

for starting. The lamps were being lighted, and their reflections quivered in the water. The masts of the vessels near stood out dark against the soft sky; whilst, farther off, masts and trees and houses were shrouded in blue evening mist.

"Good-bye," whispered Eva, as she strained her eyes to distinguish the outline of her old home — "good-bye, childhood, land, dear old father and mother! When I come back I shall be a great deal older." She had never been absent before, and months appeared like years to her at that moment.

A group of men were seen approaching the vessel, and, when close to it, they stopped and waved their caps, breaking forth into a rich part song, a well-known serenade. They were some of Adolf's old friends come thus to wish him good speed. Eight o'clock struck, the vessel was set free from her moorings, there was a shout from the singers on the quay, a sail was hoisted, and slowly, slowly the schooner gained the mid-channel, and was towed away down the river to the open sea. The lights and the sounds of voices faded; there was nothing left but the ripple of the water and the noise of the steam-tug's paddles.

Presently the moon rose, looking like a great red ball till it emerged from the mist and shone forth clear and bright on the sparkling sea. Such a night as this was a most favorable one for their start, and there was no lack of hope in the young pair. Eva could not then realize that there was anything to dread on the ocean, while heaved and lapped around their vessel almost lovingly.

A fortnight passed away. Unromantic though it sounds, Eva had been sea-sick, had recovered, and had already formed her habits to her new life. Cooking, tidying, washing, mending, and knitting were her chief occupations. Very hard she found them, till she got her "sea-legs," and learned the art of balancing herself. When she was at work, her bullfinch used to sit on the back of her chair, and they would sing and talk to each other, and fight an ill play. The bird had felt the change, and was moped in the cabin at first; but the companionship of his mistress, and he almost constant liberty he was allowed, reconciled him to life on board ship. Dampfaff was a clever bird; he could pipe several tunes when in the humor; when sleepy, he would sing first a snatch of one air, then another, mixing merry and sad together in a strange jumble. Sometimes, when sitting on the lid of the work-box, he would try to call Eva's attention by piping a merry tune and leaving off suddenly with a jerk, turning his head on one side, and flashing his bright eye at her. This behavior never failed to make his mistress pretend to fight with him, poking at him with her finger, whilst he took up a warlike position on the box-lid, with outstretched wings and open bill. Once, when this game was going on, the bird's excitement and the motion of the vessel caused the lid of the work-box to shut, and Dampfaff found himself roughly perched upon the table. On all occasions when he was frightened he sought protection on Eva's shoulder, and would nestle against her cheek.

Sea-life is monotonous when all goes well. The fair wind speeding the vessel on, the gently-rolling waves, the broad expanse of sea and sky, the regular routine of duty, have a peculiar monotony of their own, to say nothing of the weariness of a calm or the sojourn of a week or so in some sheltered roads, wind-bound, each day hoping to see some sign of change.

When excitement does come, it is in such a painful form—so sudden, so petrifying. Then every nerve must be strained, the judgment kept clear and calm, and the action must be prompt.

Adolf Lempfert was very decided in his orders, and he had a commanding manner when giving them, which always gains respect. He was considerate of his men, and when he could, he associated pleasantly with them.

II.

PARTED.

Time rolled smoothly on; the schooner, the Sea-Nymph, had made several successful voyages. Everything had prospered so far with the Lempferts in a worldly point of view, everything but Eva's health. The clear pure air of the sea, so beneficial to some persons, seemed to be too keen and penetrating for her. She thrived well at first, while the warm weather lasted, though no sun, no wind could bronze her cheek. The cold winter tried her, and the cruel easterly gales of the spring brought on a cough, which she endeavored to hide from her husband, for fear of causing him anxiety. A transparent pallor settled on her cheeks, and her strength failed. She fought against her growing weakness; she forced herself to work as usual, but what had been pleasure was now pain.

Eva was sitting at dinner one day with her husband in their little cabin. She had scarcely eaten anything, for she had made up her mind that she ought to tell him she was not well, and the dread of giving him pain had deprived her of the power of eating.

"Adolf," she began with a great effort, "I've been thinking that perhaps a month or two on shore might set me up. Much as I should grieve to see you sail without me, I think—" She stopped, for a choking in her throat prevented speech for a few seconds. "I would almost break my heart," she added hurriedly.

"Do you think that it is the sea that makes you ill, Eva?" he said, bending towards her, and fixing his large gray eyes on her face. "We

shall be home in a fortnight, and then you shall have a rest with your parents. Why did you not tell me this before you started on our last voyage?"

"I had not the heart to say anything. Besides, I thought that what I then felt might only be a passing illness, and change would do me good; but there is something very wrong with me, I fear, Adolf." She took his hand. "Did you say it would take a fortnight to reach home?"

"Not less than that; and the wind must keep fair for us, you know."

"A fortnight seems a long time to me, Adolf. Why should it do so? I've never known a day's weariness till now. I must be ill, and yet I cannot say what ails me. If I hurry up the cabin-stairs, I feel as if I must drop upon the deck, and my heart beats as if it would burst. What can it be?"

"Have you felt this long?"

"Ever since that stormy night in the winter, when the wave burst in upon us and drenched us as we lay in our berths. I thought sea-water never hurt any one; but the damp gave me a chill that night from which I have never recovered. I seem to have become worse gradually, so gradually that it is difficult to mark the time when this or that sensation first began."

"And you never told me!" he said reproachfully.

Eva said nothing, but rose and threw her arms round him, pressing her lips to his forehead. Their hearts were full. The excitement was too much for Eva. She raised herself, and pressed her hand against her side, uttering a little exclamation of pain. Adolf supported her to a chair, for she was nearly fainting, and her breath came with difficulty. By degrees the paroxysm passed off, and she rested her head against him.

"I hoped I should be so strong," she said, "such a strong useful sailor's wife; but it is God's will that I should have this cross to bear; and, Adolf, if— if it should please Him to take me, you will not repine very much; you will feel that a sickly wife would have been a sad burden to you, and then you will be able to rejoice that your Eva should be at rest, and—"

She caught sight of the agonised expression of her husband's face, and said no more. The little bullfinch flew from its cage, nestled in her breast and piped her favorite tune. Eva smiled.

"I am better now; I shall be quite well soon. Place my birdcage back in his cage, and then let me have air. It is air I seem to be always craving for, and yet it perishes me."

The bird was safely placed in his cage and the cabin-door thrown open. A rush of keen spring air came down, for the wind was blowing fresh from the north-west.

"I am better now," said Eva. "You can safely leave me." Seeing that he hesitated to do so, she added more emphatically, "Indeed I am much better now."

Adolf's heart was too full for words. He knew that his wife was not well, he had guessed it by the pallor of her cheeks and the restless light in her eyes; but it had never occurred to him that she was really ill, and she had hid the more serious symptoms from him. The truth was now confessed, and it seemed to stun and crush him. He rushed up the cabin-stairs to the deck; his eyes were blinded by tears that welled up from a heart filled with a nameless dread. The sunshine had no power to soothe him. The sparkling sea danced, and his brave little vessel scudded before the wind, now cutting through the waves, now arising buoyantly over them; but he took no pleasure in the sight. A brief half-hour had completely changed him, had crushed all his hopes. The brightest flower of his life seemed withered in his hand, and he could not at that moment bow his head in resignation to God's will. His men wondered what could have moved him so much; but they had not long to wonder—the truth was soon apparent to all. Eva sat motionless in the cabin, her head resting in her hand. She was glad that her husband knew how ill she was; it was a relief to her to feel that she had told him all, though the effort had cost her a good deal, and she had dreaded giving him pain.

"It was right that he should know," she thought. "For might not this be the beginning of the end?"

The issues of life and death are in the hands of One who never errs; but how near that end might be she could not know. In her prosperity, with her heart swelling with joy, had she not said her trust was in God; and now that trouble was nigh, should she cease to trust in Him? No, no. And with thoughts such as these struggling with her grief, she earnestly prayed that 'God's will might be done.'

Time passes slowly when the heart is heavy, and when the mind is anxiously bent on an event to come. She longed to be on shore, to see her parents once more; and the days seemed like months, and still she was rapidly growing worse. With no doctor to consult, she could apply no remedies, at least only such as her instincts suggested.

Adolf sometimes murmured; but she would not let him do so.

"If I had the best doctor in the world, he could not cure me; I feel sure of that. Thank God, I do not suffer pain; only this strange fluttering of the heart, and this longing for air. If I should never reach the land, you will go at once to see father and mother, and tell them all? Do not let them think that I pined away for home; I have loved the sea as much as any sailor could. You will take care of the bullfinch for my sake, will you not? He sings so sweetly!" and she turned her eyes towards the cage.

"Do not speak so hopelessly, Eva," said her husband. "We must be within two days' jour-

ney of port; and when we get you on shore the doctor will set you to rights, and you will feel better when you can have rest."

"I shall have rest in that land which has no shore, Adolf dear, above where the bright stars shine. Read me that beautiful hymn on eternity. I love it so well. I always think the words express wonderfully that timeless existence, the immensity of which we poor mortals cannot grasp."

Adolf took up her favorite book of German hymns, and read it in a clear sad voice. As he read, he seemed to catch some of the rapture which Eva felt, and when he had ceased reading he stooped down and kissed her, murmuring:

"God knows, I do not grudge you that bliss." He said no more; but hurried away with a heart well-nigh breaking.

The next day Eva could not rise from her berth; for several hours she was convulsed with pain so distracting, that in spite of all her endeavors she could not help an occasional moan. This pain left her as suddenly as it came, but in such a state of exhaustion that every moment seemed as if it might be her last.

The little bullfinch sat on her pillow uttering low plaintive notes. He seemed to know that his mistress was ill, and that he might lose her. Close by her stood Adolf, not knowing what to do.

"Pray," murmured Eva.

And he knelt and prayed words of agonised entreaty for her recovery. She looked at him anxiously.

"Not that," she said; "but God's will be done."

She had scarcely uttered the words when a tremor ran through her frame.

"More air," she gasped; but ere Adolf had time to throw open the cabin-door her spirit had fled to its home.

A cry of agony burst from his lips as he threw himself on his knees beside the lifeless form; the little bird flew from the pillow and nestled in his breast. The end had come.

That evening the sea was very calm, and the sun set in gorgeous colours; it was such a sunset as can only be seen at sea, where breath and space reign. Adolf stood gazing at it, and the glorious scene filled his mind with thoughts of eternity and rest. It seemed to draw him nearer to the spirit that had fled; for the beauty of nature fills the mind with a joy which oftentimes seems a foretaste of those purer joys which have no end. After the vivid colors of sunset have faded there is a soft peaceful glow ere twilight falls. The radiant sunshine of his life had indeed set in deep sorrow; but the after-glow of peace in resignation was his.

If the will and life be ruled by God's law, outward circumstances cannot disturb such a peace as this; and though the buoyant joy of youth must set, the calm of a well-ordered mind may succeed ere twilight deepens into the night of death.

The Sea-Nymph lay at anchor outside the port of Hafenwerth. The captain had signalled for a steamer to tug her into the harbor. He forced himself to perform all necessary duties, and his mind was set on having his Eva buried in the pretty cemetery outside her native town. The sad news had to be broken to the poor old parents. Frau Grenzmann wrung her hands in mute despair; her husband muttered something about his never having liked the sea, and then he buried his head in his hands and wept.

"To think that Eva, the young and happy, should die before him! Why was it so?" he cried within himself; and a voice seemed to answer, "God knows best."

Adolf told them all that Eva had said. He spoke of her resignation and her peaceful end, which comforted them not a little.

A simple cross was placed over her grave in the cemetery, and in the church where she had prayed from childhood a brass was inserted in the wall, upon which was a scroll supported by a spike of white lily. On the scroll was written:—

EVA LEMPFERT,

Died April 9, 1864, trusting in Jesus.

III. ALONE.

Adolf Lempfert had only to work for himself now, and bravely he fought with the low spirits, which naturally strove for the mastery over him. At first he could hardly bear to look at the little bullfinch, and seldom let it out of its cage. The well-known tunes sent a pang to his heart every time the little bird began to pipe, and he would throw something over the cage to make it cease. The bird was determined, however, that he should like it, and tried by every means in its power to ingratiate itself into his favor; by degrees it succeeded, and Adolf grew to be very fond of it, as he would have said, "For Eva's sake."

The bullfinch sat on his shoulder when he ate his food, and pecked seed from his mouth. As soon as he appeared in the cabin, it would show signs of the greatest joy, and flap its wings and cry "chee-aw." It was a pretty sight to see the strong weather-beaten sailor fondling his little bird. His men joked about it, and sometimes thought his mind had become a little crazed since his wife's death; but it was not so.

Next to his bird Adolf loved his vessel. Gallantly had the Sea-Nymph weathered many a gale, and with close-reefed sails had run before the wind on many a rough night. He felt

more secure on board her than on shore, when the wind blew hard, threatening to blow down chimneys, roofs, and trees. Her deck was his little kingdom; there he ruled supreme. He often thought how his fortune was linked with, and how he must, as it were, swim or sink with her.

A time of trial was drawing near. It was the autumn of 1864. There had been dirty weather for some days and nights. First driving rain and wind, then calm and fog, succeeded by squalls, which had driven the Sea-Nymph far out of her course in the English Channel. The night was dark, and thick with rain, which the wind in its violence blew horizontally over the sea. A blinding drenching rain. Everything was tightly fastened on deck, for as sailors term it, they were threatened with half a gale of wind, and the sea was becoming rougher in the open channel every moment.

No warning lights could be seen, and Adolf anxiously glanced at the compass and consulted the charts in his cabin. He mistook the position of the vessel entirely, and fancied they were near the French coast, whereas they were off the Kentish shore, and every moment drifting nearer some dangerous sands, which have been the destruction of many a fine vessel. These sands stretch out into the sea in a long line. At high tide, vessels of a certain tonnage can pass over them; but when the tide runs out, the sands in some places are left hard and dry. Floating lights have been placed at intervals to warn vessels at night, but in thick weather even their bright revolving lamps cannot always be seen, and in this instance they gave no warning to those on board the Sea-Nymph.

Adolf new not that his brave schooner was making straight for the south sands, till the sudden ominous cry of "Breakers ahead!" roused him.

"Put her about!" was the order given. Not a moment was to be lost, for there were the white-crested waves tossing and roaring in front and to the left of them. The wind howled in the rigging, making the vessel totter, whilst the waves, sweeping her deck from stem to stern, washed away one boat and stove in another. It was an awful moment; the men held their breath as they did their duty. Would the Sea-Nymph clear the dangerous sands which threatened her destruction? The wind beat wildly, and the hull of the vessel seemed lost in the trough of the sea. Above the deafening roar of the elements was heard the dull grating noise of the keel driving upon the sand. The wind seemed to utter a shriek of triumph, and then to whirl away, muttering in weird whispers. Adolf's heart sank. "Was this the end?"

To fire a signal of distress was the work of a very few minutes; and then every hand was wanted to keep the vessel in such a position that she should not feel the full fury of the winds and waves. The prow was fast in the sand, but the stern was free.

Cutting through the darkness not far ahead a rocket was seen to go up and shower its sparks of fire high up in the air, though the wind had driven it far from the place whence it had been sent up. The Sea-Nymph's signal had been heard on board the light-ship; there was hope for the shipwrecked crew if the vessel would hold together till help arrived.

Only those who have experienced a storm at sea can tell the deadened careless feeling which creeps over any one long exposed to its fury. Now that all hope of saving the vessel seemed lost, despair took possession of Adolf. He could not pray; he cared not what happened to him, his fortune, all were at the mercy of the waves; and what was life to him? Sullenly he resolved never to abandon the Sea-Nymph; he would cling to the last spar that held together. His men, he hoped and prayed, would be saved. He could pray for them, but in that dreadful moment he could not pray for himself; his heart was stern and cold.

Time went on; moments felt like years, so painfully did the mind hang on seconds, waiting and watching. The crew were wet through, benumbed, yet resolute, and all eyes strove to penetrate the darkness, to discover some signs of approaching rescue from their peril. At one time it appeared as if the vessel could not hold together till help from shore came. The wind carried away the top-mizen-mast, tearing tackle and cord as if it had been mere thread.

Many a vessel had gone to pieces on those sands ere help could come; all hands perishing, and no token of the destruction left, save weeks afterwards perhaps, a piece of goods washed ashore, the spoiled remnant of some gallant ship's cargo. One more violent gust of wind beat against the Sea-Nymph, and tore and shook her as if in fury, then whirled away disappointed; but the storm had reached its height, and from that moment it abated its violence: the rain ceased, the waves though rough were not so dangerous, and there seemed hope for the shipwrecked crew once more. Adolf ordered another signal of distress to be made, and soon afterwards came the joyful sound of "Boat ahoy!"

Some brave men had been found ready to risk their lives in the attempt to save others from a watery grave, and a lifeboat was approaching the Sea-Nymph. Danger, however, was by no means over. The vessel heaved and rolled, and the surf upon the sands prevented any boat from venturing very near. After two failures a rope was thrown from the lifeboat and caught by the men on board the Sea-Nymph. A communication being thus secured, the question arose who was to leave the vessel first. The men urged their captain to do so, but this he resolutely refused, saying he would be the last to leave.

"Life is dearest to the youngest," he added.