

THE SONG OF THE AGES.

(ZECH. IV. 17.)

A song comes to us from the far away
ages.
A song full of majesty, gladness, and
light;
It cheered long ago the sad hearts of the
sages.
It comforts our spirits in darkness of
night.
The prophets grew patient and hopeful and
cheery
At sound of the triumph that swells in
that hymn.
And we walk courageously through the
paths dreary.
Though our hearts be heavy, and our
joys be dim.
For the song is of him
Who reigns ever above;
"How great is His goodness,
How great is His beauty."
The God whom we love.

The world with its sin and its sorrow is
pressing
Too near to us ever as onward we go.
We long, but in vain, for the peace and
the blessing
That those who have rest in the better
land know.
And yet, when our thoughts turn away to
our Father,
The earth grows all fair in the glow of
His love.
We see not the grief and the shadows, but
rather
The brightness and joy of His heaven
above.
And sing with the angels,
"How great is His goodness,
How great is His beauty."

Gladly we rest by the side of the ocean,
And hear the grand music that rises and
swells
As if the old sea could be moved by emo-
tion
Whenever of its Maker it solemnly tells;
We walk in the forest; the trees waving
o'er us,
The flowers and the ferns that are kissed
by the wind,
All join to give thanks in a summer-long
chorus
To the God of all nature, the gracious and
kind.
And thus they are singing,
"How great is His goodness,
How great is His beauty."

We see but His footmarks, the work of
His fingers
Lies near us; we know not the light of
His face;
Yet seems He not far, but beside us He
lingers,
With touches of kindness, revealings of
grace.
Then gladly to Him we would fain gifts be
bringing,
To show how His children adoringly
love.
For words cannot tell Him though aye we
be singing
Fresh joy-songs of praise to our Father
above;
And hearts say with voices,
"How great is His goodness,
How great is His beauty."

And soon, when this life with its waiting is
over,
And night passes from us, and day shall
appear,
The light of the Lord shall His glory
discover,
And then we shall know what we only
guessed here.
Oh, then we shall sing the old words with
new meaning,
For then shall we gaze on Him, then
will be given
The joy of His countenance, no shadow
screening,
And finding our Father, our hearts shall
find Heaven;
And sing on forever,—
"How great is His goodness,
How great is His beauty!"

MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

From the Sunday at Home.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

BY HESBA STREETON.

CHAPTER I.—AN OLD HOVEL.

There was not another homelike it in all
the parish of Broadmoor. It was a half-
ruined hut, with walls bulging outwards,
and a ragged roof of old thatch, over-

grown with moss and yellow stone-crop.
A rusty iron pipe in one corner served as
a chimney to the flat hearth, which was
the only fireplace within; and a very small
lattice-window of greenish glass, with a
bull's eye in each pane, let in but little of
the summer sunshine, and hardly a gleam
of the winter's gloomy light. Only a few
yards off the hut could not be distinguish-
ed from the ruins of an old lime-kiln, near
which it had been built "a shelter the
lime-burners during their intervals of
work. There was but one room down-
stairs, with an earthen floor trodden hard
by the trampling of heavy feet, whilst under
the thatch there was a little loft, reached
by a steep ladder and a square hole in
the ceiling, where the roof came down on
each side to the rough flooring, and no-
where was there height enough for even a
short person to stand upright.

The furniture was as rude and simple as
the home itself. The good household
chattels, on which Ruth Medway had
prided herself when she lived in her pretty
cottage in the village street, had never
come to this poor hovel. There was a
broken chair of two, a table-top propped
upon an unbarked trunk of a young fir-tree
from the woods behind the lime-kiln, a
little cracked cocker, two or three old
boxes, and the indispensable saucepan and
kettle in which she did all her cooking.
Upstairs was a low pallet bedstead with a
flock-bed, and, on the floor beside, a
mattress studded with chaff, close under
the roof, where the thatch must almost
have touched the sleeper's face. There
was no window into this loft; the only
light came through the square hole in the
floor.

"Home is home, be it never so homely;"
and Ruth Medway had learned to love
the quiet place where her youngest child
and her dearest had been born. Behind
the house lay the Lime-kiln Woods; once
a busy place of quarries and kilns, but left
long ago to the growth of trees and brush-
wood, the haunt of all kinds of wild wood-
land creatures, hollow with rabbit-bur-
rows, and thickly peopled with singing
birds, and with the game that the squire
loved to preserve. Excepting in the shoot-
ing season, when the sharp crack of guns
was to be heard all day long, there was
no noise to drown the buzz of the humble-
bee, and the low whirring of the unseen
grasshopper, and the hundred faint and
delicate sounds which fill the stillness of
an unrequented greenwood. Day and
night, summer and winter, had their
special signs and sounds there, all well-
known to Ishmael, the youngest son of old
Humphrey Medway.

He was the youngest son, and the most
unwelcome to his father. Humphrey had
given but a scanty welcome to his first-
born child, and each successor had been re-
ceived with growing surliness. Ishmael
came the last, when his mother's hair
was already grey, and her back bent with
hard toil at out-door labor. The eldest
son was himself grown-up and married,
and the little love he might have once felt
for his mother had hardened into in-
difference; whilst the other children, those
who were living, were scattered abroad,
seldom caring to return home. Humphrey
never mentioned any of them; but some-
times of an evening, when Ruth rested for
a little while, and sat watching the kettle
boil on the crackling fire of sticks, she
would count their names over on her
fingers; eight names over which she
sighed, but at the ninth her brown wrinkled
face wore a fleeting smile as she muttered,
"Ishmael."

On the whole, Ruth was not given to
brooding over the past; for she lived too
hard a life to keep her memory green.
She had grown fond of this lonely hut,
where Ishmael had been born; and he had
never known any other home. There was
nothing in it to prevent him keeping pet
dormice, and hedgehogs found in the
hollows of the wood; though the game-
keeper would not let him have a rabbit, or
allow Ruth to keep a cat; and a dog was
not to be thought of. But a tame starling,
and a white owl which had chosen its
roost under their thatch, and answered his
call in the dusk, swooping noiselessly
through the air, made the place full of
life and interest to him. All the woods be-
hind had been his play-ground from his
earliest childhood; and not the finest house
in Broadmoor could have tempted Ishmael
to exchange his home for it.

Ruth had taught herself to read after
she was married; when Humphrey soon
began to leave her alone in the evening,
and kept her sitting up late for his return
from the village inn. Her loneliness had

led her to reading the Bible, the only book
she possessed beside a Prayer-book and
an old collection of hymns. She had
learned to believe quite simply, with no
doubts in her utmost heart, that "God
so loved the world, that he gave his only-
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in
him should not perish, but have everlasting
life;" and that Jesus Christ had really
"given his life as a ransom" for her.
With these two thoughts firmly rooted in
her mind she read the Bible eagerly; and
it was from its well-worn pages she had
chosen the name of her youngest and
dearest child. "Ishmael; because the Lord
hath heard thy affliction."

Ruth had never been a woman of many
words; and she was very silent about
those things which were deepest in her
heart. Humphrey was accustomed to
boast himself of her subjection to him, as
not daring to "cheep" a word against him.
In her young days she had been one of
the village choir; and now Ishmael sat in
the singing gallery in her old place. It
was one of her greatest pleasures to creep
just within the church door, where her poor
clothing would be least noticed, and listen
to the voices in the gallery overhead, and
to join in singing "Glory be to the Father"
at the close of each familiar Psalm. There
her bent back seemed to ache less, and
her wearied limbs felt rested. Often in the
week, as she picked stones, or hoed
thistles in the fields, her withered lips
would murmur the words, "Glory be to
the Father" and she would feel as a way-
worn traveller feels in a hot and desert
country, when he comes across a little
fountain of fresh water springing up in his
path. His journey is not over, but the
living waters give him strength to go on
with it.

So bad a name did Humphrey and his
eldest son bear in the parish, as being
idle and drunken vagabonds, that it over-
shadowed Ruth and Ishmael, and they
found themselves banished by it from all
intercourse with decent and friendly neigh-
bours. Ishmael did not feel it until he
went to the village school, where the other
children were warned against Humphrey
Medway's boy. The women who worked
with Ruth in the fields kept aloof from
her; not so much because they were better
off than she was, but because she was so
silent in her ways. Thus there was no
companionship for them but in each other;
and it was sufficient. It was enough for
Ruth to think of her boy all day, and to
hear his regular healthful breathing be-
side her all night; and for Ishmael the
woods that lay all around his home gave
him never-ending occupation and delight.

But though they were without friends,
they were not without an enemy. The
nearness of the low hovel to the woods
was enough to arouse the suspicions of the
squire's gamekeeper, even if he had had
no reason to dislike Humphrey Medway
and his family. But before Ishmael was
born, there had existed a bitter hatred
between Nutkin, the gamekeeper, and
young Humphrey, Ishmael's eldest brother.
Humphrey had succeeded in winning away
from Nutkin the girl he had wished to
make his wife; and though the keeper had
himself married shortly afterwards, he had
never forgiven the offence, or ceased to hold
him and all belonging to him in bitter
enmity. The very name of Medway was
hateful to his ears. Of late, too, Ishmael
had won two or three prizes at the
village school over the head of his own
boy, who was about the same age, and who
lamented loudly over his defeat by old
Humphrey's despised son. Yet in spite of
all Nutkin's efforts he had been unable to
dislodge old Humphrey from the miser-
able hut. The rent of a shilling a week
was paid punctually by Ruth, who would
rather have gone without food than omit
its regular settlement, since nothing else
could keep her drunken husband and her-
self from the parish workhouse. The
farmer who held a lease of the lime-kiln
and the hut, found her work on his farm-
stead, and showed her some little favor.
So all the keeper could do was to suspect
and to watch, ready to take advantage of
any trespass that could be punished by
the law.

For thirteen years now Ruth had worked
upon the Willows farm; and many a hot
summer day had Ishmael, when a baby,
lain all day long under the hedgerows,
carefully swathed in an old shawl, while
his mother toiled in the harvest fields. He
had himself begun to earn a few pence
as soon as he could scare crows from the
springing corn, or could help to tend the
sheep in the chilly days of spring during
the lambing season. For the last two

years his father had been grumbling at his
being an idle mouth to feed; though it was
rarely Ruth saw a penny of his money,
and it had been with difficulty that she
had been able to keep her boy at school.
But now the time was come when Ishmael
must cease to be a child, and must begin
to get his own living by regular work.
Mr. Chipchase, the farmer, had consented
to try him as waggoners' boy; and had
promised if he was a good and steady lad
to "make a man of him."

"Mother," said Ishmael, as they sat
together on their door-sill in the long,
light, June evening, listening to the cuckoo
and the thrushes singing in the woods.
"I told teacher I'm going to service on
Monday; and she says I may take little
Elsie into the woods to-morrow; and
she'll give us dinner to eat there; for me
as well as her, mother, because she
says I've always been a good boy at school,
and she's sorry to lose me."

"I'm glad she's sorry to lose thee," said
Ruth; "and if thee weren't to sleep at
home every night, I hardly know what I
would do without thee, Ishmael. I almost
wish thee were a tiny little lad once
again."

"When I'm a man," he answered
eagerly, "you shan't ever go out working
in the fields, or tire yourself, mother.
We'll never, never leave here, because
there's no place like it; but I'll get the
master to let me build a better house
that'll keep you warm and dry, and we'll
live together till we die; won't we,
mother?"

"Please God" she said softly, with a
smile on her brown face, as she thought
how much earlier she must die than the
young lad, little more than a child, who
sat beside her.

"I should think it would please God,"
answered Ishmael, in a quiet voice. "He
doesn't want us to be always very poor,
poorer than other folks, mother?"

"Nay, I don't know," she replied, "His
own son was born in a stable, and died
upon the cross, with folks mocking at
Him. I don't know what thee and me may
have to go through, Ishmael. We can
only say, 'Please God!'"

It was late before Ishmael mounted the
ladder to the close loft overhead, and crept
into his bed on the floor under the low
thatch. But it was after midnight when
Ruth, with her wrinkled yet sinewy
arms, helped her drunken husband from one
rung to another, fearful every night lest
her strength should fail her, and that he
might fall, crippled or lifeless, on the
floor below.

"Thank God!" she always cried in the
depth of her soul, when his sluggish and
leaden feet were safely planted on the floor
above.

(To be continued.)

WALK IN WISDOM TOWARD
THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT.

Be natural. Be yourselves. Do not
try to be somebody else. Do not have
a Christian face occasionally masking
your own face, a Christian voice taking
the place of your own voice, a Christian
language besides your own language. Of
course, when you speak of the things of
Christ, you must use certain words that
belong to these things; but they are
plain, simple, common words. Do not
go out of the way to find others. Do
not use too many of the expressions that
may be very current among us, and that
we suppose everybody understands, but
that everybody does *not* understand. Yea,
more, to many they even give offence;
and in that way, at the very moment
when we are doing our best to lead the
soul toward God and toward Christ, we
are putting hindrances in his way. Be
natural. Speak plainly. Christians are
often charged with affectation. One says,
"They seem to be walking on stilts."
But that should not be laid to the account
of their religion. Unnaturalness does not
come from having too much religion, but
from not having enough. The more we
have of true faith and true life, the more
natural we will be, and the more like
Christ we will be. What could be more
natural than the ways and words of
Christ?

Be true. Be perfectly true. That
does not simply mean, do not tell lies.
It means, be transparent. Let men be
able to see through you, to perceive that