

The Months.

FROM THE DANISH

FIRST BORN I am of twelve young sisters fair;
I wreath with whitest flowers my shining
hair;
With storm and sleet, where rudest tempests
blow,
Through Duty's round, I must untiring go.

I am the guide of all the sister train,
Yet think me not presuming, proud or vain,
For each doth shine in her unrivalled way,
Through starry eve or morning's cheering gray.

Each tireless toils for all, the others too,
Though ne'er we walk life's path together
through;
But if I roamed to farthest foreign strand,
They follow me, one loyal, loving hand.

Unlike we are, yet each doth live for all;
One braids the summer robe and one the fall,
One broiders leaves round every border fair,
One jewels hands to sparkle in our hair.

One curtains weaves, of beaming blue and
gold;
Her emerald wreathes in every graceful fold;
One binds and trains the ever-bending vine,
And one with music thrills the waving pine.

One tender weeps o'er avory lightest grief,
Her soothing voice is sorrow's sweet relief;
While one doth roar in every ear around,
Through every door her stirring tones resound.

One wakes the violet with her kisses sweet,
The crocus comes her loving smile to meet;
One balmy breathes through all the grateful
air;
Or roses wreathes around her everywhere.

Our house is large, with many pictures grand;
One sister paints with matchless master hand,
Her glowing touch a thrills the dullest scene,
Adorns her vales and hills with golden green.

Our father is the oldest born of sires,
He keeps aglow our great un fading fires,
He winds our clock, that never once is wrong,
But moves on turns to all the starry throng.

Two favoured sisters of our faithful train,
Far more than all, the choicest gifts obtain;
The sweetest lyres in all the tuneful earth
To music wake at their enlaided birth.

Pray tell us where we go and whence we
came?

And what our noble sire's illustrious name?
Pray who are we and where our changing lot?
For surely none may tell where we are not.

—Lydia M. Millard.

Petherick's Peril.

PRIZE STORY.

BY E. W. THOMSON.

"I WAS born and grew up to manhood," said old Mr. Petherick, "near the high cliffs of the coast of Cornwall. Millions of sea-fowls make their nests along the face of those wave-worn precipices. My companions and I used to get much excitement, and sometimes a good deal of pocket money, by taking their eggs. One of us, placing his feet in a loop at the end of a rope and taking a good grip with his hands, would be lowered by the others to the nest.

"When he had his basket full, they'd haul him up, and another would go down. Well, one afternoon, I thus went dangling off. They paid out about a hundred feet of rope before I touched the ledge and let go."

"What ledge?" asked Jack.

"Oh!" said Petherick, after a pause. "I see it will be troublesome to make you understand the situation." Then, after reflecting for some moments,—

"You must know that most of the cliffs along that coast overhang the sea. At many points one could drop six

hundred feet into the sea, and then be forty or fifty feet from the base of the rock he left. The coast is scooped under by the waves. But in some places the cliff wall is as though it had been eaten away by seas once running in on higher levels. There will be an overhanging coping, then some hundred feet down, a ledge sticking out farther than that of the top; under that ledge all will be scooped away. In places there are three or four such ledges, each projecting farther than those above. These ledges used to fall away occasionally, as they do yet, I am told, for the ocean is gradually devouring that coast. Where they did not project farther than the upper coping, one would swing like a pendulum on the rope, and get on the rock, if not too far in, then put a rock on the loop to hold it till his return. When a ledge did project so that one could drop straight on it, he hauled down some slack and left the rope hanging."

"Did the wind never blow it off?" asked Jack.

"Seldom, and never out of reach," said the old man. "Well, the ledge I reached was like this," illustrating with his hands. "It was some ten feet wide; it stuck out maybe six feet farther than the cliff top; the rock wall went up pretty near perpendicular, till near the coping at the ground, but below the ledge the cliff's face was so scooped away that the sea, five hundred feet below, ran in under it nigh fifty feet.

"As I went down, thousands of birds rose from the jagged places of the precipice, circling round me with harsh screams. Soon touching the ledge, I stepped from the loop, and drawing down a little slack, walked off briskly. For fully quarter of a mile the ledge ran along the cliff's face almost as level, and even as that sidewalk. I remember fancying that it sloped outward more than usual, but instantly dismissed the notion, though Gaffer Pentreath, the oldest man in that countryside, used to tell us that we should not get the use of that ledge always. It had been as steady in our time as in his grandfather's, and we only laughed at his prophecies. Yet the place of an old-filled fissure was marked by a line of grass, by tufts of weeds and small bushes, stretching almost as far as the ledge itself, and within a foot or so of the cliff's face.

"Eggs were not so many as usual, and I went a long piece from my rope before turning back. Then I noticed the very strange conduct of the hosts of sea-fowls below. Usually there were hundreds, but now there were millions on the wing, and instead of darting forth in playful motions, they seemed to be wildly excited, screaming shrilly, rushing out as in terror, and returning in masses as though to alight, only to wheel in dread, and keep the air in vast clouds.

"The weather was beautiful, the sea like glass. At no great distance two large brigs, and nearer a small yacht, lay becalmed, heaving on the long billows. I could look down her cabin stairway almost, and it seemed scarcely more than a long leap to her deck.

"Puzzled by the singular conduct of the sea-birds, I soon stopped and set my back against the cliff, to rest while watching them. The day was deadly still and very warm.

"I remember taking off my cap and wiping the sweat from my face and forehead with my sleeve. While doing

this, I looked down involuntarily to the fissure at my feet. Instantly my blood almost froze with horror! There was a distinct crack between the inner edge of the fissure and the hard-packed, root-threaded soil with which it was filled! Forcibly I pressed back, and in a flash looked along the ledge. The fissure was widening under my eye, the rock before me seemed sinking outward, and with a shudder and a groan and roar, the whole long platform fell crashing to the sea below! I stood on a margin of rock scarce a foot wide, at my back a perpendicular cliff, and five hundred feet below the ocean, now almost hidden by the vast concourse of wheeling and affrighted birds.

"Can you believe that my first sensation was one of relief? I stood safe! Even a feeling of interest held me for some moments. Almost coolly I observed a long and mighty wave roll out from beneath. It went forth with a high, curling crest—a solid wall of water! It struck the yacht stern on, plunged down on her deck, smashed through her swell of sail, and swept her out of sight forever.

"Not till then did my thoughts dwell entirely on my own position; not till then did I comprehend its hopelessness! Now my eyes closed convulsively, to shut out the abyss down which my glance had fallen; shuddering, I pressed hard against the solid wall at my back; an appalling cold slowly crept through me! My reason struggled against a wild desire to leap.

Still I pressed hard back against the wall of rock, and though nearly faint from terror, never forgot for an instant the death at my feet, nor the utter danger of the slightest motion. How long this weakness lasted I know not; I only know that the unspeakable horror of that first period has come to me in waking dreams many and many a day since; that I have long nights of that deadly fear; that to think of the past is to stand again on that narrow foothold, and to look around on the earth is often to cry out with joy that it widens away from my feet!"

"Suddenly," said the old man, "these words flashed to my brain; 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father's... Fear not; therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.' My faculties so strained, I seemed to hear the words. Indeed, often yet I think that I did truly hear a voice utter them very near me.

"Instantly hope arose, consciously, desperate indeed, but I became calm, resourceful, capable, and feeling unaccountably aided. Careful not to look down, I opened my eyes and gazed far away over the bright sea. The rippled billows told that a light outward breeze had sprung up. Slowly, and somewhat more distant, the two brigs moved toward the horizon. Turning my head, I could trace the narrow stone of my footing to where my rope dangled, perhaps three hundred yards distant.

"It seemed to hang, within easy reach of the cliff's face, and instantly I resolved and as instantly proceeded to work toward it. No time remained for hesitation. Night was coming on. I reasoned that my comrades thought me killed. They had probably gone to view the new condition of the precipice from a lower station, and on their return would haul up and carry off the rope. I made a move toward it.

"Shuffling sidewise very slowly, I had not made five yards before I knew that I could not continue to look out over that abyss without glancing down, and that I could not glance down without losing my senses.

"The cliff seemed to press outward against me. It did, in fact, incline very slightly outward. It seemed to be thrusting me off! Oh, the horror of that sensation! Your toes on the edge of a precipice, and the implacable calm mountain apparently weighing you slowly forward."

"I knew," he resumed, "that with my back to the wall I could never reach the rope. I could not face towards it and step forward, so narrow was the ledge. Motion was perhaps barely possible that way, but the breadth of my shoulders would have forced me to lean somewhat more outward, and this I dared not and could not do. Also, to see a solid surface before me became an irresistible desire. I resolved to try to turn round before resuming the desperate journey. To do this I had to nerve myself for one steady look at my footing.

"Cautiously I swung my right foot before the other and carefully edged around. For an instant as my shoulder rubbed against the rock, I felt that I must fall. I did stagger, in fact, but the next moment stood firm, face to the heaving cliff, my heels on the very edge, and the now sensation of the abyss behind me no less horrible than that from which I had with such difficulty escaped.

"I thrust forward my head against the rock and rested in agony. A whirl and wind of sudden wings made me conscious of outward things again. Not daring to cast my head backward, I drew it tortoise-like between my raised shoulders, and chin against the precipice, gazed upward with straining of vision from under my eyebrows.

"Far above the headland wall stretched Sidewise glances gave me glimpses of the projecting summit coping. There was no hope in that direction. But the distraction of scanning the cliff-side had given my strained nerves some relief; to my memory again returned the promise of the Almighty and the consciousness of His regard. Once more my muscles became firm-strung.

"A cautious step sidewise made me know how much I had gained in ease and security of motion by the change of front. I made progress that seemed almost rapid for some rods, and even had exultation in my quick approach to the rope. Hence came freedom to think how I should get on reaching it, and speculation as to how soon my comrades would haul me up."

"Then the idea rushed through me that they might even yet draw it away too soon, that while almost in my clutch it might rise from my hands. Instantly all the terrors of my position returned with tenfold force; an outward thrust of the precipice seemed to grow distinct; my trembling hands told me that it moved bodily toward me, the descent behind me took an unspeakable remoteness, and from the utmost depth of that sheer air seemed to ascend steadily a deadly and a chilling wind."

"Every possible accident and danger was presented to my excited brain. What if the ledge should narrow suddenly to nothing? Now I believed that my heels were unsupported in air, and I moved along on tip-toe. Now I