

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

PALM SUNDAY.

BY SUSAN COLERIDGE.

The King is coming! All the road
With branches of palm is strewed;
The multitudes are thronging fast
To see Him as He rideth past.
They look for pomp and sovereignty,
Purple and gold and crown to see,
They bring the sick, the halt, the dumb.
The King is coming! Let Him come!

The Christ is coming! Coarsely dressed,
With sandaled feet and fisher's vest,
His steed, the lowly ass's foal,
His crown, the viewless kureote;
No sword, no seal, no royal cloak;
Twelve tired and dusty working-folk
Make of His court the tale and sum.
The Christ is coming! Let Him come!

The King is coming! Every year
He comes for hearts that hold Him dear,
Borne as on that by-gone day
With palm-boughs strewed along His way,
No longer clad in lowly guise,
But King of kings to faithful eyes.
To every heart that gives Him room
The Lord of Love vouchsafes to come.

The Christ is coming! Heart of mine,
What fitting gift of love the sign,
Hast thou to lay as offering
Upon the pathway of the King?
No palm-branch hast thou? Nothing meet?
Then lay thyself before His feet.
His smiles can make thy dryness bloom.
The Christ is coming! Let Him come!

—Independent.

TWO FRIENDS.

CHAPTER II.—CONCLUDED.

Mr. Lacy, in spite of his protest, brought a bountiful supply of presents to Reggie.

"You are more lavish than I should have been," said his wife. "I shall not give them all at once, or he will be too overpowered to be able to enjoy them."

"Do you think you should give him any until things are cleared up?" asked Mr. Lacy.

"I think that bygones should be bygones, at least at first. If I can only win his confidence, he may tell me about it all. I feel sure there is some simple explanation."

"Don't be too sure, or you will be the more disappointed to find yourself wrong. I am afraid you have a difficult task before you. I really try to forget it, for I cannot bear to think of our little Reggie as sulky, and worst of all, untruthful."

"Don't think of it, dear. Just let us hope. I know I have often heard children called sulky who were only shy and nervous. And the same reason makes them sometimes seem untruthful. They are surprised and commit themselves in a hurry, and then it is so hard to go back again."

"In short you are determined to believe the best."

"And, Arthur, I very often think it is the fault of grown people. They do deceive children, and the children see through it, and then they deceive in their turn, or try to do so. I am inclined to think that moral qualities are infectious."

"Well, as I have said before, you will have time to try your theories of education by yourself."

"And then we will try them together," said Mrs. Lacy.

Mr. and Mrs. Lacy had talked a good deal also as to what her plans should be on arriving in England. She had determined to telegraph from Egypt to Miss Everson in order that she might not be taken by surprise. She would go down at once to Westhampton, and remain a few days if she were entitled to do so, but would in any case take Reggie with her. It would have been of course impossible for two different systems of education to be carried on satisfactorily at once. And Mrs. Lacy felt that it would not be fair upon Miss Everson to see her own plans changed under her own roof. She was most anxious to do justice to what she felt must have been Miss Everson's conscientious desire to do well for the child. It was a little difficult, as she could not help feeling that the result was not satisfactory. And yet she

knew that it was not fair to judge intentions by results.

The simplest plan seemed to be to blame herself. To think that she ought sooner to have found out that whatever Miss Everson's good qualities might be, they did not fit her for taking care of so young a child. And yet here again came in the question, what could she have done? Ought she to have gone home sooner and tried to find out for herself?

Thinking did not clear up matters very much, and in any case it was certainly useless now, as Mr. Lacy said, when she propounded some of her difficulties to him.

"If you set about worrying yourself in this style, I shall put a stop to your going, Lily. I hope that going home will do you good. It ought to do the boy good if he is worth anything. But if you fret yourself ill, you will put an end to the possibility of your being of any use. Do think of that. There is a final scolding for you."

Only a few hours more and the farewells had been said. Mr. Lacy went back to the house, whose home-like charm seemed to have gone with its mistress. His wife pursued her voyage among a crowd of people, some acquaintances, but mostly strangers, in the strange public-private life of a P. & O. steamer. The weather was fine, and she was a good sailor, but the days seemed very long, and she counted them almost as eagerly as a schoolboy does when the holidays are near at hand. Only she began, as some schoolboys also do, from the very beginning of her term.

CHAPTER III.

Reggie's wanderings beyond the garden had remained for some time undiscovered and unsuspected. No harm came of them, beyond a little extra dust on his clothes and mud on his boots, and now and then a rent, which made Hannah wonder in loud tones over his capacity for getting into mischief. He had got together a collection of treasures, which not even Sam could think highly valuable. But as his potting shed was not a marvel of tidiness, he gave the boy a corner in which to keep his things, to save them from the fire, which would have been their destiny if Hannah had pounced upon them.

The child never ventured to stray to any distance, not even though the lane a short way off reached a common, the wide expanse of which was most tempting. Reggie went a little way on it, far enough to make experiments in the gathering of gorse. The result that he got more thorns in his fingers than branches of flowers in his hands. But even there Sam's whistle sounded faint. To go out of hearing of it would be to run too much risk of discovery, and that he knew would be fatal to all his pleasures. So he contented himself, as best he could, with looking; wondering what was hidden among the slopes, what strange creatures lay in the pools that he saw shining in the sunlight, and counting the sails of the windmills that stood like sentinel giants upon the horizon.

One day as he was straining his eyes to make out some distant object, a voice beside him began, "I say."

It was very different from any voice with which he was familiar, but nevertheless Reggie started guiltily, and scarcely dared to turn his head. When he did, what he saw was by no means terrifying. A boy about half a head taller than himself, and probably a year or two older. He had a mop of dark curly hair, bright dark eyes, and showed good white teeth when he smiled. His dress consisted of a jacket much too large for him, and trousers much too short. Both wanted a good deal of mending, and looked as if they had wanted it for some time. His bare feet were thrust, the one into a boot, and the other into a shoe, and he had no hat nor cap of any sort.

Reggie stood and stared at him for a moment,

he had never come near the figure of that sort before, and did not quite know what he felt. Then suddenly he remembered "his manners," and said, very politely, "How do you do?"

He put out his hands as he spoke, but his new acquaintance did not seem to notice it, as he stood with both his own thrust in his pockets.

"I seed you often," he began, after a moment's silence, "you lives up there," he jerked his head back in the direction of Miss Everson's house. "And I sees you come out and poking about here. And I say, would you like this?"

He withdrew his right hand from his pocket, and held out a young rabbit.

Reggie's eyes sparkled with admiration and delight.

"Oh, I should like it," he exclaimed. His face fell directly however, and he added, but it's no use, I mightn't keep it."

"Wouldn't she let you?" asked the boy, again jerking his head backward, as if to point out Miss Everson.

"No, oh no!" answered Reggie, his eyes growing round with astonishment at such a suggestion. "You don't know her?" he added anxiously. "You won't tell her you saw me out here?"

The boy laughed so merrily at the idea, that Reggie could not help laughing for company.

"I don't look much like as if I was a friend of hers, do I?" he asked, cutting a caper in which he shook off the boot which was a good deal larger than the shoe.

"It is such a dear little thing," said Reggie, "I wish I could have it, but it's no use asking Sam to let me. He says rabbits are nasty mischievous things."

"Well, it may go then," said the boy, and sniting the action to the word, he set down the little creature, which scampered off and was out of sight before Reggie could ask if he mightn't stroke it first.

"I caught it a purpose for you, I did. And it's not big enough to be worth killing. Would you like this, then?"

It was as good as a conjurer, for he pulled his hand out of his other pocket, and displayed a hedgehog curled up into a prickly ball.

Reggie looked at it with intense interest. It would certainly not be so nice to nurse and stroke as a rabbit. But he had never seen one so near before, and he had never heard Sam express any opinion against hedgehogs.

"Cooks like them, they eat black beetles. Gardners likes them, they eat snails," said his new acquaintance.

"O, do they?" said Reggie. "Then perhaps Sam would let me have it? Could it live in the potting-shed, because I musn't take it indoors you know?"

The boy laughed.

"It ain't been used to living in a house like yours, bless you. It'll get away, perhaps. But there, take it if you like."

Reggie held out his hands in rather a hesitating manner, but then came the question what to do with it. His pockets were constructed so as to make the putting anything into them as difficult as possible; they were out of the question.

"Tie it in your 'ankercher," was the next suggestion. But the handkerchief proved much too small to tie over the back of the hedgehog, which, moreover, tried to take affairs into its own hands, or feet, by walking off in the midst of the attempt. This desire was, however, frustrated by its being speedily re-consigned to the bigger boy's pocket.

"I'll bring it down to your garden door for you, if you like," he suggested.

"Oh, yes, do," said Reggie, "and I'll run in and get Sam's handkerchief or something. Only we must go directly. There'll be no time if I wait till he whistles."

"Come along," said the other, and they walked along the lane side by side.

(To be continued.)