

OUR DEAR BARBARA.

(From Home Heroes.)

(Continued.)

Hurt by the tone and words of Mrs. Grayson, Barbara retired slowly toward the door; seeing which, the child stood up screaming after her wildly, and fluttering his little hands as if they were wings to bear him to his beloved nurse. The tender heart of Barbara was not proof against this appeal, and she returned with hesitating steps.

"Didn't I tell you to go to your room?" exclaimed Mrs. Grayson, passionately.

"Yes, ma'am, but I can't go. Let me take Georgie, won't you, please?"

The voice of Barbara was low, imploring, and husky with feeling; her face pale and distressed.

"Barbie! Barbie! Take Georgie!" Mrs. Grayson yielded. Georgie sprang into the arms of his nurse, who, with tear-covered face, bore him from the room.

"I think, ma'am," said the chamber-maid, soon after breakfast, "that you'd better go over and see Barbie."

"See Barbie? Why? Is anything the matter?"

"She's in bed yet."

"In bed?"

"Yes, ma'am. And I think she's very ill."

Mrs. Grayson waited to hear no more, but went over quickly to the nursery, where she found Barbara in bed.

"Are you ill, Barbie?" she asked, kindly, laying her hand upon the girl's forehead, which she found hot with fever.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Barbie, in a dull, half-unconscious manner.

"How long have you felt unwell?"

"I had a chill this morning."

"After you came from my room?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you any pain?"

"I feel so tight here, in my breast, that I can hardly breathe."

"Is there pain as well as tightness?"

"When I take a long breath."

And then Barbie lay very still and heavy.

There was no mistaking the fact. Barbie was seriously ill. Some little resistance was made by the children on attempting to remove them from her room; but they yielded when told by their mother with a hushed, serious voice, and a sober countenance, "that poor Barbie was sick," and must be kept very quiet.

When the doctor, who was immediately called, saw the sick girl, his looks betrayed concern; and when questioned earnestly by Mrs. Grayson on leaving her room, he said that it was an attack of acute pneumonia.

"Then she is in danger?" said Mrs. Grayson, a pallor overspreading her face.

"In great danger, madam," was the emphatic reply.

"What is to be done?" asked the lady, turning her hands within and around each other, like one in pain and bewilderment of mind.

"You must keep her perfectly quiet, and give the medicines I leave in the order prescribed," said the doctor.

"Will you call in again to-day?"

"Yes. I will see her before night."

"And you think her really in danger?" Mrs. Grayson's voice betrayed great anxiety.

"No good can arise from concealing the fact, madam. Yes, the girl is in danger, as I have already told you."

"Don't neglect her, doctor!" Mrs. Grayson's voice was choked. "Oh, if we lose Barbie, what shall we do?"

"I will not neglect her, madam!"

Did the doctor mean anything by this emphasis of the pronoun? Doubtless, for he looked steadily at Mrs. Grayson until her eyes fell. He had not been in attendance for years in her family without comprehending the position and duties of Barbie.

Reader, we will have no concealments with you—this sickness is unto death! Yes, even so!

Day after day the fatal disease progressed with a steadiness and rapidity that set medical skill at defiance; and when at last it became apparent to all that the time of Bar-

bie's departure was at hand, a shadow of deep sorrow fell upon the household of Mrs. Grayson.

What would they all do without Barbie? She had grown into the whole economy of things; was a pillar in the goodly framework of that domestic temple; and how was she to be taken away without a loss of strength and symmetry?

But death waits not on human affairs. The feet of Barbie were already bared for descent into the river whose opposite shore touches the land of immortal beauty; and and in spite of skill, care, regret, and sorrow, the hour of her departure drew near, until it was at hand.

True to the last, Barbie's thoughts dwelt always on the children; and she felt the disabilities of sickness as an evil only in the degree that it robbed them of the care she knew to be so needful to their comfort and happiness. If she heard Willie cry, or

She sighed faintly.

"If you should never get well, Barbie?"

"That is, if I should die?" There was no tremor in her feeble voice.

"Yes, Barbie. Are you willing to go?"

"If God pleases." She said this reverently, as her eyelids closed.

"And you are not afraid to die?"

The eyes of Barbie opened quickly.

"No, ma'am," she answered, with the simplicity of a child.

"You have a hope of heaven, Barbie?"

Mrs. Grayson tried to speak calmly, but her voice did not wholly conceal the flutter in her heart.

"Children who believe in Jesus go to heaven?"

"Yes."

"I love children. Jesus loves little children."

She said no more. That was her answer.

After a pause, Mrs. Grayson said,—

want. He maketh me down to lie in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Mrs. Grayson shut the book, and looked at Barbie. There was light all over her wasted countenance, and her dull eyes had found a new lustre.

"It is God's Word," said the sick girl, smiling as she spoke; "and I always feel when it is read as though He was near by and speaking to me."

She closed her eyes again, and for a little while lay very still. Then her lips moved, and Mrs. Grayson bent low to catch the murmur of sound that floated out upon the air.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me."

All was still again. Mrs. Grayson felt as she had never felt before. It seemed to her as if she were not alone with Barbie, and she turned, under the strong impression, to see who had entered the room. But not to mortal eyes were any forms visible. And yet, the impression not only remained, but grew stronger, and with it came a sense of deep peace that lay upon her soul like a benediction from heaven. All things of natural life receded from her thought, taking with them their burden of care, anxiety, and grief.

In this state of mind she sat for many minutes like one entranced, looking at the face of Barbie, which actually seemed to grow beautiful. Then there came a gradual awakening. The consciousness of other presences grew feebler and feebler, until Mrs. Grayson felt that she was alone with Barbie. No! Barbie had gone with the angels who came to bear her upward to her heavenly home.

"Is it over?" asked the doctor, who called on the next day to see his patient.

"Yes; it is over," replied Mrs. Grayson, tears of true sorrow filling her eyes.

"How and when did she die?" Mrs. Grayson told the simple but moving story of Barbie's departure.

"And went right up to heaven," said the doctor, turning his face partly away to hide the signs of feeling. Then he said, "I must take a last look at faithful Barbie."

And they moved to the room where her body, all ready for burial, was laid. On the wall of this room hung a portrait of the nurse surrounded by the children to whom her life had been devoted with such loving care. It was a most faithful likeness, giving all her living expression; for the sun had done the work of portraiture. After looking at the soulless face of the departed one for a few moments, the doctor turned to the almost speaking portrait, and gazed at it for some time. Then taking a pencil from his pocket, he wrote these two words carefully and legibly in a bold hand on the white margin below the picture—

"DEAR BARBARA,"

and turning away, left the apartment without a word.

In Mrs. Grayson's nursery, richly framed, hangs this picture of "Dear Barbara," and the children stand and look at it every day, and talk of her in hushed tones almost reverently. Of her it may with truth be written: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Blessed Barbara! The world knows you not, and the Church has failed to enroll you in the calendar of her worthies. But you are canonized for all that; and your memory is sacred in the hearts of children.

THE END.



THE DOCTOR WRITING UNDER BARBARA'S PORTRAIT.

Georgie complain, she grew restless or troubled. Every day she had them brought to her bedside that she might look at them, and utter, were it ever so feebly, a word of love.

"Dear, dear! Won't I be well soon, doctor? What will the children do?"

How many times was this said, even after hope had failed in the physician's heart! At last the time came when concealment from Barbara of her real state was felt to be wrong, and the duty of the communication devolved upon Mrs. Grayson.

"Barbie!" she said, as she sat alone by her bedside, forcing herself to speak because she dared not any longer keep silence. "Barbie!" she repeated, with so much feeling that the sick girl lifted her dull eyes feebly to her face, and looked at her earnestly. "Barbie, the doctor thinks you very ill."

"Does he?" The tones were untroubled.

"Yes; and we all think you ill, Barbie."

"I know I'm very weak and sick, ma'am."

"The doctor thinks you will not get well."

"As God wills it," was her calm response.

"You have done your duty, Barbie."

"I have tried to, ma'am, and prayed God to forgive me when I failed."

"You have read your Bible often?"

"Every day." A light gleamed over her countenance.

"You loved to read that good Book?" said Mrs. Grayson.

"Oh, yes. I always felt as if my Saviour was near me when I read the Bible. Won't you read me a chapter now? I haven't heard even a verse since I was sick."

Mrs. Grayson took from a table Barbie's well-worn Bible, and read, with as firm a voice as she could command, one of the Psalms of David. She did not attempt to make a selection, but opened the book and read the first chapter on which her eyes rested. It was the twenty-third.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not