

It had been a long and wearisome voyage, and eagerly they wished to be in port. As yet they had seen no signs of land.

"I think," said one, "I see far in the horizon, a little bird, which does not look like a sea-bird."

The telescope was brought. It was a bird, and it was making towards the ship. The little ones clapped their hands, for they had been so long from the land where they had heard them sing in the woods, that it was a real treat to see a little bird.

The little wings kept working away. The bird grew larger and larger as it came nearer the ship. It seemed very tired; but never mind: it has friends on the ship, and it can rest there. No hand will be raised against it.

Even the sailors have gone down into the forecabin to bring up some crumbs, for the little stranger must be hungry, and they will scatter them upon the deck that it may eat.

And now it has almost reached the ship. It will soon be safe. It is near enough for them to see that it is a land-bird. How comes it there?

"Oh," says the captain, "it has been aboard some ship, and has escaped from its cage."

Poor little thing, it thought it was going to be free. It went out upon the waters, but, alas, it found no place for the sole of its foot. It looks as though it must have been out all night in the storm. How frightened it must have been when the lightning flashed among the spray and waves. How it must have been blown about in the winds.

But never mind, it is safe now. Here it comes towards the ship.

Ah—what—it has turned back; it will not come; it is almost ready to drop into the water, it is so tired.

"Come, birdie, come," cry the children.

The old sailors whistle to it, and throw the crumbs upon the deck. "Here, birdie—here, birdie," they say coaxingly, and they go to the other side of the ship, so as to give it a chance to come without being touched.

Still it does not come. It wishes to come, but it *will* not, it is afraid. It flies round and round. It longs to rest itself. It wants to eat the crumbs, and yet it will not come near enough to pick up one.

"I've found out why it won't come," said an old sailor. "Look up there!"

They all looked, and saw sitting among the rigging a very sober-looking owl.

"That's a bad sign," said the sailor who

discovered it; "that's a very bad sign. I never knew a ship to have good luck after one of them things came aboard."

Most of the men looked upon him as a very wise old sailor, and they all seemed very much afraid.

"Shoot the owl," said one, "and then the little bird will come aboard."

"That would be worse luck than ever," said the old sailor. "I'd almost as soon you'd shoot me."

The wind is springing up, and the ship begins to move quite fast before it. Little birdie, you will have to fly fast to keep up. Will you not come on board?

No, he would not come,—he followed the ship. The captain, the sailors, the missionaries, and the children stood and watched it. They tried a thousand ways to tempt it on board.

Its fatigue became more and more plain. Once they saw its wing touch the water.

At last, as the sun was setting, the little bird fell into the waves, and rose not again.

Many a tear was dropped on the ship when they saw it drown. Even the old sailor turned away his face and said, "poor little thing."

Foolish little bird. If you had gone aboard that ship you would have met your best friends, and in two days you might have been in your native woods, for in two days the ship entered port.

When the ship was coming in sight of land, the dismal-looking owl spread his wings and left the ship.

The little bird is like every little child.

The cage from which it escaped is like the laws of God from which all children have fled.

The water is like the destruction into which they bring themselves.

And the ship is like Christ.

The owl is like the great enemy, which frightens them away from Christ.

My dear little children, will you let Satan frighten you from Christ? Never mind, though he be standing near; fly to the bosom of Jesus and find rest.

Though you may love Christ, Satan will keep near to you till you enter the port of heaven; but then he will leave you as the owl did the ship, and you will see him no more.

But if you do not come to Christ, though He, and his ministers, and his friends, beg you to come, at last you will sink beneath the waters, though the ship is in sight which would have saved you. You will be lost for ever, though the Saviour of sinners was standing by your side.