

## FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

## I AM NOT WORTHY.

BY E. R. S.

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed."—St. Matthew viii. 8.

"I am not worthy." Is not this the thought  
That soonest springs within the happy breast.  
When the dear love, long dreamed of and desired,  
In tender whispers is at last confessed?

Before the overwhelming bliss of love returned  
The soul shrinks back in deep humility:

"I am not worthy of this mighty joy,  
What have I done that it should come to me?"

If human love brings questionings like these,  
What says the heart, all soiled and smirched with sin,  
When at her door Incarnate Love Himself,  
The King of Glory, seeks to enter in?

"I am not worthy, Lord, that Thou shouldst come  
Under my roof." This her first cry, and then,  
As Faith draws near she waxes bold, "He heals  
With but a word." "Speak, Lord, with power again.

Cambridge, Mass.

## Of What Use am I?

OR, THE MIDDLE ARCH'S STORY.

I wonder what I was built for," said the Bridge to the Orphanage that stood near it by the river-side: "I wonder what I was built for? I cannot see that I am of the least use to anybody. Now, yours is a happy, useful life. You afford shelter to hundreds of poor children, who, but for you, might have died of cold and exposure. Your walls resound with their merry laughter, and at night you feel that you have all those helpless little ones to protect. Yes, yours is a happy life. How different from mine! I afford shelter to nobody. Nobody even stops on me: they even all pass away, often hurrying along, saying, 'How cold,' or 'How windy it is on the Bridge!' At night, especially, when I know all the dear children are sleeping peacefully in *you* without any fear, if some benighted traveller has to pass over *me*, he runs along as though he could not get away from me fast enough. I do not think I can stand such a useless miserable life much longer."

"I do not know," replied the Orphanage, meekly,—*"I am not very wise in such matters; but the same people who built me built you, and I think they must know best. I own mine seems the most useful life; but I am sure those good people who took so much care of the poor little orphan children could not have built you for nothing. I have sometimes heard the children read about bridges that were covered with houses; perhaps they will build houses upon you some day. You had better try to be patient."*

"It is all very well to talk of patience," said the Bridge; "I was not built yesterday. Have I not waited for years and years, and there are no signs of houses yet?"

Just then the bell rang to call the children from the playground to tea: so the Orphanage was too busy for further conversation; but the Bridge looked with envy at the large porch where the little ones were crowding, and murmured "It is too bad,—too bad, to have made such a difference between us!"

The day had been dull and gloomy; heavy clouds rose darker and darker from the west, till at last not a speck of blue sky was to be seen; and, as the evening closed in, the rain began to fall. The Bridge felt more discontented and lonely than ever, as it contrasted its dark dreary situation with the Orphanage, through whose windows bright, cheerful lights were shining. Even after the evening hymn was sung,—which the Bridge heard with bitter envy,—and the children were in bed, a light was left burning in each dormitory, so that the

Orphanage looked cheerful even during the darkest nights.

Gradually the rain became heavier and heavier, and the swollen river rushed quicker and quicker between the arches of the Bridge.

"Where are you going?" said the Beams to the Water.

"I have no time to stop talking," answered the Water; "come with me and you will see."

"Could you carry us?" asked the Beams.

"Oh yes," said the Water; "but you must make haste."

"What an opportunity of escaping from my useless life!" said the Bridge to itself. I may never have such an one again. Shall I go? I am sure I could be far more useful elsewhere. I might perhaps be turned into an Orphanage, or even a Church with a tall spire. Yes, I will go."

"Wait a minute," said the Middle Arch, which was of stone; "I am not quite ready."

"You are too heavy," said the Water; "I should not be able to carry you: you had better stay where you are. I can only take the Beams."

"We are coming, we are coming!" they cried; and, with loud cracking and shouting, they gave way, and were soon far down the river, leaving the Middle Arch standing all alone.

The Orphanage heard the crash, and some of the little children started and awoke; but it was too dark to see what was the matter, and they were soon fast asleep again.

"I Hope nothing has happened to the Bridge," murmured the Orphanage. "This is a terrible night! What a blessing to have all the little ones safe and warm! And how good the people must have been who thought of building me for them, that they might never be exposed to such weather as this! I have indeed much to be thankful for, and I must take care of them and let no rain through."

After a few hours, the clouds began to clear away; one by one the stars peeped out; and, at last, even the moon made her appearance. Then the Middle Arch began to reflect on its situation. It was by no means a pleasant one, left alone in the midst of the river, and its reflections were very gloomy.

"If only I had been made of wood, like the Beams!" it said to itself. It was really shabby of them to leave me behind at the last, especially after I had kept them together for so many years; but there is no gratitude in the world. I am sure the Orphanage will never be able to say I am of any use *now* left all alone, with no connections on either side. However, it is no use giving way, if, as the Water says, I am too heavy to move: but it is too bad!"

The morning dawned bright and cheery after the heavy rain. Everything looked so fresh and happy; and a song of praise seemed to rise from the whole earth; for several weeks of drought had preceded the storm, and the ground had been dry and thirsty. Before the children were awake at the Orphanage, a cart came rattling along the road on the other side of the river. It was the baker, with bread for their breakfast; but what was his consternation when he came to the bank and saw the Middle Arch standing alone, and no means of getting over! Soon after him came the milk-boy; and before long quite a crowd had collected. The children were now up and dressed, and crying so for their breakfast that the Middle Arch felt quite uncomfortable, and wished the Beams felt still more the morning, that the baker and milk-man might have got over.

A few minutes after, the doctor's gig drove up. "What is the matter, good people?" he exclaimed; "let me pass, please,—I have a patient very ill on the opposite side of the river, and am in a hurry."

"Oh, sir," said the people, "the Bridge is broken down."

It was very, very disappointing; however, there was nothing to be done but for the doctor to turn back and go a long way round to the next bridge. As he drove away, the Middle Arch felt still more uncomfortable, and murmured, "Oh dear! oh dear! if the poor sick person should die in consequence of the delay."

At last, some of the people got boats and took bread and milk and other things over the river. One man came up close to the Middle Arch, and climbed upon it.

"What is this?" exclaimed he, as he saw a bundle of clothes lying close to the parapet. On lifting it up, he found a poor little child, almost dead with cold and exposure. "Poor darling!" he cried; and, as he warmed it in his arms, it opened its large blue eyes and looked up in his face.

"How came you here, my little fellow?" he asked kindly.

"I stopped on the bridge last night," answered the child, "and fell asleep."

"Thank God," said the man, "that you fell asleep just on the Middle Arch, for all the rest of the Bridge has been swept away by the river."

Oh! what feelings of shame and thankfulness thrilled through the Middle Arch then, as it thought of what would have been the fate of the poor little child had it given way! "But no credit is due to me," it whispered. "I wanted to go as much as the Beams, and only grumbled because I was too heavy. How little one knows of what use one may be! I wonder whether they will pull me down now."

The Middle Arch was not pulled down, but a strong new Bridge was built, of which it still formed the centre. During all the time of the building, everything had to be taken across the river in boats which was extremely inconvenient; and the Arch often heard people say, "What a comfort it will be when the Bridge is finished."

The day it was quite ready the Orphanage children had a holiday, and they all marched across it with flags to a field on the other side, where they had a whole day's play, and tea in the evening. It was a happy day for the Bridge, especially for the Middle Arch, for the little child who had passed that fearful night on it was there, the merriest of them all. As they marched home after tea, they sang songs and hymns. One of them, especially, struck the Middle Arch. The words were these, and it thought them very nice ones:—

"We can serve in every station:  
None so weak or none so small,  
None so poor or none so lowly,  
That they cannot serve at all.

"We can serve in every station,  
It, with loving heart and true,  
We will seek to know our duty,  
And our daily task to do.

"We can serve in every station:  
He who fixed our lot is wise;  
And each act of willing service  
Is accepted in His eyes.

"Let us, then, in every station,  
Humbly strive to do our part,—  
With a faithful, earnest spirit,  
And a meek, contented heart."

During the still, summer days, and bright, calm moonlight nights, the Bridge had much time for reflection; and often it felt thankful it had not such a busy life as some, but that, though truly useful in its position, it had leisure for quiet thought. When the winter came on, there were storms of wind and rain, and sometimes it had hard work to hold fast and resist the impetuous river; but whenever the Beams felt inclined to give way, the Middle Arch would tell them the story of that stormy night, and of the little child who was so wonderfully saved: and then they stood stronger and firmer than ever.

When the summer came again, the Bridge and the Orphanage often had quiet conversation; and the latter would tell all it heard the children read and talk about, till the Bridge found out how like its former feelings were to the feelings of many men, and it longed to say to all who passed over it:—

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to *thine own* understanding. In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and *He* shall direct thy paths."

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