

Family Department.

LOVE FOR HOLY CHURCH.

Lord, Thy Church shall, next to Thee,
Best beloved of all things be;
Thither, at each hour of prayer,
Shall my hastening steps repair,
And my longing soul shall wait
For the opening of the gate.
Lost a word I fail to hear
Of the holy service there.

At what time the welcome bell
Shall of prayer and praises tell,
Let its notes be heard at morning,
Or at eve ring out its warning,
Sweetly tolling shall its sound
Bid me to the holy ground.

Vain excuses, idle pleas,
Well may suit cold, worldly ease,
Hearts that warm and thankful are
Will for God no trouble spare;
Help me, Lord, then, lest I stray
From Thy Church and Thee away,

Tho' the sultry sun may glow,
Tho' the wintry winds may blow,
Weak though I may be, or strong,
Short though be my road, or long,
Faint, or fast, or common day
Be it when I'm called to pray,
Give me but a willing mind,
And Thy courts I needs must find.

—From "Know and Believe," by Rev. A. Gray.

Over The Sea Wall.

CHAPTER VIII.

"BROTHER REGINALD."

Maudie darted forward with a gasping cry, and had her brother round the neck in a bear-like embrace.

"Oh, Guy—Guy! Where have you come from? Where have you been? Oh, we have been so miserable all the day!"

Guy, however, shook her off—not roughly, but with an assumption of impatient manhood that at another moment might have amused us, had not our bewilderment and joy, and the presence of a stranger in our midst, left us no time to analyze sensations.

"Now, Maudie, don't spoil everything. Girls are so awfully fond of kissing. I want to introduce Brother Reginald properly. Don't get in my way so dreadfully."

And putting Maudie aside without further ceremony, he went up to the tall bronzed stranger, who had made a self-possessed bow, and was looking at us all with a smile of amusement in his kindly gray eyes—eyes very like Guy's own, as I had time to note even in the first moment with something of relief—took him by the hand and led him up to Aunt Lois and me, saying:

"Now, Brother Reginald, listen! This is Aunt Lois, and she's very nice, though she's rather old; and this is Miss Sea Gull, and she's older still, but the house and everything belongs to her, and she's as kind as can be. And the little girl is Maudie, my sister. She's rather shy with strangers, but you'll like her when you know her." And Guy stood in the midst of us, looking from one to the other with the sunniest smile upon his bright face, whilst Mr. Douglas, after one attempt to keep his countenance, gave it up as a bad job, and we all burst out laughing together.

"After that introduction, ladies, we can hardly be said to be strangers," he remarked, taking our offered hands, and bowing slightly over them with that air of courteous deference that is growing rare in these free-and-easy days. And looking quickly up into his face, I asked breathlessly:

"But, Mr. Douglas, where *did* you find Guy? We have been in such a state of misery about him all day. We thought he was lost!"

Mr. Douglas turned round almost sternly upon the little boy, and said:

"Guy, you told me you had left word where you had gone."

"So I did," answered the child, looking back fearlessly. "I sent a letter."

"You sent a letter? I understood you to say you had left one behind you, explaining your wild goose chase. Now, Guy, let us have no tampering with the truth. Be a brave boy, and tell us exactly what you did."

Not one atom of shame or fear was in Guy's open face as he turned towards us, only the eager expression we knew so well, whilst the ready answer trembled on the tip of his tongue.

"Well, listen, and I'll tell you. I did write a letter last night. I said I found I had to go to town on business—I know I said that, because it took me such a time to think how to spell 'business'; I couldn't remember whether there were two z's in it or only one. I meant to leave the letter on the table, but by accident I put it into my pocket with my purse and things, and I found it at the station when I took my ticket."

We looked at each other in amaze. Had this daring scrap of humanity the audacity to go upon a railway journey to the great metropolis all alone?

"Guy!" I cried, "you haven't been to London all by yourself? I can't believe it!"

"He did, though," returned Mr. Douglas, nodding his head; "turned up at breakfast time at my hotel as cool as a cucumber. But I am so dreadfully sorry about your anxiety. Of course I should have sent a wire immediately, only the boy assured me he had left word what had become of him."

"Well, so I did; listen!" cried Guy, stepping nearer to us. "Let me explain how it was. At the station I found the letter in my pocket. It wasn't the silly little station at St. Benedict's I went to. The trains from there are so slow, people say. I just rode old Billy to Waltham Sands, and when I'd got there I gave him a cut and sent him home. I knew he'd find his way all right. Coachman says he's awful artful. Well, I went and took my ticket; but the express didn't go for half an hour, and so I thought I'd go to the post-office and send my letter. I asked all about it, and they said it would get to St. Benedict's quite early; so I bought a stamp and an envelope, and I put the letter inside, and then I sent it."

"Without directing it, I suppose?" queried Mr. Douglas.

Guy drew himself up with an inimitable air of dignity.

"I'm not a baby. Of course I directed it. I got a pen and some ink—the people were very kind to me—and I wrote on the envelope, 'Miss Sea-Gull, at Her House,' because, you know, it didn't seem sense to write the Sea-Gull part over again, and of course everybody would know. And when I'd done I put it down the box my own self, so I *know* it was all safe; and why you didn't get it, Miss Sea-Gull, I just can't imagine!"

We had to laugh; and how delightful it was to be able to do so without that black pain gnawing at one's heart all the while. Guy looked half disposed to be pained at our levity, but Mr. Douglas drew him towards him—we had by this time seated ourselves, and were feeling wonderfully little constrained by the presence of our guest—and seated him upon his knee.

"Well, old chap, I think we understand how the mistake arose, and I only blame myself that I still did not telegraph to announce your safe arrival after such a journey; but some ladies, I know, are still alarmed by the sight of yellow envelopes, and so I abstained. Now, Guy, as

you are the hero of the day's adventures, suppose you tell these ladies what you have been doing, whilst they have been in such a fright about you all the while."

"But why were you in such a fright, Miss Sea-Gull? You know I am almost a man now. I am past seven. I'm in my eighth year—Mary said so. I never do things that aren't safe."

"We thought you had got stolen by the gipsies," said Maudie, who had crept nearer, and was now standing quite close to the redoubtable brother, who plainly had no terrors for Guy.

"Stolen!" cried the little boy, indignantly. "Why, it's only *babies* and *girls* that are ever stolen! You were a lot of sillies—" And then, as Mr. Douglas checked his frank expression of feeling by placing a strong hand over his mouth, he looked up, and getting his head free again, added quickly, "Well, but listen! I don't *want* to say rude things if they don't make me; only what on earth should have put such an idea into your heads?"

"It was because of the pony," exclaimed Maudie. "You know how you wanted him; and when you had gone, and nobody knew where, except that you had gone that road, we thought you had gone to try and buy him—we knew you had all your money; and we thought perhaps the gipsies would steal you. And we have been so unhappy all day."

Guy's face was preternaturally grave and solemn.

"Well," he said at last, "I think you deserve to be mis'erable for thinking such things about me. Didn't Aunt Lois and Miss Sea-Gull decide that we couldn't do anything about the pony until we had talked it over with Brother Reginald?"

"Yes, Guy; but—"

Maudie did not like to go any further, and remind Master Guy that other decisions had sometimes been made to which he had not paid any such very strict attention. It was plain that in this instance he had been loyal to our wishes (at any rate to the letter), and we felt a little compunction at having made up our minds so quickly as to his disobedience. Dear little fellow! I am sure that more than half the times when he tripped it was through his eagerness and pretty enthusiasm, which drove all thought of rule and prohibition clean out of his mind.

"Well, there isn't any 'but' about it that I can see," returned Guy, promptly. "It was just like this. It came into my head yesterday that the best thing to do about that pony and everything was just to run up to town and have a quiet talk with Brother Reginald by myself before anybody else got hold of him. Men can always settle business better by themselves, and I've been in London before, and I knew exactly where to find Brother Reginald, because there was the name on the letter he'd written, and I tore it off and pinned it in my pocket, so that I couldn't forget."

I remembered then all in a moment where Guy had picked up these grand and manly phrases. He had come into the room the other day when some callers were there, and one of the gentlemen was talking in an offhand way about running up to town on business. I saw Guy in earnest conversation with him afterwards, asking questions, for a wonder, rather than answering them, and evidently amusing his tall companion very much. I had not the smallest doubt now that he had found out from him that quick expresses ran several times in the day from Waltham Sands, and had picked up other odds and ends of information which he had kept locked up in his memory to serve on this occasion. The children had lived for six months in London before they had come down to St. Benedict's, so that the place was not entirely strange to the child, and Guy never seemed to know what diffidence or fear was.