

Even as a Little Child.

'I don't want to go, mamma.'
 'But why not, dear?'
 'It's dark in there,' answered the child, shrinking back from the door.
 'The dark will not hurt you,' said the mother, 'and I will leave the door open so that a little light will shine in. Go now and bring me the book from the table.'
 But still the little child clung to his mother's hand and gazed with frightened eyes into the dark room. Its blackness terrified him and the streak of light shining through the open door only made its shadows seem the deeper. He imagined strange shapes lurking in their mysterious depths, an unknown something lying in wait for him.
 'What are you afraid of, dear?' But he could not tell. 'The room is just the same as it was in daytime, and there is nothing there to hurt you.'
 Still the boy was afraid to go. Then the mother said:
 'Do you think, dear, that I would send you in there if there were any danger, if anything would hurt you?'
 He shook his head.
 'Come, then! Be a little man! It is very bayish to act this way'; and she tried to draw him toward the door, but he hung back. 'I will go into the dark room myself,' she said, and walked through the door, while he gazed after her with wide, dilated eyes. As she stepped back into the light she smiled at him brightly. 'There, you see I am all safe; nothing has harmed me. Now go into the room yourself and bring me the book as I told you. There is nothing to fear.'
 The child glanced timidly at the dark doorway; he made a step toward it, but the unreasoning fear still clutched him and he shrank back in terror from that dread blackness, while his face crimsoned and he hung his head in shame. The mother sighed. There seemed to be no way in which she could overcome her child's timidity.
 'I am very sorry my little boy does not love me,' she said, sadly.
 He looked quickly up into her face and said, 'I do love you, mamma.'
 'Oh, no,' she replied. 'You do not trust me and you do not love me.'
 'Yes, I do trust you, mamma,' cried the boy in distress. 'And I do love you, truly, I do!' and he tried to pull apart the hands that covered her face.
 'How can you love me and still refuse to do what I ask of you?' she questioned and her face was grave and sad as she looked into his eyes. He could not bear that look. It pierced his heart and roused him into action. Nothing could be worse than for his mother to think he did not love her.
 'I will go, mamma,' and he made straight for the dark door. But just within the door, when weird and awful shapes seemed reaching out of the dimness to catch him, his courage faltered and he called back:
 'Will you come if I call you, mamma?'

'Yes, I will come should you need me. Don't be afraid. I am right here.'
 Thus reassured, he fought back his fears and hurried to the end of the long room. He grasped the book and turning, ran swiftly toward the welcome light where his mother stood waiting to clasp him in her arms.
 'I did it mamma. I went into the dark for you!' he exclaimed, his voice trembling and his eyes shining with excitement.
 She clasped him close and kissed him, saying, 'My brave, good boy! You see mamma told the truth when she said that the dark would not hurt you.'
 'I knew it all the time, mamma, only—I was afraid until you called to me and I knew you would come if I wanted you; then I wasn't afraid any more.'
 'Will you go in there again and put the book back on the table?' she asked.
 For a moment he hesitated—then, straightening himself, said proudly, 'Yes, mamma, because you love me and I love you.'
 And he walked again, and boldly this time, into the dark room to do his mother's bidding. The child had conquered fear.
 How many of us still doubt divine love and fear to go into the dark!—Trained Motherhood.

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