







BRAVE LITTLE TOM.







BOYS AND GIRLS

TO

WHO

DESIRE TO HELP

THEIR

WIDOWED MOTHERS,

THESE PAGES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED,



BRAVE LITTLE TOM.

"MOTHER!" said Bessie Stanford, "where shall we go? who will care for us now?"

These words were spoken by a little girl, as she clung to her

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mother's side one autumn evening: mother and daughter were standing by a newly-made grave, in which but a few days before he who had been their earthly comfort and support had been laid.

For a few moments the widow's heart was too full of grief for her to reply to Bessie's words, till again the child, raising her tearful face, exclaimed:



"Oh, mother, who will care for us now?"

"Our Father in heaven," answered Mrs. Stanford. "He knows our sorrow, He watches over us at this very moment, and for the Saviour's sake He will guide and direct us, if we trust in Him." Then with one last look at the grave, Mrs. Stanford took her little daughter's hand, and turned her steps towards her home.

Though Bessie could not thoroughly understand all that her mother's words implied, yet they gave her some comfort; and as she walked on by her side, she began to talk more cheerfully of their intended journey on the morrow, and to wonder how their strange uncle would welcome herself and younger brother Tom. For Mrs. Stanford was going to leave the village where she had

lived ever since her marriage. Her husband's long illness, previous to his death, had compelled her to part with all her furniture to pay off their debts; they had no near friends or relatives in the place, there seemed no way by which she could support herself and children, so she had resolved to seek a home with a younger brother, who was head gardener in a gentleman's family, about thirty or

forty miles away. This brother was unmarried, and had always been much attached to her. Not only that; Mr. Holland, the gentleman for whom he worked, would, she knew, do all he could to befriend herself and children, and put her in the way of earning a livelihood.

The next morning at daybreak Mrs. Stanford quitted the cottage in which she had lived so many years. As she passed

down the village she left the key at the landlord's, who had bought her furniture, and then set out on her journey. The two children walked along, pleased enough with the thought of a change; but Mrs. Stanford was too full of sorrow to heed their childish prattle. Her strength had been much tried during her husband's illness, and by anxiety since, and she feared lest it should fail her be-

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fore she could arrive at Holland Manor.

She had intended to walk about ten miles that day, so as to reach a farm-house where she was known, and where she knew they would give her a night's lodging. It was quite late when they came to the farm-gate, for Tom, who was only six years old, had become very tired, and had scarcely been able to get along. Very thankful were they

for the welcome they received, and were soon asleep after the fatigues of the day.

"If it wasn't harvest time," said Farmer Rogers next morning, "I could give you all a lift for a few miles on your way; but my horse is overworked as it is; better stay a day or two with us, you don't look fit for much just now."

But Mrs. Stanford was very anxious to see her brother as

soon as possible; she did indeed feel very ill, but that only made her more desirous to place her children under their uncle's care without delay, so that, should she be taken from them, they might not be without a protector. It added much to her anxiety that she had not heard from her brother for some time, for at the time of my story people did not write so many letters as they do now,

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and travelling was much slower and more expensive. This was why Mrs. Stanford had determined to walk most, if not all, of the way to Holland Manor; leaving such little property as still was hers in the care of a friend in the village she had left.

Bessie and Tom would gladly have had their mother accept the farmer's kind proposal, but, for the reasons I have said,

Mrs. Stanford determined to continue her journey at once; so, thanking Mr. Rogerswarmly for his kindness, she left the farm-house directly after breakfast.

By the evening of the third day they were still six miles distant from Mr. Holland's house. Tired and footsore, Mrs. Stanford sat by the roadside to rest; Bessie leant her head upon her mother's knee,

while Tom peeped through the hedge at the cows in the field beyond, and wished that his mother would have stayed for the night in the little village they had passed through about an hour before. He was not so weary as the others, for his mother had sometimes carried him a little way, and once a lad with a donkey cart had found room for Tom among his baskets, &c., and so had helped



him a mile or two on the road.

While Mrs. Stanford was thus resting, there passed by a waggoner; he came from the direction our friends were taking, and as he looked pleasantly at the little group, Mrs. Stanford was tempted to ask him a question.

"How far is it to Holland Manor?" said she; "and is there not a shorter road to it across the fields?"

"Yes," answered the man, "there is. But what be you a wanting at Holland Manor?"

"My brother is head gardener there—Squire Holland knows us well—I want to get there to-night."

"There's not much use in your going, missus. Why, didn't you know as the old squire be dead?—died four months past—and the family be all gone away, servants and

all, and the place well-nigh shut up."

"But my brother will be there, surely," cried Mrs. Stanford. "He has been with them for years."

"May-be," answered the waggoner, "but I doubt you'll find no gardener there, only two old folks left in charge of the empty house. I tell you the squire is dead, and the family right gone away. Better come back

with me to Amherst and get a night's lodging somewhere."

"No, thank you," answered Mrs. Stanford, rising, "I am too anxious; I must go on at once; I must find out where my brother is," and taking up the small bundle she was carrying with her, she and the children began to walk on.

The waggoner shook his head, as if he thought her resolution none of the wisest; but

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he saw it was of no use to try to persuade her to do otherwise, so he proceeded on his way, and a turn in the road quickly hid him from their sight.

For a little time the excitement of this news gave Mrs. Stanford fresh strength, but it gradually failed; fatigue, sorrow, and anxiety were too much for her; and at length she was forced to sit down again by the roadside.

It was now nearly dark, and they were some distance from any house, so far as she knew. The children were tired, and sleepy, and hungry; Bessie was old enough to endeavour to control her feelings, but Tom, frightened at the increasing darkness and their lonely situation, cried bitterly. His tears were more than his mother could bear, and her own began to flow.

"My poor children," said she, drawing them close to her, "how I wish I had taken that man's advice and returned to that little village. we came through. As it is, I don't know where to turn for shelter; poor little ones, what will become of you?"

"Oh, mother dear," said Bessie, "don't you remember what you told me in the churchyard the night before we left

home. You said our Father in heaven knew all about us, and would direct us, if we cried to Him; let us ask Him, mother, to show us which way to go for shelter."

And with bowed head and voice broken with tears, the widow prayed that the God of the fatherless would take her little ones under His care, and guide them into a place of safety, while little Tom, awed

and comforted, though he scarcely knew why, hushed his sobs, and was ready to go on again, in spite of the darkness, when his mother was sufficiently rested.

Mrs. Stanford turned back towards the village of Amherst, feeling that was her best course now; but owing to the darkness and the weariness of the children, they got on very slowly. Before they had quite reached

the spot where they had met the waggoner, Mrs. Stanford was again too exhausted to go further; she had tried to carry Tom, but it was too much half-fainting, she sank upon the ground, unable to answer Bessie's questions or heed Tom's sorrow.

Presently the moon rose full and bright.

"Tom," said Bessie, "would you be afraid to stay with

mother while I try and find my way to the village? It will kill mother to lie here all night; look how white she is, and her hands are quite cold; if I go to Amherst some one will surely come back with me and help to take her there."

Now Tom had been thinking a great deal about his mother's prayer. She had spoken so earnestly to God, had seemed to believe so thoroughly that


He would and could take care of them, that Tom had begun to understand that there really was One who was able and willing to help them, One who was near to them even in the darkness, and would protect from all danger those who asked Him. Tom was only a little child; but the influence of that earnest prayer had gone deep into his heart, and made him brave as he had never been before.

"Youmust not leave mother." said little Tom. "You are stronger than I am, and can lift her head, and do for her what I can't. But I can walk ever so much quicker than you, Bessie, for I am not nearly so tired, and I should get to Amherst soonest, and I know the way ; we've just come along it, and it's nearly straight. I'll go; you stay with mother."

"It would be best; only,

Tom dear, are you sure you dare?"

"Yes," answered Tom, but there was a little quiver in his voice too. "Our Father in heaven will see me all the way to Amherst, and He'll take care of me; mother asked Him to do it for Christ's sake, and I know He will."

So Tom started off alone. At first his heart beat quickly; it seemed so strange and still in

the moonlight, where all was so silent around him, save the rising wind which moved the branches of the trees, and caused their dark shadows to shift to and fro across the road; but presently Tom grew bolder, and even ventured to run. At length he came to a difficulty, the road branched off in two directions, and which one to take he knew not. Try as he would he could not remember by which one

they had come a few hours before; it all looked so different in the moonlight that an older person might well have been puzzled.

Then he remembered again his mother's prayer and Bessie's words. He knew what "guidance" meant, so, kneeling down by the roadside, he prayed God to guide him into the right way. The words he uttered were simple and childish, no

doubt, but they came from his heart, and were spoken in faith that God would hear and answer him. With a sense of protection near, he rose from his knees, and taking the road that went off to the left, trudged on as fast as his little legs would carry him, and every step was taking him from the village he wanted to reach. But this he did not know for some time. Then gradually it seemed to him

that Amherst was much farther off than he had believed : surely this rough, unpleasant path was not the one they had come by. It was only by a strong effort that brave little Tom could keep back his tears and persevere in his errand.

Presently he fancied that he saw a light far off in the distance; then a dark object seemed to hide it from him; but even that had given him some com-

fort; perhaps he was near a house where he could get help for his mother, and with new efforts Tom hurried on.

Suddenly he heard a sound behind him; it was not like anybody's footsteps—Tom would have been glad enough to hear that kind of sound, but a kind of "pit-pat," "pit-pat," that made him feel frightened. He looked round, but he could see no one. He stood still, crouching in the

dark shadow of the hedge, and the patter of footsteps came closer; then his courage failed him, and Tom screamed aloud. You may think that was not very brave, but Tom was only a little boy, and in the surprise and terror of the moment could not imagine what it was. But his fear was soon dispelled. The light came nearer, nearer; he could see that it was held by a man who was calling, "'Tiny,'

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good dog, what is it?" in a pleasant, cheery voice, while "Tiny" frisked backwards and forwards between his master and Tom, or else dashed off out of sight along the road. In a few moments the stranger was close beside him, holding up his lantern, so that the light fell full on the boy's pale face.

"What are you doing here so late? what is the matter, my lad?" asked he.

Then Tom told his story; how his mother was travelling along, and was taken ill on the road, and how he had left her with his sister and come back to Amherst for help.

"Amherst! my boy, you are far enough from there; I am glad that Tiny and I were coming this way, and so found you; though Tiny gave you a fright, didn't he? But never mind, I'll call up a neighbour and we'll

see after your mother : come along with me," and, taking Tom's hand, the stranger soon got assistance. A little pony was harnessed to a light cart, and Tom, seated beside his new friend, was speedily driven along to the spot where he had left his mother and Bessie.

"And where were you going?" asked the stranger.

"To my uncle's, sir; father is dead," said Tom, and then,

at the thought of his loss and of all the sorrow that had followed, Tom began to cry.

"Cheer up, my brave little fellow," said his companion; "think of your mother: we shall soon come towhere you left her. Look out for the place."

But there was no fear of their missing it, for Bessie, hearing the sound of wheels and voices, gave a shout; the pony was stopped, Mrs. Stanford and the

child were lifted in, and it was not long before they were seated in a warm kitchen, their wants well supplied, and all done for them that kind-learted folks could do.

The next morning Mrs. Stanford was very ill, and for a day or two was feverish and unable to speak sensibly; but the stranger whom Tom had met made them thoroughly welcome in his home and hired a nurse

to wait on the children and their sick mother. Comfort and rest were nearly all that Mrs. Stanford needed, and in a short time she was able to get up, and spoke of continuing her journey.

"You mustn't think of going yet," said her nurse. "Mr. Dawson has just given up his cottage to you till you're well and strong; so be content to stay, and don't talk of going."



"Mr. Dawson—what Mr. Dawson?" asked Mrs. Stanford, bewildered.

"James Dawson that was at Squire Holland's," replied the woman.

"God has indeed guided us aright," said the widow, in a tone of deep thankfulness; "tell him it is his sister Bessie who is in his house."

The news was soon told, and Mrs. Stanford's brother was

quickly by her bedside. He had been so occupied since the night he had found her that he had had little time to make inquiries as to her name, &c.; in fact, he had put off doing so till she should be better. His surprise and joy were as great as hers. When Mr. Holland died, he had, with his savings, taken a small farm, and as he was an industrious and clever man, there was every

likelihood that he would prosper in it.

You can imagine how pleased Bessie and Tom were to find that the kind stranger was their uncle. He, too, was equally well pleased to have such a womanly thoughtful niece, and "brave little Tom" for a nephew. In a few weeks Mrs. Stanford's health greatly improved, and it was a happy family that dwelt in James Dawson's cottage—

happy, not so much because they loved each other and had many earthly blessings, though these were great sources of happiness-but happy chiefly because they all knew that God was their kind and loving Father, that for Jesus Christ's sake He had forgiven all their sins, and would guide and keep them through all the troubles and dangers of this life, and bring them at last, redeemed

and sanctified, to the eternal home which Our Father has prepared for all His reconciled and obedient children.

"SAFE! SAFE! SAFE!"

SUCH was the exclamation uttered by a shipwrecked American sailor, under deeply interesting circumstances, in one of the islands of the South Pacific Ocean.

A few years before, he had formed one of a boat's crew which had belonged to a vessel which was wrecked on those very shores. Another boat's

crew, belonging to the same vessel, having landed on the island, had been killed and devoured by the natives. Their comrades in the other boat kept out to sea when they saw the fate of their companions, and were afterwards picked up by another vessel, and saved.

It happened, in the wonderful providence of God, that the sailor referred to was wrecked again upon the same island

some years after the above event. Consternation and extreme dread seized the survivors from that wreck when they learnt from their companion where they were, and what had once befallen his shipmates on those shores. Escape was, however, now impossible, and their only resource appeared to be to hide themselves in the thick woods until an opportunity might offer to escape.

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Being sorely pressed, however, by hunger, they determined to advance a little into the interior, in the hope of obtaining food. They were passing through a forest, where the crackling of every branch and the rustling of the birds led them to suppose an enemy was at hand at every step, and that their lives would soon be sacrificed. They were toiling up a steep ascent, in the hope that, when they reached

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the summit, they would be able to see for some distance, both over the island and to seaward. The sailor already mentioned was ahead of the rest, and having emerged from the forest, and reached the crowning point of the hill, he was anxiously looking round to see if there was any prospect of deliverance. Suddenly his companions, who were just behind him, were startled by seeing him leaping

for joy, and crying out with clasped hands, "Safe, safe, safe!"

He had indeed seen a sight well calculated to cheer and comfort their hearts. Immediately under where he stood was to be seen the little village church, surrounded by the comfortable abodes of the people. The missionary had evidently visited those shores, and God had blessed his labours. The



people had become Christians, and of course their former savage and cannibal practices had been given up; so that there was now no cause for fear lest they should be killed and eaten by the natives. The sailor at once saw all this implied in the little church, and the fears of the whole party straightway vanished.

It is scarcely necessary to add that every attention was paid by the Christian islanders

to the poor shipwrecked crew, whose wants were supplied by them, and they eventually left the island in an American ship, in peace and safety.

Surely we have here another and a striking instance of the way in which godliness has the "promise of the life that now is," as well as of "that which is to come." Had not the missionary reached that island, and had not the Gospel been blessed

there, how different would, in all probability, have been the fate of those poor sailors.— *Church Juvenile Missionary Instructor*.



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