

NOBODY LOVES ME

Written in 1883

By Mrs. O. F. Walton

Chapter 1

Old Grumpy's Home

The great church clock, in the most crowded part of that crowded city, was striking eight. It was a solemn old clock and it spoke very slowly and distinctly, as if it thought that the people who lived round the church were not able to count quickly and as if it were afraid they would make a mistake and would lay the blame on the clock. One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight!

The children heard it and they left their mud pies they were making in the gutter and ran to their different homes. The bricklayers, who were mending the old church porch, heard it and they threw down their trowels and hurried away to their breakfast. The milkman, who was driving down the street, heard it and he whipped his horse and drove quickly that his customers might be supplied in time. The errand boy, who was playing marbles at the street corner, heard it and he hastened back to the shop. All the wives and sisters and mothers, in all the streets and alleys and courts near the old church, heard it and they filled the teapots and buttered the toast and took the cakes out of the ovens and set the chairs in their places, for the husbands and fathers and sons who were coming in for breakfast.

Old Grumpy heard it, as she was raking the ashes out of her little grate. "One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight!" counted Old Grumpy and then she went on with what she was doing, without taking any further notice of it. For it made no difference to her. There was no need for her to hurry or to rake faster. No one was coming in to breakfast. She had no husband, no brother, no son to care for. Old Grumpy lived alone and she liked to live alone. She was quite proud of saying that she loved nobody and nobody loved her. The neighbors never came to see the old woman. If they had come, she would not have opened the door to them, and she never went to see the neighbors. "They were an idle, gossiping lot," she said.

Old Grumpy was a thin, bony old woman, with a hard and cross face. Even the children ran away from her as she passed through the court, for she never smiled at them or spoke to them, but stalked on, with a determined step and with her lips tightly pressed together, as if she had made up her mind to be the Ishmael of the court—her hand against every man, every man's hand against her.

It was a long straggling court, which may perhaps have been the reason why it was called Ivy Court. It certainly was not like the ivy in anything else, for there was nothing green or pretty or bright about it. The first part of the court had a double row of houses, but at the end of this there was a narrow passage, which wound round two sides of the graveyard of the old city church and here the houses were only on one side and looked upon the high grimy wall of the churchyard.

Old Grumpy's house was the last one and she had lived there so long, that every

other house in the court had changed tenants since she came there. She only rented the upper room and it was neither a very large nor a very cheerful place to live in. Still she stuck to it year after year and it would have broken her heart to leave it for another. The walls and the ceiling had never been white-washed since she came there and were almost as black as the inside of the chimney. The old four-post bed was hung with faded chintz, which was more dirty and filthy than the walls. And if you had been able to see through the dust and dirt and cobwebs that covered the windowpanes, you would have seen nothing but the bare, black, dismal wall opposite and the tops of two or three smoky and sooty gravestones which were taller than the rest and which seemed to be peering over the wall at the inhabitants of Ivy Court. It was a dismal prospect and perhaps Old Grumpy thought so, for she never tried to clean the windows, but allowed the dust to thicken there, the spiders to spin there, and the dead flies to lie in black and unsightly heaps in the corner of every pane.

No one in the court knew anything about the strange and disagreeable old woman. No one remembered her coming to the court. No one knew when she came or why she came or where she came from. They did not even know her name. The children who lived near her had given her the name of "Old Grumpy," because she always spoke in a surly, unpleasant voice. But the children who had given her the name were children no longer. They had all left Ivy Court. Some of them were married and some of them were dead. Yet, although they had left, Old Grumpy's name had been passed on to the next generation and the children, who lived in the court at the time this story begins, still ran away, calling out, "Old Grumpy! Old Grumpy!" whenever the old woman came out.

Poor Old Grumpy's life had been a very cheerless one! She was born in a workhouse and her mother had died when she was only two days old. She remembered very little about her childhood, except this one thing, that nobody cared for her. And when she was a child, this often troubled her. Other children had mothers, other children had homes, but she had not a relative in the world and her only home was the workhouse.

There was one evening, when she was about nine years old, which Old Grumpy had never forgotten. She had been sent on an errand for the matron and was coming home through a narrow street, full of working people's houses. It was seven o'clock and she could see the cheerful firelight in many a happy home as she passed by. It was Christmas Eve and there was a merry family party gathered round the fire in nearly every house. The child felt a strange, hungry feeling in her heart as she looked at them. Oh, if one of those bright little houses had been her home!

But it was the last house in the street which she remembered best of all. There was a bedroom on the ground floor and on the table was a candle. The child peeped in and saw four little beds, and in the beds, four little fair-haired children. And there was a fair-haired mother, going about amongst the cots, shaking up the little pillows, tucking up the blankets, and kissing the little rosy cheeks. Then she took up the candle and was going away, but the children called her back again and again, for more and more kisses.

The poor child outside, who had no one to love her, turned away with tears in her eyes. She could not remember that anyone had ever kissed her. She wondered if her mother had kissed her before she died.

Her mother had had fair hair, so the old workhouse nurse had told her, and was very pretty. The child wondered whether, if she had lived, she would have tucked her up and made her cozy when she went to bed.

Poor Old Grumpy had never forgotten that night. But as the years went by, and she grew older, she grew at the same time harder. Nobody had ever loved her and so she

resolved she would never love anybody. She could do quite well without their love, she said to herself. Nobody had ever been kind to her, so she made up her mind not to be kind to anybody. All the world was against her and she was against all the world.

Yet, ever and again, that old, hungry feeling, which had come into her heart on that Christmas Eve so long ago, came back to her, in spite of herself.

Unloved and loveless, she still at times yearned both to be loved and to love.

Chapter 2 The First Link

Old Grumpy was raking her grate that cold morning, when the solemn old church clock was striking eight. She had just raked out the ashes and was hunting in a dark dirty closet by the fireside for some pieces of stick, which she could use to light the fire, when she heard a step on the staircase which led up to her room.

It was not a heavy step and it was not a loud step and it was not a quick step. On the contrary, it was very light and very quiet and very slow. And yet it was such an unusual thing for Old Grumpy to hear any step at all on her staircase, that she paused in what she was doing and listened.

It could not be a child, she thought. Could it be a dog, or a rat, or a bird?

Curiosity led her to open her door and look out. There, on the landing close by her and looking piteously into her face, was a visitor waiting to be let in. It was a little black half-starved kitten.

Now Old Grumpy had the greatest contempt for cats. A neighbor of hers, the old man who lived in the downstairs room, had a cat, a great tom-cat, with a long bushy tail, which used to sit on his back when he was at work and follow him like a dog. Old Grumpy had the greatest contempt for this cat and for old Joel's affection for it. She would scowl at the cat and scowl at his master as she passed his room and would mutter to herself, "Some folks are crazed and ought to be took and put in 'sylum, and not left to live among decent people in a decent court."

Old Joel's cat was a wild, ferocious creature. No one dared to touch it but himself. The children never ventured to pull its tail or to drive it about the court, as they did all the other poor miserable cats which had the misfortune to live there. And there was not one of the neighbors, men or women, who would have dared even to stroke it.

Yet with old Joel, the cat was always gentle and obedient. At a word from him, it would leap to the ceiling or jump from the ground to his shoulder, or rush madly out of the window and leap first on the churchyard wall and then on to the roof of its master's house. Joel was very fond of this cat. It had been his companion for many years and its tricks and performances were the pride of the old man's heart.

But whilst they amused old Joel, they disgusted Old Grumpy. "Silly old fellow!" she would mutter to herself, as she heard the cat leaping in the room below. "Silly old chap, to be wasting his time over an ugly creature like that!" She was glad God Almighty hadn't made *her* a man. Women had more sense in their little fingernails than men in their whole body. Loving a cat! Spending time on a cat! Stroking and kissing a cat! It was a

wonder old Joel was let to live on there. The p'lice ought to have seen to it before this!

These being her sentiments, it was not to be expected that Old Grumpy would receive her visitor with open arms. Her great idea was to get rid of it and that as quickly as possible. She accordingly gave it a kick and shook her shawl at it, but the kitten only crawled a few steps from the door and lay down again. It seemed quite weak and exhausted and as if it had spent all its strength in climbing up the staircase.

Old Grumpy closed her door and went back to her fire, hoping that the kitten would soon go away. But whenever she paused in her work, she heard the same doleful sound outside.

"Mew, mew, mew, mew," said the kitten again and again.

And so it went on, long after the fire was lighted and the kettle had boiled and the old woman had made herself a cup of tea.

"Mew, mew, mew, mew," but the sounds grew fainter and fainter and at last they ceased altogether.

"That tiresome little thing is either gone or dead," said Old Grumpy to herself.

But which was it? Had it gone? She had never heard its step going downstairs, as she had heard it coming up. Or was it lying stiff and dead at her door?

Old Grumpy had very few things to think of, and although she tried to forget the kitten entirely, yet in spite of herself, she kept wondering what had become of it. At last she thought she would just look out for a moment to see if it were there or not. She could shut the door again if it were still alive and if it tried to get into her room.

So she looked out and the kitten was still there and it was not dead. It was evidently very ill, so ill and weak that it did not even try to crawl to the door. But it looked in at the fire in Old Grumpy's grate, which was burning brightly and it looked up in the old woman's face as if it were asking her to let it in.

It was a very strange thing, but at that moment, as Old Grumpy saw the kitten looking in at the fire, her thoughts went back to that cold Christmas Eve, nearly sixty years ago, when she had looked in at the bright firesides of that little back street. It may have been the thought of that night, so long ago, yet so well remembered, or it may have been the plaintive cries of the kitten, which began again as soon as she opened the door, or it may have been the recollection and the cries together, which touched the soft part in Old Grumpy's hard heart. But, anyhow, the old woman, who was in the act of giving the kitten another kick, suddenly changed her mind, stooped down and lifted it in her arms, as gently as if she had been old Joel himself and carried it into her room.

The kitten had been shamefully ill-treated. A wicked boy had pelted it with stones, which had broken its leg and given it a terrible wound on his head. Old Grumpy bound up its leg, bathed its wounds, gave it milk out of her own saucer and let it lie on her knee.

The kitten seemed pleased and grateful and purred its thanks. And as the day went on, strange to say, the old woman, who had never loved anyone before, began to love the kitten. And *not* strange to say, for it was the natural consequence, the kitten began to love her.

Old Grumpy's heart, which had been bolted and barred against everything before, had suddenly opened to let this poor dumb creature in and having let it in, she gave it all the stores of love which had been hidden and buried in her heart during those long loveless years.

It seemed very strange and very sad that the wealth of love God had given her, that power to love which He gives to all alike, should be squandered on a kitten! It surely was

very sad that the love which might have made so many around her happy, the love which might have helped the poor tired mothers in the court, nursed the sick children, and cheered those more helpless than herself, should have been hoarded up, only to be given to a poor little kitten, which would have been more than content with so much less.

But still it was the beginning of better days for Old Grumpy. She was learning to love, that was something. She was learning the pleasure of being loved, that was more.

And is it not, sometimes, a very little thing, a thing more insignificant and useless than a kitten, which is the first link in a chain which leads on to very important things?

There was One watching the old woman that day as she opened the door to the lost kitten. One who was also standing outside her door, longing and yearning to enter that He might give her the riches of His love and that He might win her heart in return.

But Old Grumpy knew nothing of Him, of the living, loving Lord. She knows nothing of *His* love. Now, He was about to stir up in her heart an earnest desire for someone to love her that she might be ready to receive the glad news of His great love for her, when the time came to send it to her.

Chapter 3 Missing

It was quite a new feeling for Old Grumpy to have anyone to care for but herself. She had been so long accustomed to get up in the morning, with no thought except, "What shall I eat?" or, "What shall I drink?" or, "How shall I be clothed?" that it was a curious and pleasant change for her to have even a kitten to care for. And as day after day went by, and the kitten began to know her and to follow her, Old Grumpy's love for it grew more and more.

The first day that it followed her into the court, it made quite a sensation among the neighbors. A boy, not knowing that it belonged to the old woman and thinking that it was a strange cat which had come over the churchyard wall, was seizing it by the tail, when Old Grumpy suddenly turned round on him and gave him a blow which made him fly out of the court screaming. Then all the neighbors came out to see what was the matter and stood still in astonishment, as they watched Old Grumpy petting and fondling the kitten and looking wrathfully after the boy as he ran into the street.

"What's come to the old woman?" said one to another. "Whoever would have thought it?"

But old Joel was very scornful, quite as scornful as ever she had been of him.

"Such a creature!" he said, "A poor, miserable, bony, half-starved kitten! If it had been a cat like mine"—and he glanced up at Tiger who was sitting on his shoulder—"no one would have said anything about it. But a black-and-white kitten! Ugh!"

But Old Grumpy heeded them not. It was enough for her that she had found someone to love her. She made a soft bed for her kitten to lie on. She gave it the best she had in the house to eat. She bought a piece of blue ribbon and tied it round its neck and she talked to it and stroked it and petted it from morning till night.

By degrees, the kitten grew into a cat and became soft and sleek and well fed and a

great contrast in every way to what it was when it begged to be let into her room that winter's morning, as the great church clock was striking eight. And as the kitten was growing into a cat, Old Grumpy's love for it was growing at the same time. The cat became the one thought of her life, and from living so much alone and from speaking so little to those around her, she spent all her time in talking to her cat and after a time, her cat began to talk to her, at least the old woman thought it did. And when she went to the shop at the top of the court to buy her tea and sugar, she would repeat in her strange, muttering way, half as if she were talking to herself, half as if she were talking to her neighbors, what her cat had said to her as it lay on her knee. It would tell her how comfortable it was and how it loved her and how glad it was she had taken it in. So the old woman said and so she firmly believed. The neighbors laughed at her very often and made great fun of the idea of a cat talking and old Joel said it clearly proved that she was mad and ought to be taken to the "sylum." Yet Old Grumpy held to her tale in spite of everything that was said to her.

But one morning, when the old woman had been to the workhouse to fetch her weekly allowance of half-a-crown and two loaves of bread, she came home to find a trouble awaiting her.

The cat had disappeared. She had left it asleep in the chair by the fire and she had locked her door. The door was still locked when she came back, but the cat was gone. She called it by all the many names she had given it. She hunted for it under her bed and in the dark closet by the fireside and in every nook and corner of her room, but the cat was not to be seen.

Then she remembered the window. Yes, it was open! The cat must have jumped on the churchyard wall and then down into the court. In great haste and with trembling steps, the old woman went out, calling the cat again and again.

Old Joel came out of his door and laughed. The neighbors stood at their doors and laughed. No one had seen it. No one had heard it. No one knew anything about it.

Having searched the court from end to end, Old Grumpy opened the iron gate of the churchyard and hunted amongst the graves. Sometimes stumbling over an old stone, sometimes sitting to rest on a crumbling monument, sometimes calling, sometimes searching, but never finding, so the old woman spent the greater part of the day. Then she wandered down the street, asking of every passer-by, walking down every court, calling for the cat at every turning. Still she did not find it. There came no answer to her calls.

Night came on and still Old Grumpy wandered. She could not bear to lock her favorite out. She could not bear to think of the empty desolate room without it. So she walked on the greater part of the night and her neighbors, as they woke from their dreams, still heard her cries for the cat, as she paced up and down the court.

The next day she still searched and the next and the next. Indeed, her whole life at that time became one long search, and when she came to her room to eat or to sleep, it was only to make fresh plans for finding her cat.

But all these plans were fruitless. The cat never returned to its old friend. Whether it had strayed away or had been stolen, whether the cat was faithless and had deserted her, or whether the neighbors had been treacherous and had made away with the cat, Old Grumpy never could determine. But whatever had been the cause of her loss, the loss remained the same. The cat was gone and it never came back again.

The little dirty room was as empty and quiet as it had been before and once more Old Grumpy had no one to think of but herself. But the old woman was changed. She

was no longer satisfied with the lonely selfish life she was leading. She had known what it was to love, though she had only loved a cat. She had known what it was to be loved, although only by a cat. And the old hungry craving for love, which she had had as a child, came back to her strengthened a hundredfold.

As weeks went by, she began to despair of finding her cat. She began to look around, almost ravenously for something or someone to love. She tried to make friends with the children of the court, but they had lived all their lives in such fear of her that they ran away when she called them and hid themselves when they saw her come out. Then she would wander up and down the street, looking for other children that she might kiss them as they went by.

Sometimes she would stoop down and kiss a bright-eyed baby in a stroller, whose nurse would look indignantly at the dirty old woman and would smooth the child's clothes and shake out its cloak and arrange its hat and would hasten away from her. Sometimes she would kiss the forehead of a little girl on her way to school, who would look, not indignantly, but curiously at her, wondering who she was and where she came from. Sometimes she would stop a group of little children, walking out with an aunt or mother, who would ask Old Grumpy where she lived and who would receive no answer.

As the days went by, this craving to be loved grew stronger and stronger. The old woman's brain, which had never been strong, began to be quite bewildered and troubled by it and it was a sad sight to see her wandering up and down the court, muttering to herself over and over again, "Nobody loves me, nobody does! Nobody loves me, nobody does!"

Chapter 4 The Second Link

Over and over again, till the neighbors were tired of hearing her. Over and over again, till her head ached at the sound of her own voice. Over and over again, as the church clock struck one hour after another, Old Grumpy repeated the same words, "Nobody loves me, nobody does! Nobody loves me, nobody does!"

But at least, one day, there came a change. She was leaning against the churchyard wall, watching the neighbors filling their pails at the pump in the middle of the court. She was thinking of her cat and muttering to herself, hardly hearing what they were saying, when suddenly she found herself listening to their talk.

"There's nothing to be done," said one woman. "She must go the House at once. Mrs. Perkins has sent for the officer to come and see about it."

"Poor bairn. It's a pity!" said another. "She's such a pretty little thing. I saw her standing at the door just now. I'd have kept her, I'm sure I would, if my Bob had been willing, but my Bob wasn't willing, he wouldn't hear of it. He says we've got plenty of them already!"

"And so you have, Mrs. Wilkins," said an old woman, who was waiting with her jug. "Why, you've six of 'em, haven't you? And no good ever comes of doing for other folk's children. Nobody thanks you for it!"

"What's that?" said another woman, who had just come up.

"Why, it's a woman that has just died at Mrs. Perkins' lodging-house over the way there. She went there last night—very bad she was when she arrived. They got her to bed at once and fetched a doctor, but she died in the night and there's a little girl left. Mrs. Perkins had just sent to the workhouse for them to send on and see about it."

"Is it a baby?" asked the newcomer.

"No, it's a little girl about as big as our Kate, going on five, I think Mrs. Perkins said, and so clean she is and nice little clothes too!"

"Who are they?" asked the woman.

"Mrs. Perkins doesn't know. They don't belong to this part at all. By what I understand, she was travelling through to her own parish, so I expect they'll send the child on there."

"Poor bairn!" said the woman. "I must go and have a look at her," and she hastened out of the court and went across to the other side of the street, where Mrs. Perkins' lodging-house stood.

Old Grumpy got up and came nearer the pump, where the other women were still standing, talking it over.

"Would they give her to me?" said the old woman coming more forward and suddenly clutching one of them by the arm.

"Who's that?" said the woman, starting and turning round, for she had not seen her coming. "Why, it's Old Grumpy! What does she say?"

"Would they give the bairn to me?" repeated the old woman.

"No, I shouldn't think so," said the women in a chorus. "Why, whatever would *you* do with a bairn? You wouldn't know how to look after her!"

"She looked after her cat well enough, anyhow," said a man, who was standing at a door, smoking his pipe.

"Well, to be sure, so she did!" said one of the women. "But what would she keep her on? She couldn't keep a child out of her parish pay."

"I would work for her as long as I could crawl about. Oh, let me have her, let me have her! I'll be ever so good to the bairn. Nobody loves me, nobody does!"

"She's half mad," said one of the neighbors. "I don't think she ought to have a child given up to her."

"She had sense enough to look after the cat," said the man with the pipe. "Let her try."

"Well, I'll go and see Mrs. Perkins about it," said the woman who had been the chief speaker.

Old Grumpy stood at the entrance of the court, watching Mrs. Perkins' house anxiously. It was a high house, with many rooms in it and it looked, if possible, more forlorn and dirty than the row of forlorn and dirty houses in which it stood. The dirty ragged blind was drawn down in one of the upper rooms and Old Grumpy fancied the mother of the child must be lying there. And she wondered what she was like and if she was at all like her own mother was, when she had been laid, dead, in a ward of the workhouse hospital. The poor child, she thought, was left motherless, just as she had been. But if only they would let her have it, then it should never have to say, as she had said, oh, so many times, "Nobody loves me, nobody does." She would love it as much as if it were her own child, that she would! Ah, *how* she would love it!

It was a long time before her neighbor appeared again and when she did it was to beckon Old Grumpy to come in.

"*Her!*" said the landlady contemptuously, when she saw her.

"Let her try, poor thing!" said the woman of Ivy court. "We can send the bairn to the House if she doesn't look after her and we will all keep an eye on the child and see no harm comes to her."

"Well, have your own way," said Mrs. Perkins. "It doesn't matter to me. But you'd better take her and be off, before the officer comes down. It's not very likely he'll let that crazed old body take her. I needn't tell him there is a child, if you're off at once."

"Where is she?" asked the woman.

"She's in the kitchen, playing with my Sally Jane and Anna Maria. She doesn't know her mammy's dead. I told her she was poorly and wanted to be quiet and set her downstairs."

"I'll go and fetch her then," said the woman and she soon returned, leading by the hand a tiny child with soft dark brown hair and large dark brown eyes, very pretty, as the neighbors had said, but very thin and pale, so thin and pale that there were tears in the woman's eyes as she brought her in and she whispered to Mrs. Perkins that, "It was clear it wouldn't be for long, the bairn would soon be with her mother again."

"I'll be ever so good to her," said Old Grumpy as she took her hand. "Don't you be afraid of me. I'll be ever so good to her."

Ivy Court turned out, as they walked through, to see Old Grumpy's child. Some said it was a shame to let the child go to such a place as that. The Workhouse would have been far better for her. Others, and the man with the pipe was among their number, said it would settle the old woman's mind and keep her from having to go to the asylum. Old Joel, who was standing with Tiger on his shoulder, thought it a good joke and laughed so loud as Old Grumpy passed by, that the man with the pipe came across the court to bid him to be quiet and to mind his own business.

The old woman walked on, heeding neither the remarks of the neighbors nor the laughter of old Joel. She felt as if she were in a dream. Now, at last, she had found something to love. Now, at last, she would be happy. None should rob her of this darling. Nothing should ever part them. The child would love her and grow up to be a comfort and a joy to her and they would be so happy together. Old Grumpy saw all the future spread out before her in a very bright and beautiful picture, as she opened the door for the child to go in.

And the One who was still standing outside her door, the living, loving Lord of whom the old woman still knew but little, and cared less, was adding another link to the chain which was to lead her to Himself.

When would the chain be finished? There were more links yet to follow, sorrowful links for Old Grumpy before the last link came, which led her to the Lord Himself.

Chapter 5 The White Lily

Old Grumpy put the little girl on a stool by the fire and stood looking at her, with such a loving, kind, motherly smile that the neighbors would not have known the old woman if

they had seen her.

“What do they call you, my pretty darling?” said Old Grumpy, gently.

“Lily! Mother calls me Lily. Where is mother? I want to go to mother.”

“That *is* a pretty name!” said the old woman. “I never heard a prettier name than that.”

“Mother brought me a posy of lilies one day,” said the child, “and she said their faces were as white as mine.”

“They couldn’t be much whiter, poor lamb,” said the old woman. And she was going to take the child on her knee, when suddenly it struck her how dirty she was beside the child. The child’s fair skin had not a speck of dirt on it and her print frock, though it was faded and patched, was clean and tidy. Her pinafore was as white as washing could make it and her soft brown hair had evidently been brushed and cared for. Such a clean pretty little thing she looked, as she sat on the stool by the fire. Old Grumpy had never known before how dirty and forlorn she was. She did not like to touch the child with those dirty hands or to take her to sit on her knee, whilst she had that dirty ragged apron on.

The room, too, seemed a dismal filthy place for such a child to live in. It had never struck Old Grumpy before that there was anything the matter with it. Now she felt the first thing to be done was to make the room more fit for the child to live in and herself more fit to nurse her and look after her.

“Where is my mother?” said the child, crying. “I want to go back to her.”

“Mother’s gone away,” said Old Grumpy, “you’re coming to live with me, my little darling. I’m your mother now.”

“Oh no, no, no,” sobbed the child, “no, no, no, I don’t want to stop here. Take me to my own mother. I want my own mother.”

The old woman tried to comfort her, but in vain. The more she talked to her, so much more the child cried and sobbed, and asked to be taken to her own, own mother.

Old Grumpy’s bright picture seemed to be fading away. Would the child never stop crying? Would she never be happy?

“What’s the matter with the bairn?” said old Joel’s voice at the bottom of the staircase. “Are you a beating of her already?”

Grumpy did not deign to answer him, but tried once more to quiet the child. She took her on her knee in spite of her dirty apron, she kissed her, she offered her a piece of sugar, she called her all kinds of loving and endearing names, and she made her numberless promises of what she would do for her and get for her if she would be a good girl and not cry any more.

But it was all of no use. Little Lily still sobbed on and still cried, “Take me to my mother, do. I want my own mother.”

At last, in despair, the old woman took her up in her arms and carried her down the court to the house where the man with the pipe had stood at the door. The man was not there now, but his wife, a little rosy-cheeked woman, was hanging some clothes out to dry on a line which went across the court.

“Well, I never!” said the woman. “Why, here’s Old Grumpy and her bairn. What’s the matter with the little ’un?”

“She doesn’t like me,” said the old woman, bursting into tears. “She does nothing but cry for her mother. Whatever shall I do with her, Mrs. McKay?”

“Poor wee lamb!” said the rosy-cheeked woman. “Let her bide here today. She’ll maybe get settled a bit. Our Georgiana Maria will mind her.”

It was a distinguishing feature of Ivy Court that nearly all the children in it had two Christian names by which two names they were always called. The fashion has been started by Mrs. Perkins, who was a much-respected person, because she lived in a front house and because she took in lodgers. Mrs. Perkins, having set the example at the christening of her first-born, Richard James, all the mothers of Ivy Court had at once begun to follow it. It had been taken up by one family after another, until it began to be looked upon almost as a disgrace for a child to be named plain Harry or Edward or Mary. But it was agreed by all the neighbors that Mrs. McKay had chosen the finest names of all. And as for Georgiana Maria, her name was considered to be unrivalled in beauty.

She was a little girl of eight years, as round and rosy as her mother, and with as bright and pleasant a face. She took the sobbing child in hand at once, dried her tears on her pinafore, took her in the kitchen, put her on a stool by the fire, and brought a picture-book for her to look at.

After a time, the sobbing ceased and the child seemed happier. "She'll be all right now," said Mrs. McKay. "Let her stop here till tomorrow and she'll settle down a bit."

"Very well," said the old woman, "but you'll be sure and let me have her then. You won't take her away from me, will you?"

"Oh, never fear," said rosy Mrs. McKay, laughing. "We've got plenty of 'em here. We don't want any more, / can tell you. If you was to see this kitchen when the children come in from school and when Timothy John and Anne Jane are awake too, dear me, you wouldn't think we was tempted to run off with any more. Why, the kitchen is as full as bees in a hive and as tight packed as herrings in a barrel, it is, I do assure you," said Mrs. McKay.

So Old Grumpy left her child and went home again. She had much to do that day and the next. She was going to make a nest fit for her little bird to live in. "Perhaps she'll be happy then," she said to herself.

The first thing the old woman did, when she got to her room, was to lock her door, to draw down the old ragged blind before her window, and to stop up the keyhole. Then she drew from under her bed a small square box. The box was locked, but Old Grumpy cautiously unfastened her dress, took out a key which was tied round her neck, and opened it. Inside there was another box, smaller still, made of cardboard and tied up with a piece of faded blue ribbon. The old woman untied the string and looked in.

There was not much inside the box, only a wedding ring, a lock of fair hair, and a small book. The ring had been her mother's and the lock of hair had been cut off by the workhouse nurse, after her mother was dead. Old Grumpy put the hair to her lips and tears came into her eyes as she looked at it. The book had been found in her mother's pocket, but the old woman had never read it. There was a school in the workhouse, but she had been a stupid child and had not learnt much.

"It was no use trying to teach her," they said. So she had been sent to a "little place" when she was quite young and no one had seemed to think it mattered much whether she could read or not.

Old Grumpy wrapped these things carefully up again and took out the only other thing in the box, a small leathern purse. In this purse she had put all her savings. Not that she had ever had much to save. She had been in many situations, but she had been the drudge in them all and had done a great deal of work for very little money. Still, though she had received little, she had spent less and by degrees and careful stinting and scraping and hoarding, she had got quite a little fortune in the old leather purse, at

least so it seemed to her that morning as she counted it.

Why she had saved it, she could not have told. It had never been of any use to her. Most of it had been locked up in that box for many years and yet, though she had often been very poor, and though sometimes she had not known where the next meal was to come from, she had never touched this little hoard. She had even felt as if she would rather starve than make it less. But for the sake of the child, some of it must be spent. It was a great wrench to part with it, but it must be done.

“Anything for that pretty bairn!” she said to herself, “anything for her!”

Chapter 6

The Mysterious Letter

Old Grumpy took some shillings out of the purse and hurried away to the shop. The woman of the shop was astonished when the old woman asked her for soap and soda, a sweeping brush, and a scrubbing brush.

“Well, I never!” she could not help saying to her husband. “Whatever can she be going to do?”

Old Grumpy hurried back to her house and began her cleaning in good earnest.

Joel, in the room below, could not imagine what was going on. Such a knocking and thumping and scraping, such a brushing and rubbing and scrubbing overhead. He thought that the old woman had at last gone quite mad and that he ought to leave word at the asylum at once.

But Old Grumpy worked on all through the day and the evening. Sunbeams, which came streaming in through her window, must have been astonished to see the change in her little room. The window was bright and clean, so that they had no difficulty in getting in. The dead flies, spiders, and cobwebs had disappeared. The ceiling was whitewashed, the walls were swept, the floor was clean, the grate was brushed with black lead, even the brass handle of the little closet by the fireside had been polished till it shone like gold.

But the sunbeams were to see more changes still when they looked into Old Grumpy’s room the next day. For that night, a paperhanger and painter, who lived in Ivy Court, came after working hours and hung the walls with a bright, cheerful paper. The old woman thought this paper would help to amuse the child, for it was covered with pictures of carriages and horses and of grand ladies and gentlemen in bright blue dresses and scarlet coats. Then the man gave a coating of paint to the door and chimney piece and closet, and the little room looked as clean and pretty as it could possibly be made to look.

Meanwhile Old Grumpy had been very busy on the landing. She had washed the chintz on the bed and her own clothes and everything in the house that could be washed. The old church clock was striking twelve when the old woman went to bed. She was more tired than she had been for many a day, but she did not mind how tired she was.

“Anything for that pretty bairn?” she said to herself, “anything for her!”

When Lily was brought home the next day, by kind little Mrs. McKay, the old woman's joy was complete, for the child did not cry, but amused herself by running round the room, counting the horses on the walls and choosing which of them she would like to ride, if she were a lady.

Only at night, when she had had her bread and milk and was sitting by the fire in a little night gown Mrs. McKay had given her, did the child begin to be sorrowful. She did not cry aloud as she had done the day before, but the tears ran quietly down her pale cheeks.

"My mammy's never coming back no more, Grum," said the child. "Mrs. McKay said so."

"Poor darling!" said the old woman, kissing her gently. "Poor little lamb!"

"Where's heaven, Grum?" said the child, presently, as she put her toes on the fender to warm them.

"Well," said the old woman, "I don't know. Some folks say it's in the stars, but I don't know. They're such little things, is the stars. Maybe it's behind the blue sky, if only we could see there."

"What's my mammy doing there, Grum?" asked the child.

"Singing," said the old woman, decidedly.

Lily sat looking into the fire watching the flames darting up the chimney, her large brown eyes wide open and her thoughts far away with her lost mother.

"What's she doing *now*, Grum?" she said, after they had been silent some minutes.

"Singing, my bairn, singing," repeated the old woman, for she thought she could not have heard her before.

"When will she stop singing?" asked the child.

"Never no more," said the old woman. "They do nothing but sing in heaven."

"How tired she will get!" said the child, wearily. "How very, very tired. Doesn't God never let them rest?"

"I don't know," said the old woman. "I don't think so."

"Will she sing all the time we're in bed?" asked the child.

"Yes, they say it's never night there," said Old Grumpy. "I've heard folks say so, lots of times, but I don't know if it's true!"

"Oh dear, she *will* be tired!" said the child.

Poor little loving heart. She had no one to tell her of the dear Lord's home of joy, the bright, beautiful land where it is never night, but where they are never tired. She had no one to tell her of the glorious country where they sing, because their hearts are so full of joy they cannot help singing, for they are in the midst of the fullness of joy and the pleasure which last for evermore.

So she let the old woman lay her in bed and wondered what heaven was like and whether her mother was happy there, till she fell asleep.

Grumpy sat for some time beside her, watching her pretty little face as lovingly and tenderly as her dead mother could have done. She was just thinking that she would get into bed herself, when she thought she heard a step on the stairs. Yes, it was certainly someone coming up to her room. Who could it be?

Then came a rap at her door and Old Grumpy opened it cautiously. To her surprise there was Mrs. Perkins waiting to be let in.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Perkins, motioning with her hand for her to be quiet. "Don't say a word and I'll tell you what I've come for."

Whereupon Mrs. Perkins unbuttoned her coat and took out from under it a small

carpet bag.

“There,” she said, mysteriously, “you keep that bag. It has got a few of her clothes in it and it’s yours by right now you’ve got her,” pointing as she spoke to the sleeping child. “How are you getting on? Dear me, what a nice clean-looking place you’ve got!” she said, looking admiringly round the room.

“We’re getting on all right,” said the old woman. “I’m as fond of her as if she was my own.”

“You couldn’t be much fonder,” said Mrs. Perkins. “Now then, just you remember about that bag. Nobody knows about it, you understand. If they was to get sight of it at the house, they would be wanting to take the child and I might get into trouble, so I never told them. You understand? Well, good-bye,” and in a moment Mrs. Perkins was gone.

Old Grumpy stooped down by the fire and in the dim light, for the fire was dying out, she unpacked the bag. It was nearly filled with little Lily’s clothes, pinafores, and nightgowns, a Sunday frock, a tidy little jacket and hood, several pairs of knitted socks and a little pair of shoes. But there was one other thing in the bag which troubled Old Grumpy not a little. She had taken out all the little clothes and was feeling with her hand at the bottom of the bag that she might be sure that she had found everything, when she discovered a pocket inside the lining at the side of the bag. She put her hand into this pocket and brought out from thence a letter. It was fastened up, directed and stamped, ready for the post. How much the old woman wished that she could read, that she might know what name was written on the envelope. To whom was the letter addressed? Mrs. Perkins had evidently not found the pocket, nor seen the letter, or she would have mentioned it to her. And now, what ought she to do about it?

Chapter 7 Anything For The Child

The more Old Grumpy looked at the letter she had found, the more troubled and perplexed she became. No doubt the letter was addressed to some relative of the dead woman and no doubt if the officer had it, he would be able to find out who she was, which Mrs. Perkins had said he had been quite unable to do. Ought she not to take it to him tomorrow when she went to the House for her bread?

But no, she could not make up her mind to do that, for would it not rob her of the child, the lovely, pretty child who was just beginning to love her? If the child’s friends were found and they came to take her away, Old Grumpy felt as if it would break her heart.

The old woman was ill at ease as she sat by her fire. At one moment, she had resolved to go with the letter to Mrs. Perkins, at the next, she was ready to throw it in the fire and so to destroy all chance of her darling being taken from her. At one moment, she was angry with herself for being so heartless and cruel as to keep the child from, possibly, a better home and better friends than she could ever have with her. At the next, she was angry with everyone and everything but herself, and was quite persuaded to do anything rather than run the risk of losing her little Lily.

This struggle in her mind went on for several hours. The church clock struck one hour after another, and she was the only one in the court who heard it, for the neighbors were fast asleep. And at length, just as it solemnly announced to the neighborhood that it was two o'clock in the morning, she made up her mind to say nothing about the letter to any one, at least for the present, but to lock it up safely in the box under the bed with the lock of fair hair, the old purse, and the wedding ring.

Then she crept into bed beside the child.

Every day that passed, her little Lily grew more dear to Old Grumpy's heart. Every day that passed made her less inclined to post the letter that might be the cause of taking the child from her.

Although Lily never forgot her own dear mother, and although she still talked much about the heaven where she was gone and wondered many times in the day what she was doing, still she was as happy as a little bird in the old woman's room. It was no longer a dark and cheerless place. The sunbeams, as they looked in, saw a happy little girl there, who was more of a sunbeam in the once dismal place than they the sunbeams were themselves.

Old Grumpy's life was now a very happy one. If it had not been for that letter in her box, she would have been quite contented, but she could not forget it and she had a kind of nameless dread of it. She would get it out sometimes when her darling was asleep, and turn it over and try to make out the letters and would wonder again and again what was inside it.

But that seemed to be the only cloud in her sky. When her little girl was talking to her, and she was listening to her pretty voice, when she was walking hand in hand with her in the fields outside the city, when she was making a chain of the daisies she had gathered in her walk, and when she was hanging them round the old woman's neck, when she was hugging her, and stroking her face, and calling her "her own dear, darling Grum," then the old woman's happiness was complete.

There was nothing she would not do for the child. She was ready to be the slave of the court, to run the neighbors' errands, to clean their houses, to mend their clothes, to mind their children, to do anything and everything by means of which she might earn a few pence to help her to keep her darling.

And the neighbors were very kind. Many a little present for the child found its way to Old Grumpy's room. Sometimes it was an old frock, carefully patched and mended. Sometimes a pinafore which had been outgrown. Sometimes it was a new little garment, bought with pence which had been carefully saved for the orphan child. Sometimes it was only a pudding or a cake or a biscuit, but whatever it was, it was given cheerfully and gladly and was thankfully received by the old woman, as adding to her darling's comfort.

As for her own small hoard in the box under the bed, it grew less and less, but each time that Old Grumpy took from it, she did so with greater pleasure and with less pain. "Anything for my pretty child," she would say each time to herself, as she unlocked the box.

Everyone in the court was fond of "Old Grumpy's bairn," as they called her. Her quaint, quiet, old-fashioned ways won all their hearts. Even old Joel would call her into his room and would make his wonderful cat go through its performances for her amusement. And when she clapped her hands with delight, he would pat her on the head and tell her to come again, for she was "as welcome as never was!" The children followed her about as if she were a newly-arrived curiosity and were always kind and

gentle to her in their play.

But Mrs. McKay's Albert Joseph was her great ally. He was a quiet, grave-looking child, very unlike his noisy brothers and sisters. When they were scampering about the house or playing at marbles in the court, he would sit on his stool before the fire, gazing at the flames and thinking.

"I never saw such a bairn as that," said his rosy-cheeked mother, "he does all the thinking for the lot of us. Me and his father is too busy for that sort of thing, and as for Georgiana Maria and the rest, they're too fond of their fun. But Albert Joseph has his thoughts. I do assure you, he has his thoughts."

But what Albert Joseph's thoughts were no one had ever been able to discover until "Old Grumpy's bairn" arrived on the scene. Between Lily and Albert Joseph there sprang up a great and firm friendship. They were never tired of being together. They would sit side by side for hours in the sunshine on one of the door steps of the court or would wander hand in hand down the street, looking in at the shop windows or would stand gazing in at the churchyard gate, watching the sparrows hopping from tree to tree, and sitting on the old smoky gravestones, near the churchyard wall.

"Grum," said Lily one day, "Albert Joseph thinks."

"What does he think?" said the old woman, stopping in the midst of her washing. "His mother says he thinks a many things. What is it now?"

"He thinks," said the child, "that my mother isn't always singing in heaven."

"Why, what does he think she does, then?" said Old Grumpy.

"He thinks she works for God," said the child, reverently, "and he thinks, maybe, she goes to see the stars and all the beautiful places God made. That's what Albert Joseph thinks! He says his Sunday school teacher told them all about heaven last Sunday. However does she know about it, Grum? Has she been there?"

"No, my lamb," said the old woman. "She couldn't go there till she died. May be she's read about it."

"But how did the books know about it!" said the child, still more puzzled. "Somebody must have been to see."

"Well, bairn, I don't know. I only know folks learns a lot in books and they seem to think it's true."

Lily lay still, watching Old Grumpy who was very busy with her washing again, scrubbing and rubbing her little darling's clothes that she might make them as white as snow.

There was a long pause and then she asked suddenly—

"Why don't I go to the Sunday school, Grum?"

"*You!*" said the old woman. "Why, you're such a little mite of a thing! You'll go when you're a big girl."

"I'm as big as Albert Joseph, anyhow," said Lily, stretching herself that she might look as tall as possible.

"Bless you, my darling," said the old woman affectionately, "do you really want to go?"

"Ever so much," said Lily, jumping up. "Oh, Grum, may I?"

"You may do anything you like, my bairn," said the old woman, as she stooped to kiss her.

Chapter 8

The Beautiful Garden

The very next Sunday afternoon, Albert Joseph and Lily started together, hand in hand, to go to the Sunday school. Old Grumpy felt very lonely when they were gone. She could not read and Sunday had always been a long day to her before Lily came to her. But on Sunday afternoons, she and Lily had gone for a walk together in the fields outside the town and it had been a happy time for Old Grumpy. She felt restless and discontented and almost wished she had not let the child go. But she had seemed so pleased about it, Old Grumpy felt she could not have disappointed her. So she sat watching the clock and counting the minutes till Lily's return.

The old woman felt quite rewarded for sparing the child when she saw her bright, happy little face as she ran into the room, eager to tell of her adventures.

"Oh, Grum, Grum," she said, "dear Old Grum, I wish you were a little girl and could come with me."

"Was it so nice, my bairn?" said the old woman.

"Yes, Grum. I'm going to tell you all about it," said the child, seating herself on a stool at the old woman's feet. And taking both her thin wrinkled old hands, she kissed them and then she put them on her little pale cheeks and made them stroke her face, again and again.

"It was about a garden, Grum, such a pretty garden, prettier than the garden of that big house near the cemetery, where you and me peeped through the gate, 'cause I asked teacher and she said it was."

"Did she?" said the old woman, smiling at the child's bright face.

"Yes, and prettier too," said Lily, "lovely, Grum! Lots of flowers and trees and grass. Oh, Grum, wouldn't you like to have walked in it? Well, there were only two people in it and it all belonged to them. They could walk about and eat the fruit and pick the flowers, not just the daisies off the grass, Grum, but the roses and all the flowers—teacher said so!"

"It was Adam and Eve, I should think," said the old woman.

"Why, Grum," said the child, "were you listening at the door? I never saw you?"

"No, but I heard it once before," said Old Grumpy, "maybe when I was a young 'un at school."

"Well, they were so happy," said Lily, "and God used to come and walk with them every evening in the garden and talk to them. Wasn't that nice, Grum? If He came here and walked in Ivy Court, I'd ask Him about my mother. He never comes now, does He, Grum?"

"No, my lamb, He never comes now."

"But He came and talked to Adam and Eve. Wasn't it nice? But something *dreadful* came next, Grum," said Lily, lowering her voice. "Oh, dear, it was *such* a pity. There was a tree in the middle of the garden and God told them not to touch it. It was the only tree they weren't to touch and they went and ate some. Wasn't it dreadful, Grum? And then God turned them out."

"Did He, my pet? Yes, I believe He did," said the old woman, trying to recall the lessons she had learnt in the workhouse school.

“Yes, He turned them out,” said Lily, sadly, “because they were bad and all their boys and girls were bad after that, and all the people in the world were bad, and we’re bad too, Grum.”

“Not so *very* bad, my bairn, not so *very* bad. Not you and me!”

“Yes, we are, Grum,” said Lily, jumping up. “Teacher said so. And God won’t have us in heaven if we’re bad like we are now. Teacher said that too. What did teacher mean, Grum?”

“I don’t know, my darling. Come and get your tea,” said the old woman, glad to change the subject.

“Grum,” said Lily, suddenly, as she was eating her bread and butter, “what’s a *skellington*?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” said the old woman, laughing. “I never heard of such a thing.”

“Cause Joel was talking about a *skellington* today,” said the child.

“Joel talks a lot of nonsense,” said Old Grumpy, scornfully. “He’s always talking some sort of rubbish to that ugly old cat of his.”

“It wasn’t the cat he was talking to,” said the child, “it was Mrs. McKay. When me and Albert Joseph was coming home they was talking together and Joel, he pointed at me, Grum, and he said I was as thin as a *skellington*.”

“Joel had better mind his own business,” said the old woman, sharply. “Don’t you go and listen to what Joel says. *He* doesn’t know, a silly old fellow like him! A skeleton indeed! What nonsense.”

Nevertheless, she looked at the child very anxiously, more anxiously and carefully than she had ever done before. Yes, she was thin, very, very thin. The old woman was forced to acknowledge this, in spite of herself.

“But you always *were* thin, you know,” she said, as she took the child on her knee, “always a little thing, you were! And it’s a deal prettier too to be thin than to be a great fat thing like them little Perkinses, with arms and legs like roly-poly puddings, and I’ve heard folks say that it’s a deal healthier too. So Joel may say what he likes. You and me don’t care about him, do we, my beauty?”

Thus the old woman tried to lull her fears to rest. But when Lily was in bed and the candle was put out, she sat beside her, watching her very anxiously by the flickering light of the fire.

There was a clock in the room—an old-fashioned wooden timepiece which stood on the mantelshelf and which Old Grumpy had bought, for a very small sum, at an auction in Ivy Court. She and Lily had gone to the sale together and Lily had much admired this clock, for it had a grand wreath of flowers round the face, so the old woman had bought it to please the child. It kept very bad time and was always a few hours too slow, but that did not matter to Old Grumpy, for the church clock was so near that it could be heard by night and both heard and seen by day. The clock on the mantelshelf was a pretty ornament and her child liked it and the ticking which it made was a very soothing sound when they were in bed at night.

But this Sunday evening, the clock on the mantelshelf seemed to speak. As the pendulum swung backwards and forwards, it seemed to be repeating over and over again the child’s words.

“A skel—ling—ton, a skel—ing—ton. He said—I was—a skel—ling—ton!”

And so it went on, the same words repeated so often that Old Grumpy’s head ached with the sound.

She felt angry and impatient. Why was not her little girl as strong and healthy-looking as the McKays or Perkinses? Why did not God Almighty make her so? They had plenty of children. She had only this one.

Old Grumpy felt angry with God. She knew very little about Him, but she knew that health and strength are His gifts. Why then did He not give them to her darling? She felt angry, too, with herself, that she had not noticed before how thin and delicate her child was, that she had not watched her more carefully, and that she had not kept her indoors when the wind was cold and fed her with more strengthening things, but most of all, she felt angry with old Joel. He had never liked her, never been friendly to her. She and Joel had always “had words” together and no doubt he was glad her child was like a skeleton. He was an ill-natured, cross, disagreeable old man, was old Joel.

Such were Old Grumpy’s thoughts, when they were disturbed by the sound of a man’s step on the staircase. Who could it be? She opened her door cautiously and she saw, standing before it, the very last person she expected to see. It was old Joel himself.

It was the very first time he had come to Old Grumpy’s room and she was not at all prepared to give him a welcome. She felt very much inclined to shut the door in his face, without waiting to hear what he had to say. But perhaps it would be a good opportunity to tell him to mind his own business and not to chatter and gossip about her child again.

Chapter 9 Grum Does Not Care

“Well,” said Old Grumpy, gruffly, “what do you want?”

“Is she asleep?” said Joel, peering into the room and taking no notice of the cold reception he met with.

“What business is that of yours?” said the old woman, angrily.

“Now then,” said Joel, “don’t be so stingy, old woman. You and me never *has* hit it, I *know* that, but we’ll let bygones be bygones, as folks says. Now look ye here. I like that little lass *uncommon*—I do, indeed.”

“You’re not the only one that does that,” said Grumpy, still unmoved.

“Never said I was,” answered Joel, “but look ye here what I’ve brought her! Just you put it by her pillow that she may find it when she wakes up in the morning. It’s the New Year, tomorrow is, and it’s a New Year’s present from me to the little lass.”

So saying, Joel thrust a parcel into Old Grumpy’s hands, wished her goodnight, and went quickly down the stairs.

The parcel was tied up in a very much crumpled and soiled piece of newspaper and a piece of thick string was knotted tightly around it. On it was written, “For Lily, with old Joel’s love.”

She had wronged him then. He was fond of her child and he had been sorry to see her so thin. Old Grumpy felt ashamed of herself and of her hard thoughts of Joel, as she looked at the parcel. She did not open it, for, much as she longed to see what was inside, she felt she must wait until the morning, that Lily might be the first to open it. So she laid the parcel by the child’s pillow and waited as patiently as she could for New

Year's Day.

That was a very long night. At least it seemed so to Old Grumpy. The church clock seemed slower in his movements than ever and when he solemnly proclaimed twelve o'clock and announced to Ivy Court and to all the neighborhood that a New Year had begun, his voice sounded very terrible to Old Grumpy. For the clock on the mantelshelf was still ticking the same words—

“He said—I was—a skel—ling—ton.”

What would the New Year bring to herself and to her child? Could it be that it would see her once more left with nobody to love her? Old Grumpy slept very little that night and was truly glad when the morning came and the child awoke. Of course she caught sight of her parcel at once and of course she wanted to know what was in it, and of course the old woman at once jumped out of bed and brought the biggest knife in the house to cut the string.

Inside the parcel was a little frock, made of soft warm plaid, which Joel had bought for the little girl and which Mrs. McKay had made for her. It was so warm and so pretty and fitted her so well that Old Grumpy's eyes filled with tears as she dressed her in it. For it was Joel's present, the present of “the ill-natured, cross, disagreeable old man,” as she had called him only the night before. She took hold of Lily's hand and went downstairs.

“Joel,” she said, “I'm right 'shamed of myself. It's a real beauty, that's what it is!”

“She's as welcome as never was,” said the old man. “Bless her! She *does* look a little lady now! Will she give old Joel a kiss for it?”

The child ran forward and jumped on his knee and throwing her arms round the old man's neck, she kissed him again and again and he felt well repaid for the self-denial it had cost him to save the money for his New Year's present.

The little frock was warmly lined and was made high in the neck and with long sleeves. Joel had particularly requested Mrs. McKay to make it thus.

“No cold winds will get to you now, little lass,” he said, as he wished her a happy New Year. “You'll get as fat as never was!”

But though Joel's frock kept Lily so warm and snug, and though Grumpy watched her child more carefully than ever before, and though she went again and again to her little hoard of money to buy all kinds of tempting things for her to eat, still, somehow or other, the child did not grow either fat or rosy.

And when the winter passed away and the warm spring days came, she grew very tired. The fields outside the town, where the children gathered daisies, seemed to be too far away for her now. She went once to them, but when she came home she was too tired even to make her daisies into a chain, and Old Grumpy would not let her try to go again. She would sit still for hours with Albert Joseph on the doorstep or on a stool by the fire, but she liked best to get on the old woman's knee and show her the pictures in the magazines and books which the little McKays got at the Sunday school

“She was not ill, not at all ill,” Old Grumpy often said to herself, as she answered her own fears. “Only a little white and thin and not very strong, but spring weather was very tiring to everyone and she would be all right again in a few weeks.”

Lily still went to the Sunday school. Indeed, it was her great treat to which she looked forward all the week. Albert Joseph came for her and they set out hand in hand. Then when they came home, they would tell all they had heard to the old woman.

One Sunday afternoon, Lily came in with so much color in her pale face that the old woman thought she had never seen her looking so well, but it was only a flush of

pleasure and did not last long.

“Grum,” she said, “dear Grum, they’ve been singing about me at school!”

“About you, my pretty bird,” said the old woman, “what does she mean, Albert Joseph?”

“She means the hymn,” said the little boy, “it was about a lily.”

“Yes, and we learnt the first verses,” said the child. “Would you like to hear it, Grum?”

“I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

In Israel’s sacred meadows
There bloomed the lily bright,
It toiled not, yet God clothed it
In robe of spotless white.

Oh! wash me, Lord, I pray Thee,
That so my heart may grow
As pure as is the lily,
And whiter than the snow.

Pour down upon me, daily,
Thy Holy Spirit’s dew,
To cleanse me and to strengthen,
And give me life anew.

“Isn’t it beautiful, Grum?” said Lily with a sigh when she had finished, “and the teacher said—Tell Grum what teacher said, Albert Joseph.”

“Teacher said that was the way to get to heaven. Did you ever tell Grum about Adam and Eve, Lily?”

“Yes, she told me,” said the old woman, “that was her first Sunday.”

“They were bad, you know,” Albert Joseph went on, “and all their children were bad and we’re bad too.”

“Grum doesn’t think we are,” said Lily.

“Teacher said so,” said Albert Joseph, “but she told us such a beautiful story. Tell her, Lily.”

“It wasn’t about a garden this time, Grum,” she said, “it was about a hill, like the hills outside the town.”

“And on the hill there was a cross,” said Albert Joseph, “and the Lord Jesus hung on it.”

“Ay, I’ve seen a picture of that in a shop window,” said Grumpy.

“He loved us so much,” said Lily, “that He died instead of us—*instead of us!* Think of *that*, Grum!”

“Did He, my dear?” said the old woman, smoothing out her darling’s dress and evidently not thinking of what she was saying.

“Isn’t it wonderful, Grum?” asked the child.

“Isn’t *what* wonderful, my bairn? You’ve got a wonderful bright color in your cheeks. I’d like Joel to see you now! I’ll give him a call. Maybe he’ll come up and have a look at you and see if you ain’t getting a rosy girl. We’ll have to call you Rosy instead of Lily.”

“Grum doesn’t care about it,” said Albert Joseph, when she left the room.

“Yes, she does,” said Lily, “she didn’t hear, I think.”

Chapter 10 Old Joel’s Letter

You *do* care, don’t you, Grum dear?” said Lily, when Joel had gone downstairs again.

“Care, what for?” asked the old woman, “for *you*, my darling?”

“No, for that beautiful story,” said the child. “Don’t you see, Grum, we *can* go to heaven, though we *are* so bad, because Jesus has been punished instead of us.”

“Teacher told us about a man,” said Albert Joseph.

“Yes, a bad man,” said Lily, “who was going to be put in prison. He had to pay ever so much money or else go to prison.”

“And he hadn’t any money,” said Albert Joseph, “not a farthing!”

“And then a gentleman went and paid instead of him,” said Lily, “such a kind gentleman. And teacher asked us if the man would have to pay too!”

“And we all said, ‘No,’” said Albert Joseph, “and then teacher told us it was like Jesus and us. Jesus had been punished and paid for us and we could go free.”

“Isn’t it wonderful, Grum?” said Lily again.

“Yes, I s’pose it is,” said the old woman, but she asked no more questions and began to be very busy, getting out the tea things and preparing for tea.

Lily watched her for some time and then she asked suddenly, “Grum, what else do you think teacher said? She said if the man would have nothing to do with the gentleman or his money, why then he’d have to pay himself!”

“Yes,” said Albert Joseph, “he’d have to go to prison, because he couldn’t pay. He hadn’t any money. And that’s why she taught us that verse and wanted us to say it to God.”

“And teacher said if we ask Him, He will make our souls white like the lily,” said the little girl.

“Yes, and take all the bad in us away,” said Albert Joseph, “so me and Lily are going to ask Him, Grum.”

The two children knelt down, hand in hand, in a corner of the room and repeated together the prayer with which the hymn ended—

“Oh! wash me, Lord, I pray Thee,
That so my soul may grow
As pure as is the lily,
And whiter than the snow.

“Pour down upon me, daily,
Thy Holy Spirit’s dew.
To cleanse me and to strengthen,
And give me life anew.”

“Come and say it too, Grum,” said Lily, pulling her by the apron to the place where

they had been kneeling.

The old woman could not refuse the child. It was the first time she had knelt to pray for many, many years, but though she repeated the words after her darling, she was not praying. She was thinking of her and not of the loving Lord, who was standing, waiting to bless her. The third link must be added to the chain before Old Grumpy would care for His love.

And the third link was coming very quickly. For her Lily, her lovely cherished flower, was fading fast.

Everyone knew it except the old woman, who loved her so much and who watched her so tenderly.

Mrs. McKay knew it and she wiped her blue eyes many times in the day, as she thought how soon her Albert Joseph's little companion would be gone. Mr. McKay knew it and he took his pipe out of his mouth and looked after her each time she passed down the court. Mrs. Perkins knew it and she would tell her lodgers over and over again how *she* had said when the mother was dying that she and the child would not be parted long. All the neighbors in Ivy Court knew it and the little presents that found their way to Old Grumpy's room were more numerous than ever. Old Joel knew it and he would carry the child up the stairs in his arms when she came in that she might not be tired and a tear often fell on her little arms as he did so. Even the children in the court knew it and would stroke her face or kiss her cheek or bring her flowers as she passed by.

But Old Grumpy would not believe it. She shut her eyes to it and refused to allow it was true. Yet day by day the child grew thinner and more languid. Day by day the cough, which had at first come so seldom, increased and grew worse. Day by day Lily grew weaker and more weary.

One by one, all her little ways were changed. She no longer sat on the doorstep or played in the court. She no longer looked in at the shop windows with Albert Joseph or stood at the churchyard gate watching the sparrows. And at last, the day came when Joel carried her upstairs for the last time.

But Old Grumpy did not know it. She would be better in a few weeks, she said. But the weeks on earth were getting very few for little Lily. She was going to the land which is very far off. The land where her mother had gone before.

"It's a pity this is such a cold place," said old Joel one day, "such cold east winds we get here and it's so damp too. If she could only go for a bit to a warmer country, maybe she'd get over it. I *have* heard of folks getting better when they went away."

All at once there flashed into the old woman's mind the remembrance of the letter in the box. Perhaps there was someone belonging to the child who lived in a warmer country and who would take her for a time and then bring her home again, well and strong. Would she ever come back? That was the question. Was it not more likely that once having found her, they would keep her altogether? There was a fierce struggle in the old woman's mind. But true love for the child won the victory over selfish love for her.

"Anything for her," she said, "anything for the pretty bairn! If the letter is to any one in a warmer country, it shall go, if it breaks Old Grumpy's heart to send it!"

She took it from her box and hiding it under her apron, she took it to Joel.

"Joel, man, you can read," she said, "have a look at this!" and she told him where she had found it and why she had hidden it so long.

Joel put on his spectacles and read the address—"Mrs. Havercroft, Elm Cottage, Near Bideford, Devonshire."

"It's a fine warm country that is," said old Joel, "one of my mates came from there. I

know all about it!"

Grumpy was almost sorry to hear this. Now she must find out more.

"Open it, Joel, and see who it's to," she said, "we shall need to know that."

So Joel opened the letter and read—

My Dearest Mother—Lily and I are on our way to you and hope to be with you in two days' time. I am very ill indeed and am coming home to die. Since John was taken, I've had a hard time. I took in washing and went out to work. That is why I never wrote all these months. I couldn't bear to tell you. I was afraid you would fret. Mother, I have learnt to love Jesus and He has forgiven my sins and I shall soon go to be with Him. I know you will look after my darling when I am gone. Hoping soon to see you,

Your loving daughter, Emily Turner.

P.S.—We left our home and went to Northampton, so I never got any letters from home for a long time.

"It's to Lily's grandmother," said Old Grumpy. "Now, Joel, you must write me a letter to go with it."

So Joel, with much trouble and with many mistakes in spelling, wrote as follows—

Dear Madam—I hope this finds you well, as it leaves me at present. Your daughter died in this city near two years ago and an old lady took the child, and a blessed child she is and as welcome, when she comes to see me, as never was! And Old Grumpy (meaning the old lady) makes a idol of her and loves her like her own. But she (meaning the child) is ill and thin. And she (meaning the old lady) is willing to spare her to you, if you can fetch her to Devonshire, which folks say is a warm country.

But if you will let her come back again, as soon as restored to health—for reason of *this*, that we can't get on without her—you will forever oblige all parties concerned.

From your sincere friend and well-wisher, Joel Smith.

Address—Mr. J Smith, Ivy Court, Cathcart Street, Ledminster.

This curious letter gave great satisfaction to Old Grumpy, to old Joel himself, and to Mrs. McKay, who alone was admitted into their secret. The old woman posted it herself. She felt as if her heart would break as she saw the letter fall into the box, for surely soon someone would be coming for the child.

She little thought who was coming, nor how soon!

Chapter 11 The Third Link

Several days went by and no answer had come to old Joel's letter. And each day Lily grew weaker. The doctor whom Joel had fetched to see the child, said that he could do nothing for her. They were to give her anything that she could take and keep her as quiet as possible.

Lily was very happy. Everyone was so good to her, she said. Albert Joseph came the moment that school was over and spent all his playtime with her. Mrs. McKay came in and out all day long and helped Old Grumpy to make the child's bed and to get her all she wanted. The neighbors were constantly asking after their little favorite and sending

her tempting dishes, which they thought she might fancy. And poor old Joel deserted his cat and sat beside her for hours together.

The child did not talk much now. It tired her so much, she said. Only she would often raise herself to put her arms round the old woman's neck and to kiss her and sometimes she would say—

“Grum, dear Grum, you *do* care, don't you?”

And the old woman would answer, struggling to keep back her tears, “Yes, my bairn, I do care for *you*, very, very much.”

“But you must care for Jesus too, Grum,” the child would say, “that's what I mean, for Jesus dying instead of us. Don't you remember, dear Grum?”

And then she would be tired and lie down again. They often thought she was asleep and would move about quietly and speak in whispers and then she would open her eyes and smile at them and would say, “I'm not asleep, Grum. I was thinking about my hymn,

“Oh! was me, Lord, I pray Thee,
That so my soul may grow
As pure as is the lily,
And whiter than the snow.”

“That *is* a pretty hymn!” said Joel, one afternoon as he was sitting beside her.

“Everyone in heaven is white like the lily!” said the child. “Teacher said so, but she said we must be made white *here* first.”

“I'm sure you're white enough, my pretty little lass!” said the old man.

“Only my face is white, not my soul. Not till Jesus washed me. But I've asked Him. And teacher said He would.”

Then she was tired and fell fast asleep. She slept so long and so soundly that they grew quite hopeful. Surely it was a good sign and she would awake refreshed and better. A step came on the staircase several times when she was sleeping and each time Old Grumpy thought it was someone from Devonshire who had come for the child. Each time she crept to the door on tiptoe and opened it very quietly and looked out, expecting to see a strange face. But it was only one of the neighbors who had come to ask how she was or one of the little McKays, creeping softly upstairs that he might listen at the door and tell his mother when Lily awoke.

Then another step came, but a step so noiseless that the old woman and Joel did not hear it.

Only the child heard it and she looked up and smiled and then went at once and gladly, with the One who had come for her.

“I will come and will receive you unto Myself,” said the Lord. And stronger, more loving arms than old Joel's carried the tired child up to the home of rest.

The old woman did not know that she was gone and when Joel told her, for a long time she would not believe it. “She was only sleeping. She would be waking soon,” she said. But when Mrs. McKay came and convinced her that Joel was right, the old woman sat down on a stool by the fire and rocked herself backwards and forwards in the agony of her grief. She did not speak or take any notice of those around her. She only rocked herself and moaned.

The neighbors came in to look at the little body of the child they had loved so much, but she never spoke to them, nor turned round when they came in. At last, Albert Joseph came and brought lovely white lilies-of-the-valley, which he had bought in the market to put round her little head and to lay in her little bosom.

“As pure as is the lily,

And whiter than the snow,”

he whispered to his mother, as he did so. And then he went up to the old woman and put his hand on her arm, but she never gave any sign of seeing him or of knowing that he was there. Old Joel made many efforts to rouse her, but they were all in vain.

So she sat the whole of those three sorrowful days in the darkened room, with the child beside her. She ate what they gave her, but she did not seem to know what she was going and looked strangely at them all the time.

Then they took all that was left of her darling away and still Old Grumpy did not move, nor cease rocking herself backwards and forwards. It was not until all this was over and the neighbors had gone home and the little room was empty and desolate again, that Old Grumpy spoke and then it was only to break out with her old terrible wail, in a voice so heartrending that Joel in the room below stopped his ears that he might not hear it. “Nobody loves me, nobody does! Nobody loves me, nobody does!”

“She’s gone quite mad again,” said the neighbors. “Poor old soul! Can nobody do anything to bring her to herself again?”

But though they stood talking of it by the pump for hours together, no one could think of any plan for comforting the old woman.

“Nobody loves me, nobody does!” the old woman moaned on, all through the night. “My cat loved me and I lost her. My darling loved me and I’ve lost her too. Nobody loves me, nobody does!”

The last links were being added quickly to the chain now. The living, loving Lord, who had stood so long outside her closed door, had His hand on the latch now. He was leading her on, by this dark and sorrowful way, to Himself and to His love.

There was great excitement in Ivy Court about two days after the child’s funeral. It was caused by the arrival of a respectably-dressed middle-aged woman, who was a stranger in the town she said, and who wanted Mr. Joel Smith. It was the child’s grandmother. She had come at last, but she was too late to see her little grandchild. Mrs. McKay took her into the house and with many tears, the little blue-eyed woman told her the sorrowful story. She told her of her daughter’s death—of the way in which the old woman came to have charge of the child—of her great love for her—of the way in which she had toiled for her and denied herself that she might keep her—of her terrible grief now that the child was dead.

“She’s almost crazed,” said Mrs. McKay, “she does nothing but rock herself and say over and over, ‘Nobody loves me, nobody does!’ You’ll maybe wonder we let her have the poor bairn, but she wasn’t crazed while she was here, not a bit, I *do* assure *you*!”

“God knows I’m only too grateful to her for being so good to my Emily’s child,” said the poor grandmother, wiping her eyes. “But why did I not get this letter before?” she asked, taking her daughter’s letter from her pocket and pointing to the date. “I thought Emily had forgotten me. I wrote to her again and again and got no answer.”

“Well, mum,” said Joel, who had come in while they were speaking, “I’ll tell you how it was you didn’t get it. That old body, they’re speaking of—she that has had care of that blessed child—*she* found this letter. But she didn’t find it afore she had got to love the child. And she felt it would break her heart to lose her and not being a scholar, you see she couldn’t read it and she didn’t know who it was for. So, you see, she hid it away and kept it as close as never was and none of us never got a sight of it! So that’s just about where it is,” said old Joel, “and I’m not going to say it was right of Old Grumpy, quite the contrary! But the love for the child was what drove her to it, and I’ll take it as a great favor and as kind as never was, if you won’t go for to mention it to her under present

circumstances.”

“No, indeed, I won’t say a word,” said the poor grandmother. “I’ll only thank her for being so good to her. I should have come before, but the bad news about my Emily shocked me so and it’s a long journey. But I’ll go and see Mrs.—*What* is her name? I never heard her proper name, I think.”

“*What is* her name, Mrs. McKay?” said Joel, turning to her.

“Deed, and I don’t know,” said Mrs. McKay. “I *do* assure *you* I don’t know! You see it’s this way, the children in the court, long whiles ago, gave her the name of ‘Old Grumpy’ and we’ve all stuck to it—not that she’s grumpy a bit now, poor old body, not at all! But if you be so kind as to call her Grum, ma’am, she’ll be best pleased. That’s what the child called her! It was always ‘Grum, dear Grum.’ Can’t you hear her sweet voice, Joel?”

“Ay,” said Joel, with a sob and wiping his eyes with his coat sleeve, as he left the house to show Mrs. Havercroft the way to Old Grumpy’s room. “She was a blessed child yon was and as welcome as never was!”

Chapter 12

The Chain Completed

Old Grumpy was sitting in her desolate room, rocking herself backwards and forwards and uttering the same pitiful moan.

“Nobody loves me, nobody does! Nobody loves me, nobody does!”

She heard footsteps coming up the stairs, but she took no notice of them. It was, she thought, only Mrs. McKay coming to bring her a cup of tea.

She heard a knock at the door, but still she did not move. It was only Mrs. Perkins or some of the neighbors coming to talk to her, she said to herself, and she did not want to talk to any of them. None of them knew what her darling had been to her, nor how utterly wretched she was without her. Then the door opened and the footsteps crossed her floor and still she would not look round, but, burying her face in her hands, she rocked herself again with the same sad wail.

“Nobody loves me, nobody does! Nobody loves me, nobody does!”

Then she felt a hand laid on her shoulder and she heard a voice close to her ear.

“Thee mustn’t say that,” said the voice, “thee must never say that again, it isn’t true.”

What was it in the voice that reminded her of her little girl? Old Grumpy started and turned round. It was not a child’s face that she saw, but the face of a middle-aged woman, whose hair was streaked with grey and whose eyes were full of tears. And yet there was something in the face, too, which reminded her of her darling.

“Are you her grandmother?” she said.

“Yes,” said her visitor, “I am Lily’s grandmother and I have come to thank thee for all thee hast done for her. I want to tell thee how grateful I am to thee and how I pray God to bless thee for it.”

Old Grumpy gave up rocking herself and let Mrs. Havercroft take her hand and hold it lovingly between her own.

"We have both had trouble," Lily's grandmother began, as her tears fell on the old woman's hand.

"Trouble—trouble—trouble," Old Grumpy interrupted her, drawing away her hand and beginning to rock herself again—"trouble—trouble—trouble—the world is full of trouble. I've never had nothing but trouble! I've lost them all—all I ever cared for. Nobody loves me, nobody does! Nobody loves me, nobody does!"

"Thee mustn't say that," said Mrs. Havercroft, in a very firm and decided voice, "stop, dear Grum, stop! It isn't true and thee must never tell a lie."

"It *is* true," said the old woman, almost fiercely, "nobody loves me, nobody does!"

"Hush! dear," said Lily's grandmother, in a soothing voice as if she were talking to a child—"Hush! dear—quiet! Will thee listen for a minute, Grum? Lily would like thee to listen, wouldn't she? Lily would say, 'Grum, dear Grum, stop a minute—*please* stop a minute and listen to my grannie!'"

The voice reminded her so much of the child's that it quieted her at once—she did not speak or move again, but clasping Mrs. Havercroft's hands tightly within her own, she waited to hear what she had to say.

"I want thee *never* to say again, 'Nobody loves me,' Grum. Because, dear Grum, it's a lie. It isn't true. I know somebody who loves thee far better than our darling did. He does, indeed, and she would tell thee so, if she were here. The dear Lord loves thee, Grum. He came all the way from heaven because He loved thee and He died for thee on the cross. Think of that, Grum!"

Then the old woman spoke, "Ay," she said, "that's just what she said when she lay a-dying, 'Grum, dear Grum, you *do* care, don't you?' she said, 'for Jesus dying instead of us?'"

"Did she say *that*?" said her grandmother, wiping her eyes again. "Dear Grum, won't thee believe that He loves thee?"

"Does He really love me?" repeated the old woman, slowly.

"Yes, He really does," said Lily's grandmother, "and He wants thee to love Him. Ever since thee wast a little child, He has been waiting for thee to love Him and He is waiting still."

"How do you know He loves me?" said the old woman. "Who told you?"

"He told me Himself, Grum," said Mrs. Havercroft.

"Told you Himself—how?"

"In the Bible, Grum—it's a letter from Him, thee knows."

"And it's really true?" said the old woman, looking her well in the face.

"Oh! Grum, if I could only make thee know *how* true it is!" said Lily's grandmother, with fresh tears in her eyes.

"And He died instead of me," repeated the old woman, "my darling said so."

"Yes, instead of thee, Grum. Thee couldst never have gone to heaven, never have gone to the lovely land where our little girl is now, not with thy sins, Grum."

"Ay, that's what she said again," said the old woman. "'Adam and Eve was bad and all their children was bad and you and me is bad too, Grum' she said, 'and God won't have us in heaven like we are now, Grum.'"

"No, God would have had to shut us out, thee and me too, Grum," said Mrs. Havercroft. "Ay! And the child too, because He is holy and He couldn't have aught that's sinful in there and He would have been forced to punish us instead. But then He, the Lord Himself, thee knows, Grum, was punished in our place and now, if we ask Him to be our Saviour, then we can go in, thee and me, Grum, through the gates into the City."

“She used to say a bonny little prayer,” said the old woman, “and she made me say it too. She said it scores of times, over and over again—

“Oh! wash me, Lord, I pray Thee,
That so my soul may grow
As pure as is the lily,
And whiter than the snow.

“Pour down upon me, daily,
Thy Holy Spirit’s dew,
To cleanse me and to strengthen,
And give me life anew.’

“It was almost the last words she said,”

“Let us say it now, dear Grum, thee and me,” said Lily’s grandmother. “The dear loving Lord is in the room now, Grum, think of that!”

“Here in *my* room?” repeated the old woman, doubtfully.

“Ay! That He is, waiting for thee to come to Him, Grum. He sees thee, though thee don’t see Him. Let us go and tell Him thee wants to love Him.”

So the two knelt down together in the once dark and desolate room. But it was not dark now, for the Sun of Righteousness Himself was there, shining into Old Grumpy’s soul. And it was not desolate for His unchanging, unfailing, unending love was filling her poor, sorrowful old heart.

“Dear Lord,” said Lily’s grandmother, “Grum thanks Thee very much for dying instead of her. She thanks Thee for Thy love and for waiting so patiently for her. Dear Lord, save her now. Shine in her heart now. Make her happy in Thy love now and don’t let her ever say again that nobody loves her. Lord, we know Thou lovest her. Help her to love Thee back again, for Thy Holy Name’s sake. Amen.”

And then Old Grumpy added, in a trembling voice—

“Oh! wash me, Lord, I pray Thee,
That so my soul may grow
As pure as is the lily,
And whiter than the snow.

“Pour down upon me, daily,
Thy Holy Spirit’s dew,
To cleanse me and to strengthen,
And give me life anew.”

Chapter 13

Everybody Loves Me

The great church clock was striking eight in the same solemn and deliberate way in which it had struck that morning, now so long ago, when Old Grumpy was lighting her

fire and the lost kitten was mewing at her door.

The great church clock was striking eight and Old Grumpy counted the strokes as she sat in her chair by the fire, just as she had done that other morning, so many months before.

“One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight!” counted the old woman. And the voice of the clock set her thinking.

She would not hear its voice many times more, for this was the last day she would spend in her old room, that room in which she had spent so many years and which she had thought it would break her heart to leave.

How much had happened in that little room. Old Grumpy could not leave it without a pang. There was the smart paper on the wall, with the ladies and gentlemen going to the hunt, which had amused her little girl so much and so often. There was the stool on which she had sat and the window-seat into which she had climbed and the shelf on which she had kept her pretty little cup and saucer, Mrs. McKay’s present to her at the fair. Then there was the clock on the mantelshelf, still ticking away, as it had done on the last night in the year, and saying over the same words in Old Grumpy’s ears—

“He said—I was—a skel—ling—ton.”

She was going to leave all these well-known things behind and Mrs. McKay was to get them sold for her at some auction after she was gone. She could not leave them without tears and she would take the remembrance of them with her wherever she went. She would often picture to herself that little room, with the sunbeams shining in at the window, lighting up the pictures on the wall, the faded chintz and her little girl’s pretty hair, as she sat on the stool at her feet.

This was her last day in her old home and she wanted to think it all over before she went away. All the old cheerless days she had spent there came back to her mind, when she had been even proud of saying that she loved nobody and nobody loved her. How wretched she had been then and how foolish! She saw it all not.

And then she remembered the day when she had first begun to love. The day on which that poor kitten had come to her door. She remembered how strange it had seemed to her to have anything to care for and how still stranger it had seemed to have anything to care for her. And then the cat had been lost and she was left unloved again.

But after that her darling had come. Old Grumpy covered her face with her hands as she thought of this and of the happy time that had followed. And then God had taken her and once more she was left alone and, as she thought, unloved.

But now the Lord Himself had come, the living, loving Lord, and had lighted up her dark heart with the sunshine of His love. How wonderful it was! It seemed to the old woman too good to be true!

And *this* love would *never* leave her. Lily’s grandmother had read a verse to her the night before about that love. She could not remember the words, but she remembered the meaning very well. It said that nothing could separate her from the love of Christ, not life, nor death, nor anything at all. And Old Grumpy loved Him with all her heart. She could not help it now. Had He not died instead of her? Had He not been punished that she might go free? Had He not hung on the terrible cross that she might go through the Golden Gates into the City where the dear child had gone before her?

And now what could she do to show her love to Him? That was the question. That was the one great thought in the old woman’s heart. He had done so much to prove his love for her, how could she prove hers in return?

Thank God, He was going to give her a good opportunity for doing so. She was going

back with her little girl's grandmother to her home in Devonshire, that warm country where she had so longed to send her fading Lily. And Mrs. Havercroft had told her that there would be plenty for her to do there for the Lord and for the Lord's people.

Lily's grandmother was a Bible-woman and worked hard amongst the poor mothers in the area in which she lived, trying in every way she could to lead them to the Savior and to help them to keep straight on the way to heaven. She lived alone, for her husband had been dead many years and all her children were married and she had asked the old woman to go back with her and to spend the rest of her days in her little home.

"Thee wilt go from Ivy Court to Ivy Cottage," she had said, "so it won't seem strange to thee. Only we've got some real ivy there, covering us up to the chimney and sweet fresh air blowing all around us. It will do thee good, dear Grum. And thee wilt keep my house and have all cozy and snug for me when I come in tired from my work and thee wilt help me to look after the sick folks and the poor tired mothers and the dear little children who've got no mother to look after them. Thee wilt love them and help them, Grum, for our little girl's sake and for the Lord's sake. Won't thee, Grum?"

And the old woman had answered with her eyes full of tears—"God and you are both too good to me, Mrs. Havercroft!"

No one in Ivy Court had taken any notice of Old Grumpy the day she had first come to live there. No one had asked who she was or where she came from or why she came there. But it was very different on the day she went away.

Although it was very early in the morning when the old woman started, everyone was up to see her off and to give her a kind word at parting. Everyone in the court knew her now and they knew where she was going and why she was going and they all wished her a happy journey and a comfortable home at the end of it.

Even the children wanted a kiss of Old Grum before she went away. Indeed, they had all so much to say and so many wanted to shake hands with her that it is more than likely that she would have missed her train had not Mrs. Havercroft, who had been lodging for the last few days with Mrs. Perkins, come into the court and hurried her away to the cab which was waiting outside.

But even that was not the last which Old Grumpy saw of the inhabitants of Ivy Court, for old Joel, Mrs. McKay, and Albert Joseph ran to the station and were on the platform to say good-bye again and to wave their pocket-handkerchiefs to her till she was out of sight.

"Why, *everybody* seems to love me now!" Old Grumpy said, with tears in her eyes, as the train moved away.

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