

THE

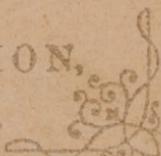
LITTLE WAIF

IN THE LIGHT-HOUSE.



SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

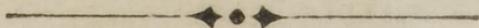
200 MULBERRY-STREET, N. Y.



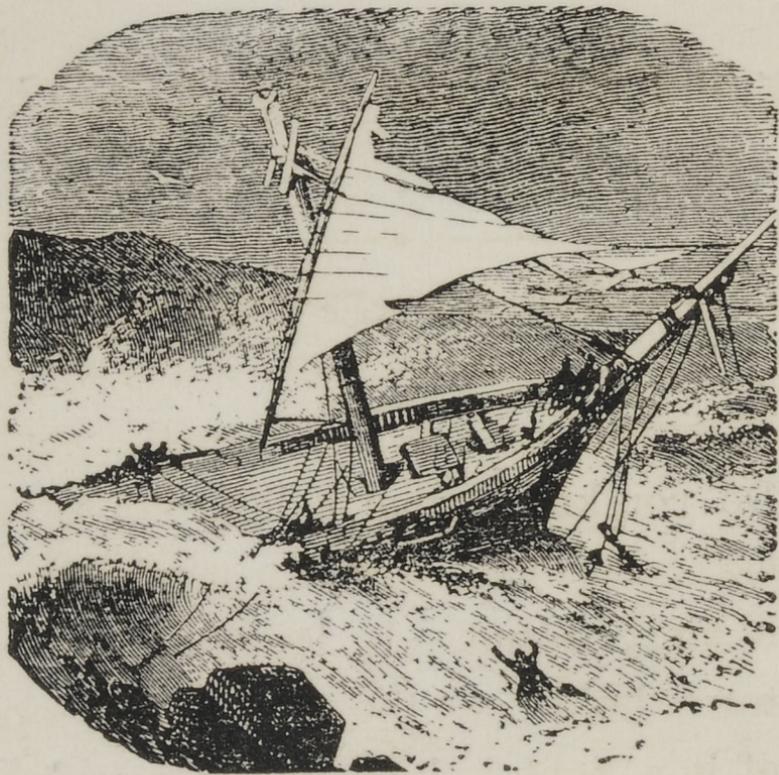


THE
LITTLE WAIF

IN THE LIGHT-HOUSE.



UNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
200 MULBERRY-STREET, NEW YORK.



LITTLE WAIF.



THE light-house stood on a strip of land that ran out into the sea. Do you know what a light-house is for? Did you ever see one? No, it may be not. It is a tall stone tower built near the sea. In the top of it a light is kept, which may be seen afar off. In the dark night,

when the storm is out on the sea, and there is no light to show the land, the great ships that sail on the sea might be cast on shore and broken to pieces. But when they see this light they know where they are, and so they try to keep off the shore.

Many ships had been saved by the lights that were kept in this light-house built on the long strip that ran out into the sea. Sand-bars lay all along the shore on both sides.

It was a bad place for ships to come near, and if no light had been there many a ship would have gone to pieces on the sand-banks.

An old man and his wife lived in the light-house, and kept the light with great care. By day they would put in new wick and fill it with oil, and all the long night when the clock struck the hours they would take turns and go up the steep iron steps to trim the lamp and keep its light from going out. Here they had

lived a long time. Two or three little huts on the shore near by were all the houses that were any where in sight. It was a lone place, but the old folks loved their work, and so they lived here quite content.

There was no child in the house. Long, long years ago they had laid away in the cold ground the dead body of their only child, a noble boy, and since that they had lived alone. No, not ever since that. About six years before my story begins there

was a great storm in that part of the sea, and a fine ship went to pieces. Many dead bodies came ashore, but of all that sailed in that noble ship only one was left alive, and that one was a little child not more than two or three years old.

She was found in the arms of a dead woman, who was tied to a plank and washed ashore. It was thought that this woman must have been her mother, but there was no name on her clothes, and they only

kept a tress of her long fair hair, and her dead body was laid in a grave under the willows.

The child was very like the mother. She had blue eyes and fair hair, but there was no mark on her clothes, save on her white dress a little vine was wrought in the shape of the letter W. But the child could not tell them her name, and that was all they could learn of the past of her life, that letter W.

And the old man and his wife

loved the child dearly because they had none of their own; and because she looked so bright in their plain rooms they kept her for their own.

For a long time they could not think what to call her. The child seemed to forget her own name, and that was strange too, but so it was. They would have it begin with W, as her true name did, but what should it be? They could think of nothing to suit them, till at last the old man said it should be Waif.

Now a waif is a thing for which there is no owner, a thing that has been cast away. And just such a thing was this little child. She had come to them, and there was no one to claim her, and the old man said that it was very fit that she should be called Waif. And after that she was known by this sweet and quaint name to the old man and his wife and all their friends. So she grew up under their kind care, and their old hearts grew young and fresh

again for having her to cheer them with her glad laugh.

As she grew she found many ways in which she could help the old folks, and when her task was done she would walk out alone a long way on the sea-shore, and pick up pretty stones and fine shells until her little apron was full of the bright things. And then again she would sit with the wives of the poor men that got their food by fishing, and watch them and help them mend

their nets, and listen to their stories of the wild, wild sea, and the great storms that had come over it.

But the lamp in the tower was a great wonder to her, and when she knew the purpose for which it was kept she looked at it with awe. The first time they let her clean and fill it it seemed to her she could never do it well enough; but she soon saw that she did it even better than the old folks, and then it became a great pleasure to her. Still they would

not let her take her turn to watch it by night. She often asked them to let her do it, but they said she was quite too young for that. She often wished for the time when she would be large enough, and at last she did watch it one night all by herself, just one night and no more.

The old man and his wife were called away to visit a sick friend. When they went they said they would try to come back that night, but lest they should not, they would

get a good man whom Waif loved, and whom she called Uncle Jay, to come and stay with her all night. A woman and a little girl from one of the houses near by came to stay with her through the day, and at five o'clock Uncle Jay would come. After one o'clock a storm began to blow up. They could see the black clouds away across the sea, and they knew that there would be a great storm that night. When it came near five it looked all the while

as if it would rain soon, and Waif saw that the woman wanted to go home to see to her house, and so she said that she need not wait, that Uncle Jay would soon be there, and she had better go before the rain and then she would not get wet. Waif was a brave little girl, and so the woman and little girl went away.

Waif went up to trim and light the lamp in the tower, and then she came down and spread the table for tea, and put more wood on the fire,

and looked at the clock ; it was half past five. Then she took a long look down the road for Uncle Jay, but he was nowhere to be seen, and it was growing quite dark. She took up a book to read, and then she looked at the clock again ; it was six o'clock. The next hour she looked at the clock a great many times, and when the hour hand pointed to seven she began to fear that Uncle Jay would not come. She went out of the door and called to one of the huts, but the

noise of the wind, and the rain, and the fierce waves drowned her voice, and she went back into the tower. Eight o'clock came, and then she tried to make her little heart very brave. She put the bars up to the door, and went up into the lonely tower to watch the light all night.

And it was a long night. The wind roared, and the waves beat madly against the tower till it seemed as if they would wash it down. Waif could not help thinking of the

stories she had heard of light-houses that had been beaten down by the fierce waves, and she began to fear that such a fate might come upon her, for the tower shook with the fury of the storm. Her little hands shook as she put fresh oil into the lamps and wiped the damp from the glass; but while she stood thus by the side of the great lens there came as it were a sweet voice to her ear that said :

“ In thy need call to the Lord,
Pray to him in faith and trust.”

It seemed as if she had heard these words often before, but where or when she could not tell. She did as they told her, and she knelt down there and asked God to keep close by her. Just then there came a great wave quite over the tower. It broke the glass on one side, and the water came in, and if the poor child had not prayed she would have gone off in a swoon with fright. As it was she stood firm, for she felt that she was not alone. Soon she heard the

boom of a gun. She knew now that some ship was nigh, and O how she hoped that her light might keep them off the shore. She trimmed it anew, and there she stood by it amid the rain and spray that came in through the broken glass all night long. She tried to look out once, but she could see nothing but the white caps dancing madly about as if trying to reach her, and she went back to her post and waited till morning.

At last the gray dawn came, and

Waif strained her weary eyes till she saw a large ship safe at anchor a little way off, and then she leaned her tired little head upon a bench and dropped asleep.

Half an hour later a boat came through the waves. The captain wanted to tell the people in the lighthouse that they had saved his ship. The door was fast, and he got in at the window; but as he found no one below he went up into the tower, and there, lying on the wet floor amid

the broken glass, he found the little girl asleep. He took her up gently, bore her down stairs to her little bed, and then called the men that came with him to look at the child that had saved them. Tears stood in the eyes of all; but when she softly said in her sleep, "In thy need call to the Lord," one of the men caught her to his heart and wept aloud. That verse he said was what his long-lost wife used to sing to her little child in her cradle. Poor Waif was too

tired to wake at once, and she slept on while they stood beside her, till the old folks came home and wept over her and told her story to the men. She slept even after this strange man had claimed her for his child whom he had long thought dead. The long hair was brought out and shown him. It was just like that of his lost wife, and the little white dress with the vine-wrought W was Winnie's.

O how glad was little Waif, now

Waif no longer, to find when she awoke that she had saved the life of her own father. How close she clung to him with her arms around his neck, and how glad he was to take her away to his nice home far beyond the sea. And the old folks who had cared for her went and lived with him till they died, and Winnie was their sunshine and the joy of her father's heart.

THE END.

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