

JACOB'S LADDER

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Jacob's Ladder by Barbara Wordsworth & Arthur Henry Brown

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BARBARA WORDSWORTH & ARTHUR HENRY BROWN

JACOB'S LADDER

JACOB'S ♦ LADDER.

BY

BARBARA WORDSWORTH.

With Musical Illustrations

BY

ARTHUR HENRY BROWN,

COMPOSER OF "MISA SERAPHICA," "A CENTURY OF HYMN TUNES," "ORGAN
HARMONIES FOR THE GREGORIAN PSALM TONES," ETC.



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LONDON, W.C.

TO
MY MOTHER.





THE HIDDEN LAND.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.



SURELY I was desolate. But a little while ago the adoring child of a tender mother, whose overshadowing had stood between me and all rough blasts of Fortune, and taken the fiery sting from every trial. I was desolate, indeed, when more than a year ago they laid her down to rest; and thrice desolate now when Death, who had been busy among my dear ones ever since, had just parted me from the last of those who were bound to me by ties of kindred, and in whose love earth still held for me a home. Mother, father, brother, sister, were names that I should speak familiarly no more. My lot was among strangers; and for kindness I must look thenceforward to that pity

which, while it is said to be akin to love, may, to my thinking, be but her foster-sister after all.

Household words put aside—no longer serviceable. No more use for the “I remember,” “Do not you remember?” which give their highest zest to the recallings of the past. Old associations, tender memories, light words fraught with subtle meanings, thoughts half expressed, stirring whole trains of laughter, love and tears—all well-nigh valueless as broken shells.

So was it with me, and with such reflections was my heart engaged, on the morning of a day that stands out in my memory in bold relief against its fellows of that dreary time—that shines rosy-tinted among the cheerless shadows of those other, empty days. I had been dreaming over night. They were waking dreams, in which I had lost myself in the late summer twilight, making the most of a short and, as it seemed to me, well-earned freedom. Some words I had lately met in a book of Julian Hawthorne's, joined to the inevitable direction of my thoughts when left to wander free—an indulgence which it was one of my most irksome, but, I considered, most obvious duties never to accord them in the busy hours—conspired to set me wondering, dreaming, longing for some knowledge of the life “behind the veil!” Did those I had lost no longer care for me? Did my mother's gentle hand no more stretch itself out to me with a mother's yearning need to comfort all my woe? If, from afar off, I were visible to her, might she not also show herself to me? It would not cause me any shock of fear, I thought, while tears of self-pity, excusable perhaps in such an utter loneli-

ness, were gathering in my eyes. I would not start or cry; I would not by one gesture of repulsion so wrong myself as to startle that sweet presence from my view. And then I bethought me that a spirit has not flesh and bones as we have; and how, then, could it make itself visible to me? I could not see my mother with the eyes of sense, nor hear that dearest voice with ears of flesh. Yet, if there were guardian angels, who so fitted to be mine as she? If this were so indeed—if she were herself my guardian angel, divinely appointed both in earth and Heaven—her gentle ministrations had not ceased with parting breath; would never cease while her child had need of them; and might put forth hands of tenderness, that need being past, to draw her to the home of changeless love.

Oh, that I might *know* if these things were! With such thoughts, hopes, yearnings, the twilight had been full. When the candles were lighted and there followed the final hour's companionship with the uncompanionable, it sufficed not to put the great longing for the spiritual nearness of the lost ones from my heart. When I lay down to rest it was strong upon me. It is hardly worthy of notice, but it lives in my recollection of that night, that I slept well and soundly, with a freedom from dreams and disturbance such as I had not known for long.

In the morning, however, I felt unrefreshed. Thoughts the saddest and most sombre settled down, as it were, on my troubled spirit the moment I awoke, and continued to harass me all the time I made preparations for the day.

It was the morning of my birthday, and, as such, brought