

INTO THE HAVEN

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Into the Haven by Annie S. Swan

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ANNIE S. SWAN

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"DO TAKE THIS DINNER, I SAVED IT FROM MINE"

INTO THE HAVEN.

BY

ANNIE S. SWAN,

AUTHOR OF "SHADOWED LIVES;" "THANKFUL REST," ETC.

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God."
"He bringeth them unto their desired haven."



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INTO THE HAVEN.



CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE STORM.

IT was a wild night. The sky was black and lowering save where, in the rifts of the flying clouds, a frightened star shone momentarily, or the struggling moon shot forth a fitful gleam. Heavy showers fell at brief intervals, driving fiercely to and fro in the grasp of the angry wind. The storm swept along the southern coast carrying danger and destruction in its train, and sending many a thrill of agony to hearts whose loved ones were "in peril on the sea."

In the fishing hamlet of Little Haven, as elsewhere, that night was one of fearful anxiety.

The boats had gone out in the sunshine of the early morning bearing the breadwinners of the hamlet, and who could tell how many would be welcomed home? It was a tiny place, just a few white-washed cottages nestling together in the shadows of the cliffs, and so near the sea that in unusual high tides the waves had been known to reach the very doors. A rude stone pier jutting a few yards out to the bay served as a landing place for the boats, and many leave-takings and glad welcomings these wave-beat stones had witnessed. A little chapel was built half-way up the cliff, surely no stranger site for a sanctuary had ever been chosen; but it was safe from high tides, and seemed to keep watch and ward on the hamlet beneath.

In the solitary chamber of one of the smallest cottages on this stormy night, a fisherman's wife lay dying. It was a cheerless, comfortless place, for the head of the house was neither industrious nor God-fearing, and all human affections and kindly impulses seemed to have died in his hardened heart. Black Bill Wild he was called in Little Haven, and not without cause. He had gone to sea with the rest in the morning,

and his wife, gentle loving all-forgiving Mary Wild, lay at home alone. Yet not quite alone, for on a little stool by her bedside knelt a boy, with a pale earnest face, and tender blue eyes, bent with intense love upon her. It was her one child, her darling Ben, the joy and comfort of her sad and lonely life. A fire flickered feebly in the grate, and a dip candle burned dimly on the table, casting a faint uncertain light on the faces of these two, one so near the haven of eternal rest, and the other just setting out upon life's stormy sea. For a long time there had been no sound in the quiet room, save the moaning of the storm, and the angry voice of the billows spending their strength against the mighty cliffs. The sick woman's eyes were closed, and she might have been thought asleep save for the moving of her lips, as if in silent prayer. The child kneeling by her bed grew timid at last at the long stillness, and laid his warm hand on hers, saying pitifully:

"Mother, speak to me."

She opened her eyes and smiled at him, after a moment her faint voice spoke:

"Benny, what time is't o' the clock?"