

the steps from which she had taken me ever so long ago.

Nurse seemed neither shocked nor alarmed. She only burst out laughing, and laughed so loud and long that I thought she never meant to give over. Then she told me that the fish with the blue flapping fins was nothing but a bathing-woman, that she was paid sixpence to come and take me up from the steps in that way, and that I had not been under the water more than a quarter of a minute altogether, indeed not a quarter of a minute, not five seconds.

Five seconds? such nonsense! As if we could go all that way down and hear all that rush and roar and noise and tumult of waves in one, two, three, four, five seconds! It was a great deal more like five hours than five seconds. I am sure it was long enough to have gone all the way down to the bottom of the sea and come up again. Five seconds, indeed! I didn't believe nurse one bit when she told me that, and I am not quite sure about it now, though when we are in such a horrible state of mind as I was just then, the time certainly does seem very long. I firmly believe to this day that I went down to the very bottom of the sea. But then, you know, the sea was