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YES! EVEN A CHILD.

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*Author of "Bonds but not Bondage," "Jesus Christ the same yesterday,
and to-day, and for ever," "Our Afflicted Prince," &c., &c.*



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THE LITTLE PILGRIM.

YES! EVEN A CHILD.



HEN I was a little boy I remember going to my mother one evening and sitting down on a low stool at her feet, and laying my face in her lap and

saying, "Oh, mother, I have been so miserable to-day!"

"Why, my dear, what's the matter? are you not well?"

"Oh, I've been thinking what a dreadful thing it would be if I were to die and go to hell!" And I told her how I felt afraid to die.

"What a gloomy child!" says one. "What a morbid little boy!" says another. "How unnatural for a *boy* to have such thoughts!" exclaims a third.

But I was not a gloomy child. I was blessed with excellent health and plenty of spirits, and I was known as one of the merriest of the merry. I loved a good slide on the ice—and many a tumble and bruise I got in that way, and I enjoyed a sham fight with snowballs, or a good galloping game at horses, as much as any one of you. No, I was anything but a gloomy or morbid child. "Then perhaps his parents were very strict, stiff, precise, strait-laced people, and they gave him gloomy ideas of religion." Not a bit of it. Nothing of the kind. My parents were not harsh or strict, but rather indulgent. "For I was my father's son, tender and beloved in the sight of my mother," and I loved them fondly. I remember some one asking

me one day which I loved best, my father or my mother. "I love them *both* best," I replied. My father was very kind to me. He used to pet me, and give me fruit and cakes, and take me long walks into the country and show me places, and often gave me good advice. And my mother, oh, how beautiful she looked, and how kind she was that day! There was such a heavenly light in her bright blue eye! such a Christ-like smile on her dear face as she laid her hand on my head and spoke to me. I think she looked something like Jesus must have looked when He said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

I shall never forget what she told me that evening. If I live to be old and grey-headed I shall think of it. And when I go to heaven and meet my mother there—for I shall know her amongst all the joyful throng,—I mean to remind her of what she said to me then. "But what was it she did say to you?" I'll tell you. She did not try to make a little Pharisee of me. She did not call me a good boy, and say that hell was only for very bad people. She did not teach me to try and save myself by my good works. She knew I could not. You might as well tell a blind man to open his own eyes and see—or a man sick and dangerously ill of a fever to cure himself without a physician, as tell a sinner, "even a child," to get to heaven by his own goodness. No, no, my mother knew better than that; and she loved me too well to flatter or deceive me. She knew that "even a child" is a sinner, and needs a Saviour. She knew that "even a child" may be anxious about his soul. She knew that *no one, not "even a child,"* can be saved without a Saviour. And so she directed me to Him. When I told her how sinful and miserable I was, she replied, "*Yes, my dear, but Jesus came to save little boys!*"

O blessed truth ! Jesus the Son of God came down into this world, took upon Him our nature, was born, as a babe lay in his mother's arms, became a little boy—" *even a child.*" He grew to be a man, and He died on the cross, the just for us the unjust ; He " bore our sins in His own body on the tree," and whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Oh, my dear young friends, I am glad to think of this, for I dare say some of you often feel anxious about your souls. Although you romp and play, and enjoy a good game, you have your serious moments. Sometimes when you lie down in your bed, and all is dark and still, you think, " If I should die in my sleep where should I go ? If I never wake any more in this world, should I awake in heaven with Jesus and all the good and holy, or should, I wake up *in the dark* shut out from God for ever ?" And then you are afraid. I used to be very often—afraid to go to sleep for fear I should never wake any more. And then if you have told a falsehood, or been disobedient to your beloved parents, or been in a passion, or been quarrelsome and sulky, or unkind, or said bad words, or talked of improper things ; or if you have said or done anything you would be ashamed to be known ; or if you have forgotten God and neglected prayer, you think of it when you are alone. And you are afraid. You know that God hates such things, and will not have any enter His pure, and bright, and beautiful heaven who say and do such things.

" Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame,
And none can find admittance there
But followers of the Lamb."

This makes you afraid and anxious. I know it

does, for "even a child" may be anxious about his soul.

"I wish I were as good as my brother!" So said a little boy to himself one night. His brother was a student, home for the holidays, and he slept in the same room with him. He had heard his brother preach and pray, and he had received letters from him about salvation. And as he saw his brother devoutly kneel in prayer by the bedside, and then rise with such a happy look on his face, and lie down in bed as though he felt perfectly prepared either to sleep and awake in the morning refreshed for another day, or, if called away, "to depart and be with Christ which is far better," he envied him and said in his heart, "Oh, I wish I were a happy Christian like my brother!"

And, perhaps you, my dear young friend, have felt something like that. "I wish I were a Christian!" And why should you not be? You may be. The youngest of you may be—now, without waiting to be a single day older. For "even a child" may be a Christian. "But what is a Christian? and how shall I become a Christian?"

It is not enough to say you wish to go to heaven when you die. Of course you do. There are only two places to which you can go; the one a bright and beautiful place, and the other a dark and dismal place. Of course you choose rather to go to heaven than to hell. But are you so in earnest about it as to seek the necessary preparation for it?

Here is a beautiful banqueting hall in a royal palace. It is lighted with many bright-burning lamps. Garlands of flowers hang in festoons from the pillars that support the richly carved roof. The air is filled with sweet perfume. In one part, up in a gallery, is a band of musicians with their instruments ready to give forth lovely sounds. The

tables arranged along the room are covered with gold and silver dishes, and vases of flowers, and ornaments. The most rare and delicate things are there. And down both sides of each long table there are the guests arrayed in beautiful robes. They are all waiting for the king to enter. Presently



there is a stir outside. A signal is given. The band begins to play. The whole company rises up. And with his suite of beautifully arrayed attendants, wearing the crown on his head, and having

on his gorgeous royal robes, the monarch enters, advances to the throne at the head of the table, and looks all around with a smile to welcome his guests. Presently, as he casts his eye up one table and down another, he pauses—his countenance changes—a dark frown takes the place of the pleasant smile. Something displeases him. All eyes are turned in that direction. Ah ! I see what it is. There, hanging his head with shame, is a wretched-looking man in dirty old garments, just the same as he wore about the streets, or when he worked in the fields. How could he do such a thing ? He might know it would displease the good king who gave the feast. I wonder how he had the face to sit down there amongst that bright company, with all those splashes of dirt and mud on his clothes ! He ought to be turned out. And so he was. “Friend,” exclaimed the king in a loud stern voice, while every one listened in breathless silence—“friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment ?” No answer. He could not say a word. “Come here, my officers of the guard. Seize that man. Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness.”

“But, poor man, perhaps he had no other clothes to come in.” True, he was a poor man, gathered in from the street. And so were all the guests. The kind king gave the feast to the poor ; and knowing how poor they were, he provided beautiful wedding garments for them all ; but this man was either too proud, or too lazy, or too careless, or too fond of his dirt to seek the necessary preparation. Just as some sinners are too proud to come to Jesus, or too careless, or too fond of their sins to seek salvation. When the royal messenger met him in the streets and asked him if he would go to the feast, just as I ask you if you will go to heaven,

he said "Yes," but neglected the necessary preparation.

Oh, my dear children, it is not enough to wish to go to heaven ; it is not enough to be willing to go to the heavenly banquet ; you must seek the necessary preparation. You must have that wedding garment which Jesus, and only Jesus, can give you.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty is, my glorious dress."

Nor is it enough to say you love Jesus. He was so good and kind, that if a child is asked, "Do you love Jesus?" who is there that would not say "*Yes?*" But do you love Him so well that you try all you possibly can to please Him? "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Do you love Him so well that you would suffer anything rather than sin against Him? "Do you love Jesus as much as you love your papa?" a little boy was asked one day. "No," said he. "Why don't you?" "I have never seen Jesus," the little boy replied. But a true Christian *has* seen Jesus. "How can that be?" you ask. "Has the Christian been up to heaven to see Him? or has he had some beautiful vision or dream of Him?" No. But he has seen Him by faith. When any one believes in Jesus, really believes, believes in his heart, God the Holy Spirit shows him Jesus. And there are many dear children who have thus seen Jesus—seen Him with the eye of the mind. For "even a child" may be a Christian. Do you want to know how to begin? Think of Jesus. Think of His great love and mercy in leaving His bright and beautiful heaven, and coming down into this world. Think how good and kind it was to suffer so much for you. Believe that He really stood in your

place, and bore the punishment of your sins. And believe that God is so full of love and mercy towards you that He is quite willing to pardon all your past sins, and accept you as one of His own very dear children, for Jesus' sake.

Believe that He is willing to do so now, this moment, without waiting until you are any older or any better. And really *trust* that He will do so. You may be a Christian before you finish reading this address, for Jesus has died in your stead. He has suffered for you ; and you may at once be saved if you only trust in Jesus with all your heart. Say to yourself something like this : " I know I am very sinful, I know that I have often said and done very naughty and sinful things ; I know that my thoughts and my feelings have been often wicked, and if I were to die before my sins are forgiven I should be afraid to meet God, for He is so holy, and pure, and good. But He is also merciful, and He gave His only begotten Son to be my Saviour ; and my dear Jesus has borne the dreadful punishment of my sins, and now there is no need for me to suffer, and so I may at once be saved. I believe that since Jesus died instead of me, there is no need for me to suffer ; but God will forgive me for His sake." Say that in your heart, and keep thinking of it until you feel perfectly happy. And then try and feel that as you are a Christian you will do all you can to please your dear Saviour who has done so much for you. Think of Him the first moment you wake in the morning. " Oh, what can I do to give pleasure to my dear Jesus to-day ? " Think of Him when you rise, and pray to Him while you dress for the day. Think of Him when at your lessons, and if you find them difficult, tell Him ; say to Him, " My dear Saviour, help me to do this

difficult sum ; help me to understand and remember this hard lesson ; for I want to learn all I can, that I may better serve Thee." Think of Him if any quarrelsome schoolfellow teases you, and tries to put you out of temper. Before you strike a blow, or say an angry word, think, "My dearest Friend, my blessed Jesus sees me !" Think of Him if you are tempted to say or do anything wrong, and say, "Dearest Saviour, help me to resist this temptation." And when you lie down at night, and after you have prayed, think of Jesus as quite near you, for this is His promise to His people : "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Begin by having the *faith* of a Christian, thus obtaining the salvation of your soul ; and then go on to live the *life* of a Christian ; for by your life you must be judged. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." *Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.*

And more than this. Not only may "even a child" be anxious about his soul,—as many dear children often are—and not only may a child get relief from that anxiety, and enjoy the peace of a Christian, but a child may become an eminent Christian. By the teaching of God the Holy Spirit, "even a child" may understand deep and profound truths, which sometimes puzzle older minds. And by God's grace, "even a child" may triumph over suffering and death, and come off "more than conqueror through Him that loved us."

"I know what the best thing will be for you to do. Do—'God is love.'" This was said by a dear little friend of mine to her brother Edmund, a bright and beautiful boy of twelve, just two or three years older than herself. They were looking



"I SHOULD LIKE TO DO — 'THY WILL BE DONE."

at a box of paints he had had given him, and talking about what text he should illuminate. Ah, she little thought of all the feelings her words excited in his young heart. It was putting him to a severe test, for he was a great sufferer. He was lying on the sofa, unable to stand or walk, and often in great pain from that most terrible complaint, a diseased hip. And thus to be laid aside and crippled, with no real prospect of recovery, was a sore trial to one of his disposition. For he was a most active, lively boy, full of frolic and fun, and especially fond of gymnastics, cricket, football, and all out-of-door games. And he was also a very truthful boy, and could not bear anything like deception or hypocrisy. And so when his little sister advised him to paint "God is love," it set him a-thinking. He did not think God unkind. He said afterwards, once when much worse, and obliged to keep his bed, "I have never felt God unkind." But he would not say anything unless quite sure he felt it. And after being quite silent for a few moments, his little sister standing by his side, looking at the colours, and waiting for his answer, he said, "No, I cannot do that, I should like to do—'Thy will be done.'" And most beautifully he did it.

Oh ! he was a great sufferer. He grew worse and worse. He had to undergo a most critical and distressing surgical operation, which, though very skillfully performed, failed to save his precious life. His illness lasted for about a year ; and during a great part of that time he kept his bed, often in agonizing pain. But he never murmured. On the contrary, "his cheerfulness, patience, and perfect calmness under severe suffering seemed a mystery to all who had the joy of being with him. He would often say he was 'so happy, and he had

so many mercies.' " He was like "a beautiful bright sunbeam, and beloved in a peculiar way by all who knew him." I shall never forget going to see him. He was lying on his back in bed, with a heavy weight attached to his foot, and slung over the end of the bedstead to keep the afflicted limb perfectly straight, and in one position ; but with his fair head resting on the pillow, his bright sparkling eye, his face pale with suffering, yet wearing a gentle smile, he looked beautiful, so resigned, so peaceful ! "The beauty of the Lord his God was upon him." Thus did "even a child" triumph over suffering. He had sought God in health. He profited by the instruction and example of his pious parents. When nine years of age he heard a sermon in which children were urged to read a few verses of the Bible every day and from that day until too weak and ill he never failed to do so. His love for the Bible was intense. His little Bible was ever by his side. He used to say, "We often get tired of reading other things, but it is so nice, we read the Bible so often and never get tired of it." He was very fond of 2 Cor. vi. 18, and seemed to delight in the thought of being called "a son of God." When too weak and ill to read himself he would say, "Oh, read to me those nice things Jesus promises to those that love Him, and begin with 'To him that overcometh.'" He had his favourite hymns, too ; amongst others,—

"Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear ;"

and that sweet hymn,

"Dear Jesus, ever at my side,
How loving must Thou be
To leave thy home in heaven to guard
A little child like me !"

At length, in the month of November, 1870, it

was evident that the time was drawing nigh when dear Edmund should triumph over death also. He said one day, "The most holy, beautiful, and pure life would be as nothing ; it must be Christ, and Christ alone." He also said, "I feel I am drawing nearer and nearer to God." On the day before he died, his beloved and sorrowing parents saw the time was very near, and were anxious that he should know it. It was therefore gently broken to him. "You would like to go to your dear Jesus, would you not, dear ?" The truth then flashed across his mind that he was going to die. But it did not alarm him. It was a glad surprise to him. His face lighted up with joy, and in answer to the question whether he would like to go to Jesus, he exclaimed, "Yes. Oh ! I did not know I was going to die ! What a change from yesterday !" He immediately threw his arms around his dear father's neck and said, "Papa, you will meet me in heaven, won't you ?" In the same manner he embraced his fond mother, his eldest brother, and his two elder sisters ; and then he paused, his bright face became sad, and he shed bitter tears because he could not see a beloved brother next to his own age, who was far away at school, and had been sent for, but was not yet arrived. With tender pleading looks and loves he begged his papa to bid him "good-bye" for him, and ask him to be good and meet him in heaven. He took his dear little sister and folded her to his bosom, and asked her to be good and meet him in heaven, and to try to teach a still younger one also to be good. The nurse, who had lived in the family from his infancy, came to his side, and throwing his arms around her neck he said, "I know you love Christ ; meet me in heaven."

After a pause, being much exhausted, he said,

"I do not think I should have loved God as I do if it had not been for this illness," Then came a severe paroxysm of pain, and he exclaimed, "Oh ! I wish I could bear it all like Jesus did." Some one whispered to him, "Jesus knows your wish, dear," and he became calm and cheerful.

During that eventful morning he said once, as if examining himself in prospect of death, "Mother, do you think I love Christ?" "Oh yes!" was the reply, "I know you have for a very long time ; but would you like to give him up?" "Oh no ! not for anything," was his answer. But all this was preparatory. The end was not yet. The final triumph was reserved for the morrow. It came. Oh ! never will the day be forgotten in that household. Fond parents, affectionate brother and sisters, and devoted nurse, all are assembled, and stand watching around the bed on which lies that pale, suffering, yet peaceful form. Up above, all in glory and expectation, heaven's gates are thrown wide open. Jesus stands waiting to receive His beloved young disciple. Holy angels throng around. And as if the dear child saw this—as who could say he did not?"—"all at once," to use the words of his beloved mother, "he raised his head a little from the pillow, threw his arms up high in the air, opened his eyes wide, and fixed them on something in the very far off distance, with a smile certainly not of earth, and exclaimed in a firm loud voice, "O Thou dear Jesus, I do love Thee ! Wilt Thou come to me ?" These words were repeated three times. Then he laid his arms down, and the bright spirit passed away." So may

"EVEN A CHILD"

triumph over suffering and death.



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