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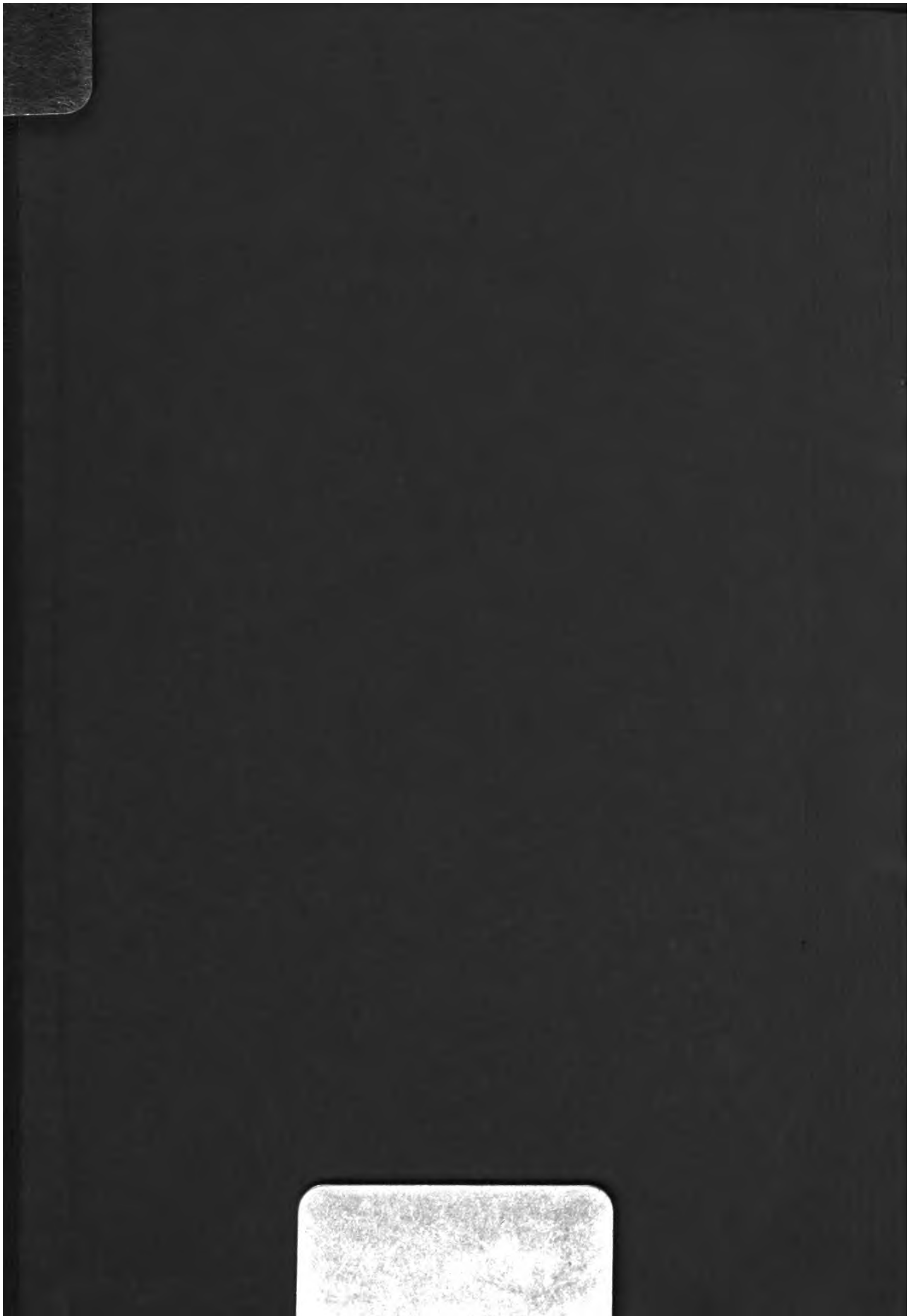


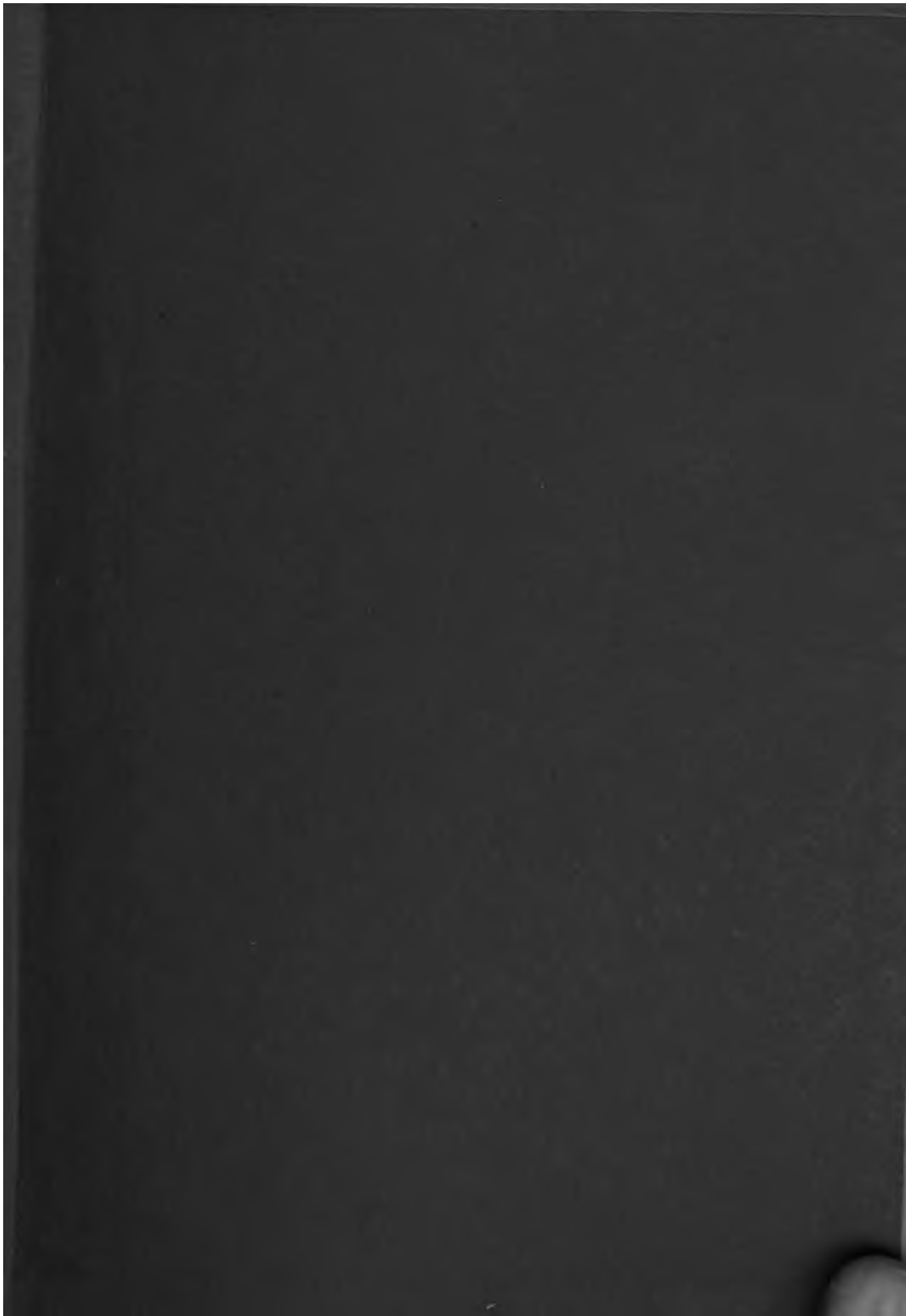
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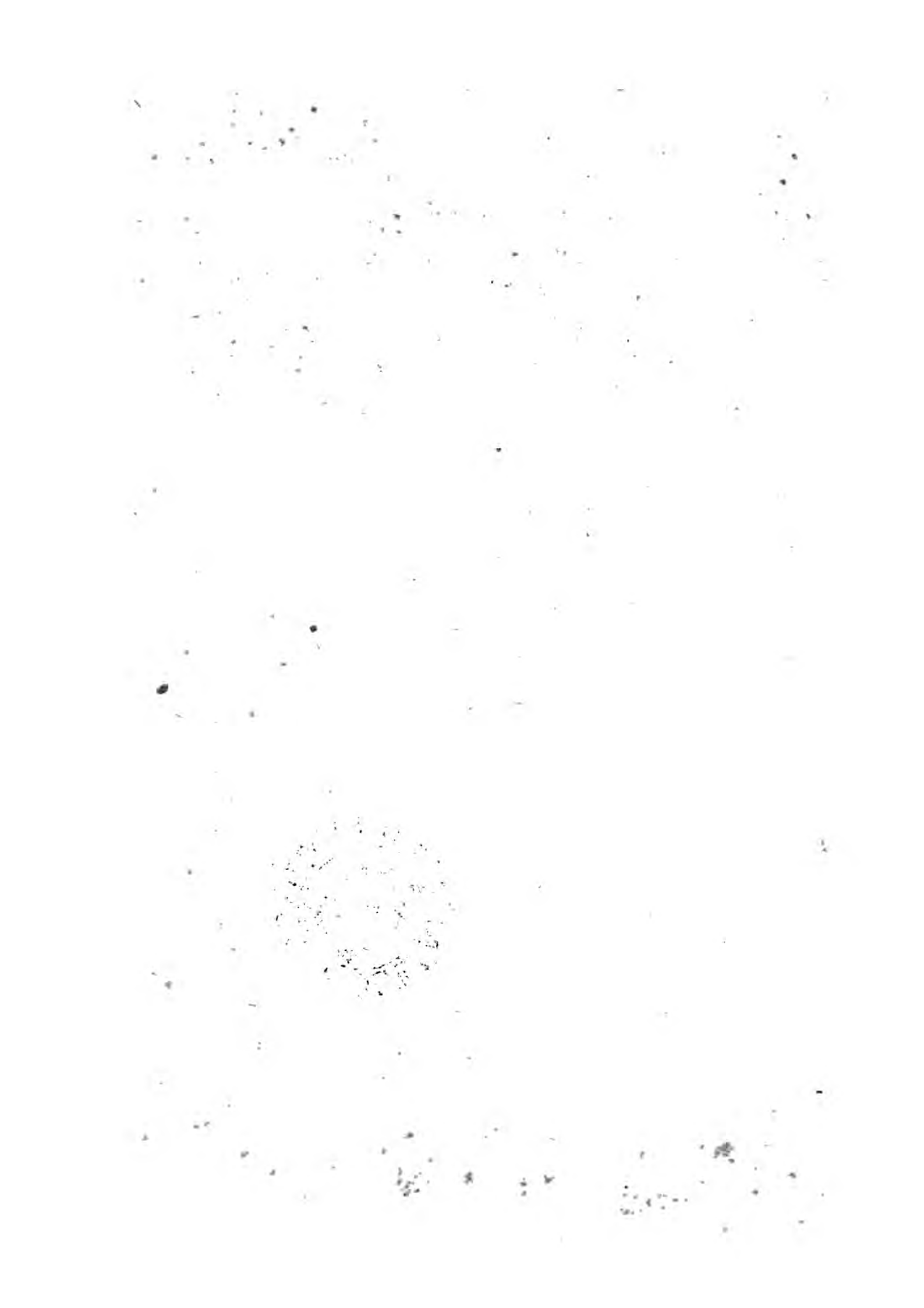


TALKING TO
THE CHILDREN

A. MAC LEOD, D.D.







Talking to the Children.

BY

ALEXANDER MACLEOD, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR."

" Lovest thou Me?
Feed My lambs."



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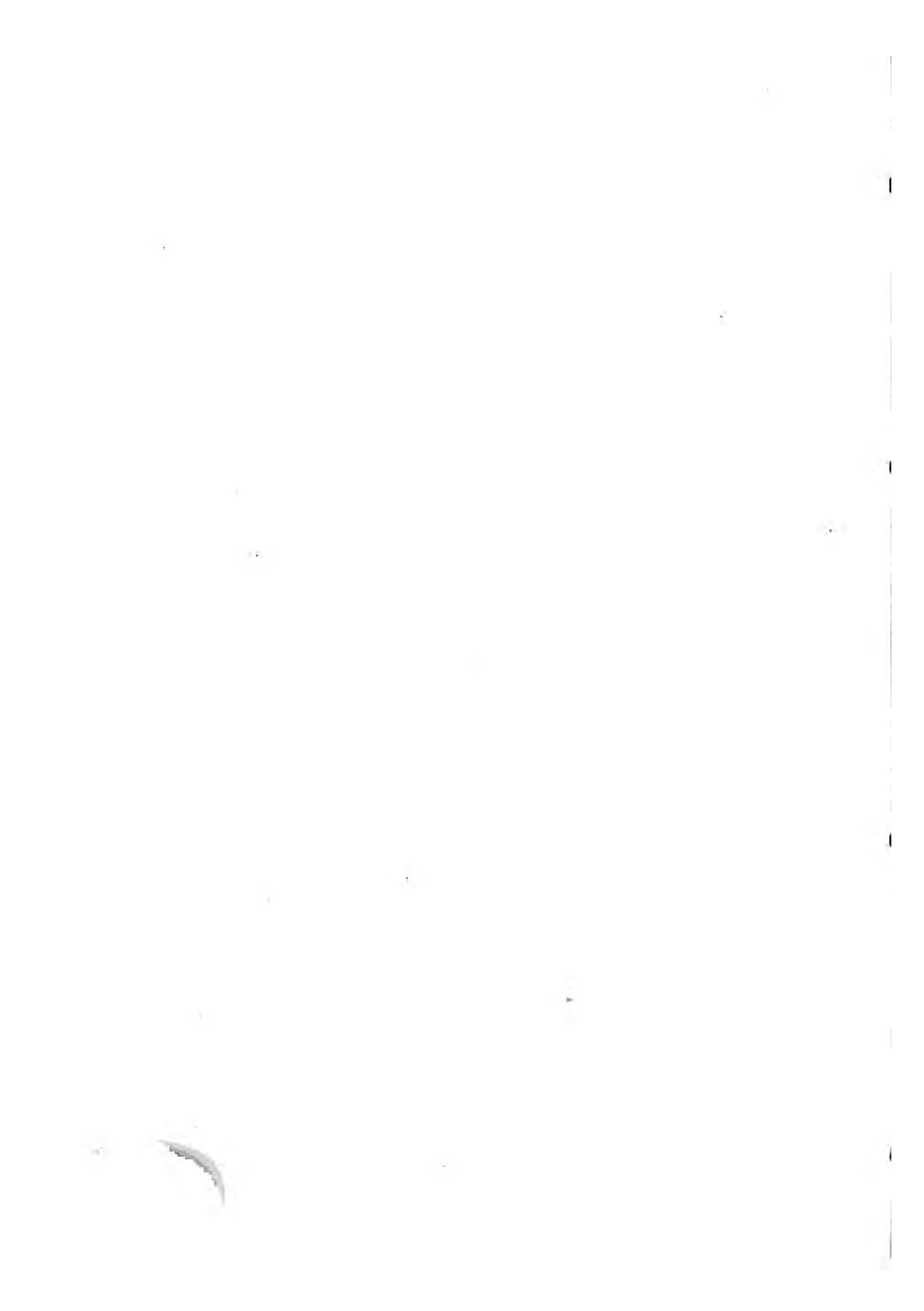


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At the Parting of the Ways.



TALKING TO THE CHILDREN.



AT THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.

I WAS one day sitting in a railway car, which I expected to take me to a little town called Newburgh. And we came to a parting of the ways called the Ladybank Junction. At this point, as I learned afterwards, the train divided, and one portion went on to Dundee—the other, by Newburgh to Perth. I heard the guards cry out quite plainly, “Change here for Dundee ;” but I did not hear “Change for Newburgh and Perth,” I said to a gentleman beside me, “Are we right ?” “All right, sir ; I’m going your way too.” And the train moved on.

The next station on the *right road* should have been *Collessie*. The station we actually stopped at was called *Springfield*. “This is not Collessie,” I

said to my fellow-passenger, the man who was going my way too. "Oh, it's all right—Springfield and Collessie—two names for the same place," said he.

After Collessie we should have come to Newburgh, the little town at which I was due. Instead of that, I saw a great spreading town, with towers and church spires rising above the roofs. The man beside me was now fairly roused; and he cried in a very loud voice, "We're wrong, sir, we're in the wrong train. We should have changed carriages at Ladybank. This is Cupar, on the road to Dundee."

And here I was—within an hour or two of the time I should have been at Newburgh—a good twelve miles away from it, and no train back for three hours to come!

But while I lounged about the station and sat in the waiting room, I began to think of mistakes on journeys, of wrong roads, of the hardships and losses of taking wrong roads, and of the need which there is of looking well after right roads. I remembered the Bible proverb which says,—“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.” I thought of the great journey of life, and of roads on that journey which seem to be right, but are wrong. And it came into my mind, that my thoughts, sad though

they were at the time, might, if I could put them into words, be very useful words of warning to children.

The road I went that day, in my journey to Newburgh, seemed to be the right one but was not. I want to tell you of roads on a far greater journey—the journey of life—which seem to be right roads but are not. And I want to show you, besides, the need of watching—where I that day failed to watch—at the parting of the ways.

I.

There is one road which it is very natural for both young and old to travel, which we all like to travel, and to travel often. That is the road to Pleasure. And it is a road God means us to travel. For He has placed us in a bright and beautiful world; and He has given us the power of being happy in His world. Youth is just the beginning of our journey on this road. And I do not know any sight more delightful than the sight of young people moving forward on innocent, natural pleasures. But on this path, as on every other we enter, there are breaks and partings of the way, and great need of watchfulness in consequence, that in our pursuit of happiness we do not go astray.

My first word to you this morning, therefore, will be : *Beware, in life's journey, of the places where Pleasure parts from Christian companionship!* What can be sadder than the contrast between the happiness sought after, by the same young heart often, at ten and at twenty! At both ages there is an earnest, eager pursuit of joy. But it is a joy mixed with the smiles and love of innocent companions at the one period, and destitute of them at the other. And the sorrowful thing is, that young people pass into the new bad way of seeking happiness, often without knowing that it is bad. It is a way which seems right to them at the time, but the end of it is death.

In a certain northern city once, there lived a family of boys. They were as happy as the day was long. They had a happy home. They were happy in a good mother and father. They were happy at school and at play. And the secret was this ; their mother had learned to live in the smile of Christ. And she made that smile shine on everything and everybody round about her. Her children began the day with Christ, and ended it with Christ. Their mother managed it so, that there was nothing gloomy in prayer, in family worship, or in going to Church. The boys were taught to understand that

Christ's eye was resting on them, and following them wherever they went, and that it was a friendly eye—the eye of a brother. In a real sense, Christ was a friend and companion to them. Many a time on the Sabbath evening, when they were singing hymns at their mother's knee, the thought passed through their minds, that nobody could be happier than they.

By-and-by the young boys had become young men. But they did not all walk in the path in which their early happiness had been found. They no longer cared to have Christ, or their Christian mother, for their companions. Two of them struck out for themselves on strange new paths, with strange new companions, and strange new joys. They attended low casinos, vile dog-fighting saloons, horse-races, and gambling houses. They knew the way to the wine shops. And they forgot the church, and the hymns they used to sing, and their mother's saintly counsels, and all good ways.

Their happiness now was to follow evil doers and evil ways. It was no use speaking to them. Others went these ways ; and why not they ? They were not going to be tied to their boyish ways for ever. They would seek happiness in their own way. And they sought it for years in that way, and never

found it. And all the sweetness died out of their life; and all the early innocence; and all the reverence for their parents; and all reverence for God. And they became hard, and narrow, and vile, and hateful. The happiness they followed after was Christless. And at last it ceased to be happiness. The end of it was death.

II.

There is another road we all like to travel. I shall name it the Road Beautiful. Old and young of us, we are all fond of beauty, and we desire to be beautiful ourselves. It is not a wrong desire. God has put it deep down in every heart. It is a joy to Him when we grow up beautiful.

And He has laid down a great line of way,—the line of loving-heartedness,—on which the most heavenly beauty may be reached. But there are side-lines not made by God, where beauty parts from that which makes it beauty.

My second warning, therefore, is : *Beware, in life's journey, of those breaks where Beauty parts from Loving-heartedness..*

Here is the right road, where beauty and the loving heart go together—Christ's road. There is the wrong one, where beauty turns away from love.

On the one, love makes heart and face beautiful with divine beauty. It fills the heart with sweetness, and purity, and humility. And these are the great and best beautifiers. On the other, beauty goes the wrong way, the way where love is not. And the heart is filled with pride, and scorn, and envy, and hate. And at the end of this way the beauty is all dead and gone.

There was, about thirty years ago, a very beautiful child living in the same city I referred to before. Everybody said of her when a child, "How beautiful she looks!" And she looked very beautiful. At school the other girls were struck with her beauty. She was all over beautiful, and had beautiful hair, beautiful eyes, a beautiful face and figure. Her very feet were beautiful. But although the loving Christ had made this beauty, the beautiful girl would not travel on the same line with Christ's love. She turned aside on a line of her own. She would go where pride, and vanity, and scorn of others were. As she grew into womanhood, there grew up in her heart pride in her own beauty. She said to herself, "I am more beautiful than Jane or Mary or Margaret by my side." She ceased to love Jane and Mary and Margaret. She did not care to remember that Christ might love them

very dearly. She cared neither for Christ nor them. She cared only for herself. It was herself she admired and worshipped. As she looked at herself in the glass, she said, "I am more beautiful than my sister, more beautiful than ever my mother was." As she said such things, love for her sister and her mother took flight and left her heart. She could no longer love mother, sisters, or school companions. The poor, vain, empty soul of her loved only herself. Her beauty was her snare, and took her away first from Christ, and then from human love. But then came God's wrath upon her wickedness. She became a fine lady, had a fine house, a coach, many servants,—had the same hair, the same eyes, the same face and figure. But somehow the beauty had all departed. She was no longer beautiful. Mary, Jane, and Margaret, and all her sisters had grown up to be very beautiful. There was a quiet harvest-evening-like beauty still resting on the face of her mother. But nobody thought the proud daughter beautiful. People spoke of her as haughty, unfeeling, and hard, but never more as beautiful. The path she chose to travel on seemed good to herself; but the end of it was death. For want of a loving heart in it, her beauty had died. And as

for admiration or love, she had neither the one nor the other from man or woman, from angels or God.

III.

My third warning is this :—*Beware of the places, in life's journey, where Cleverness parts from Goodness!* A good child may be very clever ; but there are clever children who have no goodness at all.

God would have the two in company,—cleverness and goodness together,—the two always moving along the same path. But the road to cleverness is one on which there are many partings of the way ; and many and many a poor young soul turns aside and takes the path of cleverness without goodness.

That was the case with a school companion of mine. His story is so sad in itself, and so painful to tell, that I am almost sorry I require to tell it. He was one of the cleverest boys I ever knew, and he was as obliging as he was clever ; and he was very comely. I think I see him still,—tall, well made, with long waving yellow hair, and the bluest and happiest-looking eyes. Everything he did was cleverly done ; everything he said was clever. He was far and away the cleverest boy at school. He

took all the first prizes; and every boy in the school thought he deserved to take them. When he went to the university, he took the same first place in almost all the classes. In the medical classes, to which he next went, he had the highest marks. And his career in these classes for two or three years was so bright with excellence, that both professors and students were proud of him.

But, long before the time I am describing, this bright and clever boy had turned aside from goodness: he scoffed at goodness. He went aside,—trusting to his mere cleverness,—to bad ways—to bad companions. He went to vile places and spent his cleverness on sin. Then he forgot his books, got careless in his classes—still trusting to his cleverness,—and was actually turned back at the end. Then he took his cleverness into wild society, and became drunken. Then he got into debt, and took money which was not his own. Then, as many bad people do when they get into trouble, he blamed others for his troubles, and sent a letter to an uncle, in which he threatened to kill his uncle unless money was sent to him. Then, he was hunted out and arrested by the police, and shut up in jail, and tried and banished. And,

oh me! then, in his far banishment, he became worse and worse, and at last was put to death for his crimes.

He parted from Christ's goodness. It seemed to him at the time, that that was a right movement to make. He did not believe in Christ. The badness of his life made it impossible for him to believe in Christ. He was clever; and he knew it, and trusted to it, and entered on a path where cleverness was not the servant of Christ. The way seemed right to him, no doubt; but the end of it was death. His very cleverness died out of him. He himself died, while he was still young, the bitter, shameful death I have named, in Norfolk Island, over the sea.

IV.

By-and-by all the boys I am addressing will be looking out for an opening into a well-frequented road,—the road to Business and money-making. Now that is not a bad road to travel. God made business and money too. And He has laid down straight lines, along which business people may move forward with good hope and cheer. God means us all to be busy, and He helps some business people to become rich. But

there is one thing which should never be forgotten : His blessing, on that road as on every other, rests only where Christ is. And where Christ is not, in business, or money-making, or anything else, the thing of God which is most real is His wrath.

My next warning, therefore, is : *Beware when Business and money-making part from Christ !*

Honesty and fair dealing are ways of Christ. And nobleness and service to mankind are possible to those who travel by these ways. With Christ in it, business moves along just those lines of honesty, fair dealing, nobleness, and service to mankind.

People may be very busy, and be honest in all they do. They may also be very busy, and have no honesty at all. And there are plenty of people who will tell you that business and honesty cannot go together in this world ; and other people who deliberately put honesty aside. It is a way which seems right to them ; but the end of it is death.

I knew a young lad who had been a very excellent Sunday-school teacher, and was intended for the ministry ; but some circumstance connected with his family caused him to enter into business. He was very well fitted in some respects to do business ; but in one respect, as it turned out, he

was not fitted at all. He looked on business life as a different kind of life from Sabbath-school life, or Church life. He said, "Things must be done in business which would not bear to be spoken of on Sunday." And when he had once gone a little way in this fatal error, he went greedily and madly further and further, and parted from Christ utterly in his whole business career.

One night he was alone in his office. The office windows looked out upon the sea. The sea breeze came gently up over the sleeping town in which he lived. The town lamps were shining in every street. His young wife was waiting for him, wondering at his lateness, in her new parlour. He had been sitting three hours with the pen in his hand, wishing to do what by-and-by he did, but without the bad courage to do it. At last, between eleven and twelve, he did it. Sitting all alone there, he did what he had been meditating to do. It was a little thing he did. To look at, it was as insignificant as the turning aside of the train to a branch line of the railway. He wrote down on a bank bill a name that was not his own : that was all. It was that which made the sweat come hot and cold, on his brow, and hands, a dozen times that night as he sat alone. Did not other people do it? It was

done every day, he said : it is only the discovery which is bad. This would not be discovered for six weeks ; and in five weeks he would get back the bill and destroy it. He did not want to rob the man whose name he used : he only wanted to use it for his own ends. He made himself believe that it was a right way to take, to get out of a difficulty. But the end of it was death. By that one little bit of writing he had committed the crime of forgery. It was a criminal who came home late, and pale, and cold that night to the poor young creature to whom he was so recently married. It was a criminal's terror which hung over him for the five weeks which followed. And on the sixth week he was in a criminal's cell for forgery.

The way he took killed his good name and his happiness. And the happiness of his young wife was blasted. And he was sent for ten long years to the hulks, to toil among felons as a slave.

But I must not leave you to suppose that it is only when people do dishonest things that they take wrong roads in business and money-making. There are hundreds of business men who would put their right hand in the fire rather than do a dishonest thing, who are yet on wrong roads in all their money-making.

It was only the other year—many will remember the story—that a well-known member of Parliament suddenly disappeared ; and for several days no tidings could be heard of him.

He was a money-maker ; and he had made so much that he was thought the richest man but one in London. Money-making was his life, his joy, his hope, his god. He had gone to Parliament, just because that would help him to make more money. And, as it happened, our terrible Crimean War had just begun,—and this man watched the turnings and shiftings of the war, and went in to make such a fortune as no other man could match. But, some way or other, things did not turn out on one occasion as he expected ; and instead of making a new fortune, he lost all he had made before ! He had not one shilling left. In one hour the riches he had been gathering for a lifetime took wings and flew away.

A godly money-maker would have known that everything was not lost, though his money was. He would have God's help and mercy to go back upon. He would have stayed up his soul on the Rock of Ages, and hidden in its clefts until the storm went past. And he would have said, "God is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

But this man had no Rock of Ages to go back upon, nor any green clefts to hide in. Riches had been his god; and they took wings and flew away.

He felt himself thrust back into utter darkness and want and poverty. So he left the House of Commons one evening, and took a bottle of poison, and went out of London, out to a lonely heath, out alone in the darkness of that night, out from all life and all human joy, and drank the poison there, under the stars of God—and died.

His way seemed right to him, no doubt, once. But you see the end of it—since Christ was not in it—was death.

These are very sad stories I have been telling you; but if they help you to see that there is no happiness, nor beauty, nor cleverness, nor right money-making unless Christ and His life and ways be at the heart of them, the stories will not have been told in vain.

The Three Temptations.



THE THREE TEMPTATIONS.

I.

A YOUNG man might have been seen one day, faint, and weary, in a wild desert, and among wild beasts, in an Eastern land. He was exhausted with hunger, and the marks of it were on his face.

Poor and haggard and hungry though he looked, he was the son of a king, and was, even in that desert, on the way to his kingdom.

The wonderful thing was, that it was his father who sent him into the desert, and suffered him to be without food for many days. A still more wonderful thing was, that when he was suffering the sharpest pangs of hunger and ready to perish, he did not doubt his father's love, nor that his father's way of bringing him to his kingdom was the best.

But one day a stranger came up to him, and said, "You are the son of that king of whom everybody has heard, and to whom this wilderness belongs. If you be his son, why should you remain

hungry? Bid the wilderness provide a table for you. Turn these stones into bread."

Now, this young man could actually have turned the stones into bread. That would have satisfied his hunger. That might save his life. That was a way which at the moment might have seemed right. But he knew that it was not right. His father had sent him into the wilderness; his father had sent him hunger instead of bread; and he knew his father to be wise and good and loving. "No," he said to the stranger, "I will follow my father to the end—trust him to the end—trust him through hunger and faintness—trust him even to death. My father's love is better to me than bread."

This stranger was a very deceitful man; but he saw at a glance, that the king's son was resolved to go forward on the path of trust. So he followed the young man until they came to the capital town of the kingdom, and by-and-by they went up to the high towers of the temple.

"It is a great thing," said the stranger once more, "to be a king's son, and especially the king's son you are. Your father cares for you every moment, and would not suffer a hair of your head to be hurt. His servants follow you, watch over

you, care for you. Suppose—since you are cared for in this way, and the king's son—you cast yourself down to the court below. See, there is a whole army ready to receive you in their arms !”

The young man simply said, “To trust my father's care when I am in the way of obedience and duty, is one thing ; to put it to the test in the way you propose, as if I disbelieved it, is another. It would be tempting my father. And it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the king.”

So the stranger saw how noble this youth was, and how kingly and well fitted to reign. And he took him to a high mountain, and showed him all its glory, and the glory of all the kingdoms on the earth, and said, “All these will I give unto thee, if thou wilt love me and trust me as thou lovest and trustest thy Father.”

But the young man turned round upon him in anger, and said, “*Get thee behind me!* for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Then the stranger left him. And the heavens opened, and “angels came and ministered unto him ;” and the smile of the Father shone round about him like a great light ; and far up in the depths of heaven there were songs of victory.

For this was none other than the Son of God, and the stranger was the devil who sought to lead Him out of the right way.

II.

Dear children, that is an old story ; but it is also new. It is the story of our daily and hourly temptations. It is the story of the attempt made by the Evil One to win us over to his side. In a thousand different forms in this very country, and just now, that is taking place which took place eighteen hundred years ago, in the wilderness of Judea. I could not hope, if I tried it, to give you any idea of the countless variety of forms in which those three temptations come to us ; but I will take you along one or two of the many lines of life in which they are to be found, and mention their names.

The first is the temptation of *hunger* :—If you think a little, you will see that everybody has to toil for bread. Now the devil often comes to people who have to toil, and says, “Bread is everything. Turn everything into bread—turn your skill, and your time, and your talent, the ships, and the docks, and the railways, and the banks, and the Sunday-schools, and the churches, into bread. If you are

Christians, and Christ is in the sky, He will help you to do that. You are pinching yourselves, and spending time on religion and churches and missions and such things, which your more sensible neighbours spend in enjoying life." Many are deceived by these words, and turn aside from a religious life, and give all their soul, and strength, and life, and power just to labour for bread. A good table, with plenty to eat and drink on it,—that is the one grand aim of life for them. And they forget God, and the Bible, and heaven, and go blindly on, labouring and toiling, and working for only the fine dinners, and forgetting that they cannot live on bread alone.

After that comes the temptation to *presumption*.

There are thousands of Christians—men and women—who nobly fight against the first temptation, and resolve not to spend all their soul and strength for bread; but, on the contrary, even when bread is not to be had, to keep the desire for God and truth and right above the desire for bread in their hearts. And again and again people of this stamp will say, "Although God should take all our bread from us, we will put our trust in Him."

The devil sees that people who act in this way are full of trust in God; and in a very cunning way he tries to get round them by the very strength of

this trust. He puts this thought into their minds : “Trust is a good thing—one of the best of things. One cannot have too much of it, especially if he is a Christian. Christians are God’s children, and are free to trust Him in everything. God has promised to bring them all right at last. May they not trust Him then in perilous things,—in risks, in daring ventures, even in leaps in the dark? God takes good care of His children. He gives His angels charge over them, lest they dash their feet against the stones.”

Many are wise, and cast out such thoughts, and shut their eyes on these dangerous ventures. But others are caught by the temptation, and lose themselves. And what they find in the end is only bitterness and remorse and shame.

There is still another temptation beyond this one. Even those who resist the temptation to presumption are often taken, as the Lord was, to where they can see the grand things of earth, and tempted with the temptation of *pride*, the temptation of reaching grandeur and influence by a single evil step. The temptation works in many ways ; but sometimes it comes in the form of an advice from one who pretends to be a friend, to go into an evil trade.

“Don't you see how life is slipping past, and you are losing your chances?” this evil counsellor will say. “You want to be in a higher position : you think if you were, you would have more influence for good. That's the very thing I say about you every day. Why are you so slack, then, to ascend to this position? Did you see that mansion we passed? It is owned by a rich friend of mine. Everybody speaks of him as ‘the eminent tradesman.’ He will be a baronet some day, and he will leave, by the profits of his trade, a million of money to his children. Do as he is doing. Give up strictness and sentiment. Go in for money-making in his way.—You cannot help it, if the way be evil, or if the trade be evil. Somebody must be in that trade. Other people follow that way. And by that way and that trade, sooner than otherwise, you shall have the means of doing good.”

Counsels like these fall dead on the hearts of God's real children. But sometimes they are addressed to those who are only His children by name. And ah, there are many, under such advice, who break off from Christ's way, and follow the devil's, and are ruined for ever! They see splendour of social position, and fine living, and fashionable society, and carriages and grand man

sions and fine entertainments—all passing like a panorama before them, and offering to become theirs—*if only they will fall down and worship the devil to the extent of following an evil trade, or trading in an evil way.*

III.

Once upon a time there were two brothers, and one was rich and the other neither rich nor poor. The rich brother had made his riches in an evil way and by an evil trade. But the brother who was neither rich nor poor said: “It is better to be poor than rich, if the riches come by evil means.” It happened that this brother had three sons, but the rich brother had no children at all.

It came to pass, in course of time, that the brother who was neither rich nor poor was about to die. And he called his three sons to his bedside and said: “I have spent all I had to spare in giving you education, and I have nothing to leave you except my mill. Be good and honest, and God will not suffer you to want. I leave my mill in equal shares among you. But the eldest shall be master, so long as he lives, and then the next eldest, and after him the youngest.”

When the good man was dead and the funeral over, the eldest son stepped into his father's place, and the other two continued to serve as before. And time went on, and trade increased. And all things would have gone well if the one who was master had not gone on a visit to his rich uncle. But he was so feasted there and had such plenty of rich food to eat, that he could not look on the simple fare at the mill without disgust. So he said to himself, "What is the use of our increasing profits and of our toils, if we are not to have fine food like my uncle. Why still live on barley bread and milk as our father did? Then he put the old ways of the house aside, and had fine dinners and wine to drink. And he gave and accepted invitations to parties. And by-and-by, hardly a day passed in which he was not dining out, or having a dinner party at the mill. If his father had come back, he would not have known the old house again. Nothing was heard of in all the country side but news of the feasting at the mill, and the other feasts to which that feasting led. All the talk at the country fairs, where the people met, was about the last feast and the feast to come. One would have thought, to hear this talk, that man's chief end was to eat fine dinners every day.

But all this came to an end, and an end that was not good. At one of those feasts, in a neighbour's house, the poor man drank so much wine, that he did not know what he was about when coming home. And instead of coming down from his horse at the doorstep, he came down at the very edge of the mill-pond and was drowned.

So there had to be a second funeral. And after that the second son became master. He was different from his brother in some things. He was no drunkard, and he did not spend his time in feasting. But he was a little impatient. And it was a trouble to him to go round the right way, if he could get a shorter cut across. What troubled him most was the slow growth of the money at the bank. Although the mill was prospering the profits were small. And this was a cross to him. It happened to him also to be the worse for a visit to his rich uncle. When he was at his uncle's he saw heaps of bank notes which had been got in a single day. And he came home thinking sorrowfully that the toil of a mill was a slow toil. One day a stranger came up to him at the mill and said : "We have found lead in the hills out there, and only want a little money to dig it out, and make thousands upon thousands in a single year." It

was the very chance the miller wanted. He could not sleep for thinking of it. He saw the thousands coming in like a flood. And he would have bank notes as many and as soon as his uncle. Now this poor fellow was a very good miller, and was doing well with the mill. And his brother and himself were slowly getting to be well-to-do ; but he was as ignorant as a baby about lead and lead hills, and the expense of working lead mines. To give out his savings would be a risk—he saw that clearly enough. To risk his brother's means would be wrong—he saw that too. But on the other hand, if the mine succeeded he would be as rich as his uncle, and he would get to that riches in a single year. So he got out of his bed very early next morning, and took his Bible and began to search it to see if it said anything about a case like his. He found in one place, that God would make everything work together for good to those that loved Him, and in another, that God would suffer no evil to befall His children. He said to himself,—“I hope I love God and am one of His children.” Then he knelt down and committed his way, as he thought, to God, and then he felt stronger and happier. It was a great risk—he saw that very clearly. But he thought God

would take care of him. And he would put all his trust in Him.

He forgot that the good God has given no promise to help people in their folly, or in their wrong-doing. And he knew it was wrong to put his brother's portion in peril. But he hoped it would all come right, and even that his brother would thank him for what he had done. So he sat down, and wrote to the stranger, and told him to buy as many shares in the lead-mines as the mill was worth.

Everything seemed very bright for a week or two—but only for a week or two. A letter came from a lawyer to say, that the expenses of working the mines were greater than had been expected, and that more money would be needed. And after that, a second letter, demanding more still, and saying :—"It would be a pity to have paid out so much and not pay out a little more to get it back." The miller began now to see that his bank notes were not so certain as he once thought,—but he could not draw back. He sent off the last penny his brother and himself had in the world.

And a year went past. And one day a letter came to him to say, that the lead-hill had been searched and only a little lead found, and the expenses were far beyond the payments, and he would

have to send twice the sum he had already paid. He did not answer this letter, but simply gave it to his brother to read. Then he said : “ Brother, I have risked everything and lost—lost all—yours as well as mine—forgive me—I thought I was doing it for the best.” Then he rose, went up to his bed, and died of a broken heart.

In a short while there was another funeral, and then a sale. The mill, and the house, and the horses, and the cows, and the fields were all sold, and the money taken for the wretched mines. And the youngest brother was left without a penny, or a home, or a friend, in the whole world.

But when the sale was quite over, and he was about to leave the house in which he had been born, a man came up on horseback and gave him a letter to read. It was from his rich uncle. And it was full of kind words. The uncle was old, and had no children to inherit his riches. This third nephew had always been a favourite with him. He had offered to adopt him when the father was living. He renewed the offer now. He would make him his son and heir, if only he would come into the trade, and promise to carry it on when the uncle was dead. I told you before that it was an evil trade, and one on which God’s blessing could

not rest. But the young man was touched by his uncle's kindness, and he told the messenger he would bring his answer to his uncle himself.

So he went back into the empty house, and sat down on the trunk in which his clothes were packed. There was no fire on the hearth, but it was there he sat, where he had so often seated himself in happier days.—It was not every day such an offer came to a man. All that would be his, if he accepted it, came before his mind:—the splendid seat in the country, the fine house in town, the multitude of servants, the carriages, the fine society, the high position, the possible rank he might attain to. All this, and visions of a future in which all this had place, floated before him and came round about him. And voices seemed to speak from the depth of his soul and say: “All this will be yours if you accept your uncle's offer.”

But he must also accept the evil trade. He thought of his dear father's honourable life—of his father's refusal to accept the same offer on this condition—and of his father's spirit as perhaps watching over him at that very moment. Then he raised his thoughts to his Father in heaven and cried for strength. Then, when a long forenoon

had been spent in the cheerless, empty house, he rose up and trudged a long way, till he came to his uncle's, and thanked him for his kindness, but declined his offer because of the evil trade.

I do not know what became of the uncle, nor what he did with his riches. But the young man who refused the splendid offer came back to the village in which he had spent his boyhood, and went into a neighbour's mill to serve. And after a while he married his master's daughter. And although he never got to be very rich, he was very happy, and had a clean heart and clean hands, and lived in favour both with God and man.

May God help you to resist temptation as this younger brother did—as our blessed Lord did. And always remember this, that in business, in home, in life, in love, in everything, it is just—*With Christ, or Without Christ.* That makes all the difference in the world, at the journey's end. |

Christ has come down from heaven to open for us the way to heaven itself, and to guide us thereon to the end.

He is saying even now—"Follow Me, and I will bring you to all good things, to happiness, to fortune, and to enduring riches."

May the Holy Spirit give you the grace to be-

lieve that He is speaking truth, and help you to follow Him along all His ways !

May He open your eyes to see, and your hearts to understand His love !

Your ways, after that, are sure to be ways of pleasantness, and all your paths, paths of peace.

The Wonderful Lamp.



1

THE WONDERFUL LAMP.

ONE of the most famous stories in the world is about a lamp. I was as young as you when I first heard it. And to day, speaking to you here, it all comes back to me. Aladdin, the ragged orphan boy, his poor hard-working mother, the magician selling his wares on the street, and the wonderful lamp! One thing I well remember, that like every other good thing, it had to be brought up out of a deep place, and when it was found, it was, to look at it, nothing but an old and common everyday lamp. And who that has once read the story, can ever forget how the poor mother, rubbing it one day with sand to make it look bright, found out what sort of lamp it was, and what it could do for her boy and her? It was a fortune to them. It gave them everything they wished. It brought food, clothes, money, and servants to Aladdin and his mother. It built houses for them; brought

them horses and carriages; made friends for them; put enemies away from them. And it opened to Aladdin the gates of the king's palace, made him a king's son, and at last a king.

I remember, after I first heard the story, how I used to sit at the fireside and look at the coals burning in the grate, and at the flames turning and twisting about the bars, and far in among the flames and the glowing coal, at the strange houses, and fields, and trees, and faces, which boys are always seeing in the fire, and how I said to myself: "Oh, for one other such lamp as Aladdin's, for a lamp that would make a king of me, or carry me like a bird over all the wonderful places of the earth!"

And I daresay many another boy has been as simple as I, and wished the same wish. I would not be surprised if there should be boys before me, who have read the story, and wished that wish, and wish it still, and over and over again wish it in the long winter evenings as they sit by the fire. I am sure there is many an intelligent boy in England, not so well off as you are, who has to rise early in the morning, and go through the dark cold lanes to some factory, who has said to himself: "Oh, for a lamp like Aladdin's, to put all this darkness and cold away, and bring the factory a little nearer, and

give me a little time for school, and warmer clothes, and a better dinner when I go home !”

And that is not such a foolish wish as many people might suppose. It is not a mere dream, or a thing only to be found in a story. The Bible tells us of a lamp that will do for you all that Aladdin's did for him and more,—a lamp which has been lighted in heaven, and sent down to earth, which has light for hearts, and homes, and churches; and something better than gold or silver, or houses and lands, or coaches and horses for ourselves; which every boy and girl may have, which many a boy and girl already have. This is that lamp about which prophets and apostles so often speak,—the wonder-working lamp of truth and life, which shines in the WORD OF GOD.

Of the many wonders of this lamp, I intend at present to speak only of one. And it is among the lowliest of them all. It is the wonder mentioned by King David in one of his Psalms :—“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.”

But I must first explain :—How a *Word* can be a *Lamp to one's feet*.

Seven hundred years ago, all Europe was sending soldiers to Jerusalem to fight for the Saviour's grave. The lords of Jerusalem at that time were fierce

Saracens, who did not believe in Jesus. And the people of Europe said: "Why should unbelievers like these be lords of the place where our Saviour lay?" Army after army went from England, France, and Germany. And sometimes they won, and sometimes they lost. And when it was their lot to lose, they were seized, made prisoners, and sold as slaves.

It happened in one of the battles that a young Englishman, named Gilbert à Becket, was taken prisoner and sold as a slave. He was sold to a rich and princely Saracen, who set him to work in his garden. And there, as she took her daily walks in the garden, the daughter of his master saw him. And when she looked at his sad, but beautiful face, and remembered that he was a slave, first she wept for him, and then she loved him; and then she resolved to help him to escape. So one night she procured a little ship, and had it waiting near the shore, and she opened the door of 'A Becket's prison, and gave him money, and said to him "Go back to England."

Now Gilbert had seen her love and returned it. And when he was going away he said to her, "You too will one day escape, and find your way to London, and there I will make you my wife." And

then he kissed her, and blessed her, and went out free. And he reached the little ship and found his way to England. But the Saracen maid remained in the East.

Many a night she looked towards the sea, along the very path he went, and thought of him, and longed for him, and wept. She longed to be at his side. But how was she to escape from home? How could she cross the seas? How could she ever hope to arrive in England? She could not speak the English speech. The only word she knew was "*London, à Becket.*" A Becket had taught her this much in the garden.

At last she could remain no longer in the East. She would go to the Christian land, and be a Christian, and the wife of Gilbert à Becket. So one day she left her home, and went to the sea, and to the English ships, and as she went she said, "*London, à Becket.*"

She uttered this word, and rough sailors made room for her in their ships. "*London, à Becket,*" she said, and ships hauled up their anchors, and spread their sails, and carried her through stormy seas. "*London, à Becket!*" It was all she said, all she could say, but it went before her like a light, and made a path for her over the pathless deep ;

and she followed it until her eye caught sight of the white cliffs of England, and her feet touched the sandy beach, and she was in the land of him she loved.

She had far miles still to travel to reach London. And these were the old times when there were no railways, no coaches, not even roads. Old bad times, when robbers lived in dusky woods, and bad men watched from grim stone castles, that they might rob and kill the lonely travellers. But she went onwards. "*London,*" she said, "*London, à Becket.*" London was many miles away; but that word opened up a way to her, went before her, was coach and road and guide to her. It was a lamp to her feet. She uttered it as she was setting out every morning, and peasants tending their cattle on the heath pointed in the direction where London lay. The lamp went before her over hills and fields, and woods and streams, and brought her at last to the gates of London town.

"*London, à Becket,*" she said, as she passed on through the streets. From street to street went this Eastern lady, from street to street, and from house to house, and still as she went she said, "*London, a Becket.*" Crowds gathered about her in the streets, and some wondered, and some mocked, and some

had pity; but she made her appeal to the very crowds as she said, "*London, à Becket.*" The word was caught up by those who heard it, and passed from lip to lip, and from street to street, until it filled the town, and searched out for her 'A Becket's house and brought her to his very door. And then her long toil was ended. 'A Becket heard the well-known voice, and leaped and ran, and folded her to his bosom, and took her into his house, and made her his wife, and loved her with all his love. His word had been a lamp to her feet, and brought her to his side. She became the mother of the famous Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.

That is how a word may be a lamp to one's feet. And what I want to tell you now is, that we also, like that Eastern lady, have a word that is a lamp to the feet.

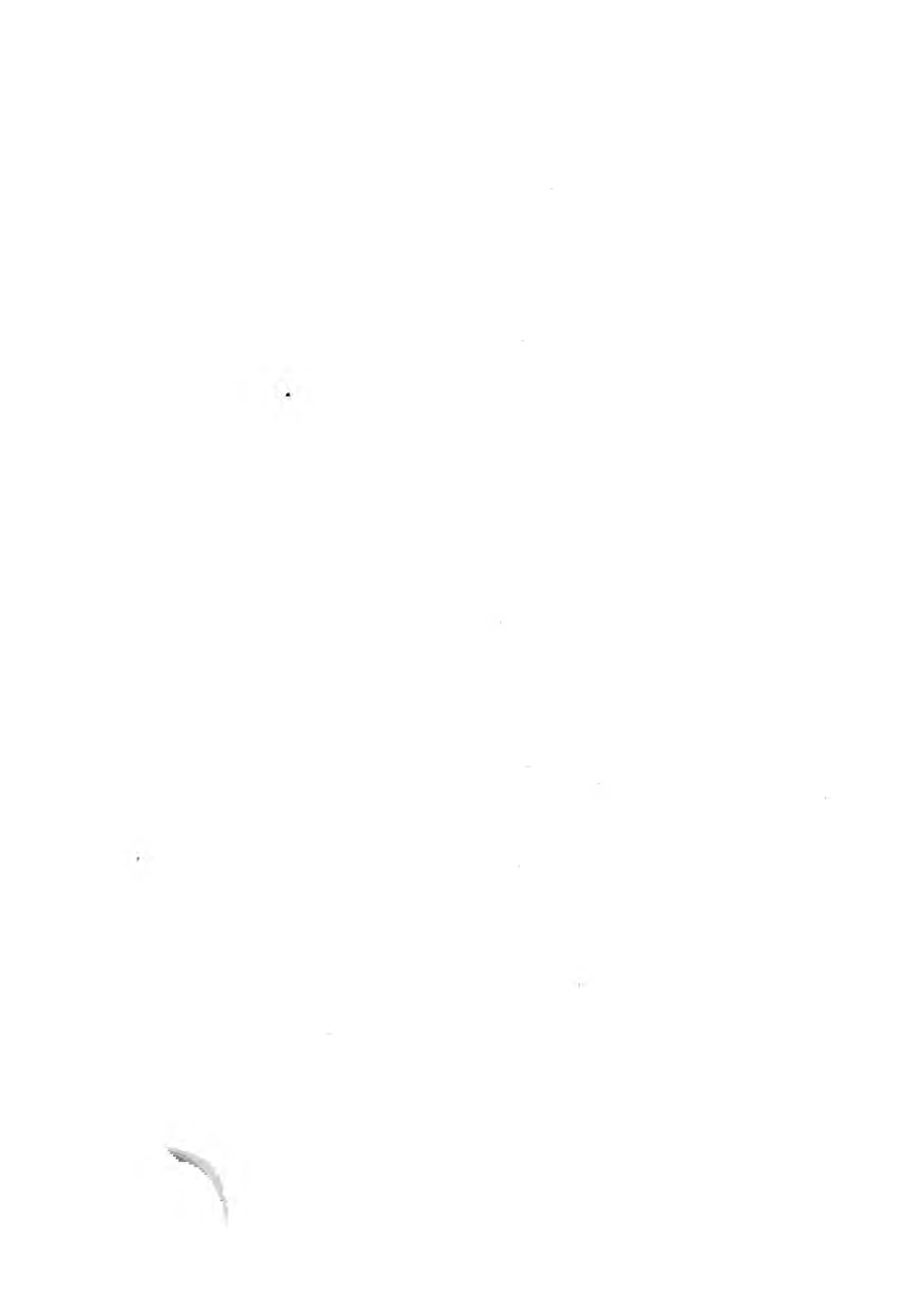
A greater than Gilbert à Becket went to Jerusalem, and was a prisoner there. And before he passed from His captivity, He left a word with those that loved Him to be a lamp to their feet, to light up their path, that they might follow Him, and arrive at His home, and live with Him for ever. It is of this word it is said, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet." And surely if the mere earthly word which that lady learned from an English soldier could

light her steps from the farthest shores of the Mediterranean Sea to London, the heavenly, divine word we have received from Jesus, is better fitted to be a light to us for the paths which lead to Himself.

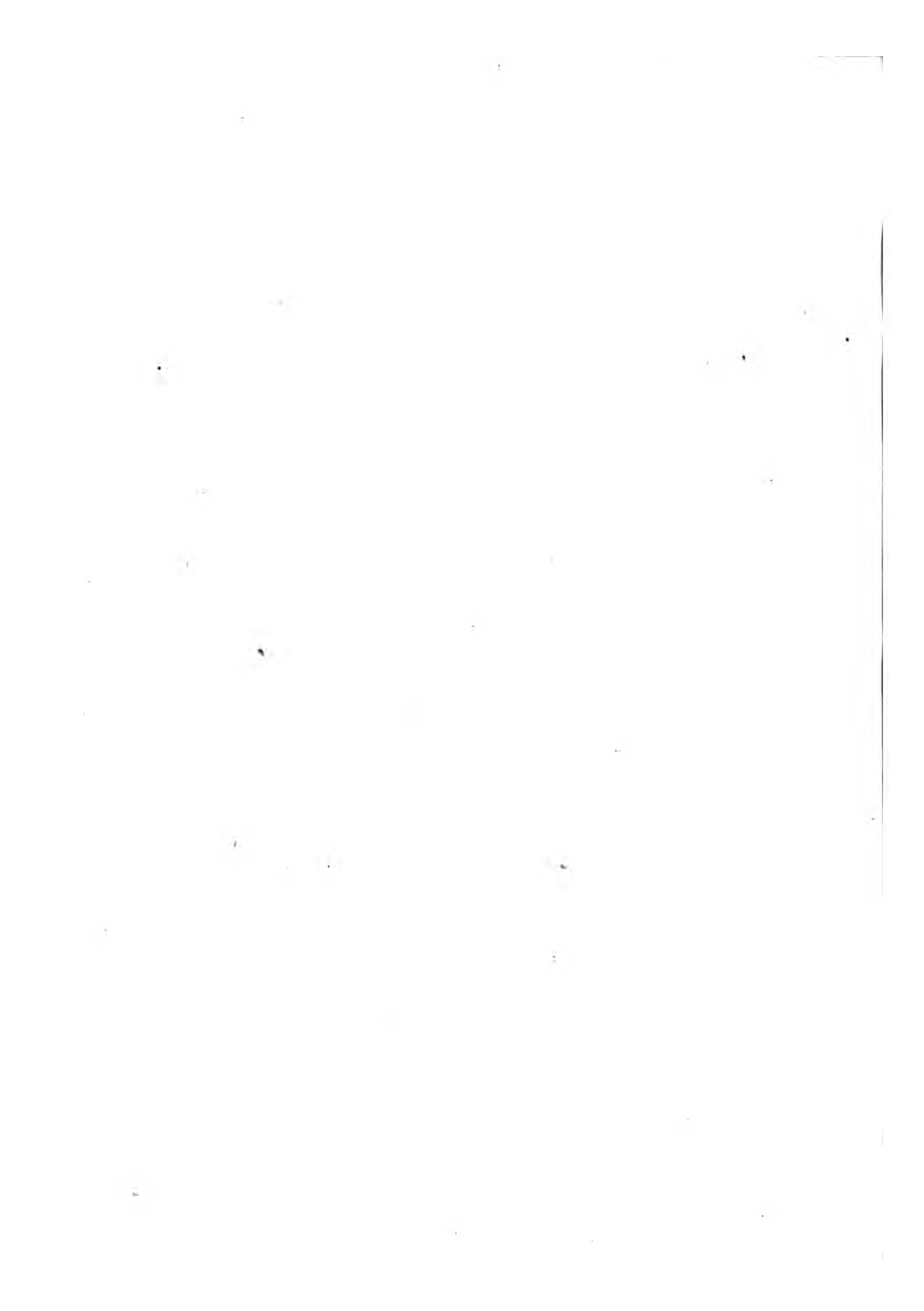
The word of Christ in the Bible is this lamp. It is the lamp for our feet,—to point out the roads we should avoid, and the roads we should walk on. It is a lamp for the feet wherever you are, wherever you are called to go, on whatever errand, with whatever companions, and to whatever place. On the road to school, to church, to town, or to market. Alone, or with companions, this is the one true lamp for the feet. It is the lamp God has given us, to shine forward on every common path we are called to walk on here. And it is His lamp to light up the great high-road from earth to heaven.

And this is no new lamp, new-made for us, and for us only ; but an old, well-known, well-used lamp, which men have had, in one form or another, from the very earliest times. It is as old as the days when God's Spirit first spoke to men, and man's spirit answered : "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" What was it which lighted Abraham all the way from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of promise ? It was the word which God spake to him

in Ur. What showed Moses the way from Jethro's flocks in Midian to Egypt, and from Egypt to the Red Sea, and from the Red Sea to Mount Pisgah? It was the word which God taught him at the burning bush. What led David from the sheep-folds to the throne? He tells us in a Psalm: "Thy word I hid in my heart, that I might not offend against Thee." It was of this word, hid in his heart, he says: "Thy word was a lamp unto my feet."



Path's the Lamp Shines On.



PATHS THE LAMP SHINES ON.

IT would take too long to tell you of all the paths for which God's word is a lamp. But I will mention these few. There is that first path of life, which in the Book of Proverbs is called "the highway of the upright"—the path of departing from evil. There is the path of our common duties, which both old and young have to tread daily. And there is the last sad path, we must one day all take, through the valley of the shadow of death. I will try at present to show you how, for the first and second of these, God's word is a lamp to the feet.

I.

Our Lord told a story which, far better than any I could tell, shows how this word can be a lamp to guide a soul out from an evil way.

There was once a silly young man who wandered a great way from home. He had been so long from home, that the clothes, which were good when he

left, were worn into mere rags. At home he was a prince; where he now was, he was a slave. He lived in a perfect wilderness, with no creatures beside him but swine. And he saw all his folly in leaving home, and saw that he was nothing now but a poor, despised, lonely swineherd. "Oh," he said to himself, "why did I ever come into this desolate land? Why did I ever leave the land of my birth?" Well, one day, when his heart was very sore, and the tears were running down his cheeks, the Spirit of Christ whispered into his soul that his father was still alive. And he said to himself: "My father! my father! in whose house there is bread enough and to spare?" *My father!* he said again. That word kept shining in all his thoughts, and growing clearer and clearer, until at last it burned within him like a light, and it became a lamp to him, and the light of it fell forward, and made a bright path to him. And he arose and followed it, and it brought him to his father's house, and to bread and love and life once more.

Two young men were one day looking earnestly at a large factory in a certain town. They had come hundreds of miles to see it, and to get into it. There was a secret there which they wanted to find out—a machine which a clever man had invented, which

was doing work nothing else could do so well. And these young men had resolved to obtain a sight of this machine, and find out its secret, and make drawings of it, and then come home and make a similar machine for themselves. And their plan was this : They put aside their fine clothes and put on the clothes of mechanics, and in that dress meant to ask for work at this factory, and work until they found out the secret. But they had just arrived, and they did not mean to apply till next day.

One of the young men had the habit of reading a chapter of the Bible every morning. And next day the chapter happened to be that one in Exodus, where the Ten Commandments are. He had read it many times, and always to the end ; but this morning, when he got to the Eighth Commandment, he could not go further. A great light flashed up from it and smote his conscience. Right up it came out of the words, "Thou shalt not steal !" He read them again, and every word seemed to kindle into fire.—"Thou shalt not steal." He laid the Bible on his knee, and took himself to task. "Is it not stealing I have come here to do? I have come all this weary way to search out a clever man's invention, and make it my own by stealing it." His agitation

was very great. But he turned to his companion and said : "What we have come here to do, if we do it, will be a theft—theft of another man's thought, and skill, and honour, and bread." Then he took up the Bible again and opened it in the Gospel of Matthew, and read : "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." And he said, "If this machine were ours, if we had spent years inventing it, and had succeeded in getting it to work, would we think it right if some stranger were to steal into our factory on a false pretence and rob us of the fruits of our labour?"

His companion was angry at first. But by-and-by he acknowledged that it would be wrong. And they came back to their home without the secret. God's word was a lamp to their feet to help them to depart from that evil.

II.

I am afraid you will think my next two stories not worth the telling, but I like them myself. They are stories to show how God's word is a lamp for the path of our common everyday duties.

James Ankerton had got into a very good office in Liverpool. One day, when he had been some months at work, his master said to him, "Ankerton,

take this money to the bank." And he gave him a bag with a thousand sovereigns. The boy never had so much money in his hands before. And it was the very first time he was sent to the bank. Now James Ankerton had been an honest boy all his days ; but he was only a boy, and, having all this money in his hand, certain strange thoughts came into his mind, and among them these : "I wonder if I shall ever have a thousand pounds of my own. If I ever have, what a rich fellow I shall be ! A thousand pounds ! If I had half as much, or quarter as much, wouldn't I send a silk gown to my mother, and a velvet jacket to my sister Jane ! And I would have coffee every day for lunch along with my dry bread." By this time he found himself at the bank, and that put an end to his fine thoughts. So he lodged the money, and came straight as an arrow back to his work.

And is that all ? Yes, that is all. That is my story. He was sent to the bank with his master's money, and he went. And it never came into his mind, nor near his mind, nor within, I will say, a thousand thousand miles of his mind, that he might buy the gown, or the jacket, or the coffee with his master's money. Never ! He was a boy who read his Bible daily. And the light of the Bible was in

every thought he had. And when he was sent with his master's money to the bank, that light was as a lamp going before him to the bank counter, as it goes before hundreds and thousands of honest boys in this country when they are entrusted, as James Ankerton was, with money not their own.

The next I have to speak about, to whose feet God's word was a lamp, was a little servant girl; and I only wish all the young ladies who hear me would take her for an example.

I don't need to tell any grown-up person, but perhaps it has never occurred to you young people, that the roads a servant girl has to travel are very common roads—from the nursery to the parlour, from the parlour to the kitchen, up-stairs, down-stairs, into sick-room, and play-room,—very common roads indeed! But for all that, God's word has been given to guide the steps of those who have to walk in them.

Charlotte was an angel in the house where she served. She went about her work so quietly, that you would not know she was moving at all. If any one were sick, she was the kindest, helpfulest person in all the house. If anybody was cross, she knew how to speak, and how to be silent, so as to put the crossness away. If anybody was discon-

tented, Charlotte's content made them ashamed of themselves. The children loved her, and well they might. She had good words and kind words for them all. And withal she was tidy, and thoughtful, and true.

It was a perfect delight to hear Charlotte speaking about her father and mother. Why, you would think they must have been of the blood royal—a prince and princess at least. She spoke of them with such love and admiration. Not as if she were boasting of them, of their wealth, or things like that. Not at all! She never concealed that her father was just a porter on a railway, and her mother the hard-working wife of a railway porter. But somehow, all that went out of sight when she was speaking of them, and you were made to see only the beauty and goodness and love, which Charlotte saw in them both. You thought of them as royal people, and of Charlotte as their royal child.

She had good things to say also about her Sabbath class, and the good lady who taught her there, and indeed about everybody. Everybody had been good to her. There were so many good people in the world. God was so good. Charlotte was as thankful as an angel, and as pure.

There never was a girl of her age—and she was

only fourteen—who walked more habitually and truly in the way of Christian life. And this was the secret of it,—she walked by the light of God’s lamp. Her teacher was one who took great pains with her class, and tried to find out the disposition of each scholar. And she had found out Charlotte’s. And then she searched out a chapter fitting her disposition and said, “Now, Charlotte, you will read that chapter, and think over some part of it every day.” It was the chapter in Corinthians about charity. And Charlotte read that chapter three times a day ; and it was a lamp to her feet.

Day by day she consulted her lamp, and hid the light of it in her heart, and from thence it would stream out, and show her paths of meekness, goodness, and gentleness to travel in.

Charlotte is in London now. And she is grown to be a young woman. I try sometimes to look into the future, and I see her old, and feeble, and dying, and buried out of view. But always I think, when that sad vision comes up, that her lamp will never be old—never be buried. “Charity never faileth.” And her charity, I am sure, will pass on, when she dies, and burn among the lamps that burn before the throne of God.

The Story-Tellers and the Lamp.

THE STORY-TELLERS AND THE LAMP.

WHEN you grow older, you will find that there is one path we have to take which is more difficult than almost any other in life. It is the path of our last sickness, that last, most sorrowful bit of our way, when we are called to die.

That is a sorrowful path to all kinds of people. But it is a very especial sorrow to those who have never heard of the Saviour, nor of the home He has prepared for us in the sky. You would cry for some of these people if you were to see them dying. They are afraid to die. They are afraid to go out from all the joy and light of the life they know, through the darkness of the grave, into the unknown world.

I once read of an old Rabbi in Jerusalem who was dying. Although he was a learned man he did not know what the youngest christian child knows, that there is an unseen Saviour beside us to

dry up our tears, and a merciful God in the sky. And he began to weep. When his disciples saw him weep, they said, "Thou light of Israel, thou strong hammer, why dost thou weep?" He answered, "If they were carrying me before a king of flesh and blood, who is here to day and to-morrow in the grave; who, if he were angry with me his anger would not last for ever; whom I could soothe with words, and bribe with riches; yet even in these circumstances I should weep. But now I am going before the King of kings, the ever-blessed God, who liveth for ever and ever; if He be angry with me, His anger will last for ever. I cannot soothe Him with words, or bribe Him with riches. And, besides, there are before me two ways, the one to hell, the other to paradise, and I know not to which they are carrying me: How can I refrain from weeping?"

Death is terrible to people like these. They are not sure of going to God. They do not know but there may be waiting for them when they die a worse thing than death. They seem to themselves to be standing at the gloomy gateway of a prison. They are afraid to look forward. Often they will grasp the hands of those about their bed, as if they wanted to remain where they are, or to have com-

panions as they go out into the gloom. And they will shed the most sorrowful tears.

But Christ can dry up those tears. Among the good things He has brought from heaven is light for the dying. He does not give back the health. But he gives a better thing than health. He gives the comfort of His own presence. He gives the touch of His own hand. He gives the gleaming of the light of the deathless land.

More than thirty years ago there was a little boy in Glasgow who was very fond of stories. He was accustomed to go in the afternoon to a neighbour's house where stories were told all round by boys like himself. There were stories told about robbers, and stories about ghosts :—foolish stories ! And stories about poor boys who went to rich London and became great men ; and stories about sailor boys who had been shipwrecked, and cast on desert islands in the midst of the tumbling sea :—fine stories ! It was a very pleasant sight to see the fire blazing on the hearth, and the boys all seated within its light, each one telling his story in his turn.

The boy I speak of would have been entirely happy at that fireside, but for one little fear. In the street where he lived there was a grave-yard.

His father's house was on the one side, and the house where the stories were told, was on the other. To go back to his father's house he had to pass this grave-yard. And he was afraid to pass that way after dark. So he had to leave every evening before the stories were ended. Sometimes, in the midst of a very good story, he would be seen turning his eyes to the window, and watching the darkening sky, as if he would keep the night from coming on.

One day the boys happened to be alone in the house. The stories were all fine, and the fire was warm, and they all forgot that the hours were passing away. The sun went down. The sky grew dark. Nothing was to be seen at the window but blackness. But just as they had reached the middle of a story, there came a flash of lightning from the sky, and after that a peal of thunder, and then rain, thick and heavy, dashing against the panes.

My little friend remembered the grave-yard in a moment, and wished he were home. He went to the door. But the light of the fire, as it fell forward across the street, made the darkness seem more dark.

"I wish I were home," he said.

He was a timid little boy, and began to weep. He was afraid of the dark night and the rolling thunder. But especially he was afraid of the graveyard.

After a long while he got courage to say, "Keep the door open, and cry after me till I am out of hearing, and I will not be afraid." The other boys agreed, and opened the door to let him out. But just at that moment, there came another flash of lightning and another roll of thunder; and he and they ran back and cowered beside the fire.

"Come with me, some of you," he next said. "Come two of you. I am afraid to go alone." But the other boys were very little older than himself. And now, they also were afraid. And they began to cry.

Eight o'clock! Nine!

"Oh! I wish I were at home."

Ten! And still he is afraid to go.

Half-past ten! Eleven!

"I wish—I wish—I were at home."

He went to the door a third time. He still saw nothing but the black, wet night. He cried more bitterly than before. He cried as if his heart would break: "I wish, I wish, I wish I were at home."

While he was sobbing out these words, he saw a star of light twinkling through the gloom. It came nearer and nearer, and grew bigger the nearer it came. Joy! It was light from his father's house. His brother, carrying a lantern, had come to fetch him home. It was as if daylight had come back again. His crying was at an end. His tears were dried up. He became bold as a lion. The fear of the grave-yard went away, and he stepped out into the darkness with a smile on his face. *His brother was by his side.* And the light in his brother's lantern would light him home?

Now Christ does for His dying brothers and sisters just what this boy's brother did for him. He comes for them, with light from their father's house, and He takes them by the hand to lead them home.

Our life upon the earth is like the story-telling of these boys. We are all story-tellers, telling our stories to each other. The hour of death comes to bring our story-telling to an end. Suddenly we find that the day of life is spent. The sun goes down. The night comes up. We cannot remain on the green earth and beside the ruddy fires any longer. Oh, it is pleasant in that hour—it dries up all our sorrow—when the Elder

Brother is seen by the soul of the dying one coming from the home in the sky. And He does come to all who love Him. He comes bringing light from that home. He comes to assure the dying one that there is life beyond the grave. He comes to chase away all fear of the grave. He says: "Brother, sister, be of good cheer." As the light of the outer world grows dim, He kindles into a greater glory the light within the soul. He opens the inner eye and reveals to it the gate of the New Jerusalem standing welcome wide. He puts strength and a new song into the heart. And the dying one is filled with peace, and that word in the Psalms comes true :

"Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill ;
For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still."



In the Valley of the Shadow.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

GOD'S word is a lamp for the common everyday roads of life. But it is more than that : it is a lamp for every road we can take. It is a lamp for every road the soul has to take. And I have now to show you, that it is a lamp for that most difficult of the soul's roads—the road through the valley of the shadow of death.

Sometimes every other road is shut up but this. God orders it so, that even a young life—as young as yours—is withdrawn from all the roads of earth, the road to school, and to playground, and to business, and every other road but the road to death.

That was the case with the son of a dear friend of mine. God laid sickness on the boy, and left him under it for years, and then he died. And for all those years, God's word was a lamp unto his path.

Like Timothy, this child had taken the lamp to be his guide from his earliest years. And of this I will mention one proof. One day before he became sick, Andrew—that was his name—bounded out of the dining-room, peeped into the kitchen, where his mother happened to be, then went slowly back to the dining-room again, closed the door very gently, remained a short time, then opened the door and went bounding out to his play. His mother noticed all this, and could not make out what it all meant. She did not suspect him of anything bad ; but yet there was something suspicious-like in what he had done. Why did he peep in at the kitchen door the way he did, and then shut himself up in the room ? She said to herself, “ I shall ask him what it meant ; ” so at dinner she asked. Instead of answering directly, the boy said, “ Mother, what does that mean : ‘ *My Spirit shall not always strive ?* ’ ” And then, not waiting for a reply, he said : “ Mother, it was this. I had knelt to say my prayer, and ask God to keep me from bad words and bad deeds all day. And just as I was kneeling down to say it, Robert Black tapped at the window outside, and cried, ‘ Andy are you coming out to play ? ’ And I jumped up without saying a word of prayer and rushed out to go to

him. But at the outside door I was stopped by the words, '*My Spirit shall not always strive.*' They came suddenly into my heart. And I thought in some way they applied to me. But I didn't know what they meant, and I went to the kitchen to ask you what they meant, and I saw you were engaged. So I said, I will not trouble my mother just now, but I will go back into the dining-room and say my prayer. And when I had done this, I was so happy I could not keep from dancing with joy. And then I went out to play with Robert Black."

This dear boy was still very young when he was sent into the valley of the shadow. And for five long years, summer and winter, he was either in bed, or in an invalid's chair. But all through those years he took the word of God for a lamp. And through the whole, long, lonesome valley it led him by paths of pleasantness to the very gates of heaven.

His mother and he used to spend many an hour together. And there was a part of one chapter which was read by them every day. This was Andrew's "own chapter." It was the first ten verses of the fifth chapter of Romans. He greatly delighted in these verses, and loved to hear others repeat them. One day when he was very near the end of his journey, Mr. Finlay, his minister, came

in to see him, as he often had done before. But this day, without knowing that it was Andrew's favourite passage, he said, "Andrew, I think the Scripture for you is the first ten verses of the fifth chapter of Romans." Andrew's eyes brightened up, and he said to his mother afterwards, "Mother, that is *our* chapter, you know." Andrew did not merely read God's words,—he made them his own.

Andrew's trouble was one which caused him to have great pain at times. But it was very rarely this pain was allowed to show its presence. Sometimes his mother, looking suddenly, would see a wave of suffering rippling over his face. But he never said he was suffering. He never once complained. One day, when his mother discovered that he had been suffering greatly from toothache, she said, "Why did you not complain?"—"Oh, mother, what would be the good? My teeth are of no more use to me now." Then after a pause, looking up into her face and guessing her sorrow because he could not take food, he added in a whisper, "I am feeding on the bread of life. I have meat to eat which even you, dear, dearest mother, do not know of. My meat now, like Christ's, is just to do the will of God."

He had time to think of many things during the

years of his suffering. And lying on his bed waking through long hours at a stretch, looking at the subjects he thought about in the light of God's Word, he was led to clear views of things on which even old Christians sometimes have everything to learn. Among other things, he thought of Christian liberality. He had always kept a mission-box. He kept it at the head of his little bed. It had three divisions,—one for Home Missions, one for Foreign Missions, and one for the Bible Society. But shortly before he died he said to his mother, "Would you get me a new mission-box?" And when he was giving away his few possessions, he took the new mission-box and said, "This is for you, mother. It is a great privilege to be allowed to give for Christ's cause. And I hope you will put into this box, on the first day of the week, as the Lord shall prosper you, your gifts for Christ." God's word had lighted Andrew to the conviction that Christian giving must be a continual thing, and be done justly and systematically.

Although he left this instruction to his mother, I must not allow you to think that he considered himself wiser than she. He was a different sort of boy from that. With his whole heart he held his mother in honour and reverence. He was very

grateful to her for her great and many kindnesses to him. One day the conversation turned on crowns of glory. "Oh, mother," he said, "*you* will get many crowns. You have been a good, good mother to me. You have been my best friend. 'Twas you first led me to the Friend of sinners."

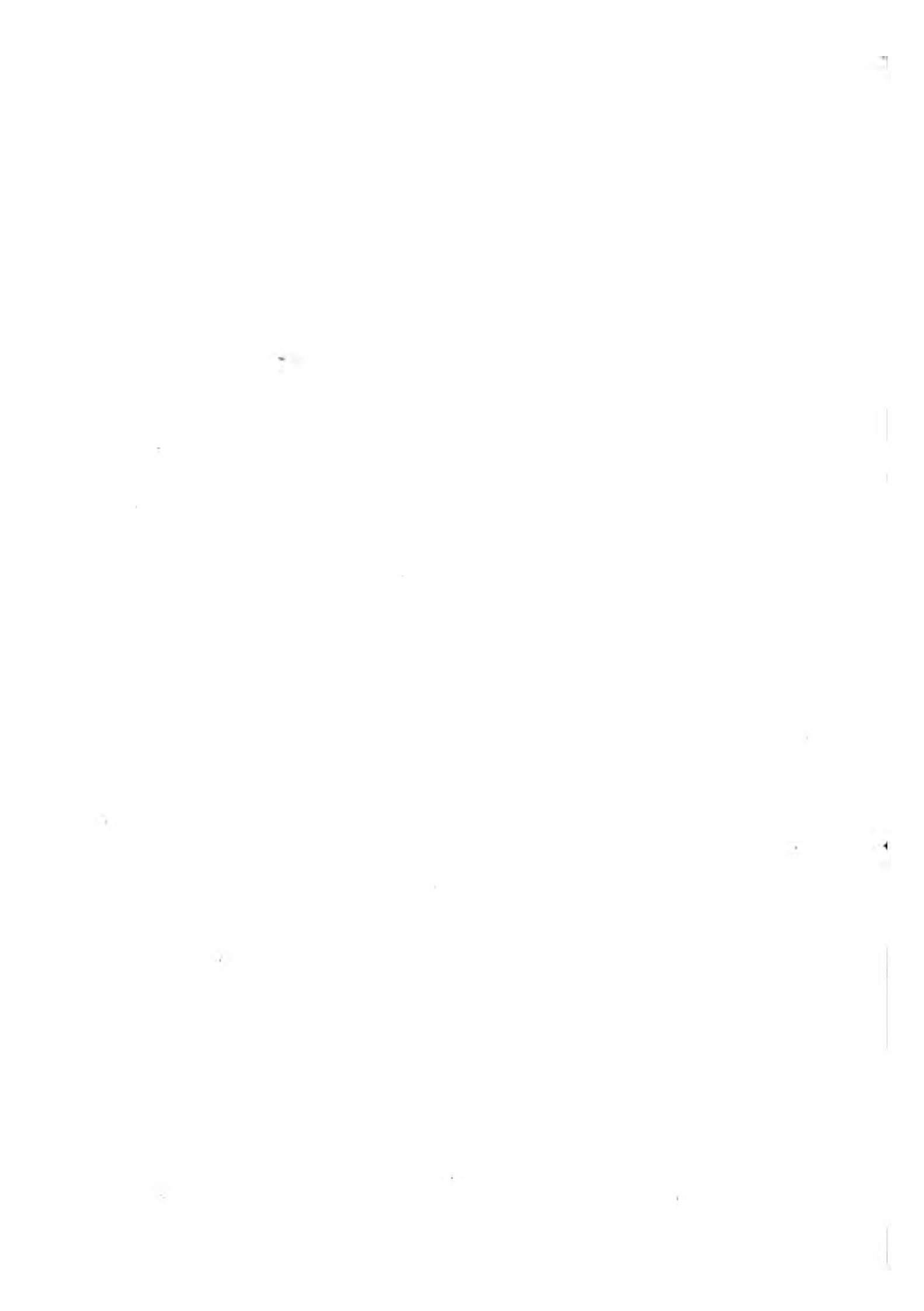
Indeed, this, which is always the mark of a humble and right heart, very richly distinguished his. He was very grateful for kindnesses done to him. And his eldest brother, James, had been very attentive and kind to him. Almost nightly he sat by his little couch, and read to him, and cheerily talked with him. One evening, as the end drew near, Andrew expressed great anxiety lest James should not get home from business in time. But James was home in good time that night, and, as usual, went first of all up to Andrew's room. When he came in, the poor sick boy motioned him to his side, and then lifted up his two thin pale hands over his brother's head, and said—blessing him like an ancient prophet :—"The Lord God bless you for ever. The Lord our Father bless you for ever and for ever and for ever." Then he let his hands fall on James' head, and groped their way—for his sight was by this time failing—down the breast until he came to his brother's hand, and seizing his

hand with what little strength remained, he said :
“Thank you, Jamie, for all your kindness. You have been a kind, kind brother to me.”

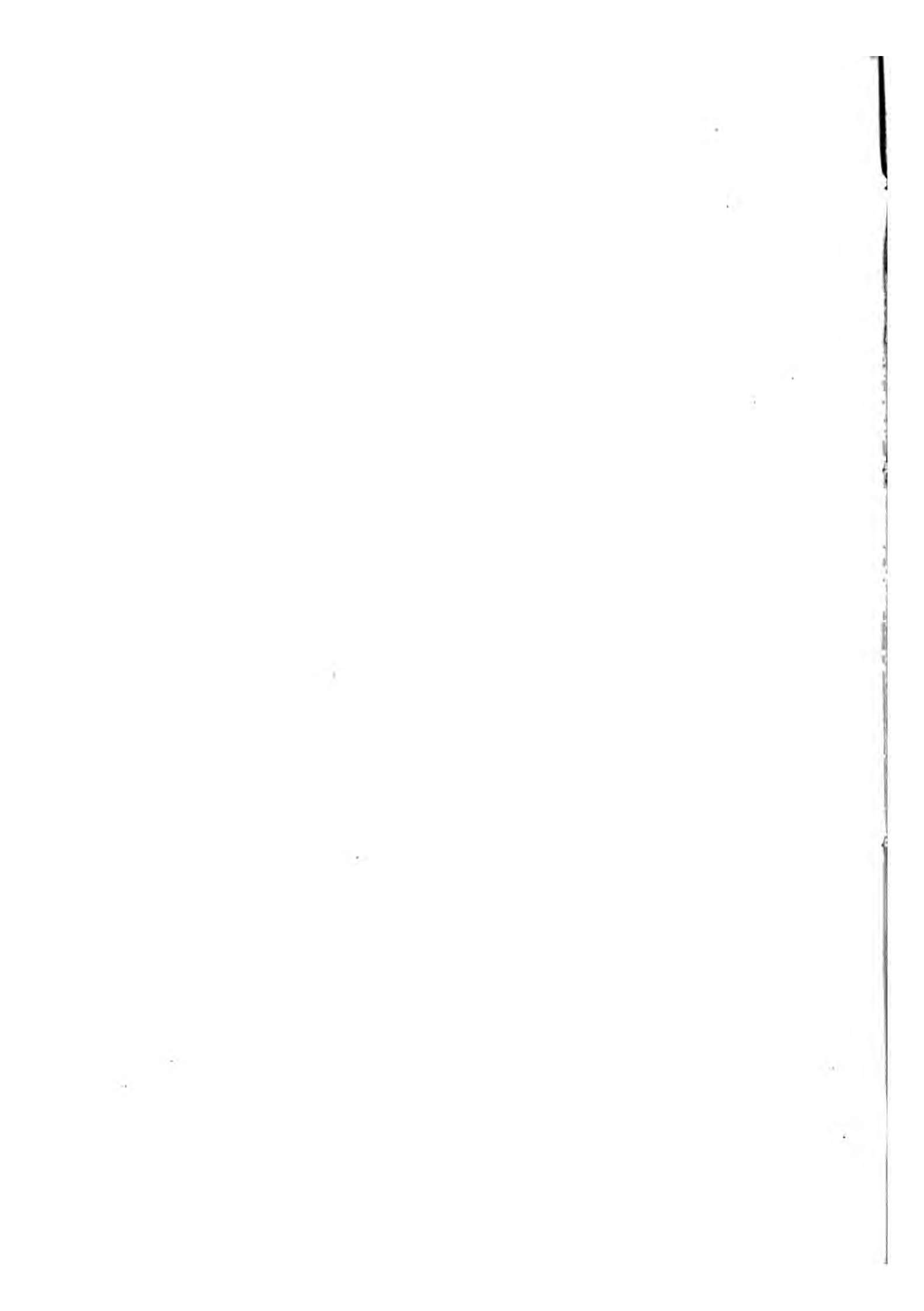
Before he died, he called all the family to his bedside and addressed farewell words to each, and gave each a little keepsake. But his mother saw that he was exciting himself beyond his strength, and said, “Andrew, it is too much for you.” His reply was : “Oh, mother, how can I help it? When Jacob saw the wagons which Joseph sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob revived. And is it wonderful if my spirit revives, when I see the horses of fire and the chariots of fire which my Lord has sent for me?”

Just before the close, his mother and her sister were beside him. They noticed a change coming over his face. And the poor sick countenance became very beautiful, exceeding in beauty, shining as one transfigured. “Do you see that?” the one sister said in hushed tones to the other. At that moment the dying child opened his eyes and said eagerly, but in the faintest voice, “Did you see Him, mother?”—“See whom, my dear?”—“Oh,” he answered in a whisper, “the Saviour has been here, and I have seen Him.”

These were his last words.



How Christ Dries up Our Tears.



HOW CHRIST DRIES UP OUR TEARS.

I USED to wonder why the Bible says so much about tears. At that time I did not understand tears. I could not imagine a life of which the drying up of tears should be a sign ; nor a Saviour to whom it should be a work.

I suppose the same wonder is in boys still. Children know laughter better than weeping. They have not learned how full our life is of tears. And consequently they do not yet feel the need of a Saviour who shall be a drier up of tears. That may be the case with some of you. You may be saying to yourselves at this moment : "Tears ! What have we to do with tears ? *We* have no tears to be dried up." Well, I am going to tell you how Christ dries up our tears, and I will begin by telling a story about tears.

Many hundred years ago, in a village a thousand miles and more away from this, there lived a little girl not older than some of you. It is not unlikely

that she said just what you are saying about tears. I can fancy her stopping in the midst of her romping some bright day and saying to herself, "What a happy, joyous time this is! What a happy world! How nice to go whirling and singing and laughing under the sunlight as we children do!" And even years after, when she was no longer a little girl, I can fancy her still thinking that she lived in a happy world. She saw the streams of people as they went past on the Sabbath day to worship. She saw happy fathers, happy mothers, happy children. And her young heart might sometimes rise on tiptoe, and look forward two, three, four years, and see the sweetest visions of a beautiful home in the future, and dear forms glancing out and in, and herself the queen of it all.

Well, this girl grew up to be a woman; and God gave her a beautiful home, and He made her queen of it all. He gave her a husband, and one little son. Her visions of the future had come true. And you might think she was still happy, and, like you, had no tears to be dried up. My own opinion is, that she ought to have been happy. Thinking of her life in that beautiful home, I can believe that she was very happy. But a day came—a sad day for her—when, if you or I could have looked

in through her window, we should have seen her standing by the bed-side wringing her hands, and turning away her face to hide her tears. There, upon that bed, lies her sick husband, about to die. His face is pale ; his hands are thin and cold. He makes a feeble movement with his lips. She stoops down, and kisses him—for the last time. Then his eyelids close, and his breathing ceases, and he is dead. She that was the happy wife—and before that, the happy, happy little girl—has become a widow. She has tears now to be dried up.

I daresay there are girls who do not know how sorry and tear-filled the heart of a widow is. The day may come when they will know it only too well. On that sorrowful day, if ever it darken on any of you, I pray God you may remember what I am telling to-day ; and you will find strength in the thought that Jesus can dry up your tears.

The poor widow of whom I am speaking could not find that comfort. She had never heard of Jesus. But she turned to her little boy, and said in her heart, “This boy will dry up my tears.” And it is very sweet for a widow to have a little boy. When her heart is sad and weary she can look to him and say, “That is *his* child.” And when the child grows up, she is pleased with the thought, that

he has his father's eyes, and hair, and voice, and walk. And she says, and she is very happy when she says it, "He is the very image of his father."

This boy grew older and taller, and the widow loved him more and more. God had taken away her husband, but her son was left. Perhaps she said to herself, "I shall be happy once again. My boy speaks kindly to me when I am sad ; he helps me when I am wearied ; he will work for me when I am old ; he will sit beside me when I am sick ; and he will bury me when I am dead."

The poor old widow ! I think I see her sitting by her door some summer evening, looking at her boy as he comes up the street, recalling a form that twenty years before was just like his, and very glad that a living picture of that form was with her still. I should not be surprised if the pleased mother thought she had no more tears to be dried up.

But one day there was a great stir of people about her house. Some, with sad faces, were going in ; others were gathering before the door. Inside, the poor widow was weeping again. Where is that brave son who was to have cheered her in her sorrow ? Ah ! you may search for him, but you will not find him. He is neither in the fields nor about the village. But if you listen, you will hear a

shuffling of feet within the door. And see ! there is an open coffin coming forth ; and behind it walks the poor widow. Her boy is there—on that coffin—dead. “ He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.”

In the country where this happened the graveyards are outside of the town. I think it would be very sad for the mourners to pace along the streets with that coffin ; but sadder still when they had to leave the streets behind and go out into the open country. Something of this sadness you may have felt yourselves. Perhaps you have seen a funeral going from your own house ; and you went to the window, and watched it slowly faring down the streets ; and so long as you could still see it you felt that you had not taken the last farewell. There was one little tie between it and you still. But when it turned into another street, and you could see it no more,—then the tie which bound you to the dead was utterly broken. This very sadness, I am sure, the old widow must have felt. When the little procession of mourners passed out from among the houses, and out through the gate, although she was with them, she would feel that the tie which bound her to her beloved boy was fast snapping asunder. She did not speak. It is a

heavy grief which cannot speak. But if there had been a window in her breast, you might have seen her soul toiling for utterance, as if she wanted to say, "Oh, my son, thou hast left the village for ever! Thou art drawing near to the place of graves. I shall never see thee more. Thou fruit of my early love! thou image of thy buried father! thou hope of my old age! my staff and stay! my green and flourishing tree! how art thou cast down and withered! The grave has opened its mouth for thee. My son, my son! would to God I had died for thee, oh my son!"

That was a touching sorrow. And it seemed as hopeless as it was touching, for there was no one left to lighten her sorrow. Her husband was in the grave; her son was now to be laid by his side; and who then would dry up her tears? There are people who say, "Time will dry up sorrow;" and there are people who say, "Friendship will dry up sorrow." And time with its changes can do much; and friends with their love can do much; but neither time nor friendship can dry up such tears as that widow was that day shedding. Death holds what he has gotten with a hand of iron, and who is he who can unloose its grasp?

But I have a wonderful thing to tell you next.

This widow's son died when the blessed Saviour was upon the earth ; and help was coming near of which she did not even dream. For at that very moment, when her dead boy was being carried out of the town, Jesus was about to enter ! Death going in that direction ! The Lord of life coming in this ! His disciples were with Him, and He was teaching them by the way. They were drawing life from His words. And yet if you had seen Him, you would have seen nothing to tell you that He was the Lord of life. He had neither a crown upon His head, nor a sceptre in his Hand. To appearance He was but a poor and toilworn man. " But when He saw the widow, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, *Weep not.* And He came and touched the coffin : and they that bare it stood still. And he said, *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.* And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all : and they glorified God, saying, *That a great prophet is risen up among us ; and, That God hath visited His people.*"

There was a great emperor living at Rome when that took place ; and in this land of ours there was a people who lived in dens and caves instead of houses, and for clothing had skins of beasts. Here,

a wild, strange people, with strange, wild looks and ways! There, a great emperor, with gold crowns and purple robes, and silver couches and marble palaces! But if you could bring back that old time to the earth, and look at it with your own eyes, I think I know what you would most wish to see, at the close of the day which saw that wonder done. Not the wild people of this land in their dismal caves,—not the great emperor of Rome in his marble palaces,—but that widow of Nain at her fireside with her son. You would wish to see how she looked at her risen, living son, and how her son looked at her. And you would wish to hear the psalm which they sang together to Him, who had unloosed the hand of death, and given back to the childless the son she had lost.

Christ dried up the tears of the widow by giving back to her the son she had lost. He has many ways of drying up tears, but none that He uses oftener than this.

He dried up the tears of Martha and Mary the same way: He gave them back their brother. He dried up the tears of Jairus the same way: He gave him back his daughter. He dried up the nobleman's tears the same way: He gave him back his son. What he did to these bereaved ones was a

promise to them and us. When you see the buds on the trees in spring, you know that the buds will yet be leaves, and that under the leaves will be clusters of fruit. The raising of Lazarus, of the widow's son, of Jairus' daughter, of the nobleman's son by the Lord, and His kindness in giving back, to those who were weeping, the beloved ones they had lost, were so many buds on the tree of life. They were promises of still better things.

These better things began to appear when Jesus Himself rose from the dead. The others were promises: that was fulfilment. The others were buds: that was the fruit. For He rose from the dead, that all might rise. And His resurrection morning was the dawn of the resurrection morning of the whole world.

The tears of the nobleman, of the widow of Nain, of Jairus, of Martha and Mary would all break out anew. They and their beloved ones would one day be again sundered by death. But on the resurrection morning, the dead shall be given back never more to be taken away. There shall be no more death, no more parting of friends, no more crying. All who have fallen asleep in Him shall then be given back to their friends. Mothers shall receive their children, and children their parents,

and their brothers and sisters. It will be a glorious day. The gate of heaven on that day will be crowded with scenes like that which the disciples saw at the gate of Nain. Sorrow will give place to joy. Tears will be dried up for ever. And friends who were parted by death will be given to each other again :

“Kindred joyous kindred greeting
Pain and grief behind them cast.”

Even now, Jesus is saying to those who have lost their beloved ones, “Weep not.” If some dear brother or sister, or if your godly father or mother has been taken from you by death, do not sorrow as those who have no hope. You have this hope: Christ will give back to you the dear one you have lost. Wait patiently on Him. The resurrection morning is sure to come. And then the trumpet shall sound, and the graves shall give up their dead, and the long-parted ones shall rush together, and they shall be for ever with the Lord, and all their tears shall be dried up.

Children of Light.



CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

GOD has beautiful names for His children : Daughters of Jerusalem, Sons of Zion, Children of Abraham, Children of the Bride-chamber, Children of the Kingdom, Morning Stars, and Children of Light.

I have a great love for the last of these. The most beautiful thing in the world is light. And it is like covering a child with a robe of light to make light a part of the name.

There is one thing in the names given by God which is different from names given by us. The name points to something like itself in the soul. When therefore He calls His sons and daughters "Children of Light," it is because, in one way or other, they have light and the love of light in their souls.

In a most delightful book I once read,—Mr. St. John's "Tour in Sutherlandshire,"—the author mentions a very interesting fact about birds and light :—

“ Birds are very fond of catching the last evening rays of a winter’s sun, and are always to be found in the afternoon on banks facing the west, or swinging, if there is no wind, on the topmost branch of the small fir tree. On the mountains, too, all birds, as the sun gets low, take to the slopes to face the west ; whilst in the morning they betake themselves to the eastern banks and slopes to meet his rays. No bird is to be found in the shade during winter, unless it has flown there for shelter from some imminent danger.

“ This is very remarkable in the case of the golden plovers, who in the evening ascend from slope to slope, as each becomes shaded by the intervening heights, until they are all collected on the very last ridge which the sun shines upon.”

Now it seems to me, that God’s children resemble birds in this love of light ;—only, the light which they love is the light of goodness and truth and righteousness, which comes from Christ.

In the whole world there are just two kinds of children :—children of light and children of darkness. If we could open God’s book, and turn to the names of the children, we should find the good children marked as “ children of light,” and the bad children as “ children of darkness.”

It would make me very happy if I knew that all the children who hear me were “ children of light.” Your parents, your teachers, and all who love you would be happy to know it. You would be happy yourselves.

And where is the boy or girl who would not wish

to have that beautiful name? I want to help you not only to wish, but to pray and strive for it. I believe that every one of you may have it.

Every child who would become a child of light must resemble the light; must *be* what light is, and *do* what light does.

I am going to show you that a child of light is just a child who is like the light. The things true of light are true of the child of light. And, therefore, to know what sort of children "children of light" are, we must search out the good things in light itself. The same good things are in the "children of light."

Now out of the many good things in light, I shall mention four. It is a likeness of God. It chases away darkness. It is a bringer of gladness. And, it does not shine for itself. When those four things can be said of you, you will have become children of light. I can only speak to you of the first and second to-day.

I.

You all know something about light. The house we live in is full of light, it is streaming in through the windows and showing you the faces around you and the words on your book. Now

light is a likeness of God. You never saw God Himself. Nobody has. But God sends us likenesses of Himself every day. Light is a likeness of Him. The light of the fire is one likeness. The light of the lamp is another. But the grandest of all is the light of the sun. When the sun goes soaring up into the sky, it is to give us a picture of God.

It is the same with children of light. They are pictures of God. When you see one of them you see an image of God. Light is like God. The child of light also is like God.

When Jesus was a child He was a perfect child-picture of God. If you or I had seen Him then or afterwards, we should have seen the very form and image of God. All He was, and did, and suffered, when He was here, was a picture. It was the picture of God's love and life. God sent Him down from heaven to be His picture to men. Looking at Jesus was the same as looking at God. Jesus Himself said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He also said, "I am the light." He was the true, best light. He came from the place whence all light comes. He came to be to the soul of man what light is to the eye,—a picture of God. He was the holiest, the truest, the most beautiful picture of God in heaven or earth.

I know that no child of earth can be so fair a picture of God as Jesus was ; but I also know that every child who resembles Jesus is as really a picture of God as He. God is light. His children are children of light. The child is like the Father, he loves what his Father loves, he hates what his Father hates. There is truth in God : that very truth is in His child. There is holiness in God : that very holiness is in His child. There is righteousness in God : that very righteousness is in His child. Looking at the child you are looking at a picture of the Father. What he does is done as God would do it. What he says is said as God would say it. If God were a little child again He would be a child of light again, as Jesus was. And therefore all who are like God, all who are good like Him, and holy like Him, are children of light.

In the beautiful nineteenth Psalm it is said, " Day unto day uttereth speech concerning Him." The meaning of that is, the light of one day bends forward to the light of the next, and one light calls to the other, How wonderful is God ! And we, seeing the light, seeing it come, morning after morning, from the sky, are made to think of that loving Father who made it and sent it into the world.

Now "children of light" do this very thing. They make men think of God. The light of the goodness which is in their lives came down from God, and the sight of it carries the thoughts of all who see it up to God. People ask, Where did that goodness come from? Who made the light which is in that child of light? Where is the sun from which it comes? Who keeps it burning and shining in these lives? What did God do that they might possess it? What is God doing that they may retain and shed it forth? And thus, the very light which is in the child of light makes men think of God.

In this they resemble the child Jesus too. They are pictures of God. Their being so makes men think of God. And down here upon earth, and up there in heaven, they have the beautiful name. This is the first mark of the child of light.

II.

The second thing in light we were to look at is, that *it chases away darkness*. This second good also we find in children of light.

Light cannot endure darkness. When it meets with darkness it strikes into it and chases it away.

You have seen this yourselves on some winter

afternoon as you sat by the fire. The darkness has come in and crept up and around and above you, until you could not see a chair, or table, or face in all the room. But some one breaks up the fire and the grate is filled with light, and the light comes out, and out, and out, over you and over all who are beside you, until not a dark corner is left in the room.

Or, perhaps you have awakened some night out of sleep and found the room filled with darkness. You little brother is lying by your side. You can touch him with your hands. You can hear him breathing with your ears. But if you strain your eyes as much as you can, you will not see his face. It is there turned towards your own on the same pillow, and you cannot see one bit of it. If at that moment, however, mamma or nurse should come into the room with a light, with a very little lamp, with a flame no bigger than a shilling-piece, this little flame, little though it be, would begin to chase away the darkness. It would reach over the bed, and lift the black shadow from your brother's face, and roll it away, until you could see the red on his lips and the red on his cheeks, and the moving of his breast with the breathing you only heard before.

It is always the way with light. It will not live in the same room with darkness. It chases it away.

Now the child of light resembles light in this very thing. But I must explain to you before saying more, that there is a worse darkness than the darkness which fills the room at night. It is the darkness of the kingdom of darkness. And the kingdom of darkness is just the kingdom of evil men and women. Bad deeds belong to this kingdom, and bad thoughts and words. These are "the works of darkness" you read about in the Bible. A child of light cannot endure these works of darkness. The darkness which the child of light chases away is the darkness of sin. He abhors bad thoughts and words. He hates the darkness and sin of them, and tries to chase them away.

But only "children of light"—children who have the beautiful name—do this. There are people who love evil better than good, and darkness better than light. These people would not try to put the darkness of evil away. The bad black sins of an evil heart, the bad black deeds of an evil life, are loved by such people. People of this kind are called in the Bible "children of darkness."

When the holy Jesus was about to return to His Father, He invited His twelve disciples to sup with Him. He had been a very kind Brother to them. He had told them of heaven and of the Father in heaven, and He wanted to make them heirs of heaven. And now He was going away to prepare a place for them in heaven. In a little while he would come back and receive them unto Himself, that where He was they also might be. Was it not most kind and loving in the Saviour to plan all this, and tell His poor brothers of all His plans? But all the time He was speaking to them at that supper-table, one of these very brothers was looking towards the window and wearying for the night to come. It was Judas. He had a bad black thought in his heart, which he did not try to put away. And when at last the night did come, this bad brother rose up and stole away from the table, and out of the room, and down into the dark street, and through the darkness, till he came to a company of evil men who hated his Lord and wanted to put Him to death. He did not try to put away the bad thoughts about his Lord which were in the hearts of these men. He did not try to roll back the cruelty which they were plotting against the Lord. He was a child of darkness.

He sold himself to these men for thirty pieces of silver. For thirty pieces of silver he gave up his kind and loving Master to cruel foes.

A child of light would have acted otherwise. A child of light would have hated and rebuked the evil of these evil men. In one way or other a child of light would have tried to chase it away.

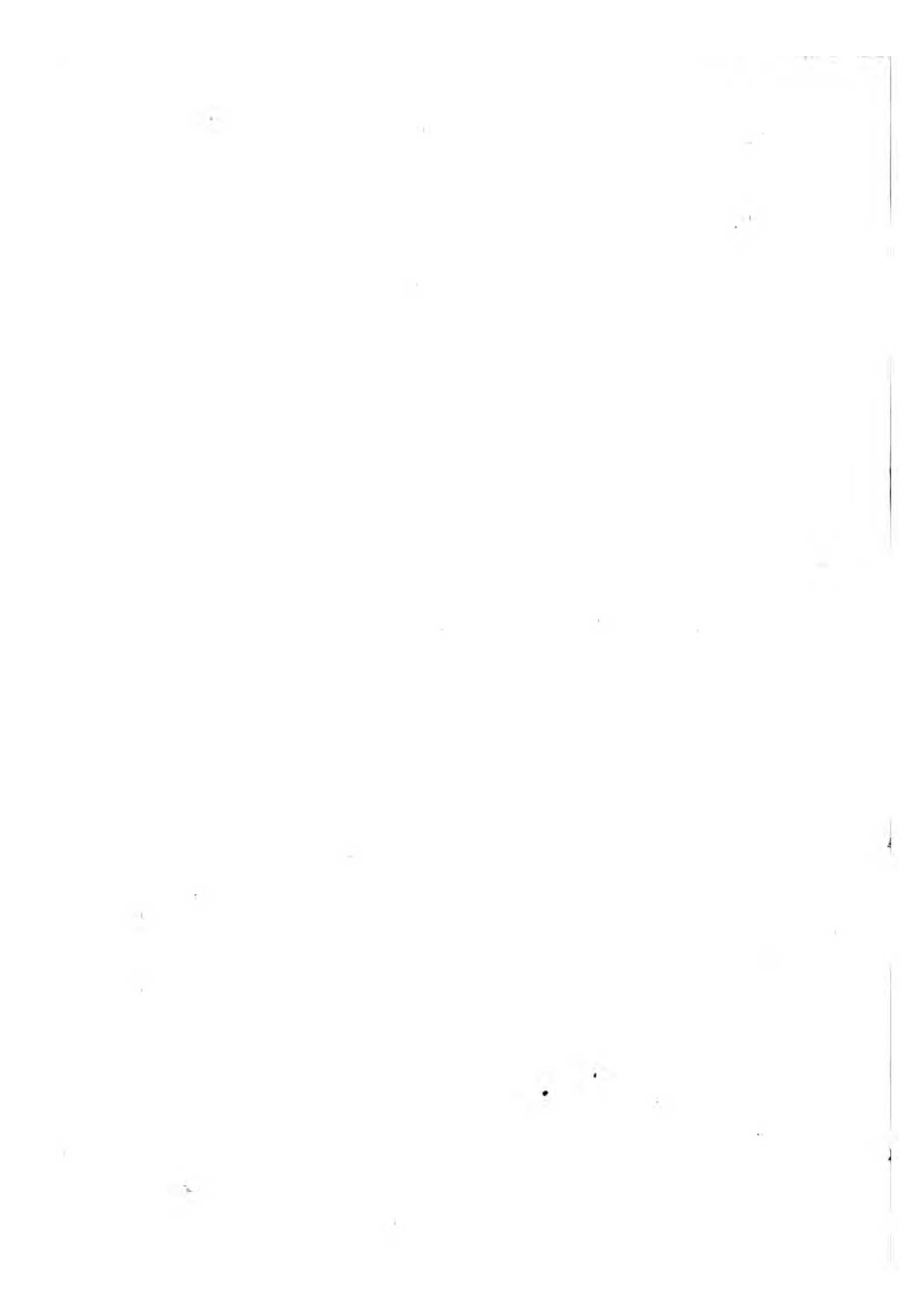
I remember to have read about a negro boy—a child with a black skin, but none the less a child of light—who would not have acted as Judas did. By God's help he was the means of breaking up and scattering a great mass of darkness. A company of foolish bad men used to meet in an American town, about a hundred years ago, to make themselves vile with drink. They met in the evenings, and were known as the Drinking Club. This negro boy was their slave. A great preacher, the great George Whitfield, came to the place and lifted up his voice against drunkenness. And these drunkards hated him. They hated him because he was letting in light upon their evil ways. They did not love the light, their deeds being evil. And they set themselves to mock, and scoff, and laugh at Mr. Whitfield. Now it happened that their negro slave was something of a mimic. He could speak so like another person that one hearing

him would think it was that other person himself. And one night his masters ordered him to mimic Mr. Whitfield. "Not that," said the boy, "me dare not do that. Massa Whitfield said, 'De negro boy has white heart.' Him said, 'God love de negro boy and send Him Son to die for de poor negro.'" But his masters would take no excuse. The boy was bought with their money, bought for life, was their slave, and they compelled him to stand up on a table and speak as Mr. Whitfield spoke, that they might laugh and mock. And he did stand up, but not to make them laugh. In the very tones of the great preacher he said to these men, "Me speak de truth in Christ. Me lie not. *Except you repent you shall all perish.*" And the word spoken by that negro slave pierced like an arrow into the hearts of these bad men; they shrunk one by one out of the room; they shrunk from the presence of their slave. As the darkness shrinks from the light, so shrank those children of darkness from the rebuke of that child of light. The light that was in him chased the darkness that was in them away. They did not dare to laugh at Mr. Whitfield. They broke up their club and met no more to make themselves vile with drink.

And always there is this power in the children

of light. The goodness which makes them children of light puts badness in others away. The hatred, and mockery, and wicked scorn of those drunkards fled at the outshining of the love, and faith, and goodness of their slave. Always it has been so. Always it will be so. All the evil in the world shall yet be put out of it in this way. God will make the goodness of His own children to shine so brightly in their lives, that badness, like a great shadow, must disappear. And already, if you to whom I speak are children of light, if in God's book you have the beautiful name, you are helping to chase away the evil which is in the world. You are letting your light so shine, that others, seeing your good deeds, are putting away their badness and coming to God for light.

More about Children of Light.



MORE ABOUT CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

III.

THERE is a third thing in light, which we find also in the children of God. *It brings gladness with it wherever it comes.*

Light is sweet and pleasant to the eye. And it makes the place it comes to sweet and pleasant too. If it only peeps into a corner it brings a smile there.

You have seen at the close of day, when the sun was going down, how sad the earth begins to be. You cannot help being sad yourselves. All things grow dark and silent. One might fancy that the earth was losing its voice. Fewer footsteps sound along the road. The road itself grows black. Blackness covers houses, and hills, and trees, and everything. You dislike the blackness. You shut your doors upon it. You shut your eyes against it and go to sleep.

But rise up in the morning and look. Look at

the red sun climbing up the eastern sky with daylight in his arms. The whole earth is gladdened. The swallows flash out from their nests in the corners of the windows to welcome the light. The larks spring up from their nests in the fields to sing their morning song in the light. All the birds of the air break out into hymns of gladness. The cattle are led out to the pastures. The sower goes forth with his seed. The hammer begins to play on the anvil and the shuttle in the loom. The streets resound with the noise of wheels and the tread of human feet. The shops and the warehouses throw off their shutters, and open their doors, and spread out their wares to the light. And town and country, and sea and land, are filled with the hum and stir of life. Brightness rests on everything. So pleasant is the light! So much gladness it carries with it wherever it goes.

Wherever it goes it carries gladness. It brought great gladness one morning through the little garret window into old Mary's room. Poor old Mary! She had lain all night long in the darkness, counting the hours, as the town clock pealed them forth, and waiting wearily for the light. All alone and sleepless and sick was she. She watched and waited for the morning light. The light would be

company to her. Nobody came to visit old Mary but the light. And there again on that morning it came. It came to her little window and shone in and made her glad. And she blessed the good God who sends the light. "Ah! blessed God," she says, "Thou never leavest nor forgettest me. Thou sendest Thy morning light to my poor dwelling. An hour ago I could see nothing. My geraniums, my rose-bushes, my myrtles were all black. My room was filled with blackness. Now, how lovely hast Thou made them all. Thy light has come once more to visit me, and my plants are clothed with green, and their flowers with white and red."

She was reaching out her hand to a cup of water. All night long she had been groping for it, and could not find it in the darkness. At that moment a gentle tapping sounded on the door.

"Come in," cried old Mary. And the door opened and a little maid came in, with a basket over her arm.

"Please Mary," said the little maid, "yesterday was my birth-day and I got some presents and money, and here is some tea and sugar and bread I have bought for you. And if you will not be angry, I will stay and make it ready, and tidy up your house, and read a psalm to you."

“Angry,” exclaimed the sick old woman. She was going to have said, How could I be angry? But her heart filled, and the tears came up into her eyes and she could not speak. She could only lie still and look at the dear child, and again and again look at her—as she lit the fire, and made ready the tea, and spread the breakfast-table—and offer up thanks to God that there are children in the world as good and pleasant to look upon as the morning light.

And what girl was this? You wish to know her name. But I cannot tell you her name. I do not know what name she was known by at home and school. But I am sure that “Child of Light” is her name in the book of God.

Some children resemble clouds. They darken every place they come to. They quarrel with their brothers and sisters. They quarrel with their school-mates. They vex their parents. They make their neighbours angry. We do not love such children. They are children of darkness. We are glad to see them going out of our sight. But the children of light bring gladness with them wherever they come. From the hour they rise until they return to bed, they make every body around them glad. Other children run to them

and stay beside them. Their parents are made happy by them. The heart of their teacher is filled with joy. We all love them as we love the light. The gladness of light is in their hearts, and eyes, and lips, and hands, and feet. And in the book of God they have the beautiful name.

IV.

I have now given you three marks of the children of light. I have to name one mark more, and it is this : *They do not live for themselves.*

Light does not live for itself. The sun does not shine to give light to itself. The fire does not burn to warm itself. They never think about themselves.

Light shines to do good to man. There are hundreds and thousands every morning, who bless God for the help which comes to them with the dawning light.

One dark night, a shepherd was awakened by the barking of his dogs. The sheep were bleating all over the hill. They had broken from the folds in terror. The shepherd thought of all the deep pits and water-holes into which they might fall. The bleating came more and more faintly to his ear. But he could not help them. Night lay

heavy on the hill. He could only wish for the light.

That same night, far from human dwellings, a poor traveller lost his way on a dreary moor. Neither moon, nor star, nor house-light could he see. He too thought of the deep pits and water-holes into which he might fall, and of the wild ways into which he might wander in the dark. How he longed for the light !

And on that very night, away out at sea, a homeward-bound ship was driving shoreward before the wind. A few miles more in that direction and it will be dashed in pieces on the rocks.

And lo ! the kind sunlight came to the help of them all. It cleft the darkness, and spread its wings, and alighted upon the rocks in time to save the ship. It shed the dawn over all the moor, and laid bare the lost road to the benighted traveller.

And down into every gully and nook, in the hills where the sheep were scattered, shone its blessed beams, so that the shepherd was able to gather them into the folds again.

Not one morning only, but every morning since the world began, the morning light has been coming to the help of men. All that time, over every land, over sea and land, the sun has been giving

away its light for the good of men. See how it has come to ourselves. Since the day of our birth, day after day, it has come laden with good things. And year by year it has brought summer and harvest in its bosom and laid them down at our doors. It has shone upon field and garden until the flowers sent up their fragrance and the berries hung ripe upon the bushes, and the ears of corn were yellow on their stalks, and the apples and pears brown and juicy on the trees. And still it continues to come. All through the dreary winter it comes. Through the mist, and the rain, and the snow, it comes, although it must travel in the cold and breathe the breath of the frost.

And in this very thing too, children of light resemble the light. They love to do good to their fellow-men. They know that there are hearts and homes over all the world where the story of Christ's love has never been told. And they spend their lives in trying to send that story there. In their own little circle they tell of Christ's love to themselves, and of the beautiful name, and of God's willingness to bestow it upon all. They gather poor children out of poor homes and teach them to read of Jesus. Or they pray to God to bless the labour of missionaries in heathen lands. Or they

give money to send missionaries to these lands. It is but a little portion some children of light can spare. Perhaps it is no more than a penny. No matter. The penny helps to buy a Bible, or to send out a missionary, or to build a church or a school.

I once heard of a poor Kaffir woman whose heart was turned to Jesus by the reading of a single tract. Who can tell but this tract was bought with the one penny of some one child of light! And if so, across the broad sea, this ray of light,—this one little gleam in the tract, from the child of light here,—had shone into the heart and hut of that poor ignorant Kaffir, and called her out of darkness into God's marvellous light.

Perhaps there are boys hearing my words who shall grow to be learned men. And some day they may read the old story of the statue which was set up in Egypt once. It was the figure of an ancient king with a harp in his hand. The story says, that whenever the morning light touched the harp it began to sound. I do not know whether it happened just as it is told or not. But this I know, that the earth in which we live is like nothing else so much as that great stone king with the harp in his hand. The harp is the heart of man. And the

light which is to fill its strings with music is light from the cross of Jesus. And that light is falling, and spreading, and making morning-tide throughout the world. And whatever heart it touches begins to sound. And the time is coming when the light shall reach over all the earth, and enter into every house, and touch every heart. And then the great harp of human life shall sound. On hill and dale, on shore and sea, wherever there are human beings, it shall give forth its song. And the sorrow which is in the world shall be stilled with the music. And the sin shall disappear. And the heart of God shall be filled with praise. And from the rising to the setting of the sun men will praise the Lord. And all this shall come to pass because children of light do not live to themselves, but to send the light they have received to their fellow men.

These then are the four marks of the child of light. He is a picture of God. He is a chaser away of evil. He brings gladness with him wherever he comes. And he does not live to himself.

But I am sure there are two questions you will want to ask me before I close. You want to know *how* a child who is not yet a child of light, may become one? And *when*?

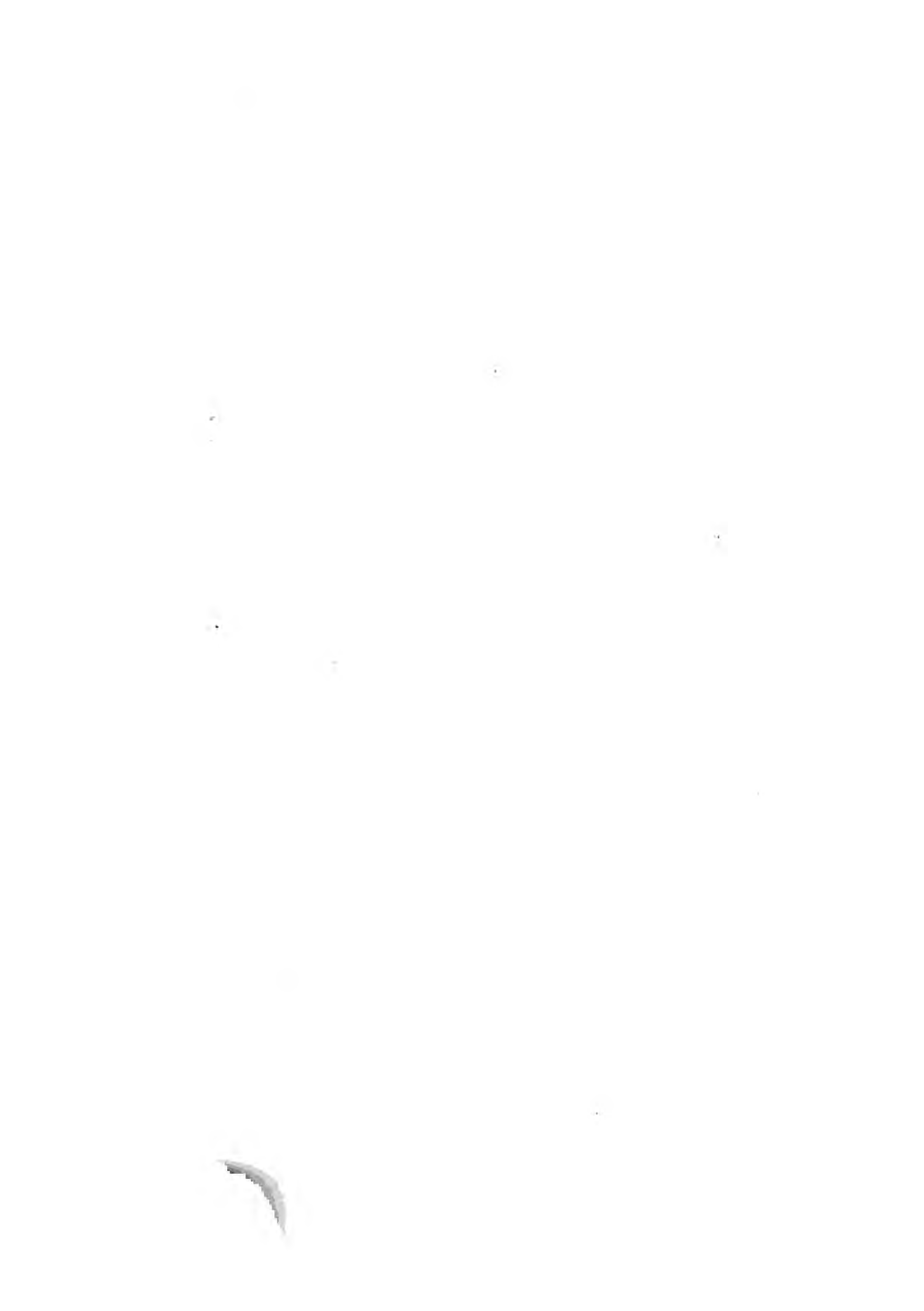
How ?

It is by opening the heart to the story of Jesus that a child is to become a child of light. That story is God's light for old and young. If it had not been told we could have known nothing about God's love to man, we should have had to live in darkness, and in darkness die. But that story has been told. Jesus Himself has come down to tell it. It is told for us all in the Bible. The Bible is the story of the light, which the good Father has sent down in Jesus, to make us all children of light. By reading that story, by taking that story into your heart, by believing it and loving it, and praying over it, a child is helped to become a child of light.

When ?

You should begin now. Now is the best time to become a child of light. This very hour. You cannot begin too soon. God is *waiting* to see you becoming children of light. Say to Him, "O my Father, Thou lovest me. Thou hast given Thy Son for me. Help me to take Thy Son for my light. Make me, by Thy grace, a child of light. For Christ's sake give me the beautiful name." And God will hear you and make you a child of light, and give you, in His book, the beautiful name.

The Bird and the King.



THE BIRD AND THE KING.

ALL the tears in the world have their spring in an unholy heart. If we had the hearts which God wished us to have, there would be no tears. It is because we have lost these hearts that we have tears to shed.

When God made our first parents, He gave them a heart without tears. He said to them, Do not spoil it, nor lose it, for the heart that will come into its place will be filled with tears. This heart is sometimes called in the Bible *the living soul*; sometimes *the image of God*; but to-day we shall call it *the holy heart of Eden*.

I wish I could tell you how beautiful this heart was. There is nothing I could mention to be compared with it for beauty. Not gold or silver, or crystal, or diamonds. It was more beautiful than flowers, or stars, or moons, or suns, or summer skies. Beautiful is a green hill-side all sprinkled

over with daises and buttercups, and white lambs feeding on the tender grass. Very beautiful is the wide blue sea, with ships sailing on its bosom, and little children playing on its yellow shore. But far more beautiful was the tearless heart which God gave to Adam and Eve in Eden. It was beautiful like His own—a heart like the heart of Him who has made all beautiful things.

Alas! our hearts are no longer like the heart of God. The holy heart of Eden has been lost. In our hearts now, there are wrong wishes, wrong thoughts, wrong tempers, wrong deeds. None of these were in the holy heart of Eden. There was nothing bad in that beautiful heart. If that heart had been kept, there would have been no sadness in the world. There would have been neither tears nor death in the world. But now the world is full of both tears and death. Always, over all the world, some are dying, and others are weeping, and many are doing wicked things. And death and tears and wickedness are all so many proofs that the happy heart of Eden has been lost.

You can see by this, that there is something for which both old and young have cause to weep. The holy, beautiful heart, which God intended us to have, has been lost. And we can never be

truly happy, we can never be truly good, till we get it back again. Without it we can never see Jesus, nor be like Him, nor be with Him in heaven. It is worth more than the whole world for us to get it back again.

Dear children, Jesus is very earnest about this lost heart. He did not merely speak about it, He came from heaven to win it back for you. He died on the bitter cross that we might have it back. Listen to a simple parable :—

The king of a warm and sunny country had a little bird, which he loved and kept in a garden he had planted for itself. Every morning the little bird rose out of its nest among the leaves, and went up through the balmy air, singing the sweetest songs, up to the king's palace on the mountain top, and was fed from the king's hand, and spent the day with the king. But the bird grew tired of its happiness—the foolish, foolish bird!—and one morning, it turned its head from the palace, and from the bread in the king's hand. And it bade farewell to the garden, and to the nest among the leaves. And it flew away, and away, and away, through the clouds, and over hills, and fields, and seas, until it lost sight of the sunny land where its garden lay, and came to a land of winter, where

the ice was mountains high, and snow lay always on the ground.

And there, in that cold country, the little bird grew cold. It could sing its pleasant songs no more. No kind king was there, to reach out his warm hand with crumbs of bread. It was perishing with cold and hunger. Its little heart grew cold, and it fell upon the snow, and lay there. And to look at, the bird was frozen, and stiff, and dead.

That night the loving stars, looking down from the sky, saw the little bird on the snow; and as their own light glanced back to them from the frozen feathers, they cried, "Alas, for the beautiful bird!"

Next morning the angels of God, who go to and fro through the earth to do His will, came to the country where the little bird was lying; and they stooped to the ground and felt the bird, and it was cold; and they put their hands above its heart, and that was cold. And they said, "Alas, for the beautiful bird! and alas, for him to whom the bird belonged! and alas, for the chilled heart of the poor bird, into which the warm life shall never enter again!"

But while the angels were lamenting, they heard

a voice behind them saying, "My bird was lost, and is found. Give the bird to Me."

And the angels lifted up their eyes, and beheld Him from whom the voice came. And they bowed their heads before Him. For He was their own king, and the king of the warm and sunny land. He had followed His bird over mountains and seas. The people of the cold country had used Him cruelly. He was all covered with wounds and blood. But He took the dead bird from the angels into His wounded hands, and put it into His bosom, close to His warm heart. And the heat went from His heart into the heart of the bird, and it began to breathe, and then to stir, and then to chirp. And then the king fed it with crumbs, and then He carried it back to the warm country, and to the garden He had planted for it, and to its nest among the leaves. And soon, it was once more going up, morning after morning, as in the former time, up through the balmy air, singing its sweet old songs, up to the palace-gate, and to the company of its king. The happy, happy bird!

I think you know what this parable means. When our first parents had the holy heart of Eden they could sing the sweetest songs, and their souls went up like a bird to the very gate of heaven, and

they were fed from the open hand of God. But when they lost that heart, they lost the songs too, and fed no longer from the open hand of God, and went up no more to the gate of heaven. They departed from God, and from Eden, and went far away, through the mists and clouds of evil, into a land where there was neither God nor gate of heaven. They went into the land of sin. And sin froze up their songs; and put a chill into their hearts, and tears into their eyes. And there they would have miserably perished; but the loving Jesus came after them, sought them out, and found them, and took them up in His arms, and put the holy heart of Eden into their souls again. And Jesus is offering this heart to every boy and girl, and to every man and woman in the world. And He has commanded me to offer it, in His name, to every one of you. The very youngest of you may have back again the holy heart of Eden. Only try to understand how Jesus loves you; only cry to God to help you to love Him in return. Love to Jesus is the lost heart come back again. And when it is once back, all badness shall go away from you, all tears shall be dried up. You will be happy, like our first parents in the Garden of Eden. You will be holy, like the holy Jesus Himself. And if

you accept His gracious offer, He will give you songs of heaven to sing, and open heaven's gate for you, and admit you into the presence of His Father, and give you bread of heaven to eat, and dry up all your tears.

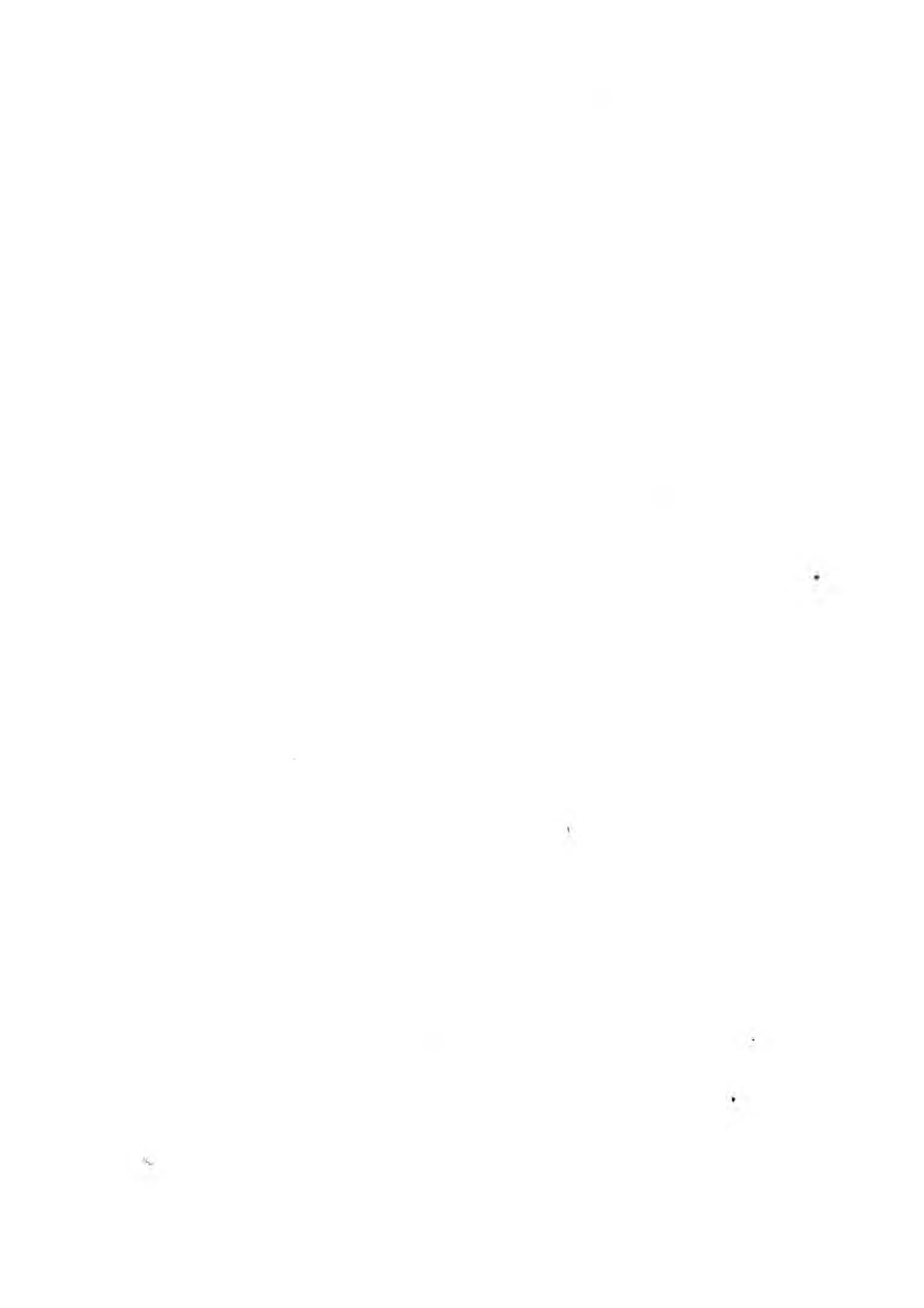
I do not know whether you have quite understood all I have been saying. There are some things some of you may not be able to understand for a long time to come. And perhaps, after all I have said, you do not yet understand how you should have tears to be dried up. For you are young. Your eyes are bright, and your cheeks are brown with health. Your limbs are light, and your hearts are full of joy. But the time will come, when your hearts will be familiar with losses, and you will know, as well as we who are old, that every child of man has tears to shed.

You appear to my eyes, at this moment, a stream of young and eager life. But the stream is moving onward, to manhood, to womanhood, to old age. The yellow locks must grow dim, and the black locks be turned to gray. And you will need a staff to support your steps. And then you must bid farewell to old age too. And it will be Eternity. And *then?* Ay, that is a main question—what *then?*

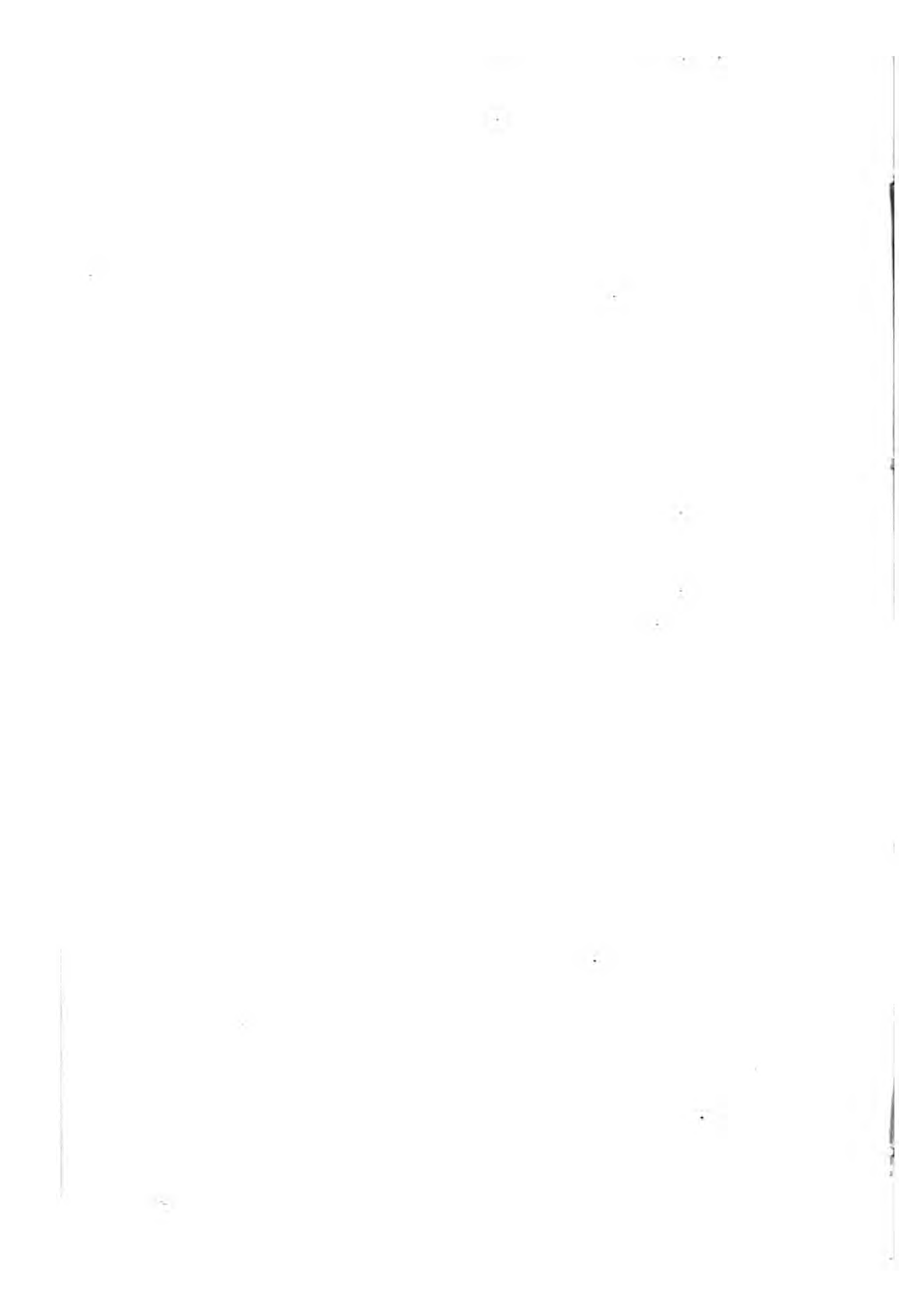
A few years ago, if those who love you had looked into the faces of all the children in this land, they would not have seen one of yours. A few years hence, and yourselves may look for some who love you to-day, and you will not find them. And in a few years after that, if an angel were to come down and look into every face in England, in Scotland, in the whole world, he would not see one face, of all the faces before me, among them all. It would make me happy to know that he should find them when he went back to heaven, if he were searching among the faces there.

How happy we should be, if we who are here to-day were all to meet in heaven! We should not then need to read about Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob: we should see them and speak with them face to face. And we should see Joseph, who had the coat of many colours; and Moses, who was cradled in the river; and David, who slew Goliath; and Elijah, who went up in the fiery chariot; and Daniel, who was in the den of lions; and the three children who were in the furnace; and Isaiah and Jeremiah, and Peter and James, and John and Paul. We should also see those holy women of whom the Bible tells: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Elizabeth, the mother of John; the sisters of Lazarus, and the widow who

got back her son. And what is better than all, we should see Jesus Himself, and He would kindly look upon us and graciously speak to us, and take us with Him "whithersoever He goeth." "And God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes."



The Door of the Heart.



THE DOOR OF THE HEART.

ONE morning, many years ago, I had to leave home early. It was still dark. East and west, north and south, it was dark. Above me rose the night-sky covered with clouds, like some great cathedral roof, all dark,—almost black with darkness—except one little chink of deep blue in the east.

On the lower edge of that chink of blue stood the morning star. I remember thinking it was a great sight, that solitary star, flaming there within that chink of blue. It looked to me like an angel, standing behind the darkness, knocking at the dark clouds, and saying, “Break up, ye dark clouds, and let me through, that I may shed my light upon the earth.”

While I was still admiring the great sight, the words flashed into my mind :—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” And instantly I seemed to be

walking under a still more solemn sky, and looking at a far greater sight. In the words which came into my mind I saw One greater than an angel—"the Bright and Morning Star" of God—standing at a door and knocking. In the morning stillness I seemed to hear a voice inviting me to look at this greater sight. "Behold,"—the voice said—"I stand at the door and knock." I remembered that these were Christ's own words. And I found myself thinking of Christ, the King of Glory, and thinking of Him in the form of One who is standing knocking at a door.

And it is this touching figure of our Lord I wish to set before you to-day. I want you to look with me for a little at this great sight of Christ at the door.

I ask myself—I hear you asking :—At what door we are to look for the Blessed Jesus standing and knocking?

The answer is :—At all doors. At all kinds of doors. At house doors, and shop doors, and school doors, and church doors. At every door which has not opened to let Him in. At every door which shuts in a bad man, or naughty child. At the doors of houses where there is no love between father and mother, between brother

and sister, between parent and child. At the doors of schools where the scholars are idle, or wicked, or thoughtless. At the doors of workplaces, where workers are unfaithful and masters unkind. At the doors of churches where God is not truly worshipped. At the doors of courts of justice where men are unjustly judged. And at the doors of kings' houses where nations are unjustly ruled. At all such doors the Lord Jesus stands and knocks. And, besides these, at another door,—a very little door, but a very, very precious door,—the door that opens into the house within the heart.

When God made the world, He built in it many houses. "In my Father's house are many mansions." "The Stars are mansions built by God." The deep sea, and the lofty mountains, and the leafy woods, are all mansions built by God. He made houses for beasts, and houses for birds, and houses for fishes. He made a house for the sea, and a house for the clouds; and for man He made the earth. But among all these houses there is one more precious than the rest,—one little, rich, unseen mansion, which He built for Himself, for Himself alone, and in which He desires to dwell. This unseen mansion—this rich, royal house of

God—is the heart. It is your heart, my heart, every heart. It is at the door of this house that the Lord Jesus stands and knocks.

Think of it, dear children! It is worth thinking about. A house for the Great Creator in the heart of a little child! How fearfully and wonderfully we are made! When you look at the body of another child, you might think there is nothing more. The body is the house. Yet the body is only the outer wall, the mere outside, of the house. Within this fair outside, in you, in every one, stands the real house. 'Eye hath not seen it.' It lies far in, deep down,—where love lies, where dreams live. Your heart is this house. It is at the door of your heart that Jesus knocks. Behold, O child, the gentle Jesus! He stands at the door of your heart, and knocks.

I have said that He made this house for Himself. But I have also to say that, although He made it for Himself, and desires to dwell in it, He does not always dwell in it. He is often kept standing without. 'Behold,' He says, 'I stand at the door and knock.' At the door! Outside of the door! He has not yet got in through the door! It is Jesus, at the outside of the heart-door, we have to look at. Jesus kept standing, and

knocking there, to get in! Oh, amazing sight! The great Saviour, whose hands were pierced for us, who came with blessings in those very hands to bless us, whose Own house the heart is, kept standing without! Shut out, and left to knock there, at the door of His house!

How is it with the children I am addressing to-day? Have *you* heard Christ knocking? And if you have, have you opened and let Him in?

Children who have let Christ into their hearts are like the beautiful temple King Solomon built, which had its innermost best room set apart for God.

Children who leave Him outside are like the inn at Bethlehem, which had no room for the infant Jesus. But that is an unblessed state, to have no room for Jesus. To leave Him—the best friend we have—the loving Saviour, outside, knocking at the door,—that would be such a sad thing for any child of man to do, and I desire so earnestly that you should not do it, that I will take up the rest of the time, which remains to-day, in stating some reasons why you should open your hearts and let Him in.

One reason is, because He will bring heaven with Him into your heart. Young people like you, and some old people as well, find a great difficulty

in beginning to be good. They resolve to be good. They try to be good; but always their badness gets the better of them, and they are sad. If they would only admit Jesus into their hearts, this difficulty would disappear. He brings goodness with Him into the heart. He brings a new heart, new love, new truth, new holiness; best of all, He brings Himself. Oh, that is goodness, and heaven itself, to have Jesus in the heart!

A second reason why you should let Jesus into the heart is, that He will cast out the bad things which are in the heart. And there are many bad things which need to be cast out—bad thoughts, bad wishes, bad feelings, lies, anger, malice, hatred, envy, selfishness, pride—these should all be cast out. We are told in the history of Jesus, that He cast out evil spirits from some Jewish children. There are evil spirits to be cast out from the children of this country too. The Bible tells us about “plagues of the heart.” The heart of a Christless child is full of plagues; plagues that will be plagues through all eternity if they are not cast out. Jesus is waiting at the door to come in and cast every one of them out. Lift up the door of your heart and let Him in, that He may cast out every plague and evil thing in your life.

A third reason why you should let Him in is, that it is easier to let Him in when you are young than after. The door at which He stands knocking grows thicker and harder to open the longer He is kept outside. The knocking comes more faintly every day. Jesus is still there ; but the spirit that should hear is growing deaf as it grows old. At last it does not hear at all.

I saw a sad story in the newspapers not long ago. A poor woman lived all alone in a dark cellar. She was very, very poor. But one day the neighbours missed her. They went to the door and listened, and there was no sound. They knocked and got no answer. They knocked again, and still there was no reply. Then they forced the door and went in. She was dead. She was seated on the floor, her body leaning against the wall. There was neither fire, nor furniture, nor bedclothes, nor food in the house. In a great rich city, she had died of want. Ah, sad though that was, the way many souls die is sadder still ! They shut out Jesus in the days of youth. They keep Him out when they grow old, and then when He comes knocking at the door of the heart with bread of truth, they cannot hear.—Their bodies are living ; their souls are dead. If you could break open the

door of that inner house where the soul is, and see what God sees there, you would find a heart without truth, or love, or faith, or prayer ; and in it a soul that has died of want.

Another reason why you should open to Jesus is, that He will not always knock. He will not knock after you die. If you die before He is let in, He will remain outside for ever. Eternity will flow on, and over you, for ever : but no hour can come when He will enter. There is no Saviour knocking at the door of any heart in hell.

He may go away from the door before you die. Ephraim had idols and kept Jesus out, and Jesus said, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." An awful word ! An awful thing to have Jesus say to food and bibles, and friends, and Providence: "Let him alone; knock no more."

I was coming home late one night. The long street was silent. Just as I reached my own door, I heard a loud knocking at the far end of the street. I heard it an hour after, when I was in bed. Then it stopped. Then I heard quick footsteps tramping along the street. Then all was silent. Just so it is with the knocking of Jesus at the doors of men's hearts. But no ear can hear the departing footsteps of Christ.

Some people are able to tell you when they first heard the knocks of Jesus. These are *first* knocks. But Mr. M'Cheyne once said to a little girl in Kelso : "Remember also there are *last* knocks." When the heart becomes hard and careless, then be afraid. Be afraid lest Christ should knock for the last time. Oh you, at whose hearts He is still knocking ; you, whose hearts are still fresh and young ; oh children, in the days of youth, open the doors of your hearts and let the King of Glory in.



Christ Knocking.



CHRIST KNOCKING.

THE last time I spoke to you it was to set before you the vision of Christ standing at the door of the heart. This morning I intend to speak of this knocking.

Jesus gives many kinds of knocks. But I mean only to mention three. And these three are the BREAD-KNOCK, the BIBLE-KNOCK, and the FEVER-KNOCK.

I.

OF THE BREAD-KNOCK.

Those children have come a great way in learning, who have learned, that all they eat and drink comes to them from Jesus. He gives us hunger, and bread to satisfy our hunger. Every day, although we see Him not, He covers our tables with food. And every day the hand that brings the bread knocks, by the bread He brings, at the door of the heart.

The Bible has some fine stories about bread-knocks. When the children of Israel began to travel in the wilderness, they had not much to eat, and they were hungry, and they wished they were back again in Egypt. They forgot the great kindness, which God had shown to them in bringing them out of Egypt. They forgot the night when His angel passed over their houses, and did not slay their first-born. They forgot how He opened a way for them though the sea, and delivered them from cruel Pharoah and his horsemen. They forgot the song which they sang with Miriam, and all the sweet thoughts about God, which were in their hearts when they sang that song. They put these things out of their hearts and their memories. They put God Himself out of their hearts. And they began to murmur against God, and against Moses and Aaron, the servants of God. And they said, "Moses and Aaron, you should have let us alone in Egypt. You have brought us into this wilderness to kill us with hunger." And the good God heard their murmuring, and that very evening He sent a great shower of birds to them for food; and next morning He caused the clouds to rain down manna. And every night, when the children of Israel were sleeping—all through the years they were in the

wilderness—He touched the clouds, and they covered the earth with the manna. And there it lay, in the beautiful morning light, “like coriander seed, white; the taste of it like wafers made with honey.” It came to them from the hand of God. And the people went out morning after morning for long years to gather it. And every time they gathered it, God’s hand knocked at the doors of their hearts, and an inner voice said, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”

About six hundred years after that, the great Elijah was living. And because the king and the people of Israel were bad, God sent them no rain for three years. The brooks dried up; the wells dried up; and the grass, and the corn, and the barley would not grow. The cattle died, and there was no food in all the land. But God was very good to the good Elijah. He sent him to live in a quiet place, on the banks of a brook, in which there was still some water. And He made ravens bring him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. One day God said to Elijah: “Elijah, leave this brook, for it is dried up, and go down to Sarepta, and be My hand and knock for Me at the heart of a widow woman whom you will find there.” So Elijah

went, and at the gate of the town he found the widow woman. She was like a person about to die. Her eyes were sunk in her head, and her lips were thin and dry. When Elijah spoke to her, she said, that she had come out to look for some sticks to make a fire—just one fire; and on that fire she was going to cook a little flour and butter which she had; and her little boy and she were to have one more dinner, and then she and the boy would lie down and die. But Elijah told her how kind God had been to him; how He had sent bread and flesh to him by the very ravens, and given him water from the brook; and he said to her: “God will be as kind to you. O taste and see that God is good. Only let this kind God into your heart. Believe that He loves your boy and you; and love Him, and do His will, and you shall not die.” So the poor widow saw that this was a prophet who was speaking to her, and that God had sent him to her; and although there was only the one handful of flour in the house and the one little bit of butter, she made it ready, and gave it to the man of God. But when she went to the flour barrel after, she found another handful of flour at the bottom; and when she looked into the butter dish, she saw another bit of butter there. And that happened to

her every day. "The barrel of meal wasted not, and the cruise of oil did not fail," until the rain came back. And that poor widow became rich in faith. She knew it was God who sent the meal and the butter. She knew it was His hand knocking at her heart; and she heard His daily knock, and daily she opened her heart and let Him in.

Nearly a thousand years after Elijah's time, a great multitude of people had come out of a lonely place to hear a sermon. They were far from home and very hungry, and the night was coming on. It was Jesus whose preaching they had come to hear. When He saw the multitude, and remembered how far they were from home, He had compassion on them, and He told the disciples to make the people sit down in little companies on the grass. And then He took a few loaves and some small fishes, and He blessed them, and told the disciples to give to the people. And it was as if they had a great heap of loaves. Everybody got enough, and there were twelve baskets of fragments over. And the people knew that this was a work of God. They knew that the blessed Jesus was knocking at the doors of their hearts. And many of them heard His bread-knock, and opened their hearts and let Him in.

Now all these stories tell just one lesson. It is the lesson of the Bread-knock. Jesus still comes as He came in the manna of the wilderness, and in the widow's barrel of meal in Sarepta, in all the good things you receive. Every meal you sit down to, every bit of bread you eat, every cup of water you drink, every apple or orange you taste, it is a bread-knock at the door of your heart. It is the hand of Jesus knocking; and at every knock He says: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. I have sent you this bread and water. I have given you that apple and orange. Your table has been covered with food by Me."

"All things living He doth feed,
His full hand supplies their need."

There was a good man in India once, a missionary. His name was Swartz. He had a little servant boy to look after his pony and cook his food. His name was David. One day the missionary and his boy had been travelling from village to village, that Mr. Swartz might preach to the villagers. In the evening, it was David's duty to prepare some rice for his master. When cooked, it was called curry. He made it ready under a large tree, and when it was quite ready the mis-

sionary stood up under the spreading branches of the tree to give thanks to God for the curry. He knew that it had come to him from God. He knew that it was one of God's bread-knocks, and the good man hastened to open his heart and let God in. So he began to pray. But as he prayed, he could not help thinking of all the other things which had come to him in the same hand of God. And his heart overflowed with thankfulness. And the love of God so filled his thoughts that he could not stop. But poor David was only a boy, and did not understand these things as his master did. And he thought his master was making too long a prayer, and he went near, and touched him, and said: "Master, the curry is cold." But his master did not stop; he went on praying a good long time. But when he did stop he turned to David and said: "David, shall the kind Jesus watch over us through the heat and burden of the day, and provide food for us in the evening, and shall we eat that food with hands which have never been raised in prayer, and lips which have never praised Him?" David never forgot these words. He never stopped his master at grace again. He learned that rice, and curry, and flesh, and bread, and dinner, and supper, and all the good things we

receive for food are just bread-knocks of Christ. He opened his own heart for Jesus and let Him in, and he became a good man and a missionary like his master. And long after the holy Swartz had gone up to heaven, David continued preaching Christ to men.

Hear, then, the knocking of Him who made the corn and the wheat. Hear Him who gives you both hunger and food to satisfy the hunger, lest He should give you hunger but not the food. For sometimes, when people will not listen to the knocking of the hand which is filled with food, Jesus puts the food away, and He knocks with an empty hand. For years and years He will come, His hands full of food, patiently knocking, patiently waiting ; and knocking in vain. And then His patience comes to an end, and He turns the world into a wilderness, and knocks with an empty hand. And that is a terrible knock. Listen, therefore, to the bread-knock. Listen to Him who comes with the full hand. Listen while you have plenty to eat. Listen every time you eat your food. Jesus knocks. He knocks at the door of your heart. He is saying, "It is I ; open and let me in." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

II.

OF THE BIBLE-KNOCK.—In the book of Deuteronomy it is said, “Man doth not live by bread alone ; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The Bible is the word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. By the Bible, the Lord is knocking at hundreds and thousands of hearts. He sent His disciples over the whole world with the Bible, and said to them, “Knock at the heart of the world with this.” He has made His great preachers knock at the gates of cities and kingdoms with the Bible ; and cities and whole kingdoms have opened their gates and let the Lord of the Bible in. I know one city to whose gates the preachers came with Bible in hand, hundreds of years ago. And that city opened its gates, and preachers, and Bible, and Jesus, the Lord of the preachers and the Bible, came in. And it was so blessed with the preaching, that it caused these words to be written up over its gates for ever, “Let this city flourish by the preaching of the Word.”

Christ knocks at individual hearts with His Bible. Sometimes He takes the whole Bible. Sometimes He takes a single verse, a single story,

a single chapter out of the Bible, and knocks with that. There was an apprentice in London once, who made an appointment with another boy to spend a particular Sabbath evening in folly. He was hurrying along to meet his companion, and at the turning of a street he met his master's wife. "William," said she, "where are you going?" And William told her. Then the good woman said to the lad, "That would be a wrong way to spend the Sabbath. Come to chapel with me." And the lad consented, and went. And that night Jesus, who has the hearts of all men in His keeping, caused the preacher to choose for his text: "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And that word came like a loud knock to the heart of William; and it kept knocking at the door of his heart. And the lad heard the voice of His Saviour in the words. And God gave him grace to open his heart and let the Saviour in. And he became a Christian, and then a student of the Bible, and in the end the great South Sea missionary and martyr, Williams.

I daresay you have heard the story of Hedley Vicars. He was a young officer in the army. One day he was waiting in his room for some other officers, young like himself, and thoughtless and foolish like

himself, that they might set out on some pleasure hunt. While he waited, his eye fell on the Bible which his mother had given him on entering the army. And he began, at first in an idle way, to turn over the leaves of the Bible ; but by-and-by his eye fell on these words : “ The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” And he was startled by these words. They came upon him like new words which he had never seen before. They struck right at the door of his heart. He felt them knocking at that door. And he said to himself, “ This blood has been shed for me, and has been appealing to me and asking me to become a Christian ; and I have never known it or felt it till now.” And he cried to God for help. And God helped him, there and then, to open his heart to the Saviour who came knocking by that verse. And he became a Christian. And from that hour he lived to Christ. In a little while his companions came and saw the Bible lying on his table. “ What is that, Vicars ? ” they said. He answered, “ It is my flag.” Every regiment has a flag ; he had resolved that the Bible should be *his* flag. Then he told them what had happened, and that day they had to go without Vicars on their idle pleasure hunt. When the Crimean War arose,

Hedley Vicars was sent out with the troops. He was a brave and noble captain over his men. But besides being a brave captain, he was a missionary for Christ. When they were not fighting, or marching, or cutting trenches, he would gather his men about him and knock at the door of their hearts with his Bible. And when they were wounded, he would go to their bedside and whisper some sweet word of comfort from the Bible, and pray that God would open their hearts and let it in. Then his own turn came to die. And God took him to the Land where Bible-knocks are no longer required.

I will tell you just one other story about Bible knocks. A good minister in the west, a very earnest man in the Free Church of Scotland, went out one Sabbath evening to preach in the streets. He went to a very dark and poor street, and gathered a crowd of people about him. His sermon that evening was from the words—"After death, the judgment." And these are very striking words. When his sermon was ended, and just as he was coming away, a poor wretched-looking man came up to him and said, "I want to thank you. I left my home this evening to throw myself into the river, and your words have appalled me. Thank you, sir; and God be thanked for sending you. I

dare not now take away my life; for I have learned that after death comes judgment; and I am not prepared for that." It was the hand of the Saviour knocking by that verse at the poor man's heart, to save him from death.

Dear children, see that you are not despising Bible-knocks. Jesus has been knocking at your hearts from your earliest years. Every time the Bible is read to you, Jesus is knocking. Every time you read the Bible, Jesus is knocking. Sermons are Bible-knocks. Psalms and hymns are Bible-knocks. Lessons about Jesus at the Sabbath school, and at the fireside, are Bible-knocks. It was that way Timothy learned about Jesus. His grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice taught him when he was young like you. He did not keep Jesus standing without. But by God's gracious help, he opened his heart and said, "Come in, Lord Jesus, and be Lord over me."

III.

OF THE FEVER-KNOCK.—There are some people who do not believe that Jesus knocks by the Bible. There are others who believe, but will not listen to His knocking, or let Him in.

The merciful Jesus, that they may not perish,

comes to their hearts another way. He fills His hand with sickness, and strikes at their door with that.

There are not many, either old or young, who have truly learned that their life comes from God. They are still fewer, who remember that their very bodies belong to Him. Most people think the body is for pleasure, not for God. Very, very few think of it as the outer wall of God's house in the heart. And thus it happens, that many keep Him at the outside. To such people, Jesus sometimes sends a fever to say, "See, this house is mine. I can take it down; I can build it up again. Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Sometimes Jesus comes knocking at the gates of a whole town in the same way. Towns forget God just as individual men, and women, and boys, and girls do. And Jesus bids a fever go up and down in the town. And at His word it goes. By night, by day, up dark stairs, up into lonely rooms, up through fine streets, knocking, knocking everywhere, and saying for Christ, "Behold, I stand at the gates of this town, and knock; open and let me in."

Fever-knocks are painful things. The Bible says: "No affliction for the present is joyous but grievous." Fevers are very grievous. But because

they come to us in the hand of Jesus, they are proofs of His love. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." Fever is chastening. It is painful, but it is a pain which love inflicts. It is the knocking of a hand which is full of love, which would open your heart and bring into it all its love and make the heart like heaven.

I had a dear young friend once, a little boy, who lived beside a public park. The windows of the house he lived in looked out over the park, and to a river beyond the park, and to great blocks of houses and hills, which rose up on the other side of the river, and stretched away into the west. He was a thoughtful boy. Often he would stand at one of the windows, and gaze at the setting sun, and think that it had been made by God. He had read the *Peep of Day*, and *Line upon Line*, and other good books for children.

And he put questions which showed how, child though he was, he was trying to understand some of the great mysteries of life. Here are three: "Where did God live before He made the world? "Why was it a sin for the Jews to kill Jesus when God sent Him to die for us?"—"And if the Jews had not put Him to death, what should we have done for a Saviour?"

Every night and morning he prayed, and sometimes with his father and mother sang psalms to God. But he did not let God Himself into his heart. Jesus had been knocking at the door of his heart ever since he was a child. He had knocked by the words of his mother. He had knocked by the happiness of his home. He had knocked by sermons on the Sabbath day in the church. He had knocked by the death of a baby sister. Yet Willie still kept Jesus standing outside. But God loved the boy, and one day came to him with His hand filled with fever. And Willie was very sick. And the sickness lasted for a long long time. It was Jesus knocking. Christ's "hand was heavy upon him." That hand kept him in bed until he would hear the blessed knocking and let the Saviour in. And at last, Willie did hear. He came to know that his illness was just the hand of Jesus. He saw that all his prayers had been outside ones, and that Jesus was still outside the door of his heart. And the Holy Spirit showed him that there could be no good in his heart till Jesus was let in. And the Spirit helped the dear child to open his heart. And he opened it wide, and very wide ; and the King of Glory came in ; and He brought heaven with him into Willie's heart.

And Willie became a child of heaven. His sins were all forgiven. Holiness came in the place of sin. And Willie's father and mother heard their boy saying at last, what King David said of old, "Isn't it good for me, that I have been afflicted?"

There was another boy I read about. He lived in a town by the sea. When this boy was eight years old, fever came to him too. It took away all his strength. It laid him up in bed for three years. During those years, James Lang had many sad thoughts about himself. He knew that he was not as good as he ought to be. He knew also that he never could be thoroughly good till Jesus came into his heart. Sometimes he would say to himself, "I am so bad, Jesus will not come into my heart." In the autumn of the third year, James became very anxious about his soul; and he made a resolution that he would pray without ceasing until Jesus came into his heart. So he set apart a week in the month of October, and began his praying with the beginning of the week. He prayed that Jesus would make him good. He prayed that Jesus would save his soul. He said, "Come to me, dear Jesus, and take up Thy abode in my heart." He told Jesus how he had been longing to be good. And he cried, "Oh, Jesus, I am willing to let Thee

into my heart. Do not refuse to come because I have not been so good as I ought to have been. Come now and make me good." And still he did not find that Jesus had come in. He was weak and faint, and almost dead with sorrow. He could not rest, nor eat, all that day. "Take some dinner, James," his sister said. "No," he cried, "I will take nothing ; nothing, but a bit of the bread of life." Then he got out of bed, and went forward to the fireside and fell on his knees. The poor boy prayed for hours that day. And ever his prayer was, "Blessed Jesus, come into my heart." And that very night his prayer was answered. Jesus, who had all the while been waiting to come in, put in His hand, and helped the anxious boy to open his heart. "Have I only to believe that Jesus died for sinners ?" he said to his sister. "Is that the way to open the door ? And is that all I have to do ?" "That is all, James," replied his sister. Poor James had been waiting till he could be worthy of Christ. He had been thinking that his heart must be better before Christ would come. He did not see till that night, that Christ is the Saviour who comes near sinners to save them. But that night he saw it, and he believed, and opened his trembling, sinful heart, and the blessed Saviour

entered in. And peace flowed through his heart like a river.

Christ may come knocking at your own door some day, with fever in His hand. Do not forget in that case that the fever-knock is also a Christ-knock. Fever on the one side, love on the other!

Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. May He open your ear to listen to His love, and your heart to let Him in.

The Mouse-ear.



THE MOUSE-EAR.

THERE is nothing which people, both old and young, take so long to learn as the kind of work which is best worth doing for God.

What most people want to be doing is some great thing—something that prophets, and apostles, or great heroes and heroines have done. But a little thing, a common everyday thing, such a thing as we require to do out of everybody's sight, in our daily duties, at the fireside, or in the school—that seems a poor kind of work to be called to do. Naaman's servants saw that thought in their master's face when he refused to go and wash in Jordan. "Master," they said, "if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, would'st thou not have done it?" It took some time to bring him to reason, and make him see that the little thing he was bid do, was the best thing he could do.

But there are people of a quite different sort, people who shrink away from great work—even from the thought of great work—humble people who have poor ideas of themselves, and never aspire to do great things. People of this sort say: “Great things are not for us to do.” It was something like that, Jeremiah said, when God asked him to go and speak for Him to his fellow men. “Ah, Lord God!” he said, “I am but a child.”

If Jeremiah had been older, or better acquainted with God’s word, it would not have seemed to him so difficult. But when God called him, and bade him go forth and speak to men about heaven, his heart failed him. “Ah, Lord God!” he said, “I cannot be of use to Thee. I am not old enough, nor wise enough, nor learned enough—I am just a child.”

Now that just expresses what many young people and children feel, when they are asked to do work for God: “What can *we* do? We are not old enough, nor strong enough, nor rich enough, nor grand enough.” Walter Crosby, the pilot’s son, had a very tender heart. And when he went along the street to his school and saw very poor people ill-dressed, or cold, or begging, he would say to himself: “I wish I were a King, or an Earl, or a Lord

Mayor, or a Bishop, I would buy bread and clothes for these poor people. I would build houses for them, and make them glad all the days of their life. But what can I do? I am only a boy, and I have nothing to give." And there was Eleanor Moseley. She saw sick people at her father's door every day. And sometimes she would be sorry for them. And sometimes she wished she were able to help them. But always she ended by saying to herself: "Oh, that I were a Queen or a Duchess! I would ride about in my carriage and visit the sick every day, and all the day long. And I would say to them, 'I am your sister and I love you—I love you—I love you. But what can I do? I am only Eleanor Moseley. And I am still a child.'"

I do not think that those who speak in that way are unwilling to work. On the contrary, they are very willing, nay eager, to work. They are looking forward to a time when they shall be workers for God. But it is not that time yet. It is not that time for a long while yet. They are not able just yet. They are too young, or too humble, or too poor as yet. They cry just as Jeremiah did: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child."

It is to young people who feel in that way I am

going to speak to-day. I am going to mention some things—real work for God—which you are not too young to do. And I will begin, as I intend to end, by saying that you are not too young to make beautiful the home you live in.

I have just returned from a place where I lived many years and made many friends. Among these friends was one who was very little, far less than Eleanor Moseley, or Walter Crosby, or you. My friend was only a little flower. Where I first met with it, the people call it "Mouse-Ear," because the green leaf is shaped like a mouse's ear. It has a most lovely little flower:—five tiny petals, or flower-leaves, pale blue, or sometimes pink and blue, arranged in a circle. These tiny petals, where they join, surround a bright yellow cup. And in that cup, standing straight up in the centre, is a slender spear of light green, and on the point of that a very little ball of red. I know many beautiful flowers. I know the tall hollyhock, that stands up in our gardens in the fall of the year, like Aaron's rod that budded. I know the peony, that in the early summer puts on a finer velvet than a Queen's. And there is my lady the lily, and my lord the rose; and pansies and pinks and daffodils. I know them all, and how fair they are, and how bare our gardens

would be without them. But among them all, I do not know one more beautiful, out and out, than my little friend, the mouse-ear.

It was a very humble place in which I first saw my friend. It was on the roadside, under the hollow of a hedge, between the rain-drop of the hedge and the gutter which the rain-water makes on the road. Not a very sightly place,—a place where snails creep and nettles grow, and the sun does not often shine. There shone the mouse-ear. There, after many years, I found it shining still. Morning and evening, from early summer till late harvest, without tiring, without murmuring, it shines on, like a little star in the shadow of the hedge, like the eye of a blessed angel, making beautiful the dwelling-place where God has planted it. In many another place as lonely, as humble, and as infested with shadow, I have found my flower since then. And many a long talk the mouse-ear and I have had together. Many a time, lying on a green bank, I have laid my ear close to it to hear what it said. And many and many a time it spoke a blessed word to me. And this is what it always said:—
“ O, my friend, make the place where God has put you beautiful. If it be but a tent in the desert, make it beautiful. If it be only a cottage in a lonely street,

or an attic room in a cottage, or a fireside, or a bench in a workshop, or a berth in a ship, or a seat in a school, or a place on your mother's knee, or a place in her heart, make it beautiful. And the sadder, the darker, the poorer the place is, be the more eager to make it beautiful. If it were as poor and lonely a place as you think mine to be—a place on a roadside, where no fine people come, with nobody to look at you but butterflies and sparrows and blades of grass, make it beautiful. And go on and ever on making it more and more beautiful. That is your work and mine in the world."

Always, when I came away from listening to the mouse-ear, it came into my mind that that was what Christ did when He was upon the earth—that is what the angels do in heaven—that is what redeemed spirits are doing in God's presence. They are just making beautiful the place they dwell in. The heart of the mouse-ear's life and the heart of the life of heaven are in this the same. Its desire is to fill the home with beauty and love. And I am sure, the poorer the home, if you could think of angels and saints as poor, the greater their desire would be to make it beautiful.

What place could be drearier and more lonely than that sea-angel, Grace Darling, filled! A

lighthouse on a low reef of rocks, was her home. Looking landward, on clear days, she could see Bamborough, St. Abb's Head, Holy Island, and the mouth of the Tweed. Looking seaward, there were the long shoreless stretches of the Northern Ocean. Waves tumbling in upon the low-set rocks; waves leaping up in time of storm like wild horses; waves in peace; waves in tumult; waves covered with shadow and black with night; waves glancing with sunlight and bright as burnished silver! All around her, day after day, it was only this, only the world of waves, which Grace Darling saw. What she heard was the crying of sea-birds and storms. And when winter came, its awful voices sounded like calls of terror around the lonely lighthouse, on the Fern Islands where it was built. Yet there, amid that world of waves, this brave girl made beautiful the place where God appointed her to dwell.

It was early in the month of September more than twenty years ago. The winter storms had begun early that year. One morning, after a wild night, Grace Darling heard human voices mingling with the voices of the storm. And going out, she saw a vessel on the rocks of the farthest island. What was she, that she should bestir herself at such

a time? A feeble girl, with the seeds of an early death at work on her already! But she roused her father and pointed out the wreck. Were the human beings clinging to it to be allowed to perish? The old man saw no help for them. He shrank from the entreaty of his daughter to go out to them. It seemed to him certain death to venture on such a sea. The brave girl leaped into the boat of the lighthouse and would go alone; and then the old man's courage was roused. And so, on the morning of that sixth day of September, those two, risking their lives for mercy, pulled through the tempest to the wreck. Nine human beings were there, in the very grasp of death. And these nine, one by one, this brave girl and her father, going and coming, rescued and carried to the lighthouse, and nursed them till help came.

O! the land rang with praises of this heroic maiden. And poets sang these praises. And royal people sent for her to their houses to see her. But this was her glory in the sight of God, that she had made beautiful for evermore, so that it shines to this day in the memory of men, the lonely and humble lot in which God had placed her.

I used to be a frequent visitor at a home which was every way different from Grace Darling's, and

also poorer and drearier. It was a home in a lonesome village, and it consisted of a single room. A poor widow lived in it with her three children—two boys and a girl. All the joy of this widow's heart for this life depended on her children. And the highest service these children had it in their power at that time to render to her was to make the heart of their mother glad. I am happy to say that they were all good children ; but I think the flower of the house was Jamie. He had never spoken a cross word to his mother. He had never disobeyed her. But the thing that filled her heart with the greatest joy was this—that Jamie had begun to fear God, and to give signs that his heart was right with God. Here is one little incident out of this boy's life. I do not suppose it was anything remarkable for him, or the best thing that might be told, but it is the thing concerning him I happen to know best. Being very poor, the widow had to send out her children early to work. Jamie was sent to a farm seven miles away to herd some cows ; but it was part of the bargain with the master, that he should get home every second Saturday afternoon, that he might go to church next day with his mother.

One Saturday, Jamie was pushing along the lonely road on his way home. He had only travelled

about a mile, when, at a turn of the road, three or four very wicked boys, who disliked him for going home to church, and refusing to join them in mischief, came rushing out from a clump of trees with a fierce bull-dog, and said: "Brown, you must say the bad words we tell you, before you go another step, or we'll send the dog at you." And then they began to swear and speak the worst of words. Now there was one thing Jamie had learned at his mother's fireside, and that was, that it was wrong to take God's name in vain, and wrong to foul the tongue with bad words. But he simply said, "Let me go, I want to get home." "Not one step further," said the biggest fellow, "until you say these words after me. Swear this oath and we'll let you go." And he repeated wild and wicked words. "I dare not say that," replied the widow's son; "and you have no right to ask me." "Swear the oath this moment, or we will let slip the dog." "I will not swear that oath; and you have no right to slip the dog on me." They gave him one more chance, and then let loose the dog. That night, as his mother and the other two sat round the fire, the brave boy told the rest of the adventure. It came into his head as his savage persecutors were unloosing the dog, that God, who shut the mouths of

the lions in the den where Daniel was, could shut the mouth of the fierce dog on that lonely road. And God did shut the mouth of the dog. The big, hulking scoundrels, more brutal than their dog, yelled it at the harmless orphan boy. The dog barked furiously for a second or two, and went rushing up to him. But it neither bit nor offered to bite. And Jamie was delivered out of their hands. In all the land that night, there was not a spot more filled with peace and thankful joy, than the humble fireside in the one poor room, where Jamie made his mother's heart glad, and his home beautiful, by telling what I have attempted to tell over again.

Jamie lives where my mouse-ear lived. And I went there to see him two or three years ago. The little hero of ten had become a man with a wife and two children. But he was in one thing the same as before. His pure upright life was making beautiful the humble home where God had placed him. And when I called on the old mother, and spoke about her son, her face lighted up into one of the pleasantest smiles, and she said : " He's a joy to me still ; and although he has a house of his ain, he aye looks well to me."



The Mouse-ear in the Garden.



THE MOUSE-EAR IN THE GARDEN.

IT is not much the mouse-ear can do. It can only shine. But it makes beautiful, by that shining, the little corner in which it lives. It was just that, the little maid, who was Naaman's servant, did. She was only a poor slave girl, whom cruel soldiers had stolen from home and sold. But she let the light of what she knew of God shine in her master's house. And that light made Naaman and his household beautiful evermore.

I knew a home once where things were quite different, and a lad who could have done as nobly as Naaman's servant, who never tried to make home beautiful, and did not find out the misery and wrong of his conduct until it was too late, and he was standing at his father's grave.

I am almost sorry to tell you this story, it is so sad. Duncan Scott was an old man at the earliest

time I knew him. He was a shipwright, but he was very poor. Not that he was a poor workman, or a spendthrift. But his house was never free from sickness. The neighbours used to say to each other, "We never remember Duncan's house without some one sick in it." And in these circumstances it was no wonder old Duncan was poor. One of the earliest things I remember was the long sickness of his daughter Martha. When she died her twin-brother was laid down. And when he too died little Bessie turned ill. How could old Duncan be other than poor! At last there were only four left of all his large family. The grave had swallowed them one by one, until his wife and himself and Willie and Dick were all that remained; and his wife did not live long. Willie married and went out to New Zealand, so that only Dick was left. Here was a fine chance for Dick, and one which God had sent to him. A very little love from Dick—the one life left to the father—would have made the old man happy, and helped him to bear up when the old sorrow came back. But Dick did not think of his father's sorrow. All Dick's thoughts were going forth upon himself alone. He had companions, and he would go out in the evenings with them. He had his pipe and tobacco, and he

would spend hours in smoking. He belonged to a rifle corps, and he had spare time for drill. He had time for many things, but none to make glad the heart of his old father. Dick wasn't a bad lad ; far from that. Only, he didn't try to do this good. The old man was sometimes very sad. He never was a great speaker, and he did not complain. But many and many a night, when he sat all alone in his dingy kitchen, he thought to himself that it would have been very, very sweet to have had just a little of Dick's love. But it was never given. By-and-by the old man died. Then Dick saw all his error, and his unkind neglect, and how beautiful it would have been if he had acted otherwise. At the grave, when the coffin was lowered into the lonely resting-place, all the long hours Dick had spent on his companions and himself came back to his memory, and filled him with shame. He would have given his right hand to have the old man back, for only one short month, to show him a little love. But the chance was past. Dick had not made beautiful the home where God had placed him.

Everybody can help to make home beautiful. And nobody I know is too humble, or poor, or young, not to try to do it. A little love will do it ;

and nobody is so poor as not to have a little love. Good-nature will do it; and the very youngest may be good-natured. It is wonderful how much good-nature, when blessed by Christ, can do. I once knew a family in which, for a long time, there was not one single spark of it. The father was a merchant who had met with heavy losses. Instead of looking on these losses as from God, he went on tracing them to bad markets, and bad bargains, and bad traders. And his wife did the same; only, she added some blame to himself. This made her husband cross, and his crossness made her cross. So the crossness of these two, and their misfortunes, made the house sad. The children, too, grew up with shadows on their faces, and did not speak kindly to each other, and there was hardly any love in all that house. I do not know what the end would have been; but God sent the cholera into the house, and in the shadow of that awful plague both father and mother saw how light their other sorrows were. First she, and then he, died. Both were buried on one day and in one grave.

Annie, the eldest daughter, had to take her mother's place, and be both father and mother in the house. And what a change! It was like sunshine after a storm. A great well of love and

good-nature, which had never been allowed to flow before, burst open in that child's heart. And the home was filled with peace, and gladness, and singing. And the children were happy and kind. And when they became men and women, and looked back, they said: "It was all through Annie's goodness and good-nature. She was the flower of us all, and made the house beautiful with her love."

And, I repeat it, there is not a boy or girl who has a home to live in, but may be helped by Christ to do this. Love and kindness in any one child, is love and kindness for all who are in the house. It is a little ray of the sunshine which should fill our homes. Not one of you is too young to be kind. All can show love to those who are younger than themselves. And even the youngest can be attentive and pleasant to the sick.

Mark Ainslie was known for a kind boy before he was twelve years of age. He was kind to all the boys in the school. For the younger boys he made kites, and balls, and windmills, and pan's-pipes, and little boats. But it was his love to his lame brother which brings him into my thoughts to-day. This brother could not romp and play like other boys. For two or three years he never got out into the

sunshine, except in his perambulator. Many a long mile Mark had wheeled him. And many a long talk they had together in these rides. It was life to the sick boy to see Mark when he came home from school. And when Mark came up to him and said : “ Now, Tomsie, where shall we go this afternoon ? ” Tom was as full of happiness as any boy could be.

One Saturday, there was to be an excursion of the school and a sort of procession. Mark was appointed to carry a banner, and he greatly wished to go. But he could not think of Tom being left alone. So, all that week Mark was invisible for half an hour before going to bed. And Tom knew that something was going on, but could not imagine what it was. Indeed, he did not discover until Saturday came round. Then appeared Mark and one of the servants carrying a long open bath. This they filled with water, and then Mark produced and launched one of the very prettiest and best-rigged little sloops ever made by a boy. And such a sailer ! Poor Tom enjoyed himself alone all the day with his sloop. And Mark carried his banner without having to think that Tom was lonely at home.

By-and-by the lame boy was well enough to be sent to school. But this was the beginning of new

sorrows. Rude boys pointed to his lame feet and threw nick-names at the child. And he came home every day in tears. "I'll tell you what, Tomsie," said Mark; "if mamma will allow it, you'll just stay at home for six months longer, until you are stronger, and I'll be your teacher." Of course, mamma allowed it, and Mark gave him a lesson every afternoon. And Tom turned out a capital scholar. When he went back to school he took the first place and the first prize in his class. And the rude boys threw no more nick-names at him in their play.

I often think of that lonely boyhood; and of the dear light of that brother's love, which shone on it and made it beautiful with the beauty of the sky.

I dare say it will have occurred to some, that there is not much grandeur in the things I have been commending to you. Except Grace Darling's feat, and perhaps James Brown's, they are not very heroic things. And that is true. And I have meant that it should be so. For what I have wished to set before you is the lesson, that if you are to succeed in serving God you must begin with humble services; by loving brothers and sisters, and speaking truth, and doing the nameless little kindnesses which may be done at the fireside and in the school.

Before I close I want to say this. None of us

can shine as the mouse-ear shines, unless the light we have be light from God. The mouse-ear is first made beautiful by God, and then it sheds its beauty wherever it grows. So it is with you and me. We must first be made beautiful. And only then can we make beautiful the place where we live.

And, dear children, that is what Christ came down from heaven for. That is what He died for. That is what He offers to each of you in the Bible.

He offers to make you beautiful. He offers to give you help to fill the place where He has set you with the beauty of heaven.

What keeps many back from Christ's beauty, is the thought that they are already beautiful, or that they can be beautiful without Him. In this simple little poem, I have tried to exhibit this error, and to explain how the young soul, to be beautiful, and to get a place among the beautiful, must begin by putting away pride in mere outward beauty, and by seeking and accepting the inward beauty—the beauty of the soul—which Christ only can bestow.

I.

At the brook, a maiden glancing,
Saw a form divine ;
Said she, all her heart exulting,
“ That fair form is mine.”

As she spoke, an angel whispered :—

“Maiden, heaven is fair ;”

Said the maiden to the angel :—

“Angel, take me there.”

“Maiden,” said the angel sadly :—

“Heaven is *for* the fair.”

“Therefore,” said the maiden proudly,

“Angel, take *me* there.”

II.

At the gates, the glory burning,

Smote her soul with dread.

“Angel, from that awful glory

Hide me,” said the maid.

III.

Then the angel, gently soothing,

Drew his robe aside,

“Maiden, in this wounded bosom

Wounded souls may hide.”

“O my Saviour, pierced and wounded,

Heaven is for the fair,

I have sinned, but Thou art holy,

Cleanse me, bring me there.”

And the gentle Saviour, gently

Drew her to His breast,

Made her fair, and at the gateway

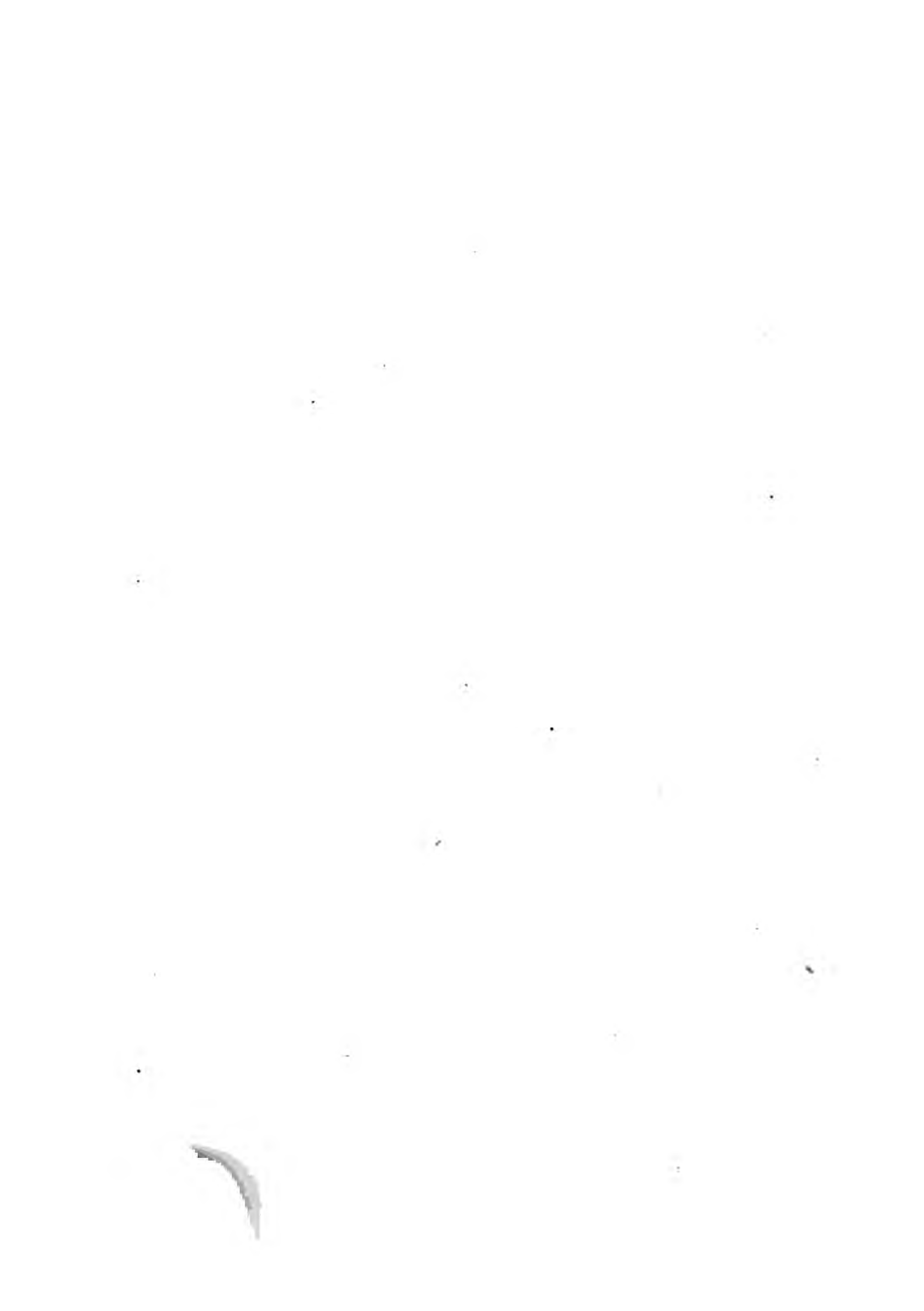
Thro' the glory pressed.

Oh! young maidens, who would be beautiful,
there is no other way! You must go to the pierced

heart of Jesus for the true beauty. Christ is the great beautifier. It is He alone who can put pride, and self, and sin away from your hearts, and make you shine like sweet flowers in the homes in which He has planted you.

I have just one other little fact to mention. As I have told you, it was on a lonely roadside I first discovered the little flower which has supplied me with my sermon. And for years it was as a wild flower only that I knew it. But one day a lady took me to see a bed of *forget-me-nots* in her garden; and to my surprise and joy I found that the forget-me-not of the garden was my little mouse-ear, brought in from the roadside and the common, and cultivated and made more beautiful, and christened with a new name. "Ah!" I said to myself, when I saw it, "that is just the way the dear Saviour does with the little human mouse-ears who hear His voice, and drink in His light, and make their homes beautiful with the beauty He bestowed! When they have served Him, and bloomed for Him, on the great highway and common below, He gathers them into his garden of delights, His new paradise above, and gives them a new name, and they become the forget-me-nots of God and a joy to Him for ever."

The Battle of Life.



THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

THE Bible tells us a great deal about fighting. It tells stories of fights in which Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samson and David were engaged. It recounts many battles between the little Jewish nation and the great heathen world outside. And from beginning to end, it is itself one long history of the fight between Christ and His enemies. It often speaks of Christ as a fighting man and captain of fighting men. And in one place it describes Him riding forth at the head of His armies, in scarlet robes, with a crown on His head, and wielding the great sword with which He puts His enemies to flight.

But I am afraid there is one thing which children, reading that description, do not consider. They do not consider, that the armies who follow Christ when He goes forth to war are just the

Christian people who are living on the earth at the time. It is not the people in the sky. All Christ's battles have to be fought out on the earth. And Christ would have all who love Him on earth, young people and old people alike, to be soldiers in these armies and fighters on His side. That was one main work the prophets and holy men of old had to do, to find soldiers for these armies. The Christian preacher has that work still. And that is the meaning of many words about soldiering, spoken by the Apostles in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul—himself a brave, good soldier in Christ's army—advises young Timothy, in one place, to join this army. "Be a soldier like me, dear Timothy," he says, "and fight the good fight of faith."

I have always been struck by this description which Paul gives of Christ's war. He calls it a "good fight" and a "fight of faith." And it is "a good fight." And Paul speaks of it in that way, because it is a fight for good things, for goodness itself, and for God. And it is a "fight of faith" as truly, because in fighting it we do not see our captain, nor the help He gives, nor even sometimes the weapons with which we fight. We only know that Christ, although unseen, is really beside us. And we are

sure that He will both help us and give us the victory.

You remember the fight which David had with Goliath? That was both a *good* fight and a fight of *faith*. Compared with Goliath, David was a mere lad. The red was still upon his cheek. He had no covering but a shepherd's cloak. He had no weapons but a shepherd's staff and sling. And he was not bred to be a soldier. All his days till now, he had been keeping his father's sheep and playing upon his harp; whereas Goliath was a big strong man, and had been a soldier a very long time. Goliath was tall, and broad, and terrible to look at; and his coat was a coat of brass. He had a sword by his side, and a spear in his hand, and a helmet on his head. And a man went before him carrying a shield.

To look at the two, one standing on either side might think, David never could fight with such a giant. Goliath was sure to overthrow him. But David was not afraid. Slim though he was, he stepped boldly down to the brook. The grass hardly bent beneath his tread. Behind him, on the slope of one hill, was the army of the Israelites. Before him, on the slope of another, was the army of the Philistines. The little brook was flowing in the valley between the two.

I think I hear the scornful laugh of the Philistines as they looked down on the shepherd lad who came forth against their huge Goliath. I know what that beating of the hearts of the Israelites would be, as they gazed at the mighty giant who came out to meet their slender champion. At his tent door stood King Saul, not without fearful thoughts. Beside him is that loving Jonathan, who has seen the friend of his life for the first time to-day. Adown the side of the hill, in anxious groups, the whole army is gathered. Beneath their helmets, they shoot forth angry glances upon the man who has defied them forty days. But they dare not fix their eyes on David. What help for them could be in that slender undefended lad? Too surely, they thought within themselves, the lad is doomed to death! One thrust of Goliath's spear,—one bite of Goliath's sword,—and he is smitten to the dust. I am sure many of these warlike men wished, as Saul had done, that the brave young shepherd had taken at least a shield to defend his breast, and a helmet to defend his head.

But David cared nothing that day for helm or coat of mail. He had tried them in the tent of Saul, and found them cumbersome. He had a better

defence than iron or brass. God was his defence. He had taken God to be both sword and buckler to him that day. And he believed that God would help him. He remembered with joy how He delivered him once from a lion and a bear. "And He will deliver me out of the hands of this Philistine to-day," he said in his own heart. It was a brave speech the young hero made to Goliath. "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts." A brave speech, I said, and followed by as brave a deed! For, look! he has reached the brook; he lifts a stone; he puts it in his sling; he hurls it at the giant! Helmet of brass and coat of mail, defend Goliath! Sword and shield and spear, defend Goliath! Bulk and strength and sturdy bones, defend Goliath! In vain! The stone goes crunching through Goliath's skull. The God of battles has sent it home. The man who defied the army of the Lord of Hosts will never utter a word again.

Now I call that a *good* fight, and also a fight of *faith*.

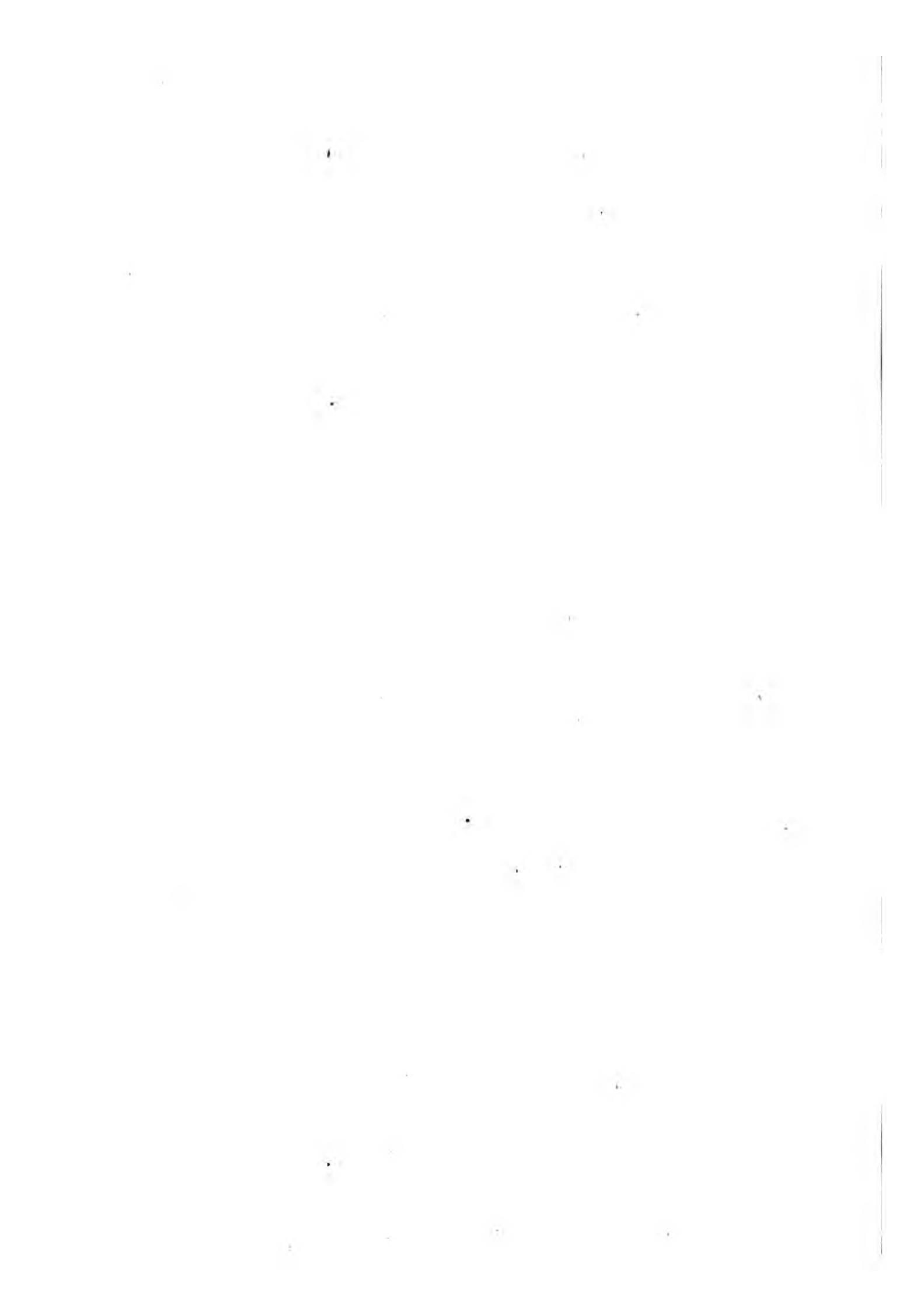
It was a *good* fight, because David was fighting for a good cause, for the cause and people of God. Goliath was a bad man. And he was the soldier

of a bad cause. He had mocked God's people and God. And David went down to fight with him, because he both heard and saw that he was an enemy of God.

And it was a fight of *faith*, because in going down to the fight, David did not trust in sword, or spear, or helmet, or shield, or coat of mail for the victory, nor in his youth, or his strength, or his skill, or any seen thing, but in God whom he could not see. This battle is the Lord's, he said to himself. He knew God although he had never seen Him. God had helped him in other battles,—in the battle with the lion and the bear, as I have already said. And he did not see Him then, but he knew that God was beside him. In his soul he felt the presence of God. And in the strength of that presence he went to meet Goliath. As he drew near to the giant his thought was: God was with me in the sheepfold, when the lion and the bear came, and He is with me here too. Then he prayed to God: "O God, Thou art my strength and present help: Be my sword and shield this day." And God was his help that day. He was not ashamed of the brave young shepherd who trusted his life and battle to His power. He stood by the youth, and gave him the victory. And many

a long year thereafter, when David was praising God as his buckler and sword, you may be sure he was remembering the fight with Goliath, and how God had helped him to win with a sling and a stone.

I have told this story of David and Goliath, partly because it is a Bible story of a fight, and partly because it helps us to understand what kind of fight it is which we are ourselves called to fight. But I have now to say, that if you think too much of giants, and slings, and stones, you will not understand the fight which you and I have to take part in. Nobody in our day needs to kill giants like Goliath. The bad people like Goliath, whom God wanted killed, are dead hundreds of years ago and cleaned out of the earth. Our fight now is with badness itself,—bad thoughts, bad wishes, bad words, bad deeds. And the badness is in ourselves as much as in other people. But in ourselves, or in others, it is badness we have to fight against. Badness is the great giant Christ sends us to fight with ; that is the one chief enemy He Himself fights against. If there be any bad thing in the world,—a lie, a theft, a meanness, a dishonourable deed, a cruelty, a rudeness,—in ourselves, or in others, Christ calls on us to be fighters against that.



William and the Lie.

WILLIAM AND THE LIE.

I WILL take one of the bad things I mentioned to show you more clearly what I mean. A lie is to you and me what Goliath was to the army of Israel. It is our enemy. Every lie is opposed to God and truth. And we have got to fight with it for the truth's sake and for God's sake. For if the lie be not killed, the lie will try to kill both God and truth. We are related to truth just as David was to Saul and his army ; the truth is God's side, and our side. And we are bound to stand by it, and fight for it, as David did for Israel. It was a great honour David got when he killed Goliath. But it is as great an honour to kill a lie. A lie is a far worse evil in the world than a Goliath. Poor Goliath ! He might have drawn a harrow, or driven a plough, or felled a tree, if he had not been killed. But a lie is for ever and everywhere a bad thing, a thing useless and worse than useless, a thing hurtful, poisonous,

and wicked. And he, therefore, who will put to death, in his own heart, or the heart of another, one such lie, shall be in God's sight as great a hero as David was.

Many a boy never tries to win the battle against lies. And many who try to win are beat. But there are some whom God teaches to win by allowing them first to lose. And that was the case with an English boy I am going to tell you about, who was fought and beaten at a shop counter in England, one Christmas time, nearly a hundred years ago.

His name was William, and he was an apprentice to a shoemaker. At Christmas time his master allowed him to go round to the customers for a Christmas-box for himself, and, at the same time, he was to collect some accounts for his master. William went first to an ironmonger. "Will you have a shilling or a sixpence?" the ironmonger said. "O please sir, I will have a shilling." So the ironmonger handed the boy a bright new shilling, and William thought he had made a good beginning. Other people added to his box, and by-and-by, he had a number of shillings. Then he thought it was time to lay out his money, and he went to a shop and bought something he needed, and then asked

what was to pay. He had to pay away almost the whole contents of his Christmas-box. So he took out his money and laid it on the counter. The shopman looked at the bright shilling which the ironmonger had given, and said, "That's a brass shilling." And just at that moment came up a thought of William's own heart, and said, "William, you have bought the things, and you can't be telling the shopman that you have no more money, or how you got this shilling,—just take a shilling of your master's." That was all the thought said. And that was all William did. He just took a shilling of his master's. But nearly all the battle was at that point, and William had already let go the moment for gaining the victory when bad thoughts came up to him again. The first said; "Oh William, what a fine scolding you will get from master. There have you gone and borrowed some money from his, without his leave!" And then spoke up a second thought: "Never mind, William, why should you be afraid that way? Just tell your master that you got the brass shilling in payment of his accounts." And the thought that first spoke to him at the shop counter came back and said: "That is the right thing to do my boy. Master will never know, and besides, you couldn't

help it." William did not know the name of this conduct at the time, but he learned afterwards that it was falsehood and fraud. And, instead of fighting or fleeing from it, William there and then gave in and let the falsehood and the fraud have the victory.

But he had no sooner done this, than his conscience woke up and said to him: "O William, William, William: you have committed sin, and God will bring it to light." At this, a great fear fell upon the lad, and he wished he had not listened to the bad thoughts; but still more, that that ironmonger hadn't given him the brass shilling. And then the battle began again. "Shall I tell all?" he said. "You will have such a scolding if you do," said the bad thought. "Tell all William, and be an honest boy," said conscience. "No," said the bad thought, "you can't be that now, for you see you have given away the shilling." "Too true—too true," cried William; "the thing is done and can't be undone, I must brave it out."

Then William did a thing that older people sometimes do. But it is a strange thing for all that. William was passing through a lonely field on his way home, and there he prayed to God and said: "O God, help me through with this theft, and

I will never steal, or do anything bad again. I could not help this one ; but I will never, never be guilty again."

Then William came to his master and told him the lie. And the Lord God, who had heard William's prayer and resolved to answer it, but not in William's way, put it into the master's thoughts to suspect the boy and make inquiries. And then it came out, that the ironmonger had offered the lad a good sixpence and a bad shilling. And so William was found out. God in His mercy and love did not help him through. And William was so affronted that for a long time he could hardly lift up his head, or speak, or go out into the streets. But when he did steal out in the evenings, and go round by unfrequented paths where nobody would see him ; and when he got into his bed at night, and hid himself beneath the blankets, he shed many a bitter tear over his sin and his bad heart. And he cried to God to give him a new heart. And this time also God heard his cry and came to his help, and drew him nearer to Himself, and opened the gate of righteousness and helped him to enter on that path where, instead of bad thoughts, there are good thoughts, and better than these even, Jesus Christ.

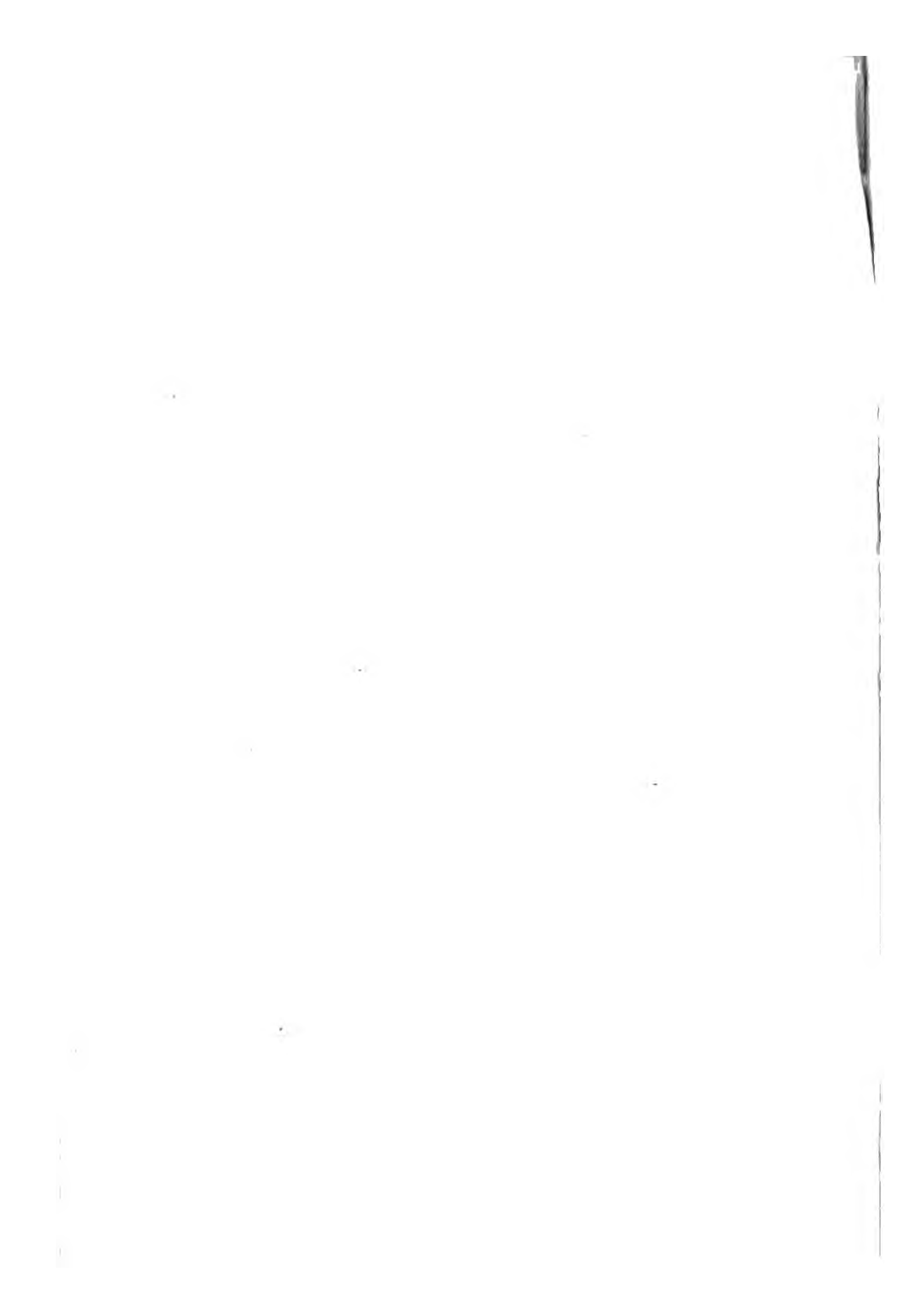
And William became good ; and great as well as good. By-and-by he went out to India and fought one of the noblest fights of faith ever fought in India. And when he died, full of years and grace, all England mourned over him and said, "The Great Carey, who has translated the Bible into the languages of India, has gone home to his rest."

I would not like you to think, because I happen to tell you this story of a good fight fought in boyhood, that it is only when you are young you have to fight it. All life is intended to be a good fight. And the noblest lives are those who fight it to the end. But there are some lives where the battle is more felt than in others : some lives where the force of the battle gathers at successive moments, and the poor fighting one seems always to be contending with giants : and some lives when all the fight seems to be gathered up into a single moment. God only knows how it shall be with you. All I know is that, in one way or other, at one time or other, every one of you will have to fight this battle. In fighting it, do not for a moment forget on whose side you are bound to be, and with what foes you are called to fight. You are to fight on God's side and on His side only. And you are to fight against badness, and wrong doing, and error, and sin.

Wherever you find the evil you are bound to fight with it ; but if you would conquer, you must begin with the evil in your own heart.

All your life long you will have to carry on this fight. As David had to do—and against far stronger enemies than Goliath. And as Paul had to do. And I hope it will be with you, as with Paul, when you come near the end of your lives, and that you also will be able to say :

With heavenly weapons I have fought
The battles of the Lord :
Finished my course and kept the faith
Depending on His word.
Henceforth there is laid up for me
A crown which cannot fade ;
The righteous Judge at that Great day
Shall place it on my head.



St. George and the Dragon.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON.

IN one of the streets of the town in which I live there is a house which has taken the name of "St. George and the Dragon." In its principal window a large plate of glass displays a picture of the fight which that name recalls. And to secure that nobody shall enter or pass without being reminded of it, miniature copies of the picture are painted on the panels of the doors which open from the street.

The subject of this picture has long been dear to me, and, in one way or another, has been a study to me since my earliest boyhood; since the time, at least, when my books were penny story-books, and I first saw on a five-shilling piece the silver picture of my favourite champion among "The Seven Champions of Christendom."

It is no wonder, therefore, if I sometimes slacken my pace when passing that way, to have a look at

the picture. The knight, clad in armour from head to heel, is mounted on a noble steed, which half advances, half shrinks, from the dreadful creature at its feet. The monster is curving up its back and head for a deadly spring. And George is about to hurl into its neck that spear which shall bring its long reign of terror to a close.

The building which this picture adorns is devoted to the sale of drink. And the picture is nothing more nor less than its signboard. It is a picture which means, in the heart of it, the triumph of Christian force over foul and cruel evil. And yet it is the signboard of a house for the sale of that which, more than anything else I could name, is keeping back the triumph of Christian force in the world. I intend to tell the story which this signboard sets forth. It has a royal and deep sense in it for every fight against evil. It is a story which has been told to old and young, in one shape and another, over Christian Europe for fifteen hundred years. And it will be told again and again, in varying forms, throughout all the earth, as long as there are hearts, old or young, to listen to it.

In that old time, when nations, which are now Christian, were still Pagan, there was a city called Lysia, and it was built on the edge of a great marsh.

In the centre of this marsh, in a wilderness of reeds and rushes, lived at that time a fiery dragon. It was a great serpent-like creature with huge wings, with a head like a rhinoceros, and a long scale-covered body like a crocodile; and its breath was fire. An awful beast! And day by day, at the same hour of the day, this terrible monster would shoot forth his ugly head from his den of rushes, and bend his long neck, first to one side, then to another, and then it would turn its face to Lysia, and come gliding, and curving, and spitting fire, to that spot on the edge of the marsh where the gate of the city was. And lying there, his tail in the water, and his vile head on the bank, he would fix his eyes on the gate, and whoever came out, or went up to go in, was sure to die; for the glance of his eye was death, and the fire of his breath destruction. And soldiers riding forth on messages from the King, and women and children coming down to the marsh for water, and shepherds driving home their flocks, had been seized by the monster, and killed by his breath of fire, and devoured. Then, when he had got his meal for the day, he drew down his head from the bank, and turned, and went curving and gliding back to his den.

When this had gone on for some time, the citi-

zens came together and said to the king : "O, King Xevius, deliver us from this dragon !" But the old King, rising from his throne, could only say, "My children, by what means shall I deliver you ?"

Then one in that company cried out : "Let us send embassies to other cities, and offer prizes of gold, and silver, and arms, to their goodliest champions. Peradventure one may come to us, able to deliver us from the dragon."

To that the whole assembly give assent. And Xevius sent embassies forthwith to surrounding cities, and out of these cities came many champions anxious to win the prizes. But the dragon prevailed, and champion after champion was slain. And the cities ceased to send others. And the beast came forth from his den in the marsh, and lay in wait with fierce eyes fixed on the gateway ; and when any one came out, or any stranger drew near to go in, seized him and swallowed him, just as before.

And when this had continued another while, the citizens came together again, and said : "King Xevius, King Xevius ! save us from this terrible dragon !" But the old King only said : "If the heavens might open and the gods descend, the dragon might be slain."

At this, the citizens lifted up their voices and wept. And they turned from the King to each other, and said: "There is no deliverance for us in man." But when their despair had made them dumb, one standing on the outskirts of the crowd said: "O King! and O citizens! hearken unto me. If we might pass a law to drain this marsh dry, and thereafter burn the reeds and rushes, we shall overcome the beast." And at that a great shout arose, for the people fancied this very thing might be. And that day Xevius and his people passed the law.

But while the citizens who proposed the law, and the wise men of the city, were surveying the marsh, and considering how its waters might be drained and the reeds and rushes burnt, the dragon was coming just as before, and day by day adding another and another victim to the tale of those he had already slain.

And the citizens grew tired of waiting. And when a long year had been spent, and the draining of the marsh was not yet begun, they came together a third time, and cried: "Did we not pass a law, O Xevius! to destroy this beast?" The old King could not answer a word. And he was afraid, for he saw rage in the eyes of his people. But a cer-

tain citizen who was present came forward and said :
“O King Xevius! and O my fellow-townsmen!
This is a great curse the angry gods have sent to
us ; and it is our children, and our brothers and
sisters, and our men and women whom it has slain.
Let us give the monster cattle instead.”

And when the citizens heard that, at first they
were angry, for their cattle was their wealth ; but
at last they consented. And one day an ox, and
the next day a sheep, was placed at the gate in the
morning. And when the monster had swallowed
his victim, he turned and went back to his den.
And for a whole year the city had peace.

But at the end of that time, the shepherds and
the cattle herds came down from the hills and said :
“Will ye take all our flocks and herds from us, and
leave our children and ourselves to perish for
want?” And they turned angry looks on the
citizens and on Xevius the King.

And when the King called the citizens together
once more, they agreed, because the hill people
could give no more cattle, to cast lots daily. And
on whatever house the lot should fall, from that
house a child should be taken and sent forth to be
devoured by the monster.

But at this a horror of great darkness fell on all

the city. And every household had terror at its heart. On the house on which the lot fell at eventide a boy or a girl had to be sent forth in the morning. And this was worse than all that had gone before. Mothers counted their children at sunrise and said : “ At sundown the lot may fall.” Strong men were seen weeping as they went out and in by doors which had already been darkened by the lot. The curse had entered the city, and come into their homes, and darkened all their joy.

One evening the lot fell on Cleotilda, the only daughter of the King. And the news went far and wide in the twilight, that next morning the beautiful princess, who had thought some day to be Queen, must go forth to be devoured by the dragon. Oh ! then the heart of the King was wrung ! And he came out on the balcony of his palace and cried : “ Be pitiful, O my citizens, and spare my daughter, my only, my beautiful Cleotilda.” But the citizens set their teeth, and doubled up their fists, and made their hearts hard against him, and said : “ King Xevius, you consented with us to this law. And our daughters and our sons have been taken. And if you withhold your Cleotilda, we will burn your palace and your daughter and you.”

And King Xevius saw that this was justly spoken.

But he said : “ For that I am your king, and a grey-haired man, and for that this is my only child, grant me eight days of her company, that I may look at her, and love her, and weep with her, before she goes forth to die.”

And the citizens, for that he was their king, and grey-headed, and this was his only child, granted his request.

But the eighth day came at last, and on the morning of that day the King dressed his daughter in white, and put a gold crown on her head, and took her by the hand, and walked down holding her by the hand, to the gate. And then, kissing her many times and weeping sore, the gate was opened to let her forth, and then shut again, and the maiden stood outside of the wall alone, waiting for her doom.

The walls of the city were crowded with citizens in tears, who waited to see her die ; but Xevius returned to his palace that he might be alone and weep.

And when the citizens turned their eyes to the marsh they beheld the dragon putting forth his head, then craning this way and that, then curving out of his den and gliding straight as an arrow to the spot on the shore where the white-robed maiden stood.

Now there ran along all the edge of that marsh one of the famous roads of Imperial Rome. And it chanced that morning that a Christian knight, of the name of George, was riding on some service of the Emperor, along that very road. And, coming to the edge of the marsh, he saw the great dragon curving and gliding to the shore, and at the shore, alone, before the closed gateway, the crowned and white-robed daughter of the King in tears.

And, putting spurs to his horse, he rode swiftly up to the maiden, and said: "And wherefore those tears? And why this closed gateway?" And Cleotilda pointed to the dragon, and told him all the woe of the city, and said: "The lot has fallen on me, and I have come forth to die."

But the knight said: "By Christ's grace, you shall not die! Take me this day to be your champion, and He will help me to deliver you from this beast." But the maiden said: "Not so, kind Sir Knight; champions too many already have been destroyed by the monster, and one more shall not die for me."

But the knight said: "Christ is my strength and my sword; and He has made this promise to me—'*The dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*'"

When the princess heard him mention the name of Christ again, she understood that he was speaking of the gods, and she said—remembering her father's words: "If the gods from heaven fight for you, the dragon may indeed be slain."

And when George told her that Heaven would surely help, she gave consent.

Then that brave knight, lifting up his eyes to heaven, said: "O Jesu, my Captain, my Lord! I have no strength but what Thou shalt give. For Thy mercy's sake, and for the pity that is in Thy pity-filled heart for children, help me this day to deliver this Thy child, and the glory shall be Thine for ever and ever."

And Jesus heard the prayer of His knight, and strengthened him with great strength. And George grasped his spear firmly in his right hand, raised it above his shoulder, and with his left reined back his horse some paces, and once more committing himself to Christ, rode straight in upon the monster. And then, with his whole soul's and body's might, he hurled his uplifted spear down into the monster's neck, and pierced him through and through. And leaping down from his horse suddenly, with one blow of his sword, the knight severed the monster's head from his body.

And then he knelt down and gave Christ thanks. And then he fastened the head of the monster to the reins of his horse. And then he set the princess on the saddle, and led her through the gate which, only a half-hour before, she thought had closed on her for ever.

But long before the gate was reached, the shouting and glad cries of the multitude on the walls, who had seen the combat and the victory, filled the city. And the citizens who were near the palace broke in upon old Xevius weeping, and cried: "Joy! The dragon is killed; and Cleotilda is coming back alive." Hearing this, Xevius came forth, and, with the citizens, ran down to the gate.

And they met the knight walking humbly by the head of his horse, and leading Cleotilda home. And the knight being told that Xevius was King, delivered up the princess to him, and bade him give the praise to Christ.

Then, going up to the place of assembly in the city, Sir George spoke to the people of what had been done, and gave all the glory of it to Christ. And he told them that Christ was able to do a thousand times more, and better, than they had seen. And he told them of His death and resur-

rection at Jerusalem, and of the great love He has for men, and invited them to become sharers of that love and Christians. And Xevius, Cleotilda, and ten thousand more, both old and young, of that city, hearkened to his words and believed. And having baptized them, the knight mounted his horse and went on his way.

This is an old story, I said, and it is the shadow of a story older than I have told. The times when Lysia was a city, and Xevius was its King, are far behind us, and Xevius and Cleotilda, and all the citizens who wept that morning, as she went forth to die, are dead. But it used always to be a comfort to me, when I was a boy, that the dragon was well killed, and could never return to eat up beautiful princesses any more.

Alas! I have lived to see another dragon, more fierce, more deathful, far more a curse than the one George killed, living in our own country, and coming forth from dens worse than the old dismal marshes, and breathing fire and poison and death on human souls and homesteads.

I have seen this dragon with his fiery eyes, lying squat at the mouth of the dens where he lives, craning this way and that for human victims. I have seen him at the doors of beershops, of gin-

palaces, of rum-holes, of dancing-saloons. And I have heard of him at the drink booths of the race-course, and in club-houses of the rich, and in excursions of the poor. And I know that he is destroying every year more than the old dragon of Lysia destroyed in his lifetime.

And this new dragon, this fiery destroyer, this curse of our land, is DRINK. O Dragon of the beershop and the gin-palace! I have seen your approaches, your cruelties, your victims, the desolations you make! I have seen homes destroyed, and children sacrificed by your cruel breath! I have heard the cry of the widows you have made in their agony, and known the deeper pangs of those to whom widowhood would have been a relief as your victims knocked at their doors! Not in heathen lands only, but in the haunts where you are bred and pampered, are the habitations of horrid cruelty described by God in His Word.

And you, Christian boys and girls of this generation, you, also; have seen the monster, and young though you be, you have been witnesses of its ravages.

Have you ever considered why you have been brought face to face with its ravages, as George was with the dragon of Lysia? It is that, like him, you

might cry to Christ against it, and fight with it as he fought, and with your whole soul and body's strength go on fighting with it, until, by Christ's help, you overcome, and put to death, this terrible monster, that is sending death into so many homes in our country. And do not fear but you will conquer.

If there is one thing more than another which this old story makes plain to us, it is this, that there is no dragon of the marsh, or any evil thing that destroys human life, or casts a shadow on human homes, which may not be put to death, if only Christ's fighters, old or young, will go near to it, *in His strength*, and earnestly encounter it, and hurl a right Christ-spear at its head.

Charlie's Feat.



CHARLIE'S FEAT.

I CANNOT remember who first told me the story I am about to tell. I have known it so long, and told it for so many years, I suppose I must have heard it at the Sunday-school, when I was a scholar there myself.

It is the story of what, in this fight with the drink-dragon, a child may do who has had little more teaching than the Sunday-school can give. Charlie was but a child when he died ; and it was on his death-bed the work of his life was done, which I am about to describe.

Charlie's mother was a washerwoman in a back street of London. She was as poor as women usually are who have to earn their bread by washing. But she had a joy which few mothers of any class have : she had a son who had never given her a cross word or look. They were alone in the huge city, in the wide world, those two, and it was well

they loved each other as they did. Their only inheritance was their love. Sunday was their great day together. There was no washing, nor ironing, nor need to go out on that day. And although it was no more than a scrap, the mother always contrived to have that scrap of something savoury for tea on Sunday. They never went to church—they were too poor for that. Alas, that in this Christian country such a thing should be! But Charlie went regularly to the Sunday-school in the neighbouring lane, and the report he brought home of the sayings and doings there was his mother's Sunday sermon and church. You must not fancy that this poor woman was a heathen because she did not go to church. She knew the best bits of the Bible by heart, and she could repeat many of the Olney hymns, and she knew, and was in the habit of singing, very many of Charles Wesley's. And the time was in her life when she attended church as regularly as any Sunday worshipper in the land.

But "the destruction of the poor is their poverty," and it was the poverty of Charlie's mother that led to the boy's death. One wet day he had been out errand-running, and he came home drenched to the skin. The fire had gone out, and the house was cold, and his mother did not get home from her

washing till late. And the poor child was chilled, and took cold, and then fever, and for a whole long week it seemed as if he never would speak to his mother again. But the Lord had a great work for Charlie to do. And although he was never to rise from his bed, the fever left him, and he could lie in a measure of comfort all day, and dream and talk and read. It changed the life of his mother. She found friends who gave her clothes to wash at home, and she almost never left Charlie alone. Ah ! if I were telling *her* story I should tell of many and many a look which she turned on her boy, and of pangs as sharp as death which she felt, which yet she could not express by either tear or cry. But it is of Charlie only I have to tell.

On the same landing with the washerwoman lived the driver of an omnibus. About a year before, his wife had died and left four little children to his care. Poor fellow ! The cold of cold days, and the heat of hot days, and his easy nature, and the weakness of his heart together, had driven him very near to being a drunkard. As often as otherwise he came home tipsy ; and if it had not been for Charlie's mother, his children would sometimes have starved. And yet he was not what you would call a bad man. There were many tender places

in his heart. He really loved his children. He never left them to go drinking on Sundays, and on the days he kept free from drink he always brought home something nice to cook for them.

Between this man and Charlie a fast friendship had sprung up. The driver allowed the boy to have his whip for whole nights. And Charlie loved to admire the rings of brass and the wonderful in-laying and intertwisting of cord, and to hear it crack as he wielded it with his feeble little arms. Once or twice, too, the driver, meeting him on the stairs, had given him an apple or orange out of the little store he was taking home to his own children. All this was before Charlie turned ill.

Before going further, I must say that Charlie was not a specially religious boy. There was nothing about him, except his illness, and what that works on a child's spirit, to lift him above the run of other well-doing boys. But he had come the length of knowing what prayer was, and of practising it. In his small sphere, too, he had been an abstainer, as his mother was, also, for three or four years. And as he lay, from day to day, in his bed, thinking of many things, and sometimes, no doubt, of the little likelihood of his ever getting better, a great desire took hold of him to give himself to

prayer for one particular boon, and to ask God to put the drunkenness of the omnibus-driver away. And yielding to this desire, he began to make it known to God, and to bring it often before the memory of God. But sometimes it seemed to him as if his life would be too short for the task ; for he felt his strength growing less and less daily ; and his voice sank into a whisper ; and there was no answer to his prayer.

All this while, the driver had been very kind to the sick boy. One touching proof of his kindness was that when he was in the least touched by drink he never stopped to ask for him. On every other night he came in. Charlie soon came to understand this touch of kindness ; and his joy was all the greater when the well-known footsteps, softly falling on the stairs, stopped at his mother's door, and the kindly face, and then the whole body, of his friend appeared. And it cheered the child when the words—although they were always the same—came out : “ And how are ye to-night, Charlie dear ? And how did ye spend the day ? And I hope ye'll have a good night's sleep.”

One night—on this particular night the driver was perfectly sober—Charlie's door was open for air, and the driver, coming quietly up the stairs,

heard sounds as of some one praying. It was Charlie praying for the driver himself. The voice was low, and he could hardly make out all that was spoken, but he caught this much slowly syllabled out in whispers: "Dear Father, grant me my desire. Put the drunkenness of the kind driver away, for the sake of his children, for his own dear sake, for Christ's sake, and give him a new heart, and make him a sober man."

The driver broke down before he could enter. Was this child praying for him? He came in, all trembling, and threw himself on his knees at the bedside. "Is it me, you're praying for, Charlie?—a poor drunken waif like me?" Then he began to cry. Charlie took the man's big hand into his own thin white long one, and looked at him, and said with a wisdom above his years: "You are no waif, but a man. And God loves you. I can never pray for you again. I am going to leave my mother and you. And I am going to God. But promise me this, only this, that you will meet me in heaven." It was Charlie's last words. He turned his eyes, full of young love, on his mother, and almost suddenly sank into a sleep. And that night Charlie died.

But his words did not die. They were never to die. They went into the heart of the poor driver,

and were as words from God to his soul. In the dark hours of that night, and in his dreams when he fell asleep, he heard them sounding. When he arose in the morning, the room seemed to be filled with the sound of them. They came to him as he sat on his box, swelling far above the roar of the streets. He could not get away from them. Sometimes it seemed as if the heavens had opened, and an angel were speaking them from above; and then, again, as if they came right up out of the depths of his own heart. "You are not a waif, but a man, and God loves you." And, "I am going to God; and promise me this—that you will meet me there."

Just at that crisis, he was found by a wise Christian man, by whose help he was directed into the way of life. He took the child's prayer, and his own promise to the child, and all his poor broken life, to Christ. And Christ helped him, and cast his drunkenness out of him, and made him a new man. And happy days dawned for his motherless children and himself.

Who killed the drink-dragon in this poor man? It was Charlie. And the word which Christ helped sick Charlie to utter on his death-bed was the Christ-spear which smote it dead.

That was the work Charlie did,—the life-work appointed to him to do. And when he had done it, “he was not, for God took him.”

“OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES AND SUCKLINGS
HAST THOU ORDAINED STRENGTH.”

Why Children should be glad for Christ.



WHY CHILDREN SHOULD BE GLAD FOR CHRIST.

JESUS once said of children : “ Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” And when He came riding into Jerusalem, it was as the king of that kingdom He came. The people had gone forth to meet Him, and bring Him in like a king. They cut branches from the palm trees and waved them in the air, to express their joy. They flung their cloaks and coats on the ground, to make a carpet for Him. They went before Him and followed Him through the streets, and up to the temple, filling the air with their welcome. But when he came to the temple the children took up the shout and cried : “ Hosanna to the Son of David ! ”

That would be a very sweet sound to Jesus. Jesus has a great love for children, and their praise is very dear to Him. On the outskirts of the joyful crowd that day, were people who did not share the

joy,—bad men, with scowling faces and hate-filled eyes, whispering hard things against Him, and plotting to put Him to death. But near at hand, moving about His feet, were the children of Jerusalem. And they were crying with all their might: “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

A thousand years before, the great King David had said, in one of his psalms: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength because of Thine enemies.” Our Lord remembered that psalm in the temple when He heard the children shouting. There were the enemies, with the wicked look in their eyes, with the wicked word on their lips, with the wicked purpose in their hearts. But here were the babes and the sucklings, the children of Jerusalem, lifting up their voices in His praise, just as King David had said.

It was the fulfilment of David’s word. The children had seen Jesus doing kingly deeds. They saw Him opening the eyes of the blind, healing the lame, and doing other still more wonderful things. And now, when He came up to Zion, to the palace of the great King, they said: “This is the great King Himself—great David’s greater Son. Hosanna! hosanna!” The praise was in their hearts, and it rushed up into their lips.

It was also a prophecy of what should be thereafter. In all ages, and in other towns besides Jerusalem, Jesus shall have children who will cry: "Hosanna" in His praise, and be joyful in Him as their King. In heaven, at this moment, there are multitudes of children who are sending up their hosannas around His throne, and are very glad because He is their King. On earth there are thousands and tens of thousands of children who are learning to take part in this joyful praise. It is the very mark of a Christian child to be ready to cry "Hosanna" to Jesus, and to be joyful in Him as the King.

It is this I mean to speak of to-day. I intend to mention some reasons why you should take part in these hosannas, and be joyful in Christ as your King. And the reasons are these:—First, He is the Saviour of children. Second, He became a child, that He might understand children. Third, He is not ashamed to call children His brothers and sisters. Fourth, He is preparing a place for children above.

I.

He is the Saviour of children.

It is a great thing for children to have a Saviour. A mother was knitting under the porch of her house one autumn afternoon. Her boy was playing with other children on the village green. Beyond the green was the river, and on the opposite bank of it was a wood full of nuts and berries, and sweet-smelling leaves, and flowers, and many other things which children delight to gather. "Let us cross to the wood," said some of the bigger children. "I shall cross too," said the little boy, whose mother was knitting at the door. The ford was a little to the right, and just out of his mother's view. There were stepping stones all the way across. And the little nutting and berrying party got quite safely to the other side. But the clouds had been darkening over the sky since the morning. And now it began to rain. First it came in heavy drops, then there was a peal of thunder, then came down torrents of rain. The bigger children hurried back to the ford, and one by one got over safely. The little boy whose mother was knitting under the porch was last. The river had by this time risen. The stepping stones were beginning to be covered. The

little man took one step, then a second, then he came to a stone over which the river was flowing swiftly, and his heart failed. He wrung his hands with fear, and cried with a piercing cry. The mother heard his cry, and flew to the ford. She was too late. She could not reach her child. A broad black flood of water came thundering down between her boy and her. "My child! my child!" she cried. "Mother! mother! come for me," cried the boy. All the village came down to the river-side—men and women, young and old; but no one would venture to cross. They looked and pitied; they looked and wrung their hands, but they gave no help. At that moment a young shepherd, leading his flock down from the mountains, entered the village, and saw the peril of the child. He left his sheep on the green, and took great strides to the river-brink. The roaring of the water over the stones was terrible, but he heeded not. He stepped boldly from stone to stone. In the centre, the flood had carried some of them away: he plunged into the stream. With strong arms he beat the water to the right and left. He pressed his feet against the currents, and swam right over to the boy. With one arm he clasped the child, with the other he once more grappled with the flood. There was the roaring of

the stream beneath, and the raging of the storm above ; but the brave shepherd, partly walking and partly swimming, brought the boy to the bank, and delivered him to his mother.

That was a boy who found a saviour. And what the brave young shepherd saved him from was death. But Christ was the real Saviour that day. It was He who sent the shepherd at the very nick of time. It was He who put the noble willingness into his heart to risk his life for the life of the child. It was He who made him brave and strong to battle with the flood. And every day, somewhere, in this or some other way, Christ is saving children. Death in a thousand forms is continually coming near to children. But by brave swimmers, by faithful nurses, by wise doctors, by loving mothers, by kind friends, and sometimes by the unseen angels, Christ brings deliverance. And He is the Saviour from a death more terrible than the death which threatened the boy of whom I told. It is He who saves from the death which comes by sin,—the death of everything good in the soul—the death of the soul itself. Every child born in a Christian home should be joyful in this Saviour. He has saved you from being heathen children ; He has saved you from being slave children. He has

come to save you from being dishonest and lying children, and idle and disobedient children. He has saved you from being ignorant of God's love. He has come to save you from spending lives without God. He has come to save you from dying without hope of going to God. He has saved you from the grave, for He has purchased resurrection for you. And He came to save you from what is worse than the grave,—from being shut out of heaven ; for He has made a way, for every child who will walk in it, into the eternal family and home of God above.

II.

He became a little child, that He might understand children.

I once heard about a little girl who was just learning to speak. She came up to her mamma, sick and pale, and began in her broken way to tell something. Mamma could not understand. The doctor could not understand. Nurse could not understand. But still the child continued her little tale, and by-and-by began to cry, because nobody understood. She wished to tell where her pain was, and no one could understand. At last they thought of sending for her playmate—a child not

much bigger than herself. She understood at once. It was the same cry which the Shunammite's little son cried long ago, when he was struck by the heat : " My head, my head."

Jesus became a little child, to understand all your cries. He was hot and cold, He was sick and well, He was hungry and thirsty, just as you have been. And He had to learn to read, just as you had, beginning with the alphabet.

He knows all about children. He felt all that you feel ; He thought just as you think. When He was hurt, He cried ; when He was sad, He wept. He had to obey His mother just as you have. Every day He met with other children,—with good children, and with children not good, just as you do. And He learned to be a good boy, and to seek good ; and He grew up in favour both with God and man. He knew that He had a Father in heaven who could hear His cry ; and He prayed to that Father. Before He was twelve years old He made it known that His Father had given Him a work to do. When His mother found Him in the temple with the priests, putting questions to them, He said : " Knew ye not that I was about my father's business ? "

He knows how weak children are ; but He

knows also how strong their helper is, and how willing He is to help them. When a boy or girl says : "I cannot live as God wants me to live. I must sometimes have my own way. And sometimes I may tell a lie," the Lord Jesus knows that that is not so. He was a child, and lived as God wished Him to live. And He never uttered a word which was not true.

At the same time, He does not forget that children cannot serve God in the very same way very good grown-up people can do. He remembers how it was with Himself when He was young ; and how hard a battle He had. He knows how little you know yet, and how little you have, and how little you are. And He does not expect you to pray to Him just in the very way your parents do. And He is not angry if your prayers are simple and short. And He does not expect you to work for Him as big people do ; but only as children can. He knows your frame, and remembers that you are just children still.

Ah ! if you knew it aright, there is nothing better than this in the world for you. Up in heaven, there is One who understands all you think and say. When you are not able to tell your wants, He knows without telling. When you cry in broken

words which even your mother cannot understand, He understands. He knows and feels every pain you have. He knows all your sorrows when you are in tears. Even the cries of the tiniest baby in a mother's arms go up into the ear of that dear Saviour who was a tiny baby Himself, and sobbed and smiled in the arms of His mother Mary in Bethlehem long ago.

“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

III.

He is not ashamed to call children His brothers and sisters.

There are many reasons which might well make Jesus ashamed to call boys and girls His brothers and sisters. He is perfectly holy; they are far from being perfectly holy. Some have bad tempers; some are rude; some are quarrelsome; some are disobedient; some are slothful; some forget to thank God for His mercies, or pray for His help.

But the Lord Jesus is not ashamed of them. He says to children: “Ye are my brethren.” He thinks of children every day as His brethren. And every day He blesses them as brethren. He makes no difference. He loves poor children and rich

children alike ; and happy children and unhappy ; and black children and white. Those who have parents, and those who have lost their parents,—they are all His brethren. There is not a poor message boy on the streets, nor a poor newspaper boy, nor a poor foundry boy, nor a poor sailor boy, nor any poor girl, nor any girl or boy, rich or poor, in the wide world, to whom He is not a brother.

Do you remember when He called His disciples “brethren” for the first time? It was after His resurrection,—after He had endured the cross, and won the crown. It was when He was on the other side of the grave, and was waiting to go up to heaven. He said to Mary: “Go and tell my brethren that I have risen, and that I am going back to God.” Think of the loving-kindness of that message. It was sent to the men who had fled from Him in His sorrow. It was sent to Peter, who denied Him with oaths and curses. Although they had been ashamed of Him before men, He was not ashamed of them. He called them brethren. There is nothing in all the Bible more beautiful than that. And it is just the same thing He says to you: “Ye are my brethren.” Even to those of you who have been ashamed to

pray to Him ; even to those who have fled from Him like the disciples, He says : “ Ye are my brethren.” He says that, in order to make you His true brothers and sisters. He says that, because it is in His heart to be a brother to each of you.

Lift up your hearts to God, and be very thankful. You and I have a brother in heaven—the best, the kindest in the whole world. In the high heaven, where the stars shine, and the throne of God is set, this brother lives ; and He is Lord of these stars, and He sits on that throne. This is the king who is continually travelling about His kingdom, and doing good to His brothers and sisters. He is near to us when we do not see Him. He is near to us now. Oh, wonder of wonders ! My little brothers are king’s brothers, my little sisters are king’s sisters ! When I enter the school, when I go among children by the fireside, I go into the midst of brothers and sisters of the King of Glory.

Nobody need go without this joy. Christ is brother to us all. We may have no money, nor fine clothes, nor books, nor food ; but we all have, and we always have, this brother.

Nothing can take Him away from us. Death may take our earthly brothers and sisters, and our

fathers and mothers, but it has no power over Christ.

Health and strength, and friends and joys, may leave us ; but this brother will never leave you, and never, never forsake you.

IV.

He is preparing a place for Children above.

Some friends called on me lately who were going to Australia. I said to one of them : “ Do you feel very dreary ? ” He replied : “ I have a brother there. ” That took away the dreariness. It would be a very sad thing to look forward to the end of life, if we had no knowledge of a brother in the life beyond. The ending of life is like leaving one’s native land for Australia. The ship goes out of the river, the sea widens, the land disappears : you will never look on those hills and shores again. But there are better hills and shores in heaven. And Christ, our Elder Brother, is there before us. He will come out and meet us, and take us to our home.

In this world there are many things that are very sad. Our life is full of partings. It is like the breaking up of a school, when the top boys and girls are not to return. Perhaps they will never

see each other on the earth again. One will go to India, one to Australia, one to London, one to the grave. So are the children of God scattered in the world. They do not know each other; often they do not see each other. One is abroad, one is at home; one is poor, one is rich. A thousand things divide them. How joyful to think that it will not be always so,—that the Lord Jesus is preparing a place for them above, and that, at the end of the world, He will gather all His brothers and sisters into one happy home in heaven!

There is just this one sad thought that comes creeping into one's mind. Some boy may be saying to himself: "That joy is not for me; I have not been the brother to Christ I ought to have been." And some tender-hearted girl may be thinking, that she has not loved the Saviour enough, nor tried enough to please Him.

My dear children, this is the blessing of having Christ for a Saviour. There is forgiveness with Him for those who have done wrong. He is waiting to forgive you, and make you as good as you ought to be. You remember the story of Joseph—the brother who was put down into the pit, and sold for a slave into Egypt? The brothers who sold him happened, years after that, to be famishing for food,

and went to Egypt to buy corn. And, lo ! they found the brother they had sold a great lord there. He did not put these wicked brothers to death. He had pity on them, and blessed them, and gave them corn, and told them to go back for their father, and their wives, and their children, and he would prepare a place for them in Egypt. He forgave them all their sin.

Christ is our Joseph. He is Joseph to all the children of men. Can we ever forget the treatment He received at the hands of men in Jerusalem ? He came into that city which was His own, and the citizens received Him not. They mocked Him, and beat Him, and sold Him, and crucified Him.

But His heart is none the less the heart of a brother. There is forgiveness and mercy in that heart for every child of man. Even for those who crucified Him He cried : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, that every boy and girl before me would cry for that forgiveness ! Oh, that you would turn to other boys and girls, and say : “ We have found the forgiving brother, whom wicked brothers sold and crucified in Jerusalem long ago. He is the King of heaven. He is preparing a place there for all who love Him. Let us

live to Him whilst we are here, and at last we shall go up together, and dwell with Him for ever and ever."

There is one of the psalms in which everything that lives is called on to join in the hosanna to Christ,—sun and moon and stars ; fire, hail, wind, and snow ; hills and trees ; and beasts, wild and tame ; and human beings—

" Both men and virgins young,
Even young and old,
Exalt His name, for much His fame
Should be extolled."

And everything that lives—in its own way—sends up praise to Christ. The singing of birds, the glad gambolling of little creatures in the woods, the rippling of waves on the beach, express their praise. Winter and summer, spring-time and harvest, are the four-part song of the year. Every season has its own song. In the harvest, the very earth seems to take up the praise. The fields are waving with ripe corn, its pastures are clothed with glad flocks, there is a stir and movement of joy in the very air. The little hills rejoice on every side. The whole wide earth, lying in the light of harvest sun and moon, rejoices before God, who made its bosom fruitful, and ripened the

wheat and the barley, and turned the little blades of spring into the yellow waving fields of harvest.

O you children of the Christian Church—you who have been born in this Christian country, and have been blessed with Christian parents—you who can read the Bible, and the sweet story of Christ's love to man,—what joy and praise should ascend from you !

If the little hills are glad because God's lambs are bleating on their side ; and the green fields because the cattle He made are browsing on their pasture ; if the valleys are glad because the corn is waving on their breast, and the whole earth because He has not left it to be a barren wilderness—there are a thousand better reasons why *you* should be glad for Him, who came from heaven to die for you, and went back to heaven to prepare for you a home.

The Palace of Life.

THE PALACE OF LIFE.

IN the days of the Emperor Agathos many wonderful things took place. It is one of the least of these I am about to relate.

Two children, a boy and a girl, were wading one day in the little brook which ran past the village in which they lived. On the other side of the brook, as far as the eye could see, was the highway, and everybody who passed could be seen by the children. And indeed this was a great part of their joy, that so many things were to be seen. They saw carts laden with harvest-store going to the mill, and soldiers marching to the city, and students travelling to the university, and a wedding party going to the church, and a funeral to the churchyard. But there was one sight greater than all these they were that day to see. Far away in the distance it rose before them, first, as a cloud of dust, then as the swift glancing

of wheels and horses' feet in the sunlight, then as a blaze of scarlet and gold.

It was the Emperor Agathos riding through his land.

To the surprise of the children, the horses stopped, and the Emperor commanded the two to cross the brook and come up into his carriage. In an instant they were sitting on the rug at his feet. The carriage began to move. A cloud of dust whirled up behind them, and they felt themselves swept along as if they had wings. Many a stolen glance they took on this side and on that—for at first they were a little afraid. The highway still skirted the bank of the stream; but it was now broader and deeper, and great bridges crossed it every here and there. They passed houses, and woods, and gardens, and pasture fields filled with cattle. But at last, when they had ridden many a long mile, and the sun was beginning to dip down into the west, they came to a beautiful hill with a crystal palace at the base. Under the rays of the setting sun, and reflecting the golden colours of the sky, it shone like an immense diamond.

"This is your home, henceforth," said the Emperor, pointing to the palace. The children noticed that the approach was by a bridge which

crossed the stream, in whose shallow waters they had waded in the morning, along whose ever deepening and widening banks they had driven all the day.

“This is your house,” the Emperor said again, as he drove up to the huge doorway. It was a succession of arches, one within another, carved in crystal into the form of leaves and fruit and creeping things. And as the sunlight touched it, the whole seemed, to the eye of the children, like one deep arch made of coloured lamps and glittering stars.

But when they reached the door, they observed in immense letters above it the words “NO RETURNING,” and they thought of the village in which they had spent so many happy days, and of their parents, and were both afraid and sad.

The door opened with a soft noise, like the sound of a flute far out on the sea. And the two children crossed the threshold and went in. But they never could tell what happened next, nor when the Emperor left them, nor who received them. The morning sun was shining through the walls of the palace when they began to observe again.

The first thing which struck them was the size of

the palace. The walls inside seemed to reach up as high as the clouds and stretch out as far as the eye could see. All up and down the walls were the most lovely pictures of cattle and woods, and birds and beasts, and fields of wheat and barley. The butterflies were almost flying, and they came to think in a little that the birds really sang. A brook, just the picture of the brook in which they had been wading yesterday, ran along the floor, and along the bank of it was a highway. The floor was carpeted with real grass, and clover, and buttercups, and daises. It was one of the wonders of the place that the picture fruit-trees had real fruit on them, which the two children were allowed to gather and eat.

But what pleased them most was the discovery that their parents were living in the house, and their brothers and sisters as well. And they saw children going to school just as in their native village; and by-and-by they found themselves joining these children and sitting in school too. The days passed very pleasantly in this splendid new home. Sometimes the two children would clap their hands and dance for joy. But they could not help noticing after a while that the door by which they had come in was far behind them. They were

also aware of a difference in other things ; but they could not tell what that was. And then they saw right before them another door, and above it the same words they had seen outside.

One day, when the school-tasks were over and they were tired of playing with other children, curiosity drew them to the second door, which opened softly at their approach. They heard the hum of busy crowds, the click of shuttles, the ring of hammers, the beat of drums. They would fain have entered, but they were so tired out with play that, while they were listening and peeping in, they fell asleep.

When they awoke it was morning, and they found that they had been carried in. They looked round—the very first thing they did—for their parents ; but neither the boy's nor the girl's could be seen. Then they began to cry, and turned to go back to them through the door. Alas ! the door would not open. The great words glowed down on them like fire—“NO RETURNING.” They cried a good long while together. But when they dried their tears and looked at each other they saw that they were no longer children.

This new room of the palace was different, and yet not much different, from the one they had left. If anything, it was larger. The fruit was

higher up on the trees. The trees were farther away. The songs of the birds were not so clear. But still there was a wondrous beauty all round the place. It was from the centre the noise of hammers and shuttles had come which they heard the evening before. There, a crowd of grimy men were working at forges: here, another crowd, pale-faced and clean, and women as well as men, were weaving cloth in looms. Standing about in the spaces between, some were buying and selling, others were building houses and laying out gardens. And at a distance, squares of soldiers were wheeling and marching about on an open plain.

While they were looking at all these wonders a man came up to them and led them to two empty looms and said: "You are now in the work-room of the palace. Those looms are for you. You shall be taught to work them. And henceforth you shall be expected to work. Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might. And do it while the sun is shining. If you work faithfully you shall receive a crown." Then he placed them on the seats of the looms and left them. The one looked to the other and said: "How like his smile was to the smile of the Emperor." Then they began to weave.

Their webs were of many colours. And as the webs unfolded, beautiful figures came out in the cloth. And the young workers were delighted with the beauty, and set themselves to work with their whole heart—at first slowly, till their hands and fingers got used to the work, then swiftly. And at last they began to sing at their work.

As their hands grew in skill, the two companions wrought together with the greatest spirit. They sometimes recalled the former days and their parents, and were a little sad. But that gave place to interest in their work. The webs were becoming more and more beautiful in pattern, and it was a continual joy to those young workers to see flowers and birds and beasts, and the most wonderful shapes, flowing out in the webs they wove.

But a change came over all this, as over everything which had gone before. That joy in working did not last very long. The heart of the young man longed towards his companion more than to his work. He became negligent and careless. He could not weave for doing little kindnesses to her and listening to her songs. And one day, when the looms were standing silent, and she was singing one of her songs, the air about them seemed to grow thick, and there was a noise of distant thunder

in the sky. And then, flash after flash of lightning coming nearer—every flash darted down from the clouds—the young man's web caught fire, and flew up in a thousand sparks. And when he looked to the other loom, his dear companion was fallen forward on the beam, and white as death. To all appearance she was dead. A company of mute women came in and carried her away. And the young man saw her no more. What happened after that he could never tell. His senses left him for a time. But when he came to himself, he found his loom close to a door like the two he had passed through before. Sick at heart for the loss of his companion, he was only too eager to press it open, and pass into the third room of the palace.

But not so pleasantly as the other two did this third door swing open. And not into so fair a room was the sorrowful young man admitted. It was a repetition of the other in some things, but smaller, and less beautiful. The walls were still the same, but not so high, and the pictures on the walls were faded, and the carpet of grass was not so green, and even the stream went sluggishly, and was not so pure as before. The air was colder, too. The workplaces were nearer, and busier, and more dreary. In the evening he felt tired in a way

he had never felt before. But, most sorrowful of all, he had no companion to cheer him in his sorrows, and the friends of his youth had all disappeared.

It was in this room, however, that he began to dream every night of riding once more with the Great Emperor in his carriage. He seemed to be a little child again, and sitting at the Emperor's feet, and looking up at his smile. And every time he dreamed, he heard the Emperor say to him: "Be not afraid," or, "At evening time it shall be light," or, "He that maketh the Most High his habitation no evil shall befall him, nor any plague come near his dwelling," or some other words as comforting as these. All next day, as he sat plying his shuttle, he would think of the words he had heard in his dream, and of the smile of the Emperor, and be glad.

But there was one thing he began to notice with sadness. Every morning he found the loom shifted forward from where it had stood the day before. And he soon saw not far off, that a door like those he had passed through already, was right in the face of his path.

And by-and-by this fourth door was reached; but it was not now as at the former doors. He who was to pass, indeed, was no longer young. His

hair was grey, his steps were a little feeble. And when the door opened, it was with a creaking noise ; and when it closed behind, it was with a heavy sound. And he stood alone in the fourth and last hall of the great palace.

I do not care to describe it. The glory of the former walls was departed. Everything was faded. The very heavens seemed further off. And within view, from the very entrance, was the egress door, dismal with iron bands and nails. Through its open chinks swept in a biting wind. And now and again there came a sound through the chinks like the sound of water—like the rushing of a river swift and deep outside.

A few old people were working here and there at looms. But every day these became fewer and fewer. One after another went forward and passed out through that door. And sometimes it was a terrible sight, when through the open door, a glimpse was now and again caught of the river outside, and of great rocky banks burying it in awful shadows.

At last it came to the turn of him, whose history we have followed so long. The door opened, and he stood on the threshold, and saw with his own eyes the swift and awful flood. And in a moment he

was in its depths. But in a moment also he knew that another was by his side. A head clothed with sunlight shed light across the entire stream. An arm strong as the everlasting hills sustained him, as he struggled with the tide, and bore him safely to the other bank. And then, as the water passed out of his eyes, and he could look at his helper, he beheld that it was no other than the Great Emperor who had asked him up into his carriage when he was a little child.

But the most wonderful thing of all was this. So soon as he touched the other bank his youth came back to him again. And he saw before him another palace, crystal, golden, on the side of the hill. And far upward, another and another still, to the very top. And at the top, towers and pinnacles of pearl and amethyst glowing in the sun.

And a door opened with a sound like sweet music, above which was carved the words: "They shall go no more out." And he passed into a hall more glorious than my words can describe. His parents were there to welcome. And his lost companion was by their side. And, most delightful of all, the good Emperor Agathos smiling on him more kindly than before. And in that hour

he learned that the Emperor had been leading him, by a way he knew not, to an eternal home; and that childhood, and youth, and suffering, and old age, were but different rooms in the Great Palace of Life, and the first stations in man's everlasting progress.



