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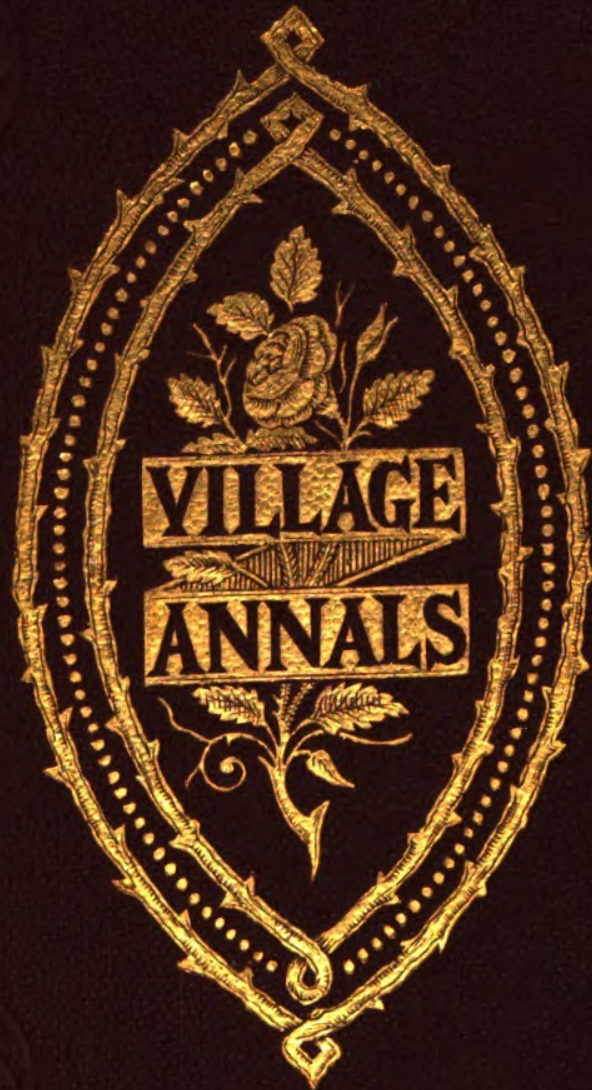
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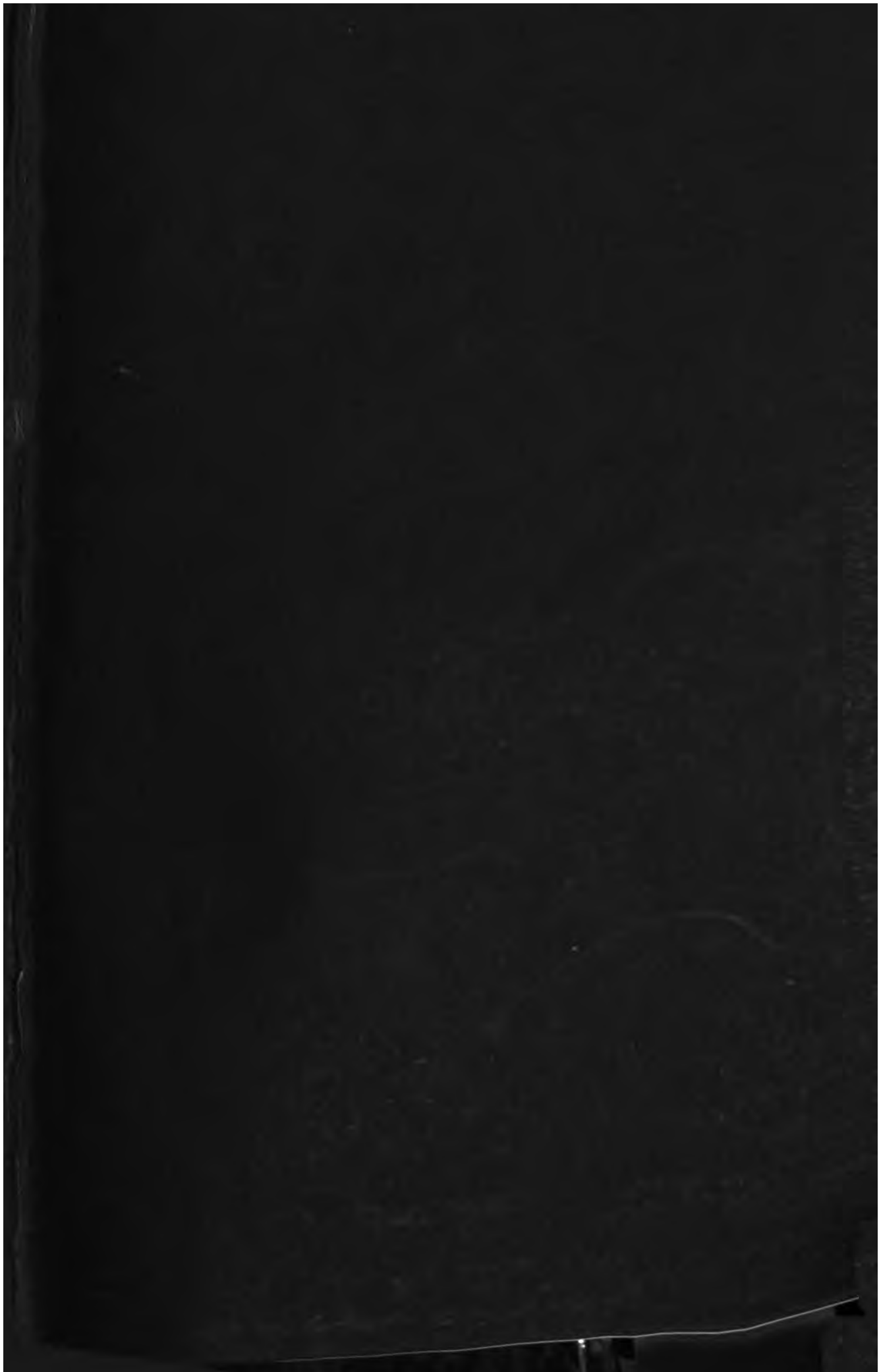
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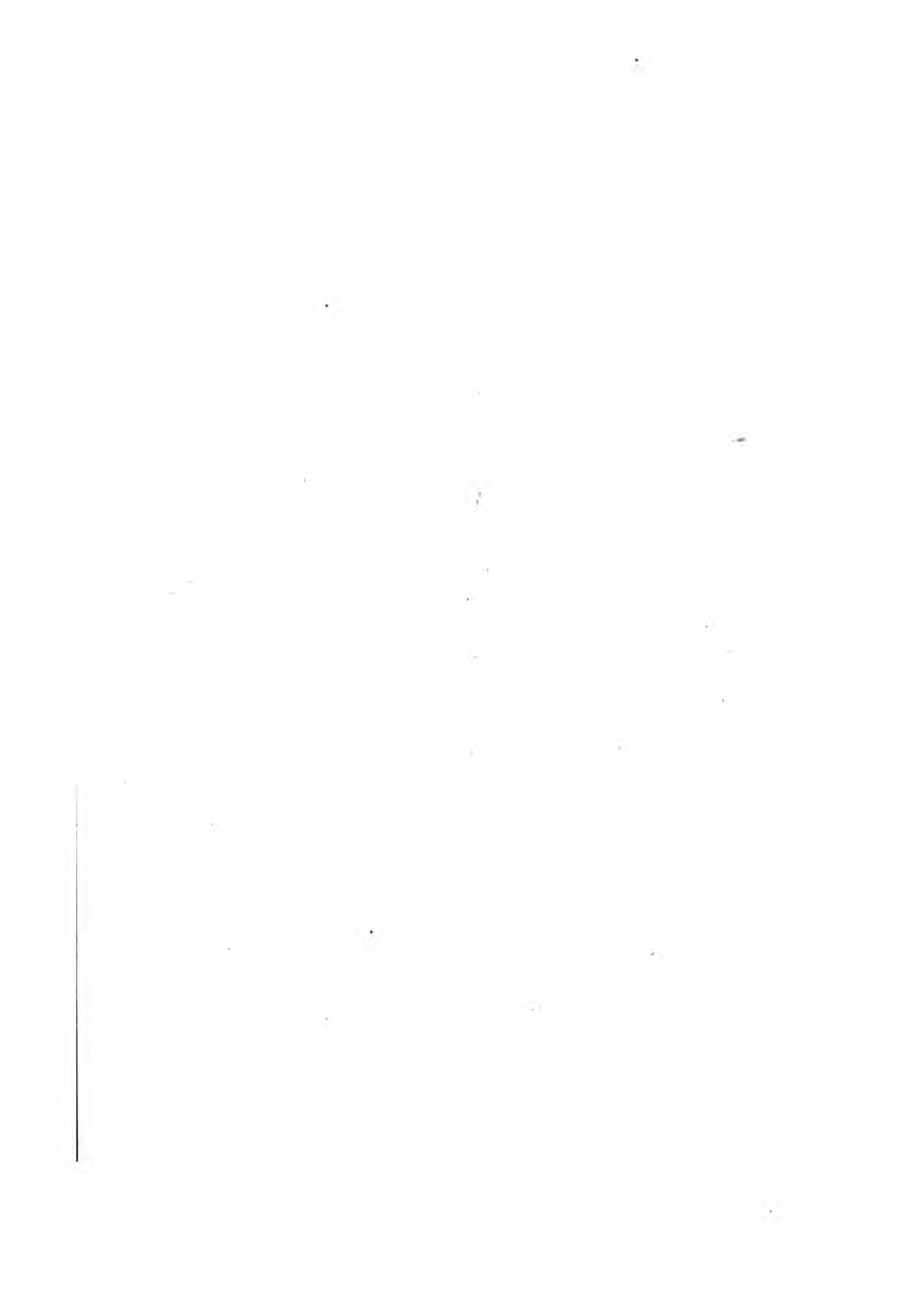




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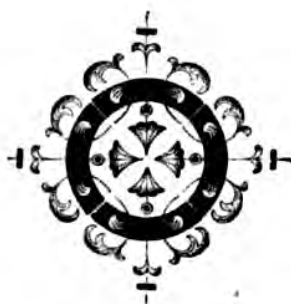


Old Church at Ayott St. Lawrence.

VILLAGE ANNALS.



MRS. OLIVE,
of Ayott St. Lawrence.



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PREFACE.



My dear sister having entrusted to me these short and simple Annals of the Poor, I have rearranged them, and trust that these true stories may stimulate others to strive, and work, and pray, feeling confident that such seed sown, in faith and prayer, must bring forth fruit to Life Everlasting.

EMMA SHEPPARD.

*Fromefield House,
November, 1866.*

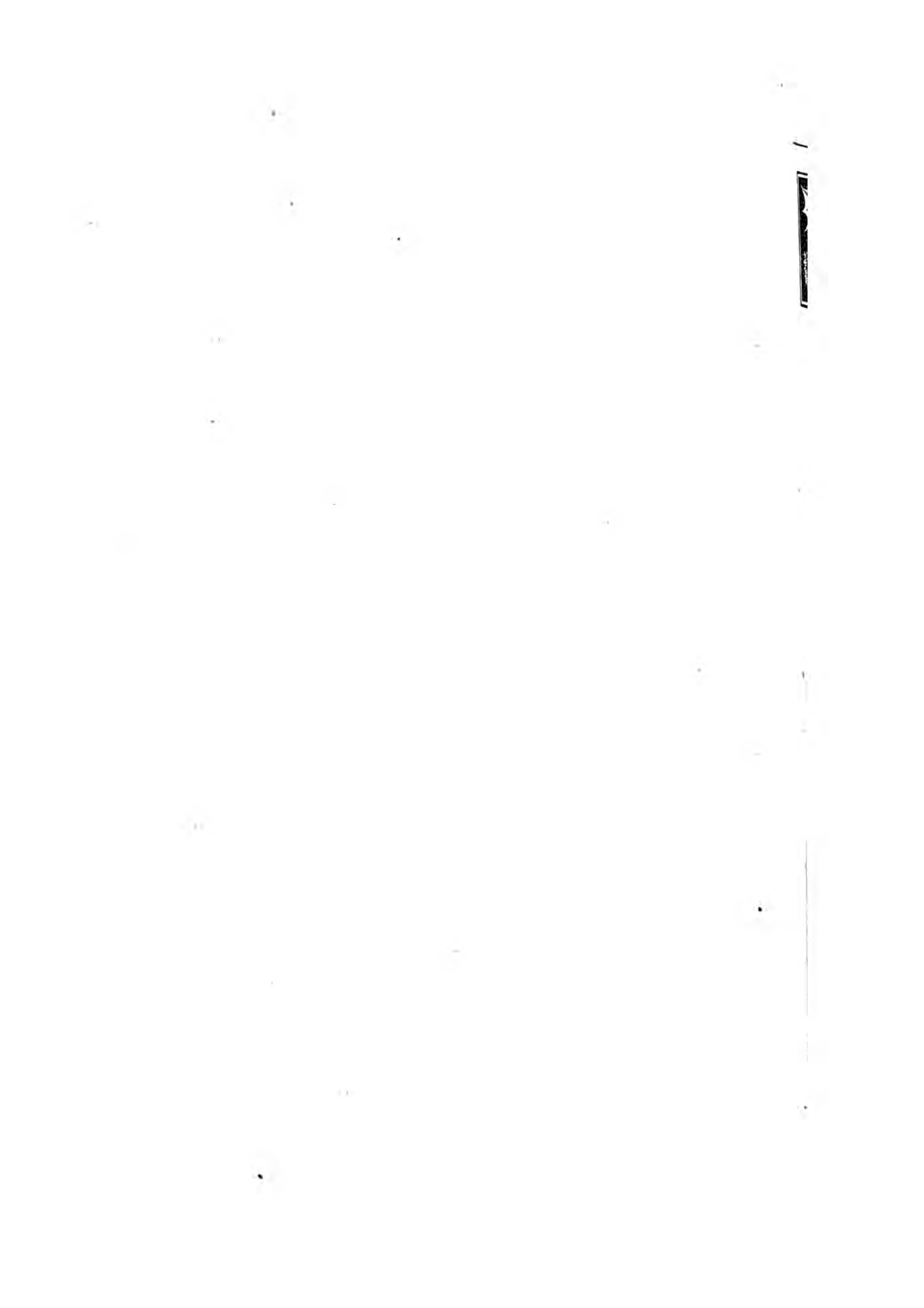
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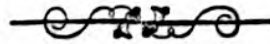
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VILLAGE ANNALS.



NO. 1.—OLD HUGH PROVERBS.

ONE of the first things that I remember is the circumstance of travelling through a dark wood in Gloucestershire, with a dear papa and mamma, and a little brother, and our nurse. I remember a wide path amongst the trees, by the side of which the carriage stopped; and to my astonishment, and to the despair of my little brother, our nurse kissed us, took her basket, curtsied to her master and mistress, and disappeared quickly amongst the brushwood. She was gone to the cottage on the common, where her parents lived, and her basket con-

tained comforts for them, which it was one of the sweetest objects of her life to gather together; for every affectionate child delights to say, as Joseph did to Jacob, "I will nourish thee."

Peggy was a rosy-cheeked country lass, who had been brought up by her father and mother to be industrious, honest, and faithful. They had not the opportunity of schooling their eldest children; for sixty years ago there were few country schools for the children of labourers: so they sent little Peggy to work, and a better bird-keeper was not to be found. She wore a round black hat, and jacket, and in the summer she knit her stockings as she went merrily to her work and walked round and round the fields; and in the cold weather she made a fire of the dead sticks and leaves, and danced round it till her blood was warm.

When she was old enough, she left out-door work, and went to service, and soon rose from being an under-servant to the charge of a nursery.

Peggy's warm heart was divided between

the children committed to her care and her father and mother ; and Hugh and Betty Proverbs were well deserving of their child's tender regard. They were respected by high and low ; and the secret of the respect they gained was this :—they honoured the Lord, and obeyed His voice ; and God has said in His Word, “Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

Thirty years ago, Hugh Proverbs was threescore years and ten, and Betty was three score. He had reached the age of man, for the Psalmist says, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten ;” and yet his eye was not dim, nor his hair grey, nor was his natural strength abated, except that like the patriarch, Jacob, he halted on his thigh, and consequently could only do little jobs of work for his good friends the neighbouring farmers. Yet they were so thrifty, so clean, so afraid of debt, and so beloved and helped by their children, that they lived comfortably in their honeysuckle-covered cottage. God gave them more than the bread and water

which He has promised to those who are in covenant with Him (Isa. xxxiii.).

I remember that cottage ; our kind mother took us when we were on a journey to spend a day there. The scent of honeysuckle now reminds me of that joyful day, when we ran wildly about the common, and into the wood, and partook of the eggs and bacon fried so well by old Betty.

I said that thirty years ago old Hugh was threescore years and ten ; he lived till the primroses had passed in the spring of 1845, and was laid in his grave, aged one hundred years.

I believe he will bless God for ever, that he was spared to see that great age ; for every year, as it passed by, showed him more of the loving-kindness of the Lord ; his soul did magnify the Lord, and his spirit rejoiced in God his Saviour. When he could no longer go forth to his labour, it was his daily habit to walk to the churchyard, where he used to sit for hours. He read there the books and tracts which were given and lent to him, and on his favourite tombstone he meditated upon death, judgment, heaven, and hell. The

grassy mounds at his feet covered many whom, in his long life, he had seen borne first to the font, and then to the grave; and the old man would say, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." And then he would lift his bright eye to the sky, and meditate upon the Redeemer, who had overcome death for him, and opened for him the gate of everlasting life.

Sometimes he remained in the churchyard till evening time, for he loved to "consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He had ordained;" and there was one bright peculiar star, which he called *his star*, and which he delighted to gaze upon. It was a planet, and moved in its orbit, which puzzled the old man, for he saw hundreds of other twinkling bodies that did not move, and he sometimes feared that *his star* was going to move quite away. So constant was he to his studying place, as he called the churchyard, that the passers-by looked out as naturally for old Hugh Pro-

verbs on his tombstone, as for the church tower itself.

He and his wife were both good readers, and had excellent memories. They had made a rule to read daily the Psalms appointed, and a portion of the Bible; and their minds were stored with words of truth. He could say the Litany perfectly, and many portions of Scripture; and she could repeat hymn after hymn. And thus the nights passed with them if they were sleepless, when he was a hundred years of age, and she fourscore and ten. Two of their favourite hymns were,

“Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labours have an end
In joy and peace in thee?” etc.

And also,

“One there is above all others,
Oh, how He loves!
His is love beyond a brother’s,
Oh, how He loves!
Earthly friends may fail or leave us,
One day soothe, the next day grieve us;
But this Friend will ne’er deceive us,
Oh, how He loves!” etc.

During the last six months of his life he became very weak, and Satan tried him frequently by causing him to see sights, and hear sounds, which were only in his imagination, and which afflicted his purified and honest heart. He had heard, with much sorrow, of the people called Socialists, who dare to say "There is no God;" and of the Chartists, who rebel against government, and refuse to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Hugh Proverbs knew that the Bible says, "Fear God; honour the king:" and when there was much talk in Gloucestershire of Rebecca and her daughters, who broke the toll-bars down in Wales, he cried out, "Shame upon such rioters."

Now, in his weakness, he fancied himself assailed by unbelievers and rioters, and clothed in heavenly armour; and with a stern, grieved voice, he would say, "I do not like you; I will not listen to you. You ask me to change my religion; I will not: my religion is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You want me to break out against the laws; I will not. I have tried never to injure my

neighbour; I never will." Then, with uplifted hands and eyes, he cried out, "Good Lord, deliver me! Good Lord, deliver my old wife from these wicked foes!"

Sometimes Satan seemed to raise in his fancy a violent storm of thunder and lightning, and for a time he appeared alarmed at the terrors of the Lord; but soon a heavenly calm returned, and he murmured, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

But his happiest delirium was that in which he kept company with the patriarch Jacob and his flock. There seemed a fellow-feeling between them—each holy and heavenly-minded; each following the labours of the field; both lame, halting on the thigh. He used to say aloud, "I'll help thee, Jacob; we'll drive the flock to the top of the hill. 'Tis a steep hill, but how beautiful the view from the top! How glorious, Jacob, when once we've reached the hill top!"

Peggy was with her father when he died; the good child, who had honoured him, and nourished him, and comforted him, was per-

mitted to close his eyes. One morning last spring, at five o'clock, he begged to be turned in his bed, and to have his mouth moistened. Peggy rose quickly, and saw him changed in countenance, and waked her mother, who was sleeping soundly by his side. Firmly he again repeated those words with which he had so often resisted the enemy, "Good Lord, deliver me;" and then he passed away, to enjoy with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the paradise of God.

Rich and poor stood around his coffin, and gazed on his fine old face, and repeated to each other, "He was a good man; we shall not soon see his like again."

He was followed to his grave by a large company of those who revered his character. Being rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him, his memory is blessed.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."





NO. 2.—MARY SAMS.

OFTEN think that it would be difficult for the believer to choose, whether he would be a gathered lily, or a shock of corn fully ripe, gathered into the garner. By a gathered lily, I mean a young disciple, plucked by his Master's hand from an earthly home, and placed in the Master's bosom: by a shock of corn fully ripe, I mean an aged believer who has weathered the wintry frosts and spring storms of life, and who, precious in his Owner's eyes, is cut down carefully, and laid up safe in the heavenly garner. Happily for us, we cannot choose, but are joyfully sure, that our appointed time is the best time.

I have this day (Good Friday, 1839) received the parting sigh of one, who for fourscore years was merely a green blade, in a

small, poorly cultivated field ; no signs were to be seen of the fruit that should have formed in the ear, the plant threatened to be barren. But, praised be the mercy and forbearance of our God, He spared the unpromising plant ; and when the right season seemed to be past, the Sun of righteousness shone forth upon it, the dew of the Holy Spirit refreshed it, it flourished and brought forth fruit.

The cottage of our dear old friend is conveniently situated for the means of grace ; it is near the church, the parsonage, and the schoolroom. It is pleasantly placed too, under the shelter of some fine chestnut trees, and close by the ruin of the former church, now unroofed, and covered with ivy. Often have I made that ivy a type of the believer cleaving to the Rock of ages, when revealing to her in childlike language the unsearchable riches of Christ ; and I think she understood the type, for one of her favourite verses during the last winter of her long life was,—

“Yes ! Jesus, Jesus, there I’ll cling,
I’ll crouch beneath His sheltering wing ;

I'll clasp the cross, and holding there,
Even *me*, O joy, His love shall spare!

The character of this dear old woman was always truly respectable. She had brought up a large family, and saw her children and grandchildren in comfortable circumstances; she was thrifty and clean, and paid her way honestly. She was quite a picture of fine old age, able to gather wood in the park and thickets, and at eighty-five one of the best gleaners in the harvest field. Her faculties were clear to the day of her death; but alas! she could not read: in her early days the village in which she had lived, and where she died, had no school, and constantly, as I have sat with her and our talking has been disturbed by the merry shout of the children leaving school, she has spoken of their advantages, and wept at her own deficiency.

When the blessing of an earnest minister was sent to the village, no one took more advantage than she did of the Sabbath and week-day ordinances; she was then nearly fourscore, and so ignorant, that she barely knew the name of Him who died for sinners.

She was visited by many who loved that Saviour, and who longed to see a spark of heavenly love kindled in her, before she should be called hence, and be no more seen; but though she wept at their entreaties, she seemed still cleaving to the dust, her mind turned quickly and willingly from heavenly to earthly things—she loved to relate old stories, or was full of anxiety as to “how she should pay her rent,” “whether it was a good day for wooding,” “how her aged back would bear the fatigue of the next harvest,” etc. She was often, too, away with her children, and we wished at one time that she would give up her cottage, which was wanted by others, and which she so seldom occupied; but the Lord ordained otherwise.

During the last two years of her life, she had been more constantly at home, which we looked upon as a good sign, and hoped she was beginning to hunger and thirst after righteousness; because, when absent, she had many little advantages as to this world; she fed better, and saved her little money for the rent day; however, latterly, home and

her chimney corner were pleasanter to her than even the visits to her children. She began, too, to fix an earnest eye upon the person teaching her, and her answers became intelligent. She was much struck about that time with the beauty of the 23rd Psalm, read to her day by day, by a kind friend. A verse well known as a favourite with the venerable Rowland Hill, also interested her, and she learned to say it:—

“ And when I’m to die,
‘Receive me,’ I’ll cry,
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why ;
But this I can find,
We two are so joined,
That He won’t be in glory and leave me behind.”

But I never saw her attention so caught, as by the account in the Gospel of St. Luke, the 7th chapter and 36th verse, of “the woman who was a sinner;” she seemed to understand the feelings of the anxious penitent, when Jesus turned and said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee!” and the simple desire often burst from her lips, “O, if *I* could wash His *dear* feet with *my* tears!” Another

favourite passage was the account of the weeping Mary at the tomb of Christ, in the 20th chapter of St. John ; and the cry of the drowning Peter in the 14th chapter of St. Matthew, " Lord, save me," she echoed. But no subject touched her heart like the sufferings of her Redeemer ; His bloody sweat ; His scourged back ; His pierced limbs ! The subject spoken of we turned into a simple prayer, and her soul seemed full of earnestness when repeating after us the petitions which suited her case.

At length the time arrived when we were to miss her at her cottage door, and from her usual place at church and lecture. Her breath became short, and her limbs weak, and she could only sit by her fire, joyfully welcoming the friendly tap at the door. " What all alone, old woman ?" I used to say ; " Yes ; but I've been praying to the blessed Jesus, and I hope I *wasn't alone* ; I hope He was with me ; but if I *could* read my Bible, how nice I could sit and never find the day too long."

The Sunday before she died, she felt bet-

ter, and tottered in to the schoolroom lecture: a friend's arm supported her home, and she felt ill and overcome, and that night took to the bed from which she did not rise again. We did not think, however, nor did her doctor, that she was sick unto death, her voice was so strong and mind so clear. She saw her children, who could not remain with her; nor did she wish it particularly, but was quite satisfied with, and thankful for the attention of her friends, rich and poor, who took pleasure in seeing her wants supplied.

On the morning of the day on which she died, when a sudden change took place in her appearance, and her dear minister was summoned, he found her calm: she said she had been thinking in the night (the night before Good Friday) of Jesus in the garden; I said, taking her hand, "Dear old woman, we, your friends, are all around *you*. *He* was *without* a friend, in His hour of need." She burst into tears and said, "I know it! and God bless you all, and reward you for your kindness to me, and I know He *will*."

Convulsive fits came on; after one of them,

she said to a pitying friend, "This is nothing, nothing [she meant nothing to the sufferings of Christ]; I do not call *this* suffering."

We assembled round her bed, and she received devoutly and calmly the Supper of her Lord, her pain being eased during the solemn time. Afterwards her ejaculations were mostly, "Blessed Jesus! Lord, have mercy!" "I *have* called upon Thy name!" "Lord, remember me!" She did not shed one tear over *her own* sufferings; nor was there a thought of this world, after she had in a loud voice blessed her absent children; but her *Saviour's* agony drew forth her tears abundantly.

When all were gone to the house of God, except the four who watched her, I sat by her side, and told her over again the never-tiring story of Mary at the sepulchre; and her eye kindled with pleasure, as it always did, when the risen Jesus said to the weeping woman, "Mary!" I was praying that the same voice might whisper peace to her; when she became unconscious, and in a few minutes, after a struggle for breath, she saw

Him whom she had learned to love, and who, we trust, has received her into the company of "those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple : and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."





NO. 3.—LITTLE LEWIE.

WE were enjoying the sea-breeze on the shell-covered beach of S—, and resting on the steps of a bathing machine, when my attention was caught by two pretty children who were playing with their nurse on the sand. I was pleased with their soft black eyes and fine limbs, and watched their play with the nurse, who entered into their little pleasures, just as a nurse should do. Presently they came and sat to rest on the next machine; and the little fellows found out my looks of interest, and began to play bo-peep with me. Seeing them all in mourning, I said to the nurse, “Nice little boys; who are they mourning for? I hope *not* for their mother.” “No,” she said;

“ ’twould be a sad day for them, poor babes, if they had lost their dear mamma. No ; it’s for a little brother they are mourning,—the finest, sweetest, loveliest boy that was ever seen—the most obedient and amiable. He has been dead seven weeks.” Her voice faltered as she spoke, and her eyes filled with tears. “ Perhaps,” I said, “ the Lord made him so sweet, because he was soon to be removed.” “ You are right, ma’am,” she said, eagerly ; “ the Lord did prepare him ; he had no wish to live, but desired to go to Christ his Saviour.” “ Tell me,” I said, “ about the dear child ; I love to hear of the lambs gathered with His arm, to rest for ever in His bosom.” By degrees she gave me the following interesting account :—

“ I live in the family of a gentleman and lady, who are upright characters, and most kind to me ; but they are Unitarians. I have nursed all their children, and they allow me much liberty, and do not interfere when I strive to the utmost of my poor power to bring them up religiously. At first, I went to their chapel, to please them. My mistress asked

me how I liked their minister. I told her, pretty well! there was nothing to find fault with in his discourse; but there was *one* Name left out—the blessed name of Jesus; and I asked her if it was true that the Unitarians would not agree that Jesus was God; but only allowed that *He* was, just as *we* are, the Son of God by creation. ‘You say right,’ she replied. ‘Then, madam,’ I answered, ‘I can never dare to go again to your chapel;’ and I never have been again, because, after that, I should have denied my Saviour by doing so.

“However, they never prevented me teaching the darling who is gone, little hymns and prayers, and they even let me take him to the house of God with me, which was his great delight. He loved me tenderly, and used to call me ‘*Neeny*,’ because he said it was a kinder name than *Nurse*. He used to listen to the sermons with wonderful steadiness, and could repeat large portions afterwards. He would say, ‘*Neeny*, when I’m a man, I won’t be a Unitarian; for they don’t love Jesus, and *I do.*’ One evening, I re-

member his papa said, 'If you have done your tea in time, you may go to the chapel with Neeny.' 'Oh, thank you, papa, thank you; I don't care for my tea, but I love to go to the chapel with Neeny.'

"It is now eight weeks," she continued, "since, on these sands, and at this very place, the youngest boy, who looks so rosy and well, was taken ill; I carried him home, and it proved to be the scarlet fever. *He* recovered, but my darling Lewie sickened. When he was first taken ill, he said to me, 'Dear Neeny, I can't pray as I ought.' 'My sweet one,' I said, 'your simple breathings are listened to.' 'Neeny,' he said, 'I ought to pray well, for I shall die.' 'No, darling, I hope not. Baby brother has got well over this fever, and, with the blessing of God, so will you.' 'No,' he said, 'I shall die; and I am glad to go, and be with Christ, though it will be hard to part, *very* hard to part from *you*, Neeny; but Jesus is calling me. He says, "Come, come;" and He has a crown of glory on; and angels are waiting for me; and I am going, Neeny.'

“’Twas true ; in four days he was gone. When he felt his end approaching, he took a solemn leave of his parents, and then laid his precious body down in my arms. The last words I heard were, ‘ Lord, let me not die like the rich man ; let me—oh, let me die as Lazarus did.’ He then unclasped his hands, and laid them gently by his side ; and, in perfect peace, he departed to his Lord, at seven years and six months old. I was very ill for three weeks after the funeral-day : two physicians attended me ; for my master and mistress treat me as a friend. Now I am well again, and can think with comfort that my darling is in glory.”

I clasped the hand of the faithful nurse, and kissed the two surviving children, and left the beach, meditating on the reunion of “ Neeny ” and her Lewie.

AYOTT.

HYMN.

JESUS, who lived above the sky,
Came down to be a man, and die ;
And in the Bible you may see
How very good He used to be.

He went about,—He was so kind,—
To cure poor people who were blind ;
And many who were sick and lame,
He pitied them, and did the same.

But such a cruel death He died,—
He was hung up, and crucified ;
And those kind hands that did such good,
They nailed them to a cross of wood.

And so He died ; and this is why
He came to be a man, and die :
The Bible says He came from heaven
That *we* might have our sins forgiven.

He knew how wicked man had been,
He knew that God must punish sin ;
So out of pity Jesus said
He'd bear the punishment instead.

Now God will pardon those who pray,
And hate their sins, and turn away ;
But wicked folk, who do not care,
We know that such He cannot bear.



No. 4.—OLD JOE ARNOLD.

“At evening time it shall be light.”

HOW delicious is the evening, after a misty day, when the sun breaks forth, and the scent of sweet flowers, and the carol of happy birds, inspire the heart with gladness, whilst the eye is fixed on the golden-edged clouds in the west! So when the Sun of Righteousness shines brightly at the close of life on one who before was wrapped in mists of ignorance and error, how sweet are the fragrant expressions of deep humility, how cheering the song of praise, what gleams of future bliss brighten the clouds of old age and weakness. Happy, thrice happy, the hoary head when found in the way of righteousness, when the hope of

glory brightens the aged face as if a crown already adorned it. No sight delights me more than that of old men and old women, with their staff in their hand for every age, on their way to the golden streets of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Seventy-five years ago, Joe Arnold, a strippling boy, planted against the old church in our parish the young root of ivy, which has now grown to a luxuriant bush, and has made the ruined edifice the prettiest object in the neighbourhood. Service was then performed in that beautiful old church, and care would have restored its roof and richly mullioned windows, and other generations might have worshipped within its walls.

Joe could remember attending Divine service in the southern chancel, which communicated by an open arch with the northern; and could also remember two great curiosities there, now removed; the freestone miniature figure of a knight Templar, or crusader, lying in a recess, and holding a heart; and a stone coffin shaped like that of William Rufus at Winchester.

This interesting old church was permitted to fall into ruins, and a new costly building, after the model of a Sicilian temple, was erected in the park. The churchyard, where the forefathers of the hamlet sleep, is, however, still the resting-place of the dead ; and when Joe Arnold was himself the father of the village,—an aged man, past fourscore,—you might have seen him leaning on his staff at the gate, gazing first at the ivied ruin, and then at the green mounds, and longing for the time when, under its shadow, his weary old body would repose, covered with the turf.

He often talked of the old times of the village, and retraced events which he only could remember. But it was not *then* that his blue eye kindled with feelings of gratitude and love unspeakable. Oh, no; in the midst of a tale he would stop and break out in expressions of deep sorrow and self-condemnation, as the thoughts of other days brought back remembrances of sin, and forgetfulness of God.

He was born at Ayott, in the cottage near the western park gate. He had a mother's warm embrace, but not a father's blessing ; for

he was not born in wédlock, and had reached the age of five years before his mother became a married woman. She was a still, quiet woman, and was anxious that he should be a steady boy and good scholar, and a regular attendant at church ; but he was a wild lad, and ran away from school, and would go bird's-nesting on the Sabbath-day, though he knew that by so doing he should get a whipping instead of his dinner.

From early childhood he was employed in the service of the proprietor of the estate ; first as birdkeeper, then shepherd-boy, then helper in the lower departments of house work. He must have been a very well-favoured boy ; for he was fine featured and well shaped in extreme old age ; and he had wit and fun and good humour, and could sing and make himself very amusing ; and at fifteen years of age he was admitted into the mansion house as a groom in livery, when he was, to use his own words, as proud as a Punch.

At the age of twenty-five, having risen to the post of butler and valet, he married the cook, Hester, also of Ayott, a prudent, mo-

dest, and pretty girl. After her marriage, she lived in the white cottage close to the park gate, and there brought up her family. He continued in service until the time of his master's death, when the public-house, the Old Three Horse Shoes, was left to him for life, at a low rent.

Forty years must have passed between the time of his patron's death and our first acquaintance with the old man, who had then the character of being funny, careless, ungodly, and exceedingly shy of meeting any one who might give him a word of counsel. But he could not entirely avoid his minister, who visited him perseveringly, and sat with him upon the sunny bench, trying to lead his wandering mind to solemn thought. He was not utterly ignorant. Snatches of the hymns and psalms he used to hear, and portions of the Church Service, were in his memory, but generally made use of for light and improper purposes. His own description of those careless days was, "I ran away from God as fast and as far as ever I could."

Year after year passed on. The clergyman

of the parish continued to plead with him and for him. One of his daughters, who had married happily, and had learned to fear and love God, prayed earnestly for him ; but all appeared in vain : his mind wandered, his deafness increased. Then, when in his eightieth year, when body and mind were failing, and all hope of his soul's amendment seemed at an end,—then a change passed over the careless, ungodly old man. A “still small voice” spoke to him ; a gradual work of the Holy Spirit manifested itself, *so* gently, it was like the rising of the evening breeze just before the summer sun sets. The Lord has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He had great mercy in store for Old Arnold the publican.

He began to frequent the church and evening lecture ; and as he felt ashamed at not knowing a prayer to say on first entering the church, he took his stick, and walked to the cottage where his grandchildren lived, and begged the little ones to teach *him their* prayer. He could not, as many do, *pretend* to pray on entering the house of God ; for it

was now all *reality* with the old man ; and, in amazement at his own feelings, he was earnestly seeking for salvation.

A neighbour, whom he had known from a child, and who had been taught to understand the Scriptures, was greatly astonished one day at seeing the old man step quietly into her cottage without joking and talking nonsense, as usual. He seated himself, and burst forth with "God be merciful to me a sinner." Struck with his manner, she said, "Shall I read you the chapter where those words are?" He eagerly assented, and came again and again, whilst she fed his hungry soul with the words of truth. As she read, he trembled, and said, "My sleep departs, my bones quake. I am vile."

The neighbour was, at that time, in poor, weak health, and unable to leave her cottage, and glad to give up a portion of her time to the service of God ; so every day, at eleven o'clock, the tottering steps were heard on her threshold ; and, anxiously did the old man step in, and take his seat near her, to hear the Bible read.

She turned to the history of Moses, and read the account of God's forbearance with that stiff-necked and rebellious people, the children of Israel. The portion was well chosen; for, whilst it revealed to him the great JEHOVAH as "a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children," it showed Him to be "a merciful God, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, and" [which sounded like sweet music in the old man's ears] "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." His eyes were opened; he saw death and judgment, heaven or hell, awaiting him, and longed for pardon and forgiveness.

It was now the sweet task of the neighbour to show him the excellency of salvation, to reveal to him a crucified Saviour; and she chose for that purpose the Gospel of St. Luke. When she reached the end, and read of Jesus Christ's "agony and bloody sweat, of His cross and passion," he cried out, "I shake, I tremble,—for me!—could it be? God be merciful. Jesus, forgive."

This Gospel, and portions of the Canticles

which she read and explained to him, left an impression on his aged mind, of deep, abiding love to Christ; and he soon sought the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in commemoration of Him, and came to the parsonage with the humility of a little child for further instruction and explanation. Many an eye was bent upon him with love and wonder, as he knelt for the first time amongst the communicants. It was a miracle; yea, as great a miracle as the change which came upon the cold, damp earth when light was formed; for "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, had shined in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

All shyness had passed away when his soul's good was in question. He had appointed times for coming to the parsonage. Two mornings in the week the tottering old man might be seen on his way to the study. We taught him verses of hymns and little prayers, which he would beg to have written out, and then kept them in his waistcoat-pocket until they were quite worn out; for

he was much distressed at his treacherous memory, and longed that he had stored the treasure-house when young.

On one occasion his minister read and explained to him the thirty-second Psalm. On understanding the words of the first verse, "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered," he broke forth as follows: "Oh, how many sins! *Words* even enough to cast me down into the pit; and, much more, my doings—astonishing! Proud and presumptuous we are, even in what we *say*; that's enough to cast us into the lake, but for the mercy of our Saviour. I do believe in Christ with all my heart and mind; that's *certain*,—yes, *sincerely*."

When the sixth verse was read, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found," he said, "Sometimes I am able to pray tolerably well; but at other times I can't. Then I go to the Rock. Oh, it is comfortable to know how a drop of *His* precious blood will take sin off. I think of it."

After these interviews he would leave his

minister's presence with a low bow and look of grateful love, and generally with the words, "The heavens bless you!"

The public-house was a noisy place for an aged believer; and, after his wife's death, life was a burden to him. He tried to influence some of the men who frequented the tap-room to change their ways; and one of them he led by the hand into an inner room, and showed him a picture of Christ crowned with thorns, hoping the sight might lead him to think; but the men laughed at him, and coarsely reminded him of the days past, when he was as light of speech as they; and then the old man turned away humbled and unable to strive more. He told his minister his disappointment, and said, "I can't get on; the Lord is not in their hearts, nor good words in their mouths. A horse or a broken plough, or some idle story, is more in *their* way. So they go on; ay, and so do we all. We've all broke the fold, and have no sense to come back again. We've nothing to make amends with; but how great is His mercy!"

During the last year of his life, his body

became very infirm, and his mind more wandering and confused; but it was deeply affecting to trace the strong power of the love of God which had been shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. On entering the study, he was sometimes quite childish, talking nonsense, and calling people and things by wrong names. Then nothing recalled him but the *one Name*, "that Name at which every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." "Old man, let us talk of Jesus;" and the aged hands were clasped, and consciousness returned to the dim eye, and in a listening attitude he devoutly hearkened to the praises of his Redeemer, and then joined in prayer for himself and others.

He was bedridden for some months before his death; his body was feverish and uneasy, and his mind delirious or astray; but he did not bring reproach upon his religious profession by any language or conduct that was inconsistent; and when he was well enough to recognise his minister, he was delighted to see him, and to repeat to him his verses and

little prayers. A few days before he died, he was trying to repeat the last part of Henry Kirke White's beautiful hymn :

“O Lord my God, in mercy turn,
In mercy hear a sinner mourn.
To Thee I call, to Thee I cry ;
O leave me, leave me not to die.

* * * *

Yes Jesus, Jesus ! there I'll cling ;
I'll crouch beneath His sheltering wing ;
I'll clasp the Cross, and holding there,
E'en me, O bliss ! His love may spare.”

He could not remember the last line ; and when reminded of it, said joyously, “Ay, that's what I was trying hard for.” And the words, “Yes, Jesus, Jesus, there I'll cling,” were the last that could be understood on the night before his death.

He passed away calmly and without a struggle, in the afternoon of the 16th July, 1846, aged eighty-eight.

The winter wind will never again shake the delicate old frame, as it used to do when he braved it on the church path. The procession of Sunday-school children will never

again be directed to make a circuit so as to avoid touching the trembling limbs of the village patriarch. His body rests under the shadow of the ivied ruin; his soul is, we have every reason to hope, in the paradise of God.





No. 5.

THE TWO SUNDAY SCHOLARS.

WHEN I visit a Sunday-school, I look with deep interest at the class of elder boys, who can read well, and can say their collects and gospels without difficulty. Those lads have attended perhaps for many years in that room, and have risen from the lowest to the highest class. I think to myself, "poor fellows, the battle of life will soon begin, the flesh will war against the spirit, the prince of the power of the air will strive to rule in you, making you children of disobedience, and religion will drop out of your minds, I fear."

Thank God it is not always so; here and there a fair-haired or dark-browed lad listens,

prays, and resolves to choose the Lord for his portion, and is kept from youthful sins, and is good and happy here, or removed to enjoy the presence of God.

These wise boys are, alas ! few in number ; the great proportion, when they leave school forget their Creator, their Redeemer, their teacher, their Bible, and rush head foremost into folly, trying also to forget “ that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.”

I will tell you the story of Bill Gale and Ted Wicks, both Sunday-school boys.

Ten years ago, I was visiting in a village in Somersetshire, and on the Sunday morning went into the boys' school, to take the upper class. Nailsea parsonage, church, and schools are close together ; the fine tower of the church cast its shadow into the playground, there being only the churchyard and village road between.

When I went in, the boys were singing their morning hymn, and the classes looked full, forming squares round their teachers. I joined in the hymn and then seated myself in

the midst of my class, and looked at the different countenances of the boys I was going to teach. They were busy finding their collects, but eyeing at the same time their new teacher ; some of them were innocent, anxious-looking boys ; some were full of play ; one of the biggest was lame, and had a shrewd, clever face, and an ugly sneer marked him, as he gabbled over his collect, and then wheeled round on his crutch to sit and laugh with his next school-fellow. I asked this boy's name—it was Bill Gale.

After the lessons had been repeated, I opened my Bible, and I remember the portion of Scripture which I read and explained to them ; it was in Daniel vii. 9, 10. “ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool : His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him : thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him : the judgment was set, and

the books were opened." I talked to them long and earnestly about the judgment, and those books which must be opened—the book of conscience, and the book of God's remembrance. I tried to arouse their attention and fear, as I described the terror, the agony which they would feel when those books were opened, if their names were not written in the other book—the book of life. I told them of a dear brother who was converted at their age, and who had taken, as the words that should guide him, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near : let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

The lads all listened, and some looked earnestly and with tearful eyes in my face. Bill Gale listened, and moved his crutch uneasily, but did not look at me. He had resolved to observe lying vanities, and to forsake his own mercy ; he was going to "sow the wind, and would reap the whirlwind."

The church bells had been ringing some time, and now the last called us from school to the house of God. I wished the boys good-bye, and said I should probably never meet them all again, till we should stand before the great white throne, either to be blessed or condemned; and lifting up my heart for them, I joined the congregation.

The next day I went to see some of the poor of the parish, and amongst others, Thomas and Mary Gale, the parents of lame Bill. They had know better days, and must have been a good looking couple when they married, some sixteen years before. Now they were very poor and destitute; he an invalid, unable to work, and spending most of his time upon his bed, whilst she earned a small addition to the parish allowance, by going into Bristol on errands, leaving him in charge of the children. She was a light-footed, gipsy-eyed woman, very pleasant to talk to, and with a warm heart, and ever ready to do a kind turn for a neighbour, though she would go into a passion with that same neighbour for a matter of no consequence at all. She

spoiled her children by her foolish ways—beating them one hour, and coaxing them the next. Everybody liked Mary Gale, though the respectable people of the parish shook their heads, and said she was ruining herself and her family by her want of steadiness, and that it was a pity.

Years passed on ! A few months ago I was again in that village: many changes had taken place ; the aged had been removed to the rest of the churchyard, the middle aged had become old ; the church was refitted ; the parsonage rebuilt ; young voices, shouted in the garden, and filled the house with glee. the old schoolmaster and his daughter had passed away, and new teachers held their situations. I scarcely knew the names of the families whose children were in the school. I asked after some of those whom I remembered, and amongst others, the Gales. The rector of the parish answered, “ The parents are both dead, the daughter is married, and Bill is the worst of the wicked.”

“ But was there no hope in the end of the parents ? ”

“Thomas, I fear, died careless : poor Mary’s case was more hopeful, but her course was inconsistent, until her last long illness came on. She never, I believe, broke the seventh commandment in its letter, but she did in its spirit, by her foolish, light conduct. Ever after her husband’s death, she would go and dance at the public-house, and sing for the amusement of the men in the tap, who called her ‘Poll,’ and encouraged her with praise and halfpence. I let her alone for a time, and soon afterwards, by the chastisement of a long and severe illness, the Lord made her, I trust, aware of her folly, and, by his Spirit, led her to repentance. She seemed to feel the loss her own soul had sustained, and the injury she had done to her children by her light ways, and want of firmness : she appeared penitent, and died peacefully. But I never speak with comfort or confidence of death-bed repentance. I believe that God *can* work on the dying bed, and at the eleventh hour ; but I am also *sure* that many who appear full of right feeling in those awful circumstances, would return, like the sow, to

wallow in the mire, were they restored to life.”

“I quite enter into your feelings : how much we should pray for *continuing* grace, as well as *converting* grace, both for ourselves and for those whom we teach ! then conquering grace is vouchsafed in the last great conflict, and the soul departs, leaving a line of light behind. But poor Bill ! that shrewd-looking, sneering lad on crutches, what has been his downward course since I heard him say his collect at the Sunday-class ? He is still in the land of the living ; he *may* repent, and show fruits meet for repentance.”

“Wretched fellow, he might have been now a man in comfortable circumstances, for he was clever, and his lameness procured him friends. I made interest to have him apprenticed to a shoemaker soon after you remember him ; he became a good workman, and could have procured a respectable situation when out of his apprenticeship ; but his love of drink, of bad company, of his fiddle, of the idle corner, ruined him. He only worked enough to buy drink, and live half the week

in brutal intoxication. When I passed him at the idle corner, he was a heap of rags and dirt, with an impudent look on his bad face. His ruin was completed by the company of an infidel with whom for a time he worked, and who broke away the last restraint which held back the miserable sinner, namely, the fear of God's all-seeing eye. Whilst with that man, he became so ill as to be unfit for work ; and just before his mother's death, he fell down at her door one Sunday morning, drunk, diseased, and covered with filthy rags, and was carried off to the workhouse, where he now lies, very ill, and quite hardened."

"Are there no means of appealing to his conscience ? have you not seen him ? has no one visited him ?"

"I have not yet seen him, for there is a chaplain to the workhouse, which is at some distance from this parish ; and now, whilst the cholera prevails in our land, no one is willingly admitted except near relations. His sister went to see him, and told him he would never recover ; he said, he *should*, he *would* get well again. She asked him if he was

sorry for his sins ; he said, ' Yes ! for they had brought a deal of pain and trouble on him : ' she said, ' Is that all the reason ? ' ' Yes, ' he replied sneeringly, according to his old customs. "

On hearing this sad tale, I went alone into the garden ; and as I pondered over the sad course of poor Bill Gale, the boy who might have been an ornament to his village, I said to myself, " Oh that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end ! "

The next morning, as we sat at breakfast, the passing-bell tolled, a sound which makes the heart beat quicker, even in the breast of a believer. We sent to inquire who had been called away ; the answer made us all start : " Sir, it is tolling for a man who has died in the workhouse, called Bill Gale. " " When did he die ? " " This morning ; and the master sends his duty, and he must be buried the day after to-morrow, for he was so diseased they can't keep him any longer. "

The servant left the room, and we sat silently. In thought we followed the trembling

soul into the eternal world, and imagined the despair of him who knew his duty but did it not.

On the day of the funeral I sat at the window and looked down into the churchyard. It was a glorious September afternoon ; so bright that the beautiful world looked as if it were still "*very good*," instead of being full of sin and misery, as, alas ! it is. The school gate was swinging to and fro, for the lads had just been dismissed, and were loitering in and out of the play-ground, waiting for the funeral ; that same gate that Bill Gale used to push open with his crutch when he went to school ten years before. The bell tolled, ceased, and then my brother appeared, the evening sun shining on his white dress and forehead ; and after him the parish coffin, and then one mourner in an old black dress, the sister of the dead man. Very sad and very solemn was the minister's face ; and as the coffin dropped into its shallow grave, I thought of the resurrection, and I covered my face and wept.

When I returned home to Hertfordshire I

gazed with peculiar comfort on a white grave-rail, which receives the last rays of the setting sun. The churchyard is opposite to the dining-room window, and encircles the beautiful, ivy-covered ruin of the old parish church; the grave-rail is to the memory of Edward Wicks, aged nineteen.

He was one of my own school-boys, and his memory is as pleasant as that of Bill Gale is terrible; we called him "the flaxen-haired plough boy," and loved to look on his fair, pure face, when he was washed clean and in his proper place, with a well-learned lesson, at the Sunday-school. He was a hard-working boy; from six years old he took his money to his respectable though poor home, to help the family with the weekly bread and shop things, and he picked up his learning as he could. So the Sunday rest and the Sunday class were very pleasant to dear Ted, and, I trust, a foretaste of the rest which he will enjoy for ever with the people of God.

He became a very good answerer, and had an excellent knowledge of his Bible, and was never ashamed of the tear of feeling, when

his teacher was helped to touch his young heart with exhortation and advice. As Bill Gale was noted for his shrewdness and *impurity*, so was Ted Wicks remarkable for his simplicity and *purity*.

He went forth, after his confirmation, into the dangerous world for a few years; and, though, thank God, restrained from *vice*, the warmth of his feelings became somewhat chilled, and for a few months he neglected his Bible and the table of the Lord. Then began the Lord's controversy with His young servant; he returned to his home, bowed down with pain, and with inflammation devouring him. His friends visited and prayed with him, but he was shy and reserved at first, and appeared conscious of a backsliding heart, and anxious for recovery and cessation of pain. But Ted was not to recover, and became more and more thoughtful, and liked to be alone. We hoped that, during those long spring days, as he lay in the room where he was born, listening to the birds, his blue eye dim, his crisp curling hair damp with the dew of severe illness—we hoped, I say, that the Lord was

bringing back to his mind the instructions of his boyhood, but we did not expect such an overflowing of Divine goodness as was granted to the dear youth.

One day his mother said, "Ted, I do bless God, as you never was such a loose, bad fellow as some be." "Mother," said he, "how can you talk so? never say such a word again; my sins are more than the hairs of my head; I lie here and think about them, and I wonder I was not cut off: I've forgotten to do all I meant to do when I was at school; mother, promise me never to say such a word again." The mother was very thankful to hear her dear boy's penitent expressions, and had not meant unduly to exalt him, and told us with tears of joy of his contrite, humble state.

Just at this time we left home for a fortnight, commending the youth to the care of those who we knew would fulfil their duty towards him. During our absence, I received the following letter from one of them.

"DEAREST MADAM,—I write with joy to tell you of dear Edward Wicks. He has given us a good testimony of his faith in his crucified Saviour; and God

has graciously manifested Himself unto him, so that he can call Jesus *his* Saviour, and feels that He is his. The first three days after you left, he was rather better; and, though not communicative, listened with sweet attention. The moment I spoke of prayer, his hands were raised, and with a solemn look he seemed to join fervently with me.

“Since that time, he has been so sleepy that I have not been able to say anything to him till this afternoon, when Mrs. Moody and I were summoned suddenly to him, for his mother thought him dying. We found him holding communion with his God. Oh how I longed that you and my dear master had been present! how you would have rejoiced to hear him call upon Jesus the Saviour, and then tell us that he was a poor, unworthy, sinful fellow, and yet that Jesus died for him! ‘Yes,’ he repeated, ‘for *me*, for *me*!’ Then, in a few minutes, he said, ‘I am in the dark valley. Jesus, be near me, and I shall fear no evil. Blessed Saviour! *my* Saviour! comfort me! comfort me!’ He then prayed earnestly for his friends, and for a time seemed to enjoy close communion with God. Mrs. Moody went near him, and he said in a soft whisper, raising his hand, ‘Do not breathe upon me; do not speak to me; do not touch me; for His arm is under my head.’ Does not this, dearest madam, beautifully illustrate two passages in Canticles: ‘Stir not up nor awake my love till He please;’ and, ‘His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me’? His weeping mother asked him if he was happy. She

need not have asked, for his face was radiant with joy. We all wept, but they were tears of gratitude. We blessed God for this encouragement to faithful teaching; and may I travel on in that path more earnestly than ever, strengthened by the promise, 'Ye shall reap if ye faint not.'

"I remain, Your affectionate servant,

"B. TURNER."

We returned home a few days before his death, and found him in the same happy state as the above letter described him. He received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the most devout manner; and as his life drew towards its close, his prayers became fervent and remarkable. He could wave his thin hands, and plead thus: "Lord, Thou hast begun a good work in me, finish it, finish it. Let my death be a blessing,—let it be a blessing to all the village; but, above all, to David. Oh have mercy on David—on my little brother David! Blessed Lord, Thou hast said that Thou wouldst forgive me if I ask with all my heart. I have asked—I have asked; and Thou wilt, Thou wilt. Let Thy red right hand pass over all my sins. Don't leave me in the dark valley: I'm almost at

the end." Then, in a moment of great joy, "I'm going—I'm going to Jesus! beautiful—glorious,—good-bye."

Just as he was departing, Satan was permitted to try his faith. We were present, and the conflict was severe. "Pray for me. Mr. Olive, kneel down, and pray for me!" We all knelt down, and joined the clergyman in his fervent petitions. Life was ebbing fast, but still Satan, the adversary, tried the faith of the youth. It was in vain. He held fast the sword of the Spirit, and pleaded the promises; and the last words we heard were—"Thou HAST promised that if I ask, I shall be forgiven. I *have* asked. Bleeding Lamb! mercy, mercy! My blessed Saviour, help me!"

Thus he passed away. Peace was granted. And amidst the tears of the villagers he was laid in his long, narrow grave, awaiting the resurrection unto life.

I have now told you my true tale of Bill Gale and Ted Wicks. Whose life would you, dear boys, like to live? Whose death, dear boys, would you wish to die?





NO. 6.—HESTER SINGER.

THE early days of Hester Singer were passed in the town of Frome, in Somersetshire. Having lost her parents, she was left in the charge of her grandmother, of whose pious mind, cleanly ways, and neat, old-fashioned dress, I have often heard her speak. Hester was a pretty, rosy, chubby child, and attracted the attention and love of a kind family in the neighbourhood, who placed her in their school, and permitted her often to play with the young ladies after school-hours. I have heard them say that it was pretty to see little Hester and her grandmother sitting together by the cottage fire, or walking hand in hand to the house of God.

When quite young, she went to service in the neighbourhood of Frome ; and after the

death of her grandmother, and when about eighteen, her kind friends recommended her to us. I remember well the evening of her arrival; it was in September, 1833. She had travelled a long distance, and was come a stranger amongst us; and I looked with interest at the artless, blooming girl, who, with rustic manners, and a mind full of the adventures of her journey, talked to me without reserve.

The two years of married life which had passed from us had been embittered by the ungodly character of our servants. We longed for servants who would make our kitchen a model for the rest of the parish, sanctifying their daily work by prayer and Bible-reading, and receiving as a privilege the religious advantages offered to them. Thus, when an opening presented itself for a change, and dear Hester arrived to fill the vacancy, we prayed that she might be one who would receive with joy the engrafted word, which is able to save the soul; and I determined, by private instruction and care, to follow up the other religious advantages she would have.

I soon heard from the upper servant that Hester had a great many faults; that she was ignorant of the ways of service, and pettish when spoken to; that she was fond of her own way, and angry when obliged to do twice, what she had not done well at first; and that she could not bear to be laughed at, but would cry, and think herself ill-used, and say "she would go and tell her mistress." Yet I liked the girl; I rejoiced in having, at last, one under the roof whose face brightened at being taught; and I hoped that a little punishment would have the good effect of leading her to try and correct her faults. Her warm heart was beginning to attach itself to us with an orphan's fervour, and a kind look from her "dear master and mistress" was Hester's greatest encouragement.

Having this hold upon the dear girl's affections, I made use of the power; and the next time she transgressed, I sent her word that I should not speak to her again, nor allow her to come to the evening reading, which she prized so much, until her good conduct assured me that she was anxious to please.

If we met by chance, I passed quickly by, not looking at her. This was indeed a punishment to the loving Hester. She passed the week in tears ; and one day, as I was sitting alone, I heard her sobbing outside the door. Some minutes passed before she ventured to knock ; and when the door opened, she fell on her knees, bathed in tears, and begged to be forgiven. "Hester," I said, "I thought I had got a servant who loved me and her master, but I find I am mistaken." "I *do* love you," she sobbed ; " *do* look at me again, as you used to do before I was naughty, and indeed, indeed, I'll try never to vex you again." "Well, get up," I said ; "I do not wish to see you on your knees to *me*, a poor worm like yourself." "But say you forgive me, my dear, dear mistress." "I forgive you, Hester ; and as you are still on your knees, I will also go on mine, and we will pray that God, whom you have offended by your ill temper, will forgive you for Jesus Christ's sake, and help you to be good by sending His Spirit into your heart."

This interview seemed to establish Hester's

love for us, and she strove to amend, though still guilty in spite of her efforts; for she sought to be good in her own strength, and knew not her weakness. She had much to learn, but the hard lessons taught her she has learned; and now, blessed Hester, she understands these words—

“From the sparkling turrets there,
Oft I'll trace my pilgrim way;
Often bless Thy guardian care,—
Fire by night, and cloud by day;
Whilst our triumphs
At our Leader's feet we lay.”

At this time,—namely, the first six months of her residence with us,—Hester had not fully given her heart to God. She was warm-hearted, honest, true, kind; but all this she was by nature. There are still to be seen, even in the unregenerate nature, some remains of the moral image of God; and those remains are beautiful, though only a beautiful ruin. But the spiritual image, the reflection of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, is *lost*, until restored by conversion of soul; *then* a different

motive is felt for every action ; the love of Christ, and not the love of self, or even of our fellow-creatures, influences the soul, and the believer lives to the glory of God.

It is my custom to assemble a chosen band of dear young people on the Sunday evening, between the afternoon service and school-room lecture, and to retrace the sermon with them, and explain some portion of the word of God, striving to make it a happy and interesting, as well as profitable exercise. The party consists of twenty boys and girls, who can read with ease, and refer with quickness to different parts of Scripture, and who have learnt to be attentive listeners. Dear Hester was admitted to this class which has been a means of great benefit to the young people, and is looked upon by them as a privilege from which they are very sorry to be excluded. At the time of her admission, I was explaining the book of Joshua, so rich in interest and in practical observation, and was directed in the last chapter to dwell long on the exhortation of Joshua : " Choose ye this day whom ye will serve ;" and looking round on

the bright young faces, I said to each, "Choose *you*, dear girl; choose *you*, dear boy, which you will serve; choose this very night to serve Him who will never disappoint you, who will be to you a good Master, and will never leave you, nor forsake you; and you will be able to say, at the hour of death, like Joshua, "Not one 'good thing has failed, of all that the Lord my God promised me." It pleased God that these words should sink deep into Hester's heart. She knelt that night, and, in her simple way, as she afterwards told me, gave herself to God, and chose Him as her Master. He heard the prayer, accepted the offering, and from that time began to refine her, as silver is refined.

There are two ways especially made use of by Almighty God to try His children, to wean them from earth, and to guide their thoughts and affections heavenwards. The one is, pain of body; the other, separation from beloved friends, either by distance or death. In both these ways was Hester to be afflicted; but she learned to say, "It is well;" and *now* she enjoys "an exceeding and eternal weight

of glory," forgetting her light affliction, which was "but for a moment."

Her health failed when she had been with us about twelve months ; violent headaches, faceaches, general debility which no medical aid could relieve, made her work irksome, and tried her temper much. The heat of the fire was injurious to her, and I offered to procure for her an easy place as housemaid ; but the idea of leaving us was agony to the loving Hester. "Let me stay, my beloved mistress, and serve you and master while I live, and put your hand under my head when I die. I feel as if I can bear any pain, any sorrow, if I am not parted from you." "Dear Hester," I would then say, "you must not rest on us only for support ; you must lean on your "Beloved." Perhaps the very parting you dread so much will be the means appointed by God to show you that 'Christ is all.' Try to say, from the bottom of your heart, 'Do with me as seemeth to Thee good, *only* be with me.' Leave yourself unreservedly in His faithful hands."

After a while a vacancy occurred, and I

was able to place her in a higher situation in our own family, where she waited upon me, and had no hard work to do. She was overjoyed and thankful; but her dim eye, wasted body, and slow movements showed that disease was making rapid progress, and that her sufferings were great. Our subjects for private weekly readings at this time were the book of Canticles,—that portion of Scripture so full of unction, because so full of Christ,—and the latter chapters of the Gospels, harmonising the history of the sufferings and death of Jesus. Each of these portions of the word of God deeply interested Hester, the eyes of whose understanding were opened in proportion as her bodily eye had dimmed. The garden of Gethsemane, with the agonized Saviour bowed down under sin—*her* sin; the cross on Calvary, where Jesus hung in anguish of body and mind, forsaken even by His Father; the expressions of wonderful love recorded in the Song of Solomon, as His words at the believer, and the devoted love of the believer in return,—these portions weighed much with Hester, and her old

Bible would open at the favourite passages which she was laying up for the time of need.

That time of need approached. Various means had been tried for relieving her distressed body, but all in vain, and she became almost useless, and caused us much anxiety, lest, by yielding more than was necessary to her uncomfortable feelings, we should make her a burden to herself, and to others. In the spring of 1838, we determined to try whether a few months residence at her native place, Frome, in Somersetshire, would not revive her. She listened sorrowfully to this arrangement, and her heart sank at bidding farewell, even for three months, to the place and people she loved so much, though she acknowledged it might benefit her. I could only comfort her by representing what a blessing she might be to her friends whilst among them, and what a comfort to us on her return, with *perhaps*, rosy cheeks, and strengthened limbs, and energy to fulfil the duties of her station. As she left the beloved village, where few lived that did not love *her*, the kind friend of the poor, and

looked for the *last* time on its ivied ruin, its laurelled school-house, her tears fell fast, and were only wiped away as she exclaimed, "Yes! I will try to glorify my God in my native place."

I saw her there shortly afterwards, living consistently, and greatly improved in health; indeed, so much so, that I doubted whether it would be wise to bring her back again to our home, until she was well, and able to do her work without assistance, which seemed likely. She felt this delay severely, which I was directed, after prayer and thought, to enforce, and she could not repress some jealous thoughts of the young person who supplied her place, which I was obliged to reprove, and thus pain her more; and she seemed to give up the hope of returning to us, though we soon forgave her, and valued the tender love which had prompted the jealous feeling, and which made her concentrate her earthly joy in our family circle. I received the following letter about this time, which I copy truly, except the faults of spelling and punctuation.

FROME.

HONOURED MADAM,—I feel it a pleasure to be allowed to write to you, hoping this will find you and my dear master quite well. I am much better in health than I have been these two years: I hope, if it is God's will, it may continue. Dear Madam, on the 23rd Trinity church was opened, and Turner and I stayed for the sacrament, which was a great comfort to us both. It caused me to look back the last five years. Dear Madam, this very Sabbath-day, five years ago, I was with you, and living ignorant of those things that I am now permitted to enjoy—so guilty in the sight of God as I am. I can truly say, through the mercy of God, and your anxious care for body and soul, that I am as a brand plucked from the burning, and my earnest prayer to God is, that my sins that do so easily beset me may be cast at the foot of my Saviour's cross. Dear Madam, what cause I have to thank you and my dear master for the care and expense you have had with me, a poor orphan girl! I hope and trust, under God, that all I have been taught will not be in vain; I hope I may show forth in my life and conduct that the pains you have taken with me have not been in vain. I can never forget them, though I must give up the thoughts of being your servant again. The trial is great indeed, to be separated from you on earth; I had looked forward with such pleasure to return to you this winter, as I am so much better, to repay you for all your kindness; I do feel equal to my place, but I am afraid if I say so,

I may grieve you again, more than I have done, which I feel truly sorry for : oh, that I could call it back again. I ask your forgiveness, dear Madam, for what I have said or done towards you or my fellow-servants that was wrong ; and I hope I shall be more watchful against my proud heart that rises within me, and not grieve the Holy Spirit to depart from me.

Dear Madam, I have had another issue made in my arm, and dear Mrs. Sheppard allowed me to have it done in her room, and supported me ; I did not think I should be able to bear it ; but God laid His everlasting arms underneath His erring child, as I feel myself to be more and more, now that I am left as a sheep having no shepherd to feed my hungry soul. Dear Madam, this trial reminds me of what you told us all two years ago in that happy little room of yours, which I have cause to think of as long as I live. The name of the place is dear to me, and those whom I love and thank for past and present kindness ; I can but love you, and thank you, and ever remember you in my unworthy prayers to God.

I have done as you wished me about the dress-making, as you are so kind as to give me the money for the winter, I will do all I can in the strength of my God, to improve myself. I am sorry to say the people here are very gay, but I hope I may resist the temptations placed in my path ; the trials seem much greater than ever before, because now I know what it is to be in the world and not of the world ; it requires me to be very watchful and prayerful ; may the Lord

give me strength as my day, and enable me, though absent, to walk as if I was before you.

Mrs. Sheppard has asked me to stay with nurse and the dear children whilst they are absent. They pass away some of my trouble now ; but I fear when I have left them I shall feel it worse—that you are no longer MY loving master and mistress: the trial is great indeed, but I hope it is all for the best.

With my humble duty,

I remain your servant,

HESTER.

The winter following, Mrs. Sheppard, who valued Hester, wished to engage her as housekeeper ; she was well qualified for a situation of trust, and would have there much to occupy her mind, and prevent her from dwelling on her bodily trials. We judged therefore that such a situation was desirable for her at that time, and I advised her to accept it with gratitude, and to look forward to an entire re-establishment of health in her native air. From our dear sister, Mrs. Sheppard, she would constantly hear of us, and at her house, till the time came for us to be joined again in the relation of mistress and servant, she would often see us. Dear Hester, with

mingled tears of gratitude and disappointment, accepted the situation, and wrote as follows :

FROME, *Jan.*, 1839.

HONOURED MADAM,

I feel truly thankful to you for the kind note, and the well wishes towards me for the new year; God grant it may prove a happy year to me for body and soul, and to all around me. Dear madam, when I look back the past year, it makes me to sorrow at times, on account of the separation from you; but I hope and trust that the trial that's past has been for my good. Though it has been a year of trial to me in many ways, yet the Lord has loaded me with mercies, and in some measure restored me to be able for a duty that is now before me. May He strengthen His erring child, and make me *willing to be nothing* in myself. Dear madam, as I was sitting alone this evening, all the trouble and expense I caused you and my dear master was brought to my mind. I do truly repent of ever having grieved you after all your kindness, both spiritual and temporal, during five years. Dear madam, may it please God that, though absent from you, I may not forget the instructions I have received from your little room and the schoolroom, in which I have spent so many happy hours. Never can I forget your look when you said to us all, "Choose you this night whom you will serve." Those were the first words in the blessed Bible that caused me to feel what I was; and now I humbly hope I am walking as one

of God's dear children. I have pleasure in telling you that I spent some time with my dear sister Lucy, and I have great hopes of her and her husband. They still say that little prayer you taught them, "O Lord God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, give me the Holy Spirit." The first night I was there, I began the book of Job, and used the family Prayer-Book which master sent them. They cried bitterly when I read to them, and talked to them of the sufferings of Christ. Dear madam, I thought of you, and prayed for you, and fancied you all in private prayer at half-past seven on New-year's morning. Thanks be to God for His benefits to me, an orphan, in providing me here with a place where I may hear the truth as it is in Jesus. May I be strengthened for the duty appointed for me. Dear Mr. and Mrs. Sheppard are so kind to me that it passes away many a pain, as you, dear madam, have often done before; and Mrs. S. reads to us on Sunday evenings, which is a great pleasure. I hope I may see you again in the flesh; if not, may the Lord prepare us for that happy time and place we are looking forward to. Wishing you a happy new year,

I remain your humble servant,

HESTER.

During the spring months of 1839, she fulfilled well the duties of housekeeper in her new service. Her soul was in a thriving state, and her "lips dropped as the honey-

comb." The little children of the family were a source of great delight to her, and "dear Hetty's pretty plays" a source of great pleasure to them. To her fellow-servants she spoke constantly of "Him whom her soul loved," Jesus, "her Beloved, her Friend." Her manner of conversing was very interesting; so simple, and earnest, and affectionate, the warm breathings of a heart full of love to God and man. She seemed at this time likely to live, and to be a flourishing plant, the sweetness of which would do credit to the hand that had tended it. But we were mistaken; her days were numbered, the lily was soon to be gathered, and placed in the Saviour's bosom.

With the spring winds came a violent cough, which was soon followed by loss of strength and appetite and all the symptoms of decline. With sorrow, but submissively, she left Mr. Sheppard's family, and we placed her in her sister Lucy's cottage, in the sweet village of Marston, near Frome. New and kind friends were raised up for her comfort, from a noble family near. She valued their visits,

and thanked God for their kindness, and strove to exalt before them that Name, which to her was "above every name," the name of Jesus. It was her custom to recommend to all her beloved book of Canticles, and nothing gave her so much pain as any ignorant, slighting observations on *that* book, which had been manna to her soul. Her visitors were much struck with her appearance and manner, and said, they had never seen such a union of respectful humility and exalted piety. One desire she expressed strongly, a yearning of heart to see us ; and as our feeling was equally strong, we arranged in the autumn to spend a week in her neighbourhood. Our kind relatives sent for the suffering Hester to be under the same roof with us, for the last time till we inhabit one mansion above.

The evening of our arrival there is deeply impressed on my memory. The spot was interesting to us on many accounts, and very pretty, especially then, from the tints of autumn, and luxuriance of the late flowers. Beloved faces greeted us at the porch, round

which twined the climbing bell-flowers, with here and there a last rose and jasmine blossom. Little lovely ones were held up for our embrace, and we had much to tell of a pleasant journey we had taken. But I could not enter into these innocent joys till I had seen her whose heart was panting to meet us. I went upstairs alone and summoned her ; I heard her feeble steps, her hollow cough, her trembling hand on the handle of the door ; she could not for a minute open it, and when she had done so, she sank upon a chair, and covered her face, bedewed with tears, as if she feared to look, lest the person near her might not be the one she longed to see. I went up to her, and spoke endearingly, taking her pale, thin hand in mine. At the sound of my voice, she looked at me, and grasped, or rather clasped me, and said, in a voice of adoration, "My God, I thank Thee ; it is enough ; I have seen my mistress ; I shall see my master's face : oh, if I might die this week, and have her hand under my head—but, Lord ! Thy will be done." She kept my hand pressed on her beating heart, and said,

“I love you, I love you more than words can tell ; you taught me to be a follower of Christ, you showed me the beauty of that Book, that precious Book, my food, my comfort. When you go back again to Ayott, tell them all there that I am happy ; that God has had mercy on *me*, poor sinful Hester ; *I* that was so troublesome, so naughty. Tell them that I have no fears : 'twill bring honour to my God.”

She had been unable to go to church for some time, and desired to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from her master's hand.

The rapid growth of her mind, her deep spirituality and discernment of truth astonished us ; and her adoring look and manner, when receiving the bread and wine in remembrance of her crucified Lord, was a glimpse of that brightness which distinguishes the inhabitants of heaven. We parted from her, after a week of happy intercourse. She bore the separation well ; expressed herself much strengthened by the sacramental ordinance ; very grateful that the meeting had been

arranged and permitted; and anxious to glorify God whilst she lived, and to depart speedily.

When we parted from her, it seemed probable that in a few weeks she would be taken to rest. But five months of weakness and suffering were appointed for her after that time. Impatience and irritability had been her besetting sins; so the "north wind" of trial blew long, and patience and submission, with the other graces, sent forth a sweet perfume at last. Our tender Father in heaven, He who describes Himself as "teaching Ephraim to go, taking him by his arms, drawing him with the cords of a man and the bands of love," "*He* does not afflict willingly." He sends the "south wind" of health, peace, happiness, oftentimes, and would fain find its soft breezes sufficient to draw out His people's graces. He gives them many innocent earthly pleasures, so well described as follows:—

Few rightly estimate the worth
Of joys that spring and fade on earth:
They are not weeds we should despise;
They are not fruits of Paradise;

But wild-flowers in the pilgrim's way,
That cheer, yet not protract his stay;
Which he dare not too fondly clasp,
Lest they should perish in his grasp,
And yet may view, and wisely love,
As proofs and types of joys above.

But alas ! the lingering foot of the pilgrim shows that the pleasantness of the pathway *has* protracted his stay ; and then the *flower's* are exchanged for *thorns*, the shepherd's crook for the shepherd's dog, the level path for the difficult hill, the south wind for the north. *Then* is proved the pilgrim's real aim ; either he turns back to perdition, or humbly and earnestly sets himself to press up the trying pathway with "shoes of iron and brass," however, on his feet ; and soon the cheering voice of promise and the kindly hand of support are vouchsafed, and the pilgrim says, "It was never so well with me as *now*."

During the winter, Hester had but one short period of coldness ; perhaps *coldness* is too strong a term, for her faith was strong, her patience great, and her hope anchored securely ; only her desire to depart diminished,

and with a few days of sunshine, came a wish to live and enjoy "the pretty world without pain." To her spiritual mind this feeling appeared sinful; her desire had been "to depart and be with Christ," and she felt it ungrateful to Him who had so loved her as to give Himself for her, when she lingered in spirit at a distance from Him. Her last letter was written to me a month before she died, and in it she refers to this transient feeling of earthliness. Her sister had removed from the country village to the town of Frome.

Feb., 1840.

HONOURED AND DEAR MADAM,

I am sorry that I have not been able to write to you before. I feel anxious to write now, as, dear madam, I am sinking fast, and soon, I hope, if it be my Father's will, He will release me of this body of clay, and receive me to Himself. I feel thankful to be able to say that, though the Lord *had* hid His face from me for a time, yet, blessed be His holy name, He is nearer and dearer to my soul than ever—increasing my faith for that hour when I shall be called to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Dear madam, never did I feel the need of kind friends to read and pray by me, so much as now. Mr. Sheppard came to see

me, and prayed with me, and it seemed like pouring water on thirsty ground: the visiting lady is very, very kind—she comes twice a week—and the dear district minister. Dear madam, I thought of you on the New Year's morning; and, though absent from you, I *did* pray for you and your household, that you may be blessed to them. If this should be the last time that this poor trembling hand scribbles to you, I hope it leaves me with a humble and truly thankful heart, for the past and present kindness I have received from you and my dear master. I am very happy to tell you of the tender kindness of my brother and sister; and we are very comfortable in our new house. There is one sweet hymn in the "Gems of Sacred Poetry" (No. 60) that I long to be like; and sometimes I can feel, "O sweet pain, it's good." God's mercies often lift up this poor body past its pain.

I remain your humble servant,

HESTER.

This *was* the last letter that the poor trembling hand scribbled to me; but in consequence of the change of residence, Mrs. Shepard was able to see her occasionally, and she wrote about this time,—

"I sat with Hester some time the other day; she cannot be worse I think: her sight has failed her, and she cannot read at all. She said, in her simple, child-like way, 'Do you know, ma'am, I've the most beau-

tiful stars and bright birds flying and falling before my eyes: they seem so real that sometimes I feel in my bosom to see if they are not really *there*."

At last the time came when she was to see *Him*, who was to her "the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely;" and Mrs. Sheppard writes, "Our happy little Hester has winged her way to Jesus's bosom; she had been very ill all the week, her sufferings almost more than human nature could bear; yet her sister Lucy says that her face the last three days was as the face of an angel; it seemed as if her sweet smiles were caused by visions of angels round the room. A friend, who was with her a few hours before she died, asked her if she was happy. She said, "Yes, I have *no fear at all*, though I have to struggle hard with pain and death." At times her feeble nature seemed to faint at the glory that was dawning upon her. Her kind sister wept as she supported her dying body; she observed her weeping, and said "No tears here, no tears here. I'm going to Christ, my Lord; sing, sing;" and, with her dying breath, she sang a verse of some

favourite hymn. Her last words were "Lord Jesus, receive me:" she lifted her hands and eyes with a smile towards heaven, fell back on her pillow—and expired.

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lay my head,
And breathe my soul out sweetly there."

Such was the happy end of dear, loving, simple Hester! Though the earthly hands she most dearly loved were not near to smooth her pillow, "*His* left hand was under her head, and His right hand embraced her."

She lies in the churchyard of Christchurch, Frome; a headstone marks the spot, and tells the passenger that underneath lies

HESTER SINGER,

Aged 26.

—
"CHRIST IS ALL."





No. 7.—OLD BEAKE.

MY friend, have you ever read with care the story of blind Bartimeus? If not, take down your Bible from the shelf, and turn to the tenth chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, and at the forty-sixth verse you will find the sweet story.

Jesus, the friend of sinners, who went about doing good, was on His last journey when He met with this poor blind man. Those kind and merciful hands, so often raised in pity to cure the blind, the sick, the lame, were in a few days to be stretched upon a cross of wood, and their flesh and sinews torn by the large nails that pierced and fastened them. But Jesus, though He knew all that He was going to endure, had "steadfastly

set His face to go to Jerusalem." O my friend, well may His name be *Wonderful*, when we think that it was *love* that brought Him down from His Father's right hand into this world of sin and sorrow. The whole world was lying in sin, and *sin must be punished*—remember this, I pray you, *sin must be punished*. So Jesus said He would bear the punishment instead of us; and He *has* borne it, He bore the cross, despising the shame, and then rose from the dead, and ascended to glory; and all who believe in Him shall, for His sake, have their sins forgiven. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Then fly to Him, as the "dove to the clefts of the rock;" and, however great and many your sins, they shall be blotted out of God's book of remembrance, and He will give you that blessed gift, His Holy Spirit, who will change your heart, and teach you to hate sin, and you will become a new creature. Perhaps you have never yet prayed a real prayer; perhaps you are going headlong into hell fire! Have you not heard that in that dreadful place the fire is never quenched?

Lift up your heart, and say many times a day,
and night too if you are awake,

“O Lord God, forgive me my sins for
Jesus Christ’s sake ; make me a clean heart,
O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

Whilst you are reading about blind Barti-
meus, perhaps you think to yourself, “What
is all this to me? I’m not blind.” Are you
quite sure of that? Many who can see the
blessed sunshine, and the green grass, and
the faces of those they love, are still blind.

You, my friend, are *blind*, unless you see your
sins, and repent of them truly ; unless you see
your Saviour, and believe on Him earnestly.

I will tell you a true story of an old man,
who, when he was fourscore, did not know
how blind he was in his soul ; but the Lord
had mercy on him then, and opened his eyes.
This aged man lived in a parish in the west
of England. His name was Amandus Beake.
The parish is very large and scattered, and,
though there are many God-fearing people
in it, there are still more who live as if this
poor world were all, and as if there were no
God, no judgment-seat, no heaven, no hell.

Nailsea church and parsonage are on rising ground, and though you may see the fine old tower of the church from all parts, yet it is a weary walk for old folks ; and those who do not care for their souls never attend there, except for burials or christenings and such-like. Poor old Beake was one of these.

My brother is the minister of this parish. He loves his people, he loves his work ; he knows he shall have to give account, and wishes to spend and be spent in the service of his Master.

One Sunday evening, many years ago, after he had performed the two church services, not feeling very tired, he determined to go out, and pass an hour in doing some more work for his Saviour. The night was dark and rainy, the roads were wet, and the young Rector felt low as he went down the hill towards the poor cottage of the Sabbath-breaker, for he was going to give a word of warning to old Beake. He lifted up his heart, and besought the presence of his God. He knew that *he* had no power to make the dead sinner live ; but he knew that the Spirit of

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God could quicken in a moment him that was dead in trespasses and sins, and from his heart he cried, "Help me, O God." He found the old man and his wife seated by the fire. They seemed much surprised to see him, but placed a chair, and listened, whilst he read and explained the story of blind Bartimeus, and whilst he prayed earnestly that Jesus the Son of David would have mercy upon them and open their eyes.

Mr. Brown returned home, comforted by the attention they had showed; and the next Sunday he sent word that he would go in the evening to a cottage near the old man's house, and that the neighbours might be invited to hear him. When he opened the cottage door, he saw in the chimney corner, waiting for him with others, the aged man. The clergyman rejoiced in spirit, for it was the first time that old Beake had ever left his cottage door to hear the words of truth. The next Sabbath evening, Mr. Brown went again to a neighbour's cottage, and again his eyes were gladdened by the sight of the old man, *now* earnest in his attention.

A day or two afterwards, Mr. Brown was visiting his poor people in that part of the parish, when Mrs. Beake begged him to step in, and see her husband, who had caught a chill, and was very unwell. "And, sir," she said, "he has been calling for you, and wanted us to go for you in the night, but we did not like to take the liberty."

Mr. Brown immediately went in, and upstairs to the bedside of the old man. The day was cold, and he seemed very ill, with only a scanty covering on his bed; but he spoke not, he thought not, of his pain, his poverty, his hard bed, and thin blanket. The old man had found out his blindness; he had heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, and the desire of his soul was to find mercy at His hands.

"Sir," he said, "I wanted you to come, that I might hear more of Jesus. Sir, will He have mercy upon *me*, an old sinner? Will He have mercy upon *me*?"

"Yes, oh yes," said the minister's comforting voice; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be

red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Only *believe*, and Jesus says, that those who come to Him, He will *not* cast them out; *He* is the Friend of sinners, of penitent sinners."

Thus did Mr. Brown speak to the sick man, once so careless, but now so eager. He returned the next morning to the cottage, and in the kitchen met one of the old man's daughters, who said, weeping, "Sir, father is dying."

He went quickly up the stairs, and heard the aged man repeating earnestly, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon *me*; Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon *me*." He stretched out his hand to his minister, and anxiously inquired, "*Is there mercy for me?*"

"Where is your hope? on what does it rest?" said Mr. Brown, taking his cold hand.

"Only, sir, *on Jesus*, who opened the eyes of"——

He would have said, "of the poor blind man;" but the hand that had grasped his minister's hand let go its hold, and the old man fell back on his pillow, stretched out his arms, and died.

Mr. B. sank down on his knees, and the old woman and her daughters did the same. He prayed ; not, however, for old Beake—his spirit had returned to God ; but he thanked God that the old man had found out the only way of salvation, and had been enabled to make so good a confession of his faith ; and he expressed a humble hope that Christ had shown mercy upon him. He prayed also for those who remained.

Friend! whoever you are that reads this, if your conscience tells you that you are still blind in soul, ask the Son of David to have mercy upon *you*. Cast away everything that would hinder you in going to Jesus, and He will heal you and cure you, and *then* follow Him in the way, as Bartimeus did. Do not delay! To-morrow it may be too late. Remember, if you do not seek mercy *here*, you will not find it at the judgment-seat of God.





NO. 8.—MARTHA ARNOLD.

A FEW years ago, one of the youngest of the Sunday-school children in the pretty village of Ayott St. Lawrence, was Martha Arnold, a shy and timid child, whose eyes were seldom raised from the ground, and whose pale cheek flushed when spoken to by the kindest voice. She was a backward child, and had great difficulty in learning her Sunday lesson; and when she *had* learnt it, her beating heart prevented her saying it perfectly.

Dear child! we did not know then that her little body was diseased, that she had what is called a heart complaint; nor did we know that God was speaking to the child, and preparing her for Himself, and giving her grace

to receive with living faith the truths she heard at school.

I remember well the first time that I saw any sign of deep feeling in the dear little girl. I was reading to a class of children a half-penny book, called "Little Martha," which contains a sweet account of a holy child. Though five years have passed away, I fancy I see her now, putting back her long, fair hair, and raising her eyes from the ground, to give me one look of deep meaning, as I read of 'Little Martha's' happy death. I turned to the rest of the children, and said, *We* have a little Martha, and *she* is not strong; God give her grace to live and die like this child, her namesake."

Very soon afterwards I missed her from school, and found that she was ill, suffering from violent beatings in the heart. I inquired, and heard from the doctor that the disease was fixed, and that a few months would remove her from us; and I doubted not that it was my duty to tell the child her danger. But, knowing how fearful, how timid she was, I dreaded the consequence of saying, "Mar-

tha, you must soon die!" when all agitation was so bad for her. However, hoping that God would strengthen *her* and *me*, I expressed a wish to see her, as soon as a fine spring day would allow her to come so far; and I was engaged in writing, one morning in February, when the dear child was introduced, panting, trembling, from the palpitation of the heart. I seated her on a stool at my feet, and spoke to her of those she loved, and especially of her baby sister, of whom she was very fond; and then I talked of her beating heart and pain; and at length I said, "Martha, my little girl, do you know that you are very ill?"

"Yes," she answered quickly.

"And do you sometimes think you shall soon die?"

"Yes, very often," she replied.

"And are you afraid to die, my child?"

She raised her downcast eyes, and looked at me smilingly, and said, "Oh, no, ma'am."

"Why not, dear child? why are you not afraid to die?"

She said firmly, "Because Jesus has washed me clean in His precious blood."

“ But, Martha, if it were God’s will, you would *rather live*, and grow up a strong and hearty girl, like sister Mary, would you not ? ”

She paused a moment, and then said, “ No ; I’d *rather die*, and go to Jesus.”

I thanked God for such a hope vouchsafed to this young child. She returned home, never again to leave the sunny doorway of her own cottage. In much pain and weakness she lingered for three months ; but, though they were months of pain, though her whole body was agitated by the throbbings of her heart, till it was sad to look at the suffering lamb, her mind was in “ perfect peace.” Her little feet stood firm in the midst of Jordan, fearless of the water-flood. Jesus, the true Ark of the Covenant, was with her.

She looked earnestly at her mother one day, and said, “ Mother ! I’m glad *I* am going to die, instead of *you* ; ” knowing and feeling that her mother had yet much to learn. The day before she died, she had been watching for some time the baby she loved so well, when she suddenly said, “ Oh, I wish I could

take baby with me to Jesus!" Her little brother, whom she also loved much, she would beg to be a good boy, and come to her in heaven. She seemed to understand and long for, in their own case, the blessedness of that meeting when there shall be—

"No wanderer lost,
A family in heaven."

The next morning, a sweet May morning, when the lambs were sporting, and the birds were singing, and healthy children were gambling in their playful joy, Martha suddenly fell back in her chair; the little heart stopped its painful beating, and her spirit returned to God who gave it. We believe that angels bore her to the Saviour she loved and trusted in.

The long grass now grows over the grave where Martha's body lies: *we* do not know the very spot, but *God* knows it; and when Jesus shall come again, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, we believe that the dust of the pious, gentle, patient, believing little Martha will be gathered

together, and shall rise a glorious body, to meet the Lord in the air.

Dear child ! may she see in that blessed company all those she so dearly loved on earth !

“There is, beyond the sky,
A heaven of joy and love ;
And holy children, when they die,
Go to that world above.”





No. 9.—TWO GRAVE-RAILS.

THERE are two new grave-rails in our churchyard ; the one is sacred to the memory of “ Edith Threader, aged 67 ;” the other is in memory of “ Eliz. Shambrook, Schoolmistress, aged 65.”

No striking events marked the course of these dear women ; but they, being children of God, and heirs of the kingdom which He has prepared for those who love Him, were guided by His hand, and followed by His eye of love during their pilgrimage ; and perhaps their simple annals might interest and encourage those who, with trembling steps, are seeking the heavenly country.

CHAPTER I.

The mother of Edith Threader was the daughter of a wealthy farmer; but she offended her father, and lowered her own station in life, by foolishly marrying a servant on the farm. She was a woman of superior mind and truly religious, but stern in character and determined in purpose. Having taken, of her own free will, a lower station than was intended for her, she suited herself to that station; she wished to bring up her family in the fear of God, to make them fair scholars, and then to see them honestly gaining their daily bread. It was her desire to serve God with the talents which He had bestowed upon her, and accordingly she kept a small school, and in the evenings often held a kind of lecture for the young servants of the place, saying, "My dear children will be servants, exposed to all the dangers and temptations of service; I will try therefore to benefit such, and perhaps my God whom I serve will raise up friends in season to be useful to them."

The little Edith sat amongst the other children in her mother's school ; she inherited a great deal of her decided, unbending spirit, and did not like the silence, obedience, and strict attention to religious duties, which were enforced. She used to describe the awe she felt as she looked on her, so commanding, so superior, dressed in the fashion of better days, with high-heeled shoes and gipsy hat,—her muslin kerchief white as snow, and ruffles on the short tight sleeves. Edith did not know then that, night after night, after their young eyes were closed in sleep, her mother's solitary prayers ascended on their behalf ; she did not know that each dear child was commended, with groanings which cannot be uttered, to His care who could guide them when removed from her watchful sight.

Edith liked stirring work, but hated learning, which caused her mother much offence ; she had also a great desire to dress well, and saved up her money to buy a red petticoat, which her mother made her return ; and the little girl, then nine years old, was so indignant, that she left home and engaged herself

in a place of service, determining to follow her own course and be happy without having to spell and read from the dreaded book. Her mother did not seek her ; but knowing that she was safe, left the wilful child to pursue the path she preferred.

Edith never returned to her mother, except on visits, but lived in different places of service until her marriage. The little reading she had gained was soon forgotten ; but the prayers of her mother were remembered by God, and it pleased Him to bring about, in His own way, the first humbling of the little girl's proud heart. When about twelve years old, she was led by a sudden temptation to steal a small article ; she was not found out, nor was the subject ever mentioned to her, but conviction seized the child ; the Spirit of God began His work, by convincing her of her wickedness ; she cast away the trifle with abhorrence ; she had not, however, grace enough to confess her sin, and it rankled in her bosom until she was taught, more than fifty years afterwards, to cast it, and every other transgression, at the foot of the Cross.

Edith married, when about twenty-two years of age, a respectable man belonging to the parish of Ayott St. Lawrence ; he obtained the situation of gardener in a gentleman's family in that place, and their circumstances were comfortable. She brought up her family industriously, honestly, with a sense of duty to God and their superiors, and with as much learning as it was in her power to bestow ; she improved upon her mother's plan, for though she was strict, she was affectionate in manner, and a bond of warm love joined her to her children.

Many years ago, we were placed by the providence of God in charge of the parish of Ayott. Edith was then sixty years of age, and was one of the first persons whom we looked upon with approbation and respect. She and her husband were amongst the few communicants whom we found in the habit of partaking of the Holy Communion, and they were constant frequenters of the house of God, and of the school-room lectures. Whoever made excuse, Edith did not ; but in her bright red cloak and neat black bonnet,

with attentive face, and in lowly posture, there was the fine old woman, pleasant to look upon, and valued by us highly. She would weep with feelings of adoration as the hymn ascended, and long that she could, like the others, follow the words in a hymn-book, and turn the pages of the Bible over, as her minister opened out to them the word of truth. How willingly would she have lived some of the years of her youth again, and have placed herself, a child of eight years old, on the school bench, to gain the learning which she then refused.

Thus respected and esteemed was this dear woman ; and yet—strange as it may appear to some—she was not at peace ; she had not yet found Him who is “the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” She worshipped she “knew not what;” she adored an “unknown God,” for it is Christ who brings us near to God, and reveals to us His character ; it is a believing view of the person, the office of Christ, which warms the heart, which infuses love, which shows us the wall of separation broken down (even those

iniquities which have separated between us and our God), broken down by Him "who bore the cross, despising the shame," who having loved His own which were in the world, loved them unto the end; and who now, at the right hand of God, sends His Spirit to guide our wandering feet into paths of grace and glory.

Edith's mother had closed her eyes in the sleep of death; but her prayers for her wilful child had been registered above, and that dear child was not permitted to say, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace," but was kept by the Spirit of God in an unquiet state, until, in old age, she was taught to delight in "His name, which is as ointment poured forth,"—to worship her mother's God.

Perceiving that she required to be taught like a little child, I invited her to meet a party of women who assembled every week in one of the cottages, to hear the Bible explained and join in prayer. I remember that I was explaining that part of Genesis which relates to the flood, and following the apostle Peter in making the destruction of

the world by water a type of the more fearful destruction by fire, at the second coming of the Lord. I dwelt much on the safety of Noah and his family in the ark, and tried to show how safe from the wrath of God are those who are in Christ Jesus, who enter the ark of safety prepared for them, which will bear them safely over the billows of life, and land them, not on Mount Ararat, but on Mount Zion. Edith listened with breathless attention, as I continued, in the simplest language, to unfold this truth to them. Tears gushed forth, and prayers seemed on her lips. As I left the cottage, she said in a whisper, "Let me see you by myself, will you?" "Yes, gladly," I replied. When she came to me, she burst forth, "Tell me, my dear lady, how to pray to be safe; I never feel so wicked as at my prayers; such prayers as mine can't go to God." I replied, "You are quite right, dear old woman; such prayers as yours can't go to God." "What am I to do then?" she said, weeping, "I try and try, and sometimes, the more I try the worse they seem." I replied, "You may try for ever, Edith, and your

prayers will never be fit to be heard by Him who is so pure that even our best doings are no better than 'filthy rags' in His sight; but go home, dear old friend, and kneel down and say, 'Jesus, pray for me.' Jesus is at the right hand of God, and it is His blessed work, now that His sufferings are over, to pray for His people. Ask Him to pray for you, ask for all you want in His great name, and fear not,—you will be heard and accepted." These simple words sank deep; and I have been told by her family, that often afterwards, they have heard her—alone, as she thought,—uttering with a voice earnest as the voice of the drowning Peter, "Lord Jesus, pray for me."

I think I may say that from this time she grew in grace and in the knowledge of God. Love to her Saviour, love to us, love to the true servants of Christ everywhere, filled her heart. When she felt that she had, by sudden sharpness of temper, or unkindness in speech, grieved the Spirit of God, deep sorrow and humiliation of soul followed. She was an earnest, humble believer. She clung

to her Saviour with living faith, and felt those beautiful words in the Song of Solomon, "My Beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh;" soothing, refreshing, was the office of Christ to her convicted soul, as is myrrh to the pained body.

We were sorry when her health began to fail; the minister could ill spare from her accustomed seat, one so anxious, so affectionate as was Edith. We saw her robust frame weakening, but we did not think her departure near; and were therefore startled on our return from a journey, when told that water had gathered on her chest, and that we must lose no time in visiting her. She had prayed much to be permitted to see our faces again, and our heavenly Father delights to answer those petitions of His children which are not bad for them; so we returned to receive her assurance that she was happy and ready; that she had only desired to clasp our hands, to hear our voices, to receive from her *own* dear minister once more the supper of the Lord, and then to depart.

The next morning (Sunday morning), we

were summoned before eight, as her illness had increased ; she received with solemn reverence the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and we rejoiced to hear that sweet views of her Saviour's love, and happy communion with Him, had filled her soul during the last suffering night ; her expression to her daughter was, " He has been close to me—I have almost seen Him."

Her dear minister was obliged to leave her for his Sunday duties ; I remained behind, and received her last smile, and heard her whisper with that last look of love, " But for them—but for them—my soul must have been cast into hell !"

She died " in her nest,"—her husband, children, friends, around her. She was unconscious at the last, and not a sound was heard but words of prayer, for they restrained their sobs, until she had breathed her spirit away. Then the cry of the bereaved arose, and tenderly was her cold form embraced, and carefully was she laid in her coffin ; and sweetly did their minister's words soothe the mourners on the next Sunday, when she lay an un-

conscious corpse, in the midst of the congregation with whom she had loved to worship.

The words addressed to the mourners were as follows :—

“ It is due, my brethren, to the cause of our holy religion, that I should state some simple facts connected with the latter days of our departed friend (without making a funeral sermon, which is many ways objectionable, except on very particular occasions); but merely to bear testimony to those evidences and signs of the work of grace within, which give to her children and to us a sure and certain hope of the entire peace and acceptance of her soul.

“ The signs manifested in her of the undoubted work of God, were :—

“ First, a clear, decided view of her polluted, ruined state by SIN. This became latterly so deep as to produce very painful conviction—a genuine sorrowing before God, and likewise a very childlike and humble confession of them before man ; not being ashamed to own those PARTICULAR instances of transgression which grieved the Spirit of God and wounded

her own conscience. This confession was joined with a total giving-up of all dependence on SELF. No righteousness of her own did she plead. No looking to her decent, moral conduct. No talking of regular attendance at ordinances and sacraments, or outward duties of any kind ; but JESUS was felt and owned to be the one object of her desire,—acquaintance with HIM—communion, in her poor way, with HIM—the remission of her sins through HIM—and a holy walk and conversation through His Spirit, was what she *longed after* ; and I doubt not, according to her light, it was granted to her.

“ Another favourable evidence was the remarkable absence of worldly anxieties and cares, a great pulling-down of natural pride, and a loathing of those past ways of the world, which brought with them a continual liability to sin. She said to me, ‘ Far more gladly would I be taken by the Lord as soon as ever it is His blessed will, than I would return like the sow to wallow in the mire ! ’ There was moreover a great desire and relish for the word of God, particularly for all such

portions of it as related to the Saviour and to His work for us poor sinners ; and gladly was that friend or neighbour welcomed who would spend a short season in reading to her that Book of eternal truth which assures us of a rest which remaineth to the people of God ; and declares to the weakest ‘saints,’ that ‘their light affliction which endureth but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory !’”

CHAPTER II.

ELIZ. SHAMBROOK was born in the hamlet of Gustard Wood, about a mile from Ayott St. Lawrence. In her young days learning was rare and dear, and Elizabeth was poor ; but she had a thirst for knowledge, and picked up her learning quickly. When her mother had not the money needful to send her little girl to school, she would go and sit weeping under a hedge, and sometimes the kind dame heard of her sorrow, and opening the school-door, would call in the anxious child.

This was well ; for though she was not a

religious child, and therefore her learning was of no value in the eyes of God, yet, in after-years, how peacefully did her pious mind meditate upon the blessed Book which she had learnt to read when young.

Elizabeth went early to service, and lived for some time in the family of two ladies, near London, where she learnt the good manners which befit intercourse with gentlefolks, and for which she was so much noticed in after-years. I do not know why she left those ladies; perhaps she longed for the bowery woods and sunny paths across the parks of her native country; perhaps she missed the gay carol of the birds, which seem to sing louder and happier in Hertfordshire than elsewhere! However, she returned, and let herself as servant to a person in comfortable circumstances, who, forty-five years ago, carried on a good business in the cattle line, at a tenement called the Hill Farm in the parish of Ayott. There was no mistress, so much care fell on Elizabeth; she was a faithful servant, and her master treated her kindly, and valued her services.

Elizabeth was faithful at this time, because she was naturally upright, and it was pleasanter to her to be faithful and approved, than to be dishonest and disgraced ; but she had yet to learn that though she had kept one commandment in its first plain sense, there were *nine* others of equal importance, and one of those she was about to break in a wilful manner.

She formed an intimacy with a servant working on the farm, of the name of Shambrook, and, alas ! following the multitude to do evil, fell into sin ; and ashamed, ill, distressed, she went back to Gustard Wood.

Shambrook married her ; but it had been falsely whispered to him that she had been unfaithful to him ; and for many years her life was miserable, pinched with want, soured by a jealous husband, whilst one dear child after another was removed by death.

In her deep distress she turned to the Lord, and He heard her cry ; she sought the courts of the house of her God, and found comfort there ; the worthy clergyman of the place gave her a helping hand, and to him she

owed much of her heavenly and earthly peace. He recommended her as a fitting dame to gather together the ragged urchins of Ayott, and give them a little order and learning in a cottage kitchen, until a school-room should be built.

It pleased God in His providence to appoint part of the Hill Farm as the place where she was first to fulfil her duty of schoolmistress. She has told me with what a feeling of self-abhorrence she reëntered its walls, having found out how exceeding sinful is sin, how abominable in the sight of the pure and holy God, that sin of fornication which she had committed, that sin which is called "the deadly sin," and which is the crying evil of our country parishes; the children walking in the miry highway trodden by their ignorant parents. Avoid it, dear young people; and during your pleasant courting days, keep in the path of purity, and stand before your minister on your wedding-day with clear consciences and happy hearts.

Thankful indeed was Mrs. Shambrook that there was a "fountain opened for sin and for

uncleanness." She flew like a dove to the clefts of the smitten Rock, and was safe; "for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

She had naturally a very good understanding; and when placed as mistress of the cottage-school, she did her duty faithfully. A hard task it was to get the wild creatures into anything like order. They would fight and quarrel, and tear the bonnet from each other's head, as they went to school; and when there, would again fight for the warm place near the fire, and pinch one another black and blue. She mourned over their wicked ignorance, but soon taught them to look up to her, and to love their "dear missis." They learnt to sing the Evening Hymn; and as they were very proud of their new gift, they would sometimes sing down the lane, on their way from school, instead of quarrelling, which seemed like a forerunner of better days in store for the neglected boys and girls of Ayott.

With a heart full of gratitude to God, Mrs.

Shambrook listened to the words of truth which fell from her young rector's lips; she followed him with prayer, helped him with her advice in his first difficulties of knowing the characters of his people, and tried to instil into the minds of the children the same veneration which she felt for him and his office; and when she heard from himself that he was going away for some weeks, but hoped to return with a companion, another friend for her and the poor children, how anxiously did she plead that it might be so. She listened for the carriage on the evening that his return was expected; and though unseen—for it was late—she was the first to welcome them, and to invoke blessings on their heads.

Dear faithful friend, she was a treasure to us then, when there were few hearts on whom we could depend. In her we could confide with certainty; and the weariness of spirit which often followed the first efforts to break up the fallow ground, was eased by pouring into her attentive ear our anxieties. I can fancy I see her now, seated at her round table, the large Bible before her, her spare

upright form turned towards us, and the tear of sympathy in her eye, or kneeling in prayer, and earnestly pleading for those we loved.

A schoolroom was soon built close to the parsonage-gate, and she and her old husband removed to a neighbouring cottage. The rules of the new school required punctuality and faithfulness; and with the help of a young teacher she fulfilled her part, and much admired the rows of healthy, happy-looking children, looking so nice in their blue pinafores, and no longer venturing or even wishing to act as they had formerly done. It was a pretty sight to see the neat old woman stand at the schoolroom door, and give the signal to some little one near that it was time to meet; when the school-call followed, and was echoed by the little parties on their way down the lanes, and across the parks, to their much-loved school. The school still assembles,—the school-call is still shouted,—but the old kind friend is gone!

Her sufferings had always been great from an internal complaint; and latterly she could

with difficulty, and only now and then, fill her place in the school, which distressed her much, as she felt that she was a burden to us, and was grieved to be no longer useful. As her body decayed, her hopes for heaven brightened ; she enjoyed the "full assurance of hope," and nothing seemed to move her from that blessed resting-place, the bosom of her Saviour.

By her desire, her son, who had lived with her after his father's death, married a young person, one of her former school-girls, who she hoped would well supply her place to him. She was confined to her bed at the time, but calmly entered into their simple happiness ; and as calmly, only ten days afterwards, surrendered that dear son at the command of God, when seized with sudden and fatal illness. His residence with his mother had been blessed to him, and he was able to say to his young weeping wife, "I love you as my life, but I am quite willing to go to Christ my Saviour." I went to break to his mother the afflicting tidings, that he was really gone, and found her lying tranquilly,

her hands clasped, her eyes upraised, and the large tear resting on her aged cheek. "I am comforted," she said; "I knew that all was over by the silence below."

She lived for about two months afterwards, in the greatest state of weakness. She liked to see the children, who would creep up to her bedside and kiss her, and listen to her solemn warnings, and weep when she told them that she was dying, and that soon they would see her face no more, but must serve God and meet her in heaven.

We were not near to close her eyes; but she was carefully watched, and affectionately tended. The day before she died she said to her daughter-in-law, "Weep not for me, but rejoice; again I say, rejoice! I am going to glory; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. I am quite ready. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Her last words were, "I am happy."

The officiating minister, the Sunday after her death, expounded the twenty-third psalm; in referring to her happy experience, he remarked what sweet hope the righteous has

in his death. He said that to the true believer it was but the *shadow* of death ; the *shadow* of a sword cannot slay, the *shadow* of a serpent cannot sting ; and therefore, being but the *shadow* of death, the Christian passes safely through the dark valley “leaning on the beloved Saviour.”

Life nor death shall such dissever
From His love who reigns for ever :
Will He fail them ?—never, never,
When to Him they cry.





NO. 10.—EMMA MOORE.

WHEN I search through that treasure-house of promises, God's own word, there is one especially which attracts my eye, which warms my heart, and excites me to stretch every nerve in the service of my heavenly Master ; it is the following :—
“ They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Often, when young, have I pondered over this inspiring verse, and longed to “ be wise ;” and longed to “ turn many to righteousness.” I have sat at the open window on a calm summer night, when the falling of a leaf was enough to break the stillness ; and have gazed on the firmament, which is still

“very good,” as it was when first spread by the Creator’s hand; and, looking up at it, spangled gloriously, I have earnestly desired to “shine as a star for ever and ever.”

My secret ponderings were known to Him from whom no secrets are hid; and He soon saw fit to place me in a sphere where all the energies of mind and body were needed, to assist the preacher by the humbler office of teaching. Ten years have passed; and though the work has been an anxious one—an *increasingly* anxious one—it has been blessed; and I can set to my seal that God is true when He says, “Be not weary in well-doing, and in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.” I can say to *you*, dear reader, let the object of your life be to testify of Jesus; do so with prayer and pains; and even *here* you will have a slight foretaste of the joy which the missionary spirit will hereafter partake of to the full.

It is not, however, of myself that I would now speak; some might point to *me*, and say, “You have had special helps and advantages for the work, from which many are

debarred." I wish to draw the minds of those who may read this little book, to the high privilege of being called to *teach*, by the dying expressions of the child Emma Moore, to her humble, holy governess. I am grieved often, when I go into a Sunday-school, to see the listless manner, the want of interest and of heavenly unction, in the teachers. *Such* will not be blessed! The *heart* must be in the work,—love to God and to the children must beam from the eye; the children must be exhorted with *tears* to seek Him early; they must be anxiously examined as to their ways,—whether they *pray*, whether they *read the Bible*, whether they *hate evil*. Topics of engrossing interest should dwell on the teacher's as well as the preacher's lips; such as, the dark valley of the shadow of death, with and without a Saviour's supporting hand; the joys of heaven,—the songs of the redeemed, as they cast their crowns before the throne of the exalted Jesus; the terrors of hell,—its moans, its groans, the words inscribed upon its portal, "Ye knew your Lord's will, but ye did it not." When

thus the teacher addresses the class, here and there an earnest tearful eye and an improved behaviour will repay the prayers and pains—oh how abundantly!

As I stood with Emma Moore's governess, a short time since, close to the grave which contained the remains of the sainted child, I thought, as I looked on the calm face of the happy teacher, and then on the green sod below, "Who would not try to turn others to righteousness?"

Emma was one of the first scholars in the day-school at Nailsea, in Somersetshire, when established in 1836. She was a little backward girl then, but soon improved, and got into the highest class—the Bible-class. She was modest and attentive; and the tears would steal down her cheeks when the Scriptures were explained to the class; and when she was thirteen years of age, she was made a teacher in the school. It was not, however, the will of God that she should teach with the ruddy lips of health, but with the parched tongue of sickness. She caught a severe cold, when attending, one night, a school-room

lecture, and returned to her loving mother's cottage, to leave it no more alive.

Her governess (as the Nailsea school-girls call their teacher) hastened to the sick child, and, finding her much altered, spoke to her as follows :—

Governess.—“ Emma, do you think you shall recover ? ”

Emma.—“ No, governess.”

Governess.—“ Are you afraid to die ? ”

Emma.—“ No, I am not afraid ; for I feel that my sins are pardoned, through the blood of Christ.”

Governess.—“ Then have you not great reason to love Christ ? ”

Emma.—“ Oh yes ! I do love Him, and long to be with Him, and see Him as He is.”

Governess.—“ Why do you love Him so much, Emma ? ”

Emma.—“ Because He first loved me, and died to save me.”

Governess.—“ Where did you first have these sweet thoughts of Jesus, my child ? ”

Emma.—“ At school.” And looking ear-

nestly at her teacher, she continued, "I shall have reason to bless God *and you*, dear governess, to all eternity." After a short pause, she continued, "God has given me the wings of an eagle, so that I can mount upwards. I was so happy just now; I saw heaven, and those beautiful mansions spoken of in the fourteenth of John; and the dear bleeding Lamb in the midst, and one of those lovely mansions for me. Oh, what is the best place in this wicked world compared with that?"

Governess.—"I trust, my sweet child, that you will be permitted to feel thus unto the end."

Emma.—"Oh yes! Jesus is with me; and when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, His rod and staff will comfort me; and, dear governess, do you come and see me as long as I remain here; I love you,—I like you to visit me; I know you well, and can speak my mind freely to you. I thank *you*,—I thank my minister, and Miss Turner, for all your care and prayers. Come, dear governess, and see me again to-morrow, if

you can, and read me that sweet little book, called 'Glory, glory, glory!'"

Governess.—"Yes, dear, I will come if possible; but I must now leave you, for the night is closing in. He who never slumbers nor sleeps will take care of you; and I will ask your other dear friend, Miss Turner, to come and see you as often as she can find time to do so."

As the teacher returned to her home, lighted by the first few stars of a clear, cold spring night, she looked heavenwards, and, blessing God for this encouragement to labour, determined to act as if she heard a voice saying, "Go on! go on! *I*, even *I* will prosper thy labour of love."

Miss Turner visited dear Emma; and having occasion to write to me, she mentioned the dying girl as follows:—

"I have lost out of my weekly Bible-class one of the dearest girls; she is very ill, and I miss her pretty face and correct answers, for she seems always glad to welcome me. I have been to see her this morning; and passing through the little garden, which in the

summer is bright with fine stocks and other flowers, I found her by the side of the fire, her pillow on a bench, and her Bible on it. Her soul seems in heaven ; and when she speaks on those subjects, there is an angelic look on her face. She suffers much ; such difficulty of breathing ; her cough reminds me of dear Hester Singer. After a violent fit of coughing, her mother thought her dying, and wept much ; she looked at me so sweetly, and said, ‘ Don’t you think mother ought to be *glad* that she is so soon going to have a daughter in heaven ? ’ She is so thin ; her bones in many places are piercing the skin, though she has not yet taken to her bed. She said, ‘ I’ve been thinking of the angels to-day ;—how different *they* are to *me*: *they* have bright wings to fly about ; *I* can’t go a step unless mother leads me, and then my legs ache ; but when I am in heaven, *I* shall be able to fly, and do God’s will, like them.’

“ I took up her Bible to read of the agonies of Christ in the garden, and I found the page wetted with tears. As I read, she remarked, ‘ Yes ! Jesus bore all my sin for me, or I

should not be so happy, should I? God forsook Jesus when He was dying,—that was because our sins were upon Him; but when *I* die, Jesus will go through Jordan *with me*; He will not leave, nor forsake me. When I can't sleep, I think of Jesus; and when I can think of Jesus, I can lie still. Sometimes I am so happy in the night that I want to sing, only it hurts my chest, and it would wake father; you know he works hard all day.' She was much struck with the verse in Canticles,—'My Beloved is gone into His garden, to gather lilies;' and said 'I hope I am a lily!' Then, in a voice of triumph, 'He will soon gather me,—I'm quite ready.' A tear stood in her mother's eye; she perceived it, and, looking at her affectionately, said, 'Mother, listen to the rough wind,—look at the falling snow,—there'll be no rough wind, no snow *there!*'"

As the foregoing letter excited a warm interest in my heart, and the hearts of my own dear Ayott school-children, for the dying child, I begged to hear more of her; and received from time to time the following accounts:—

Feb. 24th.—“ Dear Emma’s faith and love shine brighter every day. She said yesterday, ‘I long to see my Saviour, that I may show Him how I love Him. Oh, Jesus is all I want ; nothing comforts me but Jesus’ love ; and I praise Him because He sent governess to teach me to love Him before I became so ill : I love governess ;—governess loves Jesus.’ I went this afternoon again ; she is now confined to her bed, which is directly opposite the window : her eyes were closed, and I stood for some minutes watching her ; she was waving her hand and seemed in an unconscious state. Her mother was sitting opposite to her, with the Bible open at the fifteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians, and the little book called ‘Glory, glory, glory!’ Emma’s happy face looked as if she were

‘Soaring in the heights above,
Singing sweet a Saviour’s love.’

Her mother, not seeing me at first, started, which aroused Emma : she smiled, and said, ‘ You come !—that’s right ! I was dozing, I think ; and I thought I saw “ Glory, glory,

glory!' and sung "Victory." Whilst I sat with her, the funeral bell tolled. She said quickly, 'Who is that for?—how often it tolls.' 'I do not know who it is for to-day; but it will soon toll for *you*, Emma.' 'Yes, soon; but I shall not hear it; I shall be where angels' trumpets blow, and sing hallelujahs for ever and ever.' 'But your mother and those who love you will hear it, Emma.' 'Yes, they will; but God can make *them* sing too.' Her mother seems now willing to give her up, and can speak of her 'Emma dear' in glory. The father cannot yet surrender her: they are a united little family, and I doubt not this will prove to them a blessing in disguise.

Feb. 26th.—"Emma's poor body is decaying fast. It is a touching sight to see her, as she lies upon her bed of intense suffering,—so calm, so quiet. She wears a neat night-cap, and her dark hair is braided low beneath it. Her flushed cheeks and dimpled smiles are sweet also to look upon; but her death-like, white forehead; her sunken eyes, once so mild, now so unnaturally bright, or dimmed with agony; her swollen nose, and lips, and

tongue, which she would often be glad to drop on her chin, it is so parched with burning thirst,—all these sad symptoms tell us that her dear body will soon be a prey to worms ; though hereafter to experience a joyful resurrection. Emma, however, thinks not much *now* of the resurrection ; it is the immediate flight of the spirit to the bosom of Christ, which occupies her thoughts. ‘ *Soon* I shall see Him ! ’ is her joyful exclamation.”

Feb. 27th.—“ Miss Gaiger saw her yesterday later than I did. She was extremely weak ; the air caused by lifting a pocket-handkerchief to her mouth, made her gasp for breath. Miss Gaiger remarked the cold perspiration on her brow : she said, ‘ Dear governess, it is not *bloody* sweat ; take the Bible, read to me, I can listen ; Jesus spent a long time in prayer before *He* died.’ Miss Gaiger read a few chapters in Revelation ; and as she left the cottage, she heard the faint voice of the dying child, saying, ‘ Come, sweet Jesus !—do please come, sweet Jesus ! come ! come ! ’ ”

March 11th.—“ Miss Gaiger and I have just

taken our usual walk to see the dying Emma. We stood looking at some withered snow-drops at the door, and thought that those faded flowers were not emblems of her, for she looks more lovely than ever; she will soon be plucked, and placed in the beautiful garden,

‘Where everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.’

No murmur escapes her, nor is the expression of her features changed. She tries to smile; and at the name of Jesus her countenance glows, till you might suppose her opposite her Saviour’s face, and His glory reflected on her. Truly His name is to her ‘as ointment poured forth.’ She fully understands the verse, ‘Thy love is better than wine.’ ‘What should I do *now*, if Jesus were not with me?’ is the often-repeated question. She loves to adore His name; she testifies of Him to all who go to see her. When we went in, we did not speak for a minute or two; Emma broke the silence by saying, ‘See! I’m not gone yet.’ Miss Gaiger repeated the verse—

‘She came to the cross when her young cheek was
blossoming,
And raised to the Lord the bright glance of her
eye ;
And when o’er its beauty death’s darkness was
glooming,
The cross did uphold her—the Saviour was nigh.’

At the last line, Emma said, in a loud, firm voice, ‘He *is* near,—He *is* near.’ She expressed a wish that her bed might be drawn close to the window ; and then looked earnestly on the fields and distant hills. I said, ‘Dear Hester Singer, before her death, felt for a short time a desire to enjoy the growing beauties of the spring, and thought how pleasant it would be if she had her health, and could live a little longer ; do *you* ever feel this, Emma?’ ‘No ! no ! I only want to depart, whenever it is His will.’”

March 21st.—“The dear Emma is now in her heavenly home, and I shall have no more sweet visits to her to tell you of. Soon after breakfast this Sabbath morning, a message was brought that she was dying, and wished to see Mr. Brown. *I*, too, hastened

there, glad of the opportunity of seeing her fall asleep in Jesus. The morning was bright and beautiful; the birds were chirping their sweet notes, as if to praise the God of the Sabbath; there was a gentle murmuring among the trees as I walked towards the cottage. 'Ah!' I thought, 'sweet child, *you* will not see the bursting beauties of the spring, nor the pretty summer flowers; but you will see Him who made them, and be with Him in the fair land of the New Jerusalem. When I entered the room, all was silent, except the half-suppressed sobs of the friends around her. I stood opposite, hoping to catch a look from her dying eye; and I think she knew me, for she made an effort to raise her hand from beneath the bed-clothes. She had passed a night of severe suffering; and at three in the morning her mother saw a change, and thought every breath would be her last. She watched her anxiously till five; when she revived a little, and began, as her mother said, to talk to '*her Jesus,*' and spoke to all around sweetly till seven, when she sank again; but again revived, and spoke of

the rector, wishing she could see him. She threw her arms round her brother's neck, and held him for some time ; her mother thought she would have breathed her last on his neck ; she then asked for a favourite little book, and with her dying hand she turned to a picture of her precious Saviour, then to one of an angel face,—a little cherub with wings beneath it : she gazed upon it, and turned back to the picture of Jesus,—whispered ' Sweet Jesus ! '—returned the book, and sank, to *speak* no more. But for an hour after this, she would gaze on those she loved, and follow them with her dimmed eyes round the room. When Mr. Brown arrived I do not think she recognised him ; he commended her spirit in prayer to God who gave it, and to Jesus who redeemed it ; and after speaking soothingly to her friends, he bade the unconscious Emma an affectionate farewell, and went to take the superintendence of the girls' school ; which enabled Miss Gaiger to join us, and to remain ; whilst we sat silently watching the sweet child, as she breathed away her soul into her Saviour's bosom.

“I cannot express my feelings as I sat by that lowly bed,—the willingness I felt to work for God. I saw what a humble teacher may do, leaning upon the arm of her Beloved. I trust the impression may abide. When I went to my Bible-class this morning, I thought, ‘Now dwell on the love of Jesus,—nothing like that melts the heart;’ and I did feel His love shed abroad in my heart, and He opened my mouth to speak of it to the children.

“On Sunday, dear Emma’s body is to be laid in the grave. I seem to hear her in triumph ask, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ Her dying bed has led me to meditate much on the blest everlasting home; I desire to reach that home,—and not to go alone, but to lead others also. May my God go with me when I leave this place to proceed to my newly appointed sphere of labour.* The hope of leading but one of the children committed to my care, to Jesus, makes me *now* forget all I renounce for their sakes.”

* As governess of Berkley School, near Frome.

On Sunday, the 28th of March, 1841, the body of dear Emma Moore was committed to the dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Her schoolfellows were addressed by their minister, and exhorted to follow her, as she followed Christ.

Teachers!—dear friends in Jesus!—pray to *love* your children; stretch every nerve whilst instructing them; and you “shall turn many to righteousness, and shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

H Y M N .

Come, children, and look at the grave
Where, low, your companion is laid;
And learn, that time's next rolling wave
May number us too with the dead.

In the morning of life we may die;
And we too may shortly be borne
To the place where forgotten all lie,
From whence we can never return.

Is there nothing to comfort us then,
'Mid prospects so gloomy and drear?
Oh yes, the kind Saviour of men
In love and in pity draws near.

“Behold ! little children,” He cries,
“I come, dying sinners to save ;
To wipe every tear from their eyes,
And ransom their dust from the grave.

There’s room in the arms of my love
For all that are weary of sin ;
There’s room in the mansions above
For all that love me to come in.”





