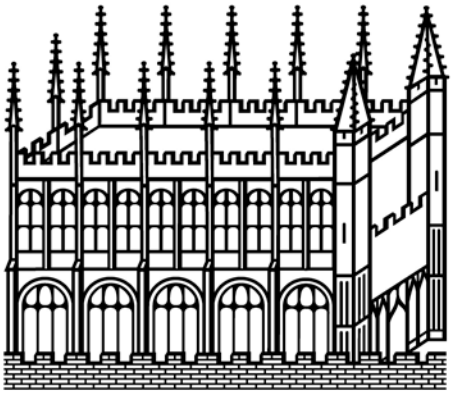

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FOURTEEN WAYS OF STUDYING THE BIBLE.

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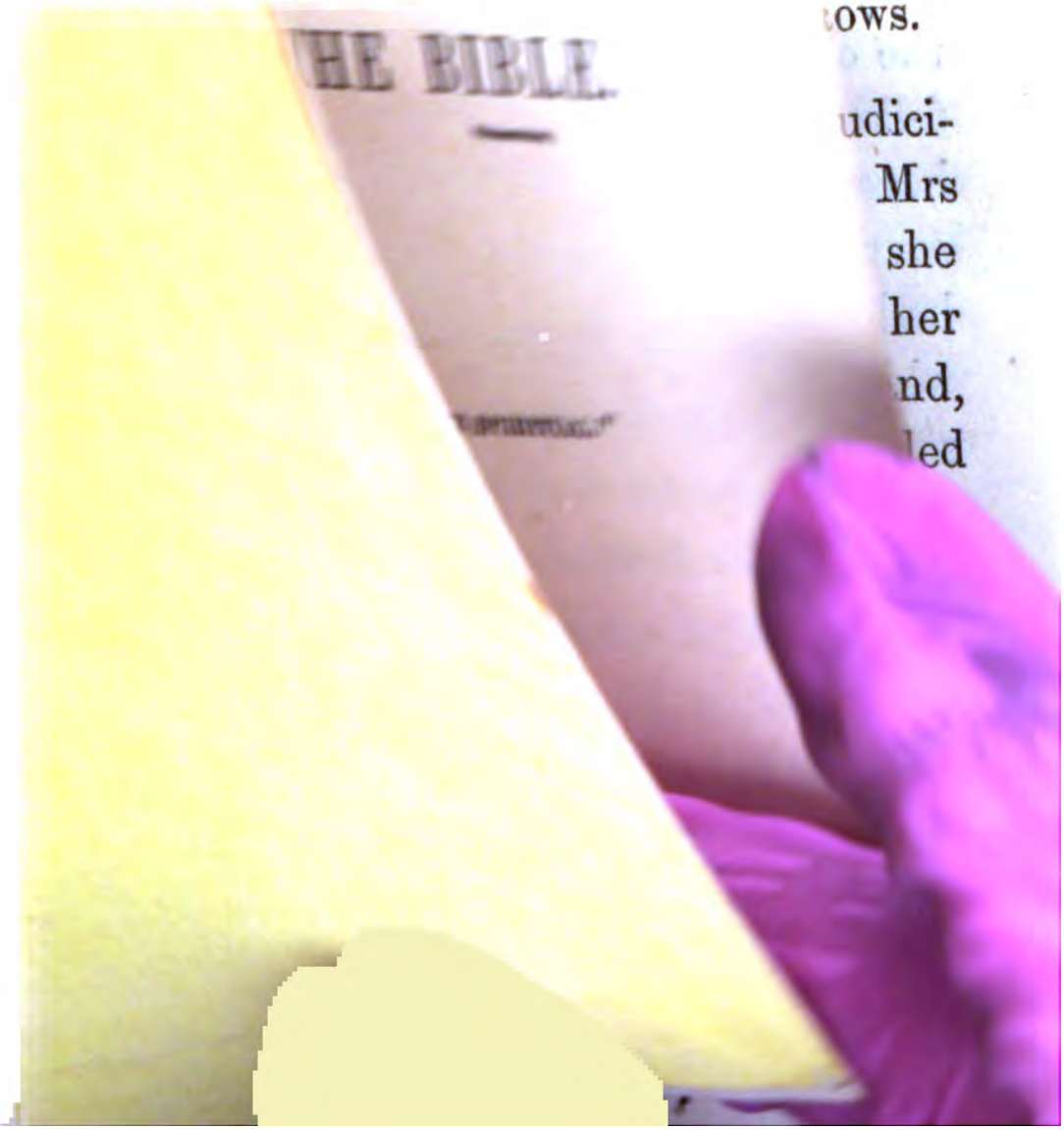

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KENNETH FORBES.

KENNETH FORBES;

OR,

FOURTEEN WAYS

OF

STUDYING THE BIBLE.

"COMPARING SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH SPIRITUAL."
—1 COR. ii. 13.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET AND CO., BERNERS STREET.
1854.

249. u. 398.

PREFACE.

THE wish is still repeatedly expressed by youthful mothers, that there were a greater supply than has even yet been issued of books fitted for the Sabbath-reading of those who, as *children*, need something of a tale to interest them, while, as *intelligent children*, they need something of solid knowledge to instruct them;—books, therefore, which may at the same time attract their attention and reward it;—above all, books which shall lead them *to* the Bible, and not draw them *from* it. It is the knowledge of this desire which has led to the following detailed account of lessons that have been found useful as a Juvenile

"Introduction" to the "Elements of Biblical Criticism."

It will be seen that the parent, whose efforts are thus described, was wont to talk fully as much as to catechise; but this was because she had around her a little audience of her own training. She had deemed it wise to prepare them for a habit of attention to sanctuary-services, by early accustoming them to listen to the loving tones of a mother's voice; and her ever-watchful eyes could clearly see whether the interest of her youthful charge was sustained, or whether it was needful to revive it by the timely interposing of a question.

1853.

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KENNETH FORBES.

CHAPTER I.

THE NARRATIVE; OR, THE BOW AND ARROWS.

A TENDER and loving, sensible and judicious, pious and prayerful mother, was Mrs Forbes. For her three elder children she had a governess in the house; because her time was not always at her own command, so that if their education had depended entirely on herself, it could not have been carried on with much regularity. There was, however, one subject on which she would not leave it to any one else to teach them. She felt it was her own duty and her own privilege to lead them on in the knowledge of God's Word, and of the way

to heaven. Every morning after breakfast, if the weather was fine, they were sent out to secure their first walk; and by the time they returned, with rosy faces and joyous hearts, their mamma had finished her little matters of housekeeping, and was ready to meet them in the dining-room, to have what they called their "Bible Class at Home." She had a plan with them for the regular reading of God's holy book, that they might learn to know something about the order in which its chapters and verses follow each other. But she did not tie herself down to this as a fixed rule for every day; and it often happened that she had an interesting Bible lesson for them which she had chosen expressly because of some little event that had happened the day before, or even that very morning.

As ten o'clock struck, one beautiful autumn day, Mrs Forbes came down, and found Constance and Ella in their places; but Kenneth was missing. He had been trusted to go with a message to his grandpapa's house; and it was quite time for

him to have come back. If Kenneth had been a little boy that did not like his Scripture-readings, his mamma would have had the grief of thinking that he had loitered purposely, to put off the time, and so keep out of the way. Happily such was not the case. Though he had his faults, this was not one of them. Mrs Forbes well knew that he was always eager for the coming of that happy hour when she was to explain some portion of the precious Bible. Though she was surprised at his absence, she felt quite satisfied; and only said to the girls, "I suppose grandpapa has been detaining your brother to-day; we must this once wait a few minutes for him, as I do not think he would be late if he could help it." It was not long before he came. In a few minutes he was seen racing up the gravel walk, with something under his arm; then he flew across the hall, hung up his hat, and burst into the room. "Oh! mamma," he cried, "I *am* so grieved; it is past ten o'clock, and it is all my own fault; but let

me tell you about it afterwards; it would shorten our time now."

"No," said Mrs Forbes, "if you tell us at once, you will get the matter off your mind; and your sisters will not be wondering what has kept you."

"Very well, dear mamma," said the little boy, "I will tell you how it was. You say grandpapa is always giving me something; look at the beautiful bow and arrows he bought for me yesterday! I was so delighted when I saw them! And as soon as he gave me leave to try them on the lawn, I ran to the clock and saw I had more than half an hour to spare before I needed to start for home. But then I was so pleased with shooting my new arrows, that I had no idea how fast the time was going. I did not forget about the clock, for I kept thinking of it all along; but when I went to see if the time was not nearly up, I found I had been three-quarters of an hour at play, and that I could not get here by ten, let me be ever so quick. Oh! I was so surprised and so sorry!"

His frank and noble countenance was not overcast with the slightest shade either of fear or of self-reproach; for he knew he had not meant to be late, he knew he was making no false excuse, and he knew his mother would see how the mistake had occurred. His hopes were realised, when she smilingly said, "Your grandpapa is indeed kind; and you will not be unpunctual another time, if from to-day's experience you learn how very fast the minutes always seem to fly when our attention is engrossed in what we are doing. We will look at your bow and arrows by-and-by, and watch your skill with them in the afternoon. In the meanwhile, let us hasten to our work, and see what we can learn from the new present you have received."

"From a bow and arrows, mamma?" cried all three, taking their seats, "surely there is nothing in the Bible about a bow and arrows!"

"Indeed there is;—a beautiful and instructive story too. You shall read it presently, when I have asked you one or

two questions. Who succeeded Elijah in the office of prophet?"

"Elisha," answered all the children at once.

"And can you tell me any of the miracles Elisha was enabled to work?"

Ella. He healed Naaman of a leprosy.

Constance. He raised the Shunammite's son to life.

Kenneth. He multiplied the widow's oil; and was it not he who healed the waters at Jericho?

"Yes; you see God greatly honoured him through his lifetime. But now I am intending to tell you of an event that occurred just before his death, when he was an old man more than ninety years of age. About seventy years had passed away since he was appointed to the prophet's office. He had lived in the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash,—six kings. Wicked kings they had all been; but Elisha had not followed their bad example. Many attempts had been made to take away his

life; but no dangers could make him step out of the path of duty. At the time of which we are going to speak, his days of active service were ended. He was no longer able to go from place to place on God's errands. His last sickness had seized him. If you could have looked into his house at Samaria; and if you could have gone into that quiet room, with its two windows looking out in different directions, there you might have seen him lying on his deathbed."

Constance. May I stop you, mamma, to ask whether there were really two windows looking different ways, or whether you are just putting that out of your own head?

"I have a good reason for thinking there were as many as two, and that they were not both on the same side of the room. You shall try to find out presently what led me to this opinion."

Ella. Oh! mamma, I should like to have seen him and heard him talk. I like to fancy the room he was in, now that you have described it, especially as it is all true.

"Well, you would have been sorry to see him so feeble and helpless; but yet, when you beheld his fine benevolent face, you could have known by his calm look and peaceful smile that the faithful prophet still enjoyed the presence and blessing of his faithful God. And suppose you could have talked to him, what would you like to have asked him about?"

Ella. About his miracles.

"And you would doubtless have found him ready to speak of these, for he would have given all the honour of them to God. Pleasant, however, as it might be for us to linger at his bedside, we cannot remain there undisturbed. Footsteps are heard approaching, the door of his room is opened, and we must stand aside to let the stranger pass. Who is it? No less a person than Joash, the king of Israel. We are surprised to see him there; but we cannot ask the reason of his coming. We can only guess that either he has come of his own accord, as soon as he heard of Elisha's illness; or (more likely) because Elisha has sent for

him to make known to him some message from God. We cannot stay longer in the room: the king and the prophet must be left to have their interview alone. After a time the king retires; he has been weeping; and there is also a little gloom on his countenance, as if something had vexed and disappointed him. I see you would like to know what passed while he was in that chamber of sickness. Then open your Bibles at 2 Kings xiii., and read from the fourteenth verse to the end of the nineteenth."

Kenneth began; then Constance; and Ella. Then it was Kenneth's turn again. So they read verse by verse as follows:—

"Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!

"And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows: and he took unto him bow and arrows.

"And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow: and he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

"And he said, Open the window eastward: and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot: and he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.

"And he said, Take the arrows: and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground: and he smote thrice, and stayed.

"And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

"Oh!" said Ella, "that is a beautiful story, and so plain; it seems as if I had seen it all happen, now that I have read it."

"And I have found out," remarked Constance, "why mamma said there were two

windows in the room; because if there had been but one, it would not have been said, 'Open the window *eastward.*'"

"Mamma," asked Kenneth, "how many things are you going to make us remember this story by?"

"Are you wanting some 'pegs to hang your ideas on?' I think you may find four here: the king's grief; the king's obedience; the king's reward; and the king's remissness. What was the first?"

Constance. The king's GRIEF. He wept because Elisha was going to die.

"He thought of the great loss the prophet's death would be to the whole kingdom of Israel; and he expressed his grief by saying, 'O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!'"

"What had Elisha to do with chariots and horses?" asked little Ella. "Does it mean that he was going up to heaven in a chariot of fire, like Elijah?"

"No, my love, the king was saying that Elisha was like chariots and horsemen for the defence of the country."

Kenneth now inquired whether there were not some words like these in the account of Elijah's translation; and Mrs Forbes pointed them out in 2 Kings ii. 12, adding, "I dare say this is what Ella was thinking about. You see the very same words were there used by Elisha to describe his master; and he had so truly received of Elijah's spirit, that now they were used to describe himself. Both these prophets had many a time saved their country from ruin. Elisha had again and again delivered it from the Syrians, who fought against it. And just as a nation generally trusts for success against its enemies to the number of war-chariots and horsemen that it can bring into the field of battle; so, for years past, the people of Israel had derived their safety from the wonder-working power given to this man of God. No wonder Joash wept; for he had forgotten that what Elisha had done had been done by God's help, and that though Elisha might die, God would live for ever. Was Joash likely to remember this?"

Constance. No; he was a wicked king.

"And perhaps a secret sense of his wickedness added to his grief. If he wept to think he was going to lose so powerful a protector, his flowing tears might fall the faster when he remembered how he had slighted the prophet's warnings, and turned a deaf ear to his teachings. Oh! it is a bitter, bitter grief to see a father, or a mother, or a teacher, lying at the point of death, and at the same time to hear an accusing conscience whisper that all the instructions of that dying relative or friend have been unheeded. I have better hopes of you, my children; but let the tears of king Joash be your warning. Let not such a sorrow as his ever be yours. It need not be yours. It will not be yours, if you begin at once to practise every lesson as soon as it has been taught you. But what more was I to tell you about?"

Kenneth. The king's OBEDIENCE was the next thing.

"Yes, sorrow had softened his heart for the time; he was ready just now to do any-

thing Elisha bade him. You know my favourite motto, 'Ready obedience.' How many examples of it have we in these verses? Name them."

Kenneth enumerated them: "He took the bow and arrows; he put his hand upon the bow; he opened the window; he shot; he took more arrows; and he smote on the ground. Six times he obeyed."

"See what unquestioning obedience this was. He never once stopped to ask, 'Why am I to do this?' but when told to do it, he did it at once. Yet there was another thing still more remarkable. You read just now, that when Joash 'put his hand upon the bow, Elisha put his hand upon the king's hands.' Would this seem to be of any use? No; the old prophet was so feeble from age and from sickness, that his strength could not have sufficed to shoot an arrow; and the young king was so strong and vigorous, that he did not need any help. It seemed a strange thing that Elisha should thus act, as if meaning to aid him. But I will explain to you how this was. It was

to teach the king that he could do nothing of himself. The prophet's hand guiding him was to be to him an emblem of the prophet's God strengthening him. I do not know whether he understood it or not; but we see that he submitted to it very quietly. He did not shake off Elisha's hand, and proudly say that he could manage the bow by himself. No; he was in what is commonly called a 'child-like spirit;' that means, the spirit we expect to see in a child —the spirit that is most becoming and suitable in a child. I am sorry to say little children do not always show this disposition. Shall I give you some instances? It is not long since I wished to show a little girl the best way of beginning a piece of work; but she took her needle, and with a toss of her head told me she knew very well how to do it in her own way, and that she did not care about a better."

Constance blushed, for she knew whom her mamma meant.

"And I remember, too, a little boy, whose teacher had set him a difficult copy of a

tree to draw from, and was then going to put his hand in a right position, and stand by to teach him with what action of the fingers to produce the touch that represents the jagged and irregular foliage of the oak. But he scorned 'to be made a baby of;' he pettishly said he could do it quite well alone; so his teacher left him to himself, and fine work he made of it, the rounded masses of the ash being joined on to the gnarled oak-branches."

It was Kenneth's turn to look ashamed.

"Ah! my dear children," continued Mrs Forbes, "look into your own hearts, and you will see it is pride that shows itself in thus disdaining help. Remember that pride is a very hateful thing. Strive to put it far from you. Think of king Joash, and resolve to be child-like and submissive. Let us go on to the next thing I mentioned."

Constance. You said the king's REWARD; but I do not exactly see what reward he got.

"His reward came in this way. It was

not in vain that he opened the window ;—not in vain that he took the bow and arrows ;—not in vain that he placed the arrow on the string and shot it. As soon as he had done so, did not Elisha tell the reason why all this had been commanded?"

Kenneth. Yes ; he said it was an emblem of God's delivering them from the Syrians.

"Exactly. The window had been opened eastward, because that window looked out on the part of the country that the Syrians had gained possession of. The king was ordered to take bow and arrows, because it was by fighting he should subdue his enemies. And the first arrow he shot, was called 'the arrow of the Lord's deliverance,' as a promise that God would make him victorious. Was this just such a promise as he needed at the time ?"

Kenneth. Yes ; when Elisha was dying, he would be glad to find that God would still help him.

"And do you see now, Constance, how this was a reward for the king's obedience?"

Constance. Yes, I think I do ; because

Elisha could not have said "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance," if Joash had not first obeyed and shot his arrow.

"Quite right; and this is particularly worth noticing, because it is the *only* instance recorded in which Joash obeyed the voice of God. Both before and after that time, he served idols. So that this was only an act of outward submission after all. But yet, so far as it went, God graciously accepted it, and made his outward obedience an occasion for granting him a promise of outward prosperity. This shows us how ready God is to notice even the faintest gleam of any good thing that there may be in our heart or in our conduct. To those who are trying to do right, there is joy in the thought that God is watching them. Let us remember this, that if God is always looking down upon us, and seeing all the good and all the evil we do, He is not looking out purposely for our sins; but He is watching, as it were, with the hope of seeing that in which He can take delight. If you turn to the four-

teenth Psalm, you will see a proof of this in the second verse: 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men,'—and what for? was it to see how many there were that forsook Him and hated Him?"

Ella. No; 'to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.'

"And so, my children, if He sees either of *you* beginning to seek Him, and trying more and more each day to keep His laws, He well knows all your efforts to please Him; and though He also sees in you many sins and shortcomings, yet these He is ready to forgive for Jesus Christ's sake. We must not talk any longer about this now. Only let yours be a better obedience than that of Joash,—an obedience from the heart; and yours will be a better reward than his. But Joash did not get all the reward he might have had: and this brings us to the fourth and last thing you were to remember."

Kenneth. The king's REMISSNESS.

"He smote on the ground thrice only,

and then he stayed. There were more arrows in his quiver. Elisha had not said, 'Stay thine hand.' What could make him leave off so suddenly? Had it not been explained to him that each arrow he shot was an arrow signifying deliverance for his nation? Would you not have expected that, knowing this, he would eagerly shoot again and again, till all his arrows were spent, or till the prophet ordered him to stop? It is indeed surprising that he was so soon weary, when such a reward had been set before him. Was any notice taken of his conduct?"

Ella. The man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times.

"Well, then, if Elisha, 'the man of God,' was angry, it must have been because he saw that what appeared to be only a mistake in Joash, proceeded really from a sinful feeling in his heart. What could that sinful feeling have been? Probably mingled thoughts rushed at once into his mind. He may have yielded suddenly to

the pride which till that moment he had been checking. He may have thought it looked foolish for a king to be shooting arrows out of a window, like a child at play. And he may have fancied that all this was useless; for that if he was to conquer the Syrians, he should succeed in that just as well, without sending forth arrow after arrow till the prophet was pleased to bid him give over. But I think the chief reason was, that he secretly disbelieved the promise given to him. If he had fully taken the prophet at his word, and had felt quite assured that these arrows were really signs of his future victories, then he would have been too much in earnest to trouble himself about the strangeness of what Elisha had set him to do. He became careless, because he was unbelieving. In what way was his unbelief punished?"

Kenneth. Elisha said, that if he had smitten five or six times, he should have smitten Syria till he had consumed it; whereas now he should smite it but thrice.

"This was the last prediction Elisha uttered. Soon he died, and was buried; but when he was slumbering in the grave, the words he had spoken found their fulfilment. Look at the twenty-fifth verse; there you will see that 'three times,' and three times only, 'did Joash beat the king of Syria.' He recovered the cities of Israel; but he was not allowed to see the destruction of his enemies. This is the end of our story. We must not leave off, however, without asking what we can learn from the king's remissness. As Joash had foes, so have you. Yours are spiritual enemies; enemies of the soul; sins that fight against your best welfare; and if they lead you captive, they will destroy you. I think you have begun to feel afraid of them; and I think I have seen you striving to conquer them. One day you tried hard; and again the next day; and a third day too. But then you got discouraged and weary, and you gave up what you found to be such hard work. You either forgot that it is only 'he that endureth to the end'

that shall be saved;* or else you ceased to be in earnest, because you did not really believe what God has said. Perhaps you began to think He would not punish you after all; perhaps you forgot what you had heard about the joys of heaven and the pains of hell; perhaps you did not keep in mind how much Jesus suffered to effect your salvation; and so you gave up praying and watching."

Ella. Just as king Joash gave up shooting his arrows.

"Yes; but there is one difference between his case and yours. He had no other opportunity given him of beginning again to shoot his arrows. God did not try him any more. But in mercy and love to your souls, God is willing to try you yet again. He reminds you once more that sin is a dangerous and deadly thing. He still commands you to resist sin, to flee from sin, to hate sin. And He bids you do this, not only once, or twice, or thrice, but even to the very close of your life."

* Matt. xxiv. 13.

Constance. But, mamma, if we have got wearied sometimes before three days were over, how will it ever be possible for us to keep on for our whole lifetime?

"It is possible, but only by the aid of God's Spirit. That Holy Spirit, however, is promised to all who ask through Christ. Do not be disheartened, then;

'Try, try, try again;'

and recollect, that *if you are commanded to go on always striving, God is willing to go on always helping.*"

"Mamma," said Constance, "I should like to put that down in my note-book. May I repeat it? *If we are commanded to go on always striving, God is willing to go on always helping.*"

"That is right. May you find it true in your own history! May you, like David, incline your heart to perform God's statutes alway even unto the end;* and if you are faithful unto death, you will receive a crown of life."†

* Psalm cxix. 112. † Rev. ii. 10.

CHAPTER II.

WORD BY WORD; OR, THE FLOWER DISSECTED.

NURSE having reported that "Miss Ella had been coughing in the night," the little girl was not allowed to join her brother and sister the next day in their morning walk. But before Mr Forbes left for town, he went into his greenhouse, plucked two splendid geraniums in full bloom, and brought them to her as she was amusing herself in the dining-room. When she was tired of play, she went and sat down by a table on which she laid one of her flowers; the other she kept in her hand, and began slowly to pull off leaf after leaf. It was easy to see that she was not doing this thoughtlessly, or out of mere mischief. No; she was doing it far too carefully for anybody to suppose that. She examined the

flower very closely, noticed every part of it separately, and as she took off each petal (or leaf), she stopped to admire its delicate colour and its beautiful streakings. After this, she took up the other geranium that lay uninjured beside her, and looked at it long and wonderingly. At length the rest of the party returned, and the first exclamation that burst from the lips of Constance was, "O Ella, how could you destroy that beautiful flower? what a pity papa threw it away upon you!" Mrs Forbes, who had been silently watching all that had passed, here inquired, "Tell us, Ella, why you did it?"

"That I might look at every part of it singly, mamma."

"And what were you thinking of, as you sat and compared it with the unbroken flower?"

"I was thinking how wonderfully God had made it, without a leaf too many, or a leaf too few, and not one but what is beautiful to look at by itself."

"Well, Constance," resumed their mo-

ther, "was the geranium thrown away, if the pulling of it to pieces gave rise to such a thought as that? But now let us see whether we cannot turn it to some further account." Then motioning them to take their usual seats, she continued, "While I was watching Ella, I began to think that the Bible may be compared to a garden, in which the verses are the various flowers, and in these verses the words are like so many petals. Thus we may often stop after reading a verse, and take up word after word, and see how much fulness of meaning lies hidden in each. Then, after having examined the words separately, we may do what Ella could not do; we may put them together again, and read the whole verse over with fresh pleasure. The more we study the Bible in this way, the better we shall see its beauty, and the more deeply we shall feel that it is indeed the book of God. We shall find that there is not one word too many, nor one word too few. Every word has its proper place, and every word adds its own force to the whole. Shall we

take a verse (or part of a verse) this morning, and try to pick it to pieces, as Ella did her flower?"

"Oh! please, mamma," was the immediate answer, "but what text will you take?"

"Suppose we try the one that is set down for to-day in my little almanack. You will find it in Ps. xlvi. 11: 'The God of Jacob is our refuge.' Let us begin with the last word. What is it that we need?"

Constance. A "refuge."

"We need a REFUGE, or a place of safety. The traveller overtaken by a storm, hastens to a spot where he may be screened from its fury. The hunted deer flees to some shady covert, where it will be hidden from its pursuers. The mariners in a leaky vessel make for the nearest harbour. In like manner, we are exposed to many spiritual dangers, and we need a place of safe retreat. The Bible tells us that 'the high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies.'* But we need something better than these. The Psalmist asks,

* Ps. civ. 18.

'Shall I lift up mine eye unto the hills? (No!) Whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth!'* And the prophet Jeremiah says, 'Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.'† Can you tell me how he came to think that any one would be likely to look to the hills for salvation?"

Kenneth. Was it because Jerusalem was all surrounded with mountains?

"That is not a bad reason. Perhaps some of the Israelites looked on the circle of hills round their city, and trusted in these as a sufficient defence. But there was another reason, which you will be able to tell me if you first think what use wicked men in those days made of mountain-tops and other 'high places.'"

Constance. They worshipped idols there.

Kenneth. Oh! yes; now I see. When they looked to the hills for salvation, it was because they thought their idols would save them.

* Ps. cxxi. 1, 2, *margin.* † Jer. iii. 23.

"Exactly so; but they were seeking protection where they could not find it; and their refuge was a 'refuge of lies.'* This is no uncommon case. There are many false refuges in which men fancy themselves secure; but after a time they find out that they need more effectual shelter. The refuge spoken of in our text, however, is just that which our souls require. Is this the only passage in which God is said to be a refuge?"

Ella. There is one in the first verse of this same Psalm, "God is our refuge and strength."

Constance. I think there are a great many in the Psalms.

"You are right; and it will be a nice employment some Sabbath evening to search them out. But let us now take another word of our text. Do you remember what I once told you was Luther's saying about some very small words in the Bible?"

Kenneth. He used to say that "the

* Is. xxviii. 17.

beauty of Scripture consists in pronouns."

"And what pronoun adds its beauty to this verse?"

Constance. "The God of Jacob is OUR refuge."

"Ah! there is a great deal of meaning in that short word. It is not enough that there is a refuge provided for some, if it is not provided for *us*. And even if it is open to us, that is of no avail if we stand outside, and refuse to enter it. As long as we do not go in and seek shelter, we are exposed to all the violence of the storm. There is a great difference between saying, 'God is a refuge *for us*,' and being able to say, 'God is *our* refuge.' It is a mercy that the former is true; that for each and all of us a refuge is provided. But then it is our duty to resort to the shelter thus prepared. Ella, turn to Psalm lxii. 8, and read it."

Ella. "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us."

"You see when we are here told that God is a refuge, we are also told what we must do in consequence: we must trust in Him, and seek His protection. The refuge will do us no good, if we keep away from it. But the moment we enter it we are safe, and then we can call it ours. See what Paul tells us in Hebrews vi. 18: 'That we might have a strong consolation, who' ....."

Ella. ..... "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

"It is not enough to know of the refuge; we must hasten to avail ourselves of it; we must flee as for our lives. The 'strong consolation' that the apostle speaks of, is not for those who intend to flee,—who resolve to flee,—but for those only who 'have fled.' It is not even for those who have begun to flee, and are asking the way; but for those only who have so fled as to reach the hoped-for shelter, and to 'lay hold' on it as their own. But what more does our text teach us?"

Kenneth. The God of Jacob IS our refuge."

"We must not lay much stress on that word, because you see it is not expressed in the original. It is printed in italics, and was only put in to make the sense clear. As God always has been, so He still is, and always will be, the refuge of His people. And as it is a true, so it is a delightful thought that He is to Christians an always-present refuge—a refuge at all times ready—not one that they have to wait for—not one that they can ever seek in vain. What is the next word we come to?"

Ella. "The God of JACOB."

Kenneth. Oh! I think I know what that reminds us of. Is it not of the many times when Jacob found God to be a refuge?

"That is a very suitable thought. Will you give me some instances?"

Kenneth. When he had to leave his home, and was sleeping with a stone under his head for a pillow; and again, when he was afraid of meeting Esau.

Constance. And when Laban pursued after him, but was not allowed to do him any harm.

"Then you see from Jacob's history that God is not an untried refuge, but that in Him abundant shelter has again and again been found. If no one had ever tried Him, we might feel afraid to do so; but such examples as these encourage us to trust in Him as Jacob trusted."

Kenneth. I don't think you can make any thing of the next word, mamma. It is only a preposition—the God OF Jacob.

"True, it is a little word, and as you say 'only a preposition;' yet prepositions are often very emphatic words. If you alter one of them in a sentence, you may often make the meaning quite different. This 'of' teaches us a good deal. It reminds us that God was not only, as we have just seen, a God *to* Jacob, but that He allowed himself to be called 'the God *of* Jacob.' Can you tell me why the Jews liked to speak of Him and to think of Him by this name?"

Kenneth. Because they knew that the God of their fathers would be their God too.

"How did they know it?"

Kenneth. Because God had promised it.

"Yes; the name 'God of Jacob' was used in order to remind them that God had made a covenant or agreement with Jacob, promising to bless him and his seed after him; so that He was their covenant God, their God by promise. And is He our covenant God, our God by promise?"

Constance. Yes, if we believe in Jesus.

"By what covenant and by what promise is He ours?"

Constance. By the new covenant which He made when Christ came.

Kenneth. And the promise, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." *

"What is the title given to Him as our covenant-God? Is He called in the New Testament the God of Jacob?"

Constance. No; but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"And you will find the apostles took as much delight in giving Him that title, as the Jews had in calling Him the God of Abra-

* Jer. xxxi. 31–33; Heb. viii. 8–10.

ham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jews knew that God was their refuge, because He was the God of Jacob; and we know that He is our refuge, because He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus. Indeed, if it were not for this, a just and holy God could never be a fitting refuge for those who have sinned against Him, and broken His righteous law. Before we can come to God the Father as our refuge from sorrow and danger, we must first go to Christ as our refuge from sin and guilt. Jesus is spoken of as such a refuge in Isaiah xxxii. 2."

Ella. "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest."

"It was through a Saviour coming that the God of Jacob was the refuge of His ancient people; and it is through a Saviour now come that God is willing to be our refuge. What is the one important word left for us to notice?"

Constance. "The GOD of Jacob is our refuge."

"Here is the security of our hiding-place.

A divine refuge can never fail us. All other refuges are insufficient and inconstant, frail and fleeting. They either yield no shelter at all, or yield it for a time only. But it is not so with God. In Him we find a protection both secure and constant. Because of His almighty power, He is a safe refuge; and because of His eternity, He is a never-failing refuge. Let us prove each of these by a text. For His power to shield us, look at Psalm xci. 9, 10."

Constance. "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even *the Most High* thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

"And for the unchangeable shelter he gives, look at the beginning of Deut. xxxiii. 27."

Ella. "The *eternal* God is thy refuge."

"It is God alone who is almighty and eternal, and therefore it is in Him alone that we can find the true refuge of the soul. There is a beautiful contrast between two verses in Proverbs, chap. xviii. 10, 11."

Kenneth. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit."

"How great a difference! The rich man's wealth is what he deems a strong city, and it is like a high wall, but only 'in his own conceit;' whereas the name of the Lord is really a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is perfectly safe, safe for ever."

Ella. Mamma, there is one word more, "THE God of Jacob."

"There we have a definite article. There is no vagueness, no doubt, as to the Deity intended. While the heathen had to seek protection from one god on the land and another on the sea, from one in the forest and another in the city, from one on the hills and another in the valleys, those who trust in Jehovah have a refuge open to them wherever they dwell, and whithersoever they go. Now you see how many ideas we have gained from looking at the separate words in our text. First, we no-

ticed that the thing *needed* is a 'refuge;' then, that this refuge may be *appropriated* by us, so as to become 'ours;' that this refuge 'is' *accessible,* now and always; that this refuge has been *proved,* as in the experience of 'Jacob;' that this refuge is *certain,* because found in the God 'of' Jacob, who through Jesus Christ is the covenant-God of his people; that this refuge is *sufficient,* because it is found in 'God,' who is an almighty and eternal protector; and, lastly, that this refuge is a *definite* one, found in 'the' God, the only true and living Lord God of Hosts."

Constance. I counted them, mamma, and there were seven. How very nice it is to read a verse in this way! I never thought before that there could be so much taught by single words.

"Then you have never heard about the Countess of Huntingdon, who said there was one single letter for which she had reason to be thankful. She referred to a text in Corinthians, in which it is not said, 'Not any rich, not any mighty, not any noble;'

had it been so written, it would have shut her out, because she was a rich and noble lady; but the words are, 'Not many rich, not many mighty, not many noble.' The letter *m* made all the difference."

Ella. Can all verses be taken word by word?

"No, my dear, certainly not all, but a very great many can. And the more we try to study them in this way, the more fully we shall draw out their meaning. Now, Constance, I think you can repeat two verses of a hymn you lately learned, which will suit our subject."

Constance:

"Jesus! refuge of my soul!
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life be past;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh! receive my soul at last.

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee:
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.

All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

"Mamma," said Kenneth, "I have been expecting you would say something about the cities of refuge. Were they not types of Christ?"

"It is true that they may serve to remind us of the sinner's danger, and of the haste with which he should seek the Saviour; but the Bible does not tell us that they were types of Christ; and if we examine closely into their appointment, we shall see that they would not have been quite suitable as emblems of His work. What was the design of the six cities?"

Kenneth. They were for the safety of the manslayer when he was pursued by the avenger of blood.

"But if the manslayer proved to have been a murderer, and to have taken his neighbour's life, not by accident, but by design, could he in such a case find safety within the city-walls?"

Kenneth. I never noticed that.

"Then if at your leisure you will read over the chapters in Numbers and Deuteronomy which contain the laws on this subject,* you will find that every person who fled to these cities was brought to trial, first on his own arrival, and then again in the presence of witnesses, who could prove the truth or falsehood of his story: if he was acquitted, he found safety in the city; if he was pronounced guilty, he was given over to the avenger of blood, that he might be put to death. The city of refuge was no place for pardon; the innocent alone could find safety by fleeing to it. But it is far otherwise with Jesus. He came, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," and he offers them forgiveness as well as security. It was on this account that I did not refer to the cities of refuge. However, as you have made me speak about them, it may be well just to tell you that every verse in the Bible where the term 'refuge' occurs has been carefully searched,

* Numb. xxxv., and Deut. xix.

and it has been found that the Hebrew word which stands for the cities of refuge is never once applied to Jehovah as the refuge of His people. Perhaps this may have been for the very reason, that whenever God is a refuge to men, He has first to blot out their iniquities. He can never receive them on the ground of their own purity; for 'there is none righteous, no, not one.' Remember this, my children, if you would have God for your refuge in the day of adversity, you must seek Him as your refuge in the bright days of your youth. Hasten to Him before the tempest bursts. Hasten to Him because your souls are even now in danger. Just as the manslayer started breathlessly toward the open gate of the city, and took no rest until he found himself secure in that asylum, so should you give no sleep to your eyes, and no slumber to your eyelids, till you have fled to the Saviour of sinners for pardon and for safety."

CHAPTER III.

SEPARATE CLAUSES; OR, THE APPLE OF THE EYE.

On again assembling, the children told their mamma they had all been trying to find verses that they could examine word by word in the way she had showed them. Mrs Forbes asked what success they had met with, and said she should be very glad if each would give her an example, beginning with the youngest. Ella replied that she had found it very difficult, but that Miss Miller (the governess) had told her of an old divine who had preached on the text, "Why will ye die?"* and who had made each word one of the heads of the sermon, in this way: "I. Why will ye *die?* —for eternal death is an awful thing. II.

* Ezek. xviii. 31.

Why will *ye* die?—for ye have had the way of eternal life taught you. III. Why *will* ye die?—for it will be your own fault if you are shut out of heaven. IV. *Why* will ye die?"—for all your excuses must be bad ones.

Constance said she had thought of one or two, but that she had found in her little book of sacred poetry a better one than she could choose for herself; and having learned it, she would repeat it, if her mamma liked. It was on the words, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"*

"O *wilt Thou not?*—yes, Lord, I will,
If by Thy grace Thou aid me still;
Since Thou art willing, so am I;
Yes, O my Lord, I will reply.

"*From this time?*—yes, O Lord, to-day;
If Thou entreat, can I delay?
Lord, I would yield at once to Thee,
Constrained by Thine appeal to me.

"*Cry unto me?*—yes, Lord, I'll cry
To Thee, and Thou wilt not deny;

* Jer. iii. 4.

I'll turn from all besides away,
And cry to Thee this very day.

"*My Father?*—yes, delightful name!
My Father—I'll repeat the same,
Rejoicing while Thou thus are styled,
That I may call myself Thy child.

"*Thou art the Guide?*—yes, so Thou art,
And may I ne'er from Thee depart:
What can I wish or want beside,
While I can call the Lord my Guide!

"*Guide of my youth?*—yes, I shall stray
From life and happiness away,
Unless Thou guide my youthful days
In wisdom's safe and pleasant ways.

"My gracious Father, Guide of youth,
Thy words of tenderness and truth
Subdue my heart; and, from this time,
I yield to Thee my youthful prime."

It was now Kenneth's turn, and he had chosen Psalm lxxxvi. 11, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." You shall hear what he said about it. "I thought, mamma, as you once explained to us from a text in Exodus,* that God's '*name*' is a term used

* Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6.

to mean God's character, so the last word here would give us a great deal to think about in counting up the number of God's attributes. Then we come to '*thy* name;' this, I thought, would teach us that no one had so many attributes or such perfect attributes as God has, and that therefore God's name is above every other name. We are to '*fear*' God's name; here we could stop and think how every one of God's attributes may lead us to do this; and then I remembered the sermon we heard last Sunday, in which we were told that even the greatness of God's love should make us fear Him.* Then it is with the '*heart*' we are to fear God's name; it is not enough for the mind to know about God, but we must have right feelings in the soul. And again, 'Unite *my* heart to fear thy name;' it is of no avail to us that others should fear God; we must do it for ourselves. But then the last remaining word puzzled me. When it says, '*Unite* my heart to fear thy name,' I know it is a prayer asking God to help;

* Ps. cxxx. 4.

but why is the word 'unite' used, when the heart is but one thing?"

Mrs Forbes explained this by saying, "You must remember that the heart is made up of different parts, as the will, the conscience, the affections; and it is capable of different feelings, as fear and hope, love and hatred, joy and sorrow, desire and dislike, and so on. Now, in the service of God, all these ought to be united. If our conscience urges us to do one thing, and our affections urge us to do another, that is having a divided heart; and such service God will not accept.* But if our will is made holy, our conscience holy, and our affections holy too; if ours is a godly fear and a godly hope, a righteous joy and a righteous sorrow, if our love is toward that which is good, and our hatred toward that which is evil, then it is that we have 'one heart' to fear God's name;† for then our whole heart with all its powers is united in God's service, like some well-tuned instrument, in which each note is ready to add its

* Hos. x. 2. † Jer. xxxii. 39.

sweetness to the strain; and so Kenneth's text just breathes the very same prayer that you so often sing on a Sabbath morning:—

"Oh, may my heart in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound!"

"But now," she added, "it is time we should take a fresh subject for to-day's lesson. As you seem to have liked the one we had yesterday, suppose I tell you another way of studying the Bible. Instead of taking up single words, let us this time take single clauses."

Ella. What is a clause, mamma?

"The term 'clause' comes from a Latin word that means to *shut up*, because formerly it was used to denote only the close of a sentence; but now it is employed in a wider sense, and just means *part* of a sentence,—*any* part, whether at the beginning or the end;—so that we often speak of the first clause, the middle clause, and the last clause of a verse."

Constance. Then it was the last clause of a verse we had yesterday.

Ella. What clause will you give us to-day, mamma?

"I was reminded of one last night as I passed the nursery. The door being open, I overheard some merry little voices, and I found all the fun arose from your having discovered that you might make a looking-glass of each other's eyes!"

Kenneth. Oh! yes; it was Ella, who did not know she could see her own image reflected in the pupil of the eye; and when she tried to look in baby's eye, he would turn another way, and that was what we were laughing at.

"Did Ella succeed in seeing herself at last?"

Constance. Yes, mamma; I let her look in my eyes, and she would hardly believe it then, till she put her hand up to her curls; but that convinced her it was her own face she saw.

"And can any of you tell me what other name is often given to that circular aperture in the eye?"

Kenneth. Is it not called "the apple of the eye"?

"Yes; and the learned men, whose opinion we can most safely trust, think it has been so called from its looking as if it were round like an apple."

Constance. And why is it called the pupil?

"From a Latin word meaning a 'damsel;' just as in Hebrew it is called 'the image in the eye,' or 'the daughter of the eye,' or 'the little man of the eye,' in allusion to the miniature-likeness which it gives."

Ella. Oh! mamma, how very curious to call it "the little man of the eye!" but it is not called so in the Bible, is it?

"It is called so in the Hebrew Scriptures; but those who translated the Bible into English, have given it the name of which we have been speaking; they call it 'the apple of the eye.' It is referred to five times in the Bible; and four of these passages are very interesting. If we compare them with one another, we shall find that these few words, 'the apple of the eye,' may be found in a Prayer, in a Promise, in a Pattern, and in a Precept."

Kenneth. I think I know where the PRAYER is. Yes, here I have found it, Ps. xvii. 8, first clause, "Keep me as the apple of the eye."

"Very good. Now to understand this rightly, you must recollect that the eye is the most tender part of the body, and the apple or pupil the most tender part of the eye. The eye itself is subject to a great many different diseases, most of which cause acute suffering, and many eventually destroy the sight. You all know how very painful it is when even the smallest particle of dust gets into your eye; and such pain is a merciful thing, because it warns us of danger, and makes us use instant means to remove what may have got into the eye before any real harm is done. But then there is another thing to recollect. Just because the eye is so tender, therefore we find that God has with exceeding care provided for its safety. As it is subject to many dangers, so it has been furnished with various defences. Can you tell me some of them?"

Kenneth. Yes, mamma, I was reading the other day about the different parts of the eye. It has three coats, the sclerotica, and the choroides, which protect the retina; as well as three humours: the aqueous, the crystalline, and the vitreous.

"What is the name of that thick horny-looking coat which serves as a covering to the pupil of the eye?"

Kenneth. The cornea.

"Yes; and over that is the eyelid, with its long lashes, ready to close instantly on the approach of danger from without, and which if closed in time, forms so frequently an effectual shield. All this will help us to understand David's petition. He was in danger from his enemies; but he prayed that God would watch as carefully against their injuring him, as a man watches against anything that would injure his precious eyesight. And we may adopt this prayer for ourselves; for our souls are of more value than the eye; and our souls are in more danger than the eye. If we would have our souls in safety, we must ask

God to keep them. He best knows our danger, and, therefore, He can best defend us from it. He can keep us better far than we can keep ourselves. A little keeping would not be enough. We need to be kept very carefully and very constantly. We need to be kept from small as well as from great dangers. What are called 'little sins' hurt the soul as much as little things hurt the eye. It is true, we are to keep our own hearts with all diligence; but our most diligent keeping will be insufficient, if we have not also God's effectual keeping. What rule does Jesus give us for our safety from temptation?"

Constance. He tells us to watch and pray.

"We are to 'watch,' and so keep ourselves. But we are also to 'pray,' and so get God by his almighty power to keep us. If we wish, however, to use David's prayer, have we any reason to expect that God will answer it?"

Constance. Yes, because he has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you."

"Then, do you think that if you prayed to be made a Queen to-morrow, God would grant your request, and set you on the throne?"

Constance. No, mamma; yet did not Jesus say "whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do"?

"True, but we must explain that promise by comparing it with another very like it, which Jesus had given only a day or two before he uttered that one. I refer to Matt. xxi. 22, in which we read, 'And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive.'"

Kenneth. Oh, mamma, I see what you mean. If Constance prayed to be made a Queen, she could not ask it "believing," because God has never promised it.

"Just so. In order to pray rightly, we must pray in faith; but there can be no faith where there is no promise. Whatever God has promised, we ought to expect from Him. What He has not promised, we may still ask for; but we cannot ask it believingly; we cannot ask it in the certain

expectation of getting it. When we pray for temporal blessings, we can have but a general faith, because God has given us but a general promise. He has not told us that He will make us rich, or give us friends, or preserve our health, or keep everything bright and sunny about us. But yet He has said that 'no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' When, therefore, we are asking for riches, or health, or friendships, or prosperity, we may be sure these things will be given us, if they *are* really for our good; while at the same time, we shall have to feel quite as sure that they will be denied if God sees that they are *not* for our good. In praying for worldly things, we cannot be positively assured that we shall receive the very things for which we ask. But when we ask blessings for the soul, we have abundant promises on which our faith may rest. If we want our heart renewed, our sins forgiven, our weakness helped, our efforts crowned with success,—for each and all of these we can find a suitable promise.

These promises we should keep in mind for ourselves; and we should repeat them in our prayers, as if it were to put God in mind of them. We know that He has not forgotten them, and we know that He will not fail to keep them; but at the same time we learn from Scripture that He is pleased when He sees us remembering His promises, and looking for their fulfilment. It would be a nice exercise for you to try how many instances you can meet with in Scripture of good men who, in their prayers, reminded God of His promises. But let us now see whether you can give a right answer to the question I was asking you;—If we take David's prayer, and make it ours, have we any ground of assurance that God will grant our request?"

Kenneth. Yes, we can ask for that in faith, because God has given a PROMISE about it. I do not recollect it at all, but yet you told us that there is one somewhere about the apple of the eye.

"You will find what amounts to a promise in the last clause of Zech. ii. 8."

Ella. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye."

"God saw that His people were much afraid of their enemies: and He sent this gracious message to comfort them. He told them that, if any tried to hurt them, it would be as if they tried to hurt God himself. He did not bid the prophet merely say, 'God will take care of you, and will keep you from harm.' No; the message was, 'He does take, and will take, as much care of you, as a man takes of the apple of his eye; He will keep you, as He would keep the thing most precious to Him.'"

Constance. What a beautiful promise that is, mamma!

"It is indeed, my child; but how important to stop, and ask whether we have any right to take its comfort to ourselves! Do you remember anything I once told you about taking promises that do not belong to us?"

Ella. You told us that when God has given a promise, He has also plainly said what kind of people it was meant for.

"And, therefore, to take a promise and apply it to our own case, when we are not of the number for whom it was intended, would be like . . . ."

Ella. Like "opening and reading a letter directed to somebody else."

Constance. And you gave us the saying of an old divine, "The promises are like a garden paled in and enclosed, the flowers of which none may gather but the children of the family."

Kenneth. This promise in Zechariah was addressed to the Jews, was it not?

"You are right. But we must in such a case make a distinction. We must ask, does it refer to them as *a* people, or as *God's* people?"

Constance. As God's people, I suppose.

"Yes; for we find the same meaning, though not the very same words, in other promises made to God's people in different ages;—such as these—'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.' 'He shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.' 'I will keep thee from the

hour of temptation.' 'He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee.' All these breathe the same love and tender care as the words before us, 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye.' We may therefore safely regard this promise as belonging to all who are the people of God. 'God's church,' says a good author, 'God's church is the apple of His eye, and the eyelid of His providence doth daily cover and defend it.' If you, my children, have chosen Him for your portion, and taken His Son as your Saviour, then you are as dear to Him as were the Jews of old, and you may take home to your own souls all the joy of this promise. If any seek to do you hurt, you can cry to God, 'Keep me as the apple of the eye;' and God's book will say to you in return, 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of *His* eye.' But we must hasten on. What God has promised to do for His people is no new thing, He has done it for them in time past."

Kenneth. Oh! now you are going to

show us the third text, which, you said, was to be a PATTERN. Where shall we find it?

"In the last clause of Deut. xxxii. 10. Let me hear the whole verse."

Ella. "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about; he instructed him; he kept him as the apple of his eye."

"This has a reference to the care God took of the Israelites on the way from Egypt to Canaan. Can you give me some instances of God's keeping them?"

Constance. He kept them from hunger, by sending them manna.

Ella. And from thirst, by giving them water out of the rock.

Kenneth. And He kept them from being slain by their enemies, when they had to fight the Amalekites and Moabites.

"In all these different ways He kept them as the apple of His eye. And thus He has given us a proof how safely He can guard His people. The God of whom it is said, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye,' is the same God who

watched over the Israelites in the desert. And He is the same God still. He has the same power, the same wisdom, the same love now, that He had in the days of Moses, and of David, and of Zechariah. The promise shows that He is *willing* to keep us; the pattern shows that He is *able* to keep us, and that those whom He keeps are safely kept. We have indeed encouragement to pray David's prayer, when we can rest on such a promise, and when we find the promise proved by such a pattern. But now suppose you have made the prayer yours, and have asked God to keep you; suppose God has fulfilled His promise, and done for you according to this pattern; suppose He has kept you as the apple of His eye,—what must you render unto Him for this benefit? Turn to Prov. vii. 2."

Kenneth. Here it is. Oh! mamma, that is the fourth thing,—the PRECEPT. "Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye."

"You see, then, that if God keeps us carefully, we should carefully keep His law.

If He watches over us, protecting us from the least thing that could harm us, we ought to watch over our own hearts and lives, striving against the least sin, that it may not displease Him. Let us esteem His law as precious as the apple of the eye itself. Let us keep His law, so as to remember it; let us keep it, so as to obey it. You will not find this easy; but if you ask God for Jesus Christ's sake, He will help you by His Holy Spirit. If you wish to keep God's law as the apple of *your* eye, you will find you can do it best when you are asking God to keep you as the apple of *His* eye. We cannot keep God's law, but as He keeps us. Our time is gone now. Perhaps you will like to search by to-morrow morning for some prayers, and promises, and patterns, and precepts, that correspond to each other. And do not forget those we have now been comparing; but let your earnest petition be,—

'Keep me, Saviour, deign to guide me,
Through a vain and treacherous life;
I would fly to Thee to hide me
From its sin, and woe, and strife.'"

CHAPTERI V.

PARALLEL CLAUSES ; OR, THE LONGING MIND.

WHEN Mrs Forbes took her seat on Thursday morning, she soon saw by the open Bibles that each of the children was prepared with some texts to read to her; and therefore she at once began by asking, "How have you succeeded, Ella?"

Ella. I could not find a pattern at all; but I have three other clauses that suit each other. Here is the woman of Samaria's prayer, "Give me this water that I thirst not," (John iv. 15.) Then we have the promise, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely," (Rev. xxi. 6.) And I thought this would do for the precept, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," (Is. lv. 1.)

Constance. I have only three, mamma, and mine are just the same kind as Ella's, for the pattern is the very thing *I* could not find. In Ps. xix. 13, David prays, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." A promise like it I found in Rom. vi. 14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." And there is a precept in the twelfth verse, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

Kenneth. I do think the patterns are the most difficult to find; I should not have found one but for the chapter papa read at prayers this morning, but I saw a verse there that would do. For a prayer I chose 1 Chron. xxix. 18, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee." Then a promise in Ps. x. 17, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble, thou wilt prepare their heart." Then the pattern

in 2 Chron. xxix. 36, "Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people." And the precept in 1 Sam. vii. 3, "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only."

"Very well indeed; I am much pleased with the choice each of you has made; and I do not at this moment recollect any text that will supply either Constance or Ella with a pattern. They must be content with a threefold cord instead of a fourfold one."

Constance. Oh! mamma, Miss Miller has a little book full of prayers, promises, and precepts, for every day in the year; but she would not let us look at it till we had chosen our texts for ourselves. And the name of it is exactly what you said just now,—"The Threefold Cord."

"It takes its name from these words in Ecclesiastes,* 'A threefold cord is not quickly broken.' That is a very suitable name, for where God has given us a promise, a prayer, and a precept, all teaching the

* Eccles. iv. 12.

same truth, our hold of that truth ought to be exceedingly firm and unwavering. Ella's three texts, for instance, have proved to us very strongly the preciousness and the freeness of the living waters of salvation. Yours have proved as clearly that God's people are to strive against sin, and to subdue it. While Kenneth's four verses all join to teach us that 'the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord.'"

Kenneth now inquired whether his mamma had chosen a nice birthday-subject for Constance, who on that day was ten years old. "Yes," replied Mrs Forbes, "but I must first give her the birthday-present I have selected for her." Then opening the table-drawer, she took from it a beautiful Bible, which she handed to Constance. After having expressed her thanks over and over again, and after having duly admired its handsome binding, the little girl opened the book; but immediately exclaimed, in astonishment, "Why! Kenneth, look here; I never saw a Bible like this one. Oh! it is called a

'Paragraph-Bible;' see, Ella, it looks like poetry." Then, after a minute's pause, she added, "But yet I can't make it out; for after all, the reading is exactly as in our common Bibles, I think. Do let us compare them;—see, the mark is at the 103d Psalm—(I dare say you put it there on purpose, mamma, for I have heard you say what a nice birthday Psalm it is);—would you just look at your Bible, Kenneth, and see if the words are not just the same?—

'Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits.
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities,
Who healeth all thy diseases.'

"Why, to be sure it is no poetry! why is it put in this way, mamma?"

"For several reasons; one is because the part you are looking at is translated from Hebrew poetry. Is the whole of your new Bible printed in that way?"

Constance. No; I see the history-part is like prose; only it goes straight on just as

other books do, without having every verse look like a paragraph. I think that must be very nice; it must give the sense so clearly. Then the prophets, I see, are partly put in prose, and partly like poetry.

"But," interrupted Kenneth, "what is the use of our having the poetical parts of the Hebrew Bible arranged this way in English?"

"It is of great use, because in Hebrew poetry a verse is often divided into corresponding clauses; and sometimes one of these clauses throws a great deal of light on the meaning of the other. You may find examples of this in almost every Psalm. Just turn to the longest."

Ella. Oh! that is the 119th.

"Read me three verses of it, beginning at the one hundred and twenty-ninth; each of you can read a verse."

"129 Thy testimonies are wonderful:
Therefore doth my soul keep them.
130 The entrance of thy words giveth light:
It giveth understanding unto the simple.
131 I opened my mouth, and panted;
For I longed for thy commandments."

"Now do you not see that each verse is divided into two parts? The first you read was,

'Thy testimonies are wonderful:
Therefore doth my soul keep them.'

Can you tell me what connection there is between these two clauses?"

Kenneth. The one gives the reason for the other.

"Then it is a connection of cause and effect. The wonderfulness of God's testimonies was the cause; and David's keeping those testimonies was the effect. There are many texts of this kind in the Bible. But it is in the two following verses that we shall find what I particularly want to explain to-day. Let us take one at a time:—

'The entrance of thy words giveth light:
It giveth understanding unto the simple.'

Do these two clauses teach one and the same truth, or two different truths?"

Constance. Just the same, I think.

"Yes, and if you compare them, you will see there are three points of resem-

blance. In each clause God's Word is spoken of; in each it is spoken of as benefiting us; and in each, this benefit is represented as consisting in the removal of our darkness."

Kenneth. Oh! yes, I see; the nominatives, the verbs, and the accusatives all answer to each other.

"I thought, as you are so fond of grammar, that you would soon see these resemblances. Now I will tell you what name is given to the kind of verse in which the clauses seem to fit each other in this way. It is called a parallelism."

Ella. What a hard word, mamma.

"Not so hard, if you think what it means. What do you call that ruler of Kenneth's that you are so often asking him to lend you?"

Ella. A parallel ruler.

"And what is the use of it?"

Ella. To draw parallel lines.

"What kind of lines are they?"

Ella. Lines that always keep on at the same distance from each other.

"Well then, are not these clauses parallel to each other? do they not run on evenly, side by side?"

Constance. Oh! I see now, mamma, why they are called parallelisms: what a nice name for them!

Ella. May I try and say it? 'Parallelism;' —is that right?

"Quite right: so I can go on to tell you something more about these parallel clauses. I have shown you that they are very much alike; but they must not be regarded as 'vain repetitions.' Let us see what differences we can find between them; I will read the verse once more:—

'The entrance of thy words giveth light:
It giveth understanding unto the simple.'"

Kenneth. The second line has a dative case in it, and tells us *to* whom light is given; to the simple.

"That is one difference; can you see another?"

Constance. Not unless you mean that the words "light" and "understanding" are not quite alike.

"Precisely. The word 'understanding' in the second clause explains what sort of light was meant in the first clause;—not outward light;—not light for the body; but light for the soul. Parallelisms, you see, are important as well as interesting; for it is only by comparing the clauses attentively, that we discover the exact idea of the whole verse. If you were to draw two parallel lines, you might make one rather faint, and the other a good deal stronger. Just so, the truth is the same in both parts of such a verse as this, but it is more fully expressed in one part than in the other. Sometimes the first clause is the stronger; more frequently, as here, it is the second clause that is the more forcible and clear."

Kenneth. Is the next verse a parallelism too?

"Certainly it is; let us hear it."

Ella.

"I opened my mouth, and panted,
For I longed for thy commandments."

"This is a somewhat unusual one; for

if you examine it closely, you will find that the first half of it may be divided into two smaller clauses. It is as though you were to draw two very short parallel lines, and then one longer line parallel to them both :

"I opened my mouth,
And I panted,
For I longed for thy commandments."

The second clause explains the first ; and the third explains both the others. I will show you why the explanation was needed. If you look at Daniel x. 16, you will see the words 'I opened my mouth' used in quite a different sense: 'I opened my mouth *and spake.*' We read the same of Job, and of Elihu ;* and in the New Testament the same is said of our Lord, and of Peter.† So you see it was not enough for the Psalmist to say, 'I opened my mouth ;' but he had to explain it, by adding what he opened his mouth for : 'I opened my mouth and panted.' Still the meaning would not be quite clear. We

* Job iii. 1, 2, xxxiii. 2. † Mat. v. 2 ; Acts x. 34.

might think he had been panting from extreme fatigue, or from exceeding thirst; we should not know whether to understand it literally or figuratively: what part of the parallelism explains this?"

Constance. The last clause, 'I longed for thy commandments.'

"Yes; now we have got the true thought. David (if it was he who wrote this psalm) meant to describe the longings of his soul after God's Word."

Kenneth. Then did he mean the same as when he said, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God?"*

"That verse is a very good illustration of what the Psalmist here means. Just as a coursed stag, wearied with the chase, and wounded perhaps by the archer's dart, pants after the clear, cool water of some flowing stream; or just as a wild ass, parched with the heat and dryness of an Eastern summer, chooses out the most airy spot, and there stands to snuff up the

* Psalm xlii. 1.

passing breeze ;* so David had an intensely earnest longing after God and His ordinances. Do you remember how the same idea is represented in the New Testament?"

Constance. As hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Mat. v. 6

"And when the Psalmist thus hungered and thirsted, what was the special object of his longings?"

Ella. God's commandments.

"As many as four times in this one psalm he speaks of his longing after them; and in one verse he even says, 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' But why was this? did he not possess a copy of God's law?"

Kenneth. Yes, he ought to have written it out for himself, because God had said every king was to do so. But he had not so much of God's Word as we have, and therefore he longed for more.

"How much could he have had?"

Ella. Only the five books of Moses.

* Jer. xiv. 6.

Kenneth. Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, he may perhaps have had.

Constance. And most likely the book of Job, too.

"Well; this is the very utmost David could have had: his Bible was a very, very small one. No wonder he longed to know more about God's will. Many times he was brought into great perplexities, so that he did not know what was the path of duty. For example; on one occasion he felt a strong desire rise up in his heart to build a temple for God's worship, that the ark might have a suitable dwelling-place where it would be better sheltered than by the curtains of the tabernacle. But strong as his desire was, he could not tell whether this thing would be pleasing to God or not. Perhaps he searched through the commandments that had been written down by Moses; perhaps he read over and over again those chapters that refer to the tabernacle; and perhaps he tried to discover whether there was not some little sentence he had not noticed which

gave directions about a temple to be built in after times. But he failed to find it.—Still his desire grew stronger and stronger; yet no light dawned upon his path. Oh! what longings he must have had to know God's will in the matter! At length he could no further restrain his anxiety. He sent for Nathan the prophet, and consulted him. The prophet was so pleased with the king's zeal, and with the new project which that zeal had devised, that he immediately encouraged him by saying, 'Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee.' The Lord, however, knew David's real wishes, and saw that it was not the advice of his earthly friend, but the will of his God that he was seeking; therefore the word of the Lord came to Nathan, and told him to hasten and prevent the king from fulfilling his purpose. So that very night the prophet went into the presence of his royal master, and opened his message with the solemn words, 'Thus saith the Lord.' What effect do you think these words would have on David?"

Kenneth. They would make him listen very attentively, and try to recollect all that was said.

"We might easily imagine the scene. There is David's room, with his harp hung up against the wall; and who can say but that among the papers on the table there may have been some already written in reference to the great work on which his heart was set—a letter, perhaps, already begun to King Hiram of Tyre to treat with him about sending cedar-wood and skilful workmen? But this is mere fancy: let us pass on to reality. David finds he is about to receive a direct intimation of God's will. He starts with surprise and pleasure; his pantings after God's commandments are about to be gratified. He bends forward in the attitude of reverent attention; nay, I think I can see him almost literally sitting with open mouth, as if to catch every syllable, while his breathing becomes shorter and quicker, so absorbed is he in the prophet's discourse. Truly he could say, 'I opened my mouth, and drew in my breath,

for my delight was in thy commandments.'"

Constance. Oh! mamma, that is just like the little boy who sits in the aisle on Sunday mornings; his eyes seem ready to start out of his head, they are so fixed on the minister.

Ella. Papa says he looks as if he were drinking in every word.

"That little boy is indeed one of those that long for God's commandments, and he loses no opportunity of learning more about them. But now I wish to show you how sincere David was in his desire to know God's will. The message that Nathan brought was a great disappointment to the king, as far as his own personal wishes were concerned. But it was a message from God. David did not forget this; and therefore, if you could have watched his countenance, you would not have seen its brightness pass away; you would not have seen any shade of sorrow gathering on it; no; he had wished to know what he ought to do; and now that he knew it, he was

content. Nay, he was more than content; he was thankful. This was no outward show of calmness put on while the prophet was by: for David went at once into the presence of God, and poured out his inmost feelings in the language of joy and gratitude. While forbidding him one thing, God had promised him many more. The command David knew to be right; and the promise he felt to be sweet. So he neither did see, nor could see, anything in this message to disturb his peace. Had he been longing to get his own will, and his own way, it would have been very different; then he would have forgotten the gracious part of the message, and remembered only the disappointing part of it. His ready and cheerful submission proved that it was really for God's commandments that he had longed."

Ella. Did Nathan often bring David messages in this way?

"We have several instances of his doing so; and there was another prophet called Gad, who was sent on similar errands, and

who is expressly described as 'David's seer.' But it was not to the prophets only that David was indebted, as declarers of God's will. Very often he was at a loss to know when he should go out to war against the enemies of Israel. He looked at God's written law, and there he saw some special rules as to *how* he should fight, but not the directions he wanted as to *when* he should fight. In such cases, therefore, he usually went to the high priest. The latter put on his ephod and breastplate; the king then inquired, 'Shall I go up and smite them?' and the priest, having received an answer from God, made it known to David."

Ella. Would it not be nice for us, if we had such an easy way now of getting out of our perplexities?

Kenneth. Why, Ella, I don't think you can have any great perplexities.

Ella. No; but I have heard grown-up people saying they wished they knew how to make up their minds; and so perhaps, when I am older, I may feel the same; that is why I asked.

"It was a very useful question, and is easily answered. Those who are the children of God are seldom left long at a loss about what they ought to do. The Bible is now complete; and they find there abundant light as to the general principles of right and wrong. If they consult that holy book with sincerity of heart, they cannot long hesitate what to choose as good, and what to reject as evil. The only matters of duty about which God's Word leaves us in any doubt, are those which relate to the management of our earthly affairs. We may, for instance, see two paths open before us; we may feel quite sure that there would be nothing sinful in our pursuing either; but we may be puzzled to know which would be wisest and best. In such a case we may still inquire of God, as David did; we may pray to be guided; and if we are really longing to know and do God's will, He often answers our prayers by causing some event to happen that makes our decision quite easy."

Constance. But then the decision would

still have to be of our own making, would it not?

"Undoubtedly it would. But if we came to that decision honestly; I mean, if we truly wished to decide right; and if, after earnest prayer, we made judgment (and not inclination) our guide, we should have full reason to believe that God had helped us to choose wisely. I once heard a Christian say, that if, after having made such a choice in such a spirit, she yet found the way she was walking in turn out to be a rough and painful one, she should still feel certain, that had she been left to choose the other course, it would either have proved more rough and more painful; or else, if a smooth, it might have been an unsafe road. However, we must not go on any longer. You may find me the best parallelisms you can for to-morrow morning. And just tell me, before you go, what is the chief lesson to be learned from what has occupied our attention to-day?"

Constance. That we should long to know God's Word better than we do.

"To know it more accurately, and to obey it more perfectly. If you long after these things so as to pant after them, you will improve every opportunity of gaining fresh information about Scripture truth. Every sermon will be more precious, every Bible-class more interesting, every good book more valued, in proportion as it tells you more about God's will. And to you, especially, Constance, I would say that this will be a happy year, if throughout its days, and weeks, and months, you are found longing after God's testimonies."

CHAPTER V.

CONTRASTED CLAUSES; OR, THE RENEWED HEART.

CONSTANCE was not a selfish little girl, and she therefore felt it a pleasure to lend her new Bible to her brother and sister, that they might search out some parallelisms by its help. Having soon collected a great number, they agreed together not to give any from the book of Psalms, which contains so many, but to read the very best that they had met with in other parts of the Bible. Ella chose the following verses from Prov. i.:

24. "Because I have called, and ye refused;
I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
25. But ye have set at nought all my counsel,
And would none of my reproof;

26. I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your fear cometh;

27. When your fear cometh as desolation,
And your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;
When distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;
They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me;

29. For that they hated knowledge,
And did not choose the fear of the Lord;

30. They would none of my counsel;
They despised all my reproof.

31. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
And be filled with their own devices."

Constance had fixed on Habakkuk iii. 17, 18:

17. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls;

18. Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The portion Kenneth read was part of Deut. xxxii.:

2. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew
As the small rain upon the tender herb,
And as the showers upon the grass;

3. Because I will publish the name of the Lord;
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

4. He is the Rock, his work is perfect;
For all his ways are judgment:
A God of truth, and without iniquity,
Just and right is he."

"Now," said Mrs Forbes, "I must remind you that sometimes two clauses of a verse, instead of giving the same sense, may have an exactly opposite meaning. Instead of being parallelisms, they may be contrasts. I think you have learned something in your English lessons about Contrast."

Kenneth. Oh! yes, in Murray.—"Antithesis or contrast is founded on the opposition of two objects, and has always the effect of making each of the contrasted objects appear in the stronger light" .....

"Ella looks as if she would like to finish it."

Ella. "White, for instance, never appears

so bright as when it is opposed to black, and when both are viewed together."

"And can you tell me in which part of the Bible we may find most examples of contrast?"

"In Proverbs," was the ready answer of all the children.

"Do you think you can repeat any?"

Constance. There is the verse I learned for yesterday morning: "The lip of truth shall be established for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment."

Kenneth. And this would do: "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

Ella. I cannot think of one, mamma.

"Don't you remember this verse, 'The wicked flee when'" .....

Ella. ..... "when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

"I should like to show you to-day the importance of paying attention to these contrasts, as they sometimes help us to gather the right meaning of a text. Turn to Proverbs xiv. 6."

Constance:

"A scorner seeketh wisdom, but findeth it not;
But knowledge is easy to him that understandeth."

"Here," resumed Mrs Forbes, "is one common object said to be sought by two different characters, and sought with two different results. What is the object that both characters are seeking?"

Constance. Wisdom, or knowledge.

"And what is the result of their search?"

Kenneth. One does not find it at all, and the other finds it easily.

"What is the character of him who seeks, but finds it not?"

Ella. He is called "a scorner."

"What is meant in the Bible by a scorner?"

Kenneth. One who despises God's truth, and mocks at it.

"You would hardly have expected such an one to seek wisdom at all; and yet it may be that at times he is to be found inquiring after it. When he does so, however, he is actuated by no right motive, and aims at no good end. If he ever seeks wis-

dom, it is as Herod desired to see a miracle, through mere curiosity;* or as Pilate asked, 'What is truth?' in proud unbelief;† or as Simon the sorcerer coveted the gift of the Holy Ghost, from the hope of worldly gain;‡ or as the Athenians inquired into Paul's strange doctrine, from love of novelty.‖ What reason can you give why they who seek wisdom in such a spirit should fail to find it?"

Constance. Because they seek amiss. But was not Paul a scorner, and yet he found the knowledge of Christ?

"That is true; but it was not *as* a scorner that he found it. So long as he was 'exceeding mad' against the Christians, he received not an iota of Christian truth. But the grace of God changed his heart. The voice from heaven which spake to him on the road to Damascus, set his sins in order before him; his proud heart was humbled; he ceased to be a scorner, and

* Luke xxiii. 8.
† John xviii. 38.
‡ Acts viii. 18, 19.
‖ Acts xvii. 19–21.

then the truths of Christianity found entrance into his mind."

Constance. Oh! yes, thank you, mamma. I see that quite plainly now.

"Let us turn our attention to the remaining clause: 'Knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.' If we looked at this sentence by itself, it would seem a very unnecessary, a very useless one. It appears at first sight to convey no thought, to suggest no idea. You would think it as unimportant as if I were to say, sight is easy to those who have good eyes; or, walking is easy to those who have the use of their limbs. But when God's Word tells us, that 'knowledge is easy to him that understandeth,' there must be some meaning in it that will come out on closer examination. And we get a clue to that meaning, if we notice the antithesis or opposition here presented to us."

Kenneth. The scorner is the opposite of "him who understandeth."

"Then it is clear enough that by 'him who understandeth,' is meant one who is

not a scorner; one who seeks wisdom earnestly, humbly, and holily; one who seeks it, not from curiosity, but from conviction of its truth; not with pride, but with lowliness of heart; not from worldly, but from spiritual motives; not from love of novelty, but from love of the truth. The Scripture-use of the word 'understanding' is told us in Job xxviii. 28."

Constance. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

"The man, then, who has true understanding is one who departs from evil; one whose heart has been turned from sin to holiness. And to such a man 'knowledge is easy.' While the scorner who seeks amiss, seeks in vain, the right-hearted man comes easily to the knowledge of the truth. His soul has been brought into sympathy with truth; his affections have been won over to the side of truth. There is no longer any veil of prejudice to blind his eyes; no longer any bias of enmity to warp his judgment. The chief

obstacles have been taken out of his path, and he presses forward eagerly in the pursuit of wisdom. What kind of wisdom or knowledge is here intended?"

Constance. Spiritual knowledge.

"Yes, the reference is to the highest wisdom—even to heavenly wisdom; but yet to a great extent the proverb will apply, though in a lower sense, to earthly knowledge. Take any branch of study,—for example, music; and tell me which of your cousins makes greatest progress; is it Jane or Emily?"

Constance. Oh! Jane gets on best, because she has a good ear, and is fond of music, and practises a great deal; but Emily cannot bear it, and does not play a note more than she can help.

"And which is the best Latin scholar, Ralph or Arthur?"

Kenneth. Ralph certainly, though he is two years younger, and did not begin nearly so soon: but I suppose that is for the same reason you were speaking of; he has a taste for it, and works hard, while

Arthur dislikes it, and takes no pains to get on.

"Ah! that is the secret: I have often heard him saying, 'Oh! what is the use of learning Latin?' and if any one has tried to explain it to him, he has not had patience to listen, because he did not wish to be convinced of its usefulness. In regard to the truths of science, too, we may often meet with instances of the scorner seeking wisdom, but finding it not. Some valuable discovery is made, or some useful invention started; and the man whose interests are threatened by it, may come forward with many questions, and much seeming desire of knowledge; but he has no real wish for information; and therefore in spite of the clearest evidence, he may often remain unconvinced of what the unprejudiced mind can easily perceive. So it is in respect of divine things. When they are rejected, it is because their purity is distasteful to the unrenewed heart; while they are readily received and joyously welcomed by the humble and contrite

spirit. Perhaps you will see this more clearly, if we examine the different texts that prove it. Last night I made out a list of passages which show that our receiving or rejecting the truth depends on whether we are of a loving and obedient, or of a proud and rebellious disposition. Will you read them to me one by one, if I tell you where to find them? Look at the first part of Ps. xiv. 1."

Kenneth. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

"You see this saying is traced to its source. It is prompted, not by the conviction of the understanding, but by the inclination of the heart. The fool *says*, 'There is no God,' because he *wishes* there were none. He denies God's existence, because he dreads God's anger. So too, when the Deist says, 'There is no Revelation,' his words are the echo of his wish; he doubts the claims of the Bible, only because he dislikes the statements of the Bible. The Socinian also says, 'There is no atonement,' but it is his heart which

has dictated the language; he spurns the provisions of mercy, only because he will not stoop to own the need of mercy. Every wrong opinion flows from a wrong state of feeling. Now read Ps. xxv. 9, 12, 14; and just lay a stress on those words which form the proof we are wanting."

Constance. "The *meek* will he guide in judgment; the *meek* will he teach his way." "What man is he that feareth the Lord? *him* shall he teach in the way that he shall choose." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show *them* his covenant."

"Contrast with that, Ps. lviii. 3–5."

Ella. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that *stoppeth her ear*, which *will* not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

"The meek find knowledge easily, for God himself becomes their teacher; but the wicked stop their ears against His messen-

gers, and bar their hearts against His truth. Turn to Ps. cvii. 43."

Kenneth. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even *they* shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

"Their wisdom is seen in their willingness to observe; and that watchfulness of heart renders them quick in understanding God's ways. There is another verse like that in Hosea xiv. 9."

Constance. "Who is wise, and *he* shall understand these things? prudent, and *he* shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the *just* shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."

"Let me hear the middle clause of Ps. cxi. 10."

Ella. "A good understanding have all they that do his commandments."

"Not 'they that *know* his commandments,' though you might have deemed that a fitter word in connection with 'a good understanding.' But, no! it is the obedient who are spoken of—they who *do* God's commandments. To practise what

we already know is the best preparation for knowing more. Now, Ps. cxix. 100.

Kenneth. "I understand more than the ancients, *because* I *keep* thy precepts."

"In the Book of Proverbs we shall find many such texts. Look at chapter viii. 8, 9.

Constance. "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness: there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that *understandeth*, and right to them that *find* knowledge."

"There are some men to whom God's words seem froward and perverse; but it is only to scorners they appear so. They are plain to such as have an understanding heart, and right to them who 'find knowledge;'—that is, who have sought knowledge by the right means, and in a right spirit; namely, by means of prayer, and in a spirit of faith. Read the first clause of chapter x. 8.

Ella. It is my turn. "The *wise* in heart will receive commandments."

"The wise in *heart*. If there be know-

ledge only in the intellect, God's precepts may be disregarded; but when the heart is right, they will be obeyed. Go on to chapter xvii. 16."

Kenneth. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a *fool* to get wisdom, seeing he hath *no heart* to it?" What does that verse mean, mamma?

"It means, 'Of what use is it for a fool to be surrounded with means and opportunities of being taught? of what use is it that he can pay for instruction?' of little use indeed to *him*, because he has no earnest desire to avail himself of such privileges. What do you find in chapter xxviii. 5?"

Constance. "*Evil* men understand *not* judgment; but they that *seek* the Lord understand *all* things."

"That is to say, they understand all things that He sees fit to unfold to them. In Jer. xxiv. 7, we find a promise on this subject."

Ella. "I will give them a *heart* to know me, that I am the Lord."

"You would rather have expected to find, 'I will give them an intellect to know me, I will give them greater powers of mind that they may get right ideas concerning me.' But instead of this, God promises what we more need, namely, a right state of heart that will dispose us to seek after the knowledge of His ways."

Constance. Is not that like the promise in Jer. xxxi., "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts?"

"Neither the mind nor the memory would be enough; it must be in the soul itself in order to be effectual. Now we come to Daniel xii. 10. We shall want the two last clauses."

Kenneth. "None of the *wicked* shall understand; but the *wise* shall understand." Oh! is not that another verse in which the contrast is of use? When the wise are opposed to the wicked, does it not mean (as you were saying) those whose wisdom is the fear of the Lord?

"Yes; I am glad to see that you understand this use of contrasted clauses. Look

next at Hosea vi. 3, and tell me how it begins."

Constance. "Then shall we know, if we *follow on* to know the Lord."

"You see it is only to persevering earnestness that the promise is given. Find Micah ii. 7, and read me the last question the prophet there asks."

Ella could not succeed in turning to Micah for some little time, and was all the longer from her impatient way of searching; but Mrs Forbes reminded her, that to stop and think a minute would take less time in the end than desperately turning the leaves of her book backward and forward in the hope of lighting on what she wanted. It needed but little thought. She instantly remembered that Micah was neither at the very beginning, nor near the very end of the minor prophets; and while she turned gently back from the concluding books of the Old Testament, she recollected part of some lines her mamma had once taught her—

"Amos too, and Obadiah,
Jonah's gourd, and Micah's lyre;"—

her Bible was open at Jonah; so she knew she had only the next leaf to turn over, and there she found what she was seeking. All this took up but a minute's time, though it takes so long in describing. Having found her place, she read the concluding words of the verse, "Do not my words do good to *him* that walketh *uprightly?*"

"Many," said Mrs Forbes, "have God's word in their hands, but they get no good from it: and the reason is just this,—they are not among the number who 'walk uprightly.' There is either a want of honesty in their spirit, or a want of holiness in their life; and therefore God will not manifest Himself unto them. But it is time we should pass on to the New Testament. You will find one proof in Matt. vi. 22, 23.

Kenneth. "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be *single*, thy whole body shall be full of *light.* But if thine eye be *evil*, thy whole body shall be full of *darkness.*"

"The sun may shine brightly, but the

blind man cannot see it, and the diseased eye cannot bear it; so God's truth is clear in itself, but our understanding of it depends on our powers of spiritual vision. If the soul is blinded by worldly affections, then all within is darkness. But where there is a love of heavenly things, there heavenly light will shine into the mind. Preparedness of heart is further spoken of in Luke viii. 15."

Constance. I think I know what you mean without looking for it: is it not where Christ explains the seed that fell into good ground as representing those "that in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it"?

"Quite right. You will find an instance of a contrary state of mind in John v. 44."

Ella. "How can *ye* believe which receive honour one of another, and seek *not* the honour that cometh from God only?"

"It was the worldly ambition of their carnal hearts that was the cause of their rejecting Christ. In John vii. 17, you will find a very important passage."

Kenneth. "If any man will *do* his will, *he* shall *know* of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

"Here is a good test of a man's sincerity. If he begins to inquire about Christian truth, let him consider his motives. Is he really wishful to do God's will? God sets before him duty as well as doctrine; if he is prepared to give heed to the former, he has the Saviour's promise that he shall not be left in any doubt about the latter. In the next chapter you will find a similar test of character, verse 47."

Constance. "He that is of God heareth God's words; *ye* therefore hear them not, because ye are *not* of God."

"There are two other verses like that,* but we must pass them over: for I want you to observe what Paul says about this. Turn to 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Ella. "But the *natural* man receiveth *not* the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can

* John xviii. 37, and 1 John iv. 6.

he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

"You know how it is with a person looking at a picture in a wrong light: he sees in it no beauty, and wonders at the value that others set upon it. In vain you talk to him about its effective outline, its judicious groupings, and its exquisite colouring. While he remains where he is, he cannot possibly discern the merits of which you speak. But so soon as he consents to be placed in another position, and views the painting in another aspect, his praises of it may far outstrip your own. In like manner, the unconverted man cannot see the excellences of the gospel, because his heart is in a wrong state, a wrong position, a wrong attitude towards it. The glimmering reflection of his pride and self-righteousness make his views of truth partial and confused. But when the grace of God turns his heart, he sees the gospel as it were in a new light, he marks its harmony, he owns its thrilling power, he acknowledges that it must have come from a

master-hand, even from the very hand of God himself. We must now read the last part of 2 Thess. ii. 10."

Kenneth. "They received not the *love* of the truth that they might be saved."

"In the next verse but one we are told what they *did* love;—they 'had pleasure in unrighteousness.' There is no salvation for such as continue to love sin and to live in sin. The next proof I set down was 2 Tim. iii. 7."

Constance. "Ever learning, and *never* able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

"What a grievous state; yet it is the state of very many! They are taught in their youth, taught at home, taught in the sanctuary, taught by the Bible, taught by friends. They are ever learning. Yet in spite of all these privileges, they never come to the knowledge of the truth. You gather the reason from the former verse, where such are described as 'laden with *sins*, and led away with divers lusts.' If you would not be of this number, my children, you

must obey the exhortation of Peter in his first epistle, ii. 1, 2."

Ella. "Wherefore *laying aside* all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

"In order to benefit by God's Word, we must lay aside all these evils, which, you see, are evils of the heart. That we may do this, we must pray for the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit. And this brings us to the last passage we have to look for at present, 1 John ii. 20."

Kenneth. "*Ye* have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

"There can be no right knowledge of divine truth, without this inward anointing of the Holy Spirit. Bear this in mind, my dear children. I know that you have a certain delight in good things; you have been taught to love the truth, and trained to love it; but perhaps you only love it, because your friends do, or else because you like the way in which it is explained to

you. Remember this is not sufficient. You must love the truth heartily, you must love it for its own sake. Pray earnestly that God would give you a heart to know the truth, by giving you a disposition to obey it. You, Constance, may keep a record of to-day's lesson by copying in your extract-book these words of Pascal: '*In order to love human things, it is necessary to know them; in order to know those things that are divine, it is necessary to love them.*'"

CHAPTER VI.

A SINGLE VERSE; OR, THE OASIS IN THE DESERT.

"MAMMA," said Kenneth, "we thought we never could find examples of what you showed us yesterday. We found plenty of contrasted clauses, but none in which they seemed to explain each other. So we asked papa to find some for us; and when he had shown us two or three, it seemed much easier, and we found some ourselves afterwards."

"Oh! yes," added Constance, "I think you will say we have all got good ones."

Ella. Mine is in Prov. xiv. 9, "Fools make a mock at sin, but among the righteous there is favour." I thought as "fools" are here the opposite to "the righteous," it must mean, not stupid, but wicked men,

as you once told us it often does in the Bible.

Constance. And in Prov. xv. 19, the "slothful" man is contrasted with "the righteous;" does this not teach that slothfulness is a sin?

"Undoubtedly; just as you read in the New Testament, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant.' And what is your's, my boy?"

Kenneth. We have found them all in Proverbs. Mine is in chapter xiv. 21. It says, "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth; but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he." As sinning is here contrasted with being happy, it may teach us that sin and happiness cannot go together.

"And can you tell me any of those your papa found for you?"

Kenneth. Yes, mamma, I put down four of them; here is the list.

Mrs Forbes took it, and saw that they were neatly written down in the very order in which they occur in the Bible. She had never asked her children to put down their

proofs in this way; but whenever she had made a list of texts for them, she had always done it so, and they had not only noticed her orderly plan, but they had also tried to imitate it. Kenneth's paper was as follows:—

Prov. xi. 13. The talebearer contrasted with the faithful; because talebearers are usually unfaithful to any trust reposed in them.

.. xv. 26. The words contrasted with the thoughts; because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

.. xxviii. 20. The faithful contrasted with those that make haste to be rich; because too great haste to be rich often leads men to get wealth unjustly.

.. xxviii. 25. The proud contrasted with the man who puts his trust in the Lord; because it is pride that makes us trust in ourselves instead of in God.

"You promised us last night," said Kenneth, "when papa was telling us the meaning of the word oasis, that we should have something about it in our class to-day."

"Tell me first whether you remember what the word signifies."

Kenneth. A green spot in the midst of a sandy desert.

"Do you remember any thing in the Bible about an oasis?"

Constance. No, indeed, I'm nearly sure I never saw the word there.

"You never did; for the word is not to be found in Scripture, but the thing itself is very clearly described. Do you not remember when the Israelites were in the desert, marching slowly over the hot sand —men and beasts alike panting for the cool breath of heaven, and fainting for want of water to refresh their parched lips? They were almost disposed to turn back again to Egypt; they remembered its vines and figs and pomegranates, as well as the delicious waters of the Nile,* and they could scarcely be persuaded to go further on into the desert. But Moses encouraged them. Perhaps he told them these were only hardships by the way, and that the way would have an end, and that the end was too precious to be given up. So they toiled on and on, till suddenly 'they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters.'†

* Num. xx. 5.

† Exod. xv. 27.

Only think of their joy, when the trees sheltered them from the scorching sunbeams, and the rustling foliage fanned their fevered cheeks, and the bubbling wells yielded them an abundant and refreshing supply! But Elim was only an oasis. Passing on, they found themselves in the wilderness of Sin, ready to die of hunger and of thirst. However, it is not of Elim we are going to read to-day. There is one verse in the Bible which has often been compared to an oasis in the desert. It is in 1 Chron. iv. 10."

Ella. What a lot of hard names! Oh! but this is an easy verse; may I read it? "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Kenneth. Why is this like an oasis?

"Because just as an oasis is a green and fruitful spot in the midst of a dry and bar-

ren wilderness, so these words full of beauty are found in the midst of chapters full of nothing but hard names. How many such chapters come together here?"

Constance. From the first to—the—end of the ninth. Nine chapters, mamma.

"Many of the names are very difficult to read, and when we have read them we do not find in them any thing to feed and refresh the soul. So that we are almost tempted to pass them over. But it would not be right to do this. If God has put them in the Bible, they must be of some use."

Ella. Oh! mamma, of what use can they be?

"These chapters contain lists of family-names. You have seen the old Bible in which grandpapa has written down, on a blank leaf, my name and the names of your uncles and aunts, with the day and year when each of us was born. And you have seen the one in which papa has set down the names of Kenneth, and Constance, and Ella, and little Malcolm. But

these two lists are interesting only to our own little circle; it would be of no use to publish them for the whole world to read. It was not so, however, with the family-lists of the Jews. These were of great importance, as helping to show that Jesus was really the promised Saviour. The first prophecy of the Messiah only told that he should be of 'the seed of the woman.' But after a while, when Adam's children had spread far and wide over the earth, another prophecy was given;—and to whom was it said, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'?"

Constance. To Abraham.

"And to whom was that same promise afterwards repeated?"

Kenneth. To Isaac, and again to Jacob.

"Just so. When the prophecy of Christ's coming had been limited to Abraham's seed, then it was further restricted to Isaac's, not Ishmael's, children; and then again to the race of Jacob, and not of Esau. To which tribe of Jacob's race was it yet farther limited?"

Kenneth. To the tribe of Judah.

"And to what household in that tribe?"

Constance. David's.

"That is right. And as the Jewish household kept their lists of names very accurately, that they might rightly know to what tribe each one belonged, so some of these lists were kept in the Bible, to show us that Jesus was indeed of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David, as it had been foretold. But this is not the only use that may be made of such chapters. When we read these long lists of people who have lived and died ages ago, we see how true it is that 'one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh;' and we are reminded that it was sin which brought death into the world. There was once a very ungodly, worldly man, who had never thought about his soul. But yet he used to go to church every Sunday morning, and once the lesson for the day was Genesis v., which contains the names of ten patriarchs, with the number of years each of them lived, while of every one separately it is

said, 'And he died.' The constant repeating of those few short words, 'And he died,' not only fell upon this sinner's ear, but by God's blessing sank into his heart. He went home feeling as he never felt before, 'It will one day be said of me, "and he died."' He was led to see how unfit he was for death; he asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' he sought forgiveness through Jesus Christ; and ever afterwards he had good reason to rejoice that the fifth chapter of Genesis had a place in God's holy Word. You see, then, that no part of the Bible is to be deemed useless; every part is of importance, and every part may do good to the soul. Still there are some portions that seem more clearly intended to refresh us with spiritual truth. Such is the prayer of Jabez, which comes in so unexpectedly in the midst of these genealogies. Let us now examine it. I think as we once studied a clause by taking it word after word, so we may study this verse by taking it clause after clause—from the beginning."

Kenneth. "And Jabez called on the God of Israel."

"This mentions *who* offered the prayer. We know very little indeed about Jabez. We only know what the former verse tells us. His name signifies 'grief,' for 'his mother bare him with sorrow.' And as to his character, we are told that he was 'more honourable than his brethren.' They were honourable, but he was still more so. Then they must have been industrious and honest, or else no one could have honoured them. Ah! and they must also have been pious and God-fearing men, or they would not have been what the Bible calls honourable. In what respects Jabez was more honourable than they were, we are not informed; but we have here the cause of his special success, namely, that he made it the matter of special prayer. What was the first request he offered?"

Constance. "Oh! that thou wouldst bless me indeed."

"He was not satisfied with the honour that came from men; he wished to have a

blessing from God: 'Oh, that *thou* wouldst bless me.' He wished to have a personal blessing—a blessing for himself: 'Oh, that thou wouldst bless *me*.' He wished to have an abundant blessing: 'Oh, that thou wouldst bless me *indeed*.' An old writer has truly said, 'Whenever God blesses, he blesses indeed.' We read of King David that he 'blessed his house;' but he could not really confer a blessing on them; he could only entreat it in their behalf. It is God alone who is able actually to bless us. But Jabez went on to specify a particular mercy that he desired."

Ella. "And enlarge my coast."

"He wished to be prosperous in the world, and to have fresh fields added to his inheritance. But he remembered that his own industry and his own honesty would fail to ensure his success, unless God were pleased to second his endeavours. It was not wrong of Jabez to offer such a prayer. He was not in too great haste to be rich, or else he would hardly have spared time to pray about it. He was not too anxious

for success; for he asks it only as a blessing: 'Oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed, *and* enlarge my coast.' He did not wish his coast enlarged without God's blessing and God's smile. But he did wish it enlarged in token of God's favour, and in connection with God's love. This is a safe rule for us. It is no harm to desire prosperity and to enjoy it, when we desire it and enjoy it only so far as we have God's blessing with it. What is the next thing this good man asked for?"

Constance. "And that thine hand might be with me."

"Probably Jabez lived about the time when the Israelites had just entered the promised land, so that before his coast could be enlarged, he would have to war against the Canaanites, and drive them out. If so, he was here asking that God would help him to fight his battles, and to conquer his enemies. He wished God's hand with him to *assist* him. Or, he might be looking on to the pathway of life that lay before him, and foreseeing many dangers, he wished

God's hand with him to *guide* him. Just as a father leads his child by the hand that it may not go astray, so Jabez wished to be led in the right path, and kept from wandering into dangerous courses. And it was not enough that he should know the right way, and walk in it, but he must be kept from stumbling, therefore he also wished God's hand with him to *uphold* him. As a little child, when treading over a slippery piece of ice, catches hold of its mother's outstretched hand, so Jabez looked to God for preservation. He felt like the Psalmist, who cried, 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.' What is the next clause we come to?"

Kenneth. "And that thou wouldst keep me from evil."

"The word 'evil' is used in two senses. Sometimes it means affliction, which is temporal evil; and sometimes sin, which is spiritual evil. It is not possible for me to say with certainty which of the two Jabez intended, but perhaps he referred to both. If he wished to be kept from affliction, the

surest way was by being kept from sin, which is the cause of affliction. If there were no sin, there would be no sorrow; and if Jabez was kept holy, he would be kept happy. What reason does he give for asking to be kept from evil?"

Kenneth. "That it may not grieve me."

"If he referred to worldly evil, then it was true enough that the endurance of this would be a thing to grieve him; for Paul tells us, that 'no chastening for the present seemeth joyous but grievous.' If he referred to spiritual evil, then it reminds us that there is nothing so grievous to the heart of a pious man as sin. It is in his esteem the greatest of all evils — the deepest of all griefs. Before we go on, I must point out to you that in these words of Jabez there is a beautiful allusion to his own name. What is the signification of 'Jabez?'"

Ella. You said it meant "grief."

"Yes; but though he was called a child of sorrow, he did not wish really to *be* such. Some one, who has turned Jabez's prayer into verse, has thus given the last clause:

'Oh! lest indeed my name express
My sad experience, let thy care
Preserve me safe from all that's evil,
Every sin and every snare.

'The God of Israel hears my cry,
And kindly answers my request:
And though they call me 'child of sorrow,'
Peace shall rule within my breast.'

Now, will you tell me how the story of Jabez ends?"

Constance. "And God granted him that which he requested."

"He did not ask amiss, and so he did not ask in vain. He had asked for right things in a right spirit, and he found God to be the hearer and answerer of prayer. We shall find it the same, if we adopt the course that Jabez pursued. You may learn from his example to pray over all your worldly concerns. If you have lessons to study, pray that God would bless you indeed, and enlarge your knowledge. If you have in future years to attend to different worldly occupations, pray that God would bless you indeed, and grant you success. Even in trying to get money, men may ask

God to prosper them, and enable them to make their way in the world."

Constance. But is not our case different from that of Jabez? I was reading in some book the other day, that "prosperity was the chief blessing under the Old Testament, and adversity under the New."

"That is a very common saying, but I rather doubt its correctness. It is true that in the Old Testament we have more numerous promises of temporal blessing than in the New; but this is chiefly because the Old Testament saints had not such clear unfoldings of spiritual joy, and such bright prospects of heavenly bliss, as have been granted us through Christ Jesus. The writers of the New Testament had higher and better things to make mention of, and therefore they say but little about prosperity. Yet when they do speak of it, they speak of it just as our hearts tell us they should; for they represent it as a thing we cannot fail to desire. They assure us that 'godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is,'

as well as of 'that which is to come.' Jesus, when he says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' does not add, concerning our earthly supplies, 'and all these things you can learn very well to do without,' but" .....

Ella. "All these things shall be added unto you."

"In like manner the apostle John offered for his friend the kind and beautiful petition, 'Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.' He considered it no sin to wish for prosperity; and we may safely desire it too, so long as we wish for it only in connection with soul-prosperity."

Constance. But does not the New Testament say a great deal about the benefits of affliction?

"True; yet the Old Testament does the same. In Proverbs, as well as in Hebrews, we read, 'Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.'* In the Psalms, as well as

* Prov. iii. 12; Heb. xii. 5–7.

in the Epistle of James, we are told, 'Blessed is the man whom God chastens.'* If Paul speaks of affliction as 'yielding the peaceable fruit of righteousness,' Isaiah also says of his country's sorrow, 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.'† There is but one God revealed to us in both Testaments; and in both, therefore, He appears as a God that 'doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.'"

Kenneth. Oh! mamma, I am so glad you think prosperity a good thing!

"Yes, in itself it is a good thing. It only becomes evil when we make a bad use of it. Prosperity has its snares, but so also has adversity. Prosperity, if abused, will make us forgetful of God; while, if sanctified, it will only be to us a spiritual help, leading our thoughts afresh from every mercy to the God who gave it. Adversity, if rightly improved, will humble us, and make us wiser, and leave us holier

* Ps. xciv. 12; James i. 12.

† Heb. xii. 11; Isa. xxvii. 9.

than it found us; but, if unsanctified, it will fill us with worldly cares, and discontented thoughts, and rebellious complainings. The worst lot that can befall us is an unsanctified providence, whether it be joyous or grievous. Sanctified affliction, though painful, is profitable. Sanctified prosperity is indeed a portion of twofold happiness. This is what I would wish for you, my children, that each and all of you may have as large a measure of temporal bliss, and as small an amount of temporal grief, as are consistent with 'the most heaped up measure of the next world's joys.' Imitate the spirit of Jabez, and you will share the success of Jabez. Let your daily prayer be, that God would keep you from sin that it may not grieve you. Entreat His blessing, and then (come joy or come sorrow) you will find that you are blessed 'indeed.'"

CHAPTER VII.

PARALLEL VERSES; OR, THE DISAPPOINTMENT AND THE PROMISE.

It was rather a surprise to Mrs Forbes, when Ella eagerly exclaimed, "We have found texts for you so easily this time, mamma; we had only to look out for the chapters full of names, and then we did not need to look far, before we found what would do to stop and think about. Shall I tell you mine first? I looked at the chapter in Genesis that you told us of, and there I found twice over, 'Enoch *walked with God.*'"

Constance, having tried to find the longest catalogue of names in the Epistles, thought it was Romans, the sixteenth chapter; and there she found it said of one man that he was "*approved in Christ;*"

and of another, that he "*laboured much in the Lord.*"

Kenneth's turn came next. "I looked," he said, "in the third of Nehemiah, which tells about the men who built the wall. It did not look as if I should find anything at all; but when I came to read it very carefully, I found a great many nice verses." "Let us hear them," said his mamma. Kenneth proceeded. "First it said of some that 'their *nobles* put not their neck to the work of their Lord:' that put me in mind of the text the Countess of Huntingdon used to speak of, 'Not many mighty, not many noble.' Then there was one man mentioned, whose *daughters* helped him to build; would not that be a good verse for Constance and Ella to think of? Another man set himself to mend the wall '*earnestly.*' And oh! I can't tell you of how many it said that they mended 'over against *their own* house;' just like what papa tells us, that 'to keep the street clean, every man must begin by sweeping before his own door.'"

Mrs Forbes was pleased with the children's diligent searching; and they agreed that in future they would never pass over a chapter of names, without looking well for the hidden beauties it might possibly contain. When they were ready for their new lesson, their mamma asked them if they remembered the use of parallel clauses.

"Yes," said Kenneth; "though they keep to the same sense, like two lines keeping at the same distance, yet one of them may be longer or distincter than the other; and so we get at the meaning better."

"Very good; now let us see whether we can make the same use of parallel *verses*. Suppose we read about David's disappointment; do you recollect my telling you that story?"

Ella. Do you mean when God did not allow him to build the temple? Oh! I should like to read it in the Bible; where shall we find it?

"There are two accounts of it, and I wish you to compare them. Kenneth,

turn to 2 Samuel vii. And you, Constance, may read out of 1 Chronicles xvii. For Ella, I have written them down side by side; so she shall look over this paper with me. When Kenneth has begun by reading two verses, he and Constance will, I think, be able to go on reading each a verse in turn. As you know the story, we will not stop, except where we find that there is any difference between the two accounts. We just want to find out all the points in which the parallel verses are unlike. So you must be on the watch. Now, begin."

2 SAM. VII.	1 CHRON. XVII.
Ver. 1, 2. And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies, that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.	Ver. 1. Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains.

"Will you tell us, Constance, what difference you noticed when Kenneth was reading his? was yours just like it?"

Constance. In Samuel it says *when* this

happened;—that it was when David had peace in his kingdom; but it does not say so in Chronicles.

"Here then we get a new idea by comparing the two; we learn that a time of leisure should not be spent in selfish ease, but in seeking to do something for God. Now, you may go on."

Ella. But it says in Samuel that the ark was "within" curtains, and in Chronicles that it was "under" curtains.

"Is that a difference in meaning? or in words only?"

Kenneth. Only in words.

"Exactly. The curtains were over the top of the tabernacle and round its sides; so that the ark was both within them and underneath them. I am glad, Ella, you noticed the difference, because it shows you were attentive. Next time, just ask yourself whether there seems to be any difference of meaning;—that is what we have to talk about."

Ver. 3. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in

Ver. 2. Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in

thine heart; for the Lord is with thee.

Ver. 4, 5. And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

thine heart; for God is with thee.

Ver. 3, 4. And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in.

Constance. In Chronicles, it is not a question; but it says plainly, "Thou shalt not build;" is that a difference in meaning?

"No; the question, 'Shalt thou,' is put so unexpectedly and so emphatically, that it is just another way of saying, 'Thou shalt not.' Read the inquiry with an expression of surprise and disapproval, and you at once see that the only true answer is, 'No, it cannot be allowed.' The two verses run parallel; only the one is a very little clearer than the other; in Chronicles the answer is *expressed*, which in Samuel is only *supposed*. What reason was given for the refusal?"

Ver. 6. Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

Ver. 5. For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another.

Kenneth. Oh! it is so different here! Mamma, I don't think the last part is parallel at all. Look, Constance.

"It does seem very different at first sight," said Mrs Forbes; "but let us examine it a little more closely. What is meant in Chronicles by the removal of God's presence 'from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another?' When the Israelites wandered in the desert, was the ark taken from one tent, or tabernacle, to another quite different?—or, from a tent and tabernacle in one place, to the same tent and tabernacle pitched somewhere else?"

Constance. The same in another place.

"And so it was, after they entered Canaan. The tabernacle was reared first in Gilgal; then in Shiloh; but until the ark was taken to Mount Zion, we read of no new tabernacle, no new tent, having been made. The verse in Chronicles just means that God's presence had not yet found a fixed abode; but had moved repeatedly from place to place. Now, is there not one

word in the parallel verse which gives the very same thought?"

Kenneth. I don't see one. Which do you mean, mamma?

"The word 'walked.' God says he had not *dwelt* anywhere as in a settled abode, but in the tent and the tabernacle he had *walked*, moved about, wandered from one place to another. Are not the verses quite parallel?"

Kenneth. Yes, it seems clear enough now. Shall I go on?

Ver. 7. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

Ver. 6. Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me an house of cedars?

Ella. Stop a minute, Constance, please; there is only a word of difference there; but it is so different that I think it alters the sense. It says "*tribes*" in one, and "*judges*" in the other. How is that, mamma? which is meant?

"If you were to look at a Bible that has marginal readings—(Constance will find

them at the foot of her's)—you would see the word 'tribes,' where it occurs in Samuel, carefully altered to 'judges.' And indeed the clause which follows shows us that this alteration in the margin is a right one. Those who were 'commanded to feed the people,' to act as shepherds to them, to guide and guard them, to provide for them and rule over them, could not be the tribes themselves, but the judges whom God raised up."

Constance. But how came the word "tribes" ever to be used?

"It is not so easy to tell you that. However, as you have asked the question, I must do my best to answer it. Some people think it was used by a figure of speech. It so happens that the Hebrew word for 'tribe' also signifies 'sceptre;' and the sceptre, which is the sign of dominion, might be put figuratively for the judges who held that dominion. But others think that the word in Samuel was wrongly written, and that it was meant to be the same as in Chronicles. The two words are exceedingly

like each other; there is but one letter different in the Hebrew, so that it would have been easy to mistake them in copying. We need not be surprised at this, if it was so. The great wonder is, that when these pages had to be written over again and again, we should find only a word here, or a letter there, that does not seem quite right. Such a mistake as this often occurs in our printed works. Kenneth, when I found you reading poetry yesterday in the schoolroom, you were talking to Miss Miller about something wrong in your book; do you remember what it was?"

Kenneth. May I go and get it? I can show it you in a moment..... Here!

"Fellows in arms! whose deeds are known to fame,
And you whose *armour* hopes an equal name!"

—it ought to have been "*ardour.*"

"You see there is only the difference of one letter, but it makes it quite another word. How did you decide that 'ardour' was the right one?"

Kenneth. Because we found it so in one of the two copies, and it makes better sense.

"Well; the old Jews, when they used to read this over, and compare it with Chronicles, would see a difference of only one letter, and the sense would show them at once which was correct."

Ella. But the difference is much greater in English; "judges" does not sound at all like "tribes."

"No; the difficulty is greater for us. This is one way in which we still have to bear the curse of Babel."

Constance. And why did the Jews never correct this, if it was a mistake?

"Because it was in the Bible, the holy book of God, and they did not dare to alter it on purpose. They were very careful in copying it out, so that if they saw they had made but a few tiny strokes wrong, they would throw away the whole skin, or sheet of parchment, and begin it over again. They did this too superstitiously, perhaps. But God brought good out of evil; and it is owing to their extreme care, as well as to God's watchful providence, that this sacred volume has for so many centuries been kept

pure and uncorrupted. Before we go on reading, I want you to notice that God here gave two reasons to show David why he need not build a temple. First, it had never been *wanted;* God had done without it. Secondly, it had never been *commanded;* God had never asked for it. The next verses prove that this refusal was not given in anger."

Ver. 8. Now, therefore, so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep to be ruler over my people, over Israel.

Ver. 9. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

Ver. 10, 11. Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime; and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to

Ver. 7. Now, therefore, thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldst be ruler over my people Israel.

Ver. 8. And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth.

Ver. 9, 10. Also, I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning; and since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover, I will subdue all thine enemies.

rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

Furthermore, I tell thee that the Lord will build thee an house.

Kenneth. We have had a long piece alike. But Constance read the last verse as a promise; in Samuel it is, "*I have* caused thee to rest from thine enemies."

"That little difference does not matter much. In either case this verse is but the continuation of the promise in the verse before. We saw, when we began our reading, that David was already enjoying rest; and now it is promised that he should live to see a time of greater peace and longer quietness. It was true that he had conquered past foes; it was true also that his future enemies should in like manner be subdued. What further promises are added?

Ver. 12. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

Ver. 13. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

Ver. 11. And it shall come to pass when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons, and I will establish his kingdom.

Ver. 12. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

"Read the next three verses together, Kenneth."

Ver. 14-16. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commmit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

Ver. 13, 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be established for evermore.

"What is the chief difference in these verses, Constance?"

Constance. There is nothing here like what Kenneth read about Solomon's being punished, if he sinned against God.

"The account in Samuel, then, is fuller and more complete: the parallel line in Chronicles has a little gap or break in it. How does the story proceed?"

Ver. 17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Ver. 15. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

"The prophet brought his message quite correctly. He was not ashamed to own that he had been mistaken; but he has-

tened to tell the exact truth as soon as he knew it himself. This finishes the first half of the chapter. Before going on to see how David received the message, I must just be sure that you quite understand all that was promised in these words. One of you said just now that Solomon was meant; how do you know that?"

Constance. Because it is said that he should build the temple.

"Very well; but is Solomon the only one of David's family here referred to?"

Kenneth. No; he was to have a whole line of kings in his family.

"For how long?"

Ella. For ever.

"And in what way has David's throne been established for ever?"

Constance. In Jesus Christ, who was David's son and David's Lord.

"You see, then, that 'a Greater than Solomon is here.' The message sent by Nathan contained three great promises. First, that David should have a son, who was to build a temple for God. Secondly,

that from this son should proceed a line of kings, who, even though they might have to be punished for their sins, should still keep the throne. Thirdly, that One should come, in whom David's throne should be established for an everlasting dominion, and of whom it could be said in a higher sense than of any one else, 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son.' Do you remember where Paul refers to these words, as having been spoken of Christ?"

Kenneth. In the first chapter of Hebrews.

"Quite right. Now we will see whether David himself understood the message that had been sent him. Kenneth, it is your turn to read."

Ver. 18. Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

Ver. 19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?

Ver. 16. And David the king came, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

Ver. 17. And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God.

"How different!" cried Kenneth and Ella, with surprise.

"Yes, my children, seemingly very different; but yet not really so. On first reading the words as they stand in Samuel, 'Is this the manner of man?' we are apt to think they refer to God's condescension and goodness, as contrasted with man's pride and selfishness. The contrast is a very true one; for God himself tells us, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' And this idea is not only true, but seems very suitable for David to have thought of at a time when he was quite laden with the promises so graciously heaped on him. True and beautiful as it is, however, this thought does not, and cannot fit in with the parallel passage in Chronicles. But just put in an article, and the sense is quite different. 'Is this the manner of *the* man? is this the way in which the promised Deliverer is to come?' You remember how, when Eve called her first-born Cain,

saying, 'I have gotten *the* man,' it is thought she considered that infant son to be the promised Seed of the woman already come. She was mistaken. But the promised One was still looked for; and when David had now been told how his throne should be established for ever, he was made to understand that the Messiah should come of his family. So in the joy of his astonished heart he exclaimed, 'Is this the manner of the man? is he indeed to come of my family, and sit on my throne?' In Chronicles, David is represented as saying, 'Thou hast regarded me according to the estate of the man of high degree.' It is as if he said, 'Thou hast raised me up to the estate or dignity of king, that I may be an ancestor of the man of high degree—the man of highest degree—the man from above—the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.'"

Kenneth. Oh! the verses do seem alike indeed, now.

Constance. But, mamma, can we be sure from this that David really knew Nathan's message was about Christ?

"If you want another proof, you may find it in the second chapter of Acts, where we read of David's 'knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.' No wonder he was lost in amazement, and added, 'What can David speak more to Thee for the honour of thy servant?'—that is, for the honour to which Thou hast raised thy servant. His heart was almost too full to speak. Yet he did go on speaking. He poured forth the beautiful prayer that fills up the remainder of the chapter. Our time will not let us go through it. Nor need we, as there is no further difference that is at all important. You can finish comparing it by yourselves, and you will see that the sum and substance of the whole prayer may be found in the closing words of the twenty-fifth verse: 'Do as Thou hast said.' David just asks that it may be, as God has said it shall be."

Kenneth. That will do for an example to add to our list of good men whose prayers were about God's promises.

"A very good example indeed. David received the promise with joy, and rested on it with faith; but his praying about it shows how earnestly he desired its fulfilment. The largest promise of mere earthly glory would not have given him the same pleasure. But in this he rejoiced more than in thousands of gold and silver. My children, ought not your faith and your joy to be stronger than David's? He was told only of a coming Saviour; but you are told of a Saviour that has come, that has suffered, that has died, that has risen, that has ascended into heaven. You are not told of Christ as coming only into your family; He is waiting to enter your hearts. And if you let Him in, He will give even to you an everlasting kingdom, and a crown that fadeth not away. Hasten to His throne of grace, thank Him for His promises, and ask Him to 'do' for you even as He has 'said.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

CONTRASTED VERSES; OR, THE NUMBER OF THE STARS.

TEN o'clock on Tuesday morning found the table once more surrounded by cheerful, yet thoughtful, faces. Mrs Forbes's quick eye detected even more thoughtfulness than usual, and she hastened to inquire the cause of it. Kenneth took on him the office of chief speaker. "We have been writing out some parallel verses opposite each other in columns, like the paper you wrote for Ella yesterday. We thought it would be easiest to take one of the stories in the New Testament. So Ella took the history of blind Bartimeus. But the two accounts are quite contrary."

"Let Ella tell me about it herself."

Ella. There were two things different.

In Matthew it says there were two men, but Mark and Luke say there was only one. And then Matthew and Mark say it was when Christ went out of Jericho, but Luke says when he came nigh to Jericho.

"Perhaps the last difficulty may be removed by remembering that there were two towns of this name,—the Old and the New town. So if you consider the miracle to have taken place after Jesus had passed through the one, and before he reached the other, does not that make it all straight?"

Ella. Yes, to be sure it does. But then the two men, mamma?

"There you have made a little mistake. You tell me Mark and Luke say there was only one man. Is that quite correct?"

Ella. Oh! yes, mamma, they both say *one* man.

"Stop, my child; think again, and tell me whether they say *only* one man."

Ella. No, mamma, they don't say 'only;' but doesn't it mean so?

"I think not. Do you remember the long story you told me on Thursday when you came back from the Rookery?"

Ella. Yes, about the little beggar-girl without shoes, whose father and mother were dead.

"And when you told me about her, did you *mean* to say that you had met only one?"

Ella. No; her sister was with her, only I didn't notice her so much.

"Then you spoke of one only, and yet you knew all the while there were two?"

Ella. Yes, mamma.

"Well, I think this quite takes away your difficulty. Mark and Luke mention one man alone; but that was because, for some reason or other, either from his being more earnest, or from his being better known, he attracted more attention. Whether he had a companion or not, they do not say; but from Matthew's narrative we find that he had with him one blind like himself, and that Jesus gave sight to both."

Constance. Mamma, I need not ask you

now about mine; I was comparing the accounts of Christ's resurrection. Matthew says two women went to the tomb; Mark says three; Luke refers to several; and John mentions only Mary Magdalene. But I see from what you have said that Matthew's account is fuller than John's; and Mark's fuller still; and Luke's the fullest of all.

"Just so. And now, Kenneth, tell us what you compared."

Kenneth. I wrote out the three histories of Paul's conversion, in Acts ix., and xxii., and xxvi.; and I soon found that they all help to fill each other up. The 26th gives a fuller account of what Jesus said to him; and the 22d tells us more of what Ananias said. But what puzzled me was, that in one account it says the men heard, but did not see; in the other it says that they saw, and did not hear.

"That certainly looks like a contradiction, as you have put it. But let us see whether you have told it us quite right. What are the words in the ninth chapter?"

Kenneth. "Hearing a voice, but seeing no man."

"That is very plain. Now tell us what the twenty-second chapter says."

Kenneth. "They saw indeed the light and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."

"Now tell me what they *did* see."

Kenneth. The light.

"And what did they *not* see?"

Kenneth. They saw no man. Oh! I have it now; they saw the light, but they did not see any thing more. How stupid I was not to find that out myself! But still I do not understand about their hearing.

"They heard *a* voice; but they heard not *the* voice of him that spake. In our English Bibles, the first has an indefinite article. They heard a vague undefined sound, as of a voice somewhere speaking about something. But they did not hear *the* voice of him that spake; they heard no definite words; they knew not who spoke, nor what he said. It was pretty much as if you were at one end of our library, while

your papa and I were talking in a low tone at the other end. You would hear, and yet you would not hear. You would catch the distant murmur of our voices, but you would not be able to overhear the words spoken."

Kenneth. Thank you, mamma; I see now that we needed both chapters to make it quite clear: else we might have fancied either that they heard nothing, or that they had heard all.

"Exactly so. And it is no mere idle curiosity that is gratified by getting at the correct idea. It serves to show us the truth of the whole story. It was not needful that these men should see who spoke, nor that they should hear what was spoken. But it was necessary they should see the sudden brightness, and hear the sound of a voice; because thus they could bear witness to the fact of the miracle. It does not rest on Paul's testimony only. We are sure that he neither dreamed this, nor invented it; for there were others with him, who could tell of the terrors which they too had felt on that journey to Damascus."

Constance. Mamma, we were wondering what you would take for our lesson to-day; and Kenneth said, as you had parallel verses yesterday, perhaps you would give us contrasted verses this time.

"Kenneth is a very good guesser. I have chosen them out of Ps. cxlvii. Begin by reading the fourth verse, and we will contrast one with it afterwards."

Ella. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names."

"Here is a beautiful verse about the stars. Grand and glorious objects we think them, as they stud our evening sky. But, in the East, their beauty is yet more remarkable. The greater purity of the atmosphere, and the deeper blue of the heaven, make them shine with brighter lustre. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find them often mentioned in Scripture. One of Job's friends exclaimed, 'Behold the height of the stars, how high they are!' And another said, 'Yea, the stars are not pure in God's sight.' David loved to look

upon them as he fed his father's sheep on the plains of Bethlehem; and when he gazed at them, he cried, 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?' Daniel looked on their unchanged splendour, when he was a captive in a foreign land, and he could feel the beauty of the promise confided to his keeping, 'They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.' It is not, however, to the glory, nor the purity, nor the size, nor the height of the stars, that the text before us refers; but" . . . . .

Constance. To their number.

"And have I any little star-gazer here that can tell me their number?"

Ella. Oh! mamma, I never thought of counting them.

Kenneth. You couldn't do it, Ella.

"Tell us why not, my boy?"

Kenneth. It would take her an immense while, even if she could ever count those she sees. Then there are some that are never seen at all in this country, because we are too far north. And besides, there

are ever so many that cannot be seen without a telescope.

"Do you remember any text in the Bible that speaks of the difficulty of counting them?"

Constance. I think Abraham was told to count them. Yes; in the fifteenth of Genesis it says, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them."

"'*If* thou be able.' There is the admission that the task of telling (or numbering) the stars exceeded Abraham's power. Since his days many an astronomer has tried to count them; but each one has at length uttered the word 'Innumerable!' With the eye alone nearly 3500 have been distinguished; and with the help of the telescope, the number swells to at least eighty millions."

Kenneth. Eighty millions! have so many been seen and counted?

"Not counted one by one; but very accurate calculations have been made, by which the result comes as near the truth as

can be. Sir William Herschel, for example, tried to count the stars on the portion of sky that his glass enabled him to see at one view. Once he counted for fifteen minutes; another time he counted for forty-one minutes; and so he counted again and again. Then he compared all the numbers he had reckoned, and multiplied them to make up for the time when he had not been counting. In this way he went on over and over again, night after night, till he could pretty nearly tell how many stars make up that bright cloudy appearance which we call the Galaxy, or Milky Way."

Ella. Oh! I have seen the Milky Way; but is it made up of little stars?

"Of stars, certainly; but we must not call them little ones: they only seem so small because they are so far off."

Constance. Was it a very large number?

"As nearly as Sir William Herschel could tell, he judged there must be very little under twenty millions of stars in the milky way alone. And who can say what countless myriads there are beyond the

reach of the best magnifier yet known? It is very clear that man is utterly unable to reckon the entire number of the stars; and we may safely conclude that angels too would fail in the attempt. The poet has expressed this in the lines,—

'To count
The thick-sown glories in these fields of fire
Perhaps a seraph's computation fails.' *

But there is One to whom this is an easy matter. God 'telleth the number of the stars.' He can count them all, for He made each of them, and 'known unto Him are all His works.' But the text in our psalm tells us something more. What does God do beside?"

Ella. 'He calleth them all by their names.' O mamma, I want to learn to know the stars. Kenneth knows so many by name, when he sees them; but when I look, it seems to me as if I could never know one from another, even of the bigger ones.

"You shall begin to learn them soon.

* Young's Night Thoughts, ix.

The way in which astronomers have come to know them apart, is by noticing different clusters of them. What are these clusters called ?"

Kenneth. Constellations, from the Latin *con*, together, and *stella*, a star ;—the stars that are near together.

" Do you know of any constellation that is mentioned by name in the Bible ?"

Constance. Yes, in Job ;—here it is—ix. 9, " Orion,"—that is the constellation something like the shape of a man with a sword at his side.

Kenneth. Orion is one of the easiest to find.

" You see how long ago they were known ; even as early as Job's days people had learned to recognise them apart. This was very natural. The shepherds of Chaldea, while tending their flocks, had abundant time to lie and watch these twinkling lights of heaven ; and just as you know what it is to dream over the fire till you fancy you see figures in it, or as you amuse yourselves in an idle hour with the beautiful patterns

that the frost has traced on your window, till each pane of glass becomes to you like a very story-book with pictures,—so these Eastern shepherds looked up into the sky, hour after hour, till they fancied they saw strange figures drawn out by the position of the stars. And they talked together about these figures, and gave them names. Is the same constellation mentioned again in the book of Job?"

Constance. Yes, in chapter xxxviii. 31, 32. "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?"

"There is another constellation very clearly referred to in this same book of Job. Have you got so far in 'Middleton's Celestial Atlas,' as to know Draco, when you see it in the heavens?"

Kenneth. Draco, or the Dragon! Yes, long ago; but I am sure I never read of that in the Bible.

Constance. Nor I.

"Turn to chapter xxvi. 13."

Ella. "By his Spirit he hath garnished

the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent."

Constance. I never thought that meant the constellation.

Kenneth. But how plainly we see that now by the parallelism.

"Yes; the last clause gives an example of the way in which God has garnished or adorned the heavens. Thus, you see, even the Bible reminds us that men have given names to the constellations. Have any of the separate stars had names given to them?"

Kenneth. Oh! yes. Aldebaran, Arcturus, Sirius, Rigel, Lyra . . . . .

"Very good; we shall be content without any more. Constance, you were going to speak."

Constance. Arcturus is spoken of in the same verses in which we were reading of Orion and the Pleiades.

"The Pleiades, or Seven Stars, with their 'sweet influences,' are distinctly spoken of. The reference to Arcturus is more doubtful. It is generally thought that our translators

have not used the right word, and that they ought to have put Ursa Major, or the Great Bear. The Hebrew word literally means a bier, or funeral car; and thus it resembles the common name given to the Great Bear. Can you tell me what that is?"

Kenneth. Charles's Wain, because it was thought like a waggon drawn by horses.

"And if you look again at the thirty-eighth chapter of Job, you find mention made of 'Arcturus and *his sons.*' The stars that our country-folks look upon as the horses to draw the waggon, were regarded in old time as the sons or mourners following the bier."

Constance. That is very curious.

"Yes; but we must hasten on. Have astronomers named all the stars that they can see?"

Kenneth. No, not nearly half, nor a quarter of them.

"Of course they cannot give separate names to all, because we have seen that they cannot even count them one by one. But we are told of God, 'He calleth them

all by their names.' He does not overlook one. He knows them all apart, and cares for each one singly. How very true the next verse is; which of you will read it?"

Ella. "Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite."

"What 'power' He must have had, in order to create and preserve such countless worlds! What 'understanding' He must have, in order to keep a constant watch over each and all of them! Now tell me, does this almighty and all-wise God, who counts the stars, and calls them by their names, ever condescend to notice what is done on this earth?"

Ella. Yes, mamma, he counts the sparrows.*

"Ah! He counts the sparrows as well as the stars. He counts the very hairs of our head. He who knows the stars by name, knows His people by name too; 'He calleth His own sheep by name.'† Though our earth is but a tiny speck in His vast dominions, yet He looks at it, and looks even at its

* Matt. x. 29, 30. † John x. 3.

littlest things. Now for our contrast. Read the third verse of this psalm with the fourth."

Kenneth. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names."

"The same God who has these numerous worlds under His care, yet stoops to earth—stoops to the broken in heart—stoops to bind up their wounds himself. He is as great in His condescension and tenderness as He is in His wisdom and majesty. If you take either of these verses alone, you have a beautiful thought. We see how *kind* God is, when we read of His binding up the wounds of the broken-hearted. We see how *mighty* He is, when we read of His calling the stars by their names. But when we contrast the verses, they add to each other's beauty; we then see kindness added to power, and power added to kindness. When the third verse sheds its light on the one that follows, we see *kindness added to power,* and the power no longer fills us

with fear; we feel that if this God is our God, He is not too exalted to notice us, however mean, and insignificant, and helpless we may be. And then when the fourth verse casts its brightness back on the verse before it, we see *power added to kindness.* The God who is willing to bind up the broken-hearted is also able to do it, for He is the God whose wondrous might is seen 'in every rolling star.' How delightful it is thus to think of God's power and His condescension together! Some men are too high to notice us; some are too weak to help us. But it is not so with God. Though He is so mighty, yet He stoops tenderly to our low estate; though He is so tender, yet He is mighty to protect us."

CHAPTER IX.

SUCCESSIVE VERSES; OR, MARK THE CONNECTION.

EXAMPLES of contrasted verses had not been difficult to find. Ella's was taken from Proverbs iv. 18, 19: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." Constance had chosen Isaiah iii. 10, 11: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Kenneth read the beautiful verses in Jeremiah xvii. 5–8: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and

whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

It was a surprise to the children when Mrs Forbes asked to look once again at the letter Ella had that morning received from their papa. He had started on the Saturday for London, where he was to stay a few days. On his arrival, he had sent off a few lines to his boy; on Monday, he wrote to Constance; and now a third letter had arrived for Ella, announcing his speedy return with an uncle who lived a few miles from their house. It had reached them at breakfast-time; it had been read and

talked over; so they could not help wondering why their mamma wished to see it again at such a time. But their surprise did not last long. She had a reason, and a good one. It happened that the little girl in her eager impatience to open "the first letter that ever came by post for her all alone," had broken the adhesive envelope very hastily; and the note having stuck to it was torn also. Mrs Forbes opened it, and said, "Ella, let us read this part again." The words stood thus—

Tell mamma
to have supper ready for the travellers
on Thursd ing. It will likely
be late before comes home; so
that he will not xpect to see his dear
children till next morning, and she
had better not let them sit up.

"Look at it carefully; how do you know that it is papa who is coming home to-morrow?"

Ella. The letter says, "It will be late before papa comes home."

"Nay; you are putting in a word that I cannot see."

Ella. The word "papa" is torn out, but you know it means that.

"How can I be sure that it was not written 'before uncle comes?'"

Ella. Oh! I wish I had not torn the letter! what shall I do?

Kenneth. Nonsense, Ella; don't you see it's quite plain? for it goes on to say, "So he will not expect to see his dear children," —but uncle George has no children; so it must be papa.

Mrs Forbes consented to this; "but," she said, "here is another word partly torn; is it to-morrow morning or to-morrow evening that he hopes to arrive?"

Ella. Oh! the evening; for he asks you to have supper ready.

Constance. And he says we are not to sit up; so he must mean evening.

"Very well. Another time, Ella, you had better open your letter more carefully. Suppose papa had wished Thomas to take the brougham down to meet him at the station, and you had torn out the very piece on which the hour was written down,

we should have had no means of knowing what train was meant. But happily in this case all is clear."

Kenneth. Mamma, I saw by your face the whole time that you knew all about it quite well.

"Then you must have been suspecting that I wished to make some use of this to help us in our Bible-lesson. I will tell you what I was thinking of. Just as we found out the missing words of the letter by what went before, and what went after, so we may often discover the true meaning of a passage by carefully looking to see what precedes, and what follows it."

Kenneth. I have heard of that before; is it not called "looking at the context?"

"Yes; sometimes what goes before and after is called 'the context,'—from *con* and *text*—that which goes with the text. Sometimes it is called 'the connection'—that which is connected, or linked together in sense. Let us take our example from Lamentations i. 12."

Kenneth. "Is it nothing to you, all ye

that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

"This is a very sorrowful verse, just such as you would expect to find in a book that goes by so sad a name—the Lamentations. Now on merely reading the verse by itself, as you have done, apart from the connection, we find that some one is speaking whose misery is most intense, but who is wholly disregarded by all that pass by. We need therefore to ask the question which the Ethiopian eunuch put to Philip." . . . .

Constance. "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?"

"This is exactly what we want to know. We ask, Who is the speaker here? who is it that endured such woe? who is it that complains of being unnoticed and uncared for in the midst of woe? Can any of you tell me?"

Constance. I think I have heard these words used of Jesus Christ.

"Very likely you have. They are often so used. And they might truly enough describe the acuteness of His anguish, the singularity of His sorrow. No one else has ever suffered as He did. Other men bear their own burden; but He had to bear the burdens and carry the sorrows of a sinful world. You remember the verse we often sing,—

'See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er *such* love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?'

But tell me now how His sufferings were regarded by those that passed by?"

Ella. They mocked Him.

"Ah! they thought He was no better than an ordinary criminal. They saw His wounds, they heard His cries, but they hid as it were their faces from Him. They looked indeed, but it was not with a look of concern, a look of pity, a look of wishfulness to help. They 'stared' on Him with brutal curiosity;* they 'laughed' at

* Ps. xxii. 17.

Him in bitterest derision;* they 'watched' Him, but it was only to prevent His rescue or escape."†

Constance. As we were walking home a Sunday or two ago, Miss Miller said that perhaps some of those who stood beside Christ and mocked Him were those whose sight had been restored by Him, and whose lips He had opened. Do you think that was possible?

"No doubt it may have been so. It is not in the power of miracles to change the heart even of those on whom they are wrought. We read of nine lepers, who did not so much as return to give thanks when Christ had healed them. And there may have been the like ingratitude in the case of many who had been blind and dumb. You see, then, that the verse I asked you to read might very well refer to the 'Man of sorrows.' In studying the Bible, however, we have not to ask what any passage *might* mean, but rather what it actually *does* mean. We want to know what God

* Ps. xxii. 7. † Matt. xxvii. 36.

really intended by it, when He caused it to be written down in His book. This is to be found out by the connection. Let us look first at the preceding context, and see what had been said before. Read the first verse of the chapter."

Constance. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!"

"The beginning of the seventh verse will show you the name of this city."

Ella. "Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her."

"In the ninth verse we are told that this was a punishment for her sin; she had not 'remembered her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully.' Then she is represented as speaking,—'O Lord, behold my affliction!' The next two verses again

describe her sorrow, and once more she cries, 'See, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile.' This brings us to the text we are wanting to understand. Can you tell me now who is speaking in this twelfth verse?"

Kenneth. Yes; it is Jerusalem.

"Very right. We may prove it further by the subsequent context. Let us see what follows. In how many more verses is Jerusalem described as bewailing her own miserable state?"

Constance. Nine times; that is, in every verse to the end of the chapter except one.

"Nothing can be clearer than that the same speaker goes on throughout. Notice too the fifteenth verse; 'My young men,' —'all my mighty men;'—these expressions plainly form part of the complaint of a city, or nation, whose men of war have been cut off. We have, therefore, no doubt that our text refers to Jerusalem's sorrow. Let us see what Jerusalem says about it, and let us prove that what she says is true. The best way will be to

divide the verse into three parts. It contains, first, a question; then, an appeal; and then, a confession."

Kenneth. The QUESTION was, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

"We find from these words that *Jerusalem's affliction was unregarded.* Those who knew of it were not moved with compassion. They saw it as they 'passed;' but yet they 'passed by,' and took no heed of it. Have you read in the New Testament of any who thus looked on a sufferer, and yet went on their way unconcerned?"

Ella. The priest and the Levite, who found the man that fell among thieves on the road to Jericho.*

"What wicked feeling could have led them to be so cruel?"

Constance. Selfishness.

"Yes; since the days of Cain, who cried 'Am I my brother's keeper?' there have always been cold and selfish hearts, that have refused to pity their neighbour's distress, and to relieve their neighbour's

* Luke x. 31, 32.

wants. Can you find me any verse to prove that Jerusalem really had cause to complain of being unpitied? Look at Psalm cxxxvii. 3."

Constance. "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

"Another passage tells us that God was angry with the heathen for this conduct. You will find it in Zech. i. 15."

Ella. "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction."

"They did indeed help it forward. Misery was bad enough; yet they added mockery to it. There were, however, some others who ought to have stretched out a helping hand. The men of Edom were of the same family as Israel: both claimed Isaac as their common ancestor: and this ought to have given rise to a brotherly feeling, and to acts of brotherly kindness. But it was not so. See what God says to

Edom in Obadiah's prophecy, verses 12 to 14."

Kenneth. "But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger:" . . . .

"That means, 'thou shouldst not have looked on carelessly and unpityingly.'"

Kenneth. "Neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction: neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldst not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldst not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress."

"Poor Jerusalem! her bitter cup was indeed full to overflowing. No wonder, when all around her had joined to heap up

the measure of her sorrows, she should have cried so dolefully, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?' Such sorrow had not always been her portion. She had known better times. Formerly her nobles had reposed at night on beds of ivory, and reclined during the day on sumptuous couches. They had fared on the best of the flock, and the fattest of the herd. Wine in abundance had been drunk at their feasts; and on their persons had been poured forth the most fragrant ointments. Their joy had found its utterance in music and in songs; while all fear of coming evil had been banished from their thoughts. But in the height of their prosperity, the prophet Amos was sent to pronounce a 'woe to them that are at ease in Zion.' Look at the sixth chapter of his prophecy, and tell me what accusation he brings against them in the sixth verse."

Ella. "They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph?" But, mamma, had not Joseph died long before?

"This does not refer to Joseph himself,

but to his descendants,—or rather to the ten tribes, of which Joseph's descendants formed a part. Sometimes these ten tribes were called 'Ephraim,' from Joseph's younger son. But what were they most commonly called?"

Kenneth. Israel. And the other two tribes were called Judah.

"It was Israel's affliction, then, for which the men of Jerusalem were not grieved. God's judgments had been descending on the ten tribes. Famine and drought, mildew and blight, locust and pestilence, had wrought great desolations among them. But Judah laid it not to heart. Her neighbour's sorrows were as nothing to her; and now her's are as nothing to all them that pass by. The unpitying has justly become the unpitied. But let us pass on from the question to the APPEAL."

Constance. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me."

"This tells us that *Jerusalem's affliction was unequalled,*—at least in her own opi-

nion. Do men generally think their own troubles greater than other people's?"

Ella. Yes, mamma, like the man you once read to us about, out of the "Tract Magazine," who thought nobody was so badly off as he.

"Well—let us hear whether you can go on."

Ella. And then he dreamed that he was carrying a heavy cross on his shoulders, and that he was taken into a room filled with crosses of all sizes, and was told to choose any one he liked to have instead of his own. But when he had tried ever so many, and found one too long, and another set with spikes, and so on, at last he came to one which was better than any he had been trying; and after all, it was only his old one that he had taken up again without knowing.

"We must find out, then, whether Jerusalem's sorrow was really so unexampled, or whether she only fancied it greater than the sorrow of other cities and other nations. What was the great trouble which the pro-

phet Jeremiah describes in this book of Lamentations?"

Kenneth. The captivity into Babylon.

"Captivity was not in itself an altogether unusual thing. Many a whole city, and many a whole district, have been bared of their inhabitants. Thus the Amalekites, when they invaded David's retreat at Ziklag, burned the city, and carried away all whom they found in it.* The populous city of No, and the mighty Nineveh †—Moab ‡ too, and Egypt ‖—even Babylon § itself—were subjected to this fate. But we must bear in mind, that grievous as was captivity to any people it must have been doubly so to the Jews. Can you tell why?"

Constance. Because the Jews were taken away from their temple.

"Not only so, but that temple itself had been burned, and its sacred and precious vessels carried away. The pious Jew might

* 1 Sam. xxx. 1–3.
† Nah. iii. 7–10.
‡ Jer. xlviii. 7, 11, 12, 46.
‖ Jer. xliii. 11, xlvi. 19.
§ Isa. xlvii. 1, 2.

still in the land of his exile offer prayer unto the God of heaven, as . . . . . "

Kenneth. As Nehemiah did.

"Or, like Daniel, he might open his window toward Jerusalem, and pray toward the ruins of the holy temple. But no sacrifices were being offered, no priest was ministering, no worshippers were assembling in the place where God's name had been recorded. All the set feasts of the Jewish religion were suspended. No passover-lamb was slain, no pentecost observed, no tabernacles reared. Year after year the great day of atonement returned, but there was no mercy-seat sprinkled with blood, there was no scape-goat let loose as the sign of reconciliation. The jubilee year too; how often did that occur during the captivity?"

Constance. Once.

"I believe once only; but when it did return, no silver trumpets sounded the joyous notes of liberty. Seeing, then, how captivity was thus embittered to the Jews, by their being deprived of all their outward

religious privileges, we find they had cause enough to cry, 'See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.' Daniel said something very like this, chapter ix., close of verse 12."

Kenneth. "For under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem."

"We shall find a reason for this sad state of things, if we now take the third part of our text."

Constance. The CONFESSION:—"Wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

"Here we see that *Jerusalem's affliction was not undeserved.* Matthew Henry has well said, 'Jeremiah's lamentation in the name of the church, Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow? must suppose another like question, Was ever sin like unto my sin?' And accordingly, we find that in this verse, Jerusalem not only traces her sorrows to Jehovah's hand, but confesses that they are the result of Jehovah's anger. How had that anger been aroused?"

Ella. By the people's sins.

"And was there any one sin for which God was especially angry with them?"

Kenneth. Yes, their following after idols.

"That was it. They had been chosen to be God's peculiar people, in order to be witnesses to the great truth that the Lord Jehovah is one Lord. Their example ought to have been a constant rebuke to idolatry. But instead of this, they followed the customs of the heathen around, until at length they went so far that in Judah every city had its separate god, and in Jerusalem every street had its separate altar to Baal.*

Ella. O mamma, that *was* dreadful!

"It was indeed; and we cannot be surprised that God's anger was kindled, and that his judgments were poured out. It is true that God had pity on his repenting people, and brought them back to their own land; but it is no less true that the way of transgressors is hard. Keep this lesson in mind. Let Jerusalem's bitter complaining remind you that sin and sor-

* Jer. xi. 13.

row always go hand in hand. You cannot admit the one to your presence, without sooner or later finding out that the other has entered too. Now, shall I tell you what to search for by to-morrow morning?"

Kenneth. Please, mamma. Something to make us look at the context?

"Yes, I will give you three questions—one a-piece. Here they are, written down on separate papers for you: 'Three times in the Bible we read the words, What is man? find the three texts, and judge from the connection whether the meaning is exactly the same in each.' That will do for you, Ella. Now, Constance, here is yours: 'Four times Jesus tells us that the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant greater than his lord. Search for the verses, and decide from the context how many of them have a different sense.' Then yours, Kenneth, will be this: 'Twice Jesus tells us, that if the eye be evil, the whole body will be full of darkness; what difference does the context show between these passages?'"

CHAPTER X.

QUOTED VERSES; OR, PROPHECY FULFILLED.

ELLA had found the three verses which ask, "What is man?" and her brother had helped her to compare them. "In Psalm viii. 4," she said, "they are words of praise to thank God for stooping to be kind to man; and so they are in Psalm cxliv. 3; but in Job vii. 17, 18, they are words of complaint."

"Very fair," was Mrs Forbes's verdict; "indeed quite as well as I could expect. These verses all agree in speaking of man's littleness. And the two in Psalms both join to praise God for his condescending love and care. In the eighth Psalm, David speaks of the littleness or insignificance of man's *nature:* 'When I consider thy

heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him?' In the other psalm, he speaks of the littleness or shortness of man's *life:* 'Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away.' Job also spoke of man's littleness; but instead of being thankful that God noticed him, he murmured as if God noticed him too much: 'What is man that thou shouldst visit him every morning?' The word 'visitest' is used, in these different verses, in its two different senses; did you observe that?"

Ella. No, mamma.

Kenneth. I see it now. In the eighth Psalm, it means visiting in *mercy;* in Job it means visiting in *judgment.*

"Yes; poor Job was looking on the dark side of things, and forgot that it was better, far better for a man to be visited even with the strokes of God's rod, than to have it said, 'Let him alone.' Have you

found your four verses, Constance, about the disciple and his master?"

Constance. The first is in Matthew x. 24, 25, and that is about persecution. John xv. 20 seems to be just the same repeated. But where it comes, in John xiii. 16, after Jesus had been washing the disciples' feet, it teaches us to be like him in humility. The other is Luke vi. 40; but I could not quite make that out.

"What is the subject referred to in the immediate context?"

Constance. The verse before it is about the blind leading the blind, and the verse after it is about watching our own faults before we tell our neighbours about theirs.

"Then both those verses teach us that a consistent example should go along with all our efforts to do good. And these words, 'The disciple is not above his master,' suitably come in here to show that our example will be followed;—that those who learn from us will not be likely to do better than they see us do; so that for their sakes

we should set before them a very high model in the holiness of our life."

Constance. Thank you, mamma;—then these four texts give us three meanings, do they not?

"Yes; they teach a lesson of patient endurance; a lesson of humble charity; and a lesson of consistent piety. Kenneth, what answer have you found to your question?"

Kenneth. Mine was about the eye being evil, and the whole body full of darkness. The two verses are Matt. vi. 22, and Luke xi. 34. But I could only find out from the context that they were spoken to different kinds of people. In the one, Christ spoke to those who were laying up earthly treasures, and trying to serve two masters. In the other, he spoke to those who would not believe without they saw a sign from heaven.

"There you have the exact difference. From the one we learn that the eye of the soul may be blinded by covetousness and earthly-mindedness; while the other teaches

that it may be blinded also by prejudice and unbelief. So that if we wish our eye to be single, we must watch, not against one thing only, but against everything that would darken our minds and becloud our spiritual sight. I am glad to see you have understood so well how the connection throws light on any verse; for you will find this of immense use in studying the Bible. We shall find it useful in our lesson to-day. I want to talk to you a little about those verses of the Old Testament that are quoted, referred to, written over again, in the Gospels or Epistles."

Kenneth. Do you mean when it speaks of some prophecy that was fulfilled?

"Yes; I should like you to begin by looking at the first chapter of Hebrews. Tell me how many quotations Paul there makes from the Old Testament?"

Constance. Seven.

"One of those—the one in the seventh verse—refers, you see, to angels; but to whom does the apostle apply the other six?"

Constance. To Christ, as the Son of God.

"And are we to understand, then, that all these six passages, as they stand where Paul found them, in the book of Samuel and in the Psalms, really were intended to apply to Christ?"

Kenneth. Yes, mamma, they were all prophecies of Christ, were they not?

"Undoubtedly they were; or else Paul would have had no right to use them as he did. He was proving the divine nature of Christ, and he proved it by these very texts. If they had not been texts that really referred to Christ, they would not have been proofs at all; and Paul's argument would have been a bad one. But how do we know that the proofs which the apostle used must have been good ones?"

Constance. Because he wrote as he was "moved by the Holy Ghost."

"Exactly so. The same Spirit who had taught the Psalmist what to write, also taught Paul which of the Psalmist's words to choose as proofs. So that whenever we read any of the prophecies quoted in such a chapter as this, we are quite sure of their

meaning, and we know very well that they refer to Jesus. But now I must show you that it may be a little different with the predictions quoted in the Gospels. The Evangelists wrote by the help of the same Holy Spirit; but they wrote for a different purpose. They were writing history, not argument. And thus we find that they sometimes bring forward passages of the Old Testament, which do not seem to have been actually written in reference to the life of Christ, but which the life of Christ may have put them in mind of. So that when we find them referring to any passage in the Old Testament, we must look back to the part whence they take it, and examine the connection in which it there stands, if we wish to know whether it was a positive prophecy of Christ or not. Let us try an example or two from Matthew's Gospel. What is the first quotation he makes?"

Kenneth. In chapter i. 22, 23: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the pro-

phet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us." That is taken from Isaiah vii. 14.

"Well, turn to the verse in Isaiah, and tell me to whom that prophecy was given."

Ella. To King Ahaz.

"Or rather to the people of Judah in the hearing of their king. What was the occasion of its being given?"

Kenneth. It was given as a sign that God would deliver them.

"Yes; Isaiah had been sent to comfort the king and people amid their fears, and to give them a promise of deliverance from their enemies. Ahaz was then invited to choose whatever sign he liked in proof of the promise being a true one. He might, like Gideon, have asked" . . . .

Constance. . . . . for a fleece of wool to be wet with dew while all the ground was dry; or dry, while all the ground was wet.

"Or else, like Hezekiah, he might have asked" . . . .

Kenneth. . . . . for the shadow to go back on the dial ten degrees.

"Anything he pleased he might have asked, when God so graciously gave him permission. But he refused to do it. He pretended to be too modest. The truth, however was, that in his inmost heart he did not care for a sign. He distrusted God's promise, and was more anxious to have man's help. At this very time he had sent, or was just going to send, to a king called Tiglath-pileser to come and help him.* He pretended that he would not tempt God by asking a sign, while all the time he was tempting God by putting his trust in an arm of flesh. But God's grace was not yet exhausted; he had a message of love to his troubled people; and he bid his prophet turn away from the unbelieving king, to tell the men of Judah that God himself would give them a sign; and it was this wonderful sign,

* 2 Kings xvi. 7.

that a virgin should have a son, and call his name Emmanuel. Now, did Isaiah speak these words as a prophecy of Christ?"

Kenneth. I always thought so, mamma.

"And I see no reason why you should not think so still. We do not read that these wondrous words ever had a fulfilment, till Mary became the mother of the infant-Saviour. He alone was born of a virgin, and He alone was called Emmanuel, or God with us. There is a little difficulty, however, to be explained. Here was a prediction that the men of Judah should be delivered from their enemies. Here was also a sign to confirm that prediction. But, in order of time, which was to happen first,—the fulfilment of the promise, or the arrival of the sign?"

Ella. The sign must have been first.

Kenneth. But it was not, though. For it says in the eighth verse that their enemies would be destroyed in "three score and five"—that is, sixty-five years; and it was hundreds of years after Isaiah's time before Christ was born. How could

Christ's birth be a sign of what was to happen before it?

"It seems strange on first looking at it. But it is not the only case of the kind."

Kenneth. Oh! mamma, where is there another like it?

"In Exodus iii. 12. Ella will read it."

Ella. "And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

"Moses had been commissioned to bring the Israelites out of the land of their bondage; but when he was first told of it, he hesitated and doubted, saying, 'Who am I that I should lead them forth?' and then God gave him this token—a token which he could not see at that time—a token which he could not see till *after* he had executed the commission about which he was in doubt. But yet it was a sufficient token. Though he dreaded the commission, he no longer doubted it. He felt that if God could predict the greater, he could

also predict the less; if he could foretell that the people would go towards Sinai, and get safe to Sinai, he must also be true when he foretold their getting away from Egypt. May it not have been thus, also, with Isaiah's prophecy of Christ? He had just announced to the people their deliverance from Syria; and how could they doubt the truth of this, when he went on to speak of the greater deliverance they were all looking for; and when he told them more about the expected Deliverer than had ever yet been known? Many of their prophets had told of the Messiah, but none had predicted the wonderful manner of His birth, or the glorious name that should be given to Him. If Isaiah could give them all this new knowledge about the coming Saviour, the people would no longer doubt what he had been telling them about the speedy defeat of the Syrians. Matthew's first quotation, then, we may safely regard as originally spoken concerning Christ. Take another example from Matt. ii. 17,18."

Constance. "Then was fulfilled that

which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

"Whence is that taken?"

Ella. From Jeremiah xxxi. 15.

"In how many verses does the prophet Jeremiah go on speaking of these afflicted mothers?"

Constance. In three verses; from the fifteenth to the seventeenth; but Matthew only quotes the first of them.

"And would the others have suited Matthew's purpose, as applicable to the children whom Herod ordered to be slain?"

Kenneth. No, it could not be said of them, "They shall come again from the land of the enemy," and "Thy children shall come again to their own border." That referred to the Jews being brought back from Babylon, did it not?

"Yes, that is the subject of the entire connection; and the voice in Rama that Jeremiah speaks of, is evidently the lamen-

tation caused by the captivity. But when Matthew was recording the murder of the infants in the villages round Bethlehem, he referred to those few words of Jeremiah that suited his purpose. The prophet's description of maternal grief had again come true, and was again fulfilled or realised; so that it was impossible better to describe the mourning at Bethlehem than in the inspired words of Jeremiah. Here, you see, is an instance in which the words quoted do not seem in their original connection to have referred at all to Christ, or to the circumstances of his life, but which are brought in only as beautifully and strikingly appropriate. You can look out some more quotations, and see whether, in the Old Testament, the verses clearly refer to Christ. Remember, that if the quotation occurs in a piece of reasoning, like the chapter in Hebrews, then we are sure it is used in the exact sense in which it was first meant. But if it is made incidentally, just as a passing thought, without an evident design to prove anything, then

you may do well to find out whether it is an exact fulfilment, or only an illustration, by looking at the Old Testament to see in what connection it there stands, and what meaning it there conveys."

Constance. But have not some prophecies a double meaning?

"That is a very difficult question; and I should not like to give a decided answer either way. It is a point that good and holy men differ about; and I cannot find any text in the Bible that positively tells us."

Kenneth. Still you have an opinion about it, mamma, one way or the other, have you not?

"As far as my own private opinion goes, I rather think I stand midway between the two extreme views. It does seem to me most likely that where God has given an actual prophecy about anything, he meant it to apply just to that one thing alone. But then such predictions are often linked with great general principles; and though the prophecy may refer to one

special time, the principle may be applied at all times. I will tell you how I like to think about this. I often fancy a pious Jew, in the time of the captivity, calling to mind the words he has heard in the great congregation. He thinks over the third chapter of Exodus, and draws sweet consolation from the words of comfort, 'I know their sorrows,' 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt.' He feels that the same covenant-God sees *his* affliction, and knows *his* sorrows. He passes on to the promise, 'And I am come down to deliver them up out of that land.' Those words contain no direct promise to him; they were spoken of the captives in Egypt, and of them only. But he knows that Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and others of the prophets, had uttered similar predictions concerning the deliverance from Babylon. The former promise, therefore, reminds him of the latter, so that when he calls to mind how his forefathers were delivered from Egyptian bondage, it strengthens his believing hope that he and

his countrymen shall in like manner be rescued from the Babylonish captivity."

Constance. And is this the way in which we may read the prophecies?

"It is just in this way that I ponder over them. I find some that have been fulfilled, and then I look for no other fulfilment of them; but yet I see in them such proofs of God's mercy and compassion, that they still serve to strengthen my confidence, to inflame my love, to increase my hope, and to heighten my joy. This subject of prophecy is one that you will think over as you grow older; and then you will form your own opinion, as to whether it can have a double meaning or not. Only take care, whatever conclusion you arrive at, that you do not hold it so positively as to condemn all who differ from you. It has often grieved me to hear young people talking with self-conceit on this matter, and setting themselves up as if they alone were right."

Constance. Miss Miller was telling us about a cousin of hers, who says she can

get no good from those preachers who do not think as she does about the millennium, and about Christ's second coming.

"That is precisely the spirit I am desirous you should avoid. It is right you should by and by study these subjects; but let it always be in the spirit, 'Lord, what I know not, teach thou me;' and always with the remembrance, that these are not the *most* important things. The most important are those which teach us the way to heaven; and (blessed be God!) that path is made so plain, that 'the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.' And now, my dear children, carry away with you this thought,—that the God of the prophecies is the God of the promises also. He who has already fulfilled so many of the former, is able and willing to fulfil the latter. He who first predicted, and then accomplished, the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt and from Babylon, has pledged himself to deliver souls from Satan's power. He has promised that He will cast out none that come unto Him

through Christ. Do not doubt His word, but go and seek at His hand the deliverance you need."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOSPEL KEY; OR, THE TWO TESTAMENTS.

Kenneth. We have found more prophecies than we shall have time to tell you; but there is one we should like to ask you about.

"Let me hear your difficulty, and I will remove it if I can."

Kenneth. In Matthew ii. 15, the words, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," are taken from Hosea xi. 1; but there they are spoken of Israel's being delivered from Egypt. Why does Matthew apply them to Christ?

"Because the God who had not left Israel, the child of his adoption, a captive in Egypt, would take even more care not to leave Christ, his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, an exile in that land.

Although Christ was not brought out from Egypt in the same manner as the Israelites, yet He was brought out from it by the same means. The proof of God's fatherly care and goodness was alike in each case. And in each case was seen the working of His mighty hand. It was probably for this reason that the inspired writer of the gospel paused in his narrative to note down the resemblance, and thus to call our attention to the unchanging goodness of God's providence."

Kenneth. Thank you, mamma. What are we to have to-day?

"There is something else that links the Old and New Testament together beside the prophecies. Can you tell what I am thinking of?"

Constance. The types, perhaps.

"And what is a type?"

Kenneth. A figure, from the Greek word *tupos.*

Constance. Is it not what Paul calls "a shadow of good things to come"?*

* Heb. x. 1; Col. ii. 17.

"Yes: in other words, a Scripture type is 'an acted prophecy,' a prophecy given not in words but in deeds, a prophecy hidden in some event or in some ceremony. Can you tell me any of the Old Testament types, and the New Testament truths which they foreshadowed?"

Constance. The sacrifices were types of Christ, and so was the high-priest; and the passover; and the scape-goat that we heard of on Sunday.

Ella. And Canaan was a type of heaven.

Kenneth. And Israel a type of God's people; and Zion of the church. And David and Moses were types of Christ; and so were the brazen serpent, and Noah's ark, and Jacob's ladder, and . . . . .

"Stop; you are going on a little too fast. This is not quite so easy a matter as you seem to think. It is very possible to fancy a type where none was intended; and on the other hand, quite as possible to look at the type only, and forget the antitype—the substance it was designed to shadow forth."

Constance. How can we tell what were meant as types?

"It is not possible to lay down a fixed rule, because the Bible has not done so. There is one point, however, on which we are quite certain:—every thing that was purposely appointed in order to prefigure Christ's offices or Christ's work must have been a type. This we cannot for a moment doubt. The sacrifices of the law, the sprinkling of blood, the washings with water, the anointing with oil, the altar, the priesthood, and such like, were unquestionably typical. They were evidently but shadows. Apart from Christ and from the gospel, they had no meaning at all. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Outward purification could not make a man acceptable to the heart-searching God. These things were of no use, except as the eye of faith looked through them to that which was represented by them. But there is some uncertainty about other things, such as the brazen serpent, the manna, Noah's ark, &c. These

may in many respects remind us of Christ, but yet they were in themselves something more than shadows. The brazen serpent was a real, though a strange mode of healing. The manna furnished actual food. The ark afforded an effectual shelter. Each of these things had a positive end, which it fully answered. Many people call them types; but perhaps it would be safer to call them emblems; because they did not necessarily lead the thoughts onward to the coming Saviour. I tell you these things because I want you to get a habit of thinking and speaking accurately. But the most profitable thing for us to do, will be to study something which we know to have been typical. Let us take the ceremonies appointed for the cleansing of a leper. You will find an account of them in Leviticus xiv. Read it through, verse by verse."

Young reader, will you lay this book down, till you have taken your Bible and have read the chapter through, as Kenneth and his sisters did? If so, you will better understand and enjoy what follows.

"Now," said Mrs Forbes, "I shall see who has been reading attentively. But tell me first what terrible disease is here referred to?"

Ella. The leprosy.

"That was a complaint which showed itself on the skin. Was it incurable, or could it be healed?"

Constance. It could be healed, for this chapter tells what a leper was to do when he *was* cured.

"While the disease lasted, where did the leper live?"

Kenneth. He might not come into the camp, but had to go about with a covering on his upper lip, and had to cry 'Unclean, unclean,' to prevent people from coming near him, for fear they should catch his leprosy.

"Not exactly lest they should take the disease, but lest they should become ceremonially unclean."

Kenneth. Was it not catching, mamma?

"It is generally thought not. The leprosy of the present day is not considered

infectious. And there are one or two passages in the Bible, which seem to show that it was not so in former days. Wherever the law of Moses was not known, or was not strictly kept, there lepers were not shut out from the society of their fellow-men. Thus Naaman, though a leper, was captain of the King of Syria's army;* and Gehazi, though a leper for life, stood and talked with the King of Israel.† The reason why lepers were thus excluded by the Jewish law was, that God had marked this disease as the special type of sin. As sin is loathsome and defiling, so the leper was to be accounted unclean; and all who came in contact with him were to be reckoned unclean too. But, as you just now told me, the leprosy was in some instances removed. And here we have an account of the ceremony connected with the leper's cleansing. Though his disease was gone, his defilement had yet to be removed. Though he had been healed, he had yet to be purified. To whom did the

* 2 Kings v. 1. † 2 Kings v. 27, and viii. 4, 5.

law require that he should show himself?"

Ella. To the priest in the temple.

Kenneth. No, not in the temple; for it says in the third verse, that the priest was to go to him outside the camp.

"This might occasion a delay sometimes. The priest might be detained, or he might come slowly; and there the poor man who had been a leper might stand waiting, longing, looking for his arrival. At length he sees him in the distance. He begins to tremble lest any symptoms of the disease should yet be found remaining, and lest he should have all his hopes disappointed. The priest draws near, examines him, pronounces him healed, and proceeds to offer the required sacrifice. Of what did that consist?"

Constance. Of two birds.

"Two birds were taken, one of which was for sacrifice. It mattered not what kind, so long as they were 'clean' birds. There was to be no further delay. No time was to be lost in seeking for birds of

any particular sort. The first that came to hand, if they were but such as the law pronounced 'clean,' would avail. What other things were to be provided?"

Ella. Cedar-wood, scarlet, and hyssop.

"Cedar-wood was used as an emblem of renewed health. The cedar was a vigorous, long-lived tree; and its bark had a scent that was very sweet and pure. The hyssop was a plant that possessed purifying qualities. But now we must speak about the scarlet. You will want to know what it was, and how it was used. If I were to ask one of you to go and buy me some scarlet, you would ask me whether I meant scarlet silk, or scarlet wool, or scarlet thread, — because the word scarlet by itself describes only a colour. What material was here intended, you will find by consulting Hebrews ix. 19."

Constance. Scarlet wool.

"Just so. The scarlet wool was fastened to the end of a hyssop branch; and when this was dipped into the blood or the water that was to be sprinkled, the wool took up

the moisture without sucking it in; while the stalk of the hyssop enabled the priest conveniently to hold it up and wave it about. What was the priest to dip them into on this occasion?"

Kenneth. The blood of the one bird that had been slain.

"In what particular way was it to be slain?"

Constance. In an earthen vessel over running water.

"And can you tell me why *running* water was to be used?"

Constance. Because that is the purest kind.

"Very good. You will find that the same ceremony was used in the cleansing of a leprous house; and as the account of that is a little fuller, you will see in the fifty-first verse that the scarlet and hyssop were to be dipped, not only in the blood of the slain bird, but also in the running water. When this had been done, how often was the leper sprinkled with it?"

Kenneth. Seven times. That is the per-

fect number. I suppose that was to show that he was perfectly cleansed.

"Precisely so. Now tell me what else was to be dipped in the blood and in the water."

Ella. The other bird—the living one.

Kenneth. And then the living bird was to be set free.

" Set free, as a token of the liberty which the healed leper was to enjoy. It was not a means of his cleansing. He was first pronounced clean, and then the bird was let loose. I want you to notice the difference between the living bird we are speaking of, and the living goat mentioned in the sixteenth chapter. You heard on Sunday how the one goat slain denoted Christ as dying for us; and how the scape-goat which had the people's sins confessed over its head, and which was then carried right away into the wilderness, denoted Christ as bearing away the sins of the world. There is nothing of that kind here. The living bird had no sins confessed over it, no burden laid upon it. It was not carried forcibly away, but just set free and left to go whither

it would. The idea conveyed by this living bird when let loose is completely one of liberty and joy. Viewed as an emblem of the leprous man, it is most appropriate and beautiful. You can see the poor little bird that has been taken from its nest, fluttering with terror, beating its tiny wings, and struggling in vain to get away. It is laid hold of by the very hand that has just killed its companion; it is dipped into the blood and into the running water; then the priest unlooses his grasp; the captive stretches its wings, soars into the air, exults in its freedom, and reaching a place of safety, pours forth its joyous song of liberty. Even so had the poor leper been in bondage, banished from his home, exiled from the camp, and terrified lest death should be the termination of his sickness; but now the priest utters the glad words that declare him free; his heart leaps for gladness; and thankfully he turns his footsteps toward the camp from which for so long a season he has been excluded. But what limit was still set to his freedom?"

Constance. It says in the eighth verse that he might come into the camp at once, but that for the next seven days he might not go into his tent.

"It is not difficult to find a reason for this. It was right he should enter God's house before he entered his own. And why was it needful that seven days should pass before he entered the temple?"

Kenneth. For fear his complaint should return.

"That may have been one reason. And it was also in order to give time for further purification. He was again to shave off his hair, and wash his clothes, and cleanse his person, before he might go up to the courts of the Lord's house. All this was intended to remind him that he ought to serve God in the beauty of holiness. What more was he to do when the eighth day came?"

Kenneth. He was to take three lambs.

Constance. Or, if he was poor, one lamb and two birds.

"God always had compassion on the

poor. He did not require from them more than they could afford. But you see that from rich and poor alike he required the same *number*, though not the same *kind* of sacrifices. Rich and poor were alike to go through the same ceremony. As both were sinners, so both needed the same cleansing. The priest might not take extra pains with the cleansing of the rich; nor might he be careless in the sprinkling of the poor. He had to sprinkle each in the same way, and the same number of times. What was there remarkable in the sprinkling which took place on the eighth day?"

Kenneth. The priest took the blood and put it on the man's right ear, and his right thumb, and the great toe of his right foot; and then he touched all the same places over again with oil. What was that for, mamma?

"Oil was an emblem, sometimes of consecration, and sometimes of joy. Kings and priests were generally set apart to their office by anointing; and the cleansed leper was thus anointed with oil, because he was

bound to consider himself as set apart to the service of that God who had so mercifully healed him. The oil was put on these various parts of his body, to show that his whole person was to be devoted to God's service. But the sacrificial blood was applied *before* the oil, to show that his sins must be pardoned before his services could be accepted. You did not say any thing about the remainder of the oil being poured on his head; but you can easily imagine that in his case it would indeed be 'the oil of joy for mourning.'"

Constance. And after this he was free to go wherever he liked, was he not?

"Quite at liberty. Then, though not till then, he might go to his own tent, and rejoice in his own home. You have now seen all that was commanded for a leper's cleansing; and I hope you have understood that there was much in these observances very beautiful and suitable. But we have still to inquire into the spiritual lessons which are hid in these types. It is as if we were presented with a splendid and

exquisitely finished jewel-case. We are sure that there are precious gems within; but we must seek the right key to unlock it. Where can that key be found?"

Constance. In the New Testament.

"Tell me how far you can trace the meaning of these types."

Kenneth. The leprosy was a type of sin; and the sacrifices were types of Christ, whose blood was shed for the salvation of sinners.

"And what do sinners need beside pardon?"

Constance. They need the Holy Spirit to give them a new heart.

"That was typified by the clear running water. And what can you tell me about the living bird?"

Kenneth. You said it was a good emblem of the leper's freedom; so I suppose it was a type of the sinner's being set free.

"Most likely it was. Christ said, 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' He sets His people free from the curse of the law, from the

bondage of Satan, from the dominion of sin, and from the fear of death. But we must not forget that the cleansed leper was not free to go anywhere and everywhere. He had still a law to keep. And much as he longed to be at home, he had yet awhile to tarry abroad. So it is with the Christian. Though he is free, he must not abuse his freedom.* He is under a a law, though it is the law of liberty.† He has not yet reached his heavenly home; when he is admitted to those celestial mansions, to which his heart aspires, then he will better understand what is the glorious liberty of the children of God." ‡

Constance. How much meaning there is in every part of these types! It makes them so interesting.

"There is indeed a glorious fulness in what they teach. I should like you carefully to notice one thing more. We are plainly taught the *source* of this liberty. The bird was not set free till it had been

* 1 Pet. ii. 16. † James i. 25, and ii. 12.

‡ Rom. viii. 21.

dipped in the blood of the bird slain; nor did the leper's liberty commence until he had in like manner been sprinkled. And so the freedom Christians have is in consequence of Christ's death. There is one verse of which this chapter always reminds me,—1 Cor. i. 30. What is Christ there said to be made unto His people?"

Ella. "Wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

"Just take these three last ideas, and you have the very things set before us in the leper's first cleansing. There was the flowing blood; that reminds us of the 'righteousness' or justification which is provided for us through Christ's death. There was the running water; that reminds us of the 'sanctification' or holiness, which we have through receiving Christ's Spirit and following Christ's example. There was the liberated bird; that reminds us of the 'redemption' or freedom, which Christ has wrought out for His people."

Constance. And would you tell us what was taught by the service on the eighth day?

"The fact that a fresh sacrifice was then offered, may remind us that we need again and again to come to Christ for pardon. And the consecration of the leper with oil may show us how we are bound to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. Do not forget, dear children, that you have by nature a heart defiled with the leprosy of sin. Do not forget where you can obtain immediate cleansing. Do not forget how joyous is the freedom of those whose transgressions are blotted out, and to whom there is no condemnation. Seek the Saviour without delay, and spend the rest of your days in His service."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCOPE; OR, THE TWO PARABLES.

"YOU gave me so many types yesterday," said Mrs Forbes, "that I scarcely expect to find you have been searching for fresh ones."

"Yes, we have," replied Constance, "but we were puzzled about one thing. Were David, and Solomon, and Moses, and Joshua types? I have often heard them called so; but then they did not live only to be shadows of Christ; for they were real men, and had their own work to do."

"If you speak of them as to their *individual* character and *private* history, then they cannot be regarded as meant for types of the Saviour. No sacrifices were fitted to represent Him, but such as were

'without blemish and without spot;' whereas the men of whom you speak were polluted and stained by many and grievous transgressions. As men, they were like all other men. Their lives were full of human passions, and human interests, and human mistakes, and human sins. If, however, you think only of their *official* character and *public* history, there you can rightly trace foreshadowings of the future. Aaron, as a high-priest, was designed to lead on the thoughts to Christ, the High-Priest of the Christian Church. Moses was raised up to be a prophet, because the Lord God would in after times raise up One like unto him; One who could like him speak with God face to face, and therefore could like him declare God's mind and will to the people. Joshua succeeded Moses, inherited his authority, and led the Israelites into Canaan,—thus performing a work which typified Christ's bringing home His ransomed ones to their heavenly rest. David was raised up to be Israel's warlike and victorious king, that

he might prefigure the conquests of his Son and Lord. Solomon occupied the same throne, and was distinguished by his wisdom and his wealth, that he might shadow forth the greater righteousness and higher glory of Him who was to be King in the spiritual Zion."

Kenneth. But then, mamma, other men beside David and Solomon were kings over God's people; were they all types of Christ?

"They are not generally so regarded. Perhaps it is because their regal glory was so eclipsed by the successes of David and the prosperity of Solomon, as to be entirely concealed from our view. Or, more likely, it is because, after Solomon's days, Israel and Judah were divided; and then the kings ceased to be fit types of Christ, whose church is 'one fold under one shepherd,' one kingdom under one king. Ella looks as if our new subject would interest her more."

Ella. What is it to be, dear mamma?

"There is another way of studying the

Bible beside those I have explained to you. I have not told you anything about paying attention to what is called the 'scope' of a passage."

Ella. What does that mean?

"The term 'scope' is derived from a Greek word, which means first a mark or target; and then an aim, a purpose, a design. You have seen Kenneth sometimes shooting his arrows at random, letting them go here or there or anywhere; but at other times he sets himself to aim at his target, and always tries to hit the very centre of it. Now, when you read the Bible, you must not fancy that the sacred writers were allowed to sit down and write at random just whatever ideas happened to come first. You must recolleet that they always had some object at which they were aiming, some special point which they kept in view. And you must always try to discover what was their exact scope or design."

Constance. Is it not rather difficult to find that out?

"Not always. If the writing or book is a short one, its purpose is easily ascertained. For example, turn to the book of Obadiah, and tell me its design?"

Kenneth. It looks as if it had two designs; it would reprove and warn the Edomites, and it would comfort the Israelites.

"Very good. Now tell me the scope of the Epistle to Philemon."

Ella. Oh! I know that, mamma; it was to persuade him to take back the servant that had run away from him.

"In some instances, the writer of a book sets out by expressly telling us his intention. What, for example, was Jude's design?"

Constance. He says it was to exhort men that they should "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," because false teachers were arising.

"What does the Preacher tell us to have been his aim in writing Ecclesiastes?"

Kenneth. To prove that "all is vanity."

"And why did Luke write his Gospel?"

"Oh! I see," said Constance, turning to it, "he begins by saying that there were many people giving such accounts, and therefore he wished to give a true one, as he had seen it all himself."

"There are other writers who tell us their design as plainly, but not just at the beginning. Thus the scope of John's Gospel you will find in chapter xx. 31."

Ella. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

"John's intention, you see, was to prove that Jesus was not a mere man."

Kenneth. Oh! yes; he begins his Gospel with that: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But I never thought before that he wrote the whole book to prove it.

"It would be interesting for you to read his Gospel through with that idea in your mind, and trace out how the various events and discourses recorded by John help to

confirm it. Does Peter tell us for what purpose he wrote his two Epistles? Look at 2 Peter iii. 1."*

Ella. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

"It was not his object, he says, to reveal new truth, or to follow out new lines of argument, but to gather up and enforce well-known truths which were in danger of being forgotten. It is not always, however, that the scope is thus clearly pointed out. Sometimes we have to find it for ourselves by carefully looking through a whole book, and noticing the connection that runs through all the chapters. Perhaps you can tell me Paul's design in writing his first Epistle to the Corinthians."

Kenneth. The first Epistle? oh! that is the one papa has just been reading at prayer-time in the evenings. Was it not to reprove the Corinthians for being so disorderly? they had contentions among them, and

* As also 2 Pet. i. 12, 13.

wicked people; and they let their women speak in the churches, and go with their heads uncovered; and they all wanted to speak at once in unknown tongues; and they got drunk, when they should have been solemnly taking the Lord's supper.

"Well, you have a clear idea of the scope of that Epistle. Though you do not find any verse which tells you Paul's design, yet by looking the epistle through, and comparing its parts, you get a general idea of it. In the same way you may discover the scope, not only of books, but of particular chapters. You may try this by yourselves, and when we next meet I should like you to give me the scope of whichever happens to be your favourite chapter. To-day I shall ask you to read to me two parables, the object of which is pretty nearly the same. One is in the Old Testament, Isaiah v. 1–7."

These verses were read one by one; and then the New Testament parable recorded in Luke xiii. 6–9.

Mrs Forbes proceeded: "Here you find

one parable about a vineyard, and the other about a fig-tree. But you will see how much they are alike, if you notice the four principal things which they describe. They both agree in telling of care bestowed, of produce expected, of hopes disappointed, and of anger displayed."

Kenneth. First, THE CARE BESTOWED. The vineyard was fenced. . . .

Ella. What was that for?

"To keep out the wild beasts that would have trodden it down. And what more was done?"

Kenneth. The stones were gathered out, which would have hindered the vines from growing. And a tower was built; was that for the vinedresser to live in?

"Yes; that he might watch it constantly, and keep it from harm by night and by day."*

Kenneth. And a wine-press was ready for treading out the grapes.

"It will be time enough to speak of the wine-press by and by. That was not

* Isa. xxvii. 3.

needed to make the vine grow well. We are talking now of the pains taken with it. You have not noticed how carefully the vine was chosen; and how well it was planted,—not thrown down upon the soil to take its chance of putting forth its roots into the ground. Moreover it was good ground; the spot was well chosen 'in a very fruitful hill.' Now, can you see the same idea of diligent preparation hinted at in the other parable?"

Constance. The fig-tree was planted too, and as it was in a vineyard, it must have been in good ground, better than if it had stood by the wayside. And the husbandman knew how to "dig about it and dung it."

"Nothing was neglected in either case, that could help to make the trees fruitful. The question might well be asked, 'What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?' Of whom were the vineyard and the fig-tree designed to be emblems?"

Ella. Of the Jews, I suppose.

Kenneth. It says so, Ella, in the seventh verse: "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant."

"God had placed His people in the favoured land of Canaan. He had fenced them in with good and righteous and holy laws. He had cast out the heathen nations from before them. He had kept His eye constantly upon them for their good. He had supplied their every want. And He had a right to ask, 'What could have been done more?' The same inquiry, my dear children, may be put in reference to you. What could God have done more for you? has He not placed you in a Christian land, and in the midst of Christian privileges? has He not granted you pious parents and pious friends? has He not provided you with a sanctuary to worship in, and with a faithful minister to teach you the good knowledge of the Lord? has He not given you the Bible, and many helps to the understanding of the Bible? has He not made you hear the joyful sound of the gospel?

has He not opened very wide for you the path to heaven? Just tell me, is there any one thing He might have done for you, which He has failed to do?"

Constance. No, indeed there is not.

"Then so far these parables apply to your case; for on you has been bestowed the care here described. What was the second thing we had to notice?"

Kenneth. The PRODUCE EXPECTED.

"The owner of the vineyard 'looked that it should bring forth grapes,' and he had the wine-press ready to receive them when the vintage-time came. The owner of the fig-tree also 'came, and sought fruit thereon.' Were these expectations unreasonable?"

Ella. No, mamma, there ought to have been a great many very good grapes and figs.

"Assuredly there should. Even trees that grow by the wayside might be expected to yield some fruit,* but trees so well planted and so well-tended as these

* Matt. xxi. 19.

ought surely to have brought forth much. So natural was it to expect this result that it even passed into a proverb, 'Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof.'* It might have been possible, indeed, to form an unreasonable expectation,—such as that which the Apostle James supposes, chapter iii. 12."

Constance. "Can the fig-tree, my brethren, yield olive-berries? either a vine figs?"

"It was far otherwise in the parables before us. The fruit expected in each case was just that which it was the nature of the tree to yield. But was it too hasty an expectation?"

Kenneth. No; Luke speaks of the husbandman's coming three years to seek fruit.

"He had long patience; and even then he was willing, at the request of the vine-dresser, to wait yet another year, by way of giving a longer trial. In one twelvemonth he had a right to look for produce,

* Prov. xxvii. 18.

but after three or four years he might well begin to despair of it. Isaiah explains, in the seventh verse, what kind of fruits God expected from His ancient people."

Constance. He looked for "judgment" and "righteousness."

"God had taught them what was just. He had taught them what was righteous. He had shown forth His own justice and righteousness; and He had reason enough to expect that, as a return for all His goodness, they would seek to walk in His ways. Can you tell me what He expects from you?"

Kenneth. The "fruits of righteousness."

"He expects holy thoughts, and words, and ways. He expects that if you know of heaven, you should seek it; that if you have heard of Jesus, you should love Him; that if you have been taught to remember the Sabbath-day, you should keep it holy; that if you have been warned against falsehood, you should always tell the truth; that if you have learned to know His will, you should seek to do it. He expects fresh

fruit from every fresh teaching that is given you. You have had instruction for one year,—two years,—three years,—and some of you even longer. It is reasonable enough that where so much has been given, very much should be required. Now, let us pass to the third subject of these parables."

Kenneth. The HOPES DISAPPOINTED. The vine brought forth wild grapes, and the fig-tree had no fruit at all.

"There was a fine show of full clusters hanging on the vine, but the grapes were wild, sour, and poisonous. The fig-tree may have been thickly covered with leaves, but not a single fig was to be met with. In each the appearance of fruit was a deceitful one. In like manner the Jewish people had abundant leaves of profession, and a fine outward show of devotion ; but what was found in them instead of the judgment and righteousness that were expected?"

Constance. The Lord "looked for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

"Wild grapes indeed were these,—not such as answered to the care that had been bestowed. Take heed lest it be so with you. There is great danger of resting satisfied with the mere appearance, without the reality of good fruit. You may be growing in knowledge of God's Word; you may take an interest in the mere letter of the Bible; you may yield an outward formal obedience to God's requirements; and yet these things may be but clusters of sour grapes, not really acceptable to the Lord of the vineyard. But if you sincerely delight in spiritual truth; if you wish for holiness of heart as well as of life; if you strive to obey God, because He is your Father in heaven whom you love, and because Jesus died to save you from your sins, and because the Holy Spirit helps you to resist temptation,—then in you there is some good fruit. It may be very little as yet; but you can thank God for the care He has taken of you, and ask Him to go on making you bring forth more and more the fruits of holiness. But

there was a fourth thing we were to speak of."

Ella. The ANGER DISPLAYED.

"Yes; in each parable the owner of the vineyard is represented as having been angry, and justly angry. In each he is said to have resolved that no more culture should be wasted on such fruitless trees. There would have been cause for this if they had only been fruitless; but this was not all:—they were positively injurious. The wild grapes were not merely useless, but actually poisonous. The fig-tree was not only barren, but it cumbered the ground. It not only took up the room that might have been filled by a better tree, but it exhausted the fertility of the soil, and endangered the fruitfulness of the surrounding vines. Just so it is with every sinner. He cannot perish alone in his iniquity.* His example leads others on to do evil. Remember this; whichever of you withholds the heart from Christ may be helping to keep the others from yielding

* Josh. xxii. 20.

their hearts to His service. Let us see how the righteous anger of the disappointed husbandman was expressed."

Constance. The fig-tree was to be cut down, if after another year it bore no fruit.

"And what was to be done with the vineyard?"

Kenneth. It says, "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it."

"In that last clause you see that the form of the parable is no longer strictly kept; but a hint is plainly given that no earthly husbandman is meant. The possessor of this vineyard was one who had power to command the clouds, and to withhold the rain. You may notice both a likeness and a difference in this latter part of the two parables. They are exactly alike in their scope or design. They are

both intended to show that the husbandman ceases to bestow his labour on what continues to be unproductive. The object of both is to teach the important lesson, that God will deprive us of the privileges by which we refuse to profit. But the manner in which they teach this one lesson is not just the same. The barren fig-tree was to be cut down, and so removed from its place; but the unfruitful vineyard was to be entirely laid waste. So there are two ways in which God may deal with us, if we fail to bring forth righteous fruits. Either he may take us away from our privileges, or he may take our privileges away from us."

Ella. I don't quite understand that, mamma.

"I will try to make it plain by an example. Fancy that you see a Sunday-school teacher in a little country village with his class of boys around him. You find that he is very earnest in his work. He comes week after week, and his eight scholars are just as regular as he is. They

would not like to be away, for they know their teacher will be there, and they have learned their lessons, and sought out their proofs. He questions them, and they give bright, sensible answers. He talks to them, and they listen attentively. You are disposed to think all is going on very well. But the teacher's heart is sad. He has looked closely at these outward appearances, and he finds they are but as wild grapes. There is no depth of feeling, no penitence of heart, no seeking after salvation. Visit the class again after six months have passed. The teacher is at his post still; his scholars assemble around him; but there are two absent. One has been laid in the grave, and the other is gone with his parents to the backwoods of America, to a lonely spot, where he has no school, no sanctuary, perhaps not even a Bible. These two lads have been like the barren fig-tree, and now the place which knew them knows them no more. The room is open; the sound of instruction is heard; but they are not there to give ear.

They have been taken away from their privileges. Go once more to the village, after a lapse of some few years. Death has again been there, and this time it has laid its hand upon the faithful teacher. You inquire for the school-room; it is shut up. You trace out the six youths who were left. They are all living; they remain in the same locality, but the neighbourhood is buried in spiritual darkness; the joyful sound of the gospel is no longer heard; no man cares for their soul. They are left where they were, but *their privileges have been taken from them.* The vineyard proved sterile, and it has been laid waste. Does my Ella understand the difference now?"

Ella. Yes, mamma. Then when Kenneth goes away to school next week, he will be taken away from his privileges, won't he?

"From his home-privileges; but I hope he will find others almost as good where he is going. Your papa is taking care to send him where the interests of his soul will be cared for."

Kenneth. And Constance has promised to write me long letters, and tell me a great deal about your Bible classes.

"Just at present, then, we cannot say that God is either taking you from your privileges, or your privileges from you. But you do not know how soon He may do so. God is now trying you a little longer; but perhaps only saying of you as was said of the fig-tree, 'Let them alone this year also.' You must seek to bring forth fruit without delay. Can you ever do this of yourselves?"

Constance. No, mamma, we have a sinful nature; and "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."*

"It is true that all our best doings are by nature as wild grapes. But Jesus has told us that He is the true vine; and that though without Him we can do nothing, yet if we abide in Him, and He in us, we shall bring forth much fruit.† Be it your prayer that you may be united to Him by faith. Go to Jesus, and ask Him to give

* Matt. vii. 17, 18. † John xv. 5.

you a new nature, and to fill you with those fruits which the Holy Spirit works in all His people."*

* Gal. v. 22, 23.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OCCASION; OR, THE REMOVAL OF THE ARK.

THE Sabbath, as usual, brought its own weekly duties, which superseded the regular Scripture-lesson; but the intervals of spare time had been well employed by our young friends in reading and pondering the chapters they had undertaken to study. Ella's favourite psalm was the ninety-first, with portions of which her mother had often succeeded in driving away the childish fears of her little timid spirit. "I like it," she said, "because it is all designed to show how safe we may feel when we remember that God can take care of us." Constance's choice was the eighth of Romans, which, as she rightly judged, has for its scope the blessedness of those who are the servants of Jesus Christ. And Kenneth had no hesi-

tation in deciding that his favourite chapter, the eleventh of Hebrews, was intended to show the effects of faith on men's conduct, especially in making them obedient and courageous.

"There is one thing," said Mrs Forbes, "which will often help us to get at the right scope of any passage, and that is, having a clear idea of the *occasion* on which it was written. Thus, in reading a psalm, it is extremely interesting to think of the circumstances which caused it to be penned. We cannot always do this, because we are not told the date of every psalm. Frequently, however, the title specifies the exact period; and when it does, we shall generally gain something by noticing it. For instance, look at the title of the fifty-ninth psalm, and tell me when it was composed."

Constance. "When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill David."

"You have read the history to which that refers.* You remember how David's

* 1 Sam. xix. 11–18.

wife heard of the plot that was formed against him; how she let him out through the window of the house the night before, and then laid an image in the bed, in order that when morning light came, the messengers might be longer in finding out that he was not there. It was on that same night David poured out the prayer given us in this psalm, and before he had finished it, his fear gave place to hope, so that in the sixteenth verse he cried out joyfully, 'I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.' The history shows you why he makes mention of the 'morning;' it was because the next dawn of day had been marked by his enemies for the time of his death; but he could now look forward to it as a time of deliverance. That very morning on which his enemies hoped to have silenced his voice for ever, he would be far out of their reach, hymning the praises of the God who had saved him from their power. Every evening, as well as every morning, David could find reason to praise the Lord; but he had

special reason that morning, because it was a morning of special mercy. You see from this example how a single word may have fresh light poured upon it, fresh meaning found in it, fresh beauty added to it, by knowing exactly *when* it was written. But sometimes this fresh light and beauty are thrown in the same way upon a whole psalm from its beginning to its close. We can read one to-day. Let us take the sixty-eighth."

Kenneth. Did you say the sixty-eighth? there is no particular title to that.

"There is not; but yet there is much in the psalm itself to prove on what occasion it was written."

Constance. The heading says, "A prayer at the removing of the ark."

"Let us see whether we can find a proof of that. Read the first verse."

Kenneth. "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let them also that hate him flee before him."

"Do you remember any occasion on which such words as these were regularly used?"

Constance. Moses used to say them at the removing of the ark. I think it is somewhere in Numbers.

"Yes; chapter x. 35, 'Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.' The verses are so exactly alike that we cannot help thinking the occasion must have been the same. But was the ark ever removed in David's time?"

Kenneth. Oh! yes; when he brought the ark to Mount Zion from the house of .... of .....

Constance. Of Obededom.

"We are told of several psalms which were composed at that time. The ninety-sixth, and part of the hundred-and-fifth, were then put by David into the hands of the musicians, for the close of the day's service. But the people were shouting, and singing with psalteries and harps, during the time when the ark was being carried in procession; and it seems as if the psalm we are now going to read had been written purposely for them to sing

upon the way. While the ark was being borne forth, with staves or poles resting on the shoulders of the Levites, the strain appropriately commenced in the well-known words of Moses,—words that had long been set apart specially for such a scene and such a service. How does the Psalmist enlarge upon the ancient form of words?"

Constance. "As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God."

"What contrast does David go on to draw?"

Ella. "But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice."

"In what way does he exhort the righteous to give expression to their joy?"

Kenneth. "Sing unto God, sing praises to His name: extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him."

"Here God's *greatness* is given as one reason why He should be praised. He rides

upon the heavens, far exalted above the highest dignity that earth can know. His name is JAH; that is the short of JEHOVAH. He is the great I AM,—the One ever-living God. But David gives a second reason why God should be praised —namely, for his *goodness:* What is said about that?"

Constance. "A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation."

"We have here the same idea we met with once before. Though God's dwelling-place is in heaven, yet He manages the affairs of earth, and makes the meanest and most helpless His special care. After the psalm has thus begun with praise to God for His greatness and goodness in general, it goes on in the next nine verses to describe some special acts of power and mercy which had been wrought for the Israelites. Which of these is the first named?"

Ella. The next verse begins, "God setteth the solitary in families."

"This is a stepping-stone, which leads from the former subject to the new one. Individuals make up families. Families make up nations. And the same divine providence that watches over individuals, also watches over families, and over nations too. Perhaps there is an allusion here to the origin of the Jewish people. Solitary enough was Jacob, when he passed over the brook alone; but God set him in a family, and when he re-crossed the stream, he had his children with him,—those twelve children, from whom sprang the twelve tribes of Israel. What was the first special mercy wrought for them as a nation?"

Kenneth. Their being brought out of Egypt.

"How is it here described?"

Kenneth. "He bringeth out those which are bound with chains." But, mamma, were the Israelites chained in Egypt?

"This is figurative language. Chains are the emblem of slavery; and the Israelites had been in bitter bondage, from

which God set them free. But did all who left Egypt enter Canaan?"

Constance. No; all but Caleb and Joshua died in the wilderness.

"Why was that?"

Kenneth. Because they rebelled and murmured against God.

"What reference is here made to it?"

Constance. "But the rebellious dwell in a dry land."

"In what part of the wilderness had God most remarkably manifested himself to His people?"

Kenneth. At Mount Sinai.

"Read the two verses which describe that awful scene."

Ella. "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel."

"This was an awful display of God's power. Did He ever manifest that power more gently and more graciously?"

Kenneth. Yes; it goes on to say, "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary."

"The heavens dropped rain at Sinai,* but the storm was a fearful one. In Canaan also the rain descended, but the shower was a fertilising one, making the earth soft, and the heart of man glad. When the people had reached that good land, were they still wanderers?"

Constance. No; it says in the tenth verse, "Thy congregation hath *dwelt* therein; thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor."

"Their settlement was a proof of God's 'goodness.' This was goodness shown to the 'poor' or afflicted; for they had been wearied with the toils and hardships of the desert. But this settlement had not been gained without a struggle; and, therefore, the next verse refers to the wars they had to fight."

Ella. "The Lord gave the word; great

* See also Judges v. 4, 5.

was the company of those that published it."

"God is described as the leader giving the battle-word; and so immediate is the conquest that the notes of triumph instantly follow, and 'great is the company of those that publish' the victory in their songs of praise. What is the substance of their rejoicings? .... It is given in the twelfth verse."

Kenneth. "Kings of armies did flee apace; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil."

"The enemy took to speedy flight; and the conquering Israelites found spoil enough for themselves and for their families. What was to be the final result of their victories?"

Constance. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Ella. What a pretty verse that seems, mamma; do tell us what it means.

"To have 'lain among the pots,' denotes

a state of degradation and debasement, such as Israel had known in Egypt. But the time was coming, when they should be in a state of peaceful repose and glorious prosperity. The soft, sleek plumage of a dove is an emblem of tranquillity, while the tints of silver and gold denote wealth. In whose days was this description most fully realised?"

Constance. When Solomon was king.

"Certainly; and therefore David here spoke of it as something that was future,—a higher blessing that was still in store for them. Having spoken of the conquerors, what does he then say about the conquered?"

Ella. "When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon."

"The simplest explanation of this verse seems to be, that God had so completely destroyed their enemies, that the land was covered with their whitened bones, just as the top of Salmon was covered with snow. It is a strong figure to show how numerous

their enemies were, and how entirely they were overthrown. This finishes the first division of the psalm. All these verses are just a comment on the words with which the holy song began, 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered.' What we have been reading would be said or sung as the procession moved onward. But at length they came within view of Mount Zion; and it seems as if the fifteenth verse was meant to be struck up when first they caught sight of it in the distance. You will see that two words of that verse are in italics; we may therefore alter the order of them. Will you try, Kenneth, to read it as a question?"

Kenneth. "Is the hill of God as the hill of Bashan? an high hill as the hill of Bashan?"

"They are to inquire which is the hill of God. 'Is the hill of God the hill of Bashan?' 'No,' would be the answer, 'Bashan has not been chosen.' A second question is asked: 'Is the hill of God a high hill like that of Bashan?' Again the

answer would be, 'No, Zion is not so lofty.' What is the third question asked?"

Constance. "Why leap ye, ye high hills?"

"These sudden questions are full of poetic beauty; especially the last, which addresses Bashan and the surrounding hills as if they were conscious of their loftiness. 'Why leap ye' in your pride? why boast ye of your height? your triumphing is at an end!—What does the Psalmist say to check their boasting?"

Ella. "This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever."

"Bashan was high; but Zion was to be the residence of the Most High. With what other mountain is Zion compared?"

Kenneth. With Sinai. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place."

"The Lord manifested His presence on both these mountains; on both He was attended with myriads of angels; and both were hallowed ground. On Sinai, indeed,

He displayed His terrors; while on Zion He had His mercy-seat. On Sinai He only appeared; on Zion He took up His abode. What does our psalm next say?"

Constance. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

"To whom does this verse refer?"

Constance. It must refer to Christ, for it is quoted in Ephesians as a prophecy of Christ's ascension.

"This seems, at first sight, a very sudden change of subject; but there are several links that unite it with the matter in hand. Can you see any of them?"

Kenneth. David had just spoken of angels being on Sinai and on Zion; did not this make him think of angels attending Christ at His ascension?

"Very possibly. At all events, *we* may be reminded of it, whether the Psalmist thought of it or not. Constance, what answer were you going to give?"

Constance. I thought perhaps as the ark was then going up to Mount Zion, that might make David think about Christ's going up to heaven.

"Well; that is not unlikely. You have mentioned the ideas that lie just on the surface. But there is a much closer connection, which lies a good deal deeper. Your reasons have more to do with the fancy; but the one I will point out to you is founded on an important truth. I think the chief reason why this verse was brought in is to be found in the last clause of it,—'that the Lord God might dwell among them.' The ark was just being taken up to Mount Zion, and there the Lord was to manifest His presence. But how could a holy God dwell with sinful men? Only through the finished work of Christ the Saviour. If Jesus had not come, or if He had left His work half done, God could not have dwelt with men. What were the proofs that Christ's was a finished work, and a work accepted by God?"

Kenneth. His resurrection and ascension.

"Just so. It was because of Christ's ascending up on high, and receiving gifts for men, even for the rebellious also, that Jehovah was able to dwell among them."

Ella. But, mamma, why does it say "Thou *hast* ascended," when Christ had not yet come?

"David here speaks as the prophets often did. He looks far forward, and then expresses himself as if he were living in that future day. The thing was so plainly revealed to him, that he spoke of it *as if* it had already happened. He was as sure it would happen, as if it had already come to pass. And, besides, God was treating His people as if it had happened. It was an event so certain, that its results were already in a measure enjoyed. God did not wait till Christ's ascension, but even in the prospect of it He already dwelt with men. How did the Psalmist express his gratitude for this?"

Ella. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."

"There is much to think of in that verse. 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily—loadeth —us—with benefits';—and that, because He is 'the God of our salvation,' the God who saves us through Jesus Christ, rebellious as we have been. How did David show that he loved to think of God by this name?"

Kenneth. He spoke of it again in the next verse: "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."

"Do all men accept God's salvation?"

Constance. No, some continue to rebel against Him; and it says here that He will punish them: "But God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses."

"For whose benefit does He do this?"

Kenneth. For His people. "The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea; that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

"God would appear for them again as gloriously as ever, and still make them victorious over their foes. Whoever those foes might be, and wherever they might hide themselves, whether on the top of Bashan, or in the lowest ocean-cave, God's justice would overtake them, and would cause His people to triumph over them. We have now ended the second part of the psalm. At the twenty-fourth verse, the removal of the ark is referred to the third time."

Constance. "They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary."

"These words would be very suitably sung, as the ark was being placed within the tent. It was not the ark alone that entered, but with it the presence of God between the cherubim upon the mercy-seat. The King of Glory was taking possession of His chosen residence on earth. No wonder that the event was celebrated by a rejoicing nation. How is the procession described?"

Ella. "The singers went before, the

players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels."

"What were they exhorting each other to do?"

Kenneth. "Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel." From the fountain of Israel? what does that mean?

"Tell me what it is in the margin."

Constance. "Ye that are from the fountain of Israel."

"That means, 'Ye who are descended from Israel.' It just answers to the 'congregations' in the first clause; and shows us that it is God's own people who are called to praise Him. Which of the tribes are specially named as having joined the procession?"

Ella. "There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council; the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali."

"These are named only as examples; but the others were doubtless present.

Benjamin was the youngest, Judah had the birthright; but neither the greatness of the one, nor the littleness of the other, excused them from attending. Benjamin and Judah were nearest to Mount Zion, Zebulun and Naphtali were furthest off; but, far or near, all the tribes were interested in it. To whom does David ascribe the success and joy of that day?"

Kenneth. "Thy God hath commanded thy strength."

"And how does he ask God to further that work?"

Kenneth. "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."

"Had he any assurance that the work of that day would be thus furthered?"

Constance. Yes, he could say, "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee."

"The tent or tabernacle was to give place to the temple; and then many would willingly come and offer presents within its glorious walls. But what would become of those who refused to submit?"

Kenneth. "Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls with the calves of the people till every one submit himself with pieces of silver; scatter thou the people that delight in war."

"They should be compelled to yield an unwilling subjection. How far would the fame of the temple be spread?"

Ella. "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

"This came exactly true. Many an Egyptian prince was glad to form alliance with the kings of Israel; and many an Ethiopian became a proselyte to the Jewish faith. The four concluding verses sum up the whole with renewed praise,—praise in which not only Israel, but all the kingdoms of the earth are invited to join."

Constance. "Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord, to him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto

God ; his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places ; the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God."

Kenneth. I am sure I shall never forget that this psalm was made for the removing of the ark.

Ella. I think I shall look for the title, whenever I read a psalm ; it is so nice to know when it was written, and why.

"Now tell me which verse in this whole psalm is the most important."

Constance. The eighteenth, because that is about Christ.

"That verse is like the foundation on which the whole psalm rests ; since Jesus is the foundation on which all a sinner's hopes rest. I was telling you, that but for the promise of Christ's ascending up on high, the Jews would have had no ark, no mercy-seat, no prayer-hearing God in their midst. And it is the same with you. But for Christ's work, you would

have been without hope. It should make you and me very thankful, to know that Jesus ascended into heaven as a conqueror, and received gifts for men. Paul tells us what He did with these gifts; He 'gave' them, not to angels, but to 'men;' not to the righteous, but even to 'the rebellious.' Do you remember what gifts Paul mentions as having been thus given?"

Constance. "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers."

"Very right. These were gifts for the entire church. But there are others which He bestows on men individually, now that He is risen to God's right hand. These gifts are repentance, forgiveness, and the influences of the Spirit.* These are gifts you need. Do not forget that Jesus has received them for you; shall He have received them in vain? He is waiting to give them to you; shall He wait in vain? Or are you willing to accept them? Remember they are *'gifts'* offered without

* Acts v. 31; John xvi. 7.

money and without price,—gifts offered *even* to the rebellious ; and therefore nothing, nothing will hinder you from sharing in them, except your own rejection of God's mercy."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ANALOGY OF FAITH; OR, SIN COVERED.

"WE have been looking at the titles of ever so many psalms," said Ella; "shall we tell you them?"

"Not to-day," was Mrs Forbes's reply; "as this is Kenneth's last morning with us, I want you to try and count up the number of ways in which we have lately been studying the Bible. Begin from the day we had the story of King Joash. Count the Narrative as the first."

Kenneth. Then the next day we had Word by Word; the third was taking a single Clause; then the fourth, Parallelisms; and the fifth, Contrasted Clauses. I think that was all we had about clauses.

Constance. Yes: then the Single Verse, like an Oasis, was the sixth; Parallel

Verses, seventh; Contrasted Verses, eighth. What came next?

Kenneth. The Connection,—that makes nine; then the Prophecies and Types,—ten, eleven;—the Scope, twelve; and then the one we had yesterday, about noticing *when* the words were written.

Ella. That makes thirteen. Oh, what a number! are there any more?

"There is only one more that I am wishing to tell you about at present. It has rather a hard name given to it. It is called explaining a passage 'according to the analogy of faith.' The word 'analogy' means a likeness as to proportion. We speak, you know, of a building as being of good proportions, when, on comparing all its different parts, we find that they suit each other in size and shape. Some of the rooms are smaller, and some larger; but each is fitted for its own purpose, and at the same time fitted for the house of which it forms a part. In the same way, the truths of the Bible are all connected. Some things are repeated more frequently,

and others are mentioned with only a few passing hints ; but there is a proportion, a fitness, which is never forgotten. Now, tell me, would it be right to judge of the size of a house by going only into one of the attics?"

Constance. Oh ! no, mamma, because those are always the smallest rooms, and generally they are not wanted to be large.

"If you were choosing a house, then, you would go into all the rooms, and compare them together before you decided. So it should be in our study of God's Word. We must not come to a rash conclusion from any one passage, but we must compare it with other passages to see how it agrees, and harmonises, and squares in with them. I will give you an example or two. When we read that the Lord 'will by no means clear the guilty,' and 'will not at all acquit the wicked,' are we altogether to despair of forgiveness?"

Constance. No; because God has promised to blot out sin for Christ's sake.

"And when He gives us His gracious offers of pardon, are we to conclude that all men will be saved?"

Kenneth. No; for He has said that the wicked shall be cast into hell.

"Then, to abide by the analogy of faith, we must take the promises and the threatenings together. If we look at either of them alone, we are judging unfairly,—we are taking an incorrect view of the truth, instead of examining it as a whole, and marking the relation and proportion of its parts."

Constance. Is it not the same as to what Paul says about a man's being saved by faith only, and what James says about faith being dead without works?

"Yes; it is necessary that we should take both those statements together. Paul did not mean that works were useless; and James did not mean that works would help to procure our salvation. By comparing the two we get at the whole truth; we learn that we are saved by faith in Christ alone,

but that faith in Him will always show itself in holiness. Now that you understand from these examples what I mean, we will just apply our new rule to a verse that I have chosen for to-day's lesson. Turn to 1 Peter iv. 8."

Kenneth. "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

A shade suddenly passed over the countenances of our young friends. It was rarely that the choice of a subject brought with it anything of sadness. But it so happened that on the previous evening some trifling cause had provoked a dispute between two of them. It is not needful to tell what it was, nor how it was. Mrs Forbes was grieved, when she returned to the room, to find them quarrelling; and this was not a thing she could let go by unnoticed. The words which passed clearly showed that, whoever had been the first to blame, both the children were now in fault. She therefore sent each into a room alone,

begging them both to think quietly over what had occurred. In half-an-hour, when the first bell began to ring for evening prayer, she went upstairs, called them to her own room, and turned to these words of Christ,—"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 23, 24. Having read this, Mrs Forbes rose to obey the renewed summons of the bell. Her hint was understood. This text out of God's own book had been well explained to them in times past; and it was not now listened to in vain. Before their mamma closed the door, they had begun to ask each other's forgiveness; and when she reached the parlour, she was glad to see her now-reconciled children following hand in hand. It was in the hope of deepening their sense of sin, and helping them to avoid the same fault in future, that she had chosen the text

for Tuesday's lesson. While, however, conscience instantly reminded them of their guilt, the sadness soon passed off. They were both wishing to do better in time to come, and they were glad to think that their resolutions might be strengthened by what would be said on such a verse.

"I see," said Mrs Forbes," that you understand the precept you have just read. I need not explain to you that the charity here spoken of is not the mere outward act of kindness, but the inward spirit of love. The closing words are what we shall have to examine. We are told that this charity (or love) shall cover the multitude of sins; and the questions at once arise, Whose sins does charity cover? and, How does it cover them?"

Constance. It cannot mean our own sins, because nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash them away.

"You are quite right. The most costly sacrifices, the most lavish alms-giving, the

most self-denying charity, would be unavailing to purchase our forgiveness. Christ's death is the sole ground of a sinner's pardon. Nothing but the robe of Christ's righteousness can cover the stains which sin has left upon our souls."

Kenneth. And we cannot make other people's sins to be blotted out either.

"No; we can no more atone for others than for ourselves. So you see that if we were to look at this text as declaring that our spirit of love could purchase peace with God, either for ourselves or for those around us, it would immediately strike us as quite out of keeping with all the rest of Scripture. It would seem to stand by itself; it would appear like a deformity; and we should see at once that we have not explained it according to the analogy of faith. We must seek, therefore, to find out the true meaning of the words,—that meaning which will fit in with the other statements of the Bible. See whether you gain any light by consulting Prov. x. 12."

Ella. "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins." Those are nearly the same words as what you are explaining.

"That verse in Proverbs will help us by the fine contrast which it brings before us. It begins with a case in which some petty strife is just smouldering away, likely to be forgotten, on the point of dying out, when the spirit of hatred—instead of letting matters rest thus quietly—rakes up the old offence, stirs it to a quarrel, fans it to a flame, and then feeds it till it becomes a blaze. But we are then told of another case, one in which there is present injury, real and great,—so real as to deserve the name of *sin*, and so great as to have become even a multitude of *sins;* yet here the spirit of love is described as gently stepping forward, and with kind hands throwing a veil over the whole, so as to hide it even from her own view. Can you tell me now whose sins are spoken of by Peter?"

Kenneth. The sins of those who have done us any wrong.

"Are those sins spoken of as committed against God or against man?"

Constance. Against man.

"And what covering of these injuries is referred to?"

Kenneth. Their being forgiven and forgotten by those against whom they were done.

"Precisely. You have now found a meaning to those words which must be the right one. It suits the connection, for it shows the good effects of having that 'fervent charity' which Peter was recommending. And it is also according to the analogy of faith, because it answers to what the Bible elsewhere teaches us about the advantages of a meek and loving disposition. There is something very beautiful in this idea of love, as covering a multitude of sins. It shows us how very easily strife may be avoided. In the book of Judges we meet with two remarkable incidents which teach this. The one teaches

it by way of example, and the other by way of warning. You will find the first in chapter viii. 1–3. Gideon had gone out with his little band of three hundred men, and had defeated the large army of the Midianites; but he could not consider his victory complete, till the princes of Midian had been captured; and for this purpose he called in the help of the men of Ephraim, who slew Oreb and Zeeb, and thus put a finishing-stroke to the work. But these same Ephraimites chose to take high ground. They were not content to play second to others,—not they. 'Why hast thou served us thus,' they asked, 'that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?' and 'they did chide with him sharply.' But what was Gideon's reply?"

Constance. He said, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of

Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison of you?"

"Gideon did not even defend himself from the charge. He just passed it by; he threw the mantle of love over their jealousy and their complaints. Instead of stirring up strife, he turned it away by his soft answer. And a wise answer it was too. He was able to pay them a truthful compliment; and he hastened to do so. He spoke humbly of himself and his own work; while he spoke highly of them and of their success. No wonder that 'their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.' You will find a very different event recorded at the beginning of the twelfth chapter.

Kenneth. Oh! it was the Ephraimites again. What a quarrelsome set they must have been!

"Not only so, but the ground of their complaint was as nearly as possible the same. Jephthah had just conquered the Ammonites without their help; and they

fancied themselves slighted. They were still as important in their own eyes as they had been in Gideon's days. And they said, 'Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.' What course did Jephthah pursue?"

Ella. "And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you ye delivered me not out of their hands."

"He began to upbraid them in return. Very possibly it was a just charge he laid at their door; but it would have been more generous and more prudent if he had covered their sins. His 'grievous words' only stirred up their pride more fiercely; and the dispute ended in a battle that cost the lives of forty-two thousand men. Remember, my children, that *it always takes two people to make a quarrel.* You have seen how ready the men of Ephraim were for contention. Gideon would have none of

it, and with him the contest became impossible. Jephthah was drawn into dispute; and the strife of words ended in the strife of swords. Which was the nobler of the two—Gideon or Jephthah?"

"Gideon," cried Kenneth and his sisters at once.

"You may apply to him the words of Proverbs xvi. 32."

Ella. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

"Gideon's rule over his own spirit was a more noble victory than his conquest of the Midianites. When charity thus covers the multitude of sins, it is not only a lovely and a prudent thing, but an honourable thing as well. It is important for you to recollect this. Many a quarrel is kept up, just because people imagine that their honour will not be maintained if they let an injury go unnoticed; they think it would be beneath their dignity to take the first step towards a reconciliation. But the

Bible pronounces a different judgment; look at Proverbs xx. 3."

Constance. "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife."

"Look also at the eleventh verse of the chapter before."

Ella. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."

"It may well be his glory; for it is more difficult and more dignified to pass over an offence than to dwell upon it. I hope Kenneth, you will bear this in mind, now that you are going to school. Perhaps, among your new companions, you may often hear meekness pronounced to be a mean and cowardly thing, while proud words will be commended as signs of a noble spirit. Such may be the world's opinion; but in these texts you have God's decision on the matter. It is He who says that it is an *honour* for a man to *cease* from strife."

Kenneth. I will try to remember where

those verses are :—Proverbs xix. 11, and xx. 3.

"We must close now, after one little word by way of help. If you wish to have this 'fervent charity,' the first and best thing for you to do is to seek *a sense of pardoned sin.* When you know that your own sins have all been covered, and that God imputes not your iniquities to you, then you will have a stronger motive to cover the sins of others. When you feel how God has borne with you, you will be ready to imitate Him. When you think how freely you have been forgiven your large debt, you will find it easier to forgive the far smaller trespasses committed against yourself. A deep and constant sense of pardoned sin would help to keep you always calm. When you are fully and habitually at peace with God, you will not be easily put out by trifles ; but your mind will be like the smooth and glassy lake, which cannot be woke into a ripple by 'the stir of an insect's wing.'"

In the dusk of the evening, Mrs Forbes sat with her children around her, awaiting their father's return from business. After having talked for a while about Kenneth's new prospects, his mamma told him she had placed in his trunk a Bible like the one she had given Constance.

"Thank you again and again, mamma; —a thousand thanks!" was his joyous exclamation.

"I hope you will read it, my dear boy?" she inquired, in a gentle but forcible manner.

"Yes, that I will," he impetuously replied, "and I will read it in all the different ways you have told us about."

"I trust you will;—with pleasure and with profit. But, above all, remember that there are two ways of studying the Bible more important than any of these. I mean, studying it with prayer and with self-examination. Read it with an earnest wish for God's blessing, and with an honest endeavour to apply its truth to your own heart, and then you will indeed love it.

Then you will be ready to adopt the words which an old South Sea Islander uttered last year, when he first received from Mr Buzzacott a copy of the entire Bible in his own language: 'My brethren and sisters,' he said, 'this is my resolve: the dust shall never cover my new Bible; the moths shall never eat it; the mildew shall never rot it; my light! my joy!!'"

THE END.

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