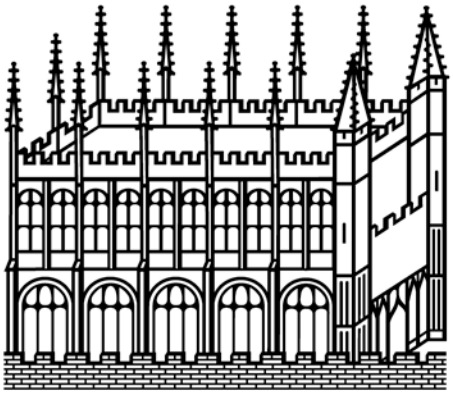

THE STOLEN CHILD

It was a sorrowful parting when Raymond bade farewell to his foster parents, who had sheltered him so long, p. 41.

THE

STOLEN CHILD;

OR,

Raymond in Search of his Mother.

'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'—PROV. iii. 5, 6.

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BIBLIOTHECA · NOVELLARA

CONTENTS.

THE STOLEN CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

THE GIPSY'S PLOT.

Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.'—PSALM x. 13, 14.

ON a warm summer afternoon many years ago, a little party of travellers might have been seen crossing the Alps on foot. The party consisted of a man and his wife, who might have been known at a glance to be gipsies, and two boys, the elder of whom seemed also to be a gipsy, but the younger, although his face and hair had been dyed brown, was evidently not of the gipsy race. His eyes were

as blue as the sky, and here and there a fair sunny curl escaping from under his coarse cap, showed that his hair had been dyed in haste. The two boys walked first along the steep and stony path winding among the mountains. The youngest, a little delicate looking child, seemed very weary,—he often stumbled, and nearly fell on the rough stones, and when he passed a soft bit of mossy turf by the wayside, or came under the refreshing shade of a leafy tree, he looked as if he longed to throw himself down and rest. But when he turned as if to ask leave, he trembled with fear as his eye met the threatening scowl on the face of the gipsy, and he made another effort to walk on. His companion, the elder boy, who had merry black eyes and a frank fearless expression, looked at him with compassion, and turning to the gipsy, said boldly, 'we are weary, father, we have walked longer than usual, may we not stop to rest a while?'

'We shall not stop till we are farther from the French boundary,' was the

answer. You shall have a long rest if you like when we are on the other side of this mountain.'

'I don't care for a long rest,' replied Pierre, 'but this poor little fellow can scarcely walk; for his sake you might let us stop for a few minutes.'

'He is a little plague!' said the gipsy harshly. 'Take his hand and help him on as well as you can round the next turning out of sight of the road we have been travelling. The quicker you go the sooner you shall rest. Keep as far before us as you can, and I will make a sign to you when you may stop.'

Pierre kindly put his strong arm round the delicate child, and helped him on, half carrying him, and talking cheerfully to him, till they had got a little way in advance of the two elder gipsies.

'Thank you very much, Pierre,' said his little companion in a whisper, looking round timidly to see if he might speak without being overheard,—'why are you so kind to me, when your father and mother are so harsh and cruel?'

Don't call them my father and

mother,' whispered Pierre. 'He forces me to call him father, but my father and mother have both been dead a long time, and that man behind us took me to help him to get money.'

'How can you earn money?' asked the little boy in a tone of surprise. 'You are not old enough to work much. I can scarcely believe it Pierre.'

'You don't believe it because you don't understand it,' answered Pierre. 'I don't do anything here, but I assure you that when we were in Paris I helped that man Rollo to get plenty of money.'

'What is your trade, then?' asked the child.

'Hush! don't ask,' replied Pierre, 'it is a secret. If Rollo fancies that I am telling you, he will knock me down and beat me. He does not want anyone to know what he does in Paris.'

'He cannot hear you, he is too far away,' whispered the little boy, 'do tell me, Pierre, I will keep the secret.'

Pierre looked back, and seeing that the gipsy and his wife were too far off to hear his words, he stooped, and softly

whispered, 'I may as well tell you, for you must know it sooner or later, if you stay with us,—we steal.'

'Steal!' said the child, excessively shocked and surprised, drawing himself away from Pierre as he spoke—'then you are very wicked. My mother taught me that to tell lies and to steal are great sins. If you steal, Pierre, you will never go to heaven.'

'Heaven! where is that?' asked Pierre. 'I never heard of it. I cannot remember my own father and mother, and neither Rollo nor his wife ever told me that it was wrong to steal. They only said that I must be quick and clever and not be found out, for if I was such a fool as to let myself be caught, the police would put me into prison, where people get nothing but bread and water. But I am sly and cunning enough, the police will not catch me in a hurry.'

The little boy listened with undisguised horror and fear, and looked as if he were inclined to run away if it had been possible Then, remembering that Pierre

was to be pitied if no one had ever told him that it was a sin to steal, he said gently, 'Do listen to me, Pierre; stealing is so wicked that God will be angry with you, and you ought to ask Him to forgive you for ever having done such a thing.'

'Who is God?' asked Pierre. 'What has He to do with me? I do not know Him, and I have never in my life offended Him to my knowledge.'

'What! have you never even heard of God?' exclaimed the little boy. 'Do you not know that He is the Great Spirit, most holy, wise, and good, who made this world and all that we see? We are all His, for He made us, and we ought to love Him and try to please him, for He gives us every good thing Ah, my dear kind mother taught me all this when I lived with her in our fine castle, or walked by her side in our beautiful gardens. She said that she delighted to teach her dear little Raymond.'

'Hush! hush!' said Pierre, hastily, don't say such things Brownface, you know well enough that your name is not Raymond. and that you are talking

nonsense when you speak of your mother and her fine castle. Has not Rollo often told you that you only dreamed all these stories. If you say any more about them he will beat you till you can scarcely stand. Don't provoke him. See, there he comes, he is making signals to us. Ah, now we may rest. Come and sit down under that tree a little farther on, where we shall be out of hearing.'

The boys gladly sat down to rest on a mossy bank in the shade; and then the younger boy said, 'my name *is* Raymond, and the gipsy called me Brownface because I cried and struggled when he was staining my face brown, and then he said that he would not only give me a brown face, but that my name should be Brownface, and that he would beat me if I ever said again that my name is Raymond. But you know, Pierre, I cannot forget my own name, and my dear mother, and I wish you would call me Raymond, and let me speak to you about my mother when the gipsy does not hear us.'

'If you will take care to be quiet about it when Rollo is within hearing, said Pierre, 'I will call you Raymond when we are alone, and you may speak to me as much as you like about your mother, and tell me about what she taught you,—all your dreams,' added Pierre, laughing.

Raymond, however, was quite serious, and in simple child-like words he repeated to Pierre many of his mother's lessons about God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Son of God, who came from heaven to die for sinners, that He might save them from their sins. This was all very new to Pierre, who seemed much interested, and listened attentively.

'How did your mother know all this?' asked he.

'She read about it in a book called the Bible,' replied Raymond. 'It is the word of God himself, who has given it to men to make them good and wise. She taught me to read it too, and she taught me to pray to God to bless me, and keep me from all evil for Christ's

sake, and if you like I will teach you the prayer I always say.'

'While the boys were talking, the gipsy and his wife were also engaged in earnest conversation. Zillah, for that was the woman's name, lingered behind, detaining her husband, by asking various trifling questions, till the boys were out of hearing. Then she stopped, and sat down by the roadside.

'Rollo,' said she, in a resolute tone, 'I have asked you many times the same questions, and now I ask again, and I assure you that I will not stir one step from this spot until you have answered them. Where did you get that fair-haired boy that you have been dragging about with us? Who is he? What are you going to do with him? And why, since he was with us, have you decided on going into Italy?'

'Stop! stop, Zillah!' replied Rollo, in a bitter angry tone, 'you ask too many questions at once, and it would take too long to answer them. Don't be cross, wait till we are in Italy, and you shall know all.'

'I shall know all before I go one step farther,' said Zillah, resolutely. 'If you refuse to tell me I will go back at once to my tribe. I have been a good and a prudent wife, and I have a right to share your secrets, and to know why you are taking us out of France.' As Rollo still seemed to hesitate, Zillah rose, and turning from him, began to walk quietly back by the way they had come.

'Zillah, Zillah, come back,' said the gipsy, 'you surely don't mean to leave me.'

Zillah smiled triumphantly, saying, 'you shall either tell me at once the history of that boy, or you shall never see me again Rollo. You shall not keep any secret from me, I *will* know it.'

'Well, if you will, you will, as I have found before. I may as well tell you all now as after we are in Italy. Sit down here and I will tell you.'

The woman seemed somewhat pacified, and sat down on the grass. After a pause the man said, 'Who do you think the boy is, Zillah?'

'I think he is the child of noble

parents,' replied she,—'he is a beautiful boy, and has evidently been used to be waited on; the clothes he had on when you brought him to me were of the finest kind, and I suppose you have stolen him that you may make his parents pay a large sum to induce you to restore him to them.'

'You are partly right Zillah; I do expect to make a large sum of money by the boy, and I hope you will take good care of him. Let me tell you the whole story. You know the name of the rich Count Darville, because it is in the woods belonging to one of his estates that many of our people encamp. The late Count left two sons, Count Charles and Count Cecil. Count Charles inherited all his father's large estates and only a small fortune was left to Count Cecil. He envied his brother, grumbled because the estates had not been equally divided. Count Charles was very generous to his brother, but that had no effect in making the younger contented or grateful. A few years ago Count Charles died, leaving a son, and

then Count Cecil grumbled still more. It was bad enough to give way to his brother, but it was worse to be kept out of his fortune by a baby boy. Although he pretended great friendship to the Countess, he was always watching to get the child into his power, but in Paris that was impossible. I was in his pay then, and we both watched the boy, but in vain, his mother took too good care of him. At last, this hot summer, the young Count was looking pale, and Count Cecil persuaded the Countess that the change to his estate in the country would do him good. He chose the estate in the woods of which we encamp. He promised me a large sum of money to take the boy out of his way. 'No murder,' I said, 'I am only a poor gipsy, but I don't care to venture that.' 'Oh, no! of course not,' was the reply, 'only take him away and provide for him as comfortably as you please, you shall have a large allowance for him, but let me never hear of him again, and let his mother believe that he is dead.' I watched for him long in vain, the

Countess was so careful. At last, one day, I saw him coming alone along the bank of the river, running quickly with his butterfly net over his shoulder. I hastily caught him up, threw his cap and scarf and his butterfly net on the edge of the river, which you know runs very rapidly through the grounds, and I brought him straight to you. It was supposed that the boy was drowned. You know the rest. Count Cecil gave me a large sum of money, and thought he had got rid of me, but he is much mistaken. I am taking the boy into Italy, where no one will think of looking for him, and I shall go every year and frighten the Count into paying me, until he has no more money to pay me with, and then I will sell the secret to the Countess, who is just now mourning for her child, and will pay for him with his weight in gold. Now Zillah, what do you think of my plan?'

'I think it is a very clever one,' replied the woman, 'and worthy of your wise head. Why, we shall be rich, and want for nothing as long as we live.'

'You are quite right,' said Rollo, 'and I am pleased to think I have outwitted Count Cecil. He thinks he has got rid of me for ever, but he is much mistaken,' and the man laughed scornfully. His wife joined in the laugh. They then took some refreshment which they had brought with them, and enjoyed a pleasant rest, Zillah being quite satisfied by having all her questions answered.

'By-the-by,' said the gipsy, 'I forgot to ask what you did with the picture of Count Charles, which was in a locket that was hanging round the boy's neck when I brought him to you.'

'It is hanging round his neck still,' replied the woman.

'How could you let him keep it?' said the man angrily, 'it is the only thing we have to prove who he is.'

'If you had trusted me,' answered Zillah, in a contemptuous tone, 'I would have known that. As it was I knew of no reason why the child should not have the toy, if he wished for it.'

'I must have it now, at all events,'

replied the man, rising hastily, and they both walked on to overtake the boys, whom they supposed to be waiting for them a little farther on the road.

The wicked gipsies rejoiced in their evil designs, and hoped to triumph in their wickedness. Man proposes but God disposes, and things turned out very differently from that which the gipsies expected. Think how much evil arises from covetous thoughts. Count Cecil allowed himself to covet his brother's estates, till the evil wish led him to sin. God's law says not only, 'Thou shalt not steal,' but 'Thou shalt not covet.' The evil thought is the beginning of the evil act.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

'A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds. * * Then said Jesus, which was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?'—LUKE x. 33, 34, 36.

PIERRE and Raymond sat talking for a long time under the tree by the wayside. Pierre had some bread and cheese in his pocket, which he shared with his little companion, who was much revived by the pleasant rest, and seemed quite to have recovered from his fatigue.

The view which the boys saw from their resting-place was one of the most beautiful that can be imagined. The road, near where they were sitting, wound round the side of the mountain, which rose in precipices behind them. Before them was a steep declivity, co-

vered with trees and brushwood going down to the deep valley, along which flowed a murmuring stream. Not far off they could see a beautiful waterfall dashing down from the rocky heights in a sheet of white foam. As far as the eye could reach they saw the mountain peaks, covered with perpetual snow, now glowing rosy-red, purple, and gold, in the rays of the setting sun. No human being was near; but they could distinguish, here and there, a few goats browsing among the rocky cliffs, a squirrel peeping from the branches of the trees, or the rapid flight of a bird.

'This is a beautiful place,' said Pierre, 'I should like to stay a long time here, and to explore these high mountains and deep valleys.'

'I should like very much to stay in such a lovely place as this,' said little Raymond, 'that is to say, if my dear mother were with me. I would ask her to get a house built on this very spot, that we might stay here in the fine sunny weather.'

'There, you are talking again about

your dreams, Brownface,' said Pierre, 'after all the warnings I have given you. I don't like you to think about this mother you will talk so much about, for it always makes you cry. Your eyes are wet with tears now,' added he, kindly stroking the little boy's long curls.

Raymond wept more bitterly. 'My dear mother used to stroke my hair just as you are doing,' said he; 'I can fancy that I feel her kind hand yet. Oh mother, mother! my darling mother, how I wish I were with you again!'

Pierre scarcely knew how to comfort his poor little companion, though he felt very sorry for him. 'Come, cheer up, Brownface,' said he, 'just to please me, look at that butterfly, what a beauty it is.'

Raymond raised his eyes; he was not ungrateful for Pierre's kindness, and he saw a bright-coloured butterfly resting on a flower near their mossy seat. Child-like, he forgot his grief in admiration of the pretty insect. 'I must catch it, Pierre,' said he, rising quickly, and following the butterfly, which fluttered before him, eluding his grasp, until he disappeared

in pursuit of it among the brushwood at the edge of the steep declivity.

Pierre rose to follow him, but, on second thoughts, he decided that it would be better to remain where he was. Rollo would be so angry if he found both the boys gone, and Pierre had no doubt that Raymond would soon return. But minutes passed, half an hour, nearly an hour, and Raymond did not make his appearance. Pierre called 'Raymond! Raymond! come back, do come back, where are you Raymond?' and only the echo answered—'Raymond.'

Pierre was terrified, what would Rollo say? In vain he searched among the nearest bushes, in vain he called as loud as he could, there was no reply, but the echo that seemed to mock his grief. He did not dare to venture far from the place, and, at length, he thought the best thing he could do was to hasten back to meet Rollo, and tell him what had happened.

Fearful was the rage of Rollo when he heard that little Brownface was lost. He threatened Pierre with severe pun-

ishment if he failed to find the missing boy. Zillah, Pierre, and Rollo himself, all joined in the search for him, but they could find no trace of the lost child. At length darkness came on, and it was dangerous to search any more in the thickly wooded and precipitous slopes leading to the valley. The gipsies resolved to light a fire, encamp in their usual fashion, and wait for the morning. The elder gipsies prepared to take a good night's rest by the fire, but Pierre, as a punishment for his carelessness, was ordered to sit up all night and keep up the fire, Rollo assuring him, at the same time, that if Brownface were not found the next day, Pierre should be severely beaten.

Pierre, left alone by the fire, thought sadly of the loss of Raymond, and of the punishment that was threatened. 'Very likely Raymond may not be found,' said he to himself. 'Why should I stay here to be beaten, when I can run away this very night. I will not lose so good an opportunity.' Accordingly, he piled more wood on the fire, and,

after satisfying himself that the gipsy and his wife were both asleep, he hastened quietly away on the road by which the party had come. He ran as fast as he could, till he was quite exhausted, and then he crept into a thick wood by the roadside, and lay down to rest among the bushes. After a short sleep, he rose and went on his way, his object being to reach Paris, where he had acquaintances, and where he could provide for himself. He had been accustomed to sleep in the open air, and he knew he could beg his food on the way, in the villages and farm-houses, keeping as far as he could from those which Rollo was accustomed to frequent.

When Rollo and his wife awoke the next morning, they found that both the boys were gone. They made an anxious search in the neighbourhood, but could find no trace of either of them, and returned, deeply disappointed, to the encampment of their tribe.

We must now return to little Raymond. When he left Pierre's side, and

rushed among the bushes in pursuit of the butterfly, he ran on, without looking whither he was going, keeping his eyes fixed on the gay wings of the insect, and when, at last, he lost sight of it, he looked round him in dismay, not knowing where he was. The bushes were so high that he could not see for any distance ; he tried various paths, always getting farther and farther away. He really wished to return to Pierre, as he was terrified at finding himself alone in such a solitary place. He ran and scrambled among the trees till he was out of breath, and then, frightened and confused, his foot slipped, and he fell over a steep precipice. He might have been killed; but his dress was caught in some bushes, and there he lay among the brushwood, stunned and bleeding, for his head had been struck by a rolling stone.

Shortly afterwards a man came along a mountain path, not far from where Raymond lay. He saw the poor child, lifted him tenderly in his arms, and carried him to a little spring just by, where

he bound up his wounded head, and bathed his face and neck with the cool fresh water. When Raymond revived a little, and opened his eyes, he was surprised, but not frightened, to see a strange man bending over him, for the face of the stranger was beaming with kindness.

'Where am I? How did I come here?' asked he, still confused.

'You know better than I do how you came here, my boy,' answered the man. 'I found you lying bleeding and unconscious by the side of the path as I was on my way home, and I stopped to help you. Tell me, dear boy, who you are and where you live. Your face is dyed brown, and you are dressed like a gipsy, still when I look at your blue eyes, your white neck and arms, I can scarcely believe that you belong to them.'

'Oh no, no! I am not a gipsy,' said the little boy, in a low voice, as if frightened to be overheard, 'I am a young Count. A dark cruel man carried me away as I was playing in the park near our beautiful castle, and he threat-

ened to beat me if I ever spoke again of my home, or of my dear mother. You look so kind, you will not beat me. Oh! will you take me back to my dear, dear mother?'

'I will do anything I can for you, my poor child,' replied the man kindly.

'Well, I will go with you,' said the boy, 'if you will hide me from the wicked gipsy, and take me to my mother. She is so rich, she will give you anything you ask.'

Before the man could answer, the voice of Rollo was heard resounding among the rocks, calling loudly on Brownface. The child trembled, and clung closely to the stranger, whispering an earnest entreaty for protection. 'Don't be afraid,' said the man, 'the voice sounds from a distance, he will not find us here. I know every path in these mountains, and I can take you to my home by a way which the gipsy would never dare to climb, especially now, since it is getting dark.'

Taking the child up in his strong arms, the man crossed the stream at the

bottom of the valley, and climbed the opposite side by an unfrequented path, where they were quite concealed by the thick trees and the increasing darkness. Rollo's voice sounded more and more distant, till at last it ceased, and then the man set down the little boy on the grass. 'There is no fear of the gipsy overtaking us now,' said he, 'so we may walk on quietly, we are not far from my house. There it is, you may see the light in the windows.'

They soon reached the cottage, and were met at the door by a pleasant-looking woman. 'What has kept you so late?' said she to her husband. 'I have been very anxious about you.' 'Look, what I have found on the way, and brought to you, Jeannette,' was the man's reply, drawing forward Raymond, who was timidly hiding behind him. 'A gipsy boy!' said Jeannette, surprised. 'No, no, not a gipsy!' said the man, who felt the child tremble at the words, 'he has been stolen from his mother by the gipsies. But he is tired and hungry, don't question him now,

when he has had something to eat he will tell us his story.'

After supper, Jeannette said kindly, 'Tell us now, dear boy, what is your name, and how were you taken away from your mother?'

'My name is Raymond, and sometimes I was called the young Count,' said the boy. 'I do not remember my father, he died when I was quite a baby, but I lived with my mother in a beautiful house in Paris. This summer we came to live in a fine castle in the country, and my uncle and my cousin Robert came to visit us. My dear mother loved me very much, and kept me always with her, till one day that my uncle gave some new butterfly nets to cousin Robert and me, and told us that we might catch beautiful butterflies on the banks of the river that runs through the park. My mother did not wish me to go; but, persuaded by my uncle, I went. Oh! how sorry I am now that I did not give it up at once, when my mother did not like it. I know now how wrong I was. Soon after, my uncle called to Robert,

and I was left alone. Then the gipsy caught me, put his hand over my mouth to keep me from screaming, and carried me to their camp in the woods. Then they took off all my nice clothes, stained my face brown, and called me Brownface. The gipsy's wife was not quite so cruel as her husband, for she gave me back my father's picture, because I cried so bitterly when it was taken away from me.'

'Where is that picture?' asked Jacques Gerard, for that was the name of the master of the house, 'it may help us to find your mother.'

'Here it is,' said the little boy, giving Jacques a picture set in gold, that was fastened to a dirty string round his neck. 'They took away my gold chain, and gave me this dirty string to hang the picture round my neck.'

Jacques looked at the picture. It was that of a handsome man, richly dressed. 'Take great care of this,' said he to the boy, 'it may help you to find your mother. You had better give it to Jeannette to put away carefully.' Raymond at once gave it to Jeannette; he

seemed to have full confidence in the new friends who were so kind to him.

'What was your father's name?' asked Gerard. 'Count Charles, my uncle was called Count Cecil.' 'And your mother's name?' 'The Countess, and sometimes the Countess Charles.' 'Do you know the name of the castle from which you were stolen away?' 'No, it was always called our country house.'

The little boy now looked so wearied, that Jeannette thought it cruel to question him any more. She took him to an upper room, undressed him, and put on him a night-dress which she took from a drawer in the room. She saw with pleasure that the boy knelt down and said, in a low voice, a prayer which Jeannette knew well. She laid him tenderly in the little bed where her own child had once lain, and, praying for a blessing upon him, she left him to sleep.

When she went down stairs, her husband said to her, 'what is to be done with this poor forsaken child? I do not think it is possible that we can find his parents. There are plenty of Counts

in France, and he does not know the name of their country house. We should have to go to France to make inquiries there, and we have neither time nor money to do that.'

'Oh, it is quite out of the question!' said Jeannette, 'Do not even attempt it. Let us keep the dear boy with us, for a time at all events. When I saw him this evening, dressed in the clothes of my own lost darling, and lying in his little bed, I felt as if Providence had sent him to me instead of the precious child I have lost.'

'He has a mother who is mourning for him, as you mourned for our little Louis when he died,' replied the man. 'Ought we not to restore him to her if we can?'

'Surely, but how can we do so?' answered Jeannette. 'Neither you nor I can go to find her, even if we knew where to go. Let us take care of the dear child for a time, and when he is older, let him go, if he likes, to look for his mother.'

This was settled; and next day Ray-

mond was told that he was to stay with Gerard and his wife, and be treated as their own child till they could hear some more particulars about his own parents.

Raymond had a happy life in the cottage among the Alps. Gerard and his wife were good people, descendants of the old Vaudois, who had done and suffered so much for the truth. Their little hill farm, if so it might be called, with their cows, goats, and a few sheep, sufficed for their subsistence in comfort. In their cottage Raymond found the Bible loved and honoured, and Jeannette continued the lessons which his mother had begun. He read daily with her a portion of the Sacred Word, and soon learned to write out texts to adorn the walls of the cottage. The stories in the holy volume were a constant source of pleasure. Not less useful were the lessons taught him by Gerard, when the boy accompanied his adopted father in his excursions among the mountains. In every object in nature Gerard taught him to recognise the wisdom, the power,

and the love of God. According to the old custom of the Vaudois, Raymond was encouraged to learn much of the Bible by heart, and Gerard used to read such portions to him as were suggested by the incidents of their daily life. Every morning there was prayer in the cottage. Gerard said, as David did of old, 'My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee and will look up.'

When they went out together at sunrise, Gerard spoke to the boy of the glorious Son of Righteousness. When they drank of the cool streams flowing from the rock, Gerard often repeated the verses of the Psalmist, 'He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from His chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works.' When they watched the

fleeting clouds, Gerard said, in the words of the Psalmist, 'Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.' When Raymond admired the mountain peaks, Gerard spoke of God, who had formed them, and directed him to read of the famous mountains mentioned in the Bible, Sinai, from the top of which God gave His laws; of Ararat, where the Ark rested; of Pisgah, from which Moses saw the Promised Land; of Mount Moriah, on which the Temple was built; of Mount Olivet, from which our Lord ascended to heaven. When the thunder rolled among the hills, Gerard called Raymond's attention to the grand description of a thunder-storm in the 27th Psalm. When they gathered the sheep into the fold, Gerard spoke of the good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life for His sheep; and when they went in search of a stray lamb, and carried it home, they remembered Him who 'gathered

the lambs with His arm, and carried them in His bosom.' Gerard also often spoke of our Lord Jesus as the 'Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.' When the eagle was seen flying to its nest in the rock, the Bible lessons about the eagles were not forgotten.

Our space forbids us to give more examples of this teaching; but all who love the Bible may find them for themselves. Gerard also told Raymond many stories of the good Vaudois, of their trials, and sufferings, and conflicts, and that they preferred death to giving up the truth, and the boy's eyes sparkled, and his cheek flushed with enthusiasm, as he resolved that he too would live to promote the cause of God, and would die, if need were, for the truth. When he was older, and could go alone to the mountains with the sheep and goats, the Bible was his companion. He had a fine voice, and the mountain echoes often responded to his songs, as he sang the hymns of the Vaudois, or the psalms of the Royal Shepherd. Thus many years passed pleasantly and peacefully away.

CHAPTER III.

RAYMOND LEAVES HIS MOUNTAIN HOME.

'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'—PROV. iii. 5. 6.

IF Raymond's mother had left the care of him to others, if she had not taught him herself to read the Bible and to pray, he would very soon have forgotten her; but as it was, the remembrance of her was entwined with almost all his thoughts, with his daily reading and his daily prayers. When he was about fifteen, and felt himself strong and able to walk great distances without fatigue, he became more and more anxious to go in search of the mother he loved so dearly. He had amused himself for some time by training marmots, which he had

caught as they peeped out from their moss-lined burrows after their long winter's sleep. These little creatures, about the size of a rabbit, are of a grayish yellow colour, of a darker brown near the head, and, like rabbits, they have short tails. They were easily tamed, and taught to assume various postures, sitting up when desired, on their hind feet. They are great favourites with Raymond, he liked their amusing ways and he thought that by showing them off, perhaps selling some of them to people fond of pets, he might manage to pay the expenses of his journey to Paris in search of his mother. He had been training the marmots for some time before he ventured to tell his plans to his foster parents.

One fine evening in the early summer, when Gerard and his wife were resting on a bench in the front of the cottage, and Raymond was lying on the grass near them, playing with his marmots, he said abruptly, 'Father, I am old enough and strong enough now to do something to earn my own living.

I think that if I were to take my marmots with me and show them off on the road, I might make my way to Paris, and perhaps I might find my mother.'

Jeannette started, and turned pale; she feared to lose her darling, but Gerard said gravely, 'You need not leave us, Raymond, because you wish to earn your own living. You know that God has blessed us, we have enough and to spare, and we look upon you as our own child. You are welcome to share what we have as long as we live. But if it is your earnest wish to find your own mother, we have no right to hinder you from trying to do so. You know well that we cannot give you money, but if you choose to go, we will give you our blessing, you will be always remembered in our prayers, and if you do not succeed, you will find here a father, a mother, and a home, as long as we live.'

It must be remembered that it did not seem strange to Gerard that Raymond should thus go to Paris to search for his mother, because Savoyard boys

often leave their homes with no other means of paying the expenses of their journey than a few playful marmots, a monkey, or some rude instrument of music. Jeannette, however, objected, she entreated Raymond to wait another year ; but the boy, loving and obedient to her as he always was, implored her to grant his request in this matter,— her husband joined with Raymond, and Jeannette yielded, not without tears.

It was a sorrowful parting when Raymond bade farewell to his foster parents and the home that had sheltered him so long. 'You are going to find your noble mother,' said Jeannette, sobbing, 'you are tempted by the hope of rank and riches, you will forget us.'

'Believe me, dear mother,' said Raymond, 'I have learned in this happy valley that content is better than riches. I go not because I am tempted by the hope of riches, but only to find my own dear loving mother, and comfort her, for I am sure she still mourns for me.

'Take with you our blessing,' said

Gerard, 'your memory is well stored with the truths of Scripture dear Raymond. I cannot give you worldly wealth, as you well know, but I would recommend these counsels to you, as your guides in your new and untried path. Do not forget them.' "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men." "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths." Will you remember this my son?'

'I will, with the help of God,' said Raymond solemnly.

'Then go my son, and may God's blessing and our fervent prayers go with you,' said Gerard, as scarcely able to restrain his tears, he turned to comfort Jeannette, who was weeping bitterly.

Raymond slowly descended the mountain, and returned to France by the very road which he had trodden when a child. Gerard had given him a

purse with a little money—all that he could spare, but Raymond did not need it.

At every quiet farm and lonely village he and his marmots were welcome, and usually he got a comfortable bed among the clean straw in a barn. He had travelled many days, always asking the shortest road to Paris, when one day feeling tired, he was tempted to rest near some shady trees on the roadside. A bench had been placed there inviting the weary traveller to rest, and refresh himself by a cool spring that was flowing near. Raymond sat down on the bench, and took his provisions out of his wallet. He was soon joined by a young man, a little older than he was, who watched him eagerly as he ate. The new comer was poorly dressed in the dark blue blouse worn by French peasants, and he looked hungrily at the food Raymond was eating.

'Are you hungry?' said Raymond kindly, 'I have enough for both of us, will you take a share?'

The young stranger seemed surprised

at the kind offer. 'I cannot deny that I am very hungry,' replied he.

'Then here is food,' said Raymond, handing him a large share of his provisions.

The stranger ate greedily, like one who has fasted long, and then he said, 'You have fed me when I was very hungry, and you have made me your friend. If I can do anything for you in return I shall be glad to do it. Tell me your name, and where you are going.'

'My name is Raymond,' answered the boy. 'I am going to Paris with my marmots, to show them in the streets, and perhaps earn a little money.'

'Your name is Raymond,' said the stranger youth, 'it is not a common name, I have heard it only once before. Where do you come from?'

'I come from among the mountains on the border of Italy,' replied Raymond.

'Is it possible that you are my dear little Raymond that was lost among the mountains,' said the stranger, who was no other than Pierre. 'Look at me well, don't you remember me?'

Raymond looked at Pierre, and shook his head. 'How is it possible that I can remember you?' said he. 'I don't think I ever saw you before.'

'Oh, Raymond, don't you remember Pierre, who helped you and took care of you many a weary day, when the gipsy Rollo was cruel to both of us?'

'Are you really Pierre who was so kind to me?' asked Raymond. 'I remember you well, though I should not have known you again, you are so tall and strong.'

'You are rather changed too,' said Pierre, 'from the delicate little boy you were; yet I remember your blue eyes and fair hair, and the expression of your face, which is not changed.'

The two youths then told each other their stories since they parted; and Raymond ended by saying that he was going to Paris to look for his mother.

'You don't know Paris,' said Pierre, 'and inexperienced as you are, you would lose everything and gain nothing. You might suffer much, my poor Raymond, if you were to go to Paris,

knowing as little of its ways as you do. But I like you, and I am grateful to you, because you have pitied me and fed me when I was hungry—we will go to Paris together. You shall show your marmots, and I will play on my pipe,—we shall make money enough to live, and if not, I know of two or three other ways.'

'What are these?' asked Raymond.

'Oh, mending pots and pans, making wooden spoons, or, better still, telling fortunes on cards, and other things.' Pierre here named various dishonourable and fraudulent ways of making money.

'This is very wrong, Pierre,' answered Raymond, 'and if you go on in such practices I must separate from you. The last advice I got from my foster-father was to avoid all evil, and the company of all evil doers. You must promise me, that while we are together, Pierre, you will be honest and true in thought, word, and deed, or we must part at once.'

'Have it your own way, Raymond,'

replied Pierre, laughing, 'rather than lose you, I will yield to your fancies and live honestly while I am with you, at all events.'

The boys then agreed to set out together on the way to Paris, which they reached after many days journey. Raymond would have been quite frightened if he had entered the great city alone, but Pierre acted as his guide, and they found a lodging, very poor indeed, but suited to their circumstances.

CHAPTER IV.

RAYMOND IN PARIS.

'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.'—PROV. i. 10.

IN vain did Pierre try more than once to induce Raymond to join him in his various dishonest tricks. Every attempt was met by a steady refusal, and a threat of instantly separating from him. The texts which Gerard had recommended were imprinted in Raymond's mind, and whenever Pierre tempted him, the words, 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not,' came vividly to his memory, as if spoken by an inward voice. Pierre always yielded to him from rather mixed motives. He really liked his young companion, but he had also a hope of sharing in Raymond's

better fortune, if he should find his mother. Raymond, however, did not see this, and he hoped that Pierre was really improving and trying to do right.

For many weeks the boys frequented the streets—Pierre with his music, such as it was, and Raymond exhibiting his marmots. They divided the money they received between them. Pierre spent his as fast as he got it, so that Raymond no longer wondered that he had been in such want when he first met him. Raymond carefully laid up his share, except what was absolutely necessary for his daily wants, and on days when they were less successful than usual, he had often to help Pierre, the spendthrift, to buy food.

One day when they had been exhibiting as usual, in a narrow street, a handsome open carriage drove up. The coachman was obliged to stop on account of the crowd which they had collected round them. Pierre's music, which was of the rudest and most inharmonious description, startled the spirited horses, and the ladies in the

carriage looked frightened. The coachman called to Pierre to stop, as the horses were plunging violently, but Pierre paid no attention to the order. A youth, who was in the carriage, hastily sprung out, and rushing up to Pierre, inflicted on him several sharp cuts with a riding-whip, saying, at the same time, 'I will teach you to obey, you impertinent dog.'

This was too much for Pierre's temper. He seized the young nobleman, and easily threw him down on the pavement. A scuffle ensued; the crowd divided, and took opposite sides; there was a call for the police; and when Pierre heard that, he let his adversary go, and made off as fast as he could, calling to Raymond to follow him.

Raymond scarcely heard the call. He was standing a little apart, with his eyes fixed on the face of a lady in the carriage, who was dressed in deep mourning. It was a fine expressive face; one not easily to be forgotten; paler, older, more worn, but still so like the kind loving face that Raymond had

so often seen in his dreams, that he stood entranced, heedless of the scuffle round him, yet not daring to approach the carriage. He was roused by feeling his arm seized roughly, and looking round, he saw the angry face of the young nobleman. 'You have stolen my watch, you young rascal,' said he.

'How can I have robbed you,' answered poor Raymond, 'when I have never even been near you?'

His remonstrances were of no avail. 'It was either you or your companion. You are both rogues alike!' said the angry youth.

A policeman took Raymond in charge; and again he earnestly protested that he was innocent, begging the policeman to search him, and see that he had not the watch.

'If you are innocent so much the better for you,' said the policeman, 'but this is neither the time nor place to search you. It is your best way to come with me quietly in the meantime. If you have not committed the theft you will soon get free.'

As Raymond was led past the carriage, he heard a sweet voice say, 'That boy has a noble face and a good expression. I cannot believe he stole your watch, Robert; are you quite sure of it?'

'Quite certain that I have been robbed of both watch and purse, and I believe that either that boy or his companion did it.'

Raymond heard no more; the carriage drove off, and he was led to the police-station, his heart thrilling at the sweet half remembered tones of the lady's voice.

He was searched at the station, and neither watch nor purse was found on him, but it was too late to take him before a magistrate that day, and orders were given to detain him for the night on suspicion of being an accomplice in the theft, and the police were directed to make a search for his companion.

Poor Raymond was left alone in a cell, with only his marmots for companions, for the policeman was not unkind; he let him keep his box, and even

gave him some food for his marmots as well as for himself. The policeman, in his varied experiences, had acquired considerable knowledge of human nature, and he did not believe Raymond to be guilty, although he was obliged by his duty to take him in charge when he was so distinctly and positively accused by the young nobleman.

Raymond was shut into a prison-cell, but his soul was free as ever. He could still feel himself in the presence of an all-seeing God; he could cry to Him for help when there was no man to help him. He remembered the promise, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' He earnestly prayed that God would save him, and make his innocence clear to all. He said with David, 'Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept Thy testimonies. The proud have forged a lie against me, but I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart. Consider mine affliction and deliver me. Plead my cause and deliver me. My help cometh from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth!' Like a ray of light the promises came into his mind, 'The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord shall preserve thee. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart.' That night in the dark cell Raymond experienced the truth of these words of the poet:

'Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage:
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.'

After his prayer he lay down and slept as peacefully as he had done in his happy home in the Alps, trusting with full confidence that the Lord would protect and deliver him.

CHAPTER V.

A JOYFUL MEETING.

'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass; and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. For evil doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.'—PSALM xxxvii. 5, 6, 9.

THE next morning Raymond was brought before the magistrate, but before the examination began, an officer entered the court, and said to the magistrate that a young man wished to speak with him before the trial. The magistrate ordered that he should be permitted to come into the court; and to Raymond's extreme astonishment he saw Pierre enter, but so changed that at first Raymond doubted if it really were Pierre. He was well dressed, like a young man of superior rank; his wild, uncombed hair had been

carefully cut and dressed; his whole appearance was so unlike the Pierre of yesterday, that no one for a moment could have supposed him to be the thief for whom the police were in search. It must be remembered that he had made his escape as soon as he heard a call for the police, so that they had not seen him.

He came into the court with a quiet air of perfect self-possession, and courteously addressed the magistrate. He had been so unfortunate, he said, as to be in the scuffle yesterday, caused by a street musician frightening the horses of a passing carriage. He had been on the street at the time, and had had some difficulty in escaping from the crowd. When he got home he found a watch and purse in his pocket that did not belong to him. He could not say how they came there. In the press and confusion they might possibly have been slipped into his pocket by the thief in his eagerness to escape detection. It was too late, he continued, to leave these things at the station the night

before, but he had now brought them, and he handed the watch and purse to the magistrate. Pierre added, that he could acquit the boy who had the marmots, of any share in the robbery, for that he had particularly observed that the boy was standing apart from the crowd, and had nothing to do with the matter.

The watch was found uninjured, and the money in the purse untouched. The sum the young nobleman had said was in it was found correct. Of course Raymond was at once acquitted, but the magistrate looked somewhat suspiciously at Pierre, and cross-examined him at some length; but Pierre's answers were so clear and satisfactory, that he, too, was declared free to go, especially as the missing property was all restored. The magistrate, however, said that he particularly wished to see Raymond in private, and requested him to accompany a policeman, who would show him the way to the magistrate's house, and he begged that he would remain there till he could speak with him.

After Raymond had been left for some time alone in a comfortable room, the magistrate came to speak with him. 'I have to restore to you this picture,' said he, 'which the searcher at the police office took from you yesterday, because he thought that it was somewhat suspicious that so beautiful a picture, so expensively framed, should be in the possession of one in your apparent position. When he showed me the picture I recognized the likeness of a very dear friend of my own; one who is dead, but whom I valued much. How did it come into your possession? Speak to me frankly, for I am pleased with your appearance, and I wish to be of use to you if possible.'

'It is the picture of my father,' replied Raymond, 'and it was given to me by my mother on my birth-day—the last that I spent with her. Oh, sir! did you know my father?'

'I knew the original of that picture very well indeed; he was my dearest friend, but how shall I know that you are really his son?'

Raymond then related his history to the magistrate, who listened with great interest; then said, 'I believe the truth of your story, and I would at once ask you to come to stay with me here till your rights are acknowledged, but I fear that it would not be prudent. It is evident that you have powerful enemies, and we must have all our case prepared before they are aware of what we are going to do. I will give you a note to a respectable person well known to me, who will give you board and lodging at my expense till we can obtain more evidence in the case. In the meantime be very careful not to speak of your rights, and appear only as an Italian boy in whom I take an interest.' Raymond gladly promised to do as the magistrate desired; and he was accompanied by a servant to a respectable lodging in an obscure street, where, after the servant had said a few words to the landlady, he was heartily welcomed, and his comforts were attended to.

He had not been long there when

he had a visit from Pierre, still dressed like a gentleman. When they were alone Raymond said, 'How did you find me out, Pierre? I did not see you as I left the magistrate's house.'

'I did not mean you to see me then,' said Pierre, 'but don't think I meant to lose sight of you. I followed you at a distance, and here I am at your service.'

'Oh, Pierre,' said Raymond, 'I fear you have forgotten all your promises to me. Did you not take the young Count's watch and purse?'

'You can't prove that I did any more than the magistrate could,' replied Pierre, laughing; 'besides, all I did was for your sake, Raymond. Only think what a risk I ran in coming into court to clear you. I am well got up, too,' added he. 'I had to take some of your hoard of money, Raymond, which you had laid up in our lodgings, to get this fine dress, but you will forgive me, for it was done to save you.'

'I know you mean kindly to me, Pierre,' said Raymond, 'but there would have been no need to save me if you

had not first got me into difficulties by taking the watch and purse. I do wish I could persuade you to avoid these crooked ways.'

'So I will for the future, I promise you again,' said Pierre, but now that I see you so comfortable here, I am going to find Rollo. His evidence will be necessary to establish your rights.'

'How can you find Rollo?' asked Raymond.

'I am not going to betray the secrets of my tribe,' replied Pierre, 'but we gipsies can always find each other when we choose, unless we are hiding, as I was once. I could have found Rollo before, but it was of no use till you had powerful friends who could make him speak. I will go and treat with him for you.'

Pierre easily found Rollo, as he had said; and after some negotiation the old gipsy agreed to give evidence that would establish Raymond's rights. Count Cecil, he said, had treated him ill, and refused to pay more money, and Rollo was ready for revenge. The

matter was arranged by the magistrates Rollo was permitted to give evidence against Count Cecil, the principal criminal.

Not many days afterwards the Countess Darville received a note from the magistrate, requesting her to favour him, by calling at his house the next day. She came accordingly; and after some conversation to prepare her for seeing her son, Raymond was introduced to her. He was now dressed as became his rank, and she at once knew him from his likeness to his father. She had been struck with his face as she saw him from her carriage, even when he wore the Savoyard's dress. Her joy at thus recovering her son may be easily imagined.

'Mother, darling mother,' said Raymond, 'would that I had taken your advice not to take uncle Cecil's gift of the butterfly net. I little knew the danger that was to follow my disobedience. I will not be so easily led aside from my duty again by any idle temptation.'

Count Cecil heard of the reappear-

ance of his nephew in time to make his escape from France. He was not sought after, at the request of the Countess, who did not wish him to to be punished, now that she had recovered her son. Pierre was taken care of by Raymond, and sent to a good private tutor, where his education was well attended to, and he was gradually reclaimed from his evil ways, so that Count Raymond hopes that he may some day be able to make use of Pierre's abilities and attachment, by making him steward of his large estates.

Count Raymond, often accompanied by his mother, paid a long visit every year to his kind foster parents. They could never be induced to visit Paris; but everything was done for their comfort in their Alpine home, that affection could suggest and wealth could procure.

The moral of this story is the text on its title page,—'In all thy ways acknowledge God, and He will direct thy paths.'

Even what appeared to be Raymond's worst affliction, his imprisonment on a

false accusation, led to his recognition by the magistrate, and to his finding his mother. Good is often brought out of seeming evil.

'Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.'