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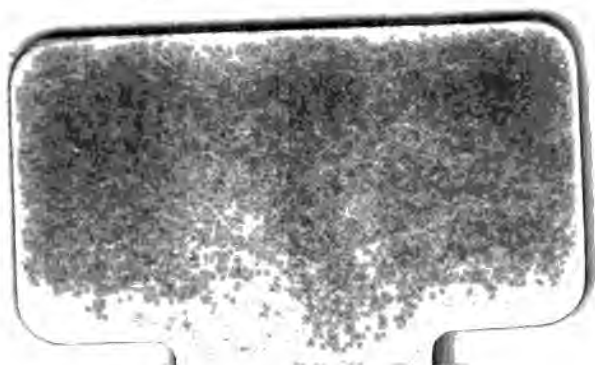
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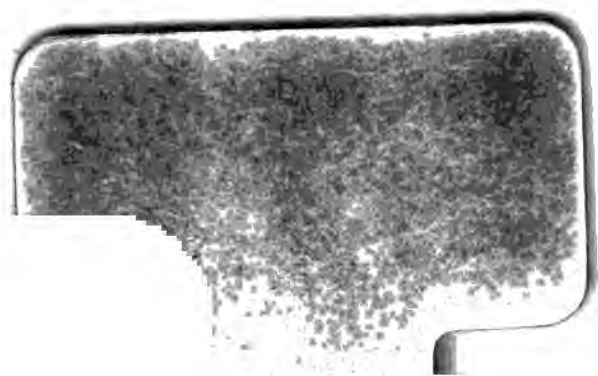


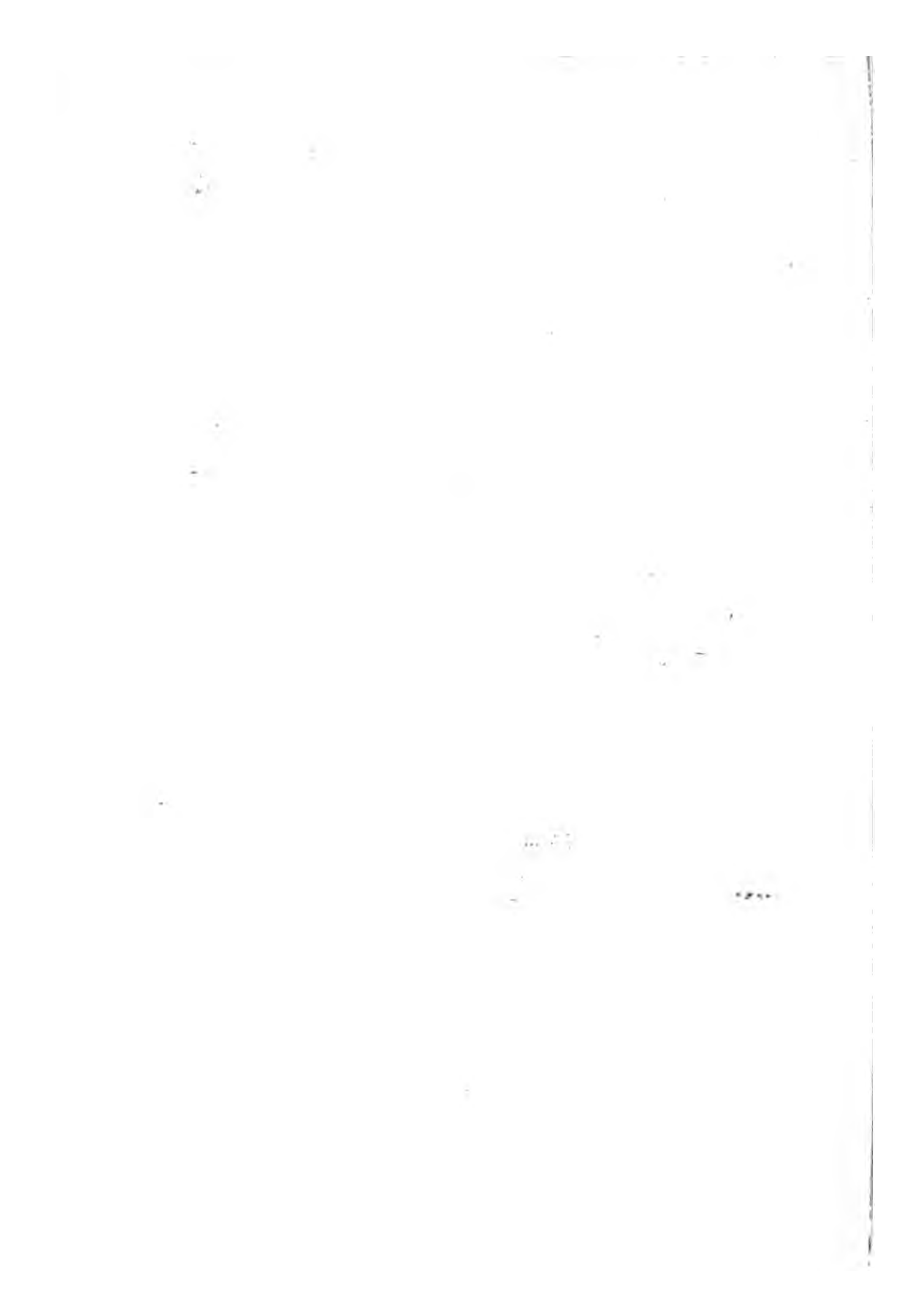
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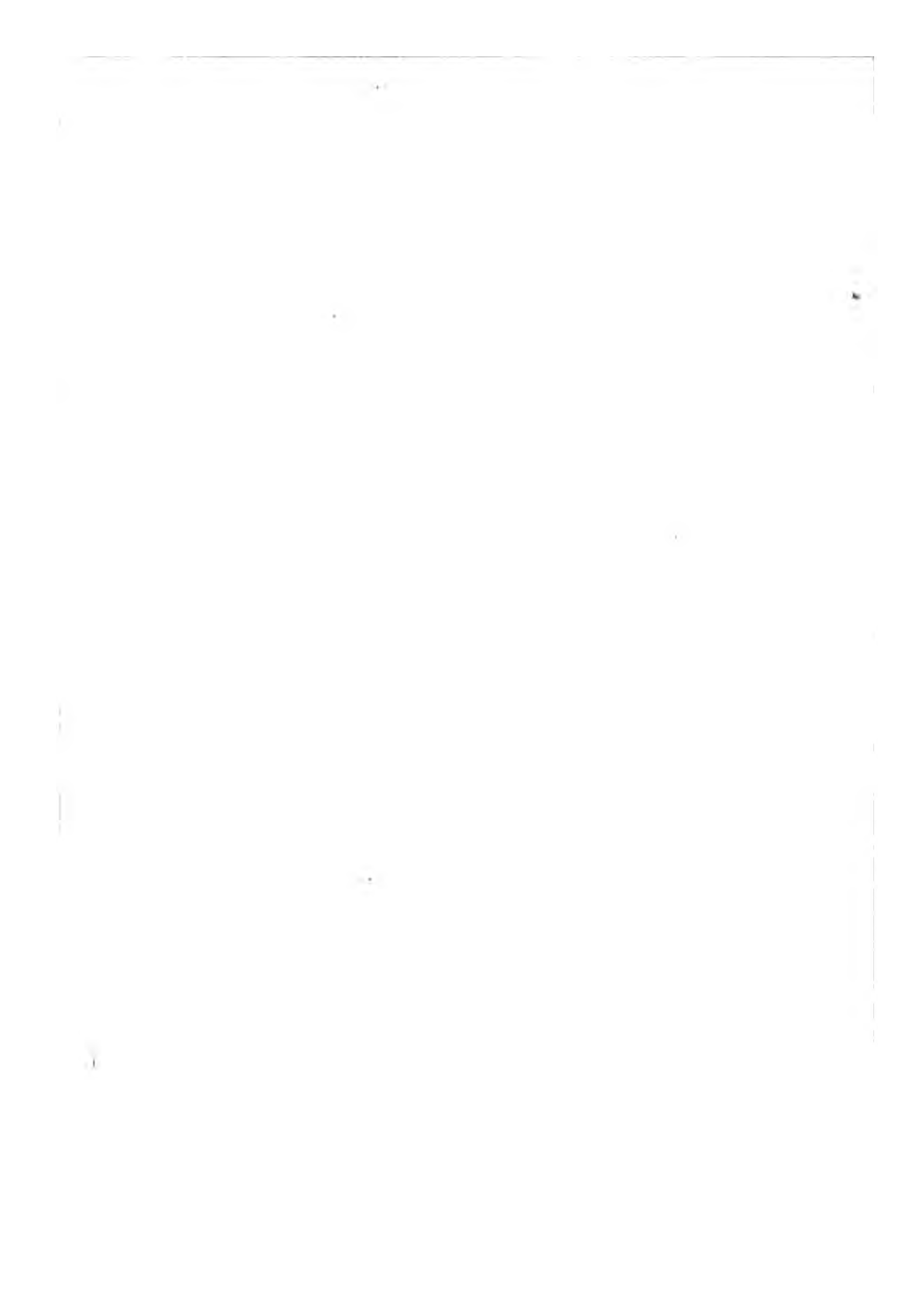


The book cover is dark red with a gold-tooled title and decorative elements. The title "THE COURT AND THE KILN" is centered in a gold-tooled, ornate frame. Below the title is a small gold-tooled emblem featuring a quill pen and a cross-like symbol. The cover has a subtle rectangular border and a decorative gold-tooled border on the left edge.











“‘Ain’t he pretty?’ remarked the boy.”—Page 87.

[Front.]

THE COURT AND THE KILN.

A Story

ON THE CHURCH CATECHISM.

BY

S. T. C.

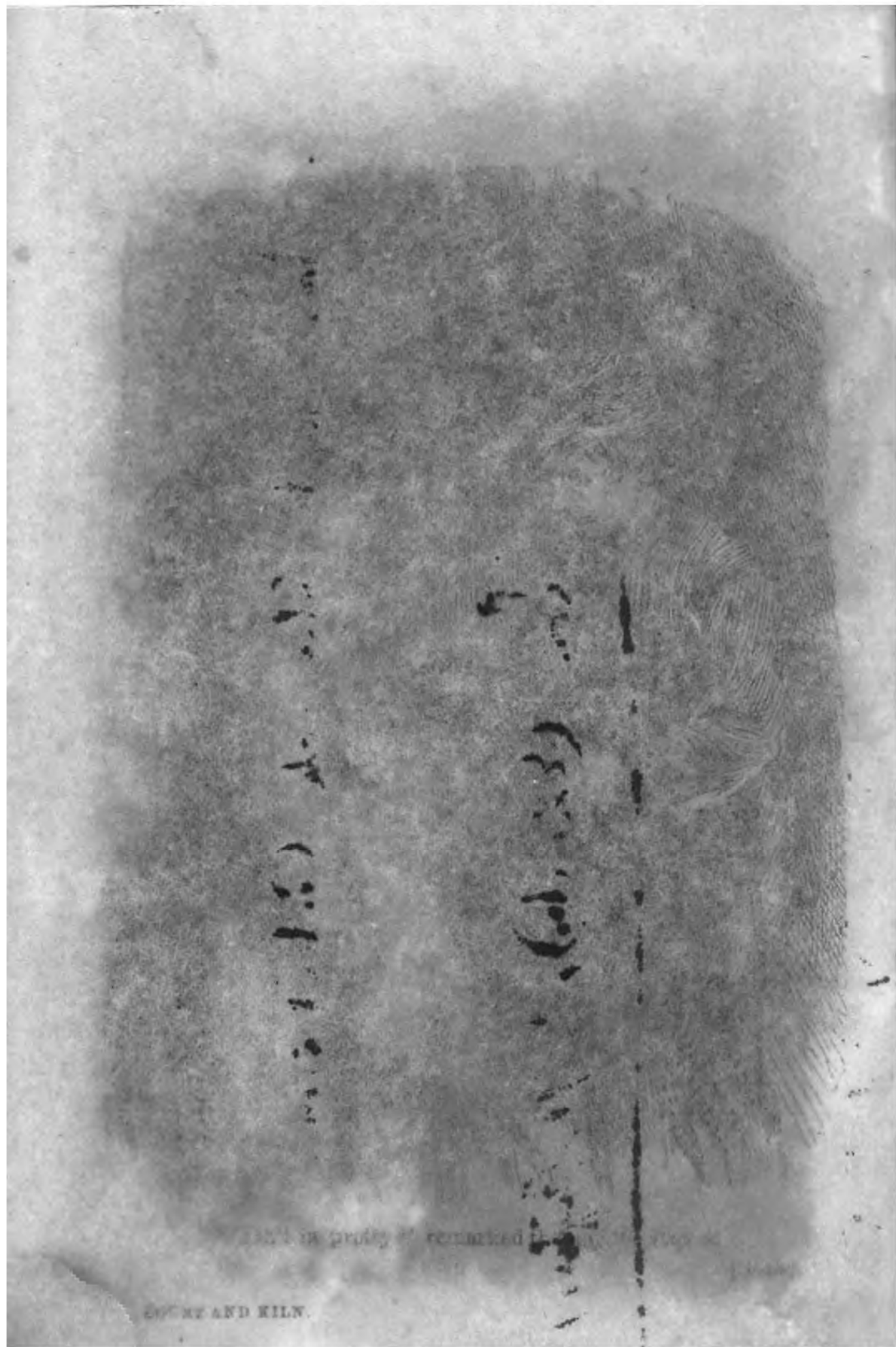
AUTHOR OF "WAGON AND WATTLE," "THE LITTLE FOX,"
"JANE GREY," ETC. ETC. ETC.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21, BERNERS STREET.

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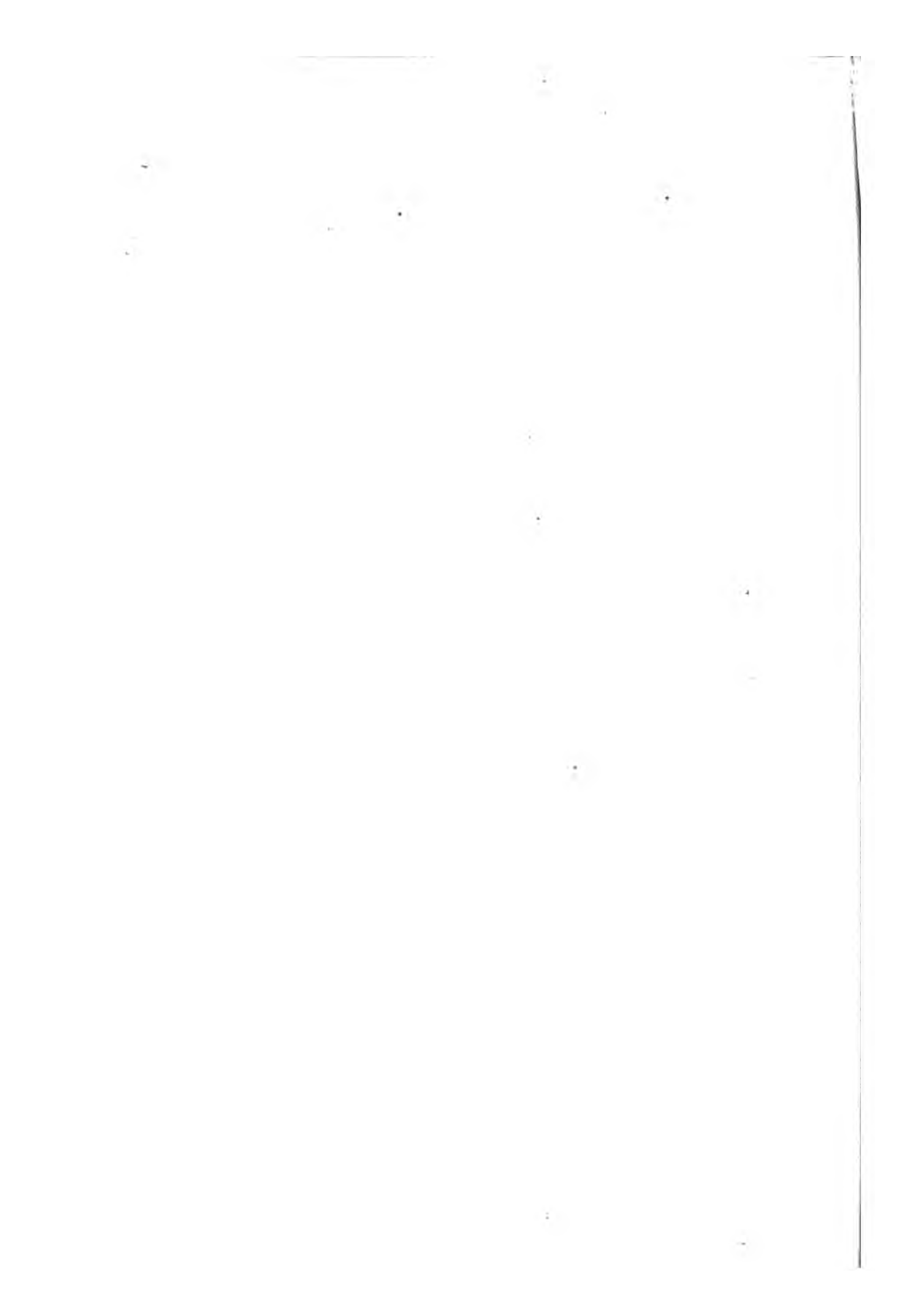
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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“THERE, do put away that stupid old book, Elvire, and come out into the garden and help me with my shanty.”

“I cannot, Ralph,” replied little Elvire ; glancing from her book to her brother. “I have not learned my Catechism for to-morrow.”

“Catechism ! you learn Catechism, oh dear ! you are come to something. Won't you find it jolly hard, that's all.” And Ralph enforced his opinion by a most expressive twist of the mouth, and shrug of the shoulders.

“Yes, it is very difficult, I cannot make it out one bit ; but mamma says I shall understand it all when I am older, and Sagey has promised to explain it to me.”

“Much she knows about it,” remarked Ralph contemptuously, turning on his heel to leave the room ; then remembering that he should miss

Elvire sadly in his afternoon's work, he again endeavoured to induce her to accompany him into the garden.

But Elvire, much as she wished to assist her brother in the formation of a proposed log-house in the plantation, continued firm to her determination of learning her Catechism first, and Ralph, finding it was useless to argue with her, left the room muttering something about "girls" being "poor silly things, and no use or good to anybody." Not that Ralph really meant what he then said, for he was passionately fond of his sister, and thought her one of the most active, useful, little girls to be met with anywhere ; but he had just returned for the holidays from school, and considered it mannish to look down upon girls and patronise them ; and as Elvire usually submitted to his wishes without offering the slightest opposition to them, believing him to know much better, and to be infinitely superior to herself, he was piqued at her refusing to accompany him that afternoon to the adjoining plantation, to select and help to remove the logs necessary for the construction of the shanty. Ralph had been reading about life in the Australian and American woods, until his head was quite turned upon the subject, and

having heard his papa order several trees to be cut down in the plantation which obstructed the view, he had begged to be allowed to make a hut with some of the boughs and smaller logs. To this request Mr Duncombe had kindly acceded, only stipulating that the hut should be constructed at the farther end of the coppice; and that Ralph should trench as little as possible upon the gardener's or woodcutter's time, by removing himself the least heavy pieces of wood that he might require. So, for the last three days, Ralph had done little else than wheel in a barrow small logs and light boughs to the spot where the shanty was to be erected, and Elvire had frequently lent her little strength to aid him in his labour.

Elvire would have much preferred going with her brother to remaining at home for another half hour or hour poring over her difficult lesson, but she had promised Miss Sage, her governess, to commit to memory the second question and answer of the Church Catechism before she went to bed; and she knew if she did not learn it then, she should not perhaps have an opportunity, even if she had the will, to do so in the evening, as she always went down into the dining-room after

her papa and mamma had dined, and seldom came up-stairs again until bed-time. So Elvire, with a shade of regret on her bright young face, heard Ralph's ungracious remark as he banged the door after him, and resuming her book, endeavoured to learn her lesson as quickly as possible. Placing her hand over the lower lines of the answer, and occasionally lifting it, to ascertain if she were right, she repeated slowly over and over to the question, "Who gave you that name?" "My godfather and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." . . . "Mrs Martin and Aunt Letitia are my godmothers, and Uncle William is my godfather," observed the child, thoughtfully; "and they had me christened Elvire after aunty who is dead; but I don't understand how that makes me a member of Christ. Let me see, a member is a part of anything, but Christ is in heaven and I am upon earth, how can I be a part of Christ? I do wish I knew what it meant! I think I know what the child of God means though, for Jesus called children to Him when He was living down here, and He put His hands upon them and blessed them, and if we love Him and try to please Him,

He lets us be His dear children now. That is very nice to think of; but, oh dear! what can an inheritor be? How I do wish Miss Sage were here to tell me. It must be something good, I am sure." And then Elvire began saying the lesson over and over again, until she knew every word by heart, although she could not understand them.

Miss Sage was only daily governess to Elvire, having an invalid mother who required all the spare time she could give to her at home. She did not come to Elvire on Sundays, but her little pupil usually found her way to her dear Sagey's cottage in the afternoon, and passed an hour or two with her, counting those hours amongst the most pleasant of her life. She was a thoughtful, intelligent child, though very backward in her education, having received little instruction until the previous six months of her life, when she had been placed under the care of Miss Sage. Up to that time, an hour or two passed with her mamma every morning, learning to read or write, had been all the teaching accorded to Elvire, Mrs Duncombe having a great dread of the premature development of children's faculties, considering it too frequently injurious to mind and body. So, until Ralph was sent to school, and a baby brother was

born at Court House, Elvire flitted about hither and thither like a butterfly, enjoying unrestricted freedom of action, both mental and physical. Then a great event took place in her young life, apart from the birth of her little brother, and that was the arrival of Mrs and Miss Sage at Old Lodge, and her becoming a pupil of the younger lady. Old Lodge had originally been a lodge to Court House, but an alteration in the main road some years before this story commences, had induced Mr Duncombe to make a new drive to his house, and erect a fresh lodge at its entrance, and the old one had remained unoccupied from that time. Separated from the turnpike road by a field, and with no communication with the Court excepting by a narrow path through the shrubbery—for Mr Duncombe had had the old drive dug up, and planted with trees and evergreens as soon as the new drive was constructed—Old Lodge presented few attractions to the Mendip villagers, and, from its isolated position, was rather shunned by them than otherwise. But it really was a very pretty cottage, and from its high situation remarkably dry and healthy, and when Mrs Sage wrote to her friend Mr Brown, the clergyman of Mendip, inquiring if there were

any cottages in his parish where she and her daughter could take up their abode, he immediately thought of Old Lodge, and made application to Mr Duncombe for it. That gentleman was only too glad to have the long disused cottage respectably tenanted, especially when he found what a boon Miss Sage would probably prove to his little daughter, and immediately Old Lodge was placed in the hands of the painters and paperers, and in the course of a few weeks was in thorough repair, with a nice broad gravel walk made from the garden through the field to the road. The narrow path through the shrubbery was also weeded, and the evergreens clipped and trimmed, that Elvire might have an easy way of access to her future governess, and the child watched the improvements with no little interest. It was a convenient, roomy cottage, containing three rooms above stairs and three below, affording sufficient accommodation for the widow lady and her daughter with their one servant; and when Mr and Mrs Brown had seen the last van-load of furniture arranged in it (for they had kindly undertaken to superintend furnishing the cottage), they could not help thinking it was one of the prettiest and most pleasant spots in the neighbourhood.

With mingled feelings of hope and fear, Elvire placed a vase of beautiful flowers on the best parlour table at Old Lodge, just before Mrs and Miss Sage were expected to arrive there, and then, perched on the rustic gate leading to the shrubbery path, partially shaded from observation by a mountain ash, watched for the advent of the new comers. She did so hope Miss Sage would be a nice, kind lady, and would not mind her being a very ignorant little girl, for Ralph in his boyish importance had never lost an opportunity of impressing on her her educational deficiencies, and she was sadly afraid her new governess would consider her very dull or stupid when she discovered how little she knew. But all her fears were scattered to the winds when she saw Miss Sage helping her invalid mother up the gravel walk leading to the cottage, and heard her say, "Oh, this is a sweet place, my mother. I feel as if we had found a home at last," and then spying Elvire on the gate beneath the ash-tree, with a bright smile and extended hand, she exclaimed, "I expect that is my new little friend, is it not?"

Elvire made a dart from her fancied hiding-place towards Miss Sage, and raising her blushing face, received with pleasure the lady's affectionate





“ ‘This is beautiful,’ cried Elvire.”—Page 9.

caress, and from that moment they were friends. But to return to the afternoon lesson, Elvire had no sooner committed it to memory than she shut up her book, and putting on her hat, went in search of her brother in the plantation. She was not long before she discovered him standing beside a barrow, piled with large logs, which Hunt the gardener was preparing to wheel away for him.

“O Elvire, is that you?” cried Ralph. “Has not papa been kind to allow Hunt to help me all this afternoon? We are getting on famously, and no mistake.”

“Would Missey like a ride?” inquired the man, remembering how fond his own children were of a ride on father’s wheelbarrow.

“Oh yes, Hunt!” exclaimed Elvire, “that is, if I can.”

“That you can,” replied Ralph, divesting himself of his jacket, and laying it upon the top of the logs. “Now then,” and with a grace that would have emulated Sir Walter Raleigh when he threw his mantle upon the miry spot for Queen Bess to walk over it dryshod, Ralph Duncombe assisted his sister to the impromptu seat.

“This is beautiful,” cried Elvire, clapping her hands with delight as Hunt began wheeling.

“It is better than going in the carriage with mamma to make calls. I did not think riding in a wheelbarrow was so nice.” Then, observing Hunt was growing very red in the face with the exertion he used, the kind-hearted child begged him to let her get off, for she was sure she was too heavy for him.

“Not a bit of it, Miss Elvire,” said the man ; “you ain’t but a feather compared to my Bess or Bill. Why, I wheels two or three of them at a time. ’Tain’t the weight, ’tis the awkwardness with these logs. Now then, Master Ralph,” and rubbing his hands, for he had been resting for a few minutes, Hunt began to wheel afresh, whilst Ralph first on this side, and then on that, assisted as much as was possible in guiding or propelling the barrow. Hunt had been of material aid that afternoon, and Elvire was astonished upon arriving at the place where the hut was being erected, to see how much it had progressed since the morning, and did not fail to express her satisfaction on the subject. “It will soon be done, I do believe,” she remarked, “and when you are gone back to school, I shall come here and learn my lessons, Ralph.”

“And a pretty learn you will make of it,” observed Ralph, who, however polite and atten-

tive in his behaviour and actions towards his sister, never let slip the opportunity of snubbing her when any mental attainment was alluded to.

“But, Ralph, I am getting on ; Miss Sage says I am. You know, mamma never wished me to learn until Miss Sage came,” pleaded Elvire.

“Why, you know,” replied Ralph, looking slyly round at Hunt, “mamma knew you were but a girl, and it would be only wasting time teaching you. Girls are twice the trouble boys are, they don’t understand quickly as boys do.”

Elvire, remembering her afternoon perplexities, wisely held her peace ; but Hunt, mistaking his young master’s sarcastic remarks to be said in earnest, boldly repudiated the suggested inferiority of girls, with—“Hold hard there, Master Ralph, making so bold I must beg to contradict you in that ’ere remark of yours, for I find girls have a deal more gumption generally than boys. Why, my little Bess has twice the sense my big Jim has ; and I must say I think girls’ wits are a main sight sharper than boys.”

“They may be sharp-witted enough,” replied Ralph, with increasing importance, as his argumentative powers were called into action ; “but it is their understanding I am alluding to.”

Hunt pushed his hat up off his forehead and scratched his head, sorely puzzled to discover the distinction between wit and understanding, having always considered them the same, and a long if not learned discussion would have probably ensued between the schoolboy and the gardener, had not Elvire spied her papa coming towards them.

“Here is papa,” cried the delighted child, bounding down the path to meet him. “Oh, we are getting on with the hut so! Hunt has done such a lot this afternoon for Ralph, and he has given me a ride on the wheelbarrow; and, oh, I am so happy, and Miss Sage and I shall have lessons here when Ralph has gone back to school, and”——

“And turn the log hut into a temple of Minerva,” interrupted Mr Duncombe, laughing.

“Minerva, papa, who is that?” questioned Elvire, pausing in her walk by her father’s side.

“The heathen goddess of wisdom,” he replied.

“Oh, we don’t want any heathens here, papa, do we? You’d rather I should be a little Christian, would not you?”

“Well, Minerva is gone out of fashion, and her votaries are few, so I will not press my little

girl into her service. I must let her have her own way, I suppose."

"Christians will not ever go out of fashion, will they, papa," remarked the child, triumphantly.

"I never knew they had really become fashionable yet, pet," observed Mr Duncombe. "Fashion is but the echo of public opinion, and is dependent upon man's will. Christianity is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and is unchangeable like unto its Originator."

"Then I will be a Christian," said Elvire, decidedly. Then, bidding her papa shut his eyes, she and Ralph led him to a spot where the fast rising hut appeared to the greatest advantage.

"Now open your eyes, papa!" they exclaimed, when they had placed him in the most favourable position for seeing. "Are not we getting on?"

"All on one side," remarked Mr Duncombe, teasingly.

"Now, that is not the side at all, papa, and you know it," rejoined the children. "That is the back, and the doorway will be here just opposite where we are standing, and there are to be two windows, one on each side of the hut."

"And a fire-place on a stone in the centre for

cooking," suggested Mr Duncombe, with mock gravity.

"Now, that is too bad, you are laughing at us, papa," cried Elvire and Ralph, giving Mr Duncombe a gentle shake, by way of bringing him to reason.

"Oh, I see, the culinary arrangements are to be carried on out of doors," observed Mr Duncombe, demurely. "Very right and proper, and decidedly pleasant in warm weather. I approve of your plan exceedingly, my dears."

"Now, you are too bad, papa," again reiterated the children. "But do not you really think the hut is getting on famously?" they pleaded, and with two pairs of beseeching eyes fixed upon his face, Mr Duncombe could no longer withhold his opinion, and was fain to confess that its progress far exceeded his expectations.

"I knew papa would say that, Hunt. I was certain he would not expect to see so much done," observed the delighted boy to the gardener.

Hunt who was nearly as much interested as the children, in the construction of the log-house, then informed Mr Duncombe, that he and Mason the woodcutter had cut down the proscribed trees

in the plantation, and hewn off the boughs, and were waiting further orders as to the disposal of what Master Ralph would not require, and that "if master had no objection, they'd be glad to give Master Ralph a bit of help the forepart of the week, with the hut."

Mr Duncombe had no objection. He had merely stipulated that Ralph should do as much as possible himself at the commencement of the work, to see whether he was really in earnest, and as he had proved himself to be, his father had no further reason for testing him, and Hunt received permission to aid his young master whenever he had an opportunity, and to tell Mason he might do the same.

Ralph could hardly find words to express his thanks, he was so rejoiced at knowing, with Hunt's and Mason's assistance, the shanty would be completed before he returned to school. "But I will do all I can myself, papa," said the industrious boy; "for I want it to be my hut after all, that when I am a man I may come and sit here and think what I did when a boy."

"Mind you use living boughs and logs then, Ralph," observed Mr Duncombe, giving a smart rap with a stick upon a decaying piece close to him.

“Living, papa? How can they be living when they are separated from the root?” inquired the lad, in surprise at his father’s remark.

“What I mean by living boughs, are those which were deriving nourishment from the root when they were cut off. You will find there is a marked and important difference between a living and dead bough. See,” and Mr Duncombe struck the decaying log a violent blow, causing it to crack and crumble beneath the stroke. “Now do the same to that sound one, Ralph. There, excepting the bark flying off, you see your blow has made no impression upon it, my boy. So remember, if you want your work to stand the wear and tear of wind and weather, you must see that your logs be living ones. But I must leave you now, children, the first bell will ring in a few minutes I expect.”

“Oh, we are coming too, papa. Nurse is going to let us have tea later this evening, that Ralph may be longer in the plantation. She said she would give us until the first dinner bell rang if we were good,” observed Elvire. “So we may as well come with you, hadn’t we, Ralph?”

“All right,” exclaimed Ralph, slipping on his jacket; “good-night, Hunt, and thank you.”

“Good-evening, Hunt. I expect you will have no objection to to-morrow’s rest,” remarked Mr Duncombe.

“No, your honour, not a bit,” replied Hunt, touching his hat respectfully. “Leastaways it’s not the rest I care for, for you ain’t a hard master. But ’tis the having the children about me, and my missus a looking as if there was nought to do but look at us, that makes me enjoy my Sunday. And what with church, and the children, and Miss Sage’s good books, the day goes by a deal faster than one wants it to ; and certain sure I am, the Sabbath is the best day of the seven with me, sir.” Hunt then, with another touch of the hat to his master, began packing the tools and gardening implements into the wheelbarrow, preparatory to conveying them to the tool-shed, and Mr Duncombe and his children returned to Court House, the former to dress for dinner, and the two latter to have tea in the nursery.

CHAPTER II.

ADOPTION.

“ Who gave you this name ?

“ My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism ; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

“ Now, Elvire, I shall just sit under the ash-tree and read my book, or kick up the turf with my heels, until you come out again,” remarked Ralph Duncombe, as he opened the gate communicating between the shrubbery and Old Lodge garden, for his sister to pass through for her Sunday afternoon visit to Miss Sage. “ So you just make haste, for I have only two more Sundays to spend with you, and I think you may shirk lessons a bit for me, that I do.”

“ Well, Ralphy, I will not be longer than I can help, but the time does go so fast when I am with dear Sagey.”

“ Well, make haste, and here goes ;” and throwing himself beneath the ash-tree, Ralph notified to his sister that he had taken up the position she might expect to find him in on her return.

Little Elvire having compared him to a great Harry Long-legs sprawling on the grass, made her way into Miss Sage’s parlour, and sitting on an ottoman at her governess’s feet, was soon busily engaged in making known the difficulties and perplexities of her lesson.

“ You see,” said Elvire, laying her hand on Miss Sage’s knee, “ I know why I am called Elvire, for mamma told me Christian names were given us at baptism by way of distinction, and to prevent confusion in families. She said Duncombe was my family or surname, and Elvire was my Christian or distinctive name, and she made me laugh, by saying if people had only surnames, all sorts of mistakes would be made ; and if she were to call out Duncombe, papa would be answering, and Ralph, and I, and Aunt Letitia, and Uncle William, and all the Duncombes that might hear her. So I understood it was good to have different names, for different people in families, very well ; but just as I wanted mamma to tell me why godfathers and godmothers gave them to

us, some ladies called, and mamma went down into the drawing-room to receive them, and I have not been able to talk to her since."

"And you want me to tell you, I suppose," remarked Miss Sage.

"Oh yes, if you please," replied Elvire.

"After the death of Christ, persons, you know my dear, who believed in Him as their Lord and Saviour, were called Christians. This name was first given to them at Antioch,* some of the disciples of Jesus having travelled there after the martyrdom of Stephen, and preached the Gospel to the inhabitants of that city. The name Christian, derived from Christ, became as it were the family name of God's children, and singled them out from the world, and great were the persecutions to which they were consequently exposed. They were driven from city to city, imprisoned, tortured, burned, and devoured by wild beasts in the Roman and Grecian amphitheatres."

"But why?" inquired Elvire, with quivering lips and tearful eyes; "why were they so cruel to them?"

"Because they would only worship the true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent. No

* Acts xi. 26.

Christian was safe in those days, and parents never knew an hour but what they might be torn away from their dear children, never to see them again in this world. So to meet and anticipate this fearful time of trial, Christian men and women came forward at children's baptisms, and pledged themselves to take care of the poor little things, should they be deprived of their own parents before they could provide for themselves. These men and women were called godfathers and godmothers, because, from love of God, they promised to become fathers and mothers to the children they had named in baptism, and bring them up in His most holy faith and fear."

"I wonder whether Mrs Martin and aunt and uncle thought of that when I was baptized?" remarked Elvire, gravely.

"Probably not, my dear," replied Miss Sage, "for those troublous days are mercifully over in our highly-favoured land; and parents, having no fears of violent deaths before their eyes, can make such provision by will for the bringing up of their children, in case they should die before they have arrived at an age to take care of themselves, which materially relieves godfathers and godmothers of their responsibilities. And now,

let me hear if you can say your lesson. Who gave you your Christian name?"

"My godfather and godmothers," repeated Elvire, slowly, "'in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' What is that?—an inheritor, I mean?" inquired the child, quickly glancing up into her instructress's face.

"An inheritor?—one who possesses anything by right, Elvire."

"By right, Sagey!" cried the child, with solemn earnestness, "but we can have no right to heaven?"

"Whose will Court House be when your papa dies?" inquired Miss Sage.

"Why, Ralph's, to be sure!" replied Elvire, astonished at the question.

"Because he is a good boy!" observed the lady.

"Now, Sagey, you know better than that," said Elvire, lovingly pressing her governess's hand; "you know Ralph is papa's son, and that is why he would have it. He is papa's heir, I have heard the servants say."

"And Jesus is God's only Son. He is heir to the kingdom of heaven, and we, as His children and members of Himself, are joint heirs with

Him. So my little Elvire can be an inheritor also. Cannot she comprehend it now?" affectionately inquired Miss Sage.

"Yes, yes," replied the child, the light of truth dawning upon her young mind; "but how am I to know I am a member, Sagey dear—you said I must be a member to be an inheritor?"

Before Miss Sage could reply, a shadow fell upon the carpet at their feet, from a figure passing the open window, and immediately afterwards Ralph was heard inquiring for Miss Elvire.

"Do come in, Ralph," said Elvire, going to the door and trying to pull him in; "Miss Sage is going to tell me how I can be a member of Christ."

Ralph, fairly caught in a trap out of which he had come expressly to draw his sister, was too polite to give vent to his chagrin in words, so allowed Elvire to lead him into the room where Miss Sage was sitting.

"You are just in time to help Elvire in a difficulty," observed Miss Sage, when she had shaken hands with the lad and bade him be seated. "I dare say you have seen the gardener grafting trees?"

"Oh yes, often and often," replied Ralph,

pleased at being appealed to on a subject he was familiar with.

“And I have once,” interrupted Elvire.

“He takes a young branch, and what does he do with it?” inquired Miss Sage.

“Why, cut the bark of the tree he wants to graft it on,” answered Ralph eagerly, “and then he inserts the root end of the branch beneath the opening in the bark, and then closes the bark over it, and binds it up with yarn and clay, and then the work is done.”

“And then the stock and the scion become” — suggested Miss Sage.

“One!” cried Ralph.

“Just so, my dear children. We bring you in baptism into covenant with the Lord, and by faith graft you upon the Living Vine, the Lord Jesus. You are outwardly admitted into the rights and privileges of the parent stem; but whether you become fruitful branches, time alone will show. The grafter waits and watches to see whether the graft takes, does he not?” asked Miss Sage.

“Oh yes! he goes very often to see the clay does not crack and peel off with the sun, or the shoot get loosened by the wind,” replied Ralph, thoroughly interested. “Why, Hunt is so anxious

about his grafts, Miss Sage, that papa told him one day, he thought he must dream about them."

"Of course he knows that not only the flavour, but the quantity of fruit hereafter, will depend on the young shoot or scion drawing sufficient nourishment from the stock. It is not enough for him to be assured the tree he has grafted upon is healthy and good, he must as a trustworthy gardener do all he can to prevent injury to the graft itself, for it is only as it becomes one with the stem, that it will live and bear fruit. I look upon faithful godfathers and godmothers in these days, Elvire, as gardeners watching the young grafts. They should watch in prayer for the children they have brought to Jesus, and entreat Him to preserve them from the scorching influences of the world, and the rough blasts of temptation, to which they may be exposed. This they can do without interfering with parental authority, or usurping a power which might be irksome to many parents of the present day."

"But, Sagey, dear, if the graft does not take?" inquired Elvire, anxiously.

"Then the bough dies," answered Ralph quickly.

"Yes," replied Miss Sage seriously, "the scion

dies, but the stock remains the same, for the life is in itself. It loses no strength by the death of the bough, though it would have gained fruit and beauty had it lived. The dead bough is removed as unsightly and useless, for it neither participates in the life or honour of the tree upon which it has been grafted, whilst the living bough drinks of its sap, draws of its strength, and is, in fact, one with it. Being one, it shares in all the benefits bestowed upon it, for, being a living member, it is an inheritor also."

"O Sagey, I hope my godfather and godmothers pray for me," observed Elvire, with a saddened little face, as her mind grasped Miss Sage's meaning.

"I hope they do, darling, for we all need good people's prayers," remarked Miss Sage. "They help us very much. But there is this important difference between the graft and the child of God; any person may destroy the graft, but none can pluck one of God's children from their Saviour's hand. They must withdraw themselves from His keeping, for no one, nor anything, can separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." *

* Rom. viii. 39.

Ralph drew his chair a little nearer to Miss Sage, for her way of explaining what he had been accustomed to call the "jolly hard Catechism," had found an entrance to his heart, and he felt that, instead of knowing nothing about it, she knew all about it, and she rose accordingly in his boyish estimation ; whilst Elvire nestled closer to her dear Sagey, observing, "I hope we all shall be living boughs ; it would be very bad to have been brought to Jesus, and yet to be dead members, would it not? Oh, I hope I am a living one."

"Yes, dear, I trust you are. Remember the sap which nourishes the bough comes from the root and stock, and so the strength God's children require comes from His Son. Keep very close to Him in prayer, and He will supply all your needs, and enable you to live in His faith and fear."

Miss Sage then rose to go to her mother, whose gentle tap on the floor, in the room above them, told her she had waked from her afternoon's nap. "You can come any time with Elvire, Ralph," said Miss Sage, shaking hands with him ; "and you, Elvire, had better ask your brother to explain any little difficulty you may meet with in learning the next answer in the Catechism. By the way, Ralph,

I forgot to mention what is to me a very striking analogy between the stock and the graft, and our Lord and His children. By grafting on a hardy stock, the fruits of warmer countries have become acclimatised to our own, such as cherries, peaches, and nectarines, and are enabled by this means to bear the atmospheric changes of our island. And so in Christ, people of all climes, tongues, and nations, are enabled to glorify Him, though to us placed in the most unlikely and ungenial situations. Bear that in mind, dear children, and now good-bye."

"Well, she is a stunner!" exclaimed Ralph, when he had reached the shrubbery, and considered himself fairly out of Miss Sage's hearing.

"A what, Ralph?" inquired mystified Elvire.

"Why, a stunner, to be sure."

"I do not know what that means, Ralph, and I am sure it is not a Sunday word; it is neither good nor pretty."

Ralph gave a queer little whistle at his sister's observation, knowing the term would be considered objectionable by many, on any day, but he had picked it up with a few other slang words at school, and was rather proud of displaying

additional phrases to his English vocabulary. "It means she is a capital one," explained Ralph, after a short pause.

"Of course she is," replied Elvire, very decidedly, "and I love her." And then they walked for several yards in silence.

Ralph was the first to break it, by proposing that they should go and look at the two boughs by the log hut. "I mean the living and dead ones, for I could not help thinking of them," he remarked, "when Miss Sage was talking just now."

Elvire readily assented to her brother's proposition, and very soon they were standing amongst the pieces of wood, destined for the completion of the hut.

"There is not so much difference in their looks," observed Ralph, after having narrowly investigated their external appearance. The rotten one is perhaps a shade darker in the bark, but I think I should never have noticed it was a bad log, if papa had not called my attention to it."

"Why, you see it is inside it is bad, Ralph, and you never thought of trying it like papa did," remarked Elvire.

“No; but I’ll tell you, Elvire, what these two pieces of wood make me think of,” rejoined Ralph.

“What?” inquired his sister.

“Why, the wheat and the tares in the Bible.* God let them be together, you know, until they were wanted. Then at harvest time, when the grain had to be stored in the barn for use, the tares were gathered together to be burned, being good for nothing else. O Elvire! they were dead members again.”

“But they were living when they were gathered up,” said Elvire.

“Yes, but theirs was a useless life, Elvire, and that in the sight of God is the same as dead, Miss Sage would say. I know that very well, though I have not cared to think about it before. I tell you what, Elvire, I will learn the Catechism with you whilst I am at home, and Miss Sage shall explain it to us. The next lesson will be about the fruits the young grafts should bear, and I should like to hear what Miss Sage makes of it. But come along, I expect it’s time to go in, we must not keep papa and mamma waiting for us.”

* Matt. xiii. 24-30.

“No, indeed, that would not be bearing good fruit, would it?” remarked Elvire, taking her brother’s hand, and trying to keep step with him, as they returned to the house.

Sundays were always happy days to the young Duncombes, because on them Mr and Mrs Duncombe dined and took tea early with their children, that their servants might be able to attend church comfortably, though, until Miss Sage’s arrival at Old Lodge, the hour after dinner very frequently hung heavily upon Elvire’s hands, as then her papa usually took a nap, and her mamma always retired for a short time to her dressing-room. But Miss Sage’s coming had turned that dull hour into a golden one, so that from the getting up to the going to bed, Sunday was a bright day to Elvire. Not but all her days were bright, but she was passionately fond of her father, and his society consequently made her Sunday the brightest of all.

Mr and Mrs Duncombe were walking on the lawn when Ralph and Elvire emerged from the shrubbery, and their presence was the signal for a good run, to see which of them would reach papa and mamma first. Of course, Ralph would have won the day, had not Mr Duncombe fore-

seen that Elvire's little legs had but a poor chance with Ralph's long ones, and advanced to meet her.

"Just like you, papa," gasped the breathless child, possessing herself of one of his hands. "Just like my own papa, to come to meet his Elvire."

A thought flashed through Mr Duncombe's brain, suggested by Elvire's words; it was of another father under very different circumstances, and the text unconsciously rose to his lips. "But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

"That was God," whispered Elvire, clinging closer to her father; "God just going to meet naughty sinners, when they are sorry and are returning to Him. Papa, do you love God?"

Something like a sigh escaped Mr Duncombe's breast, as stooping down he kissed his artless questioner, replying, "I love my Elvire."

Elvire returned his fond caress, but a momentary shadow rested on her fair young face, for her papa had not answered her question, and she felt she must not ask him again, but, "Oh!" she thought, "I wish papa had said he had loved

God, for I knew he loved me." Then dismissing the painful reflection with—"But God loves papa, only perhaps he is not quite sure of it yet," Elvire's countenance regained its wonted cheerfulness, and swinging his hand backwards and forwards, they followed Mrs Duncombe and Ralph into the drawing-room, the windows of which opened out upon the lawn.

CHAPTER III.

RENUNCIATION.

“What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?”

“They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith. And, thirdly, that I should keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.”

THE log-hut progressed rapidly, with Hunt’s and Mason’s assistance, and towards the end of the week the roofing-in had commenced. The children had fixed on a very pleasant and rather elevated spot in the coppice to erect their hut upon, commanding a pretty view on either side, though sheltered at the back from keen rough winds by thickly-grown evergreens and several lofty trees. The path which wound all through and round the plantation passed a few yards in

front of it, and Mr Duncombe had had the space they had chosen cleared the previous week, so that there might be no impediments in their way. This open space was to be laid down with grass or gravel when the shanty was finished, according to Ralph's and Elvire's fancy, and it was not until all these arrangements were completed that Mrs Duncombe was to be permitted to visit that part of the coppice. Until then her walks in the grounds were restricted, much to the lady's amusement, though Mr Duncombe was allowed to visit "the works," as he designated them, daily. Ralph toiled unremittingly with the men, to their delight and admiration, going home to his meals when they went for theirs ; and even two or three times being beforehand with them in the morning. He was a thoroughly unselfish, noble-hearted boy, though, being naturally clever, he was rather proud of his mental qualifications ; but considering that he had been the only son for nearly thirteen years, and until the last six months had seldom associated with boys of his own age and rank, such a failing was not much to be wondered at. The birth of little Cyril (the baby), and Ralph's being sent to school, had caused quite a sensation at Court House, for all the servants were very

fond of the "young master," and felt inclined to look upon the baby-boy as an interloper upon Ralph's privileges and future prospects. Ralph was, however, highly delighted at having a brother, calling it "fine fun," and anticipating the time when he should be able to initiate him in all sorts of boyish pastimes. But unbounded was his satisfaction when he was released from the daily tutorship of a gentleman in the adjoining village, and sent as a commoner to Winchester College. To little Elvire his going away would have been a sore trial but for the timely arrival of Miss Sage, for her nurse and mamma were so taken up with the new baby that the poor child would have been lonely indeed without her brother Ralph.

With July, Ralph had returned home for the summer holidays, much grown and a far more important personage in Elvire's and the servants' estimation than he had ever been before. For, had he not been to Winchester College, which was many miles away? And could he not tell them of the Hircocervus,* a painting of which was hanging up in a chamber adjoining the College kitchen;

* Animal compounded of a man, a hog, a deer, and an ass.

and clambering St Catherine's Hill in the evenings, after tea during cloister time (that is the quarter between Easter and Midsummer), and bathing at the foot of the hill in the river Itchen, with other minutiae of a Wykehamist's* daily life, particularly interesting to his unsophisticated auditors. But though Ralph's thoughts for the time being were mainly concentrated on his two pet subjects—his school and the log-house—yet he did not forget his Sunday determination of learning his Catechism with his sister; and frequently of an evening during the week, he might have been seen, after the men had gone home, sitting with Elvire upon one of the logs in the clearing, endeavouring to teach her what he had, without any difficulty, previously committed to memory. It was gratifying to him to be thus able to assist his little sister, though, mingling with his real affection for her, was a deep sense of his own superiority.

“It is so hard,” observed Elvire, one evening after having striven to master the first clause in her lesson. “There are such grand words, and I am sure I cannot tell what pomps and vanity I

* Winchester boys are called Wykehamists after William of Wykeham, founder of the College.

can give up ; for mamma would not perhaps like me to dress like the little villagers."

"Of course she would not," replied Ralph ; "nor do I see why you should want to."

"Why you see, Ralph," rejoined Elvire, folding her hands upon her book, and looking up at him most confidentially, "you see Martha said, when my new pink frock came home last night, and she brought it up to show nurse, 'Here's more pomps and vanities, nurse, for that child ! I am afraid she'll be brought up for the world after all.' I was in the day nursery playing with Cyril in his bassinette, and Martha did not notice me, until nurse said something about 'little pitchers and long ears.' But I am sure she thought my new frock would make me wicked if I wore it, and yet mamma ordered it for me. I cannot make it out at all, for I am sure mamma wishes me to be a good child, and I forgot to ask Miss Sage this morning about it. And now here, in my lesson, my godfather and godmothers promise I shall give up just what Martha says I am going to put on."

"Much Martha knows about it," burst impetuously from Ralph. "She never goes to church with the other servants, and when she's up, she

always talks of the wickedness of other people. I wonder papa and mamma do not make her go to church, she would learn better then. I don't believe she knows what pomps and vanities are. I'll ask her some day, see if I do not, Elvire!"

Martha Bull was a Dissenter, and belonged to a dissenting family, which fact, combined with her well-known integrity, had induced Mr and Mrs Duncombe to concede to her the privilege accorded to no other member of their household, that of attending a different place of worship to themselves. She was an excellent young woman, and not in the least given to forcing her opinions upon others, but now and then they would slip out, and Elvire's new pink frock the previous evening had elicited "a crack of the rifle," as the old butler was wont to designate her occasional sharp comments. "She's a bonny girl, and a true one," the old man would remark after hearing one of her keen observations; "but she raps it out quick, does Martha; and I do believe she'd like the sky to be grey, and the grass drab colour, she's that quiet in her fancies."

So Martha, with her puritanical propensities, had unwittingly set little Elvire meditating upon a matter which has puzzled wiser brains for

many generations, and probably will continue to do until the end of time,—the consistencies and inconsistencies in a Christian's dress.

“Mamma knows best,” remarked Ralph, after a brief silence, “and that Miss Sage will tell you, Elvire. And now for the lesson again, ‘What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?’ Promise for you, it means,” he explained.

“They did promise and vow three things in my name,” repeated Elvire, slowly.

“All right, go ahead!” urged the impatient boy.

“I don't know how to,” rejoined Elvire, “except, first that I should” —

“Renounce,” broke in Ralph.

“Renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world. Is it very wicked?” inquired the child, innocently.

“Yes, to be sure, or the Catechism would not say so,” replied Ralph, decisively.

“And—and,” hesitatingly continued Elvire.

“All the sinful lusts of the flesh.”

“What is that?” asked Elvire, stopping her brother short in his prompting.

“Now, Elvire, you must not interrupt,” remarked Ralph, majestically, “you must say after me.”

“But I do not understand it,” observed Elvire, despairingly, “and it is so difficult to learn.” And the little girl appeared ready to cry. “Cannot you help me, Ralph?”

Ralph saw the tears glistening in her eyes, and drawing her closer to him, descended from his lofty pedestal of superiority, by confessing, “Indeed, Elvire, I do not quite understand it myself, or I would tell you. I know the love of money, and eating or drinking, is called in Scripture lust, and I know the word lust means ‘longing desire,’ and I suppose the giving them up is what is meant in the Catechism by renouncing all the sinful lusts of the flesh.”

“Quite right, Ralph,” observed Miss Sage, who from the opposite direction had, unnoticed, approached to where the children were sitting. In an instant they had sprung up to welcome her, and in a few moments she was occupying Ralph’s seat on the log beside Elvire, whilst he was perched on a smaller one, which he had dragged up close to them for the purpose. “The lusts of the flesh,” explained the lady, “are the sinful desires originating within us; whilst the pomps and vanities of the world are the temptations to sin from without us. These, with every other

hurtful thing, our godparents promise that they will endeavour that we shall be brought up to renounce. Of course no person can pledge themselves that another *shall* forsake ungodliness, and live a pure and holy life, but they can—and if they are faithful sponsors they will — try by every possible means to lead and influence those who have been adopted by them in baptism, to follow that which is good. By prayer, they will plead with God, for Christ's sake, to keep their young charges beneath the shadow of His wings, sending His Blessed Spirit into their hearts, to guide their feet into the way of peace: and by example, they will commend religion to their youthful sight and minds.”

“But, Sagey dear, why does not the world get better, now people are so much wiser? You see there are no naughty people here to kill the Christians now. Why ar'n't we good without wanting godfathers and godmothers to promise that we shall be?” inquired Elvire.

“Because, my darling, hearts by nature are the same now as they were when God pronounced them, in the days of Noah, ‘*only evil continually,*’* and, in the time of Jeremiah, ‘*deceitful above all*

* Gen. vi. 5.

*things, and desperately wicked.** Ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their posterity or descendants have been wandering farther and farther from Him, and it is only by His Son Jesus Christ that we who were afar off could be brought nigh again."

"Then are little girls and boys just the same as they were all those years ago?" asked Elvire, in astonishment.

"Yes, by nature. They have the same wicked dispositions to contend with, and naughty tempers to fight against, as Cain and Abel had, with the same God to help them to overcome, if they seek His aid."

"But was Abel a bad man? I thought he was a good one," remarked Ralph.

"He was by nature a sinner like you and I are," replied Miss Sage. "But he was accounted righteous in the sight of God, because he drew nigh to Him in the appointed way, by a sacrifice, and that sacrifice was accepted in his place—the lamb which he offered being a type of the Lamb of God, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, by whose one offering and atonement we alone can enter into the presence of Almighty God, and call Him Father."

* Jer. xvii. 9.

“I wonder if little children played about as they do now,” said Elvire, thoughtfully.

“I should think so, my dear. One cannot fancy a child otherwise than light-hearted and playful. Nor is there any harm in their being so. By the by, Elvire, your question reminds me of something I met with in reading about the Catacombs the other day.”

“Catacombs!” echoed Elvire.

“Yes, excavations and caves for burial, extending immense distances underground. Those I was reading about were situated in the Appian Way, near Rome.”

“What, where the Christian martyrs were buried?” exclaimed Ralph.

“Yes; but what I was going to tell Elvire was, what was found in one of the compartments, which from its size must have been a child’s, when it was opened. What should you suppose it was, Elvire, and Ralph?”

“Ornaments,” cried Elvire.

“A vase, or beautiful porcelain vessel of some kind,” observed Ralph, who had seen several such at the Museums, and knew they had been found in places of sepulture.

Miss Sage gravely shook her head, as she replied, "A doll."

"A doll!" exclaimed both children at once.

"Yes, a doll, and from the picture of it, it was not very much unlike a Dutch doll, for it was very similarly shaped and jointed. The little owner's body had returned to its parent dust, but her pet plaything remained uninjured, to tell to other little maidens, that the child's toy of to-day had had the same charm for the child of eighteen or nineteen hundreds years ago."

"Dear little girl, she must have loved her dolly like I do mine—mustn't she?" observed Elvire.

"I wonder whether she was one of the Christians' children," remarked Ralph.

"Probably so," replied Miss Sage. "But only the doll remains to tell that a child was once laid to rest in that small compartment of those dreary tombs. But the evening is closing in, my dears. I thought your papa liked you to be with him after dinner till your bed-time."

"So he does, usually," said Ralph; "but the log-hut has altered our plans the last week or two, and this week papa has been busy in the

library every evening, and has not once asked after us."

"And mamma is with him most of the time," remarked Elvire, "and nurse says it is business matters they are at."

"Then we must not talk about it, Elvire. People do not like their business affairs to be talked of. Do not you think you had better be running about a little? I am afraid you may take cold sitting so long here."

"Oh no, I do not think we shall!" exclaimed Elvire.

"Besides, you have not finished explaining the lesson in the Catechism, Miss Sage," rejoined Ralph.

"Then I will briefly do so, my dear children, and after that you must have a run. Where shall I begin?"

"At the beginning, if you please," said Ralph.

"Well, then, to begin at the beginning, or first clause. Our godparents promise for us in our baptism, that we *shall renounce the devil and all his works*. Now, by that we must understand that we have an enemy, who is endeavouring to induce us to be his servants and do his works. This invisible enemy, you know, is the devil, and

his works St Paul enumerates in Gal. v., Col. iii., and Eph. iv. and v. Lying, stealing, murder, anger, hatred, pride, and such like. Then *the pomps and vanity of this wicked world*, are all things which will draw our thoughts and affections from God and the other world, and fix them upon this. The word *pomp* means show, splendour, the riches and honours of this life, and to such we are naturally attracted, but, from their emptiness and unreality, they are but vanity, and as such we are to be warned against them. *The sinful lusts of the flesh* are, as Ralph described them, love of eating and drinking to the injury of mind and body, besides sloth, indelicacy of word or action, covetousness, and many other wicked propensities springing out of these. Now of all these evils, godparents promise that they will warn their godchildren, and faithfully teach them to avoid them. Secondly, they pledge themselves that the children shall be taught to *believe all the articles of the Christian faith*; and thirdly, *that they shall keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life*. The articles of our faith are taught in our creed or belief, which, with the Commandments, will form themes for future conversations,

as Elvire commits them to memory, and even if time permitted, which it does not now, I should not touch upon them until then."

"And I shall then be gone back to school, I expect, for Elvire is such a slow coach," remarked Ralph, with a shade of regret in his tone of voice.

"Hush, Ralph, slow coach is not a gentlemanly appellative, especially when applied to a lady, and that lady a sister too. When are you going away?"

"The week after next, Miss Sage. The beginning of September."

"Well, we shall have managed to get to the commandments by then. Shall we not, Elvire?"

"Yes, if Ralph helps me," replied Elvire.

"This is Friday evening," observed Miss Sage, and as I have endeavoured to explain to you, this evening, the renunciation in baptism made by your godparents for you, do you not think you will be able to learn for me against Sunday the next clause in the Catechism? It will be but a short lesson, Elvire; and with a little perseverance, I am sure you will master it."

"I will try," said Elvire. "But Miss Sage," she whispered, drawing as close as she could to that lady, "is a pink frock a pomp and vanity?"

“A pink frock!” laughed Miss Sage, trying to divine her pupil’s meaning by narrowly examining the expression on the sweet little face so anxiously turned towards her own.

“Yes, I want, Sagey dear, to know if my new pink frock is a pomp and vanity.”

“That will depend upon the wearer, my darling,” replied Miss Sage. “If when Elvire puts it on, she thinks how kind it is of her mamma to give her such a pretty dress, and how good God is to give her such a dear mamma, the pink frock will prove a benefit to her, rather than a hurt, because it will elicit her gratitude and love. But if she thinks how much smarter she is than other little girls, and is proud, and looks down upon those who are not so nicely dressed as herself; then the frock, or whatever article of dress it may be, becomes a pomp, and is vanity, for it is drawing her heart from God, and teaching her to despise others.”

“But I cannot help feeling I look nice when I have pretty clothes on,” said Elvire, innocently. “I do not want to be proud, Miss Sage; and should like all little girls to have pretty things also; but I do like to look nice.”

“Certainly, my dear, and so you should.

Every one should cultivate self-respect ; and our personal appearance is not to be despised nor neglected. It is when our thoughts are centred upon dress, to the exclusion of better things, that it becomes sin to us, for gradually by such means our hearts and affections may be drawn away from God and become fixed upon the world. But as long as we can trace our Heavenly Father's hand in these minor gifts in life, and wear such clothing as is consistent with the station in which He has seen fit to place us, we glorify Him in our bodies, which are His as much as are our souls and spirits. St Paul in the 3d of Colossians writes to his Gentile converts, '*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him ;*' and if we try to follow out that injunction, we shall not forget in the gift the loving hand of the Almighty Giver. But look, my dear children, the sun has quite set, and the air is getting chilly, so have a run before going into the house ; and now, good-night !"

"May we not go to the gate with you ?" inquired Ralph, who was being unconsciously drawn to the lady so much beloved by his sister.

"Yes, if you please," replied Miss Sage, taking

Elvire's hand, and briskly walking through the plantation towards her home. Having arrived at the rustic gate communicating with Old Lodge garden, Ralph bounded forwards to open it, and Miss Sage releasing Elvire's hand, kissed her, and bidding Ralph farewell, passed through it.

Ralph and Elvire watched her until she entered the cottage door, and after a final wave of the hand, darted off through the shrubbery, neither stopping nor staying until they reached Court House.

CHAPTER IV.

GRATITUDE.

“Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and to do, as they have promised for thee?”

“Yes, verily; and by God’s help so I will. And I heartily thank our Heavenly Father, that He hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me His grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life’s end.”

WHEN Elvire sought her brother’s assistance with her lesson on Saturday evening, she found him sitting on one of the logs in front of the hut, so absorbed in thought, that her voice was the first thing that made him aware of her proximity.

“Whatever is the matter, Ralph?” cried Elvire, coming behind him, and patting him on the shoulder.

“Matter, Elvire! why, if you were anything but a child, you would see for yourself that something is the matter at home with papa and mamma,” replied Ralph.

“Oh, are they ill, Ralph?” gasped Elvire, paling with fear.

“Not ill in body, Elvire, but ill in mind, as any one can see who makes a proper use of their eyes,” rejoined Ralph, in an aggrieved tone.

“I am sure I did not mean not to make a proper use of my eyes, when I saw papa and mamma this morning,” observed Elvire, apologetically. “But what is it, Ralphy dear, do tell me what makes them ill in their minds?” pleaded the little girl, creeping up close to her brother.

“Well, you must not take any notice if I tell you,” replied Ralph, making room for her by his side. “But you see, papa’s money is all in the bank, and there is a great run on the bank just now, on account of the commercial panic.”

“Commercial panic! what is that?” inquired puzzled Elvire.

“Why, a sudden fear or mistrust in the business world,” explained Ralph, importantly. “People having no confidence one with the other in their business transactions. And so, because some of the banks have not been able to meet their engagements, there has been a great run on papa’s bank this week.”

“Run on papa’s bank! what is that?” inquired Elvire, again mystified by her brother’s information.

“Why, nearly everybody coming to fetch away their money, lest papa should cheat them,” exclaimed the impetuous boy, his eyes sparkling, and cheeks flushing with indignation, at the idea of such a possibility.

“But papa would not cheat any one,” observed Elvire, quietly. “Papa is too good for that.”

“Of course he is,” cried Ralph, “but it is just like this at banks. Bankers do not keep all the money paid in at different times at the banks, it is sent off to other places for other purposes; and so, if lots of people come suddenly upon a bank wanting their money, and there is not enough at hand to pay them, they fancy they are going to be cheated. Papa has had to get lots down from London to meet the run, and everybody has had their own as yet, and I heard him tell mamma he hoped the crisis was over. But, O Elvire, this week’s anxiety has made him look so ill. Why, I really fancy his hair has turned a bit grey with the worry.”

“Do people’s hair turn grey with worry?” asked Elvire, innocently.

“It does with trouble, and worries are little troubles,” rejoined Ralph. “When you come to learn history, you will read about Marie Antoinette, the Queen of France, whose beautiful hair turned white in one night, when the revolutionists shut her up in prison.”

“Oh, I hope papa’s will not turn white with worry,” observed Elvire, in evident distress. “Do you think it will?”

“Why, no ; I do not suppose it will. But I do hope the crisis is over, and that people will not think my papa is going to cheat them. I do not wonder at his looking so anxious, and not wanting us to be with him after dinner the last three or four days. I knew something was the matter, but I did not know what until I asked mamma this afternoon, and since she told me I have not been able to think of anything else. I wish I was a man, that I do.”

“But what good would that be?” inquired Elvire.

“Why, Elvire, how stupid you are,” replied Ralph, impatiently. “Do you not see, if I were a man I should be able to be a friend to papa, and help to comfort him.”

Little Elvire did not venture to make any

remark on her brother's reply, but felt in the pocket of her frock for her Catechism book.

"What are you fumbling in your pocket for, Elvire?" inquired Ralph, ungraciously enough.

"For my Catechism book," replied the child.

"Oh, I am not going to learn Catechism this evening, Elvire. I am all in a fever, my blood's up, I can tell you. I cannot get over people's supposing my father would prove a cheat."

"But perhaps they did not. They only wanted their own money, and they got it too," observed Elvire.

"Yes, they got it, of course they did. But why should people be in such hurries? I cannot think why they are! If I were papa I would give up the bank, that I would. I would just pay everybody out, and close the concern."

"And live in the log hut with mamma and my three children," observed Mr Duncombe, laying a hand upon each of them.

"O papa!" cried the children, springing up; "who would have thought of you being near?"

"Mamma told me Ralph had been asking her questions this afternoon about my anxieties," replied Mr Duncombe, "and I thought it would be better for me to come and talk them over with

my dear children, than to let them talk them over by themselves. But I find I am a little behind-hand. And so, Ralph, you would advise my closing the good old bank of 'Duncombe, Duncombe, & Co.' "

"O papa! I cannot bear any one should suppose you could be a cheat," cried Ralph, the tears rushing to his eyes, and his cheeks growing crimson.

"That no one could, whilst I can pay every one, which I can if I have time given me to do so. It is the suddenness and uncertainty of demand that causes me present anxiety. Why, my boy, rather than not meet all my engagements, I would sell Court House and emigrate to the back-woods of America or Australia, and live in a log-house in good earnest. But there! there is no fear of such an event as that coming to pass, Elvire," said Mr Duncombe, patting the child's upturned face; "for I trust the crisis is past, and in a few days the panic will be over; and papa will be free, he hopes, to take an interest in his children's pursuits and amusements once more. All will be straight again soon."

"Papa, God can make it straight, cannot He?" questioned Elvire, thoughtfully.

"God can do all things, my dear," replied Mr

Duncombe, and then he and the children returned to the house. That night when Elvire offered up her evening petition by the side of her bed, she added to it—"O God, I do not know what crisis is, but I know you do, because you know everything. Please bring papa straight through it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen." It was the prayer of faith, and it brought healing on its wings to the young petitioner, who, without a doubt of its acceptance and fulfilment, laid her head trustingly on her pillow, feeling assured that God had heard and would most certainly grant her request.

"Are you coming with me, Ralph?" inquired Elvire, as book in hand she stood beneath the portico, about to pay her accustomed Sunday afternoon visit to Miss Sage.

"Yes, here I am," exclaimed Ralph, joining her on the doorstep. "Can you say your lesson?"

"I can say it, but I do not quite understand it," she replied.

"And I was too put out to help you last evening, I wonder you managed to learn it at all," remarked Ralph, a little surprised at his sister's perseverance; "but come along, I want to hear what Miss Sage says this afternoon, for I think she is a clever woman."

“She is a good one, and that is better than being clever,—is it not, Ralph?” said Elvire.

“Of course it is,” replied Ralph; “but good and clever is better than that.”

Having arrived at Old Lodge, they found Miss Sage quite prepared for them, with an ottoman for Elvire at her feet, and a chair by the open window for Ralph. “You see, my dear children,” she observed, when Elvire had repeated her lesson, “that the portion of Catechism you have just said contains a confession of faith and obedience, an acknowledgment of weakness, a grateful expression of thankfulness, and a petition for grace and perseverance. The confession of faith and obedience is implied in the ‘*yes, verily.*’ It is as if you said, ‘I am indeed bound to fulfil the promises and vows my godparents made for me in my baptism, for they are right and good;’ and then comes the acknowledgment of your weakness: *and with God’s help so I will.* I am not able to do it of myself, but relying upon God for help, I can, and am determined I will. Yes, I will, for it is the only way I can show my gratitude to *my Heavenly Father, for having called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour*; and then with, *I pray unto God to*

give me His grace that I may continue in the same unto my life's end, you offer up that petition for grace and perseverance, that you may be faithful to your promise unto death."

"But if we had not been baptized," remarked Ralph.

"Then no such promises would have been made for you," replied Miss Sage; "and if you had not had parents or friends to teach you the Christian faith, you would be ignorant of the state of salvation to which Christ as a loving Saviour calls you, and consequently be numbered amongst the heathen who know not the Gospel."

"But how can that be, now people are mostly civilised?" inquired Ralph.

"Civilisation is not Christianity, though with Christianity civilisation ever will be found. The Athenians, you will remember, were amongst the most civilised—if not quite so—of nations, in years gone by, and yet they were heathens. There are but three classes amongst the nations of the earth: Christians, Jews, and heathen—and to one or the other we must each of us belong. We read in Revelations of the judgment: 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and *the books* were opened; and another book, which is the book

of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in *the books*, according to their works ;’* and in Daniel, ‘the judgment was set and *the books* were opened.’ † Now these books were generally supposed to be the law, the gospel, and conscience, by which an all-just God will judge all men. The heathen have neither a knowledge of the law nor the gospel ; therefore, as St Paul tells us, they ‘have a law in themselves,’ which is conscience, and by that will they be judged. The Jew shelters himself beneath the law, rejecting the gospel ; the law therefore becomes his accuser ; whilst the Christian, brought under a new dispensation, that ‘of grace, which is the gift of God,’ must stand or fall, according to his or her acceptance of that marvellous gift, wherein conscience is silenced, the law fulfilled, and the claims of infinite justice fully satisfied. My dear children, you who have Christian parents and teachers, should indeed be heartily thankful to your Heavenly Father, for having by them called you unto a state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Think what privileges are yours through having been early brought to Jesus. Look around you, and see how many

* Rev. xx. 12.

† Dan. vii. 10.

have never heard of Him as a Saviour to save, and a friend to succour in the time of temptation and need; and remember, of those who are to enter into the city of God hereafter, Scripture saith, it is only 'they who are written in the Lamb's book of life.'* What a dreadful thing it will be for those, who have had the state of salvation set before them, to be castaways then! How earnest should we be in prayer to God to give us His grace, that we may continue in the good way unto our life's end, and how anxious we should be to try and lead others in the same."

"But, Miss Sage, if the heathen have not heard of Jesus, their names are not likely to be written in the Lamb's book, are they?" inquired Ralph.

"With the heathen we have nothing to do, except, as far as in us lies, to send the Gospel to them. We must leave them to the uncovenanted mercies of God, and like Abraham of old exclaim, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'"† replied Miss Sage. "It is for us, who have been brought into covenant with God, to see that we endeavour to fulfil our part, assured that He will

* Rev. xxi. 27.

† Gen. xviii. 25.

never fail or forsake us, if with full purpose of heart we cleave steadfastly to Him."

"Sagey dear," said Elvire, her sweet little face sobered and grave, "I think it seems a solemn thing to be baptized, and I am not quite sure that I am glad that I have been; for I am afraid that I shall never be able to keep and do what my godfather and godmothers promised I should."

"Not with God's help, pet?" asked Miss Sage.

"But how shall I know that He will help me?" inquired the child.

"Ralph," said Miss Sage, "take the Bible lying on the table by your side, and read to Elvire the thirteenth verse of the eleventh of Luke. I think she will find an answer to her difficulty there."

Ralph did as he was bidden, and read aloud, "*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?*"

"Brought into covenant with God through His Son Jesus, Elvire," explained Miss Sage; "He becomes your Father and you His child, and as a

loving parent He will give you whatever you stand in need of. You must ask for His Spirit, and that blessed Spirit will show you what to pray for, and teach you what to do. Think what a privilege it is to be numbered amongst the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty,* and be not afraid to claim a child's interest in His love and care. Do you think your papa or mamma would be pleased, if they had told you, you should have everything you required if you only asked for it, and you refused to do so, urging as an excuse that you were afraid of them?"

"Oh no! they would be very grieved," replied Ralph and Elvire.

"And God is grieved when we disbelieve His promises and commands, and our doing so is sin. Yes, my dear children, it is the sin of ingratitude. And now, it is time for you to return home. Try each of you to remember this coming week that you are a son and daughter of the Lord, and pray to Him to give you loving, grateful hearts, for having called you to a *state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour*; and endeavour to bring others to a knowledge of that blessed

* 2 Cor. vi. 18.

state, by commending your religion with your lips, and in your lives."

As Ralph and Elvire were returning quietly through the shrubbery, a rustling amongst the bushes attracted their attention, and upon turning aside to examine the cause, they spied the figure of a child crouching beneath the arbutus trees, evidently desirous of escaping observation.

"Come out from there!" cried Ralph, bounding to the spot where the young culprit was hiding. "You have no business to be here."

A boy, apparently between nine and ten years of age, immediately obeyed, crawling out upon his hands and knees, and having risen upon his feet, boldly confronted Ralph. There was not the least sign of fear on the countenance of the ragged urchin, who was literally clothed in rags, as he stood face to face with Ralph; and Ralph, astonished at his audacious expression and extraordinary habiliments, for some moments regarded him in silence.

"Well, you are a cool one!" remarked Ralph, recovering his self-possession. "What brought you in here, I should like to know?"

"Picking sticks," replied the boy, pointing to a small bundle under the tree.

“But no one is allowed to gather sticks in these plantations,” observed Ralph, authoritatively; “this is private property. My papa permits the villagers to pick up sticks in the park and lower coppice, but he reserves this part for himself and family. You must never come here again, mind that.”

The boy grinned and stooped to take up the tiny bundle of twigs, whilst Elvire creeping up to Ralph timidly whispered, “Ralph dear, does he know the way of salvation? He has been gathering sticks on a Sunday. I should think he did not.”

“I should think not,” replied Ralph, contemptuously.

“Then ought not we to tell him of it, poor boy?” questioned Elvire, glancing toward the boy, who was watching an opportunity to slink off unnoticed.

“Well, I suppose we ought, but he is not a prepossessing boy at all, Elvire. I am afraid he is a very bad one,” confidentially remarked Ralph. “I do not like his looks at all.”

“Poor boy! do speak to him, Ralph,” pleaded Elvire; “he does not know what to do.”

“Here, boy!” cried Ralph, importantly. “Do you know you ought not to be gathering sticks on

a Sunday? Did you never hear of the man in the Bible, who was stoned to death, for gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day?" *

The boy grinned, and shook his head.

"Why did not you gather them yesterday?" inquired Ralph.

"'Cause I was at work," replied the boy.

"At work!" repeated Ralph; "I thought you were a beggar boy. What work can you do?"

"Help in the fields, fetch errands, and lease," was the reply.

"Lease, what is that?" asked Ralph, haughtily.

"Oh, I know, why glean, Ralph," answered Elvire. "Betty Parkins always says she is going leasing at harvest-time."

"Well, boy, do you know that it is wicked to work on Sunday. Do not you see nobody goes to work on that day?" questioned Ralph.

The boy leaned back against the trunk of a tree, and stared at Ralph and Elvire in silence.

"Why do not you say 'yes' or 'no'?" inquired Ralph, after waiting a moment or two, for an answer. But little Elvire stepped over to where the boy was, and laying her tiny hand upon his arm, said kindly :

* Numbers xv. 32-36.

“Perhaps you do not know this is God’s day, poor boy, and we must not work, but go to church, and learn about Him. Do you love God, poor boy, and what is your name?”

The boy glanced quickly at the bright little speaker, and a ray of intelligence lit up his dark eyes as he replied, “Father calls on Him sometimes, but He don’t come round our way, and so He don’t hear father, I s’pose.”

“But God always hears,” said Elvire, gravely.

“Do He? Then I never sees Him, I can tell ’ee,” replied the boy, nodding his head, confidently.

“No one sees Him until they die, boy,” said Elvire. “He lives up there,” and she pointed towards the sky with her finger; “but He sees all we do, and hears all we say, and He is always doing us good.”

“Is He?” said the boy, looking upwards, and shifting his position under the tree, so as to be able to get a better view of the blue sky; “I’d like Him to do me good.”

“Come, Elvire,” cried Ralph, impatiently. “Papa and mamma will be wondering where we are. Do wind up with the boy. He doesn’t understand you.”

But Elvire, still resting her hand upon the

ragged lad's arm, continued earnestly, "You just ask God to do you good for Jesus Christ's sake, little boy, and He will. I must go home to my papa and mamma now, but if you will tell me your name, and where you live, I will ask my governess to bring me to see you some day."

"Father and I bides in the shed t' other side of the hill," said the boy, "we don't live no-where."

Elvire opened her eyes in astonishment at the boy's reply, and asked, "What is your name, then?"

"Jimmer," was the answer.

"Jimmer!" echoed Ralph and Elvire.

"Yes," nodded the boy.

"Well, good-bye, Jimmer," laughed Elvire; "I will try and come and see you some day."

"And him?" inquired Jimmer, looking towards Ralph.

"I do not know," observed Ralph, grandly.

"'Cause I don't want yer to!" shouted the boy, catching up his bundle of twigs. "I likes her best." And, before Ralph could express his indignation at Jimmer's impertinence, he was gone.

"I knew he was a bad boy from his looks,"

remarked Ralph, when he had a little got over his chagrin.

“I think he did not like the way you spoke to him, Ralphy dear,” said Elvire ; “you looked and spoke so grandly to him, that I dare say he thought you were proud.”

“Who cares for his thoughts ?” replied Ralph, impetuously. “He’s only a beggar’s brat, I dare say.”

“Ralphy, beggars go to heaven you know. Lazarus was a beggar, and Jesus said angels carried him there,” said Elvire ; “perhaps Jimmer might get there too if he hears about Jesus.”

Ralph did not condescend to reply to his sister’s remark, but walked on, tossing his head and looking very important, though, if the truth be told, feeling very conscious that he had not carried out Miss Sage’s advice, to commend his religion to others with his lips, and in his life.

Mrs Duncombe was rather annoyed when she was told of a ragged little intruder being found in their private grounds, fearing that the village children, hearing from him how well he had got off unpunished, might take to pry and prowl about the plantations likewise. But Mr Duncombe said he did not consider it was at all probable,

and doubtless the lad and his father were strangers who had come to Mendip, during the haymaking, and for harvesting time, in search of employment.

This remark led Elvire to tell dear papa all she could about Jimmer, and several wonderful schemes, which her busy young brain had already begun to devise for his future enlightenment. "But, first," said the child, speaking more slowly and reverently, as the important thought wove itself into words; "we must teach poor Jimmer to love God."

Mr Duncombe folded his little daughter closer to him as she spoke, and a silent thanksgiving went up from his heart unto heaven, that what was so often hidden from the wise and prudent, had been early revealed to his child, who was a mere babe in years, and that she loved God.

Belief.

I

BELIEVE IN GOD

THE FATHER, ALMIGHTY

MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH :

AND

IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD, WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST, BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY, SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED ; HE DESCENDED INTO HELL ; THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD ; HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY ; FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD :

I

BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST ;

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH ; THE

COMMUNION OF SAINTS ; THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS ;

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY ;

AND

THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

AMEN.

CHAPTER V.

CREATION.

“ Rehearse the first article of thy belief.

“ I believe in God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.

“ What dost thou learn in this article of thy belief ?

“ I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world.”

“ I CAN say my belief, Sagey dear,” observed Elvire, as she finished reading it aloud after her Monday morning lessons. “ You see I have learned it by hearing it at church, and so I shall be all ready for you to explain it to me when Ralph is by.”

“ I think, my dear, we had better divide it for that purpose, taking the first clause of it for our next conversation on the Catechism,” remarked Miss Sage.

“ Ralph said you would do that. He said only this morning that Miss Sage would divide the belief into three or four parts, and he was

afraid we should not get through it before he went back to Winchester. I wish Ralph had not been going just yet. But here he comes!" and as Elvire spoke, the schoolroom door flew open, and Ralph sprang in crying, "Come along, Elvire; only think!" then spying Miss Sage, he came more quietly forwards to shake hands with her, apologising for his abrupt entrance by saying, "I thought you were gone, Miss Sage. I did not know you were here."

"We are rather later with lessons this morning," replied Miss Sage. "Elvire and I find so much to talk about, that the time flies by much faster than we think. But do not let me keep her from you now. She has quite finished her lessons."

"What is it?" inquired Elvire, hat in hand. "What do you want with me, Ralphy?"

"Why Jimmer is in the yard. He came begging to see you, but the servants were going to send him to the right about, only I was in the fowl-house with Davis, and heard them ordering him off, and I stopped them, and he wants some white rag," explained Ralph, breathlessly.

"White rag," repeated Elvire, astonished at the strangeness of the request.

"Yes, and do make haste," urged Ralph; "for

his father has cut his foot or leg, and he wants white rag for it."

Elvire cast an appealing glance at Miss Sage, who, divining her perplexity, said, "Run along with Ralph to the yard, and I will get some white rag from nurse, and join you there in a few minutes."

But a very short time elapsed before Miss Sage, with a small bundle of soft linen, appeared in the yard, much to the relief of the children, to whom every minute seemed to be ten, so anxious were they that Jimmer should obtain immediate assistance for his father.

"Father cut his leg, ma'm, bad with the sickle Saturday afternoon, and the stocking's pisened it, and he can't go to work no ways to-day," replied Jimmer to Miss Sage's inquiry how the accident occurred.

"I will go back with you, and see what can be done for your father," said Miss Sage. "Is it far off?"

Jimmer's face brightened as he answered, "Only round the corner, and through the two tatur fields, and by the wood to the hill."

"Could I get easier to it by going through Mr Duncombe's plantation?" asked Miss Sage.

“Yes,” replied Jimmer; “’tis twice as near by the hill gate.”

“Well, then, you meet us at the Hill Gate. We will join you as quickly as we can.”

Jimmer, with a nod and a grin, bounded off, and Miss Sage, accompanied by Ralph and Elvire, took one of the paths through the plantation leading to a gate, which opened upon the hill, usually called the Hill Gate.

“Will his father die?” questioned Elvire, anxiously, naturally enough associating in her mind death with poison.

“I trust not, my dear,” observed Miss Sage; “I expect the worsted stocking the poor man wore yesterday irritated his wounded leg, and caused inflammation, which has frightened the boy, and made his father suffer a great deal during the night. But we will hope with proper remedies it will be speedily subdued. Ralph and you can play about on the hill, whilst I go into the cottage and see what is the matter.”

“But there is no cottage on the hill,” exclaimed Ralph; “I cannot think where they can be living.”

“He called it a shed,” said Elvire, remembering Jimmer’s conversation the previous day.

“I never saw a shed there, when I have been

on the hill, and I do not believe there is one," remarked Ralph, very decidedly. "There is only the old kiln that I can remember."

"We shall soon determine that point," said Miss Sage. "But you have not yet told me where you made acquaintance with this poor boy. He is evidently not a village one."

"Oh no!" cried Elvire; and then she and Ralph, nothing loath, gave a full account of their first interview with Jimmer, which fully occupied them until they reached the Hill Gate, where they found Jimmer awaiting them. In a few minutes he had taken them to the place where he and his father were living, and which proved to be the old kiln mentioned by Ralph. Whether the old building had really ever been a kiln was a matter of opinion, certainly it had not been so in the memory of the oldest inhabitants of Mendip. Antiquarians were inclined to believe it was of Roman construction, but why erected where no view could be commanded, even they could not explain. So there on one side of the hill, sheltered in the front by the Court House plantations, stood the massive round building, dubbed by the villagers the kiln; and there Jimmer and his father had taken up their temporary abode, having repaired

the dilapidated stone roof with sticks and straw. Jimmer, having announced to his father Miss Sage's arrival, preceded her into the kiln, with a small empty barrel which had been lying outside, and having placed it bottom upwards, so as to form a seat, withdrew, leaving the lady to talk with his parent undisturbed. Chairs and tables there were none in the kiln; a heap of clean, sweet-smelling hay evidently answered the purpose of a bed, and by the side of it, sitting on a square box, was Jimmer's father, bathing his leg with warm water in an earthen pan. A few sticks were smouldering upon a large flat stone, in the opposite direction to the hay, and over it hung a crock, depending on a hook and chain, attached to a strong stick driven into the wall. A couple of tin mugs, a little black tea-pot, and two or three articles of crockery upon a sort of hanging shelf, completed the household arrangements, unless a small cart turned up on its end at the entrance could be numbered amongst them.

Jimmer informed Ralph and Elvire, as they waited outside the kiln for Miss Sage, that a donkey browsing at a distance was their Neddy, and that he drew their cart when they were wandering about the country.

“We sells pots and pans,” said the boy, “when haymaking and harvesting is over, and we just bides anywheres then. But I likes that ere place, that I do ;” and he notified “that ere place,” by a movement of his head, in the direction of the old stone building.

“But it must be so small and dark,” remarked Elvire.

“Small !” repeated Jimmer, in astonishment ; “why ’tis bigger than two rooms put together, I can tell ’ee. And there ’s a long slit t’other side for a winder. You come and see !” an invitation Ralph and Elvire immediately complied with, following Jimmer round to the back, or rather side of the kiln, for the entrance was at one side, and the aperture for light exactly opposite to it on the other.

“Is it not very cold here ?” inquired Ralph ; “you haven’t a bit of door to keep out the wind.”

“Oh, we shoves some hay into the slit when it’s coldish, and hangs the blanket over the door hole, and tilts the cart up against it, and bless ’ee we are as snug as an owl in an ivy bush ;” explained Jimmer, thoroughly up in such matters.

“But where would the poor donkey sleep if it

were winter, and snow came?" inquired Elvire, anxious about the accommodation of Neddy.

"Wi' us, to be sure," answered the boy, evidently surprised at the question.

"With you, in there!" exclaimed his astonished auditors.

"Yes, to be sure, but I'm going in to father; be you coming?" asked Jimmer.

Ralph and Elvire shook their heads, remembering Miss Sage had told them to wait on the hill, so Jimmer went into the kiln alone. Miss Sage's visit was but short, for she recollected it was drawing near the children's dinner hour; so promising to send Zachary Hibbs, Jimmer's father, something for his leg; she soon joined Elvire and Ralph, who were eagerly on the watch for her.

"What sort of a man is he—I mean Jimmer's father, Miss Sage?" inquired Ralph, anxiously longing to hear.

"Very different to what I expected to find, Ralph. He was more respectful, and altogether superior to the class of men to whom he belongs. But as we shall probably pay him frequent visits, you will be able to judge of him for yourself."

"Why, Miss Sage!" exclaimed Ralph, "I never noticed before how near our log-house is to

Hill Gate. We have always approached it from the lower ground, and I did not know we were so close to the fence. Why, Jimmer is our next neighbour, I declare, for he lives the nearest to our shanty."

"I trust you will be neighbourly then, and teach him manners," laughed Miss Sage, "for he is a rough diamond."

"Oh, Elvire is going to polish him, Miss Sage," returned Ralph. "She began talking to him yesterday. It was lesson number one, Sunday, August the thirty-first. Wasn't it, Elvire?"

"Now, Ralph, that is not kind of you to laugh at one," said Elvire, in an aggrieved tone.

"Never mind, Elvire. Perhaps you will have cause to laugh for joy some day," replied Miss Sage, pressing the little hand confidently resting in her own. "A cup of cold water is not forgotten by our Saviour, if given from love to Him, neither is a gentle word or kind action; He is not unmindful of our feeblest endeavours. But hark! is not that the first bell? You had better hasten home, and I will meet you this evening at your log-house and talk over the first clause in the Creed."

To this proposal Ralph and Elvire readily

agreed, and wishing Miss Sage good-morning, they returned to Court House, whilst Miss Sage threaded her way through the shrubbery to Old Lodge.

Long before Miss Sage could reasonably be expected at the shanty in the evening, Ralph and Elvire were busily employed there, making arrangements for having their chat inside of it instead of outside. Hunt, at their request, had cleared away the chips and rubbish, and Ralph had brought from the garden a wire chair for Miss Sage's use, and then he and Elvire set about forming impromptu seats for themselves. The hut was to have rustic chairs and a table when completed, but the children had thoughtfully forbore requesting their father to procure them, waiting patiently until his mind should be less occupied with business affairs. They well knew that what papa promised he would if possible perform, and they felt it would be unkind to tease him about their little matters just then. Ralph and Elvire considered their shanty a regular masterpiece, and even Hunt and Mason were brought to acknowledge that "'twas mighty out o' the common," though they evidently gave the preference to the old ivy-covered summer-

house built with stone, and in which twenty persons could be comfortably seated, possessing a fire-place and capital drawing grate, in which a fire could be readily kindled. Miss Sage was much pleased when she arrived at the shanty, with Ralph's and Elvire's provision for her comfort; and with one of them on either side of her, they at once proceeded to talk over the clause in the belief previously settled for their evening's consideration.

“The Belief or Creed in the Catechism is, as you know,” observed Miss Sage, “the same that is used in the morning and evening church service, and is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, because generally supposed to have been drawn up by our Lord's Apostles. The first account which is extant about it is by Ruffinus, who lived 390 years after the birth of Christ, and by the manner in which it is spoken of, we have every reason to presume that, if not actually framed by the Apostles, it was mainly composed and used in their times. It is very simple, and yet clear and full, embracing in a few expressive words the sum and substance of the Christian's faith. It is a personal attestation of our belief. *I believe*, not *we believe*, and this I would have

you bear in mind, for religion is an individual affair. The church is composed of individuals of whom Christ is the Head, but the belief of the Church must be held separately by each member of it. Just as in a building, each stone is a distinct and perfect stone apart, yet when united in the structure, it becomes lost in the whole: so, each child of God is a distinct member, yet united by Him in love with others, they form one glorious whole, of which He (Christ) is the Foundation and the Head. Do you understand me, my dears ?”

“I think I do,” replied Ralph, “I take it I must believe the articles of the Christian faith for myself, or I cannot be a Christian, and that no one else’s belief will do me any good, if I do not hold what is right and true myself.”

“Just so, Ralph. And now, Elvire, repeat the first clause in the Creed, and then, Ralph, you repeat the first answer which is given in the explanation after it.”

Elvire laid her hand upon Miss Sage’s lap, and looking up into her face, reverently repeated—

“I believe in God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.”

“Now, Ralph, what dost thou chiefly learn in this article of thy belief?” questioned Miss Sage.

“First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world,” answered Ralph, promptly.

“But, Miss Sage, that comes after,” interposed Elvire, “I have not learned that. It was the belief we were to say.”

“Yes, dear,” replied Miss Sage, “but do not you see Ralph’s answer helps to explain your clause. We had better take the Catechism explanation, with each division of the belief, it will simplify it for us.”

“Will it, Sagey dear,” said the child, well pleased with any proposition made by her governess.

“Yes, dear; and now, how is it we can call God our Father?”

“Because He made us,” responded Elvire.

“And adopted us,” observed Ralph.

“Yes, you are both right,” replied Miss Sage. “God is our Father by Creation,* for He made all men and all things; and He is our Father by adoption† through Jesus Christ. And in this ex-

* Deut. xxxii. 6.

† Eph. i. 5.

pression of our belief, we come back again to our baptismal covenant, wherein we declare that we are members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. If we did but remember that the Almighty God was our Father in two senses—by creation, for without His permission we should never have existed; and adoption, for if He had not called us in Christ Jesus, we should never have come to Him, how differently should we live and act. How we should endeavour to overcome our rebellious wills and affections, and stifle the unkind thought or word rising in our minds, and ever ready to escape our lips. You are proud to be called a Wykehamist, Ralph, because of the great founder of your College, William of Wykeham, and desire to walk worthy of his sons. But place the honour of being his son with that of being the child of God, and it is like comparing the light of a tiny lantern with the resplendent blaze of the meridian sun. Created to a never-ending existence at His Almighty will, surely the least we can do is to yield our body, soul, and spirit to Him, for ‘in Him we live and move and have our being.’ And now, if you like,” Miss Sage continued, “we will take the second part of the belief to-morrow,

and I will hope to meet you here about the same time as I did to-day. I cannot remain longer now, for I want to take my mother a short stroll this warm evening, so good-bye." And after shaking hands with Ralph, and kissing Elvire, Miss Sage departed, and Ralph in a few minutes followed her example. Little Elvire, left to herself, drew out of her pocket her Catechism book, and began reading the second answer to the explanation of the articles of the belief; but she had only gone through it once, when a slight noise attracted her attention, and looking up, to her great astonishment, she beheld Jimmer peeping into the hut.

"Hush, don't yer be scared," said the boy, in a low voice, when he saw how frightened she appeared. "I've heard all, and did Him up there make this?" and Jimmer, pointing with one hand upwards, held out the other, in which was curled up in perfect security a dormouse.

Elvire's momentary fear instantly vanished at the sight of the little creature in Jimmer's hand, and with, "Oh, you beauty!" she sprang up from her seat, and gently touched it with one of her fingers.

"Ain't he pretty," remarked the boy, pleased that the little lady admired his favourite; "you

just put out your finger straight, and he'll walk along it, see if he don't."

Elvire straightened her finger, and putting it under mousey's nose, the tame little thing ran along it, and perched itself upon her wrist, looking earnestly at her with its large black eyes.

"Did God make him?" inquired Jimmer, after a few moments' silence, spent in watching the mouse.

"Yes," replied Elvire, "God made everything."

"So the big lady said just now. I heard her," observed Jimmer.

"O Jimmer, you were listening then!" exclaimed Elvire; "how could you be so naughty?"

Jimmer, nothing abashed, replied with a knowing nod of his head, "Yes, but I did."

"But it is naughty to creep about listening; and, O Jimmer, you must not come in here without papa's and mamma's leave!" said Elvire, remembering her mamma's vexation on the previous day, when she heard of his being in the plantation.

"But I likes to come. I won't hurt nothing, indeed I won't; I likes to hear you and the big boy talk, and to see him put the logs up. I've been watching yer ever so long."

“But you must not come again—indeed, you must not. God will not be pleased if you do what you are told not to do,” said Elvire, gravely.

“What, Him up there?” and Jimmer raised his eyes towards heaven as he spoke.

“Yes.”

“Then, I will try and not come?” And then hearing a footstep, Jimmer seized his mouse, and with, “I’ll only peep through the fence, or over the gate,” he darted off, and in a few moments was out of sight.

“Why, Elvire, I thought I heard talking,” cried Ralph, as he came in sight of his sister. “I thought somebody was with you, and I could not think who?”

“Why, Jimmer, Ralph,” replied Elvire.

“What will mamma say?” remarked Ralph.

“He says he will try not to come again. And, O Ralph, he has a dear little dormouse, such a beauty!”

“Has he, Elvire? How I should like to have seen it. But you know we must not encourage Jimmer to prowl about the grounds, especially as I am going back to school. I must see him and make him understand that,” remarked Ralph, with great importance.

“He is going to keep away to please God,” said Elvire, quietly.

“Did you talk to him about God then?” inquired Ralph.

“I told him God would not be pleased with him, if he did what he was told not to,” replied Elvire.

“Lesson number two,” remarked Ralph, laughing, “you are to be the polisher after all, Elvire.”

“Hush, Ralph! I am only going to teach him that he can be a child of God as well as myself. You must not laugh at me. I do not like you to.”

Ralph gave a long low whistle, and flicking off a spider from the leaf of a tree with a small stick in his hand, heard what his little sister had to say without replying, though if his thoughts had been revealed, it would have been manifest that he was turning over in his mind the possibility of poor neglected Jimmer being a child of God.

“Ralph, where do they get dormice from?” inquired Elvire, when she found her brother remained silent for a longer period than he was wont.

“Why, I’ve read that they find them in the hollows of trees and thick hedges, and that their nests are lined with moss like a bird’s. And, O

Elvire," said Ralph, warming with interest in the subject, "the little creatures are like squirrels in their habits, they actually hoard up nuts and acorns against the winter, and creeping into their magazines, curl themselves up, and go to sleep, only waking occasionally to take a feed. They are knowing little chaps, are they not? I wonder where Jimmer found his. I should like to have seen it."

"We will ask him to show it us when we next see him. And suppose we try and find one for ourselves," suggested Elvire, "there are plenty of trees about here."

"I do not think we are likely to find one in the plantation, but we will ask Hunt to-morrow," replied Ralph. "And now let us go and see whether papa is in the library, because if he is not, we can ask him lots of things that I want to know. Come along!"

"Yes, that we will. I hope he is in the dining-room, that I do," said Elvire, as she tripped after her brother, who had already run on some steps before her: then suddenly stopping, she cried, "Ralph! had we better tell mamma about Jimmer's coming again? I would rather, if it would not vex her."

“Vex her, or not vex her,” replied Ralph, without a moment’s hesitation, pausing in his run, “we must tell her, Elvire; we must never have any secrets from mamma and papa.”

But neither Mr nor Mrs Duncombe were in the dining-room when their children arrived there; so Elvire went up to the nursery to see the baby, and Ralph to the play-room to work upon a piece of wood which was to form the centre ornament on the roof of his shanty.

CHAPTER VI.

REDEMPTION.

ARTICLES OF BELIEF (*continued*).

“And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

“What dost thou chiefly learn in *this* article of thy belief?

“To believe in God the Son who hath redeemed me and all mankind.”

“IN this clause of our Creed,” observed Miss Sage, when seated in the shanty with Ralph and Elvire on Tuesday evening, “we declare our firm belief in Christ manifested in the flesh. His conception, birth, sufferings, death, burial, descent into Hades or hell, resurrection, ascension, and present per-

sonal existence in heaven, from whence we look for His appearing as our Judge."

"Is Hades another name for hell, Miss Sage?" inquired Elvire.

"The word hell (Hades) here means 'the invisible place,' and is not generally supposed to be the place of torment, but rather the place of departed spirits. Learned men have held various opinions on this subject, but their views are of small moment to us, seeing it is one of the mysteries of our religion which time can never unravel, and which is not needful to our salvation to be explained. We know that, for two nights and a day, our Lord's body lay in the grave, and therefore, for that time His disembodied spirit must have had some abiding place, but where, as it is not expressly revealed, it cannot concern us to know."

"What is disembodied, please?" asked Elvire, innocently.

"Why, how stupid you are, Elvire," remarked Ralph, impatiently; "disembodied means freed from the body, to be sure."

"Ralph, Ralph! you must not speak to your sister in that way," observed Miss Sage. "You forget she is younger than you are. Yes, dear,

disembodied means divested of, or separated from, the body. But to return to the belief. It is, as the Athanasian Creed declares it to be, 'necessary to everlasting salvation, that *we* believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ,' for on this belief hangs our hope of eternal life. There is no redemption out of Christ, for without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin,* and we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.† It is, therefore, of the greatest importance to us, that we really and truly believe that Jesus the Son of God was also the Son of man—that He who was from all eternity descended from heaven, and took possession of a body like unto our own, and clad in flesh and blood for thirty-three years, lived upon this earth, upon which you and I now live, God manifest in the flesh.”

“But people did not know He was God, did they?” asked Elvire.

“It was revealed to very few for the first thirty years of His life that He was more than man. Scripture only mentions Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, Joseph, and Mary the mother of our Lord, as being conscious of the glorious fact. But after

* Heb. ix. 22.

† 1 Peter i. 19.

His baptism by John in Jordan, He could not be hid,* for His miracles of love and mercy proclaimed Him to be God as well as man. But what are you thinking of, Ralph?" inquired Miss Sage, observing the thoughtful expression on his face.

"O Miss Sage! I was thinking," replied Ralph, seriously, "what a constant humiliation it must have been to our Lord to have lived thirty years as a carpenter's son. I was thinking how much I should feel having to leave Court House, and going to live in Chipson the carpenter's little cottage, and yet that would be nothing to our Lord's humiliation. Why, the grandest earthly palace must be but a miserable hut to Him in comparison with heaven! what He must therefore have endured whilst dwelling in a mean little cottage in Nazareth."

"Yes, indeed, Ralph," replied Miss Sage; "and strange to say, a similar train of thought to yours passed through my mind whilst I was sitting with Zachary Hibbs yesterday, when I saw that even that poor man had found a place to shelter him, and a couch of clean fresh hay to rest upon, and I remembered that the Lord of life and glory,

* Mark vii. 24.

whilst ministering to His people, 'had not where to lay His head.' ”

“ But, Sagey dear, why did He choose to suffer so when He could have made Himself a beautiful house in a minute, if He pleased ? ” inquired Elvire.

“ Because His love was infinite, and wished to embrace the feelings of all mankind, ” replied Miss Sage. “ If there had been one stage of poverty that He had not descended to, or one sort of privation that He had not endured, then those persons suffering from that poverty and privation might have been tempted to doubt their Lord's sympathy with them in their trials and troubles. But now, none can say that, for He was ‘ in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ’ * Oh, my dear children, try, when you are tempted to sin, to recollect the amazing sacrifice it cost to redeem you from its curse. The world was created at a word, but nothing short of the death of the Son of God could redeem the world. By the sinless life and ignominious cruel death of Jesus, divine justice could alone be satisfied ; and in Him these demands were voluntarily fulfilled. ”

“ What does it mean when we say we believe

* Heb. iv. 16.

Jesus shall come from thence to judge the quick and the dead ?” inquired Elvire.

“ In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read, at our Lord’s ascension into heaven that two angels, or men as they are called there, in white apparel, assured the wondering Apostles that ‘ this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.’ And from that time the Church of Christ has been anxiously anticipating her Lord’s return, when He shall reign upon Mount Zion gloriously. For God ‘ hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man (Jesus) whom He hath ordained ; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.’ * Those who are living when that blessed day dawns upon us, Elvire, are meant by the quick, and those who slumber in the dust, the dead.”

“ But how many years it is, Miss Sage,” remarked Ralph, “ since Jesus ascended into heaven.”

“ Yes, to us it seems long, but we must remember what David says of time in the sight of God : ‘ a thousand years in Thy sight are but as

* Acts xvii. 31.

yesterday,'* and with St Peter's account, that, 'the long suffering (or tarrying) of our Lord is salvation,' for He 'willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,' for when Jesus returns to earth again, repentance will be in vain, and the day of grace past for ever."

"And can nobody tell when that day will be?" inquired Elvire, earnestly.

"No, my dear child; Jesus himself says, 'Of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father,'" † replied Miss Sage.

"But, Miss Sage," observed Ralph, "I thought the Father and the Son were one; how is it Jesus says then, the Son does not know the day?"

"I take it, my dear boy, that our Saviour means in that verse, that as the Son of man He knew not, but as God of course He knew."

"Miss Sage, I do not quite understand about the three days Jesus lay in the grave," said Ralph, thoughtfully. "You see in the Gospels it says, He died about the ninth hour, that is three o'clock in the afternoon on Friday, and He was laid in the grave that same evening, and that He rose very early the first day of the week, which

* Ps. xc. 4.

† Mark xiii. 32.

is our Sunday. Now, what puzzles me is, how it is called three days."

"The Gospels do not mention that our Saviour lay three *whole* days in the grave, Ralph," observed Miss Sage, "though the solemn events of His death, lying in the grave, and resurrection, trenched upon that time, and from the Hebrew method of calculation would naturally be expressed in that way. The Hebrew day commences at six o'clock in the evening, and our Lord's death and burial taking place before that hour, would be reckoned amongst the occurrences of the past day, the intervening Sabbath would be the second day, and from six in the evening until the time our Lord rose the following morning, several hours would have passed of the third day."

"Then the Jewish computation of time in recording remarkable events, Miss Sage," remarked Ralph, "is not by the number of hours that elapses in their occurrence, but by the days on which the events happen."

"Yes, so that if our Lord had died only one hour before the day closed, yet He would have been reckoned as dead one day. This manner of calculation is not peculiar to the Hebrews, but learned men tell us it is customary with many

nations of the East,"* Miss Sage explained. "And now is there any other question you wish to put to me," she asked, "for I must soon be leaving you."

"No, I think not, thank you," replied Ralph.

"Yes, but there is something about Pontius Pilate I want to know, Sagey dear. Does anybody know what became of him? Nurse was reading the other evening about his wife sending to him and begging him not to hurt Jesus; and yet, though he washed his hands pretending to be innocent of shedding our Saviour's blood, he let the naughty Jews have Him to crucify. I should think he did not feel happy afterwards. Do you think he did?" inquired Elvire.

"Tradition tells us that, after governing Judea ten years, he was banished to Vienne in Dauphiny, where in misery and despair he killed himself with his own sword. Jewish historians describe him as a bad, cruel man, always ready to sell justice for money, and as such his name will ever be held in abhorrence. But, my dear Elvire and Ralph, whilst justly censuring and condemning the conduct of this unhappy man, let us remember that

* See Calmet's "Dictionary of the Bible"—Years, Days, Hours.

our guilt will be far greater than his, if we, to whom the gospel has been fully preached, let not its truths sink deeply into our hearts, and bring not forth in our lives the fruits of the Spirit. He only knew our Saviour in the days of His humiliation, we not only know Him as the King of Glory, exalted high above all principalities and powers, but we have His Holy Spirit to abide in us, if we ask for it,—a gift of which it was impossible for Pilate to have a conception. But of this blessed gift we shall talk when we consider the third and last clause of our Belief, and as Ralph will be returning to school the early part of next week, we will, if you like, meet here again to-morrow or Thursday evening to converse upon it. But see! is not this your papa coming?"

"Oh yes!" cried both children, bounding towards him, and then half dragging, half leading, they brought him to the shanty.

Mr Duncombe having shaken hands with Miss Sage, and inquired for her mother, observed, "I fear my late anxieties have caused my children to obtrude on your time, Miss Sage, for if I ask where they are latterly of an evening, the usual answer is, 'with Miss Sage, sir.' I am really obliged to you. Mrs Duncombe and myself have

felt your kindness in thus coming to our rescue much, for, but for you our children would have lost many of their evening pleasures through my late temporary solicitude."

"I trust your cause for anxiety is passed now," said Miss Sage, kindly.

"Yes, thank you," replied Mr Duncombe, cheerfully. "This is the first day that I have returned to my home with a mind entirely free from business cares. All is straight now, and the confidence of the people appears reinstated in us. So I can enjoy my children without a shade of fear that anything unpleasant is overhanging our heads. And now for this wonderful log-house. What do you think of it, Miss Sage?"

"It has been a source of much amusement and interest to Ralph and Elvire," remarked Miss Sage, as she parted from them; "Ralph has worked at it indefatigably."

"Has he not? And how did you manage the roofing in, my boy? I see you have used long boughs lengthways for the purpose. But you must have had some sort of a frame work to rest them upon first; had you not?"

"Oh yes, papa, Hunt and Mason talked it over with Chipson," explained Ralph.

“And he gave them a little professional advice, I suppose,” observed Mr Duncombe, laughing.

“Yes, we held a regular consultation on the subject, papa, Chipson actually coming up one morning to give us his opinion.”

“O Ralph, you never told me you were going to hold a consultation,” interposed Elvire, “I should like to have heard it.”

“Ladies were not admitted, Miss Elvire,” replied Ralph, with mock gravity. “And now, papa, which had we better have the space around the shanty laid down with, grass or gravel? We have been waiting for you to decide.”

“Papa,” said Elvire, coaxingly, at the same time possessing herself of one of his hands, “would you mind taking us to see Jimmer’s father? we could talk about the grass and gravel as we go along. Could we not, Ralph?”

“Oh yes—do, papa!” exclaimed Ralph. “That is a capital thought, Elvire. It is but a short walk; only just through the Hill Gate, papa.”

“I have no objection,” replied Mr Duncombe, “but you must fetch the key, Ralph.”

“All right!” cried Ralph, bounding off like a shot.

Whilst Mr Duncombe and Elvire leisurely pro-

ceeded to the gate, the little girl found time to tell her papa of Jimmer's second visit, and his beautiful dormouse. "But he has kept his word," said the child; "he has not come again this evening. I do hope he will be a good boy. But look, papa! there he is peeping through the gate. I wonder what he is looking for!"

Mr Duncombe did look, but the lad had vanished immediately he had caught a glimpse of the squire, as he was commonly called by the Mendip villagers.

"Oh! why did he run away?" asked Elvire, distressed at the idea that any one should be afraid of her papa; "you would not have been angry with him, would you, papa?"

"Certainly not, my dear; though I expect he fears I shall. But here comes Ralph. I dare say we shall soon unearth Master Jimmer."

An expectation which was speedily realised: for on their passing through the gate, they discovered Jimmer running towards the kiln, as fast as his legs could carry him.

"O papa! did you ever see such a ragged boy before?" questioned Elvire, as Jimmer's rags fluttered and waved as he ran.

"He has an old red coat on, and the tails are

all in strips, like pieces of ribbon dangling about him," explained Ralph, laughing. "I want to know where he picked it up. He had it on on Sunday, but not yesterday. Perhaps it's his Sunday tog, Elvire."

"Poor boy! I like him very much, and his dear little dormouse too. I should like to teach him to be good, poor boy," remarked Elvire, as she trotted along by her papa's side, swinging his hand to and fro. Then pausing suddenly, she looked seriously up into her father's face, and asked with much earnestness, "Do you think Jimmer has ever been called to a state of salvation, papa?"

"State of salvation, my dear?" questioned Mr Duncombe, not catching at her meaning.

"Yes, papa, what the Catechism says we are called to in our baptism," replied the child.

"If he has been baptized, he has been outwardly admitted into Christian rights and privileges; but from his appearance, I should fear, Elvire, that he has never heard of them," replied her father.

"A dead member then, papa," observed Ralph, thinking of Miss Sage's simile of the graft.

"Nay, my son, say not that—an unconscious

member would be better. We know not the precise time when the scion and the stock become one, neither can we decide the exact period divine grace is conveyed to the soul. 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' must ever be the test naturally, or spiritually, that life has been communicated. But here we are close upon Jimmer's lair; had you not better hail him, Ralph? He will not be afraid of you."

Ralph, nothing loath, set up a loud shout of "Jimmer! Jimmer! where are you?" to which Jimmer responded by popping his head out of the door, and replying, "Here Master! does yer want me?" with such an air of unconscious ignorance, that set them all laughing.

"My father is come to see yours," answered Ralph, "so be quick and tell him, that we are coming in, if he pleases." Instantly the boy appeared without the doorway, and touching his forehead respectfully to Mr Duncombe, invited them to walk in. They found Zachary lying on the heap of hay in the corner of the kiln, looking very ill, and evidently in much pain. Mr Duncombe seated himself on the reversed barrel which had been rolled in the previous day for Miss Sage's accommodation, and, taking Elvire on

his knee, entered into conversation with the sick man, whilst Ralph and Jimmer stood one on either side of the fire, eyeing each other.

“That is your only child?” observed Mr Duncombe to Zachary, turning towards Jimmer.

“Yes, your honour, the only living one,” replied the man, “and he ain’t much to boast on in looks, though he ain’t a bad boy, taking him on the whole.”

“Do please ask him if Jimmer is Jimmer’s right name, papa,” whispered Elvire to her father.

“My little girl wishes to know if Jimmer is your lad’s name, my man,” said Mr Duncombe.

“No, missey,” replied the man, “he was christened James, but my little lass who’s up wi’ the angels, used to call him Jimmer; and so I took to call him so too.”

“Then you have had another child?” remarked Mr Duncombe, kindly; “and she was a good child?”

“Master,” said the man earnestly, raising himself so as to rest upon one elbow, “if ever I ’scapes going to hell, my little lass up wi’ the angels, threw the first stone to stop me from going. ‘Father,’ says she, when she was dying, ‘angels don’t carry drunkards to heaven; do ’ee

give up the drink,' and she put her weeny arms round my neck, and, O master, they never let me go until she was dead. Yes, dead, your honour, wi' her precious little arms round daddy's neck, and her sweet little face hid in here," and Zachary smote his breast with his free hand, and groaned aloud.

"And have you given up the drink?" asked Mr Duncombe, after a short silence.

"I'm trying to, your honour. I am just turning away from it, and that's why I travel about from place to place, and bides in sheds and barns. If I was to settle down in a village or town, the drink 'ould catch me, for it looks out tempting like to me from every public window. But when I am on the tramp, and seems to want to turn in as I go along, I feel my Jenny's arms round my neck, and seem to hear her say, 'Father, angels don't carry drunkards to heaven, do 'ee give up the drink,'—and I cry, 'Gee up, Neddy, on wi'ee, Ned,' and the poor brute beast seems to know what's up, for he starts on a good one, and I arter him till the public's out o' sight. Oh, your honour, I do believe the devil is in the drink himself, for he do follow up a poor fellow so hard."

“There, I believe you are right, my man—for drink is Satan’s stronghold in this land, and its captives are worse bound than the poor prisoner in chains of iron. But surely, with the remembrance of your dead child’s pleadings, you could restrain yourself, so as to settle down somewhere, where your living child could be taught what is good and right. Can he read?” inquired Mr Duncombe.

“Not he, sir, don’t know B from a bull’s foot, poor lad. He ain’t a been wi’ me much. I let him tramp it a year or two, wi’ my brother Jim; but when my Jenny went up to heaven, I was that lonesome that I started off arter Jimmer and brought him away, and here we are.”

“Please, papa, ask how old Jenny was when she died?” begged Elvire of her father.

“She was just turned o’ seven, missey,” replied Zachary, overhearing Elvire’s petition. “She died last March, of the low fever, pretty lamb, she were a sight too good for the likes of me to have about me.”

“It seems a pity that Jimmer should not learn to read,” observed Mr Duncombe; “he looks sharp enough to learn anything.”

“That he is, sir, and if I had a nice easy book

I'd teach him a bit, now I'm tied by the leg here. I could use to read capital; but I've nought to read out o' now, 'cept Jenny's hymn-book, and I can't abide to take that out of the wrap, it makes me all overish when I does."

"You shall have an easy book for Jimmer," observed Mr Duncombe, as he rose from his seat on the barrel; "and some papers and interesting books for yourself, and my little girl shall bring them to you. I expect by her face she would like to hear more of your Jenny."

"Oh yes, papa," cried delighted Elvire. "Miss Sage and I will try to come very often if Mr Zachary will let us."

"The lady that comed yesterday has done me a power o' good with her stuff for my leg. She brought me some dinner her own self to-day, that she did, and she spoke that kind that it made my heart glad to hear her. I'd like to see her and you too, missey, it cheers me up to see a body."

"Any shot in the locker, Zachary?" inquired Mr Duncombe, laughing.

Zachary lifted the cover of the box by his side, and disclosed to his visitor's view part of a loaf of bread, a small piece of cheese, and a bunch of onions.

“Not too well supplied,” remarked Mr Duncombe, putting his hand into his pocket.

“Stop, your honour, I don’t want nothing to-night,” said Zachary, earnestly. “I’ve got two whole shillings in my waistcoat pocket, and the lady brought me some tea and sugar, ’tis up there,” and he pointed in the direction of a shelf. “And if you was to give me money, perhaps I’d be wanting the drink. I dursn’t go but just from hand to mouth, that I dursn’t. And Jimmer’s got work harvesting for the next week or two, so we’ll do until then, and after that if we’re hard up, ’praps your honour will give us a lift.”

“That I will, my man, with all my heart, and my little girl shall see that you are supplied with books until you are about again.” Mr Duncombe then wished Zachary “good evening,” and followed by his children and Jimmer, left the kiln.

“Jimmer, will you please show my brother your pretty mouse?” asked Elvire, lingering behind her father on the hill, who, lost in thought, silently pursued his homeward course.

“He won’t hurt un?” inquired Jimmer, rather suspiciously.

“Oh no!” cried Elvire, shocked at the idea that her dear brother would injure a pet mouse.

Ralph crimsoned at Jimmer's supposition, but managed to suppress his rising indignation in his anxiety to behold the dormouse.

After a little fumbling in what appeared to be the bosom of his shirt, Jimmer drew forth his favourite, and placed it in Elvire's hand.

"Oh, you beauty! you sweet, little, black-eyed pet!" exclaimed the delighted child, "do let me show it papa?" And without waiting for Jimmer's permission, she darted after her father, overtaking him just as he reached the Hill Gate.

"O papa, do look, please look!" cried the nearly breathless child, "'tis Jimmer's mouse."

"Well now, Elvire, I call that sharp of you to ask for me to see the mouse, and then run off with it yourself," observed Ralph, who with Jimmer had followed after her.

"There it is," said Elvire, returning it safely to Jimmer; "I only wanted papa to see it."

Mr Mousey was then put through his exercises by Jimmer, for Ralph and Elvire's edification—the exercises consisting in his running up a piece of stick and perching on the top of it, coiling comfortably on the boy's head, jumping from one fore finger to the other, and finally, running into his shirt bosom and playing hide and seek, by

popping his head in and out through the many rents in that garment.

How long Elvire and Ralph would have remained watching Mousey's tricks, it is impossible to say, had not Mr Duncombe been with them to remind them of the lateness of the hour, and of the fast falling dew, which made him anxious to return home with Elvire. So thanking Jimmer for having been so good-natured in showing his pet, and telling him to come to Court House for anything his father might require, he bade the boy go back to the kiln and settle his father comfortably in for the night.

Jimmer, with a pull of his forelock to Mr Duncombe, and a nod and grin at Ralph, prepared to do as he was bidden ; but as he passed Elvire, he stopped for an instant to whisper—" Missey, I didn't hear nothing to-night, the gate was too far off, and the big lady do talk quiet like. I didn't hear nothing but a sort of hum hum in the big boy's house, cause I didn't creep through the hedge this time. I'm trying to please Him," and he glanced upwards ; " p'r'aps He'll come round our way when father calls to Him, if I does," and then before Elvire could reply, Jimmer was gone.

" Papa," said Elvire, as she took his hand and

walked through the plantation, "Jimmer has been christened, poor boy; I wonder who his godparents were. And, papa, though he does not know of the way of salvation, yet he is trying to please God. Do not you think he must be in it, though he does not know it?"

"Yes, Elvire; ignorant and poor as he is, if he is seeking after God and desiring to please Him, the desire must come from God, and it shows that God is leading him to a knowledge of Himself," replied Mr Duncombe.

"Then after all," cried Elvire, joyously, "poor ragged Jimmer, in his old soldier's coat, will be an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Oh! I am so glad, so very glad," and the child danced round her father with delight. Then growing a little more sober, she continued, "Jesus was very poor that He might feel for poor people, Miss Sage said, papa; so He can feel for Jimmer, and Jimmer will some day learn that Jesus has redeemed him and all mankind. How good of Jesus, and how good of God, to give His Son to die for us; was it not, papa? And, O papa! could you spare me, or Ralph, or Cyril, to die for God?"

Mr Duncombe clasped the tiny hand tighter within his own, and made no reply. It was a

home question that his innocent child had put to him, and he could not answer it, but it stirred his inmost soul, and made him comprehend, more fully than he had ever done before, the exceeding love of God, manifested to us in the redemption of the world by His Son, His only Son.

CHAPTER VII.

SANCTIFICATION.

BELIEF (*continued.*)

“I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

“What dost thou chiefly learn in this article of thy belief?

“I learn to believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.”

IN the visit to Zachary Hibbs the previous evening, the grass or gravel question had failed to be discussed, so Ralph took the opportunity of consulting his father on the subject as they drove into town the following day, and it was then decided that the interior of the hut, with the approaches to it, should be gravelled, whilst the exterior space should be turfed. As March was the proper season for laying down gravel, Mr Duncombe proposed that Mason and Hunt should

construct a temporary flooring for the shanty of pebbles and stones, and the two paths leading to it from the principal plantation walk should be well covered with ashes and cement, preparatory to the gravelling process in the spring. Unfortunately, poor little Elvire was excluded from this consultation, having been forbidden, as a punishment by her mamma, to accompany her papa and brother to town that day. On the whole she was usually a very good girl, seldom disobeying her parents, or indeed any one to whom it was her duty to attend ; but that morning being left for a few minutes in charge of Cyril in her mamma's dressing-room to amuse her baby brother, she had thoughtlessly taken a very splendid scent bottle off the toilet table. Now Elvire had strictly been prohibited touching anything without leave on her mamma's toilet, and especially the scent bottles there ; but forgetting the prohibition in her desire to please Cyril, she had given him one of them to play with, and master baby, who only appreciated the glittering stopper, with one hand instantly appropriated it, applying it to his mouth, whilst with the other hand he dashed the bottle to the ground, with such force that it was shivered to atoms.

Elvire, aghast with fright at the mischief done, was far too overcome to cry, but a few drops of the scent having spirted into Cyril's face, and probably eyes, that young gentleman set up a yelling that brought his mamma and nurse immediately to him, and thus the accident was quickly discovered. Mrs Duncombe was exceedingly vexed with Elvire, for she valued the bottle highly, from the fact that it was one of her wedding-presents, and could not possibly be replaced ; she was also grieved at her little girl's want of thought in giving the baby anything so dangerous to play with, for he might have upset the contents of the bottle into his face and his sight been seriously affected. So after receiving a sharp lecture from her mamma, nurse was instructed to take off Miss Elvire's hat and cloak (for she was dressed to go in the carriage with Ralph and her papa), and she was ordered to remain at home.

Very slowly, and very sadly, passed the morning with Elvire, for Miss Sage, having had a note from Mrs Duncombe, saying the young people were going to accompany their papa to town that day, did not pay her usual visit to Court House, so the poor child had abundance of time for reflecting on her disobedience. At first she felt very

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angry with the baby for throwing the bottle down, forgetting that Cyril could not possibly know the mischief he was doing, and she thought her mamma very unkind for depriving her of the pleasure of going into town with her papa and brother. Then she remembered how constantly she had been forbidden to touch the ornaments about the house, and more especially in her mamma's room; and as she recalled to her mind her mamma's grieved look, when she saw the scent bottle shattered on the carpet, and what she had said about no one's being able to replace it, Elvire's naughty rebellious temper gradually gave way, and creeping to the dressing-room, she confessed to her mamma how careless and wrong she had been, and begged her to please to forgive her. Mrs Duncombe, really glad that her little girl had come to a right mind, and was sorry for her fault, readily forgave her, for she had not failed to notice Elvire's angry countenance when she was sent from the room, and she talked to her seriously upon the danger of acting on impulse, or without reflection. She pointed out what a painful, if not serious accident, might have happened to Cyril had the whole of the Eau de Cologne been upset over his face and eyes, or if by knocking the

stopper against the bottle, it had been broken in his hands, how sadly they might have been cut with the pieces ; and Elvire upon hearing this, was fain to go and kiss the chubby hands of baby, as he lay fast asleep in his bassinette, perfectly unconscious of the trouble he had unwittingly brought upon his little sister in breaking the costly ornament. But the greatest trial awaited her in the afternoon when, upon preparing her lesson in the Catechism for Miss Sage, she inquired of Ralph the meaning of sanctifieth.

“To make holy,” replied Ralph ; “to make pure from sin, Elvire,” he explained, without pausing in his occupation.

“O Ralph !” cried the child, gazing into his face earnestly ; “is it really that ?” And tears filled her eyes.

“Yes, look into the dictionary if you do not believe me. There, that black-covered book in the book-case will tell you just the same,” said Ralph, piqued at her doubting the correctness of his information.

“Then I am not sanctified, Ralph, for I am not pure from sin, for I have sinned to-day. Oh dear ! oh dear !” And Elvire’s tears trickled down her cheeks and dropped unheeded on her open

book. Ralph, who had been busily engaged chipping away at the ornament for his shanty roof, hearing her piteous voice, glanced up from his work at her, and observing her fast-flowing tears, threw aside his chisel and hammer, and went round to her side to comfort her, saying—

“Why, you are the silliest little thing that ever was, I do believe. Why, everybody sins sometimes, Elvire. You are not worse than other little girls. Why, recollect that trick I played off on old Hall when I first came home these holidays. I had no idea of wickedness when I did it, for I thought it only fine fun to tie Chipson’s Newfoundland by a long string to the latch of Hall’s door. I never dreamed the old man would be kept a prisoner in his own cottage until the following day; and it was not until papa talked to me, and told me the poor fellow might have been burned in his cottage, or had a fit, without any one the dog was not used to being able to get at him, that I saw that practical jokes are wicked things. It’s just this, Elvire, we get into scrapes for want of thought, and as papa says, ‘experience bought is better than experience taught,’ you will know better another time than to give Cyril glass bottles to play with.”

“It is not that, it is not that, Ralph,” cried the little girl, “that vexes me, but my disobeying mamma, and being angry with her, and baby afterwards. O Ralph! I did hope I was God’s little girl, but it seems I cannot be, if I am not sanctified or made pure from sin, and I am not, or I should not have been naughty to-day.”

“Hold hard there,” exclaimed Ralph, thoroughly sympathising in his little sister’s trouble. “People do not get good all at once. I do not know quite how it is, but Miss Sage will tell us by and by, but I have read that God’s Spirit helps us to overcome our sins little by little, and so if you are God’s child, Elvire, He will just help you to get over yours. Cheer up, Trotsum, and let us pick out the hard names in your lesson. I will be master, and you shall be pupil. Come, what is your next poser, Miss Elvire Duncombe.”

And Trotsum *alias* Elvire, smiling through her tears, tried to cheer up, and soon was able to read her lesson correctly through, without a sigh or sob.

“What is Catholic?” at length she inquired, after having thought over the word a moment or two.

“Universal,” replied Ralph. “It is derived

from the Greek, *Katholicos*—*Kata* and *Holos*, whole. There, my learning comes in useful here, does it not? Catholic church means, the Church of Christ all over the world.”

“But there is not a Church of Christ all over the world. Is there, Ralph?” asked Elvire.

“No, there are lots of heathens still, but wherever Christ’s faith is held, and He is worshipped, there is a part of Christ’s Church. But I was only going to tell you the meaning of the hard words, Elvire; I shall leave Miss Sage to explain the meaning of the different sentences in the Belief; for, between ourselves, I do not quite understand all of them myself. Suppose we have a run in the garden before tea. Perhaps we shall meet with papa somewhere or other.”

To this proposition Elvire readily assented, and laying aside her book, she and Ralph went roaming about the grounds until tea-time, though no papa was met with during their ramble.

“Now, Miss Sage,” exclaimed Ralph, later in the evening, as that lady made her appearance at the shanty, “Elvire has no end of questions to ask you.”

“And have you none?” she inquired, laughing.

“Oh yes, lots. Only Elvire gets in such a way

about hers, she just takes everything to herself, and she has been in such a way this afternoon, because she fears she is not sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God."

"Sanctification is a progressive work, my dears," observed Miss Sage, taking her seat between them. "It is going from grace to grace, and as long as we are in the world we shall need the help of the Holy Ghost which sanctifieth. But what raised your doubts, my darling?" inquired the lady kindly of Elvire.

"O Miss Sage," replied the child, nestling close up to her, "I was a naughty girl this morning. I disobeyed mamma, and when she punished me, I was angry with her, and angry with Cyril, and angry with myself. And then afterwards when I was sorry and mamma had forgiven me, I was afraid that I was not a child of God, or I should not have been naughty."

"I am sorry my darling was naughty to-day," said Miss Sage, tenderly, "yet I am glad that she was afraid afterwards, because that very fear was produced by God's Holy Spirit working in her heart. Our Saviour tells us one of the offices of the Holy Ghost is to reprove or convince of sin.*

* John xvi. 7.

You see, if we are not convinced we have sinned, we shall never desire to amend our lives in that particular wherein we have been guilty. God's Spirit cannot share our hearts with sin ; it therefore shows us the sin, and helps us to overcome it or cast it out, and thus it becomes to us the Holy Ghost which sanctifieth."

"And if we do not overcome the sin?" inquired Elvire, anxiously.

"Then the Spirit departs from us," replied Miss Sage, seriously, "and leaves us to our sin. Oh! my dear children, it is a solemn thing to quench the Spirit, for God has said His Spirit shall not always strive with men. Listen, therefore, to its gentlest pleadings, and let it guide you into all righteousness, for as St Paul teaches us, 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,'* and it is having this internal witness that enables us to realise that we are children of God, and gives us power from our heart to say, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.'"

"The next sentence in the Creed," remarked Ralph, "is 'the Holy Catholic Church,' Miss Sage."

"Yes, having acknowledged our personal belief

* Rom. viii. 14.

in the existence of the Holy Ghost," said Miss Sage, "we go on to profess our firm persuasion of the universality of its operations, and that it is confined to no clime, age, or tongue, but is given to all who worship the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth, 'for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.'"* And this wondrous life-giving Spirit, influencing more or less every member of Christ's Church, leads to union and communion amongst them."

"Which is called in the Belief 'the Communion of Saints,'" observed Ralph.

"Yes, and though it is a very imperfect communion in these days, yet the name Christian links man to man in all habitable parts of the globe. Differ in minor points of opinion they may, and do; but the closer they live to Christ, the greater will be their love to each other. Nor is this communion of saints limited to time, it exists in heaven, and will exist throughout all eternity. I think Elvire knows the beautiful lines of Bickersteth on the re-union of saints—do you not, dear?"

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

“Oh yes,” she replied, “for you taught them to me when Minnie Brown died,” and Elvire repeated with much earnestness—

“The family is scatter'd yet, though of one home and heart,
Part militant in earthly gloom, in heavenly glory part ;
But who can speak the rapture, when the circle is complete,
And all the children sunder'd now, before their Father meet ;
One fold, one Shepherd, one employ, one everlasting home :
Lo, I come quickly, even so, Amen, Lord Jesus, come !”

“I see now why they put *the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting after the communion of saints*, Miss Sage,” observed Ralph. “It’s just this—we are a scattered band here, as the hymn says ; but when the resurrection day comes, and our souls and bodies are re-united, the communion will be perfect and complete for ever and ever, and that is the life everlasting—is it not ?”

“Certainly, Ralph, but you have forgotten that *the forgiveness of sins* comes between ‘the communion of saints’ and the ‘resurrection of the body,’” said Miss Sage.

“So it does, Miss Sage,” rejoined Ralph, “I had forgotten that. But there could be no communion of saints without forgiveness of sins, because no unforgiven person could be called saint, whether in heaven or on earth, could they?”

“No, Ralph; and just see how every sentence in this clause of the Creed hinges on the first, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*. For it is the Spirit that breathes life into the Church, making it holy and universal; it unites the saints in the bands of love; it assures the soul of its pardon through the blood of Christ; it gives a pledge for the resurrection of the body, in the remembrance that where the Head (Christ) is, there shall the members be also; and keeps alive in the mind the great end of all our aspirations, even everlasting life.”

“Miss Sage, what is the meaning of elect?” inquired Elvire. “It says in the answer in the Catechism, ‘all the elect people of God?’”

“Elect means chosen, selected, Elvire.”

“But how can we know we are chosen?” asked the child.

“By looking into our hearts, and seeing whether we are endeavouring to live according to God’s holy will and commandments, and

yielding ourselves to the teachings of His Blessed Spirit, my dear."

"Miss Sage."

"What, Ralph?"

"It appears to me that Amen to the Belief sounds strange—it is not a prayer, you know. It seems odd to say, 'so be it,' or 'so let it be,' when you have just declared what you believe is really so."

"Amen is here used in a different sense to what it usually is; it does not in this case signify a wish as after a prayer, but an assent or affirmative. It means here *it is truth*, just as if you said, 'all that I have just professed and affirmed is truth.' Amen not only means, *be it established*, but *truth*; the word is derived from the Hebrew *āman*, to establish."

"Thank you, Miss Sage, for explaining the Creed so nicely to us," said Ralph, gratefully. "I knew it meant a great deal in a few words. I will try to remember, God the Father has made me, God the Son has redeemed me, and God the Holy Ghost sanctifieth me, wherever I go. I wish I could never forget it."

"Do so, my dear boy; ask the Triune God to keep alive in your mind the remembrance of

whose you are, and whom you profess to serve, and you will find it a never-failing preservative against sin ; for, realising His watchful presence when tempted to evil, the language of your heart will be, ‘ how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? ’ ”

Miss Sage then rose to return home, saying it was getting too late to remain any longer in the log-hut.

“ Miss Sage, will you go with us to-morrow to see Zachary Hibbs, and take him some books ? ” inquired Ralph.

“ And one for Jimmer to learn to read out of,” interposed Elvire.

“ Very willingly, after lessons,” replied Miss Sage. “ But who is to be the boy’s instructor ? ” she asked.

“ His father,” exclaimed Ralph ; “ he told papa he used to read capitally, and would teach Jimmer if he had an easy book to do so from. So papa bought one to-day, and a nice large print Testament as well, and he said we might carry them to Zachary to-morrow if you were kind enough to go with us.”

“ Any time after eleven I shall be happy to do so, if the weather be favourable,” replied Miss

Sage, as she shook hands with Ralph, and kissed Elvire, who clung to her as if she feared to let her go.

Late that night, when Mr and Mrs Duncombe returned from a neighbouring village, where they had been spending the evening, and went to take a look at their children before retiring to rest, much to their surprise they found Elvire wide awake.

“Awake, my darling!” said her mamma, stooping down to kiss her, “are you not well?”

“Oh yes, mamma dear,” replied the child, returning the caress.

But when her papa came near to her, she threw her arms around his neck, saying in a low, pleading voice, “Pray that God the Holy Ghost will sanctify me with the elect people of God, papa.” Little Elvire, “the remembrance of sin was indeed grievous” to her, and its burden was intolerable; but she was learning by the Holy Spirit’s aid to cast it on the Son of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.

The Commandments.

I.
Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

II.
Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and show mercy unto thousands in them that love Me and keep my commandments.

III.
Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

IV.
Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man servant, and thy maid servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made

heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

V.
Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI.
Thou shalt do no murder.

VII.
Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII.
Thou shalt not steal.

IX.
Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X.
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.

EXODUS XX.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMMANDMENTS.

“What dost thou chiefly learn by these commandments?”

“I learn two things, my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour.”

WHEN Miss Sage, accompanied by Ralph and Elvire, went the following day to see Zachary Hibbs, they found him basking in the sun outside the kiln, evidently enjoying the fair September morning. Jimmer, he said, was at work harvesting, but he would be sure and teach him his letters of an evening when he returned home. He looked very weak and ill, though he told Miss Sage that his leg was so much better for the remedy she had given him to use, that he hoped in a few days to be able to stand upon it without pain, and then he could go back to work once more.

“You must not try your leg too soon,” observed Miss Sage. “We shall all be glad to help you

until you are able to maintain yourself again. My little pupil has brought you a basketful of good things which she is longing to unpack, and Master Ralph has a nice parcel of books and papers which his papa has sent you to amuse yourself with."

"Thank you all, my lady, very much. I am humbly obliged to 'ee all, but I am that tired of lying by, that I am counting the hours till I can go to work again. That ointment of your'n, ma'am, is first-rate for healing ; I never met with the like before for cooling a bad place like it does."

"It is made with elder and primroses, and the fomentation I brought you to bathe your leg with at first was an infusion of elder blossoms. The elder tree is as good as an apothecary's shop to country people, nearly every part of it being useful, internally or externally," said Miss Sage.

"I knew the blossoms and berries were good for wine and tea, but I thought all the rest of the tree was rank poison," remarked Zachary. "It's that strong smelling that nothing can sleep in its branches, or under-them, I've heard, ma'am."

"And I have heard the same, Zachary, and I think it is very probable," rejoined Miss Sage ;

“for it is a powerful narcotic, and emits a most disagreeable odour, especially towards nightfall. But see how good God is, in providing a tree yielding simple remedies for such hurts as country people are commonly meeting with. How far we should have to send for every little ointment or fomentation, that is so frequently needed at harvest time, if we had not simple remedies and herbs growing close at hand. Why, our nearest chemist lives six miles off, and our doctor three ; only think to have to go six miles to get a dressing for a cut, or a liniment for a bruise.”

“Well, ma’am, you’ve been a good doctor to me; I never thought the awful cut in my leg would have been healing so soon,” said Zachary, gratefully.

“Nor did I expect it would either, Zachary,” observed Miss Sage, “but God blessed the means used, and your being a more temperate man now considerably assisted those means. If you had been a drinking man as formerly, your case would have been far more serious and difficult to cope with. A little more rest and quiet is all that you will now probably require.”

“Oh that I might keep from the drink ! I am that afraid of it, ma’am, that I daren’t look to-

wards the keg, when the men in the field are drinking out of it. If I did, I should want some of it, I craves for it so when I see or smell it. I hope the Lord will help me to get over the drink, that I might meet my little Jenny in heaven. She always said God would bring us together again if I got over the drink."

"God will help you, Zachary, if you ask Him to. Ralph has brought you a New Testament, which tells what the Son of God did for you and me and all the world, to reconcile us unto His Father in heaven ; read it, and pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you its meaning, and you will not only find Christ came to put away sin in His own body on the cross, but to overcome the power of sin in the hearts of His servants,—and that power He is longing to bestow upon you. Now, Elvire dear, I see you want to unpack the basket ; I dare say Zachary will let you go into the kiln and do so, and Ralph can assist you."

To this proposal Zachary readily assented, and Ralph and Elvire were soon busily engaged in unpacking the large basket, which the little girl with great labour had insisted upon carrying herself to Zachary's abode. She only knew there were nourishing things in it, and her delight was

great when she and Ralph placed upon Zachary's box a piece of meat, a can of soup, some eggs, tea, sugar, coffee, and a nice white loaf, with a pot of fresh butter. "They will have a good dinner, won't they?" cried the pleased child, dancing round the box. "Even mousey will get a picking, will he not, Ralph?"

"I wonder whether Jimmer has his mouse with him," said Ralph, peering about in hopes of catching a glimpse of a box or cage in which the dormouse might be located, but excepting the large box, which Elvire had turned into a table, and two tin canisters on the hanging shelf, there was nothing else with a cover to it, unless it was the teapot, and that was simmering on the hearthstone. "I expect he has it with him," observed Ralph, having completed his survey; "I wonder whether he always keeps it in his bosom."

Having finished unpacking the basket, Ralph and Elvire rejoined Miss Sage, and after a few more moments' conversation with Zachary, they started for home. As they turned the corner of the hill to enter Hill Gate, they took a backward look at Zachary, and saw him still lying in the sun, but busily employed investigating the contents of the parcel of books.

“I trust they will be of great benefit to him,” observed Miss Sage, as they proceeded on their way.

“Of course he will read them,” remarked Ralph.

“Do you think he loves God?” inquired Elvire, thoughtfully.

“I think he fears Him, my dear,” replied Miss Sage. “He is evidently afraid of the punishment sin entails upon the sinner. The love of God has yet to be shed abroad in his heart, in the revelation of a Sin-bearer, who has borne the punishment his sins have deserved. When that glorious truth has dawned upon his soul, and not until then, will he truly love God.”

“Miss Sage, I am afraid I shall only get one lesson more in the Catechism before I go back to Winchester. I suppose that will be on the first commandment, will it not?” inquired Ralph.

“I think we had better take the first four together, Ralph, as they comprise our duty to God,” said Miss Sage. “We have finished considering the articles of faith which our godparents promised we should be taught to believe, and now we come to God’s holy will and commandments, which they pledged themselves we would keep.

We will, therefore, take them according to our Saviour's manner of classification, if I may so use the term. If you recollect, our Saviour, in answering the lawyer who desired to tempt Him, said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

"Miss Sage, does anybody know exactly where Mount Sinai is?" questioned Elvire. "Is it not somewhere in the wilderness?"

"It is one of the eminences of a chain of mountains in Arabia Petrea, but which is unknown. These mountains are in the peninsula at the northern end of the Red Sea, and lie in the route the Israelites took when journeying from Egypt to the promised land."

"Miss Sage, did God give His law to the Jews at their request, or unasked?" inquired Ralph.

"Unasked, Ralph," replied Miss Sage; "they were His chosen people, and were to be to Him 'a peculiar treasure,' † if they kept His covenant and obeyed His laws. It was therefore necessary in

* Matt xxii. 36-39.

† Exodus xix. 5.

renewing His covenant with them, that His will should be clearly revealed also, and this wondrous revelation of purity and justice was made to them, three months after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, on Mount Sinai."

"O Miss Sage, I do not wonder that they were frightened, when they saw the lightning and clouds of smoke, and heard the trumpet and thunder," observed Elvire, who was well versed in Scripture delineations.

"I wonder Moses was not too frightened to go up into the mountain when the Lord called to him," remarked Ralph.

"Moses was actuated by love to God as well as to man. He served the Lord with godly fear, not slavish dread, and well believed that God had not brought this people out of Egypt to destroy, but to save them. He was also a type of our Saviour in his intercessorship, for he stood between God and man, and as man represented and pleaded for his people in the very presence of the Almighty."

"He was a grand man, was Moses," remarked Ralph, admiringly.

"He was, indeed, for he derived all his grandeur from the source of true greatness. Not

only had he been instructed in all the learning of the age in which he lived, but he was taught by God's Holy Spirit, and whilst one of the most exalted of men, he was also the meekest," rejoined Miss Sage.

As they neared the gate leading to Old Lodge, Miss Sage observed, "I suppose you will be too much engaged to-morrow and Saturday for a lesson on the Catechism. Your mamma has begged me to give Elvire two days' holiday, that she might spend them entirely with you, Ralph. If, however, you like to come to me on Sunday afternoon, I shall be very pleased to see you, and we will take 'our duty towards God' as our subject."

To this proposal Ralph and Elvire readily agreed, and having watched Miss Sage to her door, they returned to Court House, consulting together as to the way they should spend the remainder of the week so rapidly drawing to a close.

"I cannot believe you have really been home eight weeks, Ralphy," said Elvire; "it does not seem much more than eight days, does it?"

"It has gone very quickly," replied Ralph; "and I have enjoyed my holidays very much.

Yet, Elvire, I do feel as if I should be glad to get back to Winchester again. 'Tis such rare fun there, I wish you could see us have a badger hunt."

"A badger hunt. What is that, Ralph?" inquired Elvire.

"Why half holidays, that's Tuesdays and Thursdays," explained Ralph, "we go on St Catherine's Hill, and a man takes a badger up there, and we chase it down, and I can tell you it is capital sport."

"Poor badger, I am very sorry for it," observed Elvire, shaking her head gravely. "I do not think it is at all kind of you boys to run after the poor thing, and I would not if I were a boy."

"Would you not, though?" rejoined Ralph, sarcastically. "I just wish you were once on St Catherine's Hill, or the Downs, with our fellows—see if you would not run with the best of them."

Elvire, not in the least convinced on that point, next inquired, what a badger was, for her zoological knowledge was very imperfect and circumscribed.

"Why, such an odd-looking animal, Elvire," explained Ralph, "somewhere about two feet and

a quarter long, with short legs and a broad flat body, and a long pointed nose, and very small eyes, and a skin as rough as—what,” said Ralph pausing to consider, “well as a”—

“A hedgehog,” suggested Elvire.

“A hedgehog, Elvire! what nonsense you are talking;” exclaimed Ralph, indignantly. “Hedgehogs are covered with prickles, not hair—well, as rough as some hair brushes then.”

“Oh my, Ralph! it cannot be nice to touch them,” remarked the little girl.

“I should think not, nor do we want to touch him until we are tired of the chase; then when Todson has let his two dogs loose to bring him to bay, before the dogs can get at him, some one catches Mr Badger up by the tail, and Todson, his keeper, quick enough bags him against another day. It’s rare fun badger-hunting, I can tell you; and I believe the little animal enjoys the run nearly as much as we do, though you do look so horrified at the idea of it. But hark! there is the first bell.” And off Ralph and his sister darted to prepare for their dinner, and their mamma’s luncheon,

CHAPTER IX.

DUTY TO GOD.

“What is thy duty towards God?”

“My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him, with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour His holy name and His Word, and to serve Him truly all the days of my life.”

It was with a very pale face and trembling form little Elvire presented herself at Old Lodge the following Sunday afternoon. A great sorrow had fallen upon the inmates of Court House, for Ralph, their joy and pride, lay senseless upon his bed, halting upon the very verge of death. A serious accident had happened to him the previous day, and none could tell how it would terminate. Doctors came and went, but they could give no satisfactory opinion, “Wait, and time would tell,” and “Let us hope for the best,” was all that could be elicited from them. Ralph had fallen from the

roof of his log-house, whither he had ascended to fix the centre ornament, necessary, in his estimation, to its completion. A projecting bough had considerably broken his fall, but alas! his head had received a terrible blow from the friendly branch, and he was otherwise fearfully bruised and shaken. Mr Duncombe was present at the accident, and, with the assistance of the gardener, had carried his injured boy up to his chamber, and had scarcely left him from the time he had laid him unconscious and powerless upon the bed. Elvire was present also, and, paralysed with fright, uttered neither cry nor lamentation, though her heart was ready to break with anguish of soul. Mason was the first to observe the poor child's silent agony, and without a word he lifted her in his arms, and carried her off to Old Lodge, saying, as he delivered her up to astonished Miss Sage—"Master Ralph's nigh upon killed, ma'am, and everybody's too busy to think upon this poor little lady, whose heart's just crushed out o' her; so I brought her to you, ma'am, to see if so be you could comfort her up a bit." And the kind-hearted man, as he spoke, passed his rough, sun-burnt hand tenderly over her soft brown hair. Miss Sage took her in her arms, and with gentle words and fond caresses

soothed and pitied her, until tears flowed freely down her cheeks, when she let her weep unrestrainedly on her bosom. It was not until a doctor had arrived, and Ralph's cuts and bruises had been attended to, that Mr Duncombe remembered Elvire was standing by his side when the accident occurred, and his thoughts immediately reverted to what her suffering must be about her brother. Fortunately, Mason had told the servants what he had done with Miss Elvire, so that upon her parents making inquiries after her, their minds were considerably relieved at hearing she was in such good care, and they decided she had better remain at Old Lodge as long as she pleased. But just before the nursery tea hour, Elvire returned to Court House, and crept into Ralph's room, where, clinging to her father, she begged and prayed to be let stay with him, a request which he could not find it in his heart to deny her, and it was not until a late hour in the evening, when she had dropped soundly off to sleep, that he would allow her to be removed.

All the village sympathised with the squire and his lady in their affliction, for their boy was a general favourite amongst them, and a low, suppressed groan ran through the church, when Mr

Brown requested the prayers of the congregation for Ralph Eric Duncombe. Even old Hall, who went by the not flattering epithet of "surly bear," and on whom Ralph had played his practical joke, found his way to The Court after service was over, to inquire for the young master, and to tender his humble duty to the squire and madam. If good wishes could have raised the boy from his bed of sickness, he would not have lain there a single day, so heartily did Mendip villagers yearn for his restoration to health. Court House, or "The Court," as it was commonly called, was looked upon as a sort of public building in which all the villagers had a certain vested interest, for the Duncombes had possessed it for generations, and they were lords of the Manor, and not a cottage in the village belonged to any one else. Besides, like Abraham of old, nearly all of Mr Duncombe's servants, if not born in his own house, were born in his own village, for it had always been a rule of the family, never to hire a servant out of it if they could procure one in it; so he ruled, not as a prince, but as a father in Mendip, and every transaction at The Court was patent to every cottage in the village: and Mr Duncombe was well pleased it should be so.

Of Mrs Duncombe the Mendip cottagers stood somewhat in awe, for she was a foreigner by birth, and that was enough to form a sort of barrier between them ; and it was quite evident that she was as much in awe of them as they were of her, though she never failed to help them in every way she possibly could. So when the report of Master Ralph's accident was circulated and confirmed in Mendip, every villager felt it was a personal trouble, and mourned for the brave boy as if he were one of their own relatives, and his parents came in for an abundant share of their sympathy.

"I hardly expected to see you, darling," observed Miss Sage, after she had made inquiries for Ralph, on the Sunday afternoon. "So you are come to learn the will of God, whilst poor Ralph bears it?"

"Bears it, Sagey dear?" said the child, glancing inquiringly into the lady's face.

"Yes, dear, some are taught the Divine will in suffering it ; others learn it by the hearing of the ear, and bringing it to bear on their daily life : such is your case. What says your lesson in the Catechism to-day, my dear, of your duty to God?"

“That I am to believe in Him, fear Him, and love Him, Miss Sage, with all my heart.”

“That is, with all our affections ; for the heart is the seat of the affections, as well as of our natural life,” explained Miss Sage.

“And with all my soul ?” continued Elvire, inquiringly.

“The soul or spirit is the immortal principle in us ; therefore we are to love God with all our souls, for it is the undying principle within us—breathed into us by God himself, * and, like the Giver, who is a Spirit, can never cease to be,” observed Miss Sage.

“And with all my mind,” said Elvire, pausing again for Miss Sage’s explanation.

“The mind is the thinking principle or intelligent power within us. An idiot has a soul and body, but no mind ; therefore as next to the soul, the mind is the most valuable part of us, so are we called to use it to the glory of God. God does not compel us to be His servants, for His ‘service is perfect freedom,’ but He expects us to exercise the faculty of thought and reason which He has bestowed upon us, that we might see that what He requires of us is not only right and just,

* Gen. ii. 7.

but consistent with, and necessary to, our present as well as our eternal happiness.”

“But, Miss Sage, I do not understand how Ralph can learn God’s will by bearing it?” questioned Elvire.

“At present, my dear, he is powerless in the Almighty hands, he can neither oppose nor acquiesce in the Divine will; but as reason returns again to its wonted seat, he will be able to see God’s love in sparing his life, and God’s providential mercy in giving him friends to watch over him in his hours of helplessness, and will, we trust, have learned in patient submission God’s holy law, by a light so clear and beautiful that he will desire never to swerve from it again.”

“Oh, if God will cure dear Ralph, how I will love Him and thank Him!” exclaimed Elvire.

“And if He does not, Elvire, will you not love Him?” inquired Miss Sage, gravely.

“O Miss Sage,” said the child, piteously, “I fear I shall be afraid of Him. I shall think He is angry with us, if He takes away Ralph, and—oh dear, I do not think I could bear it.” And Elvire laid her head upon Miss Sage’s knee, and wept bitterly.

“God does not willingly afflict the children of men,” replied Miss Sage, tenderly. “He is love itself; therefore all He does is actuated by love for His children. And if He commands us to make Him the first object of our life, affections, and thoughts, it is that we may have the privilege of trusting Him and calling upon Him also. You know that we must have some knowledge of a person before we can confide our wants to them, and ask them to assist us in any trouble. Even you, a little girl of ten years old, would not go to a stranger, if you needed help in any matter, would you, darling?”

“Oh no,” replied Elvire, raising her head from its resting place, and fixing her tearful eyes upon Miss Sage.

“No, you would apply to some one who, if you were not quite sure that they loved you, you knew would be ready to assist you, because they knew who you were and that you needed assistance. So, dear, if we try to believe in God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we get such a knowledge of His love to us, that we not only worship Him as the Lord, but we have such confidence in Him, that we can ask Him for all we want, knowing that He will only keep back that which would

be hurtful to us, and then, feeling that, we can serve Him truly all the days of our life."

"Then I may ask Him to cure poor Ralph?" inquired Elvire, with faltering voice and quivering lips.

"Certainly, my dear, you would not be a loving little sister if you did not; but you must also trust in God when you pray to Him. You must beg Him to make you believe that He is listening to your petition, though He may not see fit to grant it."

"But I hope He will, I hope He will!" cried the child, with outstretched folded hands, as if pleading that the desire of her heart might be granted.

"I hope, indeed, He will, my darling. Many, many prayers have ascended to heaven on your brother's behalf; and this morning Ralph Eric Duncombe was not forgotten at Mendip Church."

"Did they really pray for him there? Oh, did they really remember Ralphy there?" exclaimed Elvire, her pale, tearful face radiant with the new-born hope that the united prayers of God's people could not be in vain.

"Yes, and very sweet it was to think there was not one in the congregation who did not

offer up the petition for his recovery with all their hearts.”

“What words did they say, Miss Sage—oh! can you remember the words?”

“The words of our beautiful litany, where we pray God to preserve ‘all sick persons and young children.’”

“I am so glad that nobody forgot Ralph,” observed Elvire, “for he cannot pray for himself; he only moves one of his hands about, and moans. He does not know mamma nor anybody now. I am so glad that people pray for him.”

“And Elvire—

“ ‘ Nor prayer is made on earth alone,
The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus on the eternal throne
For sinners intercedes.’

Take that blessed thought home with you, darling, and let it help to comfort you. Think of Jesus presenting your feeble, faltering petition to His Father, and believe that only love which cannot err can or will refuse it.”

And Elvire did take the thought to her heart, and at once it began to comfort her, for it was very pleasant to think that the loving Jesus in heaven was praying for her poor sick brother

Ralph, and as she wandered about the plantation after leaving Old Lodge (for her mamma had bidden her take a walk in the grounds before she returned home), she tried to picture her Saviour pleading before His Father for Ralph, her own dear darling Ralph.

In the course of her ramble she came across the narrow path leading to Hill Gate, and immediately her thoughts turned upon Jimmer, and she wondered whether he might not be peeping through the gate, and she determined to go and see. But no Jimmer was there when she reached it, and it was some minutes before she discovered him sitting high up on the hill, gazing intently at something in the distance. Presently he took a look towards the gate, and catching a glimpse of the little lady, came rushing down to her.

“I’ve been a watching ever so long,” exclaimed the boy, eagerly, “but I haven’t a seen Him come down yet, missey.”

“Who have you been watching for?” inquired astonished Elvire.

“Why, ‘Him’ who lives up in the sky,” replied Jimmer, with great earnestness. “Father’s done naught but teach me my letters, and read the good book these two days; and he verses it out

loud, so that I hears a deal on't. And the book says Him up there will give us what we ask Him, and I have been asking Him all the morning to make the big boy well, but I haven't a seen Him come down yet? It must be a rare good sight when He do come, musn't it?"

"Yes," said Elvire, not quite knowing what she said.

"Once I thought He was come, for all the windows of The Court was like gold, one's eyes was nigh outed with the shine on 'em, but 'twas only the sun after all," explained the disappointed lad. "But do you think I'll see Him if I goes up and watches again?"

"No, Jimmer," replied Elvire, "we cannot see God if we watch for Him ever so. I do not know much, for I am only a little girl, but I know that He sees and hears us, but we cannot see Him, and He can make Ralph well, but we shall not be able to see Him do it. He will do it through the doctors, if He does it, Jimmer."

"What, him who came in the great yeller coach with the four horses from Shireton, last night?"

"Yes, and Dr Stone, and Mr Jordan," said Elvire.

"But how?" questioned Jimmer, who doubted

not the power of 'Him who lived above the skies' being able to cure Ralph, yet was very dubious about the ability of His agents.

"Why, God puts it into their hearts to use medicines which will do him good, the same as He put it into Miss Sage's heart to give your father ointment to make his leg well," explained Elvire.

Jimmer understood then, but he could not help thinking how much surer the cure would be, if "Him" who lived beyond the sky would only come down to the poor sufferer Himself; he had yet to learn that "God is about our bed, and about our paths, and spieth out all our ways."

"How many of the letters can you say?" inquired Elvire, remembering that he had said his father had been teaching him, as well as reading out of the good book.

"I doesn't seem to know 'em at all, they's that queer," replied Jimmer, scratching his head; "but I knows Jenny's prayer, that I do; I'm going to say it every night. I said it last night. Father learned it me night afore last; it's a rare pretty one."

"Oh, do say it to me, please," said Elvire, eagerly.

Jimmer closed his eyes and folded his hands,

as his father had told him Jenny always did, and repeated with great gravity—

“ I lay my body down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die ere time to wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

“ I like that prayer very much,” observed Elvire, very decidedly; “ will you say it again, please,” she asked; “ for I should like to learn it.”

Jimmer complied, Elvire repeating it after him two or three times, until she had learned it perfectly.

“ Now, if you like, I will say my afternoon lesson to you, Jimmer, shall I?”

Jimmer nodded assent, and Elvire at once explained, “ It is our duty to God, I am going to say, Jimmer. *My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all my heart,*” here Elvire placed her hand on her bosom to indicate the whereabouts of the heart; “ *and with all my mind, that is here,*” she said, raising her hand to her head; “ *and with all my soul;*” but when she came to soul, little Elvire knew not how to explain the meaning of soul or spirit to ignorant Jimmer. Pausing for a minute whilst Jimmer watched her intently through the gate,

she thought for a few instants, and then throwing both her arms out, she exclaimed, "it means, it means, Jimmer, that I am to love God with my eyes, my lips, my everything that I have, the best, the very best that I can."

"Yes," observed Jimmer; "I understands—is that all?"

"No, I must love God *with all my strength,*" she continued; "and am *to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour His holy Name, and His Word, and serve Him truly all the days of my life*—that is, as long as I live, Jimmer."

"And when you dies?" questioned the boy.

"Why, I shall go to heaven."

"Above, up there," said Jimmer, looking upwards.

"Yes."

"Is it very grand there, Missey?"

"Oh yes, it is all beautiful."

"As grand as Court House wi' the sun shining on it?"

"Oh grander, grander, grander!" exclaimed Elvire, amazed at Jimmer's idea of heaven being only like her own home.

"And what shall we see there?" asked the boy.

Elvire paused for an instant, thought of the golden streets, the gates of pearl, the saints in robes of white, and the bright shining angels, and then folding her hands, solemnly replied, "We shall see God."

"God?" echoed Jimmer, awed by the child's serious expression; "then 'tis good to be there."

Could little Elvire have written pages describing the glories that shall be revealed to the saints made perfect, all, all must have paled and sunk into insignificance in comparison with the wondrous blessed truth she then gave utterance to—"We shall see God."

And could the redeemed have come back to earth to testify of the joys of heaven, poor Jimmer's language, simple though it was, would best have conveyed their feelings to his and Elvire's heart,—"'tis good to be there."

It was a picture worth the looking at that Sunday afternoon, as the fair, delicate-looking child, clad in costly raiment, with folded hands, reverently spoke of the crowning joy of heaven, and the ragged, barefooted lad, with sparkling eyes and broad, high forehead, denoting intellect, though not yet developed, caught at the glorious fact, and rejoiced in anticipation of it. And may we not

hope that He who dwelleth with the contrite and lowly, was preparing a little temple for Himself in the heart of the child of the kiln, as well as in that of the child of the Court.

“Papa,” whispered Elvire, as she took her seat on his knee in Ralph’s room, upon her return home, “I have been learning about God to-day. Won’t it be grand to see Him?”

“Father,” said Jimmer, as he stretched himself upon the straw by Zachary’s side, “the little lady says God is in heaven, where Jenny’s gone to, so ’tis good to be there.”

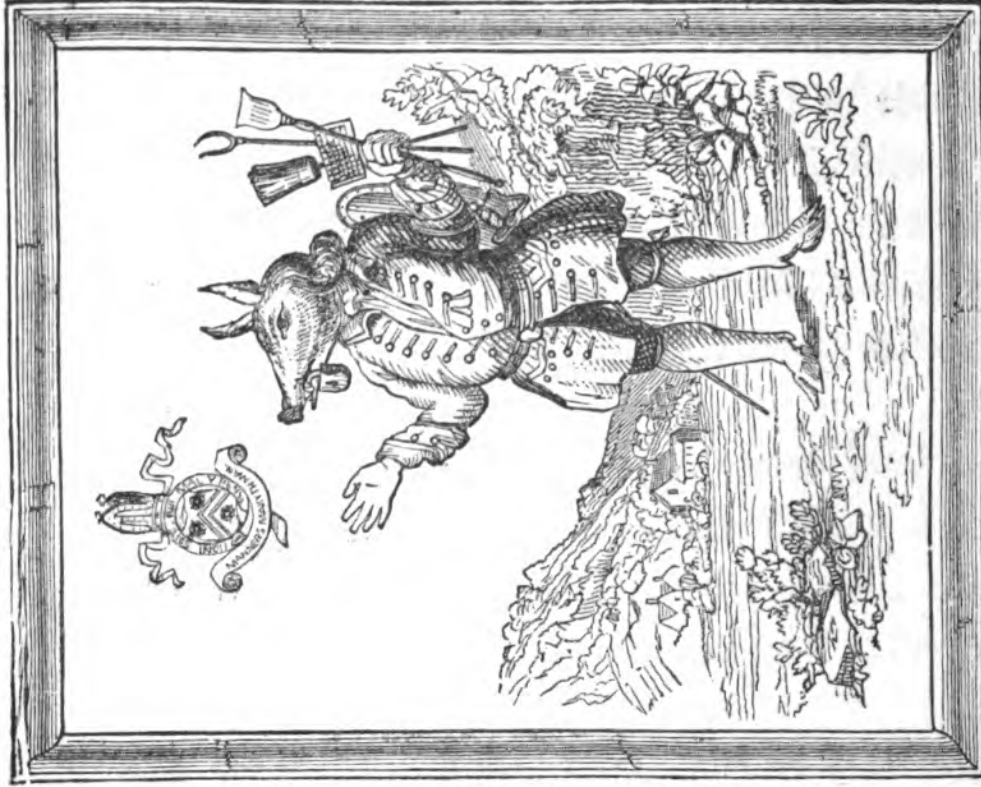
THE TRUSTY SERVANT.

LATIN.

Effigiem servi si vis spectare
 probati,
 Quisquis es, hæc oculos pascat
 imago tuos :
 Porcinum os quocunque cibo
 jejunia sedat ;
 Hæc sera, consilium ne fluat,
 arcta premit ;
 Dat patientem asinus dominis
 jurgantibus aures ;
 Cervus habet celeres ire, re-
 dire, pedes ;
 Læva docet multum tot rebus
 onusta laborem ;
 Vestis munditiem ; dextera
 aperta fidem ;
 Accinctus gladio ; clypeo
 munitus ; et inde
 Vel se, vel dominum, quo
 tueatur habet.

ENGLISH.

A trusty servant's portrait
 would you see,
 This emblematic figure well
 survey ;
 The porker's snout—not Lice
 in diet shows ;
 The padlock shut—no secrets
 he'll disclose ;
 Patient the ass—his master's
 wrath will hear ;
 Swiftmessin errand—the stag's
 feet declare ;
 Loaded his left hand—apt to
 labour saith ;
 The vest—his neatness ; open
 hand—his faith ;
 Girt with his sword—his
 shield upon his arm—
 Himself and master he'll
 protect from harm.



HIRCOCERVUS.

Painted upon the wall at the entrance to the kitchen at St Mary Winton College, Winchester.

[The above is taken from "School Life at Winchester College," by the kind permission of the publisher.]

CHAPTER X.

DUTY TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

“What is thy duty towards thy neighbour?”

“My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me; to love, honour, and succour my father and mother; to honour and obey the Queen and all that are put in authority under her; to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters; to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters; to hurt nobody by word nor deed; to be true and just in all my dealings; to bear no malice nor hatred in my heart; to keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering; to keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity. Not to covet or desire other men’s goods; but to learn and labour truly to get my own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me.”

LITTLE ELVIRE found it needed all her trust in God to believe that her prayers were heard on behalf of her brother, when day by day they remained unfulfilled. He had gained a little bodily strength, but with the bodily strength came

delirium, harder for his parents to see and hear than had been his previous unconscious moanings. In imagination he was back at Winchester, alone and uncared for. The quaint old tradition attached to Domum-day had made a deep impression on his mind when at school, and now in the wanderings of a concussed brain, he fancied himself to be the poor friendless boy, whose touching song and story has been commemorated for generations at St Mary Winton College.* “Domum, domum, dulce domum; dulce domum re so-nemus,” sang, or rather wailed, poor Ralph; whilst his mother hung in agony over him, trying to soothe him, and in answer to his piteous entreaties to be taken home, for domum-day was past, fruitlessly endeavoured to convince him he was really there. But alike useless were his mother’s pleadings, or

* “Domum-day” is the day before the Winchester boys return home in July for their summer holidays. It is an annual festival commemorating the old tradition of the Domum song, supposed to have been composed by a Winchester boy three centuries ago, who for some cause, now unknown, had been left a prisoner at the College. The poor boy in his lonely walks carved upon a tree the words “Dulce Domum,” and is said to have died as the sun set the evening his old comrades returned to school. A tree growing on the spot where the original one once stood, is called the “Domum tree.”

his father's loving remonstrances of "My boy, my precious boy, you are at home; at home with your papa, and mamma, and Elvire," the words either fell on deaf ears, or had lost the familiar sound which associated them with home in the sick boy's mind. Sometimes Elvire with her sweet childish accents quieted him, but more frequently he sang and wailed until, fairly exhausted, he fell into a dead sleep, from which, when a little refreshed, he awoke to resume anew his piteous chant of Dulce Domum, mingled with entreaties to be let go home to Mendip, to dear mamma and papa. It was a heartrending time at Mendip Court, a time in which love, position, and wealth, were alike unavailing. Another Sunday had arrived, and again the united prayers on behalf of Ralph Eric Duncombe had been offered up in the house of God by the Mendip congregation, and Elvire, kneeling by Miss Sage's side, with sobs and tears had joined in the heartfelt petition for her dear brother's recovery. And again in the afternoon, Bible and Catechism book in hand, Elvire found her way to Old Lodge. Miss Sage would have gladly had her to stay continually with her during Ralph's illness; but young as she was, her presence was a blessing in

her sorrowful home, by helping to keep hope alive in her parents' breasts, and frequently hushing the complaints of her sick brother.

"We will go and see Zachary and Jimmer this afternoon," said Miss Sage, as she met Elvire at Old Lodge door. "The walk will do you good, my darling, and my mother is quite willing to spare me ; so come along."

Elvire readily assented, and soon she and Miss Sage were threading their way through the plantation.

"Jimmer can tell all his letters now, Elvire," observed Miss Sage, "I heard him last evening."

"Did you ?" said Elvire, with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, and I told him I would try and bring you to see him this afternoon ; and his father promised to teach him the same lesson in the Catechism that you have been learning for to-day."

"Do you think he will have learned it, Miss Sage ?"

"I hope so, dear, if his father has had patience enough to teach him ; he is naturally quick and intelligent."

"That will be nice if he can say it ; I wonder who Jimmer calls his neighbour."

“Why, his friends at Court House and Old Lodge, my dear; not but when I read the lesson over to him last evening, I explained the word neighbour more comprehensively, and showed him that it meant all mankind, as well as those who live near to us.”

“Miss Sage,” observed Elvire, seriously; “I have been thinking”—— and then she paused.

“Thinking what, dear?”

“How much easier it must be to do our duty towards our neighbour than to God.”

“So it is, my darling, because God’s law binds the heart, man’s the actions. It is quite possible to do our duty to man and forget God: but it is impossible to do our duty to God, and forget our duty to man.”

Miss Sage and Elvire found Jimmer, when they reached the kiln, had been anxiously anticipating their arrival, and had made sundry preparations for their comfort. He had rolled the empty barrel outside the kiln, and placed by it a nice smooth clump of wood, for Elvire’s accommodation, and the books Mr Duncombe had sent by Ralph, were laid upon the grass between the barrel and Zachary, who reclined on some hay, within sight and hearing of what might be going on.

After a few kind words with Zachary, Miss Sage remarked to Jimmer as she took possession of her appointed seat, "You thought we should prefer sitting in the open air this lovely afternoon, I see."

"I'ss," replied Jimmer; "I knowed the little lady 'ould like it."

Jimmer then squatted himself upon the grass, at about a couple of yards distance from his visitors, and at Miss Sage's request repeated his lesson. Much to Elvire's surprise he only faltered twice in doing so, and then was instantly set right by his father, who appeared very anxious that his boy should acquit himself creditably.

"Very well learned," remarked Miss Sage, approvingly. "But do you understand the meaning of the words you have been repeating?" she inquired.

"I think I does, for father told me," replied Jimmer, and then with an arch look of the eyes and strange movement of the head, he added: "but, I am sure I doesn't do 'em always; I didn't mean to be 'picking and stealing' when I was picking the sticks in the plantation. I never knowed 'twas any harm till the big boy and missey said 'twere; but I doesn't do them ere words always, that I'm sure on."

“We none of us do, Jimmer, I am afraid,” observed Miss Sage; “but the question is, do we try to? God looks at the heart, and mercifully accepts the will, when, through the weakness of our nature, we fall short in the deed. When you gathered the sticks in the plantation, without knowing it was wrong, you erred unintentionally, but if you were now to do so, after having been prohibited going there, you would be wilfully breaking the commandment you have learned, and would be picking and stealing your neighbour’s property.”

“I ain’t a-going to, though,” said Jimmer, most decidedly; “I am going to get our sticks from the park and the wood where all the villagers do. I got a rare bundle yesterday of first-rate ones, from the wood, enough for all to-day.”

“That was quite right, try and keep holy the Sabbath-day, God’s day, Jimmer,” explained Miss Sage, “and you will find the rest of your week will be happy and useful too. I wish you had clothes to go to church in, and hope you will some day, but until you have, reverence God’s day by doing nothing on it that you can possibly avoid in the working way, and listen to your father’s reading of His Holy Word. But to return to the lesson

you and Miss Elvire have been learning for this afternoon, we shall find that every duty enumerated in it can really be summed up in the first sentence, namely, 'My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me.' Anything, therefore, that we should not like another to do to us, we certainly ought not to do to them. Any unkind thought or word that would grieve us if entertained by, or uttered by, another against us, we must not think or say of them. This law is not only to restrain our actions, but the motives which actuate them; for instance, we are commanded 'to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts, for if we do, it will lead us to evil-speaking and slandering.' Can you tell me what slandering is, Jimmer?"

"Saying what isn't true of a body," replied the boy, promptly.

"Yes, saying what is not true of a person, and injuring their character by it."

"I'm afeared I speaks evil words sometimes," observed Jimmer, with great simplicity, "I just do give it the boys a good 'un, when they pelts our Neddy."

"You mean you give it them badly, Jimmer,"

remarked Miss Sage, "bad for them, and bad for you, for you make each other more angry, by calling one another wicked names."

Jimmer scratched his head, and tried to excuse himself by saying, "Our Neddy is a first-rater, and I don't like him to be pelted, that I don't."

"Of course you do not, Jimmer," replied Miss Sage, kindly. "You would be as cruel as the naughty rude boys, if you did, but the best thing you can do is to walk on and take no notice of their unkind conduct; they would soon leave off persecuting you and poor Neddy, if they saw they could not provoke you to anger. You try, Jimmer, and see if what I say is not true. Now, Elvire, tell me what is meant by the injunction, 'not to covet or desire other men's goods.'"

"Not to wish for anything that belongs to another person—is it not, Miss Sage?" she replied.

"Yes, for the desiring to possess what belongs to another, often is the first step towards theft. From wishing, persons go on to wanting, and from wanting to taking, which of course is stealing."

"I was wishing for a fustian suit of clothes, like Johnny Green's. But I doesn't want to steal 'em," observed Jimmer, confounding the desire

to have a thing like a person's, with the desire to possess that which really belonged to that person.

"There is no harm in wishing to have anything like another's, Jimmer," explained Miss Sage. "The wrong is, in coveting what is really another's. So that you may very justly wish for a nice suit of clothes, like Johnny Green's, and that wish might influence you to good, by inducing you to labour truly to get your own living, so that by industry and economy you may save up money enough to purchase what you so much wish for."

"I'll be years doing that," said Jimmer, gravely.

"Never you mind, my boy, if father leaves off the drink, he'll be able to get thee some tidy clothes," exclaimed Zachary, encouragingly, "and God helping me, I will."

"And He will help you," rejoined Miss Sage. "There is such a beautiful collect in our prayer-book, that appears so suitable to your case, Zachary, that I would advise you to use it. It is, '*O God, the strength of all them who put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because, through the weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping Thy com-*

mandments, we may please Thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'"

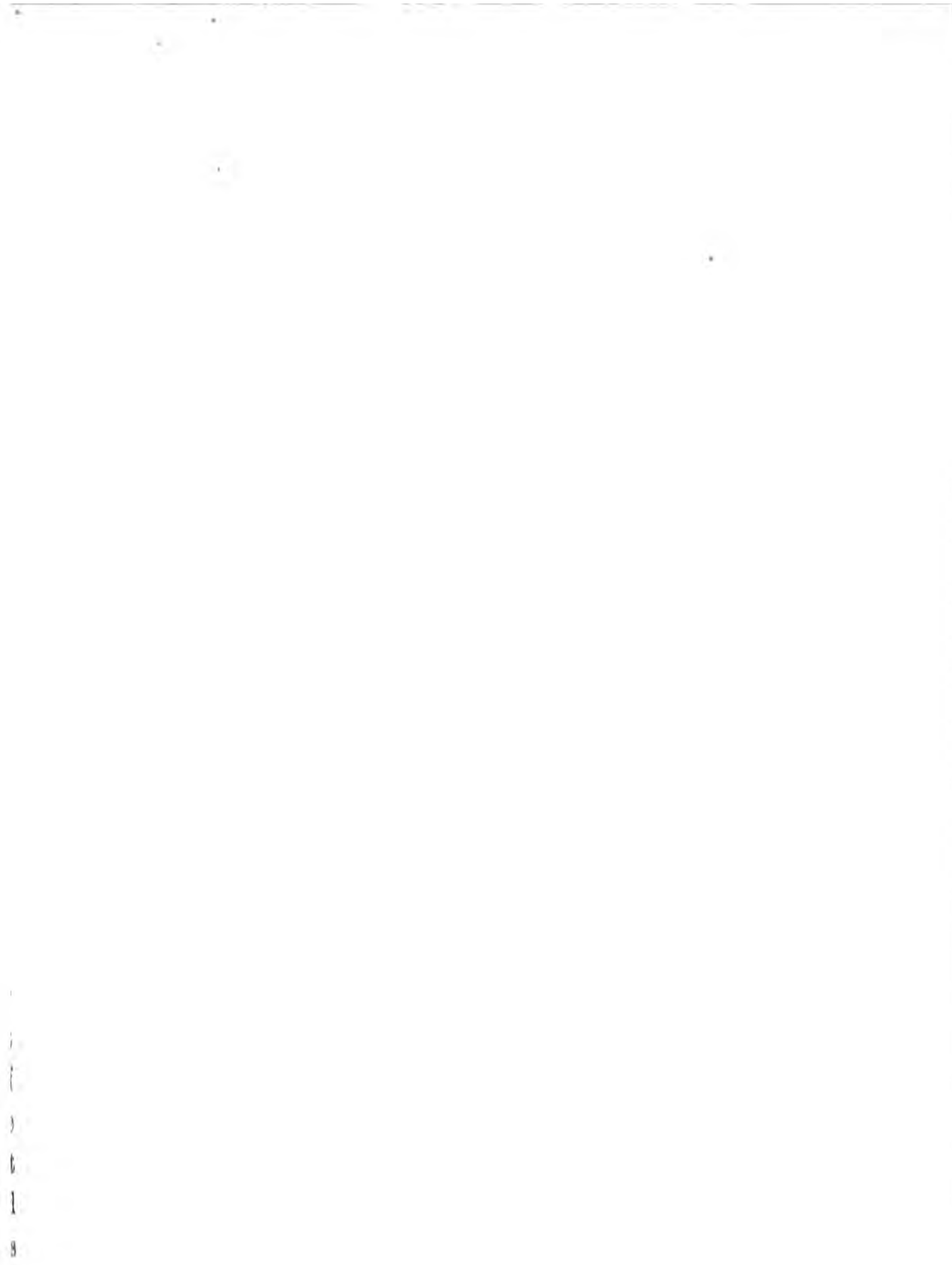
"That do just seem written for me, ma'am, for my mortal nature is weak enough, God knows. I'd read them words pretty often, if I had them."

"Then I am sure you shall, I have a large print prayer-book at home, which I will lend to you," said Miss Sage. "I would give it you, only I am afraid in your wandering mode of life, you would look upon it as an encumbrance, and get rid of it at the first town you came to."

"You just try me, ma'am," said Zachary heartily, "and see whether I will."

"I will try you, Zachary," rejoined Miss Sage, rising from her seat. "And now, my dear children," she observed, as she looked at Jimmer and Elvire, "see what you can do for your neighbours this coming week. In all your words, thoughts, and actions, endeavour to do unto all men as you would they should do unto you. You will find it works hard at first, Jimmer," she remarked, as she noticed the boy's eager anxious countenance, "but it is a rule which works well." Miss Sage and Elvire then wished Zachary good afternoon, and returned to their homes.

In the course of the night another change passed over Ralph, for the distressing wailings of the sick boy ceased, and when he woke from his heavy slumbers he remained silent and still, much to the relief of his anxious parents, though they yearned to behold the light of recognition once more shine in his eyes. But nothing seemed to attract his attention, or lead those around him to believe that he was at all conscious of what was passing in his room. The medical men looked and spoke more hopefully of his recovery, though they were very desirous that he should manifest some faint sign of returning perception, and could not pronounce him progressing as favourably mentally as bodily. "If he only smiled," observed the nearly heart-broken mother, "I should think my boy was better. But oh, that fixed, unmeaning look, it is dreadful! dreadful!" and she shuddered at what it might be the harbinger of. For a terrible fear had taken possession of both Mr and Mrs Duncombe, one that they had not hinted to each other, and yet it was never out of their minds—it was the dread that their noble boy might not regain his reason—that he might live, but be an idiot. Another day passed and still Ralph remained unconscious, taking his





“She slipped between them, and placed upon the sheet
Jimmer’s dormouse.”—Page 175.

medicines and food, but without recognising the one who gave them to him. Elvire, with all her childish loving efforts, failed to attract his notice, though she was constantly endeavouring to do so. She flitted hither and thither, noiselessly bringing into the sick-room anything she could think of that would have amused her brother in past days, but all seemingly to no purpose, until the Tuesday afternoon, when, with elated step and beaming countenance, she entered the room, and disregarding the presence of the doctors who were standing by the bedside, she slipped between them, and placed upon the sheet, close by her brother's bruised and bound-up hand, Jimmer's dormouse. The little creature, when first released from her hold, took shelter between a fold in the bed clothes, but finding it remained unmolested, after sundry wistful looks at some biscuit crumbs which Elvire was scattering about for it, crept from its hiding-place, and began picking them up. Presently as the little brown thing was busily engaged nibbling at a larger bit of biscuit, Ralph's wandering eyes were arrested and fixed upon it, and then, to the joy of all, the light of intelligence once more dawned in them, and with a faint smile, he murmured in a low but audible voice, "Mousey."

“That will do, my dear,” said one of the medical men, “take the mouse away now, and bring it by and by, or to-morrow. Your brother must not be further excited at present; Mr Mouse has done”—— but further explanation was lost in a slight confusion in the room, for Mrs Duncombe, overcome with delight, had fainted. Mr Duncombe, having whispered to poor frightened Elvire that her mamma would be better soon, dismissed her from the room, and comforted by his assurance, Elvire went in search of a safe place to bestow the dormouse in. But how came Elvire with Jimmer’s pet? In this manner—From the time Miss Sage had begged the children on the Sunday to see what they could do for their neighbours during the coming week, Jimmer had been turning over in his mind what he could do for the sick boy at The Court, and at last came to the conclusion, that if he were himself ill, nothing would give him greater pleasure than to have a pet mouse to play with. It cost him, however, a good many struggles before he could give up his favourite for a few days, even to Elvire. What if a cat should get at it, or if it should run away and be lost? or if Ralph should hurt it, or if many other ifs that suggested themselves to his mind should happen

to it? But Jimmer at length silenced them all, with the grand old commandment, "Do ye unto all men as ye would they should do unto you." He loved his mouse, and the big boy at The Court liked it. If he were the big boy he should wish to have the mouse to play with ; and at last, catching up the tiny box in which Mousey was usually domiciled, he darted off to The Court at a great pace, fearing lest he should be led to alter his mind. Jimmer had no difficulty in obtaining an audience with "the little lady," as he called her, for the little lady had talked so much about the poor boy and his father who lived at the kiln, that he was well known amongst the servants, and many were the good things sent from Court House by the housekeeper to Zachary Hibbs, through her advocacy. Having explained why he brought the mouse, "You won't let the cats get at him, will 'ee ?" petitioned Jimmer, as he deposited his favourite, box and all, in Elvire's hand.

"Oh no!" exclaimed the delighted child.

"And you won't keep him always shut up in this 'ere box," begged the lad, "nor over-feed him, nor nothing."

"No, Jimmer, I will take lots of care of him," replied Elvire, "and will put the box in a nice

cage, and find a place to hang it up where neither pussy nor anybody can hurt him."

Jimmer unfastened the cover of the box, and gently touching the pretty little creature, coiled up in a bit of hay, said—

"Good-bye, Mousey, be a good fellow, and play capital with the big boy;" then turning to Elvire, he observed, "I'll run up to-morrow at dinner hour to know how they is," and hurrying off, he left Elvire to examine his treasure at her leisure.

"We must do something for that boy," remarked Mrs Duncombe, when she had a little recovered and was able to talk about the mouse with her husband and Elvire. "He must be a noble fellow, to give up his only plaything to amuse nearly a stranger."

"He is going to be a real member of Christ, mamma," observed Elvire, who fully entered into Jimmer's motive.

Mrs Duncombe opened her eyes with surprise at her little daughter's remark, but replied quietly, "I think we must find out what he most wants, Elvire."

"Everything," rejoined Mr Duncombe, laughing, "from top to toe; does he not, Elvire?"

"I know what he wishes for," cried Elvire, with sparkling eyes.

“What?” questioned her parents.

“A suit of fustian clothes, like Johnny Green’s in the village,” replied Elvire.

Mrs Duncombe smiled a smile, which Elvire well knew meant “he shall have them,” and throwing her arms round her mother’s neck, whispered, “O mamma, thank you; won’t Jimmer be glad when he knows it!”

From that day Ralph Duncombe improved daily, and Jimmer’s mouse took frequent exercise upon his bed, much to the sick lad’s entertainment. Mousey’s box was placed in a nice close wired cage, and hung up in Ralph’s bedroom; and often in the night he could hear the little thing rattling amongst the wires as he took his nocturnal rambles.

Jimmer came, as he said he would, the following day, to inquire after his favourite and the big boy, and great was his delight when he heard of his dormouse’s success. Young as he was, he found the truth of Miss Sage’s words in endeavouring to carry out his duty towards his neighbour, when she remarked, “You will find it works hard at first, Jimmer, but it is a rule which works well.” It had indeed worked hard, but truly it had worked well.

OUR FATHER,
WHICH ART IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

THY KINGDOM COME.

THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES,

AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION ;

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

AMEN.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

“What desirest thou of God in the Lord's Prayer?”

“I desire my Lord God, our Heavenly Father, who is the Giver of all goodness, to send His grace unto me and to all people; that we may worship Him, serve Him, and obey Him as we ought to do. And I pray unto God that He will send us all things that be needful, both for our souls and bodies: and that He will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our sins; and that it will please Him to save and defend us in all dangers, ghostly and bodily; and that He will keep us from all sin and wickedness; and from our ghostly enemy and from everlasting death. And this I trust He will do of His mercy and goodness through our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore I say Amen, so be it.”

“MISS SAGE,” said Ralph, as he sat propped up with pillows upon a couch in his bedroom, listening to Elvire repeating her lesson in the Catechism about ten days or a fortnight after Mousey's introduction to his apartment, “I never thought the Lord's Prayer so beautiful before. It seems

to take everything in that we can want or ought to wish for."

"Yes, it comprehends all a Christian's requirements, whether temporally or spiritually, Ralph," replied Miss Sage.

"What does 'ghostly' mean?" inquired Elvire. "I thought there were no such things as ghosts, Miss Sage."

"No more there are, not in the sense you mean, Elvire," answered the lady. "Supposed supernatural appearances are produced by an overwrought imagination or diseased brain. But 'ghostly,' as used in your lesson, means spiritual adversaries, of whom Satan is the chief. And notice, dear child, how our ghostly enemy forms the connecting-link between 'sin and wickedness' and 'everlasting death.' Satan is the instigator to sin, and sin unrepented of ends in eternal death; therefore we pray God 'to keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death,' or in the words of the Lord's Prayer we say, 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"

"O Miss Sage, it does so grieve me to think Jimmer is going away. I thought him a bad boy when I first saw him, but now I feel, in compari-

son with what I know, and the privileges I possess, he is a far better one than I am. I wish he had been going to stay at Mendip. I am afraid he will forget the good you have been teaching him the last few weeks, and I cannot bear to think that kind little Jimmer should turn out a wicked man. I wish he could have remained here." And Ralph enforced his wish with a deep sigh, as he wearily shifted his position on the pillows.

"You have forgotten the first part of our lesson already, Ralph," remarked Miss Sage, cheerfully.

"No—have I?" questioned the sick lad.

"Yes," she replied. "For do we not pray God our Heavenly Father to send His grace not only to ourselves, but to all people, that we may worship Him, serve and obey Him, as we ought to do? Now every time you use this petition, thinking of Jimmer, you ask God to keep and teach him. God knows, far better than we do, what is best for His little ones; and I cannot help believing this poor boy is one of them, and our Saviour says of such that 'none shall pluck them out of My hand.'*" So you see Jimmer is safe, Ralph."

"I hope so," observed Ralph, "but I have

* John x. 28.

been planning for several days what I would do for him when I got about, for I shall not be able to go back to Winchester until after Christmas, and it seems so hard to be disappointed in all my plans."

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven, or, I pray unto God that He will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies," gravely repeated Miss Sage. "Perhaps it is better for you to be disappointed. God's plans are the right ones, and therefore the best ones," she gently remarked.

"Of course they are—but oh, I forgot—and I did so want to help Jimmer, and perhaps I shall never see him again," said Ralph, sadly.

"Yes, but you will!" exclaimed Elvire, "and perhaps to-day, if not to-morrow."

"Shall I?" cried Ralph, brightening up.

"Yes," replied Miss Sage, who had heard from Elvire that Jimmer was to be allowed to see her brother, as soon as he was strong enough to bear the excitement. "He is not to leave without saying good-bye to you. And do you know he has such a capital memory, that he is not likely to forget what he learns, and his father takes great trouble in teaching him."

"I am so glad," said Ralph, "and I will try

and believe that God will save and defend him in all dangers. Can he say the Lord's Prayer yet, Miss Sage?"

"Yes, and the explanation which Elvire has just learned too," was the satisfactory answer.

"Then I will try and not fret any more—for I could not help it, when I heard the poor little fellow was going away. I wish I had not spent all my pocket money, for I should like to have given him some shoes and a jacket and trousers.—What are you smiling at?" inquired Ralph, noticing Elvire's beaming face.

But Elvire did not answer; and Miss Sage having given him a little jelly, for he was still unable to feed himself, bade him keep quiet if he wished to see Jimmer that day.

In the course of the afternoon, Jimmer made his appearance at The Court, clad in a new suit of fustian, the very counterpart of Johnny Green's, procured for him by Mrs Hunt the gardener's wife according to Mrs Duncombe's instructions; and Jimmer, who had never possessed a complete suit of clothes before, could scarcely tell what to do for joy. Ralph being considered well enough to see him, Elvire was commissioned to take him up to her brother's room, a commission which she

very readily accepted, and tripping lightly before him, she gleefully led the way, whilst Jimmer, astonished beyond measure at the grandeur of the establishment, crept slowly after her, half afraid to place his feet on the polished marble flooring, or soft carpeting. He had never been in a gentleman's house before, and the elegancies of Court House were overpowering to his unsophisticated eyes. But when he entered Ralph's bedroom, and beheld the late fine healthy boy propped up with pillows, and a face as white as the linen of the pillows, with one arm in a sling and the other bound up and plastered, forgetting all the grandeur around, Jimmer sprang forward towards the couch, crying, "O big boy, I am sorry for ye, that I am!" and his dark eyes glistened with tears.

"Thank you, Jimmer, I know you are," replied Ralph, "and thank you very much for your dear little mouse, it was so kind of you to lend him to me."

"Ain't he a pretty little feller?" said Jimmer, recovering his usual equanimity.

"Yes, that he is. See where I keep him, safe enough from cats, is it not?" and Ralph indicated Mousey's whereabouts, by turning his head in the direction of the cage, which was suspended by a

cord from the curtain pole of the window. Elvire let the cage down, and carrying it to Ralph, he and Jimmer were soon eagerly inspecting Mousey's box, wherein he was snugly curled.

"You must have him in a day or two," observed Ralph, with a little sigh; "you must take him with you when you go."

"I will let you have him until we comes again next summer if you likes," said Jimmer, manfully.

"No, no, Jimmer. You have only your mouse; I have so many beautiful things that it would not be right of me to deprive you of your pet. But when will you be going from Mendip?"

"One day next week, father says. He's going to get some pots and pans Market-day, and then we'se going up country wi' 'em. Somehow I'd rather bide where we is; only the work's all over here, and father's leg is just well, and he likes being a pedlar and tramping it, he do. I'd a deal sooner stay at Mendip, if father would."

"Sit down, Jimmer, just here, close to me," said Ralph, turning towards a chair by the side of his couch. "I want to talk to you before you go. You know we may never meet again."

Jimmer nodded his head as if fully aware that such might be the case, and seated himself on one

corner of the chair, seemingly afraid of injuring it should he take further possession.

“Jimmer,” said Ralph, earnestly, “I was a proud, haughty boy when I first saw you, and despised you because you were poor and ignorant. And God has shown me what a weak creature I am, and made me to be beholden to a poor little boy like you for amusement, and it appears to me as if His love were more in your heart than mine. And I am afraid for myself, and afraid for you too, lest we both should forget God when we are separated. I have thought if we were both at Mendip, I should never forget your kindness, and God’s love in sending you here, and you would be able to go to school and be taught what is good and right. But I find my wishes are not to be, and you are to go away, I do not know where. O Jimmer! you will try and be a good man. I am going to, will not you?”

“I’ss,” responded Jimmer; “I’m going to be an inheritor.”

“A what?” questioned Ralph, not catching at his meaning.

“An inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” replied the boy, seriously. “The lady says I’m bought with Christ’s blood for heaven, and I ain’t

a-going to let Him buy me, and run away from Him. No, I'm going to wait patient till He sends the angels for me. I guess I'll be glad then." And Jimmer's dark eyes sparkled and his cheeks flushed in anticipation of the time.

"But you may have to wait long, Jimmer," suggested Ralph.

"I'ss, but He'll be sure to send some day, the lady says. P'raps not till I'm up sixty or seventy; but the lady"——

"Miss Sage," interposed Ralph.

"The big lady which comes with the little lady."

"With me?" cried Elvire.

"I'ss. She says, we must be always ready, because nobody knows when He will send. She showed me the little graves as well as the large graves in the churchyard, she did, and said, Jesus had all ages around His throne. And I thought of our Jenny then, and how He sent soon for her."

"I hope He won't send soon for you, Jimmer," observed Elvire; "I want you to be a good man, and work for papa, and live in the kiln when he has made a pretty cottage of it."

"But will papa do that?" inquired Ralph, quickly.

"Yes, if Zachary and Jimmer would but stay,"

replied Elvire, "and mamma would put furniture into the cottage. Could not you coax your father to stay a bit?" pleaded the child, earnestly.

But Jimmer shook his head, and prematurely wise, said, "'T'wont do, little lady, father 'ould get at the drink again mayhaps. No, we must tramp it, till he 's quite got over the hanker after it."

"But you will forget what you have learned, Jimmer."

"Perhaps," remarked Ralph, "you could get your father to try and stay here, and see if he could not keep from it."

"I'll never forget," replied the lad. "But I know we'd best go, father says so. Father knows best. He's a good father, he is, specially now he's running from the drink."

Ralph and Elvire ceased to press the point, when they discovered that Jimmer fully coincided with his father, though they were sorry enough for him. They had not the faintest idea that the constant excitement of a wandering mode of life, would be the greatest assistance to Zachary, in breaking off from his besetting sin."

"I'd like well to stay," continued Jimmer, casting an admiring glance at his new clothes. "I never had no new clothes afore."

“Who gave them you?” inquired Ralph, who had not failed to notice Jimmer’s improved habiliments, and had been secretly wondering how he came by them.

“Mamma,” whispered Elvire. “She asked Mrs Hunt to get them like Johnny Green’s for Jimmer.”

Ralph smiled a glad smile, as he observed to Jimmer, “Then you will not forget any of us, Jimmer, if you go away; and you will ask God to bless us, and we will ask Him to bless you, and if we do not meet on earth again, to let us meet in heaven. I cannot shake hands, for you see my right hand is so tender that everything seems to hurt it when it is touched, and my left is nothing to speak of, whilst my arm is in a sling. You will not think I am proud, because I do not shake hands with you?”

“No,” replied Jimmer, rising from the chair, upon which he had been sitting anything but at ease. “I doesn’t never care for shaking hands. I like people to speak out and out, better.”

Just then Mrs Duncombe entered the room, and Jimmer, losing all his freedom of speech and manner in her presence, after sundry bows and touchings of the forehead, gladly followed Elvire

down-stairs into the hall, where they found the housekeeper waiting for them, with a basket of odds and ends for Jimmer's father.

In a few days the necessary purchases and arrangements for starting had been made by Zachary Hibbs, and upon Miss Sage and Elvire's taking the kiln in their Tuesday evening walk, they found the little cart outside the building, and Zachary and Jimmer busily engaged packing their goods and chattels into it.

"We shall go to-morrow, ma'am, after I have been down to Farmer Hayte's, and done a job for him," said Zachary, in answer to Miss Sage's inquiry as to when they proposed leaving. "But we'll be coming back here again some day, please God, ma'am," he added. "And Jimmer shall go to the night schools you told of in the towns, when we bides in 'em. We'll never forget none of your kindness, ma'am, nor the little lady's, nor the squire's, nor nobody's at Mendip. Jimmer's close upon his eleventh year, ma'am, so he's old enough to remember you all, ain't you, my lad?"

But Jimmer was not to be seen, for the boy, with bursting heart, had darted off and hidden himself when his father alluded to the coming parting. He was a manly little fellow, and

could not bear that any one should see him cry, and yet his heart was too full to control his emotions, and keep back the tears which would rush to his eyes at the thought of going away. So, hidden in the kiln, he heard all Miss Sage and Elvire said, and sobbed aloud, unobserved.

“Tell him never to forget God is his heavenly Father, and as such He will give him all that is good for him here, and bring him to be with Him for ever hereafter,” said Miss Sage, as, taking Elvire’s hand, she began to descend the hill.

“I will, ma’am, and I’ll try and not forget it myself,” said Zachary, as he watched his friends until out of sight. “Mayhap the good Lord will not cast me off, though I’ve been a rebellious one, this many a year.”

“Pots O! pans O! d’ye want any pots or pans O!” sang Jimmer, as he tramped in front of Neddy and the cart the next morning. He sang his call loud and lustily, as if to keep his courage up upon leaving Mendip, and the sound, borne on the soft, calm autumn air, floated in at the open window of Ralph’s bedroom, and arrested his and Elvire’s attention.

“Did you hear that?” exclaimed Ralph, shifting his position on the couch, to get a peep at

the main road, which was here and there visible between the trees. "I am sure I heard some one crying 'pots and pans,' it must be Jimmer. O Miss Sage, I wish I could see him once more."

Miss Sage kindly raised Ralph a little, that he might get a better view of the distant road.

"I see them," cried Elvire; "look Ralph, just between the ash and elm trees, there, don't you see them? Jimmer is in front, and Zachary behind, and Neddy is taking it very leisurely with the cart. Poor Jimmer, I wonder whether we shall ever see him again in Mendip."

In a few minutes the little cavalcade had passed out of sight of the eager watchers at The Court, and Ralph, lying wearily back on his pillows, observed: "I do hope Jimmer will be kept from bad company, Miss Sage, and grow up a good man. I do like him so much. I hope God will preserve him, and bring him back to Mendip, —do not you, Miss Sage?"

"Yes," replied Miss Sage. "I reiterate the words of our beautiful Catechism, 'And this I trust He will do of His mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, I say, Amen! so be it.'"

"Amen! Amen!" responded Ralph and Elvire together, fervently. "So be it. Amen."

CHAPTER XII.

SACRAMENTS.

“How many Sacraments hath Christ ordained in His Church ?

“Two only as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of our Lord.

“What meanest thou by this word Sacrament ?

“I mean an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

“How many parts are there in a Sacrament ?

“Two, the outward visible sign ; and the inward spiritual grace.”

“I THINK, dear Miss Sage, that you once said the word sacrament signified any sacred or holy thing or action ; and originally was applied to the oath of fidelity taken by soldiers to their general,” observed Elvire Duncombe, one evening between four and five years after the occurrences in our last chapter.

“Yes, dear, so I did, but what has led you to

think of our past conversation this evening ?” questioned Miss Sage.

“Because Mr Brown called on mamma this afternoon, and said there would be a confirmation at Mendip in a few weeks, and he asked her if she would not wish me to become a candidate for it.”

“And your mamma ?”

“Referred him to me, Miss Sage.”

“And you ?”

“Well, I scarcely knew what to say, I was so taken by surprise ; and that dear kind Mr Brown saw, and so he begged me to think the matter prayerfully over, and he would call to hear my decision in a few days. I am very young, Miss Sage,” remarked Elvire, thoughtfully, “and it is such an important step to take——and”—— here Elvire’s language and courage failed her.

“And what, my darling ?” questioned Miss Sage, glancing at the fair young girl who, with bent head and soft dreamy eyes, seemed to be holding secret communion with her inmost soul.

“Do not you desire to live to God ?”

“Oh yes,” she replied, without raising her eyes. “But I am so young, so very young, to be confirmed.”

“I do not think so,” remarked Miss Sage, encouragingly.

“But I am scarcely fifteen, Miss Sage.”

“And what age would you be, before you consider yourself old enough to be given to God, Elvire?”

“Miss Sage! what do you mean?” inquired Elvire, raising her eyes, and gazing with an expression of surprise at her governess. “We can give our hearts to God at any age, can we not?”

“Yes, and having done so, should we not take the first fitting opportunity of publicly acknowledging our allegiance to Him?”

“I see now what you mean,” replied Elvire, her face lighting up with a bright smile. “You think that this confirmation is the first proper opportunity that has presented itself for my doing so?”

“Just so, my dear. For many, I should consider fourteen or fifteen years of age too young to be confirmed, but not in your case. You are naturally thoughtful, and have for years been endeavouring to live as a child of God should do.”

“It has been but a poor endeavour, Sagey dear.”

“But it has been an endeavour, has it not?”

“Yes, oh yes. From the time Ralph was

spared to us, I have never had but the one desire—to live to God.”

“Then, my dear, with that desire actuating your heart and life, the publicly avowing your sentiments will be a help to you on your heavenward path; for you will be united more closely with God’s children, and share with them the privilege of holy communion and the fellowship of saints.”

“There is one thing that rather puzzled me, Miss Sage, perhaps I have overlooked it though. I cannot find the word Sacrament in the Bible, and yet we say the Sacraments are of Christ’s own appointment.”

“And so they are, my dear. But you will not nevertheless find the word Sacrament in Holy Writ, because the term was applied to the ordinance of Baptism and the Supper of our Lord after the canon of Scripture was completed. Originally the word Sacrament was used in the Western Church by the early writers to express any holy thing that was figurative, and had a signification further than appeared at first sight. But after a time the word was used in a more limited manner, until it became strictly a religious term, denoting a perpetual obligation instituted by Christ him-

self, where, by an outward visible sign, an inward spiritual grace might be conveyed."

"What do you mean by the canon of Scripture, Miss Sage?"

"Those books that have Divine authority as being inspired, and containing a revelation from God, and are received by Christians for religious use in public worship, and as a rule of life. The word canon is a Greek one (*kanōn*), denoting a straight rod made of a reed, or (*kanna*), cane, used as a measure or rule."

"I hear Ralph's footstep; how I wish he would make up his mind to be confirmed. Perhaps he will when he hears I am going to be. I do hope he will."

"Who may the *he* be, you are hoping about?" laughingly inquired Ralph, as the last part of his sister's remark fell upon his ear, upon entering the room where she and Miss Sage were.

"Why you, Ralphy dear;" replied Elvire, without hesitation.

"And what are the hopes my little sister appears so desirous of realising in her humble servant and brother?" asked Ralph, making a profound bow.

"Now, Ralphy, you must not make fun," cried

Elvire, springing up from her seat, and laying her hand caressingly on her brother's arm. "What Miss Sage and I have been talking about, is far too important a matter to be thought or spoken lightly of. I am thinking of becoming a candidate for confirmation. And oh! Ralphy, dear, dear Ralphy! I do so want you to become one also."

A crimson flush rose upon Ralph's cheeks, but he looked down lovingly upon the sweet pleading face raised towards his own, and passing his arm tenderly around Elvire, he whispered, "That requires two thoughts, sister mine."

"Yes, yes, a hundred, if you like; only let it be so, Ralphy," she exclaimed.

"Miss Sage, what do you think of a long, lanky fellow like I am, going in for confirmation?" inquired Ralph, half in jest, half in earnest.

"I do not expect you will get smaller by waiting," replied Miss Sage, with a smile.

"Well no, but perhaps I shall get better or fitter," he rejoined.

"If you wait till you are fitter, you may never come at all," observed Miss Sage, gravely.

"Two against one, that's not fair," said Ralph. "It is not fair play, Miss Sage."

"Certainly, there ought to be but one opinion

between us, Ralph, and that no one knows better than yourself. Your own heart tells you we are right in wishing you to be confirmed, and the longer you defer being so, the more impediments are likely to arise in your mind and way, to prevent your taking that important step in life."

"It is no use to argue with you, Miss Sage," observed Ralph, lightly. "You are as difficult to contend with as our little coaxing Elvire here, who manages in the most innocent manner possible to get her own way in most things."

"Is it a bad way, Ralph?" inquired Elvire, gently.

"I am not going to discuss that point, Miss Elvire," replied her brother, kissing her. "You know very well, that with all, from Cyril up to papa, Elvire's wish is law."

"Now, Ralph, be quiet," said Elvire, laying her hand upon his lips. "I won't have you say that."

"Well, then, we will drop the subject, pet. By the by, Miss Sage, I wish we could hear somewhat of poor Jimmer. It was most unfortunate that we should have been away each time he and his father came to Mendip."

"Yes, was it not?" responded Elvire, drawing Ralph down by her side on a couch at the window.

"Mr Brown was much pleased with him," re-

marked Miss Sage, "and so was I, the little I saw of him ; but you know it was but very little time last summer that I could spare to any one, my precious mother claiming all my thoughts and time just then. I had hoped he would have come this summer to Mendip ; Zachary proposed doing so, I know."

"I wish he had, and then perhaps we could have all been confirmed together. That would have been pleasant. Would it not?" observed Elvire.

"Yes, I should have liked that," said Ralph. "I wish I was more like Jimmer, I should not hesitate a moment then about being confirmed."

"Why do you wish to be like Jimmer?" inquired Miss Sage.

"Because, I heard Mr Brown tell my father that he had never met with a lad with such pure simple faith, and such a yearning desire to please God."

"Little Jimmer, poor little Jimmer, has found that God not only hears, but comes round his way," remarked Elvire, her memory travelling back to their first meeting and conversation.

"He cannot be called little now, Elvire, for he was a tall, fine lad, when I saw him last summer, and doubtless he is considerably grown by this time," said Miss Sage.

“ I feel as if he would be always little Jimmer to me,” rejoined Elvire. “ I always picture him in the old soldier’s coat, with his rags waving in the wind, as he ran. I wonder what he and his father will say when they find we have put a door and window to the kiln, and had a fire-place and chimney made in the old place. How I do wish they would come and settle down at Mendip. Papa says though the kiln is a round building, it could be turned into a very respectable abode, and he would gladly go to the expense of doing it if the Hibbs would make up their minds to remain here. But, Ralph, we are forgetting about the confirmation ; do think about it ; it would make me so happy to feel we were both confirmed the same day. You know if you had returned to Winchester, you would probably have been so a couple of years ago.”

“ If I *had* gone back,” repeated Ralph, with a shade of regret in his tone of voice. “ Well, well, we will not talk about ifs. I did not—that unfortunate accident. But there, it is no good to refer to the past—is it, Miss Sage ? ” but on turning to hear her reply, Ralph and Elvire discovered that she had quietly left the room.

“ I like to think of the past,” remarked Elvire, lovingly, “ not—not the dreadful past when you

fell," she explained, "but when God heard our prayers, and gave you back to us, and you got better little by little. O Ralphy! I have loved God more since your illness than I ever did before."

"Elvire," said Ralph, in a low, sad, earnest voice, "I will tell you just how it is with me. I want to love God, but I am not sure that He loves me—and I am afraid of Him."

"We love Him because He first loved us," whispered Elvire, clinging to her brother.

"Yes, I know the words, but I want to be sure in my heart," replied Ralph. "If I could be but sure that I was loved of God, how gladly would I give myself entirely to His service."

"Then give yourself, Ralphy, and see if He will not accept the dedication, and manifest His approval, by shedding a knowledge of Himself in your heart."

Ralph kissed the gentle girl, as he rose from the couch, and with, "I will think about it, Elvire," left the room.

"He is so good and kind—I wonder what makes him afraid of God," thought Elvire, left to her own meditations. "Everybody says Ralph is a youth of a thousand, and he is all beautiful to me. Dear, dear Ralphy!"

He was indeed, as Elvire said, "good and kind," but his long, long illness, for it had been a very protracted one, extending over many months, had given a melancholy tone to his religious sentiments, and from an earnest desire to be acceptable in the sight of God, Ralph, like numberless others, kept looking into himself for a worthiness to commend him to God's notice, instead of looking out of self, and claiming the worthiness of the Son of God, as his all-sufficient plea for acceptance with the Father. Ralph was early being made to feel that, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified."

"Well, dear," observed Miss Sage, re-entering the room with her bonnet on, "I slipped away just now, thinking that you and Ralph would come to understand each other better without me on the confirmation topic. Did you?"

"He has promised to think of it, Miss Sage," replied Elvire, "and whatever Ralphy promises, he is sure, if practicable, to perform."

"He is a noble fellow," remarked Miss Sage, "would that he could make up his mind to come boldly forwards and acknowledge himself on God's side. But I am just returning home, dear, have you anything you wish to ask me before I do so?"

"Oh lots, Sagey dear," cried Elvire, springing

up, "but I will reserve my many questions until another time, and only beg you to further explain this evening the meaning of the word Sacrament, in the sense in which it is now used. I will walk through the shrubbery with you, if you like, my hat is in the hall!"

Having possessed herself of her hat, Elvire joined Miss Sage on the lawn, and the two proceeded to the shrubbery, Miss Sage observing, "In a Sacrament, dear, there must be an outward visible sign, or some sensible and bodily thing or action, which has a meaning, apart from the sign itself, denoting that we expect some spiritual favour to be freely bestowed upon us from God himself, by which our souls will be strengthened and made better. I believe, if my memory serves me truly, that it is Archbishop Secker who writes thus of Sacraments: 'A Sacrament is not only a sign, or representation of some heavenly favour, and a means whereby we receive it, but also "a pledge to assure us thereof."' Not that anything can give us greater assurance, in point of reason, of any blessing from God, than His bare promise can do, but that such observances appointed in token of His promises, affect our imaginations with a stronger sense of them, and make a deeper and

more lasting, and therefore more useful, impression on our minds. You know in renewing of covenants, or entering into them, it has been from the earliest period the custom to use representations as well as words ; and we are, therefore, not to be surprised, but grateful, that God, in condescension to our nature and the universal practice of nations, should have appointed solemn outward performances in renewing His covenant with man. But we shall have further opportunities for discussing this subject, when we take the Sacraments apart for our consideration. Not but I often feel, Elvire, that the less we talk about them the better—they are blessings wrapped in mystery, and as such they must ever remain. The more we try to explain their hidden meaning, the further we wander in a labyrinth of obscurity, and for myself, I gladly turn aside from their contemplation, and rest in the simple but divine command, ‘ *Do this,*’ assured that in obeying my Lord and Master’s charge, He will accept my obedience and grant me His blessing.”

Miss Sage, having reached the gate at the end of the plantation, bade her pupil an affectionate “good-night,” and Elvire thoughtfully retraced her steps to The Court.

CHAPTER XIII.

BAPTISM.

“What is the outward visible sign or form in Baptism ?

“Water ; wherein the person is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“What is the inward spiritual grace ?

“A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness ; for being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.

“What is required of persons to be baptized ?

“Repentance, whereby they forsake sin ; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.

“Why, then, are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them ?

“Because they promise them both by their sureties ; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.”

“I HAVE been reading my Catechism this morning, Miss Sage,” observed Elvire, as the governess took her seat at the school-room table the follow-

ing day ; “ and I have also been comparing the different clauses in the latter part of it with Scripture, but I cannot find one verse in the New Testament wherein infant baptism is expressly mentioned.”

“ No, you will not ; and yet we have not the least doubt that it was practised from the earliest period of Christianity. We read in the Acts of the Apostles of whole households being admitted by baptism into the Christian Church, and we cannot for one moment suppose that such households uniformly consisted of adults.”

“ The chief obstacle, I think, to infant baptism, Miss Sage, would be the fact that repentance is required of those who participate in the rite. Now a baby cannot repent of what it is incapable of understanding, because it knows not good from evil.”

“ Of course it cannot, my dear, but the Church meets that difficulty as you know by sureties, who pledge themselves that the babe offered to God in baptism shall be duly instructed in those things necessary to its soul’s salvation ; so that when it has arrived at an age to judge for itself, it will see that what its sureties have promised on its behalf is right and good, and will

have no hesitation in renewing the covenant for itself. Such ought to be the case, my dear, but, alas! sureties now a-days are very remiss, and parents are very tenacious about having their children's minds *tampered with*, as they frequently term it, and so too often little ones grow up without the slightest idea that the vows of the Lord are upon them, and know nothing of the solemn obligations they are under."

"The use of water is symbolical—is it not, Miss Sage?" inquired Elvire.

"Yes; from its cleansing and life-giving properties water has always been considered a type of the Holy Spirit; therefore in baptism it is used to signify that, as the body is washed and invigorated by water, so the soul is cleansed and strengthened by the influences and operations of the Holy Ghost."

"I am very glad I have determined to become a candidate for confirmation, Miss Sage; it appears now so perfectly clear, that it is not only my duty but my privilege. I do hope Ralph will be induced also. By the by, Miss Sage, please read this note before we begin lessons, papa received it by this morning's post. It is from Zachary Hibbs," and Elvire passed to Miss

Sage an extraordinary-looking, queerly-folded letter, directed—

“To his Worshipful Honour
SQUIRE DUNCOMBE,
At The Court,
Mendip Village.”

It ran thus :—

“HONOURED SIR,—This comes to say that me and my Jimmer is coming to Mendip as fast as I can bring him. He’s been in the Hospital very bad this long time, and the doctors do say the country will do him a power o’ good, so we be coming to the old place, please God—if so be, you’ll let us go there. Hoping yer honour’s honour is well, and the little lady, and madam, and the young gennelman,—I remains,

“Your obedient humble servant to command,
“ZACHARIAS HIBBS.”

“What do you think of it? I hope poor Jimmer is not seriously ill.”

“I hope not, my dear, but what his father says looks bad; I fear the lad has outgrown his strength. Don’t you remember, Elvire, when they were last at Mendip, I told you how much

we were struck with the change in his appearance ; from a sturdy, robust boy, he seemed suddenly to have become a tall, delicate youth."

" Oh yes, Sagey dear, I recollect ; and mamma said she was sure, without a great deal of care, he would go into a consumption. I do wish Zachary had not taken him away again ; papa has so often offered to do up the kiln for them to live in, and also to find work for them on our grounds ; but nothing ever seems to go down with Zachary but tramping the country and selling pots and pans."

" I believe you are right, but there has been a good motive at the bottom of this strange fancy."

" What was that, Miss Sage ?" inquired Elvire.

" Why, I believe poor Zachary in his time has been a free drinker, and that he feels a life of change and wandering conduces better than anything else to keep him from his old besetting sin ; indeed, he has told us as much."

" Yes, he has, and I dare say he finds it easier to resist temptation when moving about than when stationed on one spot—don't you think so, Sagey ?"

" I not only think so, my dear, but feel quite convinced ; I won't say it is so still, for some long

time has elapsed since he gave up his evil habit, —a period sufficiently long, I should say, to have weaned him entirely from it.”

“In which case, perhaps he will now consent to let poor Jimmer remain here, Sagey ; do you think he will ?” asked Elvire, anxiously.

“I should not be surprised ; at any rate, we must all try what we can do to persuade him.”

“I wonder when he ’ll come.”

“Wonder when who ’ll come, Elvire ?” asked Ralph, who at that moment appeared at the school-room door. “You and Miss Sage always seem so deeply interested in your subject of conversation whenever one pops in unexpectedly.”

“You ’ll be interested I expect, too, Ralph, when I tell you what our present subject is,” replied Elvire.

“And what may the all-engrossing topic be, Miss Mystical ? may I presume to ask to be enlightened ?”

“That I am sure you may,” said Miss Sage, smiling good-temperedly at the fine youth before her ; “in fact, Ralph, we shall want you in our confidence, as I think your help will be needed.”

“My help needed, Miss Sage ; why, now *you* are getting as mysterious as Elvire ; I declare

between the two I feel quite in a maze, as bad as I did the first time I penetrated the labyrinth in Hampton Court Gardens ; it was up and down, in and out, and I was as far from finding the clue to the right way after I had wandered an hour as I was when I started ; and so it is with you two ladies—if a fellow wants to be puzzled, let him, I say, come to Miss Sage, and to her pupil, Miss Elvire Duncombe.”

So saying, Ralph made a profound obeisance to the two ladies, who laughed heartily at his speech, then proceeded to announce the news they had received of Zachary and poor Jimmer. Ralph read the strange note penned by the lad’s father, and listened to their proposed intention of getting the kiln at once fitted up for their reception, and also consented to their desire that he should join in persuading the wanderers to pass the remainder of their days in that spot.

“I should not have been so inclined to joke, had I known there was bad news of poor old Jimmer,” Ralph presently said, in a thoughtful and feeling tone. “Somehow I have quite taken to him ever since that accident of mine, when he showed such a power of self-denial, and such a desire to do his duty towards his neighbour. You

remember, Elvire, his bringing up his dormouse—Peter, as we called him?”

“Of course I remember it, Ralph, and what a struggle it was with him.”

“Yes, between right and wrong,” interrupted Miss Sage, “but right gained the victory.”

“And I expect gave poor Jimmer more real pleasure than if he had kept his pet for his own amusement.”

“No doubt of that, my dear,” returned Miss Sage; “it is always more blessed to give than to receive, or, in this case, we must say, than to keep.”

“Poor fellow, it was very good of him!” exclaimed Ralph; “first, to lend his little favourite to me, and then to give it up, out and out. I tell you what, Miss Sage, it was a telling lesson to me, and one I never have forgotten, and never shall forget; from that day, I have felt the pedlar’s son was an example to the heir at Court House.”

“We won’t say that exactly, Ralph,” said Miss Sage, admiringly; “though I must agree with you, that Jimmer has turned out a noble-minded fellow; one quite worthy of being held up as a pattern to many a well-bred, high-born youth.”

“I tell you, Sagey dear, one thing that will be

nice in having Jimmer home just at this moment, we shall all be able to be confirmed together."

"All!" exclaimed Ralph, "whom do you mean by all, Elvire?"

"Why you, Ralph, Jimmer, and myself."

"Who told you that I intended becoming a candidate? I have not said so to any one."

"I know you have not, Ralph; but I could not help believing you would be confirmed with me."

"That's rather cool of you, I must say, Miss Elvire; what do you say, Miss Sage?"

"I must plead guilty to thinking the same, and even to encouraging Elvire to hope that you would so determine, Ralph, when you thought the matter over deliberately, and with prayerful meditation."

"Beaten and conquered, I declare," cried Ralph, smiling; "it is impossible to get over you two, whichever way one pulls, the other is sure to follow."

"Then you do mean to be confirmed, Ralph dear, don't you?" said Elvire, coaxingly, and laying her hand on her brother's arm.

"Yes, sister mine, I do mean it; at least it is my intention to offer myself as a candidate."

“Oh! I am so glad, Ralph, it will make us all so happy; and now I expect we shall get Jimmer too.”

“If he is well enough, poor fellow,” suggested Miss Sage.

“Oh! I hope he will be; we must strengthen him up, and get him well as fast as we can,” said Elvire; “Mendip air always agrees with him, so I dare say he will soon be pretty well again.”

“I hope so, I’m sure, my dear, but we shall have to be careful at first, I expect; in all probability he will require rest and quiet, and possibly the excitement of preparation for confirmation might be too much for him in his present state. I fancy, from his father’s note, we shall find him very weak.”

“I do not see that we can settle anything about Jimmer till he has made his appearance,” wisely remarked Ralph. “We had better for the present think of ourselves, and as I came here purposely to have a talk with my counsellor and friend, Miss Sage, I vote that we now turn to business.”

“I think you are right, Ralph,” replied the governess; “and now tell me what you would ask or say—I am at your service.”

Ralph remained silent for a moment or two, then replied : " To be candid with you, Miss Sage, I must own that directly I find myself in the presence of my female mentor, I feel puzzled and perplexed, and scarcely know what I would say or ask, though whilst on my way from a ramble in the fields my mind seemed full of busy thoughts."

" I suppose your determination to become a candidate for confirmation originated them ?" suggested Miss Sage.

" Exactly so ; no sooner did I make up my mind to join in the solemn rite with Elvire, than question upon question arose as to whether I rightly understood the nature of the ceremony, and the vows I should then take upon myself. Altogether I began to wonder whether it is not, after all, too serious an affair for such as I am."

" Oh, don't talk so, Ralph dear," interrupted Elvire.

" No, indeed, you must not, Ralph," said Miss Sage, " though I would rather have you feel as you do, than see you, as I fear many do, rush as it were into the rite merely with an outward preparation, but with no inward reflection, no sense of the religious solemn obligation those who are confirmed then take upon themselves."

“It is a very serious matter, Miss Sage,” remarked Ralph, leaning his head on his hand and looking very thoughtful.

“Undoubtedly it is, Ralph; still that is no reason why you should hesitate as to what you ought to do.”

“You mean there ought to be no hesitation on my part whether to be confirmed or not.”

“Exactly; you must not halt between two opinions. If the Lord be Lord, serve Him; if Baal, then serve him; you cannot serve God and mammon, Ralph.”

“I know it, Miss Sage, and it is this that makes me fear and hesitate lest, after solemnly promising to renounce the devil and all his works, and the pomps and vanity of the world, I should still cling to some, and be led away by others.”

“The task will not be so difficult as you imagine, Ralph, if you seek for help where alone it can be found; you will find, too, that the paths of righteousness are pleasantness and peace. With all the painting, and gilding, and alluring exterior worldly pleasures possess, they invariably turn out hollow and unlasting, and afford no real satisfaction; indeed, as the pretty little song tells

us, we find every day that 'all that is earthly fadeth away : ' whereas the joys and pleasures attendant on a righteous and holy life, are sure to bring the peace that passeth all understanding ; a peace that endureth for ever, and does not fail us in the last hour, when all earthly comforts vanish away as smoke before the wind."

"Whenever I am with you, Miss Sage, you always make me feel that a religious life is the happiest of all lives," said Ralph.

"Can there be any doubt about it, Ralph? Most decidedly *I* should say none, and therefore there can be no doubt as to what your right course is."

"I have quite determined now, Miss Sage, to be confirmed, and with God's help I will endeavour to keep all the promises I shall then make. We have still three weeks to prepare ourselves."

"Yes," said Elvire, "and Mr Brown will, I know, take many opportunities of talking to us and addressing us on the subject ; he told mamma he would."

"I am glad of that," returned Ralph ; "for I should like to ask him some questions on one or two things : for instance,—how can a baby, when baptized, repent, or show any faith in God's promises ?"

“That is just what puzzled me, Ralph, and I could not understand why infants should be baptized at all,” cried Elvire, interrupting her brother.

“And what did I tell you, my dear,” replied Miss Sage, “that *whole households* in the time of the Apostles were received into the Church by baptism, and that our Saviour ordered His disciples to baptize *all nations*; by which we know infant baptism must have been intended, as *nations* and *households* must have *all ages* amongst them. And again in answer to Ralph’s query—what does our Church Catechism say in reply to the question—‘Why, then, are infants baptized when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot perform them?’ that is, repentance and faith, of which acts their want of understanding makes them incapable.”

“‘Because they promise them both, repentance and faith, by their sureties, which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform!’”

“Yes, that is the answer,” replied Miss Sage, when Elvire had readily repeated the words from the Catechism. “When too young to make the promises for ourselves, our sponsors come forward to do so for us, undertaking at the same time to see that we are properly taught and brought up

to lead a Christian life in accordance with the doctrines of the Church into which we are grafted when baptized, so that when we arrive at an age to understand the nature of the vows they take upon themselves in our place, we may ratify them in our own persons, and openly renew them at our confirmation."

"Yes, what you say, Miss Sage," remarked Ralph, "seems to get over the difficulty caused by the want of reasoning power in infants—their sureties, or sponsors, pledge themselves in their places; still, I cannot yet understand why they should be baptized at all, till they are capable of undertaking the vows themselves."

"The answer to that is very plain, Ralph: it is our Saviour's *command*; can any one doubt if Christ will accept an infant offered in baptism, when he reads in God's own Book: 'For He commanded them to be brought to Him': 'He rebuked those that would have kept them from Him': 'He embraced them in His arms, and blessed them': and again, what did He himself say? 'Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.' With such words as these before us, can there possibly be any doubt as to whether

God will receive the little ones dedicated to Him in their infancy ?”

“I should say not, Miss Sage, now you quote these passages ; had I thought of them before, I should not have had any misgivings on the point—they make it so very clear that infant baptism is the right thing. Now, if you are not tired, I want to ask you one or two other questions : first, why is water used when a person is baptized ?”

“There is no difficulty in answering that, Ralph. What did our Saviour say : ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God,’ * and water is a part of the Sacrament, designed to signify our spiritual cleansing by Christ’s blood ; as our bodies are washed and cleansed by the effects of water on them, so are our souls purified by the blood of our Saviour. And don’t you remember, Elvire, the words used by the eunuch to Philip : ‘Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized ?’ and the verse where St Peter asks : ‘Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized ?’ Then there is another reason why water should be used in baptism ; it has always been typical of the washing away of sins, or saving from sin.”

* John iii. 5.

“I suppose the flood might be understood as a type?” said Elvire, inquiringly, to Miss Sage.

“No doubt of that, my dear, for did not the waters then bear up the ark on their surface, and thus save the righteous Noah and his family from perishing with the rest of mankind, who brought destruction on themselves by their great wickedness? You may look upon the Red Sea and the river Jordan, as two other types.”

“Oh yes, I see!” ejaculated Elvire; “the waters of the Red Sea saved the Israelites, by closing over Pharaoh and his host when pursuing them; and our Saviour was baptized in the river Jordan.”

“Exactly,” replied Miss Sage; “I think now you may feel assured that water is rightly used as an outward and visible sign in baptism, and that infants ought to be baptized.”

“Yes, you have quite convinced me on those two points, Miss Sage; but there is another thing I would ask, why should the words, ‘In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,’ be used?”

“Ah, that is another outward part of baptism, the form of using the water, accompanied by these words; three times the clergyman officiat-

ing, puts the water on the infant's forehead, thereby denoting that it is baptized into the faith of the Holy Trinity. We say, 'In the name,' but I believe the more correct translation is, '*into* the name,' &c.,—so that the real meaning of the expression would be by this solemn action—We take upon us their name, and profess our devotion to the faith, worship, and obedience of the Three Persons of the Godhead, the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier. In this profession, the whole of Christianity is briefly summed up, and is therefore considered necessary to be used in the form of baptism, when that sacrament is administered."

After saying this, Miss Sage was about to rise from her seat, when Ralph gently laid his hand on hers, exclaiming, "Not yet, don't go just yet, Miss Sage; you explain away all my difficulties so nicely, I would fain ask you one or two other questions."

Miss Sage smiled kindly on Ralph, as she once more took her seat, replying at the same time, "I cannot linger much longer now, Ralph, as my mother needs my assistance, but I will give you another five or ten minutes, if that will suffice."

"I think you will say we have been putting

the cart before the horse, as we have already spoken of infant baptism, and what I now wish to allude to comes before ; it is the answer to the question, 'What is the inward and spiritual grace?' "

"You mean the words, 'A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.' This is not difficult to explain, Ralph: what state are we in before baptism? in what state are we born?"

"'We were by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath;' that is a text that will answer your question, will it not, Miss Sage?" said Elvire.

"Yes, my dear, that is the very quotation I wanted; it is taken from Ephesians ii. 3rd verse. We are born in sin, we inherit it from the first Adam; then baptism instituted and ordained by the second Adam, our blessed Saviour, washes it away, making us children of grace."

"How are we made children of grace, Sagey dear? it is difficult to realise."

"By baptism we become God's adopted children, and He then takes us into covenant with him; our baptism is the means and pledge of our title to the grace and blessings of this covenant."

“Ah, I see,” cried Ralph, “but still, this becoming children of grace is not sufficient for us, it will not save us.”

“No, certainly not, Ralph; baptism is not sufficient to our salvation; we must die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; we must cease from sinning, as a dead man ceases from acting, and exercise holy desires and actions, praying for God’s Spirit to help us ratify our promise to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; as we do this, as surely shall we realise that in baptism there is a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; we shall feel, ‘We are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life’ (Rom. vi. 4). And also we shall find the force of the words of St Paul, ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature’” (2 Cor. v. 17).

“Thank you, thank you, many times, Miss Sage, and now I need not detain you any longer,” said Ralph, fancying from the governess’s look she was anxious to be gone.

Miss Sage rose, saying, as she put on her bonnet, “We must have another talk or two yet; if

my dear mother be better, I shall not be so pressed for time."

"I don't think we shall require further explanations of the Sacrament of Baptism," said Elvire, "you have made all so very clear to us, dear Miss Sage."

"Yes, that you have indeed," echoed Ralph, "there remains only repentance and faith to be spoken of, and of course we understand what they mean, and know that they are required of those that are baptized."

"How do you understand these two words, Elvire?" asked Miss Sage, as she prepared herself for her walk home.

"By repentance, I understand a sincere and heartfelt sorrow for past sin, and a determination to forsake it in the future; and by faith I mean a firm and steadfast belief in God's Holy Word and promises."

"Quite right, my dear, and as proofs that these acts are required of those persons who are baptized, I will tell you where you may find some texts showing that it is so. In Acts ii., 38th verse, you will read, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,' and in the same chapter, 41st

verse, 'They that gladly *received His Word* were baptized;' also in the viii. chap., 37th verse, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized.'"

"Those are nice texts, Sagey dear, and quite to the purpose; how I wish I could always have answers ready as you have," cried Elvire.

"And so you will some day, I dare say, my dear," replied Miss Sage, kissing her pupil, and then extending her hand to Ralph.

"I am not going to say 'good-bye,' Miss Sage, I will walk with you," returned Ralph.

"Then let me come too," cried Elvire, "or you will have some more talk, which will not be fair."

"You must be sharp then, Elvire, if you are coming," said Ralph, "for I can see Miss Sage wants to be off."

"I'll be back in half a minute," said Elvire, running from the room to fetch her hat and jacket.

Quickly reappearing, the three started, turning their thoughts and conversation to the subject of the kiln, which they hoped to have ready to receive poor Jimmer and his father, on their return to Mendip.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONFIRMATION.

THE following morning Miss Sage and Elvire, assisted by their aide-de-camp, as they called Ralph, set to work in earnest to renovate the kiln, and to have it ready for Jimmer's arrival. Mrs Duncombe was pressed into the service, and from her they obtained a good-sized old stump bedstead, two or three wooden chairs, a table, and a few kitchen utensils ; in addition to these, Mrs Sage turned out a mattress and some bed-clothes and other necessaries, so that by the time all the arrangements were completed, the interior of what they hoped would be Zachary's future home, looked quite snug and comfortable. Some time since, a chimney had been built and a door had been placed at the entrance of the kiln, and the slit opposite it had been glazed with small diamond-shaped pieces of glass at Elvire's express desire, once when a glazier had been called

to The Court to repair some damage done to the greenhouses by some heavy gale.

“There’s no knowing when Zachary and Jimmer may turn up,” she had said coaxingly to Mr Duncombe, “and it is so draughty in the kiln, with no door and that open place opposite the entrance ; so do let us have it ready for them, papa dear.”

“There’s nothing like taking time by the forelock, I suppose you think, Elvire,” Mr Duncombe had replied smilingly. At the same time he acquiesced in her suggestion, though he doubted very materially whether Zachary, with his roaming propensities, would ever be induced to settle down at the kiln.

His idea proved likely to be correct, for during the space of three or four years, Zachary and Jimmer visited Mendip but the same number of times, and then but for a day or so, so that Elvire, disappointed at their perverseness, as she felt inclined to call their determination to continue travelling the country over with their pots and pans, was obliged to acknowledge that the slit stuffed up with straw or hay, and the cart and blanket to form a door, would have sufficed.

However, now at the expiration of the four years

things seemed about to change, for poor Jimmer was to be brought home ill, probably to lie there on a bed of sickness for some time, so after all, Elvire said to Miss Sage, "it is a good thing I did persuade papa to have a fire-place and door and window put."

Having arranged to their satisfaction the furniture brought to the kiln, the three—Miss Sage, Elvire, and Ralph—seated themselves on the three wooden chairs, to contemplate, as they said, the fruits of their labour. They were scarcely so placed, when the well-known pattering steps of their papa's favourite pony sounded close by.

"There's papa, I'm sure!" cried Elvire, springing up and hastening to open the door.

"Papa, papa!" she called out without waiting to see if he intended making the kiln a halting place. "Papa dear, you must come in and see what we have done, you can throw Nero's reins over that post whilst you stay."

"I was coming, had you not asked me, Puss," replied Mr Duncombe, chucking Elvire fondly under the chin as he alighted from his pony.

"Well, that was indeed good of you, papa," said Elvire, taking him by the hand to lead him into

the kiln ; “ there, papa ! look and tell us what you think of poor Jimmer’s future home.”

“ I ’m sure I must congratulate you all on the result of your work ; I really think I should not mind a short sojourn here myself.”

“ There now, you are making fun of us, papa, I know you are ; but you must acknowledge it looks better than it did when Zachary and Jimmer had only some hay to lie on, and a barrel to sit on, and other furniture to match.”

“ Well, I think I must confess that, Elvire ; indeed, I will go further, and allow that it really looks comfortable, and that I believe it is a better home for them than they have had for many a day.”

“ Did you come expressly to survey our work, Mr Duncombe ? ” then inquired Miss Sage.

“ No, indeed, Miss Sage, my survey has rather been over my farm-works and timber-cutting operations ; my errand here was to announce the speedy arrival of those you have been preparing for. I was on my way from the village when I overtook them in the high road.”

“ You don’t mean Jimmer is here ! ” exclaimed Ralph, taking up his cap, and emerging from the kiln to meet him.

“Not exactly that ; I cantered all the way that I might warn you of their approach—that you might be quite ready for them, Ralph.”

“And poor Jimmer ; how is he ?” inquired Elvire, with an anxious look on her usually bright countenance.

“Bad enough, poor lad ! I fear me very bad ; he was curled up in their little cart, lying on some hay, with some sacks and old wraps to cover him ; it will be at least an hour before they are here, they are coming at such a snail’s pace.”

“Afraid of shaking Jimmer, I expect Zachary is,” said Ralph. Then after a pause he exclaimed, “I wonder if it would be of any use my going to meet them.”

“I do not think so, my boy ; in fact, I think it might tend to excite Jimmer, which he does not look much able to bear ; if you all see him first here, one bout will accomplish the whole business, whereas if you meet him on the road, it would appear like two meetings and upset him twice.”

“Then I’ll stay,” said Ralph, taking off his cap and placing it on the table ; “poor old Jimmer, I am sorry to hear he is so very ill.”

“And so am I, Ralph, I can tell you,” replied Elvire, “but we must not despair, particularly

now he will be under Sagey's care ; she knows all sorts of things to cure people."

"I have no doubt in Miss Sage's capabilities, Elvire," remarked Mr Duncombe, "but we must not forget that there is One far better able to cure than she is ; ought we not to go to *Him* and ask for *His* help ?"

"Do not think I have forgotten, or shall forget to do that, papa," whispered Elvire, standing tiptoe, so as to be able to place her hands on Mr Duncombe's shoulders, whilst she held up her face for a kiss.

"Bless you, my child ! I do not think you are one likely to forget such things."

As he replied, Mr Duncombe looked with deep affection on the uplifted face, then patting the blooming cheeks he said, "But now I must go."

"Oh ! are you not going to stay to welcome Zachary and Jimmer, papa ?" asked Elvire.

"No, my dear, no, I have not the time ; besides you will feel more at ease without me, as I cannot enrol myself on the list of your friends' close acquaintance, so that my presence would only tend to disturb you all, and add to the lad's excitement ; besides, I have just spoken to him and

assured his father I am glad to see them back at Mendip once more, so they are not likely to attribute my absence to any slight or disrespect."

"There, now, I believe you are making fun again, papa," cried Elvire.

"I'm really glad for them to be back, my child, and sincerely sorry to see poor Jimmer as he is; under these circumstances, you must forgive my words if they sound inconsistent in your very particular ears, Miss Puss, and now good-bye."

With another kiss and fond pat on the cheek still raised towards his face, Mr Duncombe turned away, and nodding farewell to Miss Sage and Ralph, he threw himself across Nero's back and cantered from the kiln.

"I believe the saying, 'the watch pot never boils,' is about the truest old saw that ever was written," exclaimed Ralph, seating himself after having looked from the kiln door for about the twentieth time to see if the travellers were near.

"I believe so too," replied Elvire, becoming quite impatient at their non-arrival.

"Time always does appear to pass slowly when we are anticipating anything," remarked Miss

Sage, "and yet he does not tarry in his course ; with the same measured tread he ever paces steadily on."

"I wish the old gentleman would occasionally shake the sand through his glass rather more quickly ; it is wearisome this waiting and waiting."

"Oh, don't say that, Ralph !" exclaimed Miss Sage, "it is well for us that he neither tarries nor hastens ; if he hurried along at our seasons of sorrow, we should miss many a useful lesson we then learn ; and if he lingered at our more joyful periods, we should only too surely learn to care more for the things of this world than we ought : we should not then find it so easy to renounce the pomps and vanity surrounding us."

"Our mentor always has something wise and to the purpose to say," cried Ralph, with a smile, at the same time an expression of approval and acquiescence in the justness of Miss Sage's remark passed over his countenance.

"I feel what Sagey says is quite true, Ralph, —but hark !" cried Elvire, "I believe I hear the grating of Zachary's cart-wheels along the road."

In a moment Ralph was through the doorway, where Miss Sage and Elvire quickly followed him.

“Yes, there they are, sure enough,” exclaimed Ralph, “and there’s their faithful old Neddy creeping along, looking quite doleful about the ears as if aware that something was wrong with his young master ; here—give me my cap, Elvire, it’s on the table ; I will just run to meet them.”

“Oh no, don’t go, Ralph ; don’t you remember what papa said ?”

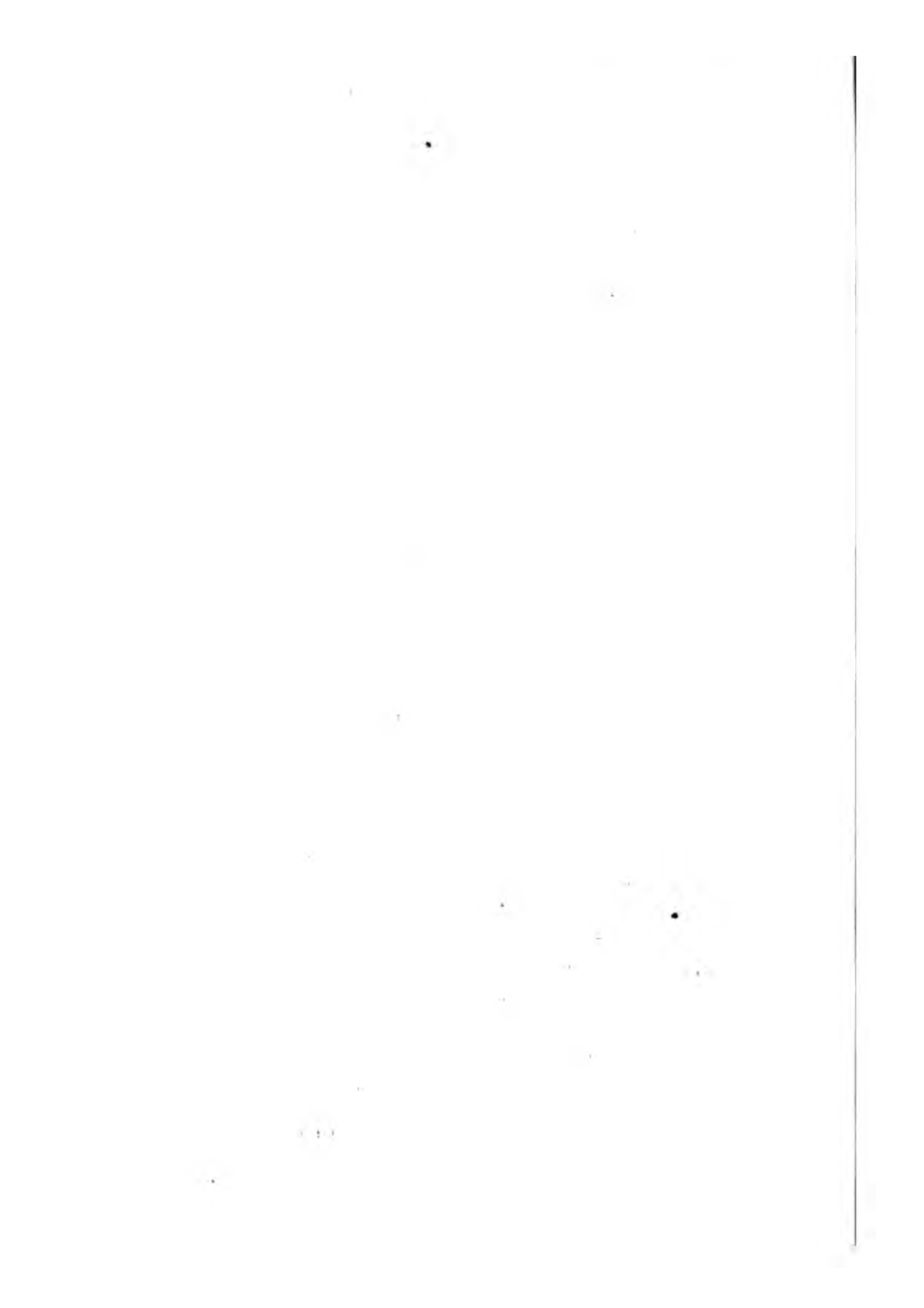
“Ah ! true, I had forgotten. I will wait here, so that they may see us all at once.”

As Mr Duncombe said, at a very snail’s pace the small procession came along the road leading to the kiln. Fearing that the jolting, if he hastened Neddy on with his “gee up, old fellow,” might add to the unavoidable fatigue Jimmer was bound to undergo, Zachary Hibbs did all in his power to make the faithful animal walk deliberately and steadily, by holding the reins and walking at his head and occasionally giving him a gentle pat or two, accompanied by the words “Softly, old boy, softly—not so fast, gent—ly—*stai—dee !*”

“Are we nigh home, father ?” asked Jimmer, raising his head suddenly at the very moment Ralph emerged from the kiln.



“At a very snail’s pace the small procession came along the road.”—Page 238.



“Yes, lad, yes, quite handy; lay still, lad, quiet, Neddy ’ll bring us there in a twinkling.”

Jimmer let his head fall back on his hay pillow with a groan, that seemed to express relief as well as weariness.

“I ’spects as how you ’ll have to hook up the old blanket at the door-way, father, I feels so shivery; but it’s so old, I count it ’ll be a main hard job to manage.”

“Let bide, lad, I ’ll see to all that when we gets there, but something tells me, the Lord ’ll provide; them good critturs up at The Court ain’t a-going to let us want for nothing, I knows that.”

Zachary had noticed the three expectant faces peering from the kiln, and shrewdly guessed they had not been there for nothing.

“How far be we off now, father?” again inquired Jimmer, giving himself a restless turn, to lessen the discomfort of his cramped position.

“About twenty yard, and we’re there, lad; now Neddy, gent—ly—stai—dee.”

Gentle in his own rough way, Zachary forbore at first telling Jimmer his kind friends were on the look-out for him; he knew well it would excite the lad, and wisely kept back the news as long as he could; then as they approached nearer,

fearing the sudden shock would be as bad, he broke the ice by saying, "I 'm pretty sure, lad, there 's some one awaiting for us up there at the kiln."

"Is there, father ; who ?" cried Jimmer, a bright flush spreading over his pale face, as he unclosed his eyes, that until then he had kept shut.

"Now, don't 'ee go and fluster yourself, lad, and I 'll tell 'ee ; I sees three on 'em, there 's the lady, Miss Sage, as they calls her."

"And who else ?" cried Jimmer, eagerly raising his head to try and see for himself.

"Now, do' ee bide quiet, lad, and as I said afore, I 'll tell 'ee ; don't go and lift your head again till yer 'bliged."

Jimmer let his head fall once more on to the hay, and again closed his eyes, saying, "Well, father, who is there with Miss Sage ? I couldn't see none of them."

"Why, there 's little Master Cyril agoing away from the kiln, and Miss Elvire ; bless me ! how she 's grow'd, and there, close alongside, stands the young master."

"What, Mr Ralph !" cried Jimmer, in a feeble, though delighted voice.

"Yes, surely, Mr Ralph Duncombe himself ; now then, Neddy, gent-ly—stai-dee—a few more

paces, old boy, and you've done yer work for to-day—stai-dee—there, gently!”

“God bless them all,” ejaculated Jimmer, fervently; “I 'spects, father, as how they've had your letter.”

“I 'spects as how they have, Jimmer, for it's pretty clear they're on the watch for us. Now then, lad, we are here, one yard more, and don't 'ee be flittered, Jimmer—stai-dee, Neddy, we-oo, we-oo!”

In another moment the meeting was over; Jimmer could only exclaim, “God bless you all.” Then his strength failed him, and he seemed to prefer remaining perfectly passive in the cart, with his eyes closed, listening to the greetings and inquiries between the party from The Court and his father, whilst they made preparations for removing him into the kiln. It was evident Jimmer could not stand or walk; so by some means he must be borne in.

“He's not so heavy a load now, poor lad!” exclaimed old Zachary, addressing Ralph. “I got a party to help put him into the cart, but I'm pretty sure I can lift him all alone, he's that wasted and dwindled away.”

“There's no need of that, with me standing by, Zachary; I will gladly lend you a helping hand.”

“And so can we too, I’m sure,” cried Elvire, alluding to herself and Miss Sage, who stood by, looking sadly on the wasted form huddled together in the little cart.

“Bless ’ee, miss, there’s no need, and if there was, it’s not Zachary Hibbs who’d be the one to let you strain yerself a lifting my Jimmer, nor the lady neither, not likely that; I could raise him right easily alone, but if Mr Ralph will be so good as to lend me a helping hand, I’ve no doubt but we shall do it more comfortable like.”

“Then come on, Zachary; don’t let’s keep talking, leaving poor Jimmer lying, or, I should say, cramped up there, in that wretched position. Poor fellow! why he must be cramped to death.”

“Nigh being so, I believe, Mr Ralph; but yer see, what could we do? He *would* come home, as he calls Mendip. He would, he said, if it was the death of him, come to be near The Court, and as there was no other means nor ways, I was ’bliged like to bring him in our own wehicle.”

“Well, any way, I’m sincerely glad you’re here,” exclaimed Ralph, preparing to raise Jimmer’s shoulders. “Now, Zachary, take his feet—that’s it, gently!”

Though grown so tall it was but a light burden

Ralph and Zachary bore between them, "a mere living skeleton," thought Miss Sage, as poor Jimmer was lifted from the cart, and Ralph mentally exclaimed, as he looked down sorrowfully on the face of his humble friend, "Poor, poor Jimmer! what a change, what a wreck!"

Jimmer allowed himself to be raised without a word, and without even opening his eyes. Happy and content in the certainty that he was once more at Mendip, he seemed to prefer remaining in a passive state, merely manifesting his gratitude and pleasure by a happy smile, that played round his pale lips, and lighted up his pallid, care-worn countenance.

As they placed him on the comfortable bed so carefully prepared for him, the strange, unusual feeling of such a luxury caused him suddenly to look up with an astonished cry of, "Where am I, what is it?"

A cursory, quick glance round the interior of the kiln told him all. Too exhausted, too weak to speak, the poor lad could only murmur: "God bless and thank you all." Then bursting into tears, he buried his face in the clean white pillow.

Zachary, full of astonishment, had remained

mute, staring with open mouth and arms a kimbo at the aspect of his Mendip home ; but the sudden outburst of emotion on Jimmer's part brought him back to himself, and quickly bending over his son, he cried—

“There, there, don't 'ee take on, lad, in this 'ere way, it'll make 'ee right down bad, and make I repent that I've brought 'ee back to Mendip. Now, Jimmer lad, do 'ee stop ; do 'ee ask him, Mr Ralph, I cant abear to see the lad like this ?”

A few whispered words from Ralph had the desired effect ; Jimmer became more composed. Then after a few minutes' silence he looked up fondly at his father, exclaiming, “But ain't it good of them, father ? just look round and see all that's been done for us.”

“You needn't tell I to look round, Jimmer. I've been a looking and wondering, wondering and looking, ever since I came inside that 'ere doorway, it's kind of took me all aback ; I don't so much as know how to say thank 'ee, I'm so struck all of a heap !”

“There's no need of thanks, Zachary,” remarked Miss Sage, speaking almost for the first time. “All we have done, we have done gladly and willingly ; it would be sad, indeed, when we have

enough and to spare of this world's goods, if we did not help our poorer brethren in distress."

"It's main good of you to say this, ma'am, and I humbly thank you, and the squire, and my lady, and all; it's more than we had any right to expect."

"I tell you what it comes of, father," said Jimmer, faintly, "it comes of your giving up the drink."

"I believe you're right, lad; the Lord has recompensed me for giving up my evil ways; but it's more nor I deserved, and certain sure I never thought of such goodness coming on us."

"The Lord's hand is ever ready to help us, Zachary," said Miss Sage; "never doubt *that*, and He will not forget you or your endeavour to overcome your besetting sin. But tell me, Zachary, have you really got over it? is it long since you yielded to temptation?"

"If you means by that, ma'am, is it long since I took a drop too much, why I answers, it's handy nine month; soon after Jimmer and me last left Mendip."

"Thank God for that!" ejaculated Miss Sage, whilst Ralph and Elvire showed by their pleased looks how gratified they also were.

“ Yes, and I thanks Him too, I can tell yer, ma’am, for now I feels I not only has a chance of getting to heaven when I dies, but I knows, my little Jenny up there will be pleased, and I can now hope to see her and her mother agin,— which you know I could never have done without giving up the drink, cause I think the Bible says no drunkard can inherit eternal life.”

“ Quite right, Zachary, no drunkard can—God says so ; and what’s more, we know it for ourselves, for what drunkard ever gives a thought to heaven or heavenly things ? ”

“ Certain sure you’re right there, ma’am. I never did afore, and now it seems I likes to read a page in my Bible, and to take my place in church when we’re handy one.”

“ I am very glad to hear all this, Zachary, and so will Mr and Mrs Duncombe be, I am quite sure.”

“ It was a hard job, a sharp battle, I had to fight, I can tell yer, ma’am,” said Zachary, not replying to her remark, being evidently lost in thought at the remembrance of what a struggle he had gone through.

“ I expect it was difficult, Zachary ; we cannot be too thankful that you have had strength given you to overcome.”

“It was hard, I can tell yer,” continued Zachary, still pursuing the same train of thought. “Why, I had to shut too my eyes, close like that, when I come handy a public, and never so much as open them, till I was a good twenty yard ahead of it. The very doors and windows, and beer barrels seemed to cry out, ‘Come in, will ye,’ but worse than all, the evil spirit was ever a going on in me, and tugging of me to give in, and once more take a drop; but at last the time came when I could say, firm like, with a stamp of the foot, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan,’ and close my eyes against the doors, windows, and beer barrels, and pass on. This ere plan went on for some five or six months, then things took another change, and now I passes by all the publics and inns with my eyes wide open, and as to the wicked one, why, I think he’s got quite afeerd of me, for he never comes across my path, a tempting me as afore, so altogether now, I’m at peace in my mind.”

“And now,” interrupted Elvire, “you will consent, I am sure, to remain here; we have made the kiln comfortable for you and Jimmer, hoping to persuade you to stay.”

“Well, miss, to say the truth, I’ve as good as promised the lad there, that we will stop in these

parts for the future ; leastways, if we can find work enough to do to rub on, and bring us clothes and vittels."

"You need not be uneasy about that, Zachary," here said Ralph, joining in the conversation, "my father will see to that ; indeed, he has told us he will be able to find plenty of occupation both for you and Jimmer, if you will but give up your wandering life, with those horrid old pots and pans."

"And there's the log-hut to be looked after," said Elvire ; "that shall be Jimmer's affair."

Jimmer smiled at the sweet face turned towards him ; but the expression on his own told its own sad tale, that he knew there was little more work for him to do in this world. Still he smiled when Elvire spoke, and said, "Thank 'ee kindly, miss, I should like it, for it's thereabouts I first met with you and the young master, and them days I likes to think on, for it's them, and your kind words, as taught me there was a summat to live for 'sides selling pots and pans, and summat to die for too," he added, after a short pause. Then with a movement of the hand, seeing Miss Sage about to speak, as if he would prefer no comment being made on his last remark, Jimmer

asked, "And does it look nice, miss, the log-house, I means? I'm main glad you still keeps to it."

"It does look nice, indeed, Jimmer, I assure you," replied Elvire. "Miss Sage and I constantly go there together to study, and we take little Cyril with us, to do his lessons. I don't think Ralph cares for it quite so much as he did a year or two ago, but still, even now, he often looks in, and when he has any of his old Winchester friends with him, he then passes a good bit of time there, sometimes even turns Miss Sage and me out."

"Which is only lawful and right, seeing it's my own property," exclaimed Ralph.

Jimmer smiled, and Elvire continued: "The log-house is nearly covered with creepers this year, it looks quite beautiful, which I am sure you will say, Jimmer, when you see it; the woodbine and blackberry brambles cover the back part, and the monthly roses and clematis have spread nicely over the entrance; just at this moment it is one mass of blossom, you can smell the perfume long before you reach the spot."

"I should like to see it," said Jimmer.

"So you soon shall, Jimmer. We will nurse you up, and quickly make you strong. Mamma

will see that you want for nothing that can do you good."

"Thank you kindly, miss."

"And I humbly thank you too, miss," said old Zachary, "and the squire, and his lady too."

"There's one thing you have forgotten to tell Jimmer," said Miss Sage.

"What's that?" inquired Ralph.

"Why, about your pet, Ralph."

"Ah, to be sure!" Then approaching the bed and addressing Jimmer, Ralph said, "You'll be surprised to hear, Jimmer, your old favourite is still living, and tolerably well, considering his great age."

"You don't mean the dormouse, do you, Mr Ralph?"

"Yes, indeed I do. He is enjoying a luxurious happy old age. When you see him, I know you will say he is both fat and lazy."

"I should like to see him."

"So you shall this very afternoon. I will bring him, and here he shall stay to amuse you on your sick bed as he did me on mine—you don't forget that time, Jimmer, do you?"

"Bless 'ee no, Mr Ralph, and never shall; I learnt many a lesson just about then."

“And so did I, Jimmer, and from you, my poor fellow,” said Ralph, in an undertone.

“No matter where our lessons was learnt, Mr Ralph, so long as we learnt them, and are both on the same right road at last ; you still keeps there, don’t yer, Mr Ralph ?”

Jimmer’s remark and inquiry were uttered in a whisper, and Ralph’s reply, “I trust so, Jimmer,” was equally inaudible to those standing by.

After a little more casual conversation, Miss Sage and her companions, having first given to Zachary the contents of some baskets Mr Duncombe had sent by Cyril on reaching home, prepared to leave the kiln—the first promising to see Jimmer again in the evening, and Elvire and Ralph early the next day.

A week’s care and nursing wrought a great change in Jimmer’s state ; he was not only much better and his cough less troublesome, but he was able to sit up, and had even twice reached the log-house.

Ralph and Elvire were charmed with the change, and began to feel their former sad forebodings had been premature and misjudged. Not so Miss Sage. Experience had taught her wisdom, and in that hectic flushed face, the hollow sounding

cough, she read but too plainly the fiat had gone forth. The seeds of disease were too deeply set in that frail body, ever to be uprooted by any human skill or agency. The great and marked improvement since his return to Mendip, was but a flattering deception; Miss Sage knew but too well it was but the last bright flickering flash before the final spark would be for ever extinguished by the cold hand of death.

The kind-hearted, good, Christian clergyman, Mr Brown, was assiduous in his attentions at the kiln, so soon as he learned that Zachary and his son were really located there. Daily visits he paid to Jimmer, and there, in that strange but comfortable home, he prepared the sick lad for the solemn rite of confirmation—not that he needed much preparation; Mr Brown soon found that, quickly discovering that God's Holy Spirit had been at work in the lad's heart, and that his teaching would be superfluous in such a case.

Mr Brown was much surprised, too, to find such a change in Jimmer's style of language and conversation. This, he learned, was to be attributed to his constant attendance at night-schools. Wherever they chanced to be sojourning, one of the first inquiries the youth made was, if there

were a school in the place he could attend. "He was always after his books and larning," his father would say; "there was a time when I thought he would never take up with reading, but ever since the people at The Court gived I the books with large print, when it seemed to come on sudden, there's been no stopping Jimmer from book-larning; he keeps right at his work like a good lad, but when the day's labour's over, then it's books, books, books! school, school, school! nothing else is ever thought of."

It was quite correct what Zachary said. Jimmer, from the first time he had an insight into the advantages of education, lost no opportunity of learning or improving himself, and with that keen, sharp intellect that almost invariably accompanies the body marked out as a victim of consumption, his progress was rapid, and his power to acquire knowledge astonishing. But far better than all was his craving after *that knowledge* that would profit him in the end; this was his chief and first desire; he was pleased to learn anything that tended to his instruction or improvement, but his one object, his one aim, was to learn *where* to find the pearl of great price and to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

This once accomplished, the treasure found, and Jimmer was satisfied, happy, and content in that station of life to which God had called him, and willing to abide patiently till the time should come when he should be called to take his place in that heaven, speaking of which some years before, he had exclaimed to Elvire, "Then it must be good to be there."

The three weeks previous to the confirmation appeared to pass quickly away. A good portion of each day was given up to the consideration of the needful preparations and necessary resolutions to be formed to enable them to join in the solemn rite consistently. At the kiln, as well as at The Court, the inmates were deeply engrossed with serious thoughts connected with the ceremony; even old Zachary was stirred up, and entered with great interest into all that passed between Mr Brown and Jimmer. He also listened attentively, when present, to all the conversations that took place whenever the young people from The Court came to pay Jimmer a visit.

At last he became so impressed with the necessity of confirmation, he surprised Mr Brown one day by saying, "Ye see, yer reverence, I was bishop'd in my young days, but it's so long since,

and I thought then so main little about it, I'm pretty nigh determined to have it done again, now that I see it's so right." Mr Brown had some trouble to convince the old man that *once* sufficed, and that it only remained for him to carry out, during the rest of his life, the vows that he had then taken upon him.

A bright sunny morning ushered in the day of confirmation; as Miss Sage remarked to Mrs Duncombe, whilst passing through The Court grounds on their way to the church with her pupil and Ralph, "All nature seemed to harmonise in one vast effort to render the day one of peace, security, and joy, as if mutely testifying to the truth that the devotion of young lives to His service was an acceptable gift in the sight of God."

There was but one drawback; at least so thought Mr and Mrs Duncombe and Miss Sage, and that came with the postman's morning knock, when a letter to Ralph from a young Wykehamist, a college friend, announced his intention of arriving that afternoon to pay him a few days' visit.

A general favourite was Horace Percival—bright, lively, and intelligent, his company was

acceptable to old and young; but more thoughtful parents saw his approach with fear and trembling. His happy disposition, and fascinating ways, giving him such a hold over the minds of those he mixed with, they dreaded his influence with their children, for they knew but too well the one thing needful was wanted—that he almost made a scoff of religion, and that worldliness was at the root of all his thoughts, pleasures, and wishes.

Under these circumstances, it could not be wondered at that a shade of disappointment should pass over the faces of Ralph's parents, when he named to them the contents of his letter. There was, however, nothing to be done in the matter; there was no time to delay the visit, so they could only resolve to be the more vigilant over the next few days' occupations and amusements, and to keep the young people with them as much as possible.

About Elvire they had no fear; her mind seemed made up, her heart fixed on the one object, indeed when she was told of Horace Percival's proposed visit, they felt a sensation of glad relief, for they heard her say, "I wish he were not coming just now."

Every word of the bishop's solemn and eloquent

charge (which he addressed to the candidates, on whose heads he had placed his hands, at the same time invoking God's Holy Spirit to descend and make their bodies His temples), every word, every syllable, sank deeply into Elvire's heart, telling her, teaching her, what a crisis that day was in her career ; also what a great promise she and all the other candidates had then made ; a whole life's service had been devoted to God by them all, when they uttered those little words, "I do." Their choice was made, and from that hour it would be their bounden duty to renounce all the pomps and vanities, pleasures and allurements, connected with the world.

From that day, Elvire felt she must either be Christ's follower and soldier, or a rebel and deserter. Still the young girl was nothing daunted ; her heart was fixed where true joys are to be found, and she was able, though gentle tears trickled silently down her cheeks when the bishop's touching words vibrated through her heart, to exclaim mentally—"I know whose servant I am, and that His strength will be made great in my weakness, so that I may go on my way rejoicing, knowing full well He will not allow me to be tempted more than I am able to bear."

Miss Sage and Mrs Duncombe glanced many times at Elvire's face, looking so sweet and peaceful through the folds of the white lace veil that fell over it; those glances sufficed to tell them all was well there, and that there was safety and peace within.

Not so was it with Ralph! anxious sorrowful thoughts the changing expression of his countenance brought to his fond mother's mind. First, when the ceremony commenced, he appeared calm and thoughtful, but the look was transitory; his eyes soon wandered, and he became restless and fidgety; then a troubled frown overshadowed his brow, as if he were questioning the rightness of the step he had just taken.

This was precisely the case: The expected arrival of his Winchester friend had caused Ralph's thoughts to wander; in spite of himself they would return again and again to the same thing; when on bended knees, and when the bishop was addressing him, shadows of the next few days' pleasure would float through his ever-active mind. But we must give him his due, and own that Ralph strove to gain the mastery over these thoughts and to drive them back, but he felt his efforts fail (trusting, alas! to his own

power), and then the questions that caused the frown on his brow arose: "Ought I to have been persuaded to take this step? ought I to have dared promise all that I have, when I feel and know earth's pleasures and the world's business have yet such a fast hold on me?" So Ralph felt vexed and restless, and though he endeavoured to listen to the bishop's address, and resolved to try and profit by it, also to carry out, as far as in his power, his baptismal vows, he felt greatly relieved when the service was over and he had left the church.

With Jimmer, the case had been widely different. Though still weak, his health had greatly improved; he had even been able to walk to church unassisted, by the support of his father's arm. Thoroughly prepared in heart and soul, the poor lad from the kiln joyfully entered into the ceremony of the day, unhesitatingly answering "I do," and readily promising to devote his life to God's service, fully believing that in answer to his prayers he would receive that grace which would be sufficient to enable him to fight the battle successfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and not only did he realise that this blessing would be his, but he also felt that when

life's struggle should be over he should gain life, win an everlasting crown, being fully convinced that for him, though he was but an uneducated lad, were the words written, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne."*

* Rev. iii. 21.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

“ Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained ?

“ For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.

“ What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper ?

“ Bread and wine ; which the Lord hath commanded to be received.

“ What is the inward part or thing signified ?

“ The body and blood of Christ : which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.

“ What are the benefits which we receive thereby ?

“ The strengthening and refreshing of our souls, by the body and blood of Christ ; as our bodies are, by the bread and wine.

“ What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper ?

“ To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins ; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life ; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death ; and be in charity with all men.”

As Mrs Duncombe and Miss Sage expected, so it happened. Horace Percival's advent seemed to disperse all Ralph's more serious thoughts. With the morning came questions as to what should be the pleasures and occupations of the day, and when evening arrived, these amusements and pastimes afforded a sufficiently large fund of topic of conversation, to preclude the possibility of anything of any import being discussed. Then when bed-time came, bodily fatigue prevented Ralph having leisure or inclination for reflection. Had it been otherwise, his better nature might have caused him to ask himself the question, "Am I endeavouring to keep those promises I so lately made in God's house, and in the presence of His congregation?"

The answer he must have given would have caused him to shudder at his neglect and forgetfulness; but the question did not arise in his mind. He chattered through the open doors to his friend whilst they undressed, and then, no sooner was his head on his pillow, than sleep closed his eyelids, and drowned all thoughts in a flood of dreams.

Mrs Duncombe little knew all that passed between the youths; she little guessed how Horace

Percival had jeered and taunted her son for having been confirmed—a ceremony, he said, that was only fitting for girls and old maids, and for those poor, soft fellows, who were stupid enough to become country curates. At first Ralph felt grieved and shocked, and begged his friend not to make a mock of religion ; then his quaint, merry jokes, and witty remarks, made him smile in spite of his better feelings, till at last, little by little, he was seduced into listening more attentively, occasionally even joining in deriding or mimicking the customs of the Church or the habits of God's people. Miss Sage and Elvire dreaded the effects of the young Wykehamist's influence over Ralph ; they knew but too well there was some undercurrent for evil at work, drawing the heir to The Court into its destroying waters, for never could they get a word out of him, and if they gently hinted that he never now paid them a visit either in the school-room or log-hut, he repulsed them invariably with an abrupt answer, such as, " You forget I have a friend to entertain," or, " I can't bother about *your* sort of things just now."

Miss Sage knew well what that "*your*" meant. It said only too plainly, " I do not intend again joining in your serious conversations ; they are all

very well for Elvire, but they will not do for me, just as I am entering upon life, and have such a career before me."

"I wish—I do wish—Ralph would join us, Sagey dear," said Elvire, one morning when she and Miss Sage had strolled leisurely through the grounds to the log-hut.

"I wish so too, my dear, but it seems that Mr Percival requires all his care and attention just now; it is most unfortunate that he should have fixed his visit at this time of all others."

"Yes, and the day after to-morrow there's to be the celebration of the Lord's Supper. I had so hoped we should have gone together for the first time to partake of it."

"I had hoped the same, Elvire, but we must, however unwillingly, abandon all idea of it."

"Why so, Miss Sage? if we can only induce Ralph to come and have a little talk with you or mamma, he may be made to see how wrongly he is acting."

"Your mamma has tried, dear, and she has told me it will be best to leave Ralph alone till after this visit; that will not be very long, as Mr Percival is to leave next week, after which we must all try to win him back again to the right road."

“But then Sunday will be passed, Sagey, and it will be too late for him to receive the Sacrament with me.”

“That must not be thought of at this time, your mamma says, Elvire. Ralph's mind is in too unsettled a state; indeed, he has told her he has no intention of becoming a communicant.”

“Was not mamma grieved and vexed, Sagey?”

“Indeed she was; but as she says there is no help for it at present, we must all pray fervently for a change to come over Ralph, and hope eventually to see him as we would have him. I for one do not despair, for he is really good at heart; his great fault is, that he is so easily influenced and led away.”

“If that is the case, he will always be changing; first from bad to good, then from good to bad, and so on and on as long as he lives! That is not the life we have just promised to lead; O Sagey dear! I am so disappointed, so sorry!”

Saying this, Elvire burst into tears, and hid her face on Miss Sage's shoulder, the usual place for her to lean her head when in trouble.

Miss Sage allowed her pupil to weep silently for a few minutes, then she endeavoured to cheer and compose her by telling her she must be

patient, God had different ways of working out His own ends, and that His people must ever be willing to wait His good time and pleasure. Remember, Elvire, those comforting words: 'Tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord.' " *

"I will trust Him, I will believe He will comfort us about dear Ralph;" Elvire replied, looking up smilingly in the midst of her tears. "I will give up the wish for him to accompany me and Jimmer to the Lord's table next Sunday, and trust that before the next day of celebration he will be changed."

"We will hope so, and try our best to show him his folly and the error of his present course."

"And poor Jimmer, he will try too, I know," exclaimed Elvire; "he is so fond of Ralph, and is so anxious that he should become a good man."

"Oh, poor Jimmer! he will, I am sure, use his humble endeavours to the best advantage; I can tell that from what he said this morning."

"Have you seen him, Sagey?"

"Yes, I went round to the kiln before calling for you; old Zachary met my mother when out

* Ps. xxvii. 16.

with Cyril, and told her he did not seem so well again."

"And was it so—was he worse?"

"Yes, I thought much worse; his cough sounded more hollow, and appeared more violent than ever, and shook his poor, frail body so severely, he seemed scarcely to have power to sit up."

"Poor Jimmer!"

"No, not poor Jimmer, Elvire; happy, thrice happy Jimmer! He said, with such a trusting bright look in his large eyes, after a bad fit of coughing, 'O Miss Sage, don't pity me, don't look sad; each of them coughs is a step along the road that's leading me to peace and happiness; I welcome them, I glories in them, for I know it's the Lord who sends them to bring me quickly to Him!'"

"Dear, good Jimmer! what faith he must have, Miss Sage."

"Yes; with him, Elvire, there is no doubt that the grain of mustard-seed has grown into a large fruit-bearing tree."

"Does he intend receiving the Sacrament on Sunday?"

"Oh yes, if well enough, his soul seems to be craving for the privilege; he says it will be the

only time here on earth, the next time he partakes of the bread and wine, he feels, it will be in God's kingdom : I believe he is right, poor fellow !”

“ You do not mean you think he is so near death, Miss Sage ?”

“ Indeed, I fear he is, my dear ; there appears to me such a marked change in his look and general bearing.”

“ I am so grieved,” said Elvire, with a deep sigh.

“ Instead of grieving, I think we ought to rejoice. Poor Jimmer will be removed from no bright prospects ; what a life of trial and drudgery his would inevitably be, and what will he change it for ? one of glorious and everlasting happiness. He has not one regret himself ; he says so, for he feels satisfied, he tells me, that the Almighty will provide for his father's wants, and that in His good time he will meet him and all of us in heaven.”

After a few more words concerning Jimmer, Miss Sage changed the conversation by saying, “ I believe, Elvire, you wished to have one more talk with me about the Lord's Supper before partaking of it ; this, now we are alone, will be a good opportunity ; have you questions to ask, or what have you to say ?”

I should like, please, Sagey dear, to take each

sentence in the Catechism as it comes, will not that be the best way?"

"Yes, I think it will, dear. Of course, you know why this second Sacrament is called the Lord's Supper?"

"Oh yes; because our Saviour appointed it at His last Supper with His disciples, just before His death, and, also, because it was designed to take the place of the Paschal Supper* of the Jews."

"Yes, of course, and this leads us to the first question in the Catechism: why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained? you know the answer."

Elvire at once repeated the words: "For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

"That answer speaks clearly enough, I think, Elvire, it tells us plainly, the Lord appointed this Holy Sacrament as a means to keep up the *constant* remembrance of His death, as well as to

* Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, was crucified the very same month, the very same day of the month, and the very same hour of the day, that the Paschal Lamb was first ordained to be sacrificed.

assure us of the benefits which we thereby receive when we partake of it *worthily*."

"And how long is this ordinance to continue, Miss Sage? the Catechism says, not for the remembrance, but for the *continual* remembrance."

"To be sure; we must keep up a perpetual remembrance of Christ's death till He come again to judge the world; what does St Paul say in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, 11th chapter, and the 26th verse?"

Elvire turned to her Testament, which she drew from her pocket, and read: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *till He come*."

"With such words as these before us, Elvire, we can have no doubt about the length of time this ordinance is to be continued; besides, there is another substantial reason for the constant celebration of it; our souls stand in as great need of being constantly refreshed by the benefits which it conveys to us, as our bodies do of a regular supply of food and nourishment."

"I suppose Christ's death is called a sacrifice, because He was a sacrifice for the sins of the world; is it not so, Miss Sage?"

“ Yes, exactly : we read in Hebrews :* ‘ He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,’ and again in Corinthians : † ‘ He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.’ ”

“ Made Him to be sin for us, means, I imagine, made Him to be an offering for sin ? ” said Elvire, inquiringly.

“ Just so ; Christ was made a sin-offering or sacrifice ; by His death on the cross He became a sin-offering, an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind. The Bible says, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin ; Christ, therefore, took upon Him our sins, and died for them, that by His death we might be freed from the guilt and punishment of them. His blood shed for us was a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, as we read in our beautiful communion service, ‘ He made (by His *one* oblation of Himself *once* offered) a *full, perfect, and sufficient* sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the *sins of the whole world.*’ This great, this all-sufficient sacrifice, you can readily understand, Elvire, did away, then and for ever, with the necessity of any other sacrifice ; no longer was there any need of slaying God’s creatures, and offering them up on altars — no longer any

* Heb. ix. 26.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

necessity for the shedding of blood of the Paschal Lamb, for the Lamb of God, God's only and beloved Son, had shed His blood, and from that time there needed 'no more offering for sin.' *"

"And yet some people think, each time the Lord's Supper is celebrated it is a renewal, or repetition, of the sacrifice—do they not, Sagey?"

"I believe there are some who have this false notion; but it is quite a Romish doctrine, and one best left alone, as being both contrary to the teaching of Scripture and to the doctrine of our Church. It is enough for us to know that this Sacrament was ordained by Christ himself to keep the sacrifice of His death, and the benefits which we receive thereby, perpetually in our memory. You may depend upon it, Elvire, where there is diversity of opinion on any religious subject, the best plan to adopt is not to enter into arguments and discussions, but to search the Scriptures for ourselves, and consult some person we know to be well versed in their pages, and then, once convinced, to let the matter rest and keep our minds undisturbed by perplexing doubts. To me there can be none concerning our present subject, the one sacrifice was an *all-sufficient, full, and perfect one*; we know *that*, and

* Heb. x. 18.

that, therefore, no further sacrifice is needed. Shall we now pass on to the next question?"

"One minute, Sagey. Some persons call the Lord's Supper the Holy Eucharist; I should like to know the absolute meaning of the word. I have not been able to turn it out."

"It means a giving of thanks, and is, I believe, derived from the Greek; eucharistia—*eu*, well, and *charis*, grace, or thanks."

"Thank you, Miss Sage, for explaining it to me. I could never understand the application of the word before. Now, if you please, we will take the next question and answer. 'What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper?' We shall not have much to say on that, I think."

"No, my dear, because the answer itself is plain. 'Bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.' These two things, bread and wine, two of the best supports we have for actual life, our Saviour himself selected and ordered us to take in remembrance of His death. They, the outward and visible sign of this Sacrament, represent the inward part or thing signified, namely, the body and blood of Christ; for our Saviour took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, 'Take,

eat; this is My body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me.' Then, when He had taken the cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of this: for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; this do, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me.' " *

"All this is very clear and easily to be understood," said Elvire. "I can quite see that Christ appointed bread and wine to be received in remembrance of His death, and that they were to represent His body and blood, but the next clause in the answer is more difficult to comprehend; 'which are *verily* and *indeed* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.' These words seem so to imply the very doctrine you say is erroneous, that it is the actual body and blood of our Saviour that are received."

"You are puzzled by them, Elvire, as many a wiser head has been before, but I think a few minutes' conversation will suffice to make the matter clear to you. First then, take your prayer-book, I think I saw you had one in your hand just now, and read from the second paragraph of the Twenty-eighth Article."

* Matt. xxvi. 26-28.

Elvire turned to the page and read aloud, "Transubstantiation (or the change of substance of bread and wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of the Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

"The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

"The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped."

Elvire closed her book, and Miss Sage remarked, "The last paragraph does not concern our present subject; that rather teaches us that our Church does not hold the doctrine of raising the elements or of worshipping them; an erroneous Romish ceremony, and not consistent with the Protestant religion.

"The other two paragraphs are what I would call your attention to, Elvire; you see, the first says plainly, the bread and wine are *not* changed in substance, and that such a supposition not

only *cannot* be proved by *Scripture*, but is indeed repugnant to it. The next sentence tells us still more plainly that the Body of Christ is taken and eaten *only* after a spiritual manner, and the means by which it is received is faith. Then the answer in the Catechism, which we are considering, echoes the same sentiment ;—it does not say —‘ the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken in the Lord’s Supper,’—but it makes the addition,—‘ by the faithful.’ Now, does this not teach us, Elvire, that faith *is* absolutely necessary to the right receiving of the Sacrament? and does it not plainly tell us that the substance is not changed, for otherwise the body and blood of Christ would be received by one and all alike—by the unfaithful as well as by the faithful. Now our Church teaches us quite differently to this ; she tells us that it is *only* by the *faithful* that this Sacrament can be *rightly* received, and that it is by faith we thereby actually partake of that great sacrifice which Christ offered, and of the benefits which that sacrifice purchased for mankind, the sanctifying and saving of our souls.”

“ I think I begin to understand it now, Miss Sage,” interrupted Elvire ; “ consecrating the

bread and wine does not change the substance of them, or, as you say, Christ's body and blood would be partaken of by the faithful and unfaithful alike ; but the bread is broken to represent the death of our Saviour, whose body was broken, and the wine is poured out to represent the shedding of His blood for us."

"Yes, exactly, Elvire ; this is done to carry out His command, 'Do this in remembrance of Me,' and we may rest assured when we join in this holy rite *with faith*, our souls will be as certainly refreshed by the spiritual reception of the body and blood of Christ, as our natural bodies are by the taking of bread and wine. What does St Paul say: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the body of Christ?' "*

"It seems to me, Sagey dear, the benefits to be derived from the right receiving of the Lord's Supper are very great, and yet how many keep back from it."

A deep sigh accompanied these words, for Elvire thought of Ralph.

Miss Sage noticed the sigh, and rightly inter-

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

preted its meaning, but making no comment on it, she remarked, "You are right, my dear; the benefits to a worthy communicant are great, incalculably so; I often think of Bishop Wilson's words: 'We do by this Sacrament keep up a continual correspondence with our Lord in heaven, and hold communion with Him and with all the members of His body, which receive nourishment and growth from Him as the branches from the tree in which they are grafted, and from which when they are separated they can bear no fruit, and are only fit to be burned.'

"Then, to show how necessary to our spiritual happiness he considers the frequent attendance at the Lord's Supper, he says, 'The love of Christ and the remembrance of His death ought to be very dear to us; and that the oftener we remember it in the manner He ordained, the more graces we shall receive from God—the firmer will be our faith, the surer our pardon, and the more comfortable our hopes of meeting Him, not as an enemy, but as a friend at whose table we have been so often entertained.'"

"How encouraging these words are, Sagey; indeed, all you have said has made me long more and more to receive my first communion."

“And have you thought, dear Elvire, of what is required of you—our next and last question in the Catechism?”

“You mean, Sagey, ‘What is required of them who come to the Lord’s Supper?’ Oh yes, I have thought well of all contained in the answer; first comes the subject of repentance.”

“By which you understand?” said Miss Sage, interrogatively.

“That I must feel sorry for my past sins, of omission as well as commission.”

“You are right, Elvire; we must not only truly repent of what we have done amiss, but we must be equally sorry for leaving undone what we ought to have done; this constitutes true repentance.”

“And it is what I have tried to feel, Sagey dear.”

“I believe you, Elvire, and firmly I believe, too, that you have a steadfast desire to lead a new life.”

“Oh yes, Sagey; I do pray and hope to do so.”

“In which case the next requirements will not be difficult; desires, such as you express and feel, are sure to be accompanied by a lively faith in God’s mercy, through Christ, and a thankful re-

membrance of His death, and then you are sure to be in charity with all men?"

"How nicely you have brought in the end of the Catechism, Sagey; I cannot, I feel, ever thank you enough, for all the explanations you have given me; I have but one regret."

"And what is that, Elvire?"

"That Ralph has not been with us since our confirmation."

"It grieves me too, Elvire, sincerely; but we must hope to win him back after Mr Percival's departure next week; I do not, I cannot, despair for Ralph; something tells me his heart is right towards God, and this falling away is sent to show him his weak point, and to teach him where he must seek for strength in the future."

"Oh, there they are!" cried Elvire, at the same moment catching a glance of Ralph and his friend, as they strolled arm in arm through the shrubbery, "shall I run after them?"

"I would not, dear, they are evidently avoiding us and the poor log-hut."

Elvire sighed and said, "Let us go and see Jimmer instead, shall we, Miss Sage?"

"By all means, if you wish it, dear; I promised I would look in again."

The kiln was quickly reached, when they found Jimmer had somewhat rallied since the morning. Old Zachary was seated by his side, as he lay resting outside the bed.

“He’s all alive, ma’am,” he said, rising, and making one of his best bows to the ladies; “he’s a main deal better than when you came in jest now, ma’am, and it seems to me what’s doing all this good is the prospes of the coming Sabbath; he talks of nothing else.”

Zachary was right; Jimmer’s whole soul was absorbed in the one thought, the one longing desire to be able to attend the celebration of the Lord’s Supper; the very hope seemed to buoy him up, and give him strength to move better than he had been able for some days past.

“Oh, if I can but be allowed to kneel there once, ma’am, I shall be thankful,” he said to Miss Sage; then when they were about to leave the kiln, with a burning flush over his bright countenance, he said to Elvire, “Missie, I wants to ask one thing of you afore you go; will you let me kneel aside you at the Lord’s table; I know it’s bold of me to ask you, a lady born, to kneel beside a poor lad like I, but you know it was you who first taught me, when I was a tiny

chap, where to find the God up in the skies, and so I feel somehow that I should like for us to be side by side, when we both for the first time receives the bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord's dying to save us."

For a moment Elvire felt too overcome to speak. Mistaking her silence, Jimmer continued, "You think I have been too bold, missie, then forgive me, for I meant no harm. I knows there'll be no difference atwixt us when we comes to God's kingdom, and I had so hoped we could have first felt this next Sunday."

"And so you shall, my poor Jimmer," said Elvire, taking his hand, "gladly will I kneel by your side, not indeed thinking that we are equal in God's sight; but, believing that *you* are an example for *me* to follow, that you are the more faithful servant, though you come from the kiln and I from The Court."

Side by side, those two young Christians did kneel the following Sunday, when for the first time they received the bread and wine, the outward sign of the spiritual reception of Christ's body and blood into their souls by faith.

It was the last time Jimmer ever went to church, indeed, the last time he ever left the kiln. Before the next Sunday dawned, he lay

prostrate and exhausted on his death-bed. But there was no expression of pain ; all bodily suffering was mercifully removed, and he lay there, patiently waiting the coming of the Lord's messenger, with a bright and radiant smile pervading his countenance. With such an example of trusting faith, such a longing desire to be absent from the body that he might be present with the Lord, before them, the party from The Court and Miss Sage could not fail to rejoice that the end was so near, inwardly hoping, as they looked on that calm, dying boy, that when their time should come, which sooner or later it must, that their last end might be like his.

Old Zachary alone felt regret ; sorrow-stricken and grievously afflicted, he refused to be comforted ; "the lad was all he'd got, and how could he get on or live without him ?" It was in vain that the party from The Court, and Miss Sage, promised to look after him ; that would not be "his lad, his Jimmer," he would say, "though he thanked them kindly all the same."

During the first week of Jimmer's last illness, Ralph held back from paying him visits ; it was not until Miss Sage and Elvire had frequently persuaded him to go and see the poor lad, who

was constant in his inquiries as to why he did not come, that he could be induced to enter the kiln. When at last he did so, they noticed somewhat of a guilty and ashamed look spread over his fine features whilst he stood beside the sick-bed, and looked down on the dying youth. Ralph took care never to go to the kiln by himself, and was equally anxious not to be left alone with Jimmer, though he, on his part, evidently longed for a private interview, and did his best to detain Ralph after his other visitors had said "Good-bye." But it was all to no purpose. Ralph invariably had a tangible excuse for not remaining just at that precise moment; he would come in again presently, but the *presently* never arrived.

Jimmer had been lying on his bed just three weeks, when the wished-for opportunity at length presented itself. Miss Sage and Elvire were at the kiln paying one of their customary calls, when Ralph entered, saying brightly as he approached the bed, "Now, Jimmer, I have the whole of the afternoon for you; I saw Miss Sage and my sister come in, so I ran on to join them."

Ralph was not a little vexed and discomposed when Miss Sage said, "I am very glad to hear

you can remain, Ralph, for Elvire and I are obliged to cut our visit short to-day, having promised your mamma to fetch Cyril home from school, and to execute some little commissions for her in the village; we shall now feel more comfortable in leaving Jimmer, who seems rather exhausted just at this moment, knowing you will be here to amuse him and see to his wants. You must give him a spoonful of that brandy-and-water every twenty minutes, or half-hour; you will see that he does not miss taking it, will you not, Ralph? so much depends on his having plenty of nourishment and stimulants."

"I'll do my best," replied Ralph, inwardly vexed beyond measure at the prospect of being left alone with Jimmer, whom he knew instinctively was all on the *qui vive* to talk with him on his late thoughtless course; so hoping to change their determination, he said to Miss Sage, "Could not one of you remain? ladies make better nurses than men, and I think Jimmer might like your services better than mine."

"No, no, Mr Ralph," spoke up Jimmer, quickly, "I wants so little, any one can do for me. I should like *you* to attend to me this once, if you will be so good, Mr Ralph."

"Then be it so," said Ralph, seating himself somewhat reluctantly by Jimmer's side.

No sooner were the two youths left alone than Jimmer made up his mind to lose no time in speaking on the subject nearest his heart, but before commencing he said, "Mr Ralph, will you be so good as to reach me down Peter, that I may have a look at him ; I haven't seen him to-day since father fed him, and somehow it does me good to watch him a bit, though he does move but slowly now, poor old chap ! he's getting old and used up, and can't no longer spin his little wheel round.

"Thank you, thank you, Mr Ralph," the sick youth continued, taking the dormouse out of the cage, and holding it gently in his wasted hand. "See, Mr Ralph, his eyes look dim, his coat is shaggy and ruffled-up like. It does me good to watch him, his case is so like my own, his work here is so well-nigh over, poor little Peter !"

"I don't think he can last much longer," returned Ralph, "we shall miss our pet, shall we not, Jimmer ?" he continued, stroking the mouse with one finger, glad that Jimmer had chosen the little creature as a subject of conversation instead of the one he had expected to be brought forward.

“Yes, *you*’ll miss him I know, Mr Ralph,” replied Jimmer, with a marked emphasis on the *you*. “Poor little Peter! but you see he’s had a pleasant sort of a life after all, and it’s better for him to go off gradual like, than to suffer a long time.” Stroking him gently, and looking at him fondly in silence for a moment or so, Jimmer presently said, “When he’s gone you’ll have him stuffed, won’t you, Mr Ralph? and keep him for my sake, so that when you looks on him you may remember Jimmer, first in his little red ragged coat and when he was no better nor a heathen; and then call him to mind as a Christian, passing away from a world of care and trouble and sickness, to a happy home in heaven.”

“You must not talk like that, Jimmer,” said Ralph, feelingly, “you know we have brought you round before, and we must hope to do so again.”

Jimmer shook his head, and replied in a serious though happy tone, “Never, Mr Ralph, never; before the leaves fade on the trees; before the autumn winds blow round and round the kiln, as the Scripture says, ‘this place will know me no more,’ my body will be crumbling in the dust.”

Inadvertently, without reflecting what the effect might be on the sick youth, with a visible shudder Ralph cried, "Poor, poor Jimmer!"

"Oh no, don't say that, Mr Ralph; I'm not to be pitied; poor Jimmer, indeed! no, no, it's happy, happy Jimmer, for I've tried and found how gracious the Lord is, and now I'm only longing for his last call to come. I am happy, Mr Ralph, happier than I ever felt afore. The Lord has granted my desires, and nearly all my prayers. I have but one trouble left, and that, I believes, He will take away, afore He sends His messenger for me."

"What is your trouble, Jimmer?" asked Ralph, kindly, "can I help you in it? I suppose it concerns your father?"

"No, Mr Ralph, it's nothing along of father; I has no fear about him. He has promised me he'll never leave this place, this kiln that you have all made so like a home for us; and the squire and his lady have promised to provide him with work constant, so that he may never want, and the two other ladies says, they'll never forget to look after him, and I know they won't. I knows they'll all keep their word, and I believe you'll look after him a bit too; so you see, Mr

Ralph, I've no cause to be afraid about father ; particular now that he has *quite* given up the drink ; besides, don't I know that the good God above Miss Elvire taught me to know and to love will look after him, and bring him to me in heaven, all in his good time ? It won't be long neither, for you know, Mr Ralph, father's getting an old man. I've no other belongings to care about, and as to myself, I am at peace within—my cares is all over in that way. Then there's the squire and my lady, and Miss Sage, and Miss Elvire, and Master Cyril, who brings me back at times, and all my other kind friends, I am happy about them, as I feels sure they are on the way to heaven ; there is but the one thing that I still wants, that I still prays for, and that's about you, Mr Ralph."

"About me, Jimmer !"

"Yes, Mr Ralph, about you : my mind has been troubled about you ever since Mr Horris, as they calls him, came to The Court the day as we was confirmed ; ever since that day you have not seemed the same, and you haven't given your mind as afore to things that concerns your soul ; I've seen, and I've heard it was so, and it has been a trouble to me in my last hours, Mr Ralph."

Noticing that Ralph looked vexed, Jimmer continued : " You musn't be angered against me, Mr Ralph, I means no harm ; I loves you too well, so you must forgive me if I speaks my mind plain—there's no time to dilly dally, for my day is far spent, and night is at hand, when no man can work, and so I must say what I wants to say, now or never."

" I don't know why you need be grieved, Jimmer, about me ; I have done nothing so *very wrong* that I know of," said Ralph.

" We can do wrong by not doing, I take it, Mr Ralph ; we can leave things undone that we ought to have done, and that's wrong, that's a sin, and if we forgets God, that's another wrong, another sin, and that's what I fear Mr Horris has been leading you to do : he kept you from the Lord's table ; if he'd not a come you would have knelt there with Miss Elvire and me ; I know you would, for afore your mind was that way inclined, but then he comes, and being a worldly young gentleman, he tempts you all the other way, and he keeps you from taking that holy Sacrament, and from taking the bread and wine, as signs that your soul is strengthened at the same time by the body and blood of our Blessed Saviour, if

you receive the same faithfully and worthily. Mr Horris did all this ; he caused you to forget God, and kept you from the Lord's Supper ; and that was *his* sin, that was the wrong *he* committed. You, Mr Ralph (forgive my speaking out plain), left all this undone, and that was *your* sin,—that was the wrong *you* committed.”

Jimmer paused, tired and exhausted; Ralph made no answer, but rising he poured out a spoonful of brandy-and-water, and gave it to Jimmer, telling him he must take it before he talked any more.

The break in the conversation did not check it or change the topic, as Ralph hoped it might, for Jimmer's remarks were beginning to make him very uncomfortable.

The sick youth noticed the distressed look in the young heir's face, and seeing at once his advantage, he went on with fresh vigour and renewed strength, after swallowing the stimulant Ralph had given him.

“ But I've not told you exactly yet, Mr Ralph, what is the one thing I still wants, and prays for ; and as I said afore, I must not lose time, as my hour is getting short.”

“ You said it concerned me, what would you have me to do, Jimmer ? ”

“ This is what I would have, what I prays constant for, that you may, Mr Ralph, remember your Creator in the days of your youth, as the Scripture teaches us, and I wants you to promise me that you ’ll think over the last three weeks—and when you have done so, and found out what ’s gone amiss, that you ’ll see that it does not take the same turn again for the future ; and promise me, Mr Ralph, please do, that you ’ll think of *what* you promised to God when you said them two words—‘ I do ’ ; and *then*, if you finds you haven’t done *quite* ALL that you ought, try to make it different in the days that is to come. Let me feel, before I leaves this place for a better, that the next time Miss Elvire and God’s people kneel before His table, that there you will be amidst them, ready and longing to receive that holy Sacrament ordained by Christ himself. Don’t let Mr Horris, nor nobody, come atwixt you and God. Mr Ralph, it may answer very well here, and give you plenty of pleasure and amusement, but it ’ll bide you nothing when you comes to lie where I does at this moment, when you are about to die, and stand in the presence of Him you ’ve forgotten to serve.”

Once more Jimmer paused, and again Ralph

looked down on him, sighing deeply as he gazed on the wasted form before him, and realised the solemn truth, that if he were spared even beyond the seventy years, the allotted life of man, still the end *must* and *surely would come* at last, and he would be standing, as his poor friend then was, on the brink of the grave that leads either to everlasting happiness or to eternal woe!

With eyes moistened by rising tears, Ralph bent over the dying lad, and whispered gently, "I will promise, Jimmer, *all—everything* you have asked—indeed I will; and I will endeavour to lead the life I promised I would when, kneeling side by side, we said—"I do.""

"Thank you, Mr Ralph, thank you; God be praised, for the Lord has heard my prayer and granted my desire. Now, put Peter in his cage, Mr Ralph, and take my hand in yours once more—yes, like that; you did not like to shake hands with the little chap in the red coat once—but things is changed—that time is past—and we are brothers; brothers in Christ, ain't we, Mr Ralph? There's no difference atwixt us in God's sight, though you lives at The Court up yonder, and me in the kiln—I'm glad there is no difference in His sight, Mr Ralph, 'cause then we shall be able to

be side by side of each other in His kingdom when you joins me there."

Noticing that Jimmer became rather paler, Ralph gave him another spoonful of brandy-and-water, then seated himself again near the bed, and taking both his hands in his, he looked sorrowfully down on the countenance before him, so pallid, so wasted, and so wan !

Jimmer returned Ralph's look with a sweet smile, which expressed, as plainly as words could, quiet resignation and gentle patience, then after a short pause he said softly, " Will you promise once more, once more, Mr Ralph ? "

" I promise, Jimmer ; I promise, my dear good Jimmer, that I'll try to follow the example you have set me. I'll promise faithfully to endeavour to love God as you have done, and to try and serve Him as you have ever since Elvire first taught you where and how He might be found."

" Thank you once more, thank you, Mr Ralph, now I die content—and happy ; so content ! so happy ! happy ! happy ! "—

Jimmer's fingers compressed tightly round Ralph's hands as they lay in his, then the hold relaxed suddenly.

Ralph started at the strange sensation that came

across him, shot through him as it were, with that pressure, and he trembled palpably at the pallor that shadowed the sick lad's face.

“Jimmer! Jimmer!” he cried, “are you worse? Speak, oh speak! do not look at me like that!”

Ralph rushed to the table, poured out some more brandy-and-water, and with trembling hand held some in a spoon to the parted lips. But there was no answering movement—the mouth remained open and still—the eyes fixed in a vacant stare—Jimmer's spirit, purified by the blood and through the merits of the Saviour he loved so well, had returned to the God who gave it!

With a wild cry of pain and anguish, for it was the first time he had ever looked on death, Ralph let the glass and spoon fall from his hand, and hastened from the kiln to summon Zachary, whom he knew to be at work for Mr Duncombe at a short distance from the kiln. Having found him, and broken the sad news to him as gently as he could, he begged a fellow-labourer to accompany the poor old sorrow-stricken father to his home, and not to leave him alone, in these first hours of his desolation and bereavement.

Then Ralph bent his steps in the direction of

the village, hoping to meet Miss Sage and Elvire. He missed them, and was at the time vexed and disappointed, but in after years (when he as squire stood in his father's place, surrounded by light-hearted children, and merry nephews and nieces), he looked back on that disappointment, the missing of those whom he sought, as a wise interposition of Providence, whilst the scene he had just witnessed was fresh in his memory. It had proved the best time for reflection, the very moment of all others for meditation and prayer. Later, its impressions might not have been as vivid, or as deep as in those first sad moments of affliction, consequently in the future he felt he had cause to thank God for giving him that opportunity to "examine himself, whether he repented him truly of his former sins;" to think over his solemn promise to the pedlar's son, and to ask himself how he should feel when his last hour arrived if he failed in that promise.

But the Lord heard and answered the dying Jimmer's prayer: from that time Ralph became an altered being—no more wavering, no more halting between two opinions: once and for ever he then made his choice; it was to be God, and he would serve Him. And before he reached The

Court on that eventful day, from seeing the last of the youth at the kiln, he began, not only to understand, but to realise that he was, besides being an inheritor to that princely domain, the house of his father, also heir, joint-heir with Christ, to an inheritance that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens.

And as he walked through those richly-wooded grounds, and traversed the paths so often crossed by Jimmer, he fully determined to keep the poor lad's example ever fresh in his memory, steadfastly purposing, with God's help, from that time to *lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death, and be in charity with all men!*

THE END.

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