

Cadbury,

dear little Anne

THE
BROKEN BOUGH.



BIRMINGHAM :
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“WHAT a beautiful afternoon it is!” said little Charles to his brother, on a fine Sunday in the month of May, as they both rose from their seat in the class to return home. “It is indeed,” replied John, as he peeped through the old casement window of the school, and saw the pretty lambs feeding in the broad,

green meadow in the distance; "it is indeed, and a fine walk we shall have in the orchard, too."

Now little Charles loved his school and his teacher also; but the thought of going home had its own peculiar charms, for he loved his dear father and mother, and his baby sister Jane; and now he thought, "I shall soon be home, and tell them all that my teacher has told me." Indeed the children in the class had spent a very happy day; for Mr. Fulton, their teacher, was so kind, and took such pains to make the lessons plain, that all his scholars loved his company; some of them even said that they had never seen such beauties in the Bible until he taught them.

They had been repeating that afternoon those verses in the 15th chapter of St. John's gospel, in which the Saviour compares himself to a vine, and his disciples to the branches; and as the orchards were all in full blossom, Mr.

Fulton reminded his scholars of the beautiful change which had taken place in the appearance of the trees within the last few weeks ; and added, that though *their* growth and beauty arose partly from the vegetable life which God had given them, and partly from the sun's warm rays, and gentle dews and showers, yet that both their life and growth must be attributed to God.

When they had done reading, Mr. Fulton said, " You see, my dear children, that the vine is intended to represent the dear Redeemer, through whom spiritual life is conveyed to his people, who are as the branches in the vine ; and let me impress this truth upon your minds—that they who are made partakers of this life, are as much dependent on the Holy Spirit to maintain its existence, as the branch is dependent on the vine for continued nourishment and support."

It is delightful to a teacher, when

thus engaged, to find that his scholars are attentive; and Mr. Fulton was much pleased by a remark from little John, who said, "I think, sir, the trees seem to explain the observation which you made this afternoon, that all the followers of Christ love to follow his example, and may be known by their conduct; for, sir, I see that all the branches of a tree bear the same kind of blossoms, and those of each sort of tree differ from all others." "That is quite true, my dear," said Mr. Fulton; "I am glad you notice these things, for they are both pleasing and instructive. But there is another lesson which may be gathered from the trees, and it is this—that although the branches differ much in size and strength, and therefore vary much in the number of the blossoms seen upon them, yet the *smallest* will go on increasing until it may, in time, become very large: thus *you*, though now so young, and like the tender twigs upon

the trees, with here and there a blossom, will, I trust, as years roll on, grow up both strong and fruitful in the ways of God."

Their teacher was about to say something more on the same subject, but the school bell rang to prepare for the address: the children then put by their Bibles, and stood up to sing that pretty hymn,

How sweet the precious Saviour's words,
 What solid joy this truth affords
 To those who early pray;
 They shall the heavenly boon obtain,
 And Jesus and his favour gain,
 Who walk in wisdom's way.

After the address they sang another hymn, and then the school was closed with prayer.

It was at this time that little Charles and John began the conversation I have mentioned, about their walk in the orchard on their way home; and as Mr. Fulton overheard them, and had been

interrupted in his remarks by the ringing of the school bell, he thus addressed them: "My dear boys, as I am going up the green lanes towards your father's house, we will all walk through the orchard together; and perhaps I may there find something to supply a better explanation of this day's lesson, than I have yet given you."

The little boys were both much pleased with Mr. Fulton's offer, and wishing their fellow-scholars good-bye, set off with him towards their home.

As they walked through the meadows, and saw the young lambs feeding with their flocks, and noticed their shepherd who watched them, Mr. Fulton called their attention to the language of King David in the 23rd Psalm, where he speaks with such confidence in the Divine protection and care, and says, "The Lord is *my Shepherd*; I shall not want." Now, as both John and Charles seemed to be much pleased when their

teacher referred them to this most beautiful psalm, he proceeded to say, "You see, my dear boys, that each of the sheep in the flock is *equally* the object of the shepherd's care; and there is not a lamb, however young or weakly, but he is anxious for its safety. Just so, the Lord is the Shepherd and Keeper of his people; for it is said of him, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead them; and if *you* are his disciples, he will protect you as the lambs of his flock.'

The feeblest lamb amidst the flock
 Shall be its shepherd's care;
 While folded in our Saviour's arms,
 We're safe from every snare.

Here Charles, who had seen some of the lambs pass through an opening in the hedge, and wander from the fold unseen by the shepherd, said to his teacher, "But the lambs of Christ's

flock must be more secure than these, sir; for *this* shepherd *cannot see all his flock at once*, although he may wish to do so: but you told us, last Sunday, that those who love the Saviour, however young or poor, are each as much the object of his special care, as if there were no others in the world." "I am very glad to find you remember that remark," said his teacher; "for, as you grow up in life, you may find it a comfort to think with Jacob, '*He knoweth the way that I take;*' and to adopt the language of David as your own, '*I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*'"

By this time they had again entered the green lane, from which they had departed to pursue the path across the meadow; and having gone over the stile by the village church, they entered the orchard through which Charles and John had expected such a pleasant walk.

I do not wonder at their wishing to go home that way, for the trees were all so full of beautiful pink-and-white blossoms, and the birds sang so sweetly as they hopped from twig to twig, or fluttered on the branches, that you could not have been there without rejoicing with them.

It was not long before Mr. Fulton invited the attention of his scholars to a little apple tree, on every twig of which were buds and blossoms. The two little boys, on seeing it, cried out together, "Oh, what a pretty tree!" to which their teacher replied by saying, "And I hope you will be like it." This remark surprised them both, especially little Charles, who looked at his teacher as if he would enquire, "How can I be like this tree?" He was not kept long in suspense, however, for Mr. Fulton observing his astonishment, explained himself by saying, "I wish that, as this little tree has so early put forth blos-

soms, so you, my dear boys, may both begin, while young, to show that you are His, who said, 'I love them that love me, and those who seek me early shall find me.' "

As they walked onward, the grass beneath the trees was strewed in some places with blossoms, which the recent thunder-storm had broken off; and whilst the little boys stooped to pick up some of them, exclaiming, "What a pity! what a pity!" their teacher availed himself of that opportunity also to teach them a lesson. "It is a pity," said he; "for each of them might have become a fine rosy apple; but they will not have fallen off in vain, if we learn *this truth* from the circumstance—that death sometimes calls away those who have scarcely yet begun to live to God: hence we sing at school,

'Why should we say 'tis yet too soon
To hear of heaven, or think of death?
A flower may fade before 'tis noon,
And I this day may lose my breath.'

But it is cheering to see a young tree promising, as it were, to be fruitful; and it is much more pleasing still to see young persons setting out in wisdom's ways."

"I remember, sir," said John, "that last year our pear tree was full of blossoms; but father said the blight had killed them." "Yes, my dear boy," said Mr. Fulton, "it is not only storms and tempests, but blights also, which disappoint our fondest expectations: so also there are moral blights, as I have sometimes told you in the class at school. You both remember poor George King, the orphan boy; how well he said his tasks, and how serious and attentive he was; but when his pious mother died, he fell into bad company, and is now a sad evidence that those who associate with the wicked have turned their backs upon the ways of God. O, then, flee from bad people, bad books, and bad scenes, as from that which will blight the best interests of your souls."

Their teacher had never had such a happy opportunity of conversing with them until now, and as they both seemed to look upon the trees around them as so many objects from which instruction might be gathered, he proceeded to point out a circumstance which had before escaped their notice; it was this, that where the branches had been *sheltered* by the tree from the passing tempest, *there* all the blossoms were unhurt. "Now," said Mr. Fulton to his young companions, "on thinking of our Saviour's language in this day's lesson, 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches,' we may learn not only that the life of our souls must be drawn from him, but that if we bring any fruit to perfection, it is the result of his most gracious and protecting care."

At this moment Mr. Fulton's attention was drawn to one of the largest trees in the orchard, which seemed to surpass all the others in the beauty and abund-

ance of its blossoms ; but the boisterous winds had broken off a fine large bough, one end of which lay spread upon the grass, whilst the other continued hanging by a long strip of bark which it had torn away in falling. It must have been some time in this situation ; for the tree was not only full of blossoms, as I have told you, but was putting forth its young green leaves in every direction, whilst, on this poor branch, there was not a trace of either bud or blossom ; but it hung upon the ground both dry and dead.

This was too striking an object to be passed by without an observation ; therefore their teacher immediately availed himself of it, to explain that part of the chapter which his scholars had been learning, in which the Saviour says, “ If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.” He was very happy in having an object before him by which the meaning of this sentence could be made plain, and

which furnished a proof to his little scholars that what he had been telling them was true.

He felt very anxious, also, to impress upon their minds that true religion does not consist merely *in being called a Christian*, or in any merely outward distinction; but that it is a living principle in the heart.

Without the fruit the Lord expects,
 Knowledge will make our state the worse;
 The barren trees he still rejects,
 And soon will blast them with his curse.

“Now,” said Mr. Fulton, “you see, my dear boys, that the broken bough has no life, *because it is severed from the tree*, and therefore gets no sap or moisture from the root. And as our Lord remarks, ‘The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine;’ so the broken bough has not a bud or blossom, whilst the tree is full of both. You see, then, that there must be *life and union*, or there can be no fruitful-

ness ; and as the root supplies the living sap to all the branches, so Jesus is the source of life to all his people. It is your blessing, my dear boys, to have godly parents, but do not think that *that* circumstance will prove a substitute for true religion in your *own souls*. No ; *relations are not life*. See how the bough hangs to its parent tree by the strip of bark : it is true, they are not altogether parted ; but, whilst the tree is *living*, the broken bough is *dead*. Learn, then, from this day's task, and also from the objects upon which we have been looking, that without an interest in Christ and union to him, *you must perish*. No Christian relatives can save you : *their* life is drawn from him, but they cannot give *that* life to you. It is possible you may have thought yourselves almost disciples, because you have mingled with those who are such ; but *this fellowship*, whilst you keep your hearts from Christ, is only like the strip

of bark which holds the broken bough;
no life flows from it. Let us, then, on
parting, each go home, and pray to him
'who quickeneth whom he will,' (John,
v., 21) to make us live indeed."

Though self-destroyed, O Lord, we are,
Yet let us feel what *thou* canst do;
Thy word the ruin can repair,
And all our hearts create anew.



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*I love them that love me, and those that seek
me early shall find me.—Prov., viii., 17.*

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How sweet the precious Saviour's words!
What solid joy this truth affords
To those who early pray:
They shall the heav'nly boon obtain,
And Jesus and his favour gain
Who walk in wisdom's way.

The Saviour will their souls regard
In tender love, and well reward
The service of their bloom;
Such early piety and grace
Shall well prepare for riper days,
And for the opening tomb.

Come, children, hear your Saviour's voice,
Make him the object of your choice,
Give him your warmest love;
For 'twas for such as you he died,
For such that he was crucified,
For such he pleads above.