



DRY GROUND

BY

MRS. SHERWOOD

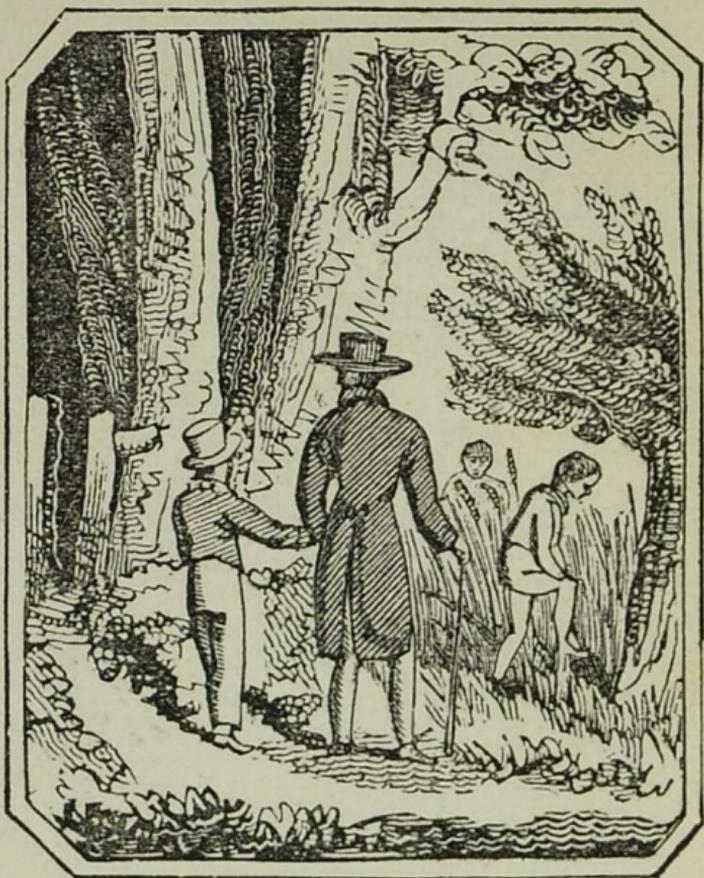
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PRICE ONE PENNY.



“The old man led me up to the place where these men were at work ; for he had brought me here on purpose ; and he said to the workmen, ‘ What are you doing here ? ’ ”

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DRY GROUND

BY MRS. SHERWOOD

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BEARER,"

"THE LITTLE WOODMAN AND HIS DOG,"

ETC., ETC.

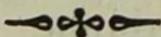
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THE DRY GROUND.



THERE was an old man in our country, when I was a little boy, who was the delight of all the children round about; because he had a way of telling such pretty stories, that we were never tired of hearing him.

I remember one day that he came to my father's house, and invited me



to take a walk with him. My father was not at home, but my mother gave me leave; so I took hold of his hand, and away we went. It was autumn; the sun was shining, the trees had not yet lost their leaves, the birds were singing, and all around was very pleasant. The old man walked slowly; but I made a skip behind and a skip before for every step he took, though I seldom let his hand go. "I am glad you came to-day, Sir," I said; "because I had a lesson to learn, and I don't like lessons."

"What do you mean by lessons, Charles?" said the old man.

"Things out of books, Sir," I answered: "and I don't like them."

"Books are not pleasant, my little boy," replied he, "when we do not understand them; but they are very pleasant when we do. But you are not to think that there are no lessons but those which are found in books; there are many lessons to be learned

as we walk about the fields, and in deserts and wild places, where there is not a single book to be met with."

"O, Sir," I replied, "I should like to learn some of those lessons which I am not obliged to look for in books."

"Well, then," said the old man, "I will teach you one. You shall learn half of it to-day, and the other half when the summer comes, and the fresh leaves appear, and the little birds sing; for I cannot teach it all in one day: and if you like my lesson, I will shew you where you may find something like it written in a book; and I hope it may help you to like that one book, at least."

"But why cannot I learn the whole of your lesson to-day, Sir?" I said. "Why must I stay till next summer for the other half of it?"

"I will not tell you now," said the old man: "you must wait with patience."

Now all this while we were walking

on; and we had crossed a field, and come into a little wood, and from the wood we had come out upon a piece of ground, where was a marsh: and there were many men working about the marsh, and they had cut ditches in various directions from the marsh. So the old man led me up to the place where these men were at work; for he had brought me here on purpose; and he said to the workmen, "What are you doing here?"

"This place," replied the workmen, ' is so marshy, and covered with wa-



ter, that it will produce nothing good, and is quite unfit for cultivation: so we are draining the water from it; and when we have done this, we shall plant it with various trees."

The old man then bade me look towards the middle of the marsh, which was quite covered with muddy water, and scarcely a reed or bulrush was to be seen; and he desired me to notice how this water was draining off through the ditches which had been cut, some running one way, and some another.

"The marsh will soon be dry, Sir, at this rate," I said; "and then I suppose the people may dig and plant it, and it may become a pleasant garden."

"Yes," said he, "bearing flowers, and herbs, and fruit trees yielding fruit, and shrubs having fragrant blossoms. Would you like to see it when it is planted?"

"O, I should like it very much:

and I dare say," I said, "that this is what I am to wait for till next summer?"

"Yes," said the old man, "that is to be the second part of your lesson; and your first part is to look at this water, and examine well how it runs off, and tell me whether you do not here see the representation of something of which you have often read."

I considered a little while, and then answered, "Yes, I do: this is like the great waters in the first chapter of Genesis, which covered the whole earth, and, when the Lord commanded them, they all ran to their places, and let the dry land appear."

"Well answered," said the old man: "and now no more of this till next summer, and then we will finish our lesson." So he took hold of my hand, and we walked on, and saw many other curious things, and went home again before it was dark.

Months passed away after this: the

leaves fell from the trees, the snows and frosts of winter came. and at length the cuckoo arrived, and the linnets filled the woods with their pleasant songs. I had often seen the old man and walked with him during that time, but he had never taken me towards the marsh. At last, however, he came, and said that he would take me there, in order that I might finish my lesson; and my mother gave me leave to go.

So we crossed the field, and passed through the wood, and came out upon the place where the marsh had been, and I hardly knew the place again. It had been inclosed with a great fence, and laid out in green plots and beds of flowers, with young trees, all fresh and flourishing, standing in order by the side of the plots of grass. "O, Sir!" I said, "can this be the marsh which looked so miserable a few months since?"

"This," replied the old man, "is



the marsh which, when the waters were drained from it, became dry ground, and was found fit for cultivation, and ready for the reception of fruit trees, herbs, and flowers; and here you will soon see a beautiful and delightful garden, a place where birds will find a pleasant shade, and bees abundance of the sweetest honey. And now, my good boy," he said, "you have heard the second part of your lesson; and you have nothing now to do but to tell me if you have

ever read any thing like this latter part of your lesson in any book, and to tell me, also, if there is any hidden meaning in all this."

"O, I know very well, Sir," I said, "what book it is where there is something very like this; but I don't know what you mean by a hidden meaning."

"These things, and almost all the things which are found in nature," said the old man, "are pictures (or emblems) of spiritual things. The glorious sun which shines in the heavens is the picture of God the Son; the dove, which lives in the woods, is an emblem of the Holy Spirit; and the serpent of the Evil One: and, in the same manner, you will find, in all that you have seen in this place, the picture of many things which really happened on earth.

"Mighty waters are the representation of the multitude of worldly people; and these being drawn away from the earth into their own places,

the dry land becomes a type or emblem of the Church of Christ, which is separated from the rest of the world, and is then fitted for the nourishment and preservation of the saints of God, who are like fair trees, bringing forth pleasant fruit. Pray, my little boy, that you may become one of the beautiful plants growing in the garden of God, and watered by his right-hand."

The old man then taught me to sing the following hymn.



WE are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground ;
A little spot inclin'd by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness.

Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,
Planted by God the Father's hand ;
And all his springs in Zion flow
To make the young plantation grow.

Awake, O heavenly wind, and come,
Blow on this garden of perfume ;
Spirit divine, descend and breathe
A gracious gale on plants beneath.

Make our best spices flow abroad,
To entertain our Saviour God :
And faith, and love, and joy appear,
And every grace be active here.

Let my beloved come, and taste
His pleasant fruits at his own feast :
" I come, my spouse, I come," he cries,
With love and pleasure in his eyes.

Our Lord into his garden comes,
Well pleas'd to smell our poor perfumes ;
And calls us to a feast divine,
Sweeter than honey, milk, or wine.

" Eat of the tree of life, my friends,
The blessings that my Father sends ;
Your taste shall all my dainties prove,
And drink abundance of my love."

Jesus, we will frequent thy board,
And sing the bounties of our Lord :
But the rich food on which we live
Demands more praise than tongues can give.

FINIS.

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