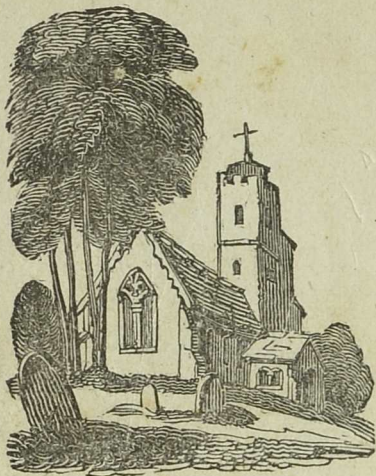


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FRONTISPIECE.



ALL glorious is the place,
The Temple of the Lord;
Where sinners seek his face,
And listen to his word,
Where crowds approach his gracious throne,
And praise and bless the Three in One.

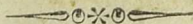
THE
MAY - BEE.

BY

MRS. SHERWOOD,

*Author of "Little Henry and his Bearer,"
&c. &c.*

Second Edition.



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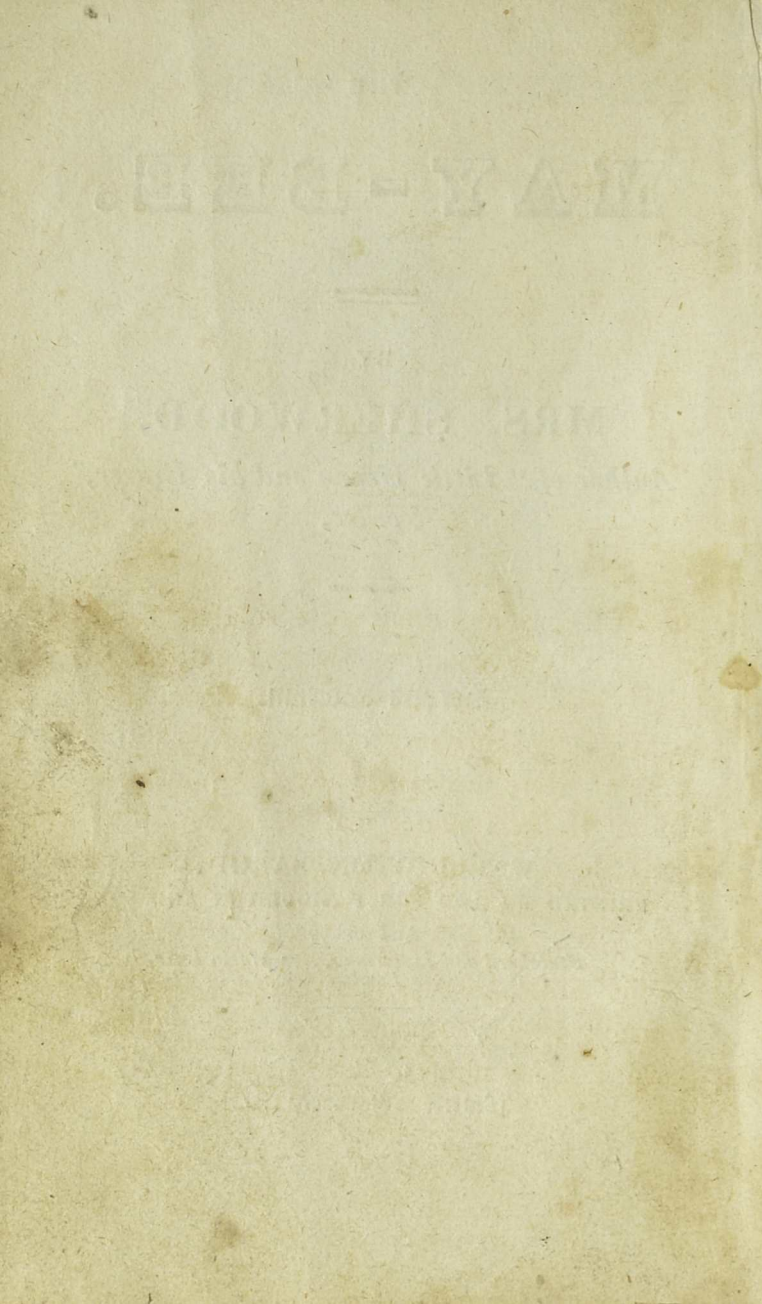
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Elizabeth Agnes Wy Gordon

THE

MAY-BEE.

THERE is a certain little village in the north of this country, where a number of small black-and-white cottages, surrounded with gardens, are scattered over a beautiful heath. Here are also many elms and oaks which, in the summer season, afford a pleasant shade to the little flocks which feed upon the heath.

The best house in this village is the parsonage, which is placed in the church-yard. The church itself is a neat old

building, with a fine tower in which the rooks have made their habitation for many years.

In this village lived little Harry. This poor boy had lost his father and mother before he could speak, when he was put under the care of an old woman, who hav-



ing a little cottage and orchard of her own, maintained herself by selling fruit and vegetables, and feeding pigs.

This poor woman was very ignorant, having no knowledge of God, nor even so much as a Bible in her house. Neither did she ever set her foot in a church, although the good clergyman had often invited her to meet him there, and warned her of the danger she incurred by neglecting the public worship of God.

This old woman did not use little Harry well; for she took no care of his soul, neither sending him to church, nor putting him to school: so that he remained as ignorant of his God and of his Saviour, as the poorest black child in the countries over sea.

It happened one Sunday morning in the fair month of May, while the cuckoo was singing in the woods, and the bees were gathering their sweet food from flower to flower in the cottage gardens, that the old woman, after making little Harry sweep the kitchen and feed the pigs, gave him leave to go out and play where he pleased till dinner-time.

For, as I before said, she neither went to church herself, nor sent the little boy thither; and, indeed, little Harry's clothes were such as she would have been ashamed for her neighbours to have seen in the church, since there was scarcely a whole thread about him.

Harry therefore set off to play, not heed-



ing the bells of the church, which sounded sweetly from the old tower, inviting all Christians within hearing of them, from the

hills and from the valleys to come forth and serve the Lord.

So little Harry ran through the garden and the orchard in which his mammy's cottage stood, (for he always called the old woman by that name,) whence, getting over the stile, he passed into a shady green lane on the other side. And now, as he sauntered down the lane thinking what he should do, he saw before him a neighbour's boy, called William, climbing up the hedge, and looking for something among the bushes.

“What are you doing there, William?” said little Harry.

“Doing!” said William, “why I am looking for humbuzzes. Here is one that I have knocked down with my hat, and he is fallen into the bushes; so I am trying to pick him out—aye and, now I have got him, I'll make him smart for giving me so much trouble.”

“Why, what will you do with him?” said little Harry.

“Why, look you here,” said William, jumping down from the hedge; “I shall spin him on this pin.”

So the wicked boy took a crooked pin out of his pocket, tied to a long piece of thread; when thrusting the crooked pin through the tail of the harmless insect, and taking hold of the end of the string, he whirled the poor creature round in the air.

“There,” said he, “see how he spins! and hark! what a buzzing he makes! Come, Harry, fetch a pin and a bit of thread, and we’ll catch another for you to spin.”

Little Harry therefore ran home to beg a pin of his mammy, and a bit of thread, with which he soon returned to William in the lane.

Now, by the time that he was come back, William had caught another may-bee, or cockchafer, or humbuzz, (for so that insect is called in different places,) which he found feeding quietly on a green leaf; so he taught Harry how to put the pin through his tail, and spin him.

And thus these two naughty boys went down the lane, spinning the poor little may-bees, the church-bells continuing to ring all the while.



On reaching the bottom of the lane, they saw some one coming towards them over the fields; when William called to Henry, who was a little behind, saying, "Here comes the parson! He has been to see old John Smith, who is sick; and if he catches us with these humbuzzes, he will be sure to give it us. So make haste, and hide yours. I have put mine, string and all, into my pocket."

Little Harry having no pocket in his tattered jacket, put his hand with the may-bee in it under his ragged pinafore. But he looked so very red and confused, that when the good clergyman came up close to them, it was easy for him to perceive, by little Harry's face, that he had been doing some mischief which he wanted to conceal.

"My little boys," said the clergyman as he drew near to them, "you are wandering about this Sabbath morning, with your

backs turned upon the church, though the bells are ringing for divine service. And I fear," added he, "that you are engaged in some mischief, besides that of breaking the Sabbath by playing in the lanes, when you ought to be preparing for church."

The clergyman then looked very earnestly at each of the little boys; and observing that Harry's hand was under his pinafore, and William's in his pocket, he seized their hands, and made them shew what it was that they wished so much to hide. Upon which this good clergyman took the poor insects from these naughty boys; and, disengaging them from the pins, he placed them gently on the palm of his hand, while he reproved the little boys very severely for their cruelty.

"Look," said he, "at these pretty creatures, which you have been thus cruelly tormenting: see what a fine brown polished coat they have on their backs, and how

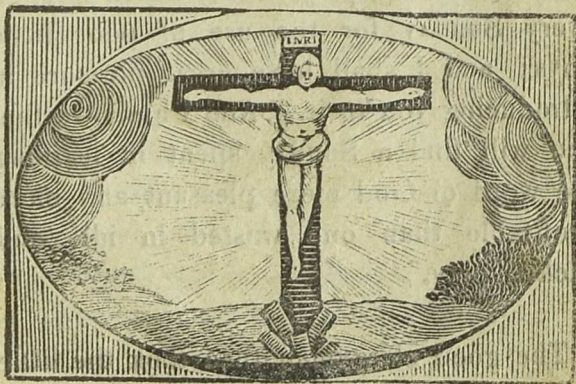
beautifully their breasts are variegated with white and black. See also what a delicate soft down covers their throats, and how bright and black their eyes appear. These little creatures are made by a divine hand; and you have no more right to put them to pain, than a giant would have to seize and torture you."

He then said to the little boys, "How should you like me now to take out my penknife, and thrust it through your hand? And yet you have caused these little insects to suffer as much pain as you would feel, if a sharp instrument were forced through one of your limbs."

The good clergyman went on to represent to the little boys, that those children who take delight in tormenting living creatures of any kind, may be compared even to devils. "You have often heard the devil spoken of, I doubt not," he said, "though you never come to church; because it is a

common custom for people, who do not love God, to talk of the devil, and to jest with his name: but it will be no sport to such people," added he, "when they come to die, and really find themselves in his power. It is the sole pleasure of the devil, to cause anguish and distress. He first tempts men, and women, and children, to become wicked, and forsake their God; after which, having them completely under his dominion, he derides and torments them without pity.

"It was to save us from this our dread-



ful enemy, that the Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven, and bore in his own body the punishment of our sins upon the cross.

“You must endeavour, my little boys,” added he, “to become like him; for he was tender-hearted, and full of pity: *a bruised reed would he not break, and smoking flax would he not quench.*”

“If you will come with me,” continued the good clergyman, “I will receive you into my Sunday-school. For there is a school-room near my house, which is open every Sunday for the use of poor little boys; and I shall have great pleasure in introducing you to it. And I am sure that you will find a Sunday spent in learning the word of God more pleasant and more profitable than one wasted in idle and wicked play.”

The good clergyman then took the little

insects, out of which he had drawn the crooked pins, and placed them on the branch of a tree, so high that no little boy could reach them; where he hoped they might recover from the cruel treatment they had met with.

Now, while this good clergyman was employed in putting the little may-bees out of danger, William jumped over a stile, and ran away. But little Harry stood still; and when the clergyman had finished his work of pity, Harry went up close to him, and said, "Sir, if you will be so kind as to take me to your school, I will go with you, and learn to be good."

The clergyman was much pleased with the child's simple address; so taking little Harry by the hand, he led him immediately towards the church-yard. And it would have pleased you very much to have heard how sweetly this holy man talked to little Harry as they walked along together.

First, he spoke to him about the Lord Jesus Christ, and told him how much our blessed Redeemer loves little children. Then he talked to him about heaven, where they who have loved our Lord Jesus Christ in this life, go to dwell for ever with him after death. And thus he continued talking to him till they reached the school-house in the church-yard, where a number of little boys were at that time learning to read the holy Book of God.

Mr. John Law, the clerk of the parish, was the schoolmaster: but the good clergyman visited the school every Sunday, and often distributed rewards among those who tried to do well.

Then was little Harry brought to the master; who finding, on examination, that he had never yet learned his letters, gave him A, B, C, printed on a card, and caused him to stand in a class with some other little boys who were also learning their A, B, C.

So little Harry obeyed his directions, and diligently applied to his lesson till it was time to go to church; when all the boys walked two and two to the house of God.

Observing that little Harry was ashamed of his ragged clothes, the master encouraged him by saying, that God would not look at his clothes, but at his heart—telling him withal that he must ask the Lord to give him a clean heart, for his dear Son's sake, and not think for a moment about his clothes.

So little Harry went to church, and behaved very quietly through the whole service; though he was so ignorant as hardly to understand any thing that the good clergyman said.

When the service was over, little Harry returned home to dinner; after which he came to school again, and was taken a second time to church; whence he was

brought back again to school with the other boys. And God gave him grace to behave properly at school, (for no little boy can do well without God's help,) where he studied so hard, as to learn six letters and a little part of the Lord's Prayer that evening, to the great satisfaction of his master.

Now I must tell you that the good clergyman had neither father nor mother, wife nor children; but he had a very faithful housekeeper, named Mrs. Harris. And it was the custom of this good woman to come into the school every Sunday evening, and invite the best boy to drink tea with her in her neat kitchen. So this evening she came in, as usual; and speaking to the schoolmaster, she said, "Well, Mr. Law, I am come again, as you see, to invite my company. My kettle is boiling, my tea-things are on the table, and my bread and butter is cut. Pray who is the best boy to-day? Which of all these am I to invite?"

“Why,” said John Law, “if I must speak the truth, I think little Harry, who came to school this morning for the first time, has done as well, or better, than any other boy in the school. But yet, I fear, that the poor child is scarcely fit to drink tea in your neat kitchen, Mrs. Harris, on account of his very shabby clothes.”

“Never mind his dress, Mr. Law,” said Mrs. Harris; “if he wishes to be a good boy, I shall not think about his coat.”



Upon this she called for little Harry; when taking him by the hand, she led him out of the school, and brought him into her master's kitchen, where her tea-table was indeed neatly set out, and such a plate of bread and butter prepared, as little Harry had not often seen.

Now, Mrs. Harris talked very prettily to little Harry, while they were drinking tea together; for Mrs. Harris was a very pious woman, and loved her Saviour. She felt also great compassion for little Harry, shewing him much tenderness, and saying every thing she could think of, to persuade him to be good. And among other things she told him, that although his father and mother were dead, yet if he would learn to fear and love God, the Lord Jesus Christ would take the charge of him, and place him with the lambs of his flock.

So when little Harry had taken as much as Mrs. Harris thought proper to give him,

his power; remembering that which is written—*a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* (Proverbs xii. 10.)

My readers, perhaps, would like to hear something more of William; and I am sorry



that I have nothing very pleasant to tell them concerning him. When he ran away from the good clergyman, he loitered about the fields till the bells of the church had done ringing; and all the time he kept

muttering and grumbling at the good clergyman, saying, he should not hinder him from spinning a humbuzz.

At length he came to a field, where he saw several of these poor insects enjoying themselves, in flying from tree to tree. As soon as this naughty boy discovered them, he took off his hat, and tried to knock them down: but they happily succeeded in getting beyond his reach. At last he marked one flying over his head, which he was determined to bring down: but while he threw up his hat for that purpose, the poor creature made its escape to a quickset hedge. Still, however, William was resolved to have it: so running after it up to the hedge, he was just going to catch at it, when his foot slipped, and precipitated him into the hedge, where his face was cruelly torn with the thorns. And more than this, he sprained his ankle so dreadfully in the fall, that he never recovered the right use of it from that time;

for it was always weak, and forced him to go limping to the end of his days.

Now you, my dear little children, who may hereafter read this story, refrain, I beseech you, from hurting any poor dumb creature; seeing that they are all the workmanship of a divine hand, and that all of them have as keen a sense of feeling as yourselves. Remember, therefore, that he who gives them needless pain, commits a grievous offence against that gracious God, whose mercy is over all his works.



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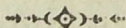
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