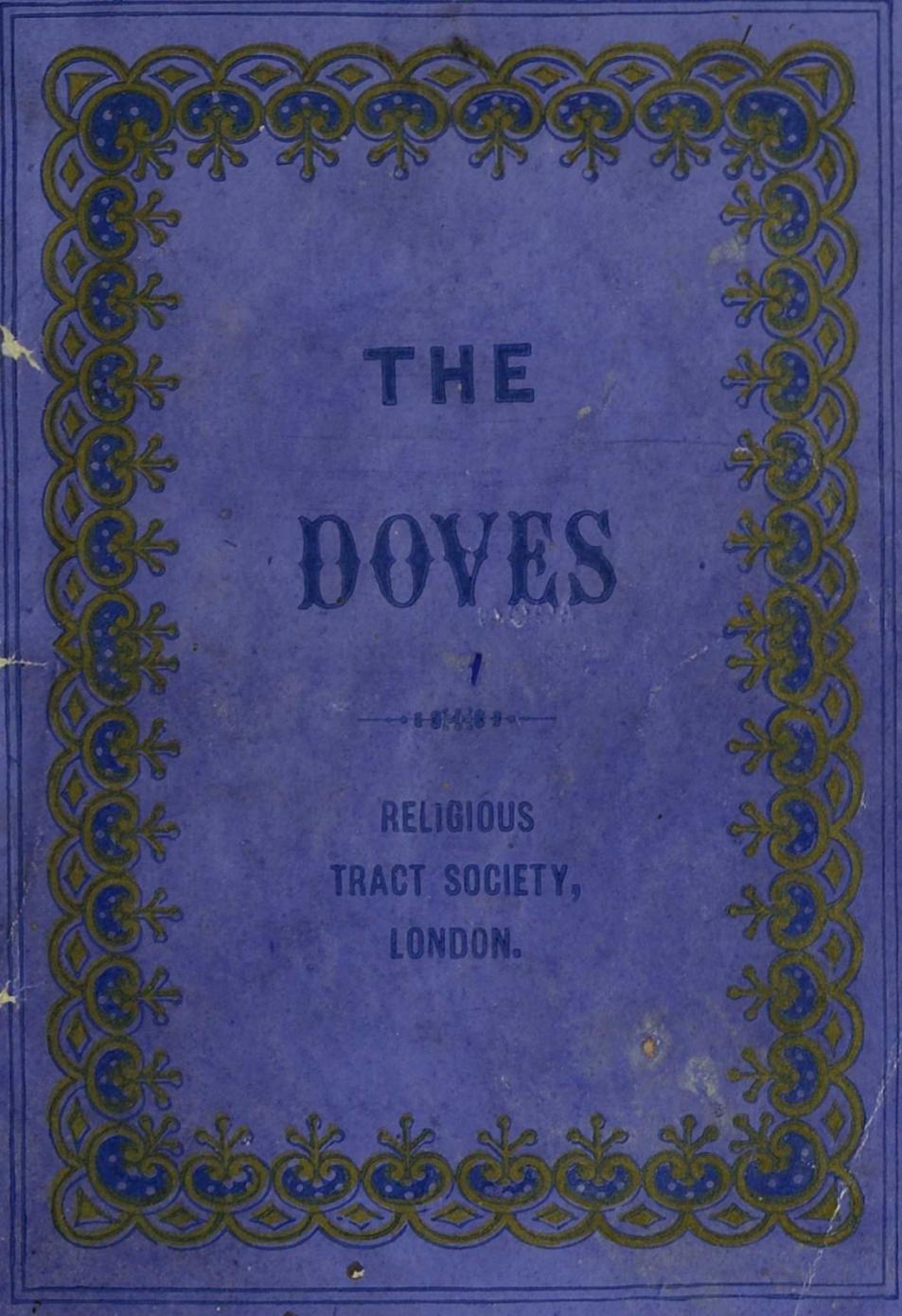


TWO PENCE.



THE
DOVES

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— 1848 —
RELIGIOUS
TRACT SOCIETY,
LONDON.

TBC (sm)
DOVES

Miss Sarah Bentley

~~Miss Sarah Bentley~~

Miss Sarah Bentley



Kronheim & Co., London

THE DOVES.

THE D O V E S ;

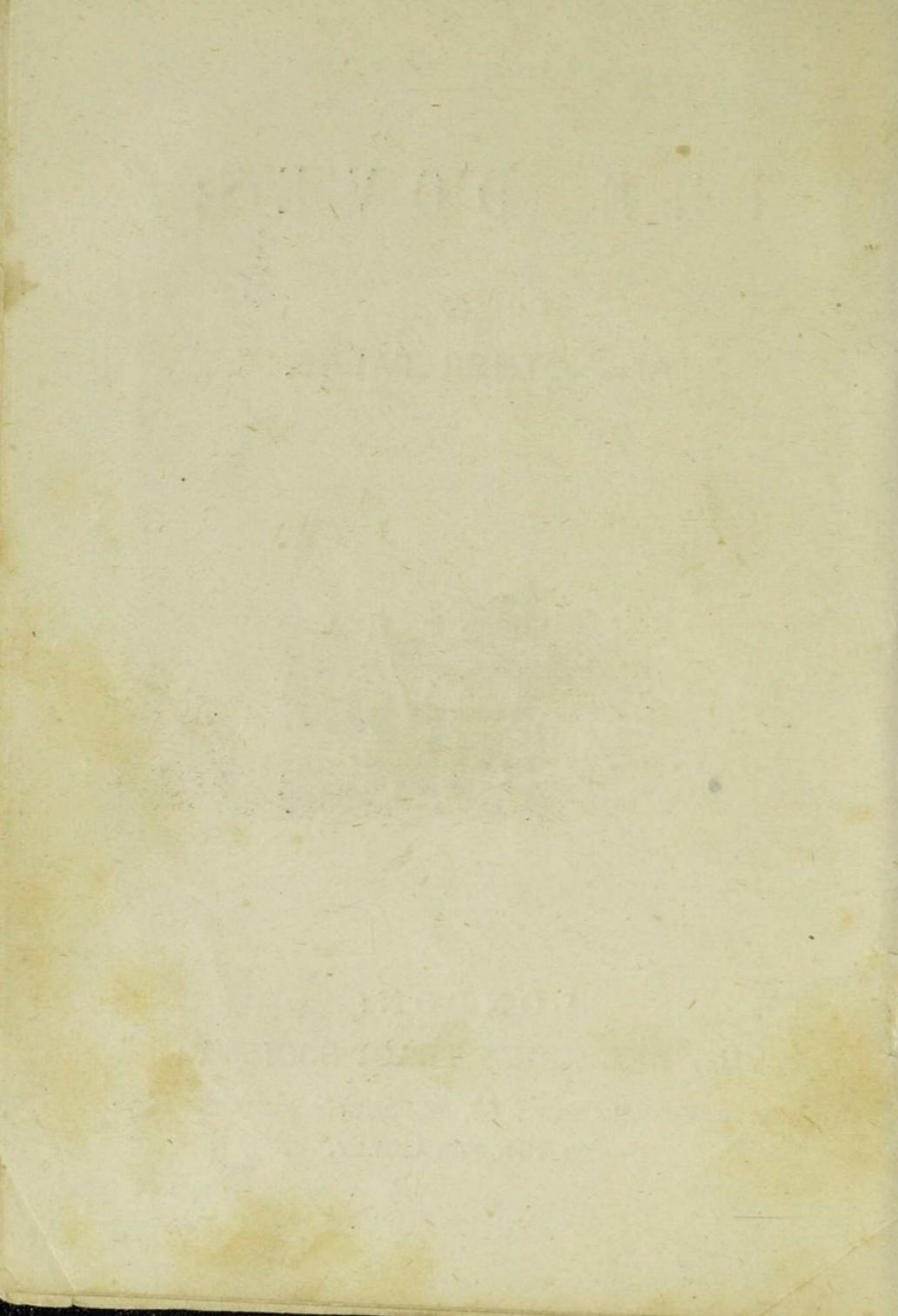
AND OTHER TALES.



L O N D O N :

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;

56, PATERNOSTER ROW ; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ·
AND 164, PICCADILLY.



THE DOVES.

“MAMMA, mamma, come into the hall, and see what we have to show you!” said Helen Foster, in a tone of delight, as she opened the drawing-room door.

Mrs. Foster laid down her book, and followed her. Henry and Lydia had run to meet her, and each seizing a hand, they drew their mother along to the hall table, where stood a large cage, containing a beautiful pair of turtle doves.

“They are for us, mamma! Only think! the very thing we have so long been wishing for. But where they have come from we don’t know. See, here is a card directed to

ourselves, so there is no mistake. But, mamma, surely you know something about them?"

Mrs. Foster smiled. "Well," she said, "I think I can give you some clue to the affair. When papa was going to town this morning, he said he had been so much pleased with you all lately, he wished to give you some little token of approval; something you could all enjoy together. He spoke to me about it, and so you have the doves."

"Oh, thanks, thanks, mamma!" cried the three children. "You could not have chosen anything we should have liked so much. Were there ever such lovely little creatures? Now what shall we call them?"

"Do let us call this one Ruby," said Henry. "Look at his little bright eyes; they are exactly the colour of mamma's ruby ring."

“Then his mate must be Pearl,” said Lydia. “She looks such a soft, tender little creature. Do you like those names, mamma?”

“Yes, I think you have chosen very well,” said Mrs. Foster. “Now, you must be very careful of your little pets. You had better take day by day to attend to them; to see that the cage is cleaned morning and evening, and that they are supplied with grain and water. Lydia one day, Henry the next, and then Helen must take her turn.”

“Oh, mamma, we shall all take care of them together; it will be our greatest delight.”

“That is all very well now, my dears, while they are new to you; but after a time, perhaps, other things might interest you more; and one day’s forgetfulness might cost the poor birds their lives. So pray take

my advice, and make it a matter of rule from the beginning."

"Very well, mamma: then, Helen, this will be your day, as you are the eldest; but I hope you will let us help you."

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Helen, laughing. "I shall be quite content with the care, if you will do the work; so that will be a fair division. Mamma, don't you think we might let them have a bath?"

"A bath!" said Henry and Lydia in surprise.

"Yes," said Mrs. Foster; "doves are very cleanly, and love the water. Ask for a large, strong saucer, Henry, and you will see how they enjoy a bath."

The saucer was quickly brought. Mrs. Foster half filled it with water, and placed it in the cage; and when they had all withdrawn a little, they had the pleasure of seeing Ruby descend from his perch, spread out first one wing, and then the other, and

enjoy the luxury of his morning bath to the full.

The children could do little else that day than watch their new favourites. They let them go in the play-room, and were delighted to find that they were quite tame and content to return to their cage. Still they seemed to enjoy this liberty at times, and it was very pretty to listen to the cooing of one of the birds, and to watch the pretty graceful bowings with which he accompanied it. It was holiday time, so the children had plenty of leisure to amuse themselves with them.

When their father came home he was glad to find that his present had given such delight. The children carried him off at once to the play-room to see their pets, and what was their joy at discovering that they were actually beginning to build! Some tiny bits of worsted and silk which they had found on the floor were laid carefully in

a corner of the cage, and Ruby was arranging them very skilfully with his bill.

“You must help them with their work,” said their father, “by supplying them with materials. That is all you will have to do, except indeed to lay a few strong twigs across a corner of the cage as a prop for the nest.

Need we say that the children were delighted with this new cause of interest, and that twigs, feathers, wool, and moss were all supplied in far greater quantities than the busy little birds were able to use.

Next day was Sunday, and as they sat at breakfast the father said to the children, “I find a favourite author was as fond of doves and pigeons as you are. Would you like to hear her account of them in childhood?”

“Oh, yes, papa, so very much.”

“She is giving an account of her early visits to her grandfather,” said Mr. Foster, taking up the book which lay near him,

“and after speaking of various enjoyments there, she says:—‘Then came the pleasure of throwing open the window, and spreading corn with salt on the large pigeon-board. How I enjoyed the sudden flight of almond tumblers, jacobins, pouters, carrier-pigeons, and doves, with many other sorts, and to hear their busy beaks on the board, making what I used to call “pigeon’s hail!”’ How eagerly I listened when my grandfather pointed out to me the deep attachment of the carrier-pigeon to her home, of the guest to her nest, of the turtle-dove to her mate; that they could only flourish upon corn, and all their food seasoned with salt! He also showed me their beautiful, but sober plumage, and pointed out, when they soared up aloft, how bright their incandescent colours appeared in the sun. I loved to learn all these particulars concerning doves and pigeons in my childhood; but how many years after was it,

when, in a different state of mind, and under a different teaching, I felt the force and beauty of the Christian symbol—that pure and holy dove-like spirit which wanders not from its home—the heart of her Lord—and can never be separated in affection from him to whom her heart is given; who feeds on the living bread—the corn of the kingdom; whose thirst can be removed only by the living waters, and whose food is seasoned with salt; and finally, whose external garb and bearing, modest, sober, and unobtrusive, is yet radiant with a heavenly light, caught from a beam of that Sun of righteousness in whom her heart delights. My grandfather only told me the facts of natural history, but I have thought in long after-years that he had a deeper meaning, whilst he waited till the word and Spirit of God might itself explain the living truth to my heart; and oh, how often have I blessed him for it!!”

“Oh, that is beautiful, papa!” said Helen. “I was thinking this morning how interesting it would be to search out all that is said in the Bible about the dove. I could not recollect much.”

“Not very much, perhaps,” said her father; “but the little we find may be very useful. What do you say, then, to put aside our usual course, and having our lesson this morning on the dove?”

The children agreed to the plan; and when all were seated round the library table with their Bibles, their father began by reading aloud the 21st and 22nd verses of the 3rd chapter of St. Luke.

“I have chosen this passage,” he said “because our lesson is to be on the dove, which is here employed as a sacred emblem. The figures of Scripture are very full of meaning, and will always repay careful study. The dove was used as a symbol or likeness of the Holy Spirit (Matt. iii. 16).

Now, children, you must tell me all you can about the dove—its nature, habits, etc., and then we shall consider the closeness of the resemblance. Now, then, Lydia, what can you tell me of the dove's nature or character?"

"It is very gentle, papa," said Lydia, "and very loving."

"It is perfectly harmless," said Henry. "Our Lord speaks of that when he says to his disciples, "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." (Matt. x. 16.)

"It is pure and cleanly," said Helen.

"Yes," said her father, "it was one of the clean birds under the law. Pigeons or doves might be given instead of lambs, by those who were too poor to offer lambs, as a sacrifice. You remember one person in particular who availed herself of this permission?"

"Yes, papa, the Virgin Mary."

"How do you know that it was a custom in general use?"

“Because it became a trade, papa. It was not easy for people who came a distance, or who lived in the city, to bring doves, so the priests allowed people to sell them in the courts of the Temple.” (Matt. xxi. 12.)

“Do you remember how our Lord, while showing his anger at this wrong use made of the Temple, yet acted with forbearance and kindness?”

“He drove out the cattle, papa; but he did not let go the doves. He only said, ‘Take these things hence.’”

“Right. Now, then, you have shown the dove to be a type of gentleness, of meekness, of love, and of purity. Now, Lydia, what can you tell me of its habits?”

Lydia was puzzled,—so Helen answered for her.

“It is domestic.”

“Yes,” said her father, “though it builds on high when at liberty, it also loves to dwell among men, and becomes greatly

attached and very faithful to its home. You can tell me a use which this fact has led people to make of it."

"Oh, papa, do you mean to carry messages. You mean the carrier pigeons?"

"Yes," said Mr. Foster; "and you would be astonished to hear the distance that these faithful little creatures will fly to return to the well-known spot, and the speed with which they travel. Do you remember where their rapid flight is alluded to in Scripture?"

The children were at a loss, and mamma answered for them.

"'Oh that I had wings like a dove! then would I fly away, and be at rest.' (Psa. lv. 6.) And again, 'Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?'" (Isa. lx. 8.)

"What does it mean by their windows, mamma," said Lydia.

"The windows or openings into their

dove-cots, thus showing their love of home by the eagerness with which they return."

"Like Noah's dove," said Helen, "returning with the olive-leaf in her mouth. She was indeed a welcome little messenger. I have often thought what joy that green leaf must have spread through the ark."

"Papa," said Henry, "should we not count cleanliness among the dove's habits?"

"Certainly," said his father; "it is pure in its nature and cleanly in its habits. The dove dislikes and avoids carrion, and all impurities, and feeds only upon pure grain or seed, and fresh water. You have observed how fond it is of washing?"

"Oh, yes, papa," said little Lydia; "and then it is so pretty to see them basking in the sun, and the beautiful tints on their plumage!"

"Ah," said Mr. Foster, "David must have seen that when he said, 'Though ye

have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' (Psa. lxxviii. 13.) Now, my children, we must come to consider how the Holy Spirit resembles its chosen symbol, and how he makes those in whom he dwells dove-like in character. The dove is known for its purity; so the Spirit of God is ever pure and holy in nature; he is the 'Spirit of holiness,' and his mission is to make believers in Jesus pure and holy like himself. You will all remember a Scripture symbol expressive of the purifying, cleansing power of the Spirit's work in the soul?"

"Oh, yes, papa, water, and the washing of water," said Helen. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. (Eph. v. 26.)

"Yes, the passages are numerous," said

her father, "but that will do to illustrate the point. Now, tell me, are Christians to remain inactive, waiting for the influence of the Spirit, or is it their duty to strive themselves after holiness and purity of soul?"

"Oh, surely they are to try themselves, papa."

"And how so, Lydia?"

"To shrink from sin, and shun it, and always to try to do right."

"Yes," said her father; "and remember, we must be ever pressing on in the paths of duty, else we are surely losing ground. We should often ask ourselves, 'Is sin more hateful and distasteful to me than it was? Do I love holiness more and more?' You must watch carefully over your thoughts and words, if you would cultivate the spirit of holiness. There are many who would shrink from sin in their actions, though yet do not scruple to dwell on it in their minds,

and who love wicked stories and foul jests, which must deeply injure both themselves and those who hear them. Now Scripture tells us to think of “whatsoever things are *pure*” (Phil. iv. 8), showing that good and useful subjects of thought are to be chosen; for the mind must be busy about something. Dr. Watts’s most true and excellent lines might be thus applied,—

‘Satan finds some mischief still
For idle minds to do.’

You know how anxious your mamma and I am that you should cultivate your minds, filling them with useful knowledge, and with good and beautiful thoughts. But above all things, you must seek to have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in you, as in a temple, breathing his purifying, sanctifying influence throughout. But the dove is also meek, gentle, harmless, and loving. Now, are these emblems of the Spirit?”

“Yes, papa; Jesus said, ‘I am meek.’”

(Matt. xi. 29.) Papa, I do not exactly understand what meekness is.'

"It may be defined as a spirit that is not easily provoked; that suffers injuries without desire of revenge, and quietly submits to the will of God."

"It would be impossible to be meek at school," said Henry.

"Nothing," said his father, "shows more forcibly the depth of man's fall, and the extent of his distance from God, than the fact that the virtues of man's devising, the so-called 'heathen virtues,' are the very qualities most hateful to the spirit and law of Christ. I have heard of a heathen chief, who, on being told that instead of revenging injuries it was the duty of a Christian to forgive and love his enemies, answered, 'If God takes away my heart, and gives me another heart, then I can do so, but not till then.' He spoke truly, though without understanding the truth of his

own words, for the fruits of the Spirit are indeed far different from the works of the flesh."

"But, papa," said Henry, "how is a boy at school to act? If he did not hold his own, and show spirit when he is insulted, he would have no peace, and all the fellows would call him a 'coward!'"

"A school is but a little world," said his father, "influenced by the same spirit that the Christian will have to contend with through life. It is not without meaning that the Christian cause is called 'a warfare.' The friendship of the world is enmity with God, and we cannot expect to please two masters so wholly opposed to each other. God's approval, and that of our own conscience, must sustain us. If you wish to be truly brave, Henry, remember there is no heroism like moral courage; daring to do right from a sense of duty to God. Remember, too, that 'He that is slow to anger

is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' (Prov. xvi. 32.) Now, who can give me some texts on the duty of meekness?"

Helen answered, "'Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.' (Col. iii. 12, 13.) And in Ephesians, papa, 'I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.'" (Eph. iv. 1.)

"Now," said Mr. Foster, "tell me what sort of children show that they are without this lovely fruit of the Spirit—that they have not the Spirit of Christ."

"Quarrelsome children, papa," said Lydia.

"Yes," said her father. "Nothing can

be more opposed to the meekness and gentleness of Christ than the mean spirit of resentment and revenge which many children show. They may call it 'high spirit,' but it is in fact a spirit from beneath. The devil is ever urging people to revenge; but Christians must watch against his snares, and cultivate a spirit of meekness and long-suffering. When we think of all that our Lord bore so meekly for our sakes, it ought surely to make us willing to learn of him to be meek and lowly in spirit.

"But we must not forget the loving nature of the dove. Love, we know, is the very essence of the Divine nature, and of all true godliness. 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' (1 John iv. 16.) It was love that brought the Saviour from on high, to lay down his life for us on the cross, that we through faith in him might obtain eternal life. It is love that invites us to come to

him for salvation. Love that sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of Christians, to 'transform them in the spirit of their minds,' and make them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Love is the very soul of religion, the very atmosphere of heaven, and it is what all Christians should by all means cultivate. Many seem as though they were trying to cultivate a spirit of hatred by dwelling on the faults of others, and pointing them out to any who will listen to them. Alas, as some one well says, 'There is hatred enough in man's fallen heart. It only needs the devil, with the match of detraction, to put a spark to it, and it soon blazes up.' Oh, how different is this from the spirit of love which 'covereth all sins!' You can tell me of a chapter, children, in which the fruits of love are beautifully described?"

"Oh, yes, papa; the 13th of 1st Corinthians. We all know it by heart."

“Try to know it by heart in the best sense, by having it at heart, and living according to it. Now give me a passage which sums up the fruits of the Spirit, contrasting them with the works of the flesh.”

Helen at once gave Gal. v. 22, 23.

“Now,” said their father, “we have scarcely left ourselves time to go into the habits of the dove symbolically; but we may just touch on one or two points. The dove makes its rest on high; how is the Holy Spirit like the dove in this?”

“The Holy Spirit is in heaven,” said Henry. “We read of the ‘Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,’ and of the Spirit being poured upon us from on high.” (Isa. xxxii. 15; 1 Pet. i. 12.)

“Yes; now give me a passage showing that, like the dove, it also loves to dwell among men.”

Helen repeated: “‘For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,

whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'” (Isa. lvii. 15.)

“Right,” said her father; “and you remember Jesus says of the Spirit of truth to his disciples, ‘He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.’ (John xiv. 17.) And St. Paul says to his Christian readers, ‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ (1 Cor. iii. 16.) We see that the dove flies swiftly. Can you tell me any instance of the Spirit acting with wonderful rapidity?”

“The conversion of the three thousand,” said Henry.

“The conversion of Paul and of the Philippian jailer,” said Helen.

“The dove mourns,” said Mrs. Foster. “What is the point of resemblance there?”

“I suppose, mamma,” said Helen, “you

mean that the Spirit leads us to mourn for sin?"

"Yes," said her father, "that is fully brought out in Zechariah xii. 10. Now one point more—the dove is easily frightened away. How does the Spirit resemble it in this?"

"Oh, papa, the Spirit can be grieved," said Lydia. "I remember the verse—

‘Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet Messenger of rest;
I have the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.’”

"Very well, Lydia," said her father: "yes, it is sin that grieves that gentle Spirit, and is the enemy of our peace. How carefully, then, should we watch even our thoughts, feelings, and words, and seek that they may all be 'brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ;' that our whole soul may be moulded according to his will.

Now tell me, Lydia, how are we to obtain the grace of this blessed Spirit?"

"We are to pray for it, papa."

"And are we sure to be heard?"

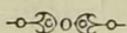
"Yes, if we persevere. Our Lord says, 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' " (Luke xi. 13.)

"Now, tell me, is it necessary to salvation to receive the Spirit?"

Helen answered, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii. 5.)

"Let us close our lesson, then, dear children, by praying earnestly that the Holy Spirit may renew our hearts, may fill us with his sanctifying influence, daily leading us nearer to Jesus, and making us Christians not only in name, but in thought, word, and deed."

A VISIT TO A SUNDAY-SCHOOL.



I AM a Sunday-school teacher; and as I am very fond of my class, you will not be surprised to hear that when I go from home I like to visit other Sunday-schools, to see if I can learn anything which may benefit my own children when I return. This summer I spent a few days at a very pretty place in Warwickshire; and I thought myself fortunate in having a friend who took me to the school on Sunday, and said that if I did not interrupt the teaching, I might look on and observe everything that was to be seen.

The school was in a quiet and pleasant part of the town, under a beautiful row of

trees. The first thing that struck me was the size of the room. It was very large; having the boys at one end and the girls at the other. Now our school-room at home is very small; and I said to myself, "How I wish we had such a building as this for our Sunday-school!" But the next thing that I noticed was the noise. To be sure, the teaching had not begun; but such a humming and buzzing of voices, and such a shuffling of feet I had seldom heard before. So my second thought was, "I suppose we shall be quieter by-and-by; but it certainly is easier to keep order in a small room filled with girls than it can be here, with two hundred children present, and more than half of them boys."

In a few minutes the superintendent came in, and a bell was rung, and all stood up to sing. I am happy to say there was perfect stillness afterwards, during prayer. But I had not time to make any more general

observations; for the superintendent came to ask me if I would teach the second girls' class that afternoon, as the proper teacher had been taken ill in the morning, and there had not been time to engage any one in her place.

Of course I was very glad to be of any use; and so presently I found myself sitting in the teacher's chair, with five girls on a form at my left hand, and five more on another form in front. Most of them seemed about twelve years of age; but there was one, a pale, quiet-looking girl of fourteen or fifteen. I found upon inquiry that she had "a little place" in service, but was come home for a holiday, and had taken the opportunity that afternoon of visiting her Sunday-school. I was sorry that her teacher was not there to see her, for it is so pleasant to welcome an old scholar; but I took care to write down her name with my pencil in the mark-book.

The first thing done was this: each girl repeated a hymn which had been learned during the preceding week. I hope I was mistaken; but, from the looks which I saw exchanged, I was much afraid that one girl attempted to deceive me by saying some verses which her teacher had heard before. I said nothing, however, thinking I might be wrong; though in the course of the afternoon I took occasion to make some remarks on the sin of falsehood, and its danger to the soul, setting before the whole class that a lie may be *acted* as well as *spoken*. I do trust that I was mistaken in my thoughts.

After this, a chapter was read verse by verse, each girl in her turn. It was the second chapter of St. Matthew; about the Star of Bethlehem, and the wise men from the East. The girls answered my questions very well. They knew something of the history of the cruel king Herod—that he

had caused his own wife and his son to be put to death ; and they could tell me about the other Herods who are mentioned in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. They knew, without looking at the references, where that prophecy was to be found : "Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda." And when I talked to them about the Chaldeans, who were great astronomers, and who would probably be looking out for some sign in the heavens near that time, they remembered the name of the prophet who was carried captive to Babylon in his youth, and to whom it was plainly revealed when the Messiah should come. Do you know any of these things, little reader ? Can *you* tell that prophet's name ?

Then I went on to speak to them of the Saviour who thus came in great humility, putting on our nature, that he might suffer and die for our sins. I entreated them not

to be satisfied with learning what is said of him in the Bible, but to go to him each one by herself, and seek from him pardon for her sins, and the gift of his Holy Spirit, to lead her in the way of everlasting life. They listened attentively; and I trust they will not forget the words that were spoken to them that day.

As I did not know the usual course of lessons in the school, I now came to a little pause, when one and all joined in the request that I would tell them a story. So I considered for a few moments, and then began.

“What I am going to tell you is not a real history; it is a kind of parable or allegory. Do you know what I mean by those words?”

“Yes,” said one, “our teacher says that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning to it.”

“‘The Pilgrims’ Progress’ is an allegory,” said Rebecca, the girl from service

“Then since you understand that my story is an allegory,” I continued, “I hope you will be able to tell me the meaning of it. There was, in a distant country, a very steep and rugged mountain, hard to climb, but on the summit there were to be found such rare and precious treasures as it was worth the most painful toils to gain. There was a shining light, which all who looked long and earnestly might see at the top of the mountain; but each traveller, as he journeyed upwards with weary steps, heard on all sides strange mocking voices, saw fearful shapes before him, warning, threatening, though none of them had power to hurt him while he held steadily on his way. Or, sometimes a beautiful form would approach him, and in gentle tones urge him to rest awhile, or try to allure him from the upward path. And, one by one, travellers were drawn aside to their own destruction: some were fearful, and, turning back, died a

miserable death; others listened to the tempter's voice, and, turning aside, were seen no more for ever. At last came one, not bolder, not stronger, than those who had gone before, but armed with a firm resolution to reach the summit of the mountain in defiance of every foe. He put a substance to his ears which shut out all sounds either of mockery or persuasion; he looked steadfastly beyond the terrible or the beautiful shapes before him to the shining light above; he would not yield to the feeling of weariness which tempted him to rest. He went on, climbing upwards—upwards; and just as the sun was sinking in the crimson sky, he reached the golden summit and gained the treasure."

"It was something like Christian climbing up the hill Difficulty," said Rebecca.

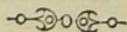
"It puts me in mind of what teacher told us last Sunday," another girl remarked; "when we said in the Collect, 'Grant thy

people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.' ”

“Yes,” I answered, “they are the enemies which hinder so many from climbing the mountain and reaching the treasure.”

Then, seeing that they understood the meaning of my story, I pointed out to them some of the difficulties of the Christian life, urging them to shut their ears, and to turn away their eyes from temptation; above all, directing them to the Holy Spirit for grace and strength. They were still listening with attention and interest when the bell rang for the closing prayer. We knelt down together to ask a blessing on what had been taught that day; and then we said good-bye, and parted, never to meet again in this life. But may they long remember the strange teacher's visit to their school, and again and again think how she urged them to climb the mountain, and never to lose sight of the shining light.

THE SOFT THORN.



WILLIAM GRANTHAM lived in the very heart of London, and up to the time when our story commences, he had never been really in the country. William was a boy who would have shuddered at the commission of any serious crime: as to stealing, or downright lying, or injuring any one in a terrible fit of passion, or any such thing, he would have been perfectly shocked if a person had hinted that he could have been guilty of such things. And yet, we grieve to say, William did not shrink from the commencement of these sins. His father was a dealer in fruit, and the little boy did not mind eating odd bunches of currants and ripe

gooseberries, when he was commissioned to lay them out for the day's sale; nor did he think it any particular harm to make excuses, although they were not strictly true, nor yet to indulge at times in a murmuring and wayward disposition, although he never broke out into any fits of passion; but in all these were to be found the seeds of greater evil.

These beginnings of evil were not hidden from Mr. Grantham's watchful eye; he knew very well that from little beginnings there often came great endings, and he determined to watch every opportunity of checking the first beginnings of sin in his little joy. Ah, how thankful should we be for the watchful eye of a kind and tender parent! How slow to think a dear father or mother unkind, because they do not let us go our own way. It is a great thing to be fully persuaded that they have no object at heart but our good.

Well, William Grantham was spoken to by his father about the different faults which that kind parent had observed. But, instead of seeing these faults in their right light, and promising to amend, the little boy argued with his parent, and maintained that there was no harm in picking odd bunches of fruit, or making an excuse, provided it was not a downright lie; or in murmuring and muttering, when he was told to do something he did not like, provided he did it in the end. William Grantham fancied that all these sins did not do harm to any one, and therefore that they were not sins at all.

The faults, however, of which we have been speaking continued to grow; and one day, as Mr. Grantham was looking through the glass door which separated his back parlour from the shop, he was amazed and grieved to see his little son pulling off some of the grapes from a large hot-house bunch

which was at that time sold at the rate of twenty-four shillings a pound.

“Oh dear! oh dear!” said Mr. Grantham, “I feared it would come to this, and I cannot tell where all this will end.”

To make the matter worse, the fruiterer's son, when taxed with having taken the grapes, denied it; and although Mr. Grantham declared that he had actually seen him, the boy persisted that he had not.

Just at this time the fruiterer had occasion to go some miles into the country, to see one of the market gardeners with whom he dealt. As he was going in his own cart, and William would be very useful to hold the horse, and as the lad looked as though he would be the better for a drive, he determined on taking him with him. Mr. Grantham's horse was accustomed to go pretty quick, so he soon left the smoky town behind, and William found himself in the midst of green hedgerows, such as he

had never seen before. The new shoots of the spring were very long, and William Grantham was soon out of the cart to pull some sprigs of the green he admired so much.

“Why, here’s a funny thing,” said the boy, as he jumped into the cart again; “look here, father, these branches have quite soft thorns; regular thorns like the rest as far as look goes, but they are as soft as butter;” and he began bending one from side to side with his finger.

“They are soft because they are young,” said Mr. Grantham; “but in time they’ll become as hard as any of the rest: even now they have just the same shape as the others, and are quite as sharp, only not being stiff and strong they cannot prick.”

Time passed on, and when autumn had come, it so happened that Mr. Grantham had to pass the very same way again, and William, as before, was in the cart. The

hedges were still beautiful, for they were now browning for the winter, and large bunches of red berries were scattered plentifully on the branches, and they attracted the attention of Mr. Grantham's son, as they had done before. The fruiterer had this time but few moments to spare, as he had to be back at his business by an early hour; he pulled up, however, for a moment, to allow his son to jump out and pull some of the berries, for which he expressed a wish. "But mind the thorns, my boy, mind the thorns," said he; "they're not as soft now as when you came this way in the spring."

But William paid no heed; he made a grasp at a large bunch, and although he succeeded in bringing them off, he scratched his hand dreadfully. Nor did the boy's trouble end there. One of the thorns that stuck in his fingers could not be taken out; in vain did he work at it himself with a

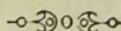
needle, in vain did his mother and the servant-maid do all they could; the thorn remained where it was. At last William Grantham's hand began to swell, the part where the thorn was began to give signs of festering, and altogether he felt so ill that the doctor was sent for. Even he found some difficulty in extricating the cause of all this trouble; he had to poultice the boy's hand for several days, and finally to use an instrument which put him to no little pain.

All this brought William Grantham very low; and his illness had the good effect of making him very meek and willing to listen to instruction. He was no longer inclined to argue with his father, but agreed entirely with what he said, and promised to amend, with God's grace, in those points in which he had been so seriously at fault.

"You remember," said Mr. Grantham, as he sat by his son's bed, "that when you

first touched the thorns in that hedge they were soft, but they were perfect nevertheless; they were shaped to a point, and all that they required was time to make them capable of hurting any one with whom they came in contact. How much they could hurt you, you have just had experience; and if you had not the benefit of medical advice, who can tell but your whole body might have become disordered, and that the most serious consequences might have ensued? Thus, William, was it with the beginnings of your sin. You do not now deny that you ate those valuable grapes; and having passed from currants to grapes, you might have gone on to money, and finally become a thief in the fullest meaning of the word. Sin in the beginning seems small, but give it time, and it will do fearful hurt. Whenever you are inclined to think little of the beginnings of sin remember THE SOFT THORN ”

THE STRICKEN-DOWN BUTTERFLY.



ONE of the earliest acts of cruelty on the part of childhood is that of running after a butterfly, knocking it down with a hat or cap, and tearing or injuring its wings by rude handling.

At the turning of a lane I came suddenly upon a little boy and girl who had just knocked down a butterfly. The moment they saw me they stood still, as though they were half ashamed of what they had done. I walked up to the spot, and began to talk to the shivering insect as it lay on the grass by the wayside.

“Poor trembling creature!” said I, “what makes you lie there as if you were in pain? What! cannot you speak? Then

I must speak for you, and this little boy and girl shall hear what we have to say to each other."

The children first looked at me and then at the butterfly. "Oh," thinks I, "I shall find the way by-and-by to your hearts." So I went on speaking thus, just as if the little insect at my feet had been talking with me.

"Tell me, poor trembler, how you came here? Whose butterfly are you?"

"I belong to Him to whom all things belong. To him who made heaven and earth, and you, and that little boy and girl."

"Then you are one of God's little butterflies, are you?"

"Yes, and he in his goodness made me very beautiful. He gave me wings to fly with, and covered them with fine feathers of different colours, as you see."

"Then why do you lie here quivering?"

Why do you not get up, and fly about and be happy?"

"I was flying about in the sunshine, as happy as I could be, when two persons ran after me. At first I did not think that they meant to do me any mischief; but all at once, when I was about to settle on a flower, and just before you came up, they savagely knocked me down."

"And where are these cruel people?"

"There they are! That little boy and girl."

"This little boy and girl! What had you done then to provoke them?"

"Nothing at all. They would not have done it if I had been able to defend myself. They were stronger than I, and there was no one to protect me."

"How cowardly and how cruel! But I am stronger than they are; shall I serve them as they have served you? Shall I knock them down?"

“No, no! Please not to hurt a hair of their heads. I am sure the little girl would not have run after me if her brother had not done so, and I do not believe that he would have behaved so cruelly if he had not seen other boys act in the same manner; but oh! they know not the misery I endure. My legs are broken, my wings are torn, and I shall never fly about again in the sunshine. I feel that I am dying. Do tell them never again to act so cruel a part to one of God’s little butterflies.”

Here the poor insect, after trying to get up on its feet, quivered for a few moments, and then fell down on its side quite dead. The little boy had a cheek as red as a rose, and his sister looked as pale as a lily. I spoke not another word, but as I came away the little girl sobbed aloud, and her brother was trying in vain to bring to life again the stricken-down butterfly.

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