

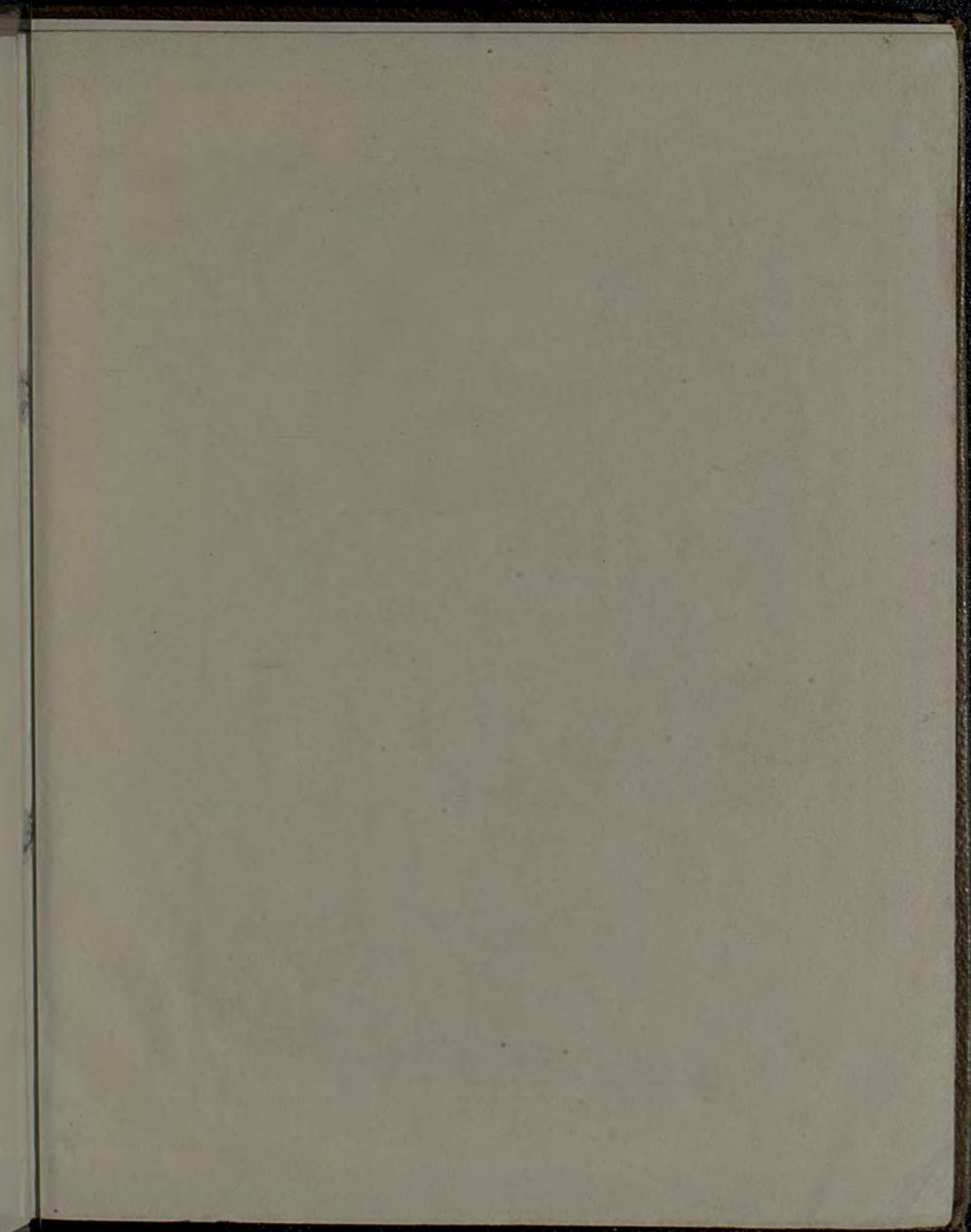
THE CHILD
AND
THE HERMIT.

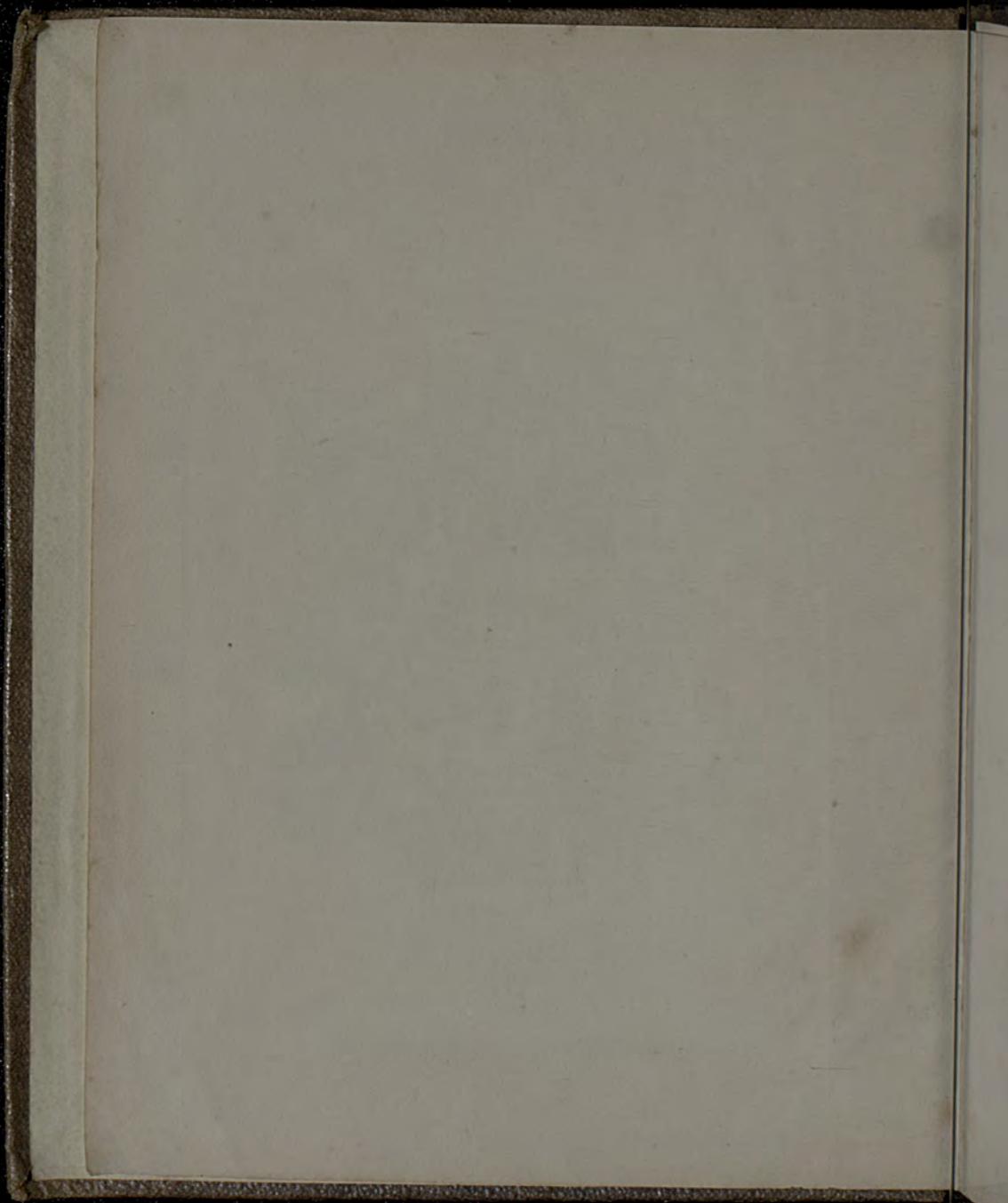
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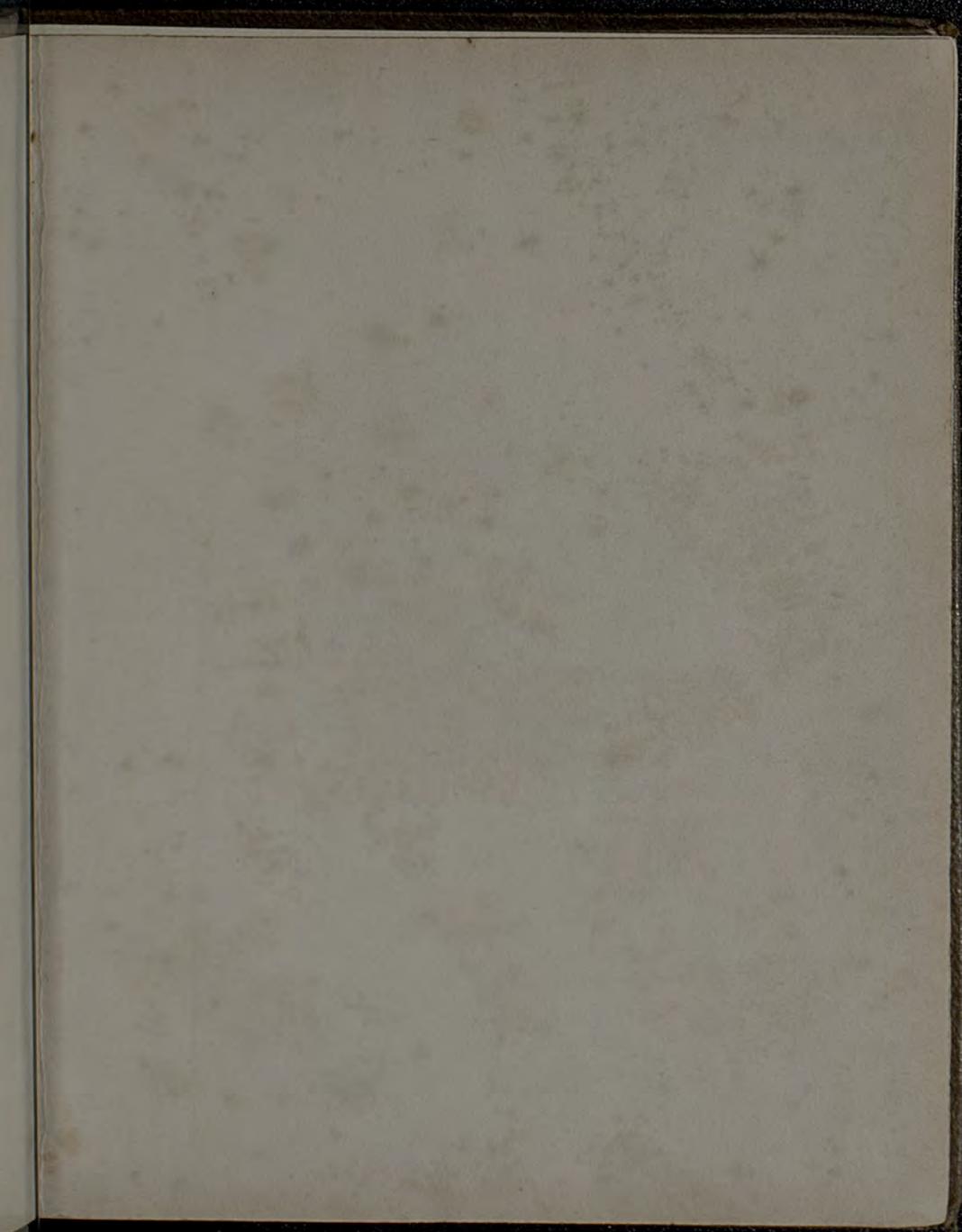


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III









THE
CHILD AND THE HERMIT;

OR,

A SEQUEL

TO

THE STORY WITHOUT AN END.

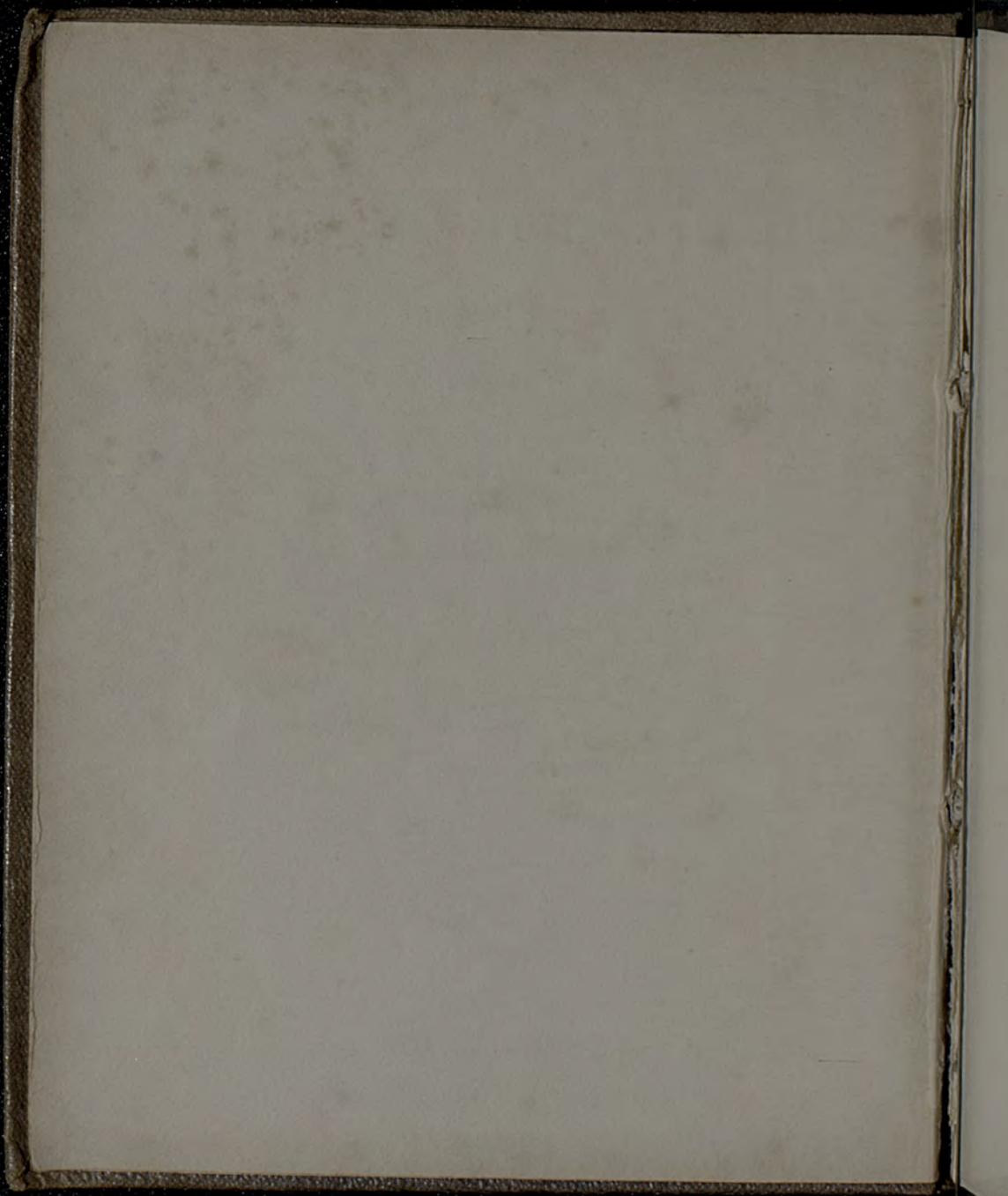
By C. M.

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by THY sweet bounty made
For those who follow THEE.

COWPER.

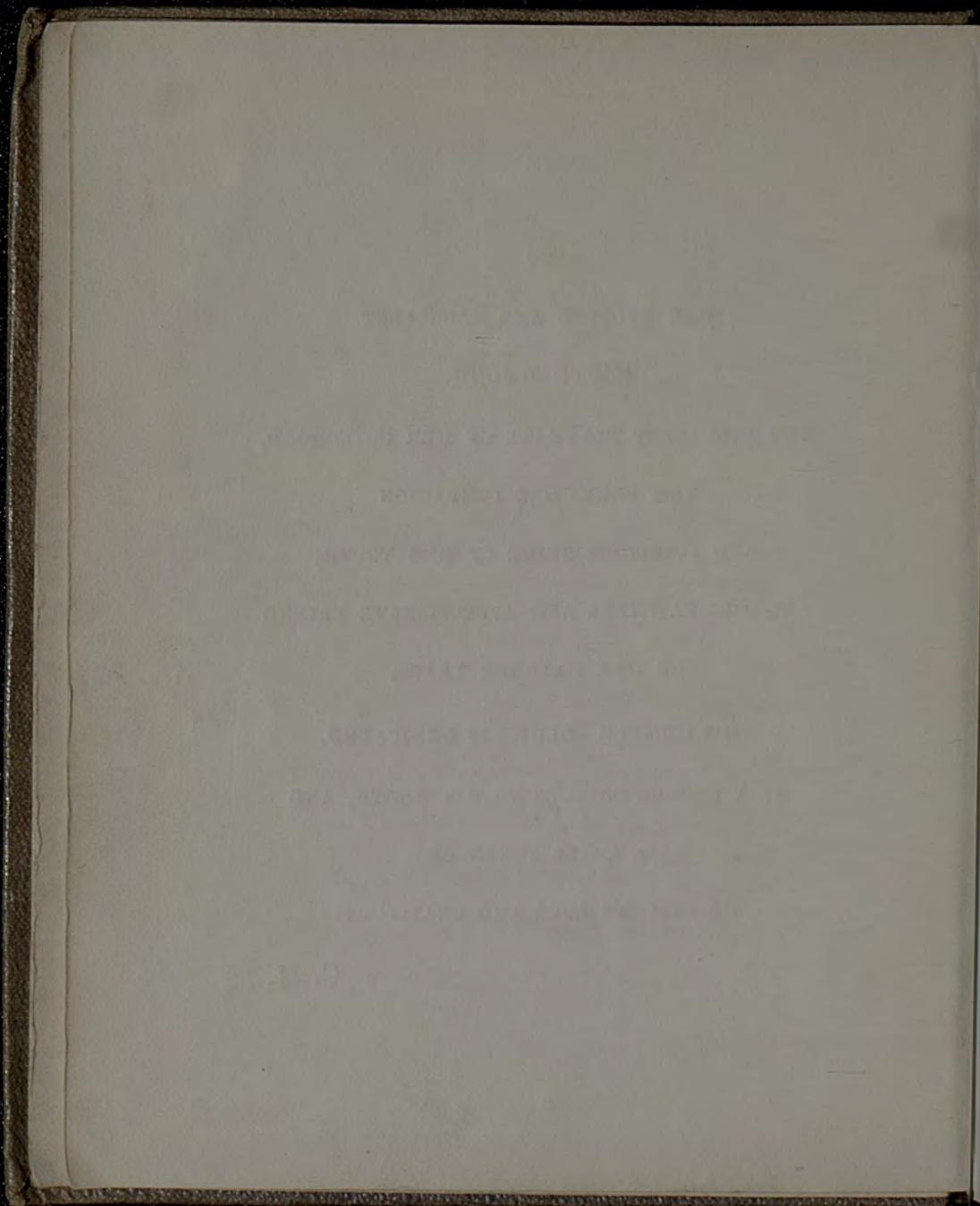
LONDON:

PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR BY
DARTON & CLARK, HOLBORN HILL.



TO
HER BELOVED AND EXCELLENT
BROTHER JOHN,
THE INDULGENT PLAYMATE OF HER CHILDHOOD,
THE ENDEARING COMPANION
AND JUDICIOUS GUIDE OF HER YOUTH,
AND THE FAITHFUL AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND
OF HER MATURER YEARS,
THIS HUMBLE VOLUME IS DEDICATED,
AS A FEEBLE TRIBUTE TO HIS WORTH, AND
A SMALL TOKEN OF
HIS SISTER'S LOVE AND GRATITUDE.

C. M.



P R E F A C E.



THE following humble volume, which I venture to offer to the public, was written in compliance with the wishes of some highly valued friends, who having read, with much delight, Mrs. Austin's elegant translation of the beautiful little German tale, entitled "The Story without an End," considered,—notwithstanding the attractive style, and the sweet descrip-

tions of Nature's favourites with which it abounds,—that some parts are veiled in much obscurity, and that “The Story” is more suited to the imaginative character of the Germans, than to the mind of an English child.

I feel that it may appear very presumptuous in one, like myself, so inferior in every way to Mrs. Austin, to attempt to follow in her steps; but as the very title of “The Story without an End” implies that it is an unconcluded tale, I have been induced to try to take up the thread of the narrative, and thus give my feeble testimony to the ever-varying, ever-benign,

works of Providence, and, by placing those works in a prominent point of view, before the infant mind, to lead every child to look “through Nature up to Nature’s God;” and to consider the Bible as the key to all knowledge and all enjoyment.

Most gratefully do I acknowledge how much I am indebted to some of our pious authors, and spiritual poets, for many lines in this simple volume, and how great has been the pleasure I have experienced whilst searching amidst their rich stores for a suitable thought, when my own mind seemed incapable of doing justice to the interesting subject I wished to pursue.

But if the heart of one dear child should feel its love to our great Creator strengthened, by the perusal of this little book, great will be my reward.

INTRODUCTION.



As some of my little readers may not have perused the beautiful tale called "The Story without an End," of which the succeeding pages are a continuation, I must inform them that "The Story" tells us "there was once a Child, who lived in a little hut," quite alone, and whose great enjoyment consisted in holding converse with insects and flowers, and in strolling

through the verdant fields, and the merry green wood.

He loved to gossip with the brilliant fire-flies, and particularly to listen to the pleasant stories of a favourite dragonfly, who was his constant companion in his rambles.

Sometimes the Child would talk to the gurgling brook, and once a drop of water stopped behind a rock, and told him strange histories of her former life.

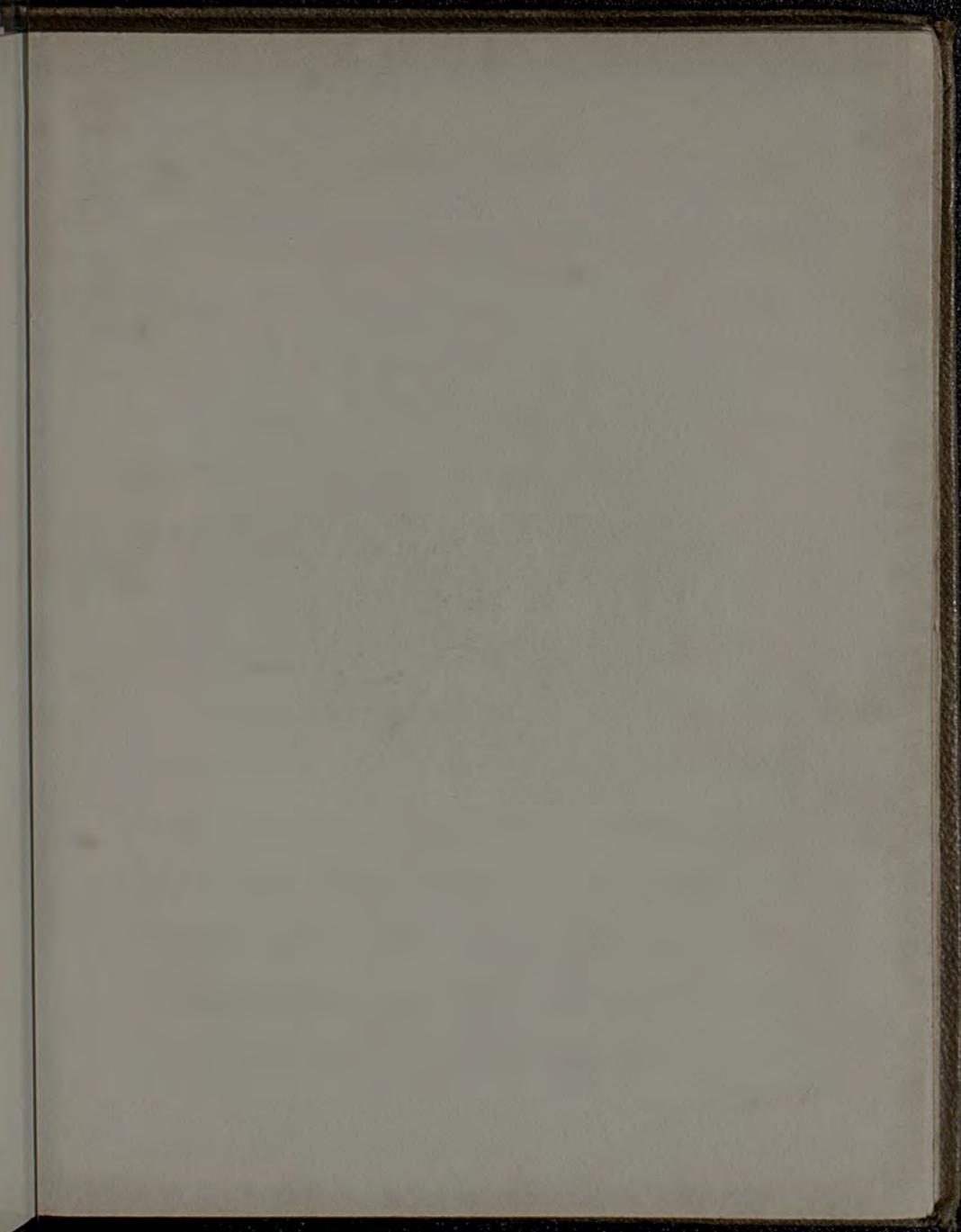
Once, "The Story" tells us, the Child's heart was pained by the discourse of some will-o'-the-wisps, who came and sat down

near him. He could not understand their conversation, but he did not like it, because they seemed to envy the happiness of others.

It was his delight to gaze at the glorious sun by day, and at the starry heavens by night;—to listen to the sweet notes of the innocent birds, and to be friendly with every object around him:—and when “The Story” breaks off, we are told that the Child was at a distance from his hut, and “thought no more of returning to it.”

I have endeavoured to carry on “The

Story," and it is my fervent prayer that my dear little friends may derive some benefit from my humble efforts to amuse and instruct them.





THE

CHILD AND THE HERMIT.



I.

FAR away from his leafy hut, and with no thought of returning to it, we were told that “the Child was become happy and joyful;”—yet, did he afterwards find himself stretched on his little bed, not knowing how, nor when, he came there. He rubbed his soft blue eyes, and looked

around for the dragonfly,—but she was not to be seen.

Then the Child arose, and went out of his lonely dwelling, thinking that he should surely find her among his favourite flowers. He spoke to the beautiful full-blown rose, “whose cup was all filled, and whose leaves were all wet” with the sparkling morning dew, but the lovely flower contented herself with offering her fragrance in silence.

The Child was astonished, and a sad and strange thought passed across his infant mind, that the rose was proud of her beauty and would not deign to con-

verse with a simple child. So he went, with gentle steps, towards the meek violet, and asked her to tell him if she had seen his pretty dragonfly. He went gently, because he knew the violet was a modest flower, loving to hide herself from the world, under the leaves and grass, and he feared that he might crush her with his little foot, if he did not walk cautiously and lightly.

He found the violet, and, in a plaintive voice, he asked for his old playfellow. The sweet flower suffered him to sit by her side, and poured forth all her delightful perfume, but, like the rose, she answered not.

Then a tear dimmed the Child's eye, and he felt grieved that his dear flowers would not speak to him. But he loved them still, and his gentle spirit formed excuses for them. "They are enjoying the first rays of the glorious sun," he said, "and they cannot speak to me now."

So he listened to the cheerful songs of the birds, and watched the lark rise slowly and steadily towards the azure sky.

"She will return to the earth, as she did yesterday," he softly whispered, "her hymn of joy will cease for a moment, and she will then give me some tidings of my friend the dragonfly." Meanwhile

the lark carolled sweetly, still soaring upwards.

The Child longed to ascend with her, for the earth seemed lonely to him now. Yet all was fair and blooming. The woods and groves were decked in their brightest green. The insects were dancing in the perfumed air, and did indeed "seem glad to be alive."

The river shone like a sheet of silver amid the distant hills, and flowing rapidly down their sides, came gently murmuring at his feet. The little fish were sporting in the cool stream, their scales sparkling like tiny stars, as they rose now and then

to the surface of the waters, whereon the sunbeams played joyously.

A lamb and a kid skipped merrily across the grassy carpet, on which the Child was seated, and they came to his call, and ate the green herbage out of his hand, which he had plucked for them;—for his heart was full of kindly feelings, and he loved to do good.

He was just going to question these pretty animals respecting the dragonfly, when—O! joyful sight! the beautiful insect flew towards him, and poised itself gracefully on a delicate lily which grew beside him.

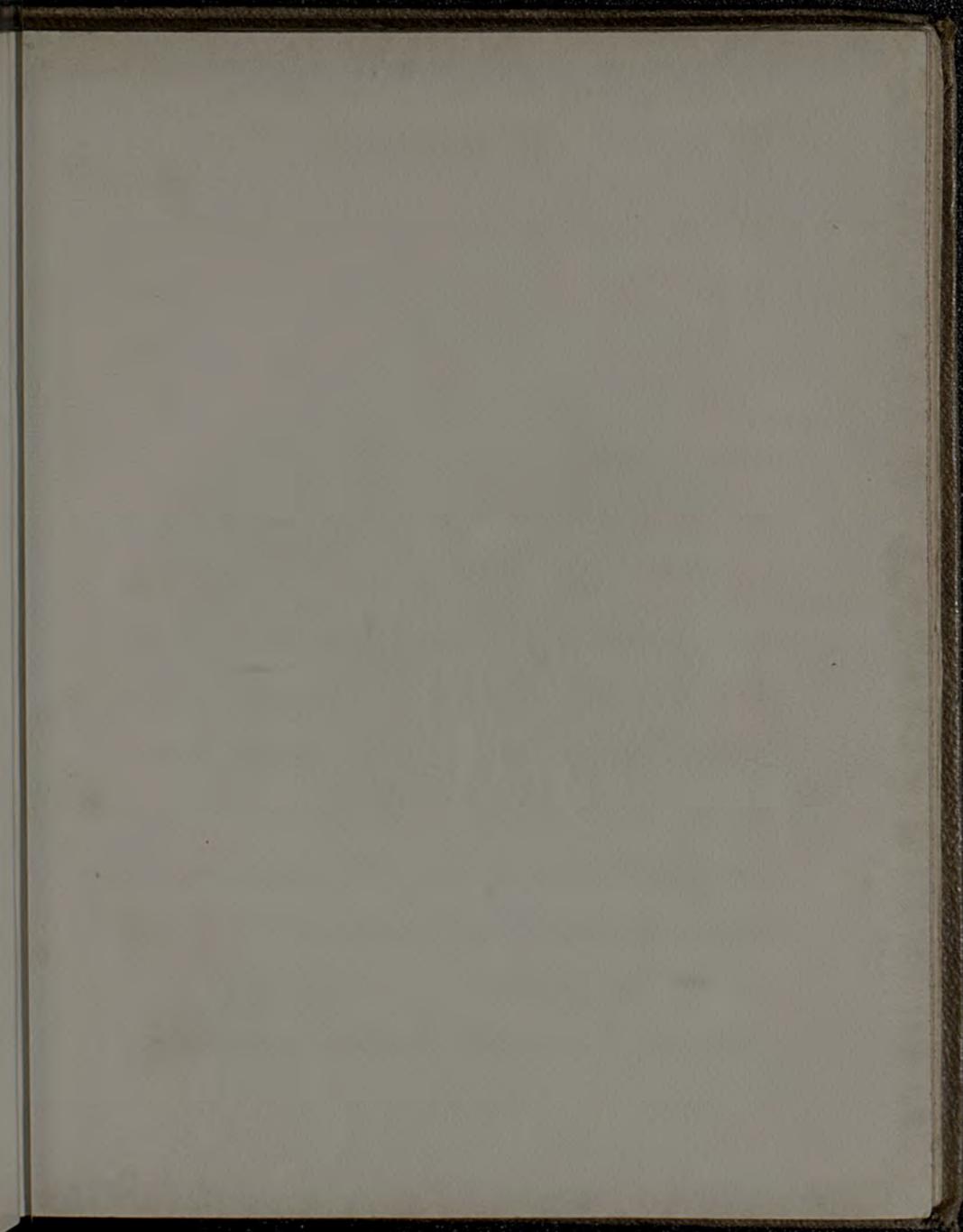
The Child clapped his hands with delight, and greeted his old friend in a happy voice. But—how strange! The dragonfly continued to flutter round about the fair lily, sometimes resting in its beauteous cup—sometimes spreading her gossamer wings as though she would again leave the Child, who loved her so much.

Again he hailed his winged favourite, but she heeded him not. He stretched out his pretty hand, hoping she would settle upon it:—but no!—she merely fluttered round him for a minute, and then flew away into the green wood.

The Child followed her until his little

feet could go no further: and at last he sank down beside a streamlet, and wept.

He wept,—because his beloved dragonfly had forsaken him, and as the tears slowly trickled down his pallid cheeks,—for he was weary and faint,—he thought there was nothing now to love him. But *he* loved every thing, and felt glad to see the birds, and flowers, and insects, all, so happy, though his own gentle mind was sad. So the Child lay beside the brook, listening to its soft murmurs, his pretty head resting on his arm:—and he fell asleep from weariness and sorrow.





II.

THE Child slept long and soundly, for when he awoke, the moon was risen, and was shedding a mild lustre on all the trees. Silence reigned around, but not her "solemn sister" darkness, for many a twinkling star was to be seen above, while the pale lamps of the innumerable glow-worms below, made the earth seem, to the Child's eyes, like another heaven. He was roused from his infant meditations by

a rustling sound, and turning to the grove behind him, he beheld a handsome large dog, that came bounding towards him. The noble animal ran fondly up to the Child, caressed his hands and feet, pulled his garment gently with his teeth, and evinced, by various actions, that he wished to lead him somewhere.

These *mute* expressions of love were not quite understood, at first, by the Child, for he had *conversed* with the flowers and birds, and insects, and with every green tree, and limpid stream:—and *they* had talked with *him*; but this dog spoke not. Yet had the Child no thought of resisting

these kind and repeated signs of friendship. His grateful feelings were all awakened, and he rose, and followed the dog, who would sometimes run sportively before him, then, return to renew his caresses ; now, licking his hands, and then again, gently taking the border of his little tunic in his mouth, as though he would hasten him on.

Brilliantly, indeed, did the full-orbed moon shine in the spangled firmament above.

——— “ No mist obscured,

“ No little cloud disturbed

“ The whole serene of heaven.”

The Child felt his heart glow with unnut-

terable happiness, and he longed to know who made all the glorious worlds that he beheld, that he might praise Him.

The stillness of the scene was now interrupted by a sweet and plaintive note. It was the nightingale, and the Child stopped—and held his breath—and listened, in an ecstasy of delight, to the pensive tones of the “night-warbling bird.”

The faithful dog stood sentinel by his side; his full dark eyes stedfastly fixed on those of the Child, as though he were waiting his commands. And the gentle Child felt pleased that the dog seemed to love him so much,—and he passed his

little arm round his neck, and stood listening, still, to the song of the nightingale, charmed, and riveted to the spot, by the sweet melody.

But he had not forgotten the dragonfly, nor did he wish to do so, for she had been his earliest playfellow, and he called to mind the joyous hours they had spent together. He thought of the days when she would come and sip the clear dew-drops, and partake of the golden honey, with him, telling him all the while, sweet stories of the merry life she led among the flowers and mosses of the green wood. He stood musing, till the dog invited him

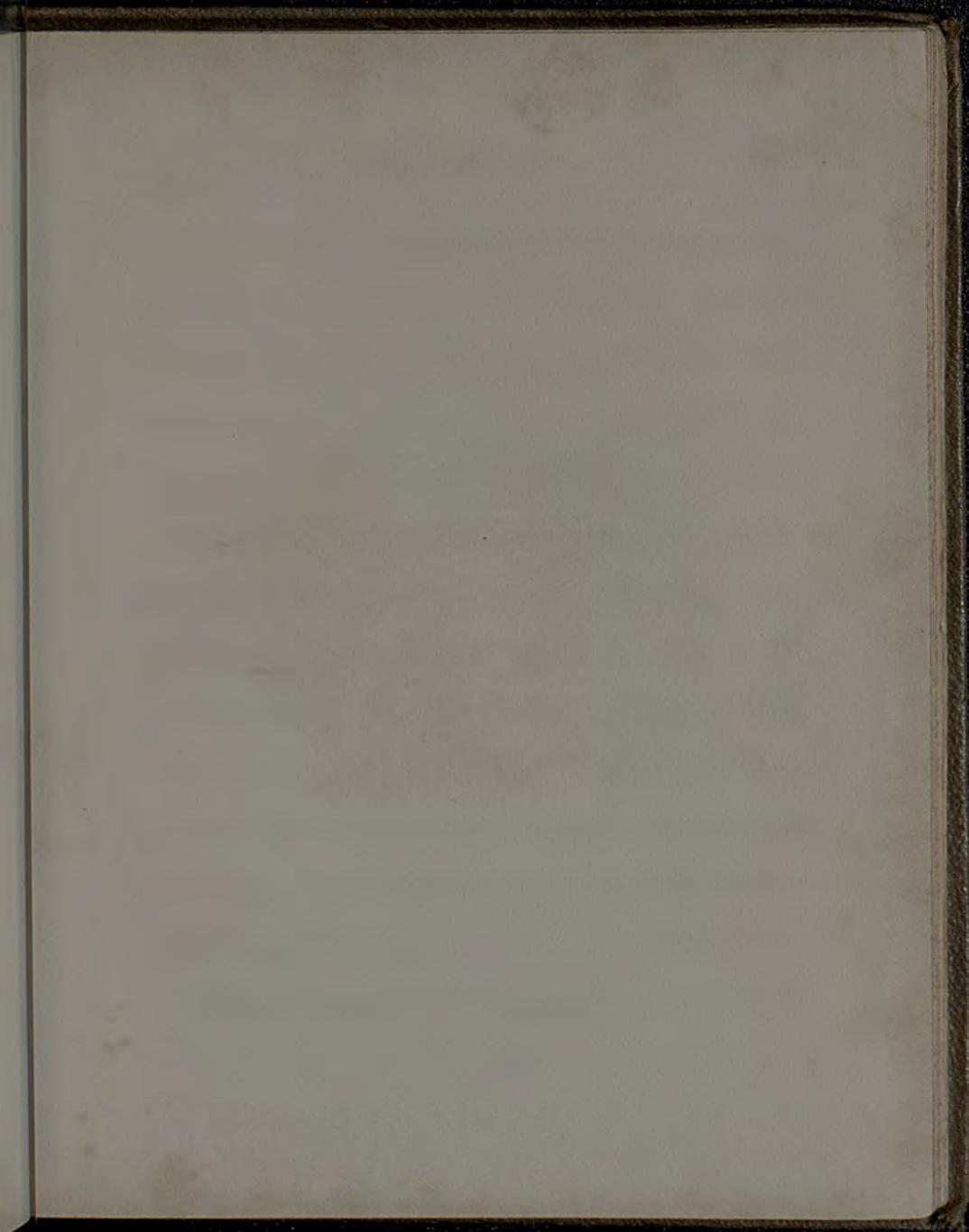
to pursue his way: so, on, and on, they went.

At length a pale, glimmering light appeared at a short distance, and the Child thought of the will-o'-the-wisps he had once seen:—and though their melancholy discourse had been so unintelligible to him, as to send him to sleep, yet he remembered and understood sufficient of their gloomy converse, to be aware that it was not pleasing to his tender mind. He hoped then that the light was not a will-o'-the-wisp. He did not feel afraid, for he knew not what fear was. He only knew love and wonder.

But now the dog began to bark, and to run on faster than before, often turning round as if to see if his infant friend were still near him. As the majestic animal approached the light, his barking became louder, and louder, when, to the surprise of the Child, a venerable figure appeared coming towards him. He was clothed in a full dark robe, that descended to his feet, and was fastened round the waist, by a leathern girdle. His form was tall and erect, though his white locks, on which the moon-beams rested, shewed that his pilgrimage on earth had been long. Deep, and clear, and full of

tenderness, were the tones of the aged man's voice, as he drew near, and addressed the Child. Then taking him up in his arms, he bore his infant guest to the spot whence the light had proceeded. The Child saw that what had puzzled him so much, was a small lamp, that lighted up a hut which he now entered with his new-found friend.

But he thought not long of the light—for he had met with kindness and affection, which had sunk deep into his little heart—and all other feelings, just then, gave place to *one*,—of grateful love.





III.

THE aged man had placed the Child upon his knee, and gently wiped the dews from off his pale cheek, encouraging him with a benevolent smile, and many endearing words: and the Child threw his arms around his neck, and burst into a flood of tears:—they were tears of joy, and thankfulness, and love.

Then the Hermit arose, and went to the

door of the hut, and clapped his hands;— and a goat came fleetly across the green sward, and seemed glad to give her milk to the aged man.

And as the Child partook of the milk, and some sweet brown bread, the lips of the Recluse slowly moved, and his eyes were raised to heaven. He was thanking God for having preserved the Child.

Then the Child's tender eye-lids became heavy, and the Hermit laid him down on his own leafy couch;—and the Child slept with the hand of his new-found friend locked in his.

And there was an eye watching over the hut, and over the Child, and over the aged man:—it was the eye of the all-seeing God.

And now

“The meek-eyed morn appeared,

“Mother of dews; at first

“Faint gleaming in the dappled east.”

And the Hermit took the Child by the hand, and bade him kneel with him at the open door of the hut.

So they knelt down together, that holy man, and that gentle Child;—but the former alone uttered the words of prayer

and praise; for the Child knew not how to address God. He knelt, because he loved to obey the voice of his kind friend, and he listened, with a grateful heart, and a humble spirit.

The prayerful tones ascended slowly, and clearly through the pure air, and as the morning breeze carried the sounds away, they seemed like heralds of peace sent to a distant land.

And they rose from their knees, and re-entered the hut. The goat again afforded her delicious milk, and fruits and bread now graced the humble board.

The Child felt happy with the aged man, but yet he longed to go again into the green wood, in search of his dear dragonfly, and to talk to his beloved flowers. So, as he listened to the "woodland hymns that thick around him rose," he turned his soft blue eyes to the open door, and though he spoke not, yet the Hermit saw that his infant mind was dwelling on some dear, and distant, object.

Then the kind old man spoke tenderly to the Child, and encouraged him to tell his simple story, and when he heard it all,—how the Child had formerly gossiped

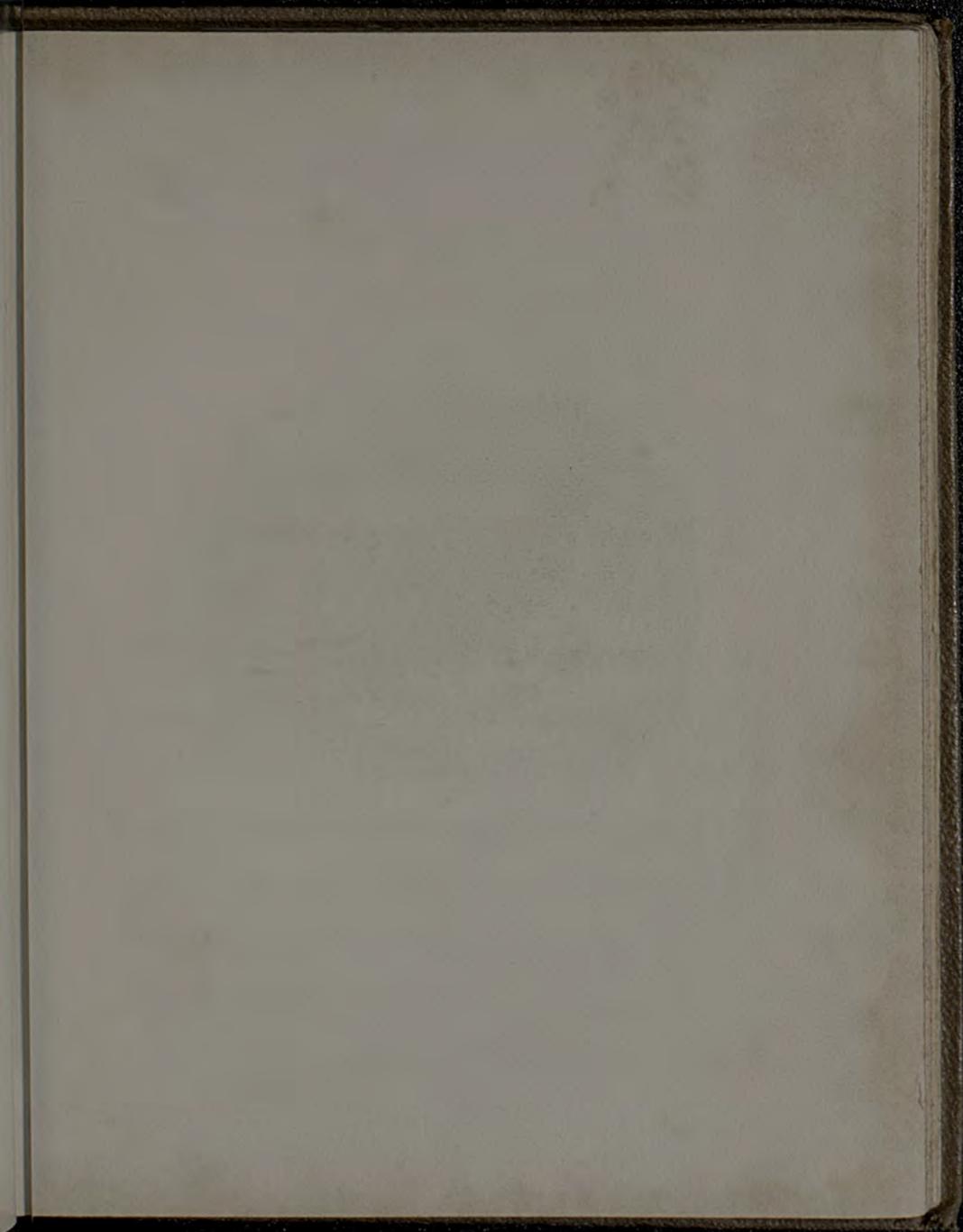
with trees, and streams, and flowers, and birds, and insects,—and how he had been distressed the previous day, at the unwonted silence of them all ;—and how the loss of his beloved dragonfly had grieved his little heart—the venerable Recluse smiled affectionately on him, for he perceived that a sweet and glorious *dream* had powerfully impressed his infant mind. So, he spoke gently to the Child, and by degrees convinced him that he had been cherishing a lovely illusion only,—but he cheered him under his disappointment, by the sweet assurance that though flowers

and running brooks, and beautiful insects,
and bright birds, and glowing stars, could
not hold converse *with* him, yet *to* him,
they would, every one and all, speak of
their great Creator, for

“ In Reason’s ear they all rejoice,

“ And utter forth a glorious voice.”

THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE OF JOHN DE Witt
BY JOHN DE Witt
AND
THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE OF JOHN DE Witt
BY JOHN DE Witt





IV.

It was a cheering sight to behold the meek and trusting Child, seated at the feet of his pious friend, listening to all he said with affection and delight.

And when the Hermit spoke of that Great Being, whose throne is in the highest heaven, and *yet* who deigns to dwell in the hearts of the contrite and lowly,—who is present in all parts of the universe, at the same moment,—who is the Creator

and Preserver of every thing,—governing all events by his wisdom and goodness,—seeing into the heart of every human being,—knowing their secret thoughts as well as their actions,—when the Hermit dilated on these things, the Child was lost in feelings of awe and admiration, and he longed to hear more and more of so great a God, and to learn to please him.

Then the aged man took the Child into the green wood, and there he pointed out the beauties of the variegated foliage. Here, was a venerable oak, spreading its leafy arms far and wide, offering a cool shade to the wanderer during the heat of

the day. There, a stately elm, which ever greets the merry spring with its light and cheerful green, waved its ample branches gaily in the breeze. There, again, the poplar, straight and tall, reared its spiral head to the skies. The mountain-ash, with its scarlet berries, entwined its branches with those of the elegant white birch; and, not far off, the holly, glittering with its armed and varnished leaves, tipped with coral, embellished the forest glade. And now the Child stopped to admire the beautiful larch, gracefully tapering from the base to the summit. The Hermit told him of the elastic nature of this tree;—

how it bends before the most violent gale, and regains its erect position as soon as the rough blast has passed over it. "And we, my Child," he added, "must bow submissively to the storms of life, should the Almighty, in his wisdom, suffer them to burst over our heads; and He will, in his own good time, raise us up again, nor will he permit us to be destroyed."

The Child did not quite comprehend the Hermit's discourse, but he hearkened to it with meek attention, wishing to be instructed. Often did he pause to examine the studded and fluted trunk of the white beech, overspread with a variety of

mosses and lichens. The lime, the majestic pine, and the overshadowing branches of the horse-chestnut, next claimed his wonder and delight. Nor were the sycamore and maple overlooked; their bark smooth and polished as satin, and their verdant boughs forming an impenetrable shade.

As they slowly left the embowered spot, the aged man again reverted to the great Creator of all.

“The noble oak,” he said, “and the minute weed which springs up at its foot, are nourished by the same earth, and watered by the same gentle dews of heaven: and so it is with man,—the high and

the low are alike His care; neither can subsist without his blessing.”

The Child felt glad when he heard all this, and he looked fondly into the old man's face as he spoke, and a tear of gratitude glistened in his dark blue eye, while a happy smile played around his pretty mouth.

They returned to their rustic dwelling, where all that contributes to health and peace was ever to be found.

As the shades of evening drew near and the Child felt the influence of sleep stealing over him, the benevolent Recluse gently placed him on a leafy bed which

he had prepared for him ; first, however, teaching him to invoke a blessing from HIM who condescends to hear the weakest infant's prayer.

And soon the Child's fair eyelids closed, and he slept the sleep of innocence.

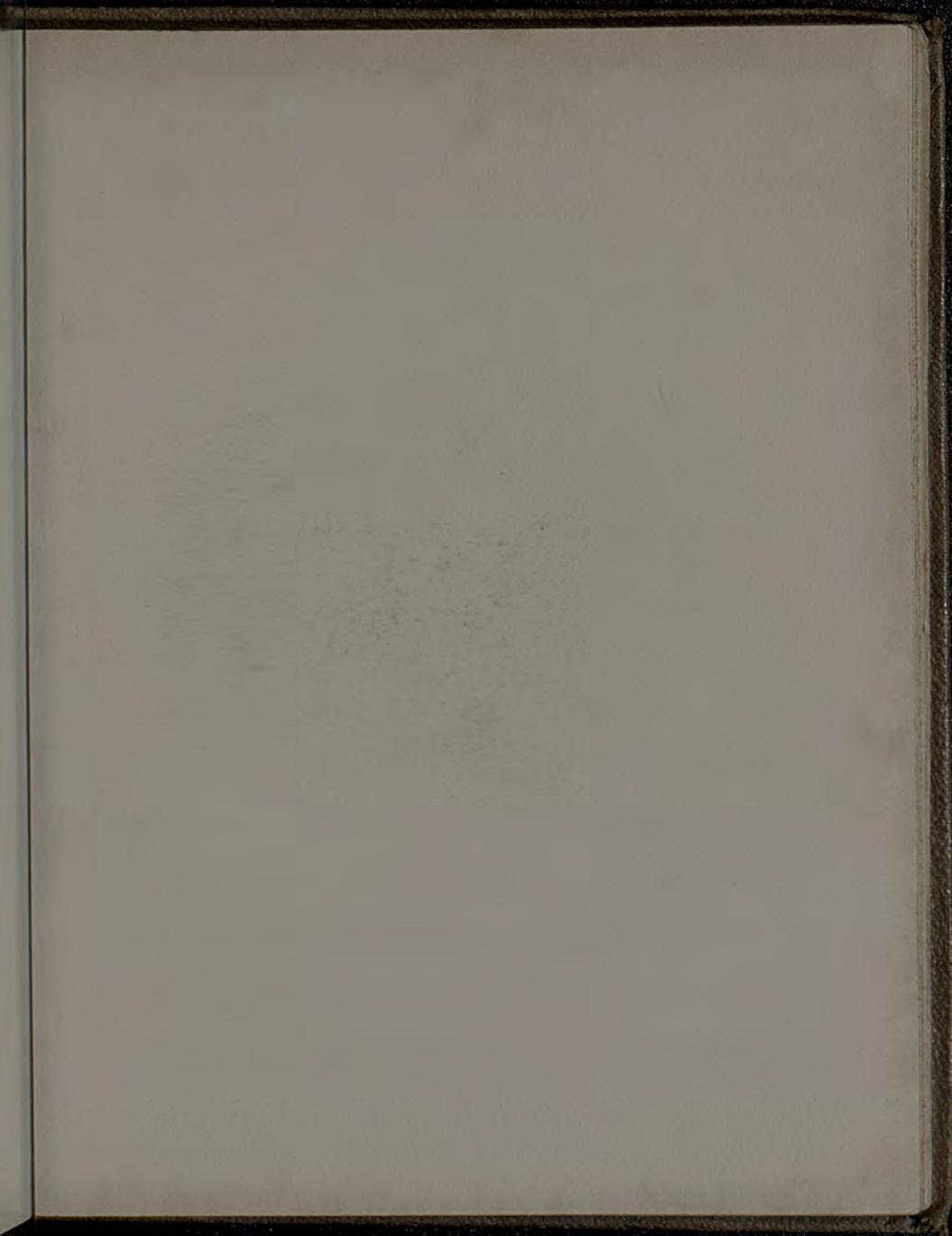
The pious man now trimmed his little lamp, and taking from a nook the volume which is dear to every Christian heart, he sat him down to feast upon its sacred truths. Ever and anon he turned to gaze upon that gentle Child, who lay in sweet repose, his little hands gracefully folded on his bosom. Light and joyful seemed his slumbers; his forehead, white as the purest

snow, was scarcely shaded by his glossy auburn hair,—his cherub-cheek glowed like a blushing rose,—a placid smile was on his coral lips,—while his soft low breathings seemed to whisper all was peace within.

The aged man lifted his soul in prayer to God, that HE would bless this little one, and cause the seed of holiness and love to take deep root within his heart. Pleasing to the Almighty is the prayer of age for helpless infancy, and as it rises to the throne of grace, it seems to bring a blessing on the suppliant. At his side

the Angel of Innocence holds her vigil; every evil spirit stands abashed, and dares not tempt; and all unholy thoughts are put to flight.

The day was very warm and
 the wind was from the
 south. The water was
 very calm and the
 sky was clear. We
 went for a walk in
 the park and saw
 many beautiful flowers.
 The children were
 very happy and
 played for hours.
 We had a picnic
 under a big tree.
 The food was very
 good and we all
 enjoyed it very
 much.





V.

It was noon when the Child was led by his aged friend to the summit of a steep cliff, whence they beheld the "multitudinous ocean."

Many a white sail was to be seen gracefully moving over the blue waters. The mid-day sun was shining in all his splendour, and the sea-birds skimmed lightly over the surface of the mighty deep. All seemed happy, and the Child felt happy

also. He pressed the hand of his venerable guide closer within his own, and waited for him to speak.

The Hermit noticed his inquiring eye, and, pointing to the vast expanse before them, he said, "My Child, again thou beholdest the wonderful works of God. 'The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands prepared the dry land.' Those ships contain many human beings, and are all bound to some port. Some are near the haven of their hopes; some have yet many days and nights to plough the waves, ere they arrive at their destinations. But the same Providence watches over all.

The God who is with *us*, is with them also. He is the faithful Pilot, who can steer the vessel in safety through the rudest storm. See now, where yon brave seaman climbs the giddy mast: he has reached the top, and his days appear to depend on that frail rope. But an invisible hand doth hold him up, and keeps him safe, suspended o'er the foaming waves. That hand is God's."

Then the Child grew more and more amazed at such great, such universal love. His little heart was overflowing with affection and delight. He did not speak, but suffered the good Hermit to

lead him back to his moss-covered hut in silent joy.

On the threshold stood the dog, displaying by various gestures his satisfaction at their return. The Child rushed forward to caress him, and when the noble animal licked his hands, and fondly leaped upon him, or, in sportive glee, rolled himself on the soft enamelled grass, he laughed aloud, from pure and unalloyed gladness. Again the aged man clapped his hands, and the pretty goat came bounding over the plain; and they sat them down to enjoy their frugal meal. The dog shared their repast, and many a feathered songster

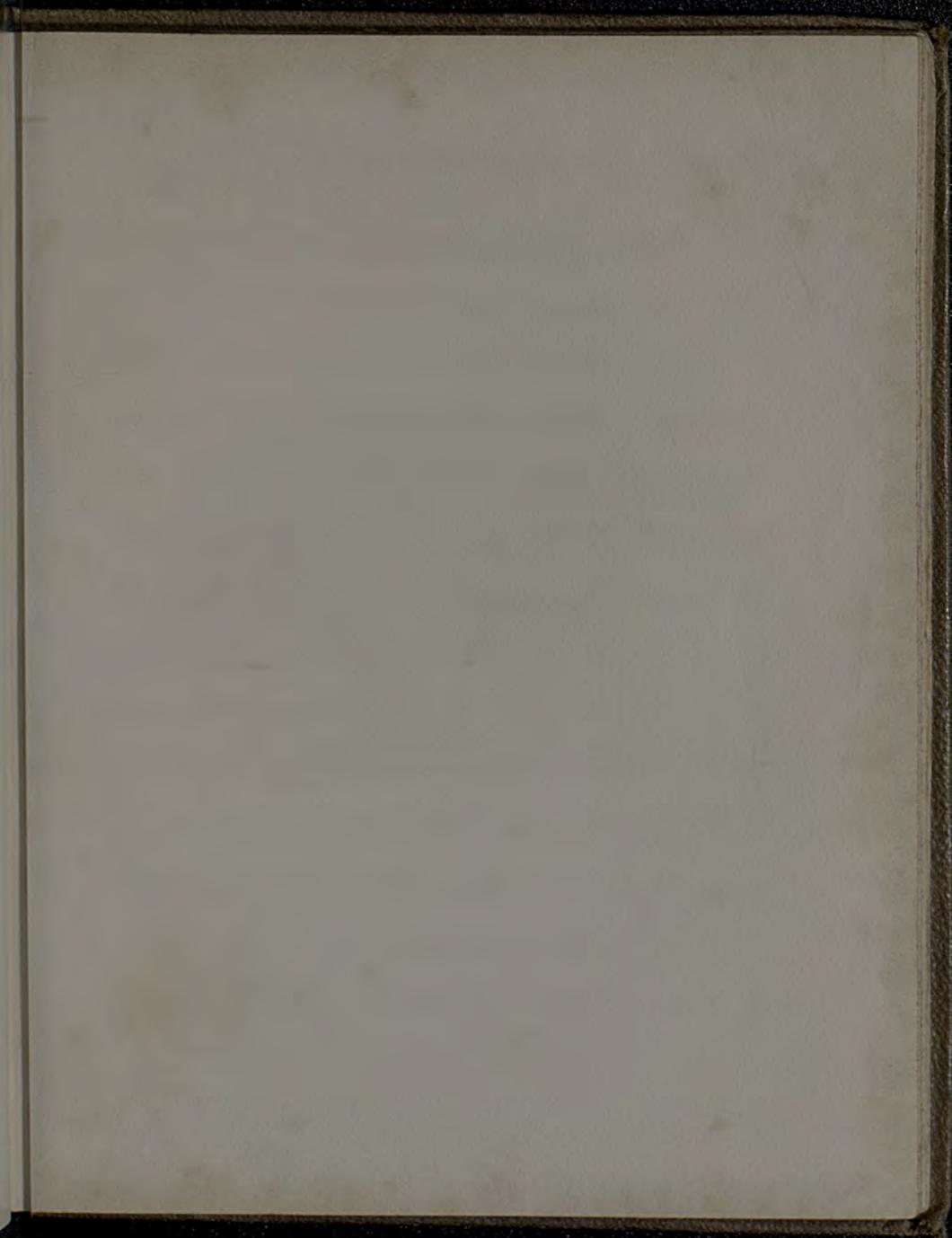
perched fearlessly around. The timid hare and rabbit, too, entered unscared into the lowly dwelling;—and the Child remarked where these uninvited but welcome guests could easiest get at the crumbs that fell, and *there* he took delight in dropping them.

Sweet Charity seemed to rule his infant thoughts. Charity, which is loving “and is kind,”—which seeks the ease of others, not her own, and never looks for praise.

And as the Child observed the pretty animals nibbling or pecking the tiny morsels, which his liberal hand had scattered

all around, he said, "These, too, are cared for by our gracious God."

"They are," replied the Hermit, "and though they speak not with a human tongue, they are not mute to *him*, who sees the Deity in every living thing, and hears his voice in all."





VI.

Thus they conversed, till evening, "slow moving in the streaky west," again returned. "Sweet evening! season of peace!"

The woods waved gracefully to the fragrant breeze. On the horizon a star or two now twinkled, and the moon rose slowly above the verdant hills.

The Child grasped the ample robe of

his conductor, and asked if that beautiful orb were also the work of God.

The Hermit answered, "It is; the glorious sun too, and the heavens themselves, were all created by the same Almighty power. The brilliant planet that adorns the twilight hour, and the myriads of stars,

—'Heaven's golden alphabet,'—

which through the silent night pursue their course, *all, all* are governed by one unerring hand. They never wander out of the way;—'they have neither speech nor language,' it is true, but yet they plainly

‘tell of the glory of God, and declare his handy-work.’ ”

The Child once before had wished that he were a star, and the idea recurred to his artless mind. He expressed the wish to the pious Hermit, and told him why he thought that he should like to be one of those shining worlds—“I should be nearer the great God,” he said, “than I am here.”

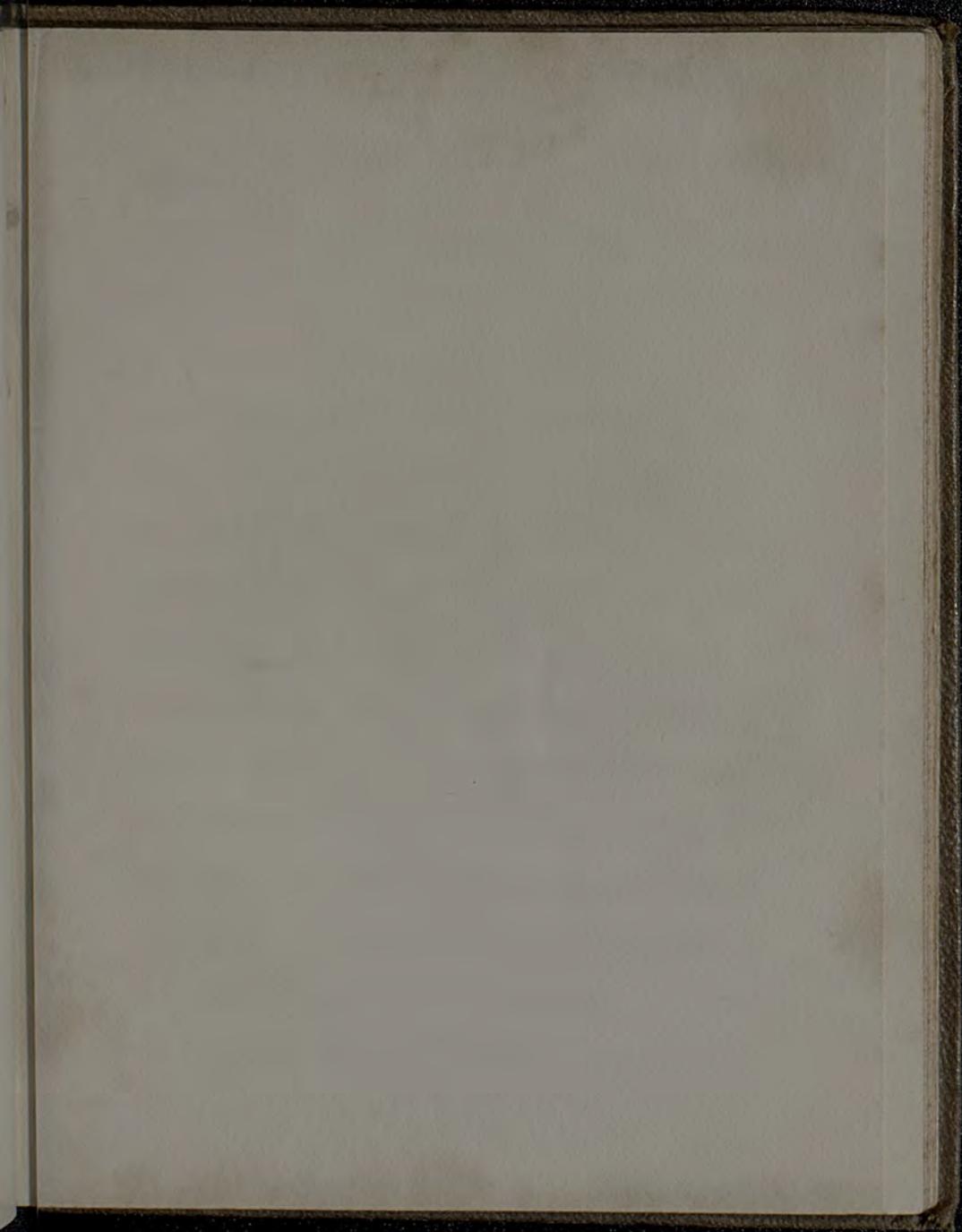
“Not so, my child,” replied his aged friend. “Listen, ‘Thus saith the High and lofty ONE, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy; *I dwell in the high*

and *holy* place; with *him also* that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' Here, we must love and serve him, knowing that he is with us, though invisible;—but hereafter, we humbly trust to see him face to face, seated on his throne of light, surrounded by the Cherubim and Seraphim, and the souls of the redeemed.”

“ And will God hearken to a little child?” asked the infant listener.

“ He will—he does;—no one, however mean, will he despise. And those who love him most, will strive to serve him best; therefore, my child, ‘remember thy Creator

in the days of thy youth,' and 'seek him while he may be found,' with all thy heart. But see, the dews are falling fast, the birds are gone to their nests, the flowers have folded up their tender leaves,—all except the night violet and the evening primrose;—and thou, my little one, art needing rest. Come, let us return to our peaceful cot;—and to-morrow with the early dawn, if HE permit, we will again read Nature's volume, and adore the great Creator through his works."





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VII.

THE approach of the glorious sun was manifested by the rosy tints in the glowing east, when the benevolent Hermit conducted his infant charge to a spot of singular beauty. It was a natural garden in a secluded valley. Shut in on all sides by stupendous mountains and vast forests, it seemed that here, Retirement and Peace held undisputed sway. Clusters of trees, at irregular distances, formed

a delicious retreat for the weary traveller, or for the lover of solitude and meditation. All around was rich in loveliness and fragrance. The jessamine, with its stars of purest ivory, wreathed its tender foliage round the stem of the laburnum, which, though no longer ornamented by its golden tassels, formed, notwithstanding, a graceful figure in the verdant landscape. The light pendent blossoms of the acacia were gone, too, with the early summer; but round its waving branches clung luxuriantly the odoriferous woodbine and the clustering hop. Innumerable flowers decked the grassy plain. The azure harebell and the

humble "crimson-tipped daisy," the bright geranium and the glowing carnation, the beautiful cornflower of richest blue, the marigold and the scarlet poppy,—roses of all kinds, from the sweet-scented moss-rose to the tiny plant of Bengal,—all were there, perfuming the air with the most grateful odours.

The Child roamed joyously from flower to flower, his little heart exulting in the lovely scene. The dog kept close beside him, and when sometimes he climbed the banks to reach some fragrant blossom, or to seek for wild strawberries to regale his aged friend, the faithful animal followed

his tottering steps, fixing his dark liquid eyes on the fairy form, with an expression of anxious watchfulness. And the sweet Child, to evince his gratitude, twined a garland of wild flowers, and with it adorned his favourite's neck, and then led him by a similar glowing chain to the Hermit, who sat meditating under the shade of some weeping willows that fringed the banks of a cool stream. Then again the sportive Child bounded away, his fair countenance beaming with delight; and soon returning with a fresh collection of Nature's treasures, he spread them before

the Hermit, entreating him to talk of HIM who made them.

The aged man selected flowers of various hues, and, pointing out the delicacy of some and the gorgeous beauty of others, he said, "My child, 'these toil not, neither do they spin,' for God clotheth them. God careth for the lily of the field. And mark, my child, the modest violet and the splendid tulip! The sweet odour of the former makes amends for its humble appearance, while the magnificent colours of the latter do not compensate for its want of fragrance. So it is with active

worth and poverty, compared with indolence and wealth. The deeds of the just, though performed in obscurity and amidst every discouragement, are registered on high, for HIS dear sake, who, though the God of all, did condescend to take upon him the form of man, and set us an example of loving obedience and suffering patience.

“But the supine or overbearing conduct of the rich worldling offends the God of mercy. The poor in spirit and the humble doer of HIS will he loves; and with HIS love they must be happy.”

Then, turning to the golden flower, the

———“lofty follower of the sun,” who,

“Sad when he sets, shuts up her yellow leaves,

“Drooping all night; and, when he warm returns,

“Points her enamoured bosom to his ray,”

the Hermit thus continued his discourse :

“This flower, too, my child, conveys a

useful lesson to the Christian mind. O !

let us ever turn our mental eye towards

HIM who is the Sun of Righteousness. If

He should hide his face from us, dark

indeed our minds must be ; but if we seek

his light, he will bestow it freely.”

And then the Hermit spoke of our

exalted Saviour, and told the Child how much he loved to meditate alone in sweet retired spots. It seems that Nature had peculiar charms for him. The Mount of Olives, and Gethsemane's garden, the lake of Gennesareth, and the brook Kedron, were the places the most frequented, when he wished to commune with his Father alone.

And the Child stood listening,—and when the aged man ceased speaking, he still remained at his side, in silent admiration of all he saw and heard.

The gentle murmuring of the rivulet,

and the choral songs of the winged inhabitants of the trees,—the buzz of the insects, as they performed their mystic evolution in the sunbeams, or pursued each other over the surface of the rippling stream,—the rustling of the leaves, stirred by the light zephyrs,—all produced a combination of harmonious sounds, enchanting to the Child's ear.

He thought of his dear dragonfly, and his infant dream appeared likely to be realised, for as he stood watching, and imitating with childish glee, the graceful waving to and fro of the long feathery grass, a beautiful insect, with burnished

body and transparent wings, settled fearlessly on his white and dimpled hand.

“ I have found my old favourite,” he exclaimed, with a shout of joy,—and as the flutterer still kept its post, he presented it in triumph to his beloved friend.

The Hermit smiled, and carefully examining the dragonfly, he perceived that one of its wings was injured, so that it could not fly away.

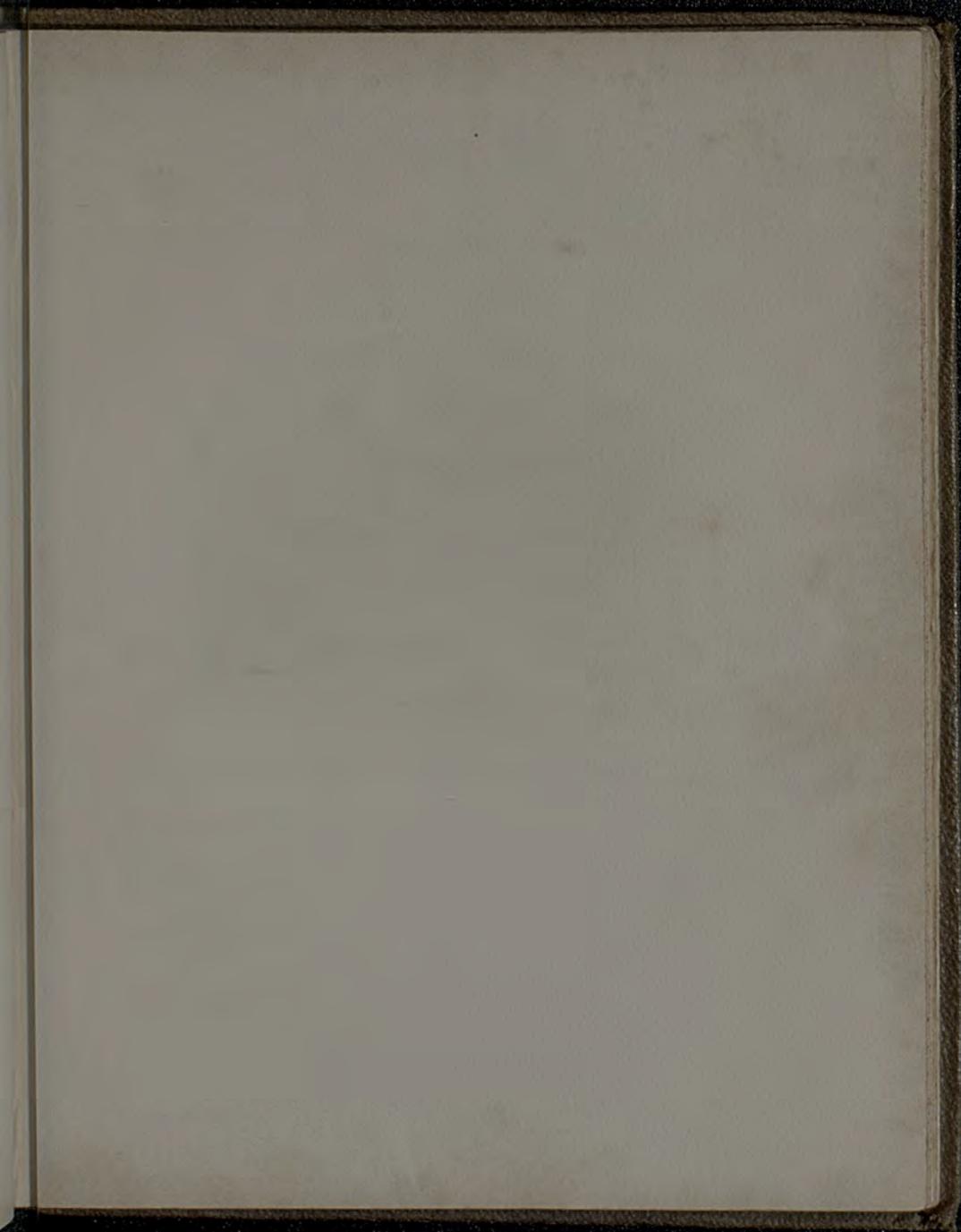
“ Dear Child,” he said, “ this insect is in pain; it cannot speak, but see, the body trembles, and its elegant gossamer wings droop mournfully.”

The Child's eyes filled with tears. It

was a new thing to him to see even an insect suffer, and his tender heart was oppressed with sorrow. But he did not remain idly weeping for the poor wounded fly. He ran to the lily of the valley, and gathering some of her broad leaves, he formed a nest for the dragonfly, and placed it gently therein, putting wild berries also for it to feed upon. Thus did he administer relief to a helpless insect; and the action brought with it a sweet consciousness of having done good.

The Hermit saw the Child's countenance again lighted up with the pure expression of benevolence, and he called

him towards him, and said, "Thou hast done well ; bless God for giving thee the power and the will to be kind."





VIII.

DAY succeeded day, and the Child was still the guest of the pious Hermit.

Sometimes the forest was the chosen spot for their rambles; and it was always a source of pure joy to the innocent Child to watch the noble stag, with branching head, bound swiftly through the glade, or the dappled fawn pursue its gambols through the leafy dell;—the merry squir-

rel, too, leaping from bough to bough, excited his infant wonder.

At other times the sea-shore attracted their roving steps ; and the Child loved to seek for the beautiful shells that lay embedded in the glittering sands ; and then his aged friend would teach him to observe how wonderfully the Divine power was displayed in the infinite variety of the form, colour, and size of these shells.

One evening, as they stood admiring the vast expanse of waters, the venerable man, as he was wont, explaining to the gentle Child the never-ending wonders of the Creator's hand, the scene became suddenly

changed. The winds moaned wildly,— clouds gathered fast, and the billows rose to a fearful height. The lurid lightning flashed, and the thunder-claps “pealed solemnly, convulsing heaven and earth.”

On the verge of the horizon a stately ship was seen buffeting with the waves:— signals of distress reached the shore. Stout-hearted mariners in vain attempted to brave the tempest, and to risk their lives to save those of their fellow men. Not a boat could live. Louder and louder rolled the thunder, and the wind raged horribly across the howling waste of the mighty ocean.

The affrighted Child clung to his aged conductor. His silken locks floating loosely in the rough blast, and his dimpled cheek pale with terror.

The Hermit's countenance was placid. "My Child," he said, "tempestuous winds arise, and thunders roar, and vivid lightnings flash, but—the ALMIGHTY 'rides upon the whirlwind, and directs the storm.'"

Then wrapping the trembling infant in the folds of his ample robe, he bore him in his arms to his humble home.

With kind and cheering words he soothed the Child, and told him that

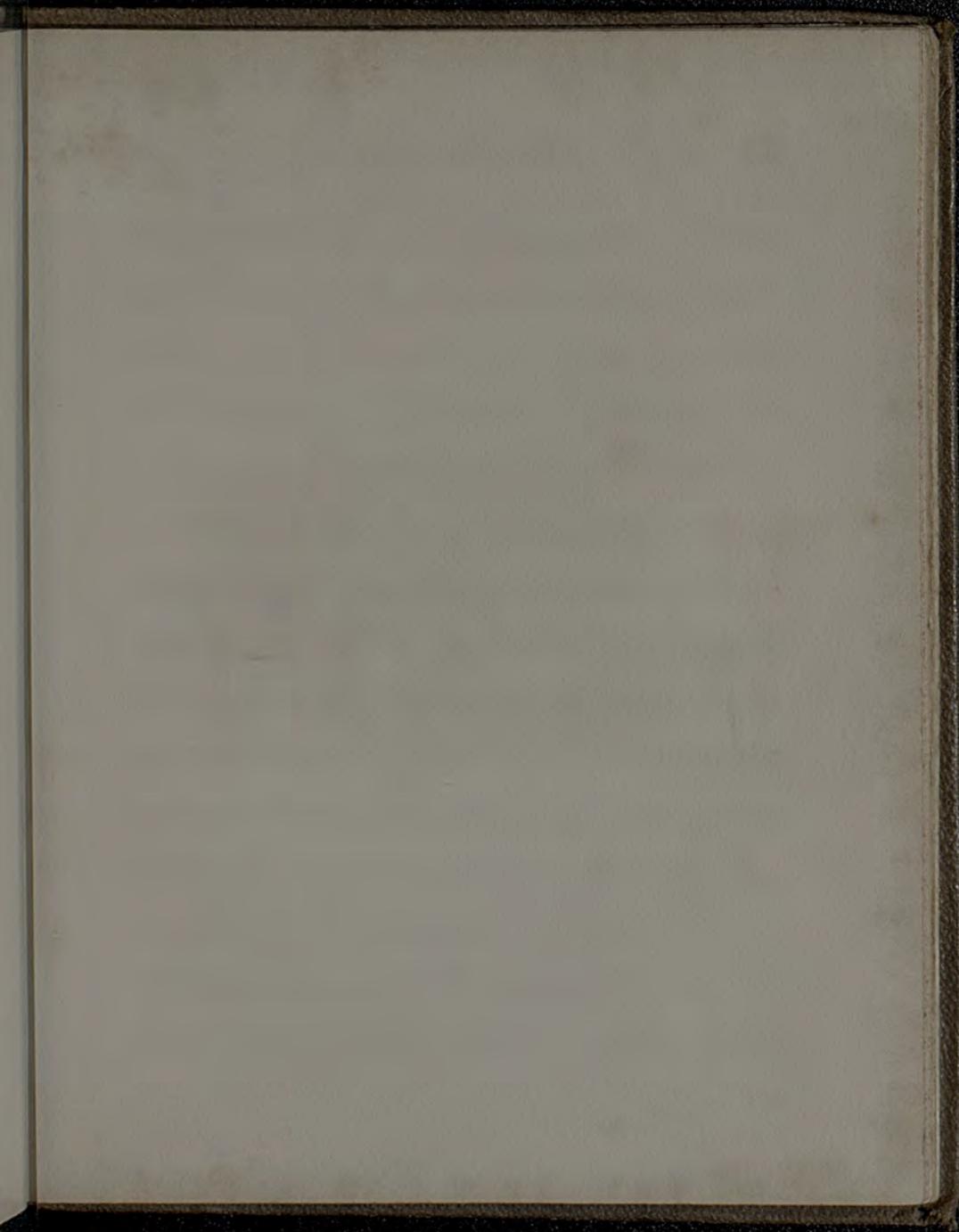
sweet story of our blessed Lord's calm slumber in the ship, when, tempest-tossed, his terrified disciples, in their want of faith, disturbed his peaceful rest. He told him how the Saviour rebuked the sea and roaring winds, and how his mandate, given in those emphatic words, "Peace, be still!" was instantly obeyed.

The Child listened with eager interest,—and when the old man paused, he said, "And that brave ship,—where is she now?—and all her crew?—are they preserved?"

The generous feeling of the Child, that made him think of others' safety, though

secure himself, pleased his benevolent friend, and he answered, "Their fate is hidden from us, but we will pray for that unhappy ship."

So the aged man and the innocent Child knelt down, and prayed for the hapless mariner, and the way-faring man. Then they retired to rest, knowing that God was their rock and their covert from the tempest.





IX.

CALM was the morn when the old man and the Child arose from their peaceful slumbers. No signs of the late tempest remained. All was serene:—the lofty pines and the stately oaks, the blue-topped mountains and the stupendous cliffs, reared their heads to the skies,—no terrific whirlwind nor reverberating thunder disturbing their proud tranquillity. The thick grassy banks, enamelled with

daisies, harebells, and wild geraniums, were reflected in the limpid rill, as it murmured gently amid the smooth pebbles. Gorgeous butterflies waved their gladsome wings merrily over the fragrant flowers, and swarms of bees fluttered about, culling every honey-drop, and then hastened away to deposit their store in their waxen cells. Brilliant dewy gems glittered on every emerald spray, and songs of joy resounded through the balmy air.

The Hermit led his infant charge where golden fields claimed the reaper's care. "Last night," he said, "impetuous blasts

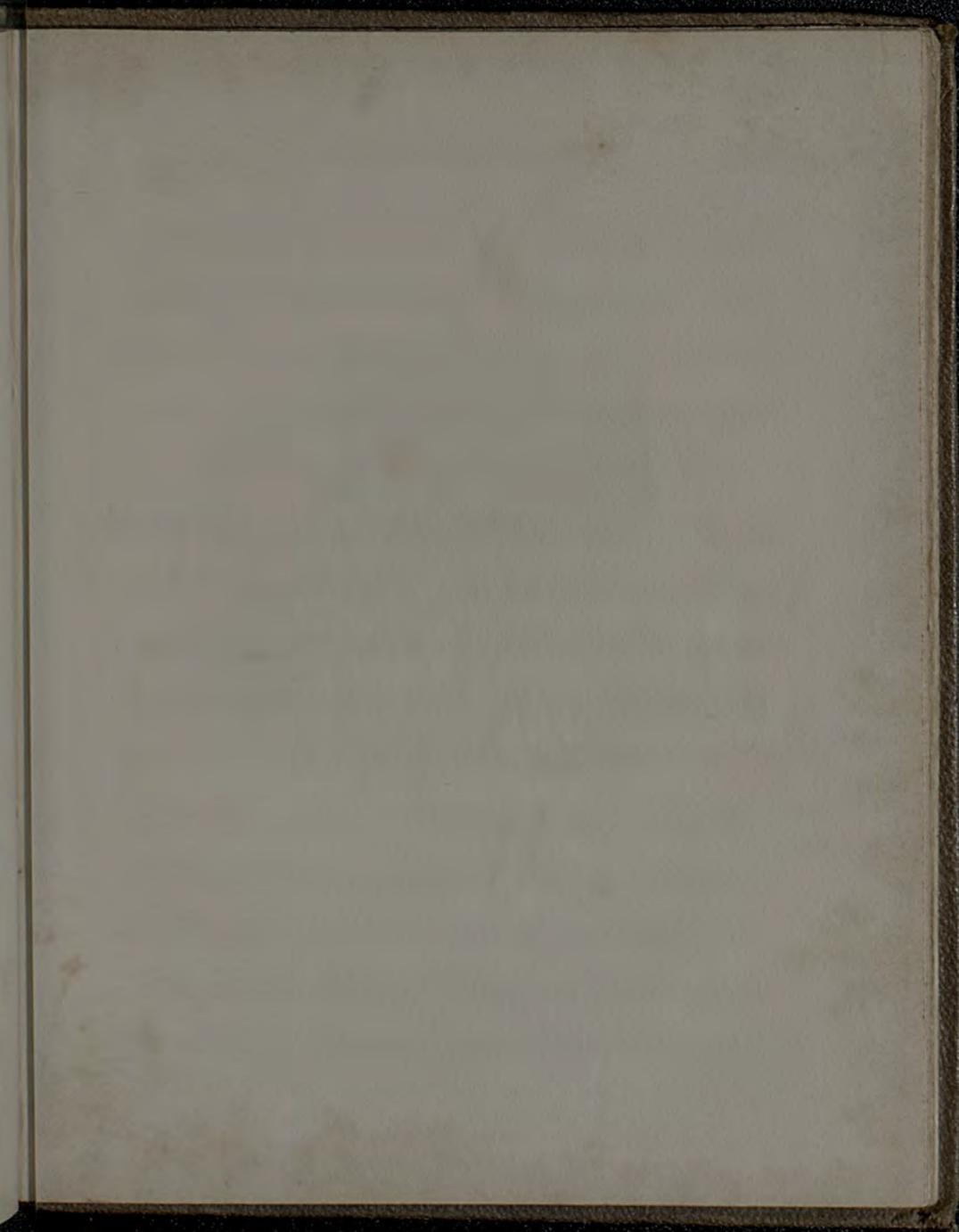
menaced destruction to this ripened corn ; and so, the storms of sorrow often threaten to overwhelm the sons of men. But they are sent to purify the heart, to root up evil passions, and to bring forth faith and love, humility and pious zeal. A field of wheat is like the world : tares and weeds are found amongst the corn, and the bad seed is suffered to remain awhile. But when the harvest day is come, the sickle cuts down all together. So, death mows down the rich and poor, the humble Christian and the sinful man. Here, we must strive to fit ourselves for heaven. God will his Holy Spirit grant to aid us

in the work, for that alone can prosper the endeavour. And may we not some useful lesson learn of every living thing? When the bird lightly cleaves the air, warbling his sweet notes, shall not our hearts spring to the great First Cause of all created beings?—shall we not join the hymn of praise raised by the hum of happy insects? Is it not God who makes the grain of wheat, deep buried in the ground, to spring again to life, for our support? From HIM alone proceed the genial dews, the cheering sunbeams, the refreshing rains, so necessary to the production of the fruits of the earth. It is His Spirit

that breathes in the gentle zephyrs, and that rules the storm. He is with us now, my Child, in this rich field laden with blessings for the sons of men. He is with the desolate and the oppressed, who cry to him for succour. He is with the lowly penitent, whom the proud ones of this world scorn;—and he is with the veiled seraphs, who, at the foot of his resplendent throne, have the high privilege of sounding, on their celestial lyres, the praises of the glorious Triune God.

The Child marked the enthusiasm of his aged friend, and hung upon his accents with all the endearing eagerness of one who

fears to lose a note of some rare melody. His beaming eyes wandered not from the venerable Hermit's benignant countenance, which, as he spoke, became so lighted up with all the pure emotions of his grateful heart, that almost might one have imagined the beloved disciple—the holy and inspired John—was come once more to visit this poor earth, and give again his gentle admonitions to *mankind*.





X.

SUMMER had passed away, and autumn was fast following in its train. The landscape was embrowned with the many deepening shades of the umbrageous woods.

As the Child wandered through the saddened grove, and marked the leaf-strewn walks, and watched the shivering birds sit on the bare trees, his little heart grew heavy. No dragonfly, with net-work

wings, nor other gorgeous insect, crossed his path. Dry withered leaves alone danced mystically round and round in the breeze, like some strange visitants from another world.

The dog was his companion in these rambles; and when the evenings became chill and dark, the faithful animal would, in his own expressive way, remind the Child that he must bend his steps towards home. And the aged man, by his kind instructions and mild discourse, made the hours pass swiftly by. "Come," he would say, "my gentle child, let us recall some of the days of pleasure that are gone,

when together we roamed through shady groves, or flowery meads, seeking and finding the Creator on every side. Oft-times we have enjoyed the melodious matin songs of the lark, and the evening lay of the nightingale. We have risen at early dawn, and have watched the mountains gradually assume their verdant robe;—and we have stood in pious admiration when the sun has set in cloudless majesty, tinging the rocks and hills with hues of gold and purple. The supreme wisdom of God has been our daily theme; and we have seen it displayed in the air and in the waters, in the forest and in

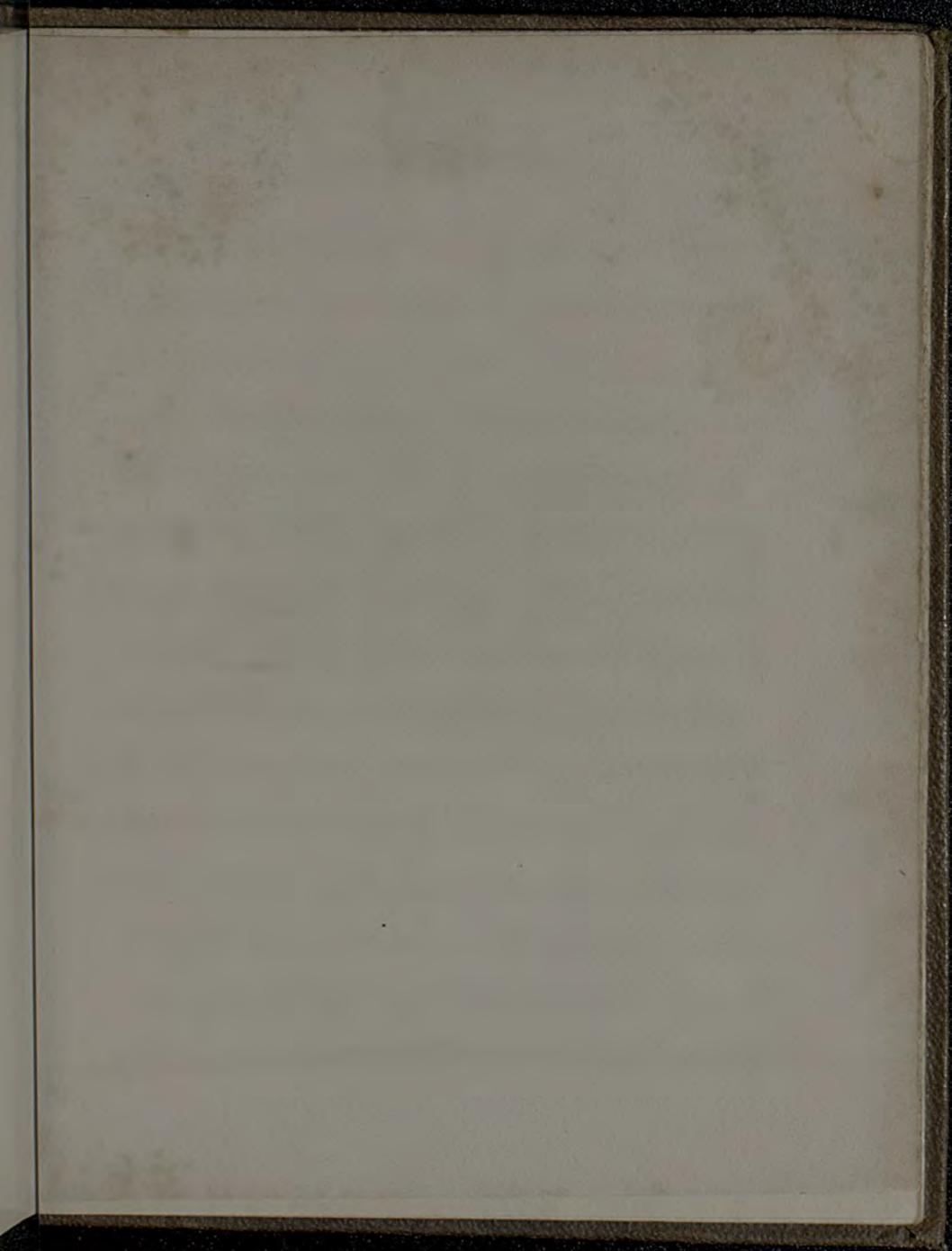
the field, in the bird and in the insect, in the quadruped and in ourselves. We have seen that in the dew-drop God is visible, as much as in the boundless ocean;—that in the glow-worm's tiny lamp his power gleams forth, as much as in the starry firmament above;—that in the softest whisperings of the summer breeze His voice is heard, as well as in the whirlwind's blast;—and now, that the face of nature is so changed, and winter with rapid step advances,—now that the days are short, and the night is long,—let us still improve the passing moments, and contemplate the infinite

goodness, wisdom, and power of HIM who made spring-time and summer, autumn and winter.”

Sometimes the benevolent Recluse read from the sacred volume the words of life and love, whilst the Child sat at his feet, in fixed attention, his cherub countenance glowing with delight, or melting into an expression of tender sorrow, as the heart-stirring narrative of our Saviour's life on earth fell on his ear. One night, as the Hermit read the touching words, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not,”—the Child dropped on his knees; he clasped his little hands and

raised his innocent blue eyes to heaven, and he whispered an humble prayer. And the aged man looked upon the Child, and he extended his hands, and placed them on the infant's head, and blessed him.

Then the Child rose, and hiding his face in the Hermit's bosom, he sobbed aloud. Happiness and love, not sorrow nor error, drew forth this emotion: his heart was touched by God's own hand, and his spirit responded to the "still small voice" of his Maker.





XI.

AND now winter was come. The fields and woods, the mountains and valleys, were covered with dazzling snow, and the light hoar-frost sparkled on the trees.

The aged man pointed out to the Child the beauties of the wintry landscape. The laurel and the twining ivy had preserved their verdure, and the deep green leaves of the yew-tree looked cheerful amid its snow-clad brethren of the forest.

The Hermit then explained the utility of snow,—how it protects the vegetable world from the icy blasts of winter. He spoke also of God's providential care of animals, in giving some a covering of warm thick fur, which guards them from the cold,—how others pass the inclement season in a dormant state, or others, having, during the summer, deposited a store of food, find an asylum in crevices of rocks, in hollow trees, ruined walls, or caverns. Then he told of the migration of certain birds as winter approaches, and of their wonderful instinct, which enables them to pursue their journey through the

trackless paths of the air, to milder climes, and, when spring re-appears, to find their way back to their old nests.

“My child,” said the aged man, “here again is a lesson for us. The same God who so mysteriously directs these birds of passage, will surely conduct, with equal care and wisdom, one whom he has blessed with reason.

“Let us then follow the road of duty which his tender mercy appoints for us, for ‘His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace.’ And, my child, let us not forget that ‘nature is a school for the heart;’ and the contempla-

tion of God's providence and goodness to man ought to excite in us a desire to do good to all his creatures. The child of God will strive to imitate his heavenly parents, in deeds of kindness and benevolence. Those who are rich will comfort the poor,—will administer to their necessities, and encourage them in active industry. Those who are poor will not neglect the opportunities they possess of employing their time usefully; and they will trust, for a blessing on their efforts, to that unerring and beneficent Being who hath caused the green herb to grow for the cattle, and hath taught the birds to

build their nests; 'who hath made the high hills for a refuge for the wild goats, and giveth the beasts their food.' Who saith to the snow, 'Be thou on the earth, likewise to the small rain, and the great rain of His strength.'”

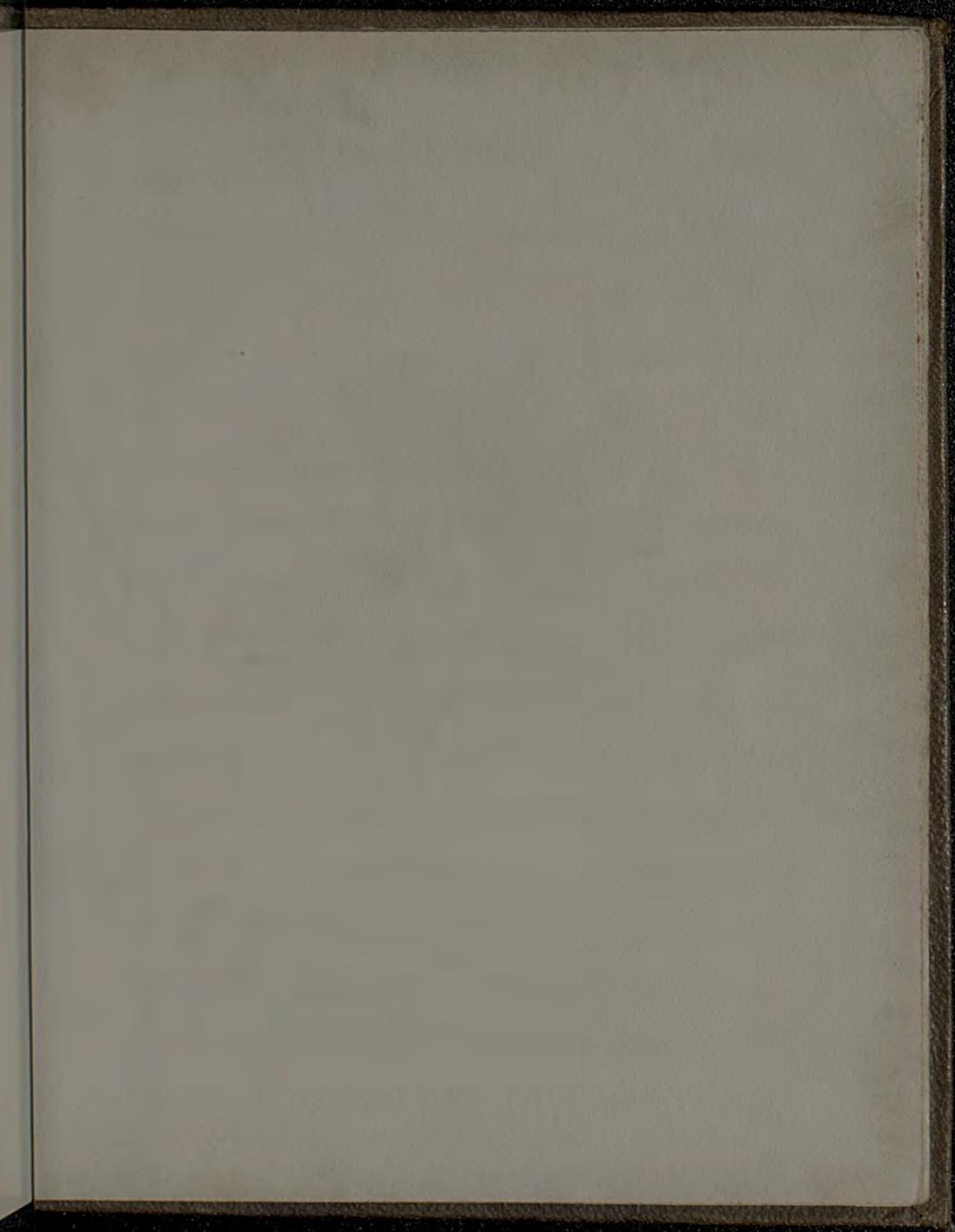
Thus did the Hermit instruct the Child during the many winter days. And the Child listened, and listened, with joy and wonder ever new. His venerable friend had opened to his perusal four great volumes;—four volumes which indeed can never tire, and never end. The word of sacred truth—the Bible—stands the first. Its comprehensiveness, its simplicity, its

majesty, its authority, sufficiently prove its divine origin. The second volume is the book of the Creation,—but to understand its beauties, man must have the Bible as a key. Without this key the works of God appear but indistinct; *with* it—to those who love *Him*—they become plain, for HE is visible in all. In the rainbow *they* see a token of His great mercy and covenant-love;—the glorious king of day reminds them of the Sun of Righteousness, and the brilliant orbs that glitter in the dark robe of night bring to their grateful thoughts the Star of Bethlehem.

The book of Providence is the third volume,—and to read its pages with profit, the same key is requisite. It teaches us that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His will,—that flowers are clothed, and beasts are fed, all by their Creator's care. We then feel a solid confidence that He will provide for us, who, of all his creatures, are alone capable of loving and obeying HIM.

The fourth volume is that of the human heart,—and the Bible teaches us to read this mysterious book also. It shews us the source, nature, and tendency of all our hopes and fears, desires, pursuits, and per-

plexities. The heart of man is deep, but God knoweth it, and we must endeavour to search our own.





XII.

So the Child was not idle nor melancholy during the cheerless wintry months, for he lived in an atmosphere of piety, and charity, and peace. Yet when the spring returned, joyfully he hailed the blithesome songs of the happy feathered choristers, now busily preparing their downy nests.

With his ever faithful dog, he now again would stroll where the hawthorn white, and many a crimson blossom, met his delighted gaze. Again he climbed the banks, where, scattered wild, cowslips and

violets, with the lily of the vale, gave all their vernal sweets.

The aged man loved to see the happy Child, and day by day he taught him. And as his lessons ended not, but still were new, and as the Child listened with untired ear, and lowly mind, and loving heart, to all the Hermit told, his life was one of undisturbed tranquillity and pure enjoyment.

Oft-times he thought of his strange infant dreams, his friend the dragonfly, and other favourites. He loved them still;—nay, better than before, for now they spoke to him of God.

The forest trees, and the fragrant flow-

ers, the sportive animals, and the warbling birds; the buzzing insects, the limpid streams, the wide blue ocean, and the stupendous cliffs, the shady groves, and the enamelled lawn, *all, all* were now, to the Child's admiring eye, marks of the power, and goodness infinite, of HIM, whom he had learned to call his father and his friend.



