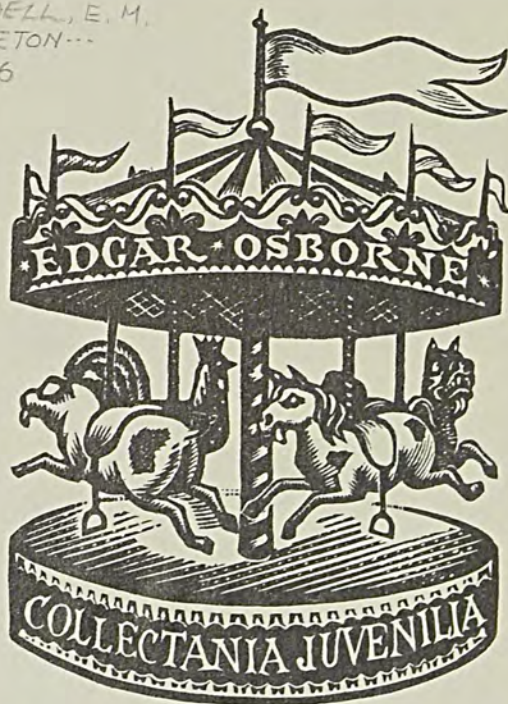


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LANETON PARSONAGE:

A

TALE FOR CHILDREN,

ON THE

PRACTICAL USE OF A PORTION

OF THE

Church Catechism.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "AMY HERBERT," ETC.

EDITED BY

THE REV. W. SEWELL, B.D.

FELLOW OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Oh! say not, dream not, heavenly notes
To childish ears are vain,—
That the young mind at random floats,
And cannot *reach* the strain.

Dim or unheard the words may fall,
And yet the heaven-taught mind
May learn the sacred air, and all
The harmony unwind.

The Christian Year.

LONDON: .

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1846.

LONDON :
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
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PREFACE.

THE following pages were commenced with the wish of adding to that class of children's books, which as containing direct instruction upon religious subjects, may be considered not inappropriate for their more serious reading. The idea of taking the Church Catechism as a foundation is neither new nor free from objection. It has, in the present instance, occasioned some degree of incongruity between the explanations and the lighter portions; and the unavoidable length of some of the conversations may, perhaps, lead many children to omit them altogether. This defect was not fully perceived until the tale was too far advanced for any material alteration; and it was then found, by experience, to be in a measure obviated by being read aloud, when even the gravest parts excited a certain

degree of interest in the minds of children of a very early age.

With this suggestion the story is now published, in the hope that, whatever may be its defects, either in plan or detail, it contains nothing inconsistent with the inspired Word of God and the teaching of the Church.

LANETON PARSONAGE.

CHAPTER I.

"MAMMA," said little Madeline Clifford, as she looked up from the work which she had been industriously hemming for nearly a quarter of an hour, "I want very much to ask you a question."

"Well, my love, what is it? why should you be afraid?"

"Because perhaps you will think it is curious, and would rather not answer."

"I can but say no! if I think it wrong."

"Oh! it is not wrong, I am sure; but sometimes you tell us not to trouble ourselves about other persons' concerns; and what I wish to know has nothing really to do with me, or with any of us."

Mrs. Clifford smiled: "Shall I tell you, Madeline," she said, "what you are going to ask?"

"You can't, mamma; how should you know? you cannot look at my thoughts."

"But I can guess them, which sometimes does as well. What made you listen so much to what Mrs. Mortimer and I were saying just now?"

"Oh then, mamma, you do know: but I did not understand when I did listen; because I could not make out what Mrs. Mortimer meant, when she

said that Lady Catharine Hyde was going to adopt Alice Lennox. What is adopting?"

"Taking her to be her own child; and having her taught, and clothed, and fed, as a mother would."

"And will she love her?" inquired Madeline: "I should not care for all the eating and drinking in the world if no one loved me."

"I have no doubt Lady Catharine will," replied Mrs. Clifford, because she is a very kind-hearted person; and Alice is most fortunate in having found such a friend, now that she has lost her mother."

"Lady Catharine was very fond of Mrs. Lennox, was she not, mamma?" asked Madeline.

"Yes, my dear, very; and she promised, when Mrs. Lennox was dying, that Alice should live with her, and be to her as her own little girl: and the fact of her keeping her word so strictly in the one case, is a reason for believing she will do so in the other."

"Will Alice like it?" said Madeline, quickly.

"I don't know, my dear; and she is too sorrowful now for any one to judge."

"But, mamma, will she be Alice Lennox still?"

Mrs. Clifford could not help smiling: "Yes, my love; why should she not?"

"But if she is Lady Catharine Hyde's child, how can she be?"

"She will not be hers really, but only what is called adopted."

"And so her name will not alter," said Madeline. "Persons' names do alter though, sometimes, mamma: yours was Beresford once."

"Yes; that was my surname; I changed it when I was married: but my other name—my Christian name—I kept, and must keep always."

"Mary, you mean," said Madeline; "is that your best name?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clifford: "Beresford is the name I had when I was born into the world, of human parents; but Mary was the name given me when I was baptized, and made a child of God. The one you see I have lost, but the other I keep."

"And Madeline is my best name then; but I don't remember that it is, when I am called."

"I am afraid we are all apt to forget," replied her mother: "and though a great many persons have never been baptized, and yet are called by two names, that is no reason why we should think nothing of our Christian names, and of the occasion on which they were given to us."

Madeline waited for an instant; and then said, "So Alice will be Alice always; and yet she will seem different when she lives at the Manor."

"She will belong to a new family," said Mrs. Clifford: "and if Lady Catharine were to wish it very much, she might by and by take the name of Hyde, besides Lennox; though I do not think this is likely. Surnames can be altered; Christian names cannot. But you must not ask me any more questions, my dear child: I have told you all I know; and I am going out."

Madeline looked as if she would willingly have kept her mamma a few moments longer; but Mrs. Clifford was gone almost before she had time to determine upon what was next to be said; and Madeline's only resource was to sit with her work in her lap, and her head resting upon her hand, while she thought upon what her mamma had said, and the sudden change which had occurred in the life of her young companion.

Madeline's meditations, however, did not last very long. They were interrupted by the sound of

a child's voice pronouncing her name; and a stranger, on hearing the tone in which it was repeated, would probably have started with surprise; for the voice seemed Madeline's own. And still more on turning to look at the little girl, who walked slowly into the room with a book in her hand, upon which her eyes were bent whilst she moved, it might almost have been supposed that two Madelines, alike in every look and feature, were present. There was the same fair complexion, the same light glossy hair, the same blue eye, the same height and size. It was, to all appearance, Madeline's second self. And if Madeline had been asked, she would have said that her twin sister, her darling Ruth, was indeed her second self; that what one liked the other liked; what one wished for the other desired too; that they had never been separated for a single day — scarcely even for an hour; that they had learnt the same lessons from one book; that they had played, and walked, and slept together, day after day, and night after night; and that without Ruth she could not imagine it possible to be happy for a moment. Ruth would have said the same: yet the two sisters were not really alike; and even in their manner and appearance, it was possible for a person who observed them carefully to discover many differences.

Madeline's voice was clear and merry; she ran about the house singing and laughing, as if her heart was too full of happiness to allow her a moment's rest. Ruth laughed and sung also; but her laugh was low, and her songs were quiet; and she was most frequently seen walking along the passage or up the staircase, reading as she went, in the same way as she was doing when she just now came into the room. There was joyousness in

Madeline's glance, and her mouth seemed formed only for smiles; but Ruth's clear blue eye was thoughtful; and when she joined in Madeline's laugh, she was the first to become serious again, and to remember a lesson, or a piece of work, or something they had been told to do, but which they were likely to forget.

In temper they were still more different. Madeline was hasty and thoughtless, quickly put out of humour, but as quickly recovering herself. She never hesitated to confess a fault when she had committed it; but perhaps the next minute the confession was forgotten, and the offence repeated.

Ruth was said to be shy; and many persons thought her gentle and humble; for she blushed when she was reprov'd, never made excuses, and always bore punishment without complaining; but her mamma sometimes grieved to find, that after her little girl had done wrong, she kept away from her; and that instead of throwing her arms round her neck, as Madeline always did, and begging for forgiveness, she sat silent, reading, or working, or learning her lessons; and now and then allowed hours to pass without expressing any sorrow.

Still, on the whole, Ruth was careful and attentive, and it was but seldom that Mrs. Clifford had occasion to correct her, and perhaps it was from this cause that the evil in her disposition was not so easily perceived as in Madeline's. Ruth Clifford was shy, and liked to keep to herself, and not to be obliged to go into the drawing-room to speak to strangers, and she was heartily ashamed whenever she had done wrong. But it was not because she was humble that the colour rushed to her cheek when she was reprov'd, but because in truth she was very proud. As soon as she began to understand the difference between right and wrong, Ruth

learnt to think herself much better than Madeline. The servants scolded Madeline for being hasty, but they praised her because she was gentle. They complained of Madeline's thoughtlessness, but they declared that Ruth scarcely ever required to be reminded of the same thing twice. As they grew older, Madeline used to forget her lessons, but it seldom happened that Ruth was not perfect in hers; and Madeline herself, when in disgrace, would frequently cry, and wish she was half as good as her sister. Scarcely any one guessed the great defect in Ruth's character to be want of humility, except her papa and mamma; for pride is one of those very serious faults which are often but little perceived, and therefore the more difficult to correct.

But though Madeline and Ruth Clifford, like other little girls of their age, had many faults which it required time and care to overcome, on the whole they were good children, whom every one felt inclined to love. True and open, generally speaking, in all that they did, good natured and generous, and anxious to please their parents, no one could live with them, without being interested in them.

Mr. Clifford was a clergyman; he was not rich, and he had a large parish to attend to, a number of poor people to see every day, and many duties to make him anxious and sometimes sad; but he was a man whose first wish and endeavour was to obey God, and therefore, whatever trouble he might meet with, he had a peaceful, contented mind; and when the labours of the day were over, and he could enjoy a walk or a conversation with his wife or with his children, he often said with a sincere heart that the blessings of his earthly lot were such as to overwhelm him with the sense of God's bounty. And certainly his home was placed in a scene

where the beauty of nature alone must have given him enjoyment.

The parsonage of Laneton was situated at the farthest end of a little village about half a mile from the sea coast. It was a cottage, built upon a hill; rather low, and long, and standing upon a smooth piece of turf, with some pretty flower beds in front, and a row of large elm trees upon a grassy bank at the side. The road through the village passed it on the right, and on the left it was bordered by a thick copse and some green meadows; while, directly in front, beyond the scattered dwellings of the poor, and the trees which skirted the extensive grounds of Haseley Manor, lay a broad expanse of the blue sea, the curling waves of which broke upon a sandy beach shut in by the steep red cliffs that formed the little bay of Laneton. Laneton was but a small village, and in itself had no particular beauty, but scarcely any one passed through without admiring it. There was a peculiar air of neatness in the cottages and gardens, the flowers were bright, the windows clean, the palings well kept. No thatch torn as if on purpose to admit the rain and wind, no broken fences, or mud walls, no gates off their hinges; it was a place which every one saw at once was cared for. Some thanks for all this were due to Lady Catharine Hyde, the possessor of Haseley Manor, and the owner of nearly every cottage in the place; but there was gratitude of a still higher kind due to Mr. Clifford. It was his goodness which had been the means of gaining an influence over the poor people, and making them more constant at church, and more attentive to their families; it was his instruction which had brought the children of his parish into such excellent order, that to belong to Laneton was a recommendation to the whole neigh-

bourhood ; whilst his constant self-denial and devotion made him spare neither time nor labour if he saw the least hope of being of use to the humblest of those committed to his care. All this trouble was shared by his wife—Mrs. Clifford did not indeed teach and advise the poor in the same way as her husband, but she could and did work for them, and visit them, and tell them how they were to take care of their little ones. She helped them when they were ill, and comforted and felt for them when they were unhappy ; and thus took from her husband half the labour of his heavy duties. With such parents Madeline and Ruth had spent a very happy childhood, for they were taught to employ their time usefully, and to be contented with the blessings which God had granted them, and they had no idea that any home could be prettier, or any station in life better, than their own. They had scarcely ever been away from Laneton, and they heard little of what passed in other houses, for there were but few children in the neighbourhood, and there was only one with whom they were allowed constantly to play.

Alice Lennox was the only child of a widow lady, whose husband had been an officer in the army. Mrs. Lennox was a great invalid at the time when she first came to live at Laneton, in the small white house which fronted Lady Catharine Hyde's lodge. No one seemed to know much about her except Lady Catharine herself, and her attentions never ceased. Whether it were from being lonely also, from having lost her husband and having no child to interest her ; or merely from natural kindness of heart ; or, as some people said, because they had been friends in years gone by, and had promised even in their school days that they would never forsake each other when trials should come

upon them; certain it is, that Lady Catharine's affection for Mrs. Lennox was very unlike that which is generally seen. Few days passed without their meeting, for scarcely any engagements were allowed to interfere with the accustomed visits. Books, pictures, flowers, and fruit, were regularly sent from the Manor, though Mrs. Lennox had nothing to offer in return but her gratitude and love; and when the illness, which had been gradually increasing for many months, at length was pronounced to be dangerous, Lady Catharine spent days and nights by the side of her invalid friend, and seemed to forget that it was possible to be weary, whilst she could afford a moment's comfort to one she loved.

Mrs. Lennox was fully deserving of this affection, though few praised, or spoke of her, except in pity. Only Mr. Clifford often expressed to his wife his surprise at the patience with which she bore the most painful sufferings, and wished that he had been acquainted with her in the days of her health, when he might have been able, from conversation, to learn more of a character which appeared so meek and so resigned. Sometimes, also, when he returned from one of his frequent visits with a countenance of sorrow, he would say that his grief was not for her, for that she was fitted for the peace of heaven, and he could not wish to keep her from it; but that he mourned for her orphan child, and for the dreadful loss which the death of such a mother must be. It was no matter of surprise to him when Mrs. Lennox had breathed her last, and her child was left without any relations who were able to protect her, to be told that it was Lady Catharine's intention to adopt Alice Lennox, and take her at once to live with her at the Manor. It seemed a natural step for one who had shown so much affec-

tion to her mother ; and when the wish was mentioned to him, he could but say that it was a merciful arrangement of Providence, and he trusted it might be a source of blessing to both Lady Catharine and her little charge. The change would have been a great event to any other person, but Alice was too unhappy to understand it. When she was told that she was to leave the small house which had been her home for the last two years, and go to live at Hasely Manor, and be treated as the daughter of Lady Catharine Hyde, she only cried bitterly, and said that she would rather stay with her mamma's maid Benson ; she did not like the Manor, it looked so gloomy ; and Lady Catharine was not her mamma, and she did not want to go to her. A few persons wondered at the little girl's dislike to the notion, and said that it was not natural, and showed that she had no gratitude, and was very cold-hearted ; but Madeline and Ruth Clifford, who had been Alice's playfellows for many months, understood a great deal more of her real feelings. They knew that she was not insensible to Lady Catharine's kindness, though there were some things which made her feel frightened at the thoughts of living with her.

"It is really true, Ruth," said Madeline, as she jumped up from her seat when her sister came into the room ; "Mamma says that Alice is to live at the Manor. I wish she would let me go and see her first."

"I don't think she will want to see us to-day," said Ruth ; "we could'nt play, you know."

"No, not play, exactly, but I should like to talk to her, and make her tell me whether she likes going. Do you know that perhaps, by and by, she will be called Hyde as well as Lennox?"

"Does mamma say so?" inquired Ruth, in surprise.

"Mamma says she *might* be, but she does not think she will be; but she must be Alice always."

"Why *must*?" asked Ruth; "why may not Alice be changed as well as Lennox?"

"Because Alice is her Christian name," replied Madeline, "and mamma says people keep that always."

"I never thought before whether I had a Christian name," said Ruth; "but I suppose that is why we answer Ruth and Madeline, and not Clifford, when we say the catechism."

"Yes," said Madeline, pleased at having given her sister a new notion, "but if you were Alice, should you like to be called Miss Hyde?"

"I don't know," said Ruth; "I think I should choose to have my own name."

"I like Lennox better than Hyde, too," said Madeline; "but it would be such fun to have a new name: shouldn't you like to be adopted?"

"I should not like to be Lady Catharine's child," replied Ruth.

"No, of course, not to give up one's own papa and mamma; but Alice has none now." Ruth looked grave. "It is very dismal, I know," continued Madeline, her bright face becoming sad also; but there will be a great many pleasant things at Haseley which Alice never would have had if she had gone on living in that little poky house. All I should dislike would be to have such a strict mamma; doesn't it sound odd?—I never can fancy Lady Catharine a mamma, can you?"

"No," said Ruth, laughing, "she is just like a governess."

"So she is,—a stiff, starch governess, all set up and prim, like Miss Meadows, who came here in the summer with Emma Ferrers. If I were Alice, I would call her governess."

"No," said Ruth; "that would be wrong, because you know she is really so kind."

"And mamma says, too," continued Madeline, "that all governesses are not prim, and that she loved one of her's very much; but she lived a great many years ago. I should like to see some more governesses, and then I could tell." For a few moments Madeline forgot Alice Lennox, whilst endeavouring to remember exactly what Miss Meadows was like, and determining whether she would rather live with her or with Lady Catherine Hyde.

Ruth was silent likewise; but after a short pause she exclaimed, "What I should like would be, to be as rich as if I were Lady Catherine's child when I grew up. I wouldn't live with her now, but I should like to have some great thing to look forward to."

"That is such a long time to come," said Madeline; "I never can think of things that are far off."

"Not so many years," observed Ruth; "we are ten now—in eight years time we shall be eighteen; it does not seem so *very* long."

"It does to me," observed Madeline; "I can't understand what it is for things to be going to happen so far off as one year; and that is a reason why I should not care to be Alice. It would be no good to have pleasure to come, by and by; I should want to have it at once."

"I dare say Alice will have some pleasures," said Ruth: "but I don't know that I should much enjoy them, if I had to live with that strict Lady Catherine, instead of our own dear papa and mamma."

"I wonder whether we shall ever go and play at Haseley!" said Madeline: "I heard Benson telling

Alice it was such a beautiful place for hide and seek."

"Lady Catherine does not like a noise," said Ruth; "you remember how she always kept on hushing whenever we went into the white house, and she was there. Somehow, I don't think I could play at the Manor."

"Oh! as for that," exclaimed Madeline, "I can play anywhere; and I don't think Lady Catherine is cross exactly, though she does hush so much. I dare say she will not care when there is no person ill in the house."

"Perhaps not," replied Ruth, as if scarcely attending to what her sister was saying; and after thinking for some minutes she added—"it is the odd feeling I can't understand. It would be like playing at being her child as we play with our dolls. I don't think I should like it;—no, I am sure I should not."

"Well! I should," said Madeline; "it is very strange of you, Ruth, not thinking of things as I do. I don't mean, of course, that it would be pleasant going away from home; but if I could go to a new house and a new place, with papa and mamma, and you ——"

"And be Lady Catherine's child all the time," said Ruth, laughing; she should be your mamma, Madeline—I would not have her for mine."

"How I long to see Alice!" said Madeline: "I fancy she must be different, though it is such a little while ago that we were with her. Mrs. Mortimer said to mamma, that she heard she was to go to the Manor to-morrow."

"To-morrow is the funeral," said Ruth.

"Yes, I know it is; shouldn't you like to see it?"

"No," replied Ruth, quickly.

“Oh! why not? Cook said, that if we looked out of the nursery window we should be able to watch it all the way to the churchyard. Lady Catharine’s great carriage is to be there, and Mr. Mortimer is going in a carriage too;—there can be no harm in looking.”

“I don’t suppose there would be any harm in it,” replied Ruth; “but I know it would make me cry, and I think it would make you cry, too, Madeline. Don’t you remember how kind Mrs. Lennox was whenever we went there, and how she used to give us oranges and baked apples?”

Madeline looked a little ashamed: “I was not thinking of Mrs. Lennox,” she said, “only about the carriages; but, Ruth, don’t you think she is very happy?”

“Yes,” replied Ruth, “yet I don’t like her being gone at all the more for that; and when nobody lives at the white house, I shall hate passing by it.”

“You are always thinking of something on beyond,” said Madeline. “I wish I could. I am sure no one would love me if they knew I wanted to see the funeral—no one but you, Ruth; but you can’t help it, because we are sisters.”

“If Alice had a sister!” began Ruth.

“Yes, wouldn’t it be nice for her? She asked me one day if you and I were not just like sisters to her, and I did not know what to say. I don’t think we can be like sisters to anybody but ourselves—do you think we can?”

“No,” replied Ruth, earnestly; “and papa and mamma would not wish us to be. You know they said, only last Sunday, when we were sitting in the arbour after church, that all our whole lives, if we lived ever and ever so long, there would be nobody to love us in the same way, because of no one having just the same things to remember.”

“ We have quite the same,” said Madeline, “ all the way back as far as we can think.”

“ Yes,” continued Ruth, “ all from that red spelling-book which uncle George gave us when we were three years old.”

“ And the work-boxes,” added Madeline ; “ and that time when old Roger used to dip us in the sea, —and the new curtains to our bed, Ruth ; only I cried, and you did not, when mamma would not let us pull them close ; and, oh, so many things !” Ruth’s memory was the clearer of the two, and one thing recalled another, till the principal events of their short and sunny lives had been named ; and then Madeline ended, by throwing her arm round Ruth’s neck, and repeating, “ Mamma says, there is nothing like a sister.”

, CHAPTER II.

It was in the cool of the evening, when the lessons were all finished, that Ruth seated herself in the arbour at the bottom of the garden, from whence she could see the boats and vessels which were in the bay, and watch the fishermen mending their nets, or sauntering about on the sandy beach, or leaning against the rocks, waiting for the return of their absent companions. It was Ruth's favourite spot; and she generally found great amusement in the sea and all that was connected with it; but on this day her eyes were not fixed upon the blue waves, or the white foam, or the red sandy shore; but upon the old turret-like chimneys of Haseley Manor, which were seen peeping above the trees to the right of the bay. Whatever Ruth's thoughts might have been, they employed her so deeply, that Madeline called to her several times without receiving an answer; and at last she begged not to be interrupted, and allowed her sister to run races with Rover down the long green walk in the kitchen garden, without feeling any wish to join her. Ruth was fond of sitting by herself, and thinking about the things which she heard and saw every day; and trying to fancy what she should be like when she was a grown-up woman. She seldom, however, spoke of her own fancies; and even her mamma often observed her grave moods, without being able to find out their cause. The person who made Ruth talk most was her papa. She had been taught to look up to him with great reverence; and when he asked her questions, it

seemed wrong not to answer them, though it was often difficult to find proper words for explaining what she meant. But Mr. Clifford had a sort of power of guessing what was in his little girl's mind before she had even attempted to tell him; and often repeated her very thoughts aloud in a way which made Ruth start, as if she imagined he must be one of the magicians or conjurors of whom she had sometimes read. It was in the same arbour in which Ruth was now sitting, that she had most frequently talked with her papa. Mr. Clifford liked it as much or even more than Ruth herself; since he could enjoy it not merely because the view was pleasant, but because the sea, and the sky, and the steep cliffs with their jagged edges overhanging the shore, and even the masses of sea-weed tossed to and fro by the tide, made him think of the unspeakable goodness of that Almighty God who has given so much beauty to this sinful earth.

Ruth liked these conversations almost more than any amusement, though she felt sometimes that it would be difficult to say any thing in answer. She often listened silently, or only repeated yes and no, till her father had finished talking, and then ran away to tell Madeline all that he had said, and beg her to stay with her in the arbour the next evening and listen too. But perhaps the next evening came, and Mr. Clifford was engaged in his study, or walking with her mamma; and Madeline thought it tiresome to wait for him, and chose to play instead; so days and even weeks passed, before Ruth again had what she was accustomed to call a long talk. This evening, when the air was sultry, and the sea looked motionless, and not a leaf was stirring upon the trees, was just fitted for sitting still. Ruth hoped her papa might perhaps come into the garden, for she had seen her mother set off for the

village; and she thought, if her father was left alone, he would be the more likely to find his way to her: and thus it proved. Ruth had scarcely begun to think about the life which Alice Lennox would be likely to lead at the Manor, when her papa's hand was placed upon her shoulder: "You here alone, my child? where is Madeline?"

"Playing with Rover in the green walk, papa; but it is so hot."

"And you like best to sit still; but I am not sure that it is as good for you, Ruth,—that is, generally: perhaps to-night there is no harm in being quiet."

"We played last evening, and the evening before, and the evening before that," said Ruth, "and I don't care for it to-night; and there is not room in the walk for two to run with Rover."

"Is that the only reason for liking to sit still, and be alone?" inquired Mr. Clifford.

"Not the only one, papa. The sea looks so beautiful, and the fishing-boats are just going off; and, besides that, I was thinking about Alice Lennox."

"Poor child!" sighed Mr. Clifford; "to-morrow will be a sad day for her."

"Worse than to-day, papa, do you think?"

"Yes, my love; for many reasons. Some of them, perhaps, you would not quite understand, for you have never known what it is to lose any one you have loved very much; and you cannot tell how dreary and lonely every thing seems, when we have laid our friends to rest in the earth, and are obliged to go back ourselves to our common duties."

"But Alice's life will be different after to-morrow," observed Ruth; "for Madeline says she is to go directly to live with Lady Catharine."

"Yes," replied Mr. Clifford, "it will indeed be very different; but I do not think that is likely to make her less unhappy, because at first every thing will be strange."

"I was thinking of that, papa, when you came. Madeline and I were talking about it all this morning, and Madeline said she should like to be adopted."

"And should you like it too, Ruth?"

Ruth coloured, as she generally did when she was asked any questions about herself: "I don't know, papa," she said. "We don't mean, either of us, that we could bear to go away from you, because it would make us very unhappy; but only that every thing would be new and ——"

"And what, Ruth?" The answer was interrupted by the approach of Rover, who was quickly followed by Madeline. "Now, Rover, down! down!" said Mr. Clifford, as the huge black dog put his paws upon his knees.

"Rover and I have been having such fun!" exclaimed Madeline: "we have been running races; and he is so good, he came directly I called him, though I knew he wanted to go into the pond."

"And papa and I have been having pleasure too," said Ruth; "at least I know I have."

"Pleasure! what pleasure?" said Madeline, quickly.

"Talking pleasure," replied Ruth; "and I like it much better than running."

"I shall like it too, now," said Madeline, taking off her bonnet, and throwing it upon the ground; "I am very tired."

Mr. Clifford took up the bonnet, and placed it upon her head: "Prudence, Madeline, my darling: there is no surer way of taking cold than that; and

I am not inclined yet to see you become ill, and perhaps die."

"You would be as sorry to part with us as we should be to go away from you, papa," replied Ruth.

Mr. Clifford only smiled in answer; and after a few moments' silence, said, "And yet Madeline thinks she should like to be adopted by some one else."

"Oh no, papa!" exclaimed Madeline, whose quick feelings were instantly touched; "that was only when I was silly this morning; I did not really mean it."

"But is there any harm, papa," asked Ruth, timidly, "in liking to have something to look forward to when one is grown up, as Alice Lennox will have, if she is to be such a great person as Lady Catharine Hyde's daughter?"

"No harm, my dear, if we look forward to the right things." Ruth's countenance showed that she did not entirely comprehend. "You don't know what I mean, do you, Ruth?" said Mr. Clifford.

"Not quite, papa."

"It is rather difficult to understand: but supposing I were to tell you that I had been adopted myself, and that you had both been adopted also, and your dear mamma, and all your friends, and that we had much greater things to look forward to than any which Alice Lennox can have from merely being treated as Lady Catharine Hyde's daughter, should you believe me?" The children did not answer; but Madeline gazed wonderingly in her father's face. "It is not the first time we have talked about it," continued Mr. Clifford: "I think only last Sunday I heard you repeat words which spoke of it."

"Sunday, papa!" repeated Madeline, hastily: but Ruth considered, and then said: "In the catechism?"

Mr. Clifford rested his hand fondly upon her head. "Thank you, my child; I am sure you understand me now. What is it you say, Madeline, in the answer to the first question in the catechism, when you are asked who gave you your Christian name?" Madeline repeated the sentence; and, when she had finished, Mr. Clifford said: "Ruth, you can tell me in your own words why I have reason to declare that you and Madeline have both been adopted."

"I can't tell, papa," interrupted Madeline: "I wish you would teach me all about it."

"Then we must be grave, Madeline; and I think you are more inclined to go for another run with Rover."

"No, please stay!" exclaimed Ruth; "I like having you here too."

Madeline looked rather wistfully at Rover; but he was sooner tired of play than his young mistress, and now lay with his eyes shut, enjoying the pleasant warmth of the afternoon sun: "I would rather stay, papa; and I will try and be grave, like Ruth."

"It is a hard matter, I know," said Mr. Clifford; "but when we are talking about God and our blessed Saviour, we must endeavour to put away idle thoughts for the time, or else we shall do ourselves more harm than good. What I wanted to say to you both is nothing new; for you have heard a great many times that you were made, at your baptism, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Perhaps, however, you will be able to know better what this means when you have an example, as it were, before you. Alice

Lennox is to be Lady Catharine Hyde's adopted child; she is to have a fortune, and to be what people call very well off in the world, when she grows up, if she is good now. It seems as if she were a very fortunate little girl, and so indeed she is; but she had a much greater blessing given her when she was baptized, and so had you; for then you were made God's children, and were promised a home of perfect beauty and happiness in heaven, where no one can ever feel pain, or hunger, or thirst, or cold, or heat, but where you will live with God and the saints and the holy angels for ever. There is something, however, which we must always remember, or we shall lose these great blessings. If Alice Lennox were to be very ungrateful, and to disobey Lady Catharine, do you think she would receive the same kindnesses as if she were to endeavour to please her?"

"No," said Madeline; "but I don't think Alice will like to do what Lady Catharine says, because Benson always lets her have her own way."

"So much the worse for her," replied Mr. Clifford; "but that would be extremely naughty in her."

"She is naughty very often," said Ruth.

"Perhaps she is, but I think we had better leave her faults, and think of our own. I am afraid we are all naughty very often, and far more ungrateful to God than Alice can be to Lady Catharine. And there is one great fault, Ruth, which we are much more likely to commit against God, than we are against any human being. I do not suppose Alice will ever be wicked enough to forget who gave her all her blessings; but we do so constantly."

"I don't think *we* do, papa," said Madeline, "whenever any one asks us who gave us our home,

and our garden, and all our things, we always say that it was God."

"Yes, my dear child, I dare say you do; but there is something more required than merely to say it, especially when we remember how much greater the blessings are which God gives us, than any we can receive from our fellow creatures. We are really made God's children, but Alice Lennox is only adopted. Do you know what the difference is?" Ruth thought she did, but it was rather difficult to explain, and Mr. Clifford went on: "Look at that large tree on the bank," he said, "see how it stretches out, and how thick the leaves are. There is a branch lying on the ground close to it; if I were to tell you to go and fasten it on to the trunk, do you think it would grow?"

Madeline laughed at the idea. "Oh! no, papa; we are not so silly as that."

"But what would prevent it from growing? It would be like the other, and be as near the trunk: what would it want?"

"The sap," said Ruth.

"Yes, Ruth, you are right, it would want the sap, which is constantly passing through the twigs and leaves, giving them life and beauty, and making them parts of one tree. But do you remember what was done with the pear trees in the orchard, last year?"

"Yes, papa; they were grafted."

"Well, and what became of the grafts?"

"Oh! they are all living, and growing quite fast."

"So, Ruth, there is a way of letting the branch of a tree into the stock of another, so as to become one with it; although no mere fastening them together will ever make them one. Now this, perhaps, will serve as an example to you of the difference

between what has been done for Alice Lennox by Lady Catharine Hyde, and what has been done for us by God. Lady Catharine may adopt Alice, she may in a manner fasten her on to herself, that is, take her into her house and treat her as her child, but she can never actually make her her own. They can never have the same relations. But when God received us at our baptism, he made us members of Christ; he joined us to our blessed Lord, as one of those living branches is joined to the trunk, by giving us his own Holy Spirit; and therefore, as Jesus Christ is the Son of God, so are we also the children of God."

"Then, papa," said Ruth, "we are all certain of going to heaven."

"No, indeed, my love, very far from it; you told me that the dead bough would not grow because it had no sap in it, but that was not always the case, was it?"

"No, papa;" exclaimed Madeline, "Thompson told me yesterday, that it died away, he did not know how, — the blight destroyed it, he thought."

"And so the blight may destroy us, my dear child; the blight of evil tempers, and vain thoughts, and idle words, until that blessed Spirit, which was given us at our baptism shall have departed from us, as the sap from the dead branch; and in the eye of God we shall cease to be members of Christ, and at the day of judgment shall not be acknowledged as his children."

Madeline seemed considering what had been said. "I hope we shall go to heaven;" she replied.

"We all hope so," said Mr. Clifford, gravely; "yet we are as ungrateful for that hope, for having been made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, as we are for having been made the members of Christ, and the children of God."

"Inheritors means that we are to have it by and by, doesn't it, papa?" inquired Ruth.

"Yes, but suppose that instead of looking forward, we were to look back, and think of the means by which it was purchased for us."

The children were struck by the solemnity of their father's manner: "We should not go to heaven, if our Saviour had not died for us," said Madeline.

"No, my dear child; assuredly we should not. It is only because he suffered, as he did, to save us from the curse which was pronounced against us as being the sinful children of Adam, that we have any title to the happiness of a better world. And how often do you think we love our Saviour and thank him for it?"

"It seems so hard, dear papa," said Madeline; "but I will try to-morrow."

"To-night also, my darling, I hope;" and then, after a short pause, Mr. Clifford added, "see, Madeline, how lovely the water is, with the waves all sparkling, and that broad light upon it!"

"And the sands," exclaimed Madeline, "they are quite shining; there is old Roger standing by his boat, just by that large rock. Ruth and I call it the white horse."

"How well the trees in the park look, too!" continued Mr. Clifford. "I don't think I ever saw them such a rich green as they are this year."

"The garden is better than all," added Ruth; "mamma's geraniums are so bright, and the roses and verbenas smell so sweet."

"Yes," said Mr. Clifford fervently, "it is a most beautiful world. But in that dark lane in Cottington, Madeline, where you went with me the other day, to visit the poor man who had broken his leg, there was nothing like this to be seen, was there?"

“ Oh no, papa ; the streets were all dirty and narrow, the tops of the houses nearly touched ; and don't you remember the naughty children quarrelling ? ”

“ The poor man was in great pain,” said Mr. Clifford, “ he had nothing to eat, and no one to take care of him properly ; I dare say he would like a change. There would be room for him here, if you and Ruth were to go and stay there.”

Madeline started, and looked at her father in fear ; “ Oh ! papa, how could we ? we should die.”

Mr. Clifford was silent, and Ruth raised her eyes to his, to see if she could discover the reason. “ Our blessed Lord did die,” he said at length. “ The home where he dwelt, Madeline, was brighter than the sun, and more glorious than the vast blue sea. No sound of sorrow was ever heard in it, and no feeling of pain was ever endured in it. Millions of angels knelt before his throne, and worshipped him for his unspeakable greatness, and not one amongst them had ever known a thought of sin ; and in that home there was room for us, — but only upon one condition, — that he should leave it.”

A pause followed, until Ruth said in a gentle voice, “ Our Saviour did leave it, papa.”

“ Yes,” continued her father, “ he came upon earth, which even in its greatest beauty was to him but a land of darkness ; and he lived, not as we live, in comfort and peace, but in poverty and shame, amongst the sinners who hated him. And when he had taught them all that it was good for them to know, and had cured their diseases, and helped them in their difficulties, he gave himself up to a death of agony, to save them and us, — to save you, and me, and Madeline, from punishment.”

Again Mr. Clifford was silent, and Ruth's gaze turned involuntarily to the clear sky, whilst Madeline whispered, “ It is not hard now, papa.”

“It ought not to be hard at any time, my dear,” replied her father; “and that it is so is the greatest proof we can have of the sinfulness of our nature.”

“It would be much easier if we could see our Saviour,” said Ruth, timidly.

“And, perhaps, you think that for that reason it might be easier for Alice to love Lady Catharine for her kindness, than for us to love God for his: was not that in your mind, Ruth?” Ruth looked half pleased and half frightened, as she generally did when her thoughts were read. “It may be so,” continued Mr. Clifford; “but it is to our shame and sorrow that it should be; and when we are called to give an account of our lives to God, it will be a fearful thing to have to confess that we have enjoyed his blessings, and yet have never been thankful for them.”

“But if we can't be?” said Madeline.

“We can pray that we may be,” replied her father, “and we can repeat to ourselves all the good things which God has done for us. We can read the bible, and go to church, and we can try to please our Saviour by being good-tempered, and humble, and sincere, and giving up our money for the poor, and going to visit them. If we do all this, we shall certainly in time love God with all our hearts,—better, yes, far better, than we do our dearest earthly friends.” Madeline became more thoughtful than before, and as Mr. Clifford rose to leave the arbour, she turned to Ruth, and said, “I liked talking to papa to-night more than any play.”

CHAPTER III.

NEARLY a week passed by, and little was heard of Alice Lennox. On the day of the funeral she had been taken to the Manor, and since then she had been seen walking with Lady Catharine, through one of the long avenues; but whether she was happy, or how she behaved, or whether Lady Catharine really treated her as she had said, like her own child, no one could find out. Mr. and Mrs. Clifford talked of her very often, and Madeline and Ruth always chose to walk in the road by the park to the sea-shore, in the hope of catching a glimpse of her in passing. But the people in the village talked more than the family at the parsonage; for in a country place every event is thought a great deal of, and though few of the cottagers knew any thing of Alice, except from having seen her playing in the garden, or walking with her nurse, they all felt interested about her, and wished much to find out, whether she was likely to be satisfied and happy in her new home. The person from whom most had been learnt about the affairs of the white house, was Benson, the lady's maid, or nurse, or housekeeper—no one knew exactly what to call her, for she seemed to do every thing. She was a little bustling woman, with a quick sharp voice, yet a very civil manner, extremely fond of finery, and a great gossip. The poor villagers thought at first that she was much too smart a person for them, and only Mrs. Dawkins, who kept a good-sized shop for tea, sugar, oatmeal, and other

necessary things, and who was considered a very important person, had dreamt of asking her to drink tea. But Benson soon gave her neighbours to understand that she liked going amongst them better than staying at home, and that as long as she could have a comfortable seat, and a warm cup of tea, and permission to talk, she cared for little else. From her, therefore, all that could be learnt about Mrs. Lennox was learnt; and a great deal more which was not at all true. Benson had only lived in the family a few months before she came to Laneton, and when she found herself at a loss in answering the questions which were put to her, made no scruple at inventing. She gave a whole history of Lady Catharine's acquaintance with Mrs. Lennox, though she had only been told that it began at school. She described Mrs. Lennox's marriage, though she knew nothing more than that her husband was an officer. She repeated long conversations between her mistress and Lady Catharine, not one syllable of which she had ever heard, beyond a few words which passed while she was preparing the tea, or putting the room in order. Benson's besetting sin was vanity, which showed itself generally in a love of talking and being listened to, and when persons indulge in this fault, there is no saying into what mischief it may lead them. She was not indeed aware of what she was doing, but this did not make the fault at all the less, nor did it hinder her from the painful consequences which are sure to follow it.

To the great surprise of the villagers, Alice Lennox was taken to the Manor, and Benson remained behind; it was thought at first to put a few things in order at the house, or to take care of the little property which was to be sold. But Benson did not stay at the house; it was given in charge

to a woman whom Lady Catharine had known for many years; Lady Catharine's own maid packed up the few articles which were to be kept for little Alice, in remembrance of her mother; and the very morning after the funeral, when every one was expecting that Benson would call on Mrs. Dawkins, and give the history of these strange doings, it was declared by two or three persons, whose word could not be doubted, that Benson, with a large trunk and a band-box, had been seen on the top of the London coach, and that she was certainly by that time many miles from Laneton. Different feelings were expressed when this news was brought. Some wondered a great deal about Benson, others pitied poor Alice, left without the only person whom she had really been fond of, except her mamma, for amongst the many things which Benson repeated, the one she persisted in most, was the fact that little Alice could not bear the sight of Lady Catharine Hyde.

The intelligence of Benson's departure soon reached Mrs. Clifford, who, though she said less, thought a great deal more of Alice than any one else, and did truly wish to know if the poor child had suffered much from the separation. She was not surprised at receiving no communication as to any thing that was done. Lady Catharine Hyde had always her own peculiar way of doing every thing, and no one could at all judge what was likely to be her conduct, from knowing how other persons would probably act in a similar case. Madeline and Ruth were from this circumstance separated from their little companion at the very moment when she was most likely to want them; and Mrs. Clifford now and then began to think that it might be Lady Catharine's intention to put a stop to their being together for the future. One

morning, however, at the beginning of the second week of Alice's removal to the Manor, just as Mrs. Clifford had seated herself at the breakfast table, and was bidding the children summon their papa from his usual saunter round the garden, Madeline perceived Lady Catharine's footman approaching the gate.

"News! news, mamma!" she exclaimed, returning quickly, and allowing Ruth to obey the orders alone, "news of Alice! Griffiths is come from the Manor, and he has a note, I am nearly quite certain."

"And I am nearly quite certain that you are deciding, as you generally do, rather hastily, my dear."

Madeline was hasty, but for once she had guessed rightly. There was a note from Lady Catharine, begging that Mrs. Clifford would call upon her that afternoon, if possible, and bring her little girls with her. No reason was given for the request, and Mrs. Clifford, having an engagement for the day, was inclined to send an excuse; but her husband begged her not. He told her that it was an opportunity for knowing something of Alice's situation, and might be a means of being of use to her, and that Lady Catharine never wished to see any one without some good motive; it was therefore settled that as soon as the children's dinner was over, they should set off for the Manor. The lessons were not done as well as usual that morning, for Madeline thought it necessary to run often to the window to decide if it were likely to rain, and Ruth asked several times what o'clock it was, and complained of her sum as being very hard, when in fact it was just like one she had done only the day before. Dinner too was hurried over, though Mr. Clifford came in to luncheon at the same time, and generally there was nothing the

children liked better than making their papa stay and talk to them till they had finished. Even before Ruth was ready, Madeline was playing with her knife and fork, and longing to leave her chair; and when at length Mrs. Clifford gave permission to go, there was a race from the bottom of the stairs to the top, and a scramble to see which could be dressed the first.

A visit to the Manor was an event which had never happened before; and notwithstanding their shyness, they were anxious to know what the place was like, and very desirous of seeing Alice. Though living in the same village, they had seen but little of Lady Catharine Hyde, only meeting her occasionally in a walk, or when she had been with Mrs. Lennox; at which time the chief notice she had taken of them was to hush, as Madeline said, and tell them that they must be sent home if they did not learn to play quietly. Lady Catharine was not a pleasant person for children to be with. She was tall, thin, and stately; she moved slowly and talked in a firm, decided way, as if sure that no one could think of differing from her. Her voice was low, but not very gentle, and her manner, which was particularly grave, often gave the idea that she was not entirely pleased at what was going on. Then her features were rather plain, and she was always dressed in black, with a widow's cap, which seemed peculiarly unsuited to any thing like play; and all these trifles put together made her rather an awful person; particularly as she was known to be extremely precise in all her ways, and never to have been accustomed to children. Madeline and Ruth were afraid of Lady Catharine, and they knew that Alice was the same; and this was their reason for thinking that no one could be cheerful and happy at the Manor: but if

they had been a little older, they would probably have seen that Lady Catharine Hyde was a person to be loved as well as feared; that she was in her heart kind and considerate, and careful for every one; that she was self-denying in all her actions; and full of holy thoughts, and wishes to do God's will; and they would then have learnt to think more of her goodness, and less of that sternness of manner which many excellent persons acquire without being aware of it. But it was very natural that such young children should stand in awe of a lady who seemed so far above them in every thing; and even the house in which Lady Catharine lived, and the garden and park belonging to it, served to increase the feeling.

Haseley Manor was a large red brick mansion; it had seven windows in front and five at the side; a very broad flight of stone steps, with an ornamental iron railing led up to the door; and from the top of these steps could be seen the whole length of a splendid beech-tree avenue, at the end of which was the lodge gate. There was a large space of ground about the house, but though it was called a park, it was principally planted with trees in straight rows, and looked somewhat formal and dull; and the garden close to the house was laid out in the same style, with long walks and narrow flower-beds, divided by low box hedges, and clipped yew trees, and the whole shut in by a high wall. This garden was kept with extreme care; scarcely a weed was to be seen in the borders, or a leaf upon the walks; and Lady Catharine Hyde's greenhouse and hothouse were considered as patterns for all the neighbourhood. Madeline and Ruth had great notions of the grandeur of every thing they were to see at the Manor; and whilst they were with their mamma, they

thought it would be less alarming to be in Lady Catharine's presence, than when they had been left as it were under her care whilst playing with Alice at the white house; so that they set off for their visit in high spirits. As they drew near, however, they began to walk quietly instead of running in and out amongst the trees. Ruth put her hand within her mamma's, from a feeling that she would be a protection; and when they stood upon the top of the steps, and the great bell was rung, even Madeline's smiles went away, and her voice almost sank into a whisper. The door was opened by a tall, grey-haired man, having a stiff soldierlike manner, who, to Madeline's eye, looked quite like a gentleman, but she soon forgot him, in wonder at the size of the square hall into which they were admitted, and the broad oak staircase, with its carved railings and polished steps, which led to the upper rooms. Mrs. Clifford and the two children followed the Butler through a long passage lighted by a window of painted glass at the further end; and then, turning to the right, the man pushed aside some folding doors covered with green cloth, and they entered a small apartment, hung with pictures in dark frames, and containing nothing but some high-backed chairs, and one or two curiously shaped tables. Both Madeline and Ruth were a little disappointed, but in another moment their highest expectations were satisfied; for without stopping, the Butler opened a second door, and they were ushered into the drawing room in which Lady Catharine was sitting. So large a room, so beautifully furnished, with gilt chairs, and sofas covered with crimson damask, and glasses reaching from the ceiling to the floor, and inlaid cabinets ornamented with china vases and figures, they had never seen or imagined. Yet it was not a cheerful

nor even a very comfortable room. There was a quaint, formal look about it. The chairs were placed in regular order against the walls; the sofas appeared as if they were never intended to be used; and the tables had no books, or work, or flowers upon them; except, indeed, the little round one covered with purple cloth, which stood in the deep bay window by Lady Catharine's side, and on which lay one or two handsomely bound volumes, and a small rosewood workbox.

The two children sought eagerly for Alice Lennox; but they did not discover her until Lady Catharine rose, and then they perceived that Alice was seated on a stool, with her elbow resting on the window-seat, and a book before her. She looked up as soon as she heard Lady Catharine speak to Mrs. Clifford, and smiled when she saw her little play-fellows; but, except this, she took no notice of them, and the children almost doubted, as they watched her, whether this could be the Alice Lennox, who had always been so delighted to see them, and had expressed herself so warmly. The change appeared at first to be in her deep mourning dress, at least Madeline fancied that was the only thing which could make her seem so different; but Ruth thought that her eyes were red, as if she had been crying, and she remarked a certain curl of the under lip, which was always to be observed when Alice was out of humour. Certainly either the dress, or the manner, or a little ill-temper, had made her far less pleasing than she usually was. Not that Alice had any particular beauty to boast of—but she was generally noticed as sensible-looking, and well-mannered, with a very good-natured expression of face. She was nearly a year older than Ruth and Madeline, and very unlike them in appearance, for her hair and eyes were

brown, and her complexion was so dark, that she had sometimes been taken for a foreigner. She was extremely quiet in all her ways when with strangers, but exactly the contrary when with those whom she knew; and her very quick bright eye now and then had an expression which made people think she was cunning; but this was not entirely the case; for Alice had been well taught by her mamma, before she became too ill to attend to her; and she had not yet acquired any settled bad habits, though by nature she did like to contrive means for gaining her own point, and was apt to make excuses which were not really true. She had great faults, certainly; but one thing there was in her character which gave reason to hope that she might in time improve. She could respect and admire other persons for their goodness, though she did not try to be like them; and notwithstanding her fear of Lady Catharine, she had some pleasure in being with her, because she knew that she was a great deal better than common people.

Lady Catharine having welcomed Mrs. Clifford, next turned to the children; and her manner was not as stern as they had before thought it. She held their hands in hers, and stooped to kiss them; and then, as she looked at Alice, some painful thought seemed to cross her mind—for some moments passed before she again spoke to Mrs. Clifford. What she said neither Madeline nor Ruth cared much to hear, for they were longing to be alone with Alice, who now came up and stood by their side—but without taking any other notice of them. Mrs. Clifford wished to tell them all to go into the garden, but she did not know whether Lady Catharine would like it; and a conversation began, during which the three children sat together, not venturing even to whisper.

If this was to be their visit to the Manor, Ruth thought they might as well have stayed at home.

At last, however, most fortunately for her, a name was mentioned, which gave Lady Catharine an opportunity for bringing forward the subject she desired. Mrs. Clifford alluded to Benson; and the colour mounted to Alice's cheek, while Lady Catharine drew herself up, and said, "If you like to go into the garden, my dears, you can. Not the kitchen-garden, mind, Alice," she continued, "and you must not ask for any fruit; and be sure you don't gather any flowers: and, Alice," she added, as the children reached the door, "keep away from the fish-pond."

Alice said "Yes," rather quickly, and, as if thankful to be released, ran out of the room, leaving the door open, which she was immediately called upon to come back and shut. "Now run," she said, when they had passed the ante-room, and the green doors were closed behind them; and without another word, she led the way through the long passage, into another just like it, and down a few steps into a small stone hall which opened upon the garden. Madeline and Ruth followed in delight. To have Alice all to themselves was a pleasure they had not ventured to expect; but they were nearly breathless before Alice stopped, so quickly she ran along the broad walk, and the raised terrace at the end, till she reached a small building with a porch supported by two pillars, round which clustered roses, and honeysuckles, and clematis. Within this porch was a neat little room, containing only a common table and some rough chairs; in one of which Alice seated herself, and catching hold of Ruth's dress, exclaimed, "I am so glad you are come!—kiss me, Ruth, do!"

“ Why didn't you kiss us just now ? ” said Madeline ; “ I thought you were cross. ”

“ How could I ? I was afraid, ” replied Alice, “ Lady Catharine would have said it was odd. ”

“ Lady Catharine ! but I thought she was to be your —— ”

“ Hush ! Madeline, ” interrupted Ruth ; “ Alice, dear, do you like it ? ”

“ Like it — like what ? — like being here ? — no, and I never shall. ”

“ But what do you do ? — have you many lessons ? — is Lady Catharine strict ? ” inquired Madeline.

“ It's not the lessons, ” continued Alice, “ I don't care for them. ”

“ But you want some one to play with, don't you ? ” said Ruth ; “ Madeline and I knew you would. ” Poor Alice leant her head upon the table and sobbed. “ Don't cry so, ” said Madeline, putting her arm round her neck ; “ we will ask mamma to let us come and see you very often, and it won't be so bad by and by. ”

“ Alice shook her head, and exclaimed, almost passionately, “ It must be just as bad ; — they won't let me see Benson — and I can talk to Benson, and I love her ; but I don't love any one else. ”

“ Ruth drew back a little vexed : “ Then it is no use for us to come and see you, ” she said.

“ Oh, Ruth, how foolish ! ” exclaimed Madeline. “ Don't mind, Alice ; we will come whenever we can — but why won't they let you see Benson ? ”

“ I don't know, ” replied Alice, becoming a little more composed ; “ Lady Catharine says she teaches me wrong things, and Marsham thinks she tells stories ; but I don't care for all that. ”

“ Is Benson gone quite away ? ” asked Ruth.

“ Yes ; the very day I came, Lady Catharine

made me say good-bye, — and Benson cried so much; but she will come back again, I know, for she said she would.”

“That will be no good to you, if you are not allowed to be with her,” said Madeline.

“But I shall see her, for she told me just before she went, that she should come back to Laneton to live; she is to help Mrs. Dyer work, make caps and things, and she will find some way of seeing me.”

“Well, I hope she wil’,” said Madeline, without considering whether what she was saying was right. “I can’t bear to see you cry, Alice; — but should you like Lady Catharine if she was kinder about Benson?”

“I should like her better than Marsham,” replied Alice; “I can’t bear her; Lady Catharine tells me stories sometimes, and she gave me some sugar-plums yesterday; but Marsham never gives me any thing.”

“And does Marsham put you to bed, and help you dress, like Benson?” inquired Ruth.

“Oh no, Lady Catharine says I must learn to do what I want myself; so Marsham only fastens my frock. I don’t care about it at all in the day time, but it makes me cry very much at night. I want my own dear mamma back again, and I think Lady Catharine wants her too.” And Alice cried again.

“But about going to bed,” said Ruth, trying to divert her thoughts: “do you sleep in a room alone?”

“Yes, a little sort of closet, inside Lady Catharine’s bedroom; she comes to kiss me every night.”

“Then she loves you very much,” said Madeline.

Alice looked up suddenly, and dashing her hand

across her eyes, and trying to smile, she answered "I like her now and then, when she talks kindly, and doesn't look so tall."

"Does she 'hush' now?" inquired Madeline.

"Sometimes, a little. I don't run about though here, as I did at home;—but she makes a great many rules. I am forced to get up and be dressed by half-past seven; and she is so particular about putting things away—and then I must never go into the kitchen garden, or the greenhouse, and must not run upon the green walks,—and I am obliged always to go directly I am called."

"So are we," said Madeline.

"Yes, but I am sure your papa and mamma never look as Lady Catharine does, if you stay a few minutes longer;—and you are able to go wherever you like all over the house."

"And so are you, too, I suppose," said Ruth.

"No, indeed, I am not; there is one whole set of rooms which I am never allowed to go into. Look, do you see? just behind the evergreens and that large yew tree."

"Where those three windows are?" said Ruth.

"Yes, and there are some others looking out into the servants' court; Anne the housemaid told me. I do so want to see what is in them."

"I dare say you will by-and-by," observed Madeline: "when you grow older."

"I don't know, I try to peep through the key-hole now; but I can see nothing but a dark passage."

"But if the door is locked, it is just the same to you as if there were no rooms," said Ruth.

"No, indeed it is not. I should not think about them if they were not there; but, when I look at the windows, I can't help longing to go in: and, besides, the door is not always locked."

“Would Lady Catharine be very angry if you were to do any thing she told you not?” asked Madeline.

The question seemed to bring back something disagreeable to Alice’s mind; for the curl of the lip, which Ruth had noticed when she first saw her, was again visible. “Wouldn’t she be angry!” she exclaimed. “If you had only heard what she said to me this morning!—that if I was her child, I must do exactly, in all things, what she wished. It was because I wanted Benson that she talked so: and she told me that I must give up thinking about it; and that I must believe her when she said that it was better for me not to be with Benson; and then she began again about going into those rooms; and at last she declared that if she ever found me there, she should send me away to school.”

“And do you really think she would?” asked Ruth.

“Yes, indeed; but I don’t know that I should much mind. I don’t seem to mind any thing now.”

“Only you will like having us to play with,” said Ruth.

Alice did not answer, for her thoughts were wandering back to her own mamma and the white house; and before Ruth had time to repeat her words, the sound of a little bell reached them. “That is for us!” exclaimed Alice; and she sprang from her seat.

“Oh, Alice! one moment,” said Madeline, catching hold of her frock; “when shall you come and see us?”

“I can’t tell; you must ask for me yourselves: don’t keep me now.”

“You never used to care about waiting,” said Madeline.

"No, I know I did not; but Lady Catharine will be angry."

"I should not care for making her angry if she is so cross," replied Madeline.

Alice's foot was on the step of the doorway; but she stopped, and, turning round, said: "I do care for making her angry sometimes; and so would you too, if you were me:" and she ran towards the house, followed by Madeline. Ruth waited for an instant behind, feeling quite puzzled by all that had been said, and as much at a loss as ever to understand whether Alice was likely to be happy at Haseley Manor.

The children did not go into the drawing-room again, for Lady Catharine and Mrs. Clifford met them in the passage. Alice became stiff and quiet; but her face brightened when Lady Catharine, looking at her kindly, said, "that Mrs. Clifford had promised that her little playfellows should often come and see her:" and she ventured to whisper to Ruth, at parting, that she hoped they would ask their mamma to bring them again very soon.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was much for Madeline and Ruth to talk about when they were again alone with their mamma. They felt certain she could tell them more about Alice than they had learnt themselves, as it was only natural to suppose that Lady Catharine had said a great deal about her; and they immediately began asking questions: but Mrs. Clifford silenced them by saying, that she never repeated what was mentioned to her in private conversation; and after this they knew it would be in vain to try to find out any thing. They consoled themselves, however, by detailing all that had passed in the garden, and asking their mamma's opinion as to the kind of life which Alice seemed to lead. Ruth was especially struck with the difference between the constant restraint which Alice was now obliged to bear, and the freedom she had enjoyed at her own home; and Madeline thought more of the longing which she felt certain she should have, to explore the rooms which Lady Catharine had forbidden to be entered; whilst both of them pitied Alice extremely for having to part from Benson, and declared that Lady Catharine must be very hard-hearted. Mrs. Clifford told them, that whilst they were so young they had better not attempt to judge of the actions of grown-up people, as they frequently had some good motive which they did not think it right to explain. As to Benson, she had been very kind to Alice, but it was certain that she had taught her many wrong

things; and Lady Catharine could not do better than place Alice out of the reach of a person who would be likely to lead her into mischief.

The answer satisfied Madeline, but not Ruth. The more she thought about it, the more sad it seemed that Alice should be thus almost taken away from every thing which had before given her pleasure, and be removed to a new home amongst strangers: she recollected her tears, and the sorrowful tone in which she had said that she wanted her own dear mamma back again, until at last her own heart grew heavy, and she felt as if she could almost sit down and cry too. As the evening closed in, the weather became gloomy, and Ruth's spirits were more and more depressed. Instead of running in the garden she was obliged to stay in the house, for the sky was of a thick dull grey, and the rain pattered cheerlessly against the windows. Poor Rover came and looked into the room, but found no one inclined to join him in a game of play; and he shook his shaggy head in disappointment, and slunk back to his kennel. Generally speaking, Ruth managed to occupy herself very well within doors, and sometimes even preferred it to going out; but this wet evening came when she was not prepared for it, and she could not so easily overcome vexation as Madeline, who, when she saw it begin to rain, provided herself with a puzzle and a book, and made no complaints to any one.

"The school children will have a wet walk, I am afraid," said Mrs. Clifford, as her husband came into the room.

"What school children, mamma?" inquired Ruth; "what are they all coming for?"

"Not all, my dear," said Mr. Clifford; "only the first class. You know they generally do come to me on a Wednesday evening."

"Oh yes! I forgot: but, papa, I wish you would let me hear what you say to them."

"It would not interest you much, my dear: you would only listen to a great many things which you know; and if there was any thing new, probably you would not understand it."

"But, papa, I should like it," said Ruth, glad of any excuse for something to occupy her thoughts when she was uncomfortable. "Will you just let me sit in the room; I won't speak or interrupt."

"And me too, please, papa," said Madeline, leaving her seat, and in her hurry throwing the puzzle to the ground.

Mr. Clifford laughed at this sudden fancy, but made no objection; and a few minutes afterwards the two children were in their papa's study, each with a piece of work in her hand, waiting the arrival of the first class of the village school. "What will they say to-night, papa?" asked Madeline: "any thing that we know?"

"One of the Psalms, and the Catechism," replied Mr. Clifford; "and then I shall try and explain any parts which may be difficult."

"As you explained to us, the other night, that first question," said Ruth: "but, papa, they won't be able to understand it all as well as we do, because you cannot talk to them about Alice Lennox."

"No; but I may give them some other example which may serve as well."

"What you said came into my head this morning at the Manor," said Ruth, "when we sat quiet in the drawing-room, and mamma was talking to Lady Catharine: but I think now, papa, that it will be harder for Alice to love Lady Catharine than for us to love God, because Alice has so many things to give up, and we have not."

“ Nothing, Ruth ? ” asked Mr. Clifford, laying down the book which he held in his hand.

“ Nothing that I can remember, papa.”

“ We will ask the school-children presently,” continued Mr. Clifford ; “ they are older than you, and, probably, will be able to answer better.” Ruth’s face flushed, and she bent her eyes upon the ground ; for her pride was hurt in having it supposed that the children of the village could answer any questions better than herself. Mr. Clifford went on reading ; and Madeline, who was quick in seeing when her sister was vexed, stole gently to her side, and gave her a kiss. Ruth remained in the same position for several minutes, trying to find out what her papa meant ; not so much because she cared to know, as because she did not like to appear ignorant. Presently the tread of footsteps was heard in the passage, followed by a short knock, and Mr. Clifford, opening the door, admitted the six little girls who were come for their weekly instruction. Madeline looked up, and smiled, and nodded, and asked two of them how their mothers were ; but Ruth took no notice. She had a knot in her thread, and it seemed as if she could think of nothing but how to undo it. Mr. Clifford looked towards her, and became rather thoughtful, — but he said nothing ; and, after a short delay, the class repeated the thirty-fourth psalm. Ruth observed all that went on, and was forced to own that she could not have done better herself ; but she had no notion that they could answer her papa’s questions, and was annoyed at the idea of poor children, who were dressed shabbily, and had learnt neither French nor music, being put in comparison with her. Madeline, too, looked up from her work, and drew her chair nearer to a little pale child, not much bigger than

herself, with the intention of prompting her if required; but no such help was necessary. Margaret Dawson had been at school since she was six years old, and from ill-health had been obliged to spend much of her time in doors, where she had nothing to amuse her except her work, and a few books; and from early instruction, and strict attention, she was as well-informed upon all the important points of religion as many of the best educated amongst her superiors in rank. She knew well what was meant by the great gift bestowed upon christians in their baptism; she understood how awful a blessing it was to have been made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven;" and when Mr. Clifford asked her the same sort of question which he had put to Ruth,—as to what things persons were obliged to give up when they were admitted into the catholic Church of Christ, she answered at once, — "That they were to renounce the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh."

"The children knew more than you expected, Ruth, did they not?" said Mr. Clifford, when the class was dismissed.

Ruth said "Yes," in her usual quiet tone, and taking up her work was going to leave the room.

"You are in a great hurry to run away," said her papa; "I thought you would have wished to stay and talk a little with me."

"I understand about giving up things now, papa," replied Ruth; "it is in the second question in the catechism."

"You understand because little Margaret Dawson told you," said Mr. Clifford gravely.

"I don't know," replied Ruth; and again she seemed anxious to go.

“Not now, my dear child,” said Mr. Clifford, drawing her towards him, and making her stand by his side: “Madeline may go if she likes it, but you must stay a little longer.” Madeline was curious, but she did not venture to ask any questions, and went away. Ruth felt that her papa perceived what was passing in her mind, and she did not dare look in his face. Mr. Clifford waited to see if she would be inclined to speak, and then said, “Is it really true, Ruth, that you do not know how you learnt the answer to my question?” Ruth was silent. “Or,” continued Mr. Clifford, “is it that you are too proud to confess it?—that you do not like to own that one of the village children was able to answer better than yourself?”

“I could have told when she did, papa,” said Ruth; “I thought about it just before she spoke.”

“But you could not have done so at first,—which shows that Margaret Dawson was quicker at understanding than yourself.”

“You did not ask her the same question, papa,” replied Ruth.

Mr. Clifford looked extremely distressed. “This is not honest in you, Ruth,” he said; “it is trying to escape from confessing your ignorance, by saying what you know is not strictly true: I did ask Margaret the same question, though I put it in different words; and now I will ask it you again: ‘What is it we are all required to renounce, or give up, when we are made by baptism members of Christ’s holy catholic church?’” Ruth repeated the answer. “And what is meant by renouncing the works of the Devil?”

“Giving up naughty things,” replied Ruth.

“And what are the naughty things which children are most often tempted to do?” Ruth twisted the thread of her work, and did not appear

willing to speak. "I will tell you," continued Mr. Clifford: "lying is one; and selfishness is a second; and ill-temper, and envy, and disobedience, are others; besides many more which I need not name now; but I do not believe that your great temptation, my dear Ruth, lies in any one of these things. I think you have in a degree broken the promise of your baptism within the last quarter of an hour,—that perhaps you are breaking it now; but it is not by ill-temper, or disobedience; will you think, and tell me how?" Still Ruth hesitated. "I cannot see your thoughts," continued Mr. Clifford, "but if I were able to do it, should I not have discovered just now that you considered yourself very superior to the school-children, that you were proud of having had more instruction, and considered it impossible that they could know any thing as well as yourself? and is not pride one of the works of the Devil which you have promised to renounce?"

"I did not know I was proud, papa," murmured Ruth.

"Very likely not," replied her father, "the fault is one of the last which we are likely to see or own; but there is a story told us in the Bible of two men—one proud, and the other humble,—when you have heard it, perhaps you will be more able to see which of the two you are like. The words are our blessed Lord's: he says, 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote

upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' We will venture to change these words, and suppose them to be, 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as these children are, poor, and dull, and ignorant. I am clever in reading, and quick in remembering ——,'"

"Papa, papa," interrupted Ruth.

"You are shocked, my dearest child," said Mr. Clifford, "and so am I, but there is one who must be infinitely more shocked; the God who knows all your blindness, and sinfulness, and sees that you, notwithstanding, boast to yourself of wisdom. Do you think your thoughts have appeared to him like the humble thoughts of his children?" Ruth's eyes glistened, and the work dropped from her hand. "I need not say to you," continued Mr. Clifford, "that the reason I am speaking seriously upon this subject, is not because you could not answer me. It signifies little whether you are clever, and able to reply to any thing which may be asked you; but it signifies a great deal that you should be humble, because without humility, no one can enter into heaven." Ruth for the moment did feel humble, and scarcely daring to raise her eyes, asked to be forgiven. "And is my forgiveness all you want," said Mr. Clifford, as he kissed her fondly, "can I keep you from being proud another time?"

Ruth blushed, and then said, "she would remember at night in her prayers."

"And not at night, only, but at once," continued her father: "we may neither of us live till night; and if, besides asking God's pardon, you like to show me that you are really wishing to be humble, you can do it by thinking whether there is any thing else in the question we have been talking about, which you do not quite understand;

but you must go away now, because I am busy." Ruth left the room, and instead of going to play with her sister, spent the next ten minutes alone, reading over the catechism and asking God to give her a humble spirit, that she might not be tempted again to forget the promise of her baptism.

CHAPTER V.

RUTH's wishes were very sincere, and for several days she really did try to remember what her papa had said, but no fault can be cured without trouble, especially one which is hidden in our hearts like pride. Ruth was indolent, and did not watch herself, and moreover, she soon forgot that it was necessary to seek assistance from God. When her papa spoke to her, she went directly and prayed against her fault, because she was told to do it: but she did not continue doing so every night and morning. Generally, she omitted what she ought to have asked, till her prayers were ended, and then she put off doing it till the next opportunity; and thus, though she formed very good resolutions, she was not able to keep them, since, if the wisest of men cannot make themselves good by their own efforts, still less can children. Ruth's pride, therefore, was even a greater difficulty than Madeline's thoughtlessness; and though sometimes, when her sister was complaining of the trouble of being good, Ruth's conscience smote her because she did not try more earnestly herself, she used more frequently to indulge her self-conceit, and to join in condemning Madeline's conduct, without inquiring into her own.

Three weeks went by, and Alice Lennox was kept at the Manor, — like a prisoner, the children said, — for she was not seen beyond the gates, except when she went to church on a Sunday and in the week days, and then she walked demurely by

Lady Catharine's side, and never noticed her former companions, except by a little nod, if they happened to meet in the churchyard or the road. Once they had been asked to drink tea, and they were in high spirits at the idea of going; but Lady Catharine was suffering from a bad headache when the evening came, and wrote to put them off, and they had not been invited since. Madeline and her sister began to despair of ever seeing Alice; but Mr. Clifford assured them that this was not at all Lady Catharine's wish, and in the course of the next week a second invitation came. It was accepted directly, and at four o'clock (the time particularly mentioned in the note), the two little girls were sent to the Manor under the care of a servant. They were shown into the drawing-room, but to their surprise, no one was there. The room in other respects looked just as it had done at their first visit, except that the rosewood work-box was shut, instead of open, and that there were no signs of any one having occupied the apartment that day. The two children waited for several minutes before any one came to them. The house seemed perfectly empty, and they could hear nothing but the ticking of the handsome old clock, which was placed in a recess in the ante-room. Madeline began to think that what Ruth had once said was true, and that it would be very difficult to play at the Manor. Presently, the quick shutting of a door told them that some one was approaching; then a sharp voice called out to Miss Alice, "to put her books up;" and directly afterwards, a heavy footstep sounded along the passage, and when the drawing-room door opened, there appeared, not Lady Catharine, but her maid Marsham, a prim, plain-looking woman about forty years of age.

Now Marsham was in reality as excellent a person as Lady Catharine, but she was yet more severe in her manner ; and when she smiled at the two little girls, and told them to follow her, it was with a sort of grim good-nature, which showed that she was not in the habit of smiling upon every one. "Lady Catharine is gone out, young ladies," she said, as she walked with a solemn step up the great staircase, "but she hopes you and Miss Alice will play together till she comes back ; and you are to drink tea at six o'clock. Perhaps you had better take your bonnets off before you go into the study." The study sounded rather awful, for Madeline and Ruth always called their room the school-room ; and Ruth, who had wished to go into the garden, felt disappointed. They passed along an open gallery, from which they could look down into the hall below, and were just going into a bedroom, when an opposite door opened, and Alice's bright face peeped out. Marsham turned quickly round : "Miss Alice, you'll be pleased to put that room tidy : " and the door was immediately shut. Ruth could not help wondering at Alice's obedience, when she remembered how she used to have her own way with Benson ; but as she watched Marsham's manner, she was obliged to own that it would require a good deal of boldness to neglect any thing which such a person ordered. When the children were ready, Marsham opened a different door from that by which they had entered, and showed them into another apartment, much smaller, and without any bed in it, and fitted up so prettily and comfortably, that they both longed to stop and examine every thing attentively ; but Marsham carelessly said, "Miss Lennox's dressing-room," and then, passing on, led them into the study. It was of a moderate size, lighted by two

large sash windows with deep window-seats. The walls were panelled, and ornamented by a few pictures of scenes from English history. A map of Europe hung over the fire-place, and a pair of globes stood in two of the corners. In the middle was a round table covered with a green cloth, upon which were placed a large bronze inkstand, a writing-desk, and some copybooks; and at the lower end was an old-fashioned, carved, mahogany book-case, the upper shelves filled by neatly arranged well-bound volumes, and the lower given up for Alice's school-books, which were at that instant in any thing but proper order. A few handsome chairs, and one with a remarkably straight high back; a walnut-tree cabinet, with open brass wire doors, lined with green silk; a large clock, and a faded Turkey carpet, completed the furniture of the room. Ruth felt that it was a study, and was more certain than ever that no one could play or be merry at the Manor. Alice, however, did not appear to be of the same opinion; she was seated on the floor by the book-case when they came in, her lap filled with books, and a heap lying on the ground beside her; but all were thrown down as Madeline and Ruth appeared, and her smile and welcome were very like what they had been when she lived at the white house.

"Now don't get into mischief, that's all," said Marsham; "mind, Miss Alice, you don't go down stairs." Alice said "very well," in an humble tone, and Marsham went away.

"We can go to play when I have put the books up," said Alice, turning again to her employment; "won't you help me?"

"What a number!" exclaimed Madeline, as she knelt down to be near the lower shelf; "you don't learn out of them all, do you?"

“No,” replied Alice, laughing; “but I am to do it by and by, Lady Catharine says, and such a heap of lessons I have now every day,—more a great deal than you.”

“It is so strange,” said Ruth, who stood by thinking; “you don’t seem to mind it, Alice.”

“Yes, but I do, I hate it sometimes; but it is all regular, and I think I like that; and Lady Catharine says I get on, and she looks pleased. I don’t want to talk about lessons now, though; just give me those French books, Madeline, and then we shall have done; and you shall come and see my dressing-room.” The books were soon arranged, but not carelessly, as would have been the case some months before. Alice took pains that every one should be in its proper place, and even brought a duster from a drawer to wipe one which required it; and at last, after casting a satisfied glance at the result of her labours, opened the door into the dressing-room. “It is all my own,” she said, as she pointed to the neat book-shelves, and the china inkstand, and the pretty little cabinet in which her special treasures were kept; “for you know,” she added, with some hesitation, “I am like Lady Catharine’s daughter now, so it is fit I should have such things.”

“No,” said Ruth, rather abruptly, “you are not like Lady Catharine’s daughter, and papa says you never can be.”

“Why not?” inquired Alice, quickly; “who is to prevent me?”

“But you can’t be—it is impossible,” persisted Ruth; “you can never have the same relations.”

“Oh! as to that,” replied Alice, “I don’t want them. Lady Catharine says I am her child, and I shall have all sorts of fine things when I grow up; I shall be much richer than you.”

“I would not change with you,” said Ruth: but Madeline said nothing.

Alice felt a little provoked at Ruth’s indifference. “Look here,” she said, opening some drawers; “these are all my clothes—frocks, and capes, and ribbons; don’t they look pretty?”

“Yes, very,” said Ruth, quietly: “but, Alice, papa told me that wearing fine dresses had something to do with poms and vanities; and that it was wrong. He said so one evening when I asked him what poms and vanities meant.”

“No, but indeed, Ruth, it can’t be wrong,” said Madeline; “because we have our best frocks on now.”

“I forget,” answered Ruth, looking a little puzzled: “but I know he did say something about it.”

“Never mind!” exclaimed Alice; “what does it signify?”

“It does signify,” continued Ruth, “because I don’t like forgetting.” Alice seemed rather surprised; and, turning away, called Madeline to come and admire her beautiful sashes; and she spread them out upon the table, whilst Ruth stood apart by the window. “I have it!” exclaimed Ruth, at length: “he said that it was not naughty to like what we have if it was grand or pretty, but that we ought not to feel proud about it, and think ourselves better than others; and he wouldn’t like you, Alice, to talk about being richer than us.”

“I can’t help it,” said Alice, “if it is true.”

“But you boasted,” said Ruth.

“And you would like to be rich, I know; so there is not much difference.”

Ruth coloured, and was going to reply, when Madeline exclaimed: “Papa scolded one of the

girls at the school, the other day, about pomps and vanities ; don't you remember, Ruth?"

"Hester Morris, wasn't it?" said Ruth.

"Yes; do you know, Alice, she spent all her money in buying a new ribbon, when her father and mother had no meat for dinner."

"That was wrong, certainly," said Alice.

"Yes; and papa talked to us a great deal besides; it was one evening when we went down to the shore; but I forget it all now."

"I remember what he said," continued Ruth: "he told us we ought not to wish for any thing more than we have; and that we ought to be quite willing to be poor; and not to want to have fine names, and to have people thinking a great deal about us: so, Alice, you will be very wrong indeed if you care about those things when you grow up."

"And he said that sinful lusts of the flesh meant greediness for us," added Madeline.

"Well!" exclaimed Alice, growing impatient at having what she considered a lecture, "I can't be greedy; Lady Catharine won't let me have any thing except at dinner-time—I mean lozenges and sweet things, as Benson did."

"I thought you said, last time we were here, that she gave you some sugar-plums," observed Ruth.

"Oh yes! just that once; but she has never done it since."

"Then you are not as well off as we are," said Madeline, opening a black silk bag which hung on her arm: "see here! they are bonbons—real French bonbons, which our aunt Wilson sent us; and we thought you would like some."

"Oh, what beauties!" exclaimed Alice; and her eyes sparkled with delight: "all silver, and gold,

and pink, and blue, and green. I never saw any so pretty."

"Madeline and I are going to keep some of ours to look at," said Ruth: "it seems a pity to tear them."

"I don't see that," replied Alice; "they are made to be eaten. This blue one is chocolate, I am sure: don't you both like chocolate very much?"

"No, not very much," answered Madeline; "I don't, at least: all those I have put by are chocolate, I think."

"Dear me! then you don't care for them. I wish you would let me have them: and I am so much obliged to you for these."

Alice immediately began eating the bonbons; and Ruth was uncomfortable, fearing they might have done wrong in giving them. "I thought Lady Catharine did not like you to have sugar-plums and things," she said.

"Oh, that is all nonsense! they never do me any harm; and Benson bought me heaps: besides these are different; they are bonbons; so do, Madeline, dear, give me the others." Madeline pretended not to hear, for she was not inclined to sacrifice her treasures: she thought them as valuable to be looked at, as Alice did to be eaten; and in an awkward manner she began turning over the coloured sashes. Alice, however, was not to be easily diverted from her wishes: the more bonbons she had, the more she wanted; and after again warmly expressing her thanks for the present she had received, she once more returned to the charge: "you know, Madeline, I don't want to do any thing you dislike; but if you are not fond of chocolate, they can be no good to you."

"Yes, but they can be," persisted Madeline, "if it is my pleasure to look at them."

"Besides, Alice," interrupted Ruth, "you know Lady Catharine would not like it."

"And it is being greedy," said Madeline, delighted to find support from her sister; "and if papa were here, he would talk to you a great deal about not being greedy."

Alice looked angry. "No, it's not being greedy!" she said: "I don't want to take them from you, if you can eat them yourself; but you don't care for them."

"But it is being greedy," said Ruth; "because if you did not think so much about sweet things you would not ask so often. You know, Alice, how you used to tease Benson to buy you lemon drops whenever she went out."

"Well!" exclaimed Alice; "I remember who used to eat them when they were bought."

"I did," replied Ruth; "but I would not have done it if mamma had wished me not; and you don't think any thing about Lady Catharine."

Alice felt from experience that there was nothing to be gained by arguing with Ruth, who generally contrived to see the right and the wrong of every case clearly, and when she did see it, never gave up. Madeline was a more persuadable person; and Alice did not in the least lose the hope of obtaining her wishes; though she continued silent after Ruth's last speech, and gathering up the bonbons from the table, put them into a drawer of the cabinet, and went on displaying her sashes. "You never saw all these before," she said: "Benson used to keep them. I never did till the other day; but are they not beautiful?" They certainly were very handsome: bright green, and purple, and pink, and figured satin, and white with coloured roses,—such an assemblage as had never been seen by the two children except in a draper's shop at

Cottington. "They belonged to an aunt of mine;—all but this one," said Alice; and she held up a very pretty green ribbon with white spots; "that was given me yesterday."

"Yesterday!" exclaimed both the children, in surprise: "how very kind of Lady Catharine!"

"It was not Lady Catharine," said Alice, with a peculiar smile; and then she added, gravely: "you know it is no exact good to me now."

"Then it must have been Marsham," observed Madeline; "but she does not look good-natured."

"No, nor Marsham; but never mind; somebody gave me this ribbon, and I think it is beautiful."

"Oh! but Alice, do tell us; we won't say any thing about it," said Madeline, with her usual thoughtlessness.

"No, no!" exclaimed Alice, shaking her head, and delighted at a little mystery; "I shan't tell you any thing, so there will be no use in your guessing."

"Besides," observed Ruth, "I don't like to promise that I won't say anything; and I don't think you ought to do it, Madeline."

"Well!" said Madeline, recollecting herself, "I suppose I must not promise not to tell; but I should like to know for all that."

Alice held the ribbon up to show it off to the best advantage, and Madeline again began guessing, when Marsham came in hastily to say that Lady Catharine desired to speak with Miss Lennox. The ribbon was thrown down, and Alice was gone in an instant. Ruth took up a book, but Madeline could not withdraw her eyes from the beautiful ribbon. The taste for finery was a folly which her mamma had early discovered in her, and often desired to correct; but she was always dressed plainly, and she had, therefore, no great opportunity of display-

ing it. Now that there was no one to caution her she gave way to it, and passing the ribbon round her waist, and holding it together that it might not be crumpled, she called to Ruth to admire it, and observe how well it suited with her white frock.

“You will spoil it,” said Ruth, scarcely raising her eyes.

“Oh! no, I shall not, it would be impossible; I am not tying it. Just see, Ruth, only once.”

“Yes, well, very pretty;” replied Ruth, looking up again. Madeline went to the glass, and stood before it at a little distance that she might see herself plainly. “If Alice is greedy, I know some one else who likes fine clothes,” said Ruth.

“Not clothes,” answered Madeline; “it is only a ribbon.”

“That is just the same, papa, said so; and he told you that mamma often talked to him about it, and that it was as bad in us to love to dress ourselves out, as it was in the girls at the school.”

Madeline felt a little ashamed, but still persisted that as the ribbon was not her own, there could be no harm in liking to see herself in it; and Ruth, having given her opinion, again returned to her book. Madeline continued to amuse herself with the sashes, putting them round her, one after the other, but finding none which she thought at all equal to her first favourite. “How I should like to have just such a one!” she exclaimed, at length, her admiration having increased to a longing desire to possess the prize, especially as it suited so well with her white frock. “I wonder whether Alice would give” — the sentence was interrupted, for Madeline caught the sound of footsteps, and feeling that she was indulging a foolish wish, she threw the ribbon aside. Lady Catharine entered directly afterwards, and Alice with her: she kissed

the two children, almost affectionately, and said, she hoped they had managed to entertain themselves pretty well; but on glancing round the room, and observing the display of Alice's finery, she grew stern again, and desiring that all that nonsense might be put away, she told Madeline and Ruth to fetch their bonnets and capes, for they were to go into the garden, and drink tea in the summer house. Madeline cast a wistful look at the green sash as Alice began folding it up, and offered to remain behind and help her; but Lady Catharine waved her hand, and pointed to the door, and Ruth whispered to her to be quick; Alice, too, gave a sign not to speak, and Madeline felt she must be careful not even to appear to disobey.

What had passed was but a trifle, and in itself seemed of very little consequence. Madeline knew that the mere admiring a pretty ribbon could be no harm, and she did not think that any one could find fault with her for merely putting it on, and wishing she had one like it; but she did not remember that a love of finery was one of her great faults, and that her mamma had often told her to try and not think about her dress at all; lest she should grow up to be silly and conceited, and should forget the promise of her baptism to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world. Madeline was thoughtless about every thing, — especially her faults; she never saw what she was doing till she had committed some serious offence, and the consequence was that she made but little improvement; for to be watchful over trifles is the only sure way of advancing in goodness. Alice being very quick in all her movements, joined Ruth and Madeline before they had reached the bottom of the stairs. Lady Catharine's presence made them all feel shy, but Ruth remarked that Alice did not walk away from her, but kept close to

her side ; and when some question was asked as to what lessons had been done, and Alice gave a good account of her day's work, Lady Catharine's face looked quite gentle, and her smile was so sweet, that Ruth for the first time thought it might be possible to love her.

The table in the summer-house was spread for tea, with bread and butter, and cakes and fruit ; and to the children's great pleasure, there were the small brown cups and saucers, and plates with gilt edges, which they had been in the habit of playing with at the white house. None of them had believed it possible that Lady Catharine should think of such trifles, and when, after seeing them comfortably seated, she left them to themselves, they were loud in their exclamations of surprise and delight : Madeline declared that it was not at all like Lady Catharine, and she was sure some one else must have begged for them ; but Alice said that Lady Catharine often remembered kind things, and Marsham had said one day, that she never forgot a poor person in her life. Ruth as being the steadiest was fixed upon to pour out the tea, and the little party went on very comfortably ; the principal amusement being Alice's description of what had happened since she came to the Manor. Sometimes, indeed, Alice's manner altered, and tears were in her eyes, if anything which was said brought back a particular remembrance of her dear mamma ; but she was much more reconciled to her new life than she had been at Mrs. Clifford's first visit, and did not protest, as she had done before, that she never should like living at the Manor.

The heat of the afternoon had by this time gone off, and when the tea was over, Alice proposed that they should play hide and seek. There were capital places in the garden, she said, and they might

go into one or two of the back courts if they liked it; "not into the farthest one though," she added, pointing to a wall adjoining the outhouses: "there is a way up there into the strange rooms, and so it's forbidden."

"Oh! how I wish it was not!" exclaimed Madeline; "it would be such fun to go; there must be something wonderful there."

"No, there is not," replied Alice: "I asked Marsham about them once; and she said they were the rooms which Lady Catharine had a great many years ago, when Mr. Hyde, her husband, you know, was alive; and that his bedroom and study were there, and that makes her so particular, because she wants to keep every thing just as it used to be, and she thinks that if every one was allowed to go there, they would be put out of order; so Marsham goes in and dusts it all herself. I would ask her to take me with her, if Lady Catharine had not made such a fuss, and declared she would send me to school if I ever did." Ruth looked at the windows, notwithstanding this account, with a great deal of interest; and felt that she would rather have seen those few shut-up rooms than any others in the house; but there was no good to be gained by wishing, and the game began. It was a long and a merry one. Behind old yew hedges, and large trees, and projecting walls, and half-open doors the children hid, in the certainty that no one would dream of finding them there; and unmindful of Lady Catharine, or Marsham, or the dull garden, they made the air ring with their shouts of joyous laughter, as loudly as if they had been playing in the shrubbery at the Parsonage.

Alice was naturally the most successful in concealing herself; she knew every turn and corner, for when left alone her chief amusement was to

spy out all the odd places belonging to the house ; and, at length, after the game had continued for about twenty minutes, she was declared by her little companions to be quite lost. They had looked every where, and called, and even entreated that she would show herself, but no answer had been returned.

“She is gone into the house,” said Ruth ; “and that is so foolish when it was against our rule.”

“Yes,” said Madeline, “and if we had done it she would have been very angry.”

“I don’t think she can be, either,” continued Ruth, after a little thought ; “she said to me again that we were not to do it just before she ran away.”

“That might have been for fun, to deceive us,” replied Madeline ; “you know Alice will do such things sometimes.”

As she said this Madeline turned down a long walk leading to the door of the forbidden court, and when she reached the bottom, she leant against the wall to rest herself, feeling tired with play and vexed with Alice ; whilst Ruth, determining to make another search, walked away in a different direction. Madeline began calling again for Alice, and when she stopped, the sound of voices in the court was plainly heard. Some persons were talking together, and Madeline fancied that one of them was Alice. The tone seemed the same, though she did not hear what passed. Once more she repeated her name — and a moment afterwards a door was shut hastily, and Alice, stealing round the corner of the wall, stood by her side, laughing heartily. Madeline was eager in her questions as to what she had been doing, and where she had been hiding, but Alice would give no account of herself, and only insisted upon their joining Ruth. Made-

line agreed ; but as she turned round to pick up her handkerchief which had fallen down, she was surprised to see the door of the servants' court open, and a woman dressed in mourning, and looking extremely like Benson, appear, who, after spying about, walked quickly towards a door in the garden wall which adjoined the park.

"It is Benson, I am sure," exclaimed Madeline, and she was going to run after her, when Alice pulled her back.

"No, no, nonsense, never mind," she exclaimed, colouring deeply ; "let us find Ruth."

"But it looked just like her ; I am sure it must be her ; do let me go and speak."

"How foolish!" exclaimed Alice ; "she is gone now — see." The garden-door was closed, and the woman, whoever she might be, was gone. Madeline persisted that it was Benson, and Alice laughed, and again called it nonsense ; and Madeline, whose attention was soon drawn away from any subject, returned once more, though without success, to the question of Alice's hiding-place. They found Ruth in the summer-house ; she had given Alice up, and began to complain that she had broken the rules of the game. Alice, however, persisted that she had not, for she had not been in the house.

"Then you were talking to Benson in the servants' court," said Madeline, "and that was against the rules, for you told us we must not go there."

Alice blushed again ; but before she could answer Ruth exclaimed, "Benson ! is she come back ? and may you see her, Alice ?"

Alice looked still more uncomfortable, and in an awkward manner said, "Benson was to have stayed in London a month."

"But she did not," observed Madeline ; "I am sure it was Benson who went through the garden,

and I know I heard your voice, Alice, in the court."

"Listening! listening! for shame!" exclaimed Alice, the crimson in her cheeks spreading itself over her forehead and neck.

"It was not listening," replied Madeline angrily; "I could not help myself."

"Well! it is of no consequence," said Alice; "it is no one's business but my own, and we won't talk any more about it. I want you to tell me, Madeline, where you got your bonbons."

"Why, what good can it do you?" asked Ruth, who was struck by the awkwardness of Alice's manner.

"You can't have any like them, because they came from France," said Madeline.

Alice looked disappointed. "Are you sure?" she said.

"Yes, quite; and I know there are none to be had here, nor at Cottington; for mamma tried the last time we were there."

This seemed to settle the question, for the shops at Cottington contained, in the children's belief, all that was most wonderful and beautiful in the world. Alice showed her vexation in her countenance, and instead of proposing another game, sat down, and began pulling off the leaves of the evergreen-honeysuckles which twined round the summer-house. "There is no use in staying here, if you are so stupid," said Ruth, after proposing several plays, all of which were disliked; "I shall go and feed Marsham's rabbits;" and she walked away.

Madeline was going to follow, but Alice pulled her back. "Stop, Madeline," she said; "why won't you give me the bonbons?" Poor Madeline felt a little surprise, for she had forgotten that any claim had been made upon her. "It is very ill-

natured of you," continued Alice; "you can't eat them yourself and you won't let any one else have them; and I would give you any thing you like in exchange."

"Any thing!" exclaimed Madeline, who had a notion, that since Alice had been adopted by Lady Catharine Hyde, she must of course possess many more beautiful things than she had done before.

"Yes, any thing," repeated Alice; "I will tell you what I would give you, if you liked;—one of the sashes— one of those beautiful sashes you saw in my dressing-room."

"Would you, indeed?" and the remembrance of the green ribbon with the white spots came clearly before Madeline's mind; "but you would not be allowed."

"Oh, yes! trust me; I may do just as I like in those things; let me have the bonbons, and you shall have the sash."

The temptation was great, for Madeline had never during her whole life possessed any thing so handsome. "I should like it very much," she said, "but then ——"

"Well, what? make haste, — why don't you say yes?"

"It would be no good," said Madeline sorrowfully; "mamma would not let me wear it; she likes Ruth and me always to be drest alike." This was rather a difficulty; but Alice, having once made the proposal to exchange something for the bonbons, was not daunted, and began to recount her list of valuables, in hopes that Madeline would find something else which would do as well. But it was in vain. Madeline cared neither for wafer-boxes, nor coloured sealing-wax, nor mother-of-pearl winders, nor transparent slates; she wished only for the ribbon, and if she did not have that,

she did not want any thing. "It is the green sash I should like," she said; "that is the prettiest of them all."

Alice's face brightened, as if a happy thought had struck her. "Well!" she said, "I don't know, perhaps it might be managed; would you really give me the bonbons, if I were to give you and Ruth a sash alike?"

Madeline, surprised at the offer, considered for a few moments, and then said, "Yes;" though not without a little feeling of reluctance; adding, "you may let me take them home, and then I will ask mamma to send Smith, the gardener, with the bonbons to-morrow."

"No, no, indeed!" exclaimed Alice, "that will never do; Lady Catharine might know about it then."

To Madeline this sounded as a reason for not having them at all; but Alice was not thoroughly sincere, and when self-indulgence came in her way, she was unable to evercome the temptation of gratifying it, even at the risk of doing wrong. Madeline's scruples were therefore laughed at, and she was told that it would be necessary to keep the bonbons till they met again, for that it would not be safe to send them; that, in fact, it would be as well not to say any thing about them.

"But I must to mamma," replied Madeline; "I shall show her the sashes to-night, and she will ask directly how I came by them."

At this difficulty Alice began to laugh, and exclaimed, "But you don't expect to carry back the sashes with you to-night, do you? why, I have not got them yet."

"Not got them?" repeated Madeline, with a blank face of disappointment, "I thought you said you would give us each one alike."

“ So I did ; but the other must be bought first.”

Madeline was puzzled. She knew that Alice was scarcely ever allowed to go beyond the park, — never, indeed, unless Lady Catharine was with her ; and how it would be possible to procure another ribbon, equally beautiful with the one she had just seen, in any place but Cottington, was a mystery which she was unable to comprehend. Madeline did not know that the green ribbon had been a present from Benson, who had brought it from London only the day before ; and, without Lady Catharine’s knowledge, had managed to see Alice and give it into her own hands. Benson had been careful to keep this fact secret, for she knew that Lady Catharine was aware of her great fault, — her love of gossiping and repeating strange stories, and was determined not to allow Alice to see any thing more of her. She had, moreover, offended Lady Catharine very much, by being impertinent to her when she was first informed that Alice was to be taken from her care ; and, in consequence, she had been forbidden ever to come near the house.

Benson was a foolish woman, and did many wrong things ; but she was really fond of Alice, and it cut her to the heart to be told she was to leave her. Having a sister living in Laneton, a dressmaker, she resolved to settle with her, and take part of her business ; and accordingly, after a journey to London to see some relations, she had returned only two days before the visit of Ruth and Madeline to the Manor, bringing with her the gay ribbon which they had so much admired. Alice was proud of finery, and pleased with the sash, but she knew she should not be able to wear it for some time ; and even if she could do so, she liked something to eat much better than something to

wear: the love of eating was as strong in her as the love of dress was in Madeline; and she had that afternoon been trying to persuade Benson, whom she met whilst she was seeking for a good hiding-place, to bring some bonbons with her the next time she came. Benson knew nothing about bonbons, or how dear they were; and fancying it would be only the expense of a few halfpence, agreed to buy some in the village; but she told Alice that she could not undertake to bring them up to the house to her, because it was only for those two days, whilst the upper housemaid was away, and the under housemaid, who was her cousin, was able to keep watch for her, that she had been able to come, contrary to Lady Catharine's order. If Alice wanted to see her again they must meet at the garden gate, which opened into the park. Alice had agreed to this, without once considering what a very wrong thing she was doing; she remembered neither Lady Catharine's commands, nor the great sinfulness of deceit, nor any thing but her own wishes: for the sake of the bonbons, for the pleasure of indulging her taste for eating, she was willing to displease not only a human being, who had adopted her when she was a friendless orphan, but One infinitely greater and kinder, the all-seeing God, who hates deceit, and from whom no thought or action can be concealed. Madeline saw that something was wrong, and she knew that Alice was going to disobey Lady Catharine; but though her conscience whispered that it would be better to give up all thought of the sashes, and that even if she had them her mamma might not like them to be worn; and that, at any rate, she was indulging the love of finery, which she had been warned against, still she allowed herself to hesitate, and think, and wish; and the con-

sequence was what might easily be imagined: she agreed to give Alice the bonbons when next they met, and to receive the two sashes in return. She half repented, indeed, when Alice told her that she must not say any thing to Ruth; for she had never kept any thing secret from her before; but the idea of surprising her in some degree made up for the restraint she was obliged to put upon herself; and though unable to find out from Alice how the ribbon was to be procured, she persisted in her resolution; and when the three children were summoned into the house by Marsham, no one would have supposed, from their merry voices and light steps, that two of them had determined upon doing what they knew to be wrong. Whilst we think only upon indulging our own wishes, our consciences are often silent; it is only when we have gained our point that we begin to see how sinfully we have acted. If Alice and Madeline had been reminded of their baptismal vow, and asked whether they had broken it by gratifying their desires for the pomps and vanities of the world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh, they would most probably have answered "No." They might even have supposed that it was only grown-up people who could ever be tempted to be guilty of such sins; but this is not the way in which God judges. He sees the working of our evil hearts in our slightest actions, and the faults of children are in His eyes very grievous, because He knows that they proceed from the deep corruption of their nature; and that if they are not checked they will assuredly end in great offences. Alice and Madeline knew all this; that is, they had been taught it, but they did not think about it. They played, laughed, looked at pictures, and told stories, and enjoyed the dish of raspberries and milk which

Lady Catharine provided for them in the study, without any misgiving ; and it was only when, an hour afterwards, they knelt down, each in her separate chamber, to offer their evening prayers, that any thing like a doubt crossed their minds as to whether God was indeed well pleased with them. Alice thought of it, but the thought was disagreeable, and she turned away from it ; and, as soon as the words were repeated, hurried into bed, that she might forget it. But Madeline's conscience was more tender ; her mamma had taught her to try and recollect the principal naughty things which she had done during the day, and to mention them in her prayers at night, and the agreement with Alice immediately struck her as one ; but then if it was wrong it ought to be given up ; she ought to refuse to take the sashes, or to give Alice the bonbons ; but she had promised, and Alice would think it unkind ; it seemed to her difficult to know how to decide ; and in the middle of her prayers she stopped to consider. The servant looked into the room at the time, to see if she was in bed, and Madeline thought it would not do to determine then ; so she finished her prayers with an unhappy mind, and instead of lying down in peace, and falling asleep immediately, she tossed about restless and uncomfortable for more than a quarter of an hour, with all sorts of confused thoughts in her head, and with the consciousness that the right way of acting was clear, but that she had not strength to follow it. Why did not Madeline pray that God would help her ?

CHAPTER VI.

THERE are few children who have not at some time or other experienced the same feelings as Madeline when she awoke the next morning, with the dim consciousness that something disagreeable had happened, or was going to happen—that there was some cause why she should be less light-hearted than usual. The truth was easily recollected, but, unhappily, Madeline was less inclined to do her duty, and give up her wishes in the morning, when the sun was shining, and the birds were singing, and every thing looked cheerful around her, than she had been in the dark night, when she lay in her bed, with nothing to distract her thoughts from the remembrance that she was in the presence of the great God, who knew all that was passing in her heart. Ruth saw that something was making her sister uncomfortable; and fancying that it was because she was not ready with her lessons, she helped her to finish dressing, and promised to hear her repeat them when she went down stairs; and Madeline did not say that this was not the reason, though the day before she would have shrunk from the idea of hiding any thing from Ruth. She only hurried over all she had to do, that she might not be asked any questions, and then knelt down to say her prayers, as usual: but as it had been the night previous, so it was now. Madeline was afraid to use holy words, and ask God to keep her from sin, when she was resolving to commit it; she knew well that this would only be a mockery.

There was a great difficulty in her mind, and a long struggle between her conscience, which told her what she ought to do, and her inclination, which told her what she ought not. Still she did not pray to be enabled to act rightly; she tried to decide by herself; and the consequence was, as it always must be, that she went wrong. She put off determining the question till another occasion, because she said to herself that it was not necessary to settle then; there would be no chance of her meeting Alice that day, so she should not be obliged to give her the bonbons, and she would think about it again, when she had more time; perhaps it would be as well to have nothing to do with the matter, but she would see; and having thus quieted her conscience, Madeline said her prayers in haste, making, at the same time, the excuse for herself that she was late. This was but a bad beginning of the day, for when we are careless and inattentive to God we may be quite sure that we shall not be able to do well in other respects; and before breakfast was ready Madeline had spoken several hasty words to Ruth, besides wasting her time, and failing to have one lesson as perfect as it ought to be.

Mrs. Clifford, who soon found out if any thing was amiss, would probably have made some remark upon her little girl's manner, which was far from being as cheerful as usual, if her attention had not been occupied by a letter which had arrived by the post, and the interest of which prevented her from paying her usual attention to what was going on. She read it twice through, though it was rather a long one, and then gave it to her husband; and, when he had ended it, they began talking of the contents. The two children, however, could not at all understand what was meant. They

heard something about their aunt Mary and their grandmamma, and a marriage which was to take place soon; but who was to be married, or what their aunt Mary and their grandmamma had to do with the matter, they could not make out. It was clear, however, that the business of the letter was important; for, directly after breakfast, Mrs. Clifford called the children to her, and, after setting them some writing copies, told them they were to go on by themselves, for that she should not be able to attend to them for the next hour; and soon afterwards they saw her walking in the garden with their papa, and talking to him earnestly. Madeline felt glad in the hope that she should not be called so soon as usual to repeat her imperfect lesson; and, as it happened, Mrs. Clifford was detained until she had had time to look over her French and geography, and to find out some places in the map which she had read of the day before; no fault, therefore, was found, and her mamma even praised her. But Madeline was not happy at being praised; she knew that she did not deserve it. The dinner hour arrived, and still there had been no opportunity for thinking; and in the afternoon Mr. Clifford took both the children for a walk with him; and they came in only in time for tea, and afterwards went out again upon the shore, where they stayed so long that it was very nearly their bed-time before they returned. Madeline's mind had been quite occupied, and she had almost forgotten her engagement with Alice; and the pain she had felt the night before was nearly gone. Yet Madeline was not better because she was happier: her happiness was caused by forgetfulness; but God never forgets. To Ruth the day had been an unpleasant one, though she had not the same causes for self-reproach as Madeline. She was uncomfortable; not about herself,

but about her papa and mamma, who, she could plainly see, had something in their thoughts which distressed them. Mrs. Clifford stayed at home all the afternoon, writing a long letter; and once, on going into the room, Ruth remarked that tears were in her eyes though she tried to hide them; and directly afterwards Mrs. Clifford called her little girl to her, and kissed her so often, and gazed upon her so sadly, that Ruth longed to ask what was the matter. Her papa, too, was not at all like himself when he took them for their walk. He was silent, and looked very grave; and sighed when an old man, at whose cottage they stopped, observed what a pleasure it must be to him to have his little girls with him. Mr. Clifford scarcely ever sighed; and Ruth was sure it must be something serious which could make him do so. What it was, however, she could not in the least find out, though she thought it must have something to do with the letter; but when she began talking to Madeline her fears rather passed away, for Madeline laughed at her for worrying herself about it. Ruth went to bed that night with much more serious thoughts than Madeline; and when she prayed, as she had been taught, that God would bless her papa and mamma, she really thought about the words, and used them from her heart; and then she felt relieved, for she knew that if any thing disagreeable was going to happen, God would be not only able but willing to help them to bear it.

The two next days Ruth watched anxiously when the post came, but it did not bring any letters of consequence, and the cheerfulness of her papa and mamma began to make her think she must have been fanciful. On the third day they were rather earlier at breakfast than usual, and the children were sent into the school-room before the post came in; and

as they were leaving the breakfast parlour, Mrs. Clifford said, she hoped they would be careful at their lessons, for she had some intention of taking them out with her in the afternoon; perhaps they might go to the Manor. Madeline's countenance changed, and she ran quickly out of the room. It seemed certain at first that she must decide at once; for Alice would expect the bonbons, and had no doubt procured the sashes. It did not seem possible to draw back; but Madeline could not make up her mind to fulfil her agreement, and again she put off the evil hour. It was the time for their writing, and she knew her mamma would be displeased if she was not ready; so she resolved not to settle positively to do wrong, but to take the bonbons in her bag, and then talk to Alice a little more upon the subject. If she did not determine to give them, she persuaded herself there could be no harm in carrying them with her. So Madeline reasoned; and so a great many other persons reason. They cannot resolve to forsake what is wrong at once; and they put themselves in the way of temptation, and then say they cannot help yielding to it. Madeline went to her writing, and took more pains than usual with it, and really fancied that she was trying to do right; and when Ruth began looking at the door, and wondering why their mamma did not come, she reproved her, and said that she ought not to talk and look about her. Ruth, however, could not help feeling wonder, though after Madeline had spoken she did not express it; and when, at last, Mrs. Clifford came into the room, all her past fears about the letters and bad news returned. Mrs. Clifford looked uncomfortable: she sat quiet for some time without speaking; and when she began to hear them repeat their lessons, it seemed to be a trouble to her, and not a

pleasure as it usually was. She smiled, however, at the end, and told them they were good children, and that she hoped, as she had promised, to take them with her to the Manor in the afternoon.

"I should like to know what is the matter," said Ruth, as they went to their rooms to prepare for dinner: "didn't you see to-day, Madeline, how very strange mamma looked?"

"Once I did," replied Madeline, "when I said something about having a new geography book next month. I almost thought she was going to cry; but you know mamma never cries, and I am sure that could not have made her."

"No," said Ruth, laughing; "but it was not only then; it was all the time she was hearing us."

Madeline merely said "Was it?" Had it been any other time she would have asked a great many questions, and guessed all sorts of reasons; but just then she was turning over her beautiful bonbons, and putting them into a bag that she might not be hurried after dinner.

Mr. Clifford did not come to luncheon, which was still another reason for Ruth's thinking that something must be going wrong, or at any rate that something important was about to happen. She was sure he was not gone out, for she had caught a glimpse of him at his writing-table as she passed the study door. When they were dressed for their walk, Ruth observed the bag hanging on Madeline's arm, and asked her why she was going to carry it, as they had nothing to take with them. Madeline did not know what to reply, but muttered something indistinctly. She did not wish to tell a story; but having begun to do what she did not like to own, she was induced to say any thing for an excuse; and besides this she was obliged to crumple the bag up, though it was very

pretty and easily spoilt, and put it in the pocket of her frock, in order that nothing more might be said about it. But the visit to the Manor was not to be paid that afternoon; for at the park gate they met Lady Catharine driving in a little pony-carriage, and Alice with her. Lady Catharine was pleased to see Mrs. Clifford; and, telling the page to hold the ponies, she got out and walked with her up and down the straight piece of road in front of the park paling; whilst the children, delighted at being left together, talked fast and merrily. Madeline hoped that Alice had forgotten the bonbons; for, notwithstanding her wish to possess the ribbon in exchange, she had been too uncomfortable during the last few days not to feel glad to be out of the way of temptation. She did not, however, escape so easily. Ruth went to gather some wild flowers in the hedge; and then Alice, catching hold of Madeline's hand, exclaimed: "Well! where are the bonbons?"

"I—I—do you really want them?" replied Madeline.

"Yes, of course; you don't mean to draw back? oh how mean!" Madeline blushed, half with anger, half with shame. "After all my trouble," continued Alice, "seeing Benson and all—for I was obliged to beg for another from her."

"Then you have the sashes," said Madeline, whilst, notwithstanding her confusion, her eyes sparkled with delight and expectation.

"Not yet, but I shall have the other; Benson says so."

"Have you seen her again then?" inquired Madeline.

"Yes, once at that gate—the garden gate into the park. Do you know, Madeline, I did not half like it, because of Lady Catharine, but I had

promised you, and so I was forced to do it." Poor Madeline felt vexed when she recollected how foolish she had been in receiving such a promise; and keeping to her resolution of reminding Alice that they were doing wrong in deceiving Lady Catharine, she now proposed that they should give up the notion altogether. To her surprise, Alice seemed at first a little inclined to listen; for although she did not feel what Madeline did, when she knew that she was grieving her papa and mamma; still she had lately become more desirous of pleasing Lady Catharine, whose few words of praise were particularly valued, from the fact of their being but seldom given.

"Then I may take them back," said Madeline, as soon as she found that Alice agreed with her scruples; and, as she spoke, she opened her bag, and displayed the gay paper and gilding, in which the bonbons were wrapped. Alice's eyes brightened.

"Oh, Madeline! I don't know; how beautiful they are! and so many! Are you sure they are chocolate?"

"Not sure, because I have not opened them all; but several are, I know."

"And you don't like them, and I do, it seems such a pity,—and I know they won't hurt me, I eat all those you gave me the other day, and I was not at all the worse for it. Just let me look at them one minute." Madeline gave up the bag, and Alice put a few in her lap, looking round cautiously at the same time, to see that Lady Catharine was not near. "I don't believe it would be so very wrong," she continued, "it is all nonsense thinking they would do me harm, and besides, Benson is to bring me the other sash to-morrow, and I shan't know what to do with two."

"To-morrow?" repeated Madeline, "then you are quite sure of having it?"

"Yes, quite, Benson's sister, the dress-maker, has it, and she is to get it from her. Your white frock would look so nice with it, Madeline."

"Better than it does with this old pink one," said Madeline, looking down at her dress. At that minute, Mrs. Clifford was heard calling to Ruth, who had wandered away to some little distance. Alice caught up some of the bonbons to put them again into the bag, but, in moving, several fell down.

"What shall we do?" she exclaimed, as she stooped to look for them; "Lady Catharine will be sure to see them." Madeline drew nearer to the pony-carriage to help in the search, but she was not able to be of much use, for Ruth came running towards her, telling her that their mamma was gone into a cottage with Lady Catharine, and that they were to follow directly.

"Coming, coming," exclaimed Madeline, hastily; going closer to Alice, she then whispered, "shall I take the bag?"

"No, no," replied Alice, "I may as well have all now;" and hiding the bag in the corner for Ruth not to see, she wished both the children "good bye," and began looking again for the stray bonbons. Madeline walked slowly away, with a feeling of greater pleasure than pain. She had gained her wishes, and not entirely by her own doing, and so she fancied herself free from blame, and yet her conscience still told her that all was not right. If she had not brought the bonbons with her, Alice would not have kept them; but Madeline was glad instead of sorry at being forced to give them up, and when the idea crossed

her mind that she might even now refuse to receive the sashes, it gave her a pang, and she said to herself that it would only be foolish, since all the harm was done. Alice had seen Benson, and taken the bonbons, and it could neither make things better nor worse for her to give up her part of the business, and part with what she liked, without having any thing in exchange,—and after all it was Alice who had disobeyed. This seemed very true, and it passed quickly in Madeline's thoughts, as she followed Ruth in silence to the cottage. But the sound of Lady Catharine's voice brought the dread, that what had been done might be found out, and Madeline's heart sank within her. Yet why should it—if she had done no harm?

The next day was Sunday : there were no letters, but Ruth had not less cause for uneasiness than before, for there was no longer any doubt that something had happened to distress her papa and mamma,—their manner showed it too plainly. Madeline, likewise, was altered : she was fretful and discontented ; but Ruth did not think much about it, and was so occupied in watching her mamma, that she did not observe a little scene which passed between her sister and Alice Lennox, as they met at the church door, when the service was over. Alice managed to draw Madeline aside, and pulling a small brown paper parcel out of her pocket, she offered it to her. Madeline shook her head and seemed shocked, and Alice coloured, and laughed, and tore off a piece of the paper to show something green within. Madeline looked, and Alice whispered, " Promise you won't show it to your mamma, till I say you may." Madeline drew back, and pushed the parcel away, but as Alice was about to put it into her pocket, she caught hold of it to inspect the

ribbon more closely. That second look completed the temptation.

“Why must not I tell mamma now?” she said.

“I can't say; there is no time: will you or will you not?” Alice laid her hand upon the parcel. Madeline gazed with a longing desire to possess; then yielded, promised, and took possession.

CHAPTER VII.

PERHAPS it might be interesting if we were to go back with Alice Lennox to the Manor, and see what kind of afternoon she spent with Lady Catharine Hyde after they had returned from the second service, and had looked in at the school to inquire how many girls had been present at church, and which were to have prize-marks for good behaviour. Alice was less talkative than usual (for, strange though it may seem, she was sometimes very talkative when alone with Lady Catharine); she did not make any remarks upon the singing, nor repeat any thing which Mr. Clifford had said in his sermon; neither did she once mention the names of Madeline and Ruth. She had a weight upon her mind which prevented her from turning her thoughts to other things. Lady Catharine, too, was silent;—indeed she seldom said much except when Alice began,—but she held her little companion's hand in hers, and once or twice patted it, and looked smilingly in her face; and these trifling marks of affection Alice had lately begun to understand meant as much, or more, than other persons' words. She could not, indeed, tell how much—few children can fully comprehend the love which grown-up people feel for them—but if Alice had known how, when Lady Catharine rose in the early morning, one of the first prayers was offered for her; how, during the long day, she was forming schemes for her improvement and her happiness; how she watched the changes of her countenance, and joyed

in every symptom of amendment in her disposition ; and how, when night had closed in, and Alice was asleep, she would steal to her bedside, look at her, and try to discover a likeness to her mother, and then bend over, and kiss her, and silently ask God to bless and guard her from harm ; — if Alice had known all this, she would perhaps have been even graver than she was, for she would have felt sorrow and shame at the idea of having done any thing that might vex the dearest and kindest friend whom she possessed on earth.

Lady Catharine went to her room for nearly half an hour when they reached home, and, during this time, Alice looked over her collect, and hymn, and a certain portion of the catechism which she did not remember correctly, in order to repeat them when she was called. She was obliged to be more particular than even in her common lessons in having them perfect ; for Lady Catharine always said that it pained her to hear sacred things said blunderingly, as if they were not thought about or cared for. In general, Alice dined when Lady Catharine had luncheon, and drank tea with Marsham ; but on Sundays, in the summer time, she went into the garden, to walk up and down and learn all that she had to say, and then returned to drink tea with Lady Catharine in a little room called the study, which opened out of the drawing-room, and which, from its having a large bow window and pretty pink furniture, and containing a number of books and pictures, was the most cheerful in the house. Alice, perhaps, would have liked better to have had tea in the summer-house, as Madeline and Ruth did, but Lady Catharine was afraid of her taking cold, and Alice did not venture to ask. This evening, however, it was so warm that Lady Catharine herself proposed that they should go out for a little while.

Taking a book with her, she led the way to a bench at the lower end of the broad middle walk, and, desiring Alice to seat herself on a stool at her feet, she began to read aloud. The book was one of which Alice had already heard a considerable portion. It was the story of a man who, having lived for many years in a large city with his wife and children, was told by a person, whose word he thoroughly believed, that, if he remained there, he must, without doubt, miserably perish; that the city was doomed to destruction; and that his only hope of escape was by immediately leaving all he loved—unless he could prevail on his family to join him—and setting out on a wearisome journey towards a bright and lovely home, prepared for him in a distant land by the Lord whose servant he was. It described the sorrow of the poor man, and the obstinacy of his wife and children; the difficulties of his way, and the hope which cheered him in the midst of them: and, though it was written in old-fashioned language, and there were many parts hard to understand; and some which Lady Catharine explained in words different from those used in the book; yet, on the whole, Alice was interested. She knew well that the city was intended to represent the evil world; and the man the christian, who resolves to give up all wicked practices, and live according to the law of God; and that by the lovely home in a distant land was to be understood that glorious heaven where all who have served their Saviour here shall be happy for ever and ever. At times Lady Catharine stopped, and asked Alice questions, or answered any which were put to her. Her manner was not winning, like Mr. Clifford's, and she did not always explain things clearly; yet Alice, who for many months had had no person to instruct her except Benson, was glad to meet with

some one who was willing to attend to what she had to say, and to try, at least, to give her a reason for the things which puzzled her. Lady Catharine had read but a few pages, when, laying down the book, she said :

“ Alice, was there anything in Mr. Clifford’s sermon at all like the history of Christian’s journey ? ”

Alice looked a little confused, for during the last part of the sermon she had not been attending, and she did not immediately recollect. At length, however, she said : “ I think Mr. Clifford mentioned something about every one’s having a journey to go.”

“ Yes,” replied Lady Catharine, “ but can you tell me what he said was the first thing which made people set out on it in earnest ? ” Alice was silent. “ It was the same thing,” continued Lady Catharine, “ which made Christian leave the city of Destruction, it was a belief in what was told him ; and Mr. Clifford said also, that that was the reason why when children are baptized they are obliged to promise that they will ‘ believe all the articles of the Christian faith,’ because if they do not believe rightly, they will be sure not to act rightly. I think, Alice, we read a little while ago in the Bible something which will give an instance of this ; of a man who believed, and his sons-in-law, who did not believe, and what happened to them in consequence.”

“ Was it about Lot ? ” inquired Alice.

“ Yes,” replied Lady Catharine ; “ if you remember, when Lot went to tell his sons-in-law that the city of Sodom would be destroyed, it is said that, ‘ he seemed to them as one that mocked ; ’ and so, when Lot escaped to the mountain, they persisted in staying behind, and were burnt up with all the other miserable inhabitants of that wicked city.

They did not believe, and it is just the same in these days."

"But no one has come to tell us that we shall be destroyed," said Alice.

Lady Catharine looked vexed, and taking up a Bible, which she had with her, she turned to the third chapter of the second epistle of St. Peter, and pointing to the tenth verse, said, "Read it."

And Alice read, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up."

"You see," observed Lady Catharine, almost sternly, "that you spoke without thought." Alice felt ashamed, and Lady Catharine continued: "this is one of the great things we are bound to believe, but there are many others; where are they to be learnt?"

"In the Creed?" asked Alice.

"Yes," replied Lady Catharine, more kindly; "they are to be learnt from the Creed; and the Creed teaches us shortly what the Bible tells us in full; and it was taught by the Apostles to the early Christians, and by them to those who came after them; and so on down to these days. We are certain therefore that it is true."

"But," said Alice, who had a little recovered her courage, and was becoming more attentive, "it can make no difference whether persons believe every single thing, if they do what they ought."

"It does though make a great difference," replied Lady Catharine; "and no persons can do what they ought, in every thing, if they do not believe what they ought. You, for instance, Alice, if you did not believe what I told you the other day about Benson, that she was an ignorant person

without proper principles, who would lead you into mischief, would be unhappy without her, and would think me unkind, and perhaps might even be tempted to do something wrong in order to see her." At the mention of Benson, Alice was thunderstruck. The colour forsook her cheek, and again rushed to it, till her forehead became crimson, and in an agony of confusion she turned her face away, at the risk of bringing upon herself a reproof for inattention. She thought instantly that Lady Catharine knew all she had been doing; but Lady Catharine did not know, nor suspect; she only mentioned Benson's name as an example, and Alice was much relieved when she went on: "You will be able, I dare say, to remember many instances in which if you had not believed what was told you, you would have been led into mischief."

Alice could not think of any at the moment, for she was still rather frightened, and could only answer, "Yes."

Lady Catharine again took up the book, and continued reading; and Alice, while she listened, forgot her fears, but after a time they returned again. Lady Catharine was tired, and said she thought tea must be ready in the study, and they walked towards the house; but as they passed the servants' court Lady Catharine recurred to the same subject,—the duty of children to believe what their friends tell them, as it is the duty of all persons to believe what God tells them. Pointing to the shut-up rooms, she said, "Alice, I think you have every reason to believe my word, for I have never deceived you."

Alice murmured, "Yes."

"Then," pursued Lady Catharine, "you must think that what I tell you I shall do, is my real firm intention. I dare say you cannot understand

why I should forbid you to enter those rooms, and I am not going to give you any reasons ; I only want to remind you that as certainly as I find you have been there, so certainly I shall send you away from me ; where, I cannot tell ; but I will have no one in my house, whom I cannot trust." Lady Catharine drew herself up and looked very tall, and Alice breathed quickly, and did not know what to say. Instead of going into the house, Lady Catharine turned in the walk again ; and fearing that she had spoken harshly, she said in her kindest manner, "It is my love for you, Alice, which makes me say this ; I should be so sorry — so very sorry — to be obliged to part with you ; and yet if I could not depend upon you, I must do it. But you would travel far over the wide world, and find no one who loves you as I do ;" and Lady Catharine stooping down, kissed Alice's forehead, and added, "you are my own Alice, my child." This was one of the few occasions on which Lady Catharine had shown something of her real affection ; and Alice could have been happy and pleased, but for the remembrance of Benson, and the sash, and the bonbons. She was indeed glad when Lady Catharine went on talking to her in the same tone ; and allowed her, when they went in, to pour out tea ; and then began to tell her some stories about some of the old family pictures :—all these things made her feel at home, and she was sorry when Marsham came to tell her it was bed time ; but, when she was left alone, she thought of Lady Catharine only as being severe, and when she laid down to sleep it seemed as if she could still hear her repeating, — "I will have no one in my house, whom I cannot trust."

CHAPTER VIII.

MADÉLINE and Ruth passed the evening somewhat in the same way as Alicé Lennox; but they were not able to see as much of their papa as usual, for besides the two services, the school, and a funeral, there was a sick person to be visited; and when all this was done, Mr. Clifford was tired and obliged to rest in his own room. The tea, however, was prepared in the arbour, and the children looked forward to it with pleasure; but when the time arrived, they found less enjoyment than they had anticipated. Both their papa and mamma were silent; and after the tray was removed, Mrs. Clifford went away, and her husband appeared engaged in his own thoughts. Madeline and Ruth looked at each other but did not move, and the idea came into Madeline's mind, that her papa might be vexed about something connected with her. A few minutes afterwards, Mr. Clifford called them to him, and made them sit down by him, and then he said: "We have been very grave to-night, my darlings: don't you think so?"

"You have been grave several nights, papa," replied Ruth.

"Yes;" and Mr. Clifford tried to smile, "I am afraid I have, though I don't know exactly why I should be; but people often are grave, without being unhappy, and your mamma and I have had a good deal to make us thoughtful lately. Do you know your aunt Mary is going to be married?"

"Married! papa;" exclaimed both the children

at once: "and will she go away and leave poor grandmamma? Oh! what will she do?"

"Your grandmamma will not be left, I hope," replied Mr. Clifford; "at least, I am sure, that your aunt would never consent to be married, if there were not some one to take her place. But your mamma is your grandmamma's child as well as your aunt Mary."

"Mamma does not live with grandmamma," observed Madeline, "so she can't read to her as aunt Mary does."

"Suppose your grandmamma were to come and live with us," said Mr. Clifford; "would not that do away with the difficulty?"

Ruth considered a little,— she did not express much pleasure at the prospect, for her grandmamma, Mrs. Beresford, was very old, and a great invalid; and whenever the children were with her, they were obliged to be extremely quiet, and scarcely ran about or talked at all. "If grandmamma lives here," she said, at length, "and mamma reads to her all day, there will be no one to hear us our lessons."

"That difficulty may be done away with, too," replied Mr. Clifford, with a little hesitation. "You and Madeline may go to school."

Ruth raised her eyes to her father's face with an expression of complete bewilderment; whilst Madeline exclaimed, "To school, papa, away from you! when should we come back again?"

"We should not like it," said Ruth, sorrowfully.

"I do not think we should any of us like to be separated, my dear child," said Mr. Clifford; "and yet it may be necessary."

"But will it be, papa?" inquired Madeline; "and when shall we go? will it be to Miss Freeman's?"

"No, not to Miss Freeman's," replied Mr. Clifford with a smile; "Miss Freeman has too many little

girls already to take care of: but I think very likely it will be to a lady near London, a Mrs. Carter, who is a great friend of your mamma's."

"But, papa," began Ruth, "I don't think—it seems ——" here she stopped, not knowing how to proceed.

"You don't think, perhaps, that I am in earnest, Ruth, because the thought seems sudden; but your mamma and I have been talking about it for several days."

Poor Ruth looked miserable, and when she tried to speak, the words failed, and she burst into tears. Mr. Clifford kissed her, and soothed her, but he did not try to comfort her by giving her any hope of remaining at home; for, in fact, from the first moment that he had known that Miss Beresford would be married and go to India, if it were not for her dislike to leaving her mother when she was old and ill, he had determined to propose that Mrs. Beresford should come to Laneton to live. Mrs. Clifford's time would then be constantly occupied, and there was no room for a governess in the house; it would be right, therefore, to send Ruth and Madeline to school, in order that their education might be properly taken care of. Mrs. Clifford, who loved her mother very much, was pleased at the notion of having her with her, and trying to make her happy; but the prospect of parting with her children was a great trial; and nothing but her firm trust that so long as she acted rightly God would order all things for good, had enabled her to consent with readiness. There were many questions asked, as soon as the two little girls understood that their papa really meant what he had said, but they were principally put by Madeline; Ruth, although she dried her tears, and even tried to smile, still looked distressed, and scarcely liked to listen to anything that was said upon so disagreeable a subject. To

Madeline, the idea, after the first moment, was rather agreeable than not. Of all things she liked seeing new places and new people; it would be delightful to go to London, and they should have a great deal to talk about when they came back; and besides, it would be so strange to go to school, and to have new playfellows; and, very likely, they should have prizes: altogether, she thought there would be a good deal of fun in it, but she hoped Ruth would not cry, for all the girls would laugh at her.

"I shall not cry, you may be quite sure of that," said Ruth, in an offended tone; "I don't do it half as much as you do, Madeline, only you like going about, and I don't, and that is the reason you don't care as I do about school."

"There is no cause to be ashamed of crying, my dear Ruth," said Mr. Clifford; "I am not sure that I could not cry myself, if I were to try, about it."

Ruth laughed: "Oh! no, papa; men never cry."

"Not often when little girls see them, certainly; but I have more cause for it now, perhaps, than you have, because I see more things to make me uneasy and afraid."

"Afraid of what, papa?" inquired Madeline.

"Afraid lest my two children should not behave well at school; and should forget what they have been taught, and return home spoilt in any way."

"But our governess will teach as properly as mamma does," said Madeline.

"Yes, I fully believe she will, or I should not trust you to her; but school is a very different place from home. There are many more temptations and trials, and you will have more companions to lead you into mischief."

"But we shall not attend to them, papa," said Ruth, whose spirit was now roused by the idea of

seeing more of the world, and being placed in difficulties.

“ Ah, Ruth! that is the danger; we think we shall not do wrong, and so we do not keep ourselves humble, and do not pray to God to guard us. It is very much safer to feel that most likely we shall wish to do as others do, because our hearts are as sinful; and then we shall learn not to trust to ourselves, and through the mercy of God we may escape.”

“ But Ruth is always good at home,” said Madeline. Ruth blushed, and felt pleased; though her conscience reminded her of several faults which none of her friends knew.

“ God only can judge whether Ruth is always good,” said Mr. Clifford; “ but I think, if we read the Bible, we shall find that all persons have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; it is said repeatedly. We sometimes fancy we are good, because we are not aware how perfect we ought to be. You know we are to keep the commandments of God, and to walk in them all the days of our life. Not to keep one or two commandments sometimes, but all of them at all times.”

“ It is impossible,” sighed Madeline. But Ruth said nothing.

“ Imagine what you would be if you were to keep all God’s commandments,” continued Mr. Clifford: “ you would get up early in the morning, and your first thought would be about Him, and His goodness in taking care of you; you would say your prayers, without any wandering thoughts; all the day you would be endeavouring to please Him; you would never use an unkind word, or give way to a proud thought, but you would be humble and gentle, constantly trying to do what you could to make other persons happy, and never seeking your

own pleasure instead of theirs. When you read the Bible, you would not do it irreverently, as if it were a common book, but as if you really felt and believed that it was God's holy word; and besides this, you would never be envious nor discontented, but you would take every thing that happened quite cheerfully, because it was ordered by God. Least of all, would you ever for an instant attempt to deceive, or say any thing which was not strictly true, or do any thing which you thought your mamma and I should not like." Poor Madeline felt so guilty, as her papa spoke, that her cheek became of a burning colour; and Mr. Clifford remarked it. "You are not well, my love," he said anxiously.

"Oh, yes, papa! indeed I am—quite; only it is so hot."

It was the second time that Madeline had been tempted to say what approached to an untruth, and from the same cause,—a wish to conceal another fault; so dangerous is it ever to yield in the least matters.

"We will come into the open air," said Mr. Clifford, "under the beech tree; I think it is rather too warm here for comfort." Madeline liked the summer-house better than the beech tree, but she did not dare object, and they went. Ruth was thinking upon what had been said; it had given her a clearer idea than she had possessed before of what was meant by being really good,—keeping God's commandments; and she began to suspect, that after all she might not be so perfect as she was sometimes inclined to imagine. "There is no use in wishing to be good, then, papa," she said.

Mr. Clifford seemed a little pained. "But if we have promised, Ruth," he said, "and if, when we promised, God gave us his Holy Spirit to help us, what are we to say then?"

“But we cannot be quite—quite good,” said Madeline, who was trying in her own mind to find some excuse for her late naughty behaviour.

“Not quite,” replied Mr. Clifford, “but always endeavouring to be; which is all that God requires of us, when He requires us to promise that we will keep His holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life. How good, indeed, we might be, if we were to serve God from the beginning of our lives, He alone can tell; certainly, very, very much better than we are; and that is the reason, my dear children, why I am so desirous that you should commence early.”

“When we go to school,” said Madeline.

“No,” replied Mr. Clifford, “now,—this very moment. Perhaps you will not live to go to school.” Madeline was frightened. It seemed more dreadful then to think that she might die, than it had ever done before; yet, with her usual thoughtlessness, she forgot her dread as Ruth began asking some more questions about Mrs. Carter, and where she lived, and how old her mamma was when she went to school; and at last, when Ruth ran away to meet her mamma in one of the walks, Madeline ran too, and was soon talking as fast as if nothing was the matter.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW days afterwards, Mrs. Clifford was seated in the drawing-room at the Manor conversing with Lady Catharine Hyde, and Madeline and Alice were together in the schoolroom. Ruth had a cold, and was therefore kept at home; and Madeline was not very sorry for this, because she wished extremely to see Alice alone, and to prevail on her, if possible, to allow the sashes to be shown to Mrs. Clifford. She had an excellent opportunity on this occasion, for they were sent out of the room, and told not to return till they were summoned; and nearly an hour elapsed before any one came to them. All this time Lady Catharine and Mrs. Clifford were engaged in an interesting conversation; Mrs. Clifford was repeating to Lady Catharine the history of Miss Beresford's intended marriage, and the difference it was likely to make in the plans for the education of Ruth and Madeline; and Lady Catharine was giving Mrs. Clifford some idea of her thoughts and wishes about Alice. Lady Catharine's notions did not, indeed, entirely suit Mrs. Clifford; she considered some of them strange, and not likely to answer, but she was pleased to hear them, because of the deep interest she took in the child, who had been the play-fellow of her own little girls; and who seemed left without the usual advantage of near relations to take charge of her. Lady Catharine thought Mrs. Clifford perfectly right in all she meant to do, and inquired many particulars of Mrs. Carter's school;

saying, that if she were ever obliged to part from Alice, it would be a satisfaction to know some place to which she might be sent without danger; "not that I have the least idea at present," she continued, "of making any change in Alice's life; if I do, it will be entirely from her own fault."

"She seems gentle and well-disposed," observed Mrs. Clifford.

"Yes, I think she is," replied Lady Catharine; "at least, if she has a bad temper, she never ventures to exhibit it either to Marsham or me; and she is quick at her lessons, and obliging, and contented; but all this is not sufficient for me, my dear Mrs. Clifford; I must have sincerity; and sincerity, I am sadly afraid, Alice does not possess."

"She has not had much care, then, taken of her, I suppose," answered Mrs. Clifford.

"Yes, indeed, she has, at least till within the last year, just as much care as you, or I, or any one else. She could have learnt nothing that was evil from ——"—Lady Catharine paused—even then, after so many months, she could not mention Mrs. Lennox's name without tears. "I wish but for two things," she added,— "truth and obedience; so long as I have these, I am contented, but if I ever have reason to suspect that Alice is deficient in them, in truth especially, I shall think it my duty to send her away to some place where she will have fewer indulgences."

"I do not see that she can have many temptations to do wrong here," said Mrs. Clifford; "she has seldom any companions."

"No; but if it is in a child's heart to be deceitful, she is sure to find out some occasion of being so; and Alice, I am afraid, was taught much that was bad by that foolish woman, Benson. At any rate, I have so arranged, that I shall soon discover

whether she is really to be trusted. I have given her one command—a very easy one, which if she should break, my confidence in her will be gone, and then the sooner she leaves Haseley Manor the better. The discipline of a school will in such a case be the only fit education for her.” Mrs. Clifford knew what command Lady Catharine meant, but before she could tell exactly what to reply, Lady Catharine went on; “There are, you know, some rooms in this house for which I have a peculiar feeling of reverence. The happiest moments of my life were spent in them; and, since my earthly joy has been destroyed, I have taken a kind of sacred pleasure in keeping them just as they were during my dear husband’s lifetime; all his books, and pictures, and writings remain in precisely the same position as when he left them, and so it is my wish that they should continue till my death. Perhaps it may be a fancy—a very peculiar one, but still I have it strongly, and I do not see why I should not indulge it. I have therefore forbidden any of my servants, except Marsham, to go into these rooms, under any pretence whatever; and the same order I have given to Alice, and if she should disobey it, I shall have no difficulty in finding it out immediately: it is her trial, and upon her going through it well must depend, not my affection, (that can never change, for I love her for her mother’s sake,) but my trust in her. The rooms are often locked, but at times they are purposely left open; and hitherto I have had no cause to think that Alice has been ungrateful enough to disregard my wishes.”

At this account, part of which only was new, Mrs. Clifford felt uncomfortable. She did not agree with Lady Catharine, as to its being a good thing to put any such temptation in Alice’s way; but she

was not asked to give her opinion, and Lady Catharine's very decided manner made every one shy of differing from her. Yet Mrs. Clifford was so honest and open in her character, that she could not prevent her feelings from being expressed in her countenance, and Lady Catharine immediately inquired whether she had any reason for suspecting that Alice had, as yet, been guilty of deception.

"Oh! no, none in the least, I was only thinking that if the door were kept locked, it might be safer. To see it open must excite her curiosity."

"That is the very point. As she grows older she will constantly meet with temptations of the kind, and it is right that she should be early trained to resist them; at any rate (and Lady Catharine drew herself up) it is my will." There was nothing to be said against this, and if there had been, Mrs. Clifford saw that nothing was to be gained by any attempt at argument. Lady Catharine had a natural fancy for trying experiments, doing things in a different way from every one else; and as she had succeeded in making the cottagers rear chickens, and raise potatoes, according to her own peculiar views, so she imagined that she should also succeed in educating Alice Lennox.

In the mean time, Alice and Madeline had been tolerably amused and happy. Not as happy as they were before either of them had had any thing to conceal, but still rather merry than not. Madeline did as she had resolved: she asked Alice to consent that the sashes should be shown to her mamma; and so far she did right; but when Alice refused, she did not trouble herself any more about the matter. Both were very well contented to make out a game with the bonbons, which Alice had left,—a game in which Alice kept a shop and

sold them, and Madeline went to buy, and paid for them with some shells which had been picked up on the shore. After a little while, Alice began to think that it would be pleasanter to go out into the passage, and play upon a high window seat which had two steps up to it, and this accordingly they did. Alice took a number of other pretty things, pincushions, and beads, and coloured papers, out of her play drawer, in order to make what she called a bazaar; and when they were all spread out they looked extremely gay, and Madeline was delighted, and heartily wished that Ruth had been there too. By and by, however, they grew a little weary, and sitting down on the steps they began talking; whilst Alice amused herself by tossing the bonbons up in the air, and catching them again in her hand. Presently, one fell on the floor, and being round, it rolled along the ground and behind a door which stood a little way open. Alice started up, gathering the remainder of the bonbons together in her lap; "Oh," she exclaimed, "it is gone, quite gone, and into that passage,—what shall I do?"

"Why? what do you mean?" said Madeline, "we shall find it directly."

"No, no," exclaimed Alice, hastily, and catching hold of Madeline's frock, she prevented her from moving: "don't you remember? I told you just now, that is the very door, the way into those rooms? I don't dare go." Madeline looked rather aghast.

"If Lady Catharine finds the bonbon there, she will think you have been in," she said.

"No, not if I tell her how it happened. If it were a ball or anything, I should not care, but one of those stupid bonbons. What shall I do? How I wish I had never had them! and I don't like them

so very much now, there is a nasty taste in the chocolate."

"If Lady Catharine asks how you came by them, what shall you say?" inquired Madeline.

"Oh! the truth, I must of course—that you gave them to me."

"And mamma will hear about it, and be angry," continued Madeline; "and perhaps she won't let me keep the sashes if she knows how we exchanged. Oh that tiresome bonbon!"

"There is no use in talking of all that," said Alice; "what shall we do now?"

"Yes, what shall we do?" It was a question which neither of the children knew how to answer.

At length Alice said, "It must be just behind the door; looking for it there won't be going into the rooms."

"No," said Madeline; "let me go, and I shall find it, I dare say." Alice hesitated a little; she fancied that Madeline would not see as well as herself, and perhaps would only roll it along further, or do something equally awkward; for Madeline was rather famous for doing awkward things. "If it were known," continued Madeline, "Lady Catharine would not scold me as she would you."

"But," exclaimed Alice, who with all her faults was not ungenerous, "I should not like that. The bonbon is mine and I threw it there, and if any one goes for it, I must."

"You must be quick then," said Madeline, "mamma won't stay much longer." Alice stood upon the step, uncertain how to act. "You need not go in, only just peep round," said Madeline: "but make haste." The slamming of a door was heard at the same instant, and Alice thought Lady Catharine was coming.

"I can't go," she said, and she reseated herself.

But again there was stillness, the slamming of the door was merely accidental, and there were no signs of Lady Catharine, or Mrs. Clifford.

"Now then," half whispered Madeline, who, to do her justice, felt more for Alice than for herself; "don't go in, but just try behind for it."

Alice moved slowly forward, pushed back the forbidden door, and put out her hand, in hopes of feeling the missing bonbon: but no, it was not to be felt, and she was obliged to advance one step into the passage. Still it was in vain, and the next moment Alice was fairly within, searching for it in every direction. The light was not very clear, for it came through a stained glass window, and in the passage—which was broad, but not long—there were some old lumbering pieces of furniture. Alice was about to give up looking, and resign herself to her fate, when her foot touched something small and round, and the bonbon rolled away still farther. Alice thought she could not then give it up as lost; but again it was no where to be seen, and Madeline, who was keeping watch, became frightened, and, fancying she heard some one coming, entreated Alice in a loud whisper to return. Alice however, notwithstanding her fears, was now too curious and too interested to listen. She had disobeyed, and she must take the consequences; and, since she had ventured so far, she was resolved to take one peep round the corner, although with a very faint hope of finding what she wanted. Heedless, therefore, of Madeline's words she moved a few steps, and then saw to her disappointment that a door, apparently closed, prevented any further advance. The bonbon, too, was gone—or, at least, it was beyond her reach; for, on stooping down, she saw it safely resting far underneath a very heavy ebony cabinet, which it would have been impossible for

any single person to move. Alice was so far satisfied that she was nearly sure no one would notice it ; but, now she was there, would it not be worth while just to push aside the door and see what was to be discovered within ? Certainly it was a great temptation : the door stood ajar ; and, without delay, Alice put out her hand, and it was opened. There were the forbidden rooms—two, opening one into the other ; large and high, and hung with crimson curtains ; and panelled by a dark oak wainscot. They were handsome and gloomy, like many in the other parts of the house, except that there were more pictures, and larger ones, against the walls than were to be seen elsewhere, and that, at the bottom of the inner room, there was a glass, reaching from the ceiling to the floor. Chairs there were also, and tables, and a writing-desk, and books, and pens, and papers, and an inkstand, besides a heavy leathern arm-chair—pushed aside, as if some one had only just risen from it. And yet years had gone by since any one had sat in that chair, or used those pens, or opened those books. Since the day when Mr. Hyde was seized with the illness which caused his death, not one of the articles which lay upon his table, or were used for the furnishing of his room, had ever been displaced. Many, many changes had there been since in his native village ; old houses were demolished, and new ones built up ; walls were raised, and gardens planted, and trees were cut down, and sold : even in his own home there were alterations in the walks and shrubberies, and changes in the arrangements of the house, but still there remained the scattered papers, and the pen resting in the inkstand, and the old-fashioned easy chair, precisely in the position in which they had all been left on that fearful, sorrowing day, which had been the most miserable

of Lady Catharine Hyde's existence. Alice knew this, and she felt it; even at that time, when she was so full of haste and alarm, she felt that there was something strange and awful in looking at things just as they had been used and left by one who was long since gone to the unseen world. A shuddering came over her, and, without attempting to move, she stood at the entrance, with her eyes fixed upon the large glass, which by reflection increased the length of the apartments. The house was always quiet; but now there was not the least sound, not even the ticking of a clock, to disturb the stillness of those solemn chambers, which seemed to belong, not to the living, but the dead. Alice was frightened; a thought, a horrible thought, entered her head. It had been the will of God that he who had lived in those rooms should die almost suddenly. It might be His will that she should die also; and, if it were, should she be ready to go? Was she really honest, and true, and earnest; trying to do everything she knew was right, and practising no deceit? Would God indeed receive her as His child, "a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven?" or would He cast her away with those terrible words, "Depart from me into everlasting fire?" The questions take some moments to write, but only one to think; and when Alice had thought, a wretched remembrance of all her naughty actions came across her, and in an agony of terror she turned away and ran back along the passage. The door at the end was nearly closed, and Alice softly called Madeline, but no Madeline answered. She peeped out, but no one was in the gallery; only Lady Catharine's voice in the hall below was heard repeating her name angrily. Alice ran out, and at the same instant a door near her was opened, and Anne, the housemaid, Benson's

cousin, met her. Alice blushed and trembled, and would willingly have passed, but she was stopped.

“Miss Alice! out of that passage! what will my mistress say?”

Alice’s face became white with fear. “Anne—pray—you won’t—you can’t tell,” she exclaimed; “I only went to look for——”

“Alice—Alice—where is Miss Lennox?” asked Lady Catharine from below.

“Hark! I must go—it would be so cruel—Anne, pray—pray,” and poor Alice caught hold of the girl’s hand entreatingly.

“Well! there, we’ll see—I can’t tell—don’t pinch so, Miss Alice.”

Lady Catharine’s step was heard ascending the staircase, and Alice felt as if she should have fallen to the ground. She looked so ill that Anne saw it would not do to trifle with her, and, hastily whispering “Don’t look so, Miss Alice, pray don’t look so—nobody will tell,” she left her.

Alice did not stay a moment longer, but, summoning all her courage, she ran down stairs, and met Lady Catharine just as she reached the first landing-place. “Did you want me? I thought I heard some one calling me?” she said, in as free and open a manner as she could put on.

Lady Catharine looked exceedingly displeased. “Yes, Alice,” she said, “I did want you, but it is too late now: Mrs. Clifford and Madeline are gone: strange behaviour, indeed, it is to leave your young companion by herself, and not to take the trouble to come and wish her good bye.”

“It was only for a minute,” replied Alice; “and I did not know she was going so soon.”

“Madeline Clifford is very good-natured,” continued Lady Catharine, “and she tried to make the best of it; but I could see from her way of talking

that she was vexed; and you look strange too; I am afraid you have been quarrelling."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Alice, "indeed we have not; I like Madeline—I like to play with her very much."

"Then you must be careful in your behaviour; Mrs. Clifford will never allow her little girls to come here to be neglected. What have you here?" and Lady Catharine put her hand upon the bonbons, which Alice still held in her frock: this was the climax of Alice's alarm, for she had forgotten them till then. She paused, and looked confused, and many thoughts rushed instantly to her mind; and the next moment she said in a clear firm voice, "They are Madeline's; we have been playing with them."

"Oh," was all Lady Catharine's reply; "then I shall keep them, and return them to her the first opportunity; and I shall tell her that for the future she must not bring such things here: I do not approve of your eating them."

Alice silently delivered up the bonbons, and Lady Catharine told her to go to the schoolroom and finish her lessons, as she wished to take her with her into the village in the evening. Alice obeyed, and for the first moment with a relieved mind; but immediately afterwards a dark cloud of miserable feelings overpowered her. She had escaped a present danger, but at what a price! she had told a lie; firmly, openly, without any hesitation; she had spoken words which were utterly false. A deadly sin, perhaps the greatest a child can commit, was on her conscience, and how could she know a moment's happiness? And was it likely that she could remain without being found out? Madeline would surely speak the truth at once; and even if Lady Catharine were to forgive

the grievous fault, which she would then discover, there still remained the lost bonbon behind the ebony cabinet, which at any instant might be the means of betraying her act of disobedience in entering the forbidden rooms; or, what was still more possible, the house-maid might take it into her head to tell upon her, and so be the means of her losing Lady Catharine's favour for ever. Alice had many faults, but she had also by nature a warm heart, and it was this idea more than any other which made her utterly wretched.

CHAPTER X.

CAN it be supposed that Madeline was happy when she returned home, and met Ruth's bright, smiling face, and heard her declare that she had been longing for her to come back; that she wanted of all things to know all they had been saying and doing; and to hear if Alice had asked after her, or seemed sorry that she was not there? Madeline, for almost the first time in her life, was unwilling to stay with Ruth; she did not like to see her—indeed she did not like to see any one. It was very true that she had done nothing so wrong as Alice, but her fault, her folly, in wishing for the sashes was at the beginning of the mischief, and the belief that she was the only person who was aware of Alice's disobedience made her feel uneasy. If Alice were discovered she might be blamed also; and oh! how heartily did Madeline now repent having indulged that first seemingly little sin, a taste for the vanity of dress.

Madeline's unhappiness, however, though it was noticed, was not thought strange by her papa and mamma, especially when, the next day, a letter arrived from Mrs. Beresford, accepting the invitation to Laneton; and another from Mrs. Carter, saying that she was very willing to take charge of the two children, and that at the end of September she expected to have two vacancies in her school, which would enable her to receive them. Ruth and her sister were not positively told that it was fixed for them to go, but it was considered almost

as a certainty; and neither Mr. nor Mrs. Clifford felt surprised that they should both at times look grave at the prospect of soon leaving their home. Mr. Clifford did not allow this idea to interfere with their usual way of going on; they were still kept to their lessons, and required to attend to their regular duties, for he knew that it could neither be for their improvement nor their happiness to have their minds unsettled; and this, perhaps, was rather a comfort to Madeline. It occupied her; and she had not so much time for wondering how Alice was engaged, or whether her disobedience had been found out; and though something was constantly happening to recall to her thoughts what had been done, yet she was less uneasy than she would have been if she had had nothing to divert her mind. Madeline was growing used to the feeling of having something to hide; it was dreadful to her at first, but by degrees it grew less and less painful: and it is the way with us all; but it is not because we do not see our faults, or think about them, that we are really good in the eyes of God; rather we ought to be very much frightened at ourselves when we find that we are becoming accustomed to doing wrong. Occasionally, however, Madeline's conscience seemed to wake up, as it were, and reproach her; but this was not, as might have been expected, when she knelt down at night, and in the morning, to say her prayers; for persons soon become accustomed to repeating the most solemn words without any thought of what they mean: neither was it when she read over a list of questions which her mamma had drawn out to help her to remember what she had been doing, and whether she had been careless, or deceitful, or cross, or inattentive at her prayers and Scripture reading, or otherwise sinful. Made-

line, as yet, did not know the real use of this habit of what is called self-examination — how necessary it is for every one, who would live so as to please God — she read the questions over, as a matter of course; and sometimes one or two things would suggest themselves, but she did not in general try very much to remember, and now there was something which she would rather have forgotten.

The occasions when Madeline did feel that she had been behaving ill, were when her papa was talking to her. Mr. Clifford's manner was so earnest and reverent, and yet so affectionate, that it was impossible for any one to listen to him without paying attention; and Madeline loved her papa dearly; and when she reflected that if he knew what she had done he would be vexed and unhappy, she was vexed and unhappy herself. This feeling was increased to the utmost one afternoon when she had been for a walk with Ruth and her papa. On their return Mr. Clifford proposed that instead of going at once to the Parsonage, they should turn down the lane which led to the sea-side, and rest a little while on a ledge of low rocks, which always afforded a dry seat. It was not quite high tide, but the waves were stealing in nearer and nearer, rippling gently over the sand, and sparkling as they caught the rays of the evening sun, which was sinking low in the western sky, and casting a long line of golden light across the smooth waters of the bay. There was something soft and soothing in the stillness and beauty of the scene, and the hour; something which Madeline and Ruth felt, though they did not speak of it. They became more silent, and their steps were slower; and instead of wandering away to look for sea-weed, or gather pebbles, they stayed contentedly by Mr. Clifford's side, wait-

ing till he should choose to speak ; but they waited for a long, or at least what seemed to them a long time. Mr. Clifford's eyes were fixed upon the far distant line, which, indeed, could scarcely be distinguished, where the deep colours of the sea melted away into the paler tint of the sky, and he seemed to be in deep meditation. Perhaps he was thinking upon the awfulness of that glorious work of God, the broad, deep ocean ; so broad that millions and millions of human beings might find space to travel over its surface together ; and so vast and deep, that they might all in an instant sink beneath it and perish, and yet not a single mark remain to tell where they had died : or he might have been considering the immensity of the sky which was above him and around him ; how it was formed by the same Being who made the little insects which we tread under our feet, and how that Almighty God, the Lord and Creator of all things, had in His wonderful mercy given up His blessedness and His power, and condescended to live in this sinful world, and die in agony and shame for the sinners who had rebelled against Him. Some such thoughts were certainly in Mr. Clifford's mind, for they were there constantly ; he had learnt to remember God everywhere ; and all the beautiful things which he saw in nature brought with them some idea of religion, in the same way as the presents given us by friends teach us to recollect, and love, and feel grateful to them. Yet Mr. Clifford's look was different from usual ; he had a sense of something painful which was going to happen ; and when, after his long silence, he turned to speak to his children, his voice was not really cheerful, though he tried to make it so. "A few more weeks," he said, "and then you will probably have very different things to look at, Ruth : how do you think you

shall like all the gay carriages, and horses, and the fine shops, and the crowds of people, and the noise and bustle of London?"

"I shall be glad to see it all," said Ruth, in a timid voice, as if unwilling for her papa to suppose that she was looking forward to any pleasure in going from home.

"That is right, my dear child," he replied, "always speak the truth. You don't dislike the notion of going to school as much as you did, do you?"

"No, papa, not the going to school; but the going away from you I do, just as much."

"School will not be at all unpleasant to you, if you make a point of doing all that you are told, and being quite sincere in every thing you say," replied Mr. Clifford.

"Mamma says Mrs. Carter is very kind, and is not fond of making rules," said Madeline.

"No, and so you ought to be the more particular. But do you know, Madeline, my fear for you both is, not that you will do great naughty things, but little ones."

"Oh, papa, why?" exclaimed the children together; "it can't signify half as much."

"Perhaps not; but I think you are tolerably safe from some great sins,—lying and stealing for instance; but I do not think you are at all safe from what are thought little ones,—indolence, and pettishness, and carelessness, and equivocation; and shall I say pride, Ruth, or is that one of the greater offences?" Ruth blushed.

"But if we never do any thing more than these little things, we shall be pretty good," said Madeline.

"Pretty good will not do," replied Mr. Clifford; "we are never told in the Bible to be pretty good,

but very good; perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

"And will God be angry with us just the same as if we did tell lies and steal?" asked Ruth, gravely.

"Yes, Ruth, if you do not try to grow better: you know, in cases of illness, people die from colds and seemingly trifling complaints, as often, or oftener, than from dreadful accidents, or the plague, or horrible fevers; and so we may all die an eternal death, I mean we may all be punished everlastingly, not because we have apparently any thing very shocking the matter with our souls, but because we have a great many little things which prove that we have no love to God in our hearts."

Madeline considered for an instant, and then said, "Carelessness does not seem to be very naughty."

"Few of our faults seem to be very naughty," answered Mr. Clifford, "and that is the danger. I dare say Cain's fault in being envious of his brother, because he had more of God's favour than himself, did not seem very naughty, — it was only something in his mind; but if envy was the beginning of his sin, murder was the end."

"Oh! but, papa," exclaimed Ruth, "it would be quite impossible for us to be like Cain."

"Indeed, Ruth! I cannot see it. It is not impossible for us to be any thing that is wicked, if we do not try, by the help of God's grace, to keep ourselves in that state of salvation in which we were placed at our baptism."

"I don't understand about a state of salvation," said Madeline, quickly; "I never do when we say it in the catechism."

Mr. Clifford did not reply immediately; he seemed to be occupied in watching a boat which was just putting off from the shore. Old Roger

was in it, and one of his grandsons; and after a slight exertion it was pushed into the deep water, and the two men, with their oars skimming the waves, were swiftly borne away over the sea. "It looks smooth and pleasant," observed Mr. Clifford, as his eye followed the boat till it dwindled almost to a speck; "but I am afraid there is a storm coming up: do you see that black cloud in the west?" The children looked in the direction in which their papa pointed, and, though not experienced in the signs of the weather, saw at once that a change was to be expected. "I am always rather in alarm when Old Roger goes out," said Mr. Clifford, "he is so helpless; and William is a mere child in point of strength, especially since he had that bad fever."

"But the boat is such a beautiful one, papa," said Ruth, "quite new; I heard Roger say yesterday, that it would take a great deal to upset it."

"Yes, that is very true," replied Mr. Clifford; "and, whatever storms may arise, as long as he can keep in the boat, he will be safe; but a little carelessness, or the violence of some unexpected gust, may put him in fearful danger. There is one thing, however, which would make me trust Roger more than any other fisherman on this coast,—he is always on the look out." Mr. Clifford stopped to see whether his children at all understood what he meant by speaking in this way. Madeline was amusing herself with some pebbles which she held in her lap, and did not appear to notice that her father had left off talking; but Ruth looked at him, and said, "Papa, are you really thinking much about old Roger?"

Mr. Clifford smiled. "Why should you doubt it, Ruth? I am thinking a little about him; but, perhaps, I am thinking more about you and Madeline."

"About us, papa?" exclaimed Madeline; "nothing can come to hurt us."

"Is it, indeed, so?" asked Mr. Clifford, in a grave tone; "what should you say to Roger, if he laughed at the notion of guarding against a storm, because he is now safe in his boat? would you not call him foolish and presumptuous, and warn him, that his not being in danger at this moment, is no reason why he may not be so in the next?"

"Is that like us, and our doing wrong?" said Ruth.

"Yes," replied Mr. Clifford, and his face brightened with pleasure; "just now, Madeline said that she could not understand about a state of salvation, but now, perhaps, she will be able to do it. If a storm were to come on, Roger Dyson would not be safe, because he is on the sea; his boat might be upset, and he might be drowned; but as long as he could keep in the boat, he would be in a state of salvation, that is, a state in which, if he were to continue, he would be saved. Now there are other dangers much more terrible, of which the stormy sea is a type or figure, and through which every one who is born into the world has to pass, before he can reach heaven. These dangers, as you well know, arise from our own evil inclinations, and the temptations of the Devil; and in order that we may be enabled to escape them, God, in His great mercy, has placed us all in a state of salvation. How has He done this?"

"By letting us be baptized," replied Ruth.

"Exactly so: when we were baptized, we were taken into what is called in the prayer-book, the Ark of Christ's Church."

"Like Noah," said Madeline, eager to show that she understood something of what was said.

“Yes, like Noah,” replied her papa: “we were not, indeed, taken away from our friends—there was no change in our homes; what was done for us, was done in our hearts by the gift of God’s Holy Spirit. But outwardly there are some great advantages granted to all persons who are baptized. Those who are not cannot, for instance, be admitted to the Holy Communion, and cannot, therefore, receive the especial blessings which God gives us through that sacred rite. The sprinkling with water at the font; the signing with the cross; the being brought up to go to church and join in public worship; and the being taught to read the Bible and learn the catechism; and then being confirmed, and allowed to receive the Holy Communion, are outward marks of our having been taken into the Ark of Christ’s Church, and so being in a state of salvation.”

“Then I am sure we are in a state of salvation, papa,” exclaimed Madeline, “because we go to church every Sunday, and we can say the catechism all through.”

“Except the duty towards your neighbour,” observed Ruth; “you can’t say that, Madeline.”

“No, all but that, it is so long; but I can say it a great deal better than I did.”

“And we shall be confirmed when we are old enough, papa,” added Ruth.

“Yes, I hope so, my dear: and yet, you may do all this,—you may say your catechism, and repeat your prayers, and read the Bible; and you may even grow up to be confirmed, and to receive the Holy Communion, and still, in the sight of God, not be in a state of salvation,—the inward mark may be wanting.”

“We ought to be good, too,” said Ruth.

“Yes, good in your hearts,—in all your thoughts,

and words, and deeds, — trying earnestly, and praying constantly, for the help of God's Holy Spirit: if you do this, all the privileges of religion will be an unspeakable good to you; but if you do not, they will only make you worse, because you will be hypocrites."

"Hypocrites are grown-up people, are they not?" inquired Madeline.

"Very often they are; but little children can be hypocrites too; when they know they have been doing naughty things, and kneel down to say their prayers without being sorry, or when they say they are sorry, and don't try to behave better, — then they are hypocrites. Or when they do what they know will please their friends whilst they are with them, and disobey them when they are out of sight, — then they are hypocrites. There are a great, great many ways in which children can be hypocrites."

"I should be very sorry to be a hypocrite," said Ruth.

"Not so sorry as I should be to see you one, Ruth. I mean, really one, — going on constantly in deceit, and yet pretending to be good." If Mr. Clifford had looked at Madeline as he spoke, he would have seen her countenance change, and her hands tremble as she tried to lift some pebbles which lay in her lap. The thought that she was a hypocrite was very dreadful; but what had her papa said? He had told them, that those were really hypocrites who went on deceiving, while they pretended to be good; and she had gone on for days, and even weeks, keeping what she was afraid to show even to Ruth, encouraging Alice in deceit, and, at the same time, saying her prayers every night and morning, and reading the Bible,

and listening to all her papa and mamma said very attentively, rather more so, indeed, than usual. It seemed extremely like hypocrisy; but that was such a dreadful word, surely it could scarcely be meant for her. There was a question which she very much wished to ask, but she did not dare, for she could not lift up her eyes. Ruth, however, put it for her:—"Are hypocrites in a state of salvation, then, papa?" she said.

"We cannot decide about any persons whilst they are living," replied her father; "so long as they are members of the Church, they certainly are not cast out of the state of salvation in the sight of men, but in the eye of God we know they may be. The condition of a wicked person is in our sight, as if Roger's boat were to be tossed about till it was all but upset; you would be very much frightened for him; but he would not be without any hope of safety."

"I should not like to see him so nearly falling into the water at all," said Ruth.

"No, and neither should we like to see the danger we are in ourselves when we persist in doing wrong. It is very, very fearful; for death, we know, may be really as near to us, as it would appear to be to Roger, if he were struggling in the stormy sea, and a wave were just about to pass over him. And if we die before we have obtained God's forgiveness, for the merits of our blessed Saviour, our punishment will be more awful than we can possibly bear to think of." Madeline felt more frightened than ever: she moved a little farther from her papa that he might not observe her. "The reason I talk to you in this way," continued Mr. Clifford, "is not because I am afraid you are very wicked now, but because I am afraid lest you should become so. You are watched over carefully here, and have

not much opportunity of doing wrong, but it will be different at school."

"It would take a long time to make us very wicked, papa;" said Ruth.

"No, Ruth, indeed it is not so; whilst we are heartily trying to do God's will, we may trust that the Holy Spirit will be given us to keep us from harm; but the moment we leave off trying, we have no reason any longer to hope that God will help us; and when we are left to ourselves, we shall most certainly go on doing worse and worse. It is the first sin which we have to dread; the first unkind word, or vain thought, or deceitful action, which, like the whistling of the wind, tells us that a storm is near. If we do not guard against this, it will end by upsetting our boat and plunging us into the sea; or in other words, by casting us out of that state of salvation in which the mercy of God placed us at our baptism.— And now, Madeline," continued Mr. Clifford, "you have been saying very little; but can you understand better than you did what is meant by a state of salvation?"

Madeline answered in a low voice, "Yes;" and her papa, thinking she felt shy, drew her towards him and kissing her said: "I should like to hear you say that answer in the catechism, which mentions our being in a state of salvation, and then we must think of going home. We have been talking of the storm, and I really think it is coming. The question is: 'Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe and to do as they (that is, your god-fathers and godmothers,) have promised for thee?' what is the answer? Poor Madeline had never before found it so hard to speak. Twice she began, and then stopped and stammered. Mr. Clifford smiled kindly, and said: "Is it quite gone out of your head? suppose you help her, Ruth."

But Madeline did not choose to be helped, and this time as she began, the words came more easily, and she went on without hesitation. “‘Yes, verily; and by God’s help so I will. And I heartily thank our Heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life’s end.’”

Mr. Clifford rose from his seat when Madeline finished speaking, and as he turned to look once more for the fisherman’s boat, which was still seen as a speck in the distance, he said: “Yes, there is nothing but prayer for God’s help, which can keep us safe from the storms of the sea, or the storms of sin. You will find it thus as you grow older, though now, I dare say, you often wonder why so much is said about the duty of praying constantly.”

Madeline murmured something in reply, but very indistinctly. “We never forget our prayers, papa;” said Ruth.

“No, my love, I trust not indeed; but prayers, if they are not said carefully and earnestly, are but a mockery.”

“Can people ever be so good as not to think of other things at all, when they are saying their prayers,” asked Ruth.

“No,” replied her papa; “I do not think they can. The devil puts thoughts into the minds of even the best persons, but they are very sorry for it, and do not attend to them; and when we are afraid that God will not hear us because we do not pray rightly, we must remember that we end all our petitions in the name of our blessed Saviour. If we endeavour to keep our thoughts from wandering, God for His sake will accept us.”

“I should like to be very good,” said Ruth, “very

good indeed I mean, like the holy persons, the saints, whom mamma reads to us about sometimes."

"Mr. Clifford smiled, and then he stopped and looked at Madeline. "And you Madeline," he said, "should not you like to be very good too?"

Madeline was by this time extremely unhappy. Her papa's serious manner had made her sensible how infinitely important it was to be good; a truth which when she was away from him she was often inclined to forget. She was conscious that she had been wrong not only in taking the sashes, and giving Alice the bonbons, when she knew that Lady Catharine would not like it, but also in a great many other instances; and whilst her voice faltered and the tears fell down her cheeks, she said: "I never shall be very good, if I try ever so hard."

Mr. Clifford did not seem pained or surprised at this speech: he took no notice of it then, for the storm which he had been fearing was now coming nearer; some heavy drops of rain were falling, and the muttered roll of thunder was heard from the black clouds which were gathering over the sea. When they reached home, however, he made Madeline go with him into his study, and taking her upon his knee he began to talk so kindly, that Madeline's distress increased. Mr. Clifford entreated her to be comforted, and to tell him what made her so unhappy, but her sobs prevented her from answering. At length he said, "If it is anything wrong which you have done, my dear child, it will be far better and happier to say it at once."

Madeline's tears suddenly ceased, a deep flush spread itself over her neck and forehead, and hiding her face upon her father's shoulder, she exclaimed, "It was very wrong in me, I know, papa, now — but it did not seem much then." Mr. Clifford perceived that some confession was at hand, but he did

not like to press her, and Madeline continued in the same hurried manner : "mamma lets us wear sashes sometimes, and I thought she would not care, and Alice liked the bonbons, so I gave ——" but before Madeline could finish her sentence, a knock was heard at the door, and Ruth begged to know if she might come in.

"Here is a note for you, papa, just sent from the Manor ; Lady Catharine's servant is waiting for an answer."

Madeline had no sooner heard the word Manor, than her thoughts turned to Alice. "Oh ! papa," she exclaimed in great agitation, "pray don't let Lady Catharine be angry. Alice did not mean any harm, it was my fault — indeed it was : I gave her the bonbons ; please beg her not to be angry."

"I cannot understand all this, Madeline," replied Mr. Clifford : "Lady Catharine begs me to go to her instantly, so I must know in few words what you have been doing."

Notwithstanding the grave and decided tone in which her papa spoke, Madeline was relieved at having at length an occasion for freeing her conscience. She began at the first visit which they had paid to the Manor, and gave a history of all that had passed ; ending with, "I would rather a great deal be punished than Alice."

Mr. Clifford was silent for a moment when Madeline finished speaking, and then he said, "I cannot talk to you upon this subject now, Madeline ; probably I shall not be very long at the Manor, but I shall tell your mamma that you must stay here till I return ;" and he left the room. Madeline was panic-struck ; she had never seen him seriously angry before. Yet it was not exactly anger ; his voice was quiet and gentle, but it was plain that he thought the affair of consequence.

When the door was closed the two children looked at each other in fear, and Ruth exclaimed, "Oh! Madeline, how could you do it?"

"I don't know — I can't tell," sobbed Madeline; "it did not seem very naughty."

"I said you had better not," continued Ruth, proud of her own superior judgment; "I said mamma would not like it, and you know she is sorry for your caring to be drest out. And then to keep it so quiet, — not to mention a word! not to me! it was so very unkind."

"I thought you would tell, and I meant to show them by and by, — and — but it would not have signified if Alice had not gone into the room, — do you think Lady Catharine knows that?"

"I dare say she does," replied Ruth; "and that she will be horridly angry, and send Alice away. I heard nurse talking the other day about her, and she declared that she always kept her word; and that when she said she would do a thing, she always did it. Only think, Madeline! all because of the bonbons: how could you do it?" Madeline could only reply by tears; and then Ruth for the first time began to see that her pride and self-conceit had made her behave, it might almost be called, cruelly. Instead of comforting Madeline, she had added every thing which could increase her distress. Ruth was naturally very warm-hearted, and loved her sister most dearly; and now, as she stood by her, and saw her grief, she began to feel great sorrow and self-reproach. Madeline was generally so full of happiness, it seemed something quite new and strange to hear her sob as if her heart would break. Ruth kissed her, and called her "dear Madeline," and wished that their mamma would come to them; but when she offered to go and fetch her, Madeline held her fast, and protested

that she would rather not see her, she would be so very much displeased ; besides, she was gone out.

“ She must be in by this time,” said Ruth : “ look how black it is ; the storm is coming.”

Madeline, however, did not raise her eyes ; but when a distant rumbling sound was heard, she caught Ruth’s hand and held it tight. “ Papa thought it would come !” she exclaimed : “ it frightens me so.”

“ Think of old Roger,” said Ruth : “ it does not matter to us.”

“ Yes ; but I don’t like it : do you think it will be very bad ?”

“ I don’t know ; it looks very black, very black indeed. There ! I saw the lightning, didn’t you ?”

Madeline shook with terror ; she had always had a great fear of thunder and lightning, and her papa and mamma had often tried to overcome it, but without success. Madeline felt, what was quite true, that the dazzling flash and the loud peal were very awful ; and she did not consider that she was equally under the protection of God when the sky was lowering, as when it was bright without a cloud. At that moment it was especially fearful, for her mind was not at ease. All trials become worse to us when we are not at peace with ourselves, and happy in the consciousness of striving to serve God ; and as Madeline cast her eye upon the window, and saw the heavy cloud hanging before it, and the next instant watched the sharp vivid light rush forth across the sky, and heard the crash of the thunder, she became speechless in alarm. Ruth was nearly as frightened ; she had never seen such a storm before. “ I will call mamma,” she said, in a very low voice, when the peal died away. Madeline caught her dress as she was about to go ; but Ruth escaped into the passage. She ran along

it quickly; looked into the dining-room, and found that no one was there; knocked at the drawing-room, and received no answer; and was just going up the stairs, when she heard some one exclaim: "How dreadful! what, both lost?"

"Not both; only the old one," was the answer: "the boat went to pieces at once."

Ruth stopped, for she remembered the fisherman and his son; and, forgetting Madeline, she called loudly to the housemaid to come to her. Almost at the same instant she appeared, very pale, and with an eager manner, evidently showing that there was something of consequence to repeat. "Only think, Miss Ruth!" she began; "such a storm! and your poor papa and mamma both out! and that terrible upset! the boat went all to pieces."

"Whose boat? papa and mamma were not in it, were they?" exclaimed Ruth in her agitation.

"No, Miss! not they; but the poor old man! Isn't it dreadful?"

Martha seemed quite awe-struck by the shock, and scarcely less so by the thunder, the sound of which was indeed alarming, rolling heavily along and then bursting, as it seemed, immediately over the house, in repeated claps. Martha caught hold of the balustrade, and shook from head to foot; but Ruth only remained the more still, as she generally did when she was feeling very much. "Was it Roger's boat?" she said, at length.

Martha replied by a sigh; and then, recovering herself, she began to describe the circumstances of the accident: how the storm had come on, and, in consequence, Roger and his grandson had given up their fishing expedition, and tried to reach the shore; and how the people had been watching them, until, as they were nearing the land, the lightning struck the boat and shivered it to atoms.

“But if they were so close,” said Ruth, “they could not be drowned.”

“Ah! but ’twas the old man, Miss Ruth,” replied the servant: “he couldn’t swim, do you see; but young William did, so he got to shore; but poor old Roger’s gone, quite gone; they picked up his body, but there wasn’t a bit of life left in it.”

Whilst Martha spoke, the tears gathered in Ruth’s eyes. She had never before heard of the sudden death of any person whom she had actually known; and the thought that the man whom she had beheld so short a time before full of health and strength, notwithstanding his age, was now taken from the world, completely bewildered her. Ruth had never seen a person dead; she could not imagine what death could be like; and she longed for her mamma, and entreated Martha to try and find her, fancying that the merely being with her would be some protection. Martha said that Mrs. Clifford was out, and begged her not to take on, for it could do no good to the poor old man: but Ruth did not think much of this comfort; and finding that there was not any hope of her mamma’s return, she took hold of Martha’s hand, and begged her to go with her to the study; for it thundered so, that she did not like to go alone, and she wanted to tell Madeline about poor old Roger. Martha consented, saying, at the same time, that the place she wanted to go to was the cellar: she had heard that was the best place in a thunder-storm. Ruth seized upon any notion of what she was told might be safety; and, running back to the study, she opened the door, and called Madeline, intending that she should go with her. When she looked round, however, to her great surprise Madeline was not there. She walked to the window and called again; and went down the passage which led to the kitchen, and in-

quired there ; but no one knew any thing of Madeline, except that the cook had heard her sobbing in the study, and the gardener fancied he had seen her running down the green walk. This every one declared was not at all likely : and, after a hasty search, the servants began to be alarmed, and were thinking of sending for Mr. Clifford, when a loud knocking and a well-known voice announced their master's return.

CHAPTER XI.

THAT stormy evening was an important one to other persons besides Madeline Clifford. It was now a week since Alice had entered the forbidden rooms; and the days had passed, in appearance, exactly as before. Alice had risen at her ordinary hour—half-past six; she had dressed, and learnt her lessons, and then gone in to prayers, and breakfasted with Lady Catharine, and spent the remainder of her time in reading, writing, working, and walking, just as usual. Yet the week was in reality very unlike any other week which Alice had ever spent;—much longer, and more unhappy; and all who know what it is to have something on their minds which they are afraid may be found out, will understand how this was. Alice had not only to keep her own secret, but to persuade Anne, the housemaid, to keep it too; and this was rather a difficult task. Anne was a young girl, thoughtless and selfish; and in about a fortnight's time she was intending to leave the Manor, and go to another situation. It did not signify to her, therefore, what happened to Alice; and she took a malicious kind of pleasure in teasing her, by threatening to tell Lady Catharine. Whenever they met in the gallery, Anne would shake her head, and point to the door, and say: "Ah, Miss Alice! you know!" and then poor Alice would entreat her not to tell, and promise to give her any thing she wished, and to be kind to her all her life, if she would only declare

that she would never say any thing about it. Anne never did promise, really ; all she said was : “ Well, we’ll see ; I won’t tell to-day : but then, you know, I must have just a little something for being so kind.” This was a signal for Alice to go to the play-drawer, and bring out some one of her pretty things,—a housewife, or a pincushion, or a little box,—and offer it to Anne as a bribe ; though knowing all the time that if she made Anne angry the promise would be broken, and Lady Catharine would be told all. A bought promise is never to be depended on ; and even when Anne was the most kind in her manner, Alice knew that she was deceitful in her heart. She soon began to feel a great dislike to her soft words ; and Marsham’s rough sincerity was, in comparison, quite agreeable. Once during the week she had seen Benson for a few minutes at the garden gate, and she had then had some thought of confessing to her ; but Alice had sense enough to know that a person who will deceive in any one instance is not to be trusted in others ; and, much as she liked Benson, she was not at all certain that her secret would be safe with her. Yet Benson was very kind ; she kissed her, brought her some sugar-plums, and promised to make her a beautiful new pincushion ; and when she went away, her parting words were : “ I will be sure to come and see you again, and we won’t care any thing about Lady Catharine.” Alice, however, did care for Lady Catharine, even with her stern features and her cold manner, for she knew that she was true, and that Benson was not ; and the slightest smile from the one was really of more value to her than all the sugared words of the other, whom she could not in her heart respect. Each day was to Alice a day of anxiety. Sometimes she thought that Anne would tell ; then, that

by some means or other Lady Catharine would find the lost bonbon in the passage, and inquire how it came there; or else, that when the rest were returned, and Madeline was ordered not to bring any more sweet things to the Manor, she might say something which might betray what had been done; though for her own sake, to conceal about the sashes, Alice trusted that she would not speak of the exchange. If Lady Catharine mentioned Mrs. Clifford's name, Alice's colour went and came as though she were ill; if a walk into the village was proposed, she was in dread lest they should meet some one from the Parsonage; and if any thing was said about the two children's coming for another day's amusement, Alice did not dare express much wish to see them: she felt that she could be safe no where. Perpetually she wondered whether Lady Catharine had sent back the bonbons; and, if she had not, when she intended to do it; but the fact was, that what to her was of great consequence, was a mere trifle to Lady Catharine. The bonbons had been put aside, with the intention of their being returned the next time Mrs. Clifford came; for, having many engagements that week, Lady Catharine had not considered it worth while to write a note. But perhaps the most painful thing of all to Alice's feelings was Lady Catharine's increasing kindness. She was growing more accustomed to a child's habits; and, being naturally considerate, she was learning how to give Alice pleasure in many little ways which at first she would not have thought of. Alice really was improving: she answered her Scripture questions much more readily; she wrote her exercises more carefully; and she was beginning to work to Marsham's satisfaction. The pleasure which this gave to Lady Catharine, could only be understood by persons who observed the differ-

ence between her present manner, and what it had been before, ever since her husband's death. There was now some one again to love and care for; and Lady Catharine's affection for Alice was becoming the great charm of her life. Even the villagers noticed the change; and declared that my lady was quite another creature since she had taken little Miss Lennox to go about with her. She seemed to care for all children now, and really would pat them and speak to them, instead of scolding them as she used to do; and the first-class girls in the school actually looked forward with pleasure instead of dread to the fortnight's examination; for Lady Catharine made allowances for them when they were wrong, and praised them when they were right; whereas before, she had expected them to be perfect, and, if they were, scarcely seemed to think they deserved to be rewarded. Alas! that children should by their own misconduct throw away the love and the attention which God has given to be the greatest blessings of their lives!

It was the same day on which the conversation had passed between Mr. Clifford and his little girls, held on the sea-shore. Alice had been more alone than usual, for Marsham was gone to see her mother, who was ill, and lived at a considerable distance from Laneton, and Lady Catharine had kept very much to her own room. She was thinking particularly of her husband; for at that same season, fifteen years before, she had been first married; the first arrival at the Manor was fresh in her memory; she recollected his affectionate words, and his anxious endeavour to make her happy, and how she had looked forward to a long life of enjoyment; and now ten years had gone by since he had been laid in his quiet grave, and she had been left a widow

indeed, and desolate. Kneeling in her chamber, alone, Lady Catharine recalled all the circumstances of her great loss, and the blessings which had still followed her in life; and as she repeated them one by one,—the opportunities for public and private prayers, God's holy word and sacraments, His minister to be her friend, her health and strength, and rank, and fortune,—tears of thankfulness mingled with her sorrow; and when, at last, the name of Alice Lennox passed her lips, she prayed earnestly, most earnestly, that it might please her Heavenly Father still to preserve to her this one great blessing, which had made the last few months happier than she had dared to hope her earthly life might ever be again. The prayer was ended, and Lady Catharine rose; and going to her bureau took out a packet of letters, which she had received from her husband in the early period of their married life: they made her very melancholy, yet the satisfaction which she felt in reading them induced her to occupy herself with them much longer than she had at first intended. Something was said in one of them about a roll of old papers which contained some interesting anecdotes of Mr. Hyde's family. Lady Catharine well remembered having been engaged at the time when she received this letter, so that she could not look for the papers; and afterwards various circumstances prevented her from thinking much about them: now a strong desire seized her to find them; and taking the keys belonging to her husband's rooms, she determined upon searching for them: for a long time, however, she looked in vain; neither in the desk, nor the writing tables, neither in the drawers, nor the cabinets, were any such papers to be seen. As a last hope, she determined upon examining the bureau in the entrance passage,

though she believed it to be empty ; and so, indeed, it proved : but just as Lady Catharine was moving away in disappointment, she discovered a little edge of paper between the bureau and the wall ; and on trying to draw it out, she found that it was part of a large packet, which had slipped down, and could not be taken up without danger of tearing it. Lady Catharine's dislike to allowing her husband's apartments to be entered made her doubt, at first, whether she would call any one to move the cabinet ; but as it was probable that this roll of paper was the very one for which she was looking, she at length summoned the men servants, and the bureau was with some difficulty moved from its place. The papers fell to the ground ; and as the butler stooped to gather them up, he picked up, also, the lost bonbon : it was put into Lady Catharine's hand, but she scarcely looked at it ; the papers were all that she, at the moment, cared for ; and finding that they proved to be the same for which she had been seeking, she carried them to her room : as she placed them on the table, however, the bonbon caught her eye : she supposed that it must have been a stray one from those which she had put away ; but no : she was certain the butler had given it to her with the papers : he had found it behind the bureau—and how did it come there ? Alice ! was it possible ? could Alice really have been so disobedient, so forgetful of all the kindness which had been shown her, as to break the only command upon which Lady Catharine had strongly insisted ? But the bonbons were Madeline Clifford's ; Alice had said so ; and Lady Catharine felt relieved, for her mind was immovably fixed to keep to her determination ; and if Alice proved deceitful to send her from the Manor. When Lady Catharine made the resolution, she had

not known how hard it would be to keep it: she had cared but little for Alice, except for her mother's sake, but now the thought of parting from her was cause of the deepest sorrow; and yet she did not for an instant think of changing her mind. What she had once settled upon, she was certain, as far as any human being can be certain, to carry into effect. The papers were put away as things of no consequence; the bell was rung, and Alice was summoned to Lady Catharine's presence. The message was taken by the housemaid; and when she delivered it she added, with a laugh, — "There is something in store for you, Miss Alice, I'll be bound: my lady looks as black as thunder."

Alice's face became deadly pale "Oh, Anne!" she exclaimed, "you have not told?"

"No, no, Miss Alice, never fear me, — I'm quite safe; but my lady has found out something, that's certain."

"How! she can't—it is impossible. Madeline never would tell, and no one else knows," said Alice, feeling at the same time very distrustful.

"If she has," continued Anne, "you've nothing to do but to face it out; it will be only her word against yours."

Alice looked excessively shocked. "How wicked! how dreadful!" she exclaimed: "Anne, how very naughty of you to think of such a thing! and I should get Madeline into such disgrace."

"Well, that's as you think," continued Anne; "but there couldn't be much disgrace for little Miss Clifford, because she wasn't told like you, and her papa and mamma never scold her a bit; they arn't at all like my lady: but there's the bell again: you must go."

"And you won't tell, — you are sure you won't

tell; you will be a good, kind Anne," said Alice, hesitating.

"Trust me; but if I were you, I should get out of it somehow, and Miss Madeline's so good-natured she won't care what you say."

"Don't you really think it would signify? but it would be very wrong;" and Alice held the handle of the door, unwilling to open it.

"As to its signifying, I am sure it won't; but it's no good staying here to think." This Alice herself knew quite well; and, making a sudden effort, she ran out of the room. Her knock at Lady Catharine's door was not very loud, and the voice which bade her come in did not tend to make her less frightened.

Lady Catharine was seated with her head leaning upon one hand, whilst the other held the lost bonbon. She looked pale, and there was a dark colour round her eyes, and a pressure of her lips, which told that her mind was unusually disturbed. Alice stood before her without daring to speak, and Lady Catharine looked at her as if she would have discovered the truth from her countenance. There was a pause of some instants, and then Lady Catharine, without any preparation, placed the bonbon before Alice, and said, "I have found this;—tell me where."

Alice raised her eyes, which she had fixed upon the ground. She looked first at the bonbon, then at Lady Catharine; her only hope of escape was in evasion: "The bonbons were Madeline Clifford's," she said, rejoicing at having avoided an actual falsehood.

"I know it," continued Lady Catharine, in the same voice; "my question was not to whom it belonged, but where it was found."

"It must have dropped in the passage," replied Alice, summoning courage to reply more boldly.

"And in what passage? Where were you playing?"

"In the gallery, by the window-seat."

Lady Catharine thought a little, and then went on: "Was the door into the east room open at the time?"

"Yes—no—no—yes; I can't remember," stammered Alice, for she could not perceive at the instant whether it would be better for her to tell the truth or not.

"You can't remember?—then you have no idea how this bonbon was lost under the large bureau?"

Alice quailed under Lady Catharine's eye, but a second time she evaded the question: "Madeline was playing with them," she said.

"And Madeline went into the passage," continued Lady Catharine, in a softened tone; "was it so, Alice? do not be afraid to tell me."

But Alice was afraid. Even after her first falsehood, in saying that the bonbons were Madeline's, she scrupled to be guilty of a second. Lady Catharine rose, and drawing up her stately figure to its full height, she folded her hands, and waited patiently for an answer. Alice's heart beat so that she could hear it; she tried to say something, but it was impossible; till at length bursting into tears, she exclaimed, "Indeed I cannot tell."

Lady Catharine made no attempt to stop her tears, but again repeated the question; "Was it so?" Still Alice only cried; and Lady Catharine, convinced by her distress of the truth of her suspicions, said, in a faint yet bitter voice, "Alice, it was my only command, and you have disobeyed it."

“No, no!” exclaimed Alice, urged at length by fear, to do what under different circumstances she would have shrunk from, “it was not me,—Madeline had them.”

“Are you sure—quite sure? remember, Alice, there is nothing so dreadful as falsehood!” But Alice had committed the sin, and there was now but little difficulty in persisting in it. With a firmer voice than before she repeated her assertion, adding, that she hoped Lady Catharine would not be angry with Madeline. Lady Catharine, however, was very distrustful; it did not seem natural that Alice should feel so much, if she had done nothing wrong, and she determined to sift the matter to the bottom. She placed herself at her writing-desk, and wrote a few lines to Mr. Clifford, begging him to come to her instantly; and then saying, “The truth must be discovered by some means, Alice,” she went out of the room; the door was locked on the outside, and Alice was left to her own thoughts. And they were far from agreeable. The first step in sin, the indulgence of an idle wish, had led her into the untruth which she had told on the previous week, and now it was dragging her on in many others; she had wilfully departed from the safe path,—who could tell where she might now be led? She cried bitterly, and from the bottom of her heart wished that she had never been tempted to do wrong. But Alice’s sorrow was not the true Christian sorrow, which God accepts for the sake of Jesus Christ. It did not lead her to confess her faults, and submit without murmuring to whatever punishment might be inflicted upon her,—rather, it made her the more determined to conceal what she had done, at any risk. She felt certain that no one would be very angry with Madeline, and she did not know what

might be the consequences to herself. This at least was the way in which she argued; for, being really good-natured, she would not willingly have done any thing which could have brought another person into difficulty.

The minutes seemed long before any one came to interrupt her; and the clouds, which were gathering thickly over the sky, made the hour appear later than it really was. Alice began to be afraid lest Lady Catharine intended to lock her up for the night. Presently she heard footsteps along the passage,—slow, heavy ones,—not at all like Lady Catharine's; then there were voices, but she could not discover what was said; and immediately afterwards the key turned in the door, and Lady Catharine entered, followed by Mr. Clifford. Alice thought she must have sunk upon the floor: of all persons, the one whom she most dreaded to see, the one in whose presence she felt the greatest awe, was Mr. Clifford.

“We are come to hear your story again, Alice,” said Lady Catherine, advancing towards her; “repeat to Mr. Clifford what you have said to me.” Alice could remember nothing; her head seemed turning round, and her mind was confused. “Perhaps,” said Mr. Clifford, kindly, yet very gravely, “Lady Catharine will allow me to ask one or two questions myself. You know, Alice, I must be anxious and sorry, when I think that Madeline has been doing wrong;”—Alice was comforted by Mr. Clifford's manner, for he did not appear to suspect her of untruth. “Was it the last time Madeline was here that she brought the bonbons?” continued Mr. Clifford.

Alice answered, “Yes.”

“And you had never seen them before?”

"No, never." Alice answered at random, for she had no time for thought.

"And you did not take any yourself? are you not fond of them?"

"Yes,—a little,—sometimes; I don't much care."

"But what was the reason of your not taking them?"

"I don't know: Lady Catharine does not like me to have them."

As Alice said this, a smile of pleasure stole over Lady Catharine's face, but Mr. Clifford looked graver than before: "And as Madeline was playing with the bonbons, one rolled into the passage, and she went in to fetch it—was that it?" Alice made no answer. "Or," continued Mr. Clifford, in a tone so very quiet, and yet so severe, that Alice trembled, "was it that Madeline and you had made an agreement to exchange the bonbons for some ribbons? that the bonbons were yours, not hers? that you took them, though you knew Lady Catharine would be displeased? that it was you who were playing with them, and that it was you who went after them?" There was a dead silence. The muscles in Lady Catharine's throat were working with agitation, and she passed her hand across her eyes to brush away a tear. Mr. Clifford's countenance was perfectly still, but his eyes were fixed upon Alice. "Your ladyship must be the judge," he said at length, turning to Lady Catharine; "I have already heard some of this story before from Madeline: her version is very different from Alice's, and I have never yet discovered her in telling an untruth."

"Madeline is cross,—she is unkind,—very unkind," exclaimed Alice; "I never do such things to her."

“Hush! Alice,” and Lady Catharine held up her finger to enforce her words, “we will have no complaints. One of you is wrong, worse than wrong, — wicked. God knows, though we do not.”

“I will bring Madeline here, if you wish it,” said Mr. Clifford, perceiving that Lady Catharine was not inclined to believe in Alice’s guilt; “perhaps when they are together it will be easier to discover the true state of the case.”

“I would rather —” Lady Catharine paused, doubting whether Mr. Clifford would like the offer. “I should judge, I think, better, — if you did not care, — if I were to go to her.”

Mr. Clifford looked rather surprised, but Lady Catharine’s evident distress was not to be reasoned against. It was no light matter to her, if Alice should prove guilty. “I am afraid the storm will be increasing,” said Mr. Clifford; but Lady Catharine was in no mood to think of or care for storms. She would not delay, — she would not even hear of the carriage being ordered, — but after one look at Alice of sorrow yet of deep affection, she went to prepare for her walk to the Parsonage, and in a few minutes Alice was again left alone. This time she was free. No doors were locked; she might wander wherever she chose; but where could she go, and what could she do? who could help her in her difficulty? who could recall her sinful words? That which has been done cannot be undone: we may repent, and God may forgive, but when we have once committed an evil deed, or spoken an evil word, or thought an evil thought, it must remain recorded in the awful book of remembrance, to be a witness against us on the day when we stand before the judgment-seat of the Almighty to answer for our lives upon earth. Alice Lennox could never again be as she had been before. She had “let her

mouth speak wickedness, and with her tongue she had set forth deceit;" and now, to save herself from punishment, she was about to "sit and speak" against her friend — to slander her playfellow and companion. When Alice wished for the bonbons, how little did she imagine into what guilt she should be led! But she was not then sensible of her grievous fault; she considered only the chance of escape from punishment; for her heart had become more hardened, and even Lady Catharine's look of sadness had made no impression upon her. Still less was she inclined to have compassion upon Madeline, or to consider the distress it would occasion her to have her word doubted; it was not a moment for thinking upon any one but herself. She hid her face against the wall, whilst a crowd of confused thoughts passed through her mind. Presently, there was a slight noise at the door, and some one touched the handle, but Alice did not look up; it was then softly turned, and two persons stole very gently into the room. "This is my lady's own room," said the one who came in first.

"Ah! very beautiful! to be sure — but, dear me!" and at Benson's voice, Alice started up, and almost screamed.

"Miss Alice! La! but I thought you were out with my lady," exclaimed Anne; "and the storm, did you ever hear anything like it? she won't be back for this hour, that's certain."

The presence of Benson, and the assurance of Lady Catharine's absence, gave a little comfort to Alice's spirit; but it was soon gone. She had not time to ask how Benson came there, or why she had ventured into the house, before Anne poured forth a torrent of questions, "what had been the matter? why was she left alone? what had she been crying for? had my lady been very angry?"

did she know about ——," and Anne shook her head, and pointed to the passage. Alice had no heart to answer: she felt as if Anne had led her into mischief by suggesting the second falsehood which she had told, and she only longed for her to be gone. But Anne was not inclined to go, and neither was Benson. They stood by her and petted her, and said a great many foolish and wrong things about Lady Catharine's cruelty and whims, till at length Alice began to think that perhaps after all she had been treated hardly, and then, in her turn, she recounted all that had taken place.

"Well, to be sure," exclaimed Benson, when she had finished; "'twas fortunate enough that I chanced to come this evening. To think of your being left all alone, and treated so bad; and I never should have found out a word about it, if it hadn't been for Marsham's mother being ill, and she away, and cook gone out for an hour; and so, you see, we had the coast clear all to ourselves, and I thought if I could just keep out of my lady's sight, I might manage to see you, my pretty dear, and the house too. But 'tis a real blessing that my lady's gone, and the thunder will be positive to hold her where she is. So now cheer up, Miss Alice, and tell us what we can do."

"I can tell what's to be done," exclaimed Anne; "there is no one knows better than me how to get out of a harl. If I just keep the same story as Miss Alice, there'll be two to one; and who's to go against us then?"

Alice could not feel thankful: she felt her selfishness, yet she could not bring herself to put a stop at once to such a plan. "Ah! yes, that's just right, any thing to serve a friend," said Benson; "nobody knows, and nobody will tell, and 'twill all do very well; though I can't, for the life of me, think why

you should care for the notion of being sent to school. If 'twas'nt just for me, you'd be buried alive like here."

"It's not about school altogether," said Alice, "but Lady Catharine looks so ——"

"Well, so she does! she looks as if she could cut one's head off; not a bit like your poor dear mamma,—she was an angel; but there, we won't talk of her," continued Benson, seeing that Alice's eyes were dimmed with tears. Alice, however, was not crying for the reason which Benson imagined; it was not so much the remembrance of Lady Catharine's harshness, or her mamma's affection, which had touched her heart, as the thought of her own wickedness, and the difference between her past conduct and the advice which had frequently been given her. She felt, in truth, that if her mamma could know all she had been doing, her sorrow would be very great; and the conviction crossed her mind that none could enter the state of happiness, in which she believed her mamma now to be, except those who lived a life of holiness; and it was the last prayer she had heard from her mother's lips, that God would grant her the unspeakable blessing of meeting her child again, when the trial of her life should be over. Benson was sorry that she had said any thing to make Alice more unhappy, and now again began to cheer her by assuring her that Anne would be her friend, and that two to one against Miss Madeline would be sure to beat. Anne also repeated the same thing, but she was tired of trying to give comfort; and as the time was passing on, she begged Benson to go with her over the other rooms, that she might see them before Lady Catharine came back. Benson consented, and was leaving the room, when a sudden fancy struck Anne, and she stopped: "To

be sure!" she exclaimed; "I never thought of it; there couldn't be a better opportunity; just the very thing: I say, Miss Alice, my dear, where does Marsham keep the key? you know what I mean:" and Anne nodded and winked.

"I don't know. What key do you mean? Marsham has a great many," said Alice.

"Aye, but the key of the rooms: they are shut up to-day; they always are when Marsham isn't here, and I should so like cousin Benson to see them."

"That's a good notion," exclaimed Benson; "it would just pass away the time, and keep me from thinking about the thunder. What a storm there is! I declare if it doesn't turn my heart upside down."

"But Anne, indeed you must not. Lady Catharine will be excessively angry," said Alice. Anne laughed.

"As for that, she's had plenty of causes to be angry before now. What a goose, to think I should have lived so long in the house, and up early and late, and never done more than peep in at that door when half the times it was open: no, no, if my lady wants to keep it all quiet, she had better lock it up, and keep the key herself. So now tell me, Miss Alice, dear, where's the key. I'll be bound you know."

Alice again protested, and Anne looked impatient and threatening: at that instant a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the room, followed instantly by a roll of thunder.

"It's quite dangerous, I declare," exclaimed Benson, turning pale; "they say it's always worst when the thunder comes so soon."

"It's setting in this way," said Anne; "If we were wise, and went to the other side, there

wouldn't be a bit of fear. Come, Miss Alice, come; it won't do to stop here."

"But Lady Catharine"—began Alice.

"Nonsense! Lady Catharine! What should I care for her? I'm going away."

"But I can't, indeed I can't," continued Alice.

"Then I can't, indeed I can't," repeated Anne, contemptuously. "If you can't for me, I can't for you, and what's to be done then?"

Here Benson stepped forward, and began to entreat in more gentle terms: "She was sure her own dear Alice would be good-natured; it was such a little thing, and they had done so much for her, and Anne would be certain to keep her own counsel, and never to tell tales upon her."

"Ah, yes!" said Anne, angrily; "and if I don't keep my own counsel now, I know who'll come badly off."

"But what shall I do? I can't be left,—I can't stay here," replied Alice, as she gazed at the lowering sky, and hid her face when the lightning broke through the gloom.

"No, that you can't," said Anne; "at least if you do I'm sure I shall not; 'tis a storm not fit for a dog to look at, and I'm going." She moved to the door, but no one followed.

"Come, there's a dear," said Benson, coaxingly, taking Alice's hand. "My lady will be back when it leaves off, and I never shall have such an opportunity again. You know Anne says we shall be quite safe there,—and what's the harm of going into a room? It's only my lady's whim."

"But you won't leave me," cried Alice, imploringly.

"No, certainly not; you come too; the more the merrier," said Anne; who, notwithstanding her boasting, had always had a superstitious dread of the

shut-up rooms. "We can be out the moment it begins to clear," she continued; "my lady need never know a bit about it; and when she comes home I'll say any thing you like, and get you out of your scrape, and then you'll be quite happy."

"Besides," persisted Benson, "it isn't any thing for you; you've been in once, so the mischief's done."

Anne's sharp eye saw signs of yielding, for Alice gazed wistfully at the window; but the storm still raged violently. To be left alone with the lightning and the thunder—and alone with an evil conscience, seemed more terrible than any other punishment.

"The key is in Marsham's room, isn't it?" said Anne. Alice nodded an assent. "With the large bunch?"

"No." Alice was so nervous that she could scarcely speak the word.

"Well! where? where?—make haste," said Anne.

"In the—in the—the left hand drawer of the large chest."

Anne scarcely waited for the last word before she was gone to fetch it; and a minute afterwards she returned, holding it triumphantly in her hand. "Come along, come; we've no time to lose." She led the way, and Benson and Alice followed.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Madeline Clifford was left by her sister in the study, her inclination was to go after her. She was thoroughly frightened by the storm, and she had no power to reason; and only the recollection of Mr. Clifford's commands induced her to remain for an instant in the room alone. Madeline, however, had never been suffered to disobey in the least particular; and she had been made so unhappy by her late fault, that the dread of her father's displeasure was at first greater even than her terror at the thunder and lightning. She stood at the door, and listened to Ruth's footsteps, and caught a few words of the conversation between her and Martha; till, at last, just as the loudest clap of all burst over head, she heard Martha's speech about the cellar, and in sudden alarm, forgetful of all her former anxiety to obey her papa's wishes, she ran towards it. The door opened not far from the study; and before Ruth entered the room to tell of the terrible accident which had befallen old Roger, Madeline was safe at the bottom of the cellar stairs, hiding herself amongst some wood and coals which were kept in a dark hole at the entrance.

It was no wonder that Ruth was puzzled to know what was become of her. Few persons would have thought of looking for her in such a place; and there had been scarcely time to determine what was to be done, when Mr. Clifford appeared, and Lady Catharine Hyde with him. The servants eagerly told their story, and Ruth stood by without speak-

ing; but Mr. Clifford was not a person easily to be frightened: he had no doubt that Madeline would soon be found, but he was distressed at her attempting to conceal herself. It seemed to show that she was conscious of greater guilt than she had confessed; and his heart sank as he thought that after all Alice might have spoken the truth, and his own child, whom he had entirely trusted, might have deceived him. "Leave it to me," he replied, calmly, when he had heard all that was to be said; "no one need be alarmed: Madeline is far too great a coward to venture out of doors; and if I call her she will come directly."

Lady Catharine seated herself in the arm-chair with a countenance of determined patience, and Mr. Clifford began his search. For a little while it was unsuccessful, and he began to be slightly uneasy; but the truth was soon guessed, when he observed that the door leading down the cellar stairs was open. He gently called Madeline; but, receiving no answer, he went down a few steps, and again repeated her name. A timid voice answered "Papa!" and Madeline, with a very white face, but a dress covered with coal-dust, appeared. "It was the thunder, papa," she said, before Mr. Clifford attempted to make any inquiries.

"I hope it was, Madeline," was the reply; "but I shall know more about this presently: Lady Catharine Hyde is here."

"Must I see her?" and Madeline looked very much dismayed; "my frock is so dirty."

"It must not be changed, though; she is waiting to speak to you."

Madeline could do nothing but obey; and Mr. Clifford opened the study door, and ushered her into the awful presence of Lady Catharine Hyde.

Madeline glanced around for Ruth as the only hope of comfort; but her father had signed to her to leave the room, and poor Ruth, feeling certain that something dreadful was going to happen, ran off to watch from the drawing-room window for her mamma's return, which, as the storm was rather going off, would not, she thought, be long delayed.

Lady Catharine Hyde had by nature a great dislike to all mysteries, and never could consent to gain her object by any but the most direct means. She had no idea of questioning Madeline so as to find out the truth by degrees; but, acting by her as she had done by Alice, she drew forth the bonbon from her reticule, and, holding it up, said: "This is yours; I am come to return it to you."

"No, it is not; it was—it is not mine, now," stammered Madeline: and the crimson colour spread itself over her face and neck.

"No equivocation, Madeline," said Lady Catharine, in a reproachful tone, whilst Mr. Clifford's countenance showed his distress; "is it yours, or is it not?"

"It is not mine," replied Madeline, growing bolder; "I gave it to Alice."

Lady Catharine coughed drily. "You do not know, then, where it was lost?"

"Speak, Madeline!" said Mr. Clifford; "tell at once all that you can."

"I have told you, papa," replied Madeline, sobbing: for she dreaded to be obliged to repeat the story again.

"That will not do; I must hear from your own lips," continued Lady Catharine. "I am afraid, very much afraid, that you have been a most wicked child."

"I am very sorry," began Madeline, in a broken voice; but her papa interrupted her:

“ True sorrow, Madeline, is shown in something more than words. If you have spoken an untruth, and have laid blame on Alice which should have been yours, the least you can do is to own it.”

“ Me! me, papa!” exclaimed Madeline, raising her head in amazement.

“ Yes, you!” continued Lady Catharine: “ you were aware, as well as Alice, of my orders against any person’s going into the east rooms at the Manor; and you chose to disobey; and then, when you had disobeyed, you tried to make your papa believe that it was Alice, and pretended to confess, as if you were unhappy about it. Oh, Madeline! I could not have supposed a little girl would have been so wicked.” Madeline looked at her papa, but said nothing. She was confounded by the accusation, and could not comprehend who had ventured to make it; and she expected him to undertake her defence. Having acknowledged the truth, she imagined, as a matter of course, that he would uphold her. “ I was right, you see,” said Lady Catharine, turning to Mr. Clifford. “ When the facts are put before her, she has no excuse to make. I am grieved, very grieved for you.”

“ But,” exclaimed Madeline, recovering from her first surprise, and speaking in great agitation, “ it was not me! it was Alice: I said so; papa knows it, and Ruth too; I told them both. Alice went in, and I waited for her till mamma called: and the bonbons were not mine; I gave them all to Alice for the green and white sashes.”

Lady Catharine coughed again. “ I don’t see how the truth is to be determined,” she said. “ It is only one child’s word against another’s; and we are both naturally inclined to believe as we wish.”

“ I own I am very much inclined in this case,” said Mr. Clifford, mildly. “ Madeline! you have

never, that I know, told me a falsehood before; but your story is very different from Alice's. She says that the bonbons were yours, and that you lost this one, and went in after it."

"Alice is — I don't love Alice, she tells lies!" exclaimed Madeline, in extreme indignation: "I don't want ever to play with her again."

"Hush! hush!" said her papa, putting his hand upon her mouth: "whatever Alice may have done, you have been very naughty yourself. The giving the bonbons and taking the sashes was what you knew your mamma and Lady Catharine would disapprove; and that was the beginning of all this mischief."

"Yes," observed Lady Catharine; "and a little girl who could do that, could do any thing."

"It was a mutual fault," quietly observed Mr. Clifford; "they were both equally to blame."

Lady Catharine was vexed. "I see, Mr. Clifford," she said, rising proudly from her seat, "that your affection is too great for your judgment: perhaps I had better return, and leave you to consider the matter more at your leisure. For myself, I can put but little faith in the word of a child who has evidently shown herself confused and uncertain in all that she has said, and who was so alarmed at my appearance that she ran away to hide herself."

"No, it was not to hide! it was the thunder! I did not care a bit about you; I only cared for the thunder!" exclaimed Madeline, vehemently; and, in her desire to prove her innocence, forgetting the awe which she had hitherto felt.

"Possibly," said Lady Catharine, in a tone which showed that she did not believe it. "But what is to be done, Mr. Clifford? — what would you advise? Shall I return, and leave you to examine your

little girl alone, till you are as convinced as I am of the true state of the case?"

"Your ladyship will pardon me, I hope," replied Mr. Clifford, "I do not believe that any examination is likely to convince me; and there is one thing you have forgotten, — Madeline says that she gave the bonbons in exchange for some sashes. These sashes she has now; she can bring them to you if you like it. So far there is evidence that her word is true."

"Yes, very probably it may be; but that does not alter the case. I care nothing about the bonbons, they are not worth thinking of; all that I wish to know is, who went into the east rooms, and of that there is not the shadow of doubt." Lady Catharine spoke positively, as persons very often do, when, without being aware of it, they begin to waver. "My mind is relieved," she continued, taking up her reticule; "I shall return much easier than I came; the storm, I think, will soon be over, and Alice will be impatient."

Mr. Clifford felt very much annoyed; he had never before seen so full an evidence of the strength of Lady Catharine's prejudices. "Excuse me," he said, "we cannot part in this way: your ladyship's mind may be relieved, but mine is not; for my own happiness, and for the sake of my child, I must beg to go back with you to the Manor, and take Madeline with me; when we have examined her with Alice, we shall be far better able to judge what is the truth. If you will allow me, I will speak a few words to Mrs. Clifford, who, I think, must be returned, and then I shall be ready to attend you."

Mr. Clifford's manner was so decided, that even Lady Catharine was a little struck by it. He left the room, and Madeline remained alone with her.

No word was spoken. Madeline pulled the strings of her bonnet, and Lady Catharine patted her umbrella on the floor, and coughed several times. The five minutes were the longest that Madeline had ever spent,—it seemed as if they never would end; but they did end at last. Mr. Clifford returned, and Madeline was sent up stairs to put on a clean frock. In the passage she met her mamma and Ruth. Both looked at her very sadly, and Madeline saw that Ruth had been crying; and then her heart smote her, for all the trouble and anxiety she had caused. In her indignation at being falsely accused, she had forgotten that any blame could attach to her for her own faults. Ruth turned away; but Mrs. Clifford went with her to her room, took out her dress, and fastened it, but still did not speak; and this silence touched Madeline's heart more than any words. If her mamma, who was always so gentle, and ready to excuse, and unwilling to believe that any one had done wrong, was thus altered in her manner, she was sure that the pain she had occasioned must be very great. Lady Catharine was standing by the door when Madeline re-entered the study, and Mr. Clifford was by her side, his hat in his hand. Both were impatient to go, and the quarter of a mile between the Parsonage and the Manor was quickly passed. The storm was dying away. Dark masses of the thunder-clouds were heaped together, leaving glimpses of the blue sky, across which there flitted occasionally a light, fleecy, golden vapour, tinged by the brightness of the setting sun. Still, however, some remains of its fury were heard, in the heavy rumbling sound which murmured in the distance,—and at any other time Madeline might have felt timid at venturing out of the house until it had entirely sub-

sided, but all her thoughts were now engaged in anger against Alice, and dread of Lady Catharine. The house seemed even more than usually silent when they entered it; and Lady Catharine, wishing to speak a few words with Alice alone, begged Mr. Clifford to stay in the drawing-room with Madeline, whilst she went up stairs. Her footsteps were scarcely heard as she passed along the open gallery, treading the soft velvet carpet with which it was covered; and with some curiosity to know how Alice had borne her absence, she noiselessly opened the door of her own apartment,—but it was empty. Lady Catharine was surprised, yet she did not suspect any thing amiss, and remembering that she had given no orders to Alice, she imagined that she would be found in the schoolroom. Again she was mistaken; there were the lesson-books open on the table, and a work-box, and writing-desk, and a story-book, which Alice had been reading just before Lady Catharine sent for her, but she herself was not there. Lady Catharine called, “Alice,” but her voice sounded hollow and lonely in the stillness of the house. A foreboding of evil came over her, she could scarcely tell why. There was nothing really unnatural in Alice’s being away; yet Lady Catharine again repeated her name hastily, looking round, at the same time, to see if she were near. She went into the passage, and stood by the window with the raised steps, the same at which Alice had played, and began to think where it was most probable to find her. Marsham’s absence did not occur to her, and she supposed that Alice might be with her. Nothing was easier to ring the bell, and inquire. But no, that could not be; Marsham was gone; so she directly afterwards remembered. Yet she certainly thought that she had seen the entrance to the east rooms unclosed, and that never

was the case unless Marsham was at home. Lady Catharine's foreboding of something wrong became painfully strong; she moved a few steps forward; the door was a-jar, the key was in the lock, and as she fixed her eye upon it, a miserable distrust of Alice crossed her mind. With a stealthy step she entered the passage, listened, and heard nothing. She walked on, but the desolate chambers looked lonely and deserted, even as they had ever been since the death of Mr. Hyde. Yet, as Lady Catharine paused before the desk, on which lay an unfinished letter, the last her husband had commenced, and gave way for an instant to the affectionate regrets which the sight of all things connected with him never failed to produce, she heard, or fancied she heard, a muttering of voices in the adjoining apartment. A moment's attention convinced her that her suspicions were correct. Some one was there, certainly; and Lady Catharine became motionless with indignation. It was her husband's study, a place which, of all others, she had wished to guard as sacred. Yet it was plain, from the sounds, that not only had some persons intruded into it, but that they were actually employed in opening the drawers, and examining the contents. Lady Catharine recognised a careless, vulgar laugh. It was Anne's; and she breathed more freely, hoping that Alice might not be there. But the hope soon vanished. "Pray take care," she heard in the well-known voice of the child she loved so well; "Benson, do make Anne take care; indeed she will let it down." Lady Catharine stood riveted to the spot. There was, seemingly, a little contention as to who should gain possession of some disputed article. Quick, sharp words were heard, and the scuffling of footsteps; and, directly afterwards, a loud exclamation escaped from all,

and with a crash the ornament, or whatever it might be, fell to the ground. Lady Catharine advanced to the doorway. Alice, Benson, and Anne were on their knees, gathering up the fragments of a small, but rare and beautiful, china vase, — a vase which Lady Catharine had received as a present from Mr. Hyde, and which had been put aside as too precious to be seen by common eyes. Alice was with her back to the door, and Benson and Anne were too much alarmed at the accident to notice any thing but the broken china. "Here's a pretty mess; what shall we do now?" exclaimed Benson, as she looked at the jagged pieces, and saw that there was no possibility of repairing the mischief.

"You just go back to my lady's room, and keep her quiet, Miss Alice," said Anne, hurriedly.

Alice rose, and remained standing in the middle of the room. She did not attempt to go, for she was overcome with alarm. There was a moment's silence, whilst Benson and Anne searched carefully for the smaller fragments, and then a stern calm voice said, "Alice!" Alice started and screamed. Her eye glanced quickly round, and, as it caught the tall dark figure of Lady Catharine, she fell back into a chair almost fainting. Benson and Anne rushed to the door, but there were no means of escape. Lady Catharine gazed on them with a countenance and manner, before which even a man's spirit might have sunk. "You will leave my house," was all she said; and Benson and her companion prepared mechanically to obey. Alice, every limb trembling with agitation, waited for the coming sentence; but it was not given. For a few moments Lady Catharine stood with a fixed, upbraiding eye; and when Alice moved her lips, and raised her hand, as if begging for pardon, she said, with a voice of perfect composure, "Alice, I need no words," and led her from the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

MADÉLINE CLIFFORD returned to her home on that evening with very different feelings from those which she had experienced on leaving it: yet few would have envied her reflections. Lady Catharine had repaired to the drawing-room after receiving from Alice a full confession of her guilt, and had openly acknowledged Madeline's innocence. She gave scarcely any explanations beyond the fact that Alice had owned her falsehood; her agitation would not permit it; but she allowed that she had been mistaken, and with the meekness of a burdened heart she entreated Mr. Clifford to forgive her for having done injustice to his child in suspecting her. Both Madeline and her papa were surprised, but it was not then the time to ask for information. Lady Catharine was evidently longing to be alone; and Mr. Clifford, without venturing to express the sympathy he really felt, took his leave. Madeline walked by her father's side, silent and sorrowful: she felt relieved that the accusation had been proved to be untrue; and her anger against Alice was greatly lessened in consequence; but how much was there still to grieve over! She had given her parents reason to distrust her; she had deceived and equivocated; and but for her Alice might never have been brought into such sad disgrace. Madeline was unhappy, yet she could never know all the pain she had caused.

Lady Catharine sat in her lonely room, and her thoughts turned sadly to the future. The voice

that had cheered, the smile that had delighted her, could now awaken no feelings but those of regret. Alice had proved false, and her presence could only be painful. Silence and solitude must be her punishment now; and when the necessary arrangements could be made she must be removed to another and a stricter care. Such was Lady Catharine's determination; and Alice, though she had not been told, had little doubt that it would be so. The few attempts which she had made to excuse herself during the short time which Lady Catharine remained with her had been instantly silenced; her tears and prayers had been unheeded; and when the door of her chamber was closed and locked, Alice, in despair, threw herself on her bed and sobbed hysterically. The evening was rapidly closing in; the sun had set, and the bright lights which had tinged the clouds were fast fading away. But Alice was too miserable to observe any thing; and it was not until the dusk had spread itself over the earth, and a few faint stars twinkled through the cloudy sky, that she began to think of weariness, or conjecture whether she should see any one again that night.

Two long hours passed by, still Alice was alone; and this was no common suffering. Imprisonment was added to solitude; and imprisonment must in any case be a great trial. Yet there have been persons who have borne all the desolateness and privations of a dungeon itself, with peace, and even joy. We are told that Paul and Silas, who were amongst the first of those who were persecuted for their Saviour's sake, being "thrust into the inner prison," and having "their feet fast in the stocks;" nevertheless, at midnight, "prayed and sang praises unto God." The prison was not like a prison to them; it shut them out from the sight

of their fellow-men, but it could not shut them out from God; and to be with Him, to know that He was watching over them, and ordering every event for good, was a comfort which could make any affliction to be endured with thankfulness.

God is, in truth, equally near to us all; but when we are conscious of having broken His laws, and sinned against Him, the thought of this awful fact can but add to our misery. To be alone with Him then, is to be in the presence of our Judge, "who made the heavens by the breath of His mouth," and can in an instant "destroy both body and soul in hell;" and until we have repented, and prayed for forgiveness, for the sake of our blessed Saviour, we can but feel terror at the knowledge that He is looking upon us. Alice Lennox did not think of prayer: she was wretched, but her spirit was proud; and instead of repentance she felt anger. Lady Catharine seemed the most cruel of tyrants, her own lot the most miserable which any child could be called on to bear; and when, as the clock struck nine, Marsham appeared with a candle, and an order that Miss Lennox should go to bed, Alice undressed herself, quickly repeated her prayers, as a matter of form; and lay down to sleep without any remembrance that she was at that moment under the wrath of God.

When Madeline reached home she still thought much of Alice; but Ruth, after she had heard what had passed, thought still more: for Madeline had her own troubles to occupy her mind; there was something in the manner both of her papa and mamma which showed that they were dissatisfied with her.

Mr. Clifford took but little notice of what had occurred that evening, for Madeline looked pale,

and complained of a bad headache ; he kissed her, though with a grave face, as she bade him good night, and said, — “ You are tired, and unwell, I see, Madeline ; but I hope you will not hurry into bed too fast. There are many things for you to remember, and ask God’s forgiveness for, even though you have not been so wicked as to tell a falsehood.”

Madeline coloured, and the tears stood in her eyes : “ Are you angry with me, dear papa ? ” she said.

“ Anger, perhaps, is not the proper word, my dear child. I am grieved, not angry : your faults have been more against God than against me.”

“ But Madeline was not so bad as Alice,” said Ruth, in a coaxing tone.

“ We must not compare, my love ; a little fault in a person who has been well taught is as bad as a great fault in a person who has had fewer advantages ; and Madeline will not say that hers were little faults.”

Madeline burst into tears ; she had not before believed that her papa thought thus seriously of her conduct. At that moment Mrs. Clifford came into the room ; and being afraid that staying up longer might be bad for Madeline’s health, she urged her going to bed immediately. Madeline would willingly have remained to hear all that her papa had to say ; but Mrs. Clifford was anxious when she saw her looking so different from usual ; and after another injunction not to forget the many faults which she had committed, Madeline went to her room. Ruth, however, lingered behind. She felt pleased, notwithstanding her regret that Madeline should be in disgrace. It seemed as if she had a greater claim than before to be petted ; and as she drew her stool to her mamma’s work-table, she said, — “ You are not angry with me, and you will let me stay ? ”

"We are not angry with Madeline," replied Mrs. Clifford.

"No; but you are not so—I mean—I think—it was not right in her to take those sashes."

"Certainly it was not," said Mr. Clifford. "I don't think you would have done it."

Ruth's countenance brightened. "Then you are pleased with me, papa?" but Mr. Clifford did not appear pleased; he waited before replying, and then said,— "It is your bed-time, Ruth; nearly, at least. Suppose, instead of reading up stairs, you were to read to your mamma and me here; there would just be time before I begin my writing." Ruth noticed her papa's manner, though she did not understand it: she brought her Bible, and inquired what she should read: "It shall be my favourite chapter, if your mamma likes it also," replied Mr. Clifford; "the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians." Ruth turned over the pages of her book, and began to read, but her thoughts were wandering: she spoke of the charity which "suffereth long, and is kind;" which "envieth not," which "vaunteth not itself," which "is not puffed up," which "thinketh no evil," and "rejoiceth not in iniquity;" but at that very time she was comparing herself with her sister, and feeling glad at the events which had shown how much better she could behave than Madeline. The chapter was finished, and Ruth laid down the book. Mr. Clifford opened it again. "Yes," he said, repeating the last words; "'the greatest of these is charity.' Charity, or what, Ruth? What is the other meaning of the word?"

"Love, mamma says," replied Ruth.

"Even so,—charity, or love, which makes us full of kind thoughts, and prevents us from envying other persons, or thinking much of ourselves; and

which causes us to be sorry, instead of glad, when others do wrong. It would be very pleasant to have such a spirit of love or charity, don't you think it would?"

"Yes, very;" replied Ruth, in a timid voice, for she was beginning to see that her papa had some particular meaning in what he said.

"And if we find that we have not such a spirit, that we are apt to think much of ourselves, and are pleased at finding fault with our companions,—that in fact, we do vaunt or boast, and are puffed up, and rejoice instead of grieving at their iniquity or sin, we ought to be very much shocked; and should at once humbly ask God to forgive us as well as them, and to give us a better mind. Is not this so, Ruth?"

Whilst Mr. Clifford spoke the colour in Ruth's cheek had been gradually rising, and by the time he ended her face and neck were crimson. "You always know about me, papa;" she said, as Mr. Clifford looked at her kindly, yet requiring an answer.

"I know about you because I know what is natural to all persons, and what you especially have in your disposition — a love of exalting yourself in comparison with others — but, my darling, you must learn very differently before you can hope to act as becomes a baptized child of God."

"I did not know that I exalted myself," replied Ruth.

"Most likely you did not. It is not the first time I have told you of a secret fault — but, Ruth, you shall answer me one question honestly: do you think that it would please you to be told that the notion of Madeline's having behaved ill was a mistake, that she had done just as well, perhaps better than yourself?"

"I — yes — I don't know — I should be very glad," stammered Ruth.

"Honestly — quite honestly," repeated Mr. Clifford; "from your heart; can you indeed say it?" Ruth was silent: "If you cannot," continued her papa; "you may be certain the reason is because you like being put first and made the most of."

"I should like Madeline to be good too;" said Ruth.

"Yes, you would like it, if it did not interfere with yourself; but this is not the mind which God requires of us. It is not being humble like our Saviour; He was grieved, not glad, that men were sinners."

"But He was so good," said Ruth.

"Yes; our Lord was perfect, quite perfect; but if we wish to live with Him, we must try to be like Him. Do you know the way to make yourself like Him?"

"By praying to Him," was the reply.

"That is the first and best way; but there are others which I should like you to remember. One is by thinking of Him."

"But I can't, papa;" began Ruth, and then stopped.

"Yet," said Mr. Clifford, "there was a promise made once that you should believe all that is told about our blessed Lord; and if you do not think, it is impossible you should ever believe rightly."

"No persons can make themselves think," persisted Ruth.

"Not so, my love; we all can, if we set about it in the proper way."

"I don't know how, papa;" said Ruth, in rather a mournful tone.

"It is difficult I know, but we can try to fix our attention; and if we are taught to repeat words,

we can endeavour to understand what they mean : this you will own, I am sure."

Ruth said " Yes ; " but she did not appear to comprehend at all more than before.

" You remember, I dare say," continued Mr. Clifford, " how I have sometimes talked to you about the Lord's Prayer, and told you that if you would try to repeat it carefully, from your heart, you would in time learn to pray rightly. Now there is something else which we all say often, that would in the same manner teach us to think, if we would attend to it. What is it that we repeat in church which contains a short account of all which we ought to believe ? "

" You mean the Creed, papa."

" Yes; and though it may seem very strange, I am quite sure that if we were frequently to say it, not as a lesson, but with thoughtfulness, it would go a great way towards making us every day become better."

" And especially humble," said Mrs. Clifford, as she looked up from her work, whilst a gentle, but rather melancholy smile passed over her face. Ruth became very grave.

" Are you too sleepy to listen to a little story, Ruth ? " said Mr. Clifford : " perhaps I may be able to tell you one which will show you how it is possible to teach ourselves to think ; and if we do that, we can never be proud." Ruth's eyes brightened at the proposal, and in a moment every feeling of fatigue was forgotten. " It will be a story of two children," continued Mr. Clifford ; " two little girls, like you and Madeline ; but they were not blessed, as you are, with a happy home, for their mother was dead, and their father was living in a foreign land, and school was the only place to which they could be sent. Now these

two little girls were alike in their faces and their voices, as you may be, but they were very different in their hearts; the elder one, Mary, was very fond of her papa, and when first he went away she wished to please him, and tried to think of him; but the younger one, Julia, cared only for herself and her playthings. A long, long time went by after the father had left them, and these little girls, from not having seen him, almost forgot what he was like, and they became so accustomed to school, that it was quite natural to them to be there; it seemed their home. Their papa was not able to write to them often, and so, by degrees, even the good one, Mary, seldom thought of him. But one day, when they were playing with their companions in the garden, they were told that a lady wished to speak to them,—a friend of their papa's, who was just come from India. Mary was glad, and ran into the house quickly; but Julia stayed behind, for she enjoyed a game of play much better than the idea of seeing a stranger. The lady was kind and winning in her manner, and after she had kissed Mary several times, she said, that she had been wishing to see them for many weeks, ever since she came to England, because she had made a promise that she would do so, if possible; and she was sure that they would be longing to hear every thing about their papa. Poor little Mary felt quite unhappy when she heard this, being conscious that she did not care half so much about it as she ought. She did not love her papa as most children do, because she never thought about him. The lady went on talking, and constantly she said, 'I am sure you must be delighted to hear of your papa; he is so good and kind, and so fond of you, and it will be such a pleasure to you to go and live with him.' Mary did not know what to say, at first; but after

the lady had told her some stories about her papa, she began to feel that she knew him better, and asked a few questions, which the lady was very willing to answer. At last, Mary became so interested, that she did not think at all how the time was passing on; all that she cared for was, to be told something about her dear papa in India. After some time Julia came in, but she did not pay any attention to what was said, and soon went back to her play. By and by the moment came for the lady to go away, and when she wished Mary good-bye, she said, that this might probably be the last time she should ever see her, for she was going to leave England again immediately. This was really sad news for poor Mary, who had been thinking all the time how nice it would be to see her new friend. She looked very sorrowful, and the lady asked her what was the matter. Mary did not much like to own; but when the question was repeated, she said that she wanted to hear again about her papa, and she was afraid that if the lady went away she should forget it all. This was very likely, yet the lady could not help going, and there was no one besides who could talk to her in the same manner. Mary felt then how nice it was to have a papa, and she wished very much to do what would please him; but if she had nothing to remind her of him, she knew that she should soon think just as much as ever of school, and just as little of India; so what do you think she did, Ruth? — she asked the lady to write down for her all she could remember, and leave it with her that she might read it over. This request was readily granted, and the next day a short account of her papa's life was sent her, written out plainly, that she might read it without trouble. Now many little girls would just have looked at it once, and

then put it aside; but this was not Mary's way. She used to read it over regularly, till at last she knew it by heart, and the words came one after the other by rote, without any effort. Mary then tried more to attend to them, and she would sit by herself, and endeavour to fancy what India would be like, and what sort of life she should lead there. By degrees it became natural to her to think of her papa, and her home; and she grew anxious to go there, and learnt to count the months which were to pass before she should be sent for. It was very different with Julia; she had not cared to hear any thing about her papa, and you may imagine that she did not care to read about him. At first she looked over what the lady had written, but when she knew it by heart, she took no more interest about it; and at length the time came when they were to sail for India, and poor Julia was very wretched. All her happiness had been at school, and to go to India was going entirely amongst strangers, even though her papa was to be there to receive her. She begged to be allowed to stay behind, but this was impossible. There was no one to take charge of her, and with a very sorrowful heart she set out on her long voyage. It was a stormy and wearisome one, and many times even Mary's heart sank as she remembered her friends in England, and thought, that when the dangers of the sea were over, she should find herself in a foreign land. But one hope cheered her, and that was, the prospect of seeing her papa. Julia could find no comfort in this. Day after day she sat upon deck, with her eyes fixed in the direction in which she was told that England lay. She would scarcely eat or speak, and when Mary tried to rouse her, and talked to her of the pleasure they should both have in meeting their father, and

begged her to listen again to the lady's account of his kindness and goodness, Julia only shook her head, and in a sullen voice said, that her papa was not like a father to her, for she knew nothing about him.

It was a lovely morning when they first came in sight of land. Mary stood upon the deck, watching the preparations for going on shore. She looked at the crowds of people who were assembling to welcome the arrival, wishing to discover her father amongst them; and the hope of at length really knowing him made her feel agitated, but very happy. A considerable time passed away, and, one after the other, the passengers landed. The lady who had charge of Mary and Julia begged them to remain where they were, as she knew that their papa would be likely to come on board to them. Mary's attention was then given to the boats which were putting off for the vessel; and each one, as it came near, she thought must be that which she expected. There were several disappointments; for other parties were waiting in the same way, and Mary envied them the pleasure of the greetings. But her own turn came at length. A gentleman, with a telescope in his hand, was seen looking at the great ship. Mary knew it must be her papa, for she had read the description of him till she fancied she knew every feature; and when he sprung up the side of the vessel, and folded her in his arms, and whispered a prayer that God would bless her, she felt that wherever he was there her happiness would be. He was no stranger to her; for she had read of him, and thought of him, and even that foreign land became to her from that moment a home."

"But about Julia, papa," interrupted Ruth.

"Ah! that is the sad part of the story," replied

Mr. Clifford. "Julia's manner was not like Mary's: she had some curiosity to see her papa, but that was all; he was little more than a stranger to her; she had no love to give to him. She received him coldly, with a melancholy smile, and her eyes filled with tears. She scarcely listened to what he said, and took but a slight interest in all the new things about her. From this beginning there followed much sorrow for all. Julia felt that Mary was more pleasing to her papa than she was, and therefore that it was probable he would love her the best; and this made her jealous of the sister, who before had been so dear to her. Jealousy caused unkind words, and they brought vexation and shame. Julia believed that her father and sister would be happier without her; and, notwithstanding their endeavours to make her comfortable, nothing could overcome the wretchedness she felt in thinking that she was not a favourite. When I last heard of her, she had returned to England to live by herself; but with her temper so soured, that there was little prospect of her being really happy. And there, Ruth, is an end of my story. I wonder whether you are much the wiser for it."

"I liked it," said Ruth.

"But can you find out why I told it you?"

"Was it because Mary read over the paper, and learnt to think, papa?"

"Yes. Mary's reading over the account of her father, is in, a certain way, like our repeating the Creed; because you know, Ruth, the Bible tells us that we are all strangers upon earth, and that our home is in heaven; and the Creed reminds us of the great God, and our blessed Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, with whom we hope one day to live in that home. We will talk more about it to-morrow, when Madeline is with us; but one thing I must

ask you before you go: how is it that repeating the Creed properly would help to make you humble?" Ruth did not know what to answer. "Whom do you speak of in it?" continued Mr. Clifford.

"Of God," replied Ruth, reverently.

"Yes, of God, 'the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth;' the Maker of the dazzling sun, and the moon, and the planets, and the millions of worlds which shine above us in the darkness of night. The Maker of the trees also, and the fields, and the flowers; the Maker of every thing that moves—all the little insects, and the birds, and the fishes of the sea, and the cattle which are in the fields, and the fierce beasts which roam about in distant lands. Do you not think, Ruth, that such a Being, who is perfectly holy, and knows every thought and action of our lives, must be glorious beyond what we can imagine?"

Ruth murmured, "Yes."

"And when that Almighty Lord looks into our hearts, and sees all that passes there, what must He think of us?"

"That we are very wicked," said Ruth.

"But if, instead of believing ourselves to be wicked, we fancy that we are good, and set ourselves up; do you suppose God is pleased with us then?" Ruth coloured, and made no reply. "And still more," continued Mr. Clifford, "if that great God came down from heaven, and humbled Himself to die because of our sins, how must we appear to Him, when we pride ourselves upon any thing we do?" There was a short pause; and Ruth's countenance showed what was passing within. "These are some of the truths which are taught us every time we repeat the Creed," continued Mr. Clifford. "I am sure I was right in saying that thinking of

them would help to make us humble. There is a great deal more which I shall like to talk to you about to-morrow, when Madeline is with us."

"The Creed will not be so much of a lesson for the future, Ruth, will it?" said her mamma, kindly.

"I only thought it like a lesson in the Catechism," replied Ruth.

"It can never really be one," said Mr. Clifford. "Certainly, it has the most solemn sound, when we all join in repeating it in church; but it cannot be a common thing, because it has come down to us from the time of the apostles, and tells us of such awful subjects. It is sacred, like a prayer." Ruth could not help remembering how frequently she had said it, both in church and at home, as a mere set of words, almost without a meaning. She hesitated to wish her papa good night, fearing she had vexed him. But Mr. Clifford's manner was full of tenderness; and, as he fondly stroked her head, he said: "Will my darling Ruth remember what is to be done before we lie down to sleep, when we are conscious of having displeased God?"

"We must pray to be forgiven," said Ruth, timidly.

"Yes; pray fervently, and for the pardon of that particular offence, for the sake of our blessed Redeemer; lest if we should neglect to do so, and God should call us to die before we have repented, we should be shut out for ever from his presence."

CHAPTER XIV.

ALICE LENNOX, in her solitary chamber, fancied that she alone was the sufferer from all that had passed: and she was indeed the most unhappy; but if she had known all Madeline's feelings, when, on the morning succeeding the storm, she was sent for to her papa's study, she would scarcely have been willing to change places with her. Mr. Clifford was in general so affectionate, that any thing like coldness was doubly felt; and the expression of his face, when Madeline opened the door, and asked if he wanted her, was grave, and even severe. The reason was, that he did not consider Madeline to be sufficiently aware of the naughtiness of her behaviour. She did not appear to care about it as she ought; and it was for this reason that he required her to go to him. At first he said a few words about the grief which it caused him and her mamma, to find that they could no longer trust her; and then, by asking questions, he made her repeat again the whole history of her fault, and drew from her the confession that she had once or twice been tempted to equivocate in order to conceal what she had done. He described to her the distress which she had brought upon Lady Catharine, and the sin which Alice had been induced to commit, from having, like herself, yielded to a slight temptation. He had received a particular account of all from Lady Catharine that morning; and her note, written in great wretchedness of mind, proved how bitterly she felt the disappointment of her hopes of

Alice's good behaviour. "If you had been firm, Madeline," said Mr. Clifford, "all this could not have been. I do not say that your conduct is any excuse for Alice—she must answer for herself; but I do say that it is very frightful to think how much mischief we may cause by one fault, and that not at first sight a very great one."

"I never thought Alice would tell stories about any thing," said Madeline.

"Perhaps not; yet she has done so; and you, if you had acted properly, might have prevented it. Just think how differently you would have felt, if, instead of following an idle fancy, you had shown Alice that you were wishing to the very utmost to keep the promise of your baptism; and because you had declared that you would give up pomps, and vanities, and sinful lusts, and keep God's commandments all your life, therefore you were determined, even in such a little matter, to do right, and try and overcome the liking for finery, which your mamma had warned you against. Do you think Alice would have been made the better or the worse by such an example?" Madeline did not reply. "Whatever may happen now," continued Mr. Clifford,—"whatever pain Alice may have to bear—you must consider that you might in a great measure have prevented it; and I am afraid there will be a great deal of sorrow in store for her."

"Indeed! indeed! I did not intend to make her unhappy; I did not think I was doing so very wrong," said Madeline.

"But you did intend to do a little wrong, and you did it wilfully, and went on with it. Could God love you all that time?"

"I don't know; I did not think," said Madeline.

“ Ah! that is the mischief; the fault with us all, grown-up people as well as children; we do not think; and the great thing we have to learn is the way to think; the way to remember, at all times, that God is seeing us.”

“ I will try, papa, really I will,” replied Madeline.

“ But you are going to school, Madeline; you will have many things there to make you forget; lessons, plays, new friends, new subjects to talk about; if you forget at home, how will you remember at school?”

“ I can't tell; but I will try to be good, dear papa; won't you believe me? Please don't look so grave at me.” As she spoke Madeline was about, as usual, to throw her arms round her father's neck and kiss him; but she drew back as soon as the thought crossed her; she did not dare, for he had not told her that she was forgiven.

“ You say you will try to-day, Madeline, and to-morrow temptation will come again, and you will be as before: you will laugh, and play, and be led to do wrong, merely because you do not think; and when you have done wrong you will make excuses, and by-and-by you will be sorry, and beg to be forgiven; and so, probably, you will go on. Who can trust you?”

“ Oh, papa! I wish you would not say so. I am very sorry!” Poor Madeline's tears now began to flow fast, but Mr. Clifford's manner did not change. “ Who can trust you, Madeline?” he said again. Madeline heaved a deep sigh; and leaning her head against the back of her papa's chair, she cried bitterly. There was a silence of several moments. Mr. Clifford took up his pen and commenced writing, whilst Madeline remained in the same position. “ If I were to punish you,”

he began, without raising his eyes from his employment —

“I would rather be punished,” exclaimed Madeline, “only if you would not look so grave at me.”

“My looking grave is not the principal thing for you to fear,” replied Mr. Clifford; “the important question is, how God is regarding you.”

“I was very sorry, indeed I was, papa,” said Madeline; “and I did try to say my prayers last night.” The words were spoken with sincerity; and Mr. Clifford, laying down his pen, turned to his little girl, and in a voice which showed that he loved her truly, notwithstanding the severity of his manner, he said, — “If God has forgiven you, my dear child, if I could hope that you have really prayed to Him, then, indeed, I should be happy.”

“But I did say my prayers, just as you told me; and I mentioned all the naughty things, about the sashes, and not speaking out plainly, and doing what mamma would not like; I said it all; and the prayer for when I had been very naughty.”

“And were you really very sorry?” asked Mr. Clifford. “But suppose you were not sorry enough.”

“I don’t know; how can I tell? indeed I was sorry: indeed I said it all, and I thought about it,” repeated Madeline, miserable at the idea of doubt.

“But what right had you to expect that God would listen to you, such a naughty child as you had been?”

“Oh, papa! I don’t understand; you never talked so before,” exclaimed Madeline, again bursting into tears.

“Because I never had an occasion. Your prayers, and mine, and every person’s, are the prayers of sinners; and God is perfectly holy,

and the Bible tells us 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;' that is, He cannot bear to look upon sin. If we go before Him in our own name, what hope can we have that He will listen to us?"

"But I said through Jesus Christ our Lord," said Madeline, and she bent her head reverently.

Mr. Clifford smiled, as he was accustomed to do. "You were right, Madeline," he replied; "and if you did indeed say through Jesus Christ our Lord, because you knew that God would only listen to you for His sake, then I can hope that you are forgiven. To think of our blessed Lord, and to ask Him to pray for us because we are too sinful to be heard ourselves, is our great duty and comfort when we have done wrong. I think, now, you are sorry."

Madeline at these words looked up with greater confidence; and venturing once more to approach her father, she said,—“Can you kiss me, papa?” Mr. Clifford's manner showed how truly he could pardon when he had reason to believe that repentance was sincere; but Madeline was not yet fully satisfied. “Am I to do any thing, papa?” she said.

“Any thing disagreeable, you mean, for a punishment: do you think you deserve it?”

“I was very naughty, I know,” said Madeline.

“And if I were to give you a punishment, how would you bear it?”

“I would try not to mind,” said Madeline, though she trembled at what might be coming.

“If I were to punish you, my dear child,” said Mr. Clifford, “it would be in order to make you remember, not to make you sorry; for that I hope and believe you are already. It was God's punishment which did that.”

Madeline looked up rather wonderingly.

“ You have been very unhappy lately, have you not ? ”

“ Yes, very.” Madeline spoke heartily, for she began to feel what a weight she had had upon her heart.

“ That unhappiness was sent by God ; it was the consequence of your sin, and at last it led you to confess it : the great thing now is to prevent you from forgetting, and going wrong again ; perhaps that might be done without what you would call punishment.” Poor Madeline’s face brightened ; she had fancied that she should be forbidden to play in the garden, or should be sent to bed an hour earlier for the next week or ten days. “ I think,” continued Mr. Clifford, “ that if you were to come to my study every day at half-past twelve o’clock, just when your morning lessons are finished, and were to repeat to me what I shall think right, it would help you to remember all you have done, and teach you to be on your guard. I should like you to try, at least.”

“ Is it any thing I am to learn ? ” said Madeline.

“ No, something you know perfectly already — the Creed ; and if you want to understand why I fix upon that, I must tell you the same story which I did to Ruth last night, and try and explain more particularly what the Creed means.”

“ I heard about the two little girls when we were dressing this morning,” said Madeline.

“ Then you know how the elder one learnt to remember and think about her father, by reading the account of his life ; and did Ruth tell you, also, what I said that was like ? ”

“ No ; the bell rang,” replied Madeline, “ and we were obliged to go down stairs.”

“ It was like the way in which we learn to think of God and our blessed Saviour, by repeating that

short history of the great things the Bible teaches us, which is contained in the Creed: but the difficulty is to repeat it not as a lesson, or a thing of course; but as something very important; and this I hope you will do by-and-by. Now go and fetch Ruth, and we will see if we cannot understand better than before what we learn in the Creed."

Ruth was soon found; she had been wondering a little what was going on; and wishing, above all things, to know whether Madeline was forgiven. Since the last night's conversation she had really felt ashamed of her own conceit; and she had been trying all the morning to make Madeline happy, and to show by her manner that she did not mean to set herself up, although she had not been guilty of the same offence. Ruth was in earnest in desiring to be good; and when she was told of a fault, she really did try to improve, at least for a time. That she went back again was, indeed, frequently the case; but this was from forgetfulness, and not because she had never cared about it: it was, therefore, a real pleasure to her to see how much more at ease Madeline looked when she came into the school-room; and when she was told that her papa had forgiven without punishing, Ruth's face lighted up with a sweet smile; and throwing down her work she exclaimed,—"Oh Madeline, that is so nice, and we will go on happily now; we will not be naughty again, either of us, ever."

"And papa will talk to mamma, I am sure," said Madeline; "you know he always does when he wants her to forgive us too."

"I never fear about mamma," observed Ruth: "she wanted to make it all up last night, I know. She looked quite miserable when you went to bed."

Madeline was struck by this, and presently said: "Was she really miserable, do you think, Ruth?"

"Yes, very: I am certain."

"And papa was grave, and so were you; and poor mamma was miserable," continued Madeline. "I did not think I had done any thing so very bad."

"I don't think you had," replied Ruth, fancying it right to make the best of her sister's conduct. "At any rate it was not like the stories which Alice told. I can't think how she could have done it. How Lady Catharine will punish her!"

"Oh Ruth, please don't say so!" exclaimed Madeline, remembering that her papa had said that whatever Alice might have to bear, she might in a great measure have prevented; "it makes things seem much worse. But I didn't mean to make you all unhappy. Is there any harm, I wonder, in making people unhappy, when we don't mean it?"

This was not an easy question to answer; and Madeline at that instant recollected that all this time she ought to have been in her papa's study. "No more work, Ruth," she said, taking the needle and thread from her sister's hand: "I don't want you to finish before me; and papa is waiting."

Ruth willingly replaced her needle in its case, folded up her work, and closed her basket. Talking to her papa, even upon grave subjects, was much pleasanter than learning to stitch wristbands; and with a light merry step she followed Madeline. Her smile was checked, however, when she looked in her papa's face. He was plainly more careworn than usual; and Ruth saw in a moment, from his look, that any thing like play and laughter would be against his wishes. All that had occurred seemed trifling to her; but to him it was a cause for much anxiety. A child's fault is like the bud on the tree, which, if allowed to grow, must one day become a full blossom; and the evil disposition

which made Madeline thoughtless and Ruth conceited, might end in that neglect of God, and that pride of heart, which would at length shut them out from heaven. This, however, was not the principal thought in Mr. Clifford's mind at that moment. He hoped and believed that his children were conscious of their errors; and his only wish was to impress upon them the sense of what they had done wrong, so that under other temptations they might be afraid of yielding. "Here is a place for you, Ruth," he said, pointing to the seat in the half-open window, through which came the sweet scent of the jessamines and roses which grew over the house: "and Madeline shall bring her chair next to mine." This was a sign of Madeline's complete forgiveness; and as she drew near, and put her hand within her papa's, she wondered how it could ever have entered her head to do any thing which would displease him. "We were talking of the Creed last night, Ruth, if you remember," said Mr. Clifford; "and I was trying to show you why it was a good thing for us to learn and repeat it; but I dare say even now it does not seem very clear to you."

"I remember about the story," said Ruth.

"Yet perhaps the account of her papa's life, which little Mary read over so often, sounds as if it must have been more interesting than the Creed."

"I think it must have been a great deal more," said Madeline.

"Most likely," replied her father: "the Creed is not a pretty story, and it requires an effort to attend to and understand it; but so it does to say our prayers, or read the Bible. God does not teach any of us to be religious without trouble; and the great question is, whether we will take it, or whether

we are resolved to be indolent. What shall I say for you both?"

"I mean to try, papa," replied Madeline, speaking humbly; for she was not inclined to trust herself after her late faults.

"And Ruth will try also, I am sure," said Mr. Clifford: and he smiled to see the earnest way in which his little girl bent her eyes upon him, as if her face would promise much better than her words. "If you could both fully understand and believe what is told us in the Creed," he continued, "you would no longer find it difficult to be religious. Suppose that, instead of having learnt it by heart, you were to hear it for the first time to-day, what do you think you should feel about it?" The children did not know what to answer, and Mr. Clifford went on. "We will fancy," he said, "a little heathen child—an Indian, accustomed to live in the forests, and never having been taught any thing about God; would it not be very astonishing to him to be told that there was a glorious Being, who had always lived before the sun, or the moon, or the stars were created, and who must live always, even if every thing else were to be destroyed? When he repeated the words—'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,' and then looked upwards to the blue sky, and abroad over the beautiful earth, I do not think he would consider them, as we often do, a lesson. He might not, indeed, rightly understand them; but he would feel that they meant something wonderful. Or let us take a case from among ourselves. Let us imagine ourselves tempted to do something wrong—to be deceitful, or dishonest, or inclined to tell a falsehood; and that just before we actually did this wrong thing, we were called on to repeat the Belief,—what would it remind us of?"

“Of God and our Saviour,” replied Ruth.

“Yes; not only that there is a God, but of all which He has done for us. We should say, in fact, though not actually in words, that we have now in heaven a father who is able to do all things, because He is the Father Almighty; that we have also a lord and master, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who, in order to save us from the punishment due to our sins, undertook to suffer for us; that this gracious Redeemer was, by the power of the Holy Spirit, born like ourselves of a human mother, the blessed Virgin Mary; and, having left the unspeakable happiness of heaven, came down upon earth to live amongst sinners, without a home, or riches, or comforts of any kind. We should be reminded that after thirty-three long years had gone by, which He spent in teaching and trying to make people good, and curing their sicknesses, He was allowed by the governor of the country where He lived, named Pontius Pilate, to be crucified — that is, His hands and feet were nailed to a cross, and He was left to endure more horrible agony than we can even imagine, until He gave up His earthly life, and suffered His body to be laid in the grave, as ours must one day be, when God shall call us to die. His Spirit descended into hell; — that is, not the place of torment (as the name, indeed, often means), but the abode of the spirits of the dead, who are waiting for the day of resurrection. Besides these awful truths, we should remember also that, on the third day after our Saviour’s death, He by His own power rose from the grave, and went up again into heaven, to that glorious world which for our sakes He had left, and where now He dwells with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and the holy angels, who are ever loving and praising Him. If we recollected

and thought of this Friend, and of all the suffering He went through for us, do you think we could go away and do directly afterwards the naughty thing which He has told us not to do?"

Mr. Clifford looked at Madeline; but tears were in her eyes, and she did not venture to answer. She was thinking of the temptation to which she had so lately given way, and wishing that she had before remembered all that her papa was now bringing to her mind. There was a pause for some moments, and then Ruth, in a tone of surprise, said: "That is not all the Creed, papa."

"No," replied Mr. Clifford; "but it is sufficient to give us a great deal to think about. It is very awful; yet that which is to come will perhaps seem still more so. It concerns each of us particularly, whether we are young or old. What is it that followeth the words—'He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty?'"

"'From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead,'" replied Ruth.

"Perhaps," continued Mr. Clifford, "we might be so hard-hearted as not to care to please our Saviour, because of His love for us; we might repeat the Creed as far as we have yet gone, and still resolve to sin; but there is something else to be thought of, which, if we said the words with any attention, would, I hope, frighten us, or at least make us stay to consider whether it would be safe to displease our gracious Lord. We are told that, some day,—it may be a hundred, or fifty, or twenty years hence, or it may be in a few months or weeks, or it may be (no man knows) to-morrow, or, more fearful still, it may be this very day before the sun goes down,—that same merciful Saviour, who died upon the Cross, and rested in the grave, and then

ascended to sit at the right hand of God, will appear again; but He will come, not as the son of a human mother, but as the son of His Almighty Father, as the Lord of heaven and earth. He has Himself warned us what the manner of that coming will be—‘with power and great glory.’ The sun, which now shines so brightly, will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from heaven. The sound of a mighty trumpet will be heard; and the voice of the archangel—the chief of all the angels—will call upon the quick and dead—those who shall at that time be living, as you and I may be living, and those who have died before—to appear before the judgment-seat of the Almighty. It is impossible for us fully to imagine that scene: but once—it is now more than 1700 years ago—a human being was permitted to have a vision of what it shall be. St. John the Evangelist, the disciple whom Jesus loved, saw ‘a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And he saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books: and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.’ This was the vision, the representation of what will be. We must have been amongst that infinite multitude; do you think St. John saw our names written in the book of life?” Madeline hid her face upon the table. “I would not willingly frighten you, my child,” continued Mr. Clifford, “but indeed it is necessary that we should think of these things; that when we say we believe that Christ our Lord will come to judge the quick and

the dead, we should understand that He will come to judge, not grievous sinners only, — the drunkard and the thief, — not merely our neighbours and our friends, but ourselves.”

“ Will He forgive us, if we are very sorry then ? ” said Ruth, eagerly.

“ The time for seeking forgiveness will be over on that day, ” replied Mr. Clifford ; “ that time is now. ”

“ But if we are very sorry, very sorry indeed, ” said Ruth.

Mr. Clifford shook his head : “ Every one will be very sorry indeed then, Ruth. The greatest sinner who ever lived, the man who was most careless, who even laughed at the thought of death and judgment, will be very sorry indeed ; but his sorrow will come too late. ”

“ Too late ? ” repeated Ruth thoughtfully.

“ Yes ; it is not a strange thing, is it, to find ourselves too late even in this life ? There are instances happening daily, and they are warnings, if we will but profit by them. I will give you one, which I am sure you have not forgotten. Do you not remember the very last time we went from Cottington to Ringwood, when I said I would take you by the railroad ? You were called early, your box was ready, your breakfast was prepared, there was nothing wanting, but that you should be dressed in time. Instead of dressing, you played ; you thought one minute could not signify. Your mamma warned you, but you did not listen. You did not understand that there was any thing in the world so fixed that it would not stop for you, even though it might be a question of life and death. At length we set off ; we walked quickly, and looked about us continually, and often I said that I feared we should be too late ; but you did not com-

prehend how it could be possible. It was but a short walk, and we saw the great steam engine as it stopped opposite the station-house; we even watched the people moving about the carriages, and we heard the panting noise of the engine, and the calling of the policemen. We drew nearer and nearer, and you thought we were quite safe;—there was a slight motion in the train, and the smoke ascended into the air, and as the people who were standing by stood still, and fixed their eyes upon the long line of carriages, it rushed swiftly away, and we found ourselves one minute too late. No exertions, no entreaties, could avail us then. That was being one minute too late for an earthly journey, but it is equally possible to be one minute too late for heaven.”

“But can little children be too late?” asked Ruth quickly.

Mr. Clifford waited for an instant, and leant his head upon his hand, as if some painful thought had struck him: “If you had been in the boat last night with Old Roger,” he said, “if you had sunk in the waves, and been drowned, what opportunity would you now have to be sorry for your sins, and pray for pardon?”

Ruth seemed alarmed even at the idea: “But we never go on the water when it looks stormy, papa,” she said.

“Yet what do you say to other dangers, Ruth?—accidents in carriages, or in walking, or by lightning, or by sudden illnesses? There is no moment, except the present, at which it may not be too late, for there is no moment at which we may not die.” As Mr. Clifford spoke, Madeline sighed heavily, but she did not look up. “It is enough to frighten us, is it not, Madeline?” continued her father, placing his hand fondly on her head, “God means

that it should frighten us. But when we do feel this fear, and begin to think, as you said the other day, that it is impossible to be good, we should remember that there are other things told us in the Creed to support and give us hope. If we believe in 'God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord,' so we believe also in God the Holy Ghost, and this belief is one of the greatest possible blessings; can you tell me why?"

"Because He will help us to do right," said Ruth.

"Yes, indeed He will. We have but to pray to Him constantly, and there is no difficulty which need be too great for us. From the moment when, as little infants, we were made at our baptism members of Christ's holy Catholic Church, that Holy Spirit was given to us to be our guide; and if, when we say our prayers, we ask Him to continue with us, we may be certain that He will never forsake us. We shall not be able to tell exactly how He assists us, but we shall find good thoughts coming to our minds just at the moment we want them; and instead of giving way to our evil tempers, we shall find that we have a power of overcoming them. It will be strange, even to ourselves, to observe, how much easier it will become every day to be good. And all this is to be done by praying."

"But if we only pray," said Ruth, "will that do as well as trying?"

"If I were very ill, Ruth, and knew of a medicine which I believed would cure me, would it do me any good if I would not send for it?" Ruth smiled at the idea. "Or supposing I actually held it in my hand, would it be any use to me unless I opened my mouth and swallowed it? In both

these cases I should have something to do myself, and yet it would not be the doing it which would cure me; and so it is with our hearts. We have to pray and to try with all our strength; and if we do pray and try, God will give us His Holy Spirit to make us good; but if we neglect either of these commands, even the power of that blessed Spirit will be of no avail to us."

During this conversation, it was difficult to know how far Madeline was listening or not. She did not try to speak, or show that she took an interest; only every now and then she drew her hand across her eyes, to wipe away the tears which were fast falling down her cheek. Mr. Clifford saw that she had been struck by the solemnity of the subjects on which they had spoken, and motioning to Ruth, he told her to leave them for a little while alone: "We will finish talking another time," he said; and as Ruth left the room he turned to Madeline, and added mildly, "there has been enough to think of to-day." Madeline felt even Ruth's absence a relief in her present state of mind; and when she found that her sister was gone, her fears were told without any reserve. Mr. Clifford's manner had lost every trace of sternness; and as he listened to Madeline's anxious question, "Whether he thought that God had really forgiven her?" he had no longer any doubt of her true repentance. He did not speak to her then of the awfulness of the Almighty, but of His mercy. He reminded her how long years before God had loved and thought of her, and sent His blessed Son to die for her, and at her birth had taken her into His Church, and made her one of that happy family to whom the glories of heaven are promised for the sake of Jesus Christ: "You are God's child now, my love," he said; "His child more fully than you are mine;

and Jesus Christ is your Saviour, and will ask for pardon for you; you do not doubt my assurances; but if I can forgive, much more can He, for His mercy is infinite."

Often and often before had Madeline heard the same words, but she had little attended to their meaning, for she had not felt the need of them. Yet, if a child can sin, so also a child can repent; and as Madeline listened to her father's words, she understood something of the comfort which the knowledge that we have a Saviour who will pray for us, and have compassion upon us, ought to give to all.

CHAPTER XV.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Clifford's thoughts were so much engaged with his own children, he did not forget Alice Lennox. She was not indeed his charge in the same way as Ruth and Madeline, but she was living in his parish, and he felt himself bound to watch over her. Notwithstanding Lady Catharine Hyde's formality of manner, he thought it possible that she would like to see and consult with him, what was best to be done with a child who had shown herself so little to be trusted as Alice; but Mr. Clifford did not understand Lady Catharine's character. She did not require any advice, for she had made up her mind from the beginning as to the course she was to adopt. She did not ask whether Alice was sorry, or whether it was likely that, if allowed to remain at the Manor, she would improve more than if she went to school; but having once discovered that Alice had disobeyed her, her only idea was to punish her severely, and then send her away. The determination seemed harsh, and yet Lady Catharine's disposition was full of benevolence and kindness. Even Alice, in her solitary room, did not feel more distress than did her truest earthly friend, as she walked through the large but desolate apartments of her house, and missed the light footstep and the cheerful voice which had for the last few months enlivened her sad life; and felt, that for the future, except in the holiday weeks, she must again be lonely.

When Mr. Clifford appeared in the afternoon at

the Manor, he was accordingly received, not with entreaties for advice, but with a request that he would give the terms, and the direction for Mrs. Carter's school. "I shall make a few inquiries myself," said Lady Catharine; "and if the answers prove satisfactory, which I have no doubt from your report they will be, I think I cannot do better than place Alice there immediately."

Mr. Clifford was rather at a loss what to say, for he did in his own mind think that Lady Catharine could do better. He believed that, to allow Alice to remain at home, and to treat her with gentleness and firmness, would be more likely to strengthen her principles, and enable her to resist future temptations, than to send her amongst strange companions at school. So he had thought with regard to Madeline; but in her case there was no choice. It was now settled that Mrs. Beresford was to come to Laneton; the two children could not therefore remain at home; and Mr. Clifford could only trust, that constant care, and the influence of early instruction, would, with the blessing of God, be the means of keeping his child in the straight and narrow way of goodness. He did, however, venture to say to Lady Catharine, that he thought it possible that, with Alice's unsteady mind, she might run great risk of evil amongst new companions; but Lady Catharine's answer silenced him. She said, "That the subject had been well considered,—that it was not her custom to act hastily;" and she again asked for Mrs. Carter's direction. Mr. Clifford gave it, and rose to take leave, when to his surprise Lady Catharine said, "Will you not see Alice? The advice of the clergyman of the parish, and such a friend as you have always shown yourself, may perhaps have an effect upon her. I shall not go to her myself till

the evening." Mr. Clifford was pleased at the offer, as it showed that, notwithstanding her determination, Lady Catharine was desirous to give him an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with Alice's state of mind, and, perhaps, of being of real service to her; and with willing steps he went up stairs. The door of the dressing-room was unlocked and opened, but Lady Catharine did not enter. She only motioned to Mr. Clifford to do so, and withdrew. The shutters were more than half closed, and the dim light of an afternoon of pouring rain scarcely penetrated into the little room. Alice was kneeling at the window-seat. She was gazing through the chinks of the shutter upon the avenue road. It had been her sole amusement during the whole of the long weary day; but there was nothing passing, not even the butcher's cart, or a stray beggar; and, as a last hope of occupation, Alice was trying to count the tiles on the stable-roof, in order, if possible, to divert her thoughts from the wretchedness caused by her own faults.

"Alice!" said Mr. Clifford, and upon hearing his voice Alice looked up quickly; "Lady Catharine wished me to come to you. I dare say she will come herself by-and-by." Alice made no reply. "Should you like to see her?" continued Mr. Clifford.

"I don't know; she does not care,—she is very angry with me," said Alice, speaking with difficulty.

"Has she not reason to be angry, Alice? Have you not deceived and disobeyed her? And do you think it possible she should ever trust you again?" Alice rested her head again upon the window-seat, while Mr. Clifford went on speaking. He talked kindly, but seriously; he reminded her of the duty and affection which she owed to Lady Catharine for her care; of the positive necessity of submitting

to her in all things; of the ingratitude which she had shown in breaking the only command which had been specially laid upon her; and then he pointed out to her how much sin and suffering had been caused by the commission of one fault. "The indulgence of one wish," he said, "the desire to gratify your liking for the bonbons when you knew they were not allowed, led you to be deceitful to Lady Catharine, and selfish, almost cruel, to Madeline; who, though she had done wrong, ought never to have been accused unjustly; and at length it brought you to be guilty of that great sin of lying, which, in the Bible, is spoken of in such fearful language. Oh, Alice! can you really be indifferent to such conduct? Does it give you no pain to think that your earthly friends doubt you, and grieve over you, and that God, the all-holy, all-merciful God, your Father in heaven, is angry with you?" Mr. Clifford paused; he hoped that Alice would speak, that he might discover whether she had any sense of the evil of which she was guilty; but Alice still appeared immovable. Yet it would have been a mistake to suppose that she was hardened, and did not feel Mr. Clifford's words: she did feel them in her heart, but she did not choose to confess it; perhaps towards Lady Catharine she would have been more humble; but with Mr. Clifford she was partly shy and partly obstinate; and a sudden determination seized her not to answer to any thing which was said; she was wilful by nature; and the consciousness of having behaved very ill made her still more so. Finding that serious words took no effect, Mr. Clifford tried more gentle ones: he had seen that Alice was really fond of Lady Catharine; and he described how much she was grieved; how pale and worn she looked, and what an effort it was to

her to talk upon all that had passed; and then Alice was more wretched than before, and more resolved that she would not show it. Mr. Clifford was extremely disappointed; he was accustomed to see his own children give way whenever he reprov'd them; and he did not know how to deal with a disposition so perverse. He again addressed Alice kindly, and begged her to look up and answer him; but his words were entirely thrown away. Every moment that Alice continued obstinate strengthened her resolution of taking no notice, because it made her more ashamed of doing better. It would have been easy to have spoken at first, but when many minutes had gone by it became almost impossible; and Mr. Clifford, finding that his persuasions were useless, gave up the attempt. "As you will then, Alice," he said: "I came in the hope of finding you penitent, and begging for Lady Catharine's forgiveness; since you will not listen to me you do not need it; when I see you next I trust you may be in a better mind." He turned to leave the room, and pausing in the doorway cast one more glance upon Alice, trusting even then that she would have spoken; but whatever might have been her grief she suffered nothing of it to appear. Lady Catharine was waiting for him at the foot of the stairs; she did not ask any questions, but her countenance expressed anxious expectation. Mr. Clifford shook his head: "It is a disposition I cannot understand," he said; "but I do not really think she is as insensible as she tries to appear; your ladyship probably will be more successful."

"And will she not own that she has been wrong?" exclaimed Lady Catharine.

"She will own nothing; but she has been crying, and is evidently in great distress of mind: it

might have been shyness which prevented her from speaking to me." Mr. Clifford hoped by this observation to induce Lady Catharine to go at once to Alice ; but the resolution to wait till the morning was made, and it was not to be broken. Mr. Clifford took his hat, and prepared to go. Lady Catharine's face was pale, and her manner agitated. Mr. Clifford would willingly have said something to console her, but she did not give him the opportunity: she held out her hand, and warmly returned his cordial pressure, but she said merely the ordinary words at parting ; and Mr. Clifford returned home, disappointed both with her and with Alice.

And so that day passed, and the next, and the day after : nothing was known of what was going on at the Manor ; even the servants did not meet ; and whether Alice was forgiven, or whether Lady Catharine was still resolved upon sending her to school, remained a mystery. The children at the Parsonage were now busily occupied ; for the day was fast approaching when they were to leave home. There was a good deal of amusement in the preparations, notwithstanding the unpleasant thoughts connected with them : new dresses were to be tried on, new books to be ordered, work-boxes and drawing-boxes to be fitted up, and a visit to Cottington was in contemplation, to buy whatever was still wanting. All this was agreeable enough ; but when Madeline went each day to her papa's study at the appointed hour, to repeat the Creed, as he had desired, a remembrance of shame and self-reproach came to her mind ; and when Mr. Clifford made her stop to collect her thoughts, and then said a few words to her upon the awfulness of the subjects of which she was about to speak, Madeline's mind was sobered : she felt that she was forgiven, but she was not allowed to forget.

There were other circumstances which at that time served to cast something of gloom over the Parsonage. The sudden death of the old fisherman had been a great shock to almost every one in Laneton ; and Mr. Clifford, as he went from house to house, and heard the regrets, and witnessed the tears which were shed for his loss, could not help sympathising with the general grief. The children also saw that such an awful event must be intended as a warning ; and when the Sunday arrived which was fixed for the funeral, they thought it sad to see the sun shine bright and hear the birds sing, when the old man who, only the week before, had been able to enjoy himself likewise, was about to be laid in the darkness and stillness of the grave.—Mr. Clifford was silent in the morning at breakfast, and walked alone in the garden before the service began ; and when he read from the pulpit the text which he had chosen for his sermon: "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come ;"—there was a little hesitation in his voice. But the death of the righteous (and such there was every reason to believe Roger Dyson might with truth be called) must ever be a cause rather of hope and thankfulness than of sorrow, and when Ruth and Madeline joined their father after the funeral service was over, there was even a cheerfulness of manner which showed that to him the remembrance of death could never be unwelcome.

"It seems such a sad day," said Ruth, as she took hold of her papa's hand ; "I wish people would not choose to be buried on a Sunday."

"It is not often a choice," observed Mr. Clifford : "generally speaking, it is necessity, or at least a matter of convenience. But, to my notions, Sunday is the best day to fix on for a funeral, because it is the one which brings with it the great-

est comfort : it is the memorial of our Lord's Resurrection."

"Yes," replied Ruth, "mamma said so too, just now ; but it does not seem right either ; it makes every one melancholy ; and you know, papa, Sunday ought always to be happy."

"It would not make us melancholy, if we thought rightly, my love. Even if we had lost a dear friend, there would be as much of peace and joy, as of grief in our feelings.

"Not about any person," said Ruth.

"No, certainly not ; but I am speaking of cases, like the present, in which we have every reason to believe that our loss is another's gain. Roger Dyson was, I most truly think, a faithful member of the Catholic Church, and we may without presumption trust that his spirit is at rest."

"You mean because he was baptized, don't you, papa?" said Ruth.

"Not entirely, my dear. There are a great many persons who are baptized ; but I am afraid, there are but a few who when they die can be really accounted, in God's sight, members of his Holy Catholic Church. Of course, it is not for us to decide in any particular instance because those who have done wrong may have repented, but when we know that persons have been thieves, or drunkards, or liars, or passionate, or even indolent, proud, selfish, vain, or in fact giving way wilfully to any sin, we can scarcely hope that they will be accepted at the day of judgment as belonging to the Church of Christ. We know that they will not be, if they have died in their sin."

"But they belonged to it once," said Ruth.

"Yes ; but they may by their own fault be cast out of it, as a child may be turned from his home, and considered as no longer one of the family.

Even here on earth, sinners are sometimes cast out of the Church—they are excommunicated; that is, they are publicly and solemnly cut off from the privileges and blessings of the Church; and especially are not allowed to receive the Holy Communion.”

“Old Roger always went to Laneton church,” said Madeline.

“Yes; but when we talk of Laneton church, or Cottington church, or Winslow, or Markland churches, we mean only different buildings; when we speak of the Church of Christ, or the Catholic Church, we mean the people who go to worship in those buildings. Catholic, you know, is not the name of a place, — it means universal, that is, belonging to all countries, and all ages.”

“Then there are a great many built churches,” said Madeline.

“Yes, but only one Catholic Church.”

“I think I know what you mean, papa,” said Ruth: “all the people who are baptized, and go to church.”

“Those belong to the Catholic Church in England,” said Mr. Clifford, “but the Catholic Church is also in America, and Scotland, and France, and Italy, and many other countries besides.”

“That makes a great many,” said Ruth; “they cannot all be one.”

“Are you sure of that, Ruth? You have an uncle in America, and another in India, and another in Jamaica; do they not all belong to one family?”

“Yes, I see, papa, but” —

“But what? do not be afraid to speak, my love.”

“Are the churches in other countries quite like ours, papa? Do the people say just the same prayers, and have they books like ours?”

“Not exactly; but I dare say your uncles do not

live exactly alike. It is impossible they should indeed, yet that does not prevent them from belonging to one family. They may dress differently, and get up at different hours, and have a great many different habits, but they are still brothers, the children of one parent."

"And the churches in Scotland, and France, and America, and all the places you mentioned, are brothers," said Ruth.

"Sisters rather they are called, but I cannot explain the reason to you now."

"But," said Ruth, and a shade of perplexity came over her face, "it is not the same either: all the churches in different countries cannot have the same parent."

"They may be descended from the same," replied Mr. Clifford; "your cousins in America, for instance, belong to our family; but your uncle Edmond is their father, and I am your's: and the same with your cousins in India and Jamaica. There may be several different fathers, but all will have come from one person, that is, your grandfather."

"And the churches all over the world must have come from one," said Ruth, still looking confused.

"Yes, from our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Universal Church."

"But who are all the fathers?" asked Ruth, quickly.

"The bishops are," replied Mr. Clifford: "they are called Right Reverend Fathers in God. You know the first bishops were the twelve apostles. Our Saviour gave to them a special gift of the Holy Ghost, and before their death they were directed to chose other persons to be bishops likewise; and to ordain them by laying their hands upon them, and praying for the blessing of God.

Our Lord then gave to these persons authority, such as apostles had, and so it has gone on down to the present day."

"Then the bishops are all like brothers," said Madeline.

"Yes, and they all have the same power given them by God to rule the Church and to make clergymen, like me and Mr. Monckton of Cottington."

"Then who is it we read about to mamma in our history?" asked Ruth, "the pope I mean."

"He is a bishop,—the bishop of Rome."

"But in the history," said Ruth, "it talks about him as if he were bishop of England."

"Yes, some hundred years after the apostles, the bishop of Rome set himself up above the others who were his brothers; and because he had been looked up to, and allowed to decide in cases of difficulty, just as an elder brother might do, he declared he was to rule in every thing."

"But why did the others let him do it?" said Ruth.

"They did not at first; they said constantly that he was very wrong; but he and the bishops of Rome who came after him persisted, till at last people began to believe them, and then they had their own way, and ruled every thing in England and France, and everywhere."

"They don't do so, now," said Ruth.

"No, because three hundred years ago, the king and parliament of England, and the bishops of the Catholic Church in England, said that they had no business to do it; that they might rule Rome, but they had no right to rule in England. There was a great quarrel about it, and since then, the bishops in England have not paid any attention to the false claims of the bishops of Rome."

“ Did a bishop make you a clergyman, papa ? ” asked Madeline.

“ Yes, no one else could do it. Our Saviour does not allow any persons to teach and administer the Holy Sacraments, except such as have been, what is called, ordained by a bishop.”

“ And that is the reason you were ordained,” said Ruth.

“ Yes; first of all, I was made a deacon, by having the bishop’s hands laid upon my head, after he had prayed for me. When this was done I was allowed to perform the greater part of the service, but not the whole. I could not pronounce the absolution or forgiveness of sins, nor consecrate the bread and wine in the Holy Communion. When I had acted as deacon for two or three years, I was made a priest in the same way, by the authority of the bishop, and now I may perform the whole duty.”

“ Did old Roger understand about it all ? ” inquired Ruth.

Mr. Clifford smiled. “ It is not very likely he did ; yet he may have been more truly a Christian than you or I are. It is not knowing, but believing and doing, which will for our Saviour’s sake gain us admittance into heaven.”

“ And does Roger belong to any church, now ? ” asked Ruth.

“ To the Catholic Church still. Those who have been holy members of Christ’s Church upon earth, continue to be so, only in a far more blessed state of peace and safety, after they die.”

“ God takes care of them,” said Ruth.

“ Yes, just as He took care of them upon earth, and as He takes care of us ; and our Saviour loves them, and the Holy Spirit comforts them ; they belong to God’s family exactly the same, whether

we see them or not; and after the Resurrection, they and we, I hope, shall all live together in heaven. So that we have a great deal in common with all good and holy persons, even when they are gone from this world, because they are living still, and have the same God to protect them, and the same home of perfect happiness to look forward to."

"And, papa, do you think old Roger knows any thing about us now?"

"It is impossible for me to say," replied Mr. Clifford, "because there is so very little information upon such subjects in the Bible. God has not seen fit to reveal to what degree the friends we have lost from our sight, can still take an interest in us, or care about us."

"Roger was not one of our friends, exactly," said Ruth, "so he would not care about us."

"That does not follow, Ruth: wherever his spirit may now be, he must understand far better than we can hope to do, the importance of all which passes here. He feels the peace which our Saviour has promised to all who love Him; and he knows how horrible it would be to be looking forward to the torment of hell, instead of the blessedness of heaven. The other world is like a dream to us, but it is all real to him, just as real as that we are walking in this garden, and looking upon the trees and the sea. And if he could know that we are risking the loss of heaven by giving way to any known sin, whether it be a great one or a little one, it must be more frightful than it would be to us to watch a man hanging over that high cliff by a single thread."

"But, papa," said Ruth, "good people now care when they see wicked ones, because mamma was very unhappy the other day when Ralph Haynes had been stealing."

"Yes," replied Mr Clifford, "the better we are, the more sorry we shall be for sinners; especially for those who are members of the Church, and yet disobey God."

"But we ought to be angry with them, ought we not?" said Ruth.

"How do you think Madeline would feel if you had done wrong?" inquired Mr. Clifford. Ruth blushed; she knew why her papa did not ask her how she would feel if Madeline were in fault.

"I should be very sorry," said Madeline.

"I am sure you would: you love Ruth, for she is your sister, you belong to one family. God has a family too; some upon earth, and some, like old Roger, in the world of departed spirits: and those who are particularly our brothers and sisters upon earth, are the members of the Church. We ought to attend to, and assist, and think of them before any others. It will be no good to recollect about the Communion of Saints in heaven, if we forget those who are living."

"But, papa," said Ruth, in surprise, "church-people are not saints."

"Some are, Ruth, and all ought to be."

"A great many are very wicked, I know," continued Ruth.

"Then their punishment will be the greater. God has given them the opportunity of being good, by taking them into His church, and bestowing upon them his Holy Spirit."

"And must we care about them if they are ever so bad?" said Ruth.

"We must care by trying to teach them better. Church people are more our relations than others: I think you must understand now."

"I am glad Roger was a church person," said Ruth.

"So am I indeed, it gives me a much more happy feeling about him; though if he had not been I hope God would have forgiven him; because he would have been ignorant, and not wilfully sinful."

"He can never be sinful now," observed Ruth. Mr. Clifford walked on a few paces in silence. Ruth had said what had been in his own thoughts often during the day.

"His grave is made under the old yew tree, in the east corner of the churchyard, shall we go and look at it?" he asked. Ruth put her hand within his, whilst Madeline went forward to open the little gate which led into the lane, dividing the churchyard from the parsonage garden.

It was a sheltered, quiet spot, which had been chosen for the last resting-place of the old fisherman. The ivy-covered wall protected it from the keen blast of the east wind, and the knotted branches of the dark yew spread over it, as if to guard it from the rays of the mid-day sun. There were not many graves near it; only a few crumbling stones marked the spots where, in long past years, others, humble like himself, had been committed to the dust; beings, whose names forgotten upon earth, were scarcely to be discovered from the half-defaced letters which had recorded them, but whose souls, resting in the hands of God, were awaiting the unchangeable sentence either of condemnation or of mercy. "His trial is over," were the first words which Mr. Clifford spoke; "the end of ours is yet to come." Ruth fixed her eyes on the newly-turned up earth; it seemed impossible that one, who had so lately lived and moved amongst them, should then be lying motionless beneath it.

"Did he never do any thing wrong?" asked Madeline, in a whispered voice.

“Yes, Madeline; often, very often: no day passed without it.”

“But, papa, he is happy.”

“Happy, we may believe, as surely as we can believe it of any human being; but it is not because he never sinned, but because, for the sake of the Saviour in whom he trusted, his sins are forgiven!”

“And God will forgive us, too,” said Madeline, in a half anxious, half confident tone.

“Yes, if we repent and amend here; the forgiveness of sins is promised to us now, but there is no forgiveness in the world of spirits.”

“None?” said Madeline, as if the thought had struck her for the first time.

“None!” repeated Mr. Clifford; and leaning against the old wall he covered his face with his hands. There was a silence of some minutes; the children stood at the head of the fisherman’s grave, and gazed mournfully around. Sweet summer flowers were springing amidst the green turf, and insects were buzzing in the warm, misty air; the songs of birds fell blithely upon the ear, and the distant lowing of cattle, and the tinkling of sheep bells, mingled with the low murmur of the waves which were breaking upon the sandy shore. At that moment all were unheeded, and a sense of the awfulness of death came over them such as they had never felt before.

“It seems so still, so quiet,” said Ruth, as she drew near to her father’s side. Mr. Clifford looked at her and smiled.

“It is right that it should be so, is it not, Ruth? They who dwell here have given up all interest in the noise and the business of this world; they are quiet themselves, and the place of their rest should be quiet likewise.”

“They will never hear any thing again,” said Madeline, and the thought seemed full of sadness.

“Yes, Madeline, they will; one sound there is for which they are all waiting,—the sound of the archangel’s trumpet which will summon the dead and the living to judgment. The bodies that are now mouldering away will then live, and move, and breathe again, even as we wake from our nightly rest to the business and the pleasures of the day.”

“But it does not seem that it can be,” said Ruth, thoughtfully.

“It is hard to think so when we look upon the graves of the dead,” replied her father; “but it is not hard when we look upon the earth and the sky. The God who could make the universe can do all things; and the Saviour who raised Himself from the tomb will not fail to raise us likewise.”

“To wake again!” said Ruth; “it is so strange!”

“And, more strange still, Ruth, the life which we shall then begin to live will never end: whether it be happiness so great that we cannot conceive it, or misery so dreadful that the most horrible torments of earth are as nothing in comparison, there will be no sleep to break it.” Again there was silence, interrupted only by the light, gentle sounds of the summer evening. Mr. Clifford’s eye wandered over the churchyard; and as it rested upon a lonely grave, apart from all others, in the farthest corner, he slightly shuddered, and an expression of great pain passed over his countenance. “Are you ill, papa?” said Ruth, anxiously, when she noticed it.

“No, my love:” and the look of peace which accompanied the words made Ruth happy again; “but there are some things which always come to my mind in a churchyard, especially in this one,

and they naturally make me serious; perhaps you would say melancholy."

"Ought we to think of them too, papa?"

"It is not possible you should, my love; but there are many here whose lives were sinful, and their deaths, I fear, without repentance, for whom the thought of the life everlasting is full of terror."

"Did you know them, papa?" said Madeline.

"Yes; some I knew long, and I tried to warn them, but they would not listen; and there was one, he who is buried by himself beneath the thorn, he had lived a wicked life, and when I spoke to him of his evil ways he mocked at me, and even closed his door against me; and, at last, after some time had passed, I thought I would try once more. I went to him, and entreated, as if he had been my own child, that he would repent while yet there was time. He turned from me in anger, and said that he would never suffer me to open my lips to him again; and I never did; God did not suffer it: that very night he was brought home dead."

"I remember, papa," said Ruth; "nurse told me of it, but she did not seem frightened."

"Because she did not think of that which was to come afterwards. If we could imagine what it must be to enter upon the life which can never end, we should never speak lightly of death."

"But we may be happy," said Ruth.

"God in His mercy grant it, my child!" said Mr. Clifford, earnestly. "Yes, we may be happy; happy, as the Bible tells us, in a home so blessed that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive' its blessedness. But we may also be miserable, and now is the time of our trial."

"And will there never be an end?" asked Madeline.

“Never ; even if we were now to go down upon the sea-shore, and take a grain of sand from the million upon millions that are collected there, and moving so slowly that our steps could scarcely be perceived, were to begin our journey towards the very farthest of those distant worlds which shine above us in the evening sky, and when we had left it were again to return for another, and another, and another, till every one of those tiny particles, both here and throughout the world, had been carried away, yet even then, when that immeasurable time had passed, we should be no nearer to the end of the life everlasting than we are now.”

Madeline tried to think, but she could not ; she could not understand, and she felt unhappy.

“We cannot hope to comprehend this clearly, my love,” said Mr. Clifford, “but we shall do well to think about it sometimes. It is easy to speak of the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting ; the words come like any other words ; they pass our lips easily, but they are, like the name of the all-holy God, awful and vast, and only to be mentioned with the fervent hope that when our bodies are raised, and our souls re-united to them, and we enter upon the life everlasting, it may be a life of joy in the presence of God.” There was a tear in Madeline’s eye as she turned to leave the churchyard : it was a tear not for the dead, who were resting there, not for the fisherman, whose cottage was empty, but it was a tear for her own faults ; for the sins which, though they had been forgiven, were still so frequently recalled to mind, and which, if she had persisted in them, would have unfitted her for the happiness of heaven. Madeline was learning by degrees that her life on earth, even her life as a little child, might bring upon her happiness, or misery, for ever.

CHAPTER XVI.

How quickly time passes! so we all say, upon meeting friends after absence, or when an event happens which has raised our expectations, or even when we stay quietly in our homes and occupy ourselves in our daily duties. It is only when we look forward that time seems long. When Ruth and Madeline were first told that they were to go to school, the period seemed years off. Two months appeared as if they would never be over. Yet the days slid by almost without notice, and in the midst of lessons, and play, and the business of preparation, came, almost as if it had never been thought of, the very week fixed for their departure. Time was short to them, for they were usefully engaged, and notwithstanding the prospect of separation there was much to give them pleasure. But time was very long to one who, like them, had lessons and occupations, but who was conscious that she had forfeited the good opinion of her best friend, and who could never look in her face without being reminded of the grief she had caused her. Alice Lennox was forgiven,—forgiven, that is, so far, that after two days of solitary punishment, when her proud heart was in a measure subdued, and Lady Catharine went to her and found her crying, and heard her confess how wrongly she had acted, and beg that Madeline might be told she was sorry, then and not before she was allowed to leave her room and return to her usual pursuits. But Alice saw that every

thing was changed. Lady Catharine never reproached her, and even Marsham ceased to find fault with her. She was allowed to employ herself as much as she chose; but there was but little notice taken of any thing which she did. If her lessons were well done, Lady Catharine scarcely looked pleased; if they were badly done, she scarcely seemed to think it worth while to reprove her. And no one spoke to her of the future. No one said, "this day week, or this day fortnight, such a thing will most probably happen, do you think you shall like it?" and when Lady Catharine once mentioned her intention of paying a visit to a friend, she gave Alice no idea of what would become of her in the meantime. There was an air of mystery over every thing, and Alice saw herself suddenly shut out from all the attention which she had before been accustomed to receive. She was nobody. What she did, or what she did not do, seemed equally a matter of indifference. Why,—she dared not ask. Lady Catharine was so silent, so occupied, she could not interrupt her. It was not now as it had been, when Alice felt something of a child's privilege with a mother, and knew that she should be listened to with pleasure. Strict though Lady Catharine had formerly been, it had been merely the strictness of over anxiety and affection; and Alice could better have borne any rules, than she could the being allowed to follow her own will, with no one apparently to care for her.

She began to repent her misconduct far more truly than she had done when shut up in punishment: then she had, indeed, shed tears of sorrow, because she was weary of being alone, and vexed at her own folly for having brought upon herself so much suffering; but she was proud,—she thought

herself hardly used. Now she had nothing to complain of;—she was fed, and taught, and allowed to walk about and amuse herself. The persons who came to the house saw no marked change in the manner in which she was treated, and yet Alice was wretched. Night after night she laid her head upon her pillow, and cried herself to sleep; and morning after morning she awoke with a heavy weight upon her heart, and a dread of the long day that was before her, without the prospect of a single word of encouragement; and, worse than all, Alice felt that she was no longer trusted. Her word was doubted. She was not told so, but she found, that if any thing happened in which there was occasion for her to say what she had done, or what she had seen, immediately there was a hesitation,—some one else was called in to answer likewise; or, if that could not be, even the servants would pause, and say, “Well, it might be so, but they could not be certain?” Alice’s assurances were no longer taken for truth: this was a most severe trial. Alice Lennox was by nature proud, wilful, and insincere; but she was also warm-hearted and energetic, and full of respect for those whom she knew to be good. Their approbation was the one thing which she longed for, and it was this which had attached her to Lady Catharine, when she had been, what many persons would have called, severely treated. Even during this heavy time Alice did not dislike Lady Catharine: she trembled before her, dreaded her appearance, gladly escaped from the breakfast or the dinner-table to be out of reach of her eye, but it was only because she was ashamed of herself, because she was conscious that she had forfeited any claim to confidence. Lady Catharine was still religious, benevolent, and self-denying, devoted to God, and

unwearied in relieving the wants of her fellow-creatures; and Alice, when she most shrank from the sound of her voice, still felt that it was the voice of one whose goodness she ought sincerely to strive to imitate. Yet a change did come at last. Slowly as the hours passed; yet they did at length bring an alteration in Alice's life. There were preparations for some event; what she could not tell; but her drawers were overlooked, her linen was counted, her frocks were brought out and tried on, and one whole afternoon Lady Catharine spent in examining her school-books, and putting aside a certain number. There were long consultations between Marsham and her mistress; and Mr. Clifford came frequently to the Manor: his coming, however, made but little difference to Alice; he had scarcely noticed her since the day when he had so vainly tried to make an impression upon her. The names of Madeline and Ruth never in her presence passed his lips, except on one occasion, when he had particularly mentioned that Madeline sent her love; and Alice could not bring herself to speak of them. On one day Mr. Clifford paid a third visit, a most unusual occurrence, and Alice, having escaped from the drawing-room as he entered, found her way into the garden. It was not for pleasure that she went there. She had her flowers, it is true, but Lady Catharine never asked now how they were looking; and she had a rabbit to pet, but Madeline and Ruth were not there to see how tame it was, or to pick cabbage-leaves to feed it. There was the summer-house to go to, but there was no particular amusement in being in it alone; and there was always something uncomfortable in Alice's mind when she sat there thinking,—a recollection of the beginning of her faults, and a remembrance of Benson appearing at the

garden-gate, and of the day when she had strayed into the servants' court. From thence was to be seen also the end of the house, and the windows of the forbidden rooms. The summer-house could not be agreeable, and Alice preferred sauntering up and down the walks, or sitting upon the steps, with her back to the green door into the park; any thing rather than be so constantly reminded of how much happier she might have been than she was. She thought of what might be going to happen to her,—of the probability that she would be sent to school—the same school with Madeline and Ruth; she should like that; but perhaps Lady Catharine would tell upon her, and all the girls would know that she had been a story-teller and deceitful. It was dreadful to have done something which she was afraid might be known, and the slight feeling of pleasure which Alice had entertained in the prospect of school was gone in an instant. She was lonely and wretched. Now that her dear mamma was gone, it did not seem that there was any one to take an interest in her. Alice had not felt so before, but the misery of her own heart made her overlook every blessing which she still enjoyed. She remembered Benson, but the remembrance did not give her pleasure. Benson had been very kind, and when she was quite a little girl, and did not know any better, she had been satisfied with her; but Alice, within the last few months, had learnt that persons were to be valued for something beyond kindness; she had no respect for Benson, and without respect no love can be lasting. Besides, Benson had never ventured near the Manor since the day of the discovery in the east rooms, and Alice had accidentally heard the cook tell Marsham that she was gone away for some time; and even if she had been at Laneton

Alice would not have been tempted again to break Lady Catharine's commands, and meet her by stealth. It was a long hour that Alice stayed in the garden. She did not know whether Mr. Clifford was still in the house, and she disliked seeing him. At length the glass door, which opened from the stone hall, was opened, and Lady Catharine appeared alone. She walked slowly up the path, stopping as she went to gather a few flowers, and to give an order to the gardener. Alice kept at a distance, waiting till some notice should be taken of her. Lady Catharine drew near, and whilst still examining some flowers, she said coldly, "Alice, you had better go in, Marsham wants you."

Alice obeyed instantly, but she was chilled to the heart, and her eyes filled with tears. Marsham was impatient; she had been looking for her, and calling her, and her temper, which was none of the sweetest, was more than usually irritable. Alice's dress was taken off, and put aside in a box with several others, and a new one was put on. Alice was pleased at the change, though it made her angry to be pulled about roughly, and told to stand still, just as if she were a child of two years old: "That is not the place for my frock, Marsham," she said pettishly, when the operation of dressing was over.

"Never you mind, Miss Alice; little girls should not ask questions, and give trouble."

Alice knew that she had done neither the one nor the other, and she was provoked: "But Marsham, it never does go there, it is always kept in my bottom drawer; and if you don't put it there, I shall not know where to find it."

"And much that will signify! don't you trouble your head about it. I'll take care fast enough." Marsham looked mysterious, and kneeling on the

floor, began industriously filling the same trunk with more of Alice's things.

"But Marsham, indeed—what are you doing? I don't like my things touched," exclaimed Alice indignantly.

Another mysterious look was the answer: the work rapidly progressed, and in a short time the box was declared to be so full that it would be necessary to call in assistance in order to make it shut. Alice stood, watching what was going on; one minute asking a question, then venting her anger at receiving no answer; and gradually working herself up into a state of extreme irritation. Marsham however went on unheeding; the box was dragged into the passage, one of the men-servants was called to close it, the key was turned, and Marsham departed. At the same moment the bell rang, and Alice was summoned to tea. For the last two months she had been in the habit of taking it with Lady Catharine, and once she had enjoyed the half-hour and looked forward to it. Now, it was a silent meal; eating and drinking seemed the one thing to be thought of; and when this was over Alice was ordered to look out her music-books, and to fetch her work-box; and being supplied with needles, thread, pins, and other requisites for work, she was employed for some time in winding silk and filling a needle-book and pincushion; and was then ordered to carry her box up stairs to Marsham. Alice's curiosity was becoming painful; yet she dared not ask a single question. She lingered to see what would be done with her box, but it was placed on the table and left. Marsham said "thank you," as if she knew quite well why it was brought, and Alice was obliged to go down stairs again. Afterwards followed the looking out of a few story books. That was not a difficult task

—she had not many, and there was no fear of their being hidden among the lesson-books, for the lesson-shelf was nearly empty. Slates, copy-books, desks, and papers, had disappeared. The schoolroom looked deserted. Perhaps Lady Catharine thought so, for she sighed as she gazed around, and her eyes glistened with tears: Alice's heart might be heavy, but there was one heart yet heavier. All the business was at length finished. It was clear to her now what was about to happen,—she was going to school. But where? when? would it be the very next day? More than ever she longed to ask. It wanted half an hour to her bed-time, and she drew near the fire, opposite to Lady Catharine, hoping that now, at last, some information would be given her. Lady Catharine took out her watch, and stirring the fire to make a blaze, looked at it and again sighed. “Eight o'clock! you had better go, Alice: there is a journey in store for you to-morrow, and you must be up early.” Alice rose to obey; she approached Lady Catharine to wish her good night, expecting the cold, quiet kiss, which lately had been her only mark of affection. But it was a strange kiss this night—long and fervent even as the kiss of a mother's fondness; Lady Catharine's arm was thrown around her, and her hand was held with a trembling grasp. No word was spoken, but the God, “who seeth the heart,” heard an earnest entreaty for his blessing upon a weak and sinful child; and when Alice had left the room Lady Catharine Hyde buried her face in her hands, and gave vent to a sorrow which no human eye would have been permitted to witness.

Parting with those we love must of necessity be one of the great trials of human life. So many accidents, so many changes, may happen before we meet again; and there are very few who have

faith enough to feel that there is an All-seeing eye, and an Almighty arm equally at hand to watch over and protect in their absence as in their presence. We fancy, who does not fancy? that our friends are safest when with us. Even Mr. Clifford, as he sat with his wife and children by the cheerful fire on the last evening which they were to spend together, experienced something of the same misgiving, though it was checked directly it was discovered. "To-morrow!" said Ruth, and every one repeated to-morrow; and then there was a pause; Madeline's thoughts were in the stage-coach, Ruth's in the drawing-room of Mrs. Carter's house, which she had already begun to picture to herself. Mrs. Clifford rose from her seat and walked rather quickly about the room, taking up boxes and portfolios to see if any thing had been left behind. She had done so once or twice before; she had not really any fear; but a sudden restlessness had seized her: she longed for something to do.

"Dear mamma," said Madeline, following her, "can't I help you?"

"No, thank you, my love; I don't want any thing," and Mrs. Clifford sat down again as suddenly as she had moved. Ruth was resting on a low stool, and her head was leaning against her father's knee. He passed his hand over her hair, but, he did not speak for some time. At length he observed,

"Some one else is to say good-bye to Laneton to-morrow. Can you guess who?"

Madeline looked up hastily, "Some one else, papa? a child, do you mean?"

"Yes, a child; some one you know."

Madeline scarcely required to think. "Alice," she exclaimed, whilst her voice was husky, and her cheek became crimson.

"She is going to school, also," said Mr. Clifford. There was a peculiar tone in his voice which showed that he had serious thoughts in his mind.

"To Mrs. Carter's?" asked Ruth eagerly.

"Yes, to Mrs. Carter's; you will have the same companion there as here."

"Not the same, papa," said Ruth; "Madeline will never do so again."

"We must hope not." Mr. Clifford had learnt to speak doubtfully upon the probability of any person's goodness, much more upon that of one so unstable as Madeline.

"Is Alice to go with us?" asked Madeline in an under voice.

"No, she will travel alone with Lady Catharine. Alice goes to school for punishment."

"I am sure Alice is very sorry for being naughty," said Ruth.

"I trust and think she is. Lady Catharine thinks so, too; but Alice's faults will require much time to correct, and so will yours. Perhaps when you are together again you may all be led into mischief."

"You are always afraid for us, papa," said Ruth, whilst she drew her head up rather proudly.

"Fear is safe," replied Mr. Clifford; "it teaches us to be on our guard. My great fear for you, Ruth, is, that you do not fear."

"And for me, papa?" said Madeline.

"No, my love, I think you have learnt to fear. Your danger is, that you will not think before you act; that you listen to every one who talks to you, and jump into a fault before you well know what you are doing. You say, yes, to every thing in an instant."

"And what is Alice's?" said Ruth.

"I do not know Alice, as I do you, my dear

child; perhaps she is wilful and determined; but we will not talk about her in that way."

"You won't be afraid for us when we grow up," said Ruth.

"Yes, more than I am now, unless you have made good use of your childhood, and have firm, strong characters."

"I dare say we shall have, as we are going to school," said Ruth; "we shall be able to do like others more."

"And what do you think these others will be like? will they all be good?"

"I don't know," said Ruth, considering.

"I am sure they learn a great deal," observed Madeline; "Fanny Evans goes to school, and she writes French letters, and next year she is going to begin Italian."

"And you can do,—what?"

"Only French exercises—easy ones. I never tried to write a letter."

"And Fanny Evans reads Grecian history, too, papa," said Ruth; "and she can say all the gods and goddesses, and the popes, and the French kings."

"Very wise, indeed," said Mr. Clifford; "I don't know what Mrs. Carter will say to two such little ignoramuses as you."

"Mamma wrote to Mrs. Carter, and told her not to ask us hard questions," said Madeline.

"I don't think I should very much mind being asked," observed Ruth. "You know Fanny Evans is eleven years old—eleven and a half now; and she has been at school three years, and Alice knows hardly any thing about history; she will be much worse off."

"Alice can say her English dates, though," said Madeline; "and I think Lady Catharine has taught her a good deal. But, do you know, papa,

she used to read 'Jack and the beanstalk' to Benson?"

The two children grew quite merry at the idea of such a lesson, and Madeline having somewhat recovered the sensation of shame, which had come over her upon the mention of Alice's name, declared that she should like her being there of all things.

"But it is so odd for her not to set off with us," said Ruth; "shall we see her as we go along?"

"No, she will travel by a different road in a carriage."

"And won't she sleep in our room, for us to talk to her?" said Madeline.

"When I went to school," replied Mrs. Clifford, "no talking in rooms was allowed."

"None, mamma, not a word? oh, how cruel!"

"Not at all like home!" exclaimed the children, and in an instant Mrs. Carter's house assumed very much the aspect of a prison.

"But what shall we do? we can't undress without talking; it will be so very dull," said Madeline.

"So very, very dull," echoed Ruth. The bright smiles which, a few minutes before, had lighted up their faces vanished; and in their stead tears gathered in their eyes, notwithstanding their endeavours to check them.

"I did not think at all it would be so strict," said Ruth.

"I thought it was to be just like home," said Madeline.

"And that we might run in the garden and read, and laugh, and do what we liked," continued Ruth.

"Yes; all the same as we do now, Ruth, only have some others with us, and Mrs. Carter to take care of us."

"Please, papa, may we stay with you?" said Ruth caressingly.

"Impossible, quite impossible!" and Mr. Clifford shook his head. Ruth turned sadly away; after that word, impossible, she had never any hope of gaining her point.

"To-morrow," she once more repeated, but there was more of melancholy in her voice than there had been before. "Papa, we would be so very good if you would let us stay."

"Ruth, my love, this is but a new fancy. School is not at all worse to-day than it was yesterday."

"If we might only talk when we go to bed," said Madeline, while the tears flowed down her cheek. Her mamma took her upon her lap, laughing at her being such a great baby.

"I never did like it," said Ruth; "I never said that I did. When I was told first, I could not bear it."

"And, mamma, we shall not see you such a long, long time," half whispered Madeline; and she turned her head aside whilst she played with her mamma's watch chain, vainly striving to recover her composure. Mrs. Clifford felt as sorrowful at the thought as her little girl. "Part of September, and October, and November, and a bit of December," she said; "not more than three months."

It was but poor comfort, and Ruth's sigh was very deep. "Well!" said Mr. Clifford, "perhaps, after all, it is best not to try to be comforted. Three months must seem a long time, and school is not as pleasant as home, and we would none of us be parted if we could help it."

Ruth looked up in his face. "Do you really think so, papa?"

"Yes, really; I have not been so uncomfortable

for a long time ; I don't know what I might do if I were left to myself : cry too, perhaps, and poor mamma is worse than all, I suspect." Madeline's lips were pressed to her mamma's cheek. A tear was resting on it, and Mrs. Clifford smiled at being found out.

" And now, that we have all confessed to being unhappy, suppose we ring for candles and go tea," continued Mr. Clifford. Half of Ruth's grief had vanished when she saw that it was shared by others ; and she busied herself in putting away the books. Madeline ran to fetch the keys ; the fire was stirred ; the candles were placed upon the table ; the urn was brought in ; and in a few minutes they were all seated around it, and school was again the subject of discussion. A merry one, however, for the children tried to forget the expected dullness of bed-time, and their mamma was appealed to with questions about her own school-days. Questions which would always have been interesting, but now seemed really of consequence. Bed-time came at last, earlier than usual ; for the same reason which Lady Catharine had given to Alice, there was a long journey in prospect the next day.

" They shall read to me to-night, I think," said Mr. Clifford to his wife, as the clock struck eight. " There is no very great hurry, and it is the last night."

Ruth had a most uncomfortable feeling in her throat, and Madeline's tears broke out afresh. " Did you read at school, mamma ?" she said in a broken voice.

" Yes, but alone in my own room, after we had prayers down stairs."

Ruth brought the book, but it was very difficult to find the place ; something seemed to come across her eyes and blind them. She turned over the

pages quickly. It is the 119th Psalm to-night, papa," she said, as her father took the prayer book from her.

"Suppose I were to read for you just this once." The children drew near, an arm was thrown round each little waist, and their mamma turned aside from the light, and cried quietly. Ruth looked round, wishing her to come to the table, but Mr. Clifford made a sign that she was not to be disturbed, and immediately began reading. There were but a few verses: short, and very simple: telling of the blessedness of those that are "undefiled in their way, and walk in the law of the Lord;" those that "keep his testimonies, and seek him with their whole heart." A wish there was also, that God would direct the ways of his servants, and enable them to keep his statutes; and the promise of the thankfulness of "an unfeigned heart," when "the judgments of his righteousness" should have been fully learnt. Mr. Clifford read the words slowly, and as he came to the end he said, "the next portion too is beautiful; we may all learn something from it to-night. It tells us how young men and the aged, how parents and little children, may cleanse their ways, and walk according to the law of their God." Ruth and Madeline listened to their father's voice, and felt that it had seldom before sounded so solemn. "'My delight shall be in thy statutes, and I will not forget thy word;" he repeated, a second time, when the additional portion of the psalm was ended. "That was the declaration of a wise and good man, and his blessedness also."

"Do statutes mean laws?" asked Ruth.

"Yes; and it shows how good the person who wrote the psalm must have been, that he could venture to promise to the All-seeing God that he

would take a delight in His laws. Generally speaking, persons do not take a delight in God's laws, — they find them troublesome.”

“Do you take a delight in them, papa?” said Madeline.

“I hope I do, in a degree, my love; though not at all as I ought: but I should be very miserable without them.”

“Do you think we shall, some day?” said Ruth.

“Yes, indeed I do: it is my greatest comfort when I think upon what your future life may be.”

“But what good will it do you, papa?” said Madeline.

“It will prove to me that you are in God's favour, under His protection, and so I shall not be afraid of anything that may happen to you.”

Madeline sighed. “It is very hard to be good, now,” she said.

“And not at all pleasant, sometimes,” continued Mr. Clifford. “But the doing must come first, and the pleasure will be certain to follow.”

“Now, whilst we are children?” inquired Ruth.

“Yes, if you are really in earnest. Even children can understand what a blessing it is to have a Being to love them who is so powerful that he made them as well as all the world; and to have a friend in God's Blessed Son, who by His death has redeemed them and all mankind from the anger of God, and has promised them great happiness in heaven; and even children, when they wish to be good, can feel what a help it is to know that they have some one always near, God the Holy Ghost, to sanctify or make them holy.”

“Who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God,” repeated Madeline, for the words seem to come quite naturally.

“Ah! if you could but remember that, my dear

child!" said Mrs. Clifford, approaching the table.
"If you could learn to think of it now!"

"You would not mind our going to school, mamma," whispered Ruth.

"Mind it,—I should, because it would still be parting from you; but it would not be the same sort of minding."

"It must not be so now," said Mr. Clifford; "we must none of us doubt and think that God will forget those whom He has elected or chosen to be His."

"Oh! papa; how do we know?" and Ruth looked up in surprise.

"You forget the outward mark, Ruth."

"Our baptism," said Ruth, blushing.

"Yes, that is the sign of our being chosen, of our being numbered amongst God's elect now."

"But hereafter—" began Mrs. Clifford,—she could not finish the sentence. Her husband looked at her tenderly.

"We will trust for the hereafter," he said, "to Him who has so blessed us at the present. He who took our darlings to be his own, when we offered them to Him at their baptism, will surely, if we all pray to Him, sanctify their hearts and guard them from sin, whatever temptations may assail them."

"But if we are chosen there is no fear," said Ruth.

"The Israelites were chosen," replied Mr. Clifford; "they are constantly called God's chosen people; yet of all those who were taken from bondage in Egypt, and who passed through the Red Sea, which is the type or figure of Christian baptism, but a few, a very few in comparison, entered the promised land."

"The others died," said Ruth in a serious voice. Though she had read the account so often, it seemed as if she had never thought much of it before.

“Yes, in the wilderness,” replied her father, “and their history is written for our example. Yet the fact of having been chosen is a cause for great thankfulness; it gives us hope, and especially when we have reason to believe that the Holy Spirit is really sanctifying or making us holy, that we are obtaining the victory over our sinful tempers.”

“If we are not,” began Ruth.

“If we are not, there is great cause for fear. It is as if the child of a great prince were to despise his blessings, and neglect his duties, and leaving his father’s home were to dwell amongst persons who were ignorant and vile, till at length he became like them.”

“But we are not princesses,” said Madeline.

“Not on earth, not to the eyes of men, but we are something far greater,—we have been numbered amongst the elect people of God; and if we continue stedfast to the end, there is a crown awaiting us in heaven, so bright and so lasting, that the first of earthly monarchs might well give up all for its possession.”

“They think you are speaking from fancy,” said Mrs. Clifford.

“Nay,” replied her husband, and as he spoke a smile of happiness and hope passed over his features, “I am speaking really—of that which I believe and know—for it is written in the Word of God. And even now, if their eyes were opened, and they could see all that is really passing around them, they would surely find themselves walking in the midst of angels and in the presence of God; and guarded and loved with a love as much greater than yours and mine, as the God of heaven is superior to a sinful human being. They are God’s children,” he continued, “and whilst they remember this they are safe.”

“Ah! whilst they remember,” repeated Mrs. Clifford anxiously.

Her husband smiled cheerfully, and as he kissed his little girls, and pressed them fondly to his heart, he said, “Yes, to learn to remember, is for us all the great business of life.” The children lingered still, but the conversation was ended, and they were obliged to go. What had been said, however, was not forgotten, for as they laid their heads upon their pillow, Ruth said to Madeline, “We will try and remember, Madeline, — won’t we?”

CHAP. XVII.

Is there any time in the year more pleasant than a bright morning in early autumn, when the air is soft yet bracing, and the leaves are only just beginning to change, and white clouds flit rapidly across a blue sky, and as we wake from our comfortable sleep with a feeling of health, and open our window to look out upon the beauty which God has spread out for our enjoyment, our minds, as well as our bodies, seem strengthened, and we are able to look forward without fear to the business or the trial of the day? Madeline and her sister could not have told why it was that leaving home seemed so much less sad the next morning, but they felt that it was so. They had thoughts of cheerfulness, rather than of melancholy, when Martha called them and told them to dress quickly that they might be in time for the coach; and the sight of their trunks and baskets, and all the preparations for their journey, was rather a pleasure than not. They dwelt less upon the home they were to leave than upon the new places they were about to visit. "I don't care about going in the coach to Cottington," said Madeline, who, according to her usual custom, stood wasting her time at the window, "but what I shall like will be the railroad."

"And London," added Ruth, "beautiful London; and all the shops. Mamma says we shall be two hours there before we have to go to Mrs. Carter's."

"It is so odd about Alice," said Madeline; "I

can't think why she doesn't go with us. It seems, somehow, as if she was a prisoner, doesn't it?"

"It does not signify what she seems like now," replied Ruth, "we have no time for thinking about her. If you stand dawdling in that way, Madeline, you will be too late."

"Too late!" repeated Madeline, slowly. She stopped to consider for an instant, and then, as if the words had given her a new power of exerting herself, began to dress quickly.

Mrs. Clifford came in to help them, Martha corded the boxes, the gardener was called in to carry them down stairs, and then the two children were told to go to breakfast. It was quite a grand breakfast for them—cold meat, and eggs, and dry toast; and they might eat what they liked: but, on this first day of their having such a permission, their appetites were gone; they wanted nothing. Dressing had made them feel differently. They had a very unpleasant sensation at their hearts, and when Mr. Clifford said that he fancied he heard the coach, Ruth felt as if she should be choked. There might have been some cause for this in the alteration in their mamma's countenance, for Mrs. Clifford was pale, and there was a dark, heavy shade around her eyes, as if she had not slept well. There was a quivering, too, every now and then, about her lips; and, when she tried to cut some bread and butter, her hand shook. Every one seemed unhappy, except, perhaps, Mr. Clifford. He appeared more cheerful than usual; but, when he had said something to make the children laugh, he would leave off suddenly, and put down his knife and fork, and walk away to the window. That was very unlike his usual manner, certainly, but Ruth thought he might be trying to become grave again.

"The coach, sir," said Martha, opening the door. Mr. Clifford rose immediately: "Come, my loves, there is no time to lose; if you want anything more you must take a biscuit with you."

"I have quite finished, papa," said Madeline, struggling in vain to retain her tears. Ruth pushed her plate away, but sat still, gazing fixedly before her.

"Ruth — my dear child — pray — indeed, you must be quick," exclaimed Mrs. Clifford.

At the sound of her mamma's voice Ruth started. "Yes, I know — Madeline, shall I bring ——" but, before the sentence was finished, Ruth burst into tears, and, throwing her arms round her mamma's neck, sobbed aloud. Mrs. Clifford felt it was no time for giving way to grief, and, gently disengaging herself, she said:

"This is not like you, my own Ruth; I thought we were all to try and show self-command."

Ruth's pride was touched; she made a great effort to subdue her distress, and, without venturing again to speak, ran to fetch her bonnet. Madeline went with her, and the first burst of sorrow was checked by the necessary parting instructions as to the boxes, and the frocks, and the parcel to be given to Mrs. Carter, and, above all, by the injunctions to write often, and say everything that came into their heads. The coachman was looking impatient, and muttering a prophecy that they should be too late for the train. "Once more, dear, dear mamma," said Ruth, and she held up her face for the last kiss. Madeline held her mother's hand so tight that it became almost pain.

"We will think of the day after to-morrow," said Mr. Clifford, as he hurried the children into the coach, and then returned to take his own farewell. Mrs. Clifford did not try to say good-bye; her eyes were dimmed with tears, but she stood at

the door, and gazed at the two little faces which peeped from the window, and, when the corner of the village street was turned, she still strained her sight to catch a glimpse of the heavily-laden coach as it slowly wound its way up the steep hill of Laneton. At length, however, even that distant view was denied her, and she was compelled to return to her ordinary duties, with a heavy heart, but with full trust that God had heard her prayers, and would guard her husband and her children from all evil.

The day closed in drearily, the sky became overcast with clouds, the wind moaned amongst the trees, and from time to time drifted to the ground the few faded leaves which already began to give warning of the coming winter. It was an autumn evening; always rather mournful, but in some places more so than in others. In London and its neighbourhood, many things unite to make it particularly dull to strangers, who have no old friends and cheerful firesides to welcome them. Mrs. Carter's schoolroom might have been thought dull by many. It looked out into a garden, a large one for London, or rather for the environs of London. There was a smooth piece of turf in front of the window, marked by many brown patches amongst a few of green, which had lately sprung up by the help of a refreshing rain. A fine beech tree grew in the centre, around which, was nailed a boarded seat; and some trim flower beds, with a tolerably fair show of dahlias and chrysanthemums, bordered the neat gravel walks. It was a very pretty garden for London, and a very pleasant playground for Mrs. Carter's school; and the little troop of girls, who were amusing themselves in it for the spare half hour before tea, cared nothing for the cloudy sky, or

the moaning wind, and had no thought to give to the brown turf. Their own homes might be prettier, but they were very happy where they were; and what with the occupation of learning, and the pleasure of playing, there was but little time left for regrets. School to them was not at all an unhappy place, but a child, situated like Alice Lennox, who looked for the first time upon the high walls, the roofs of the surrounding houses, and the dusky sky with its streaks of orange and red, shining dingily through the smoke of London, would probably have been filled with melancholy thoughts, and have found little to please in the tree, the walk, or the flower beds, or even in the voices of laughter which from time to time rung merrily in the air. Alice had passed a day of fatigue and annoyance, travelling the greater part of the time in Lady Catharine's chariot, without speaking or being spoken to; and (except when the horses were changed) stopping only once, for about a couple of hours, at the house of a lady whom Lady Catharine was desirous of seeing. The early part of the journey was agreeable enough; for Alice, like Madeline and Ruth, felt the enjoyment of the lovely weather, and found an interest in the country and the towns through which she passed, which is denied to a traveller on a railroad: but she could not forget that she was seated by Lady Catharine's side, and that she was going to school because she had not behaved well at home. Where the school was to be, even then Alice did not know. She had asked Marsham, but had obtained no answer; and though a hope lingered in her mind that it might be Mrs. Carter's, and that she might again meet Madeline and Ruth, there was also a fear that it might be in some distant place far away from all she loved, where

she should be kept with strictness or even severity. This seemed to her the most natural idea, for if she was really going to Mrs. Carter's, why was she not told at once. Half her fear would be over then, and she did not believe that Lady Catharine wished to torment her. If any comfort were to be had from knowing where her future residence was to be, she thought that she should have been told long before. Alice did not know that this silence was part of Lady Catharine's punishment. It was considered right that her going to school should be made as serious a thing as possible, in order to produce a due effect on her mind. Lady Catharine judged rightly, that when Alice knew she was to be in Mrs. Carter's house, and to have Madeline and Ruth for her companions, the change, instead of being a punishment, would almost appear a pleasure. For this reason it was that the journey was silent and gloomy. Lady Catharine told the names of the towns, and once or twice pointed out some particular places, a gentleman's house, or a spot celebrated in history, but she said scarcely any thing besides; and when they rested in the middle of the day, Alice spent the two hours by herself, with no employment but that of eating her luncheon, whilst Lady Catharine and her friend were engaged in conversation. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when they again resumed their journey, through rather a pretty country; and Alice, pleased at having something more to amuse her, felt her spirits rise in consequence. After all, she might be going to Mrs. Carter's; and at the thought her curiosity rose to such a pitch, that she actually turned round to ask the question. But she could not put it into words; there was that in Lady Catharine's face which repelled her. She was reading also, and it would be against her especial order

to interrupt her; so Alice once more looked out for the milestones, which were her greatest comfort, as they told her that she was at least on the road to London, and thus gave her the greatest probability of being finally deposited at the wished-for door. By degrees the beauty of the day passed off, and the loveliness of the country seemed to be passing also. There were more houses,—regular rows, with straight bits of garden, consisting of a strip of turf, and a narrow border of flowers, and a line of pavement leading up to each door. Occasionally a large red brick mansion, surrounded by a very high wall, stood back in melancholy grandeur from the road, apparently too proud to associate with its neighbours. Then came an inn, with the sign of the Black Horse, or the Blue Boar, or the Golden Lion, and a long list of all the conveniences which might be obtained by any one who chose to stop there. To this perhaps succeeded an open space, a village green, as it had once been called; the grass worn away by the hundreds of footsteps which were daily in the habit of crossing it; and a few posts and railings, showing that there was a desire on the part of the neighbourhood to protect it, if possible, from further injury. Now and then, too, it seemed as if they had reached a regular town, for there were paved streets and good shops, and a certain appearance of bustle; but after passing two or three of these places, Alice did not again find herself in the country; rather the rows of houses were more frequent, the gardens smaller, and the village greens more rare; till at length the open country was quite gone, and dingy dwellings, and dust-covered trees met her eye the whole length of the road. "It must be London," thought Alice, but it was not the London she had fancied; it was not so grand. A few

minutes afterwards, a heavy, rumbling sound was heard, louder than the noise of the carriage, louder even than that of the stage-coach, which Alice had daily heard as it passed through the village of Laneton. She put her head as far as she dared out of the window, and saw rapidly approaching, a huge, unwieldy vehicle, neither a coach, nor a carriage, nor a cart, nor any thing that she had ever seen before, except perhaps the Cottington van. It was long and narrow, of a bright yellow colour, with "Victoria," painted in large letters upon the outside. There were several narrow windows down the side, and as it drew near, Alice perceived that it was filled with people. On the outside also, there were some passengers, and the driver's narrow seat was half-occupied by a dirty-looking man, smoking a cigar, whilst on the step behind stood another man, holding on by a strap, and making signs to the people, and calling out to them as he passed along. Alice felt frightened as it drew near, especially when she saw two others behind, and several smaller carriages, some like gigs with heads to them, and others like little flys and chariots crowding up the road.

"That is an omnibus, Alice," said Lady Catharine as the yellow van rolled by them; "and now we are near London."

Alice felt her heart throb with pleasure, but she merely said, "is it?" And then her head was again thrust out of the window, to watch every thing that went by. There was much to amuse, for the number of carriages and people increased. Alice felt more than ever an anxiety to know where she was going. If all these things were to be seen from Mrs. Carter's house, or from any house, it could not be dull. Lady Catharine's eye was upon her; she was watching her attentively; but

she did not allow Alice to perceive it; and the same silence was observed as before.

“Are we in London, now?” Alice ventured at length to ask.

“No, we are not going there.”

Alice was grievously disappointed, yet a little consideration gave her fresh hope. Mrs. Carter's house was not in London, only near it. The carriage advanced, but more slowly. The postilion looked about him, apparently uncertain how to proceed, and twice he turned quite round. Lady Catharine laid her hand upon the check-string ready to give her orders. A house standing back from the road was seen on the left-hand side. It was of red brick, and rather large, with stone facings to the windows, and more ornamented than modern houses. There were some trees at the back and at the sides, and a gravel sweep in front, entered by two gates, and altogether it was a very respectable-looking place; rather sombre, but still with a considerable air of comfort about it. At the first gate the check-string was pulled, the carriage stopped, the footman dismounted, and in another instant they drove up to the door of the red house. Alice's colour went and came, and her heart beat rapidly. The loud pealing bell and the thundering knock were answered by a staid, neat-looking woman, who, without waiting for any inquiries, drew back for Lady Catharine to enter; she then called to a fellow servant to assist in unpacking the carriage, and led the way herself up a short flight of steps, and opening a door at the end of a broad passage, which might have been termed a lobby, showed a small study nicely furnished, and provided with a bright fire and plenty of books, where she begged that the ladies would rest themselves, whilst she went to inform her mistress of their arrival. Alice

seated herself directly, but Lady Catharine, contrary to her usual mood, was restless, and paced the room with uneven steps. "Is this Mrs. Carter's?" was the question which again rose to Alice's lips, but again also it was checked. Her awe of Lady Catharine had within the last few hours become almost dread. The books before her might perhaps give her some information, and whilst Lady Catharine stood at the window, from which nothing was to be seen but a back court, Alice ventured to take one in her hand, hoping to see a name in it. She had not opened it when a footstep was heard, and as Alice replaced the book on the table, Lady Catharine Hyde stepped forward to greet the lady who entered the apartment. She was a tall, elderly person, with a countenance which in her youth it was easy to believe might have been decidedly handsome; for there was still something more than commonly pleasing in her very benevolent mouth, finely-formed nose, and bright good-natured eye. Her forehead was high, and across it her hair was simply braided. She wore a dark silk dress, made not unfashionably, yet with a certain peculiarity from its extreme neatness, which, added to her plain cap, and handsome drab-coloured shawl, made her appear rather unlike other persons. Yet Alice felt directly that she was not as awful as Lady Catharine. A few words of greeting were interchanged, and the lady kissed Alice, and called her by her name, as if well acquainted with her. Alice listened eagerly to hear her's in return, but it was not mentioned: the conversation turned upon the weather, and the journey, and, after a short time, Lady Catharine begged that she might have a private conversation.—"Perhaps Alice will like to go to her companions," she added. Alice thought she should like it, and the lady told her to follow

her. They passed through a high, dark passage, at the end of which was an ante-room, containing some book cases, and desks, and benches covered with green baize; and within this, was another larger room, furnished much in the same style, and with windows opening upon the garden already described.

"This is the schoolroom, Alice," said the lady, "I hope you will soon be quite at home here." Alice was going to reply, when the same servant who had opened the door came into the room, and begged to speak to her mistress. The lady turned to Alice: "Will you wait one moment for me, my dear? I shall be with you again immediately I hope."

Alice could not object, and she was left alone. The window at first afforded her sufficient amusement. Twelve girls of different ages, varying from ten to fifteen, were grouped in different parts of the garden; some strolling about arm in arm; others running along the walk, at play; a few, with spades and rakes, gardening; and one, with a book in her hand, apparently learning her lesson. They were Alice's future companions, and she gazed upon them with an interest unlike that which she had ever felt for any other girls. But they were strangers, they did not know or care for her, and, perhaps, when they had heard her story, and were told that she was sent to school in disgrace, they might despise her. Alice was angry with them at the very idea, and her interest turned to indignation, and then into sorrow. She was so lonely, so very lonely; she despaired of seeing Madeline and Ruth; she was sure the strange lady was not Mrs. Carter: the room was gloomy, the garden without beauty, and, if she was never to see anything beyond, she might as well be kept in prison. Her heart became

very heavy, and her memory wandered back to the white house, and the happy hours she had spent there with her dear mamma. If she were living it would have been different: no one then could have behaved harshly to her, and sent her to school against her will; and there would have been some one to love her, which she tried to believe Lady Catharine did not. Alice tried to believe it, but she did not do so really. All the kindness—even fondness—which had been shown her before her disobedience was discovered, proved the contrary. Desolate and unhappy, though, she was, and angry with every one about her. Alice knew that the cause of all lay in herself; she had not used her advantages properly, and now they were taken from her; and who was to blame? The trial of self-reproach is very hard to bear, and, though Alice did not condemn herself, as others might have done, she yet had nothing to look back upon with comfort when she remembered the steps by which she had brought herself into her present position. The first little wish, the first yielding to a slight temptation, the continued deceit, and then the falsehood, that was the shame. If Lady Catharine had told, her character was marked. Perhaps the children in the garden knew it; perhaps they saw her, and did not wish to speak to her. If they did not observe her, Alice might have recollected that there was One who did; and she might have wondered how it was that the idea of the contempt of a fellow-creature should be so much more dreadful to bear than the certainty of the wrath of God. Alice did not cry, she was too proud; she did not choose that any one should observe how wretched she was; but she pushed her chair back from the window, so that she might not be seen, and, fixing her eyes upon the opposite

wall, which was hung with large maps, awaited the return of the lady whom she rightly supposed was to be her future governess. The waiting was longer than she had expected; it was growing dusk, and she heard the children in the garden declare that they must go in. Alice dreaded their approach, she could not think what she should say to them; they did not however run in suddenly through the window, as she had feared, but, one by one, disappeared through a door, and, directly afterwards, she heard their cheerful voices as they went up stairs to take off their bonnets. The time became now very long, for every one appeared to have forgotten her. She had heard a knock and ring at the front door, and there had been a little movement in a distant part of the house. Could Lady Catharine be departing without saying good-bye? It would be too cruel. Alice even thought she must go and see; but she did not know her way, and the darkness was increasing, and perhaps she should meet some one—a servant, or one of the girls. No, it was better to remain patiently where she was, however uncomfortable she might be. There was a sound of laughter outside the room; they were coming, certainly,—the strange girls. Alice shrank back into her corner, and, a few moments afterwards, a little troop of them entered. They did not notice her, and, to her consternation, some of them began talking about her; wondering what she was like, what class she would be put into, and whether she would be as nice a girl as one who was just gone. “No, no,” was the general exclamation, “she can’t be that—no one can be like Adelaide.”

“I shan’t care about her,” said one.

“I don’t think I shall much fancy her,” said another.

"I don't think Alices are ever good for much," said a third; "there was Alice Horner, what a tease she was."

Alice Lennox felt ready to sink to the ground as she listened; she did not see that they were speaking without thought, from a mere prejudice; and her conscience whispered that, if they did not expect to like her, they must have quite sufficient cause. "Dawson, where is Dawson? why does not she bring candles?" suggested one more steady than the rest. The mention of candles recalled the wandering attention of all, and immediately there commenced a discussion of the different lessons; what had been done, and what remained to do; and whether it was worth while to begin any thing before tea. Alice thought she heard the name of Mrs. Carter; but the hubbub of voices prevented her from clearly distinguishing. "Come young ladies, the table must be cleared," exclaimed a rather authoritative voice; and the same sober-looking person whom Alice had before seen appeared with a tray, on which were placed four candles. The sudden light discovered the unsuspected inmate of the room; and with a look of confusion all stood motionless and silent. Alice did not dare advance; she believed that the girls looked upon her with contempt; and they, on their part, felt shocked at the observations which must have been overheard: they did not venture to be civil, and the pause which ensued was most awkward; so awkward that Alice could not bear it, and burst into tears. "What shall we do? pray speak,—say something; we are very sorry," was whispered around. "Hush! hark! Mrs. Carter is coming," said a lady-like, dark-haired girl, the eldest of the party. They turned to the door with a feeling of great relief: Mrs. Carter was the only

person who could help them out of their difficulty. The dark-haired girl advanced to meet her, but drew back. Mrs. Carter entered the room, but not alone. Lady Catharine Hyde preceded her, and behind her came a gentleman and two little girls. Alice saw them, and sprang forwards: "Madeline!" "Ruth!" "Alice!" were the mutual exclamations; and in the delight of the meeting the dread of strangers was unfelt. "It is Mrs. Carter's school, Alice," said Lady Catharine, in a tone of the deepest tenderness. "God grant you may be good and happy here!" Alice's spirit was subdued: she was too satisfied at finding her doubts relieved, to be proud, and looking up into Lady Catharine's face, whilst she pointed to the girls who were standing round the table, she said in a low voice, "Don't they all know about it?"

"No one knows, my love," replied Lady Catharine, drawing her aside, "except Mrs. Carter: you have a new life before you, Alice; shall it be like the past?" Alice's voice failed her as she strove to answer; but the heartiness with which she returned Lady Catharine's kiss showed how sincerely, at that moment, she desired to amend.

"They will be friends soon," said Mrs. Carter, kindly, observing the shy glances which passed on both sides between the new acquaintances. The dark-haired girl once more ventured to approach, and taking Alice's hand, she said,— "it was so foolish just now; we did not know you were there; I hope you don't think we meant it." Alice's shyness had vanished in the presence of her former playfellows; and, though still retaining some doubts, her smile proved that she did not mean to be unforgiving: she looked round for Ruth and Madeline, feeling that from having arrived first she had a sort of right to introduce them. They

were standing by their papa, grasping his hands, as if afraid that he would escape. "My darlings, I must go," he whispered.

"Not yet, surely not yet," said Mrs. Carter, overhearing the last words; "tea is just ready."

"I am afraid it cannot be; and Lady Catharine has kindly offered to take me back to town in her carriage."

Mrs. Carter looked disappointed, and said that she had calculated upon their company for the whole evening. Madeline's eyes were raised with an eager petition of entreaty, but Ruth could not look up. The sorrow which the amusement of the journey had diverted was gathered together for the parting hour. Mr. Clifford stooped to kiss them, and bless them with a father's blessing: what he said was short and simple, but the thoughts which were in his heart were deep and unutterable. He was leaving his children weak, sinful, and ignorant; what had he not to fear? but he was leaving, also, "the members of Christ, the children of God, the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven:" wherefore should he not trust?

"It will be Christmas, soon, papa, won't it?" said Madeline. Mr. Clifford assured her that the time would pass more rapidly than she could at all imagine. "And that will be a happy meeting for us all, we hope," observed Lady Catharine, as she approached with Alice. Mr. Clifford held out his hand to Alice, and said a few affectionate words, which satisfied her completely. He had never looked or spoken thus since the day of his unsuccessful conversation, and she felt now that he had forgiven her.

"To-morrow, even, will be a happier day than this," said Mrs. Carter, as she observed the distress which Mr. Clifford could not entirely conceal.

"Worse for me," he replied, half-laughing, "but I have no fears for them. And now, good-bye." He withdrew his hand forcibly from Ruth's, once more pressed his lips to his children's foreheads, and, not daring to trust himself with another look, hastened from the room.

Lady Catharine saw that the dreaded moment of separation was come. "My own Alice! my precious child!" she said, "I must not stay."

It was all but a mother's affection which spoke, and Alice felt how truly Lady Catharine was her friend. There was a bitter pang of self-reproach in her heart, as she whispered, "Can you forgive it all?"

"Forgive? fully, entirely, as if it had never been," was the reply; "only let me hear that you are trying to do right." Alice threw her arms around Lady Catharine's neck, received one long kiss, and they parted.

Mrs. Carter followed Lady Catharine and Mr. Clifford. The door was closed, and the three children were left to the society of their new friends, and the commencement of their school life.

How that life was spent, and what effects it had upon their characters, this is not the place to tell; but at some future period, if time and opportunity should be granted, it is probable that something more may be made known of the after years of Alice Lennox, and the twin sisters.

THE END.

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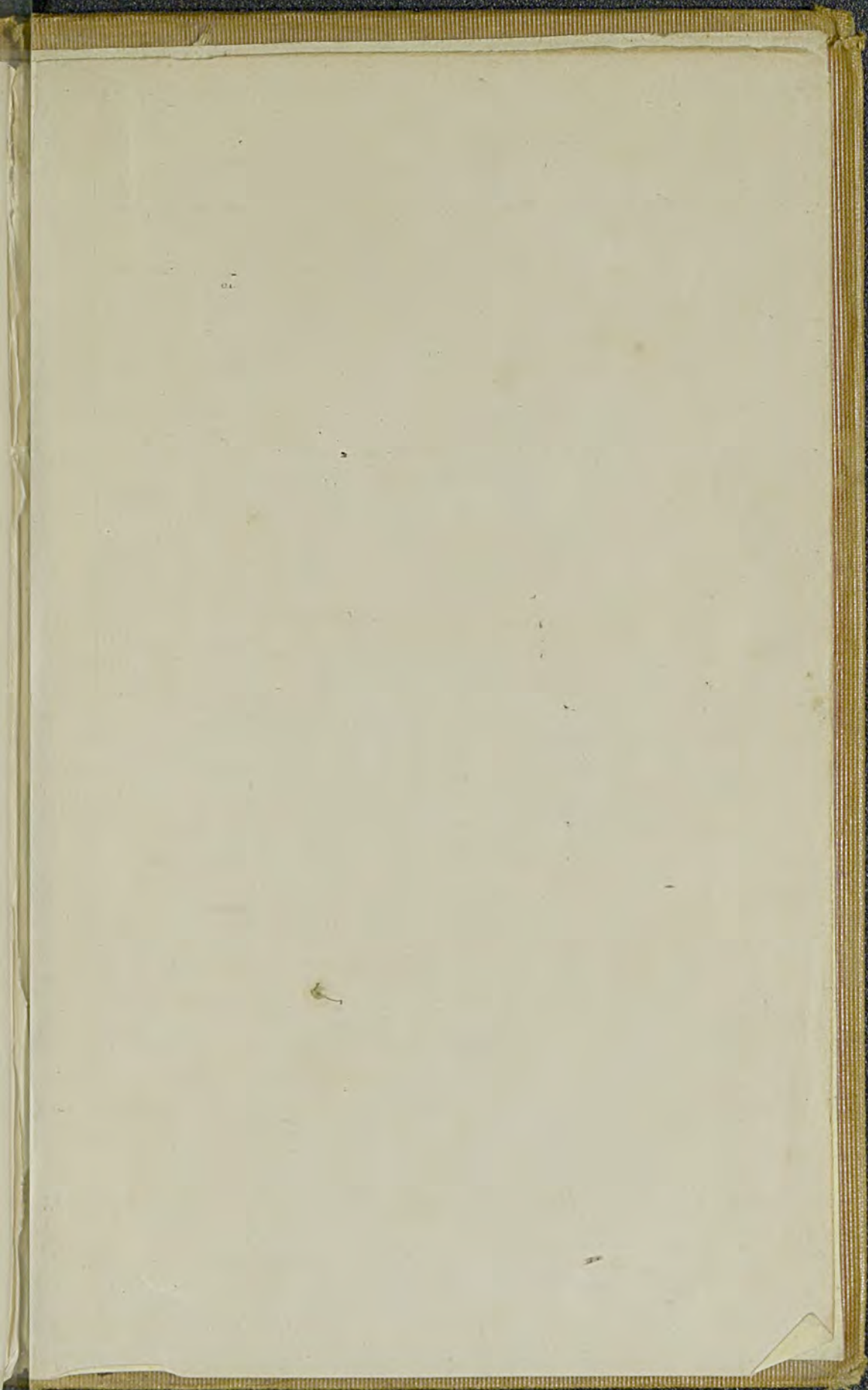
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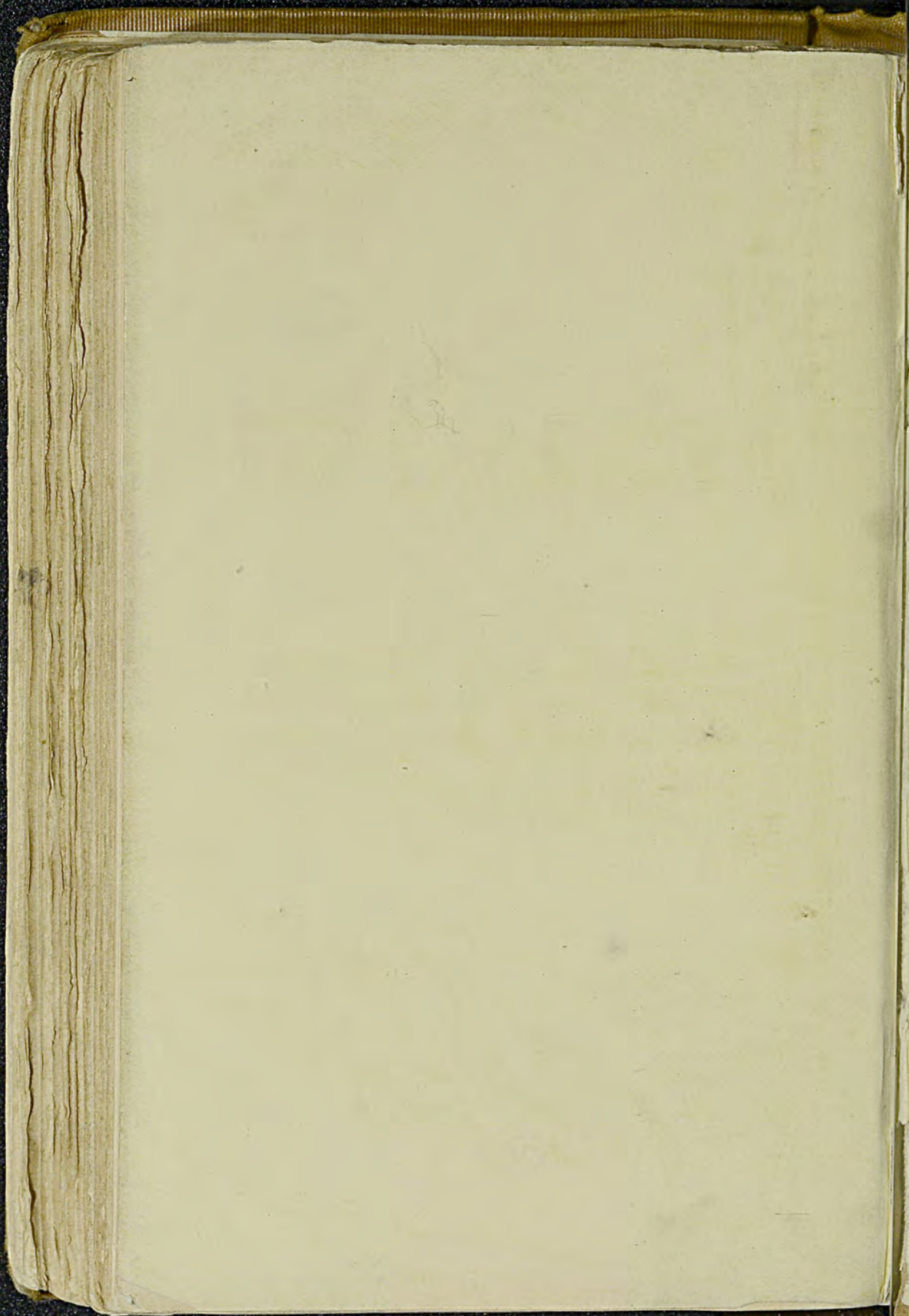
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