

FABLES
FOR
LITTLE READERS
BY
CHARLOTTE BRONTE

Aberdeen
St. Paul St. Public School.

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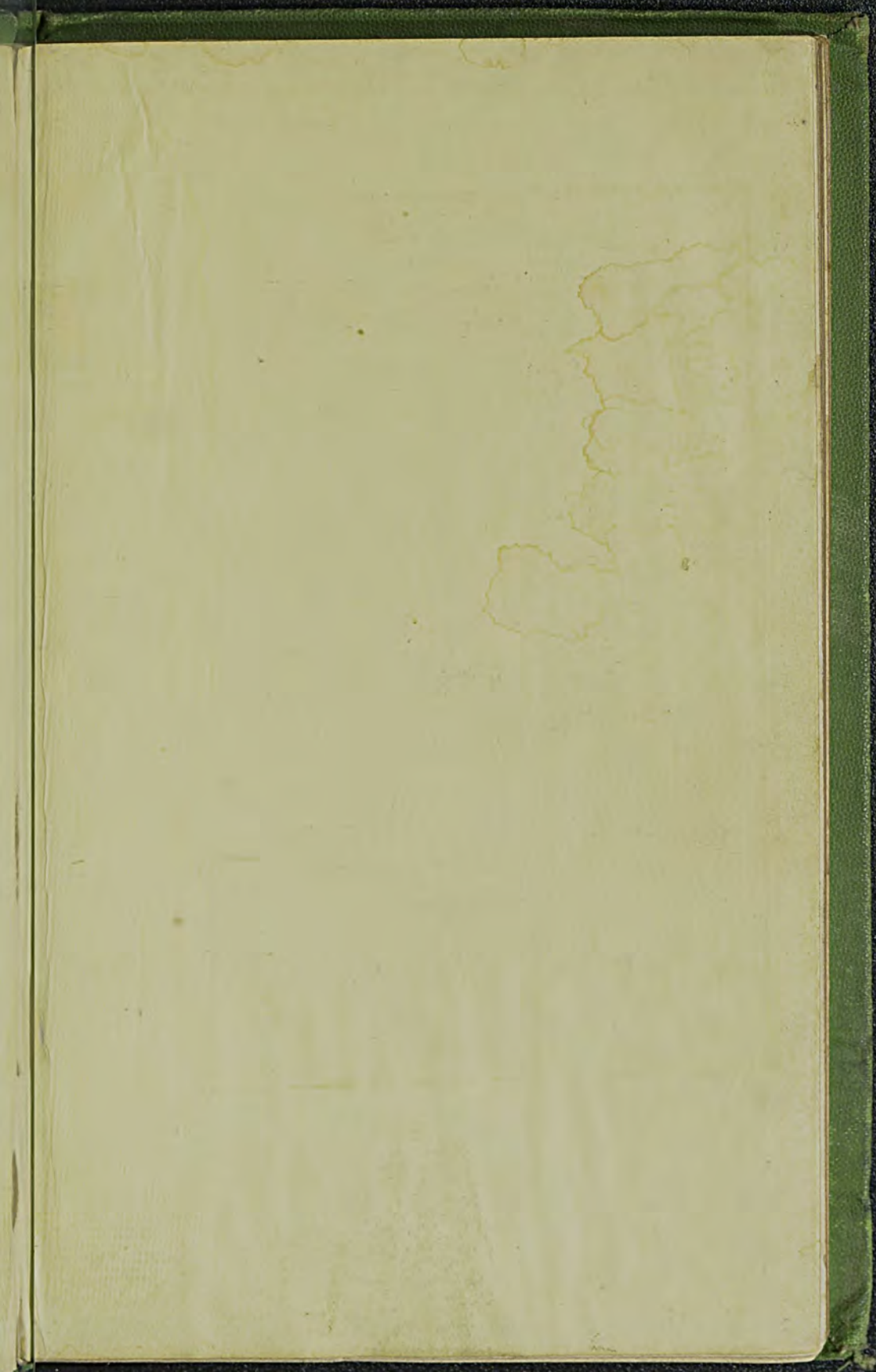
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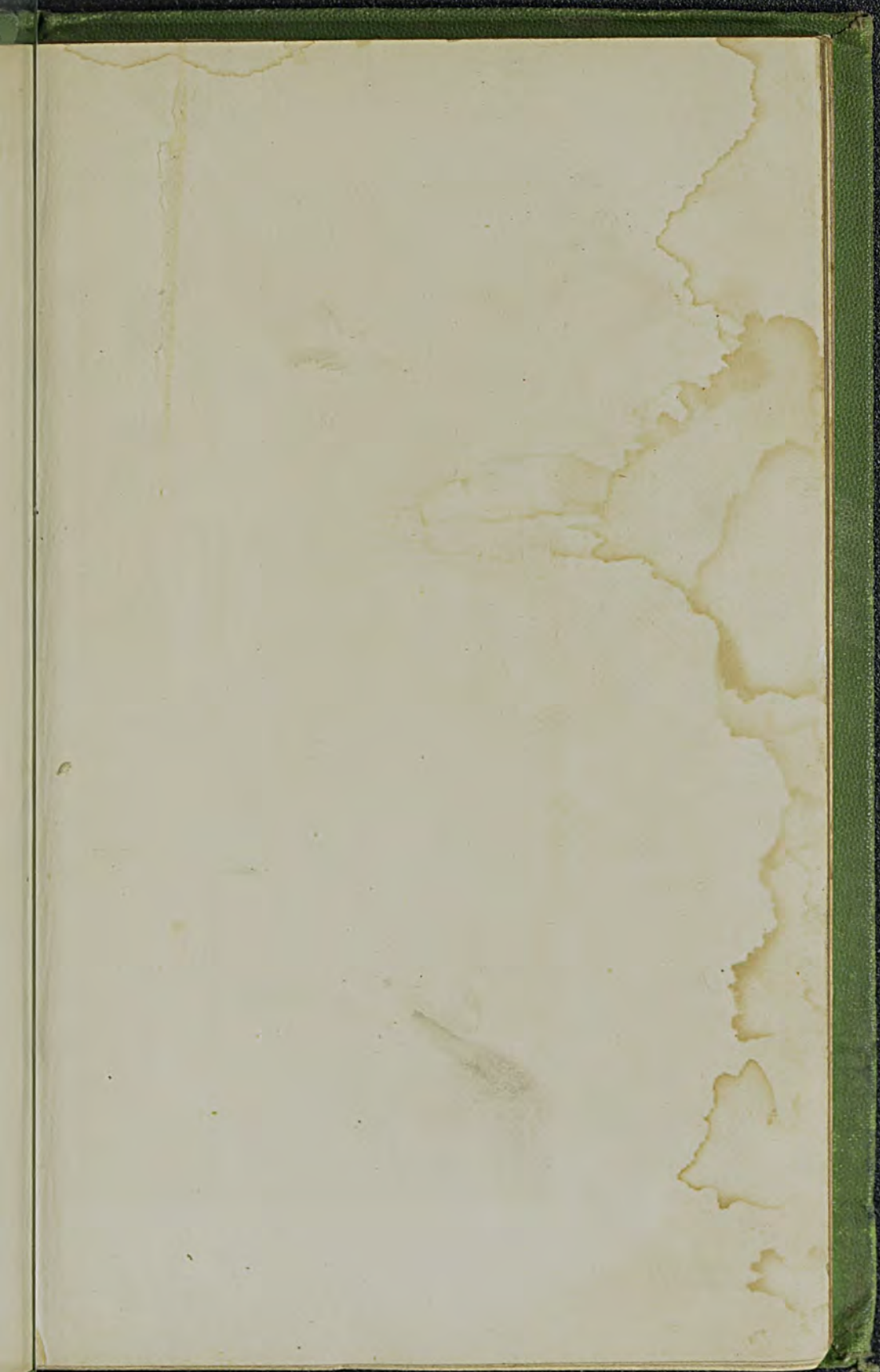
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Jas. A. Phillips
Teacher.

June 23. 1876.



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I thought she had been a beggar-woman, said Jessy, but she did not ask for anything.—p. 8.

LITTLE TALES

FOR

Little Readers.

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

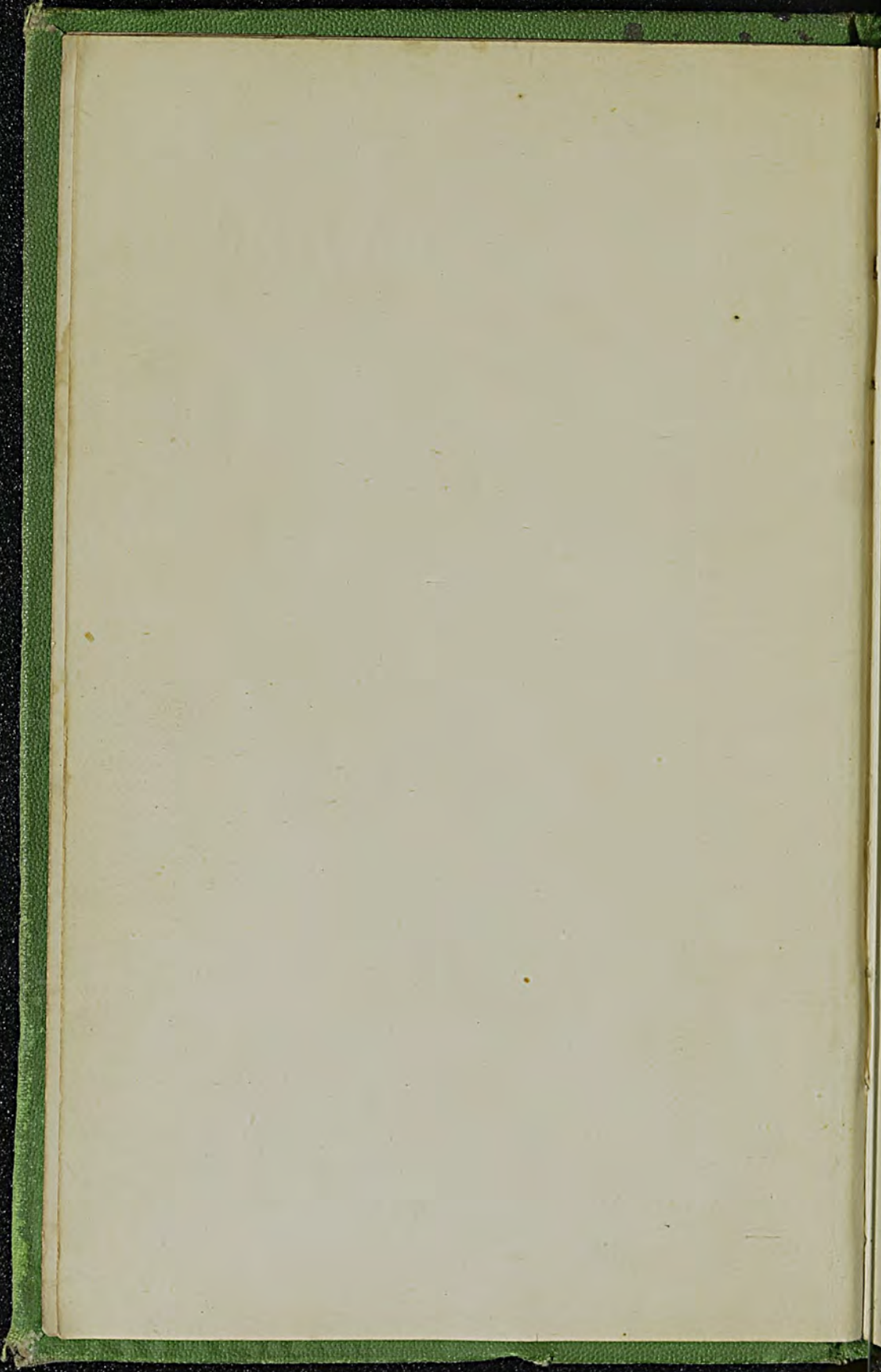
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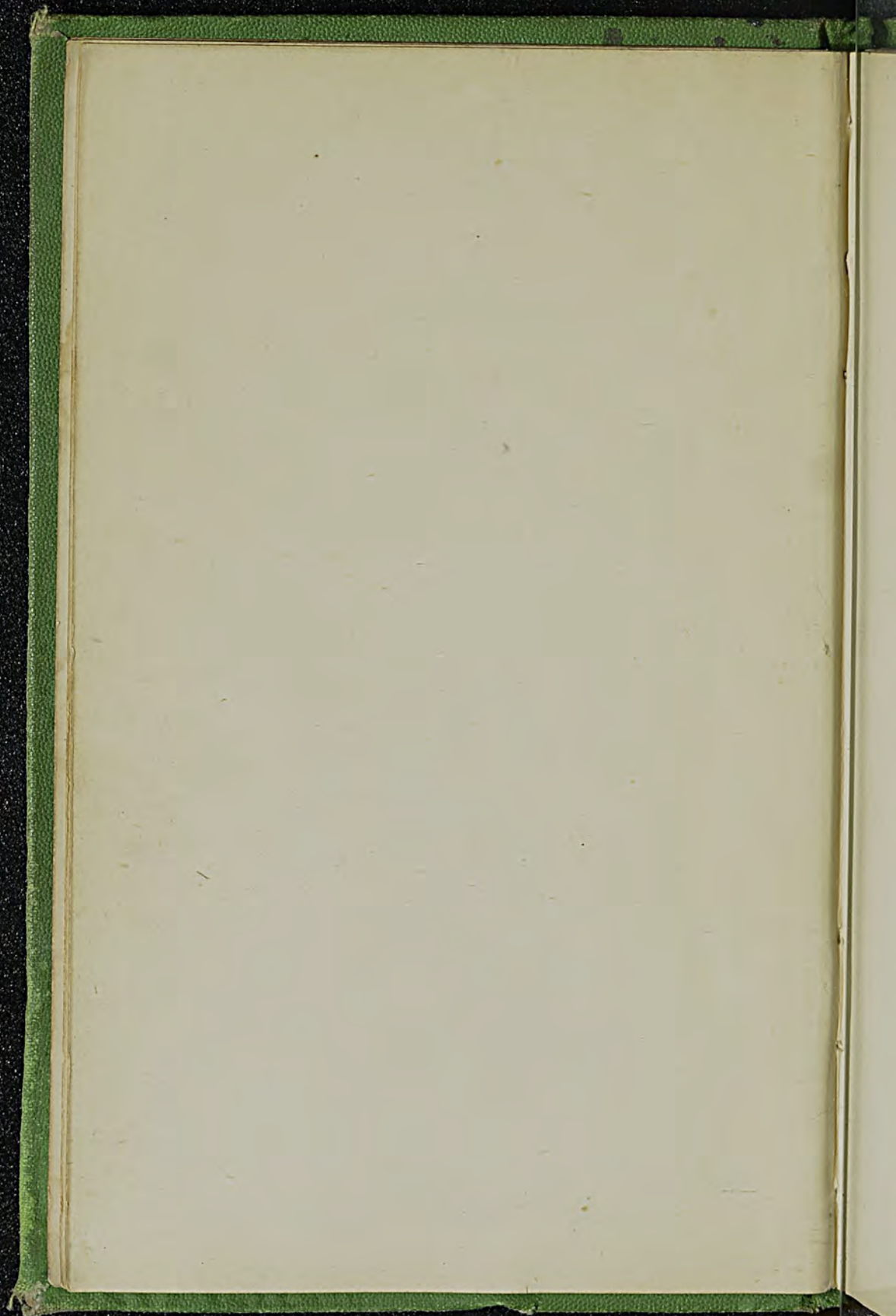
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LITTLE TALES.

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The Fortune-Teller.

THE gipsy woman was dressed in a short jacket of dark-blue cloth, the skirts of which hung down a little way over a petticoat of strange patchwork. Stuffs of all colours seemed to have been used to mend and piece out the old dirty dark-green that still remained. Her hat was of black beaver, very much the worse for wear, and it was tied under her chin with a red cotton handkerchief. Fastened to

her back in a sort of a bag, she carried a little child, whose bright black eyes shone out like jet from beneath its tangled hair. Its face was dirty, even more so than its mother's, and so sun-burnt that it seemed never to have known the comfort of a shade.*

Besides her baby, the gipsy woman carried a wallet slung over one shoulder, and hanging at her side; and a tattered apron was gathered up, and knotted into a piece of cord that served her for a belt. Altogether there was something so remarkable in their appearance, that little Jessy, who was running before her mamma, in the shady green lane, stopped to look with surprise at the gipsy woman; and then, rather frightened by the bold look of her piercing eyes, she turned back, and ran to her mamma, taking hold of her hand, and keeping close beside her.

The gipsy passed them, making a low curtsy to the lady, but not speaking a word; and Jessy looked round to observe the baby, for it had laughed and crowed when it saw her.

"I thought she had been a beggar-woman, mamma," said Jessy, "but she did not ask for anything. How black her eyes are, and the baby's too."

"They are gipsies, my dear," said Mrs Howes, "and gipsies do not often beg; but I am sorry to say that they often cheat and steal, and do many other bad things."

* The Gipsies are a wandering people; they are found in all parts of Europe; they are, in their countenance, character, habits, and language, a distinct people.

“Where do they live, mamma?”

“They are wanderers over the earth, having no settled home, Jessy. They are found in most countries, and are very nearly the same everywhere. It is not known exactly from whence they came ; but they are generally supposed to be what their name expresses, Egyptians. It was foretold by the prophets, that the mighty Egyptians should become the basest of all people ; and that they should be scattered among all nations. We here see the threat of the Lord against them as exactly fulfilled as that against the Jews.”

“Oh, mamma,” exclaimed Jessy, “tell me more about them. I am so sorry for the Jews, because God loved them very much once, and now He is so very angry with them. It is a terrible thing to have God angry with us, mamma.”

“A terrible thing, indeed, my love ; and you know the Bible says, ‘God is angry with the wicked every day,’ and all are wicked in God’s sight who do not believe in His blessed Son, Jesus Christ, and pray continually to have their sins washed away in His most precious blood.”

“Do the gipsies believe in the Lord Jesus, mamma ?” “Oh no, my dear, they have no religion at all, even in name : they are the most ignorant and wretched people among us. Knowing nothing themselves, they cannot instruct their children : but they bring them up in idleness and vice, to lie and swear, steal and defraud—to impose on the charitable, and to deceive the unwary. It is a great pity that some

among us, who love to do good, do not take particular pains to find out and instruct those wretched outcasts of society. God would bless such a work ; for He has commanded His servants to look even among the highways and hedges for sinners, who will be accepted if they come to Him; and admitted to sit down at His table."

Mrs Howes and her little girl had by this time nearly reached the house, through a field which led to the back gate; and there, the first thing that they saw was the gipsy standing at the kitchen window, and two of the maid-servants very busily talking to her. Seeing their mistress, however, they quickly ran away, and left the gipsy to answer for herself.

She was a little confused at first, but her face soon became as bold as ever, and in a fawning tone of voice she said she was sure the good lady would not be offended at her having begged a little milk for her poor child, which was very thirsty.

Mrs Howes asked if she had got any—no, she replied, the maid would not give it without leave.

Mrs Howes called a boy who was at work, and ordered him to bring a bowl of fresh milk, of which the poor little baby drank heartily : and it was then filled again for the mother. "And now," said Mrs Howes, "whether you spoke truth in telling me that this draught of milk was what you asked of the maids is known to your conscience. It is also known to God, whose eyes are in every place, who sees all that you do, hears all that you say, and knows all that you think. I hope you have not spoken falsely ; for

He will assuredly put the lying lip to silence ; and I hope you came here with no wicked intention, for He knows the things that come into your mind, every one of them, and will punish the thought of a wicked heart."

The gipsy said she would not for the world be a sinner. "You are one," replied the lady, "and so are all : but remember this—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ; and though you should be the chief of them, He both can and will save you, if you come to Him for pardon."

Mrs Howes ordered the boy to see that the gipsy left the place, and then went to speak to the servants, and to caution them against suffering such people to loiter near the house.

When Jessy saw her sister Caroline and the young lady who was on a visit with them, she told all about the gipsy, and described the poor little baby, as it was carried on its mother's back.

"'Tis the same woman," said Caroline to her friend. Her mamma asked her what she meant, and Caroline replied, that when walking in the early part of the morning, she and Miss Wilkins had met this woman, who tried very hard to persuade them to have their fortunes told.

"And did you ask her to tell your fortune?" said Jessy.

"No, Jessy : I knew mamma would not approve of it, and therefore I refused to listen to or to stay near her."

"And I was disappointed," said Miss Wilkins,

“for I have often wished to meet a *real* gipsy, who could tell fortunes, and this seemed to be one.”

“Do you mean a real gipsy, or a real fortune-teller?” inquired Mrs Howes.

“Why, both, ma’am.”

“I am surprised, my dear, to hear a young lady so well instructed as you have been, speak as if she believed a poor ignorant creature like this capable of foretelling future events ; a thing which the wisest of men would not presume to do.”

“I do not exactly believe it, ma’am. I wanted to find out if she could, and it might do no harm.”

“A very great deal of harm, my dear—a great sin as well as folly—a great injury to yourself and your fellow-creatures, and exceeding great insult against God.”

“Let me hear all about it, if you please, mamma,” said Jessy, rubbing her little hands and setting herself on the sofa: for Jessy dearly loved to listen to her mother’s instructions.

Miss Wilkins said, “I know that many sensible people entirely disbelieve in these things ; but does not the Bible tell us of them. The witch of Endor, for instance.”

“Yes,” answered Mrs Howes, “and the Bible most positively forbids the holding of any communication with them. Witchcraft as it existed in early times was punishable with death ; and the Lord’s most severe displeasure was denounced against such as sought unto those who had familiar spirits : so that even if you can believe these wretched imposters in

our days to possess any extraordinary power, you see it is a dreadful sin to listen to them."

"But suppose we do not at all believe it, ma'am ; and only amuse ourselves with their folly."

"Their folly, my dear, is very great sin ; for it begins in a lie, and fearfully insults the Most High God —assuming either that He is not the sole and supreme ruler of the world, or else that He cannot hide His designs and counsels from the impious worms of earth ; or that He is pleased to hold converse with, and to communicate the knowledge of His purposes to the most notoriously wicked and profane of persons—such as lie under His wrath, and blaspheme Him daily with their lips and in their lives. And this applies to all the idle methods practised by superstitious people, to find out what shall occur to them. It is terrible to jest with the foreknowledge of the Omnipotent God."

"But, ma'am," said Miss Wilkins, "I have heard very extraordinary things, proving how much these fortune-tellers know of the concerns of people whom they never saw before."

"Very probable," answered Mrs Howes, "for without seeing them, they could learn from servants and neighbours quite enough to enable them to give a good guess at many particulars. This gipsy might have found out, with little trouble, from my simple maid-servants, as much as might have enabled her to astonish us all with her wonderful knowledge of past events, and to gain attention to her pretended predictions. By listening to her, and of course paying

her for this information, we should at once reward a lying lip, and encourage the unhappy creature to farther deceits. If the slightest supposition that she might be speaking truth entered our minds, we should be guilty of the sin of witchcraft. If we only amuse ourselves with their ignorant pretensions to utter prophecies, we must be numbered among the 'fools' who 'make a mock at sin;' and such fools are held in abomination before God. Besides, if we who are supposed to understand our duty, set the example of listening to her for our own senseless diversion, servants and poor people will think themselves right in following it; and they will do so with superstitious belief, regarding her as one who has 'familiar spirits.' They will also be persuaded to squander their earnings in a way most ruinous to their own happiness, for these artful people take care to foretell, in general, great riches and worldly honours to their hearers, and many a simple girl is led by them to leave the path of humble industry, and fix her hopes on something which will never come to pass; but in the expectation of which, she may fall into destruction.

"If you had held out your hand to that gipsy woman, my dear young friend, or listened to her deceitful language, you would have made yourself answerable before God for more sin than you can easily imagine. Every poor creature around us, who should have been robbed, deceived, or puffed up with proud and mischievous conceits by her, might justly accuse you of setting the example, and charge upon you the injury sustained, both here and hereafter."

“No one would have seen me,” observed Miss Wilkins.

“Perhaps not ; but would the woman have neglected to boast, that a young person of education, and of the better class of society, had acknowledged her claims to witchcraft? She knows too well the force of example, to let such a circumstance pass by untold. And even were it otherwise, how could you answer to God for the gross insult offered to His Divine majesty and wisdom, in permitting a wretched creature like this to claim His awful attribute, and to boast of searching into those ‘secret things which belong unto the Lord our God,’ and unto Him alone? Reflect, my dear, upon these solemn words, and judge whether, without dreadful sin, you could lend your ear to so blasphemous a deceiver.”

“Mamma,” said Caroline, “how does it happen that these people so often discover thefts, and restore lost goods, by directing the losers where to find them?”

“I do not think that it occurs so frequently as you seem to imagine, Caroline: but greater wonders are performed every day by the police, and by the same means—active inquiry, carried on with secrecy and perseverance. Besides, it is too often found that the supposed witch is an accomplice in the theft, or has, by terrifying the superstitious mind of the suspected criminal, extorted a confession.

“‘Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,’ my children ; but commit yourselves wholly unto Him who is willing to make all things work together for good to you, and to bless your

going out and your coming in, from this time forth,
even for evermore."

Take thou no thought, O child of dust,
For what to-morrow's dawn may bring;
But in the Lord thy Saviour trust,
And hide beneath His guardian wing,

Thy times are in His hand alone,
That hand which deals thy daily bread;
To Him the coming hour is known,
That lays thee with the silent dead.

Would'st thou, a worm of earth, explore
His counsels, hid from angel-eyes?
Indulge the impious wish no more,
Nor tempt thy God—"God only wise."

Enough, if through life's path to heaven,
He deign to guide thy devious way;
Enough, that grace and strength be given,
Sufficient for the passing day.

The Swan.

“WHAT an ugly creature !” said Rose, as she walked on the margin of the lake, and saw a large white bird hastening towards the water.

It was much bigger than a goose, and had an extremely long neck, which it stretched out, as if eager to touch the liquid element : the legs were coarse and naked, the feet enormously large : it walked with an awkward shuffling motion, its wings drooping, and the whole appearance bespeaking uneasiness and agitation.

Rose’s mamma led her towards the water’s edge, the bird making greater haste to get out of their way ; and when pretty near the bank, it spread its wings, gave a run, and sprang forward in such a bustle as made Rose laugh, and exclaim, “ Oh, the awkward ugly creature !”

But suddenly a new scene was displayed : and the oird having safely retreated, and found itself at home again on its own blue lake, began to swell to an extraordinary size, puffing out its snow-white plumage, till it looked like delicate froth : the wings rose half extended, and met, forming a most elegant arch on the back of the bird, whose neck bending gracefully, seemed to rest upon them, while the head slowly

moved from side to side, looking proudly around . and there it sailed, like a thing made of the purest snow-flakes, resting on the water, which it scarcely disturbed with its soft and majestic motion. Rose did not know how to express her wonder and delight ; she burst forward to gaze upon it ; she clasped her hands together, and cried out, " Oh, look, look, mamma ! did you ever see any thing like it ? Oh, the elegant, beautiful creature ! "

Her mamma smiled : " Awkward and elegant, ugly and beautiful—what a strange mixture of ideas, Rose."

" Nay, but, mamma, only see—how graceful, how noble, what a king of the waters ! Its feathers are all like down—was any thing ever so white ? Look how he carries his head,—now he turns—look at his wings, all built up as it were—look how leisurely he rows along, with his feet just under them—how he shines in the sun ! O lovely swan, beautiful, beautiful creature ! "

" I am not surprised at your delight, Rose," said her mamma, " for perhaps there is not in the whole creation that we behold, any thing more magnificently beautiful in its way than the swan. A horse bounding at full liberty over the meadows, a peacock, with expanded tail, and several other creatures, are very striking ; but I confess that the calm majesty of a swan, thus moving upon the smooth lake, is to me more attractive than any of them. Not so dazzling to the eye, there is yet in that object a character of purity, dignity, and peace, most lovely to look

upon : and I know not what is equally majestic, unless it be man."

"Man !" repeated Rose, somewhat disdainfully "why, mamma, man goes strutting or shuffling or hopping over the ground : can man move upon the water like that beautiful swan ?"

"It is not his element ; and even your beautiful swan was contemptible when upon land, Rose."

"That is true, mamma : the beauty of a thing seems to depend very much on its being seen in its proper place."

"And the beauty of a character, too," replied her mamma. "Let us compare that swan on the water to a Christian in his proper station. By a Christian, I mean one who has learned that great and necessary lesson—his own sinfulness and misery ; and finding in Jesus Christ a propitiation for his sins, depends on Him, on Him alone, for salvation ; but who also bears in mind that God has said, let him 'that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,' and, that 'He hath purified unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Knowing, too, that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to lead into all truth, will surely be given in answer to prayer, he constantly prays for His guidance, and studies the will of God to do it. This is a Christian ; and the proper station of such a Christian is plainly marked out in Scripture, for we are commanded to tread in the steps of Him who went about doing good—who was meek and lowly in heart—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate

from sinners. Such a character as this, Rose, while steadily moving in the ways of duty, and willing obedience, is more beautiful to look upon—more admirable in its purity and peaceful dignity—than yonder swan. But when the Christian quits those holy ways, and mingles with the ungodly world, seeking its friendship, delighting in its pleasures, and so doing the abominable things which God hates, is it not like the swan on dry land, surrounded with a rabble, all its composure, all its dignity gone; its white plumes defiled with dirt, and itself an object of sneering curiosity, and well-merited contempt?"

"I think so, mamma, indeed; but must not the swan sometimes go on shore to look for food?"

"Yes: and so must the Christian mingle with a sinful world in pursuit of his necessary business—his lawful calling, or for the purpose of openly warning them of their evil ways: but I speak of the Christian needlessly leaving that narrow path which God has pointed out to him, and sauntering along the broad road that leads to destruction. In other words, Rose, I mean that weak and inconsistent part which religious people act, when they go into company, as it is called, feasting with those who pamper the flesh, conversing on idle, unprofitable subjects, wasting their precious time in the society of persons who love not the Lord Jesus, nor desire the knowledge of His ways.

"I have seen people so wantonly cruel as to throw stones and other things at that lovely harmless creature, the swan, and at such times I have beheld it, when much teased, dive under the water, and so avoid

the aim of its persecutors, rising again in a different place. Is not this a beautiful emblem of the true child of God, who, walking in the paths of His commandments, and the study of His Word, finds therein a sure refuge in the day of adversity, 'a hiding place,' a 'shield,' a 'rock,' a 'fortress,' a 'strong tower.' You remember those two delightful psalms, the twenty-seventh, and ninety-first, 'In the time of trouble, He shall hide me in His pavilion : in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.' 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation ; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.' As the swan hides its head in the water, so does the persecuted Christian take refuge in his covenant God, and finds Him a very present help in trouble."

"Go on, if you please, mamma," said Rose, "for I like to hear this."

"Then, my dear, let us suppose the same swan foolishly venturing to a distance from the water, and surrounded by a crowd of cruel boys, pigs, and every thing that can terrify and torment it, what shall the bird do? The earth will not open to afford it a shelter like the yielding stream ; it knows not where to turn for succour : foes are on every side, any one of whom would be sufficient to overpower it. Too weak to fight, too heavy to rise into the air, it can, at best, but make a difficult and painful retreat, and at last throw itself into its native element, faint, exhausted,

defiled, terrified, perhaps wounded severely, and long, very long may it be before the wretched bird regains the power of enjoying what it ought never to have quitted.

“Such is the case with many of God’s rebellious children, who, having for a time escaped the pollutions of the world, are again entangled therein. All may for a while seem very fair and pleasant about them, and they venture on, going farther and farther yet from the safe path of prayer, and praise, and obedience, and the society of those who still walk therein. Suddenly, perhaps, the scene darkens around them: they who have despised the voice of conscience whispering in their breast, and resisted the Spirit of God, who still strove with them, are overtaken by some unexpected calamity, and too bitterly feel that there is no help in man—no comfort in the ungodly world. When they lived in communion with their Saviour, they could turn to Him in every distress, and confidently trust, while they cried—

All my hope on Thee is stay’d,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing!

But no such help, no such hope, no such shadowing wing is found among earthly things. Fightings without, fears within, an upbraiding conscience, an unfeeling world, and an offended God. Oh, these are terrible! what an awful contrast to the sweet psalms which I was speaking of, do we find in those tremendous words of the first chapter of Proverbs: ‘Be

cause I have called and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you : then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.”

“ Oh, those are terrible words, indeed !” said Rose.

“ How terrible, then, to find them fulfilled to us, my child. And I fear that many a one, who at first seemed to ‘run well’ in the ways of godliness, has been made to eat of his own ways, when he had begun to turn aside into the path of sin : and if such do at last find that place for repentance which Esau could not find, and are again received into the presence of a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, yet what bitter anguish of spirit, what rebukes of conscience, what open shame in the sight of men, do they undergo, while the faithful children of God have still joy and peace in believing, and go on from strength to strength.”

“ Mamma,” said Rose, “ I hope you will always teach me thus : I am ready enough to admire the beauty of God’s works, but I do not always seek rightly to be instructed by them.”

“ You must pray for wisdom, my dear child, and seek knowledge in every thing. You are very fond

of the psalms ;—has it never struck you how much of their deep impressiveness and touching simplicity arises from the use which David makes of those things which are daily before our eyes ? The starry heavens, the rolling ocean, the rivers, mountains, valleys, and fields—the animal and vegetable creation—all these are constantly brought forward, to assist the blessed work of praise to Him who formed them. What makes the 23d Psalm so beautiful ? And the 104th and 107th, and others ? Is it not that the inspired writer gives us in his composition a rich example of his own comprehensive expression, ‘ All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and all Thy saints give thanks unto Thee.’ ”

They had now reached a bend of the road which gave them another view of the lake, and the swan upon it, at a considerable distance, gleaming like a pearl upon the soft blue waters. Rose ran up on a little hillock, and stretched her neck to gaze upon it, crying out, in a tone of joy and tenderness, “ Beautiful swan, beautiful swan ! sail peacefully on your own quiet lake, for God has placed you there, and none can hurt you without His permission. Oh, it would be a cruel and wicked hand that tried to hurt you. Lovely swan, I will not forget you, nor the lesson that you have given me.”

Instruct me, gracious Lord, and shew
The path where Thou wouldst have me go
And bid my willing steps abide
Where quietness and peace reside.

From Thy kind care I would not stray,
To loiter in the sinner's way ;
Nor walk where men ungodly meet,
Nor rest upon the scorner's seat.

If dangers threat, or sorrows come,
Oh may they find me in my home !
That home where Thou shalt ever see
An altar raised, my God, to Thee.

Or if, by varied cares of life,
Compell'd to mix in worldly strife,
Let Thy bright presence cheer my breast,
And go with me, and give me rest.

Thy favour is my life—I see
My whole salvation, Lord, in Thee :
With Thee I find the fount of light,
Without the everlasting night.



The Dying Sheep.

“THERE is a sheep lying upon the ground,” said little John to his aunt, “I wonder is it asleep.”

“No,” replied his aunt, “it belongs to the flock which you see proceeding along the road. Either from fatigue, or some hurt, the poor creature was unable to go on, and has fallen upon that plot of grass by the way side, where it lies distressed, and panting for breath.”

“What will become of it, aunt? shall we take it home, and feed it, and try if it will get well again.”

Before his aunt could answer him, John saw another flock of sheep coming down the road; and the man who followed them went up to the poor animal

on the grass, and struck it with his whip. The sheep got up, and endeavoured to run away, and succeeded in getting under some shrubs that grew at a little distance. The man then called his dog which followed the sheep, and drove it from its shelter, and pursued it, barking and even biting, as the poor creature resisted. Presently the sheep fell down, and was dragged along by the man, for some paces; but as neither threats nor blows would compel it to rise, the man was obliged to leave it there, and calling off his dog, they drove on their flock.

"There, aunt," said John, "if we had taken the poor sheep, it would not have been treated so cruelly."

"We had no right to remove it, my dear. The man who last came up, no doubt intended to restore it to the other, whom you may see waiting on the top of the hill. I think the sheep is dead: we will go and look at it."

They did so; and found the animal alive, but unable to move. It lay upon its side, its neck stretched out, its mouth open, and the film gathering on its eyes. Little John lifted its head, which immediately fell again. "Leave it alone, my dear," said his aunt, "its sufferings will soon be at an end."

While they stood looking at the dying creature, a man approached, on horseback, and went up to the sheep, which he struck with a small whip; but the poor animal could only utter a very faint cry. "What do you do that for?" said John, reproachfully. "I've bought the carcase, young master," replied the man, "and I suppose I may do what I like with it."

He then proceeded to drag it by the legs, and calling to a boy who was passing, they lifted the sheep, now in the agonies of death, and flung it rudely across the horse's back ; after which the man mounted his horse and trotted away.

John and his aunt had walked to some distance before either of them spoke : at length John said, " I am determined on one thing, at any rate : I will never be cruel."

" I hope you never will be so, my dear child," answered his aunt, " but remember that you cannot keep this, or any other good resolution, unless God gives you His grace, which you must ask in constant prayer."

" I know that, aunt ; but I don't think I *could* be cruel, if I tried. What pleasure can there be in giving pain to others ? it is not only wicked, but mean and cowardly. Oh what bad hearts those two men must have, who tortured the poor sheep in such a way !"

" Bad hearts, indeed, we all have, John ; and out of the evil treasure of our hearts, we bring forth evil things, and these only, until God, by His mighty power, changes them, and renews our wicked natures, after the likeness of our meek and compassionate Saviour."

" But do you think that it was to the cruelty of those two men the sheep owed its suffering ?"

" To be sure, aunt, was it not ?"

" I hardly think so : few people are so hardened, I hope, as to be cruel merely for the sake of putting

others to pain : such a character is horrible indeed, and, even among ungodly men, is generally detested ; but there is another and more common vice which is exceedingly hateful in the sight of God, and which leads to most of the cruel actions that we witness."

"What is it, aunt?"

"Covetousness. Men love money, and those things that money will buy ; and to this they too often sacrifice all feelings of generosity, compassion, and justice. The owner of a poor sheep may have no wish to see the animal suffer pain, but he is resolved not to lose any part of its value ; and, therefore, whatever may be the fatigue, sickness, and agony that it endures on the road, it must be made to reach the cattle-market in time to be bought for the slaughter. If a drover is employed to drive the flock, he knows his master will make no allowance on the score of humanity, should they arrive too late ; and, therefore, he employs every means, no matter how cruel, to urge the weary animals along the road, and to prevent the loss of any among them. By long custom, the heart and feelings get so hardened, that it is scarcely to be believed what horrible cruelties are practised upon the creatures that God has given us permission to slay for food, but which He never authorised us to torment in any way. Indeed, the Scripture describes cruelty as being contrary to all that God approves ; and covetousness is called idolatry, because it steals the heart from God and leads us to break His laws and to despise His love."

"But the man who took away the sheep, aunt, was not he cruel?"

“Certainly : he might either have allowed it a few minutes to expire, or have put an end to its sufferings before he flung it across the horse ; but that man’s heart was probably also set on his gains, and he had no time nor pity to spare for a poor sheep. He did not know, nor would he consider, that God takes thought for the meanest creature in existence ; and that to Him he must surely render an account of the use which he made of the power lent to him over the brute creation. We must not be too hasty in judging our fellow sinners ; but when we see an instance of wanton cruelty, we may naturally doubt whether the love of God is shed abroad in that person’s heart by the Holy Ghost, and we ought to pray for him as one in danger of receiving judgment without mercy, since he shews no mercy.”

“Then, aunt, if I would never be cruel, I must pray to be kept from covetousness.”

“You must, my dear boy ; and you must also pray and strive against every species of self-indulgence. Gluttony is another hateful root of cruelty. To pamper our appetites we torture God’s creatures in a frightful manner. You little think, and I will not shock your feelings by telling you, what agonies are inflicted on the harmless beasts, birds, and fishes, in order that men may indulge their appetites. Well may the whole creation be said to groan and travail in pain together ; well may they be represented as longing for the time which we are taught to pray for—the coming of God’s kingdom—the filling of the earth with His knowledge and glory—the blessed days

when none shall hurt nor destroy ! Self-denial is an important part of the Christian character. He who indulges himself, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, must needs be cruel to others : expending on himself what he possesses, how can he have to give to him that needeth ? he must be cruel to the poor ; and not only so, but he must be cruel to the souls of those who are perishing in heathen darkness, and who need the help of our money as well as our prayers and efforts to place the gospel within their reach. When on the Sabbath day I see persons using their carriages without necessity, I ask, are they not cruel to their servants, who are thus burdened with unnecessary work, and perhaps kept from the worship of God by such means ? to say nothing of the cattle, for which God has appointed it a day of rest, no less than for men. When I witness a love of fine clothes and splendid furniture, I again fear that the claims of humanity are little regarded ; and that much wrong is also done to those whose means are less abundant, by giving them an example of extravagance. We are told that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven ; and even what I have now been saying may shew you, my child, how difficult it is to be rich, without being covetous, how impossible to desire and to love riches, without being cruel. Do you not perceive that your resolutions must be all in vain on this point, unless it pleases God to create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you, that you may seek first

His kingdom and righteousness, and receive from above the heavenly wisdom that will preserve you from the snares of the world, the flesh, and the devil ? ”

“ Yes, aunt, I do : and I will remember what you have said, when I see a poor sheep, or any creature cruelly treated. I did not think it was so difficult to avoid being cruel, when one does not love cruelty.”

“ I am glad the poor sheep has given you a lesson, John : but we may gather farther instruction from what we saw to-day. Do you not remember who is called the good Shepherd ? ”

“ Oh yes ! it is the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“ True. He does not drive His sheep to a slaughter-house, but to fresh pastures of peace and safety ; He does not torment, and forsake His charge, but gathers them in His arms, and carries them in His bosom : He does not sell them to another master, but giveth His own life for them, that they may be for ever His. Yet alas ! how often do we see those, whom His tender voice continually invites to follow Him, preferring the thorny ways of this evil world, and going on in sin ; until, wounded unto death, their souls become the prey of a cruel enemy, and their dying eyes are vainly turned to the footsteps of the flock who are following their shepherd to eternal rest and glory. That is an awful expression in the psalm : ‘ They lie in hell like sheep.’ Like the cruel rich man, they being in torments, may lift up their eyes and see the despised people of God, in all the blessedness of heaven ; while the great gulph fixed between, renders

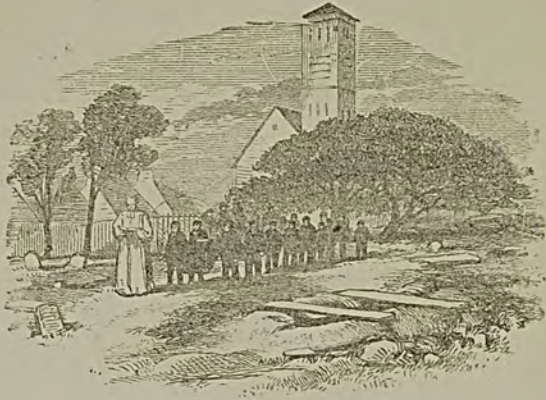
it impossible that they should ever approach that happy place, or escape from the anguish of devouring flames, and everlasting burnings. Oh, my child ! think, that in every step, every moment of your life, you are either following the Good Shepherd, or wandering away from Him ; think what will be the end of these things."

If Jesus be my Shepherd here,
And guard me on the way ;
If Him alone I love and fear,
And only Him obey,
How peacefully my steps may go,
While journeying on my path below.

If Jesus be my Shepherd still,
When the last hour shall come,
The stroke that doth my body kill,
Will bear my spirit home ;
Death cannot make my soul afraid,
If Jesus light me through the shade.

And when deliver'd from the tomb,
By Jesus led, I go
To where His own rich pastures bloom,
And living waters flow :
Oh, how shall I delight to see
The Shepherd-King who died for me !

No prowling wolf can enter there,
Where His redeemed dwell ;
To sin, and death, and pain, and care,
I shall have bid farewell :
And through eternity abide,
Rejoicing by my Shepherd's side.



The Burying-Ground.

“WHAT is that man going to do with the grass, aunt?” said a little girl, as she saw a labourer carrying away some fresh green sods that he had just dug from a piece of waste ground.

“He is going, my dear,” replied her aunt, “to do that for another person, which he may, perhaps, do both for you and me, before long.”

“What can that be, I wonder,” said Jane, smiling; “let us follow him, aunt.”

They did so. The man passed down a little alley of trees, and entered some large folding gates of iron, which led into a very spacious square, inclosed completely by a low wall, on which was an iron railing forming a very strong and handsome fence. The lady and her little niece soon found themselves within it.

“Why this is a church-yard,” said Jane.

“Not exactly, my dear, for the church is not in it : but this is the burying-ground, and a beautiful place it is.”

Jane looked about her, and certainly agreed with her aunt. The spot was completely surrounded by a grove of firs, that pointed their tall green heads far above the iron palisades. Just within the fence a great number of laurels were planted, the richly shining leaves of which looked doubly bright, as they rested against the black railings, and so near to the dark firs. The short grass was soft as velvet, and green as an emerald ; and beautiful little flower-beds surrounded several of the tombs.

Over one hung a rich weeping willow, an acacia shaded another, and a third was placed between two young cypress trees. A great deal of the ground was yet unbroken, for the place had not been many years laid out ; and it was not used for interment generally, but only for those belonging to a national institution near it. At one end was a row of humble graves, each with its white headstone and simple inscription ; and upon the last of these the labourer, whom Jane had seen, was carefully laying down the green sods that he had dug.

To this grave they walked, and the lady asked her little niece if she knew who was buried there.

“I suppose it is the soldier’s wife,” said she.

“Yes. One week ago, that woman was as little likely, according to human appearances, as you or I seem now to become the inhabitant of a grave. Sudden illness seized her, and ended in death, almost

immediately. You know, my child, that we visited her only four days back, and you saw with what mingled hope and terror she listened when I spoke of judgment to come—of the Judge who is likewise the Saviour of every true penitent who clings to His cross and casts his soul upon Him. You saw the agony of that dying woman ; you kneeled with us in prayer to God, that He would be pleased to grant unto her repentance and forgiveness of sins ; and you heard in three hours after, that she had breathed her last.”

Jane’s heart was too full to allow of her speaking just then ; so, after a pause, her aunt went on—

“I told you, my love, that the grave-digger might soon do for us what he is doing for this poor corpse. And oh ! what a solemn—what an important question it is, where will our souls be when our bodies are committed to the dust ? At all times important and solemn beyond any other subject whatever ; but does it not appear even more so, standing, as we here do, just over the lifeless remains of one whom we so lately saw able to ask the question, which is now for ever set at rest, as concerns *her* soul ? If a voice could issue from these mounds of earth, surely—surely, every one of them would cry aloud, what they now silently seem to teach us—‘Prepare to meet thy God !’”

“Let us come here very often, aunt,” said Jane, “it will keep me thinking of death and preparing for it.”

“It might, indeed, lead you daily to think of death, my dear child ; but it is very possible to do so with-

out rightly preparing for it. That is the office of the Holy Spirit, to keep alive in your heart such a sense of eternal things, as shall enable you, according to the apostle's language, to 'die daily.' The poor Roman Catholics, whom, whilst we lament their errors, we should pity and teach, have departed from the truth of the gospel, and made the commandments of God of no effect by their traditions and inventions, they have many such ways of keeping themselves in what they vainly suppose to be a religious frame of mind. They have death's heads and cross bones, and black garments, with a number of words and ceremonies to remind them of their end; but neglecting to seek the great gift of God, the assistance of the Holy Ghost; and not reading the blessed Bible in order to be made wise unto salvation, their work is vain, their hope a delusion, and their light darkness. Our chief wisdom is to look up where the risen Saviour has ascended, and now sits at the right hand of God; to consider the glories of that high and holy place, and what the Lord has declared concerning those who shall dwell there with Him. And then to examine ourselves, and try what fitness there is in us for such a state.

"When I talk of fitness, my dear child, I do not mean to say that it is possible for us to be, or to do, any thing deserving of such blessedness. No. *We* are all as an unclean thing,—all *our* righteousnesses are as filthy rags. But if we be indeed washed in the blood of Christ Jesus, we are also justified in God's sight, through Him; and if we be so washed and

justified, we shall be sanctified, too, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Though in ourselves, that is, our flesh, dwelleth no good thing, yet we shall both see and hate our sinfulness, and constantly be praying,

Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me.' We shall be growing in grace, loving God with a more perfect love, and hating sin with a more perfect hatred, every day ; we shall take that delight in the ways of holiness, which the world takes in the ways of folly and wickedness, and devote our whole selves, mind, body, and estate, to the service of our heavenly Lord and Master, doing all possible good to our fellow-creatures, *not* by the way of deserving heaven, but *because*, 'if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' Do you rightly understand what I mean by fitness for the presence of God ?"

"Yes, aunt, I think I do. God must love me, and make me love Him, and then I shall always try to do what pleases Him."

"True, my dear : but God cannot love any thing *unholy* like us ; therefore we must be 'accepted in the Beloved.' Our sins must all be blotted out by the blood of the Lamb, and our hearts changed by the Holy Spirit ; and we must be numbered among the little flock to whom the Lord Jesus says, 'It is His Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom.' Neither could we love God, until we behold Him, 'in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' The guilty rebel cannot love the king who is prepared to punish

his treason ; but when he finds himself pardoned and delivered, then indeed he must love. Let us but have this sweet assurance of the Lord's power and willingness to save, and find in ourselves a heart softened and renewed by Him, and then I know not what can be more profitable than to look up on a scene like this. For not only will it make our own troubles seem lighter, as the traveller finds the storm more bearable after he has got within sight of his home ; but it must, if we use it rightly, fill us with greater zeal for the conversion of others, when we look on the graves of many to whom the sweet sound of the gospel can never more come—many, perhaps, who despised and rejected it, for the wretched pleasures of a sinful world, and who would now, if they had them, give millions of worlds that the offer was once more made to repent and be saved. From these graves must every mouldering body arise at the judgment day, and would you not be indeed rejoiced to think that every one of them should awake to the resurrection of life ?”

“Yes, indeed, aunt : I do hope that they will be saved.”

“We cannot tell. *Their* state is now unchangeable. But look around you, among the living, and see if there be none to whom you may become an instrument of mercy ; that if it should be your lot to look down on their graves also, you may reflect with joy on having done what you could to bring them to Jesus.

“Come now to the opposite corner, Jane. Here is

a row of little mounds, of which the longest must be the resting-place of a child no bigger than yourself. What a lesson is here! Surely this smaller spot must enclose an infant, which only just opened its eyes on this world, and then took flight to a better. The Scripture is very full of consolation respecting such ; we are assured that they partake in Adam's sin by nature, but grace bestows on them eternal life, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Sleep, little baby, in your cold dark bed ; your spirit is with Him that gave it, and there too shall your body be, in His own good time."

"Aunt," said Jane, "here is a daisy growing on the grave that belongs to a child like me. It is just my length. I will keep the daisy to remind me that little children die ;" and she plucked the little flower.

"That daisy will soon wither too, my dear, however carefully you keep it, and will then more powerfully shew you how fading are all earthly things. I would wish you to be as humble, as simple, and unpretending among men, as that daisy is among flowers. Like it, you are of the earth, and must wait all the days of your appointed time thereon ; but may your eyes also be turned to heaven, and may you preserve as cheerful a composure among all mortal changes, as does that little flower, smiling amid the mansions of the dead ! You are now nearer to your last hour than when we began this conversation. May the Spirit of holiness increase your growth in grace ! But draw nigh to God, and He will draw

nigh to you. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and
He shall direct thy paths."

What thoughts, but sweetest, holiest thoughts
Should rise within my breast,
Where wicked ones torment no more,
And weary ones may rest ?

There weeps the graceful willow branch,
And droops the cypress tree,
And there a thousand sacred joys
Awake to gladden me.

The tender flowers beneath the beam
Their opening petals spread,
And sweetly they look down and smile
Upon the peaceful dead.

And like a flower that from a grave
Extracts its lowly birth,
My grateful soul desires to bloom
On this dark mound of earth.

Her root should in the tomb be fix'd,
Where Jesus deign'd to sleep;
And beams of grace should shine on her
And dews of mercy weep :

Till angels come to bear away
The trembler on their wing,
And plant her by Thy glorious throne,
My Father and my King!



The Sinful Laugh.

MRS MASON was walking in the garden with some of her children, when her eldest son, George, came up with a smiling countenance, which made one of his little sisters ask him if he had seen any thing to amuse him ?

He replied, "I have been greatly amused by the tricks and contrivances of Bob, the servant boy, to get out of a scrape."

"What has he done ?" said Mrs Mason.

"Why, mamma, he has often been suspected of taking fruit as he passed through the garden ; but

as he always denied it, and as there was no proof against him, nothing could convince me of it, till the gardener and I discovered Bob stealing some apples, and hiding them among the brambles in the hedge. When Bob was asked whether he had not been taking apples from a particular tree in the garden, he stoutly denied it, and desired us to look in his pockets, and in every place about the house and garden in which he could have hidden them. And he spoke with such a steady face, that, unless he had been seen to do it, nobody could have thought it. After a great deal of questioning, in which, I think, he told nearly as many lies as could be spoken in the time, he was taken outside the fence, and the apples shewn to him. But still he denied it, until the gardener and I told him of our having seen it all. I shall never forget the figure that he cut!"—and George laughed again, in which he was joined by the other children.

Mrs Mason shook her head, and having reached the end of the walk, she seated herself in an arbour, desiring them all to surround her. "Bob has done a very wicked thing, my dears," said she.

"Very wicked indeed, mamma : it is quite shocking to think of it," said one.

"Yes," added another, "there was both thieving and lying."

"And ingratitude," observed Mrs Mason, "for he has been very kindly treated here, and enjoyed every indulgence."

"Worse than that, if you knew all, mamma," said George. "He bore false witness, by throwing the

blame on an innocent person, and took God's holy name in vain, wishing to be punished by Him if he had done it."

"How shocking!" cried the children.

"George," said his mother, "what is the abominable thing that God hates?"

"Sin, mamma."

"What caused Adam to lose his happy and holy state? What brought death into the world? What crucified the Lord Jesus, and daily grieves the Holy Spirit?"

"Sin, sin is the cause of all," said the children.

"It is true, indeed, my dears; and now tell me what you could find in this frightful sin to laugh at."

The children looked one upon another, and all, at last, on George, who coloured and said, "I did not laugh at the sin, but at the ridiculous figure which he made, on being found out."

"This unfortunate boy bore a fair character," said Mrs Mason; "he was supposed to be honest, and to fear God: you thought well of him—did you not—as one who, in his humble sphere, wished to serve the Lord, whom you also profess to serve?"

"To be sure I did, mamma."

"Well, in an unexpected manner, all this proved to be a mistake. God is dishonoured, His holy name blasphemed, His sacred law broken, and a soul, of which you hoped that it belonged to Him, proved to be under the power of Satan, and in danger of everlasting death. Is it so?"

"Yes, mamma; I am afraid it is."

“The angels who never sinned, are represented as rejoicing in heaven over one repenting child of Adam. Are they not?”

“Yes,” said Mary, the eldest girl: “in the fifteenth chapter of Saint Luke’s Gospel, our Lord says so.”

“And why should they rejoice?”

“I think, mamma, that you have told us their constant employment and happiness is to praise and glorify the Lord God Almighty—then how very delightful must it be to them to see a soul snatched from the tyranny of Satan, and added to the number of those happy spirits who will join them in their work of praise for ever and ever!”

“Yes,” added Catherine, “and we are told that they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. i. 14.) So they must take a great interest in what is going forward below.”

“No doubt, my dear,” said her mamma. “Christ is the object of their adoration; for it is written—‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’ (Heb. i. 6.) And in heaven their song is—‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.’ (Rev. v. 12.) The salvation of souls being the very object of the mighty work in which that Lamb was slain, it must be the great delight of those holy and loving angels to see their Lord thus glorified in the saving of a soul.

“Now tell me, how is Satan described, and what is his employment and desire?”

The children considered for some time; at last one of them answered, “Your adversary, the devil, as a

roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter v. 8.)

"Moses endured, as seeing Him who is invisible," observed Mrs Mason. "Like David, he set God always before him. Oh, that we had more of that precious faith which looks to things unseen and eternal! My children, you have drawn an awful picture, and a true one, for it is given in the very words of Scripture. First, there is the All-seeing, All-observing Jehovah, who compasseth our path, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. (Ps. cxxxix. 3). And who says, 'I know the things that come into your mind every one of them.' (Ezekiel xi. 5). Then, there are the holy angels, who continually behold His glory, and rejoice in His favour, longing to see us made partakers of the same blessedness, and to be sent on messages of love to poor fallen men; and, lastly, there are the devil and his angels, busily employed in laying snares for our feet, and exulting in every sin committed by us, because it dishonours God. At once the tempter and accuser, Satan opposes himself, with all his dreadful power and cunning, to every human being who seeks the kingdom of God. The serpent who beguiled Eve by his subtilty, follows each of Eve's children with the same cruel intention: and those whom he leads to transgress, it is his delight to devour. What need, then, we have to help and encourage one another! What cause to watch over ourselves and our brethren—to pray for one another, that we may be healed of this dreadful disease, sin; and give heed to the

beautiful injunction of the Apostle :—‘Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.’ (Gal. vi. 1, 2).”

These words appeared to sink very deeply into the minds of some of the children. George in particular hung down his head, and appeared much distressed. His mother observed it.

“Does my dear boy see now wherein he has offended ?”

“Yes, indeed, mamma—I have sinned very greatly. I have brought myself into shame, worse than that of the unfortunate little boy, Bob: for I know so much better than he does what is right ; and I was bound to set an example to others, that they should not jest at sin, but mourn over it. I was the first to laugh at it, and that encouraged the servants to do the same.”

“And by so doing,” said Mrs Mason, “you taught them to make light of what God abhors : besides, this was the very way in which to harden the offender. Instead of exciting humility, it would be sure to rouse his pride, and make him eager to witness in those who made a mock of his sin, some transgression that should enable him to triumph over them in return.”

“The Scripture says, ‘Fools make a mock at sin.—(Prov. xiv. 9),” observed one of the boys.

“True, James: and I wish you had called the

Scripture to mind, the other day, when you were so much amused by the reelings of a drunken man in the street."

"Why, mamma, was there any harm in that?"

"Is not drunkenness a sin?"

"Yes; but not such a *great* sin as stealing or taking God's name in vain."

"All unrighteousness is sin—all sin is hateful to God, and every impenitent sinner lies under His curse.

"It is one of Satan's most cunning devices to persuade us that there are distinctions of great and little sins: and another of his contrivances is to mix up with the crimes of men, something that to our weak and wicked nature seems laughable. Alas! how many will smile to witness the staggering gait of an intoxicated man! Yet He who has said, 'Thou shalt do no murder,' has also placed drunkenness next to murder, in the awful list of those things which keep men from the kingdom of God. (Gal. v. 21). And therefore how displeasing in His sight must it be that we dare to make a jest of sin in any shape."

"I hope that I shall never do so again," said George. "It did not occur to me that there could be so much harm in a laugh."

"This boy, of whom you were telling us, has done a very sinful deed, and I shall consult your papa, when he comes home, how we are to deal with him. It will be our endeavour to set before him the greatness of his sin against God, against his own soul, and against his fellow creatures. It may be that repent-

ance will be given unto him, and we shall then know it by his bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. If not, we must follow David's rule, 'He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.' Shall we not grieve that our adversary, the roaring lion, has thus seized a poor wretched straggler from the fold of the Good Shepherd? Shall we not use every means—by prayer, by exhortation, by example, to induce him to seek deliverance out of his paw?"

My Saviour, shall my laughter rise
At that which drew Thee from the skies
To groan and suffer here:
That scourged Thy tender flesh, and bound
Thy bleeding brow with thorns around,
And drove the cruel spear?

Sin wrung the bloody sweat from Thee—
Sin nail'd Thee to the cursed tree—
Sin choked Thy gasping breath!
My sin, the sin of all my race,
Veil'd Thy bright glory in disgrace,
And bowed Thee unto death.

Whene'er transgressors cross my way,
Still let me for the sinner pray,
But be the sin abhorred:
Oh, teach me from my soul to fling,
And tremble at the hateful thing
That crucified my Lord!



The Oak Grove.

I WAS walking in my favourite grove, where the oaks, whose lofty branches had lately afforded a pleasant shade from the heat of summer, were fast losing their rich leaves. Yellow, shrivelled, and dry, they lay in heaps upon the grass, mingled with a large quantity of acorns, which two or three children were busily collecting in their small baskets, as a feast for some favourite pig. So they told my little companion, who, on his part, was filling his handkerchief with the same treasures, for the purpose of raising such another grove of oaks in his garden—a piece of ground six feet long by one foot wide—so mightily does man's ambition, even at six years' old, overstep his resources !

Having neither a pig to provide for, nor room in my garden for oaks to grow, I picked up a single acorn, and walked slowly on; considering it as an object always interesting. I fancied the acorn planted, and springing forth; and then pictured to myself of what scenes it might one day be the witness; and while the scattered leaves flew around me on the blast of autumn, they sent home to my heart the affecting lamentation of the prophet, "*We* all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away."

There is something very striking to my mind in the lofty unconcern with which the tree seems to stretch forth its branches, above the withering leaves that so lately were its beauty and its boast. Even so does the proud world overlook its children, who have been laid low by the hand of death. While they lived, men spoke well of them: but now their pomp and the noise of their viols is brought down to the grave: the worm is spread under them, and the worms cover them. Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is likened not only to the leaves that fade, but to the beasts that perish.

In the midst of these solemn reflections my eye was caught by the glittering of a pair of small, but showy ear-rings, adorning one of those little girls who were gleaning for the pig. It was easy to see that she had not long worn the useless ornaments; and was very vain of the consequence which they were supposed to add to her appearance. At any time, and in any place, finery displeases me: especially when

displayed by the poor. How much more, then, when every object around us seemed made to teach humility, and to "hide pride from man!"

I once knew a little girl in a far higher rank of life than that of the child whom I was observing, but whose father had the judgment to disapprove of all needless ornament. When she was about seven years old, a relation coming to the house on a visit, brought her a very fine pair of ear-rings; and as the party were settling that little Miss should on the next day have her ears bored—for they were still just as God made them—papa unexpectedly put a stop to the whole affair, by declaring that she must also have a ring through her nose, unless she could prove to him that one in the ear was either more necessary or more useful. This, of course, could not be proved; and the trinkets were exchanged by the friend who brought them, for something better suited to the child. But such an effect had the conversation upon her young mind, that it led to a habit of valuing things according to their real usefulness; and when, twenty years afterwards, she was brought to feel the true worth of her soul, and to understand how many things highly esteemed among men are abomination unto the Lord, she found cause to be thankful for this little incident of the ear-rings, as having been made the means of keeping her from many snares.

It does not often happen that a poor family can afford such things as these; but the richer sort of people sometimes do great harm by giving to them

the cast-off dresses of their own children, with, perhaps, such trimmings and flounces upon them as make them quite grand in the sight of a cottager. I would never grudge an hour's work to the task of stripping these off before I part with articles that my friends are so good as to give me for the poor. As to my own wardrobe, I hope that it is always arranged according to the counsel of the Apostle "I will . . . that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel." Shall I trim my dress with what would buy a blanket for some shivering, bedridden fellow creature, chilled with age and poverty; or defend the tender limbs of some weak infant from the cold; or satisfy the hunger of both? I hope not.

I was thus thinking, as I trod over the brown leaves, while a slight drizzling rain that began to fall, made me thankful for a warm cloak, and increased my pity for those who had no such protection even from a storm, while obliged to work in the open air.

My little companion cared not for the change in the weather, so busy was he with the acorns: nor did the other children leave their employment. They gleaned from necessity, he for amusement; but to observe the little fellow's eagerness any one might have supposed that his dinner depended upon his work. Seeing him quite loaded with acorns, I called

him to me, and proposed his putting them into the basket of the little girl.

“No : I cannot spare them. I am going to take them home.”

“Why, what can you possibly do with so many ?”

“Oh ! I can play with them.”

“But the pig would make a meal upon them : and God certainly gives them for the animal’s food. He makes nothing in vain, though we often put His gifts to very wrong and foolish uses. I cannot think that we have a right to destroy even a handful of acorns ; but you may amuse yourself a while with them, and afterwards give them to a poor neighbour, who will be glad of them, to put them into his pig’s trough. And now I will tell you how to be instructed, as well as amused, by these pretty shining things.”

“When reading the Bible, you will sometimes meet with what you cannot as yet understand ; and even when you are much older, you may still find some difficult passages. Now, it is certain that our hearts are full of unbelief by nature, and Satan is always glad of an opportunity to make the most of our bad, proud disposition. We do not like to believe what we cannot understand ; and this one thing would shut us out of heaven entirely, however wise and good we may fancy ourselves. We must, therefore, always pray for faith : ‘without faith it is impossible to please God.’”

“But what is faith ?”

“I am going to tell you, in the language of a poor old woman, who on being asked the same question,

answered, '*It's taking God at His word.* Suppose I was to say to you, 'Plant this acorn: and if it live, it will become an oak,' would you believe me?'"

"Yes, to be sure I would. Don't I know that oaks grow from acorns?"

"You do. You have been told so, and you have seen the acorn fall from the oak, and have pulled up a young plant, with the shell of the acorn still hanging to the root. But suppose I meet a person who had never seen anything of the sort, nor knew anything about the growth of vegetables, and were to shew him a handful of acorns, and say, 'See here; if you put these small round things in the earth, they may one day be made into great ships; or yield food enough every year to fatten hundreds of swine; or provide beams and floors, tables and chairs, for a whole village,' would he not think that I wanted to deceive him?"

"I dare say he would, indeed."

"The change is so wonderful that nobody would believe it; and even as it is, nobody can explain it, though it is not possible to deny what we see with our own eyes every day. God requires us to believe some things which as yet we cannot fully perceive; because, as the Apostle says, we now see 'through a glass darkly,' yet the Lord can enable us to believe, though we see not. Thus you are told, that by the sin of one the whole world is become sinful; and, by the death of another One sin is forgiven, and man made holy and happy again; and our believing this is necessary to our salvation. In 'the Man Christ

Jesus, dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily,'—that is more amazing than that the oak should dwell in the acorn ; but God tells you that it is so ; and faith assures you that what God says is, and must be true, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin ;' you know not how ; but your sin will never be cleansed unless you believe it. Satan knows all this very well : and will do all in his power to keep you from believing. But look on the acorn, and be humbled. Acknowledge how ignorant, blind, and weak we are : and from the least of God's visible works learn how necessary it is to pray for faith, that you may believe the words by which you shall be made wise unto salvation."

Look to the heavens above,
To earth that smiles beneath,
And read Jehovah's power and love
On all that move and breathe.

The ocean, land, and sky,
Are leaves in one vast book ;
His glorious hand is ever nigh,
'Tis seen where'er we look.

The acorn at my feet,
Hid in its dusty bed,
Shall burst forth from its low retreat,
And shade the path I tread.

Thus by Thy grace, O Lord,
True wisdom would I learn,
In every page throughout thy Word
Its fulness to discern.

Each promise there bestow'd
Is in rich bounty given,
To bloom above the narrow road,
And shade my path to heaven.



Little Oaths.

“ I WAS sorry to hear you swearing just now, Robert,” said Mr Somers to his son.

“ Swearing, papa ! me swearing ? no indeed, you were mistaken. I would not do such a thing for the world.”

“ You are very much in the habit of doing it, however,” said his father.

Robert appeared quite shocked, and replied very earnestly, “ Indeed, sir, I do not think that you or any one else can have ever heard me take the Lord’s name in vain.”

“Perhaps not: but you can break His commandment without naming Him. That commandment is ‘Swear not at all.’ I am sure I heard you swear by your honour not very long ago.”

“Oh, papa, that was not an oath, only an assertion.”

“Call it what you will, Robert, it was a breach of the command which I have just repeated. All such assertions are forbidden. Look at the fifth chapter of St Matthew’s Gospel, in the 34th, 35th, 36th, and 37th verses.”

Robert read, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

“Well, Robert, and do you now understand the meaning of the last words? Evil cometh from whatsoever can be brought to confirm these plain declarations, yes or no—it is, or it is not. It comes from Satan, the evil one, who is ever on the watch to betray us into breaking the law of God; or from the evil that is in man’s heart, which makes him unwilling to trust another person, and therefore afraid that others will not trust him. Passion and violence also help to produce these things: and all are *contrary to the Spirit of Christ*.

“You are afraid to call upon the Most High God,

by name, to bear witness in your idle discourse ; but when you appeal to things that are His, you appeal to Him. He who forbids you to swear by your head, and who has especially said, 'Swear not at all,' cannot hold you guiltless when you swear by your honour, your soul, your word, your faith, or any thing above, beneath, around, or within you. I have been astonished to hear some persons, who would have shrunk from taking the name of God in vain, assert or deny a thing by words which allude to the character or attributes of God. Surely such do swear by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon."

"I never thought there was such harm in it," said Robert. "People get a habit of using words of this kind, and they do it almost without knowing what they say."

"Yes ; and what does this prove, but that 'God is not in all their thoughts?' They wilfully forget that He is ever present, and they insult Him to His face. A great deal of bad language passes among the lower orders ; much idle, foolish, and filthy talking takes place, I fear, between those labourers at work in the fields yonder : but if I sent for one of them to give him directions, would he talk in the same way in my parlour, and before my family ? Certainly not. Respect for us, and fear of losing my favour, would put a bridle on his tongue : nor would the long habit of using bad language, and real ignorance of its extreme sinfulness, cause him so far to forget himself. What excuse can they find, who allow themselves to treat the great and terrible God with less

reverence than that man would shew to me? But my present object is, to prove to you that the expressions which you and others too often use are really oaths: and as such, forbidden by the Lord, and exceedingly sinful in His sight. Little oaths they may be called, compared with the more open and wilful guilt of those who sport with the name of God: but they are all of the same family. The small twig that sprouts out from the trunk of the oak, belongs to the tree, and grows upon it, as much as the great branches that spread forth from above our heads, and overshadow the ground. Cut down the tree, and they fall together."

While Mr Somers was thus speaking to his son, two gentlemen came up, and joined them. After some remarks on other things, Mr Somers told them what he had been talking of. He knew that they were men who had not the fear of God rightly before their eyes; and he hoped that the conversation might be useful to them. It is strange that religious people should so often keep silence in presence of those who are still irreligious; and even converse in a worldly manner to please them, instead of trying to do good to their souls. It certainly is not what our Lord meant when He bade His disciples let their light shine before men. We know not how a pious remark, made in an affectionate manner, may be blessed by the Lord to the most thoughtless of our companions, while, by avoiding religious subjects, we do harm to ourselves, and lose all hope of doing good to them.

Mr Somers knew this very well : so he said, " I was just now talking to Robert on a very important subject : the sinfulness of little oaths."

" I don't know what you mean by a little oath," said one of them, who here made use of an oath.

" You have now uttered one," replied Mr Somers : " you have sworn by your faith."

" Do you call that swearing ?"

" Certainly I do ; if it means anything, it must mean that your words to me are as true as your faith in God is sincere : and thus you call on Him, who alone can judge, to witness both to the soundness of your faith, and the strictness of your truth."

" I mean no such thing," said the other. " It is a foolish custom that I have, and I use the word without thinking about it ?"

" Pardon me," replied Mr Somers, " but if your servant set fire to your house by placing the candle close to a muslin curtain, would you be satisfied with his excuse, if he told you that he was not thinking about it ?"

" That is a different thing."

" Yes : the burning of a house is of much less importance than the breaking of God's laws. He who wilfully commits sin is of the devil—so the Scriptures assure us—and for such how terrible are the unquenchable flames prepared !"

The gentlemen looked surprised and rather angry. Men do not like to be reminded of their danger, while yet unwilling to forsake their sins. But Mr Somers spoke so seriously, and his looks were so

kind, that they could hardly take offence at the words which their consciences told them were true.

“ Well,” said one, “ if a thoughtless expression is to be visited so severely, what becomes of the downright swearer? ”

Mr Somers replied, “ Out of his own mouth he is judged, and so are we. It will not avail us, while breaking the laws of God, to point out others who do so more daringly than ourselves. Thoughtless expressions, as you call them, may destroy a soul. Our Lord declares, ‘ I say unto you, that every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.’ (Matt. xii. 36.) And surely those words are, in every respect, most truly idle, which are used to confirm what no one, probably, would doubt of, plainly stated ; and what, if it was doubted at all would never be the sooner believed because of them. He who does not fear an oath, will not fear a lie: both are contrary to God’s laws. The man who breaks one law, rather than give up a silly and useless custom, will hardly scruple to break another, when he thinks it may be for his present advantage. The Apostle tells us that between men ‘ an oath for confirmation, is to them an end of all strife.’ (Heb. vi. 16.) He speaks of those solemn oaths which may be required before a magistrate, and when, perhaps, the life or property of some person being at stake, it is thought needful to bind men in this way to give a true testimony. But who believes a man the more, when he attempts to strengthen his assertions by profane cursing and swearing, even though the matter

should be important? Or who will pay the greater regard to what is said in common conversation, when the expressions that I called LITTLE OATHS are brought to give weight to it? Surely then such words are idle in every respect—useless, and absurd in themselves; but when we reflect that there is a plain command of the Lord Jesus which positively forbids them, we should tremble at the prospect of that tremendous hour, when, before the judgment-seat of the Most High, we shall be called to render up an account of these things: to say why we disobeyed the laws of Him who will not be mocked: why we hated to be reformed, and cast His words behind us: why we lived in the deliberate practice of what He tells us ‘cometh of evil,’ and refused to lay aside such ‘foolish talking,’ as we knew to be offensive, nay, most dishonourable to our God. For, as I have been telling Robert, he who swears by anything belonging to the Lord, swears by Him; and what can we name that does not belong to Him? He is the Former of all things.’ ‘Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.’”

The two gentlemen seemed at a loss to answer this; at length one of them observed, “I keep pretty clear of the sin which you speak of; for when I do swear, it is by something that does not exist, nor never did—such as by some one of the heathen gods; or by some word which means nothing at all, so far as I can tell.”

Mr Somers replied, “With regard to the heathen

gods, let us hear the Apostle: 'The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils,' (1 Cor. x. 20.) This ought to be an alarming consideration to those who make choice of devils to attest the truth of what they say. As to the silly, unmeaning words that are often invented for the same purpose, it only serves to prove how far men will go, even from common sense, rather than not continue to fly in the face of God's laws. Or rather it proves the dreadful power of Satan in suggesting to our evil hearts what our unguarded tongues are so ready to utter; sadly shewing that the whole matter 'cometh of evil,' and calling for deeper gratitude to Him who has not only warned us against it, and exposed the snare, but who is ready at this moment to forgive all our sin and blasphemy, and to give us grace that we may offend no more. He who is convinced that he must no longer continue in the practice of this evil, will soon find the difficulty of entirely rooting it out, if he attempts it in his own strength; nor will his forsaking the sin now, render any atonement for his breach of this law in times past. No, my dear friends, and you, Robert, you must deeply consider how wantonly you have offended against 'a just God and a Saviour,' and flee for refuge to the Saviour from the vengeance of the just God. Do not be satisfied to resolve on forsaking a bad habit; mourn over it as a sin, and go to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, that the guilt of many days may be washed away in the pre-

ciuous blood of Christ—beseech the Most High in prayer, that the new heart and the right spirit may be given you, by which alone you can walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. So far blameless, that you may have no wilful deliberate sin to poison your spiritual peace; and while resisting the motions of that corruption which will cleave to this body of death, gratefully remembering that ‘we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins.’”

Each savage beast that roams the wood,
 Each tenant of the rolling flood,
 The reptile, and the bird, hath bent
 Beneath man’s lordly government;
 Before his arm the creatures fall,
 Or tamely follow at his call :

But fiercer than the beast of night,
 More deadly than the serpent’s bite,
 More swift than swallow’s wing, to fly
 From reason’s hand and wisdom’s tie,
 The tongue of man—oh ! who can tame
 That world of sin, that root of shame !

Great King of glory—God of grace,
 Upon my lip thy bridle place,
 Lest in the judgment’s dreadful day
 My words appear in dark array,
 To speak against my soul, and tell
 This tongue was set on fire of hell.

Read the 3d chapter of St James’s Epistle



White Lies.

“COME, Master Freddy,” said Anne the nurse-maid, “it is time to go home.”

Master Freddy, however, liked better to stay where he was, and to pick up the daisies from the pleasant green grass plot in his papa’s large garden. He therefore answered, “Freddy won’t go.” The servant then stooped to lift him up, and carry him away by force ; but the little child, who was not three years old, kicked and struggled, and screamed as no child ought to do ; and Anne, tired of his resistance, tried another method to get him home.

“Well, you may stay if you like ; but there’s a gentleman come to see mamma, with his pocket full of cakes and sugar-plums. Master Richard will go, I’m sure, to get some of the nice things, and you can stop by yourself.”

Little Freddy got up in a great bustle, and gathering in one hand his pinafore, filled with grass and daisies, stretched out the other to the servant, saying, “Me will go.”

Richard, who was four years older than his brother, was very well pleased at the thought of seeing a visitor, and had no objection to the contents of his pockets, as described by Anne. As they walked along, he asked her, “Who is the gentleman, Anne ? Is it uncle John, or who ?” “Hush,” said she in a whisper, “there is nobody there ; I only told it to the child, to get him home quietly.”

“Then you have told a great lie,” said Richard, very angrily.

“It is very impudent of you, sir, to call me a liar, and I certainly will tell your mamma.”

“Do,” said Richard, “and she will call you the same.”

When they got home, Richard ran into the parlour, shouting out, “Anne has been telling lies.” He was followed by little Fred, who, with a look of disappointment, asked for the cakes, and on being told there were none, began to cry.

Anne followed ; and having heard Richard’s words, explained the matter as well as she could. It was impossible, she said, to bring the child home, he was

so obstinate, and she was forced to let him suppose that he would get something nice by coming quietly along. She added that because Master Richard was disappointed, he had been very rude, and accused her of telling lies.

"To be sure I did," said Richard, "and you can see, mamma, she is forced to own it herself. There is no gentleman here with cakes, as she told Freddy."

"That does not excuse you," said his mamma, "your rude language and manner were as far from the meekness and humbleness of a Christian, as Anne's falsehood was from the sincerity of one."

"Why, sure, ma'am, I have done no harm," cried the girl, "I only told an innocent white lie, when it could not be helped." As she spoke, the children's papa entered the room, and exclaimed, "An innocent white lie! Pray what may that mean, Anne?"

"Why, sir, a white lie is a little story that has no malice in it, and can hurt nobody; such as people are forced to tell, sometimes."

Her master shook his head, and sat down. Then having heard all the particulars, he went on to explain the matter.

"You have made two excuses, Anne, both of which I hope, by the Lord's help, to prove dangerous and false. First, that a lie may be innocent; and secondly, that it may be necessary. An innocent thing is a thing that is neither sinful in itself, nor hurtful to others. Do you think this is the character of the story that you told the child?"

"To be sure I do, sir, or I would not have said it."

“ Was what you told him true or not ? ”

“ Why not exactly true, sir,” answered Anne.

“ Then it was exactly false,” said her master, “ for there is no middle space between truth and untruth. Now, what is the character given to a lie in Scripture? ‘ Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.’ ”

“ But I did not mean it as a sin, and I hope God will forgive me.”

“ All manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven to those who in deep repentance and faith turn to God, through the blood of His Son: but can we believe that such faith and repentance exist, where the sin is persisted in? No; for Christ came to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto Himself a people zealous of good works. As to your not meaning it to be a sin, what God has declared to be hateful to Him, must be sin—what the devil is the father of, must be sin—what will plunge a soul into the lake of fire, must be sin. When Satan prevailed on Eve to eat of the forbidden tree, he did it by persuading her that it would not be sinful; and it is by his whispering a lie into your heart, that you are brought to tell a lie to your neighbour. I suppose there are few people in the world who will commit a crime solely and entirely because it is a crime. The thief, the blasphemer, the murderer, may excuse themselves just as well as the liar on that ground. We never are safe from temptation, which would persuade us that we are at liberty to break God’s laws, so long as we do it, not for the sake of breaking them, but to serve our own purposes.

“Let it never be forgotten that the first open advantage which Satan gained amongst the Church in Jerusalem, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, was by means of this very sin. Now Satan persuaded them to what they intended should be only a white lie, as it is impiously called. The wealthier Christians, we are told, had such tender concern for their poorer brethren, that ‘as many as were possessors of land or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles’ feet; and distribution was made to every man, according as he had need.’ Oh, that there were such an heart among Christians of the present day! there would then be no member of Christ pining in poverty—no follower of the lowly Jesus ensnared by the deceitfulness of riches.

“But Ananias and his wife desired to enjoy the credit of giving up all their possessions, while they kept back a share for themselves. They sold what they had, and kept back part of the price; and, as it appears, without saying anything, went and laid the remainder at the Apostles’ feet. Now, tell me, Anne, was this a lie?”

“Why, yes, sir,” said Anne, “for the Bible calls it so.”

“Ay, and a very black lie too, though it certainly comes under the description which I have heard some people give of a white lie. Nothing seems to have been said: the lie was in the action. The object of these sinners was to deceive the Apostles and the Church. They must have known that they

could not deceive the Lord God : and oh, what a fearful insult do we put on the majesty of Jehovah, when, making light of His approval, we seek by dishonest means to escape the anger, or contempt, or dislike of a fellow worm ! In this instance the Most High vindicated His own glory very awfully. Peter was enabled by the Holy Ghost to perceive the deception, and addressed the guilty man in those solemn words, ‘ Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land ? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.’ We do not find that a single word was spoken by Ananias throughout the whole transaction, but his THOUGHT was a lie, his ACT was a lie, and the wrath of the Lord fell with so terrible a weight upon him, that he died on the spot. Now, ask your conscience whether you have not, many and many a time, provoked the Lord by the same sin to visit you in the same manner. Have you not, by a word, a look, a nod, by keeping silence when you should have spoken, as well as by speaking what was false, lied unto God ?

“ See, too, in the case of Sapphira, by what steps the sinner is led on. She, probably, intended to remain silent, and not to say what was grossly untrue : but when Peter suddenly asked her the question, whether they had sold the land for what they pretended, she found herself compelled either to confess the deceitful transaction, or to confirm it by a plain, direct falsehood. Satan had prevailed too far already, and he then completed the triumph over his victim

--she answered, 'Yea, for so much.' Well might Peter ask the question, 'How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?'

"Wonderful indeed it is that any creature, who is at all acquainted with the God of truth, and who knows His threatenings against this sin, should have the boldness to tempt that wrath which can send him in a moment quick into hell—that any thing which this fleeting world can bestow, should bribe an immortal soul to trifle with its eternal happiness!

"If judgment now overtook all who partake of Ananias' guilt, even among those who profess to be the peculiar followers of Christ, we should meet a funeral in every street. And is the Lord less holy now than then? Is He less watchful, or less jealous for His own glory? No: His eyes still search, and His eyelids try the children of men; and the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, which would lead us to repentance, will the more fearfully witness against those who despise them, and who continue to go on frowardly in the way of their own hearts. If there were not a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, even the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, how could we endure the terrors that this subject alone would excite? I hope I have convinced you that your lie was sinful in itself: do you think it did no harm to others?"

"I hope not, sir, only that it was a disappointment to the children."

"And a disappointment of this sort," said her master, "may and must injure them. Being deceived,

they will naturally become suspicious and mistrustful, so that, when we tell them things most necessary to be believed, they may not feel confidence in us: and thus in their very infancy, the seeds may be sown of the worst infidelity, to appear when they grow up. It also hurts their tempers, making them feel that they are wronged; it encourages cunning, and the desire of outwitting others. It makes them familiar with sin, and because the long-suffering of the Lord withholds Him from immediately punishing what He hates, it leads often to that dreadful error which is mentioned in the fiftieth Psalm, 'These things thou hast done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' We are commanded not to put a stumbling block, or occasion of falling, in another's way; but this we do, whenever we commit sin: and when we set a bad example to those who are younger or more ignorant than ourselves, our sin is greatly aggravated.

"But you also said that the lie could not be helped. What did you mean by that?"

"Why, sir, Master Freddy refused to come home when I desired him; and to make him come quietly, I was forced to invent something."

"What forced you? Nothing but the love of ease, Anne. You wished to avoid the trouble of reasoning with the poor little fellow, or the exertion of bringing him against his will, which you certainly could have done. You see how the devil can call the flesh to his assistance, when he is about the work of temptation, from which indeed he never ceases. This

shews the necessity of continual watchfulness. It is most insulting to the Lord, most impious and presumptuous to say or imagine that any person can be obliged to commit sin. It is positively promised to those who love God, that they shall not be tempted above that they are able. We are distinctly told that if we resist the devil he will flee from us; and that if we draw nigh unto God, He will draw nigh unto us. To do wrong, and then say that you were forced to it, is to make God a liar—to charge Him with being the author of evil. Beware how you venture thus to blaspheme! ‘In many things we offend all:’ and this will always be true of every one of us; a corrupt nature is ever struggling against the law of God, and innumerable transgressions stain our hearts and lives, through the sinful infirmities of our flesh; but knowingly to do, of deliberate purpose, that which we know God has forbidden, and then to cast the blame on Him, by saying that we could not avoid it, is indeed to sin with a high hand. Watch and pray, for you are surrounded by unseen enemies, who constantly seek to draw you from the right path, that they may triumph in the destruction of your soul.

“There are some people who think that a lie loses its real character, and becomes innocent, when it is told for the purpose of bringing about something for the good of others. Have you not such a thing as this in your list of white lies, Anne?”

Anne, however, now began to see the matter in its true light; and her conscience afflicted her for the many cases in which she had departed from truth.

She answered very humbly, "Indeed, sir, I have both heard and believed that there might be merit in such a lie as that, when good was to be done by it : but now I plainly see that all lying is sinful ; and I wonder that I have not been struck dead long ago, for my offences in that way."

"I am glad to hear you confess the fault," said her master. "I hope that you will not suffer Satan again to delude you into such sin ; but remember that any resolution made in your own strength, will be vain. You must pray constantly to be preserved from the temptation—'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips,' is a prayer of which we have hourly need.

"If you please, sir," said Anne, "tell me more of that sort of lie, which is spoken for the sake of doing good. I wish to be able to tell my fellow servants what you are so kind as to teach me."

"First, then, let us hear what the inspired Apostle Paul says on the subject. He speaks of some who, supposing that the glory of God may be advanced by their wilful lie, will not admit that they ought to be judged as sinners ; but say, 'Let us do evil that good may come,' and of such the Apostle declares, that their damnation is just. Whatever excuse they may find for themselves, God has none for them : His Word condemns all liars ; and His righteous cause needs not the aid of sinful means to advance it. This is one of the deadly errors of the Church of Rome, which divides lies into two sorts, mortal and venial, as they call it. That is, a lie which deserves

eternal punishment, and a lie which does not. But the words of God are clear and express—ALL liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone ; nor can the guilt of the smallest departure from truth, be removed by any thing less than the blood of the eternal Son of God, shed on the cross. How terrible, then, is the state of those who go into eternity without having repented of this sin, and prayed to have it blotted out by that precious blood !

“Do you remember the instructive story of Esau and Jacob ? God had declared that the blessing should be inherited by the younger son. Their mother saw Isaac their father old, and seemingly near death ; she heard him speak of blessing his son Esau before he died ; and, as if the purpose of the Lord would fail, unless she took sinful means of bringing it to pass, she contrived a lie of this description, by which to establish the truth of God’s word, doing evil that good might come. Ignorant sinner ! who but the Lord Jesus can bear the iniquity of transgressors ? Jacob, as you know, succeeded in his mother’s wicked advice, and had his whole life embittered by it. Isaac lived many years after, as if to shew how much time was left for the fulfilment of the Divine promise ; while Jacob was driven as an outcast from his home, to escape the vengeance of Esau, and become, in his turn, the victim of other liars in a most remarkable manner.

“We have an instance, too, of a lie being told to a prophet, in order to persuade him to eat and drink

after a long journey, when the Lord had forbidden it. The object of the person who told this lie, seems to have been that of kindness ; but all ended in seeing him killed by a lion, for disobedience to the command of Jehovah. Whatever we desire, believing it to be according to God's will, we have that precept and promise, 'Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass : ' but by telling a lie you commit your way unto Satan, and trust in *him* : and if in this way you seek to promote God's glory, what is it but offering to the Most High that which has first been sacrificed to devils ?

"And now, Richard, I have a few words to say to you. In the sixth chapter of Proverbs, we are told of several things that the Lord hateth—that are an abomination unto Him : of these, one is a lying tongue, and another is a proud look. I am sorry you should have been guilty of the sin of pride in reproving the sin of lying."

"I did not mean to be proud, papa," said Richard : "but I was vexed to see Freddy deceived."

"And yourself disappointed," added his papa.

The manner in which you spoke to Anne, and repeated to your mamma her fault, proved that there was more of pride and anger in your heart, than of anxiety for God's glory, or sorrow for the offence of a fellow creature. Children who are so well instructed as you are in their duty, sometimes make an improper use of their knowledge, taking upon themselves to be teachers, in a way so rude and overbearing, that it disgusts those who hear it, and often does great

harm to the cause of religion and truth. The oldest and wisest person is required to become as a little child, in order to learn the humbling doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“ Little Freddy, I see, has fallen asleep on his mamma’s lap, and forgotten all his disappointments. He is too young to understand much of what we have been talking of ; but not too young to be injured by bad example, or benefited by that which is good. I think that when a child is able to ask a question, he is fit to receive the instruction that a wise and careful answer may convey. Our little Freddy, were he to die to-morrow, could by no means enter heaven unless cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ ; and we must often tell him so, and teach him, even now, to look to Him alone.”

O Lord, if Thou hast brought me
From bondage and from shame,
And by Thy Spirit taught me
To glorify Thy name.

Let no false word, deceiving,
My conscience e’er defile,
That Holy Spirit grieving
With base untruth and guile.

Fools may cast firebrands round them,
And call it idle sport,
Their own right hand shall wound them,
Their jesting shall be short.

In vain they may endeavour
To quench the flaming coals,
Once lit, they burn for ever
Around their guilty souls.



The Wasp.

“Now, Sarah, as you have done all your tasks to my satisfaction,” said the governess, “you may put on your bonnet, and go into the garden—it is very fine.”

“I thank, you ma’am,” replied Sarah; “but I will stay here, if you please, till my little brother comes from school, and then we can play together.”

The governess went out, and Sarah was very glad to hear the door close after her. For it is sad to tell, all that she had said about her brother was merely an excuse.

Indeed it was a falsehood. The truth was, that Sarah saw upon the window a very pretty butterfly, with wings all streaked and spotted, and she wanted to catch it. She had been told that it was cruel to handle those delicate creatures, and the one before her being very small indeed, she was sure that her governess would have objected to her touching it. This, however, did not at all prevent her wishing to catch it; and she had set her wits to work, until she thought of the excuse about her brother's return, that she might be left alone, and follow her naughty inclinations at the expense of the poor little butterfly.

Sarah finding all quiet, stepped on tiptoe to the window; but just then the butterfly removed to a higher pane, quite out of her reach; and as the sash was a little way open at the top, she feared the insect would escape. She therefore brought a stool, and mounted it; and being still too low, she took her pocket handkerchief and made a blow at the poor creature, to bring it down. She *must* have known that by such means she would hurt it very much—perhaps kill it, or at least break its little limbs. But when people begin to do wrong, they never know where they will stop. Many a one who has wilfully broken the tenth commandment, by coveting what did not belong to him, has gone on to break the eighth, by stealing; and even so far as to defy the sixth, and to commit murder.

Well, there stood the naughty, artful little Sarah, with her handkerchief uplifted; and with a good smart blow she brought down, not the helpless butter

fly, but a fine strong yellow wasp, which had just flown in at the open space, to try what sweet things might be found in that nice room.

The wasp was not hurt, only a little frightened, and more than a little angry, as appeared by the very loud noise with which it began to buzz and threaten. As to Sarah, she was not at all pleased to have caught a wasp instead of a butterfly ; and instead of seizing it, as she intended to seize the poor butterfly, she jumped down in a great hurry, and ran with all her might, with her hands over her eyes, while the angry wasp still hummed about her ears, threatening to revenge itself.

Just as Sarah began to cry, her eldest brother entered the room ; and seeing the cause of her fright, drove the wasp away, who presently flew out of the window again.

“How often have I told you not to meddle with those insects,” said her brother. “I dare say you provoked the wasp, by the angry noise that it made.”

“I did not mean to do so, indeed John ; I never even saw the nasty, spiteful thing, till it flew at me.”

John went to the window, and seeing the stool standing close to it, with Sarah's handkerchief lying beside, and moreover one of her shoes, which had fallen off in her hasty flight, he thought that she had told him an untruth. But looking up, he saw the pretty butterfly, and presently guessed how the matter stood. “So, Sarah,” he said, “you were trying to seize the butterfly, and you brought down the

wasp instead." Sarah confessed it, and begged he would not tell her parents, or the governess.

"You do not deserve to be so favoured," said he; "for I myself heard you forbidden to catch flies, or insects of any kind; nowever, as you have been partly punished by the wasp, if you promise me never to attempt the same thing again, I will say nothing about it this time, and, to make sure of the poor butterfly's safety, I will just put it out," and then he carefully moved the little creature on the point of a feather, and lifted it up to the top of the sash, from which it flew away.

"There," said John, "I think it looks quite as pretty, expanding its painted wings in the sunshine, as it would have done, if crushed in your mischievous fingers. But you have not promised me yet."

"Oh, yes, brother, I do promise you that I will never do such a thing again."

"And why not?"

"Because I have promised not to do it; and because you let me off now; and because it is wrong."

"If you had put the last first, I should have been better satisfied," said her brother. "I am glad, however, that you do see how wrong it is to be disobedient, artful, and cruel."

"Yes, John. But why did you not kill the horrid wasp?"

"Why should I kill him?"

"Because he has a sting."

"Oh, I dare say if he had none, you would like to get better acquainted with his shining yellow coat

and gossamer wings, at the risk of putting him to a lingering death. He deserved to escape, after doing such good service for the poor unarmed little butterfly ; but indeed wasps are very troublesome. They teaze by buzzing about us, though they seldom sting, unless much provoked ; and they not only eat our apricots, peaches, and plums, but they also rob the industrious bees ; sometimes attacking them in their hives, killing them, and eating the honey ; at other times watching when the bees are at work, to steal their store. If I killed a wasp it would be for this reason, and not because he carries a sting to defend himself."

"What a pity it is," said Sarah, "that there are so many creatures in the world good for nothing but to torment others weaker than themselves."

"A pity, indeed, sister ! and I dare say the butterfly would think so too, if he was able to know what had been your intentions toward him, just now."

"Pho !" said Sarah ; "but I mean wasps, and hornets, and lions, and tigers, and all that."

"Yes, you may cry pho ! but I think that the child who is cruel, having reason and conscience to tell her that she is wrong, is much worse than all the wasps, and hornets, lions, and tigers, that ever lived.

"What you say is true, as to the sad state of this world, where creatures of all kinds are preying upon each other, and injuring one another. But man is the great tyrant. Beasts, birds, fishes and insects have a sad story to tell, if they could, of man's cruelty."

"Ah, brother ! I am very sorry : I did not mean to be cruel ; I have no pleasure in hurting any crea-

ture : and it is only to amuse myself with looking at them that ever I do meddle with insects. I will think more of it another time, and I hope that God will forgive me now."

"I hope so, my dear, indeed," said her kind brother, "and I am very glad that you see whom you have offended in this business. David, when he had done most wickedly towards some of his fellow-servants, felt so strongly that sin is the greatest insult to Almighty God, that he prayed, saying, 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' There is no true repentance without this feeling. Judas repented, he confessed his sin, and even restored the price of it ; but he was not pardoned. He went out and hanged himself in despair, and then went to eternal perdition. We are apt to think that being sorry, and making amends, as we call it, will take away our sins and obtain forgiveness of God ; but there is no pardon for the smallest offence, unless it be blotted out by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. In all the world there never was such suffering as the Lord Jesus endured for our sins ; and if it were not for His bitter sorrows, ours must be everlasting. You should often, when you pray, think of all the wickedness of your past life, and beseech the Lord to give you that faith which will enable you so to believe on Jesus Christ, that iniquity shall not be your ruin. If you do not this, you may be deceiving yourself, and at last die in your sins. I am ten years older than you, and know more of my own heart ; I know it is full of sin, and of false excuses .

and am often more afraid of God's wrath, than grieved for making so bad a return for His great love and mercy.

“If the wasp had not frightened you, you would have gone on to torture that harmless butterfly ; and in the excuse that you made to your governess, you told a falsehood, and then watched her out of the room, and believed that no eye should see you. But was not the eye of God upon you, marking all that you did ? and were not you proving that you neither dreaded His displeasure, nor valued His approval, so much as that of your fellow-servants ? Oh, see what a great guilt Satan led you into, by putting a bait before your eyes, which your own evil heart was so ready to follow !”

I saw the angler bait his hook,
He dress'd it with a silken fly ;
I saw the heedless fish he took
Dragg'd struggling out to bleed and die.

Now Satan like the angler stands,
To make unthinking souls his prey ;
Let me escape his cruel hands,
And from his false baits haste awa-

I have no wisdom, Lord, to know
How far his dreadful skill can reach ;
But Thou dost see that subtile foe—
Oh deign a simple child to teach !

I would not from Thy ways depart,
But still obey Thy just command ;
Renew my spirit, cleanse my heart,
O Lord, and guide me with Thy hand !



Answering Again.

I ONCE knew a little boy, who was as well taught as most children of his age, and who had sense enough to listen to good advice ; and he had learned many things very useful for him to know. I hope that he also loved God, and prayed much to **Him** and praised **Him** ; I have reason to think that the little boy knew himself to be a sinner, and that he could not be saved or go to heaven unless his sins were washed away

in the blood of the Lamb—of the blessed Lord Jesus, who died to redeem us to God by His blood : and the little boy told me that he often asked in prayer for a new heart and a right spirit, which he knew must be the gift of the Holy Ghost.

All this was well—but my dear little boy had a fault which grieved his friend ; and the more so as they could not convince him that it was a great fault. He could not bear to own himself in the wrong, in such little matters of mistake or neglect as he was often reproved for. Some excuse he always had ; and if you would believe him, it was never owing to him that every thing was not properly done. This was not like what the Bible commands, “ Confess your faults one to another ; and pray one for another, that ye may be healed,” (James v. 16.)

Now, this way of “ answering again,” as the apostle calls it, (Titus ii. 9) is very wrong : and I think that I can prove it to have been done by those who were committing great sin at the time. If I do this, I hope that all little boys and girls, all servants, and others, will see how bad an example they are following, and endeavour to leave it off ; the more so because I can tell how very differently the best and holiest persons have acted.

The first people whom I find in the Bible “ answering again,” were the first man and the first woman that ever lived ; and when did they do so ? Not while they were obeying God, and living innocently ; but when they had become very sinful, they began to justify themselves. They knew so well what wicked-

ness they had done, that they hid themselves from the Lord God, as they thought; but who can be hidden from Him who seeth all things? They were called out of their hiding place; and when the Lord questioned Adam about eating of the fruit of the tree, he threw the blame upon Eve; and when Eve was reprov'd, she threw the blame on the serpent—yet Adam and Eve both knew that they were disobeying God by tasting that fruit; and the serpent could not have forced them to do it against their wills. We are ready enough to lay the blame of our bad actions on the devil: but though he may tempt us to sin, it is entirely our own fault if we agree to it.

The next example is that of Cain, wicked, ungodly Cain, who killed his pious brother Abel. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" See how anxious the murderer is to hide the sin, which he was not afraid to commit! and shall not such an example alarm us?

I cannot wait to tell you of all the people mentioned in the Bible who have done the same thing; but it was always when they had been acting wrong. What a silly excuse Aaron made to Moses! When Moses was in the Mount with the Lord, the people of Israel would have an idol made for them to worship; so they gave their golden ear-rings to Aaron, and he melted them, and with a graving tool made the gold into the figure of a calf. When Moses came down from the Mount he was very angry, and reprov'd Aaron for his great sin. Aaron threw all the

blame on the people, and said that when they had given him the gold, he cast it into the fire, and there came out that calf. As if the calf had come out of the fire ready made, when Aaron indeed had shaped it himself with a graving tool. For this thing three thousand men were put to death. A sad proof how much it displeased the Lord !

Job was a holy man, and Satan got leave to afflict him very much, for the trial of his faith. Job's friends came to see him, and thought that his being so distressed was a proof of his great wickedness. So Job began to praise himself, and to prove that he was quite righteous and innocent. As long as he did this, he got no relief nor comfort ; but when at last he confessed himself vile in God's sight, when he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes, leaving off to say one word in his own defence, then God restored him to all that he had lost, and declared His favour to him, and reproved his unkind friends. If we submit to reproach when we do not deserve it, and leave our cause with God, He will clear our characters in His own good time.

When our Lord told Simon Peter that he would deny Him, Peter, instead of praying to be kept from such wickedness, began to boast of himself, and declared that though all men should deny the Lord, he would never do so. For this he was left to himself and to Satan ; and you know that he not only denied the blessed Jesus three times, but cursed and swore about it. This should be a great warning to us.

And what an instance of this folly and wicked-

ness we have in Pontius Pilate! He condemned the Lord Jesus to suffer a cruel death, and then washing his own hands in a basin of water, declared himself innocent of His blood! Nobody accused him; his own conscience did that: and you see what an answer the Devil put into his mouth to silence it. Oh, it is a dangerous thing to be fond of justifying ourselves!

Far different was the conduct of David. When he was reproved for sin, how humbly he acknowledged his guilt, and how earnestly he prayed for pardon! You may see this in the fifty-first Psalm, and several others. And when David was unjustly reproached, he committed his cause to the Lord, saying, "I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me."

But what a beautiful example we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, "who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter ii. 23). The blessed Jesus, who did no sin, answered not a word to all the false accusations of His enemies; how then can we, who are so very sinful and unholy, dare to shew such impatience under every reproof? Some people, when told that they should not have done such and such, things, will directly set about proving to you either that it was right, or that they were obliged to do so; and that, too, when every body may plainly see that it was wrong, and that it was through neglect or ill-judgment they did it.

"You ought to have brought out some tracts for

these poor cottagers," said I to a little friend who was walking with me.

"Yes," he replied, "but you came out in such a hurry at last that I had not time."

"Now stop," said I, "and see whether you are not telling an untruth, in your anxiety to avoid being blamed. It is true that I was obliged to hasten you at last ; but what were you doing for an hour and a half before I put on my bonnet? I told you that I was coming here, and that I had a letter to write first ; and yesterday I had charged you never to go out without a few tracts in your hat. Why cannot you own that you forgot this, and say that you will be more careful another time ; instead of trying to defend yourself from a little reproof, by deserving a much greater !

"Pride is the cause of all this ; and pride is a very dangerous thing, hateful to God, and contrary to the Spirit of Christ. The Scripture says, 'Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased' (Luke xviii. 24) ; and likewise that 'God resisteth the proud,' (2 Pet. v. 5) ; for 'every one that is proud in heart is an abomination unto the Lord,' (Prov. xvi. 5). The pride of man's heart makes him dislike to be blamed ; and a child who loves to make excuses for himself, when reprov'd by his teachers and governors, will learn by little and little to justify himself before God. That is, he will be denying that his heart is as evil, and his conduct as sinful, as God's law declares them to be ; and so in the end he may even persuade himself that he does not stand in need of

Christ's blood and righteousness, and depend, at last, partly on his own works for pardon and salvation. This would shut him out of heaven for ever; because God would then judge him according to His most righteous law; and the least offence against any part of the law, from the moment of his birth to the moment of his death, would occasion his being cast into hell."

Do you understand this? I will try to explain it more to you. God gave His holy law, to shew us what was pleasing in His sight, and to please Him we must keep it perfectly—never doing, or saying, or thinking any thing contrary to it. Have you kept that law? Oh, no, it is not possible that you should have done so. If ever you wished for a single thing that did not belong to you, you broke one of the commandments: and if you broke only one of them, in the least degree, you could not be forgiven. So you see that you and all mankind must have gone to hell, into which all the wicked shall be turned, if there was no other way of judging you but by this law.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came from heaven, to keep the whole of this law, which men and women, and children, had been breaking every hour, since Eve ate the fruit of that tree which God had forbidden. And Jesus Christ suffered death, which He never had deserved, to make amends for us, who deserved it every moment. Thus you may perceive that if we would be saved, we must leave off taking any merit at all to ourselves, and only speak to the Lord God of what His blessed Son has done and suffered for sin-

ners. This will keep us very humble: for we are forced to confess that, as the Prophet says, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all *our* righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all go rate as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isa. lxiv. 6). It is therefore plain that we should take great care not to indulge ourselves in any thing that can help to keep us proud, but rather say, with Job, "Behold I am vile; I will lay my hand upon my mouth." Children and servants should be very careful not to get a habit of answering again; or if they have got it, to pray and watch, that they may lay it aside; for if they answer those who have authority over them on earth, they may presently be led to answer God, when He reproveth them for sin, by His holy Word, or by the afflictions that He sends. And parents and masters must be careful, too, not to set the example to those who are very ready to copy whatever they do. That is a beautiful passage which speaks of submitting ourselves one to another in the fear of God. (Eph. v. 21).

It is better to bear a little unjust blame silently and meekly, than, by being in a hurry to clear ourselves, run into danger of becoming impatient under rebuke where it is deserved. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

When I am justly blamed,
Oh let me not reply,
But of my many faults ashamed,
To God for pardon cry.

And let me humbly speak
To those who shew my sin ;
They my improvement kindly seek,
And they my love should win.

But if my conscience says,
"This blame is wrongly thrown,"
I'll think how all my sinful ways
Are to my Maker known.

And this should keep me low,
And my proud spirit bend,
For those who chide me cannot know
How often I offend.

If God should judge me now
For all that I have done—
The thought is dreadful ! let me bow
Before His blessed Son.

To Thee, O Christ ! I look,
And for Thy mercy pray —
Thy blood alone can blot the book
And take my sins away ?



The Baby.

MARIAN came home from the house of a relation, where she had been visiting; and dear as the sight of her birthplace always was to her, it was still more delightful now. Since she went away, a little brother had been born, and Marian was all impatience to see him. Indeed, he was a lovely little creature, and Marian could not believe that in all the world there was another so pretty. He was very quiet too, and lay contentedly on her lap, while she prattled away to the other children about their precious new

brother: and when he was put into his cradle, she could hardly be persuaded to leave its side.

Next morning, when tasks were ended, away ran Marian to treat herself with another sight of the wonderful baby; while her brothers and sisters laughed to see her so taken up in admiring it. At last her mamma called her to join the rest.

“Come, Marian; we are going to read and talk: you have been quite long enough peeping into that cradle.”

“But consider, mamma, I have been six weeks away, and it is so new to me.”

“Well,” said her mamma, “you will have enough of nursing, by and by: we must not neglect the improvement of time, even for what may seem to be very innocent enjoyments.”

Marian obeyed; but as she took her place, said, “I hope, mamma, you will tell us something about a baby at any rate.”

Her mamma smiled. “I have no objection to do so, my dear. We could hardly choose a more interesting subject. What is a baby?—A creature of more worth than all this world of animals, and vegetables, and flowers; fields, mountains, and seas. More valuable than the bright sun which warms us by day, the fair moon and glittering stars that make nights so lovely. It is a little immortal; a being that cannot die, an everlasting thing, that must join the angels of heaven, blessing and praising God for ever and ever: or be for ever shut out from that happy company—for the child of Adam that is not born again, can never enter the kingdom of God.

All the children turned and looked with solemn awe towards the cradle of the sleeping infant: and a tear stole from the mother's eye, while in silent prayer she commended her babe to the covenant mercies of God in Christ Jesus.

Then she went on. "What an anxious and uncomfortable feeling would mine be, my dear children, when I look around upon you, and think of all the snares and dangers that await you, and all the arts that Satan will use to separate between your souls and God—how anxious, if I could not with sure trust and confidence look unto Jesus, and ask Him for grace to teach you how willing and how able He is to save you all to the uttermost. I see so many dreadful examples of children becoming a grief to their parents, and a disgrace to the Christian name, that I dare not let one day pass, without trying to impress on your minds the great duty and blessedness of having God in all your thoughts, and of living in prayer and watchfulness, ever looking to the Lord Jesus, who is all your salvation, and should be all your desire.

"And now, Marian, I will tell you a very sweet history of a most remarkable baby, whose mother's faith has often instructed me, while her rich consolation has encouraged me to trust, and not be afraid.

"When the Israelites were bondsmen in Egypt, and the time of their deliverance approached, the wicked king Pharaoh was much troubled at their rapid increase, fearing lest they should become too strong for him, by reason of their great numbers. So the cruel

tyrant gave command, that every man child born among them should be cast into the river—the great river Nile, and drowned.

“ Now, there was a Hebrew woman, named Jochebed, married to Amram, of the family of Levi, and she bore a son, a most lovely babe indeed, ‘ exceeding fair, the Scripture says : and you may suppose that it was a grievous thing to know that the cruel and unjust Pharaoh would cause this helpless little creature to be cast into the water. His mother could not do so horrid a thing ; so she contrived to hide him for three months, and no doubt the danger that her poor baby was in, endeared him the more to her fond heart. Often when I have looked upon you, my children, in your infant days, and rejoiced over your safe cradles, I have thought of Jochebed ; and been sure that nothing but strong faith in God, could have enabled her to act as I am going to tell you. Indeed St Paul says, that it was by the faith of the parents that this child was even hid so long : they must have prayed much over him, and felt assured that the prayer would be answered.

“ But the wicked king had his spies about ; and when Jochebed found that she could no longer conceal her son, she resolved to cast him even upon the waters of that river which had swallowed up so many of her infant kindred. But she would do it in a way that left it in the Lord’s hand to preserve him without asking a miracle.

“ We ought always to use lawful means, even when those means seem to us totally useless without a

special blessing from the Lord ; which we must ask in faith, and leave the matter to Him.

“ Well, upon the banks of the Nile there grew a great many bulrushes ; and of these did Jochebed make a little ark, or cradle ; remembering, no doubt, how in the great flood of waters, God preserved Noah and his family, and birds, and beasts, and creeping things, in a great ark that took a long while to build. But a small one served Jochebed for her poor baby ; she wreathed it of bulrushes, and daubed it over with slime and with pitch, that it might the longer float upon the water. And then, poor mother ! she took her beautiful baby and laid him in that strange cradle : and oh, if ever mother’s heart was wrung with agony, hers must have been nigh bursting as she printed the last kiss upon its beautiful and innocent face. Perhaps he may have smiled, and a baby’s smile is so full of love and confidence. Perhaps he wept—and then the mother’s heart teaches her to take the babe to her bosom, not to put him from it. Perhaps he slept—oh, peaceful sleep of infancy !—and he might awake in such cruel torments too ; for the river was full of terrible creatures—alligators, watching to crush and mangle and devour the bodies of all who came within their reach. It would have seemed more merciful to whelm the child at once beneath the suffocating flood : but Jochebed had prayed ; she had committed him to the Lord, and she was strengthened to wait the Lord’s leisure, and to taste and see how gracious He is.

“Behold now the poor baby in his tiny ark, set afloat on the great river. His mother could not bear that sight: she had placed him among the flags, which grew close by the land; and so hoped to prevent his being carried out by the stream, to perish alone. But I dare say she dreaded to hear him cry for nourishment; and so she went home, to pray to her God, and left her daughter Miriam to watch what should become of the little desolate baby.”

By this time all the children were in tears; and just then her infant brother woke and cried. Mamma soon hushed him; but when they saw him quieted in her arms, they felt the more for the lonely baby of the Nile.

“My dear children,” said their mamma, “we may at this moment raise our hearts in thankful adoration to Him who answered the prayer of Jochebed. We are encouraged to tell out His works with gladness, and to praise Him for the wonders which He hath done. He has said, ‘I will work, and who shall let it?’ and He often magnifies His great power, by bringing deliverance to His people by the means of those who sought their destruction.

“The daughter of cruel Pharaoh went down to the river, as was the custom in that country, to wash herself; and she and her maidens walked along the cool banks. At a little distance she saw something among the flags, and sent one of her maidens to fetch it. The ark of bulrushes was opened: and roughly awakened, perhaps, from his deep, quiet sleep, ‘behold the babe wept,’ and God gave such power to

the baby's tears that they proved too strong for the decree of the mighty king of Egypt. The princess knew that decree, and said, 'This is one of the Hebrew's children.'

"While she looked with compassion upon the weeping infant, and, no doubt, was greatly perplexed what to do, Miriam stepped forward, and asked, 'Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?' The princess said, 'Go;' and oh! how fleetly must young Miriam have run to call the best of nurses, the prayerful, faithful mother! and how *could* Jochebed conceal the overpowering joy of her heart, when her own, her lovely, her deserted babe was given into her hands by Pharaoh's daughter, with the charge, 'Take this child away, and nurse it for me; and I will give thee thy wages.' That must have been a night of thanksgiving in the house of Amram."

"Oh! beautiful history," said Marian, "I shall never forget it."

"It is indeed beautiful, my child; and not the least striking part of it is, that Moses himself wrote the simple and touching story of his infant days. But while our hearts melt over the baby of the Nile in his ark of bulrushes, let us not forget the Baby of Bethlehem in His cradle of hay! Awful and glorious mystery!—the Lord, who preserved Moses to be a type of Himself, did, in the fulness of time, take our nature upon Him, and was laid to rest in a manger—in the stable of an inn. Persecuted in his earliest infancy by cruel Herod, he was taken in flight into

the land of Egypt, that the Scripture might be fulfilled in Him, which says, 'Out of Egypt have I called my Son.'

The more you study the history of Moses, the more will you be astonished at the resemblance. Moses was indeed the shadow; Christ is the substance. Moses wrote of Him, and said, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.' (Deut. xviii. 15.) Blessed is the soul that hears the voice of that Prophet, and learns of Him! In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and we, poor, sinful, ignorant worms of earth, are invited to seek in Him those treasures, and to receive out of His fulness. I adore the Lord who heard the prayer of Jochebed, and stilled the cry of the infant Moses. But how can I sufficiently speak His praise, in humbling Himself to endure the sufferings of human nature in its most oppressed and afflicted form—refusing to save Himself, that, through His agony, others might be saved, and those too His enemies!

"My children, the study that leads you not to Jesus, is unprofitable and vain: but every part of the blessed Bible is full of Him; make it your delight, and counsellor, and give thanks to God for His unspeakable gift. For 'many prophets and righteous men have desired to see these things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.' May the Holy Spirit impress them on your hearts!"

Long hidden by his parents' faith,
Young Moses 'scaped a cruel death,
 When many an infant died ;
And strengthen'd by the Lord above,
A parent's faith the bulrush wove,
 And launch'd him on the tide.

But Moses, come to riper age,
Himself must in the war engage
 Against the world and sin ;
For Christ he bore reproach and loss,
And better loved to take the cross,
 Than Egypt's wealth to win.

The parent's lip may sweetly plead
For babes, unconscious what they need,
 Who know not wrong from right ;
But children, who can read and pray,
Must for themselves seek out the way,
 And make it their delight.

The blessed Jesus, once like you,
From infancy to childhood grew,
From childhood up to youth ;
He knows your heart, He knows your thought.
Oh, pray by Jesus to be taught
 In wisdom, faith, and truth !



Try Again.

“WILL you give my kite a lift,” said my little nephew to his sister, after trying in vain to make it fly, by dragging it along the ground.

Lucy very kindly took it up, and threw it into the air : but her brother neglecting to run off at the same moment, the kite immediately fell down again.

“Ah, now, how awkward you are!” said the little fellow.

“It was your fault entirely,” answered his sister.

“TRY AGAIN, children,” said I ; and Lucy once more took up the kite ; but now John was in too

great a hurry—he ran off so suddenly that he twitched it out of her hand ; and the kite fell flat as before.

“ Well, who is to blame now ? ” asked Lucy.

“ TRY AGAIN,” said I.

They did : and with more care : but a side wind coming suddenly, as Lucy let go the kite, and the walk being narrow, it was blown against some shrubs, and the tail got entangled in a moment, leaving the poor kite hanging with its head downwards, and its wings flapping to no purpose.

“ There, there ! ” exclaimed John—“ that comes of your throwing it all to one side.”

“ As if I could make the wind blow straight,” said Lucy.

In the mean time, I went to the kite’s assistance, and having disengaged the long tail, I rolled it up, saying, “ Come, children, there are too many trees here : let us find a more open space : then, ‘ TRY AGAIN.’ ”

We presently found a nice grass plot, at one side of which I took my stand ; and all things being prepared, I tossed the kite up, just as little John ran off. It rose with all the dignity of a balloon ; and promised a lofty flight : but John, delighted to find it pulling so hard at the string, not yet half unrolled, stopped short, to look upwards and admire it. The string slackened, the kite tottered, and the wind not being very favourable, down came the kite, very ungracefully to the grass.

“Oh, John, you should not have stopped,” said I
“However, TRY AGAIN.”

“I won't try any more,” replied he, rather sullenly.
“It is of no use, you see. The kite won't fly, and I don't want to be plagued with it any longer.”

“Oh fie, my little man! would you give up the business after all the pains that we have taken both to make and to fly the kite? A few disappointments may teach us some useful lessons, but they ought not to discourage us. Come, I have wound up your string; and now 'TRY AGAIN.'”

And he did try, and succeeded; for the kite was carried up on the breeze, as lightly as a feather: and when the string was all expended, John stood in great delight, holding fast the stick, and gazing on the kite, which now appeared as a glittering white speck in the blue sky.—“Look, look, aunt, how high it flies! and it pulls like a team of horses, so that I can hardly hold it. I wish I had a mile of string—I am sure it would go to the end of it.”

“We might have spared our painting,” said Lucy, “for it is all lost at such a distance.”

“Yes,” added her brother, “and the wings. I don't see them: they are more trouble than use.”

“The wings and the tail,” said I, “are necessary to assist it in rising, and to balance it in the air. Your kite would afford you very little amusement without them.”

After enjoying the sight as long as he pleased, little John proceeded to roll up the string slowly

and when the kite fell, he took it up with great glee, observing that it was not at all injured, and that it had behaved very well. Shall we come out tomorrow, aunt, after lessons, and try again?"

"I have no objection, my dear, provided the weather be fine. And now, as we walk home, tell me what you have learned from your morning's amusement?"

"I have learned to fly my kite properly."

"You may thank aunt for it, brother," said Lucy, "for you would have given it up long ago, if she had not persuaded you to 'TRY AGAIN.'"

"Yes, my dear children; I wish to teach you the value of perseverance, even when nothing more depends on it than the flying of a kite. But, if we consider, I think that our little checks and difficulties in this matter will be very useful in a business of the greatest importance of all—and it is our own fault if we are not made wiser by them.

"We are, by nature, poor, grovelling creatures, lying helpless on the earth, as your kite did on the gravel walk, when you asked Lucy to give it a lift. The purpose for which we are made is to reach the heavens, and dwell there; but we love the earth, and cleave to it; as David says, 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust;' and then he adds, 'Quicken thou me, according to thy word.' (Psalm cxix. 25.) And you know St Paul makes use of a like expression, when he says, 'And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' (Eph. ii. 1.) The grace of

God finds us in this wretched state : and His word is sent to us, 'Awake, thou that sleepest ; and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

"When, aroused by this call, we begin to attempt the great work of getting on towards heaven, we find that we can do nothing of ourselves—our own weight, the weight of our sins, and the evil of our nature, which loves earth better than heaven, will keep us down : and unless we get help from above, we could never set out on our heavenly journey, nor go beyond a few faint wishes after holiness. But as soon as the soul begins to seek and to use that help, Satan comes in, though unseen, and tries every way to prevent our going on. Often is the young Christian pulled back and thrown down, when first he tries to go in the path of God's commandments. And often does he throw the blame on others, and feel ready to give up in despair, because he finds so many hindrances. He must learn the importance of those two little words, 'TRY AGAIN.'

"The first disappointment that you met, in trying to fly your kite, arose from your standing still when your sister threw it in the air. This is the case with those who depend too much on the help of others, and will not exert themselves. You know the Apostle bids you 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' not that you can of yourselves do anything towards saving yourself : for you know

that your kite would not rise, if you dragged it all day along the ground ; but while you ask every help of the Lord, you are to make use of them by your own diligence. If you hear or read the Bible, you are to take it all as a rule for you yourself to go by ; if you pray you are to watch for the gifts which God will give you in answer to prayer, and use them accordingly. Suppose you pray, 'Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue,' and then soon after you are tempted to tell a lie : you feel the Spirit of God warning you to forbear, and telling you in your heart that it is sin. In this God gives you the thing that you prayed for : but if you still persist in telling the lie, you make His help useless, and only shew your own folly and sinfulness the more strongly. Don't you see, my dear, that you have a part to perform, and must perform it, if you would rise towards heaven ?"

"Yes, aunt, I must work as well as pray."

"But, then, after having asked the help of the Lord, in words, you may in your heart depend on your own strength, and work without the spirit of prayer ; and this is as useless as not working at all. You may place yourself in God's hand, by confessing on your knees that you can do nothing without Him ; and then snatch yourself out of His hand, by forgetting it. You may pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' with the belief that you shall be able to overcome it by yourself. You may wish to be instructed by pious ministers or others ; and then go and act

just as if you had never been so well taught, because you do not look constantly to the Spirit of God for the great work of having the law of God written upon your heart, which He alone can do for you.

“The tree that caught your kite, on the third attempt, is like some of the things that Satan often puts in our way to hinder us. You chose a wrong place to fly it; and the kite was easily stopped. This shews us the necessity of looking well to see what snares may be around us: and if we find ourselves in a place, or with company not likely to suit our plan of following in the ways of God, let us get out as soon as we can. Sometimes, when you intend to pray, or to read the Bible, you will find an interruption that you did not expect, and will be inclined to put it off to another time, hoping to throw all the blame on the person or thing that came between you and your duty. Never do so; remember that it was your wisdom to ‘TRY AGAIN,’ in a more suitable spot; and that you at last succeeded. The world, the flesh, and the devil, will plant snares to catch your soul, as the trees caught your kite; and you must, therefore, pray, and watch, and persevere.”

“I understand all this, aunt: but what am I to learn from the kite tumbling down, after it was half up?”

“I think you brought that about by stopping to admire your own performance. You should have run on, and let it fly to the end of your string. When you slackened your pace, the kite began to fall. Take

example by the Apostle, 'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) St Paul had much to glory in, if he might glory before the Lord: but he counted it all dross, and never stopped to think of his past doings. Beware of pride and self-righteousness! You remember Nebuchadnezzar: the same hour in which he boasted of his greatness, he was driven forth to graze with the beasts.

"You may be tempted, when you have been enabled to serve God for a time, to look back on what you were in the days of your ignorance, and compare yourself, and glory in it, instead of being humbled by thoughts of how very much remains undone. This haughty spirit cometh before a fall; but do not let a fall drive you to despair. Remember you wanted to give up all, at this last disappointment: but you were persuaded to TRY AGAIN; and by avoiding the same fault, you succeeded.

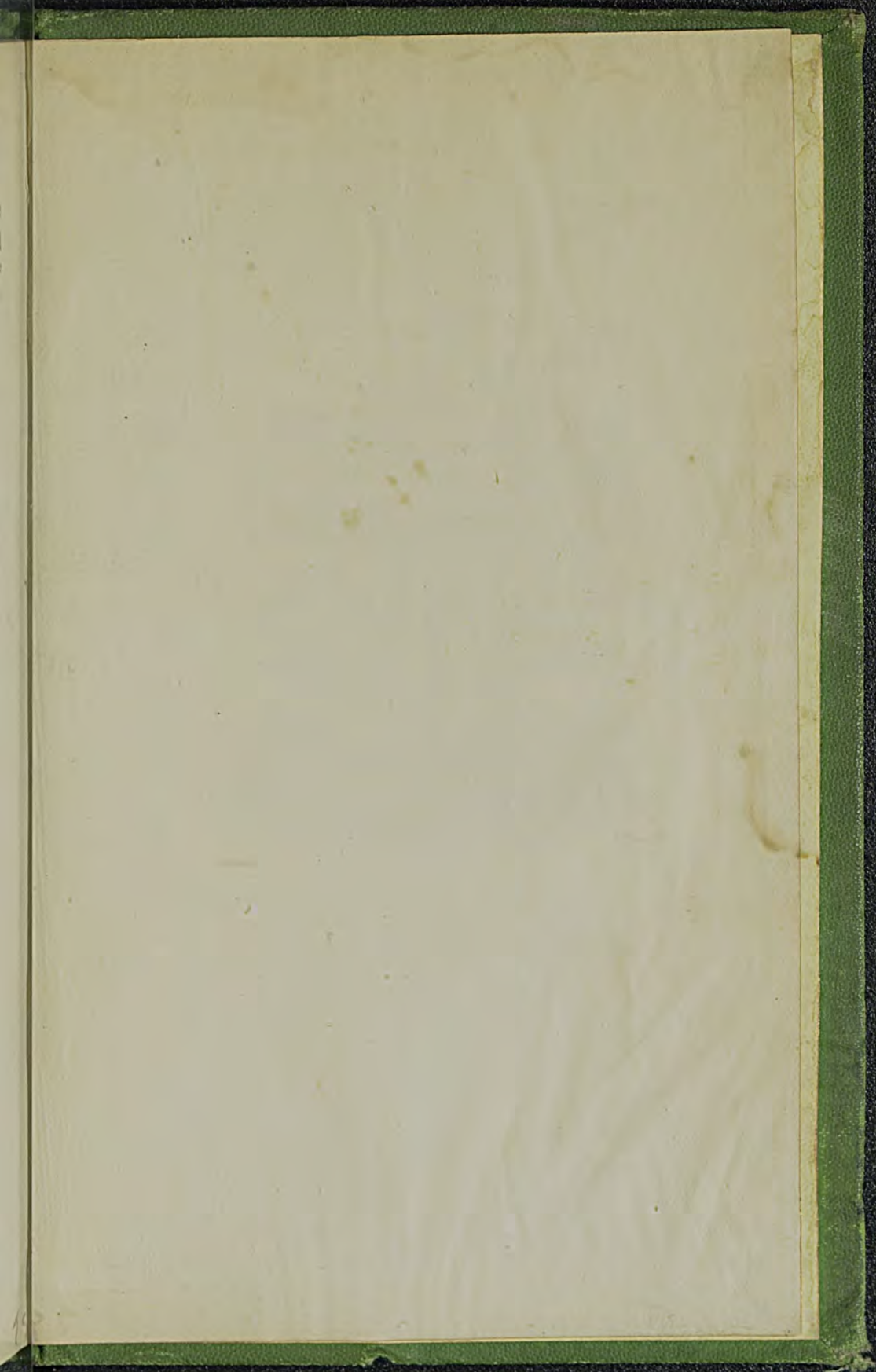
"Your kite took but a very short journey, and after floating for a little while over your head, it came down again: but the soul that mounts above the heavens, will dwell there for ever. Then the things on which we pride ourselves, such as family, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, will be of as little value as the paintings on your kite appeared; but the wings of love on which we fly from this dark, cold earth, will remain to bear us up to heaven itself. Love

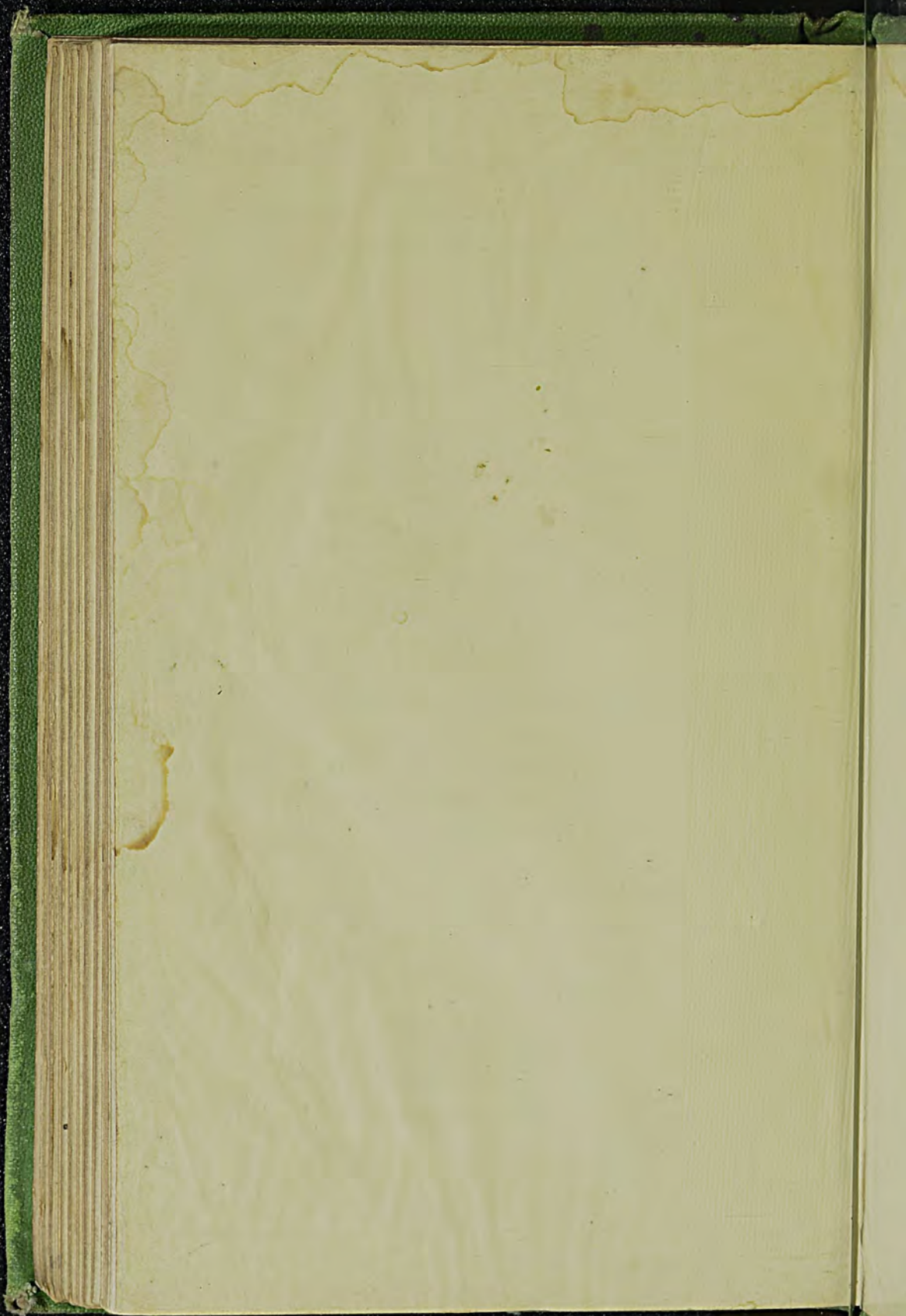
never fails. Eternity itself cannot wear out the love of the ransomed sinner towards Christ, who 'loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.'"

Oh! that my soul would learn to fly,
Far, far, above the clear blue sky,
Above the stars that shine;
To mix with angels where they soar,
And in rejoicing songs adore
Their glorious Lord and mine.

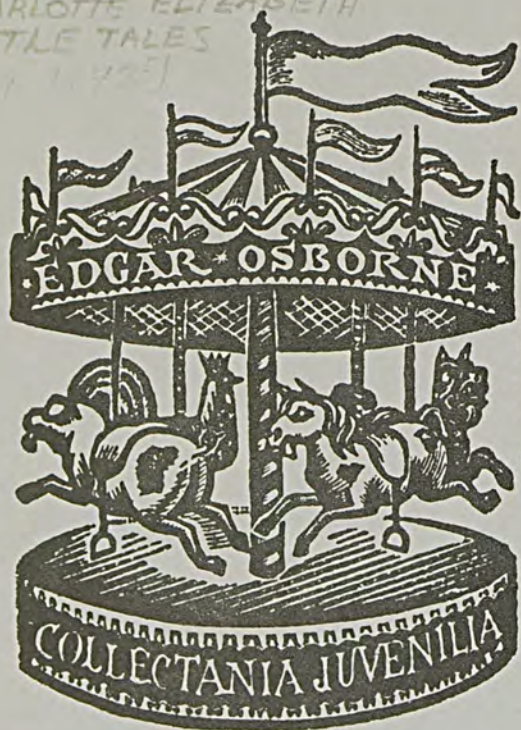
My soul is come of heavenly birth,
And why should sinful joys of earth
Confine its spreading wing?
While, sounding from the distant skies,
Thy gracious summons bids me rise,
My Saviour and my King!

I fain would come—I'd break away
From this dull, heavy load of clay,
Leave sin and death below,
And lay me at Thy beauteous feet,
In that green pasture's fair retreat,
Where living waters flow.





SB
CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH
LITTLE TALES
L. 11. 1885



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