
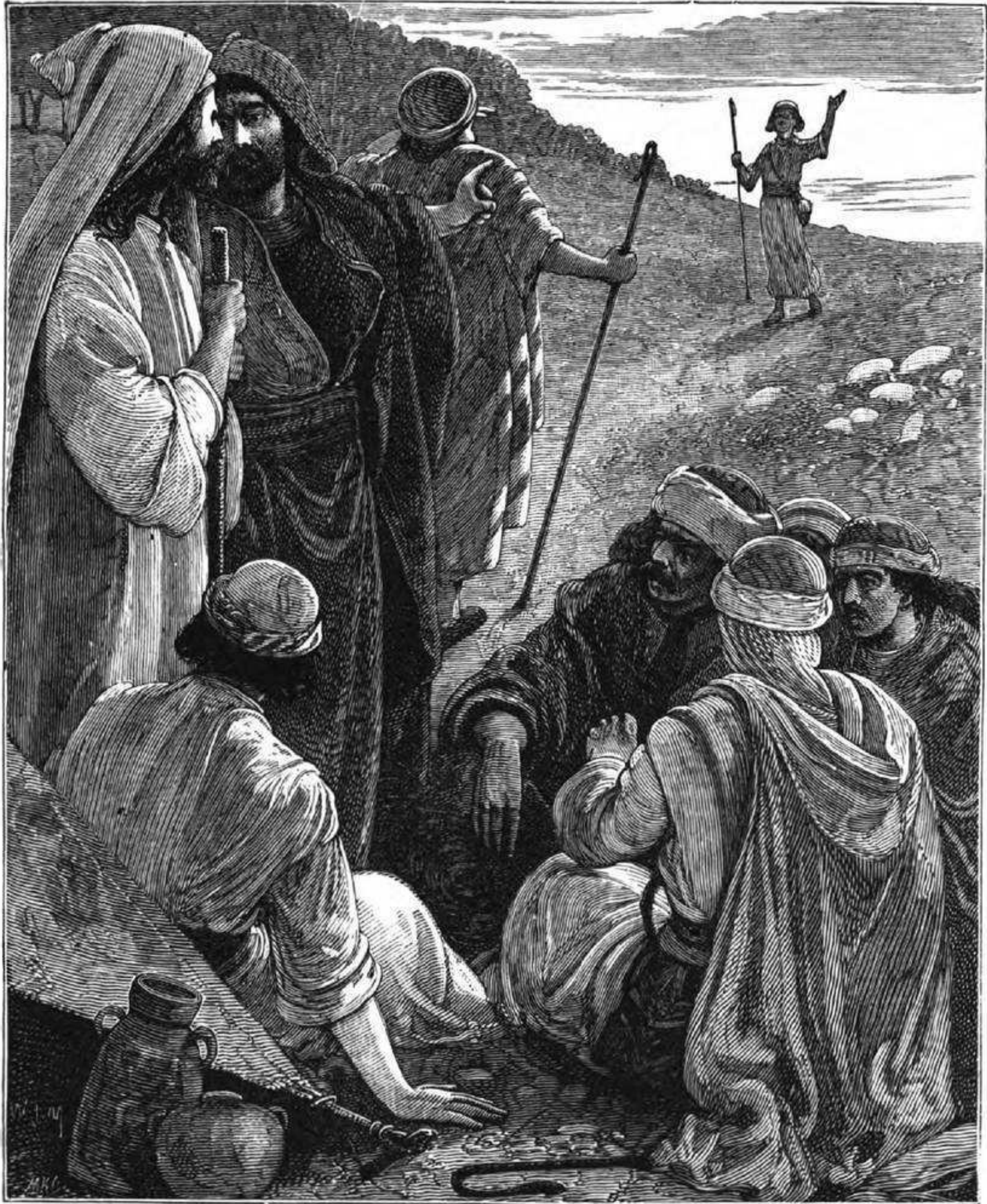


**THE CHILDREN OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.**





**"BEHOLD, THIS DREAMER COMETH" (p. 22).**

THE CHILDREN  
OF  
HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY  
L. MASSEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE COTTAGE ON THE SHORE," "LIGHT AT EVENTIDE," "MRS. HARKER'S  
CHRISTMAS," ETC.

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ILLUSTRATED.

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## PREFACE.

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THE stories written for us in HOLY SCRIPTURE are new with each new generation of children ; and not only so, but, even to those who best know them, they are quite different from any other histories in the marvellous freshness which always rests on them—freshness which is to be found not only in the cast and mould of the stories themselves, but in their every detail ; so that loving and patient study is always rewarded by discoveries of depths of tenderness, or of truth of detail which had not been seen by us before.

In these busy days of ours, when so many things are to be learnt, it is perhaps more than ever needful that first of our studies should rank the close, reverent, prayerful study of our Bible. We cannot begin this too soon ; and these familiar stories are here written down in unfamiliar words, in the hope that, thus reading them, children may learn a little of the way to gather for themselves the scattered sketches which are to make one picture.

They have also the further purpose of forming together



a study of what childhood should be. Each child-life shows us some one beautiful image: patience or lowliness, courage or devotion; and as each beauty is a reflection from Him Who is altogether lovely, we catch thus a glimpse of what that Childhood must have been, of which we know only that it was absolutely stainless; and that the Child Jesus, as in that home at Nazareth He increased in wisdom and stature, grew also in favour with God and man.





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THE  
CHILDREN OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

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THE PASTURE AND THE DESERT.

“The well, where often they  
In those calm golden evenings lay,  
Watering their flocks; and having spent  
Those white days, drove home to the tent  
Their well-fleeced train.”

AMONG the green pastures of Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, a great feast was being held. There, not far from the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean, and almost under the slope of the Judean hills, were pitched the black goat's-hair tents of the shepherd chief, Abraham. It would have been a pleasant place in which to dwell, had not the hot summer dried up so quickly all the pools of water around; and in the south land, so near the deserts, were found no pleasant springs of clear water. Therefore, in many a shaded spot in the Vale of Gerar, Abraham's servants had already dug for themselves wells; and around the mouths of these they watered, at morning and evening, their crowding flocks. But on this day the men who toiled to dig fresh wells had laid aside their tools, and but few herdsmen were to be seen amongst the white sheep. On this day no swift-footed boys followed the long-haired goats



that browsed high on the sides of the hills, for Abraham had called his servants to the feast.

Isaac was the only child of Abraham and of his wife Sarah, and he was all the more precious because God had given him to his parents when they had grown old and had thought that they should never have a son. Two or three years had gone by since his birth, and now, according to the Eastern custom, his weaning was to be celebrated.

Kids were slain, cakes of fine flour were baked upon the hearth, and curds of goats' milk set on in great bowls; every one feasted and rejoiced, and we can fancy how Eliezer, Abraham's faithful steward, and all the other old servants who loved their master, rejoiced to see little Isaac, whom God had sent to comfort him and their mistress Sarah in their old age.

Most likely there were only two faces which had no smile to give back to the bright laugh of the joyous little child. A woman slave, named Hagar, was looking on with angry eyes, and perhaps it was this look which encouraged her young son Ishmael in his dislike to Isaac, his half-brother: for Ishmael too was Abraham's son. There had been a time when Hagar had taught her boy to think that he would some day possess all the riches round him, would be master of Abraham's servants, and owner of his mighty flocks; but now that Isaac was born Ishmael was no longer the heir, and could only expect a part of his father's wealth.

Ishmael was a wild lad, fond of hunting and of shooting, and of all manner of sport—fond, too, of his own way, and violent with any one who opposed him; and when the two brothers chanced to be alone after the feast, Ishmael began to



tease Isaac, being jealous of the favour which was shown to him. Perhaps he struck or frightened the little boy in some way. We are told that he "mocked" and "persecuted" him, and all the while he thought that no one could see him, or could hinder what he chose to do to one so much weaker than himself. He did not know that Isaac's mother was near, and could see and hear him. She was very angry; and going at once to Abraham, begged him to send Hagar and Ishmael away from the tents, for she was sure that the two lads would never grow up to divide the inheritance peaceably.

Now Abraham dearly loved Ishmael, and it made him very unhappy to think that he must send the boy away. That night, when all were sleeping, he went out, and alone under the stars he prayed to God.

Abraham knew that God was near. All his life he had lived with the thought of God in his heart, and many times God spoke to him, and told him how he should order his life.

Now, as he prayed and waited, again the Voice was heard. He was bidden to do as Sarah had asked him, and not to grieve over the parting with Ishmael, for that God would be with the lad, and do him good for his father's sake. When Abraham knew what was the will of God he obeyed at once. As soon as the first light shone over the valley—most likely before Sarah and Isaac were awake—Abraham rose, and called Hagar and her son.

There were plenty of cakes in the tent, left perhaps from the feast; and taking some of these, and a leathern skin full of water, Abraham gave them to Hagar to carry with her.

Naturally the mother and son turned their steps towards



the south-west, where, far below them, lay the wild, wide desert of Beersheba.

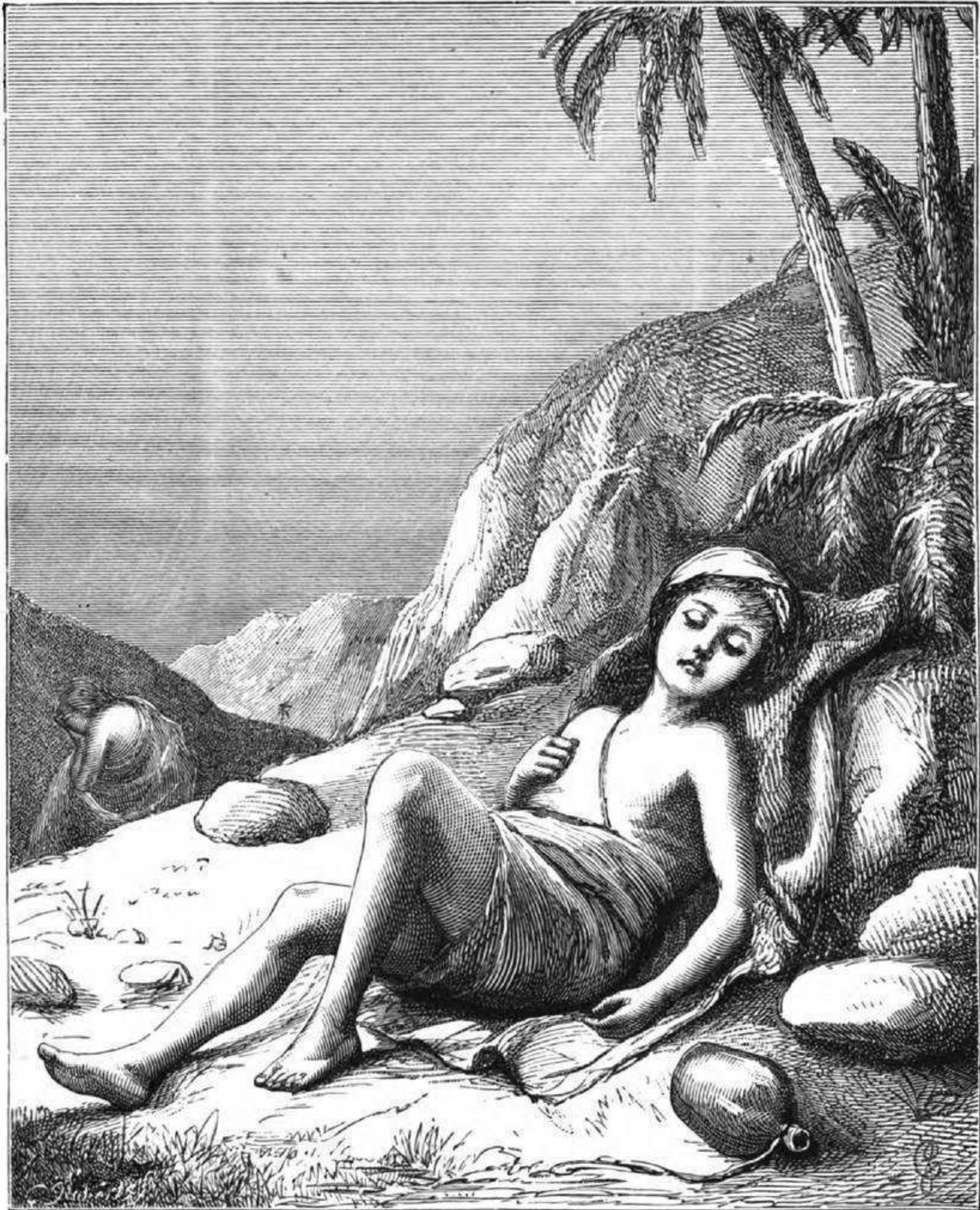
They were in the desert; the sun's fierce rays beat down upon their heads; the hot rock scorched and burnt and glowed under their bare feet. The water in the skin was too warm to give them much refreshment, and yet, when they had spent it all, hope must go with it.

Here and there, even in this desert, wells had been dug, but Hagar knew not where to go to seek them: and when the last drop from the leathern bottle had been poured between Ishmael's parched lips, both the boy and his mother sat down hopeless in the lonely desert.

There was no shade, save the scant patches under the grey desert shrubs, and Ishmael was too weak to reach even one of these. His mother carried him in her arms, and laid him beneath the nearest shrub; and then in utter despair went away out of sight, that she might not see him die.

Hagar forgot, so it seems, to pray. It was strange that it should be so, for in old days, before Ishmael was born, God's angel had come to her in the desert, not far from the place where she now was, and had comforted her with the promise that her son should live and become a mighty man. But in this new trouble Hagar seems not to have remembered that God saw her; she sat alone, weeping bitterly, while Ishmael lay helpless and fainting under the shrub. Yet the boy thought of God, even though his mother forgot; perhaps all the lessons that Abraham had taught him came back to him now. Perhaps he remembered how his father had prayed for him and said, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee!"





**"LAID HIM BENEATH THE NEAREST SHRUB" (p. 4).**



and the lad, as he lay there dying, cried to God for help and succour.

Even as the prayer was on his lips, Hagar heard a voice calling to her, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."

As she looked all round her, wondering whence came the Voice which she heard, she saw before her a well of water. It had been there during all the time of her despair, but she could not see it. The water-skin was still within reach. How quickly Hagar filled it now, and hastened with it to her son, so that the cool draught was at his lips almost as he prayed. He drank, and rose up saved! And thus the first story of young life which is written for us in the Bible has in it the very first lesson which belongs to our own life—that of the fatherhood of God. Ishmael, the boy who in his fulness of active, vigorous youth hardly knew God, perhaps thought but seldom of Him, save in sudden need, as when he fainted under the desert shrub, was yet under his Father's care. He stands there to remind us that God forgets none of all His children. The shadow of his earthly father's tent might not shelter him any longer; he must go away from the altar that Abraham had reared, must lose sight of the white flocks in the valley, and no longer hear the familiar speech of the herdsmen round the well's mouth; but he did not go away from God. There in the desert, just as in the pasture, God was with the lad.



## THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS.

- “Dread was the mystery on Moriah’s hill ;  
Low on the ridge the cloud of morning lay :  
From each dark fold, along each gliding rill,  
Strange whispers from the mountain met our way.
- “But we must wait below, and upward gaze,  
While toward the mount the father and the son  
Pursue their course, soon in that awful haze  
To vanish, till the appointed deed be done.”

ISHMAEL was gone from his father’s tents, but we may believe that Abraham constantly thought about his absent son. No doubt from time to time he would hear of him. “Ishmael is living in the desert of Paran,” some would say; and he would be told of his strength and courage, and of his wild deeds.

After a time Abraham gave orders that the tents should be struck, and the flocks driven slowly southward, to where the green land of Palestine dies away into the hot desert. Perhaps the pastures of Hebron were no longer sufficient for his flocks; but it seems likely that Abraham may have had a further motive for choosing Beersheba as his encampment—that thus he might be near to Ishmael, and might perhaps even see him, and enter beneath his tent.

But even if it were so, and if we are thus shown how dear Ishmael still was to his father’s heart, yet Isaac was far dearer.



He was growing now into boyhood, and was the joy and sunshine of both Abraham and Sarah's heart. We do not know quite how many years had gone by at Beersheba, when there fell a very solemn day in the life of the aged chief.

It was again night, and once more Abraham was alone. The voice of God was heard by him through the solemn darkness, calling him by his name, that name which God Himself had given him when He promised that he should be the father of many nations—"Abraham."

Each time he heard that name it must have reminded the old man of the promise, and how it had begun to be fulfilled in the birth of Isaac his son; and to hear it must have been a great help to him in the trial which was coming on him. And Abraham needed all his trust now, for when he had answered, "Behold, here I am," then came to him this message—

"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

How could Abraham obey this command? He had sent away Ishmael at God's bidding, and now must his tent be made quite silent? must he never hope any more to see his son's dear face, or lean on his strong arm? Must he never dream again of what it would be to see Isaac's children growing up around him and Sarah in their old age? Saddest and most terrible of all, must he himself be the one to stretch out his hand against his child?

Perhaps if Abraham had let himself dwell on all this he could not have obeyed; but instead of this he hastened at once



to do what God bade him ; he rose up early in the morning, and himself put the saddle upon his ass, and then he called two of his servants, and Isaac his son, and told them that he was going to offer sacrifice, and they must come with him. They carried wood for the offering, and fire with which it might be kindled, and Abraham had, with trembling hand, to fasten at his girdle the bright knife with which he was accustomed to slay the lambs as they lay bound on the altar ; but it was not now a lamb that he was bidden to offer.

For three days the little company were on the road ; what days they must have been to the old man as he walked slowly along, following his unseen Guide !

Sometimes Isaac would be beside him, talking about the scenes around, or about what was going on in the tents at home, and if, when he listened to the voice he loved so well, Abraham even for one moment forgot the terrible deed which he had been commanded to do, there was the sound behind him of the feet of the ass which carried the hewn wood ready for the altar. Night would come, and when all was still around the sleeping company, Abraham, we feel sure, would be awake, praying with earnest, passionate longing that God would strengthen him, and make his faith perfect.

And each day this faith did grow stronger ; of one thing he never doubted, and that was that God's word would be kept, though all else might fail. God had said that Isaac should be the father of a great nation, and therefore Abraham felt quite sure that even if he were slain, if he lay dead upon the wood, if his body were burnt there to ashes, still God could and would raise him up again. This it was that made Abraham's faith so



very great, so that all through the Bible he is spoken of as "faithful," that he believed that God could raise the dead.

Abraham had nothing of all our knowledge of the wonderful miracles performed by the prophets, and by Christ and His apostles, and yet he accounted that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead. So sure was he of this that when, on reaching the foot of the hill, he bade his two servants remain below with the ass, he said to them that when the sacrifice was offered he and Isaac would both return to them. They went up but slowly, for Isaac was laden with the wood, and Abraham was carrying in his hand the fire with which it was to be lighted. Presently Isaac spoke; at each step they were going farther away from the pastures where the white flocks grazed, and yet his father had not brought up with him any one of them that he might offer it to God. "Behold the fire and the wood," said Isaac, "but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

"My son, God will provide Himself a lamb," was the solemn answer.

And now they were, we may believe, high on the mountain, perhaps at its very top, and Abraham knew that they had reached the place of sacrifice. It did not take long to build an altar of the rough stones which lay here and there on the mountain-side, and upon this altar Abraham laid the wood which Isaac had carried, laid it in order, quietly and calmly as if it were only one little lamb out of his wide flock that was to be placed upon it.

Then the moment was come. We do not know what words Abraham said to his son; perhaps he could not speak, perhaps



he only in silence bound the lad's hands with his own girdle, and then lifting him, laid him on the wood. Isaac, we are sure, was as silent as his father; as Abraham trusted God, so did the lad trust his loving father.

Suddenly, in the utter silence of that mountain-top, a Voice was heard. Abraham knew it well. It was that Holiest Voice which had bidden him to offer up his son; and now that he had obeyed, now that in his heart and will he had given up his dearest to God, it was a far different message that reached him.

“Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.”

Abraham looked up into the calm blue heavens from which the Voice had come; but there was no sign there, no glorious Presence abode upon the quiet mountain-top, no light above the brightness of the sun shone over the now empty altar, from which the father had caught away his son. Only, close beside them, in a little thicket, a ram was struggling to free himself from the thorn bushes in which his long horns were entangled. Abraham understood the sign; he at once took the ram, and offered him for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

This story of Isaac, written down for us in God's Holy Word, has besides all its wonderful lessons of faith and of obedience, a still deeper and holier message, which can be understood and remembered even by the youngest of you, dear children.

You know what a type means. It is something like a shadow, which, when we see it, tells us a little about the form of that which casts it. Isaac was a type of Jesus





"LAY NOT THINE HAND UPON THE LAD" (p. 12).

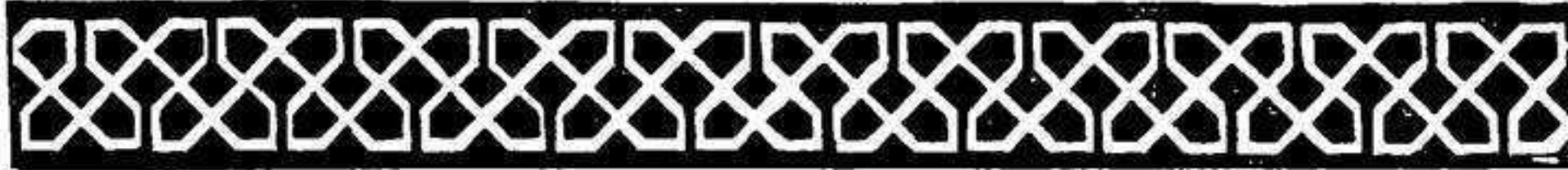


Christ our Saviour; and, through all the many hundred years before that Saviour should come, he was to be a representation and foreshadowing of that perfect Sacrifice, once to be offered for us all on Calvary.

And therefore it is well for us that the story of Isaac should stand amongst the first of those of the children of Holy Scripture. For as we seek in these stories the pattern of a perfect childhood, and find in each life some one part of that whole; so we need to learn thus, first of all, that it is only as it is like Christ, and only through Christ, that any pure and noble childhood can be. Each shines with some light caught from Him who is Light of lights; Joseph is like Him in his love for the brethren who betrayed him, Samuel in the listening heart which heard the voice of God, Daniel in his purity, and David in his courage; but Isaac tells us of that sacrifice which none else but the Sinless could offer, and through which alone any Christian childhood can be.

Side by side Abraham and his son went down the mountain. A strange new joy shone in their faces. Abraham's was lit with a gladness which seemed to tell even of more than of the life which had been given back to him; his faith was made perfect through obedience and sacrifice, and God had filled his heart with peace. For Abraham too had, in that sacrifice on Mount Moriah, seen, as we are taught to do, the fair and wonderful Shadow of the Cross, and when the Saviour came, He who knew all things declared to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was glad."





## THE COAT OF MANY COLOURS.

“ Sold by them who should have loved thee,  
Prisoner in a stranger’s land ;  
Given by him who best had proved thee  
To the dungeon and the band.  
From the land of flowers and rain,  
Borne to Egypt’s dewless plain ;

Leaving tent and pastoral dell  
And the sire that loved thee well,  
And the airs on upland breezy,  
Where the scented cedars grow,  
For the servant’s toil uneasy,  
And the captive’s weary woe.”

ISAAC was now a very old man. Long since he had lost his sight, and had become too feeble to do more than sit at the tent door, when, morning and evening, the winds blew fresh across the open fields.

With him, to care for him and watch over him, lived his son Jacob ; and there, around the plot of ground which Abraham had bought, Jacob’s eleven sons tended their father’s flocks. There was yet one other son, little Benjamin, but he was most likely still an infant ; while Joseph, the youngest of the eleven, had almost reached his seventeenth year. Joseph and Benjamin were own brothers, but the ten elder sons, who had not the same mother as these two, felt themselves very separate from them, and did not love them. They would have been glad if their father had not sent Joseph with them into the fields to water the sheep or to cut the bright corn in harvest-time ; they were always sorry to see

him coming, and would begin to whisper together, and say unkind things of him, whenever they caught sight of the bright fringe of his gay tunic.

It was partly because of this very tunic that they disliked him so much. His father Jacob had given it to him; and no one of all his ten elder brothers, not even Reuben the first-born, had been thought worthy of such a gift. This special kind of dress which Joseph wore was never given to more than one son in a household; but it was quite unusual to give it to any but the eldest, whose right it was considered to be.

It was not because it was a bright and gay dress that it was prized so highly; it had a meaning, just as a uniform has, for the son who wore it was understood to have the birthright, the rank, and position of eldest son. Most of all, he was marked out by this dress as the priest of the family, the one to whom (according to the law of that time) it belonged to offer sacrifice, and to lead the solemn prayer or thanksgiving of the household.

Joseph was his father's favourite son, and he deserved to be so, for he was pure, true-hearted, and loving, and served faithfully the God of his fathers. But it was not well for Joseph that Jacob's partial fondness made him pass over all his other sons, and give the dress of the eldest to one who seemed but a mere child amidst those tall, dark, strong men. It was through no fault of Joseph's, and yet, perhaps, it is not strange that this favour shown to him should have made his brothers look on him with jealousy and dislike.

His pure life, too, made them feel ashamed of their own evil deeds. They did not like that he should go with them



when they pastured their flocks at a distance from their father's tent. For they wished then to be free to do what they pleased, and to indulge in many wrong things which they dare not attempt under their father's eye; and they knew that if Joseph saw their evil deeds he would be sure to refuse to hide them from his father.

So that this favour shown to him by his father did not really bring any pleasure to Joseph's life; it did not even, in the end, give him the whole of the birthright; for, though his father wished it, it was against the law of God, and could not stand. God had chosen quite a different kind of life for His child, a life which, though it was after a time to become glad and prosperous, must begin with long trials, heavy losses, and bitter loneliness. Yet God had such tender care of His child, that before the trouble came his heart was strengthened to bear it by the hope of a bright future; a promise of gladness to come was sent to him, to make him able to bear the darkness when it fell.

The promise was sent in dreams. The boy's life had been such a simple one amongst the silent fields and on the green hill-sides, he had seen so little besides the flocks and the tents, that we feel at once how natural it was that the first dream should be of the bright corn, amidst which he had perhaps in the day-time been at work. The boy lay asleep; perhaps with his sickle still in his hand he rested in the half-cleared fields amidst the sheaves, and the dream which God sent to him is of a field like those on which he had been looking. But the sheaf which he has bound is now standing in the centre of all the rest, and none of those which his



brothers have reaped remain upright before it. They all fall, just as the corn did at the touch of the sickle; they fall, but his is still upright.

In simple-hearted wonder, the boy when he awoke told the dream, and angered his brothers all the more, for they understood that it prophesied that the time would come when he should rule over them.

Again there came a summer night, when the bright silver stars of an Eastern sky shone out over the sleeping fields and flocks. God sent a second dream to the boy; and now it was not in the harvest field, but on this same glittering sky that he seemed to gaze—this very sky; and yet it was not the same as when he looked on it before he slept, for the sun and the moon were both at once shining in it. In his dream he looked and wondered; and then he seemed to see the bright round sun, and the shining moon, with the planets around her, leave their place in the heavens, and all bow down to him to do him honour.

When he told this dream in the tent, even his father wondered at it, and half rebuked the boy. Yet Jacob laid it up in his mind, thinking over it often, and musing what the great future could be which such a vision shadowed forth.

These two dreams are like bright spots in Joseph's youth. I am telling now only the story of his boyhood, not that of his after-life; therefore you cannot learn here how wonderfully in years to come the dreams were fulfilled and made plain. But it is easy to believe that, though their first effect was only to make his brothers more bitter against him than before, they must have been a great comfort to Joseph,



when he was in the midst of the troubles which were soon to come upon him.

It was in the height of the hot summer. All around Hebron the springs were dry and the pastures burnt and bare, so that neither grass nor water could be found for the flocks; they must be driven farther north, where there were more springs and water-courses; and the place to which Jacob naturally decided to send them was that parcel of ground near Shechem which, some time before, he had himself bought for a hundred pieces of silver. But we may believe that it was not without a good deal of fear and hesitation that the father made up his mind to this; for, only a few years before, two of the elder sons had brought upon themselves the anger of all the inhabitants of that place by making war on them, and taking away their flocks and goods, in revenge for an injury done to them by the Prince of Shechem.

Jacob had at the time been very angry with his sons, and had been forced to flee to Hebron, with all his possessions, for fear of what the people of the place would do to him as soon as they had gathered strength. But perhaps some sort of treaty had since been made with the King of Shechem; for though we know that Jacob had not forgotten what his sons had done, that he remembered it with anger even to the end of his life, yet now he consented that his ten elder sons should drive the flocks once more into the neighbourhood of the very city to which they had done this wrong.

But when they had been gone a little while the old man grew anxious; perhaps he not only feared for his sons' safety, but was afraid lest they should again quarrel and fight with



the people of the land, for he knew them to be fierce and fearless.

Jacob could trust Joseph to tell him truly how it was with his brothers, and therefore he determined to send him, that he might bring tidings of their welfare.

Through the pleasant valley of Hebron, across the hill-country, with its scattered Canaanite towns, Joseph made his way, till he came again in sight of familiar landmarks, and to the very field which belonged to his father. That, too, like those which he had left at Hebron, was bare of grass, and looking all along the valley he could see no single trace of his brothers or of their sheep.

Hither and thither Joseph sought for them in vain; he seems almost to have lost himself, and wandered out of sight of all the places which he knew. In that lonely country there was no one of whom to ask the way; until, after a long search about the fields of Shechem, a man, in the dress of a Canaanite, met him, and asked for whom he was looking.

In that land every movement of the wandering herdsmen was noticed, and the stranger was able at once to tell Joseph that his brothers were not far distant, having gone about twelve miles from Shechem, to a place which was known as well watered, and full of green pastures.

The ten brothers were gathered in a group in the midst of the pleasant fields; it was the hour for either the noonday or the evening meal, but before they sat down to eat, one of them, looking along the valley, saw afar off the bright gleam of a fringed robe.

No Canaanite wore such a dress; they knew at once that



it belonged to Joseph, their brother, and at the sight all the anger and ill-feeling which they had nursed so long came freshly into their hearts. They were "moved with envy," we are told, and each one looked into the eyes of a brother and read the same feeling there, so that even before a word of any kind was uttered by them, they were making each other worse by their very looks.

Then they began to whisper—"Behold this dreamer cometh," choosing the name that recalled to them all one of their reasons for hating him. "Come now, therefore," they went on to say, "and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

It was not Reuben, the eldest, who spoke, though he, of all the ten, might most naturally have felt himself wronged by his father's choice of Joseph. Reuben was very weak and unstable; he had never attempted to control his fierce brothers. He knew, perhaps, that he was not fit to have the birthright, not only because of his weakness, but because he had done wicked deeds; and, as his nature was neither jealous nor cruel, he felt more kindly than did the others towards his gracious, beautiful, loving young brother. But he dare not say this; it was too late now for him to expect to be obeyed by those who had always taken their own way, and he was very much afraid lest, if they understood that he felt kindly to Joseph, they might turn on him, perhaps slay him too.

So, as cowardly people often do, he began to think how



he could get to his end by some other way than the direct one of telling the truth, and saying out what was in his heart. He pretended to be quite willing that Joseph should be put to death; only was there not some better way than falling upon him with their staves or their swords, as they had talked of doing? His restless, weak eyes wandered from his brothers' fierce faces to where, still in the distance, he could see the colours of Joseph's dress as he came along the valley; and as he looked here and there, he noticed, close beside them, one of those deep holes which in hot countries are dug to catch the rain-water as it falls, and store it for the thirsty flocks.

It was quite empty now with the long drought; and it came into Reuben's mind to propose that Joseph should be thrown into that steep, dark pit. Perhaps when he proposed it the others laughed a little among themselves, and thought it was just like Reuben's cowardice to be afraid of shedding his brother's blood, and yet to cause him to die this more painful and lingering death; but they were quite willing, for they knew that, if he were once thrown into the pit, he could never climb the steep sides without help, and must certainly die there.

They never guessed that Reuben was thinking of the poor old father at home, who loved his boy so tenderly, and was planning how, when the flocks had been driven farther on for the night, he would contrive to return, help Joseph out of his terrible prison, and send him safely to Jacob.

And now Joseph had reached the place where his brothers stood. The poor boy must have seen at once that he had



fallen into evil hands. There was no greeting in answer to his words, only he felt himself roughly seized, and the bright coat, his father's gift, was torn from his shoulders. He could see by the look in his brothers' eyes that it was his death that was intended, and it was hard indeed to meet it from them. In sudden anguish and fear he besought them, calling them by their names, and imploring them to pity him. But the evil feelings which they had indulged so long had made their hearts hard, and they would not hear.

One only had hitherto taken no part in the cruel deed; Reuben stood aside, longing, no doubt, to be away, and not to see the distress which he persuaded himself he could not relieve. But these cries of his young brother tore his heart; he could not go away; and at last he even summoned courage to speak. "Do not sin against the child," was all that he dared to say, and he hardly expected that they would pay any heed to his words.

But when he saw that no one listened to him, and that Joseph, stripped of his coat, had been thrown roughly into the pit, then he could bear the scene no longer, and hurried from the spot, intending not to come back till his brothers had gone on farther, when he would draw the boy safely out of the pit again.

But the others were as yet feeling nothing but gladness at the thought that they were rid of the companion whom they so hated. When any one has done wrong, it often happens that he does not feel at first the bitter pain of the sin. Though we know in our hearts that we have

offended, yet there is, for the moment, a sort of pleasure in going our own way and getting what we have wished for. The pain comes after, and it is long and bitter.

So it was with Joseph's brethren; there were yet to be whole years in their lives which would be filled with sorrow from this one sin. The time was to come when, in terror as great as Joseph was feeling now, their consciences would wake up, and they would be forced to confess, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother."

But just now, strange as it may seem, they were quite at ease; and as they carelessly laughed and talked together, one of them, chancing to look along the plain, saw at a great distance some moving figures, which his quick sight, used to discern far off either friends or enemies, knew to be a company of merchantmen from Midian.

Such caravans often passed across the plain of Dothan, on their way through Damascus into Egypt; their laden camels moving slowly along, bearing store of sweet spices, and costly lading of balm and myrrh, which the Egyptians prized so highly, because they used them at the burial of their dead. The sons of Jacob knew that, besides these rich goods, the Midianites often took with them prisoners whom they had taken from other tribes, and sold them as slaves to the Egyptians.

A sudden thought flashed across the mind of the fourth brother, whose name was Judah, and he spoke it out at once

"Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh."

What Judah said was sure to be listened to by his brothers,



for he was very brave, and a sort of leader among them. Reuben had not yet come back; but no one thought his consent of any importance, and they decided at once to do what Judah advised. They hailed the passing caravan, and the laden camels halted for awhile beside the pit, while, perhaps with their own girdles, they contrived to draw Joseph up, and brought him before the leader of the caravan, that a price might be set on him. He was a very beautiful youth, and even now, though his bright tunic had been torn from his shoulders, and though most likely he was soiled, bruised, and bleeding, yet his fair face and graceful form no doubt pleased the merchants, for they knew that such a slave would bring a good price in the Egyptian market.

Twenty pieces of silver were what they at last settled to give for the lad, and at this price he was made over to them, and either dragged with bleeding feet across the parched land and dry cane thickets of the Jordan, or else borne by one of his new masters upon his camel. And thus Joseph vanishes from our sight.

The story of his life as a slave in Egypt, of the undeserved disgrace into which he fell, and of the wonderful prosperity which followed, belongs not to his boyhood, but to his life as a man.

Alone and quite unfriended he seemed, as he was carried by his careless masters into Egypt. But there was something, which they did not know, that made that loneliness full of blessing—"God was with him."

He seemed to go because his enemies were so strong, because his cruel brothers had sold him, and his captors

dragged him with them. But there is another reason given us for it in the Bible, and one we could not have found out for ourselves. God sent him because He had something for him to do in Egypt; and thus all the evil thoughts and deeds of men who did not care for God were made to turn to the carrying out of His purpose.

The caravan was out of sight, lost in the dim blue distance, and now the brothers were anxious to hasten away, out of sight of the pit which reminded them of what they had done.

Reuben, meanwhile, had seen nothing of the traders; instead of thinking of his young brother as already on his way to be sold as a slave in Egypt, he believed him to be lying where he had been thrust; and as soon as he supposed that his brothers would have gone on, he stole back to the spot, and leaned over the mouth of the pit.

No one answered to his call. We can think how at first he refused to believe his own eyes; he would feel so certain that Joseph must be there, perhaps hidden in the deepening shadows. But nothing moved, no one answered; and Reuben, who knew it was quite impossible for Joseph to have escaped, no doubt believed that, in his own absence, the boy had been killed by one of his brothers.

To find those brothers was his first thought. He was so wretched at what had happened that he lost for the moment the fear which he had shown before, and was not afraid of grieving openly for his young brother.

“The child is not,” he cried out to the rest, in his despair; “and I, whither shall I go?”



His thoughts were with his old father at home, whose dearest hopes were bound up in this one dutiful and loving son. How could he face him, and bear the reproach which, as the eldest, and therefore the one specially in charge, he would have to endure?

Some one of them now reminded the rest of their first thought, when they saw Joseph coming towards them across the plain—that they should pretend to their father that he had been slain by some wild beast. There were many lions and bears lurking in the thickets of the Jordan, or coming down from the heights of Lebanon, into the plain country. They often seized and tore the lambs or the kids which wandered from the flock, and if one of them had fallen on Joseph, unarmed as he was, he would certainly have been devoured.

Reuben felt himself forced to enter into the plot. His cowardice was as sure to end in deceit and guile as were the evil hatred and cruelty of his fiercer brothers. He dared not tell the truth, for then the question would come, “Why did you not save him? how was it that you, his eldest brother, could not dare to stand openly by him and deliver him?” Or perhaps Reuben was afraid that if he told Jacob what he really had done he should not be believed; he had lost his character for honesty and openness, and thus the sin which he had committed seemed to him to force him into others.

He must stand by his brothers, and they must decide all together just what they should say to their father when they went back to Hebron, and what they should do to make him believe their story of the wild beast. There lay the

bright robe which some one had thrown down upon the grass; how if they took that to Jacob in proof of the truth of their story?

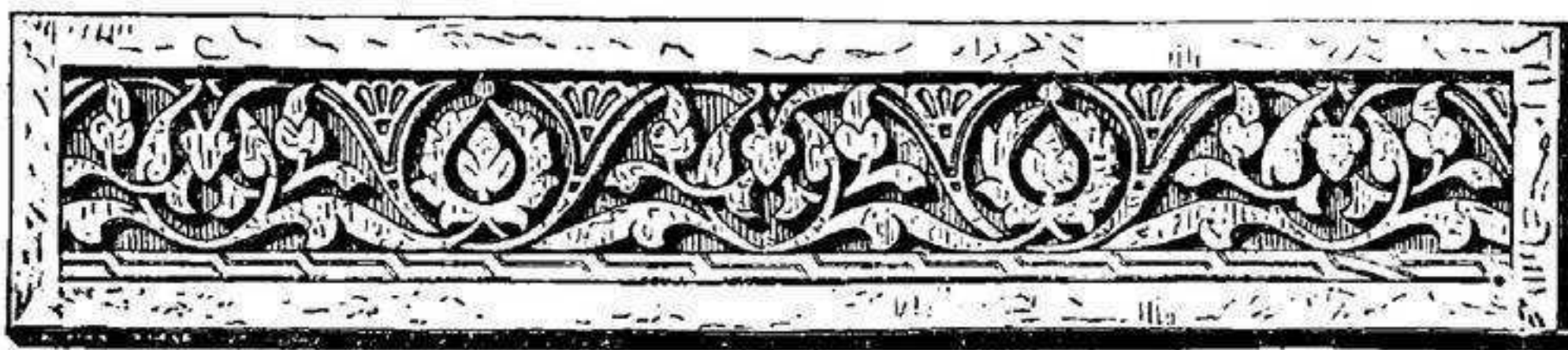
It was not difficult to tear it as if it had been rent by the fierce teeth of a lion; and then its gay fresh colours were easily dyed in the blood of one of their own young kids from the flock. Their father would believe them now, when he saw the stained and mangled dress that he knew so well.

And he did believe them. No outward punishment fell on them; all seemed to go on as usual at home after the sad news had been told, except that they saw their father with his head bowed, and his face marked with deep lines of sorrow, while his hair daily seemed to grow more white, and his steps more feeble.

What the remorse in their own hearts was we hardly know; the time was to come, long years after, when it awoke with sudden power, and they remembered those cries and tears of their young brother which they had refused to hear.

But even though for the time they had got what they desired, and though their consciences had not yet awaked to trouble them, we know who was really the happier; and that it would have been better to be Joseph, a slave in a strange land, than one of those prosperous, contented brothers at home. Better a thousand times to be Joseph, "for God was with him."





## DRAWN OUT OF THE WATER.

“ We need Thee more than tongue can speak,  
’Mid foes that well might cast us down ;  
But thousands, once as young and weak,  
Have fought the fight, and won the crown.  
We ask the help that bore them through ;  
We trust the faithful and the true.”

THE children of Israel were dwelling among the green pastures of Egypt, where Joseph long before had found a home for his brethren. In the many years which had passed since Joseph lived and died they had become a great nation, scattered throughout all the district of Goshen. From that green and pleasant place the Israelites could look across the river Nile to the sandy shore, and the blue sea beyond ; or, far over the waste Eastern desert, could fancy that they caught some faint and broken line, where their own hills of distant Palestine stood out against the sky.

But their homes and their daily tasks lay, for the most part, amidst the reedy channels by which the black Nile waters found their way into the sea ; and on some of those very papyrus weeds which waved, and curved, and rustled by Egyptian streams three thousand years ago, were then written words which have been preserved and read in our

own times, and which tell us what Goshen and the Nile valley were like in those far-off days.

This is how an old scribe, living at the court of the Pharaoh, or King of Egypt, wrote:—"Life there," he says, "is very sweet and incomparable; the plains swarm with people, the fields with birds, and the ponds and canals with fishes; the meadows glitter with balmy flowers, the fruits taste like unto honey, and the corn-houses and barns overflow with grain."

This is the description of a beautiful land, is it not? But there was something which darkened all its loveliness, for above those pleasant pastures towered up into the rainless sky the mighty heathen temples of the land. Or the forms of Egyptian idols, carved in solid rock, looked out terrible, and calm, and stern—a fear and a dread to the very people who made them, and who knew nothing of the One God, who "did them good, and gave them fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness."

The Israelites themselves, God's chosen people, had been now living so long amongst the Egyptians, and seeing their idols, that many of them had forgotten the true God whom their fathers knew. They did not keep His law; they did not teach their children to know Him; and when they looked over the desert waste, they did not long and pray that He would, as He had promised to their fathers, call them back out of Egypt to their own land, where they might serve Him better.

So we can see that this pleasant, easy life amongst fruitful plains had been turned into a terrible evil to them. The time



at which God had said that He would take them back into their own land of Canaan was coming very near, and they were not ready to go, for they would have carried back with them the evil idols of Egypt.

And it was because the Israelites had forgotten God, and in order that they might be brought back to Him, that He allowed trouble to befall them, so that their quiet days were over.

A king came to the throne of Egypt who made them serve him as slaves; just as he treated the poor captives whom his soldiers took in war, so he dealt with the whole nation of Israel. They had lived at ease in a pleasant land, and now were set to hard toil, which brought them no wages save blows. They had to toil in the dry fields, or they were set to make bricks from the slimy river-clay, and to lay them out to dry under the burning Eastern sun. Then, with these bricks, others of them were forced to build treasure-houses and strong fortresses for the cruel king who was oppressing them.

But for all this they did not remember God. It seems rather that they grew more sinful than before, sinking lower and lower, taking thought for little beside their food and their sleep; the monthly rations of corn which were served to them, "the fish" which filled the rivers, and which they could "eat freely," "the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick" of this land of plenty.

Yet the promised time of deliverance drew nearer and nearer; in eighty years the day would come when God had said that He would bring them back. How was it possible that this



nation of slaves, men who thought of nothing but their daily task and their daily food, should be filled once more with high hopes and noble longings, be won back from the worship of idols to faith in a God Whom they could not see?

It was to be made possible by the coming among them of a mighty prophet; and it is of the birth and boyhood of this prophet that you are now going to read, so that you may see something of how God trained the little child for the wonderful work which he was to do.

Under the palm-leaf thatch of an Israelitish house, in the land of Goshen, lived at this time a man named Amram. He was of the family of Levi, one of Joseph's eldest brothers, and his wife, too, was of the same house. Her name of Jochebed, which means "whose glory is Jehovah," makes us think that her parents, when they gave it to her, wished that she should grow up to serve and honour the God of Israel.

Amram and Jochebed had two children—a girl, called Miriam, and a boy who seems to have been a good deal younger. Not very long after this boy—whose name was Aaron—was born, Pharaoh made a law still more cruel than that which had turned all the nation into slaves. He found that, in spite of the toil which the Israelites had to bear, they still grew and multiplied; and he was afraid that these slaves, whom he found so useful, would become strong enough to escape from Egypt and be free. Perhaps the king had heard some rumour of the promise which God had made to Jacob, and which now, in this time of bitter suffering, might be remembered and repeated by one or another of the poor



oppressed people. Pharaoh would rather kill these slaves of his than let them escape and join with his enemies; and he made a law that every Hebrew boy was to be seized as soon as he was born, and carried away to be thrown into the great Nile. There the poor little infants would either be drowned, or else eaten by the fierce crocodiles which bask on the sandy banks of the river, or lie hidden amidst its fringing reeds.

Now, when Aaron was just three years old a little brother was born to him. A girl would have been allowed to grow up; but Amram and Jochebed, as they looked at their son's little face and heard his feeble cries, knew well that they could not hope to keep him. They were sure that, so soon as the tidings of his birth spread beyond their own home, the child would be seized, and cast out, so that he might not live.

We might almost think, from the words in which the history is given to us in the Bible, that a vision had been sent to Amram, to tell him that God had chosen the child to be a Deliverer and a Prophet—we know that it was often thus before the birth of one of God's chosen servants. But though we cannot be sure that a vision was sent, yet this we do know, that as the parents looked on the lovely face of the little child, who was even at his birth "exceeding fair," they felt certain, beyond the possibility of any doubt, that it was the will of God that they should try and save the life of the child which He had given them. The king's commandment was very strict, and most likely if they had been found out in attempting to disobey it they would have been punished very cruelly. But they were not afraid; and we are told that the reason why



they were so fearless was that they had faith in God—they had One to help them Who was stronger than Pharaoh.

How the boy's life was to be saved they did not know; but it was clear that at present he must be nursed and cared for by his mother, and therefore he must be hidden in the house. Most likely it was but a small dwelling, a clay hut, such shelter as a slave could claim; and it would be no easy thing to hide the growing boy from all the neighbours. It seems that Egyptians and people of other races lived amongst the Israelites in Goshen, and from all these at least the child must be concealed, and perhaps even amongst the Israelites there were some so crushed with slavery, and so debased by the worship of idols, that in their own misery they would have been ready to betray their brothers.

So it was that for three months the little boy was hidden by his mother in the house. Of course a name was given to him, as was generally done eight days after birth, when the child was circumcised—just as a name was given to you—but we do not know what this name was, nor how his mother called him when she soothed his cries, or sang him to sleep in her arms. When he grew to be three months old, Jochebed could not hide him any longer. Either just at that time the king's commandment was made more strict, or some one had betrayed the secret to the Egyptian neighbours, or else it was that the child himself was growing too strong and active for it to be possible any longer to keep him hidden. Yet now he was far dearer than when his parents had first made up their minds to brave the king's anger and save him. We can fancy how Amram and Jochebed



sat talking in the silent night about the boy. He *must* be cast out; they knew that they would soon be forced to give him up, that he might be thrown into the Nile.

Well, they would do it themselves; but they would do it in such a manner, that if it were, as they still trusted, God's purpose to save the child, there would yet be a little space in which He might—how they could not tell—come and deliver him.

When the morning dawned Amram went down to the edge of the nearest canal or stream, and gathered thence a great bundle of the long papyrus leaves. These leaves were used in Egypt then, even as they are to this day, for making light boats, and for plaiting baskets; and Jochebed well knew how to weave them together into a sort of covered cradle or ark.

In this ark the parents intended to lay their child before they carried him to the river; and very likely they chose to make it of papyrus rather than any other kind of leaf, because their flags were believed to be a defence against the terrible crocodiles, which lay in the slime of the river-banks.

The basket was woven, but it was not yet ready to receive the child; the sharp edges of the keen and brittle reed would have cut and wounded his tender flesh, and therefore the cradle was lined with a coating of slime or bitumen, whilst pitch was laid on outside, to keep every drop of water from the little sleeping child, for we cannot help thinking that he was still asleep, when, before it was light, perhaps on the next day, his mother lifted him, and laid him in the new, strange cradle. Then it was closed, though, no doubt, room was left for the air to reach his lips as he lay.



All was ready now ; and with a heart which would almost have broken with pain, had not Jochebed clung fast to her faith in God, she lifted the precious burden, which she would trust to no hands but her own, and carried it down to the water's edge.

Most likely it was not to the wide black flow of the great Nile that she went, but to one of those smaller channels or canals near which the Israelite population lived. Her way would lie through green meadow lands, on which the kine were feeding, then through a border of rank marsh-grass, before she could reach the line of nodding reeds in which she must hide the tiny ark.

She laid it down at last close beside the water. It was not quite hidden—a sharp eye could see it from the path by the bank ; but Jochebed dare not bury it more deeply amongst the rushes, lest the child should die there with none to pity it.

She might not linger ; and she turned away with a passionate prayer in her heart for the little one whom she was leaving, and then hurried on, scarcely daring to listen for the cry which she feared and yet longed to hear.

Jochebed well knew that it would not be safe for her to remain in any spot whence she could see the ark. Her neighbours would wonder and watch, and thus she might betray her child to the very death from which she still believed he would be delivered.

But little Miriam might sit near the water's edge, might play there with Aaron, or might gather and weave the green rushes, and no one would notice her or think it strange. So Miriam was sent down into the meadow to a place whence she



could see all that chanced upon the river-bank, and take heedful note of every movement amongst the distant reeds.

By-and-by there was heard far off a sound of feet and voices, girls' voices singing Egyptian songs, the sound of merry laughter, of quick question and reply. Then a gleam of bright dresses showed through the screening palm-trees, and Miriam thought she knew who was coming.

That lady with the sad face and rich robes who walked alone was the daughter of Pharaoh, of the mighty Rameses, King of Egypt, and those who followed bearing soft towels, and ointments, and perfumes, were the maidens who waited on her. In those days of a simpler life, it was no unusual thing for the greatest princesses to come down to the water-side to bathe and anoint themselves. No doubt often before, in the cool shadows of the early morning, had Miriam watched Pharaoh's daughter coming with her train to the bank of the river.

The bright company made their way along the water's edge; Miriam could see how near they were to the spot where her mother had laid the papyrus cradle that held such a treasure. The princess was lifting her hand, she was pointing out something to the maidens who gathered round. Could it be that she saw the ark?

Miriam crept nearer, and could see how one of the train was, at her mistress's command, taking up the basket, and was about to carry it unopened to the princess. We can fancy how all the maidens gathered round it, full of wonder and curiosity, while Pharaoh's daughter herself cut the cords which fastened down the lid, and throwing it back, showed, lying within,





"SHOWED, LYING WITHIN, THE BEAUTIFUL BOY" (p. 38).



the beautiful boy. He was awake now; and when, instead of his mother bending over him, he saw a stranger's face, and heard all round him the chatter of unfamiliar voices, the little boy began to cry. This seems so very natural, so exactly what we should be sure must have happened, that perhaps we should hardly notice it in reading the story, and yet it was just this piteous little cry which God used to work out His wonderful will for the child, and through him for the whole of God's chosen people. For this cry of the helpless babe woke up a sudden pity and love in the heart of Pharaoh's daughter.

There is a story told about her which is not written in the Bible, and which we are not quite sure is true; but this story tells us that she was not only Pharaoh's daughter, but a king's wife, and that she had no children of her own: thus, when she saw the beautiful boy, she felt at once that it was sent to her to be like her own child.

She could not help pitying and loving the little one; and it seems as if she must have lifted the boy out of his rough cradle, and tried in vain to soothe his cries. Those cries drew Miriam nearer and nearer, and she stole softly down until she stood, unnoticed, close to the princess herself. The great lady was trying in vain to hush the sobs of the babe, but she could not succeed in soothing it, and turning round, she said to her maidens, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Miriam was quick to hear the words, and God put it into her heart what to say.

"Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?"



No doubt Miriam tried to speak quietly, and the princess would not notice very closely the slave-girl, whose earnest imploring face would seem just what would be natural in the presence of so great a lady.

“Go,” said the princess, in the short word of command which it was natural for her to use.

Miriam knew where to go. Fast she hurried up the slope towards the cottage where her mother was, her mother who dare not look out on the line of dark water, but was hidden within, and must, we feel sure, have been praying with all the intense love and longing of her heart that God would save the child.

She must have heard the hurrying steps, and we cannot tell whether it was hope or fear that she felt most keenly, as Miriam rushed into the room. How terribly long those two or three hours had been, every minute bringing with it its own new fear, and yet how quickly God had sent comfort and help. Jochebed was soon amongst the group by the water, where the princess still held the frightened child. She did not know, of course, as she laid him in the Hebrew woman's arms, that she was giving the babe back to his own mother, and perhaps the great lady envied the poor Hebrew slave, as she saw how at her touch the sobs began to grow quieter, and presently all the fair little face shone out bright with smiles of content. “Take this child away,” said the king's daughter, “and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.”

Jochebed must have laughed to herself at the thought of receiving money for nursing and tending her own little



son; but of course she kept silence, only clasped him more closely in her arms, as she carried him back to the home in which now she need not fear to keep him. No hard-hearted soldier, no cruel neighbour, would dare to touch a life that had been saved by the king's daughter. Thus God had already, by this wonderful deliverance, set His seal on the child who was to be the prophet of His people, and now, in the double training which lay before him, he was to be taught and disciplined, and furnished for his great work.

First must come the teaching which he would receive under his father's roof; and we cannot but believe that both Jochebed and Amram, knowing that the child was after a time to be taken from them, and to grow up in the king's palace, would try in every way to print on his mind the knowledge of God, and the true faith and worship. We know that he learnt that he was a Hebrew, one of God's own people, and that the poor oppressed, hunted slaves whom he every day saw toiling in the fields and by the river were his brethren, of whom he must never for one moment be ashamed.

We know, too, that deep in his childish heart was set the truth that none of the riches which would be his when he went to the palace, none of the learning with which his mind would be fed, not even the praise and favour of the mighty Rameses, nor the love of the noble queen, his daughter, were to be measured against the glory of being a son of God's chosen people.

Very likely Moses was thinking of his own childish days when long after, in his old age, he told the people



of Israel how they should teach their children, when he said with what words they were to answer their sons when they asked questions about the old history of the nation, and told them to talk of God's law to them each morning and evening, when they sat in their houses, or when they walked by the way.

We may think that it was in such a manner that Amram taught Moses, telling him the story of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob over and over again on many a summer evening, under the bright stars; and the words were seeds hidden within his heart. They had life in them, the very life of God, and we may be sure that such seeds, though sometimes they seem to be buried for a long time, will spring up at last, and will bear the flowers of faith and love, and the fruits of a holy and beautiful life.

It seems very likely, too, that in some most solemn moment of all, Amram would tell his little son that God had, so they believed, specially marked him out to be the deliverer of all the nation of Israel.

If indeed a vision had encouraged his father and mother to brave the anger of the king, and save their child, then the wonder of this vision, the solemn awe with which, like the overshadowing of wings, it had rested on his father's heart, would make it indeed a sacred memory and hope to the chosen child.

And all these helps he would need; for the time came only too soon when, at a message from the palace, Jochebed had to lead her little son to the great gates of the king's dwelling, and give him over not only into the care of



strangers, but of idol worshippers, heathens who knew nothing of the true God. Well for the poor mother that she knew that in that mighty palace, with its heathen signs, its crowds of false priests and sorcerers, the Wings of the God of Israel were still spread above His child.

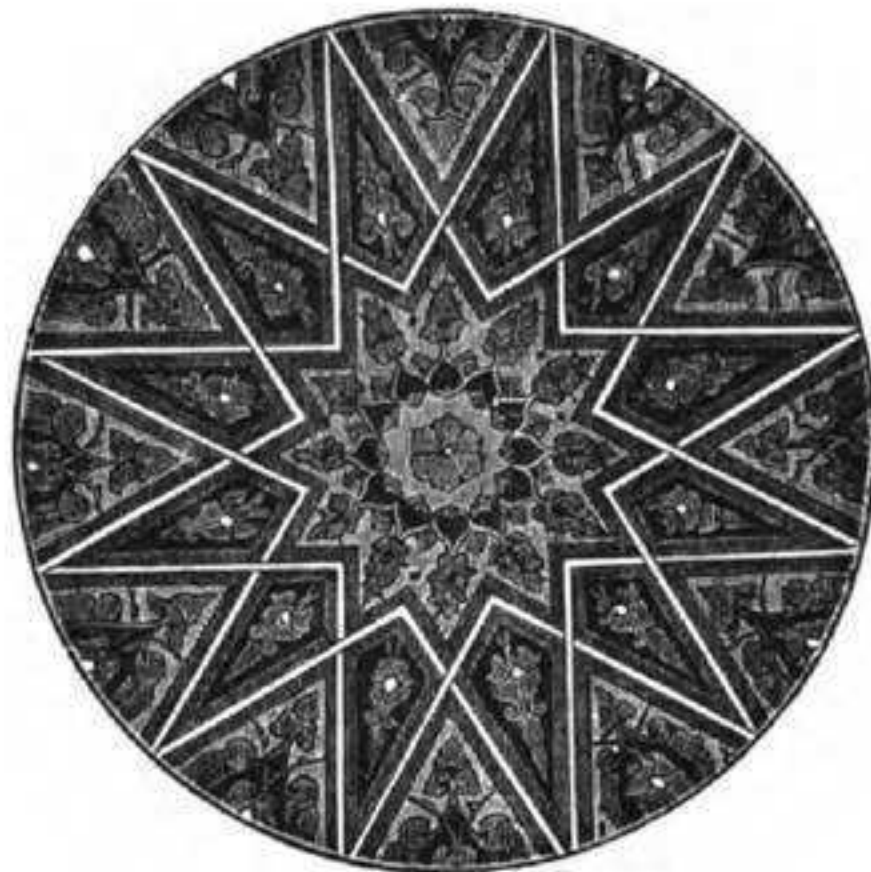
And now, in the court of Pharaoh, began the second part of the boy's training. As yet he knew only what his father could teach him, he knew the name of the Holy God, he had learnt the history of God's people in Canaan, but to be a great deliverer he must know yet more. He must be taught how to obey, that he might know how to rule, must understand the laws of a nation, and learn wise sayings, and the wisdom stored up by past ages. He must know how to read and write, to build and to war, and all this he was now to learn.

The story of the childhood of Moses ends when the palace gates closed between him and his mother. How he learnt all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and yet kept in his heart, simple and pure, his love and faith to his own poor slave brothers; how he was led into the heathen temples, and only learnt there to believe more entirely in the one true God; how the lessons of his earliest childhood at home bore fruit at last, when, having come to manhood, he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;"—all this belongs rather to his fuller life as a man, when he began to do the work for which God had been training him. But looking back through all this to the little child just warm from his mother's last kiss at the palace gate, we see how

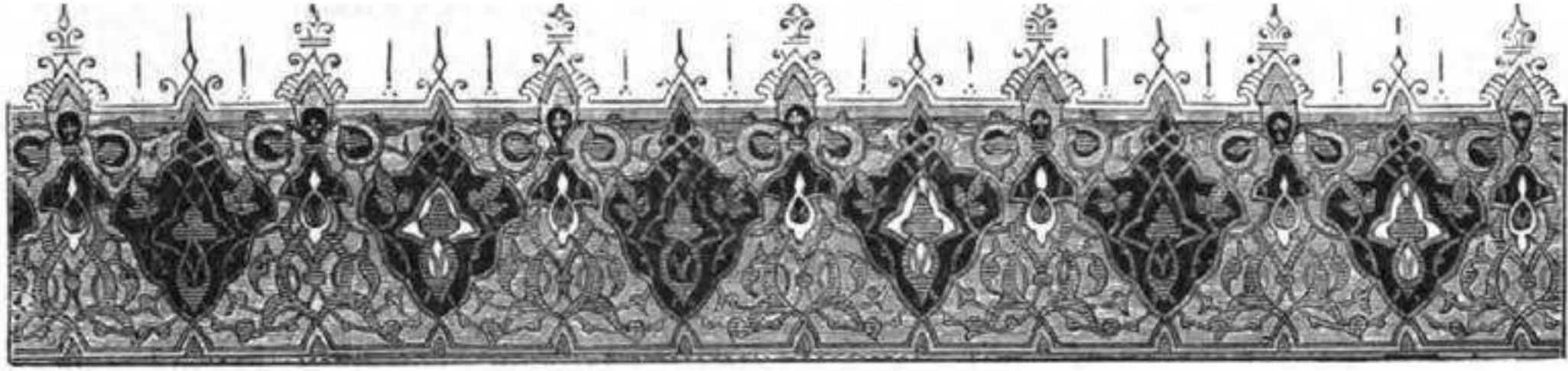
the secret of his parents' life and of his own was that faith in God which made him esteem the "reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

And the very same trust, the same high hope, may fill the life of every child who sets himself to be taught whatever lessons God has chosen for him, and who gives up himself simply to be trained at home and at school, so that he may be used by God for whatever work God has waiting for him.

For faith in God makes a faithful life—"As Moses also was faithful in all his house."







## IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

“Speak, for Thy servant heareth;  
Alone in my lonely bed,  
Before I laid me down to rest  
My nightly prayer was said.  
And naught my spirit feareth,  
By darkness or by day:  
Speak, for Thy servant heareth,  
And heareth to obey.

“I’ve stood before Thine altar,  
A child before Thy might;  
No breath within Thy temple stirred  
The dim and cloudy light;  
And still I knew that Thou wert there,  
Teaching my heart to say—  
‘Speak, for Thy servant heareth,  
And heareth to obey.’

“I’ve stood before Thee all my days—  
Have ministered to Thee;  
But in the hour of darkness first  
Thou speakest unto me.  
And now the night appeareth  
More beautiful than day:  
Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth,  
And heareth to obey.”

IN the town of Ramah, the little houses of which were clustered on a hill about two hours’ journey to the north-

west of Jerusalem, lived, in the time of the Judges, the household of a man named Elkanah.

He was a Levite: which means, as you know, that he belonged to one of those branches of the tribe of Levi to whom the great office of the priesthood had not been given, but who were nevertheless set apart from the rest of the nation, and chosen by God to sing His praises in the Temple, and to teach the people His holy law.

But as yet the Temple was not built; and the times in which Elkanah lived were so godless that even the worship in the Tabernacle at Shiloh was neglected, and the Levites themselves seem to have forgotten that any special service was due from them. So that Elkanah the Levite, though himself a devout man, only went up to the sanctuary at Shiloh once every year, when all the rest of the men of the nation gathered there to keep the great feast.

And now the time of this feast—which fell when the grapes were ripe and all the vineyards about Shiloh were purple with the rich clusters—had come round once more, and Elkanah, with his two wives and his children, prepared to make the accustomed journey. They always carried up with them sacrifices and offerings to present before the Lord; and this year, beside those which they were accustomed to take, Elkanah's servants were driving a special gift of three young bullocks, and carried also an ephah of flour and a leathern skin filled with wine. But Elkanah was bearing with him an offering which was much more to him than these. Carried in the arms of his dear wife, Hannah, was a little boy between two and three years old—a fair-faced



little boy, whose long hair, as it hung untrimmed across his forehead, showed that, like Samson before him and John the Baptist after, he had been dedicated to God from his birth by a special vow. He was the youngest of the children of Elkanah, and his mother, Hannah, had no other child.

For long years before Samuel was born she had desired to have a son, and had made a vow that if God granted her desire, then the child should be quite given up to the service of God. And this year the promise must be kept, and the little Samuel must be given out of his mother's loving, tender arms to be brought up in the Sanctuary, and to minister to Eli, the high priest.

They had left Ramah behind them now, and the hills looked dim in the distance as they went on towards Shiloh. On the roads, which led amidst cleared cornfields and purple vineyards, were crowds of people driving sheep and oxen before them, and singing gaily or greeting each other with joyful words as, like Elkanah, they went up to the feast. But we cannot fancy that Hannah, as her company travelled slowly along, cared much to notice anything but the little rosy face on her breast, and the feel of the warm, soft, clinging fingers she must so soon loosen from their clasp of her hand.

And yet the face bent down over the child would not be altogether sad. It was such a great thing to have a beautiful offering like this to give to God; and she felt altogether sure that a blessing would come both on the little one himself and on the lives of all of them from this gift of her first-born. Hannah was not a woman of many words; most likely she went silently along, but she was praying and giving



thanks in her heart, and loving her one little son so much the more tenderly because now he was to be God's child by a special right.

Shiloh was in sight at last. Hannah knew it well, for she had often been to the feast with her husband. There was the hillside with all its terraces bright with vineyards, and there the beautiful laughing valley below.

In the midst of that valley, standing apart from the town of Shiloh, was pitched the sacred tent, the Tabernacle of the Lord of Hosts. They could see from afar off the gleam of its white covering, but its bright pillars and dyed hangings would be hidden from them by the chambers and dwellings for the priests which were built around it. We can fancy how all the Israelites would pause for a moment when they first came in sight of Shiloh; for under those curtains was placed the holy Ark of God, the sign to all the nation that God Himself was dwelling among them.

But little Samuel was too young to understand this, though we feel sure that his face must have looked grave and sweet and awestruck when, after the sacrifice had been offered to God, his father and his mother both took him by the hands, and led him up to Eli the priest. Eli was an old man; he had sons who were wicked, and were a great trouble and grief to him; they had been young and innocent as Samuel once, and perhaps he thought of this when, from his high seat by the door of the Tabernacle, he looked down, and saw the group who were standing before him.

Does it not make us think of a day, long, long years after,



when that most blessed of mothers, the Virgin Mary, took her Child, the Lord Jesus, with an offering into the Temple, while old Simeon received and blessed Him? And now Samuel's mother told Eli the priest of the solemn vow that, three years before, she had made in Shiloh, and then she gave the child out of her arms.

"I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord," she said.

Then she taught her little child to bow down and worship the God Whom henceforth he was to serve wholly; and his mother knelt there by his side, and instead of grieving as she thought of the silent house to which she must go back, or the empty cot at home, Hannah broke out into a song of thanksgiving.

That beautiful song, which was first heard in the Sanctuary at Shiloh, has been preserved through all the centuries which have passed since then; and many of its words—taken up by the Virgin Mary into the song of her own thanksgiving—are still sung when we repeat—"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

The feast was over. The crowds who had gathered to Shiloh were all taking their different ways back to their own homes, and Elkanah and Hannah turned their steps to Ramah; but now little Samuel was not with them. Henceforth the child's home was to be the Temple of God, and the lesson of his life the service of God.

We do not know exactly how the days passed with the little child as he "grew before the Lord." But we are sure that these words must mean that he grew in all things pure



and sweet and childlike, and was very happy in the life which God had chosen for him. As he grew older he would be taught how to help Eli in his daily ministrations, how to keep and kindle the lights which burnt all night long before the altar. His daily lessons would be from the law of God; he would be told how holy God was, and how high, and what the purity was that He had commanded from all who would know Him. He would learn how the white dresses of the priests as they ministered, and how his own little linen ephod, were all signs that those who served before God must be pure in heart and life; and we can think of him as earnestly desiring that holiness which would make it possible for him to know more of the God whose child he was.

Perhaps, after a time, the child almost forgot that he had known any other home than the beautiful Tabernacle, with its brazen altar, its sacred lights, and its solemn offerings. But we are quite sure that he did not forget his mother. For each year, when the time of the feast came round once more, she came up with Elkanah to see her boy, and to bring him a little coat which, through the long months since they last came to Shiloh, she had been making for him. Perhaps, like Joseph's coat of many colours, this gift of Samuel's mother may have had a special meaning. For though Samuel was not of the priestly family, yet by his special dedication he received something of the office of a priest, and used it in after years. How many loving thoughts and memories and hopes Hannah wrought into the little coat, as she worked it in her home at Ramah, each year making it somewhat larger than the one she had carried up before!



That home was not lonely now; as the years went on sons and daughters grew up round her, and perhaps she brought them with her to Shiloh when she came, that they might know their eldest brother who was given to God. But we are sure that the absent child was as dear as any, most likely far dearest of all, to his mother's heart.

He had grown into boyhood now, and was just as good and gentle as he had been when an infant.

It is said of him, in words which were afterwards to be used to describe the pure and spotless childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he "grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men."

We can think of him, with his beautiful face, in his spotless ephod, going reverently about his duties in the Temple, and musing the while upon God, Who dwelt there, Whose glory filled in former days the sacred place, Who had His dwelling there between the cherubin in that holiest of all, where none but the high priest might enter. No doubt he longed that the glorious days of old might come back—days when any little child living in the Temple, praying and serving God, would have seen the heavenly Light come down, or heard some Voice speaking, and known that God was near. But for the sins of the people this grace had long been withheld, and Samuel never thought that it was possible that to him, so young, so ignorant, so far off, could be given what priests and holy men had waited for in vain.

Perhaps he often had such thoughts at night, when the last prayer had been said and all was silent.

Samuel had a little chamber in the Temple, not far from that of his master Eli, and within the light of the seven-branched candlestick which burnt before the golden altar. Each morning Eli filled these lamps with pure oil, and lit them every evening at set of sun. In the great seven-branched candlestick was a sign of the presence of God, as when Jesus, our Saviour, revealed Himself to St. John in Patmos, He walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. They burnt all night in the Temple, just as the pillar of cloud burnt all night in the desert, to show that God was with His people.

It was night; both the old priest and the boy had long since lain down in their little chambers. Morning was not very far off, for already the flames of the great lamp began to flicker a little, and pale; they would die out when the first sunshine had stolen to the sacred tent.

Samuel was asleep. Suddenly he believed that he heard Eli's voice calling him, and saying "Samuel," and almost before he was awake he answered—

"Here I am," for his first thought was one of obedience and loving service to the old man.

Eli did not speak again, and Samuel, rising from the bed on which he had been sleeping, ran to Eli's chamber, which was near at hand.

"Here am I, for thou calledst me," he said, as he saw his master's look of surprise.

"I called not," answered the priest; "lie down again." Samuel did not reply, though he felt so sure that he had heard his own name spoken aloud, and knew that he and Eli were



alone in the Temple. The boy went back to his bed, but we can hardly think that he slept again.

Once more the Voice was heard : " Samuel."

This time Samuel did not speak in answer, for, being awake, he rose instantly, and went to Eli with the same words as before upon his lips, only this time he felt more certain that it was indeed Eli's voice which he had heard. " Here am I, for thou *didst* call me."

Eli answered just as he had done before, only he added two loving words, as if to tell Samuel that he was pleased with his obedience and care, even though the voice which he thought he had heard had not really spoken.

" I called not, my son; lie down again."

Again the solemn Voice thrilled through him : " Samuel."

If the boy had ever thought it possible that the great God, Whose servant he was, might speak to him, perhaps this third time the hope would have begun to wake in his heart that it was indeed that Holiest Voice which he heard. But Samuel knew that he was only a young boy, who had done many things that were wrong, who had not been as pure as his white garment, and as the holy Temple in which he dwelt. He knew that he was ignorant and childish and thoughtless, and he never dreamed that the great God to Whom he prayed would come so near to him. Therefore when a third time he heard the Voice, Samuel went once more to Eli with the same words—

" Here am I, for thou *didst* call me."

Eli had grown grey in the Temple, and knew much which Samuel had not yet learnt. When the child came to him the third time, then the aged priest felt sure that the Voice which



Samuel had heard had been no other than God calling to him. He was glad at the thought that once more God had spoken in His Temple, and that the child whom he had taught and loved should be the one chosen to hear. Eli knew now what Samuel ought to do.

“Go, lie down again,” he said; “and it shall be if He call thee, that thou shalt say, ‘Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.’”

Silent, trembling, awestruck, the child once more lay down upon his bed, and again the Voice spoke.

“Samuel, Samuel.”

And he answered, “Speak, for Thy servant heareth.”

The solemn message had been spoken, the Voice fell into silence, and the flame of the seven-branched candlestick flickered and died out. The morning light stole softly in through the curtains as Samuel rose; he had never seen a day like this before; he, a little child, had heard the Voice of God, and the whole world was changed to him.

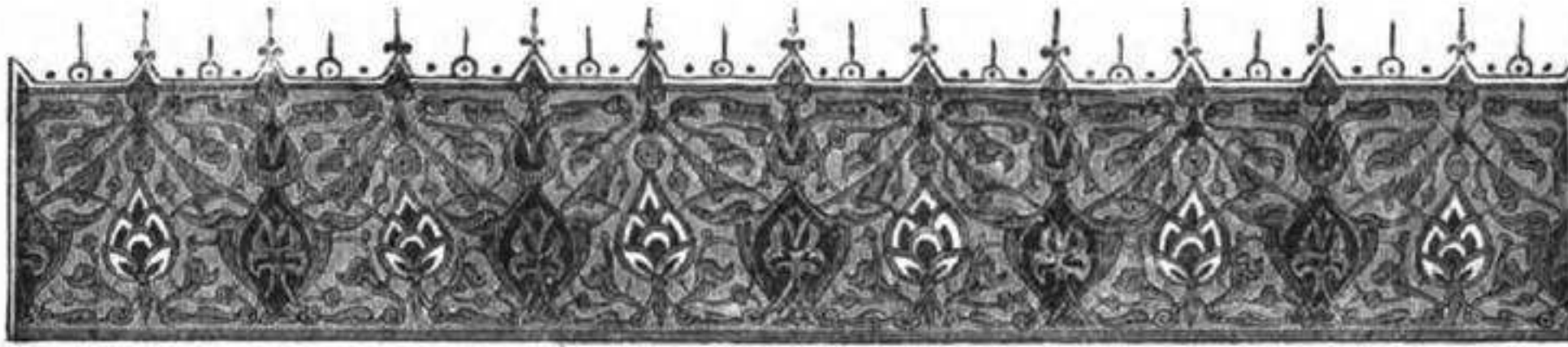
This is how Samuel waited for God. And reading of his holy boyhood, we learn one more lesson of what a child should be. To you also, to each one of you, the Voice of God may speak, and if you are listening for it you will hear it as Samuel did. It is not enough that we should speak to God, that is, that we should say our prayers reverently and carefully, and try to mean them with all our hearts; we are sure that little Samuel did this as he ministered daily to Eli in the services of the Temple. But besides this we must listen for what God will say to us. And though you cannot be His prophet, as Samuel was, be sure He has something for you to be and to do, and will



teach you if you wait to learn. Sometimes when you are kneeling alone, say those very words which Eli taught to Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

And thus your life may become like that of Samuel, who, through all the days that he lived, seemed more conscious of God's presence than he was of the things and people around him. When he had to go out from the silence and sweet lights of the Temple, and to live in the midst of battles and strife and confusion, his heart was just as calm as when of old he went about his morning tasks to open the great doors of the Temple, or to help Eli as he trimmed and dressed the sacred lamps; for God was with him, and even spoke to him and through him, and "let none of his words fall to the ground."





## THE OIL OF GLADNESS.

“Latest born of Jesse’s race,  
Wonder lights thy bashful face,  
While the prophet’s gifted oil  
Seals thee for a path of toil.  
Go! and mid thy flocks awhile

At thy doom of greatness smile;  
Bold to bear God’s heaviest load,  
Dimly guessing of the road—  
Rocky road, and scarce ascended,  
Though thy foot be angel-tended.”

UPON the side of one of the green hills of Bethlehem, flocks of sheep were feeding; they were under the care of a young lad with bright hair and a beautiful face. He was plainly dressed, and wore round his neck a shepherd’s bag, while in his hand he carried the staff with which to herd his flock.

You would hardly at first, seeing him here among the sheep, think that he was the son of the chief man of the little village which lay in the valley below. But in those Eastern lands such work was counted as quite worthy; and, moreover, this boy, David, had seven brothers older than himself, and while they went to fight for their country, it was natural that the youngest should help his father with the flocks at home.

But just now they were all gathered at Bethlehem, for a feast and sacrifice was being held, at which it was the family custom that all the sons should be present. David, however, was as yet counted too young or of too little importance





"SOLEMNLY . . . . POURED IT OVER THE BOY'S BRIGHT HAIR" (p. 61).



to be called; and no doubt it was a great surprise to him when, as he sat amongst his sheep, a servant came hurriedly up the hillside from the village, bearing a message from David's father, Jesse, to bid the boy come at once to the feast.

If, as the young shepherd hastened down, he asked the messenger the reason of this unlooked-for summons, he was doubtless told how the great Prophet Samuel, the head and judge of the nation, had suddenly arrived at the village, and, joining in the sacrifice, had refused to sit down to the feast until Jesse's youngest son had been called to eat with them.

David would have no time to change his simple shepherd dress, though the other guests had, no doubt, put on the robes which became a feast; but the eyes of Samuel were fastened, not on the tunic, but on the fair frank face above it, while the whisper of God spoke to the old prophet, and told him that this shepherd was to be God's chosen King of Israel.

There stood the aged seer, "an old man, wrapped in a mantle," gazing, with eyes which God had opened to see the things to come, on the young boy who was to be more than *he* had ever been, in whose future was bound up not only the future of the nation whom Samuel loved, but in some mysterious way that of all the world.

It was a great moment in the life of David, when Samuel lifted the horn of sacred oil which he had brought with him, and solemnly, as in the name of God, poured it over the boy's bright hair, as he stood, wondering and awestruck, amidst his seven tall brothers. Nothing is said of whether the prophet



told either Jesse or his sons why he had done this ; though, of course, it would be understood by all that he was in some way set apart, that some great and solemn work lay before him in the time to come.

The story, as we have it, would rather lead us to think that nothing was said, unless it were a whisper in David's ear ; for very soon the boy is found again amongst his sheep, and both Jesse and his elder sons seem to have forgotten that David had been in any way specially noticed or distinguished, unless, indeed, we trace some remembrance of this in the half-concealed jealousy with which his brothers seem to have looked on him.

Quiet days and peaceful nights passed over the boy, just as they had done before Samuel came. But David knew that they were not the same, that his whole life had been altered and deepened, and that his childhood had gone by for ever. For when that sacred oil was poured upon his head he received from God the gift of His Spirit, which henceforth dwelt in him, to stir him to all brave, and noble, and unselfish deeds.

When he sat alone amongst his sheep, the little songs which he had been used to sing to his harp would no longer come to his lips ; but he longed to sing the praises of that God Who was his Shepherd.

Or he looked across to the rocky fortresses whence the fierce Philistines ruled the defenceless villages below, and we can think how all his heart was filled with a longing cry that the time would come when he might fight for God against these His foes.

And though he could not know what was this new and



wonderful life which was working within him, yet others could trace how the boy was growing into a brave and noble youth. He was known already beyond the little valley : even some of the king's body-guard had noticed him, speaking of his courage and good looks, and, above all, of his beautiful music, which he may have learned perhaps at one of those schools of the sons of the prophets which, under Samuel, were beginning to rise here and there through the land. David was so famed for his skill on the harp that sometimes he was sent for even to play before King Saul. We can picture the lad in the dark presence of the violent king, fearlessly singing—

“The tune all our sheep know, as one after one,  
So docile they come to the pen door, till folding be done.  
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed  
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed ;  
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star  
Into eve and the blue far above us—so blue and so far !”

But David's heart was still in his shepherd life, with the “few sheep in the wilderness,” every one of which he knew, and for which he had sometimes to peril even his life itself, on those wild and unguarded hills of Bethlehem.

He was alone there one day, as usual, when suddenly a lion and a bear fell at the same moment upon his flock. Perhaps the sheep that was seized was one that had strayed farther than the rest, towards the thickets on the Jordan side of the hills of Bethlehem, where wild beasts often made their lairs. When its frightened cry called the young shepherd to its help, he ran hastily and fearlessly towards the spot



where the two wild beasts were. He had no weapon in his hand, except his shepherd's staff, and the lion was even now retreating to the jungle, carrying the helpless lamb in his mouth. But David ran faster than the lion, and, overtaking him, he tore the lamb out of his jaws, while he struck the fierce beast on the head with his staff. The lion, and perhaps the bear also, turned fiercely on this new foe; but the shepherd boy, catching the angry lion by the throat, struck him such terrible blows, that soon he lay dead on the hillside, while his conqueror pursued and slew also the retreating bear, and carried the lamb home in safety to the fold. Such brave deeds were known and spoken of by many, and the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite came to be looked upon as one who would do great things hereafter. The very praise which David won made his brothers angry with him; they were grown men, and the three eldest were just now gone to fight under King Saul against the Philistines.

Perhaps David was hardly glad when Jesse his father bade him go to the camp and bring home tidings of his brothers' welfare; and yet the boy's heart must have leaped up at the thought of seeing the soldiers, and perhaps helping in the battle.

But he did not go armed. Swords and spears were very few amongst the men of Israel. Not long before none but Saul and Jonathan his son had possessed them, for the Philistines had taken them by force from every Israelite.

David had to carry corn and bread to his brothers, as well as cheeses of goats' milk, which had been made in Jesse's house, and were sent by him as a present to his sons' captain.



But though he had so much to carry, the young shepherd never thought of laying aside the strong sling with which his aim was so sure and steady, nor his staff with which he had slain the lion and the bear; but with these in his hand, and his wallet round his neck, he set off on his way to the camp while the dew was yet white across the pastures.

As he turned back he could see his sheep, left for the day under the care of a servant, and he could hardly have thought, as he looked at them, that never again should he gather them to their fold at night, or watch beside them on the hillside, or lead them to the water. But the eagerness with which he turned from them towards the hills of Judah was the prophecy of a great change that was now to come over his quiet life.

Now he was near the camp; but before he came within hail of the tents themselves he reached the place where the rude waggons and the heavier baggage of the army were ranged in a line of defence to protect the rear, and be a sort of refuge for the sick and the wounded.

Just as he passed through this line, he heard, from the hillside below him, a wild loud shout. David knew it well. At that sound the heart of every Israelite beat higher, for it was the battle-cry of God's people. He knew that the army was just going forth to the fight; he could see the morning sun shining on the ranks of Israel, drawn up in order, tribe after tribe, each with its own banner; and on the other side of the dry watercourse of the ravine of Elah he beheld the long ranks of the Philistines.

Breathless with haste, the lad gave the present which he



carried into the hands of the officer who had charge of the baggage. He could move more quickly now; and he ran down the long slope towards where, in the forefront, were posted the men of his own tribe of Judah. But when he reached the well-known standard, he found that the army, which had just before gone forward with such brave shouts, was now crowded together, as if in fear, the foremost half turning back, some already fleeing up the hillside, while Saul and the other leaders were hidden in the tents. David hastened to his three brothers, saluting them with the usual "Is all well?"

But before he could ask them the meaning of this panic amongst the soldiers, the boy heard a wild, hoarse cry, which made him look across the ravine towards the army of the enemy. The sound was strange to the new-comer, but for more than a month the army of Israel had heard that shout each morning from before the enemy's camp, and each morning, hearing it, they had turned back in terror from the fight.

For there, in the front of the ranks of the Philistines, stood a man of such enormous size that he seemed scarcely human. A descendant, most likely, of those Anakims who of old had been the terror of the children of Abraham, this giant, like his forefathers, used his great strength to oppress the people of God, and did not know that there was anything in the world better than to subdue the weak, to trample on all that was good or lovely, and live at ease in selfish pleasures.

The Israelites, untrained in war, not long since gathered



from the caves and thickets and rocks in which they had hidden themselves, armed only with such weapons as they had been able to take from their foes, trembled at the very sight of this terrible giant, clothed in gleaming armour of brass; and feared his mighty spear and sword, as if they had been able to overthrow their whole camp and army at a blow.

The cry that David heard—his hoarse voice as he raised it in a challenge to the army—was like the cry of doom to them, meeting them morning by morning when they were ranging themselves for the battle, and making them crowd back upon each other in terror and hopelessness:—

“I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.”

But David, instead of being frightened, was only made indignant by the sight and by the defiance; and the soldiers looking on the sparkling eyes and bold mien of the lad, seemed to feel him a sort of protection against their own panic, and clustered round him as he stood.

They were talking eagerly. Some sought to make him afraid by describing the strength and exploits of this giant of Gath; some were telling what terrible weapons he carried; while others cried out that King Saul had promised honour and riches, and his daughter in marriage, to any one who would fight with and slay Goliath. So quickly and noisily did they talk, that David was obliged to turn away to some who seemed less excited, and ask quietly what really was the truth of the matter, and whether Saul had indeed promised such a reward to the successful champion of Israel.

Eliab, David's elder brother, heard the question, and he



was very angry that David should speak at all about matters which he thought concerned only soldiers.

There was some jealousy of the boy's high repute in his mind; he wished David would keep quiet with the sheep at Bethlehem; and he told him, roughly enough, that he would be better there, than making excuses to thrust himself into matters which did not concern him.

But David knew too well the deference which, as a young lad, he owed to his elder brother to allow himself to reply angrily; he only turned quietly away, too full of a sudden purpose to have any words with which to answer his brother. Meanwhile, David's questions had been repeated by one soldier to another; some were speaking of his courage and his bold look, some of his fearless words, until at length an officer lifted the curtain of the tent within which Saul sat in moody silence, and told him that one was come to the camp who, alone of all gathered there, did not seem to have any fear of the champion of the Philistines.

Perhaps, then, this new-comer would be willing to go forth to meet him. David was at once sent for, and led in to where the king was seated. Long ago the boy had seen Saul, when he had played the harp in his presence; but at those times the king had perhaps hardly looked at the face of the minstrel whose music soothed him, and did not know that it was the same shepherd-boy, grown tall and strong, who stood before him now, looking with pity in his eyes at the man, himself a head and shoulders taller than any of the nation, who was now cowering in his tent, shrinking even from the thought of the giant.



Saul, who had disobeyed God, and gone away from Him, and grieved His Holy Spirit, had no courage for the strife, though he was naturally brave, and was so strong and active; and David, who loved his king, could not bear to look on him in this unmanly fear, and felt his own purpose growing strong within him.

“Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine,” said the youth.

Saul, half ashamed, half hopeful, bade David at least arm himself with the bright armour in which Saul should himself have been going forth now to the battle. But the boy’s free limbs could not move under the weight of armour, which he had never learned to wear. Nor was this the only reason why the young champion put off the breastplate and greaves in which Saul had dressed him; it is plain that he was taught by the Spirit of God that if he trusted in the defence of a soldier’s armour, and went out to the fight as any other warrior might go, he would be putting away from him the only Might in which he could hope to overcome this terrible foe.

For if it were a question only of force, human strength against human strength, what hope could there be for little David in his struggle with the giant? He must put himself, unarmed, weak, into the hands of God, and then it would be not the simple shepherd-boy, but the might of God, which would be arrayed against the foe. And thus it comes to pass that the history of how David fought with the giant has always been felt to be also a parable of what is still going on in the world.



Sin is very strong ; it is like a giant sheathed in armour ; and by ourselves we cannot hope to overcome it.

David, the pure-hearted, innocent shepherd-boy, going forth unarmed against Goliath, is a type or figure of Jesus, the Sinless One, overcoming Satan, and a type, too, of the battle which every soldier and servant of His must fight under His banner.

His soldiers win the battle through weakness—that is, by taking with them no strength of their own ; in their hands they carry the cross, as David grasped his shepherd's staff. He would take nothing else except his sling, and thus, just as he had entered Saul's tent he left it again, and saw once more before him, still waiting in proud defiance on the opposite slope of the hill, the mighty figure of the bright-armed Goliath.

Instead of feeling any fresh fear at the sight, David ran down the steep towards him, and so into the dry watercourse between the hills, which, when the rains have filled it, marks out the ravine of the Terebinth, as the gorge is called.

The great giant looked with scornful eyes at the boy who was coming towards him, and gave orders to the man who bore his shield that he should move forward, that they might meet this champion, and learn whether he did indeed intend to fight.

And this did not seem very likely ; for at this moment the fearless boy was quietly searching in the dry bed of the stream for smooth stones fit for his sling, five of which he placed in the wallet round his neck.

Goliath does not seem to have noticed either the sling or the stones ; they would seem to him only the playthings of



a child. But he saw the staff which David firmly grasped as he came up the slope, and felt, through all his dull, coarse mind, fierce anger at the thought of being assailed by the same weapon with which a shepherd drove away the wild dogs which worried his flock. His amusement and scorn gave place now to threats and fierce cries, as he promised himself that he would tear the young limbs of the boy who dared thus to play with the great Goliath.

Moving slowly in his ponderous clanging armour, the Philistine descended the hill, and his shield went before him. The boy who, with uncovered face and limbs undefended, was hurrying fearlessly towards him, seemed to all who looked on as if he had no shield; they could not see how an angel went before him and covered him from all harm. The boy answered the fierce cries of the giant by a very different battle-shout—  
“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts.”

Both armies stood firm in their ranks, and looked on in silence, as the giant raised his mighty spear and poised it; but David was not yet within reach. He had placed one of the five stones in his sling, and taking aim above the covering shield at the brazen helmet, he struck his foe full on the temple.

Loud on the stony mountain-side clanged the armour of the champion of the Philistines as he fell lifeless on his face. And it was with the giant's own sword that David, standing over the mighty bulk of his fallen foe, cut off his head, that all might know that Goliath would never again defy the armies of Israel.



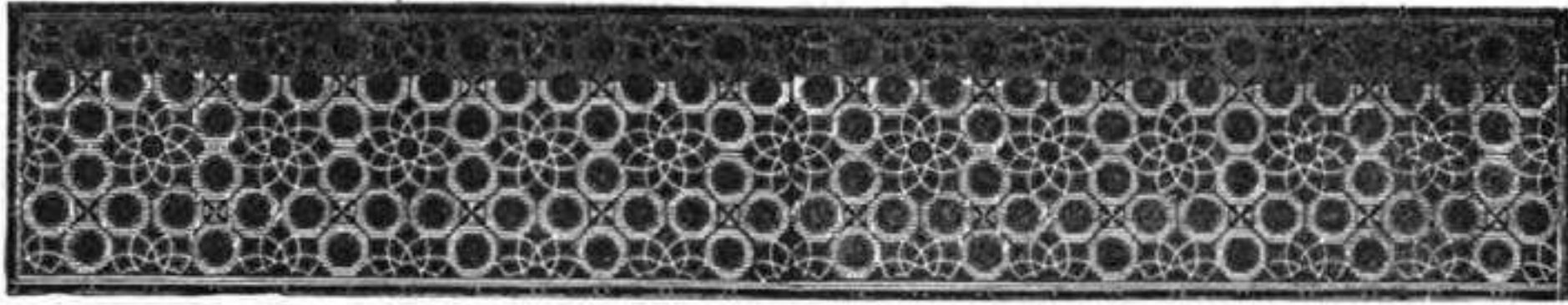
And now the ranks of the Philistines were broken; for, seized with terror, captain and soldier turned and fled up the long slope, pursued by the shouting and rejoicing host of Israel. Long was the chase that day and terrible the slaughter, for it did not cease till the remnant of the Philistines had crowded, faint, wounded, and spent, within the walls of their nearest fortress, while the whole camp, with all its spoil, fell into the hands of the conquerors.

Henceforth, life to David was entirely changed. He was no longer an unknown shepherd-lad, but a favoured warrior, the armour-bearer of the king, the chosen friend of Jonathan the king's son, and after a time the husband of Saul's daughter. Thus his boyhood ends; and we leave him on the threshold of that wonderful life of adventure and success and bitter loss, of hope and sin and repentance, which is traced out for us in the histories of the Bible.

There is many a shadow and stain on his after life, but his boyhood stands before us bright with innocence and courage, as if the sacred oil of gladness yet hung upon his fair hair.

We see how strong a weak child may become when God is with him; how what is coarse and sinful and earthly can be overcome by what is pure and holy. In every Christian child dwells the same Holy Spirit that was given to David, to be strength and shield and sword in the battle with sin which every Christian child must fight.

The prize which David won was the throne of Israel, but Christ says to each of His children, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me, in My throne."



## CALLED HOME.

“ O star, untimely set,  
Why should we weep for thee ?  
Thy bright and dewy coronet  
Is rising o'er the sea.”

IN the house of Jeroboam, King of Israel, a young boy was lying ill. We must not think of this house as of a great or glorious palace, such as those which King Solomon had built, for Jeroboam was living in a city where no king had dwelt before, and his house was perhaps not very different from those in which his officers and captains lived round him.

The boy who lay ill in one of the rooms of this house was named Abijah, and he was the eldest son of the king—the one who, if he lived, would come to the throne when his father died. This was one reason why his life was very precious, not only to his father and mother, but to all the ten tribes over which Jeroboam reigned. And there was another reason. Abijah had brothers younger than himself, and if he died, then Nadab, the eldest of these, would take his place, and be the heir to the crown; and of all the sons of Jeroboam, Abijah was the only one who gave promise of being a good king.



He was still quite young, and had not been able to do anything by which he might show his faithfulness to God, yet there was something about his ways and his words which marked him out as different from the rest of those about him, who were worshippers of idols, and did not care to hear or to think of the God of their fathers.

Therefore there was great grief when it became known that Abijah was ill, and would perhaps die; but his father and mother grieved more than all the rest, and as they stood together in the morning by the boy's sick bed, they looked at each other with eyes which said, only too plainly, what great sorrow they feared was coming upon them.

Abijah's mother was not, so it seems, a Jewess. There is reason to suppose that she was an Egyptian princess, whom Jeroboam had married when he was living in Egypt, and high in the favour of the king. Perhaps she still clung to the worship of the idols of Egypt, but now, in this time of great need, she was ready to go even to the prophets of the God of Israel, if only thus she might obtain some word of comfort and hope.

They dare not go to the Temple which Solomon had built at Jerusalem, for Jeroboam had rebelled against the son of Solomon, and was his enemy; but Jeroboam knew one other place sacred to the worship of God where, perhaps, he might learn something of what was to befall his son.

At Shiloh, where the Tabernacle had stood, where little Samuel had grown up, there was still a sanctuary of God and a school of the prophets of God. There, perhaps at



the head of this school, was living an old prophet, named Ahijah, already nearly blind, and to him Jeroboam determined to send his wife, that he might inquire what God was about to do with the child.

Jeroboam had been the man who had turned away a whole nation from the worship of Jehovah; but now, as soon as trouble fell on him and fear, he did not think of his idols any more; he knew that they could not help him, and that there was but one God who could reveal secrets. Jeroboam dare not go himself to Ahijah, for the prophet, though his eyes were dim, would know only too well the voice of the king who had led Israel into sin. Years before, in the days when Jeroboam was yet faithful to his God, it was the prophet Ahijah who had told him that he should be king over Israel. Then he had promised blessing and honour if only Jeroboam would serve God and follow him; and now the disobedient king dare not go to the prophet, to be told of his sin and of its punishment.

And yet he would not send a servant; the matter was too near his heart for this. As it was impossible that he should be himself the messenger, he would send his wife, the mother of the sick child. Her Ahijah would not be likely to recognise; and to make this still more improbable, she must go in disguise, and appear, not as a king's daughter and a king's wife, but as a poor woman from one of the neighbouring villages, anxious for her sick child.

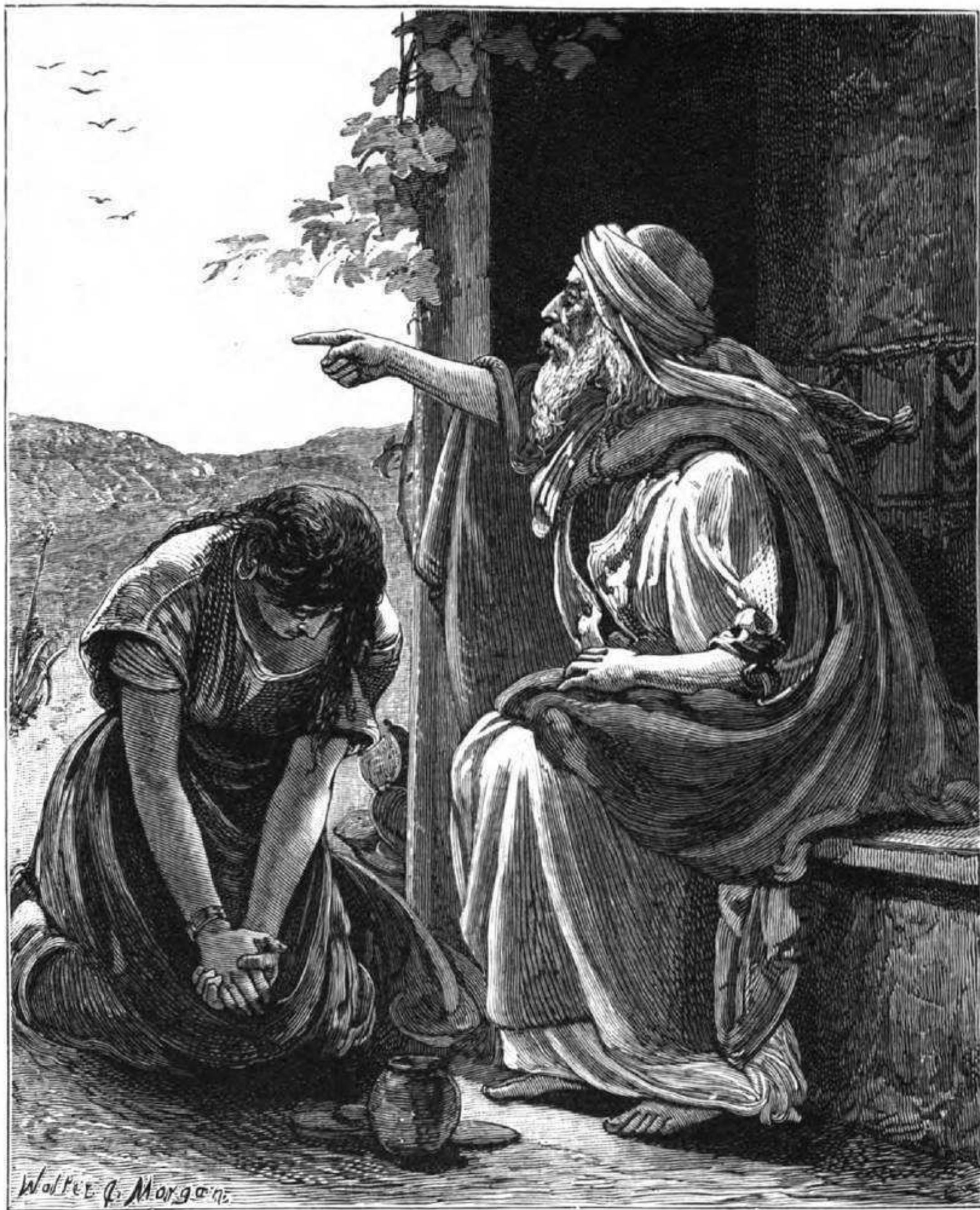
Then Jeroboam's wife put off her rich dress—perhaps her robe of fine linen from Egypt—and attired herself like



a poor countrywoman. Yet even a poor woman would not seek the prophet empty-handed; it was a universal rule that all who went to him should carry with them some present as an offering. If, however, the queen had taken in her hand gold or jewels, or any gift that would have suited her rank, it would be sure to betray her to Ahijah, and this seems to have been what Jeroboam most dreaded. For it is quite plain to all who look carefully at the story that in leaving his God Jeroboam had become full of foolish superstitions and beliefs, and now, though he was once more seeking a prophet of God, he yet sought him as a heathen would do, rather than like a true Israelite.

The king seems to have thought that God's prophet could do more than tell him what was to come—that he could even alter it, so that at his pleasure he could speak either words of comfort or of pain. And yet, though Jeroboam gave, in his thought, power to the prophet which belonged only to God, at the very same time he fancied that a change of dress and a false tale could deceive him, and make him speak favourably. Thus it was that he would only allow his wife to carry with her such a gift as a poor woman would have been likely to have afforded—ten cakes, some biscuits baked on the hearth, and a little jar of honey. Carrying these, the queen set out on her way, though all the time we are sure that her thoughts were in that room at home where Abijah, her little son, lay. Perhaps he was too ill to miss his mother, perhaps he was glad to think that she was gone to a prophet of God, for the boy himself was thinking of God, and perhaps grieved





**"HIS DIM EYES FIXED ON THE HILLS" (p. 79).**



that those round him were worshippers of idols, and had forsaken Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

And now the poor mother had reached Shiloh, and could see far off the building in which Ahijah had made his dwelling. Near the open door the old man sat, his dim eyes fixed on the hills which he could so well remember, though now he could not trace their familiar outline. He knew who was coming, for God had told him; and the changed dress, and the journey on foot without servants, and the poor gift were all quite useless, for nothing can hide us from God, and He knew every thought in Jeroboam's mind.

Now Ahijah could hear the step across the threshold—a timid step, for she feared to be discovered, and yet an eager, hurried tread, for the queen came in haste, full of anxious fear for the life of her son.

How surprised she must have been to hear the greeting of the old prophet: "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings."

And they were indeed heavy tidings that were told to the poor queen as she sat sadly in the prophet's little chamber—tidings of trouble to befall her husband and all his house because of their sins against the Lord. But she would hardly hear all the old man's words, though at his tone her heart must have sunk lower and lower; yet she was listening for some message about her little son, for whose sake she had come to the prophet. At last the message came—it seemed the very saddest which could be spoken,

for she was not even to see her child alive again. Ahijah told her that even as her feet entered the town in which Jeroboam dwelt the child would die.

And the poor mother had to take the weary journey back again, knowing that, however much she hastened, it would be all in vain; the eyes she loved would never open on her again, nor the little lips call her "mother." Thus it was: Abijah died even as his mother crossed the threshold of the palace.

There was great sorrow all through the land of Israel when it was known that the little prince was dead; rich and poor all mourned for him; and it might seem to us, at first, as if this great sorrow were God's punishment on a land that had forsaken Him. And so indeed it was; but it was something more than this.

We know that when a king tries to do justice he often punishes the innocent with the guilty, and that he cannot help doing so; but when God, the King of kings, punishes the guilty, then the judgment turns into a blessing to those who love and follow Him. It was so now. Abijah was taken away, not only that his father and mother and the whole people might learn that they were sinning against God, but because it was the best and happiest thing for the child himself.

God, who reads all our hearts, knew that Abijah, though he was only a child, had in his heart "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." And God knew that if the boy had grown up amidst the wicked people who were round him, this little seed of good would have been choked



and would have perished. Therefore it was a blessing to Abijah to be called home to God. He was safe now—safe from all that would have drawn him into sin, safe from all the troubles that were to fall on his house, blest for ever in the presence of God.

So that you see that while sometimes God shows His love by calling back a child from death, and giving him again to his father and mother, yet it is in the very same love that sometimes He calls another child away, and does not answer the prayers of those who long to keep him with them. But whatever God does is always perfectly right and best for every one whom it touches.





## THE WIDOW'S SON.

" But who is this that comes with mantle rude,  
And vigil-wasted air,  
Who to the famished cries, ' Come, give me food,  
I with thy child would share ? '  
She bounteous gives : but hard he seems of heart,  
Who of such scanty store would crave a part.

" Haply the child his little hand holds forth,  
That all his own may be ;  
Nay, simple one, thy mother's faith is worth  
Healing and life to thee.  
That handful given for years insures thee bread ;  
That drop of oil shall raise thee from the dead."

IN the time of the kings of Judah, there stood, in the broad road which ran along the sea-coast of Palestine between the two ports of Tyre and Sidon, a small town or village called Zarephath or Sarepta. Fishing-boats and nets were on the shore, and people moved here and there about the place, but every face wore a dull despairing look, which seemed to say that it was useless now to work, for toil brought them no return. Through all Galilee and Samaria there was a terrible famine ; already there had been two years in which no rain had fallen, and in the plain country the brooks were dry, the grass burnt and brown, so that the cattle, seeking pasture in vain, fell and died where they stood.



Zarephath was beyond the northern bound of Palestine ; but the dwellers in the little town were sharing the dearth, and wearied, as did every one in the land, for the sight and shadow of even one small cloud across that hot, blue, burning heaven.

Perhaps the melting snows on the not distant ranges of Lebanon may have kept the brooks of the north land from failing, for we find that there, as yet, water was to be had ; but the garners were empty, for there had not been any corn to gather in, no one had money with which to pay for work, nor was there any hope of gain in the fisherman's toil.

This morning no one was to be seen in the gate of Zarephath, generally the very centre of the village life.

At other times the older men gathered here to talk over their business, and to settle the affairs of their town. Thither came the trader to make bargains ; while women, carrying tall water-pots on their heads, passed in and out to the spring.

But now all was silent and lonely, save that just outside the gate, where the trees come down nearest to the shore, and form a little wood on either side the path, one woman might have been seen gathering sticks. Her dress showed that she was a widow ; her face, white with care and want, seemed to tell that there was no one now to work for her or to help her.

In that desolate solitude every sound could be heard ; and perhaps the poor woman looked up almost with wonder as she heard a step coming quickly towards her along the sandy road. It was a strange wild figure that she saw—a



tall man whose long, loose hair streamed over his shoulders, who wore a girdle of leather, and was wrapped in an old and torn mantle made of sheep-skin. It is not likely that the widow from Zarephath would know that she was looking on the great prophet Elijah; if she had known perhaps she would have fled in fear, because she would have remembered the whisper which had gone through all the land, that this terrible drought had been sent by the God of Israel at the prayer of Elijah. She would have remembered how it was said that Ahab, the wicked King of Israel, had refused God's message sent through Elijah, and would not believe him, and that the prophet had then foretold that until Ahab left the idol Baal, and returned to worship God, there would be no rain or dew.

If the widow had even fancied that the strange figure before her looked like what she had heard told of the great prophet, yet she would have thought it very unlikely that he would come to her country; for the king, Ethbaal, was the father of Ahab's wife, Jezebel, that wicked queen who had won her husband to the worship of idols, and who hated Elijah, and would, if she could, have killed him, because he was a prophet of the living God.

But if it is not likely that the poor woman would imagine that Elijah stood before her, still his dress would tell her not only that the stranger was a Jew, but that he was either a priest, or a seer of the Lord God of Israel.

As he came near he called to her, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."

Such is a common request in the hot parched Eastern



lands, never refused so long as a drop is left in the water-skins or jars; and the woman, as soon as she heard the cry, turned away at once towards her home for the water, for she had not with her any vessel in which to dip some from the spring. As she went along she heard the voice of the man behind her speaking once more: "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." This was indeed a strange thing to ask of her. In the lower room at home lay, faint and worn with hunger, her own little son. She knew how he was watching for her with eager, restless eyes, that she might light a fire with the sticks that she was gathering, and bake for him a little cake, for he had had nothing to eat that day; and could she give this last handful of meal, this last drop of oil, to any one else than her boy, to this stranger who was not even of her own nation?

She hesitated; why did she not quite refuse? Could it be that this man, whose face bore no mark of famine, could have a right to take away the little handful which might feed her child for one more day? We have to look very carefully before we see why it was that she did not at once turn away from the strange request. But then we notice that it is said that God had told her to sustain the prophet. How He had spoken to her we do not know, nor even if she knew why she felt obliged to yield to the words of this man; but we see that some mighty influence was at work in her heart, so that instead of at once refusing, she only pleaded a little with the man who had followed her, and stood now by her side. Perhaps he did not know what he was asking, perhaps he never guessed that the barrel of



meal at home was all but empty; if he knew it, surely he would ask some one else for food, and not her, the poor mother of a starving child. She must make him sure that what she said was true. "As the Lord thy God liveth," she began: this great God Whom she did not serve—for was she not a woman of Sidon?—but in Whom she yet, in some dim, doubting, ignorant fashion, did believe as in a living God, for had He not spoken to her, though as yet she knew Him not.

Something there was in this woman's heart which had been a reason why God chose her out for blessing before all the Jewish widows in the towns and villages of Palestine. Perhaps it was her simple trusting nature which God approved—that nature which made her believe the promise given to her by this stranger seer, that if she would share with him her little cake, then the meal and oil which were now in her home should last, and supply her needs even until the end of the long famine. The widow was won by Elijah's voice, or rather by the voice of God within her, and went homewards, carrying the bundle of sticks, there to knead and bake the little cake which must now feed all the three who were gathered around the sudden blaze.

She must have believed the promise which had been made to her, or she would not have obeyed; but still we can think with what fear she went next day to the barrel from which she had taken the meal. Should she indeed find enough meal for another cake? Was the oil-jar empty?

She looked, and found within the barrel quite as much meal as before she filled her hands yesterday, and as she moistened



it with the oil and kneaded it, we know that she must have given thanks in her heart to the unknown God Who was blessing her. Of course we cannot understand just how God wrought this miracle, because we do not know how He does any one of the marvellous things which day by day we see go on around us.

Do you know how it comes to pass that the little hard yellow seed-corn, which men drop into the ground in winter and leave there, will, before next autumn, change into a wonderful golden ear, and by-and-by yield you bread to eat? Elijah was doing now, in the power of God, what God is ever doing, and teaching in another way the lesson which we take so long to learn, that our food is the daily gift of His hand.

How glad the woman must have been that Elijah was willing still to live under her roof. In the one upper room which in Eastern countries is always accounted the best, and the "guest-chamber," she made him a bed, and there the great prophet lived, quietly waiting till a fresh message from God should come to him.

A year had gone by, and still Elijah dwelt under the widow's roof, and still the three dwellers in the cottage lived on the daily-given portion of meal and drops of oil. But though this wonderful grace had been granted to them, yet all was not well within the home, for the little boy, the one treasure of his mother's lonely heart, lay sick upon his bed.

Perhaps the hot rainless summer had made the air poisonous, and the little water that was left unwholesome, and the boy had failed and pined, till now he lay there weaker and more helpless than on the day when, in despair, his

mother had proposed to bake for him the last handful of meal.

Now, though there was still a cake, he could not touch it.

The mother, holding her darling in her arms, saw the fluttering breath grow weaker and weaker, until at length the lips were quite still, the breast did not heave any more, and she knew that the boy was dead. Then the woman burst into a bitter cry, weeping and wailing, as in the East they still mourn for those who die; but the cry now was one of anger against the prophet who stood beside her, and who—so she told herself in the first outburst of her grief—had perhaps slain her son.

She thought now of sins done long ago in her youth, and forgotten. Did Elijah know of these, and was the death of her boy a punishment for them?

She had not, she knew, been a good woman; those sins far back in her youth were there still, though she had chosen not to think about them; she had worshipped idols, she had done deeds which her conscience told her were wrong, she remembered each one of them now.

Elijah was too sorry for her to be angry at her words of reproach. The woman was still holding the dead child in her arms, rocking him to and fro, as if with her tender cherishing she could bring back the departed life.

But she did not resist when the prophet took the motionless form out of her bosom, though he carried him out of her sight into his own upper room, while the mother remained below in her desolate sorrow.

But what could he hope to do that would bring any





"SHE KNEW THAT THE BOY WAS DEAD" (p. 88).



comfort to the mother's heart. He could do nothing, for he was only a man ; he could do everything, for he was a man who knew that God heard prayer.

This great prophet was not perfect ; he had sometimes wrong thoughts ; sometimes he spoke hastily ; he was " a man of like passions with us ;" but he was a righteous man, one who put the thought of God first in all his actions, and believed in God with unshaken faith.

And now, as he laid the child on the bed, and himself lay down beside him, what was it that came into his heart to ask of God ? Nothing less than this, that God would give back to the dead form the soul which He had called away.

It was a wonderful prayer, for as yet, so far as we know, never had any word been spoken, any deed done, which had brought back one life from the dead. But we know that it was God who put the prayer into the heart of His servant, and gave him faith to believe that this mighty work could be wrought.

Close against his own anxious, longing heart Elijah held the one which had ceased to beat, and three times he cried aloud with a passionate and fervent cry, " O Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again !"

How wonderful it must have been to feel the stir of new life in the heart, the breath coming and going over the parted lips, just before so white and still ! Elijah knew that his prayer had been heard, and that the soul of the child had come into him again. Thus we see that it was the prayer of another that saved the child. When Ishmael



was dying he cried to God and God heard him, but here we learn a deeper lesson of Christian childhood—the life which God gives in answer to the prayers of others. Long before a child is old enough to know for himself what he needs or how to ask for it other prayers have been offered for him—prayers beside his cradle, prayers for him as he himself says his childish prayer at his mother's knee. God desires to give us everything, and He puts it into the hearts of those who love us to ask Him to bless us; and thus it was that the child, who most likely had never been taught to pray to God, was saved from death by the prayer of another.

Wrapped closely in his arms Elijah carried the living boy down to where his mother still sat in quite hopeless grief. She did not even look up as he came in; who could bring her any comfort now? what was the use of listening any longer for that little voice and pattering step she should never hear again? And it was not his voice or his step that she heard, but suddenly the clasp of living arms was round her neck, and the prophet spoke—"See, thy son liveth!"

We do not know what the after life of this widow's son was. No doubt Elijah would bid him stay and be a comfort to his mother so long as she lived; but there is amongst the Jews a legend or story that he became in after years the servant and follower of the prophet who had brought him back to life, and that later on still he himself became a prophet of God, and was called Jonah, the very Jonah of whom we read in the Bible.

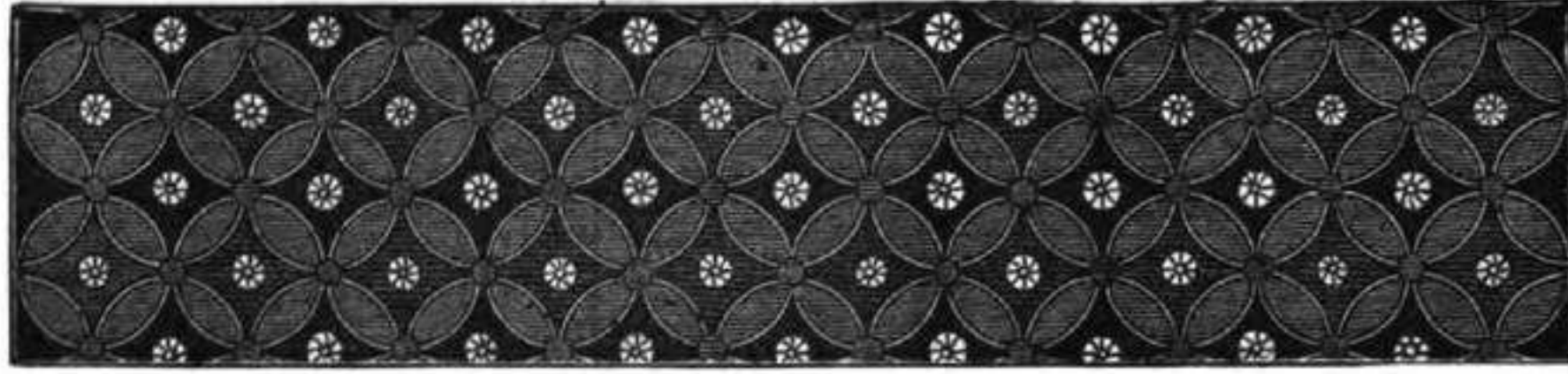
But we have no means of knowing whether or not this legend tells us truth, for there is no word of this in the Bible

itself. Only of one thing are we sure, that the child's mother, when she held her living son safe in her arms, believed, not only in Elijah, but in Elijah's God, and called Him "The Lord"—Jehovah, not as she has said before, "Thy God."

Thus we may be sure that henceforth the boy would be taught to trust, to pray to, and to follow that God Who had put it into the heart of His prophet to pray that the life of the little child might be restored to him again.







## THE HARVEST FIELD.

“ Fair waved the golden corn  
In Canaan’s pleasant land,  
When, full of joy, some shining morn  
Went forth the reaper band.”

It was the morning of a burning summer day. Though it was yet early, the sun’s rays fell with steady fierce heat upon the harvest fields of Palestine, turning to ruddy gold the plentiful crops, which were now to fall before the sickle. Everywhere you could see troops of reapers going forth to the different cornfields—young men whose task it was to cut the corn—and maidens who followed that they might gather and bind the sheaves—almost as you may have so often seen it in our own western lands.

But the keen dark faces of the men, and the bright-coloured Eastern dresses of the girls, were not at all like our own, and the manners of the people, too, were very different. Each company when they met another, greeted it with the words, “The Lord be with you;” and always the answer came back, “The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord.”

But not reapers only were in the fields that morning, for each owner of land or chief of a village was sure to be

there also, going backwards and forwards amongst the workers, speaking kindly and encouragingly to them, seeing that all was done according to law—that some corn was left standing at the corners of the fields for the poor, and that the scattered ears were allowed to remain for the gleaners, who “gathered after the reapers among the sheaves.”

The finest cornfields in Palestine are those which cover the large central plain called the Plain of Esdraelon, and throughout all these fields harvest was going on. In their midst, not many miles from where the foot of Mount Carmel dips into the Mediterranean, was built a village called Shunem, walled round, though it was only a small place, to defend it from the Syrian soldiers, who sometimes came out in troops from their distant borders, burning the homesteads, and carrying away the people to be their slaves. And walls were needed, too, as a protection from wild beasts, which in winter often came down from the hills and thickets into the plains.

The chief man of this village of Shunem was himself this morning in the harvest field with his reapers, and close beside him ran his little boy, eagerly watching the busy workers amongst his father's sheaves. He was the head man's only child, and very precious both to his father and his mother. Perhaps he was even dearer than children usually are, because he had been given them as a special token of the favour of God, in answer to the prayer of Elisha the prophet. But though generally they watched him constantly, yet this morning his father was so busy that



it was not till the little boy spoke to him in a tone quite unlike his usual merry voice that he noticed anything to be amiss with the child. "My head! my head!" said the child, and hung heavily on his father's hand.

The busy father could not leave the field just as work was at its height, and all looking to him for direction, but he beckoned at once to one of the reapers, a young lad, who was near, and said to him, "Carry him to his mother."

There, in the cool shaded room, in his mother's tender, watchful care the child would be safe; so the father sent away the fear which had begun to enter his mind, and when he had watched the child safely out of the field, he turned again to his busy work of directing the reapers. The boy was in his mother's arms, he sat on her knees, leaning that heavy head against her breast, but yet he was not safe. His mother loved him so dearly that she would have given her life for his, and yet she could not keep him with her. The eyes grew more and more heavy, and the little face more white; he did not know his mother's voice when she spoke to him, did not lift his eyelids when she called him by his name. Soon there was no breath to be felt on her cheek, and the arm that was round her neck had no power—her little child was dead.

The mother did not cry out, she did not call any one of her maidens—perhaps they were all in the field; but quite silently, with white calm face, she carried the little burden in her arms softly up-stairs. It was a tiny room into which she bore the still warm form of the dead child. It was quite high up in the house, away from the rooms





“CARRY HIM TO HIS MOTHER” (p. 96).



in general use, and in it was only one narrow bed, a table, a wooden stool, and a lamp.

Amongst the servants of the house this room was known by the name of Elisha's chamber, or the prophet's chamber; for it had been built on purpose for him, so that whenever, in his frequent journeys across the plain, he passed by Shunem, he might have a place which he should feel to be his own. It was always kept ready for his coming, and though now it was long since he had used it, the little bed was prepared as if he had been expected that very day. On the bed she laid the child; it seemed almost a sacred place—there, where the holy prophet of God had so often prayed and watched, it was surely well to leave the little child.

Softly closing the door, the mother passed alone down the stairs and into the sunshine without. There were no tears in her eyes; any one who met her would have said that she looked as she always did, and would not have guessed how full her heart was of sorrow and hope and longing. It was necessary that she should go at once to her husband, for all the servants were in the field, and there was no one to run to him with a message.

But she did not mean yet to tell him that the child was dead, and therefore she did not trust herself to go near him, lest, with all her care, he who knew her best should read something of her grief in her face. So it was from a distance that she called to him, asking him to spare her an ass and a driver, that she might go to Mount Carmel, where she knew that Elisha the prophet then was.

The father did not even ask about the child; no doubt



he concluded that if his mother could leave him to go to Mount Carmel, the boy must be well again; he only wondered what his wife's errand to the prophet could be, at a time when no solemn sacrifice was to be held, and when every one was so busy amongst the sheaves. It was not easy to spare a driver, nor even to give up one of the asses, which were carrying the sheaves to the threshing-floor. But when the head man understood from his wife's words that she was really anxious to go, he gave the order at once, and she was soon on her way towards Carmel, seated on the ass, which by her orders the servant drove at its very fastest pace.

Onward they went, still amidst ripe cornfields or golden sheaves, and everywhere round her the sad mother could hear, though perhaps she hardly noticed, the bright laugh or gay songs of the reapers—onward till they could see the rocky dells and dense shrubberies which clothe the foot of beautiful "Carmel by the sea," and could almost hear the wash of the blue Mediterranean at its foot.

Here they passed through thickets of oaks, here were dells bright with hollyhocks and jasmine; but the eyes of the mother were not fixed on these, but on a dark spot high upon the mountain-side, the mouth of the cave where she hoped to find Elisha.

The prophet had a house in Samaria, but he sometimes left it, and, with his attendant Gehazi, would take up his abode for the time in the solitude of Carmel; and he was there now, seated on the mountain-side in such a position that, as he looked across the plain, he could see the ass



with its rider, and the servant who ran beside it. Even at a distance he knew who it was that was coming, yet he could not tell why she was seeking him. For God's prophets, even the greatest of them, can only know anything or do anything by the power and teaching of God. If He did not send light then they could not see across the darkness, and God had not willed to reveal to Elisha what had just happened at Shunem. Yet there was something in the woman's hurried riding, or perhaps in the unusual time of her coming, which made Elisha fear at once that trouble had fallen on her, and in his kindness he bade Gehazi run down the mountain-side to meet her, that the story of her sorrow might be more quickly told.

Gehazi was very swift of foot; he was soon beside the ass, greeting its rider with the words, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?"

She bowed her head, saying softly, "Peace."

Her grief was too sacred and too deep to be told to this man, whom it is quite evident that for some reason she distrusted. But the word may have had yet a deeper meaning—it may have told how, deep in her sorrowful heart, faith remained stronger than fear or grief. She did not know in what way Elisha might be able to help her; she could not tell what the will of God for the child might be; but one thing she knew, and to that she held fast, that all which God does is well.

Pushing on past Gehazi, she made her way up the hillside towards Elisha. She had dismounted from her ass, and now

she threw herself on the ground with her arms about the feet of the prophet; but still she never spoke. Gehazi was angry, and put out his hand to push her aside, but the prophet stopped him by a word.

Elisha was looking down upon the poor woman with pitying eyes; he saw plainly how heavy her heart was, but till she spoke he did not know the cause of her trouble. And then she told him, told him in broken words which reminded him how years before he himself had asked from God this gift of a child for her; and now it seemed almost as if he had asked a sorrow instead of a joy.

Elisha turned at once to Gehazi, and bade him run at his swiftest pace towards Shunem, carrying with him the prophet's staff. When he reached the chamber he was to lay the staff on the child's face.

The mother heard the direction given, she saw the messenger arrange his dress so that he could run swiftly, and set out, staff in hand, down the mountain-side. But she did not mount her ass to hasten after him; her hopes were not in Gehazi, but in Elisha, the prophet of God.

At her most earnest entreaty Elisha consented to go with her; and together they returned by the way which she had come. Their progress was much slower than that of the swift-footed Gehazi, who, long before his master reached Shunem, might have been seen returning towards them along the road by which he had gone.

As he came near enough for speech he cried out, "The child is not awaked."

It seems, as we read the account, as if Gehazi had done his



errand in great haste, without any expectation of result, and hurried back with the news of his failure directly he saw that the touch of the prophet's staff had not brought back life to the child.

Perhaps Gehazi thought it useless that the prophet should try where he had failed; but the mother still drew Elisha forward, until they reached the silent house. The prophet well knew the way to that little upper room, where the child lay now. As soon as he entered he saw that the boy was dead, and his heart ached for the poor mother.

But he would not let her come into the chamber with him; he must wait till he knew what it would please God to do. Not as when Jesus our Lord raised the daughter of the ruler; He took with Him the father and the mother of the damsel, for He knew what He intended to do for the child, and all power was His to accomplish His will.

But Elisha, alone by the bed in the closed room, prayed to God. And then he laid himself beside the dead boy, and held the cold, stiff form fast in his arms, and at last he felt the dead coldness give place to a warmth which told that life was coming back. Again the prophet gathered the child into his arms, and we can think with what unspeakable delight he must at last have seen the close-shut eyes open, and the little face that he knew so well light up into a smile.

Then he gave the child to his mother, and she carried him living from the room to which she had borne him dead.



## THE LITTLE MAID.

“ A captive now, and sold and bought,  
In the proud Syrian’s hall she waits,  
Forgotten, such her moody thought—  
Even as the worm beneath the gates.

“ But One Who ne’er forgets is here—  
He hath a word for thee to speak ;  
Oh, serve Him yet in dutious fear,  
And to thy Gentile lord be meek.

“ So shall the healing Name be known  
By thee, on many a heathen shore,  
And Naaman on his chariot throne  
Wait humbly by Elisha’s door.”

ACROSS all the wide plain of Esdraelon, even into the land of Samaria itself, the Syrian soldiers had made their way. From the sides of snowy Lebanon, from the banks of the great rivers Abana and Pharpar, from the rich city of Damascus itself, little troops of robber-soldiers rode out in all directions over the land of Israel, and plundered and ill-treated the inhabitants.

For long years there had been war between Israel and the powerful neighbour who lay to the north-east—sometimes the Syrian soldiers were even camped round the city of Samaria itself, the capital of Israel ; sometimes the King of Syria was himself a prisoner in the hands of his victorious foe. The little children, as they grew old enough to understand anything of what fear and danger meant, were taught to hate the very name of their enemy ; and we can fancy how the boys of both lands would long to be able to go with their



fathers to the battle, or to do some brave deed, which would deliver their country and their homes from the dread of the invaders. And just now the Syrian king, Hadad, or Benhadad, as he is called, had taken advantage of a war which Israel was carrying on with another enemy, and had been more than usually active in sending out soldiers to distress the land.

So that we know how more and more strong must have grown the hatred between the two peoples, and can fancy with what terror the poor villagers of Samaria must have hurried into their houses, and made fast their doors, or rushed to drive their cattle and their sheep from the open fields, whenever they caught afar off the gleam of a Syrian spear, or heard, from some breathless runners, the tidings that the foes were at hand.

And it was not only cattle and sheep, not only corn and fruit, or gold or silver, that these robber-soldiers would carry off; there was a reason for dreading them much greater than the fear of loss of wealth. The women of Israel, as they gathered their children round them, shuddered to think that some as young as they had been already carried off, to be slaves to their captors in another land. Perhaps their own little ones might be seized next; and we can fancy how every mother would be afraid to let her children wander in the forests, or play outside the shelter of the village, for fear these fierce soldiers should suddenly ride up and seize them.

Somewhere in one of the villages of Samaria was living, at the time when Jehoram was King of Israel, a little girl. She was old enough to be very useful at home; and we cannot



help thinking that she was full of loving thoughtfulness, and had pleasant helpful ways, which would make her more than usually dear to her father and mother and all to whom she belonged. We do not know whether the Syrian soldiers burnt her cottage home, or whether they overpowered her as she went out alone to draw water; but so it was that some of these fierce freebooters took her prisoner, and carried her with them into their country. They would be sure to be mounted on very fleet horses, and most likely would want to retreat quickly with their spoil into their own land; and so the little maid, who would not be able to run at her captor's stirrup, as prisoners generally had to do, would perhaps be carried before some fierce soldier on his bright saddle-cloth, too terrified and heartbroken to notice, as they passed beyond all the places that she had ever seen, and came in sight of glittering Hermon, and the blue waters of the sea of Galilee.

Splashing through the fords of the Jordan, across the dry desert land beyond, the soldiers still went on; and now they had reached some height above the plain, from which, if the poor child's eyes were not too much blinded with tears, she must have seen, with sudden wonder, the beautiful city of Damascus lying before her.

It was thither she was being carried—to that city of which she had often heard, perhaps the oldest city in the world. But the little girl loved her own land so dearly, that we feel sure that, however beautiful seemed the white marble palaces, amongst the fringing palm-trees; however strange and old the great dim towers and mighty walls of Damascus, yet she



thought Samaria a far more pleasant place in which to live. And what wonder, for in Damascus she was to be a slave.

Most of the Israelites had at this time forgotten God, and did not keep His holy laws; this was the reason why they found the Syrians so strong, and why they were not able to drive them out of the land. But God had not forgotten any one of His people, and He remembered this poor captive child. She was bought by one of the greatest ladies of the country, to be her own little maid.

The little country girl, unused to riches, coming most likely out of a poor stone cottage, whose rude furniture consisted of only a few stools and rough earthenware bowls for food and water, now found herself living amongst all kinds of luxuries and beautiful things, in the "city of praise and joy."

It would not have seemed unnatural in a girl cruelly carried from her home, and made a slave amongst strangers and enemies, that she should have hated every one round her—her master, for he was a great captain, and fought against her land; her mistress, for she had bought her as a slave; and even her fellow-slaves, and the whole household, because they belonged to that people whom we know she must, from her very earliest years, have learnt to dread.

Now, in the story, as it is told us in the Bible, nothing at all is said of how the poor lonely child felt, as she moved about in the strange wide palace. But though we do not learn how she felt, we are told what she did, and as we look at the very few words which are written about her, a great deal more comes clearly out before us, as is always the case



with the wonderful words of the Bible. For this is plain, that if at first she did feel any hatred in her heart, she never let it pass into her words or deeds; and when, with the help of God, we keep an ill thought from taking shape and becoming an ill action, then we have done a great deal towards turning it out of our hearts. Perhaps even if at first the sight of the riches and luxury in which the Syrian nobles lived made her the more disposed to hate her new masters, yet before she had been long in the palace where she waited on the wife of Naaman she learnt something which changed her anger into pity. That great captain, her master, the general whom the king had put at the head of his army, the man who had fought against Israel and conquered—he was a leper.

In her own land of Israel lepers were shut out from the homes even of their nearest friends, and had to live quite apart from all others; but in Syria was no such law; and with this terrible disease eating into his flesh, Naaman still wore his soldier's dress, rode in his gaily-painted chariot, and walked nearest to the king, when he went to worship in the house of his idol. But his life was not only full of pain and present misery, he had also before him the prospect of increasing suffering and disfigurement, which could only end with his death.

Perhaps the fatal marks were not yet in his face, perhaps it could not be seen at a glance that he was a leper; but such a secret would be sure, little by little, to be whispered through the household, and at last it reached even the ears of the slave-girl from Israel.





"SHE WAITED ON THE WIFE OF NAAMAN" (p. 108).



This was the man who, more than any other, had done harm to her country, but yet she was not glad to hear what had befallen him. She knew that he was a kind master to the servants who waited on him, so that they all loved him, and were as anxious for his cure as if they themselves had the disease. He was proud and passionate, but there was something in his character, heathen though he was, which not only made his slaves love him, but pleased the God who had made him.

It would seem that God saw how even in his ignorance this Syrian soldier was seeking after goodness, so that he was nearer to the God of Israel than the many lepers in Samaria who knew Him, and yet never obeyed His voice. And thus, as he had tried to take the one step which he could see, God would lead him further; and this little maid was chosen to be the means.

*Now* we see that it was not because God had forgotten her that He allowed her to be carried away from her home; it was because He wanted her in Naaman's house. The little maid was very unhappy at the thought of her master's trouble; to be a leper was, in her eyes, the worst grief that could befall any one; but instead of wondering why all the doctors in rich Syria could not help him, her faithful thoughts went back at once to her own dear land, and she remembered the great prophet Elisha who lived there. He had done so many wonderful deeds—he had even raised a little boy who was dead—there was nothing, she thought, that he could not do, for God was with him: surely he could cure her master.



True, he had never yet attempted the cleansing of a leper, but everything was in the power of God, and Elisha was His prophet and servant. The thought was so much in her mind, that she could not help speaking about it to her mistress.

“Oh, if only my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.”

Her words were overheard, and passed from one to another, until one of the servants, most likely a soldier who waited on Naaman, went to his lord, and told him what the little maid had said.

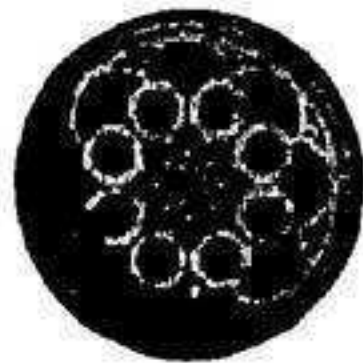
And that one unselfish loving word it was which the little maid had been sent there to speak. Such a little thing to do! and yet, through it, Naaman, the mighty soldier and noble, was sent to the prophet, who healed him, in the name of God, of his grievous disease. And through it much more than this was done, for the man who, knowing nothing of God, had yet tried to do what he felt to be right, was taught of the one true God, and learnt to believe in Him and serve Him, and made a solemn promise that henceforth he would offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord.

Such a little thing to do! Well, perhaps so, but it must have cost much. First, it cost forgiveness of injuries. The poor child who had been carried by force from her home had to learn to love and care for those who had wronged her, so that she could feel sorry for their griefs, and wish, if she could, to help them. This was no easy lesson, and she could not have learnt it except by the grace of God.

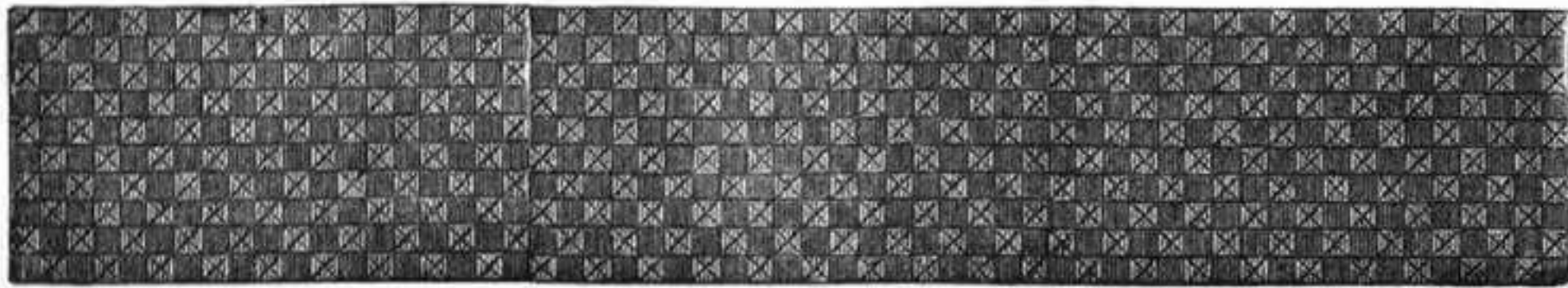
Then it was an unselfish thought. When a trouble falls on any one, even on a child, that child often forgets to think at all about others. His own pain makes him selfish; he thinks no one else has any right to complain, for no one else has so much to bear. The little maid forgot her own trouble, her own lonely life, her longings for her dear home, in pity for her poor master, and the dear memories of Samaria came back to her, to suggest in what way she could comfort or help the sick man.

And then she showed how she had remembered God. Here, amongst the idol-worship of Syria, she did not forget to pray to the God of her fathers, for if she had not prayed, could she have had faith to believe that God's prophet could heal the leper?

We do not know whether, when Naaman returned home clean from his disease, he remembered the little maid of the land of Israel. Perhaps she never went back to Samaria, and lived all her life a servant amongst strangers. We hear no more of her after she had spoken this one word to her mistress. But we are sure that God took care of her; and if her life was what He meant it to be, then it would not matter at all whether it were what we should call a fortunate or happy one, for it would be full of the best sort of gladness — "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."







## THE LITTLE PRINCE.

“Such was his dawn, but oh! how grieve  
Good angels o’er his noon and eve!  
He that with oil of joy began,  
In sackcloth ends, a fallen man.  
Then wherefore trust youth’s eager thought?  
Wait till thine arm all day hath wrought;  
Wait humbly till thy matin psalm  
Due cadence find in evening calm.”

THERE was a great cry in Jerusalem. Tidings had reached the city that Ahaziah, their king, was slain. He had not been a good king, but still he was of the house of David, whose memory the people loved; and none knew who would fill the throne now that he was gone; for his sons were young, and his mother, Athaliah, was regent of the kingdom. That means, you know, that when Ahaziah went to the war from which he never came back he had left his mother to govern for him, and to be ruler over the people so long as the king was away.

Every one in Judah who was faithful to God dreaded the rule of Athaliah, for she was a wicked woman like her mother Jezebel. She worshipped the false god Baal; and now that the idol temples which had been built in Israel were all pulled down, and their priests killed or scattered, Athaliah wished to make the people of Judah take Baal for their god—wished

to build altars to him even in the holy city Jerusalem, and gather his priests where none but the servants of the Most High God should ever come.

Athaliah was not only wicked, she was also very strong, fearless, and determined; no one in Judah was found able to resist her and the soldiers who did her bidding. They made themselves masters of the palace and of the city, and Athaliah was called the Queen of Judah. The first thing that she wished to do was to put to death all her grandsons, the children of Ahaziah, for she was afraid that when they grew to be men they would take the kingdom from her.

The boys were alone in the palace, and quite defenceless. Only one friend, a poor woman, seems to have lingered near or with them, and she could not do anything to save them. She was nurse to Joash, the youngest of the boys, an infant of scarcely a year old, and we might almost think, from the words of the story as it is written in the Bible, that when she heard the tread of the soldiers she hid herself.

There seemed no help for the poor boys. The cruel deed which Athaliah wished to do was quite easy to be done. Perhaps she smiled to herself as she thought how plain it was that Baal, the idol whom she worshipped, was stronger than the God of Israel. Or perhaps she never even knew that God had said that if the house of David would worship and cleave to Him, then the throne of their kingdom should be established for ever, and that there should never fail David a man to sit on the throne. It hardly seemed possible now that this promise should be fulfilled, for the sons of Ahaziah were all that remained alive of the house of



David, and they were shut up in the palace with the cruel soldiers and the yet more cruel queen.

One by one the poor boys were put to death. Little Joash was not too young to be frightened when his brothers fell around him, and he silently crept close to their dead bodies as they lay, and hid himself beneath them, so that the fierce soldiers did not see him. That is how we speak of it, but what really happened was that God blinded the eyes of Athaliah and of her soldiers, so that the child whom He intended to keep alive was safe, even in the very midst of his enemies.

We are not told how long he lay there, but at least till the soldiers had all gone away, and there was a great silence in the chamber. Then some one entered softly. It was not the nurse, it was his aunt Jehoshabeath, his father's sister, and the wife of Jehoiada the priest. God caused her to see what He had hidden from the curious eyes of the soldiers. There, amidst her dead nephews, lay the little living child; she took him up very quietly and softly in her arms, and no one knew, as she stole out again, that she had carried away in safety one son of the house of David.

Her first thought was to hide him. Most likely his nurse was close at hand, perhaps now that the soldiers were gone she had stolen out of her hiding-place; certainly she was quickly found, and took the little one in her arms.

Jehoshabeath led them to one of the upper chambers of the palace, where it was not at all likely that Athaliah or her soldiers would come. It was a room filled with mattresses, most likely a sort of store-room in which all that were not



in use were kept; and hidden amongst these mattresses Joash and his nurse spent perhaps several days, while the soldiers filled the palace below with noise and revelry.

We can think how frightened the poor woman must have been as she crouched there, trying to make little Joash understand that he must not cry, lest he should draw on them the notice of the soldiers. Before very long, however, when Athaliah had begun to feel secure, and the watch had perhaps grown careless, the nurse and Joash were taken safely out of the palace, and lodged in those chambers round the Temple in which Jehoiada and his family lived. So that Joash was brought up almost as little Samuel had been, though the Temple in which he lived was twice as large as the Tabernacle at Shiloh in which Eli served, and far richer in gold and jewels, and carved work, in scented cedar, and in hangings of costly purple dye.

But the boy, as he grew old enough to understand, must have seen a great deal done in God's house which would make even a child who loved God very sad.

Athaliah led the nation to worship Baal; altars to her idol were set up even on the very roof of the Temple, and all about the place, holy with the presence of God, people were busied in worshipping and sacrificing to the evil and false thing which they had made for themselves to bow down before. Joash would see the court, with Athaliah at their head, coming from day to day to the house of Baal, which she had built either close to the Temple, or even within its sacred walls. He would see the wild-looking figure of Mattan, the savage high priest, as he sacrificed on the altar of that idol temple, and



cried aloud, with fierce wild gestures, on the Baal who had no ears to hear, no hand to help.

All this the little prince must have seen, and even sadder things; for while the house of the idol was growing day by day in beauty and in wealth, more and more the Jews forsook God's altar, and the holy Temple was falling into ruin. Wicked men even carried away the bricks from its walls to set them in the house of Baal, and took the holy and dedicated vessels for the service of an idol.

We can tell from the acts of Joash when he grew to be a man that this sad sight grieved his childish heart very deeply; and that he even then longed to win back all that had been taken from God, and give it again to His house.

And if even a little child felt thus, we may be sure that the good priest Jehoiada was often sick of heart, as he served in the desolate Temple; but he looked at little Joash and his hope revived. That one living son of David was a sign to him that God remembered His promise to the house of David, and he used to repeat hopefully to himself, as he looked at the fair little face, "Behold, the king's son shall reign."

Years went on; the people began to weary more and more of the wicked Athaliah. Here and there men were to be found returning to the worship of the true God, and the good priest thought that the time was come to tell the secret of the hidden prince. One day he contrived to send a message to the five officers who commanded the royal guard. He told them that he had with him in the Temple a prince of the house of David, and he bade them take counsel and



determine how he should be restored to his father's throne, and with him the worship of the true God.

The five captains, as soon as they heard this good news, caused messages to be sent through all Judah to every Levite who lived among its hills; and these Levites, with all the wisest old men of the nation, gathered to Jerusalem, and came secretly to the Temple. Athaliah did not take any notice of this gathering; either it was so secret that she did not hear of it, or else perhaps she said mockingly to herself that it was only a few priests and weak old men going up to worship their God; and she thought of the great house of Baal, and laughed in her heart at these feeble Jews.

But inside the Temple a strange scene was going on. When Jehoiada had looked round on the captains and chief men who had come to him, and had made himself sure that none were there who were likely to be spies of the wicked queen, then he led out little Joash into their midst.

The boy was just seven years old. Most likely he had never, in all the life which he could remember, been outside the Temple walls; had seen nothing but the coming and going of priests and Levites, or of the worshippers at God's altar, or of the followers of Baal; had heard only the songs of the sons of Asaph, or the more distant cries of the savage soldiers. But now he looked on a very different sight. Here were tall and noble captains bearing shields and spears; here were elders, in rich robes, whose white beards hung below their girdles; here were all the chief men of the nation; and every one was looking at *him*, every one was thinking of *him*; and when



Jehoiada, still holding his little trembling hand, said, in a solemn voice, "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David," then we may believe that these great chieftains bowed low before the little prince, honouring God's word in him.

Jehoiada of course took the command, both because he was the high priest, and also as uncle and guardian to the prince. He told the captains what they must do, and every one promised to obey and to be true. He chose the Sabbath as the best time for what they had to do, because on that day the Levites who had been on guard at the Temple, serving and keeping the doors for one week, always went out of office, and others came in to take their place. Therefore, on the Sabbath twice as many Levites as usual could be present without any notice or suspicion being excited.

The day came. The holy place was full of priests and Levites, while outside a great crowd of soldiers and of the people of Jerusalem filled the place and guarded every door. But only a very few wore arms, and Jehoiada knew that the soldiers of Athaliah would soon trample down the whole multitude, if they had no weapons with which to fight. Therefore he went, and the five captains went with him, to a place within the Temple, where long ago King David had hung up the spears and shields that he had taken in fight. They had not perhaps been used since his day, for they were counted sacred; but the priest was not afraid to take them to be used in the service of God, just as in old times David himself had been armed with the sword of Goliath from the Sanctuary.





"SET THE CROWN ON THE CHILD'S HEAD" (p. 123).



When the captains had armed all the Levites with these weapons, they were posted round the place where the king was to stand, with orders not to allow any one to enter the Temple armed; thus the soldiers of Athaliah would be kept without. All was ready, and every eye was fixed on the platform near the great brazen pillar, where the prince would soon be seen. Then a low murmur stirred through the courts; Jehoiada was coming out, and with him the chief men of Judah.

Amongst them all walked Joash, the king's son, dressed in royal robes, and looking brave and fair and princely, as he stood at last alone above the people. Jehoiada held a crown in his hand. It was not the glorious golden one which had been set of old on the heads of David and of Solomon—very likely Athaliah had stolen that when she stole the throne; but this lighter diadem gleamed with bright jewels, and given thus by the priest was the sign of kingship. It was Jehoiada who set the crown on the child's head, just as now it is the chief bishop of our Church who sets the English crown on the head of our monarch, as a sign that kings reign, not by their own will, but by the grace of God.

It was as another sign of this that the holy oil was poured upon his head. You remember that when David was chosen to be king, Samuel anointed him, for this was the appointed token of the divine choice: "With My holy oil have I anointed thee." By the Jewish law, kings, prophets, and priests were all thus set apart for their office, because each one was a type and a shadow of Him Who is called the Christ, the Anointed One, the King by Whom all others reign. And that this might be made more clear, the next thing done was to place



in the hand or on the shoulder of the king a copy of the Testimony, the Law of God, by obeying which himself he might truly reign, and be king of God's people. Little Joash was too young yet to have copied it out for himself, as all kings were bidden to do, but no doubt his uncle had taught him to know and love its sacred words. And now Joash was really king. At a sign from the priest all the people clapped their hands, and shouted aloud, "God save the king!" "Long live the king."

The shout was caught up by Levite and soldier, and by the crowds outside the Temple, who all pressed on towards the doors. Every one wanted to see Joash, and those who were near enough to do so turned to the others behind, and said how fair and royal he looked; perhaps they thought he was like little David, with his ruddy cheeks; he was David's son, their king, and every one was praising him.

No doubt he felt very happy as he stood there; for we may be sure he had been taught to look forward to the time when he should indeed wear the crown of his father; and knew that it might be a very blessed and wonderful thing to be King of Judah, and leader of God's people. He would not be afraid, for Jehoiada was beside him, and around were the friendly faces and bright weapons of the priests, while from every side he would hear only words of praise and of kindness.

But there would be a better reason than all these for not fearing: Joash—little child as he was—would be sure at that high moment to have felt that he was safe under the very Wings of God, Who had chosen him for His own.



If it had not been for his certainty of safety, perhaps Joash would have felt afraid now, for presently, through all the crowd of shouting people, his cruel grandmother, the Queen Athaliah, rushed into the Temple. She was quite alone—if any soldiers had followed her they had been stopped at the gates, but she, a woman and with no weapons, might be allowed to pass—and she pressed on, in great wonder as to what the crowd and shouting meant. Now she understood it all. There stood Joash. Even if she did not trace the likeness to her own son, his father; even if his face did not reproach her with the eyes of his brothers, dead long since by her crime on the floor of the palace at Jerusalem, yet she knew the king by his robe, by his royal crown, by the bright hair yet shining with sacred oil, by the Holy Testimony which he still bore. Athaliah seemed to feel in a moment that the kingdom was gone from her; she rent her clothes as a sign of grief and amazement, and cried aloud—

“A conspiracy! A conspiracy!”

She knew that if her guards heard that cry they would understand directly that she was in danger, and she thought they would come to her. But she cried in vain; every one had forsaken her, and she stood alone, in the midst of the crowding thousands around the little king.

Some of the bright swords which the Levites held were raised, perhaps in another moment she would have lain dead, as her grandsons lay when the soldiers smote them; but Jehoiada spoke aloud, “Slay her not in the house of the Lord.”



Then silently the Levites laid hands on her ; on each side they went, and led her out through all the silent ranks of armed men—through all the gathering crowd they led her, until, by the gate of the palace which she had stained with blood, she herself was put to death.

Afterwards Jehoiada made both the little king and all the people solemnly promise that they would faithfully serve the God of Israel. They threw down the evil temple of Baal, and broke in pieces his altars and his images, and slew Mattan there, amidst the shattered stones of the defiled altar.

And now Judah came back for a time to obedience to God ; once more the priests in their white robes were busied with offerings brought by willing hands to the Temple ; once more the sweet singers answered each other in hymns of praise, and solemn worship bound the nation to its God.

It was a bright, sweet beginning for the reign of the boy king, and happy would it indeed have been if his after life had fulfilled its promise. For long years all went on well. As Joash grew into manhood his first care was to insist on the repair of the still dismantled Temple, just as he might have dreamed of doing when, as a little child, he saw it wasted by Athaliah.

As long as Jehoiada lived he had the comfort of seeing the prince whom he had trained and loved, and whom he had given to Judah, living a good and God-fearing life, and ruling his people well.

But after his uncle's death Joash began to change. He allowed evil men to come into his court, and when they flattered him he was pleased, and listened to their words.



Little by little they persuaded him to leave the service of God; and when, by neglecting those daily prayers which bound his life to God's life, he was growing careless and weak, then they tempted him to come with them into the groves and to the altars of idols, and there to give the worship which he had withheld from the God of heaven and earth.

Jehoiada's son Zechariah, the cousin and old companion of Joash, was priest now in his father's room; and he was brave enough to rebuke the king and all the people who followed him to do evil. But Joash would not listen; indeed, even to hear the words which reproved his sin made him so angry that he ordered the priest, the son of the man who had saved him and made him king, to be cruelly stoned to death, "between the altar and the Temple," there where Jehoiada had set the crown on his boyish head.

It makes us very sad to read this, but it is set down in God's book that we may learn from it; and this is one of the lessons which it is to teach us—never to make sure of ourselves; never to trust our own wishes to be good, nor our own power to keep the grace which has already been given to us.

For Joash was a son of David's line, yet when he began to forget prayer in God's house, and obedience to God's law, he fell into sin so terrible, that none who saw the bright-faced boy, anointed with the holy oil and bearing God's law, dreamed that it could ever be thus with him.

But Joash forsook his God.



## THE CHILD KING.

“Whate’er Thy purpose be, O Lord,  
In things or great or small,  
Let each minutest part be done  
That Thou may’st still be all.

“In all the little things of life  
Thyself, Lord, may I see,  
In little and in great alike  
Reveal Thy love to me.

“So shall my undivided life  
To Thee, my God, be given;  
And all this earthly course below  
Be one dear path to heaven.”

THE children of Israel had turned away more and more from God. Even in Judah, even in the holy city of Jerusalem, idols were set up, and the people worshipped them and forsook God. They quite forgot the Law of God; it would seem that there was not one single copy of the Law known to exist; no one could remember to have heard it read; no one knew what it was that God commanded them to do. But though they had not the Law, they knew very well that the kind of lives which they were leading were wrong and wicked; there was a law written in their hearts that told them so. They knew that it was not right to forsake the worship of God in His Temple, and never to come to the solemn feasts, even



though the knowledge of what these feasts were had almost died out in the nation. They knew that they ought to keep the sabbaths holy, and yet they despised them. They were cruel to the poor and weak, they were untruthful in their words, and false and deceitful in their deeds. And this evil life had its beginning and root in this—that they had forsaken God, and worshipped idols instead of God.

You will see for yourselves that such a state of things as this was not likely to have come in one year, in two, or even in ten or twenty. It was nearly three hundred years since Jeroboam, the King of Israel, had led away ten of the tribes to worship idols; and for these three centuries the other two tribes of Judah and Benjamin had been learning the evil lesson, and more and more forsaking God.

But even in the days of Jeroboam God had sent a message by one of His prophets that the time should surely come when the evil altars should be overthrown and those who served before them destroyed. The prophet of God said that this would be done by a young king of the house of David, a child who should be called Josiah.

The years went on until, at last, the time was come.

One day there was great confusion in the palace at Jerusalem; bands of armed men held every door, and a cry went out through the city that the servants of Amon the king had murdered their master. He was quite a young man, and had reigned only two years, and though those two years had not been good ones for the people over whom he ruled, and though he had done evil in the sight of God, yet the dwellers in Judah were sorry for him, and indignant with



the servants who had conspired against him. Crowds quickly gathered in the public places, and men armed themselves and collected into bands, until at last there was an attack made on the palace and on the wicked servants within, and they in their turn were slain for the murder which they had committed.

One of the reasons why the people were so indignant at the slaughter of Amon was that he left no son old enough really to govern them in these dangerous times. Josiah, his eldest boy, was but eight years of age, and could not keep watch on their foes, or lead them when they went forth to battle.

Even so lately as the time of Amon's father the Assyrians had swept over the whole land, had taken Jerusalem, and led away the king a prisoner. The Egyptians too were their enemies; and now that Judah was weak and its people few, all the tribes and kingdoms round about were ready to devour them. Therefore, we may be sure that the people did not like the idea of having a child for their king.

The memory of the prophecy of Josiah as the young monarch who should undo the evil wrought by his fathers had almost died out; if there had been any one then to remember and to repeat it, it might have brought comfort to such as were fearful. However, though Josiah was so young, it was decided that he was to be crowned, and the holy oil was poured upon his head, and the captains and officers did him homage.

You remember that when we read about the crowning of little Joash, we found that a copy of the Law of God was given to him; but when Josiah was made king no Testimony was



brought forward, and it would seem as if even the memory of such a custom had quite died out.

The little king did not know what had been omitted, for it would seem that he had never even heard of such a book as the Book of the Law. But though he was very ignorant and very young, yet he set his heart to do those things which he did know. To try to do what we know to be right is the way to keep our conscience tender, and ready to learn and understand more of God's will. And so it was with the little king.

The years went on till he was sixteen, and able, according to the usages of the time, to take upon himself the real kingly authority. Now, if he had wasted the eight years since the crown had been set on his head, if he had thought only of pleasure, and not of duty, if he had not striven to remember God in all his ways, then he would not have known how to rule, as a king that honoured and obeyed the King of kings.

One thing was clear to him, though he knew so little, and that was that it must be right to take away the idols out of the land, repair the Temple of God, and restore His pure worship. And when he set himself to do this, which he knew to be right, God showed him more of His will; for it was in repairing and restoring the Temple that at last the Book of the Law was found.

By this time King Josiah had grown into manhood; and the story of how the old roll was found in the Temple and read before the king, and how, after so many years, the ceremony which had been omitted when he was crowned was at last performed, and the king took the Testimony as he stood by the great pillar of the Temple—all this belongs, not to the



story of Josiah's child-life, but to his manhood ; only we see plainly, in every line of the record, that it was because in his childhood his heart was turned to God that his after years were years of obedience and faithfulness.

The name of Josiah the king stands out as one of the brightest in the roll of the monarchs of Judah or of Israel, for he did great things for his country, and was, so long as he lived, its deliverer from the dangers which had gathered so close around it ; and all this full brightness began in the little light which, as a child, was kindled in his heart, and by God's grace kept alive there.

It was a great thing for a child to do ; but what he did every child may, by the grace of God, do also, though it may be in humble and unnoticed ways, which no one will find out to speak of or to praise ; only God will see and know them.

When Josiah had grown to be a young man, God said of him that his heart was tender : that means, you know, that it was ready to take every impression which God would make on it. Now, unless he had been an obedient, dutiful child, his heart would not have remained tender ; but because he set himself to obey God, and to do every little thing which he understood God would have him do, and to be taught and ruled by those who were older and wiser than himself—because he did these things, then he was ready to learn harder lessons when God would teach them to him.

Childhood is the time for obedience ; and simple-hearted obedience to God and to man keeps the heart tender, until the little child grows, as King Josiah did, into a brave, fearless servant of God.





## THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVE.

“ For thee, O dear, dear country,  
Mine eyes their vigils keep;  
For very love, beholding  
Thy happy name, they weep.”

IN one of the painted chambers of the vast palace of the King of Babylon, a number of young boys were gathered together. You could tell by their finely-marked faces and quick dark eyes, as well as by their foreign dress and uncovered hair, that they were of a different race from the Babylonian noble who was walking about amongst them and talking with them. We can imagine *him* dressed, like the Chaldeans of those days whose pictures have been preserved for us in a long fringed and sleeveless robe, wearing a leathern girdle, and having his hair bound in a broad band or fillet.

But the boys still kept the Jewish dress which they were wearing when, a short time before, they had been carried from the homes of their fathers in far-off Jerusalem, and brought as hostages and captives to Babylon. Every one of the youths was either a prince or the son of a noble, but only the best and finest-looking amongst them were counted worthy to be even servants to the great king; and it was in order that these might be chosen out for training, that all the boys had that day been sent for to the palace.

One of the most trusted of the courtiers, a noble named Ashpenaz, had been bidden to make the choice; and he passed up and down the room amongst the boys, looking into their faces, noting their bearing and gestures, questioning them, and at last separating from the rest those whom he preferred.

We do not know how many these were; but we are sure, at least, that amongst them stood one little group of four boys, all of them belonging to the royal tribe of Judah, and their names were, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Most likely they had all been friends at home; they were nearly of the same age—perhaps about thirteen or fourteen years old, for that was the time at which it was usual to begin the special training of such as were to be honoured by being placed near the king's person.

All four were healthy, well-made boys, with fair frank faces; but Daniel had about him a special grace and charm which won the love of those who were with him.

God had given him great gifts; he had been well taught, and his ready mind and quick comprehension made every one think that, in the years to come, he would win for himself a high place in the royal favour. But Ashpenaz and the Babylonian priests who were his teachers did not know what was the hidden power which formed both his face and his life, and made both so pure and lovely. They never thought how, from his far-off home into that heathen city, the captive child had brought with him the knowledge of the true God. No doubt Daniel had already begun the practice which in his old age he refused to change; but



his Chaldean masters did not know how, alone in his chamber, at morning, noon, and night, the exiled boy knelt, with his face towards Jerusalem, and thus prayed and gave thanks before his God. They did not hear when, very likely, he and his three companions sang together, to a plaintive Hebrew melody, the song which their fellow-exiles chanted as they sat by the waters of Babylon—

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning ;  
If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ;  
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

Ashpenaz did not know the meaning of the light in the boy's eyes, or the happy smile on his lips; and perhaps he wondered why *he*, who had trained so many for the king's service, cared for this one as he had never done for any before, and was surprised at the favour and tender love which he felt towards him.

And now all the chosen youths had entered on their three years of training. Their Jewish dresses were taken from them, they were clothed in the white or dyed Babylonian tunics, and their hair was bound in a broad fillet, like that of their masters; they had “coats, and hosen, and hats,” as the dress of that day is described in the Bible. Their very names, too, were changed, to show that now they were servants of the king, and must do his bidding. Daniel was called Belteshazzar, after Bel, the idol of the land, whose vast temple, towering 600 feet above the city, looked down on all the wide gardens and meeting waters of Babylon the Great.



Daniel could not help either the change of name or the foreign dress—we cannot suppose that he liked them, for he continued to call his friends by the names they had borne in Jerusalem; but still he submitted quietly to what his teachers wished. He would do all that he was bidden, so long as it was not against the Law of his God. But he had quite made up his mind that there he would stop; he would not worship idols, nor do them service in any way. This purpose was strong in his heart, and soon the time came to test it.

The custom was that all the boys chosen for training should live in the palace; and that every day dainty meats and rich wines should be sent them from the table of the king himself. Now Daniel had been taught to read and to understand the books of Moses, in which the Law of God was written; and he knew that much of the food sent to them from the royal table was of a kind quite forbidden to a Jew. He knew beside that every dish which was brought to them had first been offered in sacrifice to Bel, and to the other idols of the land, and God had commanded His people never to eat what had been dedicated to an idol.

Daniel did not begin to think how he could escape from obeying this plain command, though, if he had wished to do so, he might easily have made himself think that it was quite impossible for him to keep it. This Law of Moses had been given to a free people; whereas he was not only a captive, but very young, and in the power of teachers many of whom were priests of Bel. He might have said that he could not resist now, but that when he grew to be a man



he would keep the Law ; but a boy who prayed three times a day was not likely to cheat his conscience with such thoughts as these. Prayer not only lightens our eyes to see our duties plain before us, but it brings down God's own sunshine to clear away all mist ; and in this fair light Daniel saw that it was his business simply to keep the Law, and leave all the rest to God.

When he had settled this in his mind, he went to talk the matter over with his three friends. Perhaps they were not quite so brave as he was ; it may be that if he had not spoken to them, and reminded them of what God had said, they would not have dared to resist the king's command. But where Daniel led the way they were quite ready to follow ; and in years to come these three boys grew strong enough to suffer boldly for God, even when Daniel was not by their side. But now they looked to him to settle what they should do ; and Daniel decided that he would speak first, not to Melzar, their own special tutor and master, but to the prince Ashpenaz, both because he had so much more power, and because of the favour he had hitherto shown him.

Ashpenaz listened kindly enough, but he looked troubled as he answered that all the food throughout the palace was offered to Bel, and that, if they refused this, they would have to live on green vegetables brought from the gardens, or on corn before it was bruised or ground. "And even if you are willing to do this," said Ashpenaz, "you will grow pale and thin on such fare, and by-and-by, when the king sends for you, he will notice that you do not look so well as your companions, and he will very likely order my head to be cut off."



Very sadly Daniel went out from the chamber of the prince. Now he might surely have persuaded himself that he had done all he could, but instead of giving way he determined to make another effort, and speak to their tutor Melzar. He told him what Ashpenaz had said, and begged that Melzar would let them live for ten days on vegetables and corn, and drink only pure water, and then, at the end of this set time, see whether they were indeed weaker and less fair than those who ate the king's meat. Daniel's gentle pleading won Melzar to grant their request. It could not have been an easy thing for strong, growing lads thus, day after day, to turn from hot rich meats, and costly wines, and content themselves with such fare as a slave might eat. There was no one to encourage them, for it seems almost certain that their companions would laugh at and tease the poor boys, whose example condemned their own doings. And it was not only a hard task to resist their own wishes for the pleasant food, and perhaps the scorn of their fellows; but it needed strong faith to believe that God would make the pulse so to nourish them, that they should not lose either strength or comeliness.

But courage and faith grow by prayer; and the boys persevered steadily through all the ten days. Then Melzar made all the Jewish youths stand before him, and as he looked at their faces, he saw that the strongest, and healthiest, and fairest among them were Daniel and his three friends. Then their prayer was granted, and, day by day, through three long years, the boys thus kept themselves pure in God's sight from the degrading idol-worship of Babylon. There was much gluttony and drunkenness at the continual feasts held in the palace, and





"KNEELING ALONE BEFORE HIS OPEN WINDOW" (p. 141).



perhaps Daniel and his fellows hardly knew how, by their simple obedience to what they had been taught, they were saving themselves from the tainting evil and sin in the midst of which they lived. They followed the one clue that leads safely, though they did not see all the dangers amidst which they walked; they did their duty for one day, and God through each day led His children on to a high and noble manhood, and to great deeds, to be accomplished for His people.

It is just the same now; boys and girls cannot tell what God has for them to do in the future; they only know that the way to all high enterprises and noble work is by the path of daily obedience and self-denial for Christ's sake. That is the highway for all of us, and this was the road on which Daniel and his fellows had entered. They were only boys as yet—boys at school we might call them, for they were busy with their lessons; and their prayers and their simple life helped them in their work, so that when at last they were taken before Nebuchadnezzar the king, he found that not only did they know more than any of the other Jewish youths, but that they were wiser than the learned priests and great men who had been their teachers in the past years.

And the reason was this—God Himself had taught them. The priests of Bel could show them how, by watching the stars, they fancied that they could tell the meaning of dreams, but Daniel knew that the God who calleth the stars by their names, He it is who revealeth secrets, and giveth wisdom to the wise.

Often, so we may well believe, while the boy was kneeling alone before his open window, he turned away in his heart



from the idol-worship, and the foolish cunning, and the false wisdom which were taught him, just as he turned from the meat which would defile him, and all his heart went out to God. Then there came to him, in faint whispers, in broken lights, in thoughts which as yet he could not understand, the dawnings of that wonderful gift of prophecy which God bestowed upon him. He could see what others did not see; wonders were plain to him which the seers could not interpret, God gave him "understanding in all visions and dreams."

There was a sudden terror and confusion through the "golden city" and in the vast palace of Nebuchadnezzar. The tread of armed men rang on the pavement, and cries of pain and alarm filled the chambers. Daniel was sitting in his own room, either in the palace or near at hand, when the curtain was lifted, and a fierce-looking man, who was closely followed by some of the king's own guard, stood before him. There was no need to ask his name. Daniel knew his terrible face; it was Arioch the executioner, the man who was the messenger of the king's anger.

Very likely the axe which he held was already covered with blood, and now, lifting it again, Arioch told Daniel that the king had doomed to death every wise man throughout the city. Daniel had lived three years in Babylon, and he knew well enough that there was no law which could defend from these sudden and cruel bursts of passion; and yet he was not afraid, for, nearer to him than Arioch and the fierce eyes of the soldiers, he had the presence and the guard of the living God.



The calm of his sweet steadfastness had power even over the heart of a man who had seen and done so many terrible deeds, and Arioch stayed his hand, and answered when Daniel said, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?"

It was a strange story that he told. Nebuchadnezzar had chosen to test the power of his Chaldean soothsayers by bidding them tell him what it was that he had dreamed the night before as he lay upon his bed. With one voice the wise men made reply that they could tell the meaning of a dream, but not what the vision itself had been.

The king, in fierce anger, called them all impostors; and though Daniel and his fellows had not been summoned to tell the dream, yet they were not thought too young to be included in the sudden decree, which was to sweep away teachers and learners alike from the schools of Babylon.

And this was the very moment for which the boy's daily life had been, though he knew it not, all along fitting him. He needed that burning love for his country which would make him count any danger light by which he could save his fellow-captives; and this had grown and deepened in his heart by every one of those long lingering looks towards Jerusalem. He needed calmness and courage; he had won them both by a life of prayer. He must be self-restrained; and he had learned control through daily, patient self-denial. He must be able to win favour from others; and "when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Daniel was not content to use his influence just to save his



own life. From all we are told of the favour in which he was held, and from Arioch's evident goodwill towards him, this would not have been a difficult matter; but his heart was set on delivering not only his own friends, not only those of his own race, but every one of the Chaldean teachers in Babylon. He knew that the wisdom which they had taught him was not true wisdom, but he was full of pity for their mistakes, and he longed to save the old men from this terrible and sudden death. Arioch was glad to grant a little delay—he did not wish to lift his hand against the lad; and he gave Daniel leave to go into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar.

The angry frown still rested on the king's brow as Daniel bent before him, but he listened while the youth promised, in clear confident tones, that he would stand the test which had been offered, would tell the king what his dream had been. For that one night Arioch was bidden to delay, and Daniel went, with solemn thoughts in his heart, to his own house. There he and his three friends shut themselves in. They did not look out on the stars, nor trust to any mysterious secrets which they had been taught, but as the evening fell over Babylon it found the four kneeling together in earnest and trusting prayer.

Night came, and each one calmly lay down to rest. Daniel did not know that he might not be roused by the summons of Arioch, for no one could count on the changing moods of the powerful violent king. But yet the boy slept quietly, and in those silent peaceful hours God whispered the secret dream, with its mysterious meaning, into his heart.

He awoke. We might have thought that he would have



been so earnest to save his own life and the lives of his friends that his first thought would have been to hurry into the presence of the king, and reveal what had been shown to him. But Daniel knew that there was a greater King to Whom his homage was due first of all—the God Who had listened to his prayer, Who had spoken to him in the visions of the night.

The boy who always began his day with prayer, would only find in the thrill of danger, and the new joy of deliverance, fresh reasons for pouring out his heart to God. There, before the window, was the place at which he always knelt—there, just where the sun was now rising, lay the unseen towers of far-off, beloved Jerusalem, and where so well could Daniel give thanks to the God “with Whom the light dwelleth?” And even as he prayed the vision became clearer and clearer before him, and he knew that “the dream was certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”

Now he was ready to go before Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had sought Arioch first, lest, even while he was before the king, the guard might have gone forth to slay his fellows, and it was Arioch himself who ushered the lad into the chamber, crying out hastily that the secret thing was known.

The bright walls and pillars around were covered with figures of the idols of Babylon, and it needed a brave heart for a boy standing amongst them to say out fearlessly, to king and court, that there was but one God that revealeth secrets, and that His dwelling-place was heaven.

But Nebuchadnezzar’s brow grew smoother as Daniel spoke; there was one at least of his wise men whom he could trust, for



this boy was describing the very vision which had troubled him in his bed, and which none of the Chaldean soothsayers had been able to tell. He could believe now in the interpretation, for it came from the same lips which had told the dream.

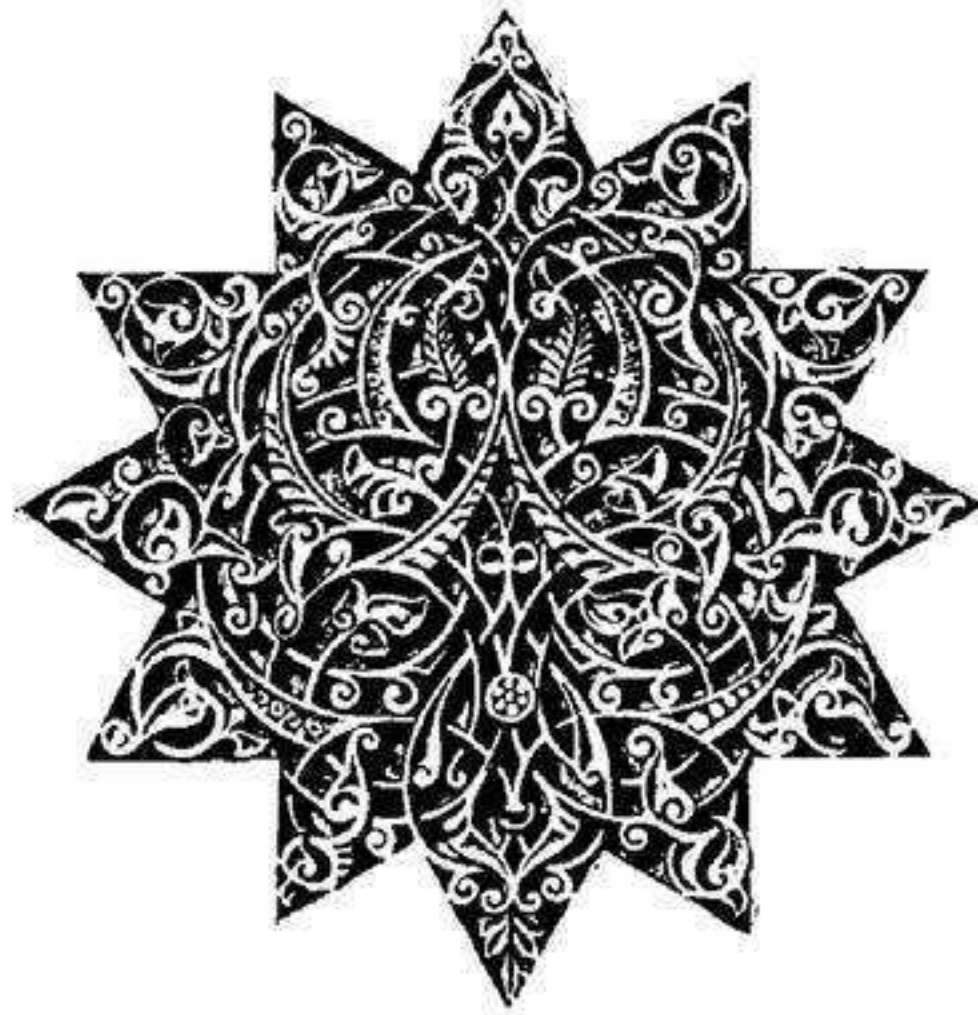
Thus Daniel was saved, and with him his three friends, his fellow-exiles, and all the wise men of Babylon. This was his reward—dearer far than all the gifts which the king gave to him, dearer than the honour of being ruler of Babylon, or of being made the prince of all the Chaldeans there. But these honours brought him one great delight; now that he was in such high favour, and that Nebuchadnezzar would grant him all that he asked, he thought at once of his three friends, and begged that they might be appointed governors under him.

The four were no longer children now. With this new dignity begins the manhood of Daniel and of his friends, a manhood full of deep interest for all who will read its story. But its joys and its troubles, its surprises and temptations, its manifold deliverances and crowning honour only repeat and enforce the lesson of the boyhood. And the key to the exile's noble life is "looking toward Jerusalem." That is, you know, faithfulness not only to his country, but above all, faithfulness to his God. When the Israelites in exile looked towards the east, they thought not chiefly of the crumbling walls of their dear city, but of the Temple of God. It was the Holy Place where God dwelt that they remembered.

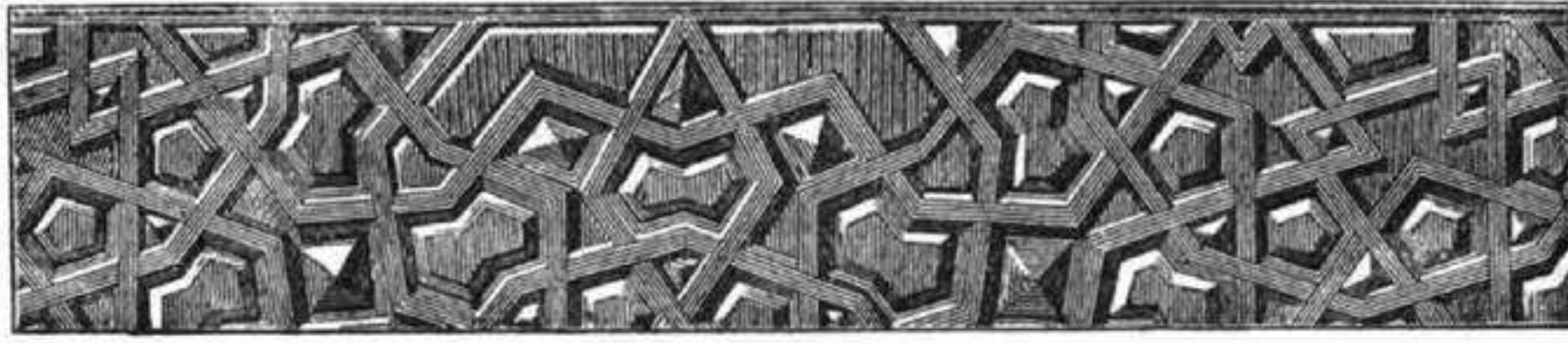
And our Jerusalem is above. When we kneel at our prayers we should look towards that dear city, and think how bright, how pure it is, and that we belong to it; "our citizen-



ship is in heaven." And that thought will help to make childhood holy, and girlhood simple and brave, and boyhood pure and gentle ; and the high thought will be with us through all the work of our lives, until of us it may be said at last, as it was said when Daniel ended his long course, "He rested and stood in his lot at the end of the days."







## ONLY ASLEEP.

“ What is our work when God a blessing would impart ?  
To bring the empty vessel of a needy heart.

“ Can ever the true prayer of faith unheard remain ?  
Must not what came from God return to Him again ? ”

ON one of the larger houses in the busy city of Capernaum, built along the lake-shore, there had fallen a sudden silence and fear.

None of the servants were doing that day their accustomed work, for in a chamber of the house the only child, a girl of twelve years old, lay at the point of death. Her father and mother stood beside the bed, but neither they, nor any doctor whom they could call, could do anything to cure the disease that was taking away her life. Her father, Jairus, was most likely rich ; certainly he was a man well known and honoured ; but his money and his influence were no use now—they could not save his child. As the slow hours went on, it was more and more certain that the little girl must die.

Most likely, as Jairus stood there, he was wishing that Jesus were at that time in Capernaum. Like all the dwellers in that city, he had heard of the wonderful miracles which Jesus had wrought. In Capernaum the Saviour dwelt for so long that it is called “ His own city,” and it was above all others the place

where "His mighty works were done," and His gracious words spoken. All who lived there were very interested about the great Prophet, as they called Him; they were always eager to follow Him as He went about teaching and healing, and they thronged the house when it was noised that He was there. But very few indeed tried to follow His commands, or to give up, for His sake, their love of doing what was wrong.

It was because of this that the city which once had such great favour shown to it, and might have been so blessed, is now only a heap of ruins, so wasted, and broken, and sand-covered, that no one can be sure where the buildings of the old city really stood. But at the time when Jairus' daughter lay dying, the doom had not yet fallen on the city. Jesus still taught in her streets, still wrought wonderful cures there, was at home there, as the Bible tells us—for that is the meaning of the words "in the house." And Jairus must have well known the name and fame of the Teacher, for he was ruler of the synagogue, president of the council which had care both of the building and of the regular worship and teaching there.

Now in his synagogue—built, you will remember, by a good Roman centurion quartered in the place—Jesus very often taught, and there Jairus would be sure often to have seen and heard Him.

Therefore it seems very likely that now, in this great fear and trouble, the ruler began to long that it were possible to have help from Jesus, and that he grieved over His absence; for the Saviour had been seen to go over the lake in a boat



with His disciples, and no one knew when He would return. There was no time for a message, even if it had been known whither to send the messenger; for, as the slow hours went by, the child grew visibly worse; her strength was failing, she looked as one already dead. But at last a rumour spread through the silent, waiting house that Jesus was once more in Capernaum; or was the good news first told by the feet of the crowds who followed Him as He passed along the streets?

There was a tumult and excitement everywhere, for many of the people of the place had been watching for His return, and gladly received Him.

When the tidings reached Jairus, he heard also that Jesus was at this very time feasting in the house of Levi, the tax-gatherer, and thither the poor father hurried at once, though fearing at every step that it would prove too late.

Most likely the ruler had never before entered Levi's house; he would not have been willingly in the company of a publican; but now he thrust his way in through the gathering crowd about the door, and glanced all down the long table at which Jesus was seated, with His disciples, amongst the friends and companions of their host Levi.

The room was crowded; people of every class had pressed in around the tables, that they might listen to the words of Jesus, or ask Him questions. There was many a Pharisee looking in, half in scorn at the Teacher who would eat with publicans and sinners; while close around the chief Guest were gathered a special company of the disciples of John the Baptist, who had come to ask Him questions of His teaching.



Almost breaking in on the very words of Jesus, as He replied to their questions, Jairus pushed his way eagerly through the crowd. He had made such haste, and was in such agitation that now he could hardly speak, could only throw himself, with imploring, eager looks at the feet of Jesus. His words, as they are written down for us, tell us how earnest he was. They are at once broken and vehement, beseeching yet confused. He does not know whether the child is dying or already gone; he thinks only that one wasted moment may make it vain to tell his tale, that the spirit may be fled before the restoring touch of Jesus is laid upon the pale child, whom he has left at home at the very point of death.

The feast was not over, all were yet at the tables; but when He heard the poor father's cry, Jesus did not linger. Down the street, followed by the dense crowd without, He and His disciples made their way, while Jairus kept close by the side of Him in Whom alone was any hope.

We can almost see how the father would press on before, and ever and anon turn back towards the Great Healer Who was following him to his home.

And they were so long on the way. It was not only the great crowd hanging about the Saviour which kept Him back, but as He went He stopped to speak to a poor woman who had come out to be healed by Him. Before that delay was over, while the woman was still blessing the Deliverer Who had taken away her sickness, Jairus saw several of his own servants making their way towards him.

Foremost, as if charged with a message, came one who



seems by his tone to have been the steward, or principal servant, while following him were several others, who may have come, as people do in confusion or excitement, scarcely knowing why.

Jairus knew what the message must be; it was as he feared. While they lingered the child had died.

Evidently they were still some distance from his house, for the steward, who most likely spoke the words as a message from his mistress, suggested that now there was no reason to weary the Master any further. We cannot help imagining, as we read the history, that the mother of the dead child had less hope than her husband in the power of Jesus, for it must have been with her consent that already the outer hall of Jairus' house was crowded with a throng of hired mourners, weeping and wailing, filling the air with long, wild, mournful cries, rending their clothes, or singing sad dirges to the sound of the minstrels' instruments.

For Jesus still went on towards the house, comforting the failing heart of the poor father with the promise that all should yet be well. Else how could he have borne these sights and sounds, which all told him more and more clearly that his child was dead? He was forced to realise the truth now, though he had not yet pressed on into the room where he knew well that the dear little form lay silent on the bed.

Yes, he knew that his only daughter was dead. And yet he did not wonder, or doubt, or disbelieve when he heard the Master saying to the mourners, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth."

He seems to have stood there in silence while Jesus, Who had entered with three of His disciples, cleared the crowded room of the hired mourners, shutting all outside except the father and mother of the child.

There was deep silence now; and with none following but the three chosen disciples, Jesus led Jairus and his wife into the inner room where the dead child lay.

“She is asleep,” the Lord had said; and yet it is true that she was dead. But this death was to vanish like sleep at the voice of Jesus; and so it was not death.

The Saviour roused her just as a loving friend might rouse a sleeping child. He put out His hand, He took the lifeless fingers within His own.

Then He spoke. Softly, not with a loud cry, as afterwards when He called Lazarus from his tomb, but as to one close at hand, ready to wake at the first sound; and the words that he used were in the familiar tongue of the people, in which they spoke each to the other.

“Maid, arise.”

Then the sleep which was death was broken; the child awoke, and at once stood up, healed and strong, just as before the long sickness fell upon her.

We do not know what was the after life of this young daughter of the ruler; to us she is always the girl of twelve years old, called back from death at the voice of Jesus. And so she stands as a sign and token of what the Saviour is ever doing amongst ourselves.

These wonderful works are to wake up our dull minds to see what God is doing even now, though we are so careless



and so used to what goes on around us, that we hardly notice or understand.

God is always giving us life. All our days through He gives it to us, freshly every morning when we wake out of sleep, when we take our daily bread, when we breathe the sweet air. We have read now the beautiful lives of many children of the Bible; but it is not till Jesus Christ came to be Himself a Child that this first fullest lesson comes out clearly before us. All the graces of which we have read—humility, self-denial, faith, purity—are like flowers upon a plant: they dress it and make it fair and delightful, but they are not the life of the plant; they could not be there unless it had life, drawn freshly every day out of the soil in which it is planted.

And this root, and life, and sap, and soil of a Christian childhood are never in any child himself, but in God. In Him we live.





## “FORBID THEM NOT.”

“Babes! Love could always hear and see  
Behind the cloud that hid them;  
'Let little children come to Me,  
And do not thou forbid them.'”

WHEN our dear Lord was on earth He took special pleasure in having children round Him; of some of these children we are told very little; but we know that we are intended to dwell on that little—to think about it, and to remember every hint that is given to us; and so, though often we cannot tell the children's names, though we do not know from what homes they came, or what their faces were like, or whether they lived to grow up into men and women, it is good for us to gather together just what we are told of these happy children, and try and make them as real as possible to our thoughts; for they become dear to us because they saw Jesus, because He spoke to them, looked on them, called them round Him; and the light of His sweetness is on them evermore, and the beauty of His smile seems to make a brightness round their memory.

Perhaps this is specially true of those little ones at Bethlehem who died for Him Who was afterwards to die for them—those little innocents, too young to know Him, whom Herod slew, whom God called home to Himself. But these



infants were so young that we can only think of them as we do of those little brothers and sisters of ours who were taken away before they could speak clearly, or run alone—we think of what they will be when we see them again, rather than of what they were.

But there are other children, the thought of whom is joined to the thought of our Lord's life on earth, about whom it will be well to gather the little that we know.

The evening sun was shining softly on the grassy slope between the Sea of Tiberias and the hills which circle it round, when Jesus and His disciples stood there, amidst the great multitude who had followed Him to the spot. All of them had received some blessing; to many the sick friends whom they had brought with them had been restored whole and sound, to others loving words and gentle teaching had been given; and all had been so full of interest and gladness that they had forgotten, as the swift hours went by, that they were without food, and far from any place where they could buy it. But Jesus did not forget; He saw that their faces were growing pale and that their steps were feeble, and that many of them were quite unfit for the journey, by boat or on foot, which lay between them and their homes.

As He talked with His twelve followers about the possibility of feeding the hungry multitude, one of them, a fisherman named Andrew, pointed to a boy amongst the crowd. Perhaps Andrew noticed him because the boy too was a fisher-lad, and held in his hand a couple of newly-caught fish, most likely just drawn from the lake. Perhaps the boy had already

offered them to Andrew, afraid, it may be, of venturing to speak to our Lord Himself. Besides the fish the lad held five barley loaves, or rather, flat cakes, which, perhaps, he had brought with him for his own dinner while away from home fishing. But now how happy he was to give them into the hands of the disciples, and to see one of them carry them up to the place where Jesus stood. He was only thinking of giving the little which he had to the Lord, and could never, even for a moment, have guessed what a wonderful use was in store for his little offering.

Those five cakes, those two small fishes were to feed the whole hungry multitude, to satisfy five thousand men, beside women and children. What a wonderful thing for that poor boy to have seen his own little store of food grow, under the blessing and in the hands of Jesus, to more than enough to feed all those companies who sat upon the green grass! He himself was fed from the very cakes which he had given up to Jesus, from the very fishes which he had caught and offered; but instead of eating them alone, they were found to serve as well for the whole people.

We find ourselves wondering what that boy became in after years—whether he was one of the disciples who spread the Gospel of Christ after the Lord was ascended. It seems as if that marvellous evening by the lake-shore must have changed and shaped the course of all his after life.

“Oh, who can tell the trembling joy,  
 Who paint the grave, endearing look,  
 When from that favoured boy  
 The wondrous pledge He took?”



“Keep thou, dear child, thine early word :  
Bring Him thy best ; who knows but He,  
For His eternal board,  
May take some gift of thee ?”

But if we know nothing of the boy after the sun had set that evening on the groups, as they made their way back across the plain or over the lake, yet the teaching of that one act of his remains clearly with us still. He gave all that he had to Jesus: he did not think first of his own hunger—he was willing to bear that; for he could not know, as he gave up the food out of his hand, that he would himself be fed from it.

We cannot give our food now into the very hand of Jesus, as this fisher-boy was able to do, but to give to His poor is to give to Him. He says, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” And to truly give to Him in giving to His poor, we must offer something that we should like to use ourselves, just as this fisher-boy gave up what seems to have been provided for his own food ; it may be a very little that we have to give, but Jesus will make it enough.

Then perhaps we remember the little child whom Jesus set in the midst of His disciples.

They were all crowding round the Lord, with eager faces and loud voices. He had called them to Him because He had heard how they had been disputing together: He knew that they had, each one of them, been wishing to be counted as the greatest of the twelve.

Outside the group of impatient, yet half-ashamed, men there stood, perhaps looking on in wonder at what was passing, a little child. We think of him as one with innocent, open face, a child with happy, loving thoughts and ways, obedient and humble. As he looked on at this scene, which he could not understand, Jesus called him. Perhaps He used the little child's name as He spoke; we are sure that He knew it, as He knows the name of every lamb in His fold. The little child came at His call, and stood willingly where Jesus placed him, not afraid, even though all those strangers were gathered round, and were looking at him. He could not be afraid, for One was beside him Whose touch and word every child loved and trusted; and as the boy bent his head humbly under that gracious Hand, a blessing passed, we feel sure, into his heart. The child was, no doubt, quite too young to understand the words that the Saviour spoke to His disciples, bidding them be humble as the little one on whom they looked, but some memory must have remained with him ever after of that most blessed moment of his life, when Jesus stooped down and took him in His arms.

Or perhaps we stand, in our thoughts, on the green plain at the foot of the mountain of the Transfiguration. We see Jesus coming down the side of the hill, followed by His three best-loved disciples, and their faces, as they listen to Him, are full of solemn awe. But the other disciples are waiting for Him on the plain, and just now they are gathered in one little group, and all about them is a crowd of very curious people, talking loudly and eagerly.



As Jesus and His three followers make their way into the outskirts of the crowd, it becomes plain that, besides the knot of waiting disciples, there is another, most likely a larger, group of scribes, who are talking and disputing with them. These scribes, or doctors of the law, were learned men; and it seemed as if their shrewd questions perplexed the disciples, who stood with a vexed, dissatisfied look on their faces, as if they did not know how to answer their questioners.

It was not the disciples or the scribes who answered Jesus, when He would know what they were talking so eagerly about. At first no one spoke; only there was a little movement in the closely-packed crowd, and presently a man made his way to where Jesus stood, and threw himself on his knees before Him. What an anxious, imploring look there was upon his face, as he told our Lord that all this excitement and strife were about his boy, his only child, who was lunatic, and had a dumb spirit.

The poor father had heard of the wonderful works that Jesus had done, and directly he knew that the Saviour was near, had come to Him, bringing his child.

But he found that Jesus had gone up the high mountain-side, and there he dare not follow Him. Full of his great need, he besought the disciples to help him; and it would seem that they tried to cure the poor boy, but all the time they were doubting whether it were possible, and so, because they were faithless they could not accomplish the cure. This was one reason why they failed; and the failure vexed them so much that it made them wear that dissatisfied, discontented



look, which had been plainly to be seen on their faces when Jesus came to them from the mountain.

But as soon as the father saw Jesus his hope had come back again. The Master could do what the disciples could not, and perhaps his poor boy might even now be healed.

At the command of Jesus the child was brought to Him through the crowd, and he lay at the feet of Jesus foaming as in a fit, so terrible was the might of the evil spirit within him.

There was a great silence through the crowd now; the scribes did not dispute any longer, nor did the disciples reply; no one could have thought of anything but of the child who lay there, white and lifeless now that the fit was passed, and of the loving, pitying Face which was bent over him.

From every side more and more people gathered round the child, while Jesus was speaking words of comfort and encouragement to the poor father, whose faith had been so much shaken by the failure of the disciples to cure his son. But now he looked on, and the wondering crowd with him, as, at the word of the Saviour, the evil spirit departed from the child, never to return to him again. Then the Healer took the lifeless, weak hand of the exhausted boy and lifted him so that he stood once more on his feet, and He placed those trembling fingers in the clasp of the father's strong hand; that he might lead away in safety the son who was thus restored to him.

There is another scene, which, perhaps, of all those drawn for us in the Gospels, will be most familiar to the children who



read this. And it is so familiar just because it is so beautiful, and draws us over and over again to look at it, and each time reveals to us something more of its beauty and its tenderness.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer. He knew that every step was bringing Him nearer to the Cross, and yet He was ready to answer questions, to heal the sick, or speak words of comfort whenever any came to Him for help.

But those who were seeking Him now were not in trouble or need, and so it might have seemed to us that there was the less occasion that Jesus should stay on such a journey to listen to them. They were women, each one of whom carried in her arms an infant, or led by the hand a little child. And as they came near to where Jesus was, they held the children out towards Him, as if they longed, each one of them, that the little one in her arms should be the first to win the notice and the smile of the great Healer and Teacher.

They were not sick children who were thus led or carried—the little faces were bright with health; but their mothers were seeking for them better blessings than cure of sickness, or life given back. The women, even before they came near Jesus, were earnestly begging from Him two things: one was that He would put His hands on the head of every little child, and thus give them each a blessing, and the other that He would pray for them. But the disciples were gathered close around their Master, and thought it their business to prevent His journey from being hindered by these poor women. It was one of the very few times when Jesus was angry with His disciples, but now, as He heard them try to drive away

the mothers and their children, He turned to them with words of strong rebuke.

“Come here,” He said to the little ones, calling them all round Him, so that the disciples were obliged to stand farther off. And then came those most loving words: “Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.”

Jesus knew exactly what it was that the women hoped that He would do for their little ones, and He was quite ready to grant it; He laid His hands on them, and blessed them. And then He went beyond even the hope of those who brought them, for He took them up in His arms.

The Saviour passed on His way towards Jerusalem, and we hear no more of the children. But we know that the blessing of our Lord was a real and living gift, and that it must have remained in the hearts of those children.

Yet it may have been with them as with infants now who receive His blessing: they do not all keep it. Children who are selfish and wilful, and do not think about God, lose the grace that has been given them, instead of daily increasing in it more and more; and perhaps it may have been so with some of these.

And yet we cannot help believing that some, at least, of the little ones whom Jesus blessed lived to know Him to be the Saviour of the world, lived to serve Him, perhaps even were amongst the noble army of martyrs who died for Him.

And when Jesus reached Jerusalem children still gathered close about Him.



He was in the Temple ; and up the steps and through the courts were thronging to Him the blind and the lame, that He might heal them. Poor cripples, who had long sat at the gates, that they might beg of the worshippers who passed in and out, came in now, creeping slowly along towards where He stood of Whom they had heard that at His touch the lame walked. You may be sure that when tidings of what was going on spread through the city, crowds from every part came to look on, so that we must think that the courts were full of people. But these were only curious spectators, they were not disciples of Jesus, nor does it seem as if what they saw made them glad, or filled them, as it should have done, with gratitude and praise to God.

But there were children there ; you may be sure that children would crowd in to look on these wonderful works. And they were not like the older people, doubting and jealous, but they thought only of how they could, with their little voices, praise loud enough the wonderful Prophet who did such mighty works.

“ Hosanna to the Son of David ! ” they cried, catching up the words of those whom they had heard shouting before Him as He rode into the city. But the children’s voices were the only ones that were raised—the men and women who had cried so loudly but an hour before were silent now ; they were afraid to praise the King while the chief priests and scribes were near, looking on with displeasure and gloomy faces.

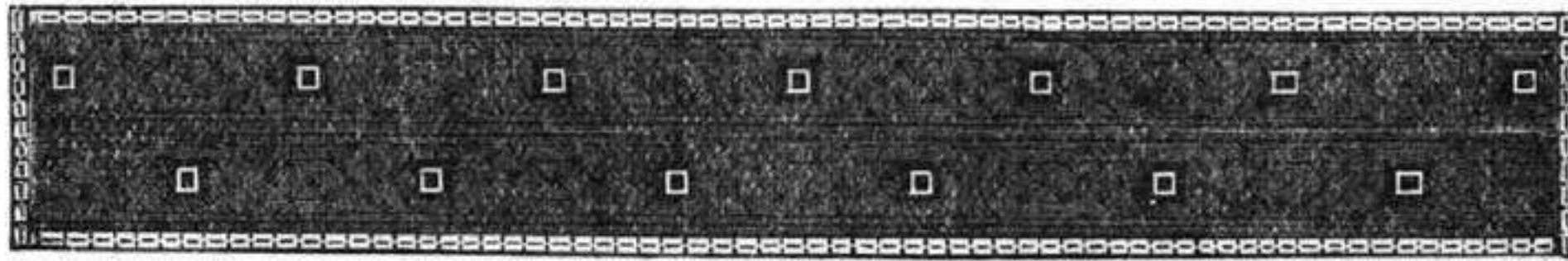
And thus it was the children who won the praise and approval of the Saviour ; it was of the children that He said,

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.”

And these, so far as the records show, were the last children who thronged about Him and of whom He spake on earth. But through them He spoke to all children, telling them that He loves their weak praise, and cares for their voices even while the angels are singing, and that, in the full song of all God's worlds and all God's creatures, there is a note for each single child to sing, if the praise is to be perfect.







## THE PARCHMENT ROLL.

“Remember, child, of them is asked  
Much to whom much is given;  
Nor read in vain the Blessed Book  
That tells of Christ and heaven.  
Nor careless the free gift abuse,  
Since love from knowledge springs,  
And reverent use keeps holy still  
The most familiar things.

And never turn that Holy Page  
Without a holy thought,  
And daily strive in word and deed  
To do what it has taught.  
So shall your feet in patience tread  
The paths of care and strife,  
Strong in the blessed hope it brings  
Of everlasting life.”

WE are not now in the Holy Land. The boy of whose history we are going to read lived far to the north-west of Palestine, where the wide plain of Lycaonia stretches from the borders of Cilicia into the bare wastes and hills of central Asia Minor.

From that wide plain, dotted with lakes of salt water round which no green thing will grow, rises towards the south-east a smooth round hill, dry and burnt like the rest of the land around, for its sides are of lava and molten rock.

At the foot of this Kara-Dagh, or Black Mountain, which stands above the plain like a lofty island amid the sea, was built the city or town of Lystra, a busy place enough in the time of which we are reading, not long after those holy days in which our Lord lived and walked on earth.

The gates and streets of Lystra were thronged by a mixed people, Greeks and Romans and Asiatics, who spoke a common tongue which all understood, a sort of *patois*, as we should say



now, and which was known as "the speech of Lycaonia." As in most of the cities of Asia Minor, so in Lystra, there was living at that time a little colony of Jews from Palestine. Possibly some Jews had dwelt here ever since, three hundred years before, captives from Babylon had settled in the neighbouring Phrygia. At any rate, we know that they had dwelt long enough amongst the heathen round them to forget much of their own law, and its strict observances, and that even the more devout among them did not hesitate to marry those of other nations.

Amongst the rest, we find dwelling at Lystra an old Jewess named Lois, under whose roof her daughter Eunice, most likely a widow, had found refuge.

Eunice had married a Greek, and they had one son, a boy named Timothy. Most likely his father died whilst the child was still quite young, for we hear nothing of him, while it is the grandmother and mother who bring up the boy, and teach him all that they themselves know of the Law of God.

We should think at first that this could not be much, for in this Grecian city was no Jewish synagogue where prayer could be offered or public teaching given. If the few Jews who dwelt there ever met to worship God, it must have been where their ancestors in Babylon wept over Jerusalem, or where their brothers in the distant town of Philippi used to gather—on the banks of some stream or river-side, "where prayer was wont to be made."

All around them went on the worship of false gods. Day by day, as the little Timothy went in and out of the gate of the city, he would see the great temple of the Greek idol Jupiter,



who was worshipped by the people of the place, and he would hear from his companions, and in the common talk of the people, the story of how, once, long years before, Jupiter and another false god, whom the people called Mercury, had come to this city of Lystra in the form of men, and had gathered the people around them, and taught them how they were to worship.

What we are told in scattered hints of the character of Timothy would make us think it likely that he would listen with interest and half-belief to these "old wives' fables," for he was evidently a dreamy, imaginative child, a boy whose weak health, and perhaps whose lonely life, led him to cherish many fancies, and brood over silent thoughts. We know now that all these fables, found amongst so many people, are shadows of that divine glorious truth that Jesus Christ our Lord and God did indeed come down as a Man amongst men. Before He came, men, hardly knowing what they wanted, longed after His appearance, and made their own mistaken dreams and pictures of what was in truth really to come.

Timothy would not know this, most likely he had not as yet heard the name of the Saviour Who, but a few years before, had died upon the Cross, in distant Jerusalem. But yet the boy was saved from the grievous errors of the people amongst whom he lived, for in the home in which he was brought up God's Word was known and studied. We can fancy how precious was that old roll of the Hebrew Scriptures which had come down to Lois, perhaps from her own mother or father.

She herself had studied it all her life, and her daughter





"HIS MOTHER WOULD TEACH HIM PATIENTLY DAY AFTER DAY" (p. 171).



Eunice, though she had married a Greek, knew and loved the Holy Law which God had given to her own nation.

The sight of that long parchment roll reverently handled by his old grandmother or his mother, the sound of its words read softly in the quiet evenings, would be dear and familiar to Timothy long before he knew the meaning of those strange signs traced on it, or could understand its words and its teaching.

We can picture him listening to the stories of Jewish children who lived long before, hearing, as you do, the lives of Joseph and of David, of Moses, who lived, like himself, among idol-worshippers, and heard legends of false gods; of Daniel, dwelling, as he did, far from the Holy City, and in his exile remembering Jerusalem.

We can picture how his little face would light up, and his heart grow warm and glad, at the thought of such brave deeds, and such pure lives. Then he would long to be able himself to read the holy words, and his mother would teach him patiently day after day, and seek to make him know not only the words themselves, but the wisdom that is in them.

Timothy, of course, knew only the Old Testament. As yet, if any part of the New was written, it was only in fragments passed from one disciple to another, amongst the growing churches in Palestine.

But the wonderful life of Jesus on earth was being told now by His apostles throughout Greece and Asia; teachers of the new religion had come to Cyprus, and to Antioch, and amongst the Jews in those cities were to be found many who believed. At last rumours of these things reached Lystra.



In the neighbouring city of Iconium were two Jews who had come hither from Antioch, and were teaching in the synagogue, speaking boldly in the name of Jesus. They had wrought many miracles, and their teaching and deeds had gained a number of disciples to the faith of Jesus. No doubt there would be talk in the streets and booths of Lystra about these new things, but at last the time came when the people were themselves to see and hear the apostles of the new faith.

Timothy perhaps saw Paul and Barnabas when they entered; they came in haste, and would be weary with their hurried journey over the hot plain, for they had been obliged to flee from Iconium to escape the anger of those who would not listen to their words.

Before they had been long in Lystra a wonderful thing happened. Sitting in one of the gates of the city was a poor man who had never had the use of his feet. From the day of his birth they had been quite helpless, and now were so wasted and shrunken that he could neither walk one step, nor even stand upon them. No doubt he sat in some public place to beg, and Timothy and all the people in Lystra would be familiar with the figure of this poor cripple, as he held out his hand for alms to those happier men who were able to walk, and who passed to and fro before him.

One day this cripple had been placed close to the gates of the city. Here there would of course be an open space, and as there was no synagogue in which to teach, Paul and Barnabas would naturally choose this spot, where the people were used to gather, as the place in which they could preach the Gospel which they had come to declare.



They took their stand quite close to the spot where the poor cripple was seated, and, when the discourse was over, Paul fixed his eyes on the suffering man, looking earnestly at him as if to read his very soul. And his face was not hard to read. The teacher had spoken of that Saviour who had come to heal the broken-hearted, and the poor lonely suffering man had received into his heart the words of comfort. He must have been surprised indeed when he found himself singled out from that great crowd, and felt the earnest gaze of the apostle.

“Stand upright on thy feet.”

Loud and clear rang out the command, and Timothy, and all the other dwellers in Lystra who had crowded round, must have held their breath as they watched the poor cripple, who had never moved without help, suddenly leap up and walk. A whisper ran through the throng. Surely these two wonderful strangers could be no others than Jupiter and Mercury come once more to their city. Some hurried to the temple to call the priest of Jupiter, some ran to weave garlands, and presently in a great triumphal procession they followed the two teachers, desiring to do sacrifice to them. With what fresh remembrance must all that he had learned from the law of Moses of the sin of idol-worship have come back to Timothy's mind, as he saw how Paul and Barnabas, with rent clothes and eager cries, ran out amongst the poor ignorant people who would have worshipped them, restraining their wild excitement, while they tried to teach them of the God to Whom alone must sacrifice and prayer be given.

This at least we know, that Lois, Eunice, and Timothy



were all, soon after this, counted amongst the disciples of the faith of Christ. It was St. Paul himself who taught Timothy what he knew, for in his Epistle he himself calls him "my own son in the faith."

It was but a short time in which this teaching could be given, but when the soul is ready for the seed, the sowing need not take long. We know how the soil had been made ready, how all the hearts in that little household had been prepared by the faithful, loving study of God's Holy Word.

In these days children often think that they know a good deal about the Bible because they hear it read every day, learn some of its verses by heart, and can answer pretty well questions about the names and doings of the people of whom it tells us.

But it would be quite as wise to think that you knew a great deal about the sea, because in summer weather you have run into the white edge of the little waves upon the beach, or dipped your fingers over the sides of a boat rocking on the water. There stretches all the wide ocean beyond you, and below are its silent depths, and the secrets hidden in it would take more than a life to learn.

It is part of the work of every Christian life, and therefore of every Christian childhood, to learn more about the Bible; and, unless you set yourself to do this, you cannot expect that the soil of your heart will be ready for all the good seeds which God would drop into it.

And we have to learn about the Bible by reading what wise and holy men, who have spent their lives in studying it, have written about it, and also by thinking for ourselves



about the words as we read them, by trying to compare one place with another, and by keeping the words in our minds to think about when we are not reading. But all this would not be enough alone; there is one thing more important than all if you would be like Timothy, who "from a child had known the Holy Scriptures."

Every morning before you begin to read the holy words you should kneel down and say reverently and thoughtfully a prayer for God's help that you may understand.

Many of you know such prayers; you can say, "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen." Or you can take the shorter one which is written in the Bible itself, and say, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law."

Perhaps you will hardly know half that you are asking, but day by day God will make more plain to you what the wondrous things are. We are so used to the Bible, to the worn brown covers of those in the schoolroom itself, to the little purple one which you carry with you to the service, to the large copy which lies on the side table, that there is great danger lest English children should not understand what a wonderful Book it is, the words of which they know so well. In it are the most beautiful stories in the world, poetry far grander than any verse of all that you so delight to learn,



histories more wonderful than anything that you can read of Rome, or Greece, or England, because in this one book we are told not only of what happened, but also *why* it happened, what God was doing while we fancied men were doing it.

And this book made Lois, and Eunice, and Timothy "wise unto salvation." They had not nearly all that you have—not the Gospels telling of the Life on earth of Christ our Saviour; not the history of the Church which He founded, of its apostles and martyrs and saints; not the letters which they wrote, nor the prophecies of that Holy City, the new Jerusalem. But even without these they had enough, and, by the grace of God, they so used what they had, that they were ready to hear of Him, of Whom in parable, and psalm, and prophecy all their Scriptures spoke.

We can picture how Paul, sitting under the roof of the aged Lois, talked to her of Jesus the Messiah, and we know how she heard and believed. But it was not often that the apostle could have entered there; for, all too soon, a great trouble fell on the little newly-gathered band of disciples.

The very people who had been listening to the teaching of Paul and Barnabas were now stirred up to anger against them. Quite suddenly the change came; one after another in the crowd began to say evil things of them, and to hoot them, till one of the worst and most violent stooped down and picked up stones, and began to throw them at the two teachers. We know that Timothy was there, but we know also that a young boy could do nothing against the violence of that angry crowd. Perhaps he was carried along in the midst, when, after Paul had fallen to the ground quite sense-



less, his enemies dragged him out beyond the city gates and left him lying there, as they thought dead.

The crowd ebbed back into the city, and round the pale bleeding form remained only a little ring of terrified but faithful friends, those whom he had taught to be disciples of his Master. Eunice would be there, and Timothy, perhaps even the aged Lois, and would have seen how at length a little colour came back to the wan cheeks, and the closed eyes slowly opened, and the martyr whose life had not yet been taken, rose, and, leaning on some friendly arm, made his way back into the gathering darkness of the city. The next day the apostles left Lystra, but they left behind some who were henceforth to be counted disciples.

When Paul next came to Lystra he found Timothy grown out of boyhood, and steadfast in the faith which he had received, living a pure life, and winning favour from all. The after life of the young man, when St. Paul adopted him, and took him with him on his journeys, does not find place here. It is natural that we should dwell chiefly on that which we are most expressly told about his childhood, that from his earliest days he knew the Scriptures. And thus very fittingly does the outline of the boyhood of the young Greek end our stories of the "Children of Holy Scripture." For these papers will have missed their chief purpose if they do not win you to read in the Holy Book itself the lives of which parts are here set down.

You may perhaps find here and there something told you in the course of these lives, as I have written them, which you do not remember to have noticed in the Bible; that must



make you look for yourself, see whether you cannot find it, after all, for many of the stories are not written all in one place, or in one book, but told in fragments scattered here and there. I have just said that Timothy was present when St. Paul was stoned. Where, for instance, will you find that written? You must look at the second letter which St. Paul wrote to him, and notice how in that the Apostle says that Timothy had fully known what persecutions he endured at Lystra. Then, looking into the Book of the Acts, you find where Timothy lived, that he became a disciple before St. Paul's second visit to Lystra, also that St. Paul himself was the first to teach him of Jesus. These scattered hints tell us the facts that I have written at more length for you.

Try and find out where in the Bible everything that you have read is to be found, and thus these stories will be of double use to you. Their first use is to show you how from every one of the Children of the Bible there is some special lesson to be learned, some one grace to be seen, which, gathered into one, will make the perfect round of a Christian childhood. Each one has caught from Him Who is the Light some one bright ray, and reminds us in something of Him of Whom all goodness speaks, Who became for us a Child, the sinless and perfect Child Jesus.

And the second use is to give you a fresh interest in reading in God's Book these well-known stories, by showing you that there are many fresh things to be found out about them, many lights that we can turn on them if we will try in the right way, and be willing to learn. And every time you try to do this the Children of the Bible will grow more living



and real to you. They will be friends and companions. In your struggles to do right you will think how they, too, had hard fights with themselves; in your troubles you will think of the sorrows they had to bear; in your prayers you will remember how they lived by prayer, and you will feel that you too, here in our own land, may be with them, and have them for your brothers and sisters, in the daily, patient, loving life of a humble Christian child.



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