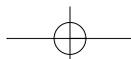
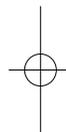
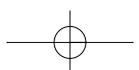
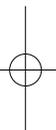


**PULPIT PARABLES
FOR
YOUNG HEARERS**





PULPIT PARABLES FOR YOUNG HEARERS

BY

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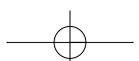
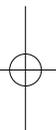
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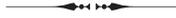
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PREFACE



THE addresses contained in this little volume have some peculiarities of their own, and a few words on these features are perhaps required. The chief peculiarity is that the writers have sought to avoid thrusting upon their young readers thoughts which are not adapted to healthy childhood and its 'natural piety'. The writers are of opinion that there is danger of confusing the minds and consciences of children by trying to give them conceptions and experiences which properly belong to adult minds only. Consequently some themes which are usually regarded as essential have been, not inadvertently neglected, but deliberately omitted. And certain positions are not to be considered denied because they are reserved.

Another feature of these addresses is that they appeal largely to a faculty so active in children as the imagination. Religion as presented to the young, the writers think, is too often despoiled of its grace and mystery in the anxious

vi

effort to make it plain; nor is the dulness really relieved by a garnish of anecdotes culled in fields but little above the trivial levels of the commonest life. The effort to make religious truth both simple and definite may be so far overdone as permanently to belittle the child's ideas of things spiritual and eternal; and it tends sometimes not only to develop the monstrosity of juvenile Pharisaism but to warp the whole subsequent growth of the soul and to stunt the Christian stature. These perils are not always avoided by the use of fresh and simple scientific illustrations; and the writers believe that more might be done to meet them by early enlisting the king-faculty of imagination in the service of faith.

For a somewhat similar reason the little allegories in the book are not always minutely explained. Something is left for the young readers to discover, either alone, or with the help of their elders. And there has been no attempt made to avoid a word of pleasantry, or even several, if they arose. The gift of true and kindly humour might without danger be more largely enlisted to serve the religion of that period of life in which the mouth is most filled with laughter. We are, perhaps, too apt

to treat with fancy, tinged by a sentiment of gentle melancholy, a season when the heart is filled with mirth, which according to the wise man 'bringeth good healing'.

 CONTENTS

	PAGE
SLEEPING BEAUTIES	I
THOUGHT-KINGS	10
THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW	19
THE HEART FOUNTAIN	24
THE SNOW-MAIDEN	32
BROWN-COAT AND FINE FEATHERS; OR, HUMILITY	39
PRISON LIGHTS	48
THE ENCHANTER PERIM; OR, COURAGE AND CONTENTMENT	54
MIRROR HUNTING	66
THE LOST PATH FOUND AGAIN	73
A SEASIDE SERMON	85
THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENTS; OR, THE MIGHT OF LITTLE THINGS	95
A CHRISTMAS SERMON	106

 viii

	PAGE
THE MAN IN GREY; OR, CONSCIENCE DEFILED	116
THE CHILD CHRIST AND HIS BEARER	126
THE STORY OF AN AIR-BABY	137
HELPERS AND HINDERERS	149
GOOD APPEARANCES; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF PINCHBECK	158
THE CHILD, THE ANGEL, AND THE FATHER	167
CHRIST AT THE DOOR	177
BABY BABBLE	186
A VISIT TO QUEEN FLORA'S CAVE	197
JESUS AND THE PLAYING CHILDREN	207
THE VOYAGE DOWN THE TIME-RIVER	217

PULPIT PARABLES FOR YOUNG HEARERS

SLEEPING BEAUTIES.

'Beauty for ashes.'—Isaiah 61:3

THAT meant comfort. It was the custom among these Jews to show by outward signs when they were in great inward trouble. It was more their way than it is ours. We think it is better and braver not to do so very much. When our friends die we put on ugly black clothes, it is true, but we do not wail and cry aloud for everybody to hear, as used to be done in Judea. And before very long it will not be good manners to put these black clothes on. I always tell people who I think won't be offended, that it is not a nice thing to do when their friends go to a better and happier world. And I think it will before long cease to be the fashion.

But these Jews used to make it still more apparent that they were in grief. They used to put on coarse clothes of

2

sackcloth; they used to tear their clothes, and sometimes their hair; they would take no food; they would sing the most dismal songs, and, worst of all, they would sit covering among dust and ashes, and often throw the nasty stuff upon their heads. So you can well believe that nothing could be more hideous than to see people in the condition of mourners—just as sometimes, in the lowest and most ignorant parts of England, the sight of a mourning or a funeral is one of the most vulgar and unpleasant anywhere to be seen. It was the very opposite of beautiful. It was ugly in the extreme. And so when the prophet speaks about joy coming instead of grief, and comfort instead of mourning, he says God will send beauty instead of ashes, and ornament instead of defilement. He will make the people rise from the dust and put on their beautiful garments of joy and hope. And instead of huddling on the ground in

sackcloth He will make them rise from the dust like a great, noble, and growing tree.

Beauty for ashes. Let us see a little more of what that means.

Once a great palace was burned down. It was built of beautiful stone, and lined with beautiful wood, and furnished with beautiful curtains, carpets, and pictures, and all things royal and fine. All night the fire raged, and next day it was a heap of ashes. What did the people do? Leave the ashes to stand there for ever? Nothing of the kind. They set to work, full of sorrow, but also full of energy and hope, and before long there stood on the same site another palace, fuller still of beauty, finer far than the old one, and far more

3

safe against fire or disease. And so they gave beauty for ashes.

You know well the story of Cinderella. One night she was sitting in her shabby clothes, and she was dreaming away with her eyes half shut, not asleep, but still dreaming, and thinking about her unhappy state, when she began to feel very cold. She opened her eyes, and the fire was all but out, the grate full of grey ashes, and the few cinders giving forth that gentle tittering sound which is like the quiet chuckle of a fire stealing out on tiptoe and cheating the people who should watch it. It was all very dreary, and it was very late, for the sisters were out at a ball and Cinderella was sitting up for them. But she sprang to her feet and bustled about, got some sticks, emptied the ugly old cinders out of the grate, built a new fire, kindled it, and blew and blew with her bellows, till very shortly the whole place was warm and cheery again. The flicker of the fire was dancing on the dish-covers that hung on the wall, and shining in the plates which stood in the rack; for I don't think Cinderella was a sluttish girl. I think, as she was a lady to begin with and to end with, she was a lady in her kitchen too. She was a lady in so far as this—she must have been neat and tidy.

Nobody need set up for a lady who can't begin with tidiness and cleanliness. I daresay her sisters may have been people who dressed loud and went out to parties, where they talked a great deal and displayed their cleverness, and played on the piano, and showed their fingers to be as fast and noisy as their tongues. But very possibly at home they were lazy

4

lie-a-beds, who, if they hadn't had servants to keep things straight, would have been as dirty and untidy as any woman with a drinking husband and half-a-dozen children. But I can't think Cinderella was like that. I think she was a modest and retiring girl, who didn't push herself upon people, but being, as I say, a real born lady (I mean a lady in her heart), she had the instinct of cleanliness and tidiness, the lovely lady's instinct of giving beauty for ashes, turning disorder into order, and litter into neatness. So I think it likely she kept her kitchen tidy, and her dishes clean, and her covers shining clear, and her little bedroom sweet and airy, with a flower in the window, which she coaxed from the gardener.

Well, when she got the fire up again in that clever way she was giving beauty for ashes. And when, she bustled about, sad but brisk, to keep her room and her kitchen neat, there again she was giving beauty for ashes, and making ugliness pretty, and turning confusion into order, and making everything go as smooth and sweet as her own good heart.

And then she had the same kind of reward when the fairy godmother came with her magic wand and turned Cinderella outwardly into the lady she really was within; that godmother was just doing to Cinderella as Cinderella had done to her kitchen and her room. For she, too, had a magic wand—the wand of neat and cheerful industry, the wand of busy affection, which does such wonders to change things into beauty and put dust and ashes away. Cinderella herself was one of those dear witches with so many charms, who drive our ashiness away and give us beauty and order at

5

home in their happy, modest way. Mind, you always have a fairy wand when you see something that you can set right; even if you are not beautiful you can make beauty, and even if you are not happy it is yet possible for you to make a good deal of happiness for other people; then they will think far more of you than if you were a person always pushing to the front, and always wanting to shine instead of anxious to make others shine.

And when the prince came at last and took Cinderella out of the kitchen, and gave her love and honour in the sight of all the people, wasn't that a reward in kind, as we say? Wasn't it paying her in her own coin? Now her own ashes were turned to beauty; now she was done by, as she had done; now she brightened up like her out fire and her littered

kitchen. She was taken from the ash and litter to the beauty and order of a king; and because she was a good servant she became a good queen. Some people give up doing their duty when things are not going well with them; they stop doing good things they used to do, and they get sour, and negligent, and even lazy. That is to say, they sit down in the ashes and they become content to stay there, and they have no idea of turning them into beauty, either with a woman's taste or a man's force. Well, that is neither manly nor is it ladylike; that is not what turns people into princes and princesses; there is nothing beautiful or royal about that, it is simply pitiful. And people of that stamp become themselves a part of the ashes which the better kind of people have such hard work to turn into beauty.

6

I have heard of another princess who did what Cinderella very nearly did when she was dozing and dreaming by the kitchen fire. This other princess actually did fall asleep, and everybody about her fell asleep. The king, her father, slept, his chancellor slept, his chamberlain slept, his guests slept, his butler slept, and the very wine in his bottles; his horses slept, the cats and dogs slept, the mice and rats in the walls slept, the very cocks slept, and one went off in the middle of a long crow which was, thereby, turned to headless yawn; the trees slept, and the grass, and the sun shine slept upon all. And how long they all slept you know, and what a Sleepy Hollow the palace became, and how the signs of neglect and decay settled down over all. And the hedge, which grew slowly in their sleep, thickened round about the palace and it became more and more difficult for anybody to get in. And the dust settled upon the windows so that even the sun could not enter, wide-awake as he is. And there they were, none in bed, but all asleep.

Isn't that like the way careless and untidy habits. grow up upon you? Your soul is like the princess who went to sleep. She pricked her finger with a spindle, you remember. Now that spindle has a name; some people call it 'Don't care', others call it, 'Oh, 'twill do'. These are the poisoned spindles that run into the soul, and the drowsy carelessness goes all through the system. And your mind is like that sleepy palace; and, in course of time, it gets more and more difficult to move you; you get habits of sloth, and slipshod ways; the light and the breeze cannot come at you. You

7

are like a grubby, cob-webby room, which smells dry and stale; you are like a heap of ashes in which the fire has died down to an invisible spark, and there is no beauty in you that anybody should desire. That sleepy palace is like a drowsy and careless soul which often turns out, in the long run, to be a bad and diseased soul.

What a business it is to set such people right again! Don't you know how hard it is to get rid of bad habits, to get out of sloth and untidy ways, once they have crept over you? Don't you remember how the prince came at last to the sleeping beauty and woke her with a kiss, and set everything going again, as the sun kisses the frozen winter into a tumult of melting waters and cleansing streams? But, don't you also remember what a very difficult task he found it to be; what a business it was to get through that hedge, how many fears and fevers he had to encounter on the way? You remember that?

Why should you ever give anybody such trouble to force a way in and rescue your soul from carelessness and sloth? Every five minutes you lie in bed after you are called, the hedge has grown a bit, and a little more dust has settled on your soul's windows. Every time you write a careless exercise and say, 'Oh, 'twill do', a new cobweb has been woven about your mind. Every time you cover up some bad bit of work hoping it won't be seen, because to do it well would be too much trouble, every time you do that, something in you has dropped off to sleep. I have heard, indeed, of people going so completely off to sleep in this

8

way, that they sputtered and laughed, poor dreamers I at the tidy people who did the whole of their duty; and they even called them names and said they were much too particular. Now, when you have got to that with it, what a dreadful job you are preparing both for yourself and for the prince who has, one day, to come and set your soul in order! Your spark of life dies down, down, and it will be a hard business to get you up into a bright fire again. You spend your life, not giving beauty for ashes, but throwing beauty into ashes, or as the prophet Isaiah says in another chapter, giving burning instead of beauty.

One day, a prince who loves your sleeping soul will come, and will force his way through to release it. Christ will wake you up, one day, to beauty and life again. But when you have been waked up, then your pain and sorrow will begin. You will grieve bitterly to think what you

have given him to do; you would give worlds never to have fallen into these slothful, and reckless, and evil ways, and never to have laid upon his love the burden of pain it cost him to recall you to life and health. He is very good; he goes about turning ashes to beauty. But how deep your regret will be to think, that instead of helping him in a work so good, you actually made it more hard and dangerous for him.

Better think, then, in good time. Beware of soul-sleepiness, beware of 'I don't care' and 'Oh, 'twill do', beware of Sleepy Hollow, and don't leave to other people the beautifying of those ashes which lie nearest to you. There is so much ashes in the world waiting to be kindled into

9

beauty! I have heard of women going into a poor, bereaved, and crushed family and making things in the room look ever so much neater than they found them, cheering the hopeless hearts with gentle pity and modest help. I have heard of boys going out and beginning to earn a little money when father died and left the whole family very poor, and these boys have been as steady, and careful, and active as if they were men, and they have risen in their employment and brightened their homes as nobody else could have done. Both these are cases of giving beauty- for ashes, and hope for despair, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. And there are a thousand cases besides; won't you add another?

P.T.E.

THOUGHT-KINGS.

*The kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.—Revelation
21:24.*

As a sick boy sat one evening by the fire, after reading, now a little of *At the Back of the North Wind*, and now a little of *Alice in Wonderland*, for he was soon tired, poor little man! his head being hot and heavy, he gazed into the fire (which is not a good thing for one's eyes, but a very amusing thing), and thought he saw faces in the fire. Such funny faces! And they went merrily up the chimney in peaked caps of flame; and while he wondered what they were and where they went, there stood before him a comical fire-face, topped with a flame-cap, and standing on two quivering little legs of fire. 'What were you thinking of, my fine fellow?' asked Fire-face. 'I was wishing,' said the boy, 'that such glorious things happened to me as happened to Diamond and Alice; but, I suppose, it is all make-believe and nonsense?' 'Well,' said Fire-face, 'perhaps it is and perhaps it is not; but if you will come with me I will show you a few curious things.' 'What! Up the chimney?' enquired the boy. 'I shouldn't like to dirty myself; and, besides, I might stick fast.' But Fire-face assured him that

11

there was no danger of his soiling his face or his clothes, or of being jammed tight in the flue, so the boy consented, and the moment he nodded Yes, he felt himself flying up the chimney with Fire-face, and all at once he was well and strong.

You will suppose that as they went up the chimney they came out at the top, but it was not so. The boy found himself in a great room, where was a king with his nobles and great men about him—a grand place, and a stately company. 'What king is this?' asked the boy, 'The King of Hearts, or Spades, or Diamonds?' 'Nothing of the sort,' said Fire-face; 'this is what people call a real king, though he is not. He is just now giving a decree, and heralds will shout it in the market-places, and men will ride fast over the country to tell everybody what the king commands; but after all, this man is not a king, although he has a palace, and crown, and court, and army, and all the playthings with which kings amuse themselves.'

And then the boy and Fire-face went—no, *they* didn't go—; it was the king and his court which went somehow, as flames go upward, the boy thought, and he and his guide stood in the room where a poor man with a pale face, in a shabby coat, sat writing with a stumpy pen, at a common table. 'This,' said Fireface, 'is the king. Yes! You may well look surprised, but in a moment you will see his court.'

While Fire-face was speaking, the boy saw a number of sprites, each of whom seemed strong enough to conquer an army, and as the sprites came forward, the pale-faced man

12

waved his stumpy pen, and immediately the sprites were clad in robes as beautiful as soap-bubbles, and as strong as steel, and armed with weapons which could cut through smoke, or fog, or water, or wood, or adamant, and as soon as the beautiful and terrible sprites were clad and armed they trooped out at the door, and floated away. 'They will not come back,' said Fire-face, 'until they have done their work. It is creatures like these which have forced the play-king, whom you first saw, to issue his decree. People will bless the play-king, but this is the real king.' 'But,' asked the boy, 'won't the real king have the crown some day?' 'No,' said Fire-face, 'he will never have yonder toy; but there is a crown being made for him such as neither you nor any other living boy ever saw. But come this way, and I will show you a company of kings.'

And behold! Fire-face and the boy were in a room where a number of men were busy, each of them being served by a troop of sturdy elves, who were bustling about in the gayest and yet the most earnest way. Said one of the kings:—'Hasten and bring me the moon and my scales.' And in a very short time there was the moon, and the king had it in his scales and stood pondering over it awhile, and then -spoke: 'All right: I have it. Go, hang it up again.' Another of the kings was employing his elves in winding sunbeams and in untwisting them just as you can untwist a piece of rope, and they were re-twisting them and Splicing them as if it was the easiest and the merriest thing in the world to do. Another of the kings bade his elves bring him

13

the strange animals which have long ago ceased to live in the world, and soon they returned, bringing woolly elephants, and flying snakes, and birds without wings, and creatures which were not birds, or fishes, or beasts, but something of each. The king looked at them carefully, and

made a few notes in a book, and then waved his hand, and all vanished. Another of the kings commanded his elves to bring him the great men who died hundreds of years ago, and, somehow, they came, great heroes and captains, wise men and noble ladies, and told the king the story of what they had done, and suffered, and thought in the days when they wore mortal flesh.

The boy would have liked to stay a long time among these grand kings, but his guide plucked at his sleeve and hurried him away. And then the boy found himself looking upon a lovely scene, which I wish I could describe to you. Before him lay a beautiful lake, and on the farther side of it the sun was setting, and making a great glory of purple, and gold, and soft bright green. A little boat was crossing the lake, with the foam flying up at her prow; and both foam and the sail of the boat were tinged with the sunset light, and so were the faces of those who sat in the boat. 'O!' said the boy, 'what a pity it is that the sunset should fade and that this charming picture should disappear.' 'The sunset shall not fade nor the picture disappear', said one whom he had not noticed at his side. 'I will give it to you to keep all your life'; and the royal stranger waved his sceptre and fixed everything as it was, and then rolled it up in his

 14

hand, and gave it to the boy, saying, 'For you this sunset shall always glow, the foam perpetually play, these sweet faces, tinged with light without and joy within, for ever smile'. Before the boy could thank this king, or find words to say that he did not wish to fix the happy company where they were, the king had vanished, and as he looked again the sky had changed and darkened, and the boat was nearing the lake shore; and one kindly lady was waving good-bye to him with her white hand, and yet the boy had only to turn his eyes and there lay the scene as he had first beheld it.

While the boy was wondering over this strange thing, his guide whispered, 'Here is another of them', and he found himself in a street of a great, and dirty, and foggy town, and saw coming along the pavement a man whose face was puckered with many wrinkles, (like a wave as you see it from the deck of a ship), with a large and comical mouth, but with eyes wonderfully bright and gentle. As the queer man came along some funny things happened. A little boy, who had stumbled and fallen into the mud and burst out crying, caught sight of himself in the mirror

behind a shop window, and broke into a laugh at his own smudged face. A man, who was striding fiercely along, and looked as though he had had a terrible quarrel with somebody, suddenly stopped, slapped his hands together, and burst into a peal of laughter, and said aloud, 'A great booby I must be to quarrel with an old friend about the shape of a hat!' And, still smiling, the man turned round and marched back, evidently to make it up with his friend. As the boy continued to watch the

 15

wrinkled man, he saw him pass a chair in which a sick boy was being wheeled along by his mother, and the boy gave a feeble little chuckle, and said, 'O mother, look, *look* at that funny old fellow.' The mother's face brightened in a moment, for it was a long time since her poor little boy had laughed so heartily, and she took it for a sign that he was growing stronger. Our boy followed the queer old man, and as he did so, he observed a passer-by, who was muttering as he came along, 'The wretches, to say such things of me!' But as he came close to the man with the wrinkled face, the mutterer smiled and said, 'Really, it is amusing, very amusing, that people should believe such stuff'.

Then all at once the city street and the strange old man were swallowed up, and the boy found himself in a room where a king was seated, giving orders to tiny beautiful fairies. He was teaching them to sing, and as soon as one had learned a song he floated away, and somehow the boy was able to follow both with eye and ear. One alighted in a miserable garret where a girl lay ill, and as the fairy sang the girl forgot her pain and weariness, and her face grew bright as a flower. Another fairy entered a house where a man and his wife were in great poverty and trouble, and seemingly cross and angry with each other, but as the fairy sang, their scowling looks passed away, and they knelt down and prayed, and when they rose from their knees they glanced at each other in kindness and hope. Another fairy sought a rich man's chamber—a rich man, but weary, and vexed, and anxious about something which spoiled his rest and deprived

 16

him of all pleasure; but as the fairy trilled out her wonderful song he grew quiet and restful, and then rose as if a great load had been lifted from his heart.

Then the boy said, 'I have often wished that I was a king, and had a crown and sceptre, and fine robes, and could command everybody; but

I wish now that I could be one of these true kings. Could I be apprenticed to the business?’

He looked round to see what Fire-face thought of that idea, but Fire-face was gone, and in his place stood a tall, strong angel, who yet resembled the boy’s mother, and answered, ‘It is a very good idea, and I am glad you have it. Come with me.’ And she took him up in her great, beautiful arms, and flew with him until she hovered over a little cabin where a man was busy with hammer, and saw, and plane, and a boy was giving his mother a good-bye kiss before he went to school. At the school he was diligent in learning; just, and fair, and gentle at play, cheerful and obedient. Then a cloud hid the little village, but after a while the cloud rolled away, and instead of the village a city was to be seen, all astir with a great excitement, and there was a man, who was a prisoner, in the charge of rough and cruel guards, and yet wearing a crown! Only it was a crown of thorns. Again a cloud hid the scene from view.

And then the angel showed the boy a beautiful city in a beautiful country, and there were companies of kings, real kings, aye, and queens too, trooping towards it; kings who had done wonderful deeds with sunbeams, and star-beams,

 17

and the hidden treasures of the earth; kings who were crowned with real crowns—the men of knowledge. And there were kings who had the power to fix the fleeting beauty of the earth, and sky, and sea, and to give it a new beauty out of their own minds—the painter and sculptor kings. And there were kings who had the power to send singing fairies with skill to charm, and soothe, and hearten men—the poet kings. And there were kings who had the magic spell which we call humour—the power to move gentle, genial laughter, who had grown wrinkled in smoothing wrinkles out of others’ faces, aye, and out of their hearts too. And there were kings who had power to command companies of thoughts, and to clothe them in strong and beautiful words, and to arm them with the force of life and earnestness, and so ruled the world from their lowly homes.

And all these kings were wending their way to the splendid city, where they would lay their crowns at the feet of him who was King of them all—King of all knowledge, and poetry, and music, and humour, and thought, who was once crowned with thorns, but now is crowned with many crowns. As the boy turned away from the scene, he looked up into

the angel's face, and said, 'But how can I be a king like these?' 'That,' said the angel, gravely and tenderly, 'I can easily tell you, for all who love the King of kings become kings themselves. They may not receive crowns such as these men wear, at least not now and here, but somewhere, somewhen, somehow, they will have crowns to cast at the great King's feet.' 'I see,' cried the boy, 'I

18

see! I have only to love and trust the King, and he will find me a kingdom.' He spoke with so much energy that he awoke. But he will never think that his dream before the fire was all a dream, nor shall I, nor, I hope, will you. We cannot all be great thinkers, poets, artists, heroes, but we may all obey the Lord Christ's words, and follow his example, and love him for his love; and if we do, we shall receive the crown which he is keeping in his heavenly cabinet for all who love his appearing. And it is possible that we may, by diligence and faithfulness, even here win a crown which we may lay at the feet of the King of kings. They are the most royal persons who most feel his royalty, and wear all their honours for his sake. And of this you may be sure that our text does not mean the glory of outside pomp and show, but the glory of mind, and heart, and soul, which the world cannot give or take away, so that by God's good help we may be among the kings and queens who bring glory into the great city of God.

J.A.H.

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW

Until the shadows flee away.—SONG OF SOLOMON 4:6.

READ not long ago a famous story about a man who lost his shadow. It was told how he sold it away to a grey old man for a purse of gold which would never get low, take out of it what you would. Well, shadows seem very light, so at first the man never felt the want of his, and he liked to feel the heavy purse of gold, from which he filled chests and chests of treasure. But people began to notice his peculiarity. They talked of the rich man that had no shadow. They began to suspect him. The children from school ran after him; the old men pointed at him; then they got to fearing him. People conversing with him would notice all at once he had no shadow and would move hurriedly away. He was shunned and boycotted. Life became a misery to him because he was not as others are. He dared not venture out till the sun was gone down, and he had to rush home whenever the moon rose. He was a perfect burden to himself. He wandered and travelled without rest or end. He fell in love, and was just going to be married, when the sad discovery was made, and it was all broken off. Misery

rose wherever he went, but chiefly in his own heart. He was like the fox who lost his tail in a trap, and all the long-tailed foxes persecuted him out of his life. This poor man tried every way to get back his shadow. He found the grey old man who bought it, and he offered him his purse and all his gold back again if he would return the shadow. This the old man would not do, but he took the shadow out of his pocket, unfolded it, and made it dance before its true owner to torment him. Then he told him he could get his shadow back in only one way, namely, by selling his soul. 'Promise me,' said the old rascal, 'that I shall have your soul when you die, and I will give you back your shadow.' Now you know, perhaps, who the old rogue was. But the poor shadowless man would not do that. So he wandered a vagabond over all the world, shunning men and shunned by them. He cursed his gold; and one day he threw the purse in disgust and anger down a deep pit. He could have no intercourse with his fellows, but sought the study of nature-plants,

and stones, and animals. He got a pair of seven-league boots and rambled easily over the earth, making wonderful scientific collections on his way, and, for all I know or am told, he may be rambling about the world still, gaining, with sorrow, deep stores of knowledge, but ever unable to win the love or the trust of men.

Perhaps some lad who took a prize in elementary botany, thinks he is not such a fool as to believe or care for a tale so silly as that. 'How could a man lose his shadow? Why should a man wish to lose it? And if he did, it wouldn't

21

make all that difference. Why, they would put a person like that in a show nowadays, and make hatfuls of money by exhibiting him round the country. And he could live happy enough.' Oh, very good, my sharp little botany boy, but I fear you are much too clever ever to be very wise. Perhaps if you had been a black slave trying to escape in a town of white folks, you would have been glad to part with that shadow upon your complexion. Perhaps, if you had been the boy who was caught mimicking the master behind his back, because he forgot his shadow was thrown on the wall in front, you might have been a little inclined to part with your shadow if it could have been managed. The sharp botany boy and the too-clever-by-half chemistry boy must stand down while I speak to the wiser children who love the wonders of a fairy tale.

Some of those tales have wisdom playing in them like shot silk, or the sun in a brook. Now you needn't always look for the wisdom, but you can listen when anybody points some of it out. So listen to me. What does the shadow mean which the man parted with for gold? Well, I think it means trouble and sorrow; such trouble as every human heart is sure to meet with if it is a loving heart at all. And what we may learn is this, that if we set our hearts upon nothing else but escaping trouble, we shall only succeed in piling up trouble of a far worse and more hopeless kind. I hear often, for example, that 'lazy people take the most pains', which is a jest with truth behind it. For the boy who has to be sent upstairs six times to wash his face, has to take a great deal

22

more trouble over it than if he had done it properly before ever he came down. And in a more serious way it is still more true. Those who are always trying to escape all pain, and who think of nothing but comfort, are sure one day to get into trouble for which there is almost no remedy.

If you say in the winter, 'It is too cold, I can't go out, and I don't want any exercise', you will get so ill and so restless that no exercise will do you any good, and you will make a hard job for the doctor. And if you say, 'I will keep my heart shut up, and I will love nobody, for those I love may be ruined, or ill, or die, and that would make me suffer'; if you say that, and grow selfish, and lay yourself out to make money and nothing more, so that you may keep clear of all life's troubles and share none of them with others, I bid you take warning from the fate of the shadowless man. He parted with his shadow for gold. He thought plenty of that would make him happy, by ridding him of the dark and haunting side of his life. But sorrow is the shadow of joy, and you can't have the one without the other. The heart that feels no sorrow is a heart that feels no love. The love of God, you remember, was in Jesus closely joined with the sorrow of God. And a heart that tries to leap off its own shadow, and to have no part or lot in the griefs of life or the woes of brethren, such a heart will always be shunned when it needs sympathy itself people feel that the heart which cannot sorrow is like the man without a shadow, an inhuman and monstrous thing. And then, however rich or selfish the shadowless heart may be, it must grow miserable when

 23

left quite alone; and it will grow restless and find no peace or comfort in anything. It will have the greatest difficulty in keeping its soul from the devil. You are almost sure, if you only think of escaping sorrow, to fall into sin, and though you may study the wonders of nature, yet you will be shut out of the hearts of men and have no share in the fellowship of Christ.

I wish you would reward me for this short sermon by learning off the following text, taken from a sermon to a child, and keeping it before you all your life. 'It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves. There are so many things wrong and difficult in the world that no man can be great—he can hardly keep himself from wickedness—unless he gives up thinking much about pleasure or rewards, and gets strength to endure what is hard and painful.'

One day, the shadows will of themselves flee away. Where is it that there are no shadows? Near the Equator. Why? Because the sun is straight

PROOF READING DRAFT I

21

over your head. Your shadow is then exactly under your feet. So, one day, when we stand far closer than we now are under the presence and light of God, the shadow of earth's trouble shall vanish. It will not be lost or stolen, but it will be trodden under our feet. We shall have conquered it in the light of the Lord. We shall stand upon it, and it will neither haunt our way, nor darken our past, nor cloud our future any more, for ever and ever.

P.T.F.

THE HEART FOUNTAIN

Keep thy heart above all that thou guardest; for out of it are the issues of life.—PROVERBS 4:23.

A TRAVELLER was going through a certain land in a time of drought. The sky was without a cloud; the sunshine was so bright and hot that the white dusty roads were painful to the eye. So were the glaring limestone rocks and the whitewashed cottages. The hot dust got into the traveller's eyes, and mouth, and nostrils, and it almost seemed to penetrate his skin. There was little grass to be seen, and what there was, was withered and brown. The air seemed to quiver with the heat. Towards evening the traveller saw in the distance a few green fields, a garden and an orchard, and wondered how the grass, and the corn, and the trees were kept alive in the parched and burning land. As he journeyed on, he perceived that right across the landscape there was a winding line of greenness and life, which, of course, he knew must be owing to a stream of water.

It was not until sunset that the traveller arrived at the farm house in the middle of the green fields, and so he determined to stay there that night. After he had rested and

refreshed himself, he walked out and saw what good use the farmer had made of a spring that flowed out of the hillside just above his house, which was at the foot of the hill. He had made trenches to carry the water this way and that, so as to keep his fields fresh and fertile, and he had made great troughs through which it ran, for his sheep and cattle to drink at. Then our traveller went up the hillside to find the spring itself, and found that the water flowed out of the rock and fell into a deep natural well, which it seemed to have hollowed for itself in the solid rock, and overflowing this basin, it went leaping, and splashing, and bubbling, and tinkling down the hillside in a merry stream. The basin or well was partly overshadowed by the rock, so that the traveller could not in the twilight see how deep it was, but he saw that something waved in the water; as he supposed, some kind of moss or water-weed.

He stretched himself upon the ground, much enjoying the evening coolness and the pleasant plash and murmur of the water.

In a little while he fancied that he heard a voice as of one who sang, and spoke, and laughed all at once, and sometimes sobbed—a voice which was *in* the murmur of the stream and yet was *not* the murmur of the stream. The song or speech was so wonderfully sweet that he wished, with a great yearning in his mind, that he could see the hidden minstrel or speaker. And while he was wishing it, the voice sang:—‘Thou wishest to see and know me, O stranger. Behold me then.’ He saw a nymph rise partly out of the hollow in the rock, a pale but beautiful maiden, whose long flowing hair made

26

a mantle for her shadowy form. And she sang to the traveller of her name, and her toil, and her thoughts, and her joys. Of course I cannot tell you the very song she sang, but only what I remember of what the traveller told me, but this is something like the song or story.

‘I am one of many sisters who dwell in the springs and streams, and never cease from toil. It is given to me to inhabit this fountain-basin and to keep it. You look and wonder what keeping it needs. I will tell you. Have you noted that more water overflows my basin than drips from the, rock above? Water bubbles up into this basin from below, and more than flows from above; but dust, and dead leaves, and withered grass are blown into it; and stones find their way into it, and these fall to the bottom and would choke the spring but for my toil. But I, with my hands, stir these things, and try to cast them out, and so keep the spring from being clogged and blocked. For if the spring should cease to flow then would the fields be withered, and the trees would die, and beasts, and birds, and men would perish. Therefore I am always at work to keep open the channels through which the water wells upward. But this is not *all* my task. The dead leaves, and grasses, and other rubbish which are drifted, and wafted, and tossed into the basin would rot, if they were allowed to rest here, and so corrupt and poison the spring, and then they who drink of my stream would suffer sickness, and perhaps would die. So I am constantly casting these things out as fast as I can, and by keeping a full flowing spring I empty out these

27

poisonous things and sweep them away with force of water.’

Then said the, traveller:—‘This is indeed good work, and you bless many by doing it; giving water for the thirst of man, and bird, and beast, and life to seed and plant. But did I not hear you sob in the midst of your song?’

‘Yes,’ answered the shadowy maiden, ‘because I sometimes fail to perform my task. For heedless men often leave heaps of foulness near, and the rain soaks through the soil, and sinks and leaks into my well full of the vileness which poisons my spring. And—’ ‘Stay,’ said the traveller, ‘pray tell me what would happen to you if the fountain should be dried up, or if it should be utterly poisoned?’

The nymph answered, ‘If the spring were to cease to flow I should be condemned to ascend into the air, and to be blown about by fierce hot winds, and to be carried into icy regions where I should be held fast under a terrible spell. But if the stream were to be poisoned, I should suffer the pains of those who, through my negligence, had come to harm by the foul and deathful water.

‘But there is not only the foolishness of men to trouble me: there are wicked hags and spiteful elves who come at times, bringing evil things, putrid messes and carcasses, which they cast into my basin to corrupt the bright, pure water. These things they do, watching and spying their chance while I sleep. For they know that if they can once cast these things in, I can scarcely get them out again, since I

28

am too frail to lift heavy weights, though I am nimble to guard against their being thrown in when I am awake.’

‘But,’ said the traveller, ‘do you, a nymph, need to sleep like creatures of flesh and blood?’

‘Not exactly like you,’ she replied; ‘a light slumber serves for my rest, but the hags and the elves have songs and spells, which, if I listen to them, overcome me with drowsiness, and then they can do more mischief in a few minutes than I can undo in hours. Therefore I sing much that I may not hear the songs which lull me into drowsiness.’

Then the traveller became aware of dusky, elfish figures, who came creeping softly, carrying in their hands and upon their backs noisome things which they wished to cast into the fountain; others wore more kindly shapes and played soothing airs upon strange instruments, and they crooned a low song which had great power to charm one to sleep; so much so that the traveller felt that he must make a strong effort to

resist it, and giving himself a shake, he rose—and the nymph had vanished; the hags and the elves were gone; no sound was to be heard except the splash and gurgle of the stream. He was alone under a sky which was besprinkled with brightening stars.

You may suppose that he had been asleep and dreamed of the nymph. But he says that it was no dream, or at least if it was a dream it has an interpretation; for our heart is a fountain, from which flows life or death for ourselves and to others. What our life will be depends upon our having right and true thoughts, good desires, kindly feelings, or the

29

opposite. But where do right thoughts, desires, and feelings come from? From where but from God himself? From him they flow and well up into our hearts as water welled upward into the nymph's basin. But if in our hearts there are useless and evil thoughts, they block up the channel through which God's Spirit flows into us; so that our very first duty is to see to it that the way is kept open for the influences—that is, the *inflowings*—of God's Spirit into our hearts. And the nymph who must see to it is watchfulness, and, the tools with which she must work are good books, above all the Bible, and the habit of prayer. It is to be remembered, that just as a spring may be choked and clogged by rubbish until the water ceases to flow, so our hearts may be choked and clogged against the inflow of right thoughts and good feelings, if we become careless and neglect to read and pray. But it is also true that if we are watchful, and use the right means, then there will flow into our hearts a continual stream of worthy thoughts and pure desires.

Our nymph has also another thing to do, and that is to get rid, as fast as possible, of evil things which are wafted and tossed into our minds. We may be among school-fellows, or playmates, or workmates, whose talk is bad, who are greedy, and cunning, and quarrelsome, and disobedient. We may be induced to read foolish and evil books. So the poison may find its way into our hearts, and our character may be tainted or even ruined. And there are always people to be found who wish to make others as bad as they are themselves—people who answer to the elves and hags in the

30

story—people who say, 'O, never mind! Don't be so particular. Don't be always thinking about right and wrong, but enjoy yourself.' Even friends who love us, may sometimes try to dissuade us from right-doing,

and our nymph must keep broad awake indeed, if we are to resist the soothing lullaby which they sing to us.

Now, was there any meaning in what was said about the nymph's being shadowy and frail—that she was alert to prevent the foul things being thrown into her basin, but not strong to lift them out? Yes, there was meaning in that also. If we are watchful, if when a nasty, selfish thought, or a covetous desire, or a temptation to tell a lie, or shirk a duty offers itself, we say at once, 'Get thee behind me, Satan', the evil thing will be kept out of our heart-fountain; but, if we dally and play with the thought, we shall find it hard to be rid of it even when we want to be rid of it. We shall find that our nymph is not strong to lift heavy weights from the depths of the basin.

You notice that we are talking of the *heart*, not of the hands, or the eyes, or the tongue. For if our hearts are right then *all* will be right: if our thoughts and wishes are kept pure, our words and deeds will certainly be pure also. But if our thoughts, and wishes, and feelings are evil, then, no matter how much we try to say nothing and do nothing that is evil, we are sure both to say and do what is wrong as sure as an impure stream is to flow from a poisoned spring. If the inside be right, the outside will be right; but if the inside be wrong, no matter what pains we may take

31

with the outside, it will be wrong too. That is the great lesson of the wise man's saying, and of many another solemn word of Holy Scripture.

You noticed, perhaps, that the nymph in trying to keep her fountain pure did so by 'keeping a full flowing spring, and thus sweeping away poisonous matters by force of water'. Of course you see what it means, that the best way to drive off evil thoughts is by having a heart full of good ones, to be so busy with pure and kind feelings that we have no room for selfish and bad feelings, to keep our hearts open to the Spirit of God.

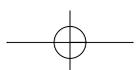
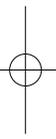
Perhaps you say to yourself, 'Unhappily, my heart-fountain is not pure. My nymph has slept, and much that is wrong has come into the spring, and I feel that I am to blame.' Remember that 'if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. Remember that our Father God, who loved us so much as to give us his beloved Son, is always ready to help us to do this thing, which is more important than all other things—to guard our hearts, since out of it are the issues of life, even of life eternal.



PROOF READING DRAFT I

27

J.A.H.



THE SNOW-MAIDEN

I saw a great white throne.—REVELATION 20.

ONCE I was travelling with a friend in a land that is very far off. It was Saturday evening, and we were near to a village where we meant to stay till Monday. We were very tired and glad to rest on Sunday, for during the week we had travelled many hundred miles. The evening was rainy, cloudy, and chill. There were mighty hills round us and the village was quite shut in by them. But we could see none. For the clouds shut us in still closer. We could just see at times, through a corner of mist, a white patch in the distance. It was the lower end of a glacier, or great field of perpetual ice. We went to bed and slept soundly. Next morning the sun was shining long before we were awake. As soon as we lifted our heads from the pillow what do you think we saw? We saw a mighty mountain which looked as if it were only as far away as from Hyde Park to the Bank. How high do you think it was? It was more than two miles high. If we had been in a boat on the sea it would have been close upon three miles straight up to the

* The Jungfrau.

top. But from where we were it was about two miles high. Think of that, a mountain two miles high! When we rose we spent most of the day gazing upon this great and terrible sight. I never saw such a mountain before, so *high, and yet so near!* But that was not all, there was something more wonderful than that about it. What do you think was the colour of it? Black with earth? No. Brown with heather? No. Grey with smoke? No. Green with grass? No. It was pure white. And the higher you went up the whiter it grew; and just near the top, not on the top, but near it, there was a smooth, steep white cone,* like a sugar loaf, or like a young mountain growing out of the old one, or sitting on its shoulder. And the whole huge mountain glowed and sparkled in the sun like a great white cloud that had come down from its voyage across the sky to rest for a little upon the earth. And the little white horn near the top of it

shone brighter than all, shone like silver, like a silver horn on its forehead. All shone and sparkled the more the higher you carried your eye, as if the mountain itself was blazing with joy the nearer it got to heaven. And the great winds were ever blowing upon the silver horn, only we were too far off to hear the tune they played. For though the mountain seemed so near, it was really ten miles from the village where we gazed. So we could not hear the awful tune that the winds kept playing on that white silver horn. And they call the mountain the Maiden, because it is a white thing of exceeding purity, and radiance, and dignity, and peace.

* The Silberhorn.

34

But what made the hill so white? Was it a hill of chalk? Was it like the white cliffs you can see at Dover rising out of the blue sea? No; it was far whiter than that. It was dazzling white. And if you were upon the top with the sun shining, you would find it almost blinding white. And when bold men go up they have to put on coloured spectacles to preserve their eyes from the glare. Chalk cliffs are not so white as that. And then the chalk cliffs are always the same; but this great mountain is white-washed every year several times. And at those times there is a great curtain hung up over it so that you cannot see the white-washing, and then when it is taken down, the mountain is gleaming brighter and more blinding than ever. You know now, don't you, what that whiteness is? It is snow and ice; and the white-washing is done by huge snow-storms, especially in the winter time. And the curtain that is let down to hide the process is the clouds that cover up the mountain in storm time. And very likely on the Saturday when we arrived it was getting another coat of this heavenly paint, for the curtain was down quite low, and nothing was to be seen.

Do you remember that story in the New Testament about the transfiguration of Christ? What does it say? It says that one day Jesus took Peter, and James, and John, and brought them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep (just like my

35

friend and me, who were sleeping with heavy heads while the morning sun was shining white outside our window upon the transfigured hill). And it says, moreover, that a bright cloud overshadowed them and they were sore afraid. And they heard strange voices up there like the silver blowing of unseen winds upon holy horns. And their heads were turned, and when they spoke to each other they hardly knew what they said, they were so bewildered and amazed.

Now when I hear that story I think about the great hill clothed in white, and the tall white cone that shines upon its shoulder. Sometimes, as they call the mountain the Maiden, it makes me think of Mary the mother of Jesus, carrying her shining boy upon her shoulder, and beaming herself upon the whole world in radiant joy. But at other times I like to picture the tall cone, two miles up there, as an image of Christ transfigured on the mountain-top in raiment as white as the light. It is like Jesus in glory at the top of the world.

In the Book of Revelation, and in my text, it speaks of a great white throne and one that sat on it, from whose face earth's shadows fled away like scattered clouds. Now, that is just what this mountain showed us as in a picture. It was like the judge of all the earth sitting on a great white throne high and lifted up. And the heaven was far, far away above, and the earth was far away below, as if they had fled from the face of the awful and glorified One that sat upon the mighty throne.

36

Some days afterwards we went nearer this great white throne of God, and it seemed more terrible and glorious still. We heard thunderings and voices proceeding out of the throne. There were fearful precipices of rock in the mountain, and those again are covered with great crags of ice. Now when the sun shines upon this ice it melts it a little, and huge pieces break off, and fall down every hour almost, at the hot season of the year. Men call these avalanches; and sometimes they fall many hundreds of feet, and they are broken as they fall, so that when they come to the bottom they are crushed to powder though they started from the top as blocks of many tons weight. Well, as they fall from rock to rock they make a noise like thunder. And as the place is quite still, the sound is heard a long way off. And it is caught up by the echoes, and magnified, and carried up valleys where you can't see the avalanches at all. And then it is very mysterious, and the mountain is like the throne

of God in the Book of Revelation from which came forth thunderings and deep voices. The sound of the avalanche is like the voice of God. And about that throne which John saw there was a sea of crystal glass. And that is like the sea of ice round the waist of these mighty hills that I saw.

Now the people who live always near these great mountains grow so accustomed to their beauty and splendour that they get to think nothing of it. But is it not the same with ourselves? The presence of God stands over us every day. He fills the blue sky wherever we look up. He dwells

37

in the green fields and woods where we walk and play, yet we don't see him, and we seldom think of him. It is as if we had always a cloud round us which veiled him from our sight. Sometimes we wake up on Sundays and find him near. We feel that he is standing over us, very grave and very high, yet very near. Then, when Monday comes, the cloud comes down again, and we go about trying to get money out of each other, and forgetful of the great white thing that is so close and yet so hidden from us. That should not be. We should lift our eyes more often to the hills from whence cometh our help. We should try to feel that God is over us and near us. And if we know that, it will help us as nothing else can.

There is a great white throne always set up among us. It hangs over this London unsoiled by fog or smoke. We cannot see it, but we can love it. Its name is Righteousness and Truth. It is God that sits on it. We cannot see him, but we can love him. We can serve him. Will you be courtiers of Righteousness and Truth?

Do not think because the thought of this throne is a dreadful thought that the face of him that sits on the throne is only a terrible face. That face of God is the loveliest, sweetest thing we know. When the sun shines on the dazzling snow of the mighty mountain-top it is a sight that human eyes can hardly bear; but I have seen it otherwise than that.

I have seen the setting sun cast a lovely glow of soft colour upon that white, pure cone on the shoulder of the

38

hill; and when the sun has gone down the great white figure becomes a tall grey form, like a pillar of cloud. Then there comes back upon it a rosy light, an after-glow, which makes the maiden mountain blush to her very brow. It is just as if God had bidden the world good-night, but

came back for a moment to have another look, as a mother comes back to her child when she has said good-night once, to take another kiss and say it all over and over again.

As this great severe mountain can sometimes look so sweet and gentle, so the most high God has the richest kindness in His face. Where do we see the kindness in the face of God? In the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not altogether a dreadful judge—a white-throned king. He is the same who kissed the children and was kind to poor women, and made simple folks love him. Yea, and they were ready to die for him; and they would not have done that if he had frightened them, and nothing more. Would they?

P.T.E.

39

BROWN-COAT AND FINE FEATHERS; OR, HUMILITY.

*Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another:
for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.—1
PETER 5:5.*

OUR story is of two boys who were thrown upon the shore of a strange country. How they came there is not our business just now, but what happened to them there. As they toiled up the steep, pebbly beach they suddenly heard a voice behind them, and turning round, they saw a tiny lady, rather old they thought, with silvery hair smoothed back under a grey hood, wearing a plain grey gown. But plain and old as she was, she yet seemed bright and sweet and good: there was a brightness in her eyes like the shell of the sea on a sunny day, and something in her voice which made the boys think of the splash of playful waves. 'Welcome, my brave boys, to the island,' she said, in her free, cheery way, 'Come to my house, and rest, and refresh yourselves, and I will equip you for your travels in this new country.' Right willingly they accepted the invitation, and

40

followed her, as she went up the high beach, and then down into a pleasant hollow where a little cottage stood. Here they rested and ate a good meal, and then looked about them and wondered what would come next. They were not kept wondering long. The lady opened a box and took out of it clothing of strong, homely-looking stuff, and said, 'I try to befriend all who come as strangers to this island, and, my chief gift is clothing of the sort you see'. The boys could scarcely help laughing, for there did not seem much to be admired in the old lady's present. She saw the smile—she had seen it on many faces before—and she read their thoughts easily. 'You think,' she said, 'that my gift is not worth much, but you will soon think differently. He who wears one of the coats of my making will be warm in cold weather and cool in the heat of summer; he will find that this stout cloth resists briars and thorns, and that it will defend him from the claws of many beasts and from the arrows of savages; and there is a certain virtue in the stuff which tends to keep off disease, and to make the wearer healthy and strong.'

The boys began to think that the lady's gifts were well worth having, and they thanked her and put on the clothes. When they came out of the little chamber where they had dressed, the lady sat silent awhile, and the boys looked at each other, and wondered whether they ought to go now. 'Yes,' she said, answering their looks, 'you must go now; but before you go, listen to what I have to say. You are sure to meet with a lady, not an elderly person like me, but

41

a most bewitching lady, and she will try to coax you to throw away the garments which I have given you, and to take much prettier ones from her. She is a wicked creature who only wishes to do you hurt.' Then the lady opened the cottage door; the boys made their best bow and went out to meet such adventures as should befall them.

They had not gone very far before they saw a carriage drawn by two ponies, and in the carriage sat a dainty lady, gaily and richly dressed. When they came near, the lady checked her ponies, and leaning forward said, 'You dear boys! just landed, I suppose; and that frumpish old cross-patch has wheedled you into wearing her livery.' The boys looked at the lady and at each other and then at the lady again, but could not find a word to say. The lady was so very, *very* charming. She went on. 'That wicked old thing pretended to be your friend, of course, but she really means to make you her slaves; and as it is the law of the country that everybody who wears her livery must be reckoned to belong to her, you must throw off those hideous clothes at once, or you will be seized as her property.'

Now, the boys did not know what to say or think, for how were they to know which of the two ladies spoke the truth? Both seemed nice ladies,—both spoke very kindly, and each accused the other of being wicked. One of them must be wicked. Perhaps both were. What were the poor fellows to do? 'Get up into my carriage, dear boys,' the young lady said, 'and I will take you to my house, and clothe you in something better than the garb of slaves.' Not to

42

make too long a story, one of the boys chose to go with her, and the other determined that he would believe the old lady, and so refused the beautiful lady's invitation. As I don't know his name, we may call him Brown-coat, not as a nickname, for nicknames axe vulgar and silly, but just as a label. Well, Brown-coat set off to explore the country.

He soon became sure that he had been wise or fortunate in believing the elder lady, for when he was upon the hill-tops, where the wind blew bleak and chill, his clothing kept him nicely warm; and when he was trudging through sheltered valleys, where the air was close and warm, he felt comfortably cool.

One day he encountered a tribe of savages, dwarfish and cowardly creatures, armed with bows and arrows. They hid themselves among the brushwood and shot at him from their covert, but Brown-coat soon learned to laugh at these warriors, for their arrows did not go through the stout cloth in which he was clad. And once or twice, when he was attacked by wild beasts, he found that his plain garments were as good as a coat of mail.

So, being freed from many fears, Brown-coat gave his mind to the things about him. He found abundance of food,—fruits, and nuts, and roots of many kinds; small game which he soon learned how to catch, and fishes in the streams and shell-fish on the shore. Having food and raiment, Brown-coat travelled about the island and learned the language of some of the tribes, and their manners and customs. He became quite friendly with the people, who were mostly

43

ignorant and yet glad to learn. So Brown-coat helped them to improve their ways, and did a good deal to civilise them. And, having plenty of leisure, he took note of the rivers, which were navigable, and which were not; and of the bays on the coast, which would yield shelter, and which would not. He found wild plants which could be improved by cultivation, and tried many experiments with them. In short, he was always learning something when he was not teaching, and became a great favourite with some of the tribes to whom he gave useful hints. 'Good, good fellow, Brown-coat,' they said; 'not eagle, not peacock, not jay,—only plain partridge; but good fellow.' They meant that he was not a great warrior, or a handsome man, or an eloquent one, only a plain fellow, but very useful.

So Brown-coat went on his explorations, and often wondered what had become of his old comrade. At last he met with him. And this was how it happened. One day, after threading his way through a thick forest, he came to an open glade across which a great procession was marching, a multitude of savages who were beating gongs, blowing horns, and waving coloured rags about. At the head of the procession was his old

companion, in a dress of all the colours of the rainbow, with feathers, and fringes, and tags, and streamers, and little bells, and jingling chains,—more frippery and finery than I can describe.

Fine-feathers, for so I think we must call him, was seated upon a sort of litter, which some of the savages carried upon their shoulders, and it was evident that the procession and

44

the horrible noise were meant in honour of him. Browncoat went forward, but as soon as the archers caught sight of him, they sent a flight of arrows at him. However, they did not hurt him, and when Fine-feathers recognised his old companion, he commanded the archers to cease shooting, and waved his hand in a lordly way for his friend to come near.

After the savages had concluded their performance, the two went together to the tent of Fine-feathers to hear all about each other's adventures. Fine-feathers said that the beautiful lady had been most kind to him. She had endued him in the grand clothing he wore, and had introduced him to a tribe, who had gone wild with joy at having such a gorgeous chief set over them. And very proud he was of the post

It came out, however, bit by bit, that Fine-feathers had not an exceedingly comfortable time of it. He was obliged to be always thinking of his fine attire, devising new ornaments and gew-gaws to please the savages. His gay raiment was so heavy that he could not take much exercise, and he was obliged to be careful that he did not scratch himself with the tags, and beads, and metal-frrippery, which adorned his person. It was impossible for him to go through a thicket, because he would tear his clothes. He dare not wade through a brook, or be out in the rain, lest the colour should be washed out. His fine clothes were thin, though they were so heavy, and he had much ado to keep himself warm in bitter weather. He admitted that he suffered many disagreeable things, but when Browncoat said that he thought the

45

gift had proved an unlucky one, Fine-feathers answered that Browncoat was a simpleton, for his royal dignity depended upon his fine apparel. When Browncoat rejoined that *he* did not see much royal dignity in being attended by a troop of yelling savages, Fine-feathers looked for a moment as if he would like to order in the executioners to take Brown-

coat's life. However, they finished their conversation without a quarrel, and parted in a friendly sort of way.

A long time rolled by before they saw each other again. They met one day upon the same spot where they had landed, and saw a ship coming towards the island. It proved to be the ship of the king of the country of which the island was a part. And when the king and his courtiers and guards had landed, it turned out that the king had come on account of the strangers. He did not at first seem to notice Brown-coat, for Fine-feathers pushed forward and gave himself the airs of a great prince—or what he thought the airs of one. 'Who is this poor simpleton?' said the king. 'Strip him of his ridiculous trappings, and give him a decent blanket.'

A sad spectacle poor Fine-feathers was when his frippery was taken away. His thin spindle-shanks, his round shoulders, his pot-bellied shape, his shrivelled arms, were dreadful to see. For you know he had taken no exercise, braved nothing, toiled at nothing, thought about nothing, except wearing his grand toggery.

Then the king looked at Brown-coat, and asked, 'Who is this robust fellow?' Brown-coat's bright; intelligent face, and sturdy limbs, and manly bearing, seemed to please the king

46

much. Just then the quiet little lady somehow appeared upon the scene, and said, 'Your majesty, this youth knows the island well, and has done great good to many of the people. Is it your pleasure that his robe be reversed?' 'Yes', said the king. When it was done, lo! Brown-coat was Brown-coat no longer, for the other side of his tunic was fit for a real prince, and he was admitted into the king's court as such.

The tale is true, true in its spirit and meaning for us all. The brown coat is the garment of humility, which the Apostle counsels us to wear. That is, humble thoughts about ourselves. You may, perhaps, be handsome, or clever, or strong, or rich, but that is no reason for putting on the foolish finery of vanity. I don't mean, of course, that you should pretend that you are not strong or clever, if you are so. If there had been room for it, I should have put something into the story about mock-modesty,—false humility, but I hope you don't need to hear about that. Boys and girls are generally too healthy and wholesome to need a sermon or a story on that subject. You are more likely to be tempted to think a great deal of yourself. If you should be, remember how many people there are who excel you in the very things of which you are tempted to be

vain. Remember, too, that compared with the angels of God, whom we hope to see and know shortly, the best and greatest of us are like simple, half-savage islanders. Remember, also, that you are strong, or clever, or beautiful, not by your getting, but by God's giving. Think also of the great life, the endless life before you, and

47

that all the praise men can give you is very much like the gong-beating and horn-blowing of the tribes who made so much fuss of Fine-feathers. Remember that you will have to appear before the great King, and a noble Court, where nothing but shame can come of the frippery of vanity.

There is great truth in all that was said about the comfort and safety of the garment of humility. People are often miserable because others speak slightingly of them, or do not seem to think highly of them, which is very silly; for nothing is more sure than that some people will be found who will think the wisest man a foolish one, and the best man a bad one. There are many arrows and thorns and briers in the world, which sorely wound vain people; but if we think humbly of ourselves, we shall be able to go on cheerfully without being much troubled by them. It is quite true, as some one says, that 'to be clothed with humility is to be clad in armour'. Note again, that it is the humble who grow stronger and stronger, and become ever more serviceable to others, while vain people grow weaker, and more foolish, and useless every day of their lives.

Ask God, then, to clothe you in the humble robe which the Lord of glory wore, and bye-and-bye you will find that it is a robe of state and splendour,—beautiful in the eyes of the angels and of God.

J.A.H.

PRISON LIGHTS

A light shined in the cell.—ACTS 12:7.

I HAVE heard of people who describe this life of ours altogether as a prison. That is not your opinion, I hope. Nobody who enjoys a game of cricket is very likely to think of life as a prison house.

But do not forget to whom you owe it that you are so free to enjoy the open fields and all the winds of heaven. We should have had no such liberty except for men who lost their freedom for freedom's sake, who were not afraid of a prison, and who went down to agony and death with a light in their soul brighter than the glory of the grass or the splendour of the sun. Life to them was full of hardship and bondage; but they had light in the cell. And it may be that one day for you life shall become narrow, your work a bondage, and your very body the prison-cell of a weary spirit. Then may God send you his angel and his inward light!

Meanwhile for you, in your young liberty, the winds are his angels, and his light is the glorious sun upon the smiling earth.

But about this light in the cell. Why should we not speak of it, free and gladsome as you are? If anybody should take you, you would go and see a prison, would you not? And you would follow the man with the candle down into the deepest dungeons of the old castles of the bad old times? Very well; come with me.

First, come to the Zoological Gardens. Never mind the monkeys. Let us get on to the lion-house. I want you to look at that tiger. To and fro, to and fro like that he will go for hours, along the few feet of bars that make the front of his cage, with his shoulders down, and his scowling brow, and his soft, heavy, unwearable stride. He is in a cell, poor captive. But what light is it in his eye? Patience? Pride? No, but a dull, fierce gleam which is no comforting light, but a tormenting fire, like a boiling sea in a socket of rock, or a worm which gnaws for ever and dieth not.

Now come to the birds. Let us go straight to the eagles. What noble prisoners these are! They fill me with sorrow. I want to be like the sailor who came home from years in a French prison, and the first thing he

did with the little money he had was to buy a cageful of birds which a man was selling, just for the pleasure of setting them free. Your eagle does not ramp about his cell. No, he is of more royal blood than the tiger. His throne was in the heavens, and he used to range, not the dark jungles, but the shining clouds. He has learned from the proud blue sky and the careless crags a dignity to the tiger unknown. He is a noble captive, and there he sits with neck unbent, with royal beak, and a

50

light in his eye more grand, more calm, yes, and more powerful, than the light in the tiger's cell. What beams in that eagle's unquailing eye? It is not the embers of ferocity, but the star of pride. But if you ever come yourself to fill any kidd of cell, I do not recommend you to light either the tiger's glare or the eagle's fire. There is a holier, a nobler, and a mightier beam.

Now I will take you into my spring garden. Yonder is my house, my cell, where I must sit and write these words of light for you. I wander up and down that walk, and round that centre plot when I need a little change. I am caged, but I am no tiger (am I?), and I have other than the eagle's light. I am circled in with budding trees, and I have a light which makes me see their delicate flakes of timid green to be like a fall of coloured snow. And yonder spot, where the long grass is streaked down the slope (as if the fairies had been sending the earth to sleep by combing its green hair), I have a light which makes it seem like an emerald waterfall spreading away into a river of turf, and tulips are coming out upon islands of soil like rubies which the stream has washed bare. I have a light, as I sit in my cell, which shows me the vanished crocus like a sweet guest gone, who was little trouble and much delight in a month there will be a blaze of rhododendrons in that middle plot like the very glory of the Lord shining round about. And my light shows me these thrushes and starlings to be dark dots like the notes in God's music-book, shy visitors like his angels of happiness. And then inside my cell there is a little

51

candle of the Lord, a little girl; but I won't say any more about her light, lest you might be jealous and she might be proud. You see I have much light in my cell, of neither the tiger's fierceness nor the eagle's pride, but of beauty and love. But, oh dear! men are worse than children,

and sometimes I am not content, and I do so long for the light of God upon the high and shining hills of far-off lands.

Once I got a lesson and a rebuke. You remember the Wars of the Roses, the Red Rose, the House of Lancaster, and John of Gaunt. Well, I went to see Lancaster not long ago, and the great old castle, now a jail, where John lived. Lancaster commands a lovely view. You look across the silver stretch of Morecambe Bay, and your eye rests on the hills around the English Lakes. There is Black Combe, Coniston Old Man, Helvellyn, and far to the right is Ingleborough. It was early March when I was there. The snow lay upon the mountains, and they shone in the sun as if they were the great white throne, and the waters of the Bay were like the crystal sea, and over all was the living Light. My heart went forth, and I began to pine for the sight of mightier snows in foreign lands. We were standing upon the Castle roof, and the dungeons were beneath our feet, modern cells, and old, old dungeons built by the Romans deep in the ground with neither light nor heat, nor breath of air. Then I thought how dreadful is the beauty of nature, like the beauty of the tiger's skin. Here I am standing to gaze upon it on the summit of deep, old misery, among the relics of cruelty and

52

wrong. What did those beautiful hills ever care for the poor prisoners that for centuries have come and gone, deep shut away from their light? How could I help remembering that I should not have been so free to enjoy the sight, but for the struggles and captivities of such men as some of those who had lived and died beneath my feet? I had the light of Liberty which is more than the glory of a thousand hills. Ah! there is a more glorious light than the beauty of the world, and it comes not from the throne of Nature but from him who sits thereon. We went down from the roof, and visited the dungeons. We were kindly taken with lights down many nasty steps to those old Roman cells. When we came to one of them, our guide said, "This is where George Fox was confined". All of a sudden I felt a kind of fear. I felt I was on holy ground, the walls were holy, and it was holy dimness that crept around. If George Fox lay days and nights here, then somebody had been here far greater and grander than he. George was a man who lived more than two hundred years ago, a man who spoke much with Jesus, and who saw and heard Jesus as it is given to few either to hear or see. If George Fox lay here in the dark it was not dark for him. Jesus had been here. These windowless

walls had shone once as the sun shines not on the sunniest hills. To George Fox there had been a light in that cell such as never was upon sea or land. He was one of the men who were much in prison, but who were haunted, absolutely haunted with glory, and filled with *the* Light of men. We are freer today because of George's prisons, and his prisons were more bright

53

and open to him than most men's liberty, because of the visitation of Jesus to his soul.

I tell you in that dungeon I felt it was a solemn place, and there was something about it like what you feel on entering a room from which a lady has just gone out, only much higher than that. When I returned to the light of day, it seemed almost common; and I looked again at the hills, and I was more sure than ever that the light of the Lord which shines in the heart and soul is fairer than the sun, and clearer than the moon, and more terrible to the foes of freedom than an army with banners.

P.T.F.

54

THE ENCHANTER PERIM; OR, COURAGE AND
CONTENTMENT

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.—
PHILIPPIANS 4:11.

AS a youth stood at his father's door one morning, watching a procession go by, a man stepped out of the ranks and went up to him, and said, 'I have a message for you'. 'From whom?' enquired the youth. 'From the King,' said the man, 'and here is the proof', he continued, drawing a package out of his knapsack. 'This is the king's picture, and his orders are that you repair to his Court, where you will receive further instructions and find employment in the king's service.' 'But,' said the youth, 'how can I go?' 'Follow the road, and do the best you can', replied the other.

Before the lad had opportunity to ask another question the man was gone. The youth opened the small parcel which had been so suddenly thrust into his hands, and found that it contained a miniature portrait, with what seemed to be the royal autograph at the back of it. Right noble

55

and king-like the face was, and the boy was at once on fire with the wish to see the king and to enter his service.

Not long afterwards he set out to find his way to the Court, taking the high road which led to the capital city. Gaily he marched along, with shoulders back, and chin in the air, now humming a song, now whistling, but often thinking and dreaming in silence. He expected to see strange sights on the road and to have fine adventures, and he wondered a good deal what employment the king would give him. At one moment, he thought he should like to be a soldier and rise to high command; at another, he hoped he might become a king's messenger, and go about the world and see strange lands and peoples; at another, that he might be made a librarian, and have a chance to see and read the best books.

On he went, wondering and dreaming, until he was startled by an old woman, who was standing by the roadside,—an old woman in a ragged dress, and a faded red shawl, who had a couple of pails at her feet. The

old woman said, 'Good day to you, young sir, and a pleasant journey and a happy ending, for sure your bonny bright face deserves it. Would ye mind helping a poor old woman, for my husband's gone away after some nonsense or other, and the pigs are starving, and there's nobody but myself to carry them their swill, and 'tis a long way, and my poor old arms are aching, and my breathing's very bad today, and it's killed dead entirely I am.'

Our young gentleman felt mightily indignant at first. A

56

young man who was on his way to Court to be asked to carry hog-wash! But when he looked at the poor old woman, and saw how she panted (though she had breath enough to make such a long speech), and how pinched and thin her face was, the young hero pitied her with all his heart, and snatching up her pails, he carried them to her cottage, though his arms ached before he arrived there. The old woman blessed him fervently, and ended by saying, 'Wait ye here a moment; you shall lose nothing by your kindness, my good young gentleman'. And she bustled about, and took a handful of salt, which she wrapped in paper, and a pair of old spectacles, and a common thread purse containing a battered penny, and a little brown bird, whose feathered coat was most rumpled and shabby, and offered these choice presents to the young traveller. He had something to do to keep from laughing at her, but as the old woman seemed very anxious that he should receive her gifts, and he did not wish to hurt her feelings, he took the things, bade her good-bye and trudged away on his journey.

The bird was quite tame and nestled in his bosom, or perched upon his shoulder quite contentedly. The other things he stowed away in his pockets, though he was at first inclined to throw them into the road as soon as he was out of sight of the old dame's cottage.

Our hero's next hap was to be overtaken by a sprightly young man, with whom he had much pleasant talk, but after parting company with him, the youth discovered that his purse—his own purse, not the old woman's gift—was gone. That

57

night he was obliged to beg permission to sleep in a stable, and he was about to turn in, hungry as he was, when he remembered the battered penny in the old woman's purse. With that he bought a pennyworth of bread, and so satisfied his hunger. As he was munching his dry bread, he

bethought him of the paper of salt, and opening it, took out a pinch and scattered it upon his bread. To his great astonishment his supper became delicious. 'Ah,' said the young fellow, 'is there something magical in the old lady's gift?' Then he proceeded to what people call experimental verification, that is, he first ate a bit of bread without salt, and then a bit with salt, and was satisfied that the delightful flavour was due to the salt. Of course, he carefully wrapped up the remainder for future use. Then he lay down and tried to sleep, but not being accustomed to such quarters, he was far from comfortable, and tossed about some time, thinking about the pickpocket, who had robbed him of the means to sleep in a cosy bed at some decent inn. While he lay thinking, and looking vacantly at the little horn window of the stable, through which a pale glimmer of moonshine came in, he remembered the spectacles, which he had in his breast pocket. He took them out, lest he should break them, and in a whim, put them upon his nose. No sooner had he done so than he cried out aloud. The spectacles were as wonderful as the salt. The youth saw through them a room beautifully furnished, a comfortable bed in the room, and on the bed a man tossing restlessly, either in pain of body, or distress of mind. The scene vanished and another

58

appeared. A company of ragged wretches huddled together in a damp, windy, underground tunnel, shivering with cold and utterly miserable. The youth took off the spectacles and put them carefully into a hole in the wall, and said to himself, 'Come, my boy, you have had a good supper: here is plenty of clean straw, and over you a good roof: let us have no whimpering'. In a few minutes he was fast asleep, and slept till morning. But with the morning, hunger came, and the youth thought, 'The one penny I had is gone', and with that he took the old purse out of his pocket, and, lo! there was another penny in it. 'How could I have overlooked this second penny?' he asked himself; but he did not trouble himself long about that, but bought a penny loaf, and, with a pinch of salt, made an excellent breakfast.

It would be impossible to tell you all our young hero's adventures, for he was a long time upon his journey, and many curious things occurred during it; so I must tell you only the most remarkable of them. One sultry day, as the youth was going through what they call in Yorkshire a 'ginnel', that is, a very narrow lane between high walls, at a turn of the lane, there stood a horse, a great brute with a wicked eye and his

ears laid back, blocking up the path. The walls were too high and too smooth to climb: the horse would not budge. When the youth tried to edge past, the brute squeezed him against the wall, and made as if he would bite. After trying for some time to pass the horse, but all to no purpose, the youth suddenly seized his mane, and swung himself on to the horse's back. All at

59

once the animal put up his ears, gave a swish with his tail, and then went quietly backwards, until there was room to turn round, when he jogged along the youth's way, with the youth on his back, as comfortably as possible. And the road that day was such that our hero was glad indeed to be upon the great brute; there were several streams to cross, which the youth could not have crossed on foot, but the enormous horse strode through rushing water where it was, shallow, and swam across it when it was deep, as though it was sport to him. That evening, when the youth came to an inn, he slid from his steed's back, intending to stable him for the night, and to make enquiry about his owner; but no sooner had he set foot on the ground than the horse threw up his heels and was away like the wind.

The evening was not to pass without adventure. The youth had settled himself in comfort at the inn, and having earned a little money, he ordered a good meal, being tremendously hungry. The host was a most obliging person, and was busily seeing about supper, and the lad was eating a bit of bread to take off the sharp edge of his appetite, when a large dog came into the room, and curled himself up at the young traveller's feet. When the host came in, bringing a hot and tempting dish and a bottle of some kind of wine, the dog jumped up, and somehow the host stumbled over him, and the supper was scattered on the not very clean floor, and the bottle was broken and the wine all spilled. The poor lad was too hungry to wait for another dish to be cooked for him, though the host was quite anxious that he

60

should do so, so he satisfied his hunger with bread and cheese, and drank fair water. His troubles with the dog were not yet over. It proved that the dog did not belong to the host, who had supposed that he was his guest's property. Both the host and the lad tried to turn the dog out of doors, but he became furious, and as he was a big, savage animal, they were obliged to let him do as he liked, and what he liked was to go and

lie down on the bed which had been prepared for the young traveller. When any one came near the bed, the dog growled and showed his teeth. There was no other bed to spare in the house, so that the tired traveller was forced to seek such rest as could be had on a wooden settle in the common room of the inn. The landlord came in several times after the youth had lain down for the night, 'just to see,' he said, 'whether his guest was comfortable'. At last the weary boy fell asleep, but he had scarcely done so when the dog began to make hideous noise, now barking wildly, now howling dolefully. Sleep was impossible, and very early in the morning the youth gladly quitted the house, and set off on his journey. He was not pleased to find that the dog was trotting steadily behind him, as he did for several miles, but just as, the youth entered a great town, the dog slunk away and was seen no more.

A much more agreeable adventure happened one day, when the youth was plodding on, weary, foot-sore, and a little disheartened, for he seemed to be no nearer the king's court, and there were even people who told him that there was no such place as that he was enquiring about. While

61

he was toiling along, tired and down-hearted, a passing carriage drew up, and a lady who seemed fit to be a queen, the youth thought, invited him to take a seat, drove him to a house the like of which he had never seen, gave him a good dinner and delicious fruit, showed him rare and beautiful things, and talked to him about them in a delightful way, and played sweet music to him, until what with fatigue, and what with overpowering pleasure, he was glad to go to rest in the pretty chamber made ready for him. In the morning the youth woke up greatly refreshed, but found himself on a mossy bank in a wood; the only thing to prove that he had not dreamed all that he had enjoyed being a purse of gold, that he found in his pocket. Cheered, but a good deal puzzled, he went on, and shortly afterwards came to a town which, he had heard, was famous for a kind of college of learned and wise men. At this place our traveller thought that he might learn true tidings about the royal court, and, perhaps, come to understand the strange things which had happened to him.

As anybody might go to the sages with a question, the youth made his way to them, and found that a number of them were assembled in a hall and holding a great discussion. A grey bearded gentleman in a gown was making a speech when the young fellow entered, and this

was the substance of it:—He had discovered that there was an Enchanter in the land, an Enchanter whose name was Perim; and this Perim was a most capricious and whimsical being. ‘Sometimes,’ the sage said, ‘Perim disguised himself as a beautiful lady, and

62

behaved to people for a while in the kindest fashion. Sometimes, Perim transformed himself into a vicious horse and attacked people sometimes into a ferocious dog, full of annoying tricks sometimes into other and more terrific shapes, such as a lion or a serpent; but, in one shape or other, this wicked, wilful Perim meddled with everybody, and did as he pleased with them.’

Another sage rose and made a speech. He said ‘that the previous speaker was in error. Perim could not do as he pleased with everyone. If a man was brave and wise, he could conquer or outwit Perim. Indeed, he had known of people who had seized and tamed him, and used him as they chose; and in short, it was quite open, to anyone to do so.’ Then our young man ventured to get up and tell his adventures, and to say that he hoped the king might do something with this troublesome Perim. Then there arose a great tumult in the hall, for a number of the sages all got upon their legs at the same moment, in order to tell the young man that Perim *was* the king, and a very troublesome king; but when education was so far advanced that every man, woman, and child in the country knew the true reason why it was of no use to try to hatch chickens out of hardboiled eggs, Perim would be put down, and all would be well. Other sages rose to contradict this, and to say that Perim would never be subdued until everybody could repeat backwards, and forwards, and crosswise, the story of ‘The House that Jack built’, and explain the mysteries concealed in that venerable classic.

63

Our hero went away in disgust from the hall of the sages, and falling in with a man who was making his way to the royal court, he had some comfort in what his fellow-traveller said. The man told him that it was his opinion that Perim was not the king, but the king’s servant; that the big horse was expressly sent for his use, in order that he might cross the torrents safely; that the fierce dog had probably saved his life, for the host of the inn where he had intended to sup and sleep was a murderous villain, who had drugged meat and wine, and robbed and slain his guests in their sleep. It was unpleasant, no doubt, the man said, to be kept awake

all night, but it was better than being murdered. The man did not pretend to know all about Perim and his ways, but he was disposed to think that he served the king's purposes, and that the king's purposes were good. What he said comforted the youth, and led him to look afresh and frequently at the king's picture, and the oftener he looked, the more sure he felt that the king was a right noble king, and that when they arrived at the royal court there would be a great clearing up about Perim.

The two companions had many adventures together; but I must say no more of their perils and pleasures now. The end of their story, as it was told to me, was that they were last seen with their faces glowing, as they said, with the sight of the royal palace and the king waiting to receive them.

You will not need many words to tell you what the story means. We are all called to the King's service and the King's court and we are, I hope, minded to win our way to

64

it. It will be well if we have the magic salt and spectacles, and the bird and purse, which mean a contented mind. There are people whose dry bread tastes better to them than some other people's roast beef and plum pudding tastes to them; there are people who have a little bird which sings merrily even in the dark, and spectacles through which, even in uncomfortable times and places, they can see reasons for being cheerful, patient, and thankful. And to have a cheery temper is, we can all see, far better than to have all the money and fine things in the world, for no money can buy the sweet and sunny temper. And as our hero gained his magical things by serving the poor old woman, so we must gain ours by kindness to others. Unkind people, thoughtless people, cannot have the priceless talismans of content. The school in which the great apostle had learned to be so content was, you may be sure, the school of love.

The portrait of the King—you know what that is—the picture of God which the Lord Jesus Christ has given us, and the more we look upon it the more sure we shall grow that Our Father in Heaven is altogether wise and good, and our sureness will become deeper and stronger as we try to become like him.

Perim! You will hear a good deal about Perim as you grow older. People call him in English '*circumstance*'. Some wise men, or men thought to be wise, will tell you that we are '*creatures of circumstance*',—that

Perim is master and king. Some are for teaching us to master him in ways that seem to me as foolish as those of the sages in

65

our story. It is quite true that Perim has a good deal to do with us, and some of the things which he does are hard to bear; but we must believe that he is the king's servant, and comes both to try us and to be of use. When he comes in an ugly shape, we must try to master him; and if, after honestly and heartily trying our best, we cannot overcome him, we must bear bravely and believe that he is serving us, though in a way that we don't like. Perim comes to you in ugly shape sometimes,—in lessons and duties that you find tiresome—in pain and sickness, and unpleasant medicine; but he comes also in some very delightful forms. Believe that in all forms he is God's servant sent to help you: if in no other way than to make you courageous and strong.

J.A.R.

MIRROR HUNTING

Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also on the things of others—PHILIPPIANS 2:4.

WHAT would you say if you found that the new servant stopped for a minute at every mirror she came to about the house?

If at this one she fixed her cap, with a long glance out of the tail of her eye as she moved away; if at that one she smoothed down her hair and patted it, as if she were petting it for its good behaviour; if at that other she smiled on her teeth for their whiteness, and pouted her lip for its redness; and if at that other she was so lost in the study of her own face, and so full of designs for the sweetest bonnet, that she started with a little scream when a ring at the bell recalled her to her duty; I say, if she went on like that, what should you think?

Why you would say she was a vain creature, and that a girl who thought so much about herself was not likely to make one of those good and faithful servants who delight to think of others. And cases have been known where

people went on admiring their own silly faces to such an extent that it clean got the better of them, and they really went off their heads because they dwelt on their own heads so much.

Now isn't it true that there are people who go about the world, and wherever they are they are like the girl at the mirror, they can see nothing, and think of nothing but themselves?

At home they are thinking how they may be clever enough to come in for the best things going; as they meet people they wonder whether something is not to be made out of them; and in school they have no notion of anything but overtopping the rest; and in the very church they find reason to be thankful they are not like those people that really need preaching to.

Wherever they go it is as if they saw nothing but a host of mirrors and their own good-looking image in each. And it gives them a certain pleasure. A witty clergyman once went into an empty room hung round with mirrors, and he said he thought it was a meeting of the clergy, and

was delighted. That was his fun, of course, in the way of putting it. But there are people who never feel any delight except of this sort. If they go into any crowd it is always themselves, themselves they see, over and over again, because they are always thinking of themselves, and measuring others by themselves, and finding no pleasure in forgetting themselves, but only in making others in some ingenious way contribute to their happiness or profit. And they never are so happy

 68

as when they are most successful in turning the world, as it were, into a roomful of mirrors. They see themselves in all they see.

Now is this the happy life? Is it the road to real pleasure? Well, if it is, then the New Testament is all wrong, Paul is wrong, Jesus the Saviour took the wrong way to save, and all the loveablest people in the world are going the wrong way. For that mirror way is not the way of any of them; their way is quite different. And I am going to believe them and think they are right, and the others wrong.

If I wanted to drive anybody in my power into misery and madness, I think I know a way in which it could be done. I would suggest that they should be put into a room which was covered all over the walls and ceiling with mirrors; and I would let nobody see them, and I should never let them out; they should speak to nobody; they should be left in solitary confinement, only not in the dark. No, I would give them plenty of light—that would be part of my plan. And there would be no windows to look out at, the light should all come from above. And it should come through frosted glass panes, so that the blue sky could never be seen. But the only thing they should see would be themselves over and over and over again in these mirrors. And every time they moved a limb a hundred limbs would move around them, and every wink should be answered by a shower of winks, and every time they lifted their eyes hundreds of eyes would stare at them from all sides, and if

 69

they got up in a rage a hundred men would rage and dance to keep them company, and if they raised their faces to the sky there would be no sky, but scores of their own terrified faces looking down upon them day after day. They would have no companions round them, only images of themselves mocking every movement; and they would have no face of God over them, only reflections of their own face and their own passions. Can you conceive how horrible this would grow to be? Don't

you think it would send anybody crazy before very long? I am sure it would. They might find a little amusement in it at first, but at last it would be dreadful and more than they could bear.

Now just as a man would go mad if he had no society but his own image, so those people who move about in pure self-seeking go what we might call morally mad. They are sane and wise enough to transact business; they don't go off their heads, but they go off their hearts. It is a derangement, not of the wits, but of the conscience. And they become poor, miserable, detested beings, though they may grow as rich as you like to think. They lose all the wisdom of the heart and all the wealth of love. They dwindle and dwindle, if you could see their soul, like a prowling spider or a starving cat. They wither and shrivel into nothing, because they go about seeking to be everything. Amid their wealth and power their soul goes flickering and sputtering out, like a candle-end in a gold chandelier.

Are you tired of my preaching? Well, I will preach by a parable and tell you an old, old story. We are bidden consider

70

the lily. Well, we will. You know the narcissus flower? I will tell you its tale. Long, long ago, they say, in the glorious land of shining Greece, there was a beautiful youth named Narcissus, whom everybody admired. But his beauty was marred by one great defect. He knew how beautiful he was. He looked for nothing but that people should see his beauty and praise it aloud. But he made as if he cared nothing for the people whose praise he sought. He was disdainful and proud. And he grew to think so much of himself that he retired from the society of men, and wandered among lonely spots of silent woods where there was no rival to his fame. One maiden alone loved him enough to follow him, and her name was Echo—as if the only thing he carried with him into solitude was the echo of his own fond self-conceit and the memory of the praise he stirred. One day he wandered to the side of a clear fountain, and there he lay down in the cool to rest from the heat of the noon. As he lay there he spied in the clear, still water the reflection of his own face, and he was so enchanted that he could never cease to gaze and long. He thought he had never seen anything so beautiful as his own face shining back upon him there. You know how lovely those water pictures are. He longed and longed to be as beautiful as that; he joyed and joyed to think how beautiful he was; and some say he gazed and

stretched so eagerly towards it that he fell in and was drowned. And others say that by gazing and longing so much in admiration of himself he pined and pined away, and at last be dwindled into the thin long flower which now

71

bears his name, with a face still lovely, and a sweet eye craving admiration still, but with a slender stem of a body and no strength or manliness in it at all.

And that is a true parable of the way people become feeble, even if they are pretty or clever, by always dwelling upon themselves. Thinking always to make more of themselves, they make less. They grow to be pitied instead of admired; they grow so weak that they have to be held up by stronger and better people, as the lily is tied to a stick for support. They won't go out and mix with others in the business of life, for fear they might hear something unpleasant about themselves. They retire into obscure life, where they will only be surrounded by the echo of their own little band of blinded friends. They grow conceited and indolent, and, as indolence always enfeebles body and mind, they turn out miserable, vain, and selfish beings at an age when they should be doing strong and helpful work in the world. What is the good of a pretty face without a beautiful soul?

Beware of mirror-hunting. You must make the best of yourself, but you never can do that till you begin to think more about others than yourself. Don't look for mirrors but *be* mirrors. Our Lord Jesus Christ was called the image, the mirror of God. His beauty consisted in reflecting so purely and clearly the face of God, about whom he always thought far more than of himself. People, too, came to him, and found themselves in him more beautiful and precious than they had dreamed. Isn't it better to be a mirror, to help other people to be beautiful and good, than

72

to go about making everybody else into mirrors for you to admire yourself in till you go silly with conceit and mad with selfishness? 'Look not every one upon his own things, but every one also on the things of others.' And, above all, to get rid of this craving self, look hard and longingly upon the beauty and glory of Jesus Christ our Lord.

P.T.F.

THE LOST PATH FOUND AGAIN

This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.—1 JOHN 5:3.

IN a country not very far away from this, there was once a state of things which would have been funny, if it had not been so sad. Ships used to come every now and then to the ports, and a sort of pressgang laid hold of a number of the people and carried them away in these ships. Some said that the people were taken to the king's court, and that those whose behaviour had pleased the King were made happy. The sailors who came, however, were all dumb apparently, and they paid not the least attention if they were asked questions. Many questions there were, you may be sure, in the minds of the people of the country, and one especially was often asked,—‘How can one please the King?’ There was, or rather there had been, a book of instructions, which some people said the King had sent, but it had been cut up into slips, and the slips put together again in a curious way. Besides that, some said the proper way to read the slips was from top to bottom like Chinese, others that they should be read from right to left like Hebrew, and

others again that the correct way was from left to right like English. Some people insisted that A meant B, and that C stood for X, and so got strange things out of their reading.

In this odd country there was a little girl who was beginning to wonder how the book ought to be read, and how one should do in order to please the King, and whenever she could ask questions, or hear conversation on the subject, she was very eager to learn. One day when she was out gathering herbs for her mother, she came upon a man who was lying on a pile of brambles, thistles, and nettles, and venturing to ask why he lay on so uncomfortable a bed, he told her that he did it in order to please the King, who did not like people to sleep on feather beds. The man said that he expected to please the King so much that, when he was taken away in the ship, he would be sent to a nice place where the beds were all made of the softest silk, and stuffed with the very best real eider-down, and people lay on them all day as well as all night long, and

were fed with sweet stuff out of a golden spoon. The girl was a good deal puzzled about the man's story, for it did seem a strange thing that the King should want his people to be uncomfortable in one country, only that they might be lazy and luxurious in the next; and the thing seemed still more odd when the man's servant brought him roast pork on a hot-water plate, and the man on the nettle-bed scolded savagely, because the apple-sauce was not sweet enough for his taste. She left him eating gluttonously, and yet growling about the apple-sauce, and she had not gone far before she

 75

came to a crowd of people who were standing round a cart, and in the cart a man was jumping about, and saying:—'Ladies and gentlemen', you see these lozenges: they are made after a most excellent and famous recipe: they have been manufactured by the only and original firm, all others being fraudulent imitations by unprincipled dealers, who are not authorised to use the name which you see is on the government stamp. Ladies and gentlemen, the one thing to please his Most Illustrious Majesty, and so to secure a good place in the other country to which you will shortly be transported, is to buy and take these lozenges, which are only half-a-crown a packet, a reduction being made on taking a quantity. I am the only representative of the Arm in this part of the country. Here is my certificate, and you observe my blue cap and the red ribbons on my jacket, which are according to the government regulations. All other lozenge-sellers are impostors.'

The little girl thought this very ridiculous, but if she had had half-a-crown in her pocket, she would most likely have bought a packet of the lozenges, for it was at any rate easy to take lozenges, if that was the way to please the King. She went a little farther, and found another crowd collected round another cart, in which a gentleman stood and spoke something like this:—'Yonder mountebank in the skullcap is either a rogue or a simpleton: taking lozenges will not procure the King's favour. The right way to do that is much more sensible and intelligent: it is to come and listen to me every Wednesday evening, when I shall teach all who,

 76

attend several most important things. You, no doubt, think that you are tolerably decent people. In that you are most fatally mistaken. You are all ruffians, scoundrels, incorrigible rascals, lazy vagabonds, bloodthirsty

pirates, inveterate burglars, atrocious murderers, and abominable rebels. That is the King's opinion of you anyhow, and there are prisons being built, fetters being forged, whips knotted, and gallows being reared for you. But as soon as you go down on your knees and confess that you are such villains as the King says you are, there will be good news for you.' just then a poor widow, who had six little children to feed and clothe, and managed to do it by washing and mangling all week, fell down upon her knees, and acknowledged that she was a pirate captain. Then the gentleman seemed pleased, and taking out of a box a number of letters, put them together so as to spell the words ROYAL PARDON, and handed them to the poor woman and said, 'There, you are all right. You will be a countess in the other country.' The poor woman did not know how to thank the gentleman enough, and readily promised to wash and mangle all his clothes for nothing, and wished she could do more to prove her gratitude. The little lassie could not understand this man any better than the one with the lozenges, and she went on sorrowfully, wondering whether she should ever find somebody who would tell her what seemed sensible.

As she went along, she came to a hut by the road-side, a modest, little place, but very pretty, almost covered with creeping plants, standing in a charming little garden. In

77

this garden, was an old man at work among his flowers; and when he happened to look up and saw the bright, earnest face looking at him, he invited our little maid in, and would have her rest upon a rustic seat and eat a piece of brown bread covered with delicious honey, which he brought out for her. She thanked the kind old gentleman very much, and wondered whether *he* could tell her the truth about the King. Before long she began to ask him questions, and he smiled and said that he would tell her all he knew, when she had eaten her bread and honey. So, when that was done, he bade her wash her hands at the pump near the door of his hut, and wipe them very dry upon a towel behind the door. The girl obeyed, and then the old gentleman laid before her, on his only table, a large portfolio full of drawings and paintings. Most of them represented one person, though in different scenes and circumstances. In one picture, he was looking round most lovingly upon a band of children, who had flowers in their hands and were singing; in another, he held a bonny little boy in his arms, and was gazing upon the little

fellow with a tender smile; in another picture, the same person was weeping at a grave; in another, he sat at table with a merry wedding party; in another, he was laying his hand upon a poor diseased man with a look of wonderful pity; in another, he was upon his knees, washing a man's feet, and the man was looking down with a puzzled face, as though he was ashamed and afraid; in another, he was saying something gentle to a poor woman who was crouching at his feet; in another, he was surrounded

78

by a group of savage men who were striking him. But there was no end to the contents of the portfolio, or seemed to be none. When, at last, the little girl was so tired and so excited, that she could not bear to look at any more, the old man brought out a book filled with beautiful writing, all poetry, and all about the Person in the pictures. And the old man told her, that the Person was the King's Son, and that he had been some months in the country in which she lived, and he had dined with rich folk and poor folk, and grieved with them in their troubles, and been glad with them in their joys, and a marvellous doctor to the sick, a great comfort to the sorrowful, and such a teacher of the ignorant as had never been heard of before or since, and that wicked men hated him, and ill-treated him most shamefully, and still he had been kind. 'So it is easy to see what we ought to do', said the old man to the child. 'We ought to love the dear, good prince, which indeed no one can help doing, who knows how noble and gracious a prince he is. I, for my part, after working in my garden just enough to supply my wants, which are but few, spend all my time in painting pictures of him and writing poems in his honour; and I feel quite sure that, when the order comes for me to embark on the voyage, it will prove that the King will be kind to one who loves the prince as I do.'

The little girl thought that she had at last found the right place, especially as the old gentleman had much to say about the country in which the King's palace stood, and how all those who loved the prince lived there with him, and brought

79

him fresh flowers and crowned him every day, and sang poems in his praise. The little maid thought that it would be delightful if she might live with the dear old gentleman, and learn to write poetry and to paint pictures as he did in honour of the prince.

But our poor maid was to be disappointed. When she went home to ask leave to spend most of her time with the painter-poet, her mother asked her who would mind baby and go on errands, and take father's tea to the shed where he worked. When she found a chance she told the old gentleman her trouble, and he cheered her by saying that the prince would know all about it, and would be pleased that she wanted to spend all her time in doing pretty things *for him*, and would doubtless excuse her, because her mother would not allow her to do so; and, when she *could* get away for an hour, she was to come to him, and do as much as she might be able for the prince.

This is not the end of our story. It happened one day that our little girl had to go on an errand for her mother to an old woman who was rather cross, and crabbed, and sour; and while the little maid waited at the old woman's house, as she had to do, she began talking of the things of which her head and heart were so full. The cross old lady had not patience to listen long. She said that the lozenge-seller, and the blustering gentleman, and the nice old painter were 'all a pack of fools.' She declared that none of them knew anything about the prince, and that ail they said was idle nonsense. 'Who had ever seen this prince?' she asked. 'Nobody.' As

80

for the strange dumb sailors, who came in the ships, she was of opinion that they were pirates, who only knocked people on the head in order to steal their money and clothes; and when the people of the country had more sense, she believed that they would fight the dumb sailors and beat them off, and follow them across the sea, and find their home, and burn them and their hold and their ships together, and so put an end to that plague. If there was a king or a prince, she thought that he would have his people do well for themselves and their neighbours, where they were, and not be bothering their heads about such stuff and nonsense as to what came of them when the dumb sailors carried them off, and dreaming stupid dreams like that silly old man, who spent his time in painting pictures of what never happened. 'Take my word or don't take it, just as you like,' she concluded; 'but the man who sells lozenges, and that rowdy who bullies and frightens folk, are really of my opinion. You notice when the next ship comes, if they don't skulk or scamper out of the way as fast as they can, and try to escape the good things which they

say the ships would carry them to. I dare say the old painter believes all he says, but that only proves that he is silly.'

The girl went home in a doleful mood. She could not shake off the feeling that there was some truth in what the fierce old woman said, though the girl tried to think it was nothing but crossness and bad temper. In the evening, as mother could spare her for a time, the girl went out into the wood near her home, and sat down upon a fallen tree

81

by a small river, which flowed gaily through the wood; and while she sat there in the mellow golden light; listening to the rustling of the leaves in the wind and the laughter of the stream, she thought she made out voices in them, which sang low and soft—

Be born of the water,
 Be child of the wind;
 Come, be thou our daughter,
 Then Freedom thou'lt find.
 The clear open mind
 Set free from the rules,
 Which fetter the blind,
 Who're dull'd in the schools,
 Will soon know the King,
 Whom service delights;
 For use is the thing
 That truly unites
 All contrary truth,
 All opposite right,
 Resentment and ruth,
 The new and the trite.
 Be born of the water,
 Be child of the wind;
 Come, be thou our daughter,
 Then Freedom thoult find.

Our little maid thought that so ran the endless song, which the wind and the river sing, and perhaps they may sing such doggerel, never having been to school to learn prosody. But whether they really sang to her, or she only imagined the song, or some other higher wind blew in upon her soul,

82

or some heavenly rill flowed into her, what is certain is that she began, then and there, to think for herself, and to think to some purpose. She began to see that the river and the wind and the trees and the flowers are so beautiful and free and playful, because they are *servicing*,—serving the ends for which they are made, not trying to make a rightness for themselves, or a goodness of their own, but simply being useful according to their natural use. And then all at once it flashed upon her, that the person in the pictures was somehow like the wind and the river and the trees and the flowers, always doing the useful thing when it was wanted, being bright at the wedding and sad at the grave, giving food to the hungry and health to the diseased. ‘Ah! I see it now,’ said the little girl; ‘that was the Prince, and the way to please him is not to take lozenges, or to be frightened,—not even to paint pictures of him, or to write poems in his honour, except when we can’t help doing so. The right thing must be to do as he did—to be of use always, of just the use that is wanted, to serve the right service of the moment. What else did the Prince come for?’ And the next moment the girl thought what a beautiful evening it was, and how tired poor mother must be, and she went quickly home and said, ‘Mother, give me baby this very minute, and you go out and listen to the song that the wind and the river sing’.

I have not much more to tell you, but I must mention that the man who sold lozenges, and the man who threatened and insulted people, and the man among the nettles, all agreed that the little girl was a wicked child for thinking as she did. The

83

cross old lady said, ‘Humph! There’s some sense in it!’ And when she and the nice old gentleman fell into conversation about the matter, he said, ‘The child has taught me a lesson,—the greatest lesson. I ought not to have been putting the prince’s deeds into paint and poetry, but into fact and life. I hope I always did a little in that way, but not nearly so much as I might have done if I had seen the right way earlier.’

I need not tell you what the Prince said in due time. You know that our little maid was right.

There is no reason why I should explain the story at any great length. Day by day, the dumb sailors come in the ship of Death. The Prince has been to our world to teach us how to live in this world, and so to be ready for the next. We have a book, but people have pulled the Bible

into bits to make little puzzle-boxes of letters out of it, and some tell us, like the man in the nettles, that the way to please God is by making ourselves miserable; some tell us to do things that can help us no more than taking lozenges; some tell us that we must be very much frightened; and some dear, good people tell us that we must love and praise God. But the Prince himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, has told us to love and serve one another, to be of use, of use always, of just the use that is wanted and that we find ourselves fit for. It was he who said something very like, 'Be born of water and of the wind'. He was cheerful and generous at the marriage, and full of sorrow at the tomb. He was always free, because full of love, always serving the present use; and

84

the one thing for us to do is to trust him enough, and love him enough, to tread in his footsteps, to ask for his Spirit and to do as he tells us. True religion is the simplest, freest, and in one sense the easiest thing in the world. It is all told in *loving* and *being of use*—which Jotham, by the first parable in the Bible, taught the men of Shechem was the royalist thing in the world,—which our Lord taught in all his parables and showed in all his life.

J.A.H.

A SEASIDE SERMON

His voice was as the sound of many waters.—REVELATION 1:15.

I HAVE been on the sea. Many of you are there or thinking of going. I have just been. I am by the sea now. I am writing your sermon there. But quite recently I was on the sea. I was on it in a ship, and I was on it in some small islands. It is better, I think, to be at sea on an island than on a ship. You know what an island will do next, but what the ship will do next you do not know. And uncertainty of this kind is not good.

My mind is full of the sea. The grass by the coast is often salt with the spray carried in by the breezes, especially on a broken and stormy shore. Now my mind is saturated and salted with the savour of the sea, and the sight and the sound of it are with me night and day.

Besides, within the last week I have heard some great and wonderful music performed in London representing the movement and magic of the deep and sounding sea. Do you know that there is a music in the sea—not noise merely, but noise with God in it—music? You all know that you can see the loveliest things in the way of cloud, and colour,

and ships like swans, upon the sea. But you do not know, perhaps, how beautiful the sounds are that some ears can hear from the sea. They used to, tell stories about the sirens and the mermaids that played and sang with such sweetness that they drew poor sailors, who were enchanted with their music, down into the depths, from which they never returned alive. But nobody ever really saw a siren or a mermaid. It was one way of representing beautifully the charm of water and the music of the sea. I love to linger in a wood and be soothed by the sound of rustling water. I love to sleep in a house by a great, broad river, to hear, when I awake, first thing, the melody of its rushing waters. I love to dwell by the sea in like fashion, so that whenever I wake I can hear through my open window the welcome tune which the white-fingered waves keep ever playing on the rattling beach. I was born by the sea. I was brought up by the sea. A mile or two inland, in the dead of night, when all else was quiet, I used to hear the sea singing a lullaby to the fisher children on the shore beneath the moon and all her family of stars. Some people

call the great world God's cathedral. Well, one of its organs is the sea. Oh, it is a great organ, the sea! It can play as sweet and soft as a flute. But it can also roar and thunder to terrify the bravest. It is awful to hear the sea rolling in like mountains upon a shore of rocks and caves, and rousing echoes that are heard far inland as if many giants were roaring into many tuns. I suppose it is very silent at the bottom of the sea. The fishes and the shells may know nothing of all the

87

concert amid which they live. But we can hear it; though we can hardly tell the words it sings. We can hear its music, so strange, mysterious, magical, and mighty. There are some hearts it can speak to, and they know what it says. They listen and they are soothed; or they listen and they feel something like rapture; or as they listen they feel something like terror; but always they love as they listen to the many sounds and the one great voice.

For the sounds are many that make the music of the sea. It may seem to you one great sound, but it is made up of many. As you lie by the sea on a breezy day you see the little white waves out there like sheep in a green field, or like cloudlets in the blue sky. Each one of them is making a little whisper as it runs along and breaks; and the sum of all their whispers must be something considerable, like the singing of a forest of little birds. Then there is the sound of every wave that tumbles on the shingle or the sand. Then there is the rush of it as it runs along the beach. Then there is the hiss of it as it draws back. And there is the rattle of the pebbles one upon another which it carries back with it. Then there is the little clash as it meets another upcoming wave, and the pebbles are driven up again. Then there must be the sound of the tidal wave as it rises for hours and then sinks for hours away. Then streams are flowing with their own sound into the sea, or falling over cliffs with a trickle, or a splash, or a thud. Then children axe paddling and splashing on the sand, and bathers are shouting and calling to each other. And you

88

can hear the thump, thump of the steamer a mile off, and, you can catch the creaking of the oars in that rowboat. And the ship yonder with all her sail set is hissing through the water, while her cordage creaks, and her mate shouts to the wheel, and the cabin boy is squabbling with the captain's dog. And the winds are piping in many keys, and the seabirds are shrieking with wild, swift joy. And all these things are many sounds,

which, perhaps, you do not separately hear, but they make up the one mysterious voice and music of the sea—a voice as rich and a music as unfathomable as the great ocean deeps themselves. When you stand at High Beech or Richmond-hill and gaze on the great and glorious sight at your feet it is one picture you see; but it is made up of a million things which you do not separately see, all different, all beautiful, like the leaves on the trees, and all needful to build the noble prospect before your eyes. So with these sounds that come on all sides from the sea. Many of them you cannot separately hear, but they go to make up the one voice and music which breathes from the bosom of the deep. We speak of the silent sea, but there is little silence there for those who have ears to hear. We speak of the silence of the hills too, but I could paint you a like picture of the hills, with the splash of water, the chirp of insects, the hum of bees, and the fluting of the winds, which would make you feel that these quiet hills are no more silent than the sea. The quiet things are sometimes the things that say most of all. And from silent people we can often learn more than from the people who are always talking

89

and always heard. You may be sure a quiet, brave man says more, and teaches us more, and delights us with the music of his modest courage more, than a man who is always boasting of what he has done or can do. The voice of the hills is the sound of many sounds, and the voice of the sea is the sound of many waters.

The little bit of sea that you look out on from your share, is a very small portion of the great ocean that encircles the world. And the sounds you hear are a very small part of the great voice which the many waters of the sea everywhere are sending up for music to the ear of Heaven. If you sat on a hill-top over a little town, you could hear something musical even in the shoutings of a mob, or the clamour of a market below. And so, if you sat at the right hand of God, who has all the world at his feet, what unspeakable music would rise to your ears from the manifold and awful concert of the mighty sea! Voices would come from east, west, north, and south, from pole and equator, Atlantic and Pacific, from rushing rivers, and roaring floods, and whispering brooks, and the plash of thunder-showers, and the sweet ripple of the refreshing rain, and the noiseless falling of the gentle dew, and they would all go up together in such a voice as none could utter, and unless they were where God is, none would have ears to hear. God alone can fully and always

hear the voice that the earth utters to the sky by the many tongues of its many waters. But he sends us men sometimes to whom he has given such ears in their soul that they can perceive some of the meaning of the world's great sea voice,

90

and they are able to translate for us some of the music and magic of the sea-soul of the earth. These men are poets, or painters, or musicians, and they can hear more than most of us, far more than we hear at the coast, of the great sea's musical mystery, the strange trouble of the weird waters, and the moving ocean's mighty joy. And they sing for us, these men, what the sea says, and their voice is beautiful and wonderful—there is so much in it, and we always feel as if there were more. It is as if we put our ear to a hole in the top of a great cave into which the green sea-water ran below, playing, and sometimes thundering on its worn sides. All the sounds come blended up through the hole, and it is like a sea-bugle that plays from far a wild sea song. You have held a shell to your ear (have you not?) and listened to the hushed roar that seemed to sing of the ocean where it was born. Well, God sends us men sometimes of such fine and strange gift that they are like a beautiful shell held to our ear, and they seem, in songs without words, almost to make us hear the magical music of the sea and the one voice of its many waters.

Now, mankind is a great, great sea, and the souls of men and women are like the waves which cover the face of the great deep. They are always in motion, and they utter many a sound of joy and grief, of laughter and woe. They clash against each other and foam; they throw themselves against the hard shore of law and fate; and they hiss and rage. They join again hand in hand and dance to each other in life's sunshine, and laugh, and sport, and answer

91

gaily to the blue sky. We can see, among the people we meet and know, how different they are from each other, and how differently they feel at different times, and how differently they express themselves. They are now quiet, now merry, now busy, now full of praise and joy; again they are sad, restless, crying, sobbing may be, or even wailing and gnashing their teeth. The moods of the soul are more than the shades of the sea, and the heart's sounds are more manifold than the voices of the waters. Babies are crying and crowing, boys are shouting, while the girls whisper, and the birds sing; women are smiling and rippling with gladness and

moving among men like a quiet tune; again they are full of fierce jealousies, hatreds, and bitter words, or they are crushed with grief for the little ones to whom they used to sing. Men are lustily moving about their noisy business, shouting in public conflict, preaching quiet or jubilant truth, or, again, cursing God and each other, or groaning beneath blows and losses from which they never rise. All these moods and sounds of the soul we see and hear, both within us and around us, and they make altogether a strange and mysterious tone. The voice of our own hearts is more than we can often fathom—it is so manifold, so mingled, so confused. How unfathomable, then, is the one sound of all those souls whom day by day we meet and look out on, as we look at the waves from the shore! But if we could hear, not our own hearts only, nor the hearts' utterance of our own little circle, but the sound of the great human heart all the world over, and the sound of all the hearts that ever

92

have lived or shall live, what a strange and awful voice that would be? If we could go to some magic hole and put our ear where we could hear the beatings, the chafings, the music of the whole human soul and the whole world's heart, what a great and dreadful sound that would be! If we could only sit up there with God, where it all rises to, and comes up like one mighty tune, so sad, so solemn, so glorious, like an eternal organ; if we could only get one of these messengers of God, like the poets and musicians who caught and sang the great music of the sea—if we could get some such one to gather up for us all the many little voices that rise from the restless sea of sounding human souls and speak it out again for us, with the voice of God thrown in, and the awfulness of the music made divine, what a voice his would be, sweet, full, mighty, mysterious, solemn! What a voice!—rich like all instruments, piercing like a sword, never to be forgotten, like the loveliest of all our dreams.

Now it is no dream but a truth. God has sent us such a man. He has sent us a soul in whom there sounds the echo of those many waters, which I have described as the stir, and passion, and glow, and pain of the great human soul. He has sent us Jesus Christ. There is no movement of the human heart to which he does not answer and sympathise. All that people rejoice in and all that they suffer rests in the heart of Christ. He is like the cleft in the rock where we can hear the whole restless human heart below, sounding so awful and strange. When we feel in

sympathy with Jesus it is as if we were taken up to God's right hand, and heard

93

all the still, sad music of mankind rising in a wondrous key and a complete tune. When we understand Jesus we get such a deep, sweet knowledge of the human soul as we get of the music of the sea from poets and musicians. That is the meaning when it is said, 'His voice is as the sound of many waters'. All the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the human soul are like waves of the sea; and all together they make a mysterious and solemn sound like the voice of the ocean; and the one voice which gathers up for us all these sounds by his deep sympathy, and lets us hear its sweet and manifold solemnity, is the voice of Jesus. And so it is because of his deep, true sympathy with little waves like you or me that he gives out the vast music of all such waves together, and his voice is as the sound of many waters—so huge, so soft, so musical, so mysterious, so grand, sometimes so terrible.

And, last of all, you must remember this—God is greater than the world and all the souls in it. And God has more life, and more movement, and more music in him than of us all put together. For we draw our life from him. God is like an ocean vaster than all our seas and mightier than all our souls. And so his voice, the voice of his heart, is as the sound of more and mightier waters than those which sound in all our joys and griefs, or deeds, or thoughts. But it is Jesus that re-echoes for us the heart and life of God. He gathers up and tells us the movements of the soul of God. Here again his voice is as the sound of many waters. It must be an awful but beautiful sound that expresses for

94

us the vast, manifold, and glorious play of the life of God.

So his voice is as the sound of many waters; first, because he speaks the true sound of all our restless hearts, and, next, because he speaks the loveliest sound of all the moving heart of God. What a voice, then, that must be! No wonder John says he fell at his feet as one dead. But it is a very much worse kind of death never to hear that voice at all, and never to care to hear it. Of all deaths that is the worst; just as of all music there is none like the voice of Christ, with its sound of many waters, and its music of many sounds.

P.T.F.

95

THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENTS; OR, THE MIGHT OF LITTLE THINGS

For them the bitings of flies and grasshoppers killed, but thy sons not the very teeth of venomous dragons overcame.—Wisdom 16:9–10.

He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much.—LUKE 16:10.

THERE was once a company of travellers—men, women, and children, going through a strange country, called the Land of Enchantments. Some of them were bent upon finding another and a better country, called the Land of Realities, and were always on the look-out for the right track, but others did not cue; they were very well satisfied with the country in which they were. Now, in this Land of Enchantments, there were many giants, and dwarfs, and wizards, who wished to prevent the pilgrims from reaching the good country, and to take them captive, and carry them away to a place, which was called the Valley of Death.

The giants were terrible monsters, who greatly frightened the pilgrims, but as it was easy to see the great creatures

96

when they were quite a long way off, and as the ground shook under their heavy tread, and even their breathing could be heard when they were far away, the pilgrims generally could get out of the reach of the giants; only those pilgrims who were foolhardy, or exceedingly careless, were caught by them. The dwarfs and the wizards were far more dangerous than the giants. The dwarfs were such tiny creatures, that they could hide themselves very well among tufts of fern, or long grass, and they stepped so lightly, that one did not hear them. They had wings too, much like those of a bat, and they would fly up into a tree, and perch among the leaves, and suddenly drop down upon a passer-by. But you will ask, 'What harm could such small creatures do?' Almost all sorts of harm. They had tiny knives, so very, very keen, that at first you did not know, when you were cut by them, that you had suffered any injury. The dwarfs

would stop softly behind a pilgrim, and slash at the back of his ankles with their knives, and soon the pilgrim began to limp and grow tired, though he could not tell how he came to be so weary. The dwarfs would flit past a pilgrim's face in the dusk of evening, and spurt a few drops of liquid into his eyes, which the pilgrim supposed to be only rain or dew, but which was really a liquid that gradually produced blindness. Sometimes, a nimble dwarf would dog the footsteps of a traveller, with a coil of cord in his hand,—cord as slender as a spider's thread, but very strong; and the dwarf would dart in and out, fastening the coil round the traveller's feet, so that, in a little while, the poor traveller felt the

97

strangest sense of weight in his limbs, and would be ready to sit down, and give up all hope of going further. At other times, a dwarf would creep softly to a pilgrim, who was taking a rest, and the dwarf flapped his wings gently and slowly, until he had fanned the pilgrim into a deep sleep. Then, still softly flapping his wings, the dwarf would bite an almost imperceptible wound, and steadily, but very quietly, suck at the wound. When the traveller awoke, he of course felt very weak, through loss of blood, but did not know that it *was* through loss of blood. He could not at all understand how it was, that he was so feeble and faint. In this way, the dwarfs made it easy for the giants to catch the travellers. The poor man, who had been hamstrung, or blinded, or fettered, or bled by the dwarfs, could not get away when he knew that a giant was coming. He might try to run, but was sure to stumble and fall; or he might draw his sword, and try to fight, but he was too weak to defend himself; or, if he had been blinded, he might run right into the giant's grasp, when he thought he was escaping from the monster. In this way it was easy for the giants to seize the poor pilgrims, and drag them away to the Valley of Death. Thus, you see, the dwarfs were more terrible enemies than the giants themselves.

Another thing which I ought to tell you is, that some of the blood-sucking dwarfs grew bigger and stronger by the blood of their victim, until they were able to fasten upon him, and force him along whither they pleased. And sometimes a number of the dwarfs would together attack a pilgrim,

98

and so blind him with their beating wings, and so harass him with knives, cords, and blinding liquid, all at once, that he was quite helpless among them.

I mentioned that there were wizards, as well as giants and dwarfs, who sought to do harm to the travellers. The wizards had all sorts of arts and tricks, wherewith to cheat the pilgrims. I cannot tell you more than a very few of their wiles. Sometimes, one of the wizards would pretend to be a benevolent old gentleman, and he would offer one of the weary pilgrims supper and bed at his house; and, if the pilgrim went with him, he tried to persuade him to stay with him for good, and practised enchantments to make him forget his journey. Sometimes, an enchantress took the form of a bright, young girl, and seemed as merry and sprightly as if she was one in reality, and gaily invited a pilgrim to come to her father's house. Then, if he went along with her, she sprinkled him with water from an enchanted spring, and took him to a wretched cabin, which he (because he was under the enchantment you understand) supposed was a fine mansion; and she gave him horrible and abominable stuff to eat and drink, which she made him believe was the richest and daintiest fare. And, if the enchantment was not broken, she ended by leading her victim to the Valley of Death.

And now that you know something of the Enchanted Land, I may go on to tell you the story of a youth, who once travelled through that country. He wished to find the way to the Better Country, but that was no easy matter. Some

99

people pointed out one course to him, and some another, and nearly every one whom he asked directed him differently from everybody else. There were beaten tracks in abundance, but the youth knew that the giants and the wizards had made many of these paths, on purpose to mislead travellers, so that it was hard to know when one was in the right way.

It would take too long to tell all the adventures which the youth went through, so I must only relate his story in outline. He suffered a good deal at the hands of the dwarfs, though without knowing who they were that plagued and hurt him; for, as I told you, the weapons of the dwarfs caused very little pain just at first, though they did so much harm in the end. Now and then John—for that was his name—fancied that he

heard somebody, or something, rushing among the ferns at his feet, or in the leaves over his head, but he could not see anyone, or make out what it was, which seemed to be following him. Several times he caught sight of giants, who seemed to be coming after him, but he was not so much weakened by his wounds that he could not run, and he was happy enough to keep out of the giant's clutches. Several times, too, he was almost deceived by wizards, but somehow, he began to suspect them before they had enticed him to their dens, and always made off before it was quite too late.

One strange thing set John thinking a good deal. He came across a remarkable foot print several times—a bloodstained footprint. Once he came upon it at the foot of a

100

rugged hill, which he was turning to go round. Straight upwards went the strange blood-stained footprints. Once John found them again by a sort of hedge, or thicket of briars and thorns, and, as well as he could see, the person who had left the foot prints must have gone straight through the thicket. Again, he came upon the curious footprints at the brink of a rapid stream, which rushed and roared furiously over the rocks in its bed, and it seemed as if the person, whoever he was, had waded through the raging waters. John could not help an unaccountable feeling, that the footprints were those of someone who knew the way to the Better Country. He had a fancy, of which he could not get rid, that, if he could only pluck up courage to follow that blood-marked track, he would be in the right way. But that was just what John could not do. He was weak through fatigue and loss of blood, and did not dare to follow. He was timid because he was feeble.

One evening, when he was sitting on a mossy bank, much tired and a good deal perplexed, a plain old man came up, and invited John to his house for the night. Said he, 'My home is no fine mansion, and I cannot promise you costly entertainment, but a simple supper and a clean bed you may have, and you will be heartily welcome'. At first, John thought the man might be only a cunning wizard, but he looked like an honest man, and so, after a moment's hesitation, John thanked him, and went along with him. After supper, the two had some talk about John's wish to find his way to the Better Country, which the strange

101

commended and encouraged. This led our hero to speak of the curious footprints, and his feeling about them. Then the old man's face grew serious, but, looking kindly upon John, he took him by the hand, and led him to a sort of window, from which he drew a curtain, and bade John look that way. John did so, and there he saw a noble person journeying through the Enchanted Land, and at once felt sure that this was the person, who had left the mysterious footprints. On, on, the stranger went, over rough and stony places, where his feet were cut by sharp flints; through thorny hedges, which tore his flesh; through surging streams, in which he was battered against the rocks. And, as John continued to look, almost forgetting to draw breath, he saw a crowd of giants, armed with axes and clubs, and a multitude of dwarfs, with daggers and knives, throw themselves upon this traveller, and try to beat him back, but all in vain. On he went, marking his track, at every footfall, with his blood. While John was gazing, with wide eyes and parted lips, the old man said softly, 'That is the Son of the King of the Better Country. He came through this land to make and mark a way for all who seek that country.' Then John made a movement as though he would go immediately to join the King's Son, but, as he did so, the vision faded away.

'Is it only a picture then?' John almost sobbed; 'I thought it was real.' 'So it is, my son,' answered the old man, 'all real, though it happened long ago. And, since you wish to follow the King's Son, here is a token

102

which I am allowed to give you.' Then he handed John a ruby, which had the name of the King's Son engraved on one side of it, and John's own name on the other. 'That will be of use to you, when you meet any of the King's servants,' said the old man; 'and now I can only do one thing more for you. Go up the hill behind my cottage, until you come to a level, barren space, where you will see stars falling from the sky. Do not be afraid of the darkness, or the loneliness, and, above all, do not fear what looks like fire.'

John thanked the old man for his kindness, and took his leave. He toiled up the hillside until he came to a bare, level place, and there he waited awhile. It was a lonely, silent, and rather awful place; and it became awful indeed, when a star came rushing down from the sky, as though it was descending upon him. But he remembered the old man's saying,

‘Above all, do not fear what looks like fire’. So he stood steadily, as the star came nearer and nearer, growing brighter and more red as it came, until it fell like a spark upon his breast. It made his flesh tingle, and he was very near shaking it off, but he bore it bravely. Soon, however, it ceased to burn him, and it seemed to John that somehow the star-spark had gone right into him, his heart glowed so warmly within him. But, in a little while, John began to feel aching and smarting pain in the gashes, which the dwarfs had made about his ankles, and a weight about his feet, and a tingling and throbbing in his eyes. For it was one effect of the star-spark to make pilgrims feel the

 103

wounds made by the dwarfs, and the tightness of their cords, and the presence of their foul liquid in the eyes. Gradually, however, the star-spark seemed to send strength all through John’s frame, and his heart seemed to grow bolder and bolder to face whatever might have to be met. Then, while he was cutting away the cord, which the dwarfs had tangled about his feet, he saw the strange footprints more clearly than ever, and he planted his own feet in them firmly, and went bravely whither they led.

From that time, John went happily forward on his journey. True, the dwarfs still pursued him, but John was no longer insensible to their weapons. At the first touch of their lances or daggers, he detected them, and turned upon them swiftly, and often trampled one or more to death. Before long, he could generally hear even their soft, cautious tread, before they came up with him. And as he continued his journey, he found that the wizards, who came out to beguile him, however splendid and gay they might look at a distance, could not come close to him without appearing the wretched, ugly creatures, which they really were. As for the giants, they shrank away from him, as from one who carried some charm, which was fatal to them.

You must not suppose that everything was smooth, and easy, and pleasant to John, after the star-spark had burned itself into him. He was more sensitive to pain in some ways than he had been before; but that itself was good for him, because it saved him from the terrible dwarfs. Very often he was obliged to go through rough and thorny places, be

 104

cause the footprints led straight onwards. But, day by day, John’s courage increased, and he went calmly and stoutly on, until at length he crossed

the frontier of the Better Country, and was met and welcomed by the King's Son himself

You scarcely need to have this parable-story explained. This world is the Enchanted Land. The giants are the crimes and great sins, which endeavour to kill our souls. The really more dangerous dwarfs are what we call *little sins*—greediness, vanity, small falsehoods, cross tempers, boasting, idleness, and disobedience, and the like, which wound our souls without our feeling the wound, and drain away our strength without our knowing it. The wizards are the sins which are often thought not to be sins,—such as what is called sometimes 'proper pride', or ambition to be thought great or wise, or a strong desire to have a large share of the good things of the world, or what is called a 'high spirit', that is really a haughty spirit. The dwarf-sins and the wizard-sins sometimes deliver us up to the giant-crimes; sometimes they kill by their own strength and cunning. You know what is meant by the Better Country, and you know who the King's Son is—the Blessed One, who has left us an example that we should follow his steps, and has suffered through our sins, The old man, and the cottage window with the pictures, stand for the Gospels, which tell us of Jesus—of his sufferings, example, goodness, and love. The ruby passport is the promise, which is given in the Gospel to every one, who trusts in Jesus and has a mind to follow him. What is

105

the star-spark? The influence of the Spirit of God, which comes into our hearts. It burns sometimes, which made an Apostle say, 'Do not fear what looks like fire', or, to use his own words, 'Quench not the Spirit'. It makes us feel the pain of our sins; makes us feel hot, and ashamed, and angry with ourselves; but if we bear it well, it also heals our sins, and makes us strong to follow in the footsteps of Christ. The star-spark often falls upon our hearts, when we are not waiting for it, or looking for it, but it surely comes to all who wait for it in the still, solemn place of prayer.

May this little parable help you to ask for the star-spark, and to know when you have it!

J.A.H.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON

*The understanding of man is the candle of the Lord.—PROVERBS
20:27.*

YOUR Bible says the *spirit* of man, but it is better to say the understanding. You don't know exactly what your spirit is, but you do know what your understanding is. If I asked you, you would say you learned things with your understanding. You do sums with it. When you say, six and four are ten, and eight are eighteen, and two are twenty—you do that by your understanding. When they tell you the earth is round, you don't quite see it; but when they take you to the seaside, and bid you watch a ship far, far away, and you see first the topmasts, then the mainyards, then the hull coming into sight,—you see that the ship as it comes nearer is coming up-hill, or round a ball, to where you stand; and you see then the earth must be round. You are made to see it by your understanding. So when at last, after working a quarter of an hour with a puzzle, you get the secret of it all at once, it is like a flash of light inside your head, and you see it with your understanding. And whenever you see the reason of anything, you see it by the light

of your understanding. Your understanding is like a candle set up in the dark inside of your head, so that you can see your way about among all the things that come pouring in at the doors—at your eyes, ears, nose, and so on. Your mind is your candle.

But what does my text say? It says your mind, or your understanding, is the candle '*of the Lord*'. Isn't that strange? Aren't you a little bit afraid? I suppose you have a candle in your bedroom—a common sort of candle possibly—not even coloured perhaps, nor carved as some pretty candles are, but just an ordinary white candle, which might even be tallow. And it has a common sort of candlestick—perhaps a tin one, or a plain china one. Both candle and candlestick are quite good enough for you to go to bed by, and better indeed than you need to see to sleep by. Well, once on a time a boy went up to his room and struck a match, and was going to put it to the wick of his common old candle, when suddenly he found in its place a magnificent, tall, red candle, all carved up and down, and

stamped with little crowns, he was so surprised that he dropped the match, and then he had to light another, and this time he caught sight of the candlestick, and he saw that it was shining, yellow, heavy gold, also beautifully carved, and stamped with the royal letters. He saw at once, when he thought of the crown and the letters, that this was one of the palace lights, which the princes and princesses perhaps went to bed by. And he was a little frightened, and wondered what it meant, and who had put this grand thing in

108

his room. Was it stolen? Was it a witch's work? What if the police were to come and find it in his room? What would the King say if he were found in possession of one of his candles? However, it was all set right in the morning, for he found that it was a present from his father. He was, indeed, a young prince, whom the King wished to be brought up without knowing his rank till he was of a certain age. And this was the strange way taken to suggest to the boy his royal birth. Just as *you* are sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; but for a long time you don't know it, and for longer still you don't realise it; till one day you are told that your mind or soul is the candle of the Lord. And then you are a little uneasy, perhaps, and afraid of the new knowledge. You are shy to think that the candle inside your head, where your mind sleeps, is not your candle, but something so splendid as *the candle of the Lord*. But it is true. When you shut your eyes and think, and say, 'Let me see,' and then open your eyes again, saying—'I have it', 'I do see', 'I remember', you have got light on something. And the light came from the candle of the Lord. And as you grow wiser and wiser at school, and read harder and harder books, and converse with clever men and women, all that is light rising and shining within you. And it comes from God. It is no light of ours that dawns upon us brighter and brighter every morning till twelve o'clock and the perfect day. And the growing understanding of man is not his own light, but the candle of the Lord.

If you would remember this, it would keep you from

109

being conceited when you thought yourself clever, For you would feel that the light you had was put in you by your Father. Who ever thinks of being conceited about his bedroom candle, even if it is a pretty, and carved, and costly one? You are thankful, when you think of it, to your parents for not making you go to bed in the dark, but you are very

silly if you are conceited about it. Besides, plenty of boys and girls are just as well off. And if they are not, if they have to go to bed with halfpenny candles, while you have penny or sixpenny ones, that's no credit to you or discredit to them. You each have what your parents think proper to give you. So mind you don't give yourself airs when you meet with people you think stupid. Don't sneer about 'those tallow people'. They have just the sort of candle your Father and theirs thinks proper to give them. Whatever brains you each have are a gift and portion of the wisdom of God. All you have to do is to make the best of them.

And, let me tell you, you may one day be very thankful to have even a halfpenny candle to go to bed by. I mean it now in this sense. Your mind, as I say to you, is your candle, and when we die we may be said to go to our last and narrow bed. In this sense there are some poor pitiable people who have no candle to go to bed by, and very little light to live or go about in the day by. There are people who don't take care of their soul's candle, and it goes out too soon. There are people who get no education, who don't have their candle trimmed, and snuffed, and seen to. And there are people whose candle gets upset

 110

that is to say, they lose their reason, and their mind is dark, and disorderly, and insane. And people of these sorts, the reckless, or the untaught, or the insane, go down to their graves with no light, no hope, no cheer; their candle is removed from its place. They go to their last bed without a candle. And when you think of such things you must learn to be full of pity and praise—not full of pride and silly conceit about any light of reason or candle of the Lord that may have been left with you. Our very best light is not our own at all. And the people with most light are the most modest men and thankful. They are meek and lowly of soul, holy and humble men of heart.

But now, here is a puzzle. Why should God set up so many candles in this world of his? He does not need any lamps or candles to find his way about. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If the sun went out God would always find his way. When the little candle of your mind is put out every night and you go to sleep, that does not prevent God finding his way into your mind, and doing you so much good that you wake up bright and happy and ready to give light to all that are in the house. It does not prevent the messengers of God coming into your spuries room and tidying things up, and cleaning your candlestick and

making it shine like morning gold. For what does the Bible say? 'He giveth to his beloved in sleep.' So when you, his beloved, are asleep, and, as I may say, the candle of your understanding is put out for night, that does not prevent the Lord of Light from finding his way into you

 III

and giving you what nobody else can. I believe God does just as much good in the night as in the day. And if people always remembered that, they would not be so afraid of the night of death. No, God needs no light but his own shining and all-seeing self to find his blessed way about the world. Why then did he light up these many and manifold candles of human spirits all over the earth? Why, this earth of ours is like a magnificent chandelier hung up in space and covered in all sizes and colours with living souls, which are candles of the Lord. What an illumination this crowded world must seem to those who can see it with the eye of God! One of our poets says:—

*The whole round world is everywhere
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.*

That is what I say. The populous world is a chandelier, lighted up with millions of living candles, and let down by golden chains, as it were, from heaven. And the whole heaven itself, with all its stars, is not so dear and delightful to the eyes of God as this world, which is lighted up by so many candles of his own in the shape of human souls. But why did God light up all these candles if he needs no light but his own?

Now we are coming to Christmas-time, and that will give us an illustration. This world of ours, this chandelier let down from God, might perhaps better be called the Christmas-tree of heaven. Our old forefathers, in the days when they worshipped many gods, thought the whole world was a tree, a great and terrible ash-tree, with a dismal meaning as the

 III 2

ash-tree has, and under one part of it dwelt the race of man. But it is better and brighter for us, who are taught by Christ, to think of this world as if it were the Christmas-tree of heaven—a lovely, flashing, living tree, garnished with all manner of precious souls, loaded with gifts of corn and gold, and having its very cause and beginning of endless life from the ever-young, evergreen life of Christ. The world, with all its burning souls, is the tree of life in the midst of the starry garden of the

Lord. And the tree of life must for us always be a Christmas-tree. For with Christ man, true man, was born.

Now, the delight of it! Oh, the splendour of it! What an excitement! A Christmas-tree! They are getting it ready; your eyes are beaming and sparkling brighter than its candles, and more like your shining souls within. Your cheeks are redder than the toys that glow on the twigs. You cannot keep still. You are upstairs and downstairs, and in my lady's chamber. You peep through the keyhole of the room where they are decking it. You could almost burst in the door with impatience. You can see as you peep just two candles and one cracker on it. Oh, you wish they would only be quick, and you fidget from one foot to another! And then you want another peep. And your brother happens to want one at the same time. And your heads meet at the keyhole with a crack that makes your eyes brighter, because wetter, than ever. Then, as you must not cry before your sisters' little friends, who, you are sure, think you a hero, you choke it down, and it goes off in a queer

 113

laugh, and next moment the light at the keyhole goes down, the door is flung open, and there he is in all his golden glory—your tree, shining in his own light, calm, laden, generous, perfect after his kind. And the big people stand by, and your father is looking after the candies and straightening them up just here and there, and perhaps snuffing them a little to make them burn clear. But you and your party are some of you staring, some of you dancing, and some of you calling out and clapping your hands. And the little girls say, 'How very pretty!' and the boys say, 'Isn't he a splendid fellow!' And you are all in ecstasies, each in his own way. And the old folks are beaming as if they were themselves large wax candle's of love's best illuminating power.

Now, what did they do it all for? Not to find their way about; they had gas for that. Not because they were obliged to do it; nobody is obliged by the laws to have a Christmas-tree, with candles or presents or anything else. They did it to make delight; they did it for the joy of seeing you joyful and sharing your joy; they did it out of the full kindness of their good fatherly and motherly hearts; they did it to make more happiness in the world than there was before; they did it to help make home more of home and more of heaven.

Now we have the answer to our puzzle. That is also the reason why God made this huge Christmas-tree of a world, and lighted it up with

innumerable living souls as candles of the Lord, and gave gifts unto men.
It was out of the fullness

114

of his great, great heart. It was because he wanted to have you, and you, and you, shining spirits, to share his ever-shining joy. From his own light he lighted up millions of lights more that he might rejoice in them, and they rejoice in him. You, with your minds and souls—candles of the Lord—were set by him for his joy and yours, that joy might be full. And another strange thing: you are candles that can feel the delight of shining. Wax candles don't. And what greater joy has God than that you should rejoice in his light, and sing for ever as you shine! What a lot of dark places there are yet waiting for some bright spirit to shine in upon them, and bring the joy of light, and add to the joy of the Lord! Won't you grow up burning and shining lights, making glad the hearts of men, and cheering with your own joy the very heart of the Lord our Light?

But mind, you little candles, no guttering and no grumbling. No guttering—no tears of anger, and no ugliness of sulks; no dribbling on the carpets—no spoiling of the pretty or precious, or humble things of life simply that you may shine; no burning of holes in the other furniture—no destruction of others by the careless way you carry yourselves; no flaring—no boasting and trying to outshine everybody else. It is always a bad and short-lived candle that flares. No smouldering, no grumbling and giving off an evil smell. The candles of the Lord give cheery light and a sweet savour to all that are in the house. And when the Father and Master of this radiant world, going round to watch his

115

candles, snuffs you or sets you straight, see that you shine the brighter and cheerier for it than before. If God correct you there must be no grumbling. If he snuff you, and seem almost to extinguish you; if he disappoint you, and seem to crush you, you will know now what it is for. They snuff the candles because they were burning badly, to make them shine with a perfect gleam, and smile with a free unflickering and untroubled smile.

P.T.E.

THE MAN IN GREY; OR, CONSCIENCE DEFILED

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.—TITUS 1:15.

A CERTAIN king one day sent for his son, and told him that it was high time he should go out to see the world, and learn to play the man. The young prince having a princely temper, was glad enough to hear what his father said, and was eager to go. In a short time, all was ready for his departure, and one bright morning he set out on his travels.

He rode a noble horse, and he was clad partly in armour, for in those days there were bandits and fierce ogres, and great giants, and many other terrible enemies, whom a prince might meet and have to do battle with. A squire rode behind the prince, carrying his helmet, and spear, and shield; a company of gallant young noblemen accompanied him, and a train of brave and stout serving men followed him.

The procession halted at the gate, which led out of the

palace and grounds into the high road, for the king stood there to say his farewell words: 'My son,' said he, 'you are provided as becomes a prince for a journey and adventures; but here is yet another to join your retinue.' And then the king pointed to a stranger, whom the prince had not noticed before—a curious figure he was indeed—a little man, almost a dwarf, clothed in russet-grey and mounted upon a mule. The prince could not tell whether the stranger was young or old. His brow was wrinkled as with age, but his eyes were bright as with the light of youth. He was thin and meagre, not at all like a soldier, and he carried no weapons,—nothing but a roll or book, of which he seemed to be very careful.

If the king had been in the habit of jesting, the prince would have thought that this was only a joke. But the king went on to say:—

'Plain and simple as this man looks, I wish you to make him your counsellor and guide. He is more to be trusted than all the stout-hearted men who follow you; more than all the young nobles, who have been chosen to accompany you. His advice may be unpalatable at times: it is

just possible that it may not always be perfectly wise, but it is sure to be the wisest you can have.’

The prince did not quite like such a homely-looking companion, but he bowed his head in submission to his father’s will. The man in grey rode up to the prince’s side, and seemed to think himself his right-hand man and welcome friend. And so they moved away together.

 118

Of course, I cannot tell you all the prince’s adventures, but must tell you chiefly what concerns the man in grey. He soon became rather tiresome. For one thing, he was not a polished courtier. When he spoke to the prince he did not say, ‘Your highness’, or use any kind of title. Indeed, he did not directly address the prince at any time. He spoke as if to himself, and when the prince did anything of which he did not approve, the man in grey would shake his head and say, ‘Wrong, wrong, decidedly wrong’. At times, he would seem to be in doubt for a while, until he had looked at his roll, and then he would pronounce, ‘Right, right’, or ‘Wrong, wrong’, with so much confidence, that the prince remarked once to a companion, that the old fellow was too cheeky and too cocky a good deal. It was, of course, most unprincely to use such phraseology, but the prince was sadly out of temper.

Sometimes the prince would try to argue, but the man in grey never condescended to argument: he would only nod, or shake his head, and repeat his opinion, tapping with his fingers on his roll. Now and then the prince grew quite cross, and rudely told the man to ‘shut up’. Even princes can be vulgar when they are in a bad temper. But the man in grey was never silent long. He would make remarks, whether the prince liked it or not he was continually interfering.

One day, the prince’s horse was a little frolicsome, and the prince, not being in a humour for frolic, used his riding whip rather savagely; whereupon the man in grey said, ‘Wrong,

 119

decidedly wrong’. the prince turned upon him furiously and shouted, ‘Silence, Sir’; but the man in grey only shook his head and said, ‘Wrong, more wrong than before’. Then, I am sorry to say, the prince struck the little man such a violent blow, that for a while he was silent, for he was stunned.

However, the prince did not always behave so ill. There were days when he remembered his royal father’s words, and paid attention to the

queer little counsellor, and he generally found that things went happily with him thereby.

But there were some in the prince's train who did not like the little fellow, and they plotted how they might get rid of him. Whenever one of these plotters could get into conversation with his young lord, he would argue that it would be well, if the prince would dismiss the man in grey. One, whose name was Wheedle, was in the habit of saying something like this:—'Your highness must surely be weary of this tiresome old pedagogue. It ill becomes me to say so, but I think you would have a wiser counsellor and a better right-hand man in me. This old fellow is wretchedly stupid, he is for all the world just like a parrot, which has only learned a couple of phrases. He must be in his dotage, for no sensible being would always be mumbling, 'Right, right', or 'wrong, wrong'. Things are not to be settled in that way. It is sometimes wise to do a thing, or unwise, as the case may be, and there is often much to be said upon both sides, and certainly one cannot decide everything by saying it is right or wrong.'

120

At length, after a good deal of this kind of talk, the prince agreed so far to take Wheedle's advice that, for one day, he would be rid of the man in grey, so they made a rapid gallop and left him miles behind. Away they went, as fast as their good horses could go, and both roared with laughter, as they looked back, and saw nothing of the man in grey. But just as the prince was going to bed that night at the inn where they rested, in walked the man in grey, as calm and cool as possible, and went up to the prince and said, 'Wrong, decidedly wrong, to try to leave me behind'.

'Little by little, the prince grew more inclined to listen to Wheedle and those like him, but, though he allowed them to talk against the man in grey, he would not permit them to do him serious harm. At length, however, the prince was brought to be of Wheedle's mind. One day the company halted upon a hill-top, where the road divided, and consulted the map, which the king had caused to be prepared for his son's use, upon which a dotted red line showed the best route for his journey. According to the dotted red line, the road branching away to the east was the appointed one, but Wheedle and some others agreed that the map was wrongly marked, and that the road tending to the west was the better. They said that the two roads did not diverge very widely, and it

was quite clear that the easterly road was rough and lonely, while the westerly road was good and smooth, and wound through a pleasant part of the country, where many villas and country houses, and probably comfortable inns were to be seen dotting the view. Of course,

121

the man in grey was for following the line marked out on the map. It so happened that the prince listened to his advice on this day instead of to Wheedle, whose counsel he had taken frequently of late! So the company took the rough, lonely road.

They had not gone far before a band of robbers surrounded them, and there was a hard, grim fight before the robbers were beaten off, and some of the prince's company were rudely handled, and some rather severely wounded. I need not tell you that Wheedle and his friends were savagely angry that the advice of the man in grey had been followed. 'They were quite sure,' they said, 'that there would be no robbers on the other road.' But the man in grey looked at the prince with sparkling eyes, for, to do the prince justice, he had fought like a lion, and he had made up his mind that in no long time he would have that road cleared of robbers. The little man in grey looked brightly on the prince and said, 'Very good, very good', which chafed Wheedle into fury. However, there were other troubles before they got out of the lonesome road. It *had* crossed a river by a bridge, but now the bridge was fallen into such decay, that it was with difficulty that the party gained the other side, and several of them tumbled into the water and were for a short time in no small danger. But nothing shook the man in grey. He laid his hand on the prince's arm, and said, 'This is the right road, not a doubt of it'.

Wheedle and his men were almost beside themselves with rage to hear him talk so, but they kept silence until they

122

had a better opportunity to speak. They found it that night. There was no inn to be seen or heard of, when darkness fell. Some rugs and things, which they used for bedding at such times, were wet through when they crossed the river. They had nothing to eat. So the prince was persuaded, while he was tired, and cold, and hungry, and cross, that the little man was the cause of all the misfortunes of the day, and he gave Wheedle permission to do as he liked. Wheedle and the others seized the man in grey, pinioned his arms, and blindfolded him. 'There!' said they, 'let us see how he will choose roads for us next time.'

For days after the poor man rode with his hands bound and his eyes tightly bandaged, but he kept up with the company, in spite of his disabled condition; and though he could not see, he could speak, and he murmured, 'Follow the dotted red line; follow the chart'. This was too much for Wheedle's patience, so he put a gag into the man's mouth to prevent his speaking to the prince. It so chanced that, as they were busy about this, they accidentally removed the bandage from his eyes, and then they found that there was no need to be at the trouble to put it on again. Either the tightness of the bandage or the sudden burst of light after being so long in the dark, or some other cause, had blinded the man in grey.

So he went along at the prince's side, both blind and dumb, but still he would moan and mumble, when he considered that the prince was going into danger, or deviating from the path which his father had appointed him. For,

123

though the poor man could not see, he could hear, and often gathered what was being done from the remarks made by the prince, or some member of the company.

And now the prince grew weary of the man in grey, for having given up himself to the guidance of Wheedle, the way was often different from the course marked on the chart, and the prince's conduct was not such as the king had urged upon him, so that the man in grey was almost always making moan. So they removed him from the prince's side, and fastened his mule to a horse on which one of the serving men rode, and, as the men took their cue from the prince's favourites, the poor fellow received many a cut with a whip, or blow with the flat of a sword, until he seemed to become quite stupid and confused by the continual ill-usage.

Well, one day, the company came near the mansion of a nobleman, who had the reputed of being a secret conspirator against the king. The king had warned his son not to go near this man's dwelling, and to be especially careful when in that part of the country, and to keep himself and all his troop well armed, and ready against attack. But, since the prince had ill-used his father's counsellor, he seemed to forget almost everything that his father had said to him, and to grow more foolish and reckless every day. Wheedle easily persuaded him to pass close by the enemy's house. The nobleman came out to meet the prince, and

behaved so fawningly and speciously, and made such presents to the prince and his favourites, that the silly young man was quite bewitched by him, and actually accepted an invitation to a

124

banquet at the man's house. He had just taken his seat at table and received a cup of wine, which his host offered to him, when there was a sudden commotion in the room.

The man in grey had broken loose from his guard: he had somehow found and forced his way, blind though he was, into the banquet-chamber, and pushed on until he reached the prince. He could not speak—he could only growl like a faithful dog, but he groped about and plucked at the prince's sleeve, evidently wanting to draw him away from the table, and out of the house. The prince flew into a passion, drew his dagger, and plunged it into the poor man's side. His host's servants removed the wounded man to the cellars or dungeons of the house. But even from there, his cries were sometimes heard above the tumult of the dance or the riot of the feast,—cries which sounded like warnings rather than appeals for help. In a few days, however, they ceased. The man in grey troubled the prince no more. He was dead. Then the pleasant host was no longer pleasant. He had not dared to take measures against the prince, while the man in grey was alive, for he knew how wise, and clever, and strong, the trusty counsellor was. But now that he was out of the way, the nobleman seized the prince, put out his eyes, and threw him into a dungeon.

'You have found out the moral of my story. You are all princes and princesses, sons and daughters of the King of all kings. You are out on your travels in this world, that you may be fit to rule kingdoms by and bye. The King sends you out with a train of servants,—appetites, desires,

125

passions, powers of body and mind. He gives you also a man in grey to be your counsellor, whose brow is wrinkled, for he is as old as the Eternal Law, but whose eyes are bright, for he is as young as you. Conscience, that is,—the voice within you, that speaks of right and wrong. You, too, will have Wheedle at your elbow, whispering that you should do what you like, what is easy, and what will bring you gain. Many listen to Wheedle, but every time they do so, they blindfold conscience, or gag it, or weaken and confuse it, until at last it seems dead within them, and they become the sport and spoil of the Evil One.

It moans for awhile, even from the dungeon, but only for a little while.
May this little story help you to listen to the man in grey, who consults
the Book, and tells you the way chosen by your Royal Father in heaven.

J.A.H.

126

THE CHILD CHRIST AND HIS BEARER

A CHRISTMAS SERMON FOR THE CHILDREN

*He bare them and carried them all the days of old.—ISAIAH
63:9,*

NOT long ago I was in one of the greatest and grandest churches in the world. It stands in the old city of Cologne, which is on the banks of the Rhine, and is full of old churches great and small. Of all these churches the greatest and grandest is the Cathedral, which has the highest spires in the world and one of the strangest histories. That is the church in which I stood a few weeks ago, as I have often stood before, and shall always gladly stand again.

Now if the spires on the outside of this church are very wonderful and beautiful, the columns, and the arches, and the passages inside are very splendid too. Everything seems large, and everything seems lovely. One would think that nobody who was much in this great and glorious church could ever have a little mind or a mean one. Ah! but the only church where all the people are of large and lovely minds is the church around the throne of God in heaven. But then,

127

that is a church more great, and glorious, and high than any cathedral in the world.

There are splendid coloured windows in this cathedral at Cologne, full of figures and faces looking down at you from the midst of golden glory or heavenly blue. And there are many fine pictures and great statues there, and a multitude of interesting things, which men in large caps and long red cloaks take you to see. Under one of the coloured windows there is a huge column which beautifies the inside of the church, and sometimes, when the sun shines through the window, the column is tinted with all the hues of the rainbow, and made to look as if it were a part of the wall in the New Jerusalem, which was garnished with all manner of precious stones.

Now, if you look up the column you will soon have your attention seized by something which is fastened to it, and which you are sure to ask questions about. It is a gigantic figure, in carved wood, of a man with a huge staff in his hand, who seems to be trudging along with a beautiful child seated upon his shoulders. I have often seen other figures of this giant and child in the churches of that country, but I never saw any so large as this. You ask, of course, when you see the two up there on the pillar, who they are and what it means. Well, the man is called St Christopher, and the child is the little Jesus. I do not know if any of you have a friend whose name is Christopher, but if you have you will be able to inform him now what his name means. For I have to tell you that the meaning of the name

128

Christopher is 'the Christ-bearer'. And I think it an excellent name for any Christian child.

I must, however, tell you the story of Christopher, or the story they tell about him.

Once there was a man of huge size and giant strength, who seemed able to go anywhere and do anything, but still he was not happy. What he wanted was not food, not clothes, not a fine house, or a fortune, or a wife, but a King. He wanted somebody to whose service he could give all his enormous power of work in the way of obedience and duty. Some of you want to get away from all teachers and masters, and have no King over you, and no duty to do. But it was otherwise with this man. He was unhappy, not because he had a master, but because he hadn't one. And if you don't get a master and a king, you will be unhappy some day, I can certainly tell you, and you will wander about, perhaps, very miserable in search of one. But any master won't do. You must get a real master, the greatest master, the Master of masters and King of all kings. It was this Master that the giant sought. He wanted the greatest King, and no other would satisfy him. He tried a great many, but was disappointed in every one of them. They all seemed themselves to be the servants of somebody or something else that was stronger than they. At last the giant beard of Christ, and heard him spoken of as the Lord of heaven and earth. Now, he thought, if I can find this Christ, he is the King for me to serve. But where to find him? How get to his palace? How

129

find out what he wanted done? You may remember that when Paul was struck down and blinded on his way to Damascus, as he was being converted to the service of a new King, with all his gigantic gifts of mind and heart, he was dazed and helpless, and he said, 'Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?' Now this giant in my story did not yet know Christ, and was not in the habit of praying. But his desire to find and know Christ was itself a prayer, only not put into words like Paul's 'Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?' And in the story of Paul, you may remember he was sent for help and advice to an old man named Ananias of Damascus. So the giant in my story was led to meet an old hermit, and he asked him how he might serve this greatest King Jesus! The hermit at first said, 'You must fast and pray'. That was what the hermit did himself, and he thought it was the proper thing for everybody else—a mistake that many people, even old people, make who ought to know better. The giant said to the hermit, with great good sense, that he didn't know how to pray, and, as for fasting, why, it would take away all that very strength with which he wanted to work for Jesus and serve him. So the hermit, who was not a foolish old man after all, saw that fasting and prayer were not exactly the thing for that vigorous man, and that there might be another way of getting to know Jesus and to serve him. It is quite needful that we should pray, but it is just as needful that we should work, and sometimes work for Jesus will do us much good when prayer does not seem to help us in the

130

least. The old hermit saw that the kind of prayer for the giant at present was work. So he set him to do something good. And he said to him, 'Well, my big friend, I will tell you what to do. You are a powerful fellow, and your legs are long and your back is broad. Can you hear that roaring?' 'Yes.' 'Do you see that stream?' 'Yes.' 'Well, the roaring comes from that stream a little way up there where the road crosses it. It is the only place where the road can cross it, but it is a dangerous part, especially when the floods are out, and the wind and rain are at their height. Many people have to cross that ford, and have to cross it on urgent business, and many of them perish for want of directions or for want of help. You are the very man that is wanted there. Go and build a little house (which you will soon do) by the side of that stream at the ford, and you will quickly find plenty to do for the travellers in these stormy parts. You will pilot

them safely across, and you will go in and with your size and strength help out any that are in danger of being swept away. And that will be the best service I can think of at present for you to render to King Christ. We'll see what may come after that.' So said the old hermit, and the great, docile giant, like a gentle elephant, immediately took a tree out of the ground for a strong staff, and set off, and before long had plenty to do, especially in the dark nights, with his long legs and long staff, and strong arms and broad back.

Now this pleased the Lord Christ in heaven, and he said, See, this giant does not know how to worship me; but he

131

does know how to serve me, and he serves me willingly and well. I must have something more to do with him.' So one wild night the strong man was sitting up, when he suddenly was amazed to hear a child's voice calling out, 'Giant! giant! come and carry me across.' He strode out, and before long found a child sitting by the river-side. He was greatly amazed, but he did not hold up his hands and waste time in 'Ohs', and 'Ahs', and 'Well, I nevers'. Business first, and interjections afterwards. What he had to do he did first, and what he said he said afterwards. So he caught up the child, swung him on his shoulders, settled his great staff among the stones of the stream, and waded in, and in, among the deepening water. And as he went on the wind rose to a gale, and the rain was like a river from the clouds, and the force of the storm tried even his mighty limbs. And strangest of all, the further he went the heavier and heavier grew the burden upon his shoulders. He had to stoop, and stoop, and his own life was in more peril than ever it had been, and a strange feeling of amazement and fear came over his stout heart. At last, however, he reached the other side, and put his load safely down, and said, breathless and tired, 'Child, who and what are you? I never felt like this. I thought I had the whole world on my back!' And the child said, 'You *have* had upon your back the whole world and its Creator. I am Christ who made the world!' Here the giant fell upon his knees, and was more terrified than ever. But the child, whose face was now at once both young and old, like the fresh ancient stars (for Christ is the

132

first and the last) encouraged him and said, 'Yes, I am Christ, whom you have so faithfully served. I saw and watched your readiness to be taught, your eagerness to serve, your faithful deeds, and saving help. I

have kept count of the lives you have saved and the steps you have guided right. Many a mother and child in far-away homes speak of the great, good giant, who helped father out of the storm when he was like to be swept away to a dismal death. And your good deeds have gone farther than that, and have come up to heaven, and have pleased us well. Now, I am come down to tell you, by my own mouth, that your service is accepted, and I am your reward. You have got your King at last. Now you can not only work, but praise and pray. And in token that it is so, plant your staff into the ground and it will blossom and bear fruit.' By which I suppose was meant that he was to go on with his service more deeply rooted and assured than ever, and it would become fruitful service, and be the beginning and the example of many, many such deeds all over the world. When he had spoken thus, the child vanished away, and when the giant came to himself, he was so full of gladness as his huge heart had never been before; and he seemed to have more power than ever he had. And many other mighty and blessed works he was able to do, and he even became famous among men, now that he had become the loving and knowing servant of King Jesus. And this story went out over all the world, and men gave him the name of Christopher, which is, being interpreted, the Christ-bearer.

133

Now, this is a very beautiful story, whether it be true in every part or not. There is a great deal of deep truth in it, and many great lessons. Some of them are these:—

1. You may be too young to pray much, and it would not be good for growing young people to fast much. But you are never too young to begin doing something for other people. You can never begin too soon to be one of the Helpers. You can never begin too young to be on your guard lest you fall into the host of the Hinderers who find people struggling in the middle of the stream, and only use the chance to steal their clothes, and even stone them.

2. If you go on doing true service and true duty in a hearty way, depend on it Christ will take notice of it, and he will have something to say to you, sooner or later, which will give you more joy than any words man or woman either can ever speak to you. In Christ's kingdom the honours and prizes go, not to the people who know most, but to the people who are most eager to serve and to learn the way of serving best. Jesus is a King, but he is the King of Love, and the way of love is

the way of doing things for people, and helping them, and getting them out of trouble, and sending them on their way rejoicing. When you get up on the morning of a Christmas holiday you say, 'Now, what fun can I have today? What am I going to do with myself all this. long day? I can do as I like. Now, what should I like to do to have a real jolly day?' But I beg you on holidays, and other, days, to ask yourself this question also, 'What can I do to give pleasure today? Is there anybody I can

 134

make to smile? Is there anything I can do to make a pleasant surprise for somebody? Let me see now, who could I help?' If you asked yourself this question every morning, you would grow up to be such heart giants! You might always be little. Some grown-up people don't grow very far when they stop. They are short people. But what hearts some of them have; so big, it is a wonder their small bodies can hold them. You can be great servants of Jesus, even if you are little people like Zaccheus. I have been telling, you how Christ came to a giant: you all know the story how He came to Zaccheus, who was a bit of a dwarf, and how he overjoyed the little man's great heart, and made him a better man even than he was before. There are big, strong people that are not very ready or very steady servants of Christ. You remember Samson. Well, Samson was not a very, very good one, not nearly so good as Christopher. The stories of Samson are none of them such beautiful stories as that of Christopher. And I would rather be little Zaccheus than big Samson any day. Samson was a strong man, but Zaccheus was a great Christian, which is better.

3. There is no strength of heart, mind, or body, that you can possess, which will not be better spent and better nourished in the service of Christ than any other way.

4. The more you do for Christ the more you will get to do. This last word is for the older children. Some people think it is such a nice, sweet, easy thing to have to do with Jesus. They read pretty stories about the child Jesus, and the Christmas time, and the invitation to little children, and

 135

they feel that it must be a very happy thing to be a Christ-bearer, to carry this sweet image about the world. They are fond of talking about the gentleness of Jesus, and the beauty of his ways, and the lightness of his yoke. And they carry Christ, as it were, on their shoulders, as if that

were the last and greatest thing, instead of being carried by him. But a day comes when it is hard to carry Christ; when what seemed a child is suddenly felt to be a man, nay, to make the demands of a God upon your strength. You enter the Christian life lightly, brightly, in the flower of your strength, and the bloom of your enthusiasm. But you soon find when the storms come, that the burden of Christ is a very, very heavy one, a serious one, one which calls all your most earnest manhood and womanhood into play. The simplicity of Christ taxes all the depths of your soul and all the muscles of your conscience and will.

You took up the simple, gentle Christ, and you found before long that you had pressing on you the burden, the sin of the world. How could you come through it all if he did not carry you far more really than you him. When Christopher was called to carry the Christ, it was all due to the great fact that Christ really had been carrying and leading him. And so we who lightly, though sincerely, take, in our sentimental youth, the name and yoke of Christ, shall find, as life becomes more earnest and strained, the load of the Saviour on us grow and grow, and his demand tax us in the torrents of the world, till we bend and almost break; and when we come, saved but hardly saved, to the other

136

side, we shall discover that we carried our Christ in the strength of a Christ that first chose us and bore us and carried us all the days of old.

P.T.F.

THE STORY OF AN AIR-BABY

*She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth.—1
Timothy 5:6.*

I HOPE you won't think it silly to listen to a story about a baby, because you ought to know that babies are the jolliest, merriest, funniest, drollest, gayest, wittiest, cleverest company in the world. If you tell me that there is another side to that, I shall reply that there are two sides to everything, and sometimes more; but that what I say is true for all that. There are, however, different kinds of babies. There are land babies and water babies. Charles Kingsley wrote a book about water babies, which you ought to read through thirteen times, and then begin again. It is full of fun, and fuller still of wisdom. But though Charles Kingsley was a great man, he didn't know everything. Few people do, and those few are the silliest fellows in the world; so if ever you feel that you are growing so clever that you will soon know everything, stop at once, and don't learn anything more. But we were talking of land babies and water babies, and I said that Charles Kingsley wrote a book about water babies, but that he didn't know everything. Whether he knew about the Air-babies is a question.

I dare say you will hear some people say that there are no Air-babies at all. People used not to know that there are curious living creatures in a drop of seemingly clear water, and for a long time, people did not know that the folk who live on the planet Jupiter go out on picnics by moonlight,—having seven [four] moons to light them. And no doubt, when some people who didn't know were told that such was the fact, they said that it was all stuff and nonsense. But if anyone tells you that there are no Air-babies, ask him to prove his assertion, and see how wise he will look then. And if he asks you whether you can prove that there are, you may reply, that it is an irrefragable intuition of your inner consciousness, unsusceptible of syllogistic support, but none the less transcendently true; which will, of course, convince him, because people who use big words must be right, as everybody knows. But if he is still unconvinced, ask him what a noun is, when he may be stupid enough

to say that a noun is the name of something which exists. Then you ask him what part of speech *sylph* is, and he will say it is a noun. Then you say, a noun is the name of something that exists. Sylph is a noun, therefore it is the name of something that exists. So it is proved that sylphs exist, and sylphs are Air-babies.

And now I may tell you what the Air-babies are like. Why, you have seen pictures of them—rosy, chubby, little boys and girls with wings like butterflies, sitting as cosily as can be, on lovely clouds. Of course they are much daintier and lighter than land babies, and, possibly, even a

139

shade prettier. Do they go to school you want to know? Well, they do a kind of Kindergarten work under the direction of a noble lady, the Air-Queen.

You have lain on your back in a field on a hot summer day, and watched the clouds, have you not? And you have laughed, for there was a cloud which looked just like a giraffe, and then like a goat, and then, all at once, it changed into the face of an old man, whose nose and chin nearly touched each other. The Air-babies do all that for fun, modelling the clouds into all sorts of shapes, just as land babies make mud pies, only of course it is much nicer to model clouds than to make mud pies.

Sometimes the Air-Queen says, 'The ground is dry and parched. We must help the poor folk who live down there.' Then the Air-babies hurry down to the sea, taking tiny watering pots, with which they climb up the sunbeams, when they have filled them. Others draw clouds across the sky, for it will not do, as you know, to water the garden when the sun is shining full upon it. When the coverlet of cloud is stretched out, the Air-babies empty their watering pots upon the fields, and people who don't know any better say, 'It is raining'. Sometimes the Air-Queen indulges the children with a display of fireworks, and, when her grand squibs, and rockets, and crackers are going off, the Air-babies roar with laughter, and clap their hands, and as there are many millions of them, the laughing -and clapping make what some people think an awful noise, and call it thunder.

140

At other times the Air-babies go through their fan drill. You have seen thistle seed, dandelion puff, and the like, flying high, then coming gently down, and going up again with a rush. The Air-babies are after it with their fans, and keep it up as long as they can. That is their battledore

and shuttlecock, and at the same time they are helping the Air-Queen to sow seeds. In autumn they have fine fun with the dead leaves, chasing them round and round, and up into the air.

In the summer nights the Air-babies come flying down by thousands, and people say, 'See, what a mist is rising!' It is the Air-babies softly flitting about, breathing upon the grass, and ferns, and flowers, and forming tiny drops of moisture, which people call dew. And, if you could only see with what care they breathe all over a geometrical spider's web, you would not wonder that it looks so beautiful early on a summer morning. The Air-babies enjoy doing that, because it spoils Mrs Spiders web, and causes her to have to go all over it, when the dew is gone, to put fresh glue upon the lines. Now I am sure you will agree with me in thinking that the life of the Air-babies is very pretty and pleasant, but it is not all play. Indeed it is all work, but they make it play by the mirth and cheerfulness with which they go about it. That is the real prettiness and pleasantness of the life of angels, and noble men and women—doing work so earnestly that it becomes pleasure, and when any one's work becomes pleasure, then all sorts of fine pleasures come of themselves, unsought and unexpected.

141

The Air-babies are very busy, little creatures. Sometimes the Air-Queen orders one, who is clever at fan drill, to go to an open cottage window, out of which a poor boy is looking, who is getting better after an illness. The Air-baby knows his work, and he flutters his fan, and waves his wings, so as to send into the room fresh sweet air all day long. And, every now and then, he sweeps into the room a delicious whiff of new-mown hay and mignonette, so that the invalid says, 'What a gush of sweet scent came in just then!'

Sometimes the Air-babies are allowed to play little practical jokes upon pompous folk. When some conceited fellow stalks down the street, thinking that everybody is admiring his tall, shiny hat, roguish Air-babies may often be heard whispering together as they wait at the corner of the street, and as soon as the fine gentleman comes near them, out they rush, and puff his hat off, and away they fly laughing, and sending it on further with their fans, and everybody in the street laughs, too, to see Mr Starch cutting after his hat. But, much as I should like to tell you more about the Air-babies, I must stay, for I want to tell you the story of one particular Air-baby. I must not, however, lead you to suppose that

the Air-babies have anything to do with great winds and hurricanes. Those things are under the care of certain awesome and dread ladies of the air, about whom you may have read something in George Macdonald's story, *At the Back of the North Wind*.

And now about the one Air-Baby. She was, named

142

Sweetlips, and a very sweet and dainty little lady she was, but rather too fond of dipping her rosy fingers into the honey flowers to suck the sweet off them, when she ought to have been minding her work. One evening the Air-Queen said to her, 'Sweetlips, go down to the marsh yonder. A peevish gnome lives there under the roots of an old willow, and he sets a light to the vapour which rises out of the damp ground, and misleads strayed and belated travellers, who mistake his wicked flame for the gleam of the hearth through a cottage window. They wander about seeking the cottage, and get lost in the marshy wood, or fall into the green-scummed pools. Go, Sweetlips, and all night long wave your fan, and put out the light as often as it is kindled, for I see a poor, tired, old man is coming in that direction, and he may come to harm, if we do not prevent the tricks of the gnome.'

Sweetlips flew swiftly towards the flickering light, but she shuddered when she reached the spot, for the place was very dismal. The ground for many a rood was flat, covered here with mass and rushes, there with heather. Twisted and half-rotten old willows, which looked like hideous men turned into trees, were dotted about on the bog. There were pools of black, sullen water, surrounded by stunted birch trees, some of which had fallen, and were covered with ugly growths of fungus. The evening was growing dark. There was no sound, except the whirr of the nightjar now and then, or the plaintive cry of the plover, disturbed by the marauding weasel. It was a dismal and

143

dreary scene. Sweetlips thought how much nicer it would be to be lying upon one of the soft clouds above her, than to perform this dull task all night long. If only she had a companion, she thought, it would be much more pleasant. While she was so thinking she heard a voice saying, 'Welcome to this dreary wild, most dainty lady, none the less that it is strange to see such beauty here'. Sweetlips turned, expecting to see a graceful fairy, for the voice was wonderfully sweet and musical.

At the first glance she was horrified, for the speaker was an ugly, old creature, not more than three feet high, with nasty wrinkles all over his face, tiny red eyes, and great, tusky teeth protruding over his lower lip, had he had a hump upon his back, and he had hands so hairy and crooked that they were disgusting to see. But the voice was, as I said, sweet, and full, and mellow. Sweetlips covered her eyes with her hand, for she could not bear to look at the little monster. But he went on, 'What sad mistake brings so lovely a creature to these wastes? May a poor wretch like me venture to inquire?—to offer his humble services to beauty in distress?' Sweetlips took away her hand from her eyes, and looked again at the misshapen elf, and she said to herself, 'He looks *kind*, though he is so hideous'. Then she said aloud, 'I am Sweetlips, sir, one of the Air-Queen's handmaidens, and my business here is to prevent benighted travellers from being misled by the deceitful fire, which is kept up by a malicious gnome.' 'I am grieved to hear it', answered the dwarf,

 144

for, as you perceive, there is no such fire to be seen, and I believe the wicked being, who kindles it, has left this wretched region. Besides, it is most unlikely that any traveller will come this way. Travellers seldom do.' At this Sweetlips gave a little sigh, and thought it was a great pity that she was ordered to remain the whole night long. Then the dwarf went on again, 'It is really painful to me to think of an elegant sylph like you remaining here, for the sake of preventing a coarse mortal from going a mile out of his way'. Sweetlips thought so too, but she did not dare to fly back to the Air-Queen, who would be angry. The dwarf seemed to read her thoughts, and continued, 'Perhaps, beautiful lady, you do not choose quite to desert the task—pardon me, if I say the needless and foolish task—assigned you. But if you think fit to rest awhile, or to amuse yourself, pray enter my humble dwelling.'

Sweetlips was now so fascinated by the dwarf's fine voice and polite manners, that she followed him to his home, which was actually under a willow. She quite forgot that the gnome, who lighted the fire, lived in such a place, or else she might have suspected that this polite dwarf was he, and that all his fine speeches were false speeches. But she did not. She followed him down into a cave—a wonderful place. There were soft cushions of dried moss, almost as soft as the clouds upon which Sweetlips had slept many a time. There were plenty of pretty and curious

things, and she admired them much. After she had looked round, the dwarf drew aside a curtain and said, 'Fair lady, I have

145

reserved my rarest object for the last. Pray look upon this lovely picture.' Sweetlips looked, and was delighted. There was a clear mirror, in which she saw herself for the first time, for the Air-babies have no mirrors. The ugly dwarf had such a clever way of pointing out to her the beauties of the reflection in the mirror, that she was full of pleasure, and looked so long, that he had time to slip out and kindle his baleful fire. Then he crept back to the cave, and prepared a delightful couch for Sweetlips, who lay down and slept.

While she slept, a poor old man came across the dreary, boggy moor, thinking that the light which he saw shone through a cottage window, and that he should be able to obtain a night's shelter. The crafty dwarf moved his light in this direction, and that, until the old man was wearied out, and at last stumbled into a deep pit, and was seen no more. Then the wicked gnome stole back to the cave, and awoke Sweetlips, and said, 'It is now grey dawn, dear lady. Perhaps you may wish to return to the Air-Queen. I wish you could stay here always, but that is too much for me to hope.' Sweetlips thanked him, and after taking another long look at herself in the glass, and thinking that, as the dwarf said, she was more beautiful this morning than she had been the night before, flew away to join her companions. She did not like to face the Air-Queen, but she was obliged to do so. And the Queen was terribly stern, and told her that she ought to have been wiser than to listen to the dwarf, and she added that, on

146

punishment day, Sweetlips would suffer for her folly and carelessness. Then Sweetlips was allowed to join her companions. Some of them spoke gently to her of her fault, and of the sad fate of the man whom she ought to have saved. And one of them said, 'How is it, I wonder, you are not so rosy and sweet as usual? You seem to be beginning to be ugly!' Now Sweetlips could not bear this easily. She said to herself, 'The Air-Queen ought not to have set me such a dreary task. She ought to have sent Sharp-eye or Fine-ear, or some one, not me. Besides, she did not describe the dwarf to me as she ought. As for beginning to be ugly, that is all nonsense, for I saw myself in the mirror.'

So all that day Sweetlips was sulky and dull, and did her work in a half-hearted way. She even did some peevish tricks. She puffed down a cottage chimney, and sent the smoke and soot all over the nice dinner that a poor woman had just got ready as a special treat to her children. She blew a wee toddler's new hat into a puddle, and laughed at the child's crying. Her companions chided her gently, and she gave them sharp, snappish answers, and was very cross. In the evening, when the rest of her company were floating about in the fields and woods, breathing the refreshing dew upon the plants, Sweetlips stole away to the waste, for, though she knew now that the polite dwarf was a wicked wretch, she did not care. She longed to see herself again in the mirror.

The dwarf received her most courteously, and when she

147

gazed into the mirror, she thought herself far more lovely than before. In reality it was not so. Her pretty looks were becoming spoiled, but the mirror was an enchanted one, and deceived her. When the dwarf saw how pleased Sweetlips was with the mirror and the cave, he ventured to say to her, 'Fair sylph, would you not be happier if you stayed here, queen of this humble grotto, instead of toiling and moiling in those wearisome labours, which are far too dull for a charming creature such as you are?' Sweetlips would not at first consent to stay, but she visited the cave more and more frequently, and little by little, she came to hate the Air-Queen, and the company of the Air-babies, and all their merry work and glorious fun, and to like to loll upon the soft couch, and gaze at the mirror, and hear the dwarf's fine speeches. She was not truly happy *there*, but she had come to hate everything else.

One morning a terrible thing happened to her. When she woke, and tried to fly away as usual, her wings would not bear her. Those beautiful wings had shrivelled up into limp shreds of wings, which could not beat the air at all. While poor Sweetlips was sobbing over her dreadful plight, the ugly dwarf came in, and as soon as he saw what had happened, he grinned a savage grin, and then capered clumsily round the cave, howling frightfully for joy. He sneered at her, mocked her, beat her, and even spurned her with his ugly feet. He bade her look into the mirror now,—for he had taken away the enchantment,—and poor Sweetlips could scarcely believe her eyes. And now she must

148

remain in the cave under the willow-roots, the miserable, trembling slave of the horrible dwarf, serving him on bended knee, and very thankful if a day passes without his beating her. She sometimes hears the voices of the Air-babies as they go singing by. She can sometimes catch a glimpse of their bright wings. And then she cries as though her heart would break, and the ugly elf mocks her weeping, and tauntingly asks why she does not fly away to join her old friends.

I hope,—I am not sure, but I hope, that, by and by, new wings may grow. They say, that when Air-babies, who have done wrong and suffer for it, are sorry in the right way, the sorrow and weeping cause new wings to bud just below the old ones. I hope it may be true for poor Sweetlips' sake, don't you?

I need not tell you the moral of the story. I need not tell you, that they who love pleasure more than duty come to sorrow; that they who turn a sulky ear to kind reproof are in a dangerous way; that at last they see themselves in a false, flattering glass, and become the miserable slaves of evil. As our Bible text says, 'She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth'. And it is just as true of the HE'S as of the SHE'S.

J.A.H.

HELPERS AND HINDERERS.

Helpers of joy—2 CORINTHIANS 1:24.

THERE are two sorts of people in the world, and I am going to ask which you belong to. I don't mean the black people and the white, nor the tall and the short, nor the grown-ups and the little ones, nor the men and the women, nor the boys and the girls, nor the rich and the poor, nor the happy and the miserable, nor the clever and the slow, nor the handsome and the plain, nor the dark and the fair, nor the French and the English, nor the savage and the civilized, nor the country people and the town, nor the teachers and the learners. No, and I don't mean exactly either the religious and the irreligious, the people that go to church and the people that don't. None of these are the classes I mean. But what I do mean is the division of people into the two sorts,—The Helpers and The Hinderers. And I ask you which of them you belong to?

There were two children born into a family known as the Great H family, a family of much influence, difficult sometimes to deal with, and frequently not very well treated. The letter H, you are aware, is a letter that plays a great

part in the language, but it is one that does not always meet with the respect due to a family of such aspirations. People invite the H's into their words when they shouldn't, and they don't ask them when they should. They ask them to come and take the head of a word which is already choke full of letters, so that the poor H is dreadfully in the way. And then when the whole company of letters in a word are waiting for their H to just complete the number, take the lead, and open the ball, H it turns out, has never been asked, and the word has to begin without a single one of the H's being present. Then children, sometimes, say 'all when they mean hall never inviting poor Mr H to take a position in the word he could fill so well. And then I hear them at other times say hall when they mean all, or hup when the word is up. The word is quite full with the letters a-l-l or u-p, like a little room, but if these children don't go and drag poor Mr H in by the shoulders, and set him at the

top of the room, and make him very hot, and very much in the way! Well, if the H's were not a good-natured family they would never stand it.

Into one branch of this family, then, two children were born, who were very unlike, as different as two people could be. You do find that sometimes. You find in the same family people who grow up to be excellent people in every way, and one, perhaps, who is just the wickedest and most intolerable person you could meet. Well, one of these H's was a first-rate fellow. He was stout on his legs, and quick in his eye, active in his movements, and

151

counted nothing a trouble. He could hit a very hard blow when it was required, but mostly he was sunny-faced, cheery-spoken, vigorous but not noisy in his behaviour, very sincere in his manner, and gentle in his way of doing things. He was the kindest lad about the place, and when he grew up it was always to this Mr H that people looked in a difficulty. He had the gentlemanly stamp upon him—a sort of mark that lies not in the clothes but on the heart. He never seemed to think much about himself, but used to have always leisure to be at the service of somebody else. Dogs and horses took to him in an extraordinary way, and he could do anything with them. The young children regarded him as just the best fellow that ever was born, and all the little girls quarrelled about having him for a husband. He was one of the H's that seldom are where they shouldn't be, and seldom absent where they should be. He was usually in his proper and unpretending place. Consequently, he was a favourite with big people too when he was a boy, because he was always ready to be made use of as he was required, but never pushed himself into notice, or made himself a pest—and when he grew big himself, he became a fine, quiet soldier, and finally a distinguished officer, who feared nothing, failed in nothing, spared himself in nothing, and said little or nothing. Now, to distinguish him from the other Hs he got a second name—Elper. Some people used to think it was given him by a Greek scholar, who used to visit at his father's house, because it sounded so like a Greek word that signified hope, and he was always so energetic

152

and hopeful in his cheery, watchful way. At any rate he found it necessary, in order not to be mistaken for the brother I am going to speak about, to sign his name H. Elper, which is just Helper.

The brother was a very different sort of person. As a boy he was thin and sly; but as he grew up to be a prosperous man he became stout, and instead of calling him sly, people only said he was a smart man of business. He was not lazy, he would take no end of trouble about many things, but they were always things that were likely to benefit himself or amuse himself, and likely to give no small pain to others. He had a clever face, and could laugh well, especially when he had got some poor creature into a fix. You could hear him laugh all over the house when he enticed his little sister into the shower-bath, on pretence of playing at houses, and then pulled the string and drenched her from top to toe. The cats and the fowls fled from him as if he had been a tiger or a hawk. He got hold of a cat's tail once, by creeping quietly up and seizing it as it stuck through a slit in the fence, and he laughed as he held on and made the beast suffer till you could not tell which was louder, the noise made by the boy or the cat. Nothing delighted him more than outwitting stupider lads in a bargain. He used also, if he saw ladies looking at something nice in a shop window, to slip in front of them, as if he were greatly interested too, and then wink to his companions, with great triumph, as the ladies moved away wondering in disgust whose that rude boy could be. He used to boast

153

that nobody could look after him so well as he could himself, and as he grew older he did look after himself with more care than if he had been his own mother. The anxiety he caused at home was very great. They could never find him when the service of an H was wanted, but if ever he should not be there, there he was and no mistake. The amount of happiness he destroyed in the household was incalculable. It was he who smashed the toys, that had to be taken to his brother to be mended. He never had time if anybody wanted a little service done, or the loan of his new knife, or a piece of the cake he bought with the pence he saved up so greedily. At school if he lent a boy sixpence he made him promise to pay eightpence next week. He got well trounced several times by other lads that he played selfish tricks upon. He was the same kind of man grown up. He made a large fortune, by always managing with his great cleverness to pop in before other people, and sometimes he would jostle them over in the mud of misfortune, so that he could push to the front. His wife was sadly afraid of him, and his children used to become very silent and timid whenever he was known to be about.

Indeed, people used to wonder if he was really an H at all. They used to think it possible that he was one of the I children from next door. I is the next letter to H you know, and the I family were a perfect pest to the neighbourhood. Every one of them used to think only about I, I, I. 'It was always what shall *I* get, what shall *I* do, how high up shall *I* be; and they quarrelled frightfully with everybody else

154

and among themselves. And when the whole family came to ruin, it was believed that the baby I was taken by the good-hearted H's, and brought up with their own children; only as the H's were modest people they said nothing about it, and when they removed to another town it was thought that young I was really and truly one of the H's. But he was so unlike the other H that some suspected that he really belonged to the I lot. So they called him HI to distinguish him from H. Elper, Helper. His full name at last came to be H. Inderer. Some boys said it was connected with India, because his dark complexion could put on such a scowl when he was crossed. Others said it was because his sneaky, pliant ways made them think of the stretching of India Rubber, which always rebounds upon itself when released and free. But these boys were not good at derivations. At any rate the name of this brother was Hinderer, and it probably had nothing to do with India, or India Rubber, or even his birth in the I family, but came about just because he was never known to help anybody in his life.

From the one brother sprang the great family of the Helpers, and from the other the large and active family of the Hinderers. The Helpers dwell in the county of Joy, and are now great manufacturers of Happiness, and all their houses are painted with Love and decorated with Kindness. But the Hinderers live in what is called the Black Country, or the Land of Misery. They deal in Trouble, and have a large business. And their houses are full of the dust of Suspicion and the ashes of Ill-will.

155

Now which family do you belong to? I got into a railway carriage the other day where there were several other people beside myself, and it seemed at first as if it were a little party of the Hinderer family, each bent on keeping the nice corner places for themselves and keeping the rest out, and each grumpy and uncivil to all the rest. One lady had piled up parcels on the seat, and was in no way disposed to move them to accommodate the new comers. But she soon got out, and then I found

that I was really going to have the pleasure of travelling with some of the delightful family of the Helpers. For a young lady came in who was parting from her dearest friends for a long absence, and, grownup as she was, she could not help crying sadly. Opposite sat another young lady, a stranger, who seemed to be at first of the Hinderer set, but she began to talk so quietly, so respectfully, so kindly to the lady who felt so lonely, that it almost, made tears come into my eyes. I observed how she tried, by speaking in quite a simple and common way, to divert the troubled heart from its grief, and to suggest that, after all, the absence would not be long, and the distance was not so very great, and the home-coming would be so delightful, and so on. Then she gave her a newspaper, and picked up the sad lady's handkerchief which fell down, and many little respectful kindnesses she did, which made me think that if I could be born over again, I should like to be born that lady's big brother. A young man was watching it all in another corner, and it acted on him like an infection. Loving-kindness spreads like fire. Opposite him was a poor

 156

man who had travelled many miles to look for work, and was returning unsuccessful. He had an interesting daughter of about ten with him, with a nice, bright face, and such a poor thin dress. He had had to leave his bundle at the station to pay for a ticket to take his little girl home. Well, the young man got out some chocolate, and gave the little girl a piece to her great surprise. Then he made the man grateful by speaking up for him when at one station there was a difficulty about his tickets, which had been roughly and wrongfully taken away at the station before. Then the sister of the kind lady gave the little girl an orange. Then she gave me a Graphic to look at. And, really, though there was very little said on the way, and that little was somewhat dry and distant, yet we were all undoubtedly of the Helper clan, and it was very pleasant to have this good family meeting.

Now, this does not always happen. Some of those horrible Hinderers get into railway carriages and elsewhere, and things are very different indeed. They get smoking where they have no business to, and saying bad and rude things, and joking and making everybody feel that they are themselves like smoke in the eyes, or vinegar to the teeth.

When you get up every morning, I beg of you to ask yourselves this question, 'Am I to be a Helper or a Hinderer today? Am I going to look

round, and think, and watch, for chances of making joy? Or am I going to be a nuisance, a Hinderer, and a kill-joy?’

Then say, ‘I’ll look out for joy chances. I’ll play at making happiness. I’ll be on the watch to see where I can

157

step in to make things easy and pleasant to everybody in the house. I will stop upon my lips the cross word. I won’t say, ‘Do it yourself,’ when I am asked to go upstairs and bring Mary’s scissors. I’ll smile instead of frowning, when I catch myself in time. I’ll see the little ones helped first. I’ll get the cats and the dogs to be awfully fond of me. Puss shall learn to come and rub her sides on my legs when I come in, and carry her tail in the air with no fear of my seizing it. Our dog shall wag his tail when he sees me till he is in danger of wagging it off. Everybody will be glad to have me about. The servants will come to do anything for me when they find I am glad to save them any trouble I can. My mother shall be proud of me for a manly boy, or a charming girl. And my father will say some day, when he doesn’t think I hear him, ‘What a comfort that child is, to be sure; what a help we shall have in him or her the older they grow’.’

Now, say something like that when you get up, and see, when you lie down, that you have done it, and life will grow full of joy, and you will gain a great appetite for fun, and a great power of hearty laughter from the conscience outwards, and you will cheer the heart not only of your kinsfolk and acquaintances, your mother and father, but also of Jesus Christ your Lord and your Father in heaven, who see in secret, and one day will reward you openly.

For the great first ancestor of the Helper family is God in heaven. Whoever helped the world like Jesus its Saviour? All Helpers are God’s children, and every one of them can truly say, ‘The Lord is my Helper’.

P.T.E.

GOOD APPEARANCES; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF
PINCHBECK

When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.—ISAIAH 28:15.

A GREAT king, who had much territory north, south, east, and west, thinly inhabited, wished to settle people in it, who might guard the country from savage tribes, who roamed about the borders. The uninhabited territory was of various kinds, some of it consisted of stony hills, some was tangled wilderness, some of it forest, some low-lying, swampy waste; and the king desired to find settlers, who would make the best use of the ground, and bring all into cultivation that could be cultivated. The way which the king took was this: he made grants of land to certain of his subjects, and gave them, considerable aid in money and other forms, requiring only that they should bind themselves to build good, durable houses (and, where it was necessary, a tower or block-house), and be diligent to make the best use of their land. They had one good reason for being diligent—the house and land

were to be their own, if they satisfied the king that they had done well.

One of the king's servants, Pinchbeck by name, received a grant of land of a highly valuable sort. Some of it was good for corn growing, some for pasture; there were spots where excellent building stone could be got by quarrying, and it was said that ironstone abounded on one part of the estate. Altogether, Pinchbeck had a splendid property. The king sent him a large sum of money, a quantity of good timber, and a lot of useful tools, so that Pinchbeck, had every prospect of becoming a wealthy settler. It was whispered that the king would make the very best of the colonists lords of the kingdom, so that all had a reason the more to do their utmost to improve the land, and to be brave in protecting it from the savages.

Pinchbeck was glad and proud, when he had been over his ground, and seen the worth of it; and he soon had a number of men busily quarrying for stone, in order to build a house and tower. Another gang

of men were set to work to stub up trees and clear away brushwood on some land which was certain to yield fine crops of corn. Of course, the work was hard and slow, and Pinchbeck was rather impatient. He was fond of shooting, and there was plenty of game in some parts of his ground; and so it happened that he was often away with a few idle people, gun in hand, when he ought to have been looking after his men, who in their employer's absence were given to beer-drinking and playing pitch and toss, and every occupation except hard work. Meanwhile,

160

some of Pinchbeck's neighbours were doing famously. Some of them had built strong towers, and solid, comfortable houses, and had ploughed ground, and sown corn, and laid out pleasant gardens, or gardens which soon would be pleasant, while Pinchbeck had not even had foundations dug, or stone dressed for his building. Now, though Pinchbeck did not like work, he liked to be as good as his neighbours, and he began to cast about in his mind for an easy way of doing as well as the or at least of being *supposed* to do as well as they. He remembered the timber that the king had given him, and he struck out a fine idea. He used the timber to build a house and fortress, and then he painted it to look like granite, and, when you looked at it from a distance, you could not tell that it was made of wood.

But then came a difficulty. Suppose the savages should come and attack his house and tower! They would soon discover that it was only a wooden affair, and they would easily destroy a tower of timber. The great thing, Pinchbeck thought, was to hit upon some device that would frighten the savages off. Now, his neighbours had made small holes in their walls, and kept rifles ready inside near the holes, so that they might be prepared for a sudden assault. Pinchbeck took it into his head that he might prevent the savages from even coming near his tower by an improvement on his neighbours' plan. He had plenty of paint; paint was cheap, and he was very clever and ingenious. So he painted on his tower great portholes, and the muzzles of cannon, as if protruding from the portholes, and of course cannon looked

161

much more terrible than rifles. All his neighbours said, 'What an able man Pinchbeck is! How quickly he has managed to rear that tower, and he has actually mounted cannon in it! He is an example to us all.' You see they were all busy at home, and had never been near his grounds,

so that they did not know that his tower and cannon were all sham,—mere planking and paint. And whenever they spoke to Pinchbeck of coming to look over his fortress, he had always some clever reason why they should not come just at present.

One of his clever notions was to stick on the top of his tower a figure, which looked like a man with a rifle on his shoulder, and Pinchbeck arranged it so that the figure moved slowly, to and fro, on the tower top, as a living sentinel might do. Then Pinchbeck said to his neighbours, that he hoped they would not venture too near the tower, lest his trusty sentinel should be suspicious and fire at them. In this way, he hoped to prevent its being found out that his tower was only painted wood.

When Pinchbeck had contrived all this, he went further, having begun to like contrivance for its own sake. His neighbours had gardens. He would have a garden too. But he could not wait until next year, as he would have to do, if he went about the business the usual way. He wanted to have a splendid garden at once, and a much finer one than those of his neighbours. So he got a great quantity of paper, and after steeping it in a kind of acid, which would prepare it to stand the rain, he cut it into flower shapes, and then stained the artificial flowers with gaudy colours, and had them stuck

162

about his grounds. Of course, this was troublesome, and you may find it hard to believe that an idle man, like Pinchbeck, would take so much trouble. It is certainly very odd, but it is the fact. After he had filled his garden with paper flowers, you may be sure that he was more anxious than ever to prevent his neighbours coming to visit him. Indeed, he found it needful to fix palings all round his grounds, so high that nobody could look over them; and he was constantly going about to see that all gates and doors were securely locked. So one pretence and another kept him always at work to avoid being found out. But, nevertheless, Pinchbeck went on with his make-believe.

Some of the settlers had made nice, smooth lawns, where their children played games like croquet and lawn tennis. Pinchbeck was not to be outdone, but there was too much trouble and expenditure of time, for his liking, in the work of cutting turf, and carrying it and laying it down, nor did he wish to have the bother of mowing and rolling the grass, and clearing away the wireworms, which were abundant in that part of the country. He decided on a shorter and easier way. Accordingly he laid

some green baize down on a level plot of ground, which, seen from a distance, looked like a very trim lawn indeed. But in this again, Pinchbeck gave himself much more trouble than he meant to have. Moths got into his baize; the rain, and dew, and sunshine discoloured it; the stuff wore into holes in a very little time, and, in the end, the sham lawn cost more pains than the real thing would have done.

163

One day Pinchbeck was alarmed by a neighbour, who said to him, 'I am afraid I am losing my sense of smell, for I have just passed your garden, and though you have, I know, a magnificent lot of flowers, I did not catch even a whiff of perfume'. Pinchbeck muttered some kind of an answer, and the next day he sprinkled about in his garden a quantity of essences and odours. That again brought him more trouble, for another neighbour said to him, 'What remarkable fragrance your flowers have. I should so much like to see your garden.' Pinchbeck put the man off in some way, but he began to be very much afraid of being found out. From fear of being found out, he went on to suspect that other people were suspicious of him. He took alarm at the most innocent remarks. Thus, one day, a neighbour said to him, 'Your cannon must have cost a good deal of money. I had no notion that you were rich enough to spend so much money on cannon?' Pinchbeck imagined that his neighbour had discovered his secret, and hated him from that moment. However, he went home, and prepared some explosive stuff that would make a tremendous bang, and that evening he exploded his stuff, that his neighbours might think he was firing a volley from his cannon.

So, from one thing to another, Pinchbeck went on until he had spent nearly all his money in cunning little tricks of this sort, (and they were expensive tricks), and had scarcely any left to carry on really useful work. Gradually he became so much of a trickster, that he began to play tricks

164

upon himself. You smile and think that too ridiculous to be true, but true it is, as you will know some day.

Pinchbeck said to himself, 'I must improve the look of things from my windows'. Some of his windows looked out upon barren heath and moorland, which ought long ago to have been cleared, and ploughed, and sown. Pinchbeck did not like the prospect as it was, and he determined to improve it in his own silly way, which was to paint *upon the windows* a pleasing landscape. After much painstaking and practice, he did it most

cleverly—so cleverly that when you looked through the windows, as you fancied, you saw waving cornfields, fine orchards, and thriving plantations. And it became one of the chief pleasures of the man's life to look at his windows. He half persuaded himself that the corn, and fruit, and forest trees were growing outside. He became so foolish that it did not occur to him that if anybody looked upon the scene from the outside, it was as barren, and ugly, and unthrifty as could be. No, he sat stupidly gazing at the windows, which he had painted so well as to deceive himself, while it deceived no one else.

Now while poor Pinchbeck was so busy with his pretences and tricks, the tools and implements, which the King had given him for his mining, and farming, and building work, were rusting away unused. What little ground was under cultivation was sadly neglected. The house was going to rack and ruin. It was, as you know, only a mere log hut, but a log hut may be dry, and clean, and comfortable, but Pinchbeck's was a wretched hovel inside. Pinchbeck cared

165

only for the room with cunningly painted windows, and there he spent most of his time, while the rest of the hut fell into decay. At length he was awakened out of his stupid day-dreaming. The scouts of the savages discovered that the tower was only a wooden one, and that the cannon were only so much paint, and one night a number of the savages burst in upon Pinchbeck. He tried at first to scare them away by his fireworks, but they were not to be so easily frightened. They swarmed all over the place, carried off everything that they fancied, and, amongst other things, all that was left of the treasure which the King gave him. Then, finding that Pinchbeck was so entirely at their mercy, the savages imagined that they would have no difficulty in plundering the other settlers. Night after night, hordes of them came down upon the colony, and they were only beaten off after severe fighting.

The King, hearing of this state of affairs, came himself to inquire into things, and then poor Pinchbeck was found out. Every trick was discovered—the paper flowers, baize lawn, mock cannon, sham sentinel, imitation granite, painted windows, everything. Such hooting, and laughing, and angry shouts had never been heard before in that part of the world, as the neighbours heard of one foolish pretence after another. The King was highly indignant. Time had been wasted, treasure thrown away, and there had been serious wounds inflicted upon some of the

colonists by the savages Pinchbeck was carried off to prison, to wait his trial for breach of trust and encouraging the King's enemies.

166

You understand the story, do you not? You and I have been entrusted with an estate, and treasure, and tools. Our own body, and soul, and circumstances are given to us, that we may make a good soul-house, soul-farm, soul-garden. That is, on one side of it, our great business in life. If we are faithful and diligent, we shall have great enjoyment of our estate, and be made lords of the Divine kingdom. But we are all tempted, more or less, to do as Pinchbeck did. It often seems easier and nicer to pretend and make-believe than to be simple and true. We think it will do to *pretend* we have learned our lessons, or *pretend* to be courageous. And we may go on for awhile in that way. Simple, honest people will, for a time, believe that we are wise, or clever, or brave, or good, as Pinchbeck's neighbours believed in him. But we shall be found out at last—there's no doubt of that. And we shall, in the end, deceive no one except ourselves. That is the terrible consequence of all deception,—that the deceiver deceives himself. The Pharisees and priests, who plotted against the Lord Jesus, had practised deception so long that they could believe that they were good, honest folk. They said of Jesus that 'He was a deceiver of the people'. Is it not awful even to think of coming to a condition like that? And every little trick and bit of slyness, every make-believe, is as ridiculous as Pinchbeck's cannon and flowers, and leads straight on to things as awful as the fate of the priests and Pharisees. Let us ask God to help us to be true always, and in everything.

J.A.H.

THE CHILD, THE ANGEL, AND THE FATHER

The Lord hath need of him.—LUKE 19:31.

HIM! Whom? Was it John the beloved disciple that Jesus needed? Was it the bold Peter? Was it John to comfort him or Peter to sustain him? Neither. Well, was it some wealthy man that Jesus sent for, because he was going to ask a favour of him, or give him a new commandment about the spending of his money? Was it Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man, and who might speak to the rulers, and persuade them to leave off persecuting Jesus because he was really doing nothing but good? No. Was it then, perhaps, some poor, but very good man, whom Jesus knew and loved, and whom he wished to have by him as a friend when the great trouble of the cross was drawing near? No, not that either. Was it somebody he had once healed that he wanted to speak up for him, and tell the priests and pharisees what Jesus had done for his good? Was it Lazarus, perhaps, whom he had raised from the dead? No, it was none of these. Well, who was meant by him? Who had the honour of being sent for by Jesus, and told that the Lord needed 'him', and wanted 'him', couldn't do

without I him? Why it was a young donkey, a colt the foal of an ass.

Now when I speak of a young, donkey you feel inclined to laugh. You think I am going to be funny. You think, perhaps, I am going to speak about silly lads. You have been called a young donkey yourself, perhaps, when you were more stupid than usual, so you think I am going to speak about people of that sort. But I am not. It is not fair to the donkeys to speak like that. They are rather hard in the mouth, it is true. They eat thistles and they don't answer the bit as readily as they should sometimes. But look at the stuff boys eat, and think how obstinate they can be. Stupid, however, donkeys are not. They are badly treated often. They are treated as if they had no sense or feeling. And if you treated a boy or girl like that you would do much to make them stupid in the end however sharp they were to begin with. If donkeys were better treated we should find them both clever and affectionate. They have a shock-headed look about them, too, which people, who don't know better, think is the

same as thick-headed. But it is a great mistake. Some day, perhaps, you will make the mistake of thinking some shock-headed person is stupid, and when you have lost a good deal of money by your blunder you'll be cured of it. I think these shaggy-faced ass foals the most delightful creatures. A friend of mine has a picture of the head of one as large as life in his dining room, and I always covet it. I break the tenth commandment and covet my neighbour's ass. It seems so friendly, so honest, so good,

 169

and simple in the heart. I am sure if Beauty had no worse, beast than that she was not so badly off. No creature of God's is to be despised and certainly not the young ass, with his good heart, his willing mind, and his warm, rough, honest, funny face.

They treat their asses better in the East, and you see Jesus sent for one to ride upon—sent and said He had need of 'him'. 'Him', you observe. Not 'it'. Everybody who is fond of animals (and I think Jesus was, from the way he spoke of sheep and birds for example), speaks of them as he and she. Or, at any rate, when you find people fond of speaking of them in that way, you may guess that they look upon animals more as companions and fellow creatures, and not as mere beasts. So Jesus, whose heart was so full of love for his Father's creation, looked upon the very ass as, in a way, his brother. Our Saviour Jesus, who came to seek and save lost men because His heart hungered for them, the same Jesus sent out for the young ass because he had need of him. He needed the young colt as well as the beloved disciple. And we may go a step higher and say that God Himself needed the little ass. And still further we may go, and we may say, there is no creature of God's upon the earth but God needs it else it would not be there. The very sparrows that twitter about the eaves of a summer morning and will not let you sleep—God needs them. And even if they die of winter cold and hunger, and fall to the ground stark and stiff, it is not without their Father. God has need of their death as he needs their life, as he needs our life and death. For we die because God needs our death.

 170

And the kind of need that God has for us all is a *heart* need, a love need. I wish you particularly to notice that. When the cat takes the life of a canary, or the cook puts little larks into the stuffing of a turkey, that is not a *heart* need, is it? No. And when a king sends for men, and says he needs them to fight his battles and be killed, that is not a heart need.

But when God needs and takes, it is always for the need of his heart, not for the need of his purposes merely. He needs for love and not simply for use. For God is love and all the needs of love are heart-needs. It is not his purpose only but his heart that needs the cats, and dogs, and sheep, and donkeys, and children, that he scatters so plentifully on the earth.

Now you may not think much of yourself, you may even, perhaps, think too little of yourself. You may, perhaps, be used to hear big people call you a donkey, and snub you, and keep you down, and make you afraid, and make you feel as if you never could be, or do, anything worth much. When you think you've done pretty well, they tell you it is badly done. When you ask questions, they look as if you had no business to know anything. When you say something, they look as if they would be dreadfully surprised to hear you say anything worth while. Well, young folks that are always thinking a great deal of themselves are people I for one don't like. But I don't like that you should always be made to feel as if you were of no consequence, and always snubbed, and always afraid to open your mouth lest you should make a mess of it. So I want to teach you this, that

171

even if you are a donkey, or if people call you so, still the Lord has need of you. You are of great value to God, of more value than many of those sparrows he needs, of far more value than many creatures, like horses, elephants, or whales, which are much larger than you, and which cost more money than you ever saw in your life. God needs you more than Jesus needed the dear young ass that had the honour of carrying him into Jerusalem. And if it ever happened that you should wander away from God, he would miss you—ay, miss you, even more than your father or mother would. He might have cleverer people than you left, he might have handsomer people, people who could do greater and better things than you, but he would not have *you*, and *your* ways, and *your* heart, and he would miss *you*. For you are different from everybody else, and you are dear to God for your own sake, and nobody can ever be to God what you can be. If he lost you he would miss you dreadfully, and nothing would ever make it up to him but your coming back again. It is like a shepherd with a hundred sheep. If he lose one he goes looking for it. He does not say 'Oh, it doesn't matter, I have plenty left'. Or it is like a mother with a large family. If her little boy wander away, and

get lost in town, does she sit down and say ‘No matter, I have plenty more’? Not she. She is as afraid, as anxious, as frantic, as if she had but the lost one only. And she runs everywhere till she find him. Nothing can satisfy her, till he is brought back. So God misses you, however many good and glorious children he has, and however humble your place may be.

172

And if you go wrong and get lost nothing can satisfy him till you return. And to make sure that you should return he sends out after you, not an angel, but his own dear Son to seek you, and to seek you sorrowing, and never to leave off seeking you till he find you—never.

To make my meaning quite clear to you I will tell you a story—one of the kind Jesus used to tell, a parable. I found it in what they call a poem, that is, a story with the beauty uppermost.*

There was once a poor boy who had to work very hard for his living and his name was Theocrite. He worked hard, but he also worked well, and above all cheerfully. Every little while he would stop to rest, and then he sang a little song, the chorus of which was, ‘Praise, praise God’. Then he would toss the long curls away from his face, and back with a will to his work again. One day an old monk heard him, and said ‘Well done, my son. God hears you, and is pleased as much as if you were the great pope himself praising in the greatest church in the world.’ To which the boy replied, ‘Oh, if I could only praise God in that grand way I could gladly die’. Well, before next day came Theocrite had vanished—where, nobody knew. But the song had ceased, and God in heaven said, ‘Oh, there comes no more the song I used to love’, and the Lord was sad to miss the praise of Theocrite. Now the angel Gabriel heard these words of the Lord, and, as the angels have but one business and one delight—to please God, down dropt Gabriel on his wings to

* Browning’s ‘The Boy and the Angel’.

173

the earth, put on the appearance of Theocrite, entered the hut where he had lived, as if it were the boy returned, and went on with his old work and his old praise in Theocrite’s place, that God might not miss what had delighted him so well. Years he remained there, grew from a boy to a man, and from a man grew an old man, ever working, ever as content to praise God on humble earth as in glorious heaven. Now this

pleased God indeed, but there was something lacking to his pleasure still. And one day, when Gabriel had grown old in lowly praise as the substitute of Theocrite, he found that, to satisfy God, substitution was not enough. For God said, 'The song of Gabriel is sweet and good. It is like the sound of new worlds, when they go forth fresh from my hand, and sing together for joy. It is like the sound of old worlds that for long and long have gone to the sweet music of my will, and never faltered, wearied, or gone wrong. But it is an angel's song, it is not a boy's song or a man's. It is clear, and sweet, and sinless; but I long for the old praise of the weary, the sinful, who praise me through it all and in spite of it all.

Clearer loves sound other ways;
I miss my little human praise.

The moment Gabriel heard that, he could no longer remain the substitute of Theocrite, and he found there was a better way of pleasing God than substitution. He found that God must have the very soul he loved, and not another. It was Theocrite and his praise God wanted, not Gabriel instead of Theocrite. Nobody can ever praise God instead of you. You

174

alone can give him the praise for which he longs from you. So Gabriel threw off the disguise he had worn for years, and made it his business to find Theocrite, and restore to God his long-lost praise. Being an archangel Gabriel knew most things, and he knew where to find Theocrite. He flew to Rome. It was Easter day and he descended upon the great church of St Peter's.

On Easter Day the pope joins in a splendid service of praise to God in this great church, and Gabriel found him in his robing room putting on his grand attire to take part in the gorgeous worship. It was a new pope, who had slowly risen from poverty by his piety to be the very head of the Church. He had been a labouring man, who, after a great sickness, became a priest, and at last, after many years, the pope. He was in fact no other than Theocrite. He was now on the eve of doing what he had longed as a boy to do—praising God in the pope's great way from St Peter's Church at Rome. And, being left in his private room for a little, Theocrite began thinking about his own past life, and how he had risen from the little praise of his first years to the sumptuous praise of a gorgeous pope. And as he thought he lifted his eyes and was amazed to see the angel. And Gabriel spoke and said, 'I took you from your

humble task and I made you pope. I thought it would please both God and you. I was wrong. I took your place. You took this great place of pope. We were wrong. We thought it would please God better. It has not. I thought your praise over your work was little and weak; and perhaps it was, but God

175

loved it. And he has missed it. The music of the world has not been the same to God without it. I tried to supply it but I could not. It was you and your dear little old praise that God wanted and must have. Go back to your old work, lift up your simple old song. The great praise of all the world is waiting for your dear small voice before it can present itself to God. 'Go back and become the boy again, become the workman, toil and sing. So shall the heart of God be at rest again. He shall find his little jewel and his joy shall be full.'

So spoke Gabriel. And Theocrite returned to his boyhood again, and Gabriel remained and was pope, and nobody knew but God. And the heart of God was rejoiced and satisfaction was made. And when they died they died both together, old and grey, and both together went into the heavenly presence of God.

Now notice, 1. We don't always please God best by getting on in the world. There are many good people of whom we never hear, who please God far better than other good people of whom everybody hears. You must not be too ambitious even in your desire to please and praise God. The true praise is to praise him just where he wants you, where he would miss you if you weren't there.

2. God needs the humble and weak things of the world as much as the great and strong, he may have plenty of angels, but they don't make up to him for children. He has many great and splendid servants, but they won't fill his heart if one of his little ones go wrong and cease to

176

praise. There are even stupid people whom the Lord loves, and clever ones with whom he is not well pleased. There will always be quiet, ordinary people of whom the Lord has need. And I am sure the Lord has need of you, dear children. Because for one thing, if he hadn't children first what would he do for men and women afterwards. But besides, he tells the men and women that his heart must have children, and when everybody has grown up he must still have them little children in heart if they are to please and satisfy him at all.

3. To please and satisfy God we must offer him faithful work, however humble, and cheerful praise, however weak.

P.T.E.

177

CHRIST AT THE DOOR

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—Revelation 3:20.

ONE dark, wild night, when the wind was roaring, and the rain was coming down in torrents, there was great mirth—or at least, great tumult—in a certain house. It had been a fine mansion once, or it had very nearly been a fine mansion, but the builder had spent a great part of his money before the house was complete, and it had been left in many ways unfinished. On this night of which I am telling you the house was a sorry sight. The drive was overgrown with straggling plants run wild, and nettles, and ragwort, and brambles, and docks. The front door was barred and bolted, but it looked as though it might easily be broken down. The paint had blistered under the heat of the summer sun, and the exposed wood had rotted with the wet. Some of the windows were boarded up, others were patched with rags and paper; all were begrimed with mud. The stone steps leading up to the door were twisted awry and cracked; evidently the foundation had sunk

178

beneath them. Everything told of neglect and decay. Inside the house the condition of things was the same. The walls of some of the rooms had been covered with beautifully painted panels, but they had been smeared with grease, blackened with smoke, battered and damaged, as though a mob had raged and fought in the room.

But at the back of the house the owner was entertaining some friends. In a dirty room a large fire was blazing in a broken grate, but the room was not warm. Strong draughts blew through cracks in the door, and broken panes in the windows. The flooring of the room had been torn up in some places—seemingly in order to feed the fire with the planks. On a rickety table, near the fire, stood several bottles, and the master of the house was drinking from the bottles at a great rate along with some friends. Such friends! Ugly fellows, whose voices were hoarse and loud, whose laughter was horrible to hear. One of them was yelling—not singing—yelling a song. Another was telling a story, at which a few

others were making a half-pretence of being amused. All were pouring from the bottles into glasses, and from glasses into their throats as fast as they could. But in spite of all their noise they were not really merry—only making believe to be so.

While they were roaring and shouting, some one came up the drive with a lamp in his hand. He pushed through the thick, wet grass, and weeds, and thorny thickets, and came straight up the broken steps, and raised his hand to pull the bell, or lift the knocker. But the bell-wire had long

 179

been broken, and the knocker had been wrenched off. So the stranger rapped with his knuckles at the great door. Again and again he rapped, and at last gave a long thunderous knock. The master of the house heard it, and jumped up, pale with fear. 'What is the matter?' cried his companions. 'That stranger again!' he gasped. 'He is knocking at the door which has not been opened for years.' 'Nonsense!' they answered. 'It was only some old board flapping in the wind, or the rats at their tricks below.' 'No,' said the master, 'it was the stranger. There! Don't you hear it? It is at the front door. It is the stranger.' 'What of him?' inquired his comrades.

'Oh! he comes and professes that he is my friend, and will help me if I will let him in; but I am afraid of him,—he looks so serious and sad.'

After awhile the knock came again, and the man went with his comrades, in a strange fear,—not to open the door, but to look out of the window. They saw the stranger, wet and weary, but calm and stately, not at all like a beggar, but like some great one. In a lull of the wind they heard his voice, asking the master to open the door. At the same moment, the light from his lamp flashed full upon the faces at the window, and the master of the house shuddered as he saw his companions in that light, and he was half inclined to go and pull back the rusty bars, and open the door. But his comrades drew him back, and said, 'Don't let that man in. There's no more fun or jollity for you, if he comes here. We have heard of him and his doings'

 180

before tonight.' Then the master of the house changed his mind, and soon grew angry because the stranger continued knocking, and at last he snatched up broken glass, old lumber, anything that came handy, and hurled them down at the stranger. In the end, the stranger turned to go away with his face and forehead bleeding. Slowly, slowly, he turned away,

sighing as he went, as if in great pity for the man who refused to admit him.

The stranger went on until he came to a wretched little hovel, miserable outside and inside. The rain beat into the place through wide chinks in the mud walls. A heap of straw in one corner, a broken stool, a tub, with a board across the mouth of it, were all the furniture. A dead bird lay in a rusty cage. Some burned-out cinders lay cold, and grey, and dusty upon a rude kind of hearth. A flickering candle of the poorest sort made all the light there was in the miserable hole. A famished woman crouched near where the fire had been.

The stranger came up to the rickety door and tapped softly. The woman started up almost in terror. 'Who knocks,' she asked, 'at such a door on such a night?' 'It is I,—a friend,' answered the stranger. 'I don't know you,' she called. 'This can't be the place you want. Nobody comes to see the like of me. I have no friends.' 'But let me in,' he persisted, 'I am come to take supper with you.' Then the woman laughed a low, mocking kind of laugh. 'Supper!' she said, 'that is a cruel jest. There's not a crust in the hut: no, not even a crumb to keep a bird alive,'

181

she added as she looked towards the cage. 'Still, let me in', the stranger said. Persuaded, or curious, or wearied by his persistence, the woman went to the door, lifted the latch, the only fastening of the door, and dragged it—for it had almost left the door-post—open. As soon as she saw the cairn face she said, 'This is no place for you: you belong to a different sort of house. What do you want here?' Then she perceived the stranger's bleeding brow and cheek, and cried, 'You are sorely hurt, sir! I have water at least; will you bathe your wounded face?' Then the stranger smiled a grave, sweet smile, and went in.

In a short time the woman told him her sad tale, confessing that it was her own fault that she had no shelter but the mud cabin, and that she was starving. The stranger drew from out the folds of his robe some food and a flask of pure, sweet wine, and put the food before her, and filled a broken cup, which she brought out, with the wine, and bade her eat and drink. She needed no urging to that, poor creature, As she supped, a change came over her. She was not only satisfied and refreshed, but she began to look younger and brighter. When she had finished her meal, she looked up and round the hovel, which the stranger's lamp filled with golden brightness, his lamp had wrought a wonderful

transformation in the place. The stranger had turned the lamp so as to shine upon the dead cinders on the hearth, and they glowed and reddened, and became a cheery fire. The ray of the lamp had been turned upon the pallet of straw, and it became a comfortable couch; it had shone

 182

upon the walls, and they had become solid and strong as marble. The ray fell upon the rusty cage, and it glittered like gold; upon the dead bird and it revived: its ruffled plumage became smooth and bright, and its voice returned, and it sang, not the old time song, but a new one, thrilling, sweet, though there was a kind of melancholy mingled with its gladness. The ray of the lamp fell upon the woman's rags, and lo! she was decently clad. The woman fell at the stranger's feet, sobbing in her joy, and wonder, and gratitude, and when she lifted up her face to try to thank him, he was gone for that time.

The stranger went on until he came to a great stretch of land, on which the houses were miles apart one from another. He made his way to a rough log hut, which had not long been built. There were not even windows in it; the holes, where the windows were to be, being boarded up to keep out wind and rain. Such furniture as was in the place was rude and coarse. On this evening, the owner, and indeed the builder, of the hut was sitting over some calculations. He was just beginning business on his own account as a farmer, and meant to reclaim a tract of waste land, and on this stormy evening, after doing such outside work as must be done, he was making the best of his time by reckoning the cost of a plan, which he thought a good one. While he was deep in his reckoning, he heard a gentle tap at the door. Up sprang the young man in a moment; and threw the door wide open. 'Who is abroad on such a night?' he asked, in a kind and hearty voice. 'There's not much comfort in

 183

my rough and ready place, but inside is better than outside anyway: come in and welcome.' Then he looked with some surprise at the stranger's noble face, for he had expected to see a poor fellow who was seeking work or the like, not a person of such mien as the man who entered. 'You must be drenched', said the young farmer; 'I have some wraps that you might wear until your things are dried'. The stranger assured him that the rain had not gone through his outer robe, which he threw off, and sat down on a bench. 'You must be hungry', said the young man, and he began to rummage in his cupboard for something to set before

his visitor. In a minute or two he came with his provision, but stood amazed beyond measure. On his log-table was spread a wholesome and enticing supper.

At the invitation of the stranger the young man sat down,—a guest where he had thought to be the host. The conversation of the stranger charmed him so much that he listened as though to the rarest and sweetest music. And, while the conversation went on, the lamp was shining and working great changes, but the young man did not observe them; he was so intently looking at the stranger's majestic and beautiful face, so eagerly listening to his voice. The two sat long in conversation, but on a word from the stranger, the young man made ready the best substitute for a bed in his power, and both lay down to sleep. When the young man opened his eyes in the morning, he could scarcely understand what had happened, or where he was. Everything which the night before was cheap, coarse timber had

184

become costly wood, or choice stone. His pots and pannikins were now of silver and gold. His log hut was a stately mansion.

You already know what the story means. The first man stands for those who have had a noble soul-house to begin with, but have not had wealth of will to make it as noble as they might, but have taken vices for companions, and live in the poorest and most miserable part of their nature. Our soul-house has rooms for holy and wise thoughts, for bright and beautiful thoughts, and it has also rooms which are like the scullery and cellars, where the appetites and natural wishes do their work. If we sink to be only human *animals*, then we desert the best rooms for the worst, and the whole house goes to ruin. Then, we are afraid of the Lord Christ. We come to think that he is our enemy and will spoil our pleasures, if we let him in. Our vices dread his pure presence, and we drive him away and do even more hurt to him than the man in the story. We grieve his *heart*.

The woman in the mud-hovel may stand for those who have not had so good a beginning, but yet have wasted their lives in folly and wrong, and are sorry for it, but not sorry quite in the right way. They think that the Lord Christ cares nothing for them, but when they find that he does, open the door of their heart and give him welcome. Then the Lord brings food to their starved souls, and the brightness of his presence

makes them far richer and happier than they had dared to hope they could be.

The young man may stand for those who, like you, are

185

beginning life, whose future is to be made. He did not know how much joy the stranger was able to bring into his log-house, as young people do not know how much happiness will come of hearing the voice of the Lord and opening the door to him. He simply did what he believed he ought to do, and when young people receive the Lord, they often do so for the same reason. But as they listen to his voice, they come to love him, and at the same time their souls are made rich, and strong, and beautiful, beyond all their high hopes and expectations.

They are the happiest of all, for there is not ruin to be repaired in their nature, but every day they improve their nature, or rather the Lord does it for them, they trying their best. They prepare to entertain the Lord, and he entertains them. They receive him into their unfinished souls, and so make the best beginning. May you have the wisdom and happiness to take the Lord Christ as *your* Lord in early days, and you will be saved from all the bitter sorrows of life and be made strong, and useful, and joyous men and women.

J.A.H.

186

BABY BABBLE

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.—MARK 8:2.

ONCE on a time, long, long ago, there lived in the country a good man, who, before he went to bed, used to go out and sit in the porch of his house to think in silence about God. One night, before going out of doors, he looked at his wife and his children, and saw his baby crowing, and smiling, and talking words not to be written by any pen in the world. And as he looked his heart was softened, and the father became himself, for the time, like a little child; and he forgot the hard battles that he had to fight in the world all day, and he felt kindly to everybody. And he heard, as it were, the voice of God speaking with a sweet power in the babble of his baby on its mother's breast, as you might hear the solemn whisper of God in the prattle of a brook that runs through deep meadow land. And the mother's face hung over her child like a happy moon, and her black hair was like high heaven's dark blue, and her eyes were like stars in a twilight night. Then he went out of

187

doors. And when he lifted up his gaze, lo, there was not a cloud to be seen, and it seemed as if it was neither dark nor light. It was like daylight without the sun, or like midnight without the dark. For above him was the great, round moon, and a family of little stars such as no man could number were shining upon the blue floor of heaven which no man can measure. And away upon the fields that ran to the distant bills, were scattered the dwellings of other men, with mothers and children, and the stalls of cattle, and the folds of sheep. And there flowed the river, with the sleeping fish beneath the stones, and far, far away was the sea with the great rocking ships and plunging whales. And the heart of this man was filled and lifted up. The moonlight, flooding the sky, and gilding the fields, and white on the silver river, was like the glory of God which covers all things, and gives them peace. And he was so full of solemn joy, of beasts and babes, of men and their mothers, of heaven, and its

God, that he could not be silent, so he broke out into this eighth Psalm, which is a hymn of praise.

That is why people praise God, who do it best. Because their hearts are so full that they run over. The baby's joy is so full that it soon overflows its teacup of a heart into shouting, and crowing, and all that nonsense which is such music to women and to God. And this man's joy was so full that he overflowed too into a song of gladness in words of praise. Some people say there is nothing in baby prattle. But then, some are silly enough to say there is not much in this man's song. What did he say? He lifted up his heart to God,

 188

and he said, 'O Lord, our Lord'—not my Lord, but our Lord, because he was thinking of the baby, the mother, the people far away, and the cattle, and the sleeping fowls of the air. 'O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.' That was when his eye caught sight of the golden fields and the shining sky as he stepped out of doors. Then he thought about his baby. Everything was full of God's praise. Was the baby not to praise God too? Yes, the glory and beauty of God shines in a baby's face as well as in the wide, bright, twinkling heaven of night. The sound of distant waters was in this man's ears, and the wind was sough, sough, soughing in the trees. The tongue of nature was unloosed, and the very sky seemed to speak and sing like angels at a Christmastime. Like Christmas angels the world seemed to sing, for it sang round the little child in the manger of this man's heart. He could not forget his sucking child.

Could the baby be silent if all the world was singing a quiet tune? No, the father felt the babies must be praising God too in their way. Their mouths opened to let out a little hymn to the power and glory of God. And so, because he felt the great power and majesty of God, this man felt the mighty power that lies in a little child. He did not forget the little ones because he thought about the great sky, the great world, and the great God. These great thoughts about God made him think great thoughts about everything else—about babies too. So he says to God, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast founded strength.' That

 189

is to say, 'Thou hast made the little child to be a great power, and the helpless baby shows forth thy glory just as much as the old, strong sky'.

It was very wonderful that the Maker of the mighty heavens should care about so small a thing as a man, let alone a baby. But this man felt that his heart was touched and moved by his child, as much as it was stirred and awed by the Eternal Heavens. And so it must be with God's heart. The baby and the sky, they both speak with an eternal voice. The baby is a very little thing, a very weak thing. The sky, with all its army of stars, is a very mighty thing. But they are both glorious in the sight of God. And of the two, the baby is dearer to God than all the stars. For was not his own beloved Son a baby once? and there was music in the heavens at his precious birth. A baby may seem a small thing to you, but it is more in the eyes of God than all the sky.

You want to know what a baby's power is. You want to know what sort of power God has ordained in the mouths of children. You know, do you not? that big, strong men tremble and weep when their babies die. You know mothers will do anything for their babies—more than they would do for anything else in the world. I once read of a slave-mother who, to save the life of the child in her arms, ran across a river, stepping upon floating and slippery pieces of ice, where the rough, cruel men that pursued dared not follow. Did not God ordain strength out of that baby? Did not the baby give its mother a strength she could not have got anywhere else? And brave men that fear nothing,

190

—great sailors, great warriors, when they see the patient suffering of a poor sick child, that does not cry but only looks at you,—brave men are overcome by that sight the weak, little child has a power which they cannot resist, and they go down on their knees and pray God to be merciful and to spare.

There was a very bad man a little while ago, who wanted to kill a very good man. He came several times prepared to do it, but he could not. Why? Because the good man always had his loving wife with him, and the bad one had not the heart to murder the husband in the wife's presence. Now, the wife could not have prevented the murder once begun; for then she would have been as weak as a child. And it would have been the same, probably, if it had been a child and not his wife that was with this man. There was a power in the wife, as there would have been in the child, to overcome the bad man for a long time, and make him lay his evil purpose aside. Children can do things of that kind which nobody else can. They can touch and change even bad men. And if you

look at the text, you will see that the psalm says the same thing. The author of the psalm felt that the sleeping or prattling baby could take the revenge out of even a murderer's heart. In his hymn of praise to God for babies, he says, In the very infants Thou hast ordained strength, to the very babies Thou hast given power, to still the enemy and the avenger.

You all know the story of the Babes in the Wood. Well, why was it that the one man could not keep his word to the

 191

uncle and kill the boy and girl? Because there was a power in the children that stilled the enemy and the avenger. He was a strong, rough fellow, but it overcame him. He had the power of force. They had the power of gentleness and innocence; and that is the power which God has ordained in children, and women, and all other good people, and which stills the enemy and the avenger.

You children really have no idea what you can do if you are true children; if you possess this power of gentleness, brave cheeriness, and obedience.

I will tell you a story which I read the other day about this. It is told you by a very great and wise man,* who means to say that all true-hearted service, small as it may be, is equally prized by God, and does a great deal more in the world than we ever see. Little people, if they be but glad, and hopeful, and ready, can be made of great use to God though they don't know it.

There was once a young girl who lived a very hard and, lonely life. She was, perhaps, about fourteen, or fifteen, or sixteen, but as simple and light-hearted as a child. She was an orphan, lived alone in a room by herself, and worked in a silk mill long hours every day. One morning she sprang out of bed delighted. It was her one holiday in the year—New Year's Day. She was not going to lose a moment of it. She teased the sunbeams in the room while she was dressing, spoke to her few flowers, and felt, because she had this day before her, as rich as a queen. 'Who should I like to be?'

* Browning. 'Pippa Passes.'

 192

she said. 'I should like to be the great, proud, handsome lady that lives up the hill, whose husband owns our mill. I should like to be the bride who is to be married at church today. I should like to be one of those

two, mother and son, who come and talk so kindly and so long to each other in the ruined tower every evening. I should like to be that good bishop, who lives in the palace, and who must always be thinking about the love of God. Well, I'll fancy I am each of these. I shall spend my day passing by where they live, and I shall please myself by fancying I am first one then another.' So off she set singing. Everybody knew her in the little town, so she went singing on her way, and she came first to the large house on the hill where the proud, handsome lady lived. What was doing there? Ah! Inside was a corpse. The old husband had been murdered, and his wife and a wicked man had done it, and now they were rejoicing in their crime. But our happy, little spinner came singing by the closed door and windows, and she sang words about God in heaven which smote the wicked people inside with horror, for they had forgotten about God who sees all, and they killed themselves in a fit of repentance and shame. But what did she know of all this? She did not know she had been God's angel of death to those guilty people. She had stilled the enemy and the avenger. You see the Angel of Death need not be a dreadful being unless we make him so.

Then she went on singing still, but when she came to the house of the newly-married people it was another song, for she had plenty of them, and was so happy she never kept

193

long at one. Now, the bridegroom had never seen his bride until he married her. She was not what he thought, though she was very pretty and nice. Some of his friends had tricked him. She was ignorant and common-bred, and he was desperately angry, and was going to leave her, and never see her more. But a verse of the happy singing girl fell upon his ear, and it roused him up. It touched a noble chord in his soul, and he said, 'No, she is now my wife. I will teach her, and be patient with her, and make her what I hoped she would be.' So again this cheery girl, in her happy innocence, was an angel from God to help a man to do a noble and lovely thing. But she passed singing on and knew nothing about it.

Then she came to the old tower, where the young man and his mother used to stroll and talk. They were inside. The son was a very high-spirited man, who was going to do a brave but dangerous thing for the sake of his country. And his mother was trying to persuade him not to do it, And he thought, 'What if I gave up and pleased my mother!' But just

then, the singing maid came along, and she had another song by this time which she sang as clear as a lark, and some of the words came to the youth's ears, and he started up and resolved to do what duty bade him, to obey his conscience, and leave his mother to the care of God. And away he went to his bold task, and well it was he went. For if he had remained another night, there were enemies who had arranged to seize him, and lock him up in jail, and then kill him. So the happy angel this time

 194

helped the youth to do his duty, and helped also to save his life. She was the angel of deliverance. But she still knew nothing at all about it, and on she went still singing, and still making believe that she was one of those great, happy people in the houses she passed.

Then she came to the bishop's palace. The bishop was sitting in secret conversation with a scoundrel who had already killed several people, and was ready to kill more. They were speaking about a young girl, the orphan daughter of the bishop's brother—the bishop's niece. She was heiress to an estate, but did not know it. If she died the bishop would get her money. The other man, whose crimes were well known to the bishop, was tempting him and asking to be employed to put this girl out of the way. Being a bad man himself the bishop was listening, and half inclined to do it. But the singer came by with another song. It had words which stung the bishop's conscience. He was not utterly bad. He sprang up, and ordered his servants to chain the scoundrel, and carry him off to be tried for his other crimes. And this time whose life should it be that she had saved but her own. For *she* was the bishop's niece whose fate was so nearly sealed. But she knew nothing of it. She only heard as she passed the bishop's palace, the uproar made by the servants seizing the villain who had plotted her own destruction. So she saved her own life and the bishop's soul. But she still knew nothing of it. And she returned home at night very tired, and the holiday was at an end, and the result was disappointing, and the sky was cloudy. But she was not

 195

sulky and fretful, only tired and somewhat disappointed, and as she got into bed she said, 'How I wonder if ever I could have anything to do with those great people I dreamt I was. I wonder if my life could ever in any way touch theirs. Perhaps when I go back to the mill tomorrow

I shall spin a thread of silk which will go on the fringe of the great lady's cloak. God says we are all useful to each other, and needful to each other, and all equally dear and useful to him. Perhaps that is how I am to be useful to these people. I spin silk that they wear.' Poor, patient, lonely child, in her bare room she never knew how near she had come to them, how she wove golden threads into their very souls. Out of the mouth of a mere child was ordained strength to stay the enemy and the avenger, and to help tired and tempted men to victory and goodness.

So I tell you, you don't know, you can never tell beforehand what great good you may do, children as you are, by being cheery, and hopeful, and innocent, and obedient I shall go home tired to bed tonight, but I shan't know anything about the good I've done all day. But if you remember what I say for even one day and be better children for it, I shall be sure I've done some good. I shall have helped you into the kingdom of Heaven. For does not Christ say that only those that have the spirit of little children have power to enter therein.

196

PRAYER

FATHER, who dwellest in the most excellent glory and bearest thy little children of men written upon thy very heart, receive our praise and prayer, and all the good deeds of our lives. And though all our praise and all our service is like the prattle of babes compared with what thou bestowest on us, yet it is dear to thee, because it is the voice of thine own. Make us to be angels of gladness, and messengers of thy glorious joy. And if ever it should please thee to make us see trouble, and endure evil, still let us do the errands of thy goodness, and serve the uses of thy holy will, along with the great host that love thee more and serve thee better, through Jesus Christ. our Lord. *Amen.*

P.T.F.

A VISIT TO QUEEN FLORA'S CAVE

A SPRING STORY-SERMON

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.—MATTHEW 6:28.

WILLIE was a bright boy who was fond of birds, and beasts, and flowers; and, just about this time of the year, he was always rather impatient to see the pleasant sights and hear the pleasant music of the spring. One day, after the frost and snow seemed to be gone for good once more, a bright, warm, sunshiny day, he went into the summerhouse in his father's garden with a big book, full of pictures of flowers, and insects, and birds. For a good while he turned over the pages, and looked, and looked, and sometimes he said to himself, 'How I wish the spring would come with the real flowers! Pictures are very nice, but the real things are a great deal nicer.' Then he put his arms upon the summerhouse table, and gazed at the blue sky and bright white clouds, and wondered how long he would have to wait for the real flowers.

While he was sitting there, wondering and thinking, a queer little fellow, no higher than your knee, came and stood

in the summer-house. He had on his head a funny bonnet, more like a snap-dragon flower than anything else that Willie could think of. His tight jacket seemed to be made of bright green moss, and his legs were clothed with gaiters of the colour that oak-leaves have, as soon as they unfold in the spring. Slung upon his back was a kind of basket, which looked like a big poppy-head. Willie stared at the queer little creature, and at length he asked, 'Who are you, and what do you want here?' 'Never mind my name,' answered the dwarf or elf, 'I am a servant of Queen Flora, who is pleased with you, and has sent me to bring you to the flower-factory, where she has something to show you.' Willie was not at all afraid, or even astonished. The dwarf looked so merry and kind that it would have been silly to be afraid; so Willie rose at once and went with him.

The elf led him straight to a pit in the garden. Long ago it had been made as an air-shaft for a coal mine, but nobody worked in the mine now, and Willie had often looked over the wall which had been built round the mouth of the shaft, and wondered what there was at the bottom of it, and wished that he could reach the ferns and plants that grew far down the shaft. Now, he had the chance, for the elf gave him his hand, and they both walked straight down the pit. You think that was impossible, but you must not think that a thing is impossible because *you* cannot do it. That is a common mistake, but, nevertheless, it *is* a mistake. There was a time when you could not walk on the level ground, and perhaps you have never considered how wonderful it is that

199

you can do so now. But if you still say that you are sure Willie could not walk down a pit, I must remind you that he had hold of the elf's hand, and that makes a difference.

Down they went, a long, long way, through winding galleries and great caves, until Willie began to think that they must be very near to the centre of the earth; but just then they turned a corner, and came into a marvellous cavern. It was very high, and the walls and the roof of it shone and flashed with all the brightest colours you can imagine: a stream ran through it, making the merriest sound, and on a seat at the end of the cavern—a seat shaped like a mossy bank—sat a lady, so beautiful that I cannot attempt to describe her, and her dress seemed to Willie as though she had taken a rainbow, and wound it about her for a scarf or shawl.

Willie felt sure that this was Queen Flora when first he saw her; but when he noticed that she was working with all her might at something, her busy fingers moving at a great rate, he said to the elf, 'Then this is not the Queen?' 'Of course, this is the Queen,' replied the elf. 'But she is working hard,' said Willie. At this the elf laughed and said, 'All real queens work, and work hard too. It is only the sham queens who are idle.'

But the Queen was not the only person in the cavern. There were giants, and dwarfs, and elves by hundreds and thousands, all coming and going, and working like so many bees. Some of the dwarfs were so tiny and strange-looking, and had such vari-coloured wings that at first Willie thought

200

they were butterflies, and moths, and beetles; but, when he had looked at them awhile, he saw that they were elves.

And what do you think the Queen was doing? Did you ever see a lady making wax flowers? Perhaps not, for the fashion changed before your time. However, this lady was making flowers, not in wax, but real flowers, and at such a rate. Her nimble fingers moved so quickly that they looked like a dragon-fly's wings in motion. A bright, trembling haze was all that could be seen. She was making not only flowers—buttercups, daisies, primroses, cowslips, anemones, and so forth, but oaks, and beeches, and elms, and all kinds of trees. Though she was so busy with her hands, her face seemed at leisure; it was bright and smiling, and she looked at Willie kindly, and said, 'Come, my little man, you are very fond of flowers, I know, so I sent for you that you might see the flower-factory'. 'Yes, your Majesty,' said Willie, 'I am fond of flowers, and thank you very much for sending for me. May I ask questions?' 'Certainly, you may', answered the lady. 'People who don't ask questions are never allowed in Fairyland or in the flower-factory. I am told that in the end they are all banished to Noodledom.' 'Then,' said Willie, 'what becomes of the things which you make, for as they drop out of your hand they disappear, I cannot tell how?' 'Watch,' said Flora, and she went rather more slowly, and said to some one, 'Pack up slowly.' She made a hyacinth and let it fall. Then a dwarf came near, and he began folding it up: he pushed down the stem much as you push a telescope; he rolled up the flowers; he

201

doubled down the leaves; and soon he had made a tiny parcel of it, like an onion. Then another dwarf put it into his basket, and as this completed his load, away he went, like a bee off to his hive, to the top of the cavern, and vanished.

Then the lady made a sweet-pea plant, and as it fell at her feet another dwarf caught it, and twisted, and twined, and folded, and curled, and packed, and pressed it, and put it into a tiny case, so small that it looked like a small shot. Then the lady turned out a great oak, and this time a giant, not a dwarf, took it up; and he began packing, and did it so tightly that he got the tree into a case which looked like an acorn.

Willie was much puzzled by what he saw, and said, 'What are you doing all this for, please your Majesty?' She answered, 'I am, as you know,

Flora, the mistress of the flowers and trees, and I am busy getting ready for the spring. As fast as I make things, my servants pack them up, and go and put them into the proper places; and then, at the right time, other of my servants and nymphs, who live in the sunbeams and the waters, unpack them slowly, drawing them out again. Everything must be made before it is put into the ground, for, of course, the earth cannot make anything.' 'But,' enquired Willie, 'did the giant really put the oak, all the solid wood, into the acorn?' 'No, my dear, he did not; he took a good deal out of it first, which my assistants will put into it again by and bye; but. I have to make the thing complete at first.' 'I see,' said Willie, 'it is like my drawing the other day. Papa filled it in, and then rubbed

202

some of it out for me to do.' 'Very like that, you bright little man', said Queen Flora.

'How hard you work!' said Willie. 'Don't you grow dreadfully tired? Do you make plants and trees for all the earth?' 'Yes, to your second question', said Flora. 'I make not only for the earth, but I attend to the gardens which grow beneath the water, in streams, and rivers, and the sea. But I don't grow tired. When you are weary of work you go to play; but my work is my play. By and bye, when you have to choose your work, I hope you will choose something you love so well that it will be play and work both at once. That cannot quite be so in this world, perhaps; but you may get ready for the place where work is always play. But I want you to notice my work a little more closely.'

So Willie sat silent on the mossy bank, beside the Queen, and he observed that a dwarf came flying to her with a crystal vessel, and that the lady dipped something into it, which at first he could not see; but, when it came out of the crystal vase, it was a primrose. 'Then you keep your colour in the vase', said Willie. 'Yes,' said Flora, 'my dwarfs fetch it for me from the sun, as I require it. All my colours are got there.' Then she dipped another something, and it came out of the vase a hyacinth. 'Will you tell me, please,' said Willie, 'how it is that you dye one flower yellow, and another blue, by dipping both into the same vase?' 'Wait a moment,' said Flora. Willie waited, and saw that dog-roses, and violets, and clover, and water-lilies, and red champions, and pimpernels, were all coloured by being plunged into the

203

clear, crystal vase. Then said Flora, 'All colours are mixed up together in the vase, and I make my flowers so that they catch and hold the colour of which I want them to be.'

Then Willie saw much the same thing done to give flowers their fragrance, and wondered more than he had ever done before at the variety of the perfumes of flowers: primrose, violet, lilac, woodruff, mignonnette, sweet Cicely, and all the endless list of odours. Then he remembered that some plants and flowers had not a pleasant smell—garlic for instance; and he asked how it was that some pretty flowers were of such unpleasant odour, and Queen Flora replied that, if everything was pleasant, there would be no pleasantness; and that one reason why some pretty flowers had a disagreeable odour was that children might learn that prettiness was not everything.

'But,' said Queen Flora, 'the odour of flowers has many uses, and one of them is not thought of as it ought to be.' Then she beckoned one of her attendants, and said to him, 'You have remembered to put the medicine into the mallows and willows, have you?' He bowed, and said that he had. 'What do you mean by that question?' asked Willie. Flora smiled, and answered, 'You see there are moist and boggy places, where people live who have not the sense to drain away the water, or to use things which I provide for them, and they suffer with ague, and rheumatism, and fevers, so I put medicine into the marsh-mallows for rheumatism, and medicine for the ague into the willows and some other

204

trees, and my servants place the plants just where they are wanted.' 'I see,' said Willie, 'and that is why you put docks near to nettles, I suppose, so that when one is stung by the nettle he may find the cure close by.' 'Quite so,' answered Flora, 'and if men were not so stupid, they would find things just where they are needed. I will tell you a little fact about that. For thousands of years, I have gone on putting into marshy pools and slow streams a plant which feeds on the nasty things which cause fevers and other diseases; but men thought that I was plaguing them, for the plant grew very fast of course—a slow-growing plant could not have done the work—and that forced them to clean out the streams, which they don't like to do, being foolish enough to suppose that filth does no harm when it is in water, and besides, they hate trouble. So they have growled and grumbled about my good plant more than enough.

But at last a wise doctor has found out what I meant by my gift, and now I hope men will use it, and be all the happier for doing so.

‘I think I know what you mean,’ said Willie, I heard papa talking about the doctor’s discovery. You mean water-thyme, do you not?’ Flora nodded, ‘And that reminds me,’ continued Willie, ‘of another question. Papa showed me that water-thyme bore no flowers, at least, not real flowers. And while I was looking at the oak which you made, I saw oak flower, which I never saw before. And I remember hearing some one say that flowers were made for the bees and butterflies, or something like that. Please tell me why

205

you make them, and why some plants have such tiny green flowers that one can hardly see, and some have none at all.’

Queen Flora smiled, and answered, ‘There are no flowers to some plants, and very small ones to others, because I wish people to understand that *I* could do without flowers, and that they are made bright and beautiful in order to gladden your eyes and hearts. It is quite true that they are made for the bees and butterflies, but you may be sure that they are much more for you. I care more for you, my boy, than for all the bees and butterflies that ever were.’ Then Willie looked up quickly and asked, ‘Does it vex you, when children gather bunches of your flowers, and then grow tired of them, and throw them away?’ Flora answered, ‘No, it does not vex or grieve me, when baby boys and girls do so. But it grieves me that so many bigger children, and grownup men and women take no heed of all my toil for them. For I put many secrets, and stories, and songs into my flowers, and not one in a thousand people pays any attention to them. My flowers would tell them, if they would listen, of lands that once were, but now are sunk beneath the sea; of days when the sun shone fiercely and hotly on lands, which are covered now with ice and snow; of many wonders of which it would take me too long to tell you now. My flowers sing beautiful songs too. Some of the poets that you know—Burns, and Wordsworth, and others—have written down what they heard some of my flowers sing. Men and women might be far wiser and happier than they are, if they would do as they have been bidden: “Consider

206

the lilies, how they grow.”’ just then Flora vanished; the giants and dwarfs, the cavern, all vanished, and Willie looked round in great surprise,

for he was in the summer-house again. And it was all a dream? No, not all a dream. Even the strangest parts of it were true. It seems odd that Flora should make the plants complete, and then have them put back again into seed cases; but there is wisdom in the words, 'God made every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew'; and in the other words, 'that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear'. It is quite true that the colours of the flowers are obtained from the sun; true, that trees and herbs are placed where they are needed, and that we are continually learning that they have many uses. It is true the flowers tell secrets, and stories, and songs to those who will listen to them. Perhaps it is not true that there is a Queen of the flowers, but something still better is true—that there is a King of them, who works unweariedly to make men and children glad with the beauty and odour of his flowers, and would have us learn the wisdom with which they are made, and believe in the love which gives them to us.

J.A.H.

207

JESUS AND THE PLAYING CHILDREN.

Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the markets and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.—MATTHEW 11:16–19.

WHAT would you do if you were playing at shops, or churches, or weddings, or funerals, and were to look up of a sudden and see Jesus standing looking at you? Would you be frightened? Would you stop playing? Would you run away?

I saw the picture not long ago of a canary's funeral. A little boy and girl had a canary, and one morning it died. It had been sick for days and wouldn't sing. Its feathers came off, and it sat huddled up on the end of its stick as if it were always cold. They tried to give it medicine, and they put a rusty nail in its drinking water. But it was no use. One morning they found the poor little bird dead on its back in the bottom of the cage, with its head limp, its claws

208

clenched, and its feet in the air. So they first cried a good deal, then they got a match box for a coffin and put the little yellow corpse carefully in. The little boy got a book and a bell, and they asked the gardener to be a sexton, and he carried the coffin to the garden, where in a corner they dug a little grave, and lowered the body into it; and then the boy tolled the bell, and pretended to read a funeral service from the book, and the girl knelt by the side of the grave and dropped flowers and tears upon poor little Dickie's corpse. She was more tender than her brother, and too sorry to make a play funeral of it. And the gardener was a kind old man, and it made him nearly cry too. At least, when they looked up at him, they thought his face softer than usual, and his eyes more mild. Now, if that had been not the gardener, but Jesus; if Jesus had come to the corner and found them paying their last respects to their little bird,

what do you think they would have done? Run away in a fright? I think not. I am sure his face would have been as kind and his eye as mild as the old gardener's at least, and his smile much sweeter. And there would have been nothing to frighten them in anything he said or did.

And, so, if you were playing at churches, and had on a nightgown for a surplice, and were preaching to your brothers and sisters from a chair; or, if you were having a wedding, and some were singing, and some were dancing, and some, were carrying, sugared water to the little bride; and if Jesus suddenly came in at the door, would you all run away and scream? Well, if you did he would be greatly vexed and

 209

sorry. For it would delight him to sit in a corner and watch you play, and smile at your churches and funerals, thinking his own thoughts all the while. Then when you were tired he would likely take the two littlest ones on his knee and tell you stories—perhaps about God.

How do I know he would do that? Because I remember his getting the children about him in that way once, and he said he was not pleased with some older people who tried to keep them away. And once he was going about a town not far from the lake of Galilee, walking through its streets and examining the place, which was somewhat strange to him. And he went up one street and down another, watching the people, for he cared a great deal more for people's faces than for buildings and shop windows. And at last he came to the large square in the middle of the town, where the country people came in on certain days and held their market. And the towns-people came there too, and bought their meal, and potatoes, and cheese for the week. And it was there that the mayor of the little place sat, and heard cases of dispute, and gave judgment on them. And people who had no particular business to transact came there to see each other and gossip about the crops and their neighbours. And the rich men went there sometimes for the pleasure of having the poor ones take off their hat to them and call them Sir, and doctor. And the travelling doctors were there on market days and Jesus among them, and the sick were brought out to him for cure. Jesus almost always went into the market-place when the market

 210

was going on. But on the day I speak of there was no market. There were few people out in the hot, sleepy square. It was given up to the children, who were running and tumbling about enjoying the hot

sunshine and the open space, as children in good health always do. They didn't in that country shut up the squares with gates and iron railings, and turn the children into the narrow-streets to play among the horses' feet and torment the sick people in the houses with their noise. The children had possession of the square that day, and Jesus found it very interesting, and he watched the romping ones in the sunshine, and the quiet ones who were sitting in little knots in the shade of the houses. Some were telling stories, and some were playing at houses, and some were playing at funerals, and some were playing at a wedding. And Jesus was amused. They got on very well for a while, but shortly they came to quarrelling. Perhaps the heat of the day was too much for them, and they had run about till they were tired, and hot, and cross. At any rate Jesus heard some of them say, 'I shan't play.' And they wouldn't play. The good humoured ones said, 'Let us play at a wedding. We'll play the music and you shall dance. So they got a bit of stick and pretended it was a flute, and they tootle-too-ed upon this flute; but it was no use, the cross ones wouldn't dance, wouldn't play. Then the good humoured ones said, 'Well, if you don't like a wedding let us have a funeral'. Now it was the custom at funerals in that country to cry and wail in the most miserable and noisy way, and as one party finished their wail it was taken up and continued

211

by the other party, and so on. And they used actually to pay people to go to their friends' graves and wail and howl there as a token of respect to those that were dead and gone. Just in the same way as some people among us think it becoming to have a lot of ugly, dismal looking men, and horrid black feathers, and hearses, and scarves, and staves, and the like, when God takes their friends away. So the good humoured children said, 'Let us play at funerals: we will wail to you and you will wail back to us'. But when children, old or young, are determined to be cross there is no pleasing them. And the funeral was no more agreeable to the cross ones than the wedding was. So I suppose the good humoured children said they were nasty things and cross patches, and they sprang up and ran away to find some boys and girls in better temper.

None of them knew that there was anybody watching them. But there Jesus was, taking it all in, as pleased as the best of them. It is very delightful to watch children playing when they don't know they are watched. When they get to think they are watched they sometimes begin to show

off, and that spoils everything. When I find a child showing off I go and attend to somebody else. So Jesus watched these children with delight. And then as the party broke up he turned away too and went on his walk with a sigh. For he thought there were some grown up children who acted just as perversely as those cross little ones. Nothing could please them. For example, there was his friend, John the Baptist, a great man but rather a severe one,

 212

fond of retirement, preaching in the wilderness, not given to visiting the markets or behaving in a sociable way like Jesus. So people said, 'We don't like John. He isn't sociable and friendly. He is a funeral kind of a man and we don't like funerals.' And then there was Jesus himself, moving about among people, going to marriages, markets, and churches, rubbing shoulders with ordinary people on the streets, and going to sup at houses when he was asked in a friendly and genial way. And the same disagreeable people said, 'Oh, we don't like this minister either. He is too fond of company and eating and drinking. The other was a funeral kind of man, this one is a marriage sort of man, and we don't like people who are everybody's body, and we don't think ministers should be out so much, and talk so much with all sorts of people and be so fond of happy company.'

You see these people were hard to please. They didn't like a solemn man like John, and they didn't like a cheerful man like Jesus. What would they have? Jesus thought they were just like the cross-grained children he had been looking at in the square. They wouldn't play at funerals and they wouldn't play at marriages. They wouldn't dance to the music, and they wouldn't weep to the crying. And there was no doing anything with them.

Jesus, you see, didn't always find children nice, but he always found them interesting. They set him thinking. It is very strange but we never read of his speaking a word to children, much as he said and thought about them. Sometimes they made him think of cantankerous men. Some

 213

times they made him think of heaven and the best of men. Oftenest they made him think of heaven. He often spoke of sweet children, not very often of cross ones. He didn't care to think or speak about the bad children. This I think is the only place in which he does it. Children

were to him like flowers out of the garden of heaven set to grow in a pot upon earth. You know it is the custom to take flowers out of the bright garden or the warm greenhouse, and put them in a pot and set them on a table in our rather dark rooms, that we may enjoy the sight and smell of them while we eat our dinner, or sit and rest. In some such way Jesus thought of children. The flowers on our tables remind us of lovely gardens, the smell of them carries us away sometimes, if we shut our eyes, into beautiful dreams. So the sight of children made Jesus think of the sweet glory of heaven where little children do always behold the face of the Father.

I was living a few weeks ago up among my own Scottish hills. And day by day the sun shone on them, and night by night they were looked on by the harvest moon. Day by day I gazed at their lovely faces, and night by night I thought how beautifully they slept. From top to bottom they were dressed in purple, and the morning mist clothed them like fine linen. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these; August is the month for the heather bloom, and heather clothed these hills as with a garment seamless from head to foot. Every day that picture was hung up before me, and every hour almost the changing light of the sky made a new shade pass upon that purple robe. Now it

214

1. Jesus watches your play as he does our Work, and the heartier your sport, the better he is pleased. He is not dead, and he is not dreadful, so you must be glad and not be afraid.

2. Every one of you has two sides, a good and a bad, a pleasant and a cross, and you must choose which side you will grow to. Will you be children such as Jesus does not care to think or speak about, children that make us think about bad and disagreeable men, or children such as the Saviour often made into texts from which to preach the kingdom of heaven? Fancy being taken for one of Christ's texts. But good children are often Christ's texts, and good old people get many sermons out of them. You have no idea how often God has made you a text and preached long sermons to your parents out of you. What sort, of texts are you? Crabbed difficult ones, or beautiful helpful ones? Are you a trouble to your friends or a joy? Go home and think over the answer.



PRAYER

ALMIGHTY Father, who knowest our downsitting and our uprising and aft acquainted with all our ways, make us ever to be glad and rejoice before thee. Give us the tractable spirit of hope and love and of a sound mind. Take away from us all ungodly fear and all inhuman hate, all fretful temper and all dark self-will. Clothe our childhood with

 215

was dark, deep, almost blue. Again it was bright, clear, almost pink. It changed from glory to glory. And every evening the sunset made storms of solemn glory among the tumultuous clouds, and heaven showed lovelier than the lovely hills. The colours of earth are nothing to the colours of the glowing sky. Fiery red, and tawny gold, and sweet pale green were there. Fiery red in the waves and billows that the long clouds made; tawny gold on the yellow sand where they seemed to gently break; sweet pale green in the peaceful pools that slumbered deep in cloudland's pathless and eternal rest. And pearl and pink, orange and blue, violet and purple were up there, mingled in a sweet unrest and calm commotion. And the sky above and the hills below, made as it were a picture of some high holy land, and it was good to be there.

All this rose before my mind as I passed a shop window in an ugly London street the other day. What did I see? Nothing but a few sprays of flowery heather, a few scraggy and faded twigs of that hardy purple which had clothed whole hills beneath gorgeous skies. That was all, but it was enough. These poor little branches opened heaven to me as it were, and all the sights I had been used to see came back with a rush.

Now that is how the sight of children, no matter how ragged, poor, or tiny, made Jesus think of the sweet glories of heaven where crowds of children do constantly behold the face of the Father.

Two lessons and I am done,

 216

modest mirth and our age with beauty of holiness. May our life begin, continue, and end with thee. Help us to take Jesus for our close companion and make men and women of us in him. Make us thy blessed texts and write us like verses in thy great Book of Life, for ever and ever. Amen.

P.T.F.

217

THE VOYAGE DOWN THE TIME-RIVER

Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not strengthen the foot of their mast; they could not spread the Sail.—ISALAH 33:23.

I PUT these word at the head of the little story or dream that I am about to tell you, because it was in thinking about the prophet's words that the dream came to me. They are not the text, but as they suggested the story, perhaps they should have the place of the text.

I dreamed that I stood in a tropical forest, where tall trees and giant creeping plants made a soft green shade above, so thick that one could scarcely catch a glimpse of the sky. Here and there curious flowers seemed to light up the green twilight, like enchanted lamps, and great butterflies flitted past, like huge animated flowers. The forest was crossed by numerous streams, which ran into and out of each other like silvery network. Some of you will perceive that I must have had in my mind what we are told about the Upper Amazon. On these streams there were many small boats, and in each boat a person, and only one in each. And it came, somehow, into my mind, that each person was bound to go with the stream, through the dim forest, across broad,

218

sandy wastes, by cultivated fields and busy towns, on, on, ever on, until he came to the great ocean. That seemed a perilous voyage in the light boats, and one in which many adventures must befall the voyagers. When I thought of rapids, and falls, and alligators, and snags, and sudden squalls, and lurking savages, and wild beasts, and the vast, awful sea to which the voyagers must go, I wished that I knew which of the many streams was the safest, that I might tell the young people.

They, however, did not seem to be thinking of the possible dangers of their voyage. They shot now into one channel, now into another, and chattered, and laughed, and had fine fun in sprinkling and splashing one another, and clapped their hands and shouted, when some new wonder came before them: now a gigantic tree; now one covered with gorgeous blossom; now a strange beast, bounding out of the thicket, startled by their far-echoing laughter. I could have laughed with them, and almost wished I was one of the merry company, and yet my heart was full of

desire that they might be counselled by some one, who knew the watery ways, and the best course to take in order to reach in safety the sea towards which they were drifting. At length, I went to them and asked, whether they knew the way, and had weapons to defend themselves, and provision enough for the voyage down the river and on the ocean. Some of them laughed merrily, and said that I talked like an old fellow whom they had passed a while ago,—asking silly questions. ‘For what harm can come to us,’ they

 219

asked, ‘on this smoothly gliding water? And what a stupid thing it would be to miss all these pleasant sights by poring over the tiresome charts, which that old fellow thrust upon us, as if they had been the most charming pictures.’ Then I answered that I was glad they had charts, and that I did not advise them to miss the beautiful sights; but that surely they might be seen as well on the right course as in the wrong one, and that it certainly was worth while to satisfy themselves first of all that they were in the right way. At this some of them only laughed, and passed on down the stream.

Some, however, had taken care of their charts, and were giving earnest glances, first at the chart, and then at the bendings and turnings of the stream, and at compasses which they had placed conveniently in the boat. On further looking, I noticed that some of the young boatmen had a strange tackle—a kind of thread which was attached to the middle of the boat, and went upwards until it seemed to be lost in the sky. It was so slender, that in some lights it could not be seen at all; but when one had a glimpse of it, the nearest like it that one could think of was a gossamer spider’s line.

The thing seemed so curious to me that I hastened to a place where the stream narrowed, so that I could easily speak with one of the voyagers, that I might ask what it was and what use it served? The youth, whom I questioned, answered me, ‘That is my anchor-cable.’ ‘Your anchor-cable!’ I exclaimed, ‘why it goes *upwards*, and, besides,

 220

you cannot call that gossamer a *cable!*’ He answered, ‘Yes, indeed: we are bound, as you may know, to go forward with the flowing river and across the sea. So it would be foolish to try, to use an anchor which went downwards; we must anchor upwards, and mine is fastened in the sky, and the cable is paid out from there. By the advice of the venerable

man, who gave me the chart, I seized this cable which was waving to and fro, and made it fast to my boat, so that I am confident of being safely held during the voyage, unless I should make some great mistake and drift into dangerous channels, where the cable might be broken though it is not easily broken.'

So saying, the young man floated onwards with the moving water, and I looked at him, wondering, as he passed away, his strange cable glistening with changing colours. And, in my dream, I followed the voyagers:—first, a company of the gay and careless, who took no heed of their charts, nor any thought of the great voyage before them after they gained the river's mouth and the wide expanse of the sea. For a while all went merrily. They laughed, and sang, and often stepped lightly out of their boats, holding them by a rope, to gather flowers, and berries, and other pretty things, and to barter with the natives, who sometimes appeared upon the river banks, offering to sell rope, and sail-cloth, and provisions of various kinds, for they knew that the youths in the boats had a great voyage before them; but the joyous company laughed, and said, 'Time enough to load ourselves with such things when we come in sight of

221

the great sea. Bring us fruit, and wine, and cakes, or any thing rare and curious.'

But by and by the streams began to tend to flow together, and to make fewer and larger channels, in which boating was not so easy as it had been in the smaller ones. The company were drifting soon on a river, and then, in the distance, the roar of falling water sounded dreadfully,—all the more so that night was coming on, I saw, in my dream, that the boats began, almost imperceptibly at first, to move faster, and then faster still: they were in the rapids, and in spite of all that the voyagers could do, they were carried over a fall. Some were half-drowned, many were drenched with water, some contrived to shoot the fall more successfully, but nearly all complained that their boats had received damage. Some of them mended matters, as well as they could, baling out water, plugging leaks, and passing ropes under the keel of the boat, and tightening them to hold the strained and shaken planks more firmly together.

They had not gone much further, before they came to a part of the river where half-sunken roots, and stocks of trees gave a great deal of

trouble. In trying to avoid these things, they often ran one boat against another, and this soon caused a good deal of wrangling and jangling. The noise of their quarrelling drew the attention of a company of thieves, who were concealed in the woods near the river bank, and they crept softly down and, during the tumult and the darkness, contrived to steal many valuables belonging to the travellers.

Morning found the poor voyagers in a sad condition,—

222

tired and cross, and at a loss for the things which the robbers had taken; while their boats were none the better for the battering and banging which they had done against one another, and against the snags and the river banks. But the morning sunshine brought one comfort. A hut was in sight by the river side, and as the company drifted in a straggling way nearly opposite to the hut, a man opened the door and came out, shouting, 'Ahoy! Ahoy! you have got into a nasty channel, and, as I see, you have suffered much damage; but cheer up, mates! A little further on there is a canal, which connects this channel with the right one. A little hard pulling, and a bit of patience, through the canal, and you will be safe in the better stream, and then you must set to and get masts up, and sails ready, and provision yourselves for the sea voyage. You have a fair chance yet, but you've no time to lose.'

Some of the voyagers took the advice in good part, and looked out for the canal, and pulled stoutly through it; but many only laughed—rather bitterly and savagely though. I heard them saying amongst themselves, 'What a stupid fellow this is. Talk about getting ready for a sea-voyage! What we want is some pleasure on the river-voyage. Who knows anything about the sea that they talk of?'

So these people went drifting on, seeming to mind about nothing but basking in the sun, or plucking fruits and nuts from the trees, which overhung the river, and catching bright-coloured fish that swarmed in the water. In a lazy, careless way, they did some repairs to their boats, botching and

223

patching up such holes as must be mended, but nothing thoroughly.

Thus, drifting on, they came at length, after many adventures of which we cannot talk now, to where the river grew broader and broader, so that they feared that they were indeed coming to the sea, and one and another began to be anxious to make some sort of preparation for it.

But the river banks were no longer wooded, but the low and muddy margins of a great, flat plain, where no houses were to be seen, or men, or even cattle. Nothing could be bought, neither food nor timber, neither tools nor sail-cloth; nothing that could be used to mend and rig the boats, or provision them for the voyage. Some wept, and bemoaned their past folly. Some went on in dull stupidity. Some tried to turn their oars into masts and yards, to prepare a make-shift sail, and to cobble up the leaks, and to be in some sort ready.

Soon the river widened still further, and there, at last, was the expanse of sea, where great billows rolled and tossed their white manes of foam; and in the distance was a thick haze which looked like storm. On went the voyagers, and, before long, were lost to view; some hidden from sight in the hollows of the heaving waves; some carried away as it seemed by a strong current, and at length all were swallowed up in the distance and the mist, and one could not help a chilling fear that they would be engulfed by the vast, cold, pitiless, tossing sea, which they were so little prepared to face.

After I had watched this company until they vanished on the immense and darkening ocean, I was somehow back

224

again, looking upon the company who went with the youth who glanced so often at his chart, and who was so strangely anchored by a cable going upward to the sky. He and they enjoyed their course down the stream, although they were so busy. Perhaps, indeed, it was because they were so busy that they were cheerful. They came to many rather puzzling divisions of the stream, and sometimes made mistakes, and shot into wrong channels, and only got back into the right one by dint of hard pulling. But the watch that they kept only made the voyage more delightful, when they had a long river-reach before them, where there could be no doubt about the course.

Indeed, they found much more leisure than the other company to rest, and float, and look at the strange and beautiful things around them. But they were always on the alert about provisioning and preparing their boats. Wherever the natives of the river bank had rope, or sail-cloth, or tools, or the like for sale, this company were eager to buy what seemed to be most useful for the greater voyage to come.

They did not, however, escape trouble and danger. Once there was a tremendous freshet, and at the same time a gale of wind. In the great

rush of water and furious breeze some of the boats were severely damaged. But the youth, with whom I had a little talk, said to the rest, 'Comrades this has been a rough experience, but we may turn it to good account. It has shown us the weak places in our little craft and given us some notion of what the sea-billows may be like.' The rest agreed that the remark was sensible, and all

 225

set to with 'might and main to repair their boats, and, after their work was done, they had some conversation as to the best way to manage, if they should have another freshet to cope with.

This company was attacked by a band of robbers or river-pirates, who shot out of ambush in one of the broader reaches, but as there was a mark upon the chart at this place, 'Beware of pirates'—the voyagers were on the alert, and fought a good running fight, and came off well. They had to encounter difficulties too, with falls and snags, but not of so dangerous a sort as the other company fell into, for they were in a much safer and better stream. Besides, they had two other great advantages over the other company: one being that, on this stream, there were huts here and there, in which watchmen lived, whose business it was to warn voyagers of peril, and to supply them with things needful. The other advantage was still greater; their boats were upheld by the cables. Sometimes, when they swept over a fall, the boats seemed to swing smoothly, hanging by the glittering sky-cables, where, but for the cables, they must have been terribly battered, if not dashed to pieces.

They came, in due time, to where the river widened, and the banks were low, and tree-less, and deserted, but this gave them no uneasiness. They had a store of food, and they busied themselves in setting up masts, and making ready the sail, and looking well to their tackling. And when they came to the great sea it was with sail set, and hand on rudder, and chart laid handy, and so they rode the waves,

 226

which foamed about the boat's prow, straight on towards the mist in the distance. And as they entered the mist the cables gleamed like shining steel, and one voyager after another rose up in the stern of the boat, with one hand upon the tiller, and waving the other, as if he saw before him the port, which the mist veiled and hid from me. So they vanished hopefully and joyfully.

You know the interpretation of my dream. You are drifting on the river of Time, which is fast carrying us all, whether we choose or not, to the great ocean of Eternity. And each of you must go by himself or herself. You may go in company with other voyagers, but no one may share your boat. There are many curious and delightful things to enjoy by the way, but they can be seen as well in the right channel as in the wrong one, though many silly people think, like the foolish company, that to pass on heedlessly is most pleasant. We have a chart—the New Testament. There are, on the right course, watchmen to warn us—the good and wise who are ever willing to help those who are willing to be helped.

There are perils on the voyage; in both the right and the wrong course there are perils, but there are far more and worse in the wrong one than in the right one. In that way there are temptations and risks of many kinds, and voyagers in that course fall foul of one another in the dark, and wrangle, and quarrel, and lose their best things. If you dislike to obey your parents and teachers; if you are inclined to be quarrelsome and impatient; if you are disgusted with

227

lessons, or with work, then you are in a wrong channel. But just now, while you are children, there are cross streams and channels by which, thank God, you may get into the right channel. By and bye it will not be so easy. The cross streams are fewer and fewer down the river, and they are more and more difficult to take. And the wrong channel becomes more wearisome and dangerous as you go on, while the right one becomes more pleasant and safe.

It is not true, as some seem to think, that it is painful and dull to go in the right way, and to prepare for the great voyage to come. In reality, everything that makes the voyage on the Time-river truly prosperous and pleasant, is preparing us for the after voyage. It is the way of transgressors that is hard; the way of wisdom is pleasant and peaceful. And it is in that way only that the cable swings which we may make fast to our boats, that is, trust in Jesus, the anchor of the soul, which does not drag along the bottom of the Time-river, but holds firmly to the foundation of the Throne of God. That anchor and cable seem slight and slender only to those who have not tried them. They who have tried them know that they are strong and sure.

J.A.H

