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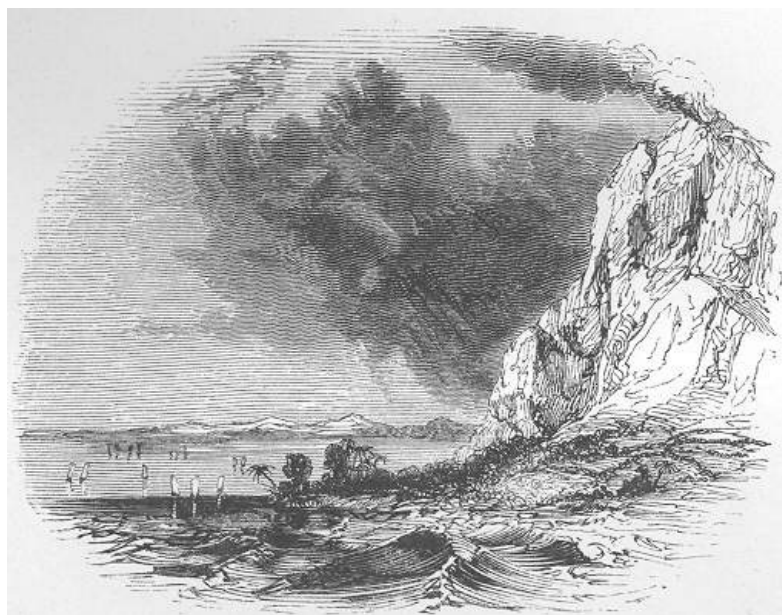
# THE ROCKY ISLAND, AND OTHER SIMILITUDES.

By SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, D.D.  
LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

"Fed my lambs."—S. JOHN xxi. 15.

TENTH EDITION

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1849.



## PREFACE.

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The advertisement to a work of similar character to the present expresses the author's principle

and wishes as to this little volume. It is constructed on the same plan, and, like the former, has had the test of the observations of his own children before it was given to the public. The reception of "Agathos" has shewn that many parents have felt the want which these little volumes are intended to supply, and leads the author to hope that he has in some measure been able to meet it.

It is a peculiar gratification to him to be able thus to enter many a Christian household, and fulfil, in some measure, his Master's charge, "Feed my lambs."

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May it please God to give His blessing to this new attempt.

S. W

*Winchester, Sept. 29, 1840.*

## The Rocky Island.

p. 1

I saw in my dream a rough rocky island rising straight out of the midst of a roaring sea. In the midst of the island rose a black steep mountain; dark clouds rested gloomily upon its top; and into the midst of the clouds it cast forth ever and anon red flames, which lit them up like the thick curling smoke at the top of a furnace-chimney. Peals of loud thunder sounded constantly from these thick clouds; and now and then angry lightning shot its forked tongue, white, and red, and blue, from the midst of them, and fell upon the rocks, or the few trees which just clung to their sides, splitting them violently down, and scattering the broken and shivered pieces on all sides. It was a sad, dreary-looking island at the first view, and I thought that no one could dwell in it; but as I looked closer at its shores, I saw that they were covered with children at play. A soft white sand formed its beach, and there these children played. I saw no grown people among them; but the children were all busy—some picking up shells; some playing with the bright-coloured berries of a prickly dwarf-plant which grew upon those sands; some watching the waves as they ran up and then fell back again on that shore; some running after the sea-birds, which ran with quick light feet along the wet sand, and ever flew off, skimming just along the wave-top, and uttering a quick sharp note as the children came close upon them:—so some sported in one way, and some in another, but all were busily at play. Now I wondered in my dream to see these children thus busy whilst the burning mountain lay close behind them, and the thunder made the air ring.

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Sometimes, indeed, when it shone out redder and fiercer than usual, or when the thunder seemed close over their heads, the children would be startled for a little while, and run together, and cry, and scream; but very soon it was all forgotten, and they were as full of their sports as ever.

While I was musing upon this, I saw a man appear suddenly amongst the children. He was of a noble and kingly countenance, and yet so gentle withal that there was not a child of them all who seemed afraid to look in his face, or to listen to his kind voice when he opened his mouth, for soon I found that he was speaking to them. "My dear children," I heard him say, "you will all be certainly killed, if you stay upon this rocky island. Here no one ever grows up happily. Here all play turns into death—the burning mountain, and the forked lightning, and the dreadful breath of the hill-storm,—these sweep down over all that stay here, and slay them all; and if you stay here, for these childish pleasures of yours, you will all perish."

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Then the children grew very grave, and they gazed one upon another, and all looked up into the face of the man, to see if he spoke in earnest. They saw directly that he did, for that kind face looked full of care as well as of love: so from him they looked out upon the waves of the sea, and one whispered to another, "Where shall we go? how shall we ever get over that sea? we can never swim across it: had we not better go back, and play and be happy, until the time comes for us to die?"

"No," said the man, looking round kindly upon them all; "you cannot swim over; you never could get over of yourselves: but you need not stay here and die; for I have found a way of escape for you. Follow me, and you shall see it."

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So I saw that he led them round a high rough rock, to where the calm waves of the sea ran up into a little bay, upon the white sand of which only a gentle ripple broke with a very pleasant sound. This bay was full of boats, small painted boats, with just room in each for one person, with a small rudder to guide them at the stern, and a little sail as white as snow, and over all a flag, on which a bright red cross was flapping in the gentle sea-breeze.

Then when the children saw these beautiful boats, they clapped their little hands together for very joy of heart. But the man spoke to them again and said, "You will all have a deep, and dangerous, and stormy sea to pass over in these little boats. They will carry you quite safely, if you are careful to do just as I bid you, for then neither are wind nor the sea can harm them; but they will bear you safely over the foaming waves to a bright and beautiful land—to a country where there is no burning mountain, and no angry lightning, and no bare rocks, and no blasting hill-storm; but where there are trees bearing golden fruits by the side of beautiful rivers, into which they sweep their green boughs. There the trees are always green, and the leaves ever

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fresh. There the fruit ripens every month, [6] and the very leaves upon the trees are healing. There is always glad and joyful light. There are happy children who have passed this sea; and there are others who have grown old full of happiness; there are some of your fathers, and mothers, and brothers, and sisters; and there am I ever present to keep and to comfort you." Now when they heard this, all the children wished to jump into the boats, and he was kindly ready to help them, only he put each one in carefully and slowly; and as he put him in, he gave him his charge. He told them that they must never look round to this island they were leaving, but must be always setting their faces towards the happy land they sought for. He told them that they must leave behind them all the shells and the berries which had pleased them here, for if they tried to take these with them in their boats, some accident would certainly befall them. Then some of the children, when they heard all this, drew secretly away, and ran round the point, and gave up the boats and the sea, and began their old idle play again. And some of them, I thought, hid the shells and the berries they had got, and then jumped into the boat, pretending they had left all behind them.

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Then I saw that the man gave different presents to each of them, as they seated themselves in the boat. One was a little compass in a wooden box. "This," he said, "will always shew you which way to steer; you are to follow me, for I shall always be before you on the waters; but often when the darkness of the night comes on, or the thick mist seethes up from the wave's brim, or the calm has fallen upon you so that your boat has stood still,—often at such times as these you may not be able even to mark my track before you: then you must look at the compass, and its finger will always point true and straight to where I am; and if you will follow me there, you will be safe." He gave them, too, a musical instrument, which made a soft murmuring sound when they breathed earnestly into it; "and this," he said, "you must use when you are becalmed and so cannot get on, or when the waves swell into a storm around you and threaten to swallow you up." He gave them, too, bread and water for many days.

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So I saw that they all set out upon their voyage, and a beautiful sight it was to look upon. Their snow-white sails upon the deep sea shone like stars upon the blue of the firmament; and now they all followed close upon the leader's ship, and their little boats danced lightly and joyfully over the trackless waves, which lifted up their breasts to waft them over: and so they started. But I looked again in a little while, and they were beginning to be scattered very widely asunder: here and there three or four of the boats kept well together, and followed steadily in the track of the leader's vessel; then there was a long space of the sea with no boat upon it at all; then came a straggler or two, and then another company; and then, far off on the right and on the left, were other boats, which seemed to be wandering quite away from the leader's path.

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Now, as I watched them closer, I saw that there were many different things which drew them away: one I saw, soon after they started, who turned back to look at the rocky island, forgetting the man's command. He saw the other children playing on the beach; he heard their merry voices; and then looking round again towards the sea, it looked rough and dark before him; and he forgot the burning mountain, and the terrible thunder, and the bright happy land for which he was bound, and the goodly company he was in, and the kind face of the kingly man; and he was like one in a dream, before whose eyes all sorts of shapes and colours fly, and in whose ears all sounds are ringing; and he thought no more of the helm, nor watched the sails; and so the driving swell carried his boat idly along with its long roll; and in a few minutes more I saw it at the top of a white foaming breaker, and then he and it were dashed down upon the rocks which girdled the sandy beach, and he was seen again no more.

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Then I turned my eyes to two other boats, which were going fast away from the true course, for no reason which I could see; but when I looked at them more closely, I saw that they were in a sort of angry race; each wished to get to the wind-side of the other; and they were so busy thinking about this, and looking at one another with angry glances, and calling out to one another with angry words, that they forgot to look for the leader's ship, or to watch the finger of the compass; and so they were going altogether wide of the track along which they should have passed.

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Then I looked closely at another, which was shooting quite away in another direction; and I saw that the poor child had left the rudder, and was playing with something in the bottom of the boat; and as I looked nearer in it, I saw that it was with some of the bright berries of the rocky island which he had brought with him that he was so foolishly busy.

Foolish, indeed, he was; and kind had been the warning of the man who bade them leave all these behind: for whilst I was watching him, and wondering what would be the end of such a careless voyage, I saw his little boat strike suddenly upon a hidden rock, which broke a hole in its wooden sides, and the water rushed in, and the boat began to sink, and there was no help near, and the poor boy was soon drowned in the midst of the waves.

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Then I turned sadly away to watch the boats which were following their leader; and here, too, I saw strange things; for though the sea when looked at from afar seemed just alike to all, yet when I watched any one, I saw that he had some difficulties, and some frights, and some helps of his own, which I did not see the others have.

Sometimes it would fall all at once quite dark, like a thick night, all round a boat; and if he that was in it could hear the voice of a companion near him for a little while, that gladdened him greatly; and then oftentimes all sound of voices died away, and all was dark, still, deep night, and he knew not where to steer. Now if, when this fell upon him, the child went straight to his

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compass, and looked close upon it, in spite of the darkness, there came always a faint flashing light out of the darkness, which played just over the compass, so as to shew him its straight blue finger, if he saw no more; and then, if he took up his musical instrument, and blew into it, though the thickness of the heavy air seemed at first to drown its sound, yet, after awhile, if he was but earnest, I could hear its sweet murmuring sound begin; and then directly the child lost his fears, and did not want company; sweet echoes of his music talked with his spirit out of the darkness, and within a little time the gloom would lift itself quite up again, or melt away into the softest light: and lo! he had got on far on his voyage even in this time of darkness, so that sometimes he could see the beloved form just before him; and at times even the wooded shore of the happy land would lift itself up, and shine on his glad eyes, over the level brim of the silver sea.

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From another boat it would seem that the very air of the heaven died away. There it lay, like a painted sail in a picture—the snow-white canvass drooping lazily, or flapping to and fro, as the long dull swell heaved up the boat, and let it sink again into the trough of the waves: other boats, but a little way off, would sail by with a full breeze; but he could not move; his very flag shewed no sign of life. Now if the little sailor began to amuse himself when this happened, it seemed to me that there he lay, and would lie, till the dark night overtook him, and parted him from all his company. But if, instead of this, he took up his musical instrument, and played upon it with all his earnestness, its soft breath, as it whispered to the wind, soon woke up its gentle sighing; the long flag lifted itself on high; the blood-red cross waved over the water; the snowy sails swelled out, and the little boat danced on along its joyful way.

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I noticed also that before those boats which were passing on the fastest, the sea would every now and then look very dark and threatening. Great waves would seem to lift their white heads just before them; whilst every where else the sea looked calm and enticing. Then the little sailor would strain his eye after his master's course, or look down at the faithful compass; and by both of these sure signs he saw that his way lay straight through these threatening waves. Well was it for him, if, with a bold heart and a faithful hand, he steered right into them. For always did I see, that just as he got where it seemed to be most dangerous, the tossing waves sank, as if to yield him an easy passage; the wind favoured him more than at any part of his voyage; and he got on in the right way faster than ever before. Especially was this so, if at first he was somewhat tossed, and yet held straight on; for then he shot into a glassy calm, where tide and wind bore him steadily along unto the desired haven. But sad was it for him, if, instead of then trusting to the compass, he steered for the smoother water. One or two such trembling sailors I especially observed. One of them had long been sailing with the foremost boats; he had met with less darkness, fewer mists or troubled places, than the boats around him; and when he saw the white crests of the threatening waves lift up their strength before him, his heart began to sink; and after wavering for a moment, he turned his little boat aside to seek the calmer water. Through it he seemed to be gliding on most happily, when all at once his little boat struck upon a hidden sandbank, and was fixed so firmly on its side, that it could not get afloat again. I saw not his end; but I sadly feared that when next the sea wrought with a troubled motion, and the surf broke upon that bank, his little boat must soon be shivered, and he perish in the waves.

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The other who turned aside followed closely after him; for this was one thing which I noted through all the voyage. Whenever one boat went astray, some thoughtless follower or other would forget his compass, to sail after the unhappy wanderer; and it often happened that these followers of others went the farthest wrong of any. So it was in this case; for when the first boat struck upon the sandbank, the other, thinking to escape it, bore still farther off; and so chancing to pass just where the shoal ended, and an unruly current swept by its farthest edge, the boat was upset in a moment, and the poor child in it drowned.

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And now I turned to three or four boats which had kept together from the time they left the harbour. Few were forwarder than they; few had smoother water or more prosperous gales. I could see, when I looked close into their faces, that they were all children of one family; and that all the voyage through they were helping, cheering, and directing one another. As I watched their ways, I noticed this, too, which seemed wonderful. If one of them had got into some trouble with its tackle, and the others stayed awhile to help it, and to bring it on its way, instead of losing ground by this their kindness, they seemed all to make the greater progress, and press on the further in their course.

And now I longed to see the ending of this voyage; and so looking on to those which were most forward, I resolved to trace them to the end.

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Then I found that all, without exception, came into a belt of storms and darkness before they reached the happy land. True, it was much rougher and more dark with some than others; but to every one there was a deep night and a troubled sea. I saw, too, that when they reached this place, they were always parted one from another. Even those which had kept most close together all the voyage before, until just upon the edge of this dark part, they, like the rest, were scattered here, and toiled on awhile singly and alone.

They seemed to me to fare the best who entered on it with the fullest sails, and had kept hitherto the straightest course. Indeed, as a common rule I found this always true—that those who had watched the compass, and held the rudder, and cheered themselves with the appointed music, and eaten the master's bread, and steered straight after him, they passed through this cloud and darkness easily and swiftly.

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Next to these were those who sought most earnestly to cheer its gloom with the sound of their appointed music. The Lord of these seas, indeed, had many ways of cheering His followers. Even

in the thickest of that darkness His face of beaming love would look out upon them; and He seemed nearer to them than He had done heretofore through all their voyage.

Then, moreover, it was never long; and bright light lay beyond it. For they passed straight out of it into "the haven where they would be." Sweet sounds broke upon their glad ears even as they left that darkness. A great crowd of happy children—parents who had gone before them—friends whom they had loved, and holy persons whose names they had long known—these all lined the banks, waiting to receive and welcome them. Amidst these moved up and down shining forms of beautiful beings, such as the children's eyes had seen only in some happy dream; and they, too, were their friends; they, too, waited for them on the bank; they, too, welcomed them with singing, and bore the happy new-comer with songs of triumph into the shining presence of the merciful King. Then, on the throne royal, and with the glorious crown upon His head, they saw the same kind face of gentle majesty which had looked upon them when they played on the shores of that far rocky isle. They heard again the voice which had bid them fly the burning mountain. They saw Him who had taken them into His convoy; who had given them their boats; who had been near them in the storm; who had given them light in the darkness; who had helped them in the dull calm; who had never left them; but who had kept and guided them across the ocean; and who now received them to His never-ending rest.

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\* \* \* \* \*

*Father.* Who are the children playing on the shores of the rocky island?

*Child.* The fallen children of fallen parents, born into this sinful world.

F. What does the burning mountain, and the lightning, and the hill-storm, represent?

C. The wrath of God ever burning against sinners.

F. Who is He who warned these thoughtless children?

C. The Lord Jesus, who, by His ministers, warns men to "flee from the wrath to come."

F. What are the boats by which they are to escape?

C. The "ark of Christ's Church," into which we are admitted by baptism.

F. Many of the children who embarked in the boats were lost,—what is shewn by this?

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C. That it is not enough to be received into the congregation of Christ's flock; but that we must always "manfully fight under His banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives' end."

F. What is the compass, and the musical instrument, and the bread, and the water?

C. God's word, and the privilege of prayer and holy sacraments, and the other gifts of God to His Church.

F. What is the gentle wind which the musical instrument awoke?

C. The grace of God's Holy Spirit, promised to the members of His Church, to be sought by earnest prayer, and in all the means of grace.

F. What means the boy playing with the berries, and so striking on the rock?

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C. One who having been given up to Christ in baptism follows worldly pleasures, and so "makes shipwreck of the faith."

F. What are the dark places and calms into which different boats enter?

C. The different temptations and dangers of the Christian life.

F. What are the threatening waves which seemed to be right ahead of the boat?

C. The dangers and self-denials which they must meet with who will follow Christ.

F. What is meant by the boat which turned aside, and ran upon the shoal?

C. That they who will turn aside from following Christ because danger and self-denials meet them cannot reach heaven.

F. What is shewn in the boat which followed this one?

C. How ready we are to follow a bad example, and go beyond it.

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F. What was the little company of boats which kept together?

C. A Christian family earnestly serving God.

F. Why did those who helped others find that they got on the fastest?

C. Because God, who has bid us "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," will greatly help and bless all such.

F. What is the belt of storm and darkness which all must pass through?

C. Death.

F. Why were all separated in it?

C. Because we must die alone.

F. Who are those that generally passed through it most easily?

C. Those whose life had been most holy and obedient. "Keep innocence, and take heed unto the thing that is right; for that shall bring a man peace at the last" (Ps. xxxvii. 38).

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F. Who were the next?

C. Those who entered on it with much prayer.

F. What was their great support in it?

C. The presence of Jesus Christ our Lord.

F. What declaration have we on this subject in God's word?

C. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me shall never die."

F. What lies beyond this to the faithful Christian?

C. The blessed rest of paradise and the bright glories of heaven.

## The Vision of the Three States.

p. 27

I saw, in my vision, two glorious creatures walking together through a beautiful garden. I thought at first they must be angels, so bright and happy did they seem. The garden, also, in which they were, seemed too beautiful for earth. Every flower which I had ever seen, and numbers which my eye had never looked upon, grew in abundance round them. They walked, as it were, upon a carpet of flowers. The breeze was quite full of the rich scent which arose from them. The sun shone upon them with a brightness such as I had never seen before; whilst the air sparkled with myriads of winged things, which flew here and there, as if to shew how happy they were.

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All through the garden, too, I saw every sort of beast, in all its natural grace and beauty; and all at peace. Great lions moved about amongst tender sheep; and striped tigers lay down quietly to sleep amongst the dappled fawns which sported around them. But, amidst all these beautiful sights, my eyes followed more than all, the two glorious forms which were walking together with such a kingly majesty through the happy garden: they were, truly, I could see, beings of this earth; they were talking to each other; they were speaking of ONE who had made them out of the dust of the earth; who had given to them living souls: who was their Father and their Friend; who had planted for them this beautiful garden, and made them the rulers of all that was in it.

Now I marked them as they talked, and I could see that their eyes were often turned from all the beauty round them towards one far end of the garden; and as I watched them, I saw that they were still passing on towards it. Then I also fixed my eyes there, and in a while I could see that, at the end of the garden to which they were moving, there was a bright light, brighter and purer than the light of the sun; and I thought that in it I could see here and there heavenly forms moving up and down, flying upon silver wings, or borne along upon the light breath of the sunny air. But as I strained my eyes to pierce into it, it seemed to dazzle and confound them by its great lustre. Then, again, I heard the words of the two; and they spake of what was before them; of the bright light, and the heavenly forms: and I found that they were only travellers through this beautiful garden; that the King who had placed them in it dwelt in that light, the brightness of which had so confounded my gaze; that they were on their way to His presence, and that when they reached it, they should be happy for ever; even as those shining spirits were already, whose golden figures I had been just able to discover.

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Now, whilst I was pondering upon these things, and casting my eyes round and round this beautiful garden, I heard all at once a most terrible sound, as of thunder, such as man's ears had never heard. I looked up, and the bright light at the end of the garden seemed to turn itself into angry fire, and to flash red and threatening through thick black clouds, which were forming themselves into terrible shapes all over the garden. Then I looked for the two that I had seen before: I could just see them; sorrow sat upon their faces, and fear made them deadly pale; a serpent was gliding from them into the bushes; and their eyes were fixed upon the air, as though voices, which I heard not, were speaking terrible things to their inner ears. Then, as I looked, it grew darker and darker—the thunder pealed all round me—cries came forth from every hill, as of fierce and deadly beasts in wild dreadful fight. The flowers round me were withering up, as if a burning blight had passed over them; and soon it was all dark, and dreary, and desolate.

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Then when my heart was very heavy within me, methought there stood by me one of the forms of light whom I had seen at the garden's end; and my knees smote together through fear of his glory; but he looked upon me kindly, and spoke to me in a voice of pity, and he said, "Wouldst

thou see the end of this sight?" Then my heart gathered courage, and I told him, that if it were lawful, I would indeed fain look upon it.

With that he lifted me, and we flew through the air, and I knew not where he had borne me; but in a while he set me on my feet, and bade me look right down beneath me. Then I looked down at his word, but could see nothing. My eyes seemed to rest upon the thick mantle of the night, and they could not pierce through it. Now, while I was striving to pierce through the darkness, strange noises rose from it to my ears. All sounds that ever were, came up from it, so mingled together that I could not say what they were. Whether it were a groan, or a cry, or a roaring, or music, or shouting, or the voice of anger or of sorrow; for all of these seemed joined together into one; but the groaning was louder than the laughing, and the voice of crying well nigh drowned the music. Then I asked my guide what was this strange noise; and he told me that it was the voice of all THE WORLD, as it rose up to the ears of those that were on high. Then I begged of him, if it might be, to let me see those from whom it came. With that he touched my eyes; and now methought, though the darkness remained, that I could see in the midst of its thickness, even as in the brightness of the day.

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It was a strange place into which I looked. Instead of the beautiful garden I had seen before, and two glorious creatures passing through it; now I saw a multitude of men, women, and children, passing on through a waste and desolate wilderness. Here and there, indeed, there were still flowery spots, but they were soon trodden down by the feet of those who passed along. Strange too were their steps. Now, instead of passing straight on, they moved round and round, for they were all in the black darkness. The ground was full of pitfalls, in the low bottoms of which I could see red fire burning fierce and hot, and one after another fell over into these pitfalls, and I saw them no more. Evil beasts, too, moved amongst them, slaying one, and tearing another; and as if this was not enough, oftentimes they would quarrel and fight with one another, until the ground all around was covered with their bodies strewed upon it.

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Yet for all this, some would sing, and dance, and frolic; and this seemed to me the saddest of all, for they were like mad men; and mad in truth they were, for in the midst of their dancing and their singing, one and another would get near the side of some great pitfall, and step over into its flames, even with the song upon their lips.

In vain did I strain my eyes to see any light at the end, as I had seen it in the garden. If it was there, the black clouds had rolled over it so thick and dark that not a ray of it was left.

Yet I heard one and another offering to lead those that would follow them, safely through this terrible wilderness; and such men never wanted followers: so I watched many of these leaders, to see what they would do for those that trusted them. Little help could any of them render. Some put their followers on a path which led straight down into the deepest and most frightful pitfalls; some set them on a path which wandered round and round, and brought them at the end back to the same place from which they started; some led them into thorny places, where the poor pilgrims pierced their bleeding feet with many a wound: but not one did I see who brought them into any better place, or took them any nearer to their journey's end.

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How they found their way at all, was at first my wonder. But as I looked more closely, I saw in all their hands little lanterns, which just threw a feeble light upon the darkness round them. These were always brightest in the young, for they soon grew very dim; and the falls and blows they met with, bruised and shattered them so much, that some had hardly any glimmering left, even of the feeble light which they had seemed to cast of old.

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I looked at them until my heart was very sad, for there was no peace, no safety, no hope; but all went heavily and sadly, groaning and weeping, or laughing like madmen, until, sooner or later, they seemed all to perish in the fearful pitfalls!

Then my angel-guide spoke to me again, marking my sadness, and he said, "Hast thou well observed this sight?" and I answered, "Yes." Then he said, "And wouldst thou see more?" So when I had said "yes," methought we were once more flying through the air, until again he set me on my feet, and bid me look down. Now here, too, strange noises reached my ears; but as I listened to them, I found that there were mixed with them such sounds as I had not heard before. Sweet clear voices came up now from the din, speaking, as it were from one close by me, words of faith, and of hope, and of love; and they sounded to me like the happy talking which I had heard at the first between the glorious beings in the garden.

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So when my guide touched my eyes, I bent them eagerly down into the darkness below me.

At first I thought that it was the same place I had seen last, for there was a busy multitude passing to and fro; and there was music and dancing, and sobbing and crying; there were pitfalls, too, and wild beasts. But as I looked closer, I saw that, in spite of all this, it was not the place that I had seen before. Even at a glance I could see that there were many more flowers here than there; and that many amongst the pilgrims were going straight on, with happy faces, by a road which passed safely by all the pitfalls. I could see, too, that at the end of the road was a dim shining of that happy light which had been so bright in the beautiful garden.

p. 38

Now, as I looked, I saw that there were but a few who kept to this straight safe road, and that many were scattered all over the plain. I saw many leave this path even as I looked upon it; and very few did I see come back to it: those who did, seemed to me to find it very hard to get into it again; whether it was that its sides were slippery, or its banks so steep, many fainted and gave up, after trying to climb into it again. But it seemed quite easy to leave it; for every one who left

it went on at first lightly and pleasantly. Sometimes, indeed, they seemed greatly startled after taking their first step out of it, and some of them turned straight back, and after a few struggles, more or less, such always got into it again. But if once after this first check they set out for the plain, they seemed to go easily along, until their path lay straight by the den of some destroying beast, or led them into the midst of the pitfalls, where they wholly lost their reckoning, and knew not how to get on, or how to get back.

p. 39

I saw, too, after a while, that they had got lanterns in their hands, some of which gave a great deal of light. Those which were carried along the narrow path shot out bright rays on all sides, until towards the end they quite blazed with light. I could see, too, that these travellers had some way of trimming and dressing their lamps; and that much of their light seemed to come from an open book which they carried in their hands, from the leaves of which there flashed out continually streams of light, which made their lamps burn so brightly that all their road shone with it. But as they got further and further from the path, their lamps began to burn dim. All these travellers, too, had the book of light closed; or if they now and then opened it, they shut it up again, some carelessly, and some as if its light frightened them; and not one could I see who stopped to trim his light: so that just when they got amongst the pitfalls, and wanted light the most, they were all the most nearly in darkness.

p. 40

Now, when I had looked at them for a space, and wondered, my guide said to me, "Wouldst thou see how they enter on this plain?" Then he took me to a fair porch, which came from the wilderness I had looked upon before; and there I saw a man standing in white robes, and speaking good words, and giving good gifts to each one as he came in. There were persons coming in of all nations and people, and some, too, of all ages, though the greatest number were little children, so small that their little hands would not hold the man's gifts, and so he hung them round their necks, for them to use as soon as they were able.

p. 41

Then I joined myself to the group, to hear and see the better what was passing. The man in white was speaking with a grave kind voice as I came up. He told the pilgrims that the great Lord of the land had built that porch, and set him there to help the poor travellers, who were before without hope or help amongst the beasts, and snares, and pitfalls of the terrible wilderness; he told them that the blood of the King's own Son had been shed, that that porch might be built; that the King had prepared them a narrow way to walk in, which led straight from that porch to His own blessed presence, and that they might all pass along it safely if they would; he told them that if they left that path, they would surely get again amongst the pitfalls which they had left in the wilderness; nay, that they would be worse off than they had been even there, for that there was no other porch where they could again be set right, and no other place where the gifts that he was giving them now, could ever be got any more, if they were once thrown quite away.

p. 42

Then I looked to see what these gifts were. I saw the man bring forth clear and sparkling water, which shone as if with living light; and with this he washed from them the dirt and the bruises of the terrible wilderness: with this, too, he touched their little lamps, and as it touched them, they grew so bright and clear, that the light within poured freely forth on all around them. Then he looked in their faces, and gave them a name, which he wrote down in the King's book; and he told them, that by this name they should be known, not only by their fellow-travellers, but that this would remain written in the King's book here, unless they wholly left His path; and that every name which remained written here, they would find written in another book in letters of gold and of fire, when they reached the other end of the path; and that for every pilgrim, whose name was written there, the golden gate would open of itself, and he would find a place and a crown in the presence of the King.

p. 43

Then, as he spoke all these glorious words, my heart burned within me to see how the travellers sped.

But he had not yet done with them; for he brought out of his stores a golden vial for each one; and he told them that in it the King had stored the oil of light and beauty for the dressing of their lamps.

Then he shewed them how to use it: not carelessly or lightly, for then the oil would not flow; but earnestly, and with great care; and then sweet odours issued from the vial, and the flame of the lamp burned brightly and high. He gave them, too, the precious light-book, which I had seen; and he bade them read in it when it was dark, or the way was slippery; and that they should ever find that it was a "lantern unto their feet, and a light unto their paths." He put, too, into the hand of each a trusty staff, suited to their age; and then he told them, while they leant upon it, it would bear them up at many a pinch, and ever grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength. "Church-truth" he called these staffs; and they were made after a marvellous fashion, for they were as if many wands had been woven together to make one; and as I looked, I could see "example," and "experience," and "discipline," and "creeds," written upon some of these wands, which grew together into "Church-truth."

p. 44

Then I longed greatly to follow forth some of these whom I had seen under the porch; and as I gazed, I saw the man look earnestly into the face of a fair boy, who stood before him: he gave him the name of "Gottlieb," <sup>[45a]</sup> and entered it in the book, and put the staff in his hand, and washed him with living water, and hung the vial at his side, and put the banded staff into his hands; and, bidding him God-speed, set him out upon his journey.

p. 45

Then he looked steadily into the face of another, and it, too, was fair to look upon; but it had not



the quiet happy peace of the last. The man wrote it down as "Irrgeist;" [45b] and I thought a shade of sadness swept over his brow as he gave to him the King's goodly gifts.

Then he sent forth a third, whose timid eye seemed hardly firm enough for so long a journey; and I heard the name that was given him, and it was "Furchtsam." [45c] Close to him went another, with a firm step, and an eye of steady gentleness; and I saw, by the King's book, that he bore the name of "Gehulfè." [46]

p. 46

So these four set out upon their journey; and I followed them to see how they should fare. Now, I saw that at first, when they started, they were so small that they could not read in the goodly book, neither could they use the golden vials; and their little banded sticks would have fallen from their hands, if they had not been small and thin, like the first green shoots of the spring. Their lamps, too, cast no light outwardly, yet still they made some way upon the path; and whilst I wondered how this might be, I saw that a loving hand was stretched out of the darkness round them, which held them up and guided them on their way.

But, anon, in a while they were grown larger; and I could see Gottlieb walking on the first, and his book of light was open in his hand, and his lamp burned bright, for he often refreshed it with oil, and he leant upon his good staff, and strode along the road.

p. 47

Then, as he walked on, I saw that there stood upon his path a shadowy figure, as of one in flowing robes, and on her head she seemed to wear a chaplet of many flowers; in her hands was a cup of what seemed to be crystal water, and a basket of what looked like cool and refreshing fruit. A beautiful light played all round her, and half shewed her and her gifts to the boy. She bid him welcome, as he came up to her; so he raised his eyes from his book, and looked to see who spoke to him. Then she spoke kindly to him; and she held forth the cup towards him, and asked him if he would not drink. Now, the boy was hot with walking, for the air was close, so he stretched out his hand to take the cup; but though it seemed so near to him, he could not reach it. And at the same moment she spake to him again, and asked him to come where these fruits grew, and where the breeze whispered amongst the boughs of yonder trees,—and there to drink and rest, and then go on his way again. Then I saw that she had power to call out of the darkness the likeness of all she spoke of. So he looked at the trees to which she pointed; and the sun seemed to shine around them, and the shade looked cool and tempting under them, and the pleasant breeze rustled amongst their fresh leaves; and he thought the road upon which he was travelling was hotter and darker, and more tiring than ever; and he put up his hand to his burning brow, and she said to him, as he lingered, "come." Now, the trees to which she pointed him lay off his road, or he would gladly have rested under them; and whilst he doubted what to do, he looked down to the book that was open in his hand; and the light shot out upon it bright and clear, and the words which he read were these, "None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life." [49a] And as he read it, he looked again at the stranger; and now he could see more clearly through the wild light which played around her, and he knew that it was the evil enemy who stood before him; the sparkling cup, too, and the fruit, turned into bitter ashes; and the pleasant shady grass became a thorny and a troublesome brake: so, pushing by her with the help of his staff, he began to mend his pace; and looking down into the book of light, there shone out, as in letters of fire, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." [49b]

p. 48

p. 49

Then I saw that he was feeding his lamp, which had begun to grow dim as he parleyed with the tempter, and that he ceased not till it streamed out as bright and as clear as ever.

p. 50

But still the air was hot and sultry, and no cool breath blew upon him; and if he looked off for a moment from his book, the fair form of the tempter stood again beside him in silver light; the cold water sparkled close to his lips; and trees with shady boughs waving backward and forward over fresh green grass, and full, in every spray, of singing-birds, seemed to spring up around him. For a little moment his step faltered; but as his lamp streamed out its light, all the vain shadows passed away: and I heard him say, as he struck his staff upon the ground, "I have made a covenant with my eyes;" and even as she heard it, the tempter passed away, and left him to himself. Scarcely was she gone, before he passed by the door of a beautiful arbour. It was strewn with the softest moss; roses and honeysuckle hung down over its porch; light, as from a living diamond, gleamed from its roof; and in the midst of its floor, a clear, cool, sparkling stream of the purest water bubbled ever up from the deep fountain below it. Now, as this lay on the road, Gottlieb halted for a moment to look at it; and the light of his lamp waxed not dim, though he thus stayed to see it; the book of fire, too, spoke to him of rest, and of halting by "palm-trees and wells of water;" and as he looked, he read in letters of light over the door-way—

p. 51

Faithful pilgrim, banish fear,  
Thou mayst enter safely here:  
Rest for thee thy Lord did win;  
Faithful pilgrim, enter in.

Then Gottlieb rejoiced greatly, and cast himself gladly upon the mossy floor, and bent down his parched lips to drink of the cool spring which bubbled up before him.

Now, whilst he was resting safely here, I turned to see how it fared with the others who had set out with him from the porch, for they had not got as far as Gottlieb.

p. 52

The first of them was Irrgeist; and when I looked upon him, he was drawing near to the place

where Gottlieb had fallen in with the tempter. Irrgeist was walking quickly on—so quickly that, at the first glance, I thought he would soon be by the side of Gottlieb. But, upon looking more closely, I saw that Gottlieb's steps had been far more steady and even than those with which Irrgeist was pressing on; for Irrgeist's lamp burned but dimly, and gave him no sure light to walk in. Very near to the place where Gottlieb had met with her, the tempter stood beside Irrgeist. He was not looking at his book, as the other had been; and he did not wait to be spoken to; for as soon as he saw the light which played round her figure, he began to speak to her, and asked who she was. She told him that her name was "Pleasure;" and forthwith she shewed to him her crystal cup and fruits; and she brought before the charmed eyes of the wanderer all the gay show with which she had tried before to mislead the faithful Gottlieb. There was the bright sunshine, and the green path, and the waving trees, and the rustling of the wind, and the song of birds, and the sweet resting-shade. Irrgeist looked eagerly at all she shewed him, and in his haste to reach out his hand for the cup, he dropped altogether the trusty staff of "Church-truth." Then the cup seemed to draw away from him, just as it had done from Gottlieb; but he followed thoughtlessly after it. And soon I saw that he left the path upon which he had been set; and though he started suddenly as soon as he was off it, yet it was but a moment's start,—the cup was close before him, the shadowy form led him on, the grass was green, and the trees and the sunlight but a little farther. p. 53

And now I saw him drink some of the enchanted water; and as he drank it, his look grew wild, and his cheek burnt like the cheek of one in a fever; and he walked after the deceitful figure with a quicker step than ever: but I saw that his lamp was almost out, that the book of living light had fallen from his hands, and the golden vial hung down, ready, as it seemed, to fall from him altogether. p. 54

Still he walked on; and a strange flitting light, from the form which was before him, lightened the darkness of the valley, so that he could pass on quickly; the meadow, also, was smooth and even, and there was a rustling breeze, which played around him: so that he got on faster than he had ever done upon the narrow path, and thought that he was getting well on to his journey's end. Many times did he put forth his hand for the sparkling cup, and drank of it again and again. p. 55

But now I saw, as I thought, a strange change which was coming over him; for he drank oftener of the bowl, but appeared each time to find it less refreshing. Sometimes it seemed almost bitter, and yet he could not but take it the very moment he had thrust it from him. The shadowy form, also, before him seemed altogether altering; he looked again, and her beautiful features and pleasant countenance had changed into a sharp, stern, and reproachful frown. His own voice, which had been heretofore almost like one singing, grew sad and angry. The very figure of his guide seemed vanishing from his eyes; the light which floated round her grew wilder and more uncertain, and his own lamp was almost out. He felt puzzled and bewildered, and hardly knew which way to go: he had got into a broad beaten path, and he found that many besides himself were going here and there along it. Sometimes they sang; and, in very bitterness of heart, he tried to sing too, that he might not think: but every now and then, when a flashing light came, and he saw the look of the travellers amongst whom he was, it made his very heart shiver—they looked so sad and so wretched. Now, none went straight on: some turned into this path, some into that; and then he soon lost sight of them altogether. Sometimes he heard fearful cries, as if wild beasts had seized them; sometimes a dreadful burst of flame from the horrid pits which I had seen, made him fear that they had fallen over into them: for poor Irrgeist had got now into the midst of the deep pits and the ravenous beasts. And soon he found how terrible was his danger. He had been following one who had made him believe that he had light to guide his steps; he had gone with him out of the beaten path; and they were pressing on together, when Irrgeist suddenly lost sight of him in the darkness; and whether it was that he had fallen into a pit, or become the prey of some evil beast, Irrgeist knew not; only, he found that he was more alone than ever, and near to some great peril. Poor Irrgeist sprang aside with all his force, thinking only of the danger which he feared; but, feeling his feet slipping under him, he turned, and saw that he had got upon the treacherous brink of a fearful pit; down which, at the very moment, another pilgrim fell. The fierce red flames rose out of it with a roar like thunder, and a blaze like the mouth of a furnace; and the wind blew the flames into the face of Irrgeist, so that he was singed and almost blinded. Then the poor boy called in the bitterness of his heart upon Pleasure, who had led him out of the way, and now had forsaken him; but she came no more—only terrible thoughts troubled him; and he heard the hissing of serpents as they slid along in the bushes near him, and all evil noises sounded in his ears, till he scarcely knew where he was standing. Then he thought of his staff, which he had dropped when Pleasure had first tempted him, and he grieved that it was gone; and he felt in the folds of his mantle, hoping that he might still have the book of light within it; for he had too often thrust it there at the beginning of his journey; but he could not find it. Then he strove to get some light from his little lamp; for, hurt as it was, he had it still in his hand, and he thought there was just a little blue light playing most faintly within it; but this was not enough to direct him on his way, rather did it make his way more dark. Then at last he bethought him of the golden vial. Few were there of those near him but had lost theirs altogether, and his hung only by a single thread. But it was not gone; and when he had striven long, he just drew from it a single drop of oil, and he trimmed his lamp, and it yielded forth a little trembling light, just enough to shew that it was not altogether dead. With the help of this light he saw that when he had dropped his book of fire, one single leaf had been torn from it, and stuck to his mantle; so he seized it eagerly, and strove to draw light from it; but all that it would yield was red and angry-looking light, and all that he could read was, "the way of transgressors is hard." p. 56

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Poor Irrgeist! he sat down almost in despair, and wept as if his heart would break. "O, that I had never trusted Pleasure;" "O, that I had never left the path;" "O, that I had my book of light, and my lamp's former brightness, and my goodly stick;" "O, that one would lighten my darkness."

Then did it seem to me as if in the murmur of the air around him two voices were speaking to the boy. One was like the gentle voice of the man whom I had seen at the porch of the valley; and it seemed to whisper, "return," "return;" "mercy," and "forgiveness." And as he listened, something like hope mixed with the bitter tears which ran down the face of the wanderer. But then would sound the other voice, harsh, and loud, and threatening; and it said, "too late," "too late," "despair," "despair."

p. 60

So the poor boy was sadly torn and scattered in his thoughts by these two different voices; but methought, as he guarded his golden vial, and strove to trim his dying lamp, that the gentle voice became more constant, and the voice of terror more dull and distant.

Then, as I was watching him, all at once the boy sprang up, and he seemed to see a light before him, so straight on did he walk: many crossed his path and jostled against him, but he cared not; he heard the sweet voice plainer and plainer, like the soft murmuring of the cushat dove in the early summer, and he would follow where it led. Hitherto his pathway had been smooth, and he had hastened along it; but this did not last, for now it narrowed almost to a line, and ran straight between two horrible pitfalls; so he paused for a moment; but the roaring of a lion was behind him, and forward he pressed. It was a sore passage for Irrgeist, for the whole ground was strewed with thorns, which pierced his feet at every step, and the sparks from the fire-pits flew ever round him, and now and then fell in showers over him. Neither did he hear now the pleasant sound of the voice of kindness; whether it were that it had died away, he knew not, or whether it were that the crackling and roaring of the fierce flames, and the voice of the beasts behind, and his own groans and crying, drowned its soft music, so that he heard it not.

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I had looked at him until I could bear it no more; for the path seemed to grow narrower and narrower; the flames from the two pits already almost touched; and I could not endure to see, as I feared I should, the little one, whom I had watched, become the prey of their devouring fierceness. So, with a bitter groan for Irrgeist, I turned me back to the road to see how it fared with Furchtsam and Gehulfè.

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They had fallen far behind the others from the first. Poor little Furchtsam had a trembling tottering gait; and as he walked, he looked on this side and on that, as if every step was dangerous. This led him often to look off his book of light, and then it would shut up its leaves, and then his little lamp grew dimmer and dimmer, and his feet stumbled, and he trembled so, that he almost dropped his staff out of his hands. Yet still he kept the right path, only he got along it very slowly and with pain.

Whether it was that Gehulfè was too tender spirited to leave him, or why else, I know not, but he kept close by the little trembler, and seemed ever waiting to help him. Many a time did he catch him by the hand when he was ready to fall, and speak to him a word of comfort, when without it he would have sunk down through fear. So they got on together, and now they came to the part of the pathway which the evil enchantress haunted. She used all her skill upon them, and brought up before their eyes all the visions she could raise; sunshine, and singing-birds, and waving boughs, and green grass, and sparkling water, they all passed before their eyes,—but they heeded them not: once, indeed, poor Furchtsam for a moment looked with a longing eye at the painted sunshine, as if its warm light would have driven off some of his fears; but it was but for a moment. And as for Gehulfè, whether it was that he was reading his book of light too closely, or trimming too carefully his lamp, or helping too constantly his trembling friend, for some cause or other he scarcely seemed to see the visions which the sorceress had spread around him. So when she had tried all her skill for a season, and found it in vain, she vanished altogether from them, and they saw her no more. But their dangers were not over yet. When Gottlieb passed along this road, he had gone on so boldly, that I had not noticed how fearful it was in parts to any giddy head or fainting heart. But now I saw well how it terrified Furchtsam. For here it seemed to rise straight up to a dangerous height, and to become so narrow at the same time, and to be so bare of any side-wall or parapet, that it was indeed a giddy thing to pass along it. Yet when one walked over it, as Gottlieb did, leaning on his staff of Church-truth, reading diligently in his book, and trimming ever and anon his lamp, such a light fell upon the narrow path, and the darkness so veiled the precipice, that the pilgrim did not know that there was any thing to fear. But not so when you stopped to look—then it became terrible indeed; you soon lost all sight of the path before you; for the brightest lamp only lighted the road just by your feet, and that seemed rising almost to an edge, whilst the flash of distant lights here and there shewed that a fearful precipice was on each side.

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Furchtsam trembled exceedingly when he looked at it; and even Gehulfè, when, instead of marching on, he stopped to talk about it, began to be troubled with fears. Now, as they looked here and there, Furchtsam saw an easy safe-looking path, which promised to lead them in the same direction, but along the bottom of the cliffs. Right glad was he to see it; and so taking the lead for once, he let fall his staff, that by catching hold of the bushes on the bank, he might drop down more easily upon the lower path; and there he got with very little trouble.

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It was all done in a moment; and when he was out of the path, Gehulfè turned round and saw where he was gone. Then he tried to follow after him; but he could not draw his staff with him through the gap, or climb down the bank without letting it go. And, happily for him, he held it so firmly, that after one or two trials he stopped. Then, indeed, was he glad, as soon as he had time

to think; and he held his good stick firmer in his hand than ever, for now he saw plainly that Furchtsam was quite out of the road, and that he had himself well-nigh followed him. So leaning over the side, he began to call to his poor timid companion, and encourage him to mount up again, by the bank which he had slipped down, and venture along the right way with him. At first Furchtsam shook his head mournfully, and would not hear of it. But when Gehulfè reminded him that they had a true promise from the King, that nothing should harm them whilst they kept to the high way of holiness, and that the way upon which he had now entered was full of pitfalls, and wild beasts, and every sort of danger, and that in it he must be alone,—then his reason began to come back to him, and Furchtsam saw into what an evil state he had brought himself; and with all his heart he wished himself back again by the side of Gehulfè. But it was no such easy matter to get back. His lamp was so bruised and shaken as he slid down, that it threw scarcely any light at all; while it had never seemed, he thought, so dark as it did now: he could not see the bushes to which he had clung just before, or the half path which had brought him down. Gehulfè's voice from above was some guide to him, and shewed him in which direction to turn; but when he tried to mount the bank, it was so steep and so slippery, he could scarcely cling to it; and he had no staff to lean upon, and no friendly hand to help him. Surely if it had not been for the kind encouraging voice of Gehulfè, the weak and trembling heart of Furchtsam would have failed utterly, and he would have given up altogether.

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Now, just at this time, whilst he was reaching out to Furchtsam, and urging him to strive more earnestly, he heard a noise as of one running upon the path behind him; and he looked round and saw one of the King's own messengers coming fast upon it: so when he came up to Gehulfè, he stopped and asked him what made him tarry thus upon the King's path. Then Gehulfè answered very humbly, that he was striving to help back poor Furchtsam into the right way, from which he had been driven by his fears. Then the messenger of the King looked upon him kindly, and bid him "fear not." "Rightly," he said, "art thou named Gehulfè, for thou hast been ready to help the weak; and the Lord, who has bidden his children 'to bear one another's burdens,' has watched thee all alone thy way, and looked upon thee with an eye of love; and forasmuch as thou seemest to have been hindered in thy own course by helping thy brother, the King has sent me to carry thee on up this steep place, and over this dangerous road." With that, I saw that he lifted up the boy, and was about to fly with him through the air. Then, seeing that he cast a longing look towards the steep bank, down which Furchtsam had slipped, and that the sound of his sad voice was still ringing in his ear; the King's messenger said to him, "'Cast thy burden upon the Lord.' 'The Lord careth for thee.' 'For the very hairs of your head are numbered,' and 'the Lord is full of compassion, pitiful, and of great mercy.'" So the heart of Gehulfè was soothed, and with a happy mind he gave himself to the messenger, and he bore him speedily along the dangerous path, as if his feet never touched the ground, but refreshing airs breathed upon his forehead as he swept along, and silver voices chanted holy words to his glad heart. "He shall gather the lambs in his arms," said one; and another and a sweeter took up the strain and sang, "and he shall carry them in his bosom." And so he passed along the way swiftly and most happily.

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Then I saw that he bore him to the mouth of the arbour into which Gottlieb had turned to rest. And now as he came up to it, Gottlieb was just coming forth again to renew his journey. Right glad was Gottlieb of the company of such a comrade; so they joined their hands together, and walked along the road speaking to one another of the kindness of the King, and telling one to the other all that had befallen them hitherto. A pleasant thing it was to see them marching along that road, their good staffs in their hands, their lamps burning brightly, and their books sending forth streams of light, to shew them the way that they should go. But now I saw they got into a part of the road which was rough and full of stones; and unless they kept the lights they bore with them ever turned towards the road, and looked, too, most carefully to their footing, they were in constant danger of falling. The air, also, seemed to have some power here of sending them to sleep, for I saw that Gottlieb's steps were not as steady and active as they had been; and he looked often from this side to that, to see if there were any other resting-place provided for him; but none could he see: and then methought, as he walked on, his eyes would close as he bent them down over his book, like one falling asleep from exceeding weariness.

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Gehulfè saw the danger of his friend; and though he felt the air heavy, his fear for Gottlieb kept him wide awake. "What are those words," he asked his drowsy friend, "which burn so brightly in your book?" When he heard the voice, Gottlieb roused himself, and read; and it was written, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." Then, for a little while, Gottlieb was warned, and he walked like one awake; but, after a time, such power had this sleepy air, he was again almost as drowsy as ever, and his eyes were nearly closed. Then, before Gehulfè could give him a second warning, he placed his foot in a hole, which he would have easily passed by, if he had been watching; and, falling suddenly down, he would have rolled quite out of the road (for it was raised here with a steep bank on either side), if Gehulfè had not been nigh to catch him again by the hand, and keep him in the path. He was sorely bruised and shaken by the fall, and his lamp, too, was dusted and hurt; so that he could not, at first, press on the way as he wished to do. But now his drowsiness was gone; and, with many bitter tears, he lamented that he had given way to it before. One strange thing I noted, too: he had dropped his staff in his fall, and he could not rise till he had taken it again in his hand; but now, when he tried to take it, it pricked and hurt his hand, as if it had been rough and sharp with thorns. Then I looked at it, and saw that one of the stems which were twined together, and which bore the name of "discipline," was very rough and thorny; and this, which had turned inwardly before, was now, by his fall, forced to the outside of the staff, so that he must hold that or none. Now I heard the boy groan as he laid hold of it; but lay hold of it he did, and that boldly, for he could not rise or travel without it, and to rise and travel he was determined. Then he looked into

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his book of light, and he read out of it these words, "Make the bones which Thou hast broken to rejoice." And as he read them, he gathered courage, and made a great effort, and stood upon his feet, and pressed on beside Gehulfè.

Then I saw that the road changed again, and became smoother than they had ever known it. Gottlieb's staff, too, was now smooth and easy in his hand, as it had been at first. Soon also a pleasant air sprung up, and blew softly and yet cool upon their foreheads. And now they heard the song of birds, as if the sunshine was very near them, though they saw it not yet. There were, too, every now and then, sounds sweeter than the songs of birds, as if blessed angels were near them, and they were let to hear their heavenly voices. A little further, and the day began to dawn upon them—bright light shone out some way before them, and its glad reflection was already cast upon their path. But still there was one more trial before them; for when they had enjoyed this light for a season, and I thought they must be close upon the sunshine, I saw that they had got into greater darkness than ever. Here, also, they lost sight of one another; for it was a part of the King's appointment, that each one must pass that dark part alone—it was called "the shadow of death." Gehulfè, I saw, walked through it easily; his feet were nimble and active, his lamp was bright, his golden vial ever in his hand, his staff firm to lean upon, and the book of light close before his eyes: he was still reading it aloud, and I heard him speak of his King as giving "songs in the night,"—and so, with a glad heart, he passed through the darkness. The brightest sunshine lay close upon the other side of it; and there he was waited for by messengers in robes of light, and they clad him in the same, and carried him with songs and music into the presence of the King.

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But Gottlieb did not pass through so easily. It seemed as if that darkness had power to bring out any weakness with which past accidents had at the time affected the pilgrim: for so it was, that when Gottlieb was in it, he felt all the stunning of his fall come back again upon him, and, for a moment, he seemed well-nigh lost. But his heart was sound, and there was One who was faithful holding him up: so he grasped his good staff tighter than ever, though its roughness had come out again and sorely pricked his hand; but this seemed only to quicken his steps; and when he had gone on a little while thus firmly, as he looked into his book he saw written on its open page, "I will make darkness light before thee." [76] And as he read them, the words seemed to be fulfilled, for he stepped joyfully out of the darkness into the clear sunlight. And for him too the messengers were waiting; for him too were garments ready woven of the light; around him were songs, and music, and rejoicing; and so they bare him into the presence of the King.

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Now, when I had seen these two pass so happily through their journey into rest, I thought again of the poor trembling Furchtsam, and longed to know that he had got again into the road. But upon looking back to where I had lost sight of him, I saw that he was still lying at the foot of the steep bank, down whose side he had stepped so easily. He had toiled and laboured, and striven to climb up, but it had been all in vain. Still he would not cease his labour; and now he was but waiting to recover his breath to begin to strive again. He was, too, continually calling on the King for aid. Then I saw a figure approaching him in the midst of his cries. And poor Furchtsam trembled exceedingly, for he was of a very timorous heart, and he scarcely dared to look up to him who stood by him. After a while I heard the man speak to him, and he asked him in a grave, pitying voice, "What doest thou here?" Then the poor boy sobbed out in broken words the confession of his folly, and told how he had feared and left the road, and how he had laboured to get back into it, and how he almost thought that he should never reach it. Then I saw the man look down upon him with a face of tenderness and love; and he stretched forth his hand towards him; and Furchtsam saw that it was the hand which had been pierced for him: so he raised the boy up, and set him on his feet; and he led him straight up the steepest bank. And now it seemed easy to his steps; and he put him back again in the road, and gave the staff into his hand, and bid him "redeem the time, because the days are evil;" and then he added, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, 'be strong: fear not.'" [79a] Such strength had his touch, his words, and his kind look, given to the heart of the timid boy, that he seized the staff, though its most prickly "discipline" sorely hurt his tender flesh; and leaning on it, he set bravely out without a moment's delay. And I heard him reading in his book of light as he climbed up the steep path which had affrighted him; and what he read was this: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word." [79b]

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When he had almost reached the arbour, another danger awaited him; for in the dim light round him he saw, as he thought, the form of an evil beast lying in the pathway before him. Then did some of his old terrors begin to trouble him; and he had turned aside, perhaps, out of the way, but that the wholesome roughness of his staff still pricked his hand and forced him to recall his former fall. Instead, therefore, of turning aside, he looked into his book of light, and there he read in fiery letters, "Thou shalt go upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet:" and this gave him comfort. So, on he went, determining still to read in his book, and not to look at all at that which affrighted him: and so it was, that when he came to the place, he saw that it was only a bush, which his fears had turned into the figure of a beast of prey; and at the same moment he found where it was written in his book, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." [80]

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And now he stood beside the arbour, where he rested a while, and then pursued his journey. Now I noticed, that as he got further on the road, and read more in his book, and leant upon his staff, that he grew bolder and firmer in his gait; and I thought that I could see why Gehulfè, who had been needful to him in his first weakness, had afterwards been carried away from him: for

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surely he had leant more upon him, and less upon his book and his good staff, unless he had walked there alone.

However this might be, he grew continually bolder. As he drew near the last sad darkness, I began again to tremble for him; but I need not have done so; for he walked on so straight through it, that it seemed scarcely to make any difference to him at all. In the best part of the road his feebleness had taught him to lean altogether upon Him who had so mercifully helped him on the bank, and who had held up his fainting steps hitherto; and this strength could hold him up as well even in this extreme darkness. I heard him, as he parsed along, say, "When I am weak, then am I strong;" and with that he broke out into singing:

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"Through death's dark valley without fear  
My feeble steps have trod,  
Because I know my God is near;  
I feel His staff and rod."

With that he too passed out of the shade and darkness into the joyful sunshine. And oh, it was indeed a happy time! It made my heart bound when I saw his face, which had so often turned pale and drooped with terror, now lighted up with the glow of the heavenly light; when, instead of the evil things which his fears had summoned up, I saw around him the bands of holy ones, and the children of the day: and so they passed along. And soon, I thought, he would see again the hand which had been stretched out to save him on the bank, and hear the kind and merciful voice which had soothed his terror and despair, and live in the present sunshine of that gracious countenance.

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And now methought I heard an earnest and sorrowful voice, as of one crying aloud for help; so I turned me round to see where he was that uttered it, and by the side of the King's path I could see one striving to mount the bank, and slipping back again as often as he tried. He was trying in right earnest: his cries were piteous to hear, and he laboured as if he would carry his point by storm. But it was all in vain; the more he struggled, the worse his case grew; for the bank, and all the path up to it, got so quagged and miry with his eager striving, that he seemed farther and farther from getting safely up. At last, as he was once more struggling violently up, his feet quite slipped from under him, and he fell upon his side: and so he lay sobbing and struggling for breath, but still crying out to the King, who had helped him before, and delivered him from the flames of the pit, to help him once more, and lift him again into the right way. My heart pitied the poor boy, and I looked more closely into his face, and saw that it was Irrgeist—not Irrgeist as he had been when he had walked at first with Gottlieb along the road, or as he had been when he had first followed the deceitful phantom "Pleasure" out of it,—but Irrgeist still, though brought by his wanderings and his trouble to paleness, and weariness, and sorrow. Now, whilst I was looking at him, as he lay in this misery, and longing for some helper to come to him, lo, his cries stopped for a moment, and I saw that it was because One stood by him and spoke to him. Then I could see under the mantle, which almost hid Him, that it was the same form which had visited Furchtsam, and delivered him when he had cried. Now, too, I saw the hand held out, and I saw Irrgeist seize it; and it raised him up, and he stood upon his feet: and the staff was given to him,—exceeding rough, but needful and trusty; and his lamp shone out, and the book of light was his; and his feet were again in the road.

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But I marked well that Irrgeist trod it not as the others had done. Truly did he go along it weeping. Whether it was that the thought of what he had gone through amongst the pitfalls dwelt ever on his mind; or whether it were shame of having wandered, I know not,—but his road seemed evermore one of toil and sorrow. Still, in the midst of tears, a song was often put into his mouth, and his tongue was ever speaking of the great kindness of Him who had restored the wanderer: his head, too, was so bowed down, that he marked every stone upon the road, and therefore never stumbled; but still his speed was little, and his troubles were many. When he got to the dark part, he had a sore trial: his feet seemed too weak and trembling to bear him; and more than once I heard him cry out, as if he thought that he were again between the pitfalls, and the fire were ready to break out upon him. But then did it seem as if there were some sweet hopes given him, and his face brightened up; and in a faint, feeble voice, he would break out again into his song and thanksgiving. As he drew towards the end, things somewhat mended with him; and when he was just upon the sunlight, and began to see its brightness through the haze, and to hear the voices of the heavenly ones, methought his heart would have burst, so did it beat with joy: and withal he smote upon his breast, and said,—“And this for me! And this for the wanderer! O mercy, choicest mercy! Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardonest iniquity?” And so saying, he entered on the heavenly light, and left for ever behind him the darkness and the danger of the pitfalls, and the face of shame, and the besetting weakness; for he too was clothed in raiment of light, and borne with joy before the Lord the King.

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*Father.* Who were those who were walking in the beautiful garden as its lords?

*Child.* Man in Paradise before the fall.

F. What was the dreadful change that came upon them?

C. Their fall into sin and misery.

F. What was the second estate seen in the vision?

C. Their fallen children in this sinful world, without the knowledge of God; wandering in the darkness of heathenism amongst the pitfalls of error.

F. What was the porch which let them into a better way?

C. The entrance into the Church of the redeemed by baptism.

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F. What does our Catechism say about this?

C. That it is our being "called to a state of salvation."

F. What are the gifts bestowed upon them?

C. God's word is the book of light; conscience enlightened by God is the little lamp of each; the oil in the golden vial is the help and teaching of God's grace; and the staff is the help and assistance of the Church.

F. Why was it so easy to get out of the path, and so hard to get back?

C. Because it is easy to go wrong, and very hard to return into the way of righteousness.

F. What were the baits which the phantom offered to the youths?

C. The pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.

F. Why was the staff rough to those that were coming back from wandering?

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C. Because the discipline of the Church, which is easy to the obedient, is often galling to those who offend.

F. Why was Irrgeist, after he was brought back, still so sad a pilgrim?

C. Because, though he was accepted and forgiven, the effects of his former sins still weakened and grieved him: as says the Lord, by the mouth of the Prophet Ezekiel (chap. xvi. ver. 63), "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

## The Little Wanderers.

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In a miserable little hovel, built on the edge of a wide and desolate common, lived a poor widow woman, who had two sons. The eldest of them was quite young, and the least was scarcely more than an infant. They were dressed in torn and dirty rags, for the widow had no better clothes to put upon them; and often they were very hungry and very cold, for she had not food or fire with which to feed and warm them. No one taught the biggest boy any thing; and as for the poor mother, she did not know a letter. She had no friends; and the only playfellows the little ones ever knew were other children as poor, and as dirty, and as untaught as they were themselves, from whom they learnt nothing but to say bad words and do naughty tricks. Poor children! it was a sad life, you would say, which lay before them.

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Just at this time the widow was taken very ill with a fever. Long she lay in that desolate hut, groaning and suffering, and no one knew how ill she was but the little children. They would sit and cry by her miserable bed all day, for they were very hungry and very sad. When she had lain in this state for more than a week, she grew light-headed, and after a while died. The youngest child thought she was asleep, and that he could not waken her; but the elder boy rushed weeping out of the house, knowing that she was really dead, and that they were left alone in the wide world.

Just at that very moment a man passed by, who looked into the pale, thin, hungry face of the sobbing child, with a kind, gentle look, and let himself be led into the wretched hut, where the poor dead mother lay. His heart bled for the poor orphans, for he was one who was full of tenderness: so he spake kind words to them; and when his servants came up after a while, he gave orders that their dead mother should be buried, and that the children should be taken from the miserable hut, to dwell in his own beautiful castle.

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To it the children were removed. The servants of the Lord of the castle put on them clean fresh clothes—washed their old dirt from them; and as no one knew what were their names, they gave them two new names, which shewed they belonged to this family; and they were cared for, and given all they wanted.

Happy was now their lot. They had all they wanted: good food in plenty, instead of hunger and thirst; clean raiment, instead of rags and nakedness; and kind teachers, who instructed them day by day as they were able to bear it. There were a multitude of other happy children too in the castle, with whom they lived, and learned, and spent their glad days. Sometimes they played in the castle, and sometimes they ran about in the grounds that were round it, where were all sorts of flowers, and beautiful trees full of singing birds, and green grass, and painted butterflies; and they were as happy as children could be.

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All over these grounds they might play about as they would: only on one side of them they were

forbidden to go. There the garden ended in a wide waste plain, and there seemed to be nothing to tempt children to leave the happy garden to walk in it, especially as the kind Lord of the castle bid them never set foot on it: and yet it was said that some children had wandered into it, and that of these, many had never come back again. For in that desert dwelt the enemies of the Lord of the castle; and there was nothing they loved better than to pounce down upon any children whom he had taken as his own, and carry them off, to be their slaves in the midst of the waste and dreary sands.

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Many ways too had these enemies by which they enticed children to come on the plain; for as long as they stayed within the boundary, and played only in the happy garden, the evil one could not touch them. Sometimes they would drop gay and shining flowers all about the beginning of the waste, hoping that the children would come across the border to pick them up: and so it was, that if once a child went over, as soon as he had got into his hands the flower for which he had gone, it seemed to fade and wither away; but just beyond him he thought he saw another, brighter and more beautiful; and so, too, often it happened that, throwing down the first, he went on to take the second; and then throwing down the second, he went on to reach a third; until, suddenly, the enemy dashed upon him, and whirled him away with them in a moment.

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Often and often had little Kühn <sup>[95a]</sup>—for so the eldest boy had been named—looked out over this desert, and longed, as he saw the gay flowers dropped here and there, to run over the border and pick them up. His little brother, who was now old enough to run about with him, would stand and tremble by him as he got close to the desert; but little Zart <sup>[95b]</sup> would never leave him: and sometimes, I am afraid, they would have both been lost, if it had not been for a dear little girl, who was almost always with them, and who never would go even near to the line. When Kühn was looking into it, as if he longed for the painted flowers, the gentle Glaube <sup>[96]</sup> would grow quite sad, and bending her dark sorrowful eyes upon him, their long lashes would become wet with tears, and she would whisper in a voice almost too solemn for a child, "O Kühn, remember." Then Kühn, who could not bear to see her sad, would tear himself away; and the flowers seemed directly to lose their brightness, and the desert looked dry and hot, and the garden cool and delicious, and they played happily together, and forgot their sorrow.

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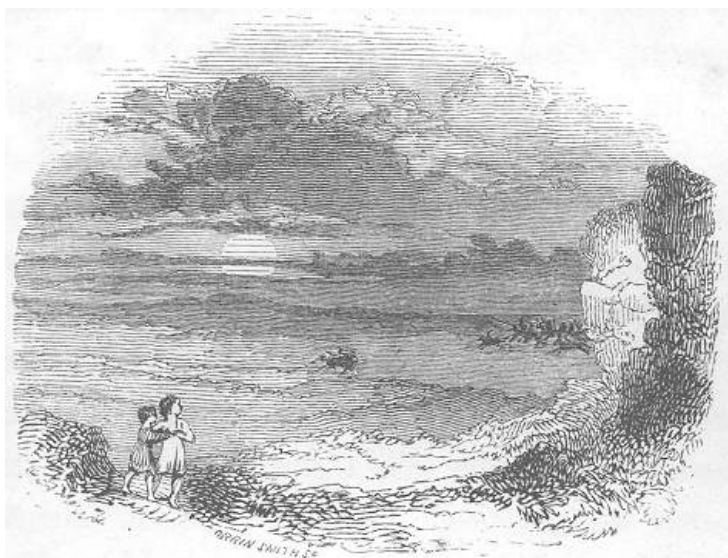
But it was very dangerous for Kühn to go so near. The servants of the Lord of the castle often told the children this; and seeing a bold and daring spirit in Kühn, they had spoken to him over and over again. What made it so dangerous was this,—that the flowers of the wilderness never looked gay until you got near to its border; afar off it seemed dusty, dry, and hot; but the nearer you got to it, the brighter shone the flowers; they seemed also to grow in number, until you could hardly see its dry hot sands, for the flowery carpet that was drawn over them.

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Poor Kühn! he was often in danger. Never yet had he crossed the border; but it is a sad thing to go near temptation; and so this unhappy child found to his cost.

One day he was sauntering close to the forbidden border, when the hoop which he was trundling slipped from him and ran into the desert. In a moment he was over after it; and just as he stooped to pick it up, he saw, right before him, a beautiful and sparkling flower. He would certainly have gone after it, but that at the instant he caught the eye of Glaube looking sadly after him, and it struck upon his heart, and he hastened back, and was safe. For a while his legs trembled under him, and Zart looked up quite frightened into his pale face; Glaube too could scarcely speak to him; and it was long before they were laughing merrily again under the tall palm-trees of the garden. But by the next day all Kühn's fears had flown away, and he went with a bolder foot than ever to the very edge of the desert.

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Glaube was further off than usual; and just as Kühn and Zart were in this great danger, a beautiful bird started up under their feet. The boys had never seen such a bird. All the colours of the rainbow shone upon his feathers, and his black and scarlet head seemed quite to sparkle in the sunshine. It tried to fly; but whether its wing was hurt, or what, I know not, but it could not rise, and ran before them flapping its painted wings, screaming with a harsh voice, and keeping



only just before them. The boys were soon in full chase, and every thing else was forgotten; when, just as they thought the bird was their own, he fluttered across the border, and both the boys followed him,—Kühn boldly and without thought, for he had been across it before; but poor little Zart trembled and turned pale, and clung to his bolder brother, as if he never would have crossed it alone.

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Once over, however, on they went, and the bird still seemed to keep close before them; and they never noticed how far they were getting from the garden, until suddenly they heard a dreadful noise; the air looked thick before them, as if whole clouds of dust were sweeping on; shining spear-heads were all they could see in the midst of the dust; and they heard the trampling of a multitude of horses. The boys were too much frightened to shriek, but they clung to one another, pale and trembling, and ready to sink into the earth. In a minute rude hands seized them; they heard rough voices round them; and they could see that they were in the midst of the enemies of the Lord of the castle. In another minute they were torn asunder, they were snatched up on horseback, and were galloping off towards the sad abode in which the evil men of the desert dwelt. In vain the boys cried, and begged to be taken home; away galloped the horses; whilst no one thought of heeding their cries and prayers. They had gone on long in this way, and the dark-frowning towers of the desert castle were in sight. The little boys looked sadly at one another; for here there was no flowering garden, there were no sheltering trees, but all looked bare, and dry, and wretched; and they could see little narrow windows covered with iron bars, which seemed to be dungeon-rooms, where they thought they should be barred in, and never more play together amongst the flowers and in the sunlight.

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Just at this moment the little Zart felt that, by some means or other, the strap which bound him to the horse had grown loose, and in another moment he had slipped down its side, and fallen upon his head on the ground. No one noticed his fall; and there he lay upon the sand for a while stunned and insensible. When he woke up, the trampling of horses had died away in the distance; the light sand of the desert, which their feet had stirred, had settled down again like the heavy night-dew, so that he could see no trace of their footmarks. The frowning castle-walls were out of sight; look which way he would, he could see nothing but the hot flat sand below, and the hot bright sun in the clear sky above him. He called for his brother, but no voice answered him; he started up, and began to run he knew not where: but the sun beat on his head, the hot sand scorched his weary feet; his parched tongue began to cleave to his mouth; and he sunk down upon the desert again to die.

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As he lay there he thought upon the castle-garden and its kind Lord; upon the sorrowful face with which Glaube was used to look on them, when he and Kühn drew near to the forbidden border; and his tears broke out afresh when he thought of his brother in the enemies' dungeon, and himself dying in the desolate wilderness. Then he called upon the Lord of the castle, for he remembered to have heard how He had pitied wandering children, and heard their cry from afar, and had brought them back again to His own happy castle. And as he lay upon the sand, crying out to the Lord of the castle, he thought that he heard a footstep, as of one walking towards him. Then there came a shade between the sun and his burning head, and looking languidly up he saw the kind face of the Lord of the castle turned towards him. He was looking on the poor child as He had looked on him when He had pitied him by the side of the hut; and that kind face seemed to speak comfort. Then He stretched out to him His hand, and He bade him rise; and He lifted up the child, and bore him in His bosom over that waste and scorching wilderness, nor ever set him down until He had brought him again into the pleasant garden. Once as he lay in that bosom, Zart thought that he heard in the distance the tramping of horse-hoofs; and he saw the dusty cloud lifting itself up; but he felt that he was safe; and so he was, for the enemy did not dare to approach that Mighty One who was bearing him.

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When he reached the garden again, the gentle Glaube met him, and welcomed him back again to their peaceful home. But he hung down his head with shame and with sorrow; and as he looked up into the face of the Lord of the garden, he saw in it such kindness and love, that his tears rolled down his cheeks to think how he had broken His command, and wandered into the wilderness of His enemies. Then he tried to speak for his brother, for his heart was sore and heavy with thinking of him; but the Lord of the castle answered not. Many, many days did Glaube and Zart pray for him; but they heard nothing of him: whether he died in the enemies' dungeon; or whether, as they still dared to hope, he might even yet one day find his way back to the garden of peace; or whether, as they sometimes trembled to think, he had grown up amongst the enemies of their Lord, and become one of them,—they knew not, and they dared not to ask. But they never thought of him without trembling and tears, and Zart more even than Glaube: for he had crossed that terrible border; he had been seized by the fierce enemy; he had lain alone in the wide scorching desert; and had only been brought back again from death by the great love of the mighty and merciful Lord of that most happy garden.

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*Father.* Who are meant by these children born in the wretched hovel?

*Child.* All the children of fallen parents.

F. Who are such?

C. All who are born. For we were "by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath."

F. Who is the kind Lord of the castle who takes pity on them?

C. Jesus Christ our Lord.

F. What is meant by His taking them to His castle?

C. His receiving us when children into His Church.

F. When was this done?

C. At our baptism. For "being by nature children of wrath, we were hereby made the children of grace."

F. What is meant by the clean raiment and the new name He gave them?

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C. The "forgiveness of all our sins" (see Collect in Confirmation-Service), and the giving us our Christian name.

F. Why is it called your Christian name?

C. To mark its difference from our natural, or parents' name.

F. Why was it given you at that time?

C. Because then I was taken into God's family, and "made a member of Christ, child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

F. What was the food with which they were fed?

C. All the means of grace of the Church of Christ.

F. What was the desert, and who those who dwelt in it who were enemies to the Lord?

C. The ways of sin, and the devil and his angels.

F. What were the bright flowers and the bird?

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C. The baits and temptations of sin.

F. Why did Kühn, or "bold," cross the border more easily the second time?

C. Because one sin makes another easier.

F. Why did Zart, or "tender," follow him?

C. Because bold sinners lead weaker sinners after them.

F. What were the dry sands into which Kühn and Zart were carried?

C. The evil ways of sin.

F. Who came to Zart's rescue when he prayed?

C. The gracious Lord who had at first received him into His Church by baptism.

F. Why was he still sad and ashamed after he was brought back?

C. Because he had wandered.

F. Did he then doubt whether he was forgiven?

C. No: but he "remembered and was confounded, and never opened his mouth any more, when the Lord was pacified toward him for all his iniquity."

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F. What was the end of Kühn, or the "bold?"

C. We know not; but they who "draw back unto perdition" are punished above all others.

F. What are we to learn from the whole?

C. The blessedness of being taken into the Church in our infancy; and our need of prayer and watching, lest we turn it into a curse.

## **The King and his Servants.**

A great king once called his servants to him, and said to them,—“You have all often professed to love me, and to wish to serve me; and I have never yet made trial of you. But now I am about to try you all, that it may be known who does in truth desire to serve me, and who is a servant only in name. To morrow your trial will begin; so meet me here in the morning, and be ready to set out upon a journey on which I shall send you.”

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When the king had so spoken, he left them; and there was a great deal of bustle and talking amongst these servants. Not that they were all alike. Some were very busy, and said a great deal of the services they should render; and that they hoped it would be some really hard trial on which the king would set them. Others were quiet and thoughtful, saying little or nothing, but, as

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it seemed, thinking silently of the words the king had spoken, as if they feared lest they should fail in their trial. For they loved that king greatly; he had been as a father to them all. Once they had been slaves, and cruelly treated by a wicked tyrant who had taken them prisoners, and cast some of them into dungeons, and made others work in dark mines, and dealt evil with them all. But the king had triumphed over this their enemy, and rescued them from his hands. His own son had sought them in the dungeons and dark pits into which they had been cast, and had brought them out; and now he had given them places in his service, and fed them from his own kingly table; and he promised to such as were faithful, that he would raise them yet higher; that he would even set them upon thrones, and put crowns upon their heads; and that they should remain always in his presence, and rule and dwell with him. Now, when the time of their trial was come, these faithful servants were grave and thoughtful, fearing lest they should fail, and be led to forget him their kind and gracious king. But one thought held them up. He had said unto them all, "As your day, so shall your strength be." They knew, therefore, that he would put on them no task beyond their strength. They remembered his kindness and his love in taking them out of the dungeons of the enemy. They desired greatly to serve him; and so they rejoiced that their trial was come, even while they feared it; and they trusted in him to help them, even whilst they trembled for themselves.

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These servants spent much of the night in preparing for their journey; in thinking over all the directions the king had ever given them; for many times had he spoken to them of this coming trial; and even written down plain rules for them, which should teach them always how he would have them act. All these they gathered together, lest in the hurry of setting out, they should forget any one of them; and so they went into the court of the palace to meet the king.

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Then he came forth from his palace-door, and gave them all their charge.

From the great treasure-chambers of that palace he brought out many different gifts, and laid them before these his servants. One had gold and silver, and another had precious stuffs; but all had something good and costly: and as he gave them these gifts, he told them that this was to be their trial. He was about to send them with these gifts into an exceeding great and rich city, which lay afar off from his palace; and in that city they were all to trade for him. They were to take his gifts and use them wisely, so that each one of them might bring something back to him. He gave them also very close and particular instructions. He told them that there were many in that city who would try to rob them of these his gifts; and he told them how to keep them safely. He told them that many would seek to make them waste what he had given to them on pleasing themselves. But that they must remember always, that what they had belonged to him; that they would have to give him an account of their way of using all his gifts; and that of his mere mercy he, who had redeemed them from the dungeon and made them able to serve him, would graciously reward hereafter all their efforts to use his gifts for him. He told them also to set about trading for him as early as they could; for that all the merchants' goods were freshest in the morning; that then the precious stones were the finest and the truest; but that those who waited till the evening would find all the best goods sold; and that, perhaps, before they had any thing ready, the trumpet would sound which was to call them all out of the city, and then they would have to come back to him empty-handed and disgraced.

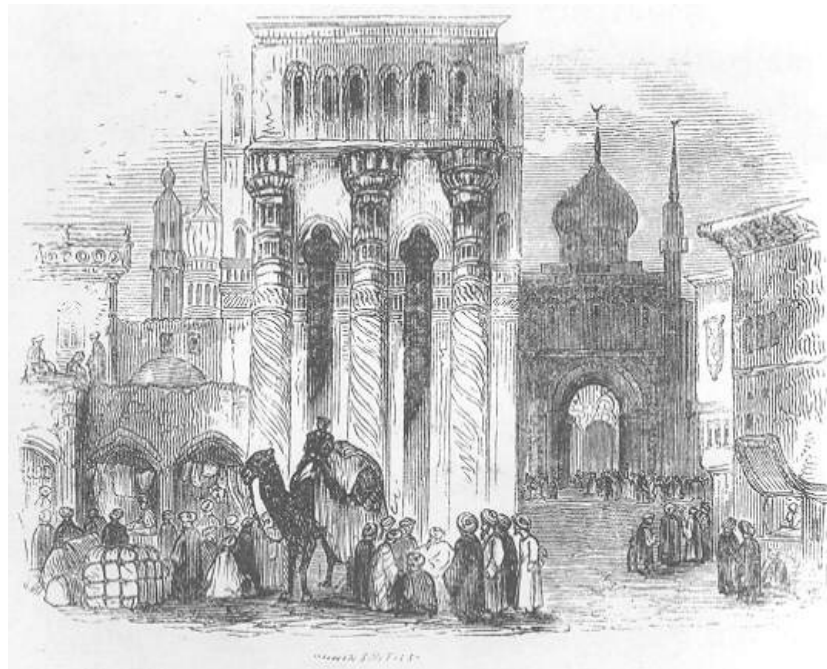
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When he had given them these charges, he sent them from his presence to begin their journey to the great city. All that day they travelled with horses and camels over plains and hills, and fruitful fields and deserts, until, just as the sun went down, they came to the walls of a great city; and they knew that it was here they were to traffic for their king upon the morrow.

Then the thoughtful servants began carefully to unpack their goods; they looked into their bales of precious stuffs to see that they had got no injury from the dust and sand of the desert; they counted over their bags of money to see that all was right; and began to lay them all in order, that they might enter the town as soon as the gates were open, and trade for their king in the morning hours, which he had told them were the best.

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But some of the other servants laughed at them for taking all this care and trouble. "Surely it will be time enough," they said, "to get every thing ready when the markets are open to-morrow. We have had a long, hot, weary journey, and we must rest and refresh ourselves before we think of trading." So they spread the tables, and began to feast in a riotous way, quite forgetting the king's service, and putting the morrow out of their thoughts.

Now as soon as the sun was up, in the morning, there was a great stir amongst the servants. Those who had been careful and watchful in the evening were ready with all their bales; and as soon as ever the city-gates were open, they marched in through them with their goods. It was a great wide city into which they entered, and must hold, they thought, a vast multitude of men. Houses and streets of all sizes met their eyes here and there; but they passed easily along, because it was still so early in the morning, that few persons were in the streets, and those few were all bent upon business, as they were themselves. So they passed on to the great market where the merchants bought and sold, and here they set out all their goods; and the merchants came round them to look over their wares, and to shew them what they had to sell in return. Now they found it true as the king had foretold them. For they had the first choice of all that the merchants could offer. One of them opened his stores, and shewed them rubies, and diamonds, and pearls, such as they had never seen before for size and beauty. So they chose a pearl of great price, and they bought it for their prince, and they trafficked in their other wares, and gained for him more than as many bags of treasure as he had given them at first. Thus they traded according to their skill, and every one had now secured something for his lord. The pearl of great price was stored by some; others had rich dresses adorned with gold and precious stones; others had bags of the most refined gold; others had the spices of Arabia and the frankincense of the islands of the East.

One there was amongst them who seemed to have got nothing to carry home with him; and yet he, as well as the rest, had laid out his master's gifts. Then some of the other servants asked him, what he had stored up for the king? and he said that he had no riches which he could shew to them, but that he had an offering which he knew that the merciful heart of the king would make him love and value. Then they asked him to tell them his story; so he said that, as he was walking through the market, he had seen a poor woman weeping and wringing her hands, as if her heart would break: he stopped, and asked her the cause of her sorrow; and she told him that she was a widow, and that some merchants, to whom her husband had owed large sums of money, had come that morning to her house and taken all that she had, and seized her children too; and that they were dragging them away to the slave-market to sell them for slaves in a far land, that they might pay themselves the debt which her husband had owed them. So when he heard her sad tale, he opened his bag of treasure, and found that all the gold which he had got in it would just pay the widow's debt and set her children free. Then he went with her to the merchants, and he told out to them all that sum, and set the children of the widow free, and gave them back to their mother; "and I am taking," he said, "to our merciful king the offering of the widow's tears and gratitude; and I know well that this is an offering which will be well-pleasing in his sight."

So it fared with these faithful servants in their trading; and all the while they were cheerful and light-hearted, because they remembered constantly the love and kindness which their king had shewed to them; and they rejoiced that they were able to serve him and to trade for him with his gifts. They thought also of the goodness of the king's son towards them; they remembered how he had sought them when they were prisoners in the dark dungeons of their tyrant enemy; and they were full of joy when they thought that they should be able to offer to him the goodly pearl, and the other curious gifts, which they had bought. They thought of these things until they longed to hear the trumpet sound, which was to call them out of the town and gather them together for their journey home. When that trumpet might sound, they knew not; but the sun

was now passed its noon, and the town, which had been so quiet when they came in the early morning along its empty streets, was now full of noise, and bustle, and confusion, as great towns are wont to be, when all the multitude of sleepers awaken and pour out for pleasure, or business, or idleness, into the streets, and squares, and market-places.

Heartily glad were they now that they had been so early at their traffic. Now the merchants had shut up all their richest stores; and the markets were full of others who brought false pearls and mock diamonds, instead of the costly gems for which they had traded in the morning. There seemed to be hardly any true traders left. Idlers were there in numbers, and shows and noisy revels were passing up and down the streets; and they could see thieves and bad men lurking about at all the corners, seeking whom they could catch, and rob, and plunder.

On all these things the servants looked; sometimes they saw beautiful sights pass by them, which gladdened their eyes; and sometimes sweet music would fill their ears, as bands of merry harpers and singers walked up and down through the market; and they rejoiced in all of these, but still their hearts were full of thoughts of their kind king, and recollections of his son their prince; and they longed to be at home with them, even when the sights round them were the gayest, and the sounds in their ears were the sweetest; and they were ever watching for the voice of the trumpet, which was to call them again homeward.

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But this happy case was not that of all the servants. When these watchful men had been entering the gates of the city in the morning, the thoughtless servants were not yet awake. They had sat up late at their feasting and rejoicings, and when the morning sun rose upon them, they were still in their first deep sleep. The stirring of their fellow-servants moved them a little, and for a while they seemed ready to rise and join them. But their goods were not ready, so they could not go with them; and they might as well, therefore, they thought, wait a little longer and rest themselves, and then follow them to the market. They did not mean to be late, but they saw no reason why they should be so very early.

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They slept, therefore, till the sun was high, and then they rose in some confusion, because it was now so late; and they had all their goods to unpack, their stuffs to smooth out, and the dust to shake off from them. Soon they began about every little thing to find fault with one another, because they were secretly angry with themselves. Each one thought that if his neighbour had not persuaded him to stay, he should have been up, and have entered the city with the earliest: so high words arose between them; and instead of helping one another, and making the best they could of the time which remained, they only hindered one another, and made it later and later before they were ready to begin their trading.

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At length, after many hard words and much bad temper, one by one they got away; each as soon as he was ready, and often with his goods all in confusion; every one following his own path, and wandering by himself up the crowded streets of the full town.

Hard work they had to get at all along it when they had passed the gates. All the stream of people seemed now to be setting against them. The idlers jested upon their strange dress; and if they did but try to traffic for their lord, the rude children of the town would gather round them, and hoot, and cry: so that they could not manage to carry on any trade at all.

Then, as I watched them, I saw that some who had been the loudest in talking of what they should do when they were tried, were now the first to give up altogether making any head at all against the crowd of that city. They packed up what goods they might have, and began to think only of looking about them, and following the crowd, and pleasing themselves, like any of the men around them. Then I looked after some of these, and I saw that one of them was led on by the crowd to a place in the town where there was a great show. Outside of it were men in many-coloured dresses, who blew with trumpets, and jested, and cried aloud, and begged all to come in and see the strange sights which were stored within.

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Now when the servant came to this place, he watched one and another go in, until at last he also longed to go in and see the sights which were to be gazed on within. So he went to the door, and the porter asked him for money; but when he drew out his purse, and the porter saw that his money belonged to some strange place, and was quite unlike the coin used in that town, he only laughed at it, and said it was good for nothing there, and bid him "stand back." So as he turned away, the porter saw the rich bundle on his back, and then he spoke to him in another tone, and he said, "I will let you in, if you like to give me that bundle of goods." Then for a moment the servant was checked. He thought of his lord and of the reckoning, and he remembered the words, "As good stewards of the manifold grace of God;" and he had almost determined to turn back, and to fight his way to the market-place, and to trade for his lord, let it cost him what it might;—but just at the moment there was a great burst of the showman's trumpets; and he heard the people shouting for joy within; and so he forgot all but his great desire, and slipping off the bundle from his shoulders, he put it into the hands of the porter, and passed in, and I saw him no more.

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Then I saw another, who was standing at the corner of a street gating at some strange antics which were being played by a company of the townsmen. And as he gazed upon them, he forgot all about his trading for his master, and thought only of seeing more of this strange sight. Then I saw that whilst he was thinking only of these follies, some evil-minded men gathered round him, and before he was aware of it, they secretly stole from him all the gold which his lord had given him to lay out for him. The servant did not even know when it was gone, so much was he thinking of staring at the sight before him. But it made me very sad to think that when he went

to buy for his master, he would find out, too late, his loss; and that when the trumpet sounded, he would have nothing to carry back with him on the day of reckoning. p. 127

Some of these loiterers, too, were treated even worse than this. One of them I saw whom the shows and lights of that town led on from street to street, until he came quite to its farther end; and then he thought that he saw before him, beyond some lonely palings, still finer sights than any he had left; and so he set out to cross over those fields, and see those sights. And when he was half over, some wicked robbers, who laid wait in those desolate places, rushed out upon him from their lurking-place, and ill used him sorely, and robbed him of all his goods and money, and left him upon the ground hardly able to get back to the town which he had left.

Then I saw one of these loiterers who, as he was looking idly at the sights round him, grew very grave, and began to tremble from head to foot. One of his fellows, who stood by and saw him, quickly asked him what made him tremble. At first he could not answer; but after a while he said, that the sound of the trumpet which they had just heard had made him think of the great trumpet-sound of their master, which was to call them all back to his presence, and that he trembled because the evening was coming on, and he had not yet traded for his lord. And "How," he said in great fear, "how shall we ever stand that reckoning with our hands empty?" Then some of his companions in idleness laughed and jeered greatly, and mocked the poor trembler. But his fears were wiser than their mockings; and so, it seemed, he knew, for he cared nothing for them; but only said to them, very sadly and gravely, "You are in the same danger, how then can you jeer at me?" And with that he pointed their eyes up to the sky, and shewed them how low the sun had got already, and that it wanted but an hour at the most to his setting, and then that the trumpet might sound at any moment, and they have nothing to bear home to their lord. p. 128

Now, as he spoke, one listened eagerly to him; and whilst the others jeered, he said very gravely, "What can we do? Is it quite too late?" "It is never too late," said the other, "till the trumpet sounds; and though we have lost so much of the day, perchance we can yet do something: come with me to the market-place, and we will try." So the other joined him, and off they set, passing through their companions, who shouted after them all the way they went, until the townsmen who stood round began to jeer and shout after them also: so that all the town was moved. A hard time those two had now, and much they wished that they had gone to the market-place in the early morning, when the streets were empty, and the busy servants had passed so easily along. Many were the rough words they had now to bear; many the angry, or ill-natured, crowd through which they had to push; and if any where they met one of their late and idle companions, he was sure to stir up all the street against them, when he saw them pushing on to the market-place. p. 129

"Do you think that we shall ever get there?" said he who had been moved by the other's words to him, who led the way, and buffeted with the crowd, like a man swimming through many rough waves in the strong stream of some swift river. "Do you think that we shall ever get there?" "Yes, yes," said the other; "we shall get there still, if we do but persevere." "But it is so hard to make any way, and the streets seem to grow fuller and fuller; I am afraid that I shall never get through."

Just as he spoke, a great band of the townspeople, with music, and trumpets, and dancing, met them like a mighty wave of the sea, and seemed sure to drive them back: one of their old companions was dancing amongst the rest; and as I looked hard at him, I saw that it was the same who had given away his precious burden in order to go into the show. Now, as soon as he saw these his former fellows, he called to them by their names, and bid them join him and the townsmen round him. But he that was leading the way shook his head, and said boldly: "No: we will not join with you; we are going to the market-place to traffic for our lord." "It is too late for that," said he; "you lost the morning, and now you cannot trade." Then I saw that he who before had trembled exceedingly grew very pale; but still he held on his way; and he said,— "Yes, we have lost the morning, and a sore thing it is for us; but our good lord will help us even yet; and we will serve him, 'redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'" Then he turned to the other and said to him,— p. 130

"And will not you stop either? Do not be fooled by this madman: what use is it to go to buy when the shops are all shut, and the market empty?" Then he hung down his head, and looked as though he would have turned back, and fallen into the throng; but his fellow seized him by the hand, and bid him take courage, and think upon his kind master, and upon the king's son, whose very blood had been shed for them; and with that he seemed to gather a little confidence, and held for a while on in his way with the other.

Then their old companion turned all his seeming love into hatred, and he called upon the crowd round him to lay hands on them and stop them; and this the rabble would fain have done, but that, as it seemed to me, a power greater than their own was with those servants, and strengthened them; until they pushed the rude people aside on the right and on the left, and passed safely through them into another street. p. 131

Here there were fewer persons, and they had a breathing-time for a while; and as they heard the sound of music and of the crowd passing by at some little distance from them, they began to gather heart, and to talk to one another. "I never thought," said the one, "that I could have held on through that crowd; and I never could, if you had not stretched out your hand to help me." "Say, rather, if our master's strength had not been with us," said the other. "But do you think," said he that was fearful, "that he will accept any thing we can bring him now, when the best part of the day is over?" "Yes, I do," he replied. "I have a good hope that he will; for I remember how he said, 'Return, ye backsliding children, return ye even unto me.'" "But how can one who is so

trembling and fearful as I am ever traffic for him?" "You can, if you will but hold on; for he has once spoken of his servants 'as faint yet pursuing.'" "Well," said the other, "I wish that I had your courage; but I do believe that I should not dare to meet such another crowd as that we have just passed through; I really thought that they would tear us in pieces." "Our king will never let that be," said the other, "if only we trust in him." "But are you sure," replied he, "that our king does see us in this town?"

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Just as he said this, and before his companion had time to answer him again, they heard a louder noise than ever, of men dancing, and singing, and crowding, and music playing, and horns blowing, as if all the mad sports of the city were coming upon them in one burst. At the front of all they could see their old companion; for the band had turned round by a different street, and now were just beginning to come down that one up which they were passing. Then he who had been affrighted before, turned white as snow; and he looked this way and that, to see what he could do.

p. 135

Now it so happened, that just by where they stood was a great shop, and in its windows there seemed to shine precious stones and jewels, and fine crystals, and gold and ivory. And, as he looked, his eyes fell full upon the shop, and he said to his fellow,—“Look here; surely here is what we want: let us turn in here and traffic for our master, and then we shall escape all this rout which is coming upon us.” “No, no!” said the other; “we must push on to the market; that is our appointed place; there our lord bids us trade: we must not turn aside from the trouble which our lateness has brought upon us—we must not offer to our master that which costs us nothing. Play the man, and we shall soon be in the market.”

“But we shall be torn in pieces,” said the other. “Look at the great crowd: and even now it seems that our old companion sees me, and is beginning to lead the rabble upon us.” “Never fear,” said he who led the way; “our king will keep us. ‘I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people who have set themselves against us round about.’”

p. 136

Then I saw that he to whom he spoke did not seem to hear these last words, for the master of the shop had noticed how he cast his eyes upon the goods that were in the window, and was ready in a moment to invite him in. “Come in, come in,” he said, “before the crowd sweep you away; come in and buy my pearls, and my diamonds, and my precious stones; come in, come in.” And while he halted for a moment to parley with the man, the crowd came upon them, and he was parted from his friend, who had held up his fainting steps; and so he sprung trembling into the shop, scarcely thinking himself safe even there.

p. 137

Now the man into whose house he had turned, though he was a fair-spoken man, and one who knew well how to seem honest and true, was altogether a deceiver. All his seeming jewels, and diamonds, and pearls, were but shining and painted glass, which was worth nothing at all to him who was so foolish as to buy it: but this the servant knew not. If it had been in the bright clear light of the morning, he would easily have seen that the diamonds and the pearls were only sparkling and painted glass, and the gold nothing but tinsel; but the bright light of the morning had passed away, and in the red slanting light of the evening sun he could not see clearly; and so the false man persuaded him, and he parted with all the rich treasures which his king had given him, and got nothing for them in exchange which was worth the having, for he filled his bag with bits of painted glass, which his lord would never accept.

p. 138

However, he knew not how he had been cheated; or if, perhaps, a thought crossed his mind that all was not right, it was followed by another, which said that it was now too late to alter, and that if he had chosen wrongly, still he must abide by it; and so he waited for the trumpet. But he was not altogether happy; and often and often he wished that he had faced the strife of the multitude, and pressed on with his trusting companion to the market.

A hard struggle had been his before he had reached it. It seemed indeed at times as if the words of his fearful companion were coming true, and he would be torn altogether in pieces, so fiercely did the crowd press upon him and throng him. But as I watched him in the thickest part of it, I saw that always, just at his last need, something seemed to favour him, and the crowd broke off and left room for him to struggle by. I could hear him chanting, as it were, to himself, when the crowd looked upon him the most fiercely, “I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people that have set themselves against me round about.” And even as he chanted the words, the crowd divided itself in two parts, like a rushing stream glancing by some black rock; and on he passed, as though they saw him not.

p. 139

So it continued, even till he reached the market-place. Right glad was he to find himself there: but even now all his trials were not over. Many of the stalls were empty, and from many more the fair and true traders were gone away; and instead of them were come false and deceitful men, who tried to put off any who dealt with them with pretended jewels and bad goods.

Then did he look anxiously round and round the market, fearing every moment lest the trumpet should sound before he had purchased any thing for his lord. Never, perhaps, all along the way, did he so bitterly regret his early sloth as now, for he wrung his hands together, and said in great bitterness, “What shall I do?” and, “How shall I, a loiterer, traffic for my lord?”

p. 140

Then his eyes fell upon a shop where were no jewels, nor gold, nor costly silks, nor pearls of great price; but all that was in it was coarse sackcloth, and rough and hairy garments, and heaps of ashes, and here and there a loaf of bitter bread, and bitter herbs, and bottles wherein tears were stored. As he gazed on this shop something seemed to whisper to his heart, “Go and buy.”

So he went with his sorrowful heart, as one not worthy to traffic for his master, and he bought the coarsest sackcloth, and the ashes of affliction, and many bitter tears: and so he waited for the sounding of the trumpet.

Then suddenly, as some loud noise breaks upon the slumbers of men who sleep, that great trumpet sounded. All through the air came its voice, still waxing louder and louder; and even as it pealed across the sky, all that great city, and its multitudes, and its lofty palaces, and its show, and its noise, and its revels, all melted away, and were not. And in a moment all the servants were gathered together, and their lord and king stood amongst them. All else was gone, and they and their works were alone with him.

p. 141

Then was there a fearful trial of every man's work. Then were they crowned with light and gladness who had risen early and traded diligently, and who now brought before their master the fruit of that toil, and labour, and pain. Each one had his own reward; and amongst the richest and the best—as though he brought what the king greatly loved—was his reward who brought unto his master the offering of gratitude from the broken-hearted widow.

p. 142

Then drew near the servant who had wasted the morning, but had repented of his sloth, and had fought his way through the crowds, and had at last bought the sackcloth. Now he came bringing it with him; and it looked poor, and mean, and coarse, as he bore it amongst the heaps of gold, and jewels, and silks, which lay piled up all around; yet did he draw near unto the king; and as he came, he spoke, and said, "A broken and a contrite heart wilt thou not despise." And as he spake, the king looked graciously upon him: a mild and an approving smile sat upon his countenance, and he spoke to him also the blessed words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Then did the coarse sackcloth shine as the most rich cloth of gold; then did the ashes of the furnace sparkle as a monarch's jewels; whilst every bitter tear which was stored in the bottle changed into pearls and rubies which were above all price.

p. 143

Then the king turned to the careless servants, and his voice was terrible to hear, and from his face they fled away. I dared not to look upon them; but I heard their just and most terrible sentence, and I knew that they were driven away for ever from the presence of the king, in which is life and peace; and that they were bound under chains and darkness, deeper and more dreadful than those from which the king's son had graciously delivered them.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Father.* In what part of God's word do we read such a parable as this?

*Child.* In the 25th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, and at the 15th verse.

F. Who is the King who called his servants thus together?

C. Almighty God.

F. Who are meant by these servants trading in the town?

C. All of us Christians.

p. 144

F. How do you know that they were Christians?

C. Because they had been delivered from slavery and dungeons by the King's own Son.

F. What is the great town to which they were sent?

C. This world.

F. What are the goods which God gave them to lay out for him?

C. Every thing which we have in this life: our strength, and health, and reason, and money, and time.

F. How may we trade with these for the King?

C. By trying to use them all so as to please Him and set forth His glory.

F. Who are those who rose up early to go into the town?

C. Those who begin to serve the Lord even from their youth.

F. What is shewn by their finding the streets easy to pass, and the markets full of rich goods?

p. 145

C. That this service of God is far easier to such as begin to serve Him in youth; and that such are able to offer to Him the best gifts of early devotion, and their first love, and the zeal of youth, and tender hearts, and unclouded consciences.

F. What is taught us by their seeing the beautiful things of the city at their ease, after their diligent trading?

C. That those who serve God truly in a youthful piety commonly find more than others, that "godliness has promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come."

F. Why were those who were late ready to quarrel with one another?

C. Because companions in sin have no real love for each other, but are always ready to fall out; being all selfish and separate from God.



- F. What were the full streets they met with when they entered the town? p. 146
- C. The many difficulties and hindrances which beset those who set about serving God late in life.
- F. What were the shows, and the thieves, and the robbers, which troubled them?
- C. The different temptations which come from the devil, the world, and the flesh.
- F. Who were the crowds who withstood them?
- C. Those who love this present world, and who therefore withstand those who seek to live for God's glory.
- F. Who was he who sold the false jewels?
- C. One of those who often make a prey of persons beginning, after a negligent youth, to feel earnest about religion, and of whom we read, Rom. xvi. 17, 18, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." p. 147
- F. Who was he who held on through all difficulties to the market-place?
- C. A truly humble penitent, who having turned to God with all his heart, leans not to his own understanding, but follows God's leading in all things; cleaving close to Christ's Church.
- F. What were the sackcloth and ashes which he bought?
- C. The true contrition of heart and deep sense of sin, which God gives to those who seek earnestly to turn away from all iniquity.
- F. What was the sound of the trumpet?
- C. The call of men to the general judgment.
- F. Who were those whose trading the master was pleased to reward? p. 148
- C. Those who had served God early; those who had given to Him the best of their youth; those who had been kind to others and helped the needy for His sake; those who had turned to Him in truth, and clave to Him with a humble penitence.
- F. What was the end of the careless servants?
- C. It is an awful end, which our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ speaks of thus: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [148a] And, again, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." [148b]

## The Prophet's Guard.

p. 149

It was the very earliest morning. The day was not breaking as it does in this land of England, with a dewy twilight and a gradual dawning—first a dull glow all over the east, then blood-red rays, catching any fleecy cloud which is stealing over the sky, and turning all its misty whiteness into gold and fire;—but day was breaking as it does in those eastern countries—sudden, and bright, and hot. Darkness flew away as at a word; the thick shadows were all at once gone, and the broad glaring sun rose proudly in the sky, rejoicing in his strength. The people of the town woke up again to life and business. Doors were flung wide open, and some were passing through them; the flat roofs of the houses began to be peopled—on one was a man praying, on others two or three standing together; but most of the people were hastening here and there to get through their necessary work before the full heat of the day came on; numbers were passing and repassing to the clear dancing fountain, the cool waters of which bubbled up in the midst of a broad square within that city. p. 150

And now, what is it which one suddenly sees, and, after gazing at it for a while, points out to another, and he to a third? As each hears, they look eagerly up to the hill, which rises high above their town, until they gather into a knot; and then, as one and another are added to their company, grow into almost a crowd. Still it is in the same quarter that all eyes are fixed; their water-vessels are set idly down, as if they could not think of them. Those which were set under the fountain have been quite full this long time, but no one stooped to remove them; and the water has been running over their brimming sides, while its liquid silver flew all round in a shower of sparkling drops. But no one thinks of them. What is it which so chains all eyes and fixes the attention of all? p. 151

The hill is quite full of armed men. There were none there overnight: they have come up from the vale silently and stealthily during the darkness, while men slept, like some great mist rising in stillness from the waters, and they seem to be hemming in the town on every side. Look which way you will, the sun lights upon the burnished points of spears, or falls on strong shields, or

flashes like lightning from polished and cutting swords, or is thrown a thousand ways by the rolling wheels of those war-chariots. "Who are they?" is the question of all; and no one likes to say what all have felt for a long time—"they are our enemies, and we are their prey."

p. 152

But there is no use in shutting the eyes any longer to the truth. The morning breeze has just floated off in its airy waves that flag which before hung down lifelessly by the side of its staff. It has shewn all. They are enemies; they are fierce and bitter enemies; they are the Syrians, and they are at war with Israel.

But why are they come against this little town? When they have licked up it and its people like the dust from the face of the earth, they will be scarcely further on in their war against Israel. Why did not they begin with some of the great and royal cities? Why was it not against Jerusalem, or Jezreel, or even against the newly rebuilt Jericho? Why should they come against this little town?

Then one, an evil-looking man of a dark countenance, one who feared not God and loved not His servants, whispered to those around him, and said, "Have you not heard how Elisha the prophet, who dwells amongst us, has discovered to the king of Israel the secrets of the army of the king of Syria? No doubt it is because Elisha is dwelling here that the king of Syria has come upon us. And now shall we, and our wives, and our sweet babes, and our houses, and our treasures, become the prey of the king of Syria, for the sake of this Elisha. I never thought that good would come from his dwelling here."

p. 153

Now, fear makes men cruel and suspicious, and fills their minds with hard thoughts; and many of these men were full of fear: and so, when they heard these words, they began to have hard bad thoughts of God's prophet, and to hate him, as the cause of all the evils which they were afraid would very soon come upon them.

Just then the door of another house opened: it was the prophet's house, and his servant came forth with the water-vessels to fill them at the fountain. He wondered to see the crowd of men gathered together, and he drew near to ask them what was stirring. He could read upon their dark scowling faces that something moved them exceedingly; but what it was he could not gather. He could not tell why they would scarcely speak to him, but looked on him with angry faces, and spoke under their breath, and said, "This is one of them." "'Twere best to give them up." "They will destroy us all." Then the man was altogether astonished; for his master had been ever humble, and kind, and gentle; no poor man had ever turned away without help when he had come in his sorrows to the prophet of the Lord. And yet, why were they thus angry with him, if it were not for his master's sake?

p. 154

Broken sentences were all that he could gather; but, by little and little, he learned what they feared and what they threatened; he saw, also, the hosts of armed men gathered all around the city; and his heart, also, was filled with fear. He believed that it was for his master's sake that they were there; he saw that all around him were turned against his master, and he trembled exceedingly. For some time he stood amongst the rest, scarce knowing what to do, neither liking to remain nor daring to go; until at last, as some more stragglers joined themselves to the company, he slunk away like one ashamed, without stopping even to fill the water-vessels he had brought.

p. 155

And so he entered his own door, heavy-hearted and trembling; and he went to the prophet's chamber, for he deemed that he still slept. But the man of God was risen; and he knew, therefore, where he should find him—that he would be upon the flat roof of his house, calling upon the name of the Lord his God, who had made another morning's sun to rise in its glory.

p. 156



So he followed his master to the housetop; and there, even as he had supposed, he found the holy

man. It was a striking sight, could any one have seen the difference between these two men. The one pale and trembling and affrighted, like a man out of himself, and with no stay on which to rest his mind; the other calm and earnest, as, in deep and solemn prayer, with his head bowed and his hands clasped together, his low voice poured forth his thanksgiving, or spake of his needs; he also, as it seemed, was out of himself, but going out of himself that he might rest upon One who was near to him though his eye saw Him not, and who spake to him though his outward ear heard no voice of words.

Thus he continued for a season, as if he knew not that any man was nigh unto him; as if he knew not that there were, in the great world around him, any one besides his God with whom he communed, and his own soul which spake unto his God. All this time his servant stood by him, pale and trembling, but not daring to break in upon that hour of prayer; until at length the prophet paused, and his eye fell upon the trembler; and he turned towards him, and said kindly, "What ails thee, my son?" Then the servant answered, "O my father, look unto the hill." And he stood gazing in the prophet's face, as though he expected to see paleness and terror overspread it when his eyes gathered in the sight of those angry hosts. But it was not so. No change passed over his countenance; his brow was open as it was before; the colour never left his cheeks; and, with almost a smile, he turned unto the servant, and said, "And why does this affright thee?" "It is for thee they seek, my father—it is for thee they seek; and the wicked men of the town are ready to fall upon thee and deliver thee into their hands. Even now, as I walked along the street, they looked on me with fierce and cruel eyes; and they breathed threats which these lips may not utter, and said, that thou hadst brought this trouble upon them, and their wives, and their little ones; and I feared that they would curse thee and thy God." But the prophet was not moved by his words, for he only answered, "Fear them not; they that are with us are more than they that are against us." Then did the servant cast his eyes to the ground, and he spake not, yet his lips moved; and if any one had heard the words which he whispered, they might perhaps have heard him ask how this could be, when they were but two, and their enemies were so many and so mighty.

Now the prophet's eye rested upon him, and he read all his secret thoughts; and he pitied his weakness, for that holy man was full of pity for the weak: so he chid him not; but, bowing his knees again on that flat roof, he prayed unto his God to open the eyes of his affrighted servant. His prayer was heard. For there fell from them as it were films; and now, when he looked out, he saw a glorious sight. All the mountain was full; and they were a wonderful company which filled it. The dark hosts of the Syrians, and their glancing swords and clashing chariots, now looked but as a mere handful; for the whole mountain round them was full of that heavenly army. Chariots of fire and horsemen of fire thronged it in every part. High up into the viewless air mounted their wheeling bands: rank beyond rank, and army beyond army, they seemed to stretch on into the vastness of space, until the gazer's wearied eye was unable to gaze on them. And all of these were gathered round his master. They were God's host, keeping guard over God's servant. And they who would injure him must first turn aside those flashing swords, must break up that strong and serried array, and be able to do battle with God's mighty angels.

Then was the weak heart strong. Then did the poor trembler see that he was safe; and know that he who is on God's side can never want companions and defenders.

## **The Brothers' Meeting;** **OR,** **The Sins of Youth.**

A large company was winding its way slowly out of the vale in which the river Jordan runs. The sun was just beginning to strike hotly upon them, and make them long for rest and shelter, as they toiled up the open sandy hills and amongst the great masses of rock with which that country was strewn.

It was a striking sight to see those travellers. First went three troops of kine, lowing as they went; camels with their arched necks, stooping shoulders, and forward ears; asses with their foals; ewes and lambs; and goats with their kids, which mounted idly upon every rock that lay by their road-side, and then jumped as idly down again; and before and after these, drivers in stately turbans and long flowing robes, keeping the flocks and herds to their appointed way. Then came large droves of cattle, and sheep, and goats, and asses, stirring up with their many feet the dust of the sandy plain, till it fell like a gentle shower powdering with its small grains all the rough and prickly plants which grew in tufts over the waste. Then was there a space; and after that were seen two bands of camels,—the best they seemed to be of all the flock, those which came last especially,—and on them were children and women riding, over whom hung long veils to shelter their faces from the hot breath of the sandy desert through which they had travelled. And after all these came one man, with his staff in his hand and a turban on his head, walking slowly, as one who walked in pain and yet walked on, following those who went before.

If you had stood near to that man, you might, perhaps, have heard him speaking to God in prayer and thanksgiving; you might have heard him saying to himself, "with my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands:" or you might have heard him earnestly calling upon

the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac his father, to keep him safe in the great danger which now lay close before him. His mind was certainly very full of that danger; for he kept looking up from the sand on which his eyes were often fixed, and gazing as far as he could see over the hills before him, as if he expected to see some great danger suddenly meet him on his way, and as if, therefore, he wished to be quite ready for it.

If you looked into his face, you could see at once that he was not a common man. He was not a very old man; his hair was not yet grey upon his head; and yet it seemed, at the first glance, as if he was very old. But as you looked closer, you saw that it was not so; but that many, many thoughts had passed through his mind, and left those deep marks stamped even on his face. It was not only sorrow, though there was much of that; nor care, though he was now full of care; but besides these, it seemed as if he had seen, and done, and felt great things—things in which all a man's soul is called up, and so, which leave their impress behind them, even when they have passed away.

p. 164

He HAD seen great things, and felt great things. He had seen God's most holy angels going up to heaven, and coming down to earth upon their messages of mercy. He had heard the voice of the Lord of all, promising to be his Father and his Friend. And only the night before, the Angel of the covenant had made himself known to him in the stillness of his lonely tent, and made him strong to wrestle with him for a blessing, until the breaking of the day. So that it was no wonder, that when you looked into his face, it was not like the face of a common man, but one which was full of thought, which bore almost outwardly the stamp of great mysteries.

p. 165

But what was it which now filled this man with care? He was returning home from a far land where he had been staying twenty years, to the land where his father dwelt. He had gone out a poor man; he was coming home a rich man. He was bringing back with him his wives, and his children, and his servants, and his flocks, and his herds; and of what was he afraid? Surely he could trust the God who had kept him and blessed him all these twenty years, and who had led him now so far on his journey?

Why should he fear now, when he was almost at his father's tent?

p. 166

It was because he heard that HIS BROTHER was coming to meet him. But why should this fill him with such fear? Surely it would be a happy meeting; brothers born of the same father and of the same mother, who had dwelt together in one tent, kneeled before one father's knees in prayer, and joined together in the common plays of childhood,—surely their meeting must be happy, now that they have been twenty years asunder, and God has blessed them both, and they are about to see each other again in peace and safety, and to shew to each other the children whom God had given them, and who must remind them of their days of common childhood. And why then is the man afraid? Because when he left his father's house this brother was very angry with him, and he fears that he may have remembered his anger all these twenty years, and be ready now to revenge himself for that old quarrel.

p. 167

And yet, why should this make such an one to fear? Even if his brother be still angry with him, and have cruel and evil thoughts against him, cannot God deliver him?—cannot the same God who has kept him safely all these twenty years of toil and labour, help and save him now? Why then does he fear so greatly? He has not forgotten that this God can save him—he has not for a moment forgotten it; for see how earnestly he makes his prayer unto Him: hear his vows that if God will again deliver him, he and all of his shall ever praise and serve him for this mercy. Yet still he is in fear; and he seems like a man who thought that there was some reason why the God who had heard him in other cases should not hear him in this.

What was it, then, which pressed so heavily upon this man's mind? It was the remembrance of an old sin. He feared that God would leave him now to Esau's wrath, because he knew that Esau's wrath was God's punishment of his sin. He feared that Esau's hand would slay his children, as God's chastisement for the sins of his childhood. He remembered that he had lied to Isaac his father, and mocked the dimness of his aged eyes by a false appearance; now he trembled lest his father's God should leave the deceiver and the mocker to eat the bitter fruit of his old sin. It was not so much Esau's wrath, and Esau's company, and Esau's arms, which he feared—though all these were very terrible to this peaceful man,—as it was his own sin in days long past, which now met him again, and seemed to frown upon him from the darkness before him. In vain did he strive to look on and see whether God would guide him there, for his sin clouded over the light of God's countenance. It was as when he strained his eyes into the great sand-drifts of the desert through which he had passed: they danced and whirled fearfully before him, and baffled all the strivings of his earnest gaze.

p. 168

p. 169

But the time of trial was drawing very near. And how did it end? Instead of falling upon him and slaying him and his; instead of making a spoil of the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and giving the young children to the sword, Esau's heart melted as soon as they met; he fell upon his brother's neck and kissed him; he looked lovingly upon the children who had been born to him in the far land; he spake kindly of the old days of their remembered childhood, of the grey-haired man at home; and he would not take even the present which his brother had set apart for him.

Jacob knew who it was that had turned his brother's heart, and he felt more than ever what a strong and blessed thing prayer and supplication was. Nor did he forget his childhood's sin against his God. It had looked out again upon him in manhood, and reminded him of God's holiness, of his many past misdeeds, and made him pray more earnestly not to be made to "possess the iniquities of his youth."

p. 170

*Father.* What should we learn from this account of Jacob's meeting Esau?

*Child.* That God remembers and often visits long afterwards the sins of our childhood.

F. Does not God, then, forgive the sins of children?

C. Yes, He does forgive them, and blot them out for Christ's sake.

F. Why, then, do we say that He visits them?

C. Because He often allows the effects of past sins to be still their punishment, even when He has forgiven them.

F. Why does He do so?

p. 171

C. To shew us how He hates sin.

F. What should we learn from this?

C. To watch against every sin most carefully, because we never can know what may be its effects; to remember how God has punished it, often for years, in His true servants; to pray against sin; to think no sin little.

F. What should we do, if we find the consequences of past sin coming upon us?

C. Take our chastisement meekly; humble ourselves under God's hand; pray for deliverance, as, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord" (Ps. xxv. 7).

F. What should be the effect on us when God hears our prayer, and delivers us?

C. It should make us more humbly remember our sins and unworthiness, and strive to shew forth our thankfulness, "not with our lips only, but in our lives." p. 172



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## Footnotes:

[6] Rev. xxii. 2.

[45a] Lover of God.

[45b] Wanderer.

[45c] Timid.

[46] Help.

[49a] Prov. ii. 19.

[49b] Ps. cxix. 9.

[76] Isaiah xlii. 16.

[79a] Isaiah xxxv. 3, 4.

[79b] Ps. cxix. 67.

[80] Isaiah xxxv. 9.

[95a] Bold, or Rash.

[95b] Tender.

[96] Faith.

[148a] Matt. xxv. 30.

[148b] Ib. xxv. 46.

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