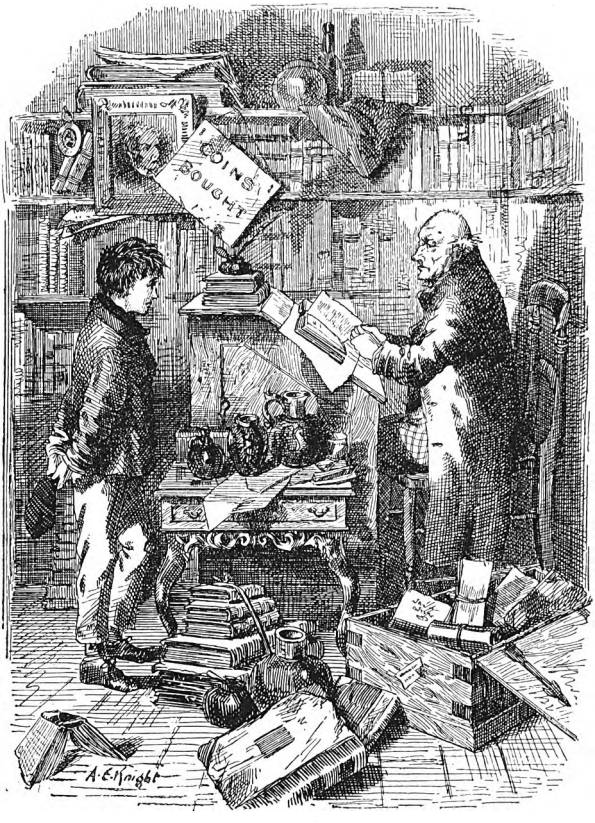
THE SLEEPERS AWAKENED OR THE ARTIST'S LITTLE MODEL



"'Well, what's the good that is going to come out of it?' said the little bookseller."

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THE

SLEEPERS AWAKENED:

OR,

THE ARTIST'S LITTLE MODEL.

BY

ALFRED E. KNIGHT,

AUTHOR OF "A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH;" "BIBLE PLANTS AND ANIMALS;" "TWICE BORN," ETC.

WITH AN ILLUSTRATION BY THE AUTHOR.

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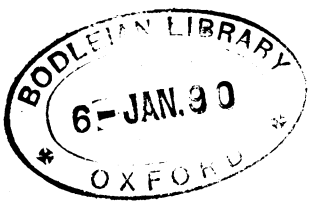

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THE SLEEPERS AWAKENED.

CHAPTER I.

A DREARY DAY.

"Darker and darker seems the path! how sad to journey on,
When hands and hearts which gladdened ours appear for ever gone!
* * * * * *
With mournful retrospective glance we look to brighter years,
And tread with solitary steps the thorny vale of tears."

BARTON.

ONCE upon a time—and I suppose it must have been "once upon a time," if the circumstances ever really happened—a certain artist paced up and down his studio in a fretful mood. It was a grey, cloudy afternoon, the very bane of artists, and to John Deasel at this season, as hard to be borne as Egypt's ninth plague. It was useless for him to roll the white

blind of the skylight overhead, and to wheel his easel nearer the light; the dark blind of clouds higher up was the hindrance, and to roll this was quite beyond his power.

Receiving day at Burlington House was only a few weeks off, and the canvas which he was preparing for that exhibition was far from finished. Sketches enough for the picture were scattered upon the floor, and two or three of the less prominent figures were growing into shape on the canvas; but the principal group was not begun, and a few rough lines in charcoal alone suggested where it would be placed. The contemplated work was an ambitious one; ambitious not merely because of the subject chosen—"The Child Christ in the Temple, questioning the Doctors"—but for the scale on which it was being conceived, and for the numerous figures in the composition.

On the platform at the farther end of the studio sat one of the models for the picture; an old man who might have answered for Gamaliel, with phylacteries on his wrists and forehead, and a flowing robe of purple cloth arranged in Oriental folds about his person. He had been sitting there for half-an-hour or more, but the artist had made no use of him as yet, nor even placed him in position. He required a full light for the figure, and the heavens denied him that.

Presently a great cloud, blacker than the rest, passed overhead, and deepened the darkness of the studio, while an ominous clatter of raindrops on the skylight warned him to shift his easel to a safer place. Having done this, he tossed aside his palette and stood still, disconcerted and angry.

"It is useless sitting there any longer," he said, turning to Gamaliel, "I can do nothing with you to-day. If the sky is any brighter on Monday, you may call again then, at the same hour."

The tone of his voice seemed to imply that Gamaliel was responsible for the cloudy weather; but the old man looked even more miserable than the artist, and commenced untying his phylacteries with evident reluctance. This done, he retired behind a screen to change his robes, and in due time sallied forth in a ragged and rusty coat, which he pulled about his ears in a dejected manner, and, with shuffling gait and drooping head, left the studio and slouched into the street.

The artist was not long in following his example, though he took an opposite direction, and presented a very different figure, as he threaded his way among the people who thronged the paths. It is not necessary, however, to describe his appearance, for it was by no means extraordinary; he was neither handsome nor ugly, colossal nor

diminutive in stature, and indulged neither in long hair nor slouch hat. There was intelligence in his face, it is true, and his eyes were expressive and thoughtful; but beyond that he was like the generality of men, and might have been taken with equal propriety for a city clerk, or a railway guard in plain clothes.

Occasionally he stopped to make a rapid note of a face or figure that impressed him, and seemed to bestow particular notice upon children; even turning back once or twice to follow a child a few paces, though never speaking to, or detaining one.

Before many minutes the heavy rain ceased, and settled into a drizzle; though this was even more depressing, and might last for hours. The outlook was far from cheering, and the artist was not sorry, as he neared Hornsey, to find the throng of people thinning, and the splashes from cartwheels and other vehicles becoming less frequent. It was a relief, too, to get away from the sight of steaming horses, and from the sound of street organs and wrangling carmen; to be free from the stench of offal in the streets which the heavier rain had stirred up, and from the taste of earthward-driven smoke which had lost all energy to rise. Every sense had been unpleasantly awakened, so that the rain had even a cleansing effect now; and on

nearing Hornsey Church, his heart expanded with the changed condition of things, and he found himself humming the very tune which the last street organ had dinned into his ears.

Before he reached the church he was almost alone—quite alone save for one figure in the distance, the figure of a child, who was wheeling a truck with some heavy load upon it. His longer steps soon brought him nearer to the child, and then he saw that the load in question was covered by a black cloth; upon this the artist checked his tune, and a curious feeling crept over him.

It was very evident what was under the cloth; though the reader would scarcely guess. It was a coffin. The load which the child was pushing wearily forward was a coffin, a baby's coffin; and one might see by the way he toiled with his load that it was not empty. The little corpse was there, without doubt, for the child's feet moved slowly, and his body was bent forward as though it needed all his strength to push the truck along. Once he stumbled heavily, blinded by his tears; —and then he rested the legs of the truck on the ground, and took his peakless cap from his head to brush the tears away.

As he straightened himself and threw back his head with an air of weariness and pain, the artist saw his face for the first time. It was very pale,

whiter than the coffin which he was wheeling along; as white as the dead babe within that coffin; but it was beautiful too. Thin, perhaps, but the features were faultless, and the dark eyes were full of earnestness and intelligence.

It was the very face the artist wanted.

Crossing over to the child, he said with gentleness, "You have a heavy load there, my boy?"

"It is heavy, sir, but I don't mind that," said the child, sadly.

"No?" said the artist, curiously.

"No," returned the child; "I should like to wheel it about always, but they won't let me; they are going to put her in the ground this afternoon."

It was evident, from the child's answer, that his heart was not upon the coffin, but the object which it concealed.

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the artist, kindly.

"It's Dot, sir,—my baby sister" (the boy's eyes were filling with tears). "Oh! I shall never see her again!"

"Have you no one to assist you with the truck?" inquired the artist.

He was anxious to soothe the child by diverting him from the object of his grief.

"Father would have come," was the reply, "but

there was no one to mind the shop, and he couldn't afford to shut it up, being Saturday."

"Have you no mother?" asked the artist.

There was another rush of tears to the child's dark eyes at this question. "They buried her last autumn, sir," he said; "a few days before Dot's third birthday. I shouldn't mind this so much if she was here. She always talked kindly to me when I felt low and lonely like."

He drew off his cap a second time to wipe his eyes, and did not replace it again for some moments.

"Mother was too good for this world," he continued, "at least the doctor said so; and I noticed how she brightened up when he told her she'd got to die. I wanted to know what it was that made her happy, but father always stood by when I was in the room, and mother seemed timid about talking to me when he was near. Dot was more often with her than me, and I suppose she got to know the secret, for she was quite happy too, just before she died. Mother was very fond of Dot, and told me when she took worse, that I was to look after her for her sake (mother's sake, I mean), which I did, but when Dot took ill she scarcely knew me, and was always calling for mother, making as though I didn't care about her."

"Yes, yes, but she was wandering in her mind, poor little thing," said the artist.

"I know that, sir," returned the child, "but it seemed so real the way she spoke; and then when the doctor said she was agoin', and I whispered in her ear, 'You're agoin' away from home and Davey now, Dot, ain't you sorry?' she pushed my face away with her tiny arms, and called 'Mamma —mamma!' and before I could get my own arms round her neck to kiss her, she said 'Happy, happy, happy,' three times, and then the doctor looked at his watch and said that she had 'gone home.'"

This was the signal for another outburst of tears, and the child buried his face in his hands for some seconds. He seemed speaking to himself rather than the artist, and, indeed scarcely noticed his presence.

"I can't see what the doctor meant by 'going home,'" he continued, sobbing bitterly; "it was home here, and I tried to make her happy, as mother asked; though that don't make much matter either. She *must* be buried—they must put her down there like they did mother—'t least that's what they tell me. Oh, Dot, Dot! I shall never see you again."

The artist took the child's hands between his own, and soothed him as best he could, but Davey's heart was very full, and he continued repeating the desolate cry: "Oh, Dot, Dot! never again, never again!"

"Hush, hush now; be brave," said the artist, in a low voice; "be brave. See, the rain is coming on faster again; let me help you with your load."

The lad instinctively withdrew his hands from the hands which held them, and placed them hastily on the coffin, as though he feared to have it touched.

"It's very kind and thoughtful, sir," he answered quickly, "but it's no weight much. I'd sooner push it along myself."

"To be sure," said the artist, soothingly, "and if I may I'll walk along by your side; I happen to be going in the same direction."

The gentle, persuasive tone of the stranger's voice was comforting to the child, and won his confidence, and as they drew near the church-yard, he even consented to avail himself of the proffered help; and in this manner they reached the grave.

There were only three persons at the grave—the minister (who was advanced in years and very feeble), the artist, and the child; but it was a touching scene. Nature herself was weeping at the sight; and the deep tones of the bell, which was tolling for another funeral a short distance off, lingered mournfully on the moisture-laden air, as though to do service for the little corpse as well.

On seeing the open grave, the child became broken-hearted again; but while the minister engaged in prayer he checked himself; and when, after a seasonable pause, the old man began to read from John's gospel the account of the raising of Lazarus, the child was even interested, and fixed his dark eyes on the reader with increasing attention.

He could not tell exactly how or why, but as he gazed, a strange hope dawned upon his mind. There was death in the chapter, as there was death in the little grave before him; and that made the chapter interesting, and drew his attention from the first; but that was not all. There was Lazarus dead, and there was little Dot dead, and the death of Lazarus was spoken of as sleep. Moreover, He who had spoken of it in this way, had actually declared His power to awaken the sleeper. The lad listened to the story with quivering lips, for to him it was the most wonderful of all the wonder stories he had ever heard; and when in time the minister came to the words, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," he felt a thrill go to his heart.

Resurrection was a long word, and he could not understand it all at once, but death and life were

easier understood, and he had evidence of both before him. Little Dot was dead, and he was left alive to mourn for her. Already her baby form was in the coffin; and very soon the coffin would be lying at the bottom of the damp, dark hole, with a great load of earth hiding it from his gaze; and then—yet stay—what was that which Jesus had said? "I am the resurrection, and the life—he that—he that——" but the rest had left his mind, and all his efforts to recall it were in vain.

Had he learnt anything, however, from what he could remember? Yes. Death had been spoken of as sleep, and Dot was dead; then Dot was only sleeping. That was lesson number one.

Then, moreover, there was One who could rouse the sleeper from his death-sleep; One whose name was Jesus; whom some called Lord and Master—perhaps He could rouse little Dot. He must get to know Him, and ask the question. But how? That was lesson number two. And this lesson was not learnt yet.

CHAPTER II.

A GLIMMER OF LIGHT.

"To awake from spiritual slumber, to arise from dead works, are the terms on which Christ doth offer that eternal, happy life."—Dr. Isaac Barrow.

THE child's father kept a second-hand book shop not far from the Angel tavern at Islington, and was a chatty little man, well fitted for his trade. With him it was a profession rather than a trade; for he claimed affinity with the most eminent authors of his day, and indeed, looked upon himself as one of the fraternity. In early life he had followed successively, though not successfully, the kindred professions of miniature painter, violin instructor, and photographer; and when put to the pinch had not refused a commission in law writing, or scorned an occasional shilling for balancing a neighbour's books. Up to forty years of age

he had remained a bachelor, and had been in much requisition at public-house politico-social gatherings, where the violence of his opinions and the exuberance of his fancy made his presence both welcome and essential. The tight string which he always kept upon his purse was the only drawback to his popularity.

His married life had lasted twelve years, with the result that two children had been born to him; of these some mention has been already made, and more will be made hereafter. David, the elder, had been so named in honour of David Hume, the historian, and not after the David of Biblical celebrity. Being now single again, and having steeled his heart during his twelve years of conjugal felicity to the pleadings of a Christian wife, he had added a little scepticism to his other attainments, and was zealously rocking his soul to sleep in a cradle of infidelity.

A couple of deal planks, painted black, and joined at either end by cross pieces of the same wood, hung over his shop, and on these were inscribed in ill-formed letters his name and calling—"Humphrey Bogle, Bookseller, &c." The "&c." was explained in numerous dirty cards which peeped out from different corners of the shop, as well as by the miscellaneous lumber which met the gaze at every turn. Toby jugs full of

coins, and tea caddies; Japanese figures and brass candlesticks; rusty firearms and rusty keys; wormeaten bits of wood carving and old lanterns; these and countless other things were scattered about the shop, and vied with the books as to which could show the most variety. The books won the day, however, for there were no two alike; and they told a tale there, which would certainly have become popular if committed to paper. Religious works stood out in biggest muster. There were ecclesiastical works, expository works, and hortatory works; works of modern divines, and works of ancient divines; Church establishment publications side by side with Roman Catholic publications; Arminian books by Calvinistic books; and here and there the work of some Plymouth brother, pressed down upon by books of every sect. Then there were Unitarian works, rationalistic works, and speculative works; works on Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Mahometanism; Platonic works and pantheistic works—in short, you might look upon books of every religion, in every style, in every size, and in every condition. But these, though the most numerous, were not the most saleable, and in their rusty black or sombre brown covers, they seemed to have settled down upon their shelves for ever. Philosophical and scientific works, however, had the worst sale,

for they were out of it altogether, and were only bought by weight if bought at all. It was the gayer-looking books that went well. The novels and books of travel in their red and blue uniforms with gold trimmings, and the novelettes in their yellow paper covers—they were always safe stock. Odd numbers of periodicals, too, were in demand, from shilling monthlies to penny weeklies; and these were eagerly bought up by passing errand boys, who read them going along the streets, and tucked them behind their apron-bibs when nearing home.

But there was yet another class of books which sold sometimes, and this was the class of books which Humphrey Bogle used to read—the wiser infidel books I mean. He would sometimes neglect his business over these, and would get angry with his more juvenile customers if they came with their custom when he was poring over some favourite author. He thought he had no friends in the world like Tom Paine, or Bolingbroke, or David Hume; not even those living authors with whom he claimed such close affinity. Indeed there was only one person in the world for whom he had a greater regard, and that was himself. He was zealous, too, in propagating the knowledge of his intimacy with these men, and would go on Sunday mornings to Islington Green,

and speak there for hours—in truth, it was the very sum of his happiness to be engaged thus.

Now, without wishing to be uncharitable, it certainly did seem that the cause of Humphrey Bogle's absence from the grave of little Dot on the afternoon of which we have spoken was to be found here. It is a notorious fact, to which the milkman and the grocer have added their solemn attestations, that he was heard to complain the night before that he had nothing ready for the coming Sunday; and it is indisputable that he was seen in close consultation with one of his favourite authors, while Davey was away at the funeral. Latterly he had got to look at things in a stoical way, and Zeno himself could not have borne the death of a child with greater complacency than did Humphrey Bogle the death of little Dot; indeed it would seem that his particular friends had taken him into their confidence in a special manner, and had disclosed to him a charm against all pain and sorrow. To be sure he needed it, for there was no God in his creed, and no hope of anything hereafter.

But once or twice in the very midst of his reading, a sort of dread had stolen into his mind, and his heart had suddenly failed him, he knew not exactly why. But he had always worked the feeling off, and would look back upon it merely to

indulge a smile at his own cowardice. Occasionally he had heard such feelings as these described by other speakers on the green (speakers who uncovered their heads when they got up to speak), but they had interpreted it as "a certain fearful looking for of judgment," and he did not like that. He would interrupt at such times, and let the people know what a great historian, or a celebrated nobleman had said on the subject; men who had larger opportunities for getting at the bottom of such matters, and who had made a study of it all their lives.

The day of Dot's burial, while Davey was at the grave, and he was poring over a volume of Tom Paine, one of these fears, like an erratic comet, flashed across the dark firmament of his thoughts. What suggested it he could not tell; he could only speculate and theorise about it, as the astronomers theorise and speculate about the comets. Of course it shaped itself into a thought, as every fear must, and the thought was a most audacious one. "What," it said, "if Tom Paine, and Chesterfield, and Cooper, and Bolingbroke, and the whole crew of them are false teachers after all, and a day of judgment is indeed coming upon the earth?"

Now it was quite a chilly sort of day, and raining, as the reader knows, but Humphrey Bogle

took out his pocket-handkerchief at that moment and wiped his forehead. He had been very intent upon his book too, but was not sorry on looking up to find that there was a customer in the shop. The customer held in his hand a volume which he had picked from a heap of others on the stall outside, and now handed it to the little bookseller while he felt for his purse.

As he handed him the money the gentleman remarked, "You keep all sorts of books, I perceive."

Humphrey Bogle stopped in his task of tearing the ticket from the cover, and looked at the title of the book. It was Bunyan's "Jerusalem Sinner Saved."

"Yes," he replied promptly, "all kinds. I've Bunyan's complete works here if you should be wanting them—a splendid folio edition. Purchased it at a great reduction the other day—*édition-de-luxe*—wonderful bargain! if you want to buy a really cheap set of books, now's your chance."

"Thank you, I have most of his works," said the gentleman. "I was only struck by the curious variety of the books around me."

"Ah—to be sure," said the little bookseller, sagely, "mine is a wide profession, and embraces every author. As you just observed I keep all

kinds of books—religious, educational, philosophical, and entertaining."

"And infidel," added the gentleman, quietly.

Humphrey Bogle looked at his customer, and became a little excited. "I include that with the others," he replied.

"With which class, may I ask?" said the gentleman quite unmoved.

"With the philosophical," answered the little bookseller; and then, with a vicious twinkle in his eyes, "Yes, sir, and with the 'entertaining' too, if you like!"

In a moment he had raised the red flag of defiance, and it was fluttering at the very top of the mast. At the same time he drew a rather soiled handkerchief from his pocket, and blew his nose like a trumpet.

"That is as *you* like," said the gentleman, still unmoved, "though I perceive you head your list with the religious books. The philosophical and entertaining come last."

The little bookseller measured his man all over, and for a second time that afternoon, his courage failed him.

"Don't you think that is their proper order?" he asked, lowering his flag with caution.

"*I* think so—certainly," returned the gentleman. "Religion—of course I mean *true* religion

—Christianity in fact—has to do with eternal realities, about which human philosophy can only speculate, and therefore it should stand first. Christianity has a Divine Person for its centre; while human philosophy has a theory. The former shuts God in, the latter shuts Him out. Perhaps you don't agree with me—indeed I am persuaded that you don't; but that is your responsibility and does not alter the fact. Bring a philosopher into the presence of death and what can he do? He can only moralise upon it. Bring the Founder of Christianity into the same presence, and a life-giving word goes forth, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'"

At that moment Davey returned, tired and broken-hearted, and the gentleman, observing his swollen eyes and grief-worn face, felt that it would be unwise to remain. He did not leave, however, without making an allusion to the child. Lowering his voice, so that only the bookseller could hear him, he said, "I don't know whose child this is, but if he is yours, I would recommend you to consult a doctor about him without delay. I do not like his looks, and he is at a critical age just now. Good-day." He then pocketed his purchase, and left the shop.

Davey was too late to hear all that the gentle-

man had said, and the closing words were spoken in too low a voice to be heard by any but his father, but he had overheard the text which the gentleman had quoted, and he was not going to let it pass forgotten. It seemed to him to link on with what the minister had been reading at the grave, and to remember it was all important.

So while the words were yet fresh in his ears, and before the gentleman was out of sight, he began repeating them over and over, slowly, in his mind.

CHAPTER III.

THE LIGHT BRIGHTENS.

"Still some lingering sweetness seemed to bless
The hard life left of toil and loneliness,
Like a past song, too sweet, too short, and yet,
Enmeshed for ever in the memory's net."

WM. MORRIS.

THUMPHREY BOGLE received his son and heir with a monosyllable and a frown.

"Well?" he said, returning to the chair from which he had been disturbed by the gentleman.

Davey knew what "well" meant. It was a monosyllable often used by his father, and had a deep significance to both of them. Speech was silvern to the little bookseller, and whenever children were before him he was as miserly with his words as with his money. On this occasion Davey knew that "well" was equivalent to "what's the news?—how did you get on at the funeral?" so he replied:

"I got up there all right, father. It was hard work at the end, but a gentleman lent a hand with the truck part of the way, and talked cheery-like as we went along."

"Have I not cautioned you against associating with strange people from the streets?" was the fretful inquiry.

One might have thought from the tone of the question that Davey was a young marquis, and the artist a sweep's son, or city arab.

"I quite forgot that, father," said Davey, meekly, "but I reckon something good 'll come out of it."

"How 's that?" asked the little bookseller sharply, "some new Brahma dream, I suppose."

"I don't think so, father," said Davey. "He 's an artist, and wants to take my portrait. He says he 's been looking for my face for a long time."

"Does he know you, then?" was the next inquiry.

"Oh! I don't think he meant that," said Davey; "he meant he had been wanting to draw a face like mine for a long time, and he saw me by chance and said I 'd do."

"Don't I know all that?" said Mr. Bogle, loftily. "Do you think your father is foolish, child?"

"I 'm sure of it, father," said Davey, quickly.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Bogle, in a shrill voice.

Davey explained that he meant that he was sure his father knew all about it, and that his reply had no reference whatever to the second question.

"I thought that I hadn't spoken clear enough, p'r'aps," he added, apologetically.

"Time you did begin to see your faults," growled Mr. Bogle, bending savagely over his book again.

Davey began to think he had said enough, and lifted his eyes with a look of inquiry. Feeling very tired, too, he sat down on a pile of books, and gave expression to a prolonged sigh.

"What are you doing?" exclaimed the little bookseller, in a shrill voice. "Get up, sir! This is the way you bring discredit on your father's name and profession, is it?—sitting upon the best authors, and in your wet clothes, too—get up, I say!"

Davey had risen to his feet like a dart, at the first summons, so that the repetition of the command was unnecessary; but it gave an impressive finish to the parental reproof. Certainly it was a wrong act on his part to sit upon the books, and showed great indiscretion, as the topmost volume of the pile could abundantly testify; indeed he had impressed upon it a circular patch of moisture which might leave its stain for ever. But Mr. Bogle seemed to make more of the circum-

stance than the circumstance demanded, and waxed more and more eloquent as he denounced the iniquity of the act. He would not have the best authors sat upon; he would rather be sat upon himself than allow that; and thus he rambled on for some minutes, till respiration became difficult, and he had to stop short for want of breath.

Davey was accustomed to this treatment, however, and a tongue-threshing from his father was a diurnal occurrence; so that it was not surprising that his mind went straying a little, while his father was reproving him, and that he found himself thinking of Dot and the minister again. There were those words, too, which the gentleman in the shop had let fall, and he must not forget them on any account. This was a fine opportunity for repeating them over in his mind, so he began at once and went through them several times.

Seeing Davey's lips move, Mr. Bogle cut short his declamation.

"Don't mutter at me, sir!" he said, sharply.

"I wasn't muttering at you, father, really," said Davey, innocently.

"Don't contradict me, sir!" said Mr. Bogle again.

"I didn't mean to contradict, indeed, father," said Davey.

"There you are again!" retorted Mr. Bogle.

This was very perplexing, and Davey for a second time took refuge in silence.

"Well, what's the good that is going to come out of it?" said the little bookseller, roaming back to the beginning of their conversation.

"He says I may come on Monday if I like, and he'll give me three shillings a-day and my dinner till he's done with me."

The little bookseller's eye twinkled.

"And did you tell him to remit the money every day to me?" he inquired.

"No, father," said Davey, "I thought that could be settled when I'd earned something."

Mr. Bogle felt the propriety of this remark, but told his son that it was a rude answer, and that he must apologise for it, which Davey did.

"Did he follow you to the grave?" was his next inquiry.

"Yes, father," said Davey, in a lower voice.

"Did he ask any questions?"

"Yes, father. He asked about mother, and Dot, and you."

"Me last, of course," said Mr. Bogle; "when will the child learn manners? And what did you tell him?"

"I told him that mother had died last autumn, and what a trouble it was for me to lose her; and

that Dot was my only sister, and they were going to put her in the ground, too; and that I thought my heart would break now, because they were taking her away as well, and then——"

"But what did you say of me?" said Mr. Bogle impatiently. "Did you think to tell him that I had a clean and valuable copy of 'Burnet on Painting,' as well as Lanzi's 'Lives' in six volumes, and Field's 'Chromatography'?"

The springs of Davey's heart had been wound up to their tightest tension by these inquiries, and now at this final turn they broke away. He burst into tears.

"Oh, father! don't you feel a grief that she is gone?" he cried passionately. "You'll never see her again—never! She was mother's pet and mine—Oh, Dot, Dot! I wish I was gone too! I wish I was dead and buried and lying by your side! I hate my life—I hate it! there's no pleasure here—it's much better in the grave there with you—with you and mother! Oh, much better—much better!"

Humphrey Bogle rose to his feet and stood wondering.

At the first outbreak Davey had sunk down again on the pile of books; but the little bookseller attempted no rebuke. He only stood wondering. For once the best authors had to bear

their ignominy in silence, for there was no voice to speak in their behalf.

As for the child, it seemed that his heart was really going to break, for he sobbed and sobbed, till the very strength to sob was gone; and then he leaned his head upon his hands and groaned. It was like the moanings after the storm—for the violence of his grief had spent itself—and it served to break the spell which had bound his father. The little bookseller took out his pocket-handkerchief again, and wiped his forehead; then made a fan of it, and went to the door of his shop and fanned himself. Then presently he came back again, and told the child to go into the parlour and get ready the tea, while he attended to the customers; and with that instructed him to put three spoonfuls of tea into the pot instead of two, and to make sure that the kettle boiled before he mixed it.

Davey got up obediently, and set about his task, but his mind was not on his work now, and every second or two his breath would catch in an unpleasant way, because of the crying he had done, and this made him spill the milk once, as well as narrowly escape scalding his hand at the kettle. However, he got through the task somehow, and went to the door to call "father"; but father was engaged with a customer, so Davey

closed the door again and drew a chair to the fire, well pleased enough that father was engaged.

What a deal of grief he had gone through during the past two or three days to be sure! He began to look back upon it as he sat there in the gathering darkness, looking into the fire. Dot had often sat by him and looked into the fire too; but she was gone now. Since the moment that the doctor had taken out his watch, and told him that she had "gone home," his eyes had been "a well of waters and a fountain of tears," and every new incident had only increased his woe. The unwonted stillness of the house, the drawn blinds, the first visit of the undertaker, the black board which his father had told him to put up in the window; all had spoken afresh to him of the fact, and brought again the tears. Then there was the undertaker's second visit, and the momentary glimpse of the still, pale face of little Dot in the coffin; and with that the horrid sound of the screws as the lid was being fastened down, and the dreadful thought that he would never look upon that face again. Then there was the lonely feeling on waking the next morning, as the question came into his mind, "Where is Dot to-day?" She was only in the room below, but she was in her coffin, too, now, and the lid was fastened down, and he would never see her dear face again—never

again! Later still was the journey to the grave, and his meeting with the artist, whose questions seemed to burst afresh the floodgates of his heart; and then, soon enough, the trio at the grave, and the lowering into it of the little coffin, while the bell tolled mournfully for a grander funeral some distance off. This brought him to the present moment, with the dreary loneliness of the house, and the drearier loneliness of his own heart. For Dot was gone altogether now. There had been some satisfaction before in being near her body, though it was in the coffin, and hidden from his sight; and he had felt it a privilege to carry her to the grave, but even that satisfaction had been taken away, and everything was gone.

Davey gazed at the fire, and thought on, till he became sleepy, and then his thoughts became confused. Where was Dot? He was calling for her now about the house, but could not make her hear. Ah! there she was; so still, so pale, so beautiful! There was something shining round her head too; what was that? Where was he now? It was a strange place; like the churchyard he had lately visited, and yet not like it. Where was he? Look! there is Someone approaching. Who is it? Such a kind face He has, so full of tenderness and love; and now He stands over the little coffin. Davey was sure

he heard Him speak—yes, he could remember His very words—"She is not dead, but sleepeth!" And with that He stooped down, and folded Dot in His arms. How kind He looked! Then He began repeating those words, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and while He was repeating them, Dot opened her eyes, and whispered sweetly —"Jesus."

Ah Davey, Davey! happy child!—but it was only a dream.

"Wake up, Davey! wake up!" said the little bookseller, shaking him by the shoulder, "don't you see that there are customers in the shop?"

As Davey was fast asleep, with his eyelids almost hermetically sealed, it is scarcely surprising that he was ignorant of this fact. Indeed after he had opened his eyes, it was not immediately that he saw the people waiting outside, or recognised where he was. He heard someone calling upon him to wake up, but he thought it was the Stranger of his dream, who was telling him, in some such way as He had told Dot, not only to awake, but to rise from the dead, and He would give him light.

It was a sad surprise for him, when he looked around the room, and upon the tea-things on the table, and found that he had been only dreaming. He got up, and went into the shop to see after the

customers, but the dream followed him. He could not help thinking of the Stranger of the dream, and wished so much that He were real. He would like to have spoken to Him, and thanked Him for waking little Dot, and to have asked Him what the meaning of "resurrection" was, for the word had come back to him in his dream. But then Dot had not been raised up after all, because that was only part of the dream; so there was no use in wishing about it. The words of the Stranger were real, though, for the minister had read them out of the Book at the grave that afternoon, and he knew that there were plenty of copies of that Book in the shop, only father would not let him read them. People called it the Bible, and every copy had on its title-page and cover (provided these had not been torn out or lost) "Holy Bible," and he had often wondered what that Book was about. "Holy" meant *pure*, and if it was pure, why didn't father let him read it? He had never thought of that before. Father would be going out to speak on the green to-morrow, and that would be a good opportunity to get a peep into it; at all events there would be no harm in reading over for himself the chapter which the minister had read at the grave.

So he set his mark upon a small Bible in brown covers, which had been tucked away in a dark

corner of the shop, and determined next morning to carry out his design.

When he went back to the parlour, and sat down to his tea, the Stranger of his dream still followed him. There was so much comfort for the child in His loving face, that he tried to think of it as a reality; and often shut his eyes to assist him in the effort. And all the evening as he stood at the door of the shop, looking after the books on the stall outside, the face was with him. And when he was putting up the shutters at a late hour that night it was still there. So that what with thinking of the face, and repeating over the words which he had heard the Stranger utter, his grief was in great measure assuaged. The face was still before him as he crept into his bed that night; and he began to hope that he would have another dream like it before morning; but he did not.

The Stranger, however, was beside him when he woke, and as the daylight streamed in upon his pillow, those words, like a glad matin song, rose sweetly to his memory—"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

CHAPTER IV.

STILL BRIGHTENING.

"The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."—PSALM cxix. 130.

IT was scarcely five o'clock when Davey woke the next morning, an hour before his time to rise; so he turned his face toward the little smoke-grimed window of his room, and looked out. Not that there was much to be seen, for a stack of sooty chimney-pots so occupied the prospect, that a little corner of sky, scarcely six inches in diameter, was the only other feature visible; sometimes, too, a stray cat would walk across the smoky disc and obscure even this bit of nature, but this was only a temporary eclipse, and Davey did not mind that.

He had a purpose in looking out this morning, and it would require no very shrewd person to guess what that purpose was. The day was

Sunday, and Sunday was Humphrey Bogle's day for lecturing on the Green; but when the weather was very wet, Humphrey did not go. Davey, however, was particularly anxious to be clear of him that morning, and naturally enough was very curious about the weather; hence his purpose in looking out.

To his delight the day was fine—sunny in fact, and his heart beat high with expectation as his dark eyes rested on the bit of blue between the chimney-pots, and as he thought of the Book with brown covers downstairs, tucked away in a dark corner of the shop.

Thinking of the Book brought to mind the fact that to-day was the day when people might be seen at certain hours, going along the streets with similar books under their arms; the day on which most of the shops were shut, and the mass of men kept holiday or went to church. Theatres and places of amusement were closed on that day, too, and he could not help wondering why. His mother had told him years ago, that Sunday was the Lord's day, and he began to ask himself, could it be that the day was named after the Lord of whom the minister at the grave had read, the Man called Jesus Who had roused His friend Lazarus from his death-sleep? Perhaps so; for the history of that event was in the Bible, and

people seemed to use their Bibles on the Lord's day more than any other. Speculating in this way, Davey gradually arrived at the conviction, that the Author of those words which he had heard the gentleman in the shop quote the evening before, must be none other than Jesus Himself. At all events the names agreed, for the words in question said, "Christ shall give thee light," and in the history of Lazarus, Martha had told Jesus that *He* was the Christ, the Son of God. The Son of God, too—why surely he must have been mistaken! Could it really be that Jesus was the Son of God? That would account for all His power, then! But Davey had to stop short, for the magnitude of his discovery had bewildered him.

Before an hour had gone by, the lively strains of a fiddle in the adjoining room warned him that it was time to see about his father's breakfast; so he got up hastily, and huddled on his clothes. Every morning, at about this time, the fiddle might be heard going, for Humphrey Bogle invariably took it to his room when he retired for the night, and deposited it on a nail within easy reach of his bed. Sometimes his shrill, piping voice might be heard as an accompaniment, but that was on Sundays, when there was no long business day before him, and another opportunity for the display of his popular oratory on Islington

Green made his heart merry. On this particular morning everything was in his favour. The Saturday before he had had a busy day, in spite of the rain, for he had taken more than thirty shillings in hard cash, two-thirds of which, at the very least, was profit. This alone was sufficient to set him singing. But, then, there were other things besides, for it was Sunday, and he had a specially pungent and racy discourse to deliver to his audience that morning, about a bright star of liberty and reason which had dawned upon this beauteous earth, and which was about to free an oppressed and downtrodden people from the galling yoke of ignorance and superstition. Then again (though these were minor considerations), the weather was so fine, and his lungs were in such good action that he felt he could reach the upper "soh" without an effort. What with one thing and another, therefore, Humphrey Bogle began to feel quite young again, and commenced warbling in a most graceful manner a love ditty which had not crossed his lips for years.

When Davey came upstairs with the breakfast (Mr. Bogle always indulged himself on Sunday morning) and heard his father singing, "Oh come, my beloved, come!" he thought he must be calling for little Dot, otherwise he might have smiled at the queer spectacle which met his gaze.

The little bookseller was sitting up in bed, in a very worn dressing-gown of faded black, and on his head was a soiled white nightcap, from beneath which his draggled hair was peeping stiffly out like wisps of straw. His stubbly lower jaw was going through all manner of contortions as the song flowed on, and his long lean hands were performing their separate functions on the fiddle with convulsive rapidity. As Davey entered the room, he went on with the song, but ceased playing, and pointed with his bow to the chair beside his bed, on which Davey—who understood the motion—placed the tray and retired.

An hour or so afterwards, Humphrey Bogle descended to the parlour, and continued his practice; becoming, as the moments slipped by, so interested in his occupation that he forgot the time, and Davey began to fear that his father was going to stay at home that morning. When ten o'clock had struck, the child became quite impatient; and as his father was commencing for about the twentieth time the love ditty, "Oh come, my beloved, come!" he could not forbear muttering peevishly, "Oh go, my beloved, go!" Humphrey Bogle's quick ear caught the inharmonious sound, but, fortunately for Davey, the parody was not detected.

"What's that?" he said, ceasing his song and

laying down his fiddle, so as to get a better look at Davey.

"Oh nothing, father," said Davey, timidly.

"Don't contradict me, sir," said the little bookseller, sharply; "you muttered something."

"I—I—you—you——" Davey was beginning an explanation, but the little bookseller drew him up shortly with the remark—

"Bring me my boots at once! Don't you see the time?"

The remark was a relief to Davey in two ways. It delivered him from the difficulty of replying to a searching question, and it told him his father was going out after all.

When he had returned with the boots, and had laced them up, and his father was buttoning his coat in the passage, the latter said with emphasis:

"Now be sure, David, that you keep the fire in; and mind, if it begins to rain, get ready that chop at once."

Davey dutifully responded, "Yes, father," and opened the door; and having watched his father with trembling heart till he was out of sight, he closed it again, and returned to the parlour.

The Book with the brown covers was uppermost in Davey's mind, but he did not go for it at once. He had a conscience about taking it; for his father had forbidden him to enter the shop on

Sundays, and he knew that he was disobeying orders by going. So he sat for some moments in anxious cogitation. Then he began thinking of Dot, and the words which he had heard at the grave, and which had given him such hopes about Dot. They were from a Bible, he was sure, but somehow the thought of this was not sufficient to induce him to unlock the door of the shop. But at last a thought came into his mind which decided him. If Jesus was the Son of God, and the book with brown covers spoke to him of Jesus, it was his *duty* to look into it, for he ought to obey God rather than man. It was just one of those thoughts which flash into the mind at unexpected moments, we know not how, and which have a voice to us—a voice unlike all other voices, as though the speaker belongs to another world than ours.

Davey rose from his chair, took the key from its nail over the mantel, and, feeling all the time very like the princess in "Bluebeard," unlocked the door. Having possessed himself of the treasure, he returned to his seat, and was presently busied in his search. He began quite at the beginning, with the dedicatory epistle to King James, but he did not understand much of that, there were so many long words. Reading it, however, made him think that his father might

be a Roman Catholic, because the people who were writing to the King spoke of Popish persons at home and abroad who maligned them because they were "poor instruments to make God's holy Truth yet more and more known unto the people," these Popish persons desiring still to keep them in "ignorance and darkness." Davey knew his father acted in this way; indeed, he had forbidden him to read a Bible, and had gone off that morning on purpose to condemn other people for reading theirs; he therefore concluded he must be a follower of the Pope.

But it was the New Testament he wanted—Davey knew that; John's gospel, though the chapter was forgotten.

The headings helped him, and when he had found the gospel, he turned to the first chapter, and began reading them carefully through. Well, if he could go by the headings, every chapter spoke of Christ; and Davey was sorely tempted to read a little of chapter two, when he came to the interesting announcement, "Christ turneth water into wine;" but he resisted the temptation, and read on. When, however, he came to chapter three, and his eyes wandered to the words, "the great love of God towards the world," his heart seemed swelling with a strange, new joy, and he could get no further. "Great love?" "to the

world?" Why, he was part of the world, and could that great love be for him? He thought nobody loved him. Dot used to, but she was dead now—asleep, rather, and sleeping people cannot love. But that was only the heading. Perhaps the heading was wrong; what did the verse say? It was the sixteenth verse, and as Davey ran his finger down the chapter till he came to it, his hand shook. Ah! he had it at last; and as he read through the verse, slowly, and half aloud, his face changed visibly. "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE." Once again he read it, slowly, but no longer half aloud, for a lump was in his throat, and his voice was gone. "For God so loved the world—that He gave—His only begotten Son—that whosoever—whosoever——"

It was too much! It was such great love! and Davey burst into tears.

Ah! somebody loved him—somebody loved him! God loved him, and Jesus loved him; and with that Davey sank down upon his knees. Such love! who could measure it? It could only be measured by the gift, and that was infinite.

And everlasting life was his. Davey began to think of this as he grew calmer; for he was a

stranger before to this new life. The gift had been waiting for him ever so long, but he had not known it. He had been asleep all the while —like a dead person, in fact; for the absence of this life in his soul was a sure evidence of spiritual slumber and death. There was no occasion now to hunt for that passage which the gentleman had quoted in the shop, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," for the sleeper had already awakened, and the light of Christ was even now flooding his happy soul.

He saw now the reason for his mother's happy smile—that smile which had lighted up her face when they told her she was going to die; and he saw the reason for Dot's crying after her, when the little one found that she was gone. He knew now what Dot meant by "happy," and understood the doctor's statement that she had "gone home." "Gone home?" Ah, yes! and he was going too, one day—perhaps very soon. And whom would he see when he got home? Dot, you say? and mother? Yes, yes; but first of all—Jesus.

Every fresh passage, as he looked at it, gave him some new thought of Jesus; and he became so engrossed at last with his Bible, that he did not notice the clouds which were gathering in the sky, or the rain that was again beginning to fall

in heavy drops. He did not even notice the figure of his father as he hurried past the window, or hear the sound of his latch-key as he quietly re-entered the house. He seemed entirely shut in with God, and only returned to conscious existence as the voice of the little bookseller broke rudely on his ear.

"Is my chop ready?" The tone of the inquiry seemed unusually shrill.

"I—I—it'll be ready in a few minutes, father," said Davey, faintly.

"A few minutes," echoed the little bookseller, turning his eyes from the fire, which was almost out, to Davey who was making tremulous efforts to tuck the Book with brown covers under his waistcoat, just as he had seen the boys do with the novelettes and penny dreadfuls—"A few minutes? what's that you're doing under the table?"

Without a word, Davey produced the book, and laid it on the table. He was shaking all over, and felt that had he opened his lips, his heart must have dropped out upon the Bible.

"You ungrateful, good-for-nothing little thief!" exclaimed Mr. Bogle, as he recognised the book, "I suppose you were going to sell it."

This was a hard thrust for Davey, and he felt it. It was meant as such, for Humphrey Bogle knew quite as well as Davey why the book was being

concealed, and intended that Davey should suffer for his conduct. What was his consternation therefore, when Davey's terrified manner suddenly changed, and he exclaimed—

"But I 'm so happy, father!"

"Happy!" echoed the bookseller twice over—"Happy!" and he was going to add something else, but Davey, mistaking his tone and meaning, exclaimed eagerly—

"Yes, father—so happy! not twice happy like you said, but three times happy like little Dot was just before she fell asleep."

"Happy — asleep!" repeated the little bookseller in amazement. "Happy, oh, well, to be sure! David, you shall live on happiness to-day—feed on it, sir! Go to your room at once, sir! and get to bed, sir! you impudent, audacious little thief!"

True to his father's word, Davey did feed on happiness that day, and a right royal feast it was. For there was a King for his host at table, and unlimited provisions to be had.

CHAPTER V.

THE LIGHT PENETRATES.

"Conscience is a clock which, in one man, strikes aloud and gives warning; in another, the hand points silently to the figure, but strikes not. Meantime, hours pass away, and death hastens, and after death comes judgment."

JEREMY TAYLOR.

EXPERIENCE has taught most observing people that atheists and deists (and all atheists are deists, though the statement may sound a paradox) are, as a class, the most miserable of men. They may try to parry the fact, as indeed they do; but no amount of forced wit or airy conceit (in the display of which they are very skilful), can deceive a fairly intelligent person. And for this reason, they should be objects of Christian compassion rather than of contempt. Moreover, there is so much ignorance, and even positive dishonesty in their reasonings, that it is profitless to argue with them; for whilst acknow-

ledging in a general way a God, they put it out of His power to make any external revelation to man. A miracle is to them an absurdity, because it is opposed to nature; and nature is the standard by which they measure God. They bring it to the test of human reason, and as human reason cannot grasp it, it is wrong; thus their God is their reason, or they have no God at all. And this deduction is inevitable; for if human reason is absolute in defining the things of God, it must be infinite and therefore God; and, on the other hand, if reason is only finite (and this they will allow) their rejection of statements because they are beyond their reason is only illogical and absurd.

But it is sorry work expatiating on this subject, and we leave it. The fact remains. The man who shuts out God is miserable; and the cause of his misery is not far to seek. *There is a limit to his infidelity.* He may shut out God from his mind, and may say in his heart, "there is no God," but his conscience is never a party to the lie. He may refuse to retain God in his knowledge, and God may give him over to a reprobate mind, but his conscience remains a stubborn witness of the fact, and misery must follow.

Humphrey Bogle made no exception to this rule. He could argue and reason about the Bible

in the petty way that most infidels can, and could pass his blasphemous jokes on the solemn statements which it contained; but no amount of argument or wit could stifle the still small voice which spoke to him of death and judgment. His infidelity was the fruitful source of many doubts, but it never gave him one moment of settled peace. The gloom of uncertainty was always hanging over him, and the thought, "It may be true" rang out its warning note again and again. A course of excitement and pleasure varied by close application to his books did often drown the voice; but there were times when it made itself heard. Pauses of leisure would come in, when his mind would be wearied with work, and his heart surfeited with pleasure, and his soul's slumber would be disturbed with the solemn words, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." It is ever so; for death and judgment are the dregs in the wine-cup of human pleasure, which show themselves when the cup is empty; if they do not choke the drinker while he is still carousing.

The Sunday afternoon with which the last chapter closed was not without its warnings of this character to the little bookseller; and it was strange how many passages of the Bible came to his remembrance as he sat over the fire with his

favourite authors. It was thinking of Dot and Davey that introduced the subject, for Dot brought the thought of death before his mind; and Davey (though in a more indirect way) the thought of judgment. He had forbidden Davey long ago to open a Bible, and now had punished him for reading one; and if the Bible were true, that act alone would bring down judgment on his head. Withering judgment too; for "it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

Every new thought of unbelief which rose in his mind, was broken in upon by some unwished-for word from the Book of God; and pierced home to his conscience in a way that was quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. How they came into his mind he could not tell; he did not want them there, that was certain; and he could not but ask himself, "Whence came they?" "Who sent them?" "How did they find an entrance?"

If he thought of Dot, it was not Dot as he had known her running about the house, nor as he had seen her on the bed of pain and languishing; it was Dot in death, a child of his no longer. Yes, in death. But what made him shudder so? There was nothing to fear in death. Doubting

Christians might fear death, but not free-thinking, intelligent men like himself. Infidels died well, "there were no bands in their death; their strength was firm." Then it flashed across his mind who had said that. It was David; not *his* David, the great historian, but David the man after God's own heart; and he wished now that he had not been reminded of the words. It seemed to suggest a thought of something after death. "But of course there is nothing after death," he said quickly to himself, for his heart was beginning to beat hard—"No, no, there is nothing." Then the word was echoed like a question in his conscience, and he started. "Nothing? 'It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment!'"

If he thought of Davey, it was Davey as he had seen him a few hours ago, telling him with beaming face that he was "so happy." Yes, "so happy," like Dot before she fell asleep. Asleep, too; what had given the child that idea? Death was death, and not sleep; for sleep always supposed the possibility of an awakening. People who feared death might call it sleep, as a kind of fancy name to hide its terrors, but every man of sense knew differently. He was so confident about it, too; so sure in his own mind upon the point; and yet he started again. Why was that? It was

another questioning echo in his conscience, another unbidden thrust from the two-edged sword. Sleep? Sleep? "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

It was a relief to Humphrey Bogle when one of his friends from the Radical Club called in and diverted his mind, by commencing a discussion on borough franchise. His first words, however, were an inquiry after Dot.

"How 's Dorothy to-day?"

"She 's dead and buried. Didn't you know?"

"Dead, hey! Well, you don't seem to take it much to heart."

"It 's no use crying about it," said the little bookseller. "Sorrow only gives grey hairs and wrinkles."

"You talk and act like King David when he had lost a little one," said the Club companion, "except that David gave a reason for his act. Wasn't it he who said, 'Why should I weep? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me.' The first part of his argument is yours, you see; though the last part doesn't correspond at all."

"To be sure," said the little bookseller, nervously, "but shelve that subject now. You are

settled that the Bible's a fable, and so am I; there's no need to discuss the matter."

"I don't know that I am so settled," objected the Club companion. "But there, I'll drop it if you like. How did you get on at the Green this morning?"

The conversation having turned upon a subject which will scarcely interest the reader, we may pass over a few hours and return to Davey.

As he had been in bed since one o'clock on Sunday afternoon, it is not surprising that he awoke at an early hour on Monday morning. The sun had scarcely risen when he opened his eyes upon the patch of sky between the chimney-pots.

Was it all a dream that had taken place the day before, filling his heart, as it had, with such strange gladness? Ah no. It was a bright, bright reality. He had found a treasure now where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. His father could not rob him of it, for it was reserved in heaven for him; and death, if it came, would only give him immediate possession of the treasure. Yes, *Jesus* was his,—Jesus—the gift of God to him. He could sing now, what Dot and his mother had doubtless sung before, "My beloved is mine, and I am His," and could join

with their freed spirits in the grand redemption song, "Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

And what a link it was with those dear departed ones! He had thought he should never see them again, but now, he knew that he should meet them before very long, never to be separated more. He had thought when he saw the little coffin lowered into the wet earth, that the last dear object of his love had gone from him for ever, and that his desolate, beating heart must break; but now, how changed! Dot was only asleep, asleep in Jesus; and he need not sorrow as others who had no hope, for if he believed that Jesus died and rose again, even so also those who slept in Jesus would God bring with him. And he did believe it, believed it from his heart, and loved the Saviour who had taught his heart so much.

He had two griefs now, and only two; and they only drove him closer to his Lord. He had been denied the reading of the Bible, and his father was not a Christian. The latter was the worst grief to the child, though both were great enough, and as the fact crossed his mind he got out of bed and knelt down. How sweetly, beautifully strange it seemed to him, as he folded his hands and looked through the little space between the

chimney-pots (where he felt assured that God must be), and began speaking earnestly to Him. There was no mistrust of God in that prayer; and the child rose to his feet again in full expectation of an answer. With that guileless simplicity which belongs to children, and which is ever well-pleasing to Him whose delight it is to give, he had made no measure of his request, but only taken into his thought the power and willingness of the One to whom he spoke.

But the prohibition placed upon the reading of the Bible was also a sore grief to Davey, and when he had opened the shop and was spreading the books on the stall outside, he was greatly tempted to take a peep into one or two of the New Testaments that were lying amongst the stock; but he felt it would be wrong. And it was well he acted so, for the little bookseller was glinting at him from the corners of his eyes all the while; and it would have fared hard with Davey if he had been caught a second time thus engaged.

He could not help wondering, however, as he trudged along on his way to the artist's residence, why God permitted his father to act towards him in this way. Surely it must be His will that he should read the Bible, and it was quite in His power to remove the hindrance; it was strange, therefore, that He did not exercise the power.

But this was a lesson which Davey was to learn later on, and for the present he had to take his heavenly food as God provided it.

On his way he stopped at more than one stationer's window to read the illuminated texts which were exposed for sale, and many a joy they brought to his heart as he looked at them. He had read them before, many of them; but had never thought what they meant, and certainly had never dreamt that they had any voice for him, or any bearing upon his own circumstances; but now they were replete with interest. God had placed them on record for his comfort and guidance because his interests were God's interests now, and his very life was hid with Christ in God. And just as every unbelieving thought of his father had been met on the previous day with some withering threat of coming judgment, so every little fear of the child's was met with some soothing precept or promise. If Satan put into his untrained heart the thought "How shall I keep near to Jesus to the end?" the next shop window brought to light the words, "As thy days so shall thy strength be." When the thought came, "Perhaps father will make me do wrong when he knows I am a Christian, and then Jesus may give me up," the next words which met his eyes were these, "I will never leave thee nor for-

sake thee." When he thought of the world and its allurements in the way of evil companions, and wondered how he was to gain the mastery over it, an illuminated text at the frame-maker's contained the teaching, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "But I am so weak," thought Davey; and in the same manner the suited answer was supplied, "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Crossing and recrossing the roads so frequently, and stopping before the various windows, he was rather late in getting to the artist's house; but the artist made no complaint. On the contrary, he was very kind, and insisted that Davey should partake of another breakfast before he dressed for the occasion; and Davey, not at all loth (for he had partaken of neither dinner, tea, nor supper the previous day), sat down in grateful expectation. The servant presently brought in a handsome electro-plated pot of hot coffee, with several slices of bread and butter, and a glass dish of preserves; and as Davey was so modest in the way he helped himself to the latter, the artist took the silver trowel out of his hand, and helped the lad himself. Davey did not eat very heartily, however, for the artist talked so kindly to him all the while, that he became conscious of a certain choking sensation in his throat, which prevented

his swallowing with ease, and gave him the strongest inclination to cry.

"Now I suppose you 'd like to see the picture in which you 're to be immortalised," said the artist, when Davey had reaffirmed for a third time that he had eaten quite enough.

"Yes, sir, if I may," said Davey, respectfully.

The artist pulled his easel directly under the skylight and undraped the picture, and Davey gazed upon it with looks of admiring wonder.

"That is where you are to go," said the artist, pointing with his mahl-stick to a blank space near the centre of the canvas, "You know what the subject is?"

"No, sir," said Davey, looking up.

"You don't? well it 's 'The Child Christ in the Temple questioning the Doctors.'"

"Indeed!" said the child, looking down at the picture with increased earnestness. "Will you tell me which is Jesus?"

"Oh! you know the story then?" said the artist.

"No, sir, I should like to," said the child, "but I know that Jesus and Christ are the same person."

"I see," said the artist; "Well, Jesus is to come here. I want to paint you for Him."

"Oh! but I wouldn't do," said the child, recoil-

ing. "I'm too sinful, and He was the Son of God. I don't like to be painted for Him."

"But I can't see your sins," said the artist, smiling. "I want to paint your face and figure; not to look inside you."

"Well, if you think it's right, sir," said Davey, "I'll do what you wish, for I'd like to please you somehow, you've been so good to me."

"And this is just the way," returned the artist, "so I'll get you your little dress at once."

In a short while Davey might have been seen standing on the platform at the farther end of the studio, in a plain tunic of fine white linen, bound round at the waist with a richly embroidered silk scarf, the predominant colour in which was crimson. His feet and head were bare, and there was no other ornament about him, save some plain embroidery round the collar of the tunic.

Davey was told to keep his head very still; but he forgot the injunction once or twice, and the temptation to look about the studio was too strong to be resisted. There was such a curious assortment of things lying about—canvases and portfolios, armour and draperies, plaster casts and cabinets—that Davey thought the artist must really be in his father's way of business, only there were so few books to be seen, and no tickets to indicate that anything was for sale. Two life-size

lay figures particularly interested him, and his eyes got wandering to these so often that at last the artist had to check him.

"Come, come, Davey," he said, "you 're twisting about like an eel. Try and fix your eyes on that piece of armour to which I first directed them, and see how long you can keep them there."

Davey was very sorry that the artist had had to speak to him, and made up his mind that he would stand as quiet as the lay figures for the future. But the lay figures had no weak lungs like Davey had, nor bad colds either; and when he began to feel a tickling in his throat, he found himself at a disadvantage, and was obliged to place his hand to his mouth while he coughed.

"That 's a violent cough, Davey," said the artist, pausing again in his work. "Have you seen a doctor about it?"

"Oh no, sir," said Davey, smiling at the very idea of such a thing. "It 's nothing, sir. I 've had it for months now. I suppose it was getting wet on Saturday that made it a little worse to-day."

"You ought to have some advice about it," said the artist, as he bent over his work again.

The gentleman who had purchased Bunyan's "Jerusalem Sinner Saved" at Mr. Bogle's shop,

had said the same thing, but Davey did not know that.

After standing for an hour, there was a rest of ten minutes allotted him, and the artist told him he might look at the pictures in a large illustrated Bible, which he kept in his studio for the purpose of reference.

Davey embraced the opportunity with delight, and soon (heedless of the pictures), was busily engaged with the text. When the artist looked at him, he could not but remark how Davey lingered over the pages, and how little attention he gave to the illustrations; but for the present he said nothing.

Every hour there was a rest of ten minutes, and every rest was spent by Davey in looking through the Bible; and the artist began to think he must be a strange lad, unless there was some reason unknown to him, that gave his model such an enduring interest in so dry a book.

At two o'clock, true to his engagement, Gamaliel put in his appearance, so Davey had to return home, promising, as the artist dismissed him at the door, to call again the next morning at the appointed time.

And as he retraced his steps that afternoon, with his young heart brimming over with gratitude to God, and whilst he kept the stall outside

his father's shop for the remainder of that day, he was turning over in his mind those truths which he had learned ; truths which were more to him than his necessary food, and he went to bed that night in the expectation of another fall of manna on the morrow.

CHAPTER VI.

BASKING IN THE LIGHT.

"Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine."

BURTON.

WHEN Davey entered his father's room next morning to rouse him as usual, his father was wide awake, and on hearing his footfall, turned his eyes upon him with no very gracious expression.

"Here I've been awake all this night with your precious barking," he groaned, as Davey stood still, uncertain what to do.

"I'm very sorry, father," said Davey; "but I didn't sleep hardly a wink myself."

"Well, who's fault was that?" inquired Mr. Bogle.

"I suppose it was mine," said Davey; "at least God sent the cough, and I'm sure it was all for the best."

"Who sent it?" exclaimed the little bookseller, in a shrill treble.

"God," returned Davey, quietly, "and 'all things work together for good to them that love God,' father; so I suppose this is one of the 'all things.'"

"Get my strap at once!" said Mr. Bogle, rising suddenly from his bed in a tremendous heat.

The perspiration broke out on Davey's forehead, and for a few seconds he delayed to obey the command.

"Did you hear me speak?" said the little bookseller, in a higher key.

"Yes, father," faltered the child, and then he added, "Is it for me, father?"

"For you?—of course it's for you. Who else should it be for, pray? Why do you ask?"

"I only ask because I'm feeling queer this morning, father," said Davey, "and if you get knocking me about much, I shall be too ill to go to Mr. Deasel's."

Such an event as that meant three shillings out of Mr. Bogle's pocket, so he relented.

"Why do you rouse my indignation, then?" he asked. "Have I not told you that there is no such being as God, and that the Bible is only a child's fable?"

The perspiration broke out again on the child's forehead, and his frame shook.

"Father," he said, in a faint voice, and he fixed his dark, lustrous eyes full upon him, "I'd sooner have a strapping twice over than hear you talk in this wicked way. There *is* a God. It's only the fool that says there is no God—the Bible says so. And it says too that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God—I'll take a seat a moment, if I may, for I feel so sick."

The child sank down on the chair beside his father's bed, and clasped his head, which was beating like a pulse.

Directly he saw the change in his child, the little bookseller changed too, and jumped out of bed in haste. His face wore an expression of anxiety rather than anger, and the thought of death was once more present in his mind.

Like every other man, he was not quite destitute of feeling; a human heart beat within his breast, though its avenues had long been choked by self; and deep in the recesses of that heart, there was still a lingering love for Davey. The occasion had aroused it, and it was not long before he was downstairs, making a cup of tea for the exhausted child.

Davey thought he had gone to fetch the strap, and was agreeably surprised when, instead of that

unpleasant monitor, his father returned with a refreshing cup of tea, and some dry toast.

"Did you really make the toast for me, father?" said Davey, who could scarcely realise the transformation which had taken place.

"I did, Davey," said the little bookseller, reddening as he thought of the surprise which so trivial an act of kindness had called forth.

"If you don't mind, father," said Davey, "I'll save one of the bits; I'd just like to keep it in remembrance of your kindness. I know it seems silly, but may I?"

Mr. Bogle coughed several times, and turned his face away from Davey while he blew his nose. He then said:

"No, no, child; eat it up—eat it up."

Davey ate it up, and the other pieces too, and finished the tea, and by half-past eight o'clock was sufficiently himself again to start for the artist's house.

He was punctual to his appointment; but on this occasion Mr. Deasel was not quite ready, so that Davey had another opportunity of looking at the picture Bible. When the artist entered the studio, and saw the child busily spelling through the words, he said, cheerily:—

"Why you 're a regular little bookworm, Davey; you 'll die reading."

"I hope I may, sir," said the child, "if it's with this Book in my hand."

"It would be a heavy Book for a dying child," said the artist, passing off as a joke what to him was hardly an agreeable topic.

"But you believe it, sir, don't you?" said the child, gravely.

"I suppose it's true enough, my boy," returned the artist, "but you know my profession is to paint, not to preach; and the Bible is a book for preachers."

"But you paint pictures from it," said the child.

"You're a sharp boy," returned the artist, smiling; "I do paint pictures from it—you're quite right."

"And I thought it was everyone's book," continued the child; "nobody can go to heaven without it—I'm sure of that; for 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God;' and we are 'born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.' I think it must be only those who despise the Lord Jesus, and want to go to hell, who say it's not their book."

"Is your father a Methodist?" asked the artist, with a puzzled look.

"I don't think so, sir," said Davey, "at least, I don't know what a Methodist is."

"Perhaps he belongs to the Plymouth Brethren then?" said the artist.

Davey shook his head.

"Well it doesn't matter, we'll put the book aside for the present, and begin work."

Putting on the tunic again, and standing with his bare legs on the platform brought on the cough, and the artist looked at the child in real concern.

"You must take something for that cough," he said, "it's enough to tear your chest;" and having summoned the servant, he gave orders that a basin of strong beef tea should be ready for Davey by the time his next rest came round.

"How kind he is!" thought Davey, his heart swelling with gratitude for this fresh thoughtfulness of the artist; "every one seems getting kind now; even father has changed. Fancy his making me the toast this morning!"

The artist was a sympathetic man, and Davey's intelligence and modesty, together with his delicate health, and the circumstances which were known to him of his history, all tended to rouse his interest in the child, and to make him an object of his care and generosity. He gave him his dinner that day, and some fruit after it; and when Davey was leaving about dusk that evening, he put sixpence into his hand in addition to his lawful earnings.

Yes, sixpence. The first sixpence that Davey could ever call his own. He had often wished as he went along the streets, and saw the boys with their peg-tops and marbles, that he could boast the possession of such a sum, for then he would have his peg-top and marbles too; and now this opportunity was suddenly afforded him. But the desire was gone. A month ago it would have been the consummation of his happiness, as it had been the object of his dearest hopes, to call such treasures his; but the opportunity had come, and the wish had gone.

Davey had another investment for his sixpence now, and the toy-shops had entirely lost their charm. Whither were his feet taking him, as he sped along the streets with the money pressed tightly in his hand? What was his object now?

Davey stopped at last, and looked furtively around him; though he knew that his father must be keeping the shop at home. Next he looked eagerly in at the window of the shop before which he had drawn up—a marine store-dealer's—and began searching for something among the bones and dirty dresses.

There were a few musty books scattered in that part of the window, and it was one of those which Davey wanted. Presently he caught sight of it, and a thrill of joyful expectancy ran

through him; he clenched his sixpence more tightly in his hand, and marched boldly in.

A grimy, greasy slattern of a woman kept the shop; and when Davey entered she was busily shaking by the shoulder an equally grimy child about three years old, whose screams had been disturbing her. Hearing customers in the shop she gave the child a parting shake, and came forward to the counter.

"I want that small book marked threepence in the window," said Davey.

This reasonable demand was met by the uncourteous response, "Ain't they all marked threepence?"

"Well, I'll show you the book if you like," said Davey.

"Look alive, then," returned the woman.

Davey mounted himself on the iron scales upon which the bones and paper were weighed, and reached forward till he felt the book.

"Drat your impudence!" exclaimed the woman, "get down from my scales! Isn't it four and sixpence I've paid already for mending 'em? get down I say!"

Without answering her question, which Davey was scarcely in a position to do, he dismounted in haste, and handed his purchase to the woman.

"I don't want the rubbish," was her retort, as she pushed it away with her chapped and dirty

hand, "here, give me the money, and get out of my shop as quick as you know 'ow."

Davey handed her the sixpence, and after she had treated him to a storm of abuse for not bringing the proper amount, she tossed the change on the counter, and went back to shake her child again.

When Davey got clear of the shop, and was in the street once more, how he hugged his treasure to his heart! It was a Bible, a complete, uninjured Bible—there was not a page missing from the dedicatory epistle to King James to the closing chapter of the Revelation. It was such a neat, little book, too. He could tuck it away in his pocket, and it would never be noticed; and that was an important consideration. He could scarcely forbear opening it as he went along the street; and at every lamp-post he made a pause to take a peep into the precious treasure.

But the sixpence was not all spent. There was half yet remaining, and Davey had a way for this. If he was to read his Bible at night before going to bed (and this was one of the fond wishes of his heart), he must have more candles to burn than his father supplied him with. So Davey purchased on his own account, threepennyworth of dip candles; and this was his second investment.

His heart beat high that night as he spread his trousers along the crevice of his door, to hide the light, and he felt very happy when the candle (which he had cut in half for economy's sake) was burning, and the book, his best treasure, was lying open on the bed!

What a feast was in store for him! What a world of bright pleasures was flung open to his faith! It was a real world to him—the very world in which Dot and mother were, and to which he was journeying fast! His heart filled very full as he read of the Holy City with its jasper walls, and gates of pearl; with its golden streets, and garniture of precious stones! There would be no aching footfall there; no weariness or pain; no graves, because there could be no death; no tears, because there could be no sorrow. The glory of God would illumine the scene, and Jesus Himself would lighten it. And he would be there, and his mother and Dot; and they might walk together, hand in hand, on the banks of that pure river whose waters were as clear as crystal; or sit in the shadow of that tree which yielded her many fruits every month.

Davey read slowly, and the piece of his candle had burned low, long ere he came to the words, "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle——" for, at that point, the paper

round the mouth of the candlestick caught fire, and Davey, with a start, closed the book. Then having replaced it carefully in his pocket, he extinguished the flaring paper, and sank back, well satisfied, upon his pillow.

CHAPTER VII.

INTERCEPTED RAYS.

"Alone with Thee, my God! alone with Thee!
Thus wouldst Thou have it still—thus let it be.
There is a secret chamber in each mind,
Which none can find
But He who made it; none beside can know
Its joy or woe.
Oft when we enter it, oppressed by care,
We find Thee there:
So full of watchful love, Thou knowest the why
Of ev'ry sigh.
There all Thy righteous dealings I may see,
Alone with Thee, my God! alone with Thee!"

THEY were happy times which had now dawned upon the child of sorrow. Before a week was out the little Bible had quite changed in its appearance, and many of the leaves were soiled with Davey's finger-marks. He liked none of its books so well as John's gospel and the Canticles, for these were all about Jesus,

and dwelt so much upon His love. But the former spoke of judgment too; judgment which the Father had committed to the Son; and when the child thought of this his heart would get troubled in the midst of his joy, and the thought of his father's dangerous condition would bring the cold dews to his forehead. He had his remedy, however, for the darkest forebodings, and that was prayer; and he had a place to which he could come boldly to offer up his prayers, and that was the Throne of grace; and he knew that the One who sat upon that Throne was the God of all grace, Who heard and answered prayer. Though He was "far from the wicked," yet He heard the prayer of the righteous, and this gave Davey hope for his father. The answer might be long in coming, but he would wait for it; for "it will surely come," he thought, "it will not tarry;" and the Bible said, "the just shall live by faith." He had got the promise that "all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" and the child did believe, and acted upon the promise as though the blessing had already come.

But Davey's life was not all sunshine even now; for at night, long after his candle was extinguished, and long after his treasure was put safely away, his cough would keep him awake, and many were the restless hours he spent in the

dark loneliness of his little room. The time seemed so long as he turned and tossed his weary frame upon the bed, his eyelids drooping with heaviness and yet unable to meet entirely in sleep. The thought, too, that his father might be kept awake by the coughing, greatly troubled the child at first; though when a few such nights had passed and no complaint had been made, he began to lose his dread, and suppose his father slept through it all.

The little bookseller knew differently, however, and knew it to his cost. There was never a sound from Davey, through the long night watches, which he did not hear, and he, too, turned and tossed upon his bed, oftentimes long after the child had sunk to sleep. These silent hours of darkness and unrest had miseries for him, which they never had for the child; and his blood would chill with horror as unbidden memories of a long life of sin and unbelief passed in solemn panorama before him.

And what had life brought him after all? Happiness? No. It might have done, but he had driven a loving Christian wife to an early grave, and he had buried his pleasures there. Not happiness, then. Wealth? No. King David of old had complained of the prosperity of the wicked, but no prosperity had come to him. A blight had fallen upon his hopes, and nothing he

had done had ever prospered. Not wealth, then. Wisdom? Let us grant that he had got wisdom—worldly wisdom; and what was it worth? "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," foolishness—nothing more. It had taught him to say, "There is no God," and had spurred him on in the devilish work of wrecking the faith of others, and that was the sum total of its achievements. But even the days of his wisdom were circumscribed, and sooner or later he must lay it in the dust. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," was an unchangeable truth, which neither he nor his friends the philosophers could overturn, and that must be his portion ere long. Human happiness, if he had any, must end there; riches and prosperity must be surrendered there; he had brought nothing into the world, and it was certain he could carry nothing out. And it was just at this point the peculiar force of those words came in, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It was a perplexing, terrifying question; and night after night it rose before his mind as he lay tossing on his bed, until, like Job of old, fear would come upon him and trembling, which would make all his bones to shake.

* * * * * *

A fortnight had gone round since Dot's burial,

and it was Saturday again. The artist was standing before his easel, with the colours already on his palette, waiting for Davey. His picture was still far from finished, and he had begun to fear that he should not be able to get it done in time for exhibition, an event which he did not care to contemplate. Every person who had seen it in its unfinished state, with but one exception, had spoken glowingly about it, and the exception was only the critic of some Society journal, whom the artist never invited to supper.

"I hope the child 's not ill," he said to himself, as a clock in another room struck the half-hour, "he has always been before his time but once hitherto."

While the clock was still striking Davey might have been seen turning the corner. He was tucking in his pocket the treasure which he always carried about with him, and with which he was getting quite familiar now.

Hearing the gate swing, the artist opened the door himself, and with an expression of relief, admitted the child.

"Well, Davey," he said, patting him kindly on the shoulder, "how do you feel this morning? I began to think you were not so well."

"I didn't have a very good night, sir," said Davey, whose tired eyes bore witness enough to

the truth of his statement, "the cough was troublesome again."

"Poor child," said the artist. "I might have told that by your look. But step in; we'll see what another cup of hot coffee will do for you."

The child's heart was too full to speak; but when, a few moments later, the artist was handing him the coffee, he said, "I've left off thanking you, sir, it seems like working round you for fresh favours."

The artist laughed and shook his head.

"We understand each other better than that, I think, Davey—don't we?"

"I'm sure I hope so, sir," said Davey.

Having emptied the cup, Davey repaired at once to the dressing-room, and the artist was soon at work again, although his progress was hampered a good deal by the child's distressing cough.

The picture Bible was still the object of Davey's perusal during his intervals of rest, and when for the fifth time that day, the child turned to its pages, and began reading at a place where there was no picture, the artist remarked,

"You don't look at the pictures, Davey; how's that?"

"I don't care about them much," returned the

child. "I like the reading best. Besides the pictures will all be destroyed one day."

"Destroyed, eh! Pray when is that to be?" said the artist, smiling.

"In the day of the Lord, sir," returned the child, solemnly. "I was reading last night that the day of the Lord shall be upon all pleasant pictures," and that 'the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.'"

"What a memory the child has!" thought the artist; "he must know his Bible by heart."

This was almost the fact. The progress which Davey had made in the Scriptures was indeed wonderful, and his memory seemed to have retained whatever he had read. Perhaps the intensity of his faith would partly account for this. His eye was single, and hence his whole body was full of light. But the clever artist had a puzzle for the child now—a question which he did not think he could answer. "If the pictures are to be destroyed, Davey," he said, "the Bible must be destroyed too."

The child thought a moment. The objection seemed a difficulty, and he closed his eyes a moment or two in prayer. Then he was ready with his answer.

"I shouldn't wonder, sir, if this particular book was destroyed, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever, and that is what I meant. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away."

"The child's a prodigy!" said the artist, looking up with a puzzled air; but he said no more, and bent over his canvas with renewed assiduity.

Presently it began to grow dusk, and it was necessary to roll the blinds of the skylight, in order to get all the benefit of the remaining day. But the wings of evening spread quickly across the heavens, and within a little it had grown too dark to work with safety. On this the artist threw down his palette and brushes, and rose from his chair in evident vexation.

"I hope I haven't been moving, sir," said Davey anxiously.

"No, no, you've been quiet as a statue, I've no fault to find with you, but time steals on our heels, Davey, and the daylight is gone before the day's work is done; that's the plague."

Davey stepped from the platform, and went over to look at his figure in the canvas.

"It's quite a likeness, sir," he said; "people will never think that is Jesus!"

"Why you've got heaven in your eyes, my boy," said the artist, patting him gently on the shoulder.

"I never read that in the Bible, sir," said Davey.

"Did you ever read anything about yourself in the Bible?" asked the artist.

"Oh yes!" said the child, "'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,' that was something about me. He 'hath concluded all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all,' that was about me. 'All that believe are justified from all things,' that was about me; and that is just what the Bible says about me now."

"Why you're like a birthday-book," said the artist, "full of texts."

"I'm not so full of them as the Bible is," was the child's reply. "Not nearly. The Bible must be a great birthday-book. Besides, I know it is, for it's got my birthday in it, and others too."

"But you're thinking of the family register," said the artist, laughing.

"It may be the family register," returned the child, earnestly, "because I don't know what that means; but it's in one of the epistles, I'm sure; and the words are, 'He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.'"

"But how do you know that you are born of God?" asked the artist, ceasing his banter. "How did it come about?"

"I don't know," said the child; "I don't suppose

anybody knows, except God. When a great ruler of the Jews came to Jesus by night once, and asked Him what it meant, Jesus only said, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of God.' It seems to me that that explains it as near as it can be explained."

The artist was silent. A host of memories had been roused in his mind by the child's answers, and he felt in no humour to try him with another question. So the two sat on till the studio was enveloped in darkness, when Davey, feeling cold, began to cough again.

"Bless me! I'd quite forgotten you, Davey," said the artist, starting. "Where are you?"

"Here, sir," returned the child, stepping forward to where the artist sat.

"Why, you've not changed your tunic yet," exclaimed the artist, "no wonder your cough has started again."

"I'll do that in a minute, sir," said Davey, stumbling forward in the darkness.

The artist struck a match, and lighted one of the gas-jets which branched from the wall; after which he pulled his easel nearer the jet, to get the effect of his picture under a yellower light.

"I shall never get it done," he muttered.

"I ought to have commenced it a week earlier at least."

When Davey returned, instead of paying him at once, and wishing him "good-night," the artist asked him to take a seat a moment; and having lowered the gas, took another chair and sat down beside him.

"I'm afraid I shall never get my picture finished, Davey," he began.

"Do you mean, in time for the exhibition?" asked the child.

The artist nodded.

"That will be a great trial, sir," said Davey, after a respectful pause; "I wish I could help you to bear it."

"You can remove it altogether, Davey," returned the artist; and he looked straight into the child's wistful eyes.

"That would be splendid, sir," said Davey, brightening up. "Will you show me how, please."

"Well, I want you to come for the next two Sundays, and stand for me," said the artist, toying with his chain.

Davey hesitated a moment, and then burst into tears.

"Oh, anything but that, sir," he cried, covering his face with his hands, "anything but that! It

wouldn't be right to do that, sir, I'm sure; and I couldn't act against what I know to be right—Oh no—no!"

"I thought so," said the artist, tossing Davey's money on the table, and moving towards the door; "this is your gratitude; I thought so—I might have expected it."

Davey sprang forward with a wild, remorseful cry.

"No—no! I wouldn't be ungrateful; indeed, sir, I wouldn't." But the door was closed upon him, and he listened in vain; as the artist's footsteps died away on the stairs.

How he got home that night he could not tell; he only thought his heart was breaking. On two occasions he was nearly run over while crossing the road; but these events made little impression upon his mind; the one great crushing blow which had fallen made everything else seem trivial and unimportant. An escape from broken bones was a small matter in comparison with a grief which tore his heart; and the artist's words had done that. The death of little Dot had scarcely left a deeper wound; for the stroke had fallen more gradually then, and he had been expecting it; but this blow—ah! it was a sad experience for Davey, this!

Ungrateful!—was he ungrateful? Oh! he could

suffer any name but that. He would give anything—even to his right hand—rather than be thought ungrateful. The artist had said in fun that morning that the gratitude of some people was only an expectation of favours to come; and doubtless he had put him with that class ere this. The benefits which he had received from the artist were many, and the extent of them only increased the anguish which Davey felt. The measure of those benefits was just the measure of his burden now. The artist had been so kind to him in word and deed, and had poured so much comfort into his heart the day that Dot was buried, and now all this gave point to the accusation, and made the sting of it more hard to be borne. A dreary sense of loneliness, such as he had felt while standing at the grave of Dot, when the clods were falling with a dull thud on the little coffin, returned to him; and he felt that another object of his love was lost to him for ever. He was alone again now; alone in the battle of life; alone in the dark, dark world; his last friend had deserted him, and henceforth he must work and weep alone.

But why so? Could he tell what a day or an hour would bring forth? Had he forgotten the Friend to whom he might carry all his cares?—the Friend which sticketh closer than a brother?

Davey *had* forgotten; but a chapter from his pocket Bible made it all right ere long, and he did not creep into his bed that night before he had cast his burden upon the Lord, and sought a blessing on the one by whom he had been so grievously misunderstood.

CHAPTER VIII.

REFLECTED RAYS.

"Out of doors, too, were tombstones of every intermediate date, from a very early period to the present year. What a peacemaker, I thought, is the grave!"—*Article* "Churchyards" *in* SOUTHGATE'S "Noble Thoughts."

THE following day being Sunday, Davey had a holiday in the afternoon, and, so soon as his father had finished his dinner, he started for the churchyard.

Poor child! he had left his burden with the Lord the night before, but he had taken it up again on waking, and as he now commenced his journey his heart was very full. But perhaps his ill-health would account in some measure for his sorrow and dejection; for he looked unusually pale when he started out, and a dark purple ring about his eyes told plainly of another sleepless night.

The last time that he had taken the road which

he was now taking was a little more than a fortnight ago; and Dot was with him then. She was not walking by his side, it is true, but still she was there; and he had found a dreary sort of satisfaction even in carrying her lifeless body. But he was alone now—quite alone. He felt he wanted some one to speak to, but the wish was denied. There was no ear into which he might pour his full heart of sorrow; no sympathising friend who would help him with his burden. Many people were going his way, for the day was fine, and the lanes about Hornsey had great attractions for dwellers in North London; but they had no regard for Davey. His burden was invisible to them; and could they have seen it, they never could have lightened it. It was not a coffin which he carried, or any load which shoulders might have borne; but the sadder, heavier load which belongs to an overburdened spirit.

Ungrateful—oh no! he was not ungrateful. He loved the artist; and had cried himself to sleep more than once, only through thinking of his kindness. He had done what he could to prove his gratitude; though his opportunities in this direction were never very numerous or great. He had often shivered with the cold in his thin tunic while the artist was painting him; and had stifled the cough lest it should distress him;

though the effort had given him pain. He had stood on the platform sometimes, till he felt as if his head were going round, and he must drop with giddiness; but he had never complained. It had been his pleasure to know that he was denying himself some little comfort for the artist's convenience; though he had thought but little about the sacrifice till the charge of ingratitude had been brought against him. And even now he was not angry with the artist—oh no! There was not a tinge of bitterness towards him in any of his thoughts. He would do the same things again if the occasion offered; for though he groaned beneath the blow, his respect and love remained undiminished.

It was spring season, the summer end of it; and the face of nature looked fresh and beautiful as the child neared Hornsey; but the freshness and beauty had nothing in common with his thoughts. A sunny sky and green lanes are not the best palliatives for a wounded heart, and the child's eyes wandered sorrowfully from one object to another as he walked along. Besides, the leafy hedges on either side reminded him too much of little Dot. He had sometimes taken her as far as this, to gather blackberries, and hips and haws; and the memory of her happy little face made his misery more intense.

Here was the very spot where she fell down the last time he had taken her out; and there the place where she burst into tears, when a thorn from a bramble had pierced her arm. How well he remembered standing over her on that occasion, while he tried to get it out, and how long it took before it was extracted. It was tedious work then, for it hindered him in gathering the blackberries; but now he felt he would stand there twenty times as long, if only he could gaze again on her rosy little face. Farther on was the hollow tree, into which she had crept for concealment while he was looking another way, and he remembered what a thrill had gone through him the moment after, when he looked up and down the lane, and could not see her. But she was gone indeed now; and it was vain for him to look this way or that, or to peep in the hollow tree; she was out of human sight, and past all human recall.

At last the churchyard was reached, and without much difficulty he found his way to the grave. It had been filled in, and the diggers had placed some turf over it; but there was no stone. The grave next to Dot's had a stone; and underneath the name were chiselled the words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their

labours; and their works do follow them." There was power and hope in the words for Davey, and as he read them a second time a ray of comfort broke in upon his soul. His mother and Dot had died in the Lord, and were now sleeping with the blessed dead. One day his turn would also come, and he would enter into the rest of God. Yes, one day. It could be but a little while at the longest, and he must wait with patience that little while. He was told to "run with patience the race that was set before him;" but he had begun murmuring already. What a faithless, faltering heart was his!

Davey drew forth his Bible and began to read. It opened at a familiar book—one of his favourites—the Song of Solomon; and his heart felt lifted up as he read on. It was indeed the Song of songs to him, and the words came with peculiar freshness, as he rested beside the grave. They sounded like a fairy tale that afternoon; although he knew that they were true, and felt they had an application to himself. With feverish interest his listening soul drank them in; for the voice of his Beloved was in the words, and the assurance of His love was better than wine to Davey. He had been murmuring, he knew, and that was sinful; but his Beloved, who was looking down where Davey lay, saw no sin there. Stretched

upon the green grass with the book before him, he heard no chiding voice, but only a sweet whisper of love, which said, "Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our bed is green." It was heaven itself to the child to lie there; and the only hindrance to his full joy was the little body of sin and pain which had yet to be put off. The dissolution was not far off, and the child felt it. Already the voice of his Beloved was sounding in his ears, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

He was still reading, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he looked up. It was the artist.

"Don't be startled, Davey," he said; "I've come to sit beside you, if I may, and to talk with you."

"Oh! have you found it out then," said the child, quickly, "that I'm not ungrateful?"

"I spoke hastily, Davey," said the artist, as he took the child's hand; "I never thought you were ungrateful. I must ask your forgiveness for saying that."

"Oh thank you, sir, thank you!" said Davey, fervently.

"But have I your forgiveness, Davey?" said the artist, quietly.

"I don't know that I have anything to forgive, sir," returned the child. "But if you want me to say so, of course, I will. And I've been thinking, sir, that if you could paint by gaslight some evenings in the week, I'd be glad to come for nothing, and stay as late as you like."

The artist thought a moment.

"To begin with," he said, "I'm afraid your health wouldn't stand it, Davey."

"Oh, I think it would, sir," said the child; "besides, if I'm not there, I shall be out minding the stall for father."

"Your father is a very religious man, I suppose," said the artist, turning the conversation.

Davey shook his head.

"Then how comes it that you're so fond of your Bible, Davey?" inquired the artist.

"I suppose it's because it makes me happy," said the child. "Doesn't it make you happy too, sir, when you read it?"

There was no answer, and the child presently remarked,

"Perhaps, sir, you're like the people of whom it is said, 'The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.'"

The artist said nothing, but presently took

Davey's Bible in his hand, and began turning over its pages in a thoughtful manner.

A revolution had taken place in his mind that afternoon; and the child's conduct, the night before, had been the cause of it. He had started from home in a state of agitation which had really driven him from the house; and as he strode along, the galling thought, that the child's act had destroyed his last hope of finishing the picture, was almost unbearable. But when he had reached the churchyard, he had fallen into a contemplative mood; and the *motive* of the child's act appealed to him for the first time. That gave a touch of nobleness to it at once; and the general tenour of the child's conduct, at least so far as he could watch it, gave consistency to the act. He thought that it was a curious remark, too, that the child had made when speaking of the pictures; and supposed that it was a quotation from the Bible. The words were forgotten; but he knew that they were something about "the day of the Lord," which was to make an end of all pleasant pictures, and bow down the loftiness of man. Certainly the graves around him bore witness enough to the fact; and preached plainly of the emptiness of human pride, and the end of human ambition. A few short years and the fever dream of life would be over, and the grave would have

seized him for its prey. Sooner or later he must go "the way of all flesh," and take that solemn step from time to eternity, which could never be retraced. Was he prepared? The question had naturally occurred to him as he stood among the graves; for they told of death—of the Reaper whose sickle must one day cut him down with the rest. On some of the stones no hopeful line was written; on others, the light of heaven seemed to shine; and what made the difference? The child knew, he was sure of that; but it was quite a mystery to him. He had not learned yet that the world by wisdom knows not God; and his mind was still groping at the question, "Can a man by searching find out God?" He did not know that One, Who was Himself the Truth of God, had once thanked His Father that He had "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes."

As he closed the Book that afternoon, he said to Davey,

"Davey, how is it that you, a mere boy, enjoy this book and understand it; while I, who have read it again and again, can get no light upon it?"

"Perhaps you are too wise to become a little child," said Davey.

"I don't catch your meaning, Davey," said the artist.

"Well, Jesus says, that 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein,' that is what I mean," said Davey.

CHAPTER IX.

TWILIGHT.

"To me, the thought of death is terrible,
Having such hold on life. To thee it is not
So much even as the lifting of a latch;
Only a step into the open air
Out of a tent already luminous
With light that shines through its transparent walls."

THE days crept slowly on, and the weather remained clear and sunny, but the child grew worse rather than better. A strange lustre began to light up his dark eyes; and a flush that was not healthy appeared from time to time on his pale cheeks. The short, dry cough became more incessant, and in the dead stillness of the night the little bookseller would hear it as he tossed about; and often would lie listening to it till the dawn had streaked the sky.

It is during seasons such as this that God will sometimes work out His designs, and make His

Presence felt. When the veil of darkness has fallen upon the face of nature, and deep sleep has fallen upon man, then He openeth the ear of some sleepless one and sealeth His instruction. The voice that said to Adam, "Where art thou?" is heard again in the trembling stillness of the soul, and discloses in a moment all its moral nakedness. No fig-leaf covering is then of any avail, no trees or rocks will hide the affrighted listener from the face of Him who speaks. Then he learns that all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with Whom he has to do; and try as he will, he cannot get away from the unwelcome Presence. He finds himself beset before and behind, and an arresting hand is ever upon him. There is One who knows him altogether, and is acquainted with all his ways; and such knowledge becomes too wonderful for him, he cannot attain unto it. If he says "surely the darkness shall cover me," and seeks to hide his nakedness that way, he finds that the darkness hideth not from that Presence; but "the night shineth as the day, and the darkness and the light are both alike to Him." It is in vain for him to cry in the bitterness of his soul, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence?" for the way is cut off and there is no escape.

To one who had despised and rejected the love

of God so persistently as Davey's father had despised and rejected it, a ploughing up of this kind was necessary before the heart could be reached at all. He found it so, as he lay awake night after night, with the burden of his sins upon him, and the terrors of hell before his soul. He began to find that the mocker's cheek can blanch, and the heart of the scoffer can grow faint; and that even an infidel may own at last the self-condemnatory truth, that "the way of transgressors is hard."

One night, as he lay awake thinking and trembling, an unusually violent cough from the child startled him; and he sat up in bed to listen. Almost as suddenly it ceased, and he was settling himself on the pillow again when he fancied he heard the child call. In a moment he had struck a light and was hurrying up to Davey's room. When he got there his worst fears were confirmed: a stream of blood was pouring from the child's mouth.

"Don't be frightened, father," said the child, in a hoarse whisper; "I think it has stopped now."

The words pierced to the father's heart. Surely his ears had been deceived! Could it be true, that at a moment such as this, when the child seemed almost dead with exhaustion, and the blood was still trickling from his mouth, he could turn to comfort him? Unselfishness of this kind

was foreign to his own nature, and the philosophers said nothing about it; who had taught it to the child?

But he had no time to follow up his train of thought, interesting as it might have been; for the child's case was urgent, and he must do something. He had heard that ice was a good thing to stop the hæmorrhage; but there was none in the house, and the shops were shut. A wet cloth might answer the purpose, however, so he saturated a towel with water and laid it on the child's chest.

Then he rinsed the blood from Davey's mouth, and bending his face right over the child, kissed his forehead.

A faintly whispered, "Thank you, father," was already on the child's lips, when he felt the kiss, and his dark eyes opened dreamily. A look of mingled hope and wonder lingered on his pale face, and he said, faintly, "Father, do that again, will you?"

With a deep feeling of shame, the little bookseller bent down and kissed the white forehead a second time.

"That was kind," murmured the child, "so kind. I'm sure I don't deserve it, father, after keeping you awake all night."

"Hush, Davey," said his father, hurriedly, "try

and get to sleep, there's a good boy. I'm going for a doctor now."

"No, don't do that, father," returned the child, "I'm ever so much better now. If I come over bad again you can send; but I don't much think I shall."

"Well, can I do anything for you, Davey?" inquired the little bookseller.

"If you wouldn't mind sitting up for a little while," was the earnest reply, "I should like that."

"Yes, yes," said his father, readily, "I'll get my dressing-gown and slippers, and be back in a minute."

When he had returned, and was seated comfortably beside the bed, the child put forward his hand, and said—

"Will you take my hand, father?"

The bookseller responded at once, and placed his hand mechanically in that of the child.

As he did so, some vehicle rumbled past, breaking for awhile the solemn stillness of the room, and Davey waited till the sound had died away.

It seemed extra quiet after that, and the breathing of both could be distinctly heard.

Then the child said, in a grave whisper, "I'm going a long journey soon, father, where Dot and mother have gone."

"No, no, Davey," said the little bookseller, as the grasp of both grew tighter; "the doctor will make you better in the morning. You mustn't talk like that."

Their eyes met, and the child returned his father's restless gaze with a peculiar steadiness.

"Father, you don't think that, yourself, do you?" he said.

Humphrey Bogle remained silent. He did not think it, and he feared to give the child the lie.

"It's a long journey, father," continued the child, "but it'll be a safe one, and my passage has been paid all the way. Supposing *you* were going, father, instead of me, could you say that the passage was paid?"

"It'll all come right one day, Davey," said his father, uneasily.

"Yes, I know it will all come right, one day," repeated the child, "for Jesus must reign until His enemies be made His footstool. The Bible says that, and it tells us that every knee shall bow to Him one day; but then you know, father, some will have to bow in judgment, because they would not bow in grace, and those are the ones whose passages are not paid. Death comes suddenly sometimes, father, and the Bible says, 'Because there is wrath; beware lest He take

thee away with His stroke, then a great ransom will not deliver thee.'"

"Where did you learn these things?" inquired the little bookseller, as Davey paused. He was anxious to divert the conversation.

The child trembled, for he felt that his secret was out at last. His treasure would be taken from him, and his morning and evening readings would have their end now. The very thought of such a thing was dreadful, and he hesitated to reply.

"You don't answer me, Davey," said his father, noticing his hesitation.

"I—I—oh! father, Mr. Deasel gave me sixpence, and I bought a Bible with it, and some candles."

Having said this, Davey expected that terrible consequences would ensue, but he was mistaken.

"I should like to see your Bible, Davey," said his father, quietly.

"Yes, father," and the child's heart beat violently as he took it from beneath his pillow, and surrendered it to his father. He thought that he was looking upon it for the last time.

"What did you pay for it, Davey?" said the little bookseller, after twisting it about in all directions to examine the binding.

"Threepence, father," faltered Davey.

"Now that's a bargain," said his father,

commendingly; "I 'm glad you bought it. It 's a good book, Davey. You may read it as often as you like."

Oh! how happy Davey felt when he got this permission from his father's own lips! He felt like a free man, and scarcely knew who to thank most, the one who had granted the permission, or his heavenly Father who had brought it all about.

Acting on his new liberty, Davey opened his Bible, and began reading to himself; but the exhaustion brought on by so much coughing and loss of blood, was too much for his weak frame, and before long he had fallen into a troubled sleep.

By morning he was feeling stronger again, and when his father spoke to him of a doctor, he smiled at the idea. Then, before his father was aware of it, he had slipped out of the shop, and was on his way to the studio.

Even when the child had been at his worst that night, the artist had been present in his thoughts, and he knew that if the doctor were sent for, and he were ordered to bed, the picture would never be finished.

Every day that week he had been staying late, that the artist might get through his task; and the evening before, he had heard, to his joy, that there was every prospect that after all it would be completed in time. It had been hard work,

tiring work, standing so very still for so many hours; but he had borne the weariness without a sigh, and whatever pain he had suffered had been even pleasure to him.

For the child had an object before him now, and that was to clear the artist's mind altogether of every suspicion of ingratitude. True, the hateful word had been withdrawn, but Davey attributed all that to the kindness of the artist's heart, and considered that the stigma of shame still remained.

When he reached the house the artist was looking out for him, and the usual cup of hot coffee was in readiness.

"Davey, you're worse this morning," he remarked, as he saw the hectic flush on the child's cheeks.

"Oh! I'm all right, sir," said Davey, cheerfully; "I feel quite fresh to-day."

"You've had a bad night, I feel sure of it;" said the artist, who was convinced by the child's looks that something had happened.

"I've had a very happy night, sir," said Davey, evasively.

"And how was that?" inquired the artist.

"Why, when father came up to my room in the middle of the night, he gave me leave to read my Bible as often as I liked."

"And this could make a happy night to a suffering child," thought the artist, "strange—strange." Then he added aloud, "In the middle of the night, Davey, eh? What brought your father to your room in the middle of the night, I wonder?"

The child became confused.

"Now tell me plainly, my boy," said the artist, gently; "you've had a bad, bad night of it, haven't you?"

"Well, I'm better this morning, sir," said the child, earnestly.

"I guessed as much," returned the artist, "your looks betrayed you. But are you sure you feel well enough to stand to-day?"

"I'm quite sure, sir," said Davey.

The hours stole on, and at intervals came the rests, with the sure return to the picture Bible. Dinner-time flitted by, and tea-time, and presently the gas was lighted up; but the child stood firm. The cough had been troublesome from the commencement; but that had interfered but little with the artist, and now as ten o'clock drew near, his own tired brain began to tell him that it was time to send the child away.

"You've been a good boy, Davey," he said, "as good as gold. In another three minutes I shall have done with you."

Whilst he was speaking he thought he saw the child's body sway forward a little; but he took little account of it, and went on with his work. But when he looked up again the child's face had undergone a death-like change, and before he could reach the platform, Davey had staggered forward, and fallen heavily on his face.

The artist rang the bell violently, and rushed forward to support the fainting child.

He was scarcely conscious when the artist took him in his arms; but seemed to recognise the face that bent over him, and as he was being borne away, murmured in a scarcely audible whisper, "I 'm not ungrateful, sir—oh, no—no."

Before many minutes a doctor was on the spot. It was the gentleman who had purchased Bunyan's little book in Mr. Bogle's shop some weeks before. He did not recognise the child, but at once gave orders that he should be put to bed, where he sounded him.

While he was thus engaged the child asked,—

"Do you know me, sir?"

The doctor shook his head.

"I saw you in father's shop on the day of Dot's funeral," said the child, simply; "and some words you spoke were a great help to me."

"Yes; but you mustn't talk now," said the

doctor, though the expression of his face had become one of interest.

"I should just like to tell you this, sir," said the child faintly, "in case I don't have another chance. The words you repeated were these, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light'—do you remember now, sir?"

"Yes, yes," said the doctor, quickly, "but those words were not addressed to you, my boy."

"No, sir, but God intended them for me," was the quiet answer. "I was asleep like the rest of the world, and that call from God woke me up."

"Thank God, thank God," said the doctor, fervently. "Surely His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. The message which I thought was only a message of death unto death, was after all a message of life unto life."

The artist had been standing anxiously by while the examination was proceeding, and now said, in a low voice—

"I trust this is not a bad case, doctor."

"It is useless disguising the truth," was the grave reply, "the child has been terribly neglected; his lungs are almost gone, and he cannot last above a few hours."

Davey's attentive ear just caught the closing words, and his face grew bright.

Only a few hours—a few hours; and he would

be at home for ever—for ever with the Lord. The weariness and the pain would be over then; and over for ever. True, death came between, but what was death to him? It was only a falling asleep; a sinking to rest; for its sting had been plucked out, and he had nothing to fear. The sting of death was sin; but the burden of his sin had been removed, and the One who had borne it away had received the sting in His own bosom.

"You still seem happy, Davey," said the artist, when the doctor had gone; "what an everlastingly happy child you are."

"It's enough to make me happy, sir, when I think of it," returned the child faintly. "Fancy, sir, only a few hours! Why, that's no time!"

The artist started; he did not know that Davey had heard the doctor's last remark.

"And you really wish to go, Davey?" he presently asked.

"Oh, yes," returned the child, with great fervour, "I want to go—I want to go. I daresay Dot and mother will be looking out—for they're sure to know I'm coming."

"And do you not fear to die, Davey?" said the artist, gently.

"Fear to die!" repeated the child. "Oh, no—no. It is not death, sir. 'He giveth His beloved sleep.'"

CHAPTER X.

SUNSET.

"We felt in the lonesome midnight
As we sat by the silent dead,
What a light on the path going downwards
The feet of the righteous shed;
When we thought how with faith unshrinking
He came to the Jordan's tide;
And taking the hand of the Saviour
Went up on the heavenly side."

PHŒBE CARY.

IT was long after the doctor had gone, and long after the busy folk of Hampstead had sunk to rest, that Davey closed his eyes at all; and then his sleep was much broken. The artist remained with him throughout the night, and was indefatigable in ministering to his wants; but with all his care the look of death never left the child's face. Occasionally Davey would speak, and then it was mostly about God or the Bible; save when he would express his thanks

to the artist after receiving anything. These occasions were frequent, as every few minutes there was something to be taken, either in the way of medicine or food: the pillow, too, wanted shifting from time to time, and the bed-clothes re-arranging.

Again and again while the artist sat watching beside the bed, the words of his child-model would pass before his mind; words that had been uttered days ago, and which had fallen lightly upon his ears, but which the loneliness of his present situation, gave opportunities enough to meditate upon and digest.

To tell the truth, he had never thought much about these things before. Life with him had been too full of excitement and bustle to allow of quiet thinking moments such as these; and his ambition for honour here, had made him indifferent about everything hereafter. He called himself a Christian, but little guessed that he was an entire stranger to the first principles of Christianity. Of the power of saving grace and the preciousness of Divine love, he knew nothing. He would acknowledge that he was not perfect, yet had a high opinion, secretly, of his own worthiness. Who could impeach his morality, or deny the rigid justice of his dealings with the world? Like the village blacksmith, he "could look the whole world in the face, for he owed not any man;" and this

was perhaps the more creditable considering that he was an artist. He was liberal in his sentiments, and profuse in his charity; and, in short, had a most exalted view of the dignity of human nature generally, and of his own in particular.

But now as his past conversations with the child were recalled, and he meditated in the silence upon some of Davey's answers and observations, he found that much of his own moral beauty began to fade, and that though he had attained a high place in man's approval, he had after all "come short of the glory of God." The child had told him that *all* had sinned and come short of that glory; and if the Bible were true he must be included in the "all." But the Scriptures also said, "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" and that being so, sentence of death had been passed upon his own soul, and he was "condemned already." Well, this was a serious thought. Reformation was of no use where condemnation had been passed; the only hope for him under such circumstances was mercy; and if he wanted life and pardon he must plead for mercy.

Was it to be had, however? Did the Scriptures give any warrant for making such a plea? They did. The child (who seemed to know his Bible so thoroughly) had told him that "the Lord delighteth in mercy," and that He had concluded all in

unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. Strange that he had never searched into this matter before! The subject was a deeply practical one; and really, if one came to the point, it involved a most important question—the question of a man's eternity!

When he got thus far in his reflections, Davey began moving restlessly in his bed; and presently with a low moan turned over on his side, so that his face was towards the lamp.

"I think it is time to take your medicine again, Davey," said the artist, as he lowered the lamp, which was shining too strongly in the child's eyes. "Let me see, it is the green bottle now, I think."

The child replied in the affirmative, and the artist having mixed the dose, placed the glass to Davey's lips.

"Thank you, thank you," murmured the child, and his head fell back heavily upon the pillow.

Later on, he asked in a feeble voice, "Has father come yet, sir?"

"Not yet, my boy," returned the artist, gently; "but I daresay he'll be here in a few moments. Try and get a little sleep, and then the time won't drag so heavily."

"It doesn't drag very heavy, sir," returned the child, slowly. "I suppose I've been fretty and

impatient, and that is why you think it seems long to me."

The artist placed his hand kindly on the child's forehead.

"No, no, Davey, you 've been good and patient as an angel," he said.

"I 'm glad you think so, sir," said the child, gratefully; "I'm sure I don't want to be impatient. You 've been so good to me, and I 've been trouble enough to you as it is."

"Indeed you mustn't talk like that, Davey," said the artist. "You 've been no trouble at all; but a great help. I only wish, my boy, that I were as patient and good as you are."

The child looked wistfully into the artist's face, and almost immediately asked,

"Would you like to know Jesus then, sir?"

The artist hesitated. For a moment a feeling of pride lingered in his heart, and to answer such a question seemed beneath his dignity. But a remark which the child had made in the churchyard a few days before, flashed suddenly across his mind, and he felt that a moment of decision had come. Was he too wise to become a little child, as Davey had suggested, or would he humble himself for once, and be content to think nothing of his own importance? Which was it to be?

There he hesitated.

"Wouldn't you like to know Him, sir?" pleaded the child, on receiving no reply.

Which was it to be? Again the question was before him, and decision must be made. Hesitation was useless.

"Yes, Davey," returned the artist, "I *should* like to know Him."

The humiliating process was over, and over sooner than the artist had expected. In that moment he had yielded up his will, yielded it up to God; and the very act of submission had made him as a little child. He had passed from darkness to light, from death to life; and all in that passing moment. Immediately he became conscious of a great joy filling his soul, and he fell down upon his knees beside the sick bed.

When he rose again, and looked at the child he found that weariness had overpowered him, and he was in a gentle sleep. So he crept down to his studio, and returned with the big picture Bible; which he spread upon his lap and commenced to read.

How different it all seemed as he read it now! How understandable it was! The very truths which had perplexed him most in the past, became simple as a child's story-book, and witnessed to the reality of his new found joy. A few moments before he had found it well to become as a little

child; now he found it well to remain so. His wisdom, as ever, was only a hindrance to blessing; and he found it was better, like Paul, to remain a fool for the time, that he might become wise. He saw that his faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, because the natural man could neither receive nor understand these things. They were only foolishness to him, because they were spiritually discerned.

Meanwhile the child slept on; and while he slept his father arrived, and took his place beside the bed.

Then presently the little bookseller and the artist fell to talking; and a most edifying conversation they had. Their talk was about the Lord's goodness, and their own conversions; and each seemed anxious to excel the other in his praise of Davey.

And as they talked softly together, Davey dreamed.

He dreamed that he was going along a lonely path on a stormy night, and the clouds were gathering thicker and thicker at his back. All around was darkness, save for a lamp which some invisible hand was holding to direct his feet, and for a light which shone upon the path before him. He pressed eagerly forward, the lamp ever shining near his feet, and the light ever travelling ahead

of him ; and as he drew near the end of the path, he saw a gate at the far end of it, beautiful in form and made of pearl. Directly the light, which was some few paces ahead of him, had reached the gate, and was shining over it, the gate flew open ; and he saw a sight, which, though it dazzled his eyes at first, filled him with a wild joy. There at the shining portal stood his mother, clad in a robe of fine linen, pure and white ; and by her hand she led a little girl, similarly clad, whom Davey recognised in a moment. It was Dot : his own dear little Dot ; and her face was lit up with joy in a way that he had never seen it lighted up before. Rushing forward, he was about to fold her in his arms, when the gate suddenly closed, and the light which he had been following turned off in another direction. The darkness surrounding him seemed to become more dense ; and the even path which he had been travelling, was exchanged for the rough and thorny soil of a great wilderness. Pitfalls were on every side ; and had it not been for the lamp and the light he would have fallen repeatedly, as well as torn himself with the brambles. Then at last he came to the verge of a mighty chasm, and a horror of darkness (to which the darkness he had left behind was as nothing) hung over it. It was a darkness that might be felt ; and stricken with terror, Davey

closed his eyes and stood still. When he opened them again, the light had shifted a little, and was shining down upon the recumbent figures of two men, one of whom was hanging half over the chasm. They were both sleeping heavily; and as the light shone upon their faces, he recognised in an instant his father and the artist. Then he felt glad that the pearly gates had been closed against him, and that the light had led him some little way through the wilderness; and hurrying forward he shouted to them to awake, and to fix their eyes upon the light. This, after many excuses to sleep on, they did; and when they were fully awake, thanked him for rousing them; after which he lost sight of them again, and continued following the light which had now turned back again in the direction of the gate. But, during the interval, the storm which had never ceased beating all the time, had flooded the country nearest the gate; and a great river was now rushing past it. Davey closed his eyes again as he stood on the brink, and began to tremble; and he stood thus till a Stranger whom he had seen in a former dream (a Stranger now no longer) came up to him, and placed His strong arms right under him, saying, "Fear not. Lo, I am with you always even unto the end." With that he felt the rushing waters close over him, and heard them hissing

and foaming above his head; but he was conscious of no fear. The Everlasting Arms were under him, bearing him up; and at that point he awoke, with an ecstatic cry of joy.

"How you startled me, Davey," said the little bookseller, turning quickly towards the child. "We were just talking about you."

The child turned his bright eyes towards his father, and looked down at the Book which he had been reading.

It was the Book with brown covers, of happy and unhappy memories.

"I saw you wake up, father," he said in a weak voice, "but you were nearly falling over."

"Poor, dear child, he's wandering," said the little bookseller, beneath his breath.

"You were both near falling over," said the child, his voice sinking lower and lower, "but He sent me just in time. Shall we thank Him for His kindness?"

The child folded his thin hands and prayed; but his voice had become inaudible before he had finished the prayer. The listeners heard their names mentioned, and the child's heavy breathing, and as they looked at him they could see his lips were moving; but that was all.

Then he lay quietly for awhile, a smile playing on his face, and so remained till the death-film

began to spread over his dark eyes, and the death pallor on his cheeks grew more ghastly.

Then came the convulsion. The raging waters closed over him and hissed and foamed above his head; but underneath were the Everlasting Arms, and the struggle was not for long.

"See there!" he cried, pointing upwards with his finger. "The gate is opening—it's opening! Oh mother!—Dot!—I'm coming—I'm coming!"

Then he fell back upon his pillow with a smile of ineffable joy, and a death-like silence reigned.

The artist looked from the smiling face to the little bookseller, whose head was bowed upon the coverlit, and whispered sorrowfully:

"The Lord is merciful. It is over now. He has gone home."

"No — no!" moaned the poor father, "it cannot be! he is only asleep—Davey boy! Davey!"

But there was no answer, and the hand he took between his own was limp and cold.

"Yes, he is only asleep," said the artist, as he bent down and kissed the child's forehead. "'So He giveth His beloved sleep.'"

* * * * * *

Thus we reach the end. If you would like to know more about the picture, I will tell you just this. The doctor bought it. The artist asked a

large sum, for he thought of keeping it himself, but the doctor had a long purse, and secured it.

The picture was too late for the Exhibition; but that was of little consequence, seeing that it had been sold. People who came to view it, wondered at the strange inscription that was put upon the frame, for this is how it ran: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But the doctor knew all about it; and so did Humphrey Bogle, and the artist.

It is needless to dwell further on the histories of these men, though the task might be interesting, for the two who figure prominently in this story became greatly changed. The artist gave up painting on the Lord's day; and instead of spending the sacred hours of that day in his studio, engrossed with self and selfish aims, he went with others to the house of God, and sang the praises of the redeemed.

In the case of the little bookseller the change was even more remarkable. The Sunday after Davey's funeral (and let me tell you in confidence, he spent twenty pounds on that funeral, and nearly twenty more on a marble headstone for the grave)—that Sunday, he took up his accustomed place on the Green, and told his hearers of the Saviour he had found. Many thought him mad,

and called him crazy; but he said, no, he had been mad all his life, and had only just begun to know what sanity was. And then he told them the story of Davey's life and death, and of his own life, which he said had been, until a few days since, a sort of spiritual death. And before he closed, he slipped in a word about the artist, in case there were any moral ones in the crowd, who thought that they would obtain entrance into heaven in the torn rags of their self-righteousness.

And what more, my reader? Is there anything further to be said, now that I have told the story of my sleepers? Only this. You see, there were three of them—three sleepers—and they were all awakened—imaginary sleepers, if you will, for the story is but a story after all. And yet, are there not many such?—many whose souls are sleeping, though perchance they dream they are awake. For such have I written. For such I send forth those words again, through the medium of this closing page:

"*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*"

THE END.

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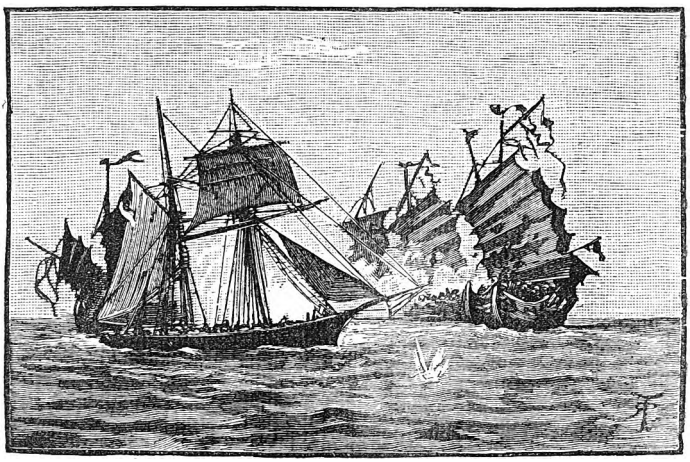

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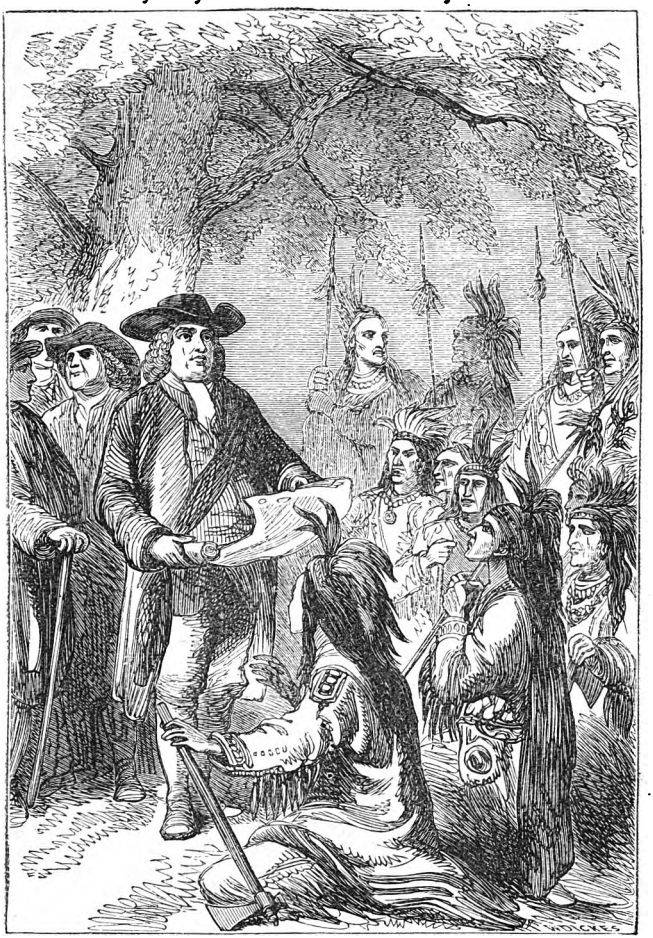

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