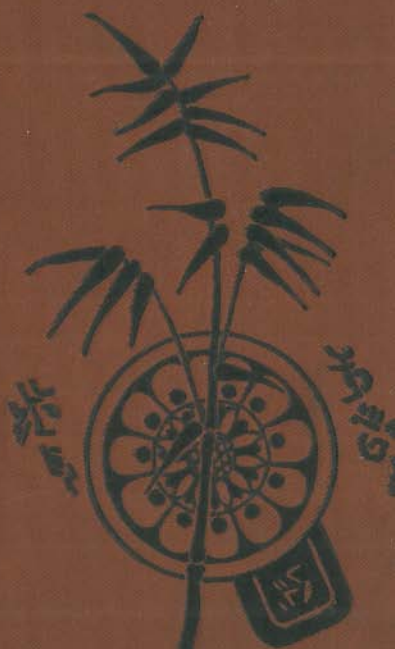



HOME COUNSELS

By Gertrude Martineau



The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is decorated with a repeating floral pattern of small, light-colored flowers and leaves on a slightly darker background. A vertical crease or spine edge is visible on the right side. In the center-left area, there is a rectangular label with a decorative border. The text on the label is centered and reads "WESTGATE" on the top line and "SUNDAY SCHOOL." on the bottom line.

WESTGATE
SUNDAY SCHOOL.

HOME COUNSELS.

BY
GERTRUDE MARTINEAU.

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Home Counsels.

CHAPTER I.

SPEAKING THE WHOLE TRUTH.

NOTE.

These "HOME COUNSELS," with the exception of the last chapter, originally appeared in the *Sunday School Helper*, and they are now published in this separate and more permanent form at the request of many parents and teachers, who found them interesting and valuable aids in guiding and training their children.



AS Agnes went to say good-night to her mother she put her arms round her, and whispered, "Mother, do come and see me in bed." Her mother was struck with the eager, anxious tone in which she said it, and remembered that Agnes had seemed sad and quiet; and she at once said she would come.

When she went into Agnes' room after she was in bed, Agnes hugged her very close, and said, "Mother I want to tell you something. When you asked me why I was late home from school, I said I had been kept late at school to do my sums, because they would not come right."

"Yes, dear, so you said: have you any more to say about that?"

"Well, yes, mother; I did stay to do the sums, of course, but that did not take all the time."

"Then what did you do besides, Agnes?"

"I am afraid you will be angry, mother;—I went down Regent Street with Nellie and Susie, to look at the shops; and O, mother, it was lovely, and we ran along very fast, and Nellie and Susie shouted and screamed, and made a great noise, but I didn't, because I knew you would think it rude to do so."

And Agnes chattered on for a minute or two about all she had seen, almost forgetting that *that* was not what she had asked her mother to come and hear from her. Soon she noticed that her mother was quite silent.

"Mother, she said, are you angry with me?"

"I am not *angry*, Agnes, but I am very sorry."

So Agnes lay still, and waited in silence,—a little afraid to say any more: but after a while she said, "Was it *very* naughty to go mother? I did know that you had told me always to come straight home, now the afternoons are dark; but the shops did look so lovely with all the Christmas things in them."

"It *was* naughty, dear, and you know that without my telling you: of course the shops are pretty; but that did not make it right to go when you knew I had told you not. But there is something else that you did which makes me more sorry than your going with Nellie and Susie about the streets against my wish. Can you think what that is?"

"Because I did not tell you, mother."

"Partly dear,—yes,—but that is not all."

"O, mother, more still? Was I really as naughty as all that? What can you mean that there was besides?"

"Well, you told me yourself what it was when you began to talk to me to-night. You said that you had told me that you had been kept in to do your sums, but that did not take all the time. What makes me most sorry is that you should tell me only *part* of the truth, and not the whole."

"But mother it *was* true that I was kept in, and that that *did* make me late."

"Yes dear, I am sure it was true. But think a little; what made you tell me only that bit of the truth, and not tell *all* that made you late?"

"Why mother, I was afraid you would be so vexed."

"What did you think would vex me most, Agnes?"

"Why mother, my going where you did not want me to go."

"The best way to prevent my being vexed was *not to go*. But you *did* go, and you could not alter that by not telling me."

"No, I couldn't *alter* it mother; but if you didn't know you would not be angry."

"Agnes, there was a servant girl who broke the handle off a jug, and she did not like to tell her mistress, so she stuck it on again with a soft bit of soap."

Agnes laughed: "What a silly girl," said she.

"What did she want her mistress to think when she came into the room?"

"That the jug was *not* broken, mother, of course."

"There was a little boy who was very idle, and drew on his slate instead of doing his sums; and when his teacher began to go round the class to see if the sums were right, he hastily copied his sums from the next boy's slate. What did he want the teacher to think?"

“That he'd done them himself.”

“A man who was selling fruit put all the bruised or rotten cherries underneath, and at the back of his heap. Why did he do that?”

“To make people think that they were all good ones, mother.”

“Yes: and a woman who kept a dairy shop put a label of ‘fresh laid eggs’ on to a basket where the eggs were not fresh at all, but were old ones which she wanted to sell.”

“Then, mother, she was *cheating*, and was a bad woman.”

“Yes, Agnes, that is quite true: and what do you say of the man with the cherries?”

“Oh, he was trying to deceive people, and hide that some of the cherries were bad ones.”

“Yes, that is true too: and what do you say of the boy who copied the sums?”

“I think he was a naughty, cheaty boy, and I'm sure Kenneth would not do so.”

“And what do you think of the servant girl who stuck on the jug handle again?”

Agnes laughed again, and then said, “Well, of course she was cheaty too,—only she was so silly, I can't help laughing.”

“Then Agnes you see that the people who do these sorts of things are ‘cheaty’ people, as you call it: and now I will only ask you one more question. There was a little girl who told her mother half the truth to make her ask no more questions and think it was the whole truth; what do you think of her?”

Agnes jumped up in bed and flung her arms round her mother's neck, and said in a low voice, “O mother, I didn't

see it before,—*I was cheaty too!* I am so sorry; I never thought I *could* be a cheaty girl.”

“Dear child,” said her mother, now that you see it I hope you will not do so again. It was that that made me *most* sorry;—not that you were disobedient, though that was wrong,—nor that you yielded to temptation, which was weak,—nor even that you were not brave enough to tell me plainly, but were ‘afraid,’—but that you were not quite honest and truthful, and wished to deceive me: and yet I know that if someone had whispered in your ear, ‘you are deceiving,’ you would have been shocked at the thought.”

“O yes, mother!—if I had heard anyone say such a thing I should have been *horrified*—if it was someone that I believed.”

“Agnes, someone *did* whisper to you and tell you it was wrong, but you did not listen.”

“O mother, *no!* I am sure I should have listened.”

“Then, dear child, what made you say, when you went to bed, that you had something to tell me, and then tell me all you had done?”

“Why mother, I was unhappy about it, and I knew I had been wrong, so I wanted to tell you.”

“Yes dear, you listened *then* to the whispering voice; but you might have heard it sooner if you had listened; and I think something told you several times when you were out that you ought to be at home.”

“Yes,—it did;—I kept thinking of that a great many times; but still I *did* want to stay.”

“Then who was it that told you ‘a great many times’ that you ought to be at home, and at last told you to tell me all about it?”

Agnes was silent, and then said in a low voice, "I suppose you mean it was God, mother."

"Yes, dear, I do; and when you 'still *did* want to stay, you refused to listen to God's voice. He spoke to you, and you said 'No, I mean to do as I like;' and then as you shut your ears to God's voice you did not hear when He told you it was wrong to deceive me. You did not see it in this way, I know, but it really was like that, was it not?"

"Was it so bad, mother?"

"Not so bad as if you had seen it all plainly, as you do now; but it is always 'bad' not to listen to what God tells you is right: and you see how one bad thing comes out of another; for having been disobedient made you cowardly, and then what you call 'cheaty.' But we have talked enough now, and I am sure you will do better another time. You see God lets you learn by experience; He leaves you free to listen to his voice, or not to listen; and now your eyes are opened to understand what you did, and to find that you cannot go back and do it all over again, but must bear the punishment of sorrow. Dear child, remember always to be perfectly true and straightforward; nothing else is ever right. And now ask God to help you to do better when the next temptation comes."

Agnes gave her mother a warm hug and kiss, and then her mother left her.



CHAPTER II.

COWARDICE, SELF-CONTROL, AND SELFISHNESS.



THE next day Agnes came home at once after school: her mother was alone, and told her that her father had gone out for the evening as soon as ever Kenneth came in from school, taking Kenneth with him.

So Agnes and her mother had a quiet little tea together, and Agnes chatted away about her school and her companions and all that had happened; and when tea was over and all cleared away, Agnes did her lessons; and as she was industrious and had not Kenneth to chatter with, they were soon done. Her mother was sitting sewing by the fire, and Agnes said to her "Mother, give me some of your work that I may help you; I will sew very neatly, and I *should* like to help you to make father's shirt." So her mother gave her a sleeve to make, which made her very happy. And as they worked they talked sometimes, and sometimes were silent. After one unusually long silence, during which the shirt sleeve lay idle on Agnes's knee, and she only made little dabs with her needle in and out of her pinafore, she said, "Mother, I have been thinking to-day of something you said last night, and I don't think I understand it."

"What was it, dear? Perhaps I can make it clear."

"Well, mother, you said that I was *cowardly*: I thought

people who screamed when they were hurt or frightened were cowards: when Susy shrieked because she saw a mouse in the room Kenneth said she was a little coward."

A coward, Agnes, is anyone who lets himself be overcome or mastered by fear. If Susy shrieked at a mouse she let a very foolish fear of a poor little creature that was afraid of *her*, get the better of her self-control."

"O, mother, that's too difficult! I don't understand any better than before!"

"Well, dear, I will try and make it easy. First of all, think about Susy and the mouse. Of course you know that the mouse could not possibly hurt her, and would run away as fast as ever its little legs could carry it; but even if Susy thought it would hurt her, she ought to have tried to be brave."

"Yes, I understand that;—but you said something different before;—what did that mean?"

"You mean about 'self-control'?"

"Yes, that was it."

"Well, if you had a horse to drive, and the horse was frisky, and you got frightened and let the reins go, what would happen?"

"O, the horse would run away, or kick, and upset me perhaps."

"Yes, and you would not be able to manage the horse; you would not be able to *control* him or keep him in order; he would be too much for you. And Susy's fear was like the horse;—she did not keep the reins in her hands and keep her horse in check, and the horse (fear) ran away with her, and she lost control over him."

"Yes, I see: that is nice about the horse, and he was

quite right to run away if she let go the reins: tell me some more about horses."

Her mother laughed.

"Well, Agnes, there are many things inside our minds or characters which we might call horses,—and which, like fear, may run away with us; and, as they are part of ourselves, when we throw up the reins and let them run away we are said to lose 'self-control,'—because we let one part of ourselves go wild and get beyond control."

"O yes, I quite understand that. What are some others of the horses, mother?"

"Can you find out any for yourself, Agnes?"

"Let me see,—Fear,—we have said Fear: what else can there be?—Mother, I am stupid; I can't think of anything else;—tell me."

"If there was something which you and Kenneth both wanted very much, and you snatched it and got it for yourself, what would that be called?"

"Selfish,—horribly selfish:—but, mother, I don't think I *could* with Kenneth, because he is such a nice boy, and my brother; but if it was Tom I might, for I can't bear Tom."

"But it would be the same thing in *you*, Agnes, whether it was Kenneth or Tom."

"O no mother! it would be so horrid of me to do it with Kenneth; but Tom isn't a nice boy."

"But, Agnes, the selfishness would be in *you*; it would not be Tom's fault; it would be a horse that ran away with you, if you let yourself be selfish to Tom; and your not liking him does not turn what is selfish in you into something good."

Agnes thought a little, and stuck her needle in and out of her lap several times. Then she said,

"Well, no;—if I let my horse run away, it wouldn't make any difference who was in the carriage, whether it was a nice boy or a nasty one."

"Yes, that is so. And think of Jesus; was he unkind, or rude, or selfish to people who were not good and nice, and only kind to those whom he liked?"

"O no! he was kind to naughty people: and he said something once about being a doctor to people who were ill."

"You mean when the Pharisees grumbled at Jesus for going to Levi's supper, where there were chiefly 'publicans and sinners;' and Jesus said as an answer to their complaints, 'they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.'"

"O yes, that was it; I like that, and I think the grumbling Pharisees must have felt so small, and I like that too, for they were so cross to Jesus."

"Well Agnes, you see it is selfish to try and get something for yourself when another person wants it too, whether you like the person or dislike him."

"Yes,—so it is," said Agnes, a little doubtfully, "but, mother—"

"But what, Agnes?"

"It is *nice* to give up what I want to you or father or Kenneth, but it *isn't* nice to give it up to Tom or people I don't like."

"No, it is not easy to find it nice at all in the same way; but if we know that we *ought* to give up, it feels much better to do so than *not* to give up."

"Better, mother? Why? Does it make people happier?"

"I don't think it always does make them feel exactly *happier*, dear, but it is always *better* to be unselfish. Some people have felt that they ought to give up something they want to some one they do not care for; and so they have given up their own wishes because they *loved God* and *loved right*, even if they could not love the person to whom they gave up: and this has brought peace to them."

"Mother, if it does not mean '*happier*,' I don't think I know what 'peace' means."

"Perhaps if I tell you a little story you will understand it better. On board a great ship, where there were many sailors, there were two men who did not like each other, and they sometimes quarrelled, for both had hot tempers, and Parry was very rude and rough and very often behaved ill. One evening Parry insulted Allen, and a quarrel arose, which ended in a fight, and it was only the captain who at last put a stop to it. When the two men went into their cabin that night they felt that they never could be friends. Allen had a wife and four little children left at home, and Parry had an old mother and a sister and a crippled brother. For several days they did not speak to each other, but were sullen and silent when obliged to be together. One night a great storm arose, and the poor ship laboured along in great distress; the masts had to be cut away, and the cargo thrown overboard; and several of the men got washed over into the sea and were lost. The boats were all smashed or washed away, and the ship no longer obeyed her rudder, and had to be left to drift. At length she struck on a rock, and the water began to pour in. The captain told the men to save themselves if they could, for land was within sight,

and some few might possibly reach it. There were some life-belts and life-preservers; and without these there was scarcely a chance of escape in so fearful a sea. But when all these life-preservers had been given out, there were still several men who had none; and as they saw their companions leap off the sinking ship into the awful water, they knew that their own chance was not half what these had: and yet one by one they leaped—out into the darkness, and the foam, and the black water. Parry stood looking into the water—clinging still to his life,—(for no life-preserver had fallen to his share,) when Allen rushed up from below, and in his hands he held a life-preserver; he had found just one old one still left, and had seized it; but as he came in the dim darkness to the edge of the deck, there was one solitary, clinging figure; it was too dark to see who it was, “Are you not all gone?” said Allen; “I thought I was the last.” “We two are the last,” said Parry. Why did his voice make Allen silent and trembling? Parry could not see the life-preserver; he would not know that Allen had it. Why should Allen not keep it? He did not speak, he did not think; he flung it over Parry’s neck, and leaped into the sea. Parry struggled to land, almost dead with the buffeting of the sea; but Allen’s body was washed ashore soon after, lifeless. Parry saw it, and he stood over his old companion with a heart full of sorrow. He reached his home: and the meeting with his old mother and his sister and brother was happy indeed; and the look of peace on the dead face of Allen never left his memory.”

Agnes was crying now. “O, mother,” she said, “what a sad story.”

“You see, Agnes, it would have made Allen ‘happy’ to go home to his wife and children; but if he had got there by a selfish deed he would not have felt ‘*peace*.’ Do you see the difference?”

“Yes, mother, I do.”

“And when men and women, and boys and girls even, were taken up and cast into prison on account of their religion, and then were led away to be burnt, you can easily fancy that their noble, faithful hearts had many a loving, longing thought of their homes where they had been happy, and where it would be so pleasant to be again, if only they *could* be there: and yet they could not *buy* that *happiness* with a lie, and though they knew that just a word would set them free and send them home again, they could not speak a word that was untrue. So they bravely met their terrible death, and peace no doubt was theirs.”

“O mother, how could they bear it? I know they *did*; I know I have heard stories of their walking bravely towards the fire, and singing hymns on the way;—and not struggling and screaming even when the fire burned them. How dreadful! I *know* I should have screamed.” Agnes was silent for a minute and then added—“Yes,—I must be a coward; you said I was cowardly, mother.”

“What I meant when I called you cowardly for what you did, dear child, was that you were *afraid* to come and tell me the truth at once. Do you remember now what people it was that I said were cowards?”

“Yes, mother; people who let themselves be overcome or mastered by fear.”

“Well, dear, you let fear get the mastery over you and so *you* were cowardly. Is it not so?”

"Yes; I think I understand about it now. I can't think how I could do it. Mother, I think I shall speak the truth out at once next time."

"Well, now, Agnes, give me your work and go to bed; we have talked enough for to-night."

"O, mother, I have done so little work! my sleeve is only begun. How lazy I was!"

"You were too busy thinking to work much, but I must put it away now."

So the quiet evening came to an end; and Agnes was soon in bed and sound asleep.



CHAPTER III.

COURAGE.



ONE evening, when lessons were done, Kenneth and Agnes sat with their mother whilst she did her work. There was always plenty to talk about, and Agnes especially was always ready to talk. So she began:

"Mother, Kenneth says boys are always braver than girls."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "I think they're *made* so."

"It isn't fair," said Agnes, "and I don't like it."

"Well, mother," said Kenneth, "isn't it true? If there's a ladder to climb, the boys go up at once; and the girls go a few steps and then they're afraid and begin to shake, and come down again. If there's a single plank over a stream to cross, the boys run over and back again while the girls are shivering at the edge and making up their minds whether to go or not."

"I think, Agnes, that Kenneth is right, that boys have generally more delight in adventure, and in trials of skill and hardihood than girls; and that they *like* running into danger and doing daring things better than girls do. Girls would very seldom do really dangerous things for mere pleasure as boys do."

"Yes,—I told you so, Agnes," said Kenneth.

"Well but Kenneth," said his mother, "I don't think things are really unfairly divided between the boys and girls, if we think about it quietly. You are quite right in thinking that people are differently made, and that they can't all do exactly alike; but I am not sure that it is right to call all this that boys feel 'bravery' or 'courage.'"

"But mother, a boy or man can go into battle, and he likes to hear the guns fire, and all the noise, and bustle, and fighting; but when a lot of us went on to a man-of-war and saw one of the big cannons fired, all the boys laughed with delight at the big bang, and all the girls put their hands over their ears, and some of them cried with fright."

"Yes, my boy, men and boys have generally very strong, active bodies which like and need a great deal of activity,—work and stir and exercise; and they have a kind of strong-heartedness and bravery which belongs to their *bodies*, which is of very great use in the world, and without which a great deal of its hard and disagreeable work would remain undone. Something to battle with, something to be overcome, some trouble to be met and conquered, rouses their energies, and makes them eager for the struggle. But this is not exactly courage; it is rather a sort of hardihood and energy."

"A soldier is brave, mother! good soldiers are never afraid."

"Soldiers are very brave, Kenneth, but I do not think they would be half so brave if they were 'never afraid.'"

"But mother," said Agnes, "I thought people who were afraid *weren't* brave."

"I have heard it said that young soldiers when they first

go into battle are often terribly frightened, and would give *anything* to be out of it; but that after they have once conquered their first fear, they seldom feel it again."

"If they are so frightened, mother, I wonder they don't run away," said Agnes.

"If they did," said her mother, "they *would* be cowards, do you know why, Agnes?"

"Yes, because they would be letting their fear master them and run away with them, like the horses you told me of."

"Yes, and because they did not do that, but mastered their fear and stood to their posts, they were brave."

"I never thought of soldiers being frightened, mother," said Kenneth.

"No, Kenneth, I dare say not; but I think that is because you cannot realise what going into a real fight is like: you think of the drums, the cannons, the wild rush and excitement; and you have never felt what it is like to have cannon balls and shots and shells flying close to your head and all around you, and to see your companions drop beside you, and to know that the next shot may hit you yourself. I hope you may never be in a battle, my boy, but if you ever are, I trust you may have true courage."

Kenneth was silent, and Agnes looked at him, and then said,

"Ken wants to be a soldier, mother."

A silence followed, and then Kenneth said,

"Yes, I do: I wonder whether I *should* be afraid. Then you say, mother, that it is *not* cowardly to be afraid."

"No; people cannot help being afraid of what is terrible or awful. But if we let fear pursue us like a great

giant, and if we turn our backs and fly whenever anything terrible comes, *then* we are cowards."

"I was talking to a young soldier in the train the other day," said Kenneth. "He seemed very brave, and he said there was nothing to frighten anybody. I thought I could never be as brave as he, for I felt sure that I should be afraid of *some* things."

"I am inclined to think, Kenneth, that no one is truly brave who does *not* know what it is to be afraid."

"That sounds very odd; tell me what you mean, mother."

"The sort of courage that is never afraid is like the courage of an animal,—a lion or tiger; but the sort of bravery that *conquers* fear comes from the person's character,—his mind and reason,—which makes him able to be brave in spite of fears."

"Tell us a story, mother; I can always understand best by stories," said Agnes.

"Two little boys in a school had done something very wrong, and were to be caned for it. One of them, James, was very much afraid, and he screamed and kicked and tried to get away, and behaved so wildly that some of his companions laughed at him. The other boy, Ben, stood very still, but his face was terribly white, and his hands were clasped so tightly together that he dug his nails into his hands but did not feel it. When his turn came he was quite still and made no sound; and when it was over the colour slowly came back to his face, and as he sat at his place tears began slowly to run down his cheeks. When the boys went out to play all his companions laughed at James, and called him a little coward; but he was angry

and declared that he '*wasn't* a coward,' and that he '*wasn't* afraid,—not a bit.' Ben said very quietly, '*I* was, dreadfully afraid; I am afraid I *am* a coward.' 'Not you, Ben,' said his companions, 'you are a plucky little chap,—you never made a sound.' 'He cried,' said James, 'I saw him crying afterwards.' 'Yes,' said Ben, 'it was very stupid, but I couldn't help it; I always am so frightened of anything that hurts.' The boys looked surprised, and said, 'Well, you *are* plucky, for you bear it so well; we thought you didn't care.'

"O mother," said Agnes, "I do understand that. Ben was brave because he managed to bear it so well and to say nothing."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "though I wonder at a boy minding a flogging as much as all that."

"Oh, *I* don't," said Agnes,—"*I* should have been in a terrible fright."

"Yes, but you're a girl, and that's just the very thing; girls *can't* be as brave as boys, I do believe."

"O no,—that can't be true, mother, can it?"

"No, dear children, girls can be as truly brave as anyone in the world. I will tell you another story:

"Several children were left alone in the house one day when their parents had to go out. They were told to be very good and careful, and not to get into mischief, and they promised. They thought it delightful to be left alone. They employed and amused themselves well; and Ruth, the eldest girl, who was about twelve years old, was very kind to all, and amused and cared for the younger ones. At last it began to get a little dusk, and Ralph, who was eleven, and a rough, merry boy, came into the room with

the lamp, which he wanted to light. Ruth said, 'No Ralph, mother doesn't let us touch the lamp; we can do very well without it till mother comes; come and let us sit round the fire, we will make a blaze, and then tell stories.' But Ralph refused. He said he wanted to look at pictures and read, and he could not wait any longer for the lamp; and Ruth spoke in vain,—he *would* light it. Little Oliver wanted to see it lighted, and scrambled on to a chair, and Ralph took off the glass, and struck a match, and lighted the wick. It flared up high, and Oliver wanted to blow it out, and began scrambling on to the table, and Ralph pushed him away hastily, and he fell on to the floor, pulling the table cloth to save himself; and down went the lamp on to the floor with a crash, and the oil was all spilt and caught fire, and the whole side of the room was in a blaze in a moment. Ruth caught up Oliver almost before he reached the floor, but the part of the room near the door was all ablaze, and the children not daring to run through the fire were imprisoned on the side next the window. They all shouted and screamed with all their might, they threw rugs and carpets and all the things they could lay hold of over the flames, but they blazed on worse and worse. Then Ruth threw the window open, and shouted out into the street for help, and someone heard and ran off for the fire engine; but the lighted oil had run under the door and set the stairs on fire, and the children saw no hope of getting out that way. They could only wait till help came; and the fire came nearer and nearer, and it was scorching hot. Ruth wrapped Oliver and Jenny together in a woollen shawl, as they had cotton frocks on. Ralph stood close to the window and cried aloud, and shouted for help,—and the little ones

screamed and clung to Ruth. Ruth's face was as white as a sheet, but she did not scream; she held the three younger ones in her arms, and told them to be quiet, and that help would come,—though in her heart she did not feel sure that it would come in time. She put herself between the children and the fire, and she felt the fearful heat nearer and nearer; and though the draught from the window drove the flames back a little, she knew the fire was coming. She felt it scorching her legs, below her short frock,—she felt her hair singeing; but she gently comforted the younger ones, and *prayed* Ralph to be brave. At last, O, how long it had seemed!—there came a shout from below. Ralph stopped crying to hear. Ruth looked over the window sill (they were in an upper storey) and saw that the people were holding a blanket below. 'Throw the children out,' cried a voice. Ruth took Jenny in her arms, wrapped the shawl close round her arms so that she should not cling to her,—and dropped her over the window-sill. She dared not look,—she felt quite sick;—but Ralph looked, and a shout arose, 'All right! now the next!' Oliver was to go next. There was no shawl for him, and he screamed and clung to Ruth. Ruth cried 'O! Ollie, look—there is Jenny quite safe,—dear Ollie, go,—I am so hot,—I will come after.' 'Come with me, Ruthie!' cried he in agony. 'No dear, the blanket wouldn't catch us both at once.' And whilst he looked down and hesitated she dropped him too. Again the cry came, 'Hurrah! all right!' 'Now Ralph, jump,' cried she. 'I daren't, O! I *daren't*, Ruth.' He clung desperately to the window-sill on which he was sitting. But as he spoke Ruth tore a piece from her frock and in an instant tied it round his eyes, and

as he sat clinging to the window-sill she suddenly and with a jerk loosed his hands and pushed him over. Again the shout of the crowd below told her that *he* too was saved. But as she sat on the window-sill herself, ready to jump down in her turn, the shout in her ears melted away, her head swam, and she fell,—not *out* at the window, but *in*, where the fire was raging more and more. But just then a ladder came, and a policeman rushed up and looked into the room, and reaching over to the floor he picked up Ruth by her frock and carried her down, all unconscious. Her hair was burnt off with the heat, her frock was all singed and brown, and her stockings were scorched into tinder, and the back of her poor legs, which had been nearest to the burning floor as she stood between the children and the fire to keep off the heat, were terribly blistered; but she was not burnt, only scorched. She was taken to the hospital and well nursed, but she was ill for a long time, and had fearful dreams of fires, and of falling out of the window, for a long time. The others were not hurt, and they were cared for by the neighbours, till the parents could be fetched home; and then they were told all about everything, and how brave Ruth had been. ‘Ruth didn’t cry,’ mother,’ said Ralph, ‘not one bit.’ ‘*Ralph* cried, mother,’ said Oliver. ‘Well I do not wonder that he cried,’ said his mother, holding him fast in her arms. Ralph hung down his head, and said humbly, ‘Yes, it was Ruth that was brave; I wasn’t.’”

“Well,” said Kenneth, “I don’t wonder that Ralph cried; I think I should have shrieked too, loud enough, when I saw the flames, and had to jump out at the upstairs window: it was enough to frighten anyone.”

“Yes,” said his mother, “and of course all the children were terribly frightened; it would have been a wonder if they had *not* screamed and cried.”

“Yes,” said Agnes, “and even Ruth was frightened, mother, though she was so brave.”

“Yes, Agnes, I think she was quite as much frightened as any of them. Why did not she cry, do you think, and what was the difference between her and Ralph?”

“Perhaps Ralph was more frightened, mother, though he was a boy, because he was younger.”

“I do not think that that was the difference, though, Agnes.”

“Ruth was the eldest, mother, and had to take care of the others, and she hadn’t time to think of anything else;—perhaps that was the reason.”

“Yes, her thoughts were too full of the others to leave her any thought for herself. She was just as much frightened, but she was master over her fear for the sake of the younger ones. When she had seen them safe, and had only herself to save, she fainted away.”

“I *am* glad they were saved; and that Ruth was brave. Now Kenneth,—a girl *can* be just as brave as a boy.”

“Yes,—braver than lots and lots of boys; I was stupid to think they couldn’t be.”

“Then, mother,” said Agnes, “being afraid *doesn’t* show that I am a coward?”

“No dear, if you conquer the fear that you cannot help *feeling*, and *act* bravely, you are much more truly brave than if you acted bravely and felt no fear.”

“O dear, I am so glad. I was afraid I was a dreadful coward, for I am always feeling frightened at things; and I always do try to be brave in spite of it.”

"That's the way, Aggie!" said Kenneth, "there's hope for you then; perhaps you'll turn into a soldier some day after all!"

Agnes laughed, and they kissed their mother and went to bed.



CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER SORT OF COURAGE.



ONE evening the little home party were unusually quiet. Lessons were done, and Agnes had a story which she was reading. Her mother was at her work, but Kenneth, who was usually merry and busy, sat silent before the fire with rather a gloomy face, and seemed to be thinking deeply. His mother fancied that he was in trouble, but she knew that if so he would most likely tell her, so she asked no questions. At last he said suddenly,

"Mother, I am in a mess; I don't know what to do."

"What is the matter, my boy? Can I help you?"

"Perhaps so, mother, you always do."

Agnes put down her book to listen.

"Well, dear," said his mother, "tell me what is the matter."

"It's a long story, mother, but I'll try. Some time ago the boys at my school talked of getting up a cricket club.

I thought it would be splendid, for there's nothing like cricket, and we all talked it up, and thought of little else in all our play-time; and I thought all the school was to belong, and that the best cricketers would be leaders, and so on. So I went in for it like anything. Then I found out, what I never thought of before,—that we should have to pay a subscription each; and I found that my subscription would take nearly all my pocket money."

Kenneth sighed.

"Well Kenneth, don't you think it worth it?" said his mother.

"O, but that isn't all, mother; for after I had gone in for it I found that it had been settled that all the members of the club must have dresses alike,—flannel, and blue caps: and now I don't know what to do. I told one or two of the boys that I wasn't sure that I should join: and then they got into a wax and said I was *bound* to join, that I had gone in for it all along, and that I was one of the best players, and all sorts of things. And I didn't say any more, and they all believe I am going to join the club. But you know, mother, father and you told Agnes and me that father was very badly off just now, and that we must all spend as little as ever we can, so I knew I ought not to ask for the cricketing suit."

"I am very sorry, dear Kenneth, but I am afraid we cannot get you the clothes for some time to come."

"Then what am I to do, mother?"

"Well, if they are really made a necessity for the club, I am afraid you can't belong to it at present."

"But, mother, what am I to say? how am I to get out of it?"

"Why, dear, say that your father can't afford it."

"O, mother, I should be ashamed to say that!"

"Ashamed! what of, Kenneth?"

"To say that my father can't afford what other fellows' fathers give them. Besides the boys would call me mean to draw back now."

"But Kenneth, there is nothing to be 'ashamed' of in having a father who is less rich than other boys' fathers. Your father has to work hard to support us all; and nothing can be more honourable to any man than to work hard and honestly. I should be sorry to think you had any of the foolish pride that looks down on work as something to be ashamed of."

"O no, mother, I don't; but then you see lots of fellows do,—or at least they always think you mean if you say you can't afford anything. If it were tarts or sweets or anything of that sort I should not a bit mind holding off and saying that I couldn't afford them, even though very likely they would call me mean. But, then, those are rather greedy things; but this is a good thing whatever way you look at it; and it would be so jolly to belong to it, and go out twice a week all summer for matches or games."

"Yes, my boy, it is a capital thing, and I am very sorry; but though it is harder to you to refuse than tarts or sweets, I do not see anything else to be done but to tell the boys frankly and honestly that you are very sorry that you cannot belong to the club at present if new clothes are necessary, as your father can't afford to give them to you."

Kenneth tried hard to keep back the tears, which he

thought were babyish. After a time he said, "Well mother, of course I must tell some of the boys that I can't belong; but I won't tell them why."

"But, my boy, it would really be much *better* to tell them why."

"And get called mean and stingy? that would make giving it all up doubly hard."

"Dear Kenneth, I do not think it would; you had much better tell the reason: tell them that your father was ill for three months and unable to work, and so that he has not the money to spare; and then if any boy calls you mean or stingy he is a very hard-hearted fellow, and not worth a thought, or rather, probably he would not *really think so*, even if he said so in a fit of vexation."

"Yes, of course I should despise the fellows who said it,—but still I don't want to hear them say it,—even though it wouldn't be true."

"Then, Kenneth, I think you are wanting in courage."

"O no, mother,—that would mean that I'm *afraid*. I'm not *afraid*."

"I think you are, Kenneth; you are afraid to hear the foolish boys laugh at you or ridicule you. That is want of moral courage."

"I don't think I know exactly what moral courage is, mother."

"It means courage about things that belong to your mind and character,—your *inner* life,—just as the other kind of courage belongs to your body. If you refrain from telling the boys that you cannot afford to buy cricketing clothes from dislike or fear of being quizzed or

laughed at, you are not brave in your character, and are not anxious enough to uphold what is right and true to make you feel that nothing else really matters."

"I don't see that it matters to the boys *why* I can't join them."

"Well my boy, that is another question, but the reason you gave for not telling them is what I was answering; and that reason does seem to me a cowardly one."

Kenneth thought in silence for some time. Then he said, "I am afraid that *was* the reason that I didn't want to tell. I never thought I should be cowardly. I suppose I must tell them after all; but it *is* horrid."

"I think as you have been led so far into the plan, and as they are expecting you to join, and rather as one of their leaders, that you owe it to them to give them some reason for calling off."

"Mother, I suppose you couldn't *lend* me the money, and let me pay it off by degress out of my allowance?"

"O mother," said Agnes, "*do*, and I will give Kenneth all my allowance too till it is paid!"

A silence followed, but soon Kenneth said vehemently, "*No*, Aggie, *never*; I couldn't—I hope I never *could* be so mean as that."

"Why not, Kenneth? It would be *so* nice to see you in pretty white flannels with a blue cap. How much would they cost? and how long should we have to save up."

"O ever so long;—don't talk about it, Agnes;—I wouldn't touch your pennies, though it's awfully nice and good of you, you good little chit. What do you think I'm made of?"

"Why, is it worse than borrowing from mother?"

"O mother has more money than you."

"I am sure I use my pennies to amuse myself much more than mother does her shillings, Kenneth."

Another silence.

"Yes, of course: mother doesn't use her shillings to amuse herself with at all; but I thought perhaps just for a time we might do without something, so as to save up."

"Well, that's just what I mean, Kenneth; if you and I joined our money together we *should* do without some things till you had got your clothes; and nothing would be nearly so nice to buy with the money as those things for you."

"No, Aggie, we can't do it," said Kenneth resolutely, "the money wouldn't buy the clothes for ever so long,—we haven't enough; but if it would, if you had a shilling a week instead of a penny, so that a few weeks would do it, I wouldn't touch a penny of it."

"Well, Kenneth, I don't see why you should be so proud;—you might just as well take my money as mother's:—mother, *do* tell him to do it."

"No, dear Agnes, I think Kenneth is quite right in refusing."

"But *why* mother? I don't see at all."

"Because I think Kenneth feels that it would be selfish in him to swallow up all your money for weeks and months to give himself some pleasure that he wants."

"Yes, mother, that's just it; any way Agnes, child, I couldn't do it,—so there's an end of it."

"And I do not wonder that Kenneth thinks it rather a different thing to ask his mother for the money from

what it would be to take it from his little sister; for you see, Agnes, I *do* buy him his clothes, so it is quite natural that he should come and ask me for any clothes that he wants."

"Then, mother, isn't it quite natural too that he should have them?"

"No, dear, because he has got all the clothes that are necessary to keep him neat and respectable, and I cannot afford just now to buy him any more that are not necessary. That would be letting him be selfish in another way, for the money that bought the new clothes would have to be taken from something else in order to afford them."

"Ah well!—I *am* sorry, Kenneth," said Agnes. "What will you do?"

"Do without them; go to school to-morrow and tell the boys. I see I ought, and so I will; and there's an end of it."

"And an end of your cricket club too, Kenneth?"

"Well yes, I suppose so," said Kenneth, sadly.

Agnes slipped her arms round his neck and whispered, "I *wish* you'd have my pennies, Ken."

"No, chick, no,—not for worlds;—good night," said Kenneth, and with a kiss they both went off to bed.

Kenneth's face looked very cheerful and resolute in the morning, but nothing was said about the cricket club till he came back from school in the evening. He burst into the room to his mother and Agnes, and flung down his cap and books, saying vehemently, "Mother, you were right; and I *was* a coward, and nothing was half as bad as I thought."

"Dear Kenneth, I *am* glad," said his mother, "how did it all come about?"

“Well mother, after school we had a meeting in the playground, and I was in a great funk; but luckily one of the head boys began speaking to me as if I was to be one of the club, and asking me to be one of the managers, so that made it easy to speak up: so I said I was sorry but I couldn’t belong to the club at present. Then the fellows broke in and made a row about it, and when I could say anything again I told them how it was. A few fellows said it was a shame; and one chap said my father *must* be stingy, and I gave him such a whack that he won’t say it again in a hurry; and some of them laughed; but I told them about father being ill, and that we weren’t rich, and that I must wait a bit. They were awfully good-natured; and one fellow said he’d get his father to give me a suit of clothes.”

“O Kenneth, that was a kind boy,” said Agnes; “what did you say?”

“O, of course I said that couldn’t be,—that neither father nor I could possibly accept that; and I said I had no doubt I could wait if I tried.”

“Well, my boy, you did quite right,” said his mother.

“Well mother, Kenneth is not cowardly *now*,” said Agnes.

“Ah but Aggie, one thing made me see that I *should* have been cowardly if I hadn’t done as mother said.”

“What was that?”

“A small boy came up and stood beside me, and he looked very much as if he’d been crying; but after I’d told the boys, he said *he* couldn’t join either (and he’s a very good player too though he is little) because his mother was poor, and he would never be able to have a flannel suit.

So I took the small chap off with me, and he told me he’d never have had courage to speak out if I hadn’t done it first. So we talked about our mothers and homes, and he was quite jolly before I came away; and he said he didn’t mind about the cricket half so much now. And so you see I felt what a mean rascal I should have been if I hadn’t spoken up.”

“Yes, Kenneth, it is very nice when things turn out clear and plain like that. I think it is God teaching us our lessons.”

“But mother, lessons are often very hard to learn,” said Agnes.

“Yes, but sometimes they turn out easier than we expect, Agnes. We complain and grumble beforehand that they are too hard for us, and we try to get off learning them; and then when we have done them we wonder that we were so cowardly.”

“Well, mine wasn’t a quarter as bad as I expected, mother; and now I’m sure I shall quite enjoy going to look at the other chaps play, though I shall want *awfully* to be one of them, often enough, I know! Now let’s have tea,—I’m so hungry,—and I’ll be cook and make the toast. So blaze up old fire, and boil the kettle!”



CHAPTER V.

PUNISHMENT.



and after tea she silently got her lessons and worked at them; but after a while, her mother, who was watching the two children at work, saw that Agnes was hanging down her head, and sitting very still, and that she was crying.

ONE afternoon Agnes came in from school looking very much as if she had been crying. She was evidently not in a good temper, and she was very silent and sulky. When Kenneth came home, and they had tea, she cheered up, and was better, but there was still a cloud over her;

“Agnes, dear,” said her mother, “are your lessons hard, and do you want help?”

But Agnes did not answer,—and a minute later she got up slowly, and buried her face in her mother’s lap. Kenneth, who was sitting near, put out his hand and stroked her head, and said “Hullo! little woman, what’s up?”

“O mother,” she sobbed, “O Kenneth, what shall I do, what *shall* I do?”

“What is it, dear child?”

“O mother, I was punished at school;—I never was before; and it’s such a disgrace,—I *can’t* go back to-morrow.”

Kenneth looked very grave. “*Punished*, chickie, who on earth punished *you*? You’re a good enough chick, I’m sure. What in the name of wonder did you do, and what did they do to you?”

Agnes dried her eyes sadly, and sat on a stool by her mother; and Kenneth laid down his book and sat on the hearth-rug.

“Tell us, Agnes, what it was all about,” said her mother.

“O, it was only fun, mother,” she said; and then added angrily, “I’m sure Miss Lucas *likes* punishing us.”

“Have you been punished before, Agnes?”

“No, not I, mother, but other girls are always getting punished by her, for *nothing*.”

“No, not for nothing, Agnes, that could not be.”

“Well, for little, tiny things, mother; and it *is* a shame.”

“What was it to-day, Agnes?”

“Well, mother, it was because I did a scribble in my copy-book; and I am sure *that* was nothing.”

"When did you do it: was it in lesson-time?"

"O yes, mother, it was when Miss Lucas told us to write a composition; we were to write how we liked best to spend a holiday afternoon."

"And had you done it before you did the scribble?"

"No, mother, I'd only just begun; and then I stuck, and couldn't think of any more to say; and then Jenny and Nellie were whispering and laughing, and they whispered to me, and I listened; and then Miss Lucas caught us and told us not to talk; and then Jennie and Nellie began again very soon, and they were quizzing Miss Lucas because she had such a funny dress on, and they tried to draw her, and they didn't make it like, so I drew her, and it was ever so much more like, and then——"

"Here she is," cried Kenneth, who had seized Agnes' copy-book and opened it.

"O, don't, Kenneth! I don't want you to see it."

"But I *have* seen it, and I *do* see it," said Kenneth; "it's first-rate; bravo! very good!" And he laughed and held up the picture to his mother, and then laughed again. Their mother took the book gently from him, and turned back from the drawing to the lesson on the page before it."

"The drawing may be good, my boy, but, Agnes, where is the lesson? this one seems, indeed, only just begun."

"And so it is, mother; I hadn't time to do it, because Miss Lucas pounced upon me; and though it was Jenny and Nellie who began, she only found out me, and picked *me* out to be punished."

"How long were you doing the drawing, Agnes?"

"O, a good while, because I had to turn back the page whenever Miss Lucas turned round, lest she should see."

"But, Agnes, you had time to do the drawing: why hadn't you time to do the lesson?"

"O well, mother, I suppose I *had* time,—but—well, I did the drawing instead."

"Yes, that was it: and, Agnes, a few days ago you were so sorry to think that you had been a 'cheaty girl': do you know that you have been so again?"

Agnes looked very grave. "Do you mean because I did something that I had to hide?"

"That is one reason: you tried to make your teacher think that you were doing your lesson, whilst you were really playing. But you were cheating your teacher in another way also. When you go to school, all the school hours are to be given to what your teachers wish you to do. Play is for play hours, and when you play in school hours you are cheating your teacher out of some of the time that belongs to her."

"Nellie and Jenny began it, mother; they are worse than I."

"Never mind about Nellie and Jenny; *you* are *my* little girl, and they have *their* mothers to talk to them. Whatever they did does very little to alter what *my* little girl did. Did you understand, dear, what I said about your teacher and your school-time?"

"Yes, mother, I think I did."

"Well then, listen again: there was something else that was wrong too."

"O mother, the *poor* little chit," said Kenneth; "she's not a bad chit,—do let her off!"

His mother laughed, and so did Agnes.

"No, she's not a bad chit at all on the whole, Kenneth,

and that is why I am talking to her ; if she were a bad chit she would not understand so well, or try to be a better one as much as she does :

“ Well, dear, when your father sends you to school he gives you opportunities to learn, and expects you to use them ; if you idle your time away, and do not learn all you can, you are in a sort of way cheating father.”

“ O dear !—am I ? I never thought of all this ; what a lot of things there are to think of ! ”

“ They will all come easily and naturally to you if you are in earnest, Agnes, and try more and more to be what Kenneth calls ‘ a good chit. ’ But it is to help us to remember these things, and to do what is right, that we must all sometimes be punished.”

“ *Why* should we be punished, mother ? *Why* doesn’t *telling* do ? ”

“ Did not you say that Miss Lucas did tell you not to talk, and to go on with your work ? ”

“ Yes, mother, she did, several times.”

“ Then you see telling was not enough ; you were not obedient, and so you had to be punished that you might remember another time that trifling would not be allowed, and that you were doing wrong in wasting your time.”

“ Well, I shan’t *forget*, mother, but still I think Miss Lucas was very unkind ; and then she *might* have found a nicer way of punishing me.”

“ What did she do to you, Aggie ? ” said Kenneth.

“ She stuck me up on a chair in front of all the girls, with my hands behind me, with my back turned, and I had to stand there till school was over.”

“ You think she might have chosen a ‘ nicer ’ punish-

ment, Agnes ? But, you see, punishments are not meant to be ‘ nice ’ ; if they were, they would not *be* punishments, and you would not mind getting them again. Miss Lucas wanted to give you something to bear which you would dislike, and not want to have again ; and you see she succeeded.”

“ No, I’ll take good care not to get *that* again if I can help it.”

“ And, Agnes, my child, you do wrong to think Miss Lucas was unkind in punishing you ; most likely she would much rather have let you off altogether, but she knew that you had been idle and naughty, and deserved punishment, and so she knew that it was her duty to give it to you ; you had *earned* it.”

“ Well, she *did* tell me she was sorry, and didn’t like to punish me, but I didn’t believe her.”

“ Then it was *you* who were unkind, my child ; and what is more, she would have been unkind if she had *not* punished you.”

“ Why, mother,—how could that be ? ”

“ Because you were not sorry for doing wrong, and she kindly *wished* you to be sorry, that you might do right next time.”

“ Miss Lucas said she would not have punished me if I had been sorry, mother.”

“ Yes, that is what all our punishments are for,—to make us sorry.”

“ Then if I had been sorry before I was punished I should have got off being punished ? ”

“ You would not have had to stand on the chair, Agnes, your punishment would have been different.”

"But, mother, Miss Lucas said she *should not* have punished me if I had been sorry."

"No, dear, *she* would not have punished you, the sorrow you felt would have been your punishment, and *that* punishment would have come from God, who put the sad feeling of sorrow into your heart."

"Does *God* punish people, mother?—how does He do it?"

"In very simple ways, dear Agnes; He has put His whisper into our hearts, and we cannot disobey it without a punishment following."

"Tell me something to make it plain, mother."

"If a boy at school is tyrannical and unkind, he loses the love and respect of his schoolfellows; that is the natural punishment of his fault, and though no one on earth who could punish him ever knows of his fault, that boy has met with a punishment in the consequences which follow what he did."

"Yes, and he would deserve it too," said Agnes.

"If a servant girl steals something, she loses the trust of her mistress."

"And she would deserve that too."

"If you were left alone in charge of a baby, and in ill-temper or anger you struck it, or were unkind to it, how uneasy you would feel, and how the baby's cry would ring in your ears!"

"Yes, indeed, I should think it would, mother! Poor little baby!"

"A little boy took some fruit that was not his; and though no one was near he swallowed it down so fast, with fear and trembling, that he did not enjoy it, and the fright

and anxiety lest he should be found out were *his* punishment."

"I am glad he didn't enjoy it,—greedy little boy!"

"A man did a very wicked deed, and he went away and travelled far, hoping to forget; but he never could forget, and the horror of his wickedness followed him about and tormented him. That was his punishment."

"That was like Cain, mother, when he had killed Abel."

"Yes; and was not this perhaps what is meant by God *putting a mark* upon him? He was different from other people because he had done something different,—worse than what anyone else had done."

"Yes,—poor Cain,—how miserable he must have been; no wonder he said, 'my punishment is greater than I can bear.'"

"And, Agnes, there is another very terrible sort of punishment that comes to us all when we have yielded to temptation to do wrong."

"What is it, mother?"

"That yielding *once* makes it easier to yield again, and harder to say *no*."

Agnes was silent for some time, and then said softly, "Yes, I know that." And then she added, "Our teacher told us never to go along one passage into one of the rooms, but always by the other; some of the girls wanted to go, and said it was shorter. I said I wouldn't go, but they laughed at me, and most of them went—so I went just for once, and now we always go that way, unless the teacher is near."

"Well, Agnes, you had your punishment in being less conscientious than before you went; but now that you see

it you will not do it again ; you will go the other way, and perhaps you may be able to lead other girls to do right too. It is always very sad when people let their consciences be darkened by yielding to what is wrong ; it is like drawing down the blind that you may not see ; you are shutting out God's light from your soul."

"O, mother, I wish I could remember ! and I am always doing such dreadful things !"

"No, dear, not very dreadful ; God knows that we are weak, and He is sorry for us when we slip and fall, and lifts us up, and bids us try again ; but we must try and remember more and more, and do better and better. We must try never to do *worse than we know we ought* to do, and though we may often fail, yet if we have *tried* God will give us a blessing, and help us to try again. And now, dear children, we must not talk any more ; you must go to bed and to sleep."

"Well, mother, I see now that Miss Lucas was not unkind for punishing me."

"I don't believe she *meant* to be unkind," said Kenneth, "but I think she might have let you off, chick."

"No, Kenneth, my boy," said his mother, "I think it was much more true kindness to punish Agnes, and she showed how truly kind she was when she told Agnes that if she were sorry already she would not have punished her, because then the work which the punishment was meant to do would have been done without *her* punishing Agnes."

"Well, I wish she'd punished the whole lot of them, for Agnes was not the only one, nor the worst ; she *ought* to have set the whole row of them on chairs, with their hands behind them, and they *would* have looked comical !"

Agnes could not help laughing, but her mother said, "Don't make fun about it, Kenneth, for Agnes is really sorry that she was idle and disobedient ; I wish the other girls who were so also had been punished, as it would have been much better for them ; but you see *our* business is not with them, but with our own little maiden here ; and I think now she understands it all better, and will know the meaning of things better than she did."

"O yes, mother ! and thank you ever so much ; you are so patient with us, mother, and you explain things so that I can always understand."

"I am glad you feel that, dear ; I like to feel that I can talk to you, and that you really understand, and *care* to understand these things."

"Mother, there's just one thing I want to say, and that is that I was *angry* when Miss Lucas punished me ; I was sorry too, but I didn't want her to think so ; I was angry with her, and I was sorry with myself."

"Yes, I understand that, but you are not angry now, and you are sorry ; the anger did not last long, but the being sorry for what you had done was stronger and deeper than the anger, and grew stronger as the vexation died away. That is quite natural."

"Well, mother, I know what I shall do to-morrow : I shall go to Miss Lucas and tell her I'm sorry, and I don't care who hears me say it ; and I shall try and not listen again to Jenny and Nellie."

"Good-night, then, my dear child : and good-night, my boy, and God bless you."

CHAPTER VI.

BEARING DISAPPOINTMENTS.



GREAT pleasure was in store for Agnes, for she was to bring back Mary, one of her little school-fellows, with her to her home, where Mary was to stay for some days. Agnes was reckoning on it extremely: she spent a long time in making her room look as nice as she possibly could, for it was the next day that Mary was to come back with her after school, and all must look beautiful then. Night came, and bed-time, and Agnes thought as she lay down, "to-morrow night I shall have Mary!" and with that happy thought she fell asleep. She did not waken again till morning, and then jumped up before her mother came to call her, and was soon dressed. Her mother was later than usual in coming to call her and when she came she kissed her and said, "Agnes dear, Kenneth is very unwell, and I want you to run for the doctor, as I do not feel at all easy about him. Be as quick as you can."

So Agnes ran off, and was soon back again, for she was impatient to hear about Kenneth. But she was not allowed to go and see him; and when his mother took him some breakfast he could not take any; and then Agnes had to

go off to school before the doctor came. School-time passed, and Agnes ran home to dinner, and rushed in, saying, "Mother, how's Kenneth?"

But the mother's face looked troubled, and she answered, "He is very poorly, dear, but perhaps he will soon be better."

"Did the doctor come, mother?"

"Yes, dear, he came. He cannot tell yet whether Kenneth has only got a bad cold, or whether it is anything worse coming on."

"O mother, dear, don't be anxious; I dare say he'll soon be well."

"Yes dear, I hope so, but we cannot tell yet."

"Anyhow, mother, you mustn't look so sad; Kenneth is sure to be all right with you to look after him: people must be ill sometimes, I suppose, though its very horrid."

Her mother said, "I am a little anxious about Kenneth, Agnes dear; but what makes me feel most sad just now is that I have got a disappointment for my little girl to bear."

"A disappointment, mother?" said Agnes, looking very blank; "a disappointment? and because Kenneth is ill?"

"Yes, dear; and it is such a sad disappointment to me too, that you must help me to bear it by being brave about it."

"O mother, what is it?"

"The doctor says, dear, that he cannot be sure whether Kenneth is going to have scarlet fever, and you know that is a bad illness which people often catch from others; and so it will not be right for us to have Mary here at present, and you must put off her visit till Kenneth is well, and till it is quite safe to let her come."

Agnes looked up straight into her mother's face, but her little face grew so sad that her mother felt grieved for her. She saw that Agnes was struggling to be brave, and she stroked her head gently, and said, "I know it is a grievous disappointment, dear, but you shall have Mary when Kenneth is well."

The tears began to drop now, and she cried silently for a little while: at last she said, "How long will it be, do you think, mother?"

"Dear child, I cannot tell, If it is only a bad cold he will be all right in a few days; if it should be scarlet fever it will be many weeks before Mary may come."

"But mother, if Mary may come we won't go near Kenneth, and we will be *so* quiet."

"Yes, dear, but that is not it; someone else might take the fever, and it is never right to run any risk of giving it to others."

"Mother, I don't see how I *can* wait all that time. I got my room ready last night, and we were only longing for the evening to come. O mother! I don't think I *can* bear it!"

"My dear little girl, I think you can, though it is very hard to bear; but you will try and be brave and good, I know. Get on to my knee, and I will tell you a story."

"O mother, I *do* like your stories, but I don't think I want one just now."

"Well, try and listen; I shall not be long, as I must go and see after Kenneth soon. There was a young boy at school who was bright and good and industrious. He worked so well that one day the master told him that if he went on as well as he was doing he thought he might go

in for an examination with several older boys, and have a chance of being sent to a higher school and having his schooling paid for, so as to save his father. Charlie was delighted, as he knew his father would be so glad; for his father was a poor man, and worked very hard to get his children well taught."

"Like *our* father, mother; go on about Charlie; did he do it?"

"The time came very near: Charlie's whole mind was set and bent to get the 'scholarship,' as it is called, and all seemed going as well as possible; he told his mother about it, but kept it a secret from his father, that he might surprise him. The examination was to be in a few days, and the master told Charlie one evening that if he did not miss *one* day he might succeed, but that if he missed even *one* he would have little chance. Charlie came home and told his mother this; but the next day he was ill, and there was no chance of his going to school for many days at least, and so his chance was lost."

"O mother! poor boy; what *did* he do and say?"

"I do not know, dear, for I have not asked him yet; but poor Charlie has a sad disappointment to bear, and his friends must all help him to bear it, and if they are kind they will hide up any disappointments of their own in thinking most of his."

"Then, mother, do you know Charlie? who is he?—I never heard of him."

Her mother smiled and said, "He is upstairs in bed, dear; Charlie is our own Kenneth."

Agnes sat up straight and was very silent. Then she burst out, "Is it a *true* story? and is it really Kenneth?"

"Yes, dear, it is."

"And was he really trying to get the examination, and with big boys? and had he a chance? and did the master tell *you*, mother?"

"Yes, Agnes, it is *all* true, only the boy's name is Kenneth instead of Charlie."

"O poor Kenneth,—dear Kenneth!—and I'm not to go and see him? But mother, perhaps he'll be able to go to school again to-morrow, and then if he works *very* hard he can make it up, and get the—what did you call it?"

"'Scholarship,'—no, dear, there is no chance; for if he were ever so much better to-morrow he must not go to school and work for many days; it would be sure to make him much worse, even if he could do it, and his head aches terribly."

"O, I *am so* sorry! and he never told father?"

"No, he wanted to surprise him: he was so eager about it, and was reckoning so on being able to say that it was all done and settled;—*quite* as much as you were reckoning on having Mary, Agnes."

"Yes, we have both got things to bear, mother. Give my love to Kenneth, and say I'm as sorry as *can* be; and that I don't see how he *can* bear it,—only he is always brave, so I suppose he will; and tell him I'm going to be brave about Mary too, and if we're both brave together it will be easier."

"Yes, dear, I will tell him, but you must be patient, for at present he does nothing but lie very drowsily; and till he speaks himself about his disappointment I must not speak to him about it, or remind him. He has to be kept very quiet, and at present I don't think he has thought about it at all."

"That's very odd, mother; I should have thought he would have thought of nothing else."

"I think he feels ill, dear, and is only half awake. We must be very patient; but when he begins to talk about it I won't forget to give him your message, and it will help him to bear his trouble. I am sure it will be a very real trouble to him, poor boy. Now eat your dinner, and I will write a note to Mary's mother, and you must go off early enough to take it to their house on your way to school: that will explain everything to her, and you can tell Mary all about it, and you must help each other to bear the disappointment. I hope it may not be for long, and Mary shall come as soon as ever it is right for her. God sends us things to bear, sometimes, Agnes; and I think it is nice to try and bear them bravely and lovingly, to show our thanks for all the happy and beautiful things he gives us. Soldiers have to endure hardships and privations; and God's good soldiers must endure hardness too. I think God sends trials to try us and see what we are worth. People who never had anything to bear would grow weak and spoiled, like children who have too many sweets."

Agnes laughed and said, "Yes, like Tom and Milly; they are *always* eating sweets, and they are no use to play with; they are always crying and saying we hurt them when we play; and they say things 'aren't fair,' and they 'won't play,'—and I wish they *wouldn't* play with us; and if their mother hasn't any sweets for them they cry till she gives them a penny to go and buy some: it *is* horrid."

"Well, God never gives us things because we are spoilt

and cry for them ; but if we bear our disappointments well and lovingly, God turns them into blessings."

"O mother, how ?"

"Dear child, it is time for you to go ; I must not stop to tell you now. I think you will see it some day, as I do."

"You might tell me about it when you have time, mother. I'm going now ; I've got the note. May I tell Mary Kenneth's secret ? It would make it easier to her to bear the disappointment."

"I think you may, dear, for we must soon tell your father, and he is not likely to hear it first from Mary."

So Agnes ran off, and reached Mary's home in time to go to school with her ; and the two little girls talked over their trouble together, and kissed each other in the street, and cried a little together ; and then Agnes told the story about Kenneth just as her mother had done, calling him "Charlie," and then saying, "And who do you think Charlie was ? Why our Kenneth !" And the story was so interesting that Mary forgot her own disappointment for a time ; and she agreed with Agnes that that was much worse than what they had to bear, for she was to go and stay with Agnes still, before long,—they had only to *wait*, but poor Kenneth had lost his chance. So when Agnes came home in the afternoon she was as bright and cheerful as ever ; and though she sighed once or twice in thinking of Mary, she felt much the most sorry for Kenneth, and kept asking whether he had said anything about the examination. Still her mother said : No,—that he was very drowsy and did not rouse himself or speak ; and that they must wait. Agnes found waiting harder than anything ; but though Kenneth woke up for a little tea he

hardly spoke ; and his mother told Agnes when she came back to her that she must go to bed and try to sleep, and that would make the time go more quickly ; and they must hope for Kenneth to be better in the morning. So she went, and was soon fast asleep.



CHAPTER VII.

BEARING DISAPPOINTMENTS (Continued).



THE next morning Kenneth was soundly asleep, and did not awake till Agnes had gone to school. When his mother peeped in to see if he were awake, she found him sitting up on the side of the bed, looking quite bewildered. When he saw her he said, "O, mother, what have I done,—what time is it? I must be quick and go to school;—I'm afraid it's late, and if I am late I shall lose everything. Why didn't you wake me sooner?"

"My dear boy, do not worry yourself. I came in many times, but you were asleep; and you are not well, that is why I did not wake you."

"O what *am* I to do?—O mother, my examination! did you forget? O dear! O dear!"

And Kenneth began to cry, which was very unusual with him, all the time fumbling about for his clothes; but his mother gently laid him back in bed and covered him up, saying, "My boy, you must not cry; you must stay in

bed at present, till you are better, and I will bring you your breakfast. It is very hard for you to bear, but I know you will try and be a brave boy, and do as I ask you, even though you cannot go to school. I will go for your breakfast now, and then when I come back we will talk about it. But do not fret now."

Poor Kenneth felt very tired and weak, so he said no more, but lay still and made a great effort to stop his tears. "What a fool I am," he said, "*baby,—idiot!*" And these strong words seemed to help to bring back his self-control; and when his mother came back with his breakfast he looked more like himself. He took his breakfast in silence, and then when he had nearly done he said, "What time is it, mother?"

"It is eleven o'clock, dear; do you feel better now?"

"O yes, I'm all right. Mother, do you think I might go to school this afternoon? Perhaps if I worked very hard I might do the work, as I've only lost one morning, and make up."

"My boy, you must not work hard at present; you have worked too hard lately, and the doctor says you must be idle and take a holiday for some time."

"The *doctor*, mother? Has he been here?"

"Yes, Kenneth, don't you remember seeing him yesterday?"

"*Yesterday*, mother? Why surely I was at school yesterday?"

"No, dear, you were in bed all day; I did not know that yesterday was all blotted out to you; is it so?"

Kenneth looked round the room in a puzzled way, and then said, "I think I do remember seeing Dr. Banks, but I

must have been nearly asleep. Then, mother, I have lost one day already?"

He dropped his hands despairingly on the bed, and his mother sat down on the bed and took his hands in hers.

"Yes, dear, you have been very poorly; we were afraid that you might be going to have scarlet fever, but now I hope it is not so. I have been so grieved for you, to think of your great disappointment. I feel as if all our love and sympathy could hardly make up to you for it; but your father and I shall not feel the disappointment ourselves, if only our boy gets well,—though for *you* we do feel it sorely."

The tears again began to come, and Kenneth said, "O, mother, is it really all over? is there no hope?"

"No, dear boy, we must give it up; it is much the hardest for you."

"I did so reckon on telling father," said Kenneth, "and Mr. Taylor said I had the best chance of anyone."

"You shall tell father still, my boy, and I know how pleased he will be that you have done so well. And then, you see, though you don't gain what you wanted, you have gained all the knowledge, and all the good, steady industry that was needed for so young a boy to get so far."

"But, mother, it will seem as if I had nothing to work for, and it will all be so stupid and blank."

"Yes, dear, that is a feeling that most of us know; but it is one which God wishes us to conquer."

"Do you think I ever can, mother; Fancy going to school again, and nothing to work for and look forward to."

"Kenneth, when I was a young girl we had some friends who had been boys and girls with us. We were all

poor, but we were very happy, and were all great friends. As we grew up, the boys all went to work. One of the boys, Roger, grew up a very noble, upright young fellow; another brother died, and the third did not turn out well, and was always in trouble. Roger worked for everyone; and when his father died also, Roger supported himself and his mother and sisters. The girls worked too, but could not bring in very much. It was all that Roger could do to keep the home together. Then he came to love dearly a young girl whom he wished to marry; but he knew he could not marry for years to come, because he could not make a home of his own and neglect his mother and sisters; so though he loved her deeply he did not ask her to be his wife; he waited till he should have a home to offer her. After a time he heard of a very good situation in Scotland, where he would have much better pay; and to this he went, and sent home money to his mother and sisters till he could save enough to remove them also; and then they went to live with him again. Now with better hope he worked on, saving up every penny that was not wanted, till, after years of toil and patience, he had enough saved up to make him feel that before very long he might marry, and still support his mother and sisters. Then he took his journey back to London, meaning to see the girl he loved, and ask her to be his wife; but on the morning after he got there, when he was longing for the morning to pass that he might call and see her, he saw in a newspaper the news that the bank where all his money was saved had failed,—and that all the money was gone. He dared not see Mary; he went back to Scotland, and learnt that all his savings were gone, and he must begin all his years of toil

over again. Then he felt as you do, that all was blank,—that he *could* not go back to his work and begin all over again. His hope seemed gone. But yet his love was so strong that after a little while he felt that he *must* go on and try again. He had still his situation, and his good salary, and he might save again. And so, with his heart full of longing, and love, and uncertainty, but with a brave and cheerful face that made no one suffer for his sake, he began all again."

"Poor old chap," said Kenneth. "He *was* good and plucky. Did he get her at last?"

"Yes, after years of waiting the time came at last. He is dead now, but he had a very happy home of his own for many years with Mary."

Kenneth remained quiet a little while, and then said gently, "He *did* get what he wanted at last. Well, I can't do that now." And his eyes filled again with tears.

"No, dear,—not that one thing; but there is a great deal left for you to work for; and I think you will soon feel this yourself when you are once back in your school life again. You are in the midst of the hardest part of your trial now; but when once the struggle is made, and you launch forth again upon your school work, you will see the need and the pleasure of working once more."

"Well, perhaps. You always do know best, mother." One sigh, and then a long silence, his eyes were cast down and his hands lay very still in each other. His mother thought he was asking God to help him to be brave and to start afresh.

After a while she said, "A little girl had a great pleasure in store in the visit of a little friend; but her

brother fell ill, and she had to wait for her pleasure till he was well. She thought she never *could* bear her disappointment; but she heard that her brother himself had a worse one to bear, so she bore her own cheerfully for his sake."

Kenneth suddenly looked in his mother's face, and said quickly, "Why, mother, that's our chit! Has she been disappointed of Mary, and all because I was ill? O, the *poor* little chit,—I *am* sorry!"

"Yes, dear, it was very hard for her, but she is very good about it, and she is to have Mary as soon as you are well enough."

"O, mother, send for her now, I shall be all right directly. I'll get up now," and he jumped out of bed; but he was so giddy that he had to scramble back again with his mother's help, for fear of falling.

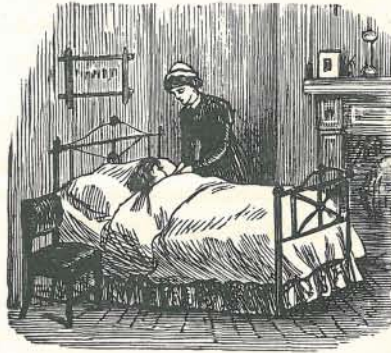
"You must not be in a hurry, dear,—you can't get well all at once, and Agnes is quite content now to wait patiently."

"Well, I'll be good and do *all* you tell me, mother, to get well as quickly as I can, and then Mary can come. Mayn't I see Agnes? I want to talk to her."

"Not to-day, dear; she is longing to see you too, but you must wait a little; but she sent you a message." And then his mother told him what Agnes had asked her to say to Kenneth. Then he said, "Give her my love, mother, and say she's a good little chit, as I always said; and we'll have fine fun together, we three, very soon. And may I see father to-night when he comes in? I want to tell him everything."

"Yes, dear, you shall see him as soon as he comes in. He was very anxious about you when he went out this morning."

And when the father came in he and his boy talked over all the trouble and disappointment together; and both were satisfied,—the father with his boy's industry and good conduct, and the way in which he took his trouble; and the boy with his father's pleasure with him, and kind and loving words.



CHAPTER VIII.

ENDURING HARDNESS.



FEW days later Kenneth was much better, and able to be up and sit with his mother and Agnes again in the evening. They had their work, and he was sitting near the fire, very quiet, for he was feeling sadly that he would soon now be able to go back to school; and that it all felt very dull and stupid, now that he had no longer the scholarship to try for. Agnes felt very sorry for him, but she hardly liked to say much, for fear he should cry, which she knew he would not like. After a long silence she said, "Mother, you said something about soldiers when you were talking to me the other day,—about hardships. I remembered some of it afterwards, but not all. Will you tell me more about it?"

"It was St. Paul who said the words you mean, Agnes, when he wrote to Timothy: he knew that Timothy would have many things to bear when he went about preaching, and he told him to 'endure hardness, as a good soldier of

Jesus Christ.' Jesus was his leader, whom he was to follow, and he was to try and do like his leader, as a soldier follows *his* leader ; and to try and be a 'good soldier.'

"I suppose soldiers do often have a great deal to bear, when they really go out to war, though they look comfortable enough at home."

"Yes, when soldiers go out into active service, as it is called, they often go through great hardships : they sometimes have to bear hunger, or heat, or cold, long marches, sore feet, painful wounds, terrible thirst, and many other trials ; and it is wonderful how cheerfully they can bear things which we should think almost unendurable."

"Yes, they *are* brave fellows! Kenneth wants to be a soldier, mother," said Agnes, glancing at Kenneth. "Would he have things like that to bear ?"

"I am afraid he might, dear Agnes ; and anyone who goes to be a soldier must be ready and willing to bear all such things cheerfully and bravely."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "I know that. I often think about it ; and when I get hurt, or tired, or anything that I don't like, I remember the soldiers, and want to be like them."

"It doesn't seem fair that the soldiers should have so much to bear, and other people so little," said Agnes.

"It is true, Agnes, that many people do *seem* to have very little to bear ; but we cannot always tell, and a great many people have quite as much to bear as any soldiers. I often think that we are *all* God's soldiers, and that that makes it easier to fight our enemies and bear our troubles."

Kenneth looked up at Agnes, and said, "I think some things are worse to bear than those things which the soldiers have to bear."

"O Kenneth ! *could* there be anything worse ? Think how bad it is only to be *thirsty*, and then think what it must be to *die* of thirst, or of a terrible wound, or all sorts of things like that."

Kenneth was silent, and looked into the fire. His mother saw that his eyes were full of tears. They were all silent for a little time, and then his mother said, "Those sorts of things are very terrible, more terrible than anyone can quite understand till he has to bear them ; but some troubles that come are really harder to bear well, and to make up one's mind to, than those."

"I can't think of any, mother, do tell us about some," said Agnes.

"Well, dear, Kenneth wants to be a soldier : there was another little boy whose whole heart was set on being a soldier ; and one day at school, to get out of the way of the boys, he climbed on to a wall with snow on the top. The boys pulled him down, not in the least meaning to hurt him, and a heavy stone fell with him, falling on one foot and crushing it. Poor Hugh had to lose his foot, and he had terrible pain to bear with that ; but there was another pain besides his foot, can you tell what that was ?"

"O mother, he could never be a soldier with only one foot !"

"Yes, that was it : it was a bitter disappointment to him ; and it was one which could never be cured in the way of his getting what he wanted."

"Was there *any* way for it to be cured, mother ?"

"Yes, by his looking his trouble in the face and bearing it bravely ; he might feel himself God's soldier then, fighting his enemies."

“What enemies, mother?”

“O, a great many: I think they came on him like giants; one was the temptation to complain, and make other people unhappy, instead of being cheerful; another was to be selfish, and let other people do things for him when he ought to learn to help himself as much as possible; another was to keep thinking all the time of how much he had wanted to be a soldier, instead of trying to think what he could do now, and trying to make up his mind to his hardship; and learning to endure hardness manfully. All these, and many others, I dare say, were hard to battle with, but it had to be done if he was to be worth anything; and he was very good, and fought them bravely.”

“I never thought that ‘endure hardness’ meant these sorts of things, mother; I only thought of bearing cold, or hunger, or pain, and such things.”

“The other kind of bearing is as hard to our souls as those are to our bodies, dear: perhaps they are all the harder sometimes because they have to be borne chiefly alone.”

“Tell us a story to make us understand, mother, it is so much easier to remember by stories.”

“There was a young man who was an artist; he had not been brought up as an artist, but as a carpenter, but his whole mind was set on painting. When he was at his carpentering he used to draw on the planks, on the bits of wood, on the bench, and on the walls; he seemed hardly to know that he did it, and his master was always scolding him about it, and he felt ashamed; and yet he did it again,—it seemed as if he could not help it. He was a lad then, and one day an artist came to the carpenter’s shop to order a

box to pack up a picture in, and he saw the lad’s drawings all about, and asked the master who did them. Hubert stood near, covered with shame and vexation, whilst the master angrily pointed to him and said, O, sir, it’s that idle lad; you see how he wastes his time and mine, and how little good I can expect of him.’ The artist looked at the lad’s red face; but all he said was, ‘You’ll never make a carpenter of *him*.’ ‘No, never, sir,’ said the master, ‘he’s no good to me; I shall send him away.’ So the gentleman left, but he saw that the lad’s drawings were very clever, and that his heart was in his drawing, and not in his carpentering; and that evening when Hubert left his work he met the gentleman in the street just outside, and was surprised when he took him by the arm and made him walk beside him. He asked him about his drawing; whether he had ever learnt; whether he wished to learn, and so on; and then went with him to his home, and got his father’s leave to give him something to do in his painting room, and to teach him to draw and paint. This was a new life to Hubert, and he felt as if he were in heaven almost. Every day was a joy and happiness, and he learnt fast and well, and got to paint well. He was very poor, but he pinched and saved every penny he could. After a while he determined to paint a real large picture. His mind was full of his subject, and day after day he worked at his painting, and for months he did nothing else. Almost all his money went in models and materials; and the little he earned was not nearly enough to pay his lodging and his living. But the man whose house he lived in was kind, and Hubert said if he would only wait till his picture was done and sold he would pay it all up. His picture was done at last, and in

time to go to the exhibition ; and whilst he waited to know its fate he employed himself in doing small drawings to sell to poor people for small sums, to decorate their rooms. In this way he earned a little,—just enough to buy his scanty food ; but the debt for his lodging remained and grew larger, and he fixed all his hopes on his picture. At last the time came when he could learn whether it had been put into the exhibition, and he went to inquire. His heart beat so fast and his head swam so that he could hardly control himself enough to find his own name on the list. And when he found it he learnt that his picture had *not* been admitted and must be fetched away. All his months of labour and enduring hardship came to nothing ! With despair in his heart he carried away his picture. What should he do ? Sell it he *must*, and at once. He took it about to all the shops where pictures are bought and sold,—all over the town : no one would buy it, or even try and sell it for him. I cannot tell you all he went through, nor how miserable he was. He could not bear even to *seem* to beg, and so for a long time he did not go to the house of the artist who had first taught him to paint. But at last he was so broken in spirit with his disappointments and despair that he *did* go to the house to see if he could get any advice from his old master ; but when he got there the house was shut up, and notices of ‘to let’ were in the windows, and no one in the neighbourhood could tell him where the artist was gone. The man where Hubert lodged told him now that he could keep him no longer, as he could not afford to get no money for his room ; and Hubert at last told him that he must keep the picture instead of money, as he had none to pay. He had grown thin and weak and ill for want of proper

food and clothes ; and one day, as he was wandering about the streets in search of a job, he fell down, fainting and ill, and was taken to a hospital. He was ill for a long time, but kindly nursed ; and as he began to recover he learnt to look his trouble in the face ; and he resolved that when he was well he would go back to his carpentering, and earn money to pay his debts, and to live upon, before he painted any more, unless it were in his spare times. And so he did ; he got work to do, and worked patiently month after month ; and every week when he received his wages he went and paid all that he could possibly spare to his old landlord till at last the debt was all paid off. Then he carried back his poor picture again to his lodging, and all that he could now save he laid by carefully. He painted some little things, and managed to sell these, and so added to his little store ; and one day, after years of this sort of work, a man who had a shop and bought some of his little pictures, asked him if he had no larger ones ; so he took his poor old picture there, and the owner of the shop said it was very good, and that he would put it in his window for Hubert, and see if he could sell it. And after it had been in the window some time, it was bought, and poor Hubert at last found himself the possessor of £60. After this he got on, and his sorrows and hardships and privations were over.”

“I *am* glad he got all right at last, mother,” said Agnes. “He *did* have a bad time.”

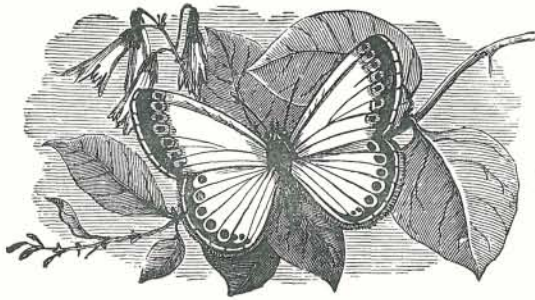
“Do you see now a little better about enduring hardness, Agnes ? Besides all his privations he had the pain and hardness to endure of disappointment in every one of his dearest hopes.”

"Yes, it was dreadful for him about that poor picture, after all his months of work and thinking about it."

"But you see he was wise enough to go back to what he cared so little for as his carpentering, to earn his living, after his illness; and to see that even what we like least must be done. And I have no doubt that he was a better painter, and that his pictures had much more life and depth in them, on account of the strengthening he received through self-denial and struggle against difficulties. He was a better soldier for having passed bravely through the fight, and learnt to 'endure hardness.'"

"I don't think, mother, that Kenneth and I shall ever forget 'endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ' again. I'm glad it is a short sentence, it is nice and easy to remember."

"Yes, and it is always a great help to have little sentences in your mind which come up again when you need them. It makes one's work in life easier. And now to bed my children, and good night, and do not dream of hardness, but lie soft and warm in your beds."



CHAPTER IX.

ENDURING HARDNESS (Continued).



OR several days Kenneth and Agnes were very busy, and the evenings were too full to leave any time for talks with their mother over the fire. But on Saturday evening there were no home lessons to do, and many clothes to be mended for the next week, so Agnes and her mother set to work with their sewing, and Kenneth got out a drawing which his father wanted to have copied, and there was once more a long, quiet evening before them. They had not been long at work when Agnes said,

"Mother, 'enduring hardness' has been in my head ever since our last talk, and I do think it is very hard. Wouldn't it be much nicer and better if there were nothing to endure?"

"I don't think God thinks so, Agnes, or He would have made the world very differently."

"How do you know, mother? how can you tell what God thinks?"

"By seeing what He *does*, Agnes, and how He plans and arranges the lives of His creatures and His children."

"Tell me what He does, mother; I should like to learn to find out what God thinks; I didn't know we could."

"Well you see, Agnes, we find out what *people* think by what they *do*. If a man is kind and gentle and just you know what sort of thoughts he has. If your father refuses to let you have or do something that you would like, you look into his face to see what he is thinking, and why he refuses you; and, if you cannot find out, you *trust* him, and know that his thoughts were there, though you cannot understand them."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "father's splendid. I'm sure we should always know *his* thoughts were good, even if he refused us ever so many things."

"A little boy's mother went out one cold day, and before she came back the little boy put her shoes to warm before the fire for her; but he was so anxious that they should be *very* warm that he put them too close, and when she came back the shoes were all shrivelled up with the heat, and roasted."

Kenneth and Agnes laughed, and Kenneth said "Poor little chap,—and he didn't succeed in warming his mother's feet after all."

"No, but still his thoughts were made plain by what he did, were not they? What were his thoughts, Agnes?"

"Why, that he loved his mother very much, and wanted to make her *very* comfortable."

"And in much the same way that we can read each

other's thoughts we can read God's thoughts; as you know your father's thoughts partly, and where you do not know them you *trust* him, so we partly read God's thoughts, and where we cannot understand we can trust Him."

"Only, mother, when I don't understand father I can look into his face and *see* that he is kind, and when I don't understand what God means I can't see Him."

"No dear, not in the same way, with your eyes; but still there is a way in which we can feel God's kindness quite as real as father's; and as you grow older I think and hope you will feel this more than you do now. When you have been tempted to do wrong and something has warned you to resist, that is God, standing close to you to guide and guard you; and when you have resisted the temptation and done right it is because God has helped you. And you will learn to look to Him at every turn of your life, for guidance and help, and to know more and more what He wishes and what He means. It is difficult to explain it in words, but some day I think you will see that it is so, and learn to know God with your soul, better even than you can now."

Agnes was silent for some time. Then she said, "But what shows you, mother, as you said, that God thinks there ought to be things that are hard, and that have to be endured?"

"Well, think about the way in which God has made the world, Agnes; look at the animals, wild animals have to hunt and fight for their food, and they often have to bear wounds and scratches; often those that are hungry are beaten in the fight, and their prey escapes, and they have to endure hunger; God does not let them find their food lying ready for them without trouble."

"No, they all have to work for it."

"And then think of all that the creatures endure in defending their young; think of the poor cat that ran through the burning theatre several times to fetch out her little helpless kittens in her mouth, one by one; think of the beautiful wild duck that was found frozen to death on her nest of eggs after a snow storm, because she would not leave them, and sat patiently on, enduring the cold to keep her eggs safe and warm."

"Yes, yes, mother," said Agnes sadly, "but it would have been much nicer if the duck had lived; one is so sorry for her to die—just because she was so nice and good."

"And what makes you think her so nice and good, Agnes?"

"Why, mother, of *course* because she was so faithful and patient, and bore all the cold rather than leave her eggs."

"Yes, she endured hardship; and would she have been so nice and good if she had not endured it?"

"No, mother, of course she would not."

"Then you see that what she had to bear strengthened and brought out what was so beautiful and good in her. And bearing things, resisting things, battling for things, are all exercise of the powers which God has put into us, and makes these powers strong and steadfast and noble."

"Then is it the same with us, mother? and is that why we have things to bear?"

"Yes, I think so. Even babies begin their little battles. They push with their hands, they kick with their feet, they learn that they must not have something they want, that

they must not do this or that. If they did not use their powers, and work their little limbs about, the limbs would remain powerless and useless; everything that they pull or push about strengthens their limbs and makes them grow; if we had nothing to battle against we should all be very weak and feeble. If our gardens grew fruit and flowers and vegetables without our taking any trouble, what sort of gardeners and farmers should we be? It is learning to overcome difficulties that makes us grow hardy as well as clever and wise."

"I think I begin to understand, mother. Perhaps if everything was easy and came without trouble we should get spoilt and lazy."

"Yes, I am sure we should. You know what we mean by a spoilt child, and how disagreeable he becomes; instead of being bright and active and eager, he is whiney and cross, and never satisfied; and that is just because he has things without any trouble."

"It is funny though, mother, that taking trouble should make us strong."

"No, I do not think it is very funny, dear; it is just like taking exercise. When James had an accident to his hand and had to wear his arm in a sling for several weeks, do you remember the day he took it out of the sling?"

"I do," said Kenneth, "it was all crooked up, and he couldn't unbend it; and it had gone all thin, no muscles to speak of, and he couldn't do anything with it."

"Yes, and it took a great deal of rubbing and gentle exercise to get it into proper use again; but the exercise, though it hurt him, and was a great deal of trouble, gradually made his arm useable again. It would have been

much less trouble to leave the arm as it was, but what a pity it would have been. It would have been 'spoiled' for want of exercise and trouble."

"Yes, yes, I see, mother," said Kenneth. "Don't you see, Agnes, if we don't have anything to hurt us, and to fight with, we get like that arm,—shrunk,—little pigmies, instead of strong enough to fight giants."

"Yes, I suppose it *is* a good thing to have to bear things, then, but it is not *nice*."

"Hardships and trials *test* us, and show what sort of stuff we are made of. It is like testing iron or steel; before they are used for anything where strength is very important they are put to severe tests, or trials, to prove their strength, and see if they can bear strain and hard work; if they are not well made and strong they break down and fail, and have to be re-made. So, if we are not well made we shall break down when the trial comes."

"Oh, mother, that is a parable!" said Agnes. "I like parables, but do make it up into something by which I can remember it better, things do so fly away out of my head."

"A ship struck on a rock, and the waves swept it from stem to stern. The captain stood calmly on his gallery, and gave orders to his seamen. They were all in their places, steady, quiet, obedient to orders. The passengers were called up from below, and the boats manned; but the efforts of the sailors seemed almost useless because the passengers would not obey orders, and were selfishly fighting to get first to the boats. The women shrieked and the children screamed and cried with fright, and the confusion was so intolerable, that at last it was only by threatening to throw overboard the first person that attempted to get

into the boats without orders, that the captain got any obedience and was able to save anyone. Some were drowned after all in struggling to get into the boats when they were already full; but most were saved, and the brave captain and a few others who stayed in the sinking ship when the well-filled boats had to leave them behind, were picked up by a passing steamer."

"How horrid it is, mother, that women always *will* scream," said Agnes.

"Yes," said Kenneth, "silly things, whatever use do they think it is of?"

"They don't *think* at all, Kenneth; it is just because they do not learn to control themselves. But they do not *always* scream, I am glad to say. There *are* brave women who can be silent in the direst and most sudden dangers, and give help even where it seems least likely that they should."

"Yes, and *girls* too, mother, and *little* girls,—like Ruth in the fire," said Kenneth; they're not *all* silly things, I know."

"The fire and the shipwreck were tests or trials to prove what people were made of. Those people who screamed and failed in the trial would have to be re-made, like the iron and steel, till they learned better; and so whenever we fail we have to be re-made."

"But mother," said Kenneth, "those people would never grow into brave people, I am sure. People who scream and make a fuss are quite different from brave people."

"But, Kenneth, I do not think God made anybody to remain weak and foolish always; even the weakest and

most foolish will have to grow gradually into strong and brave souls."

"Do you think they ever *can*, mother? I'm sure lots of people die whilst they are still weak and silly."

"Yes, my boy, some of those screaming people were drowned at that very time."

"Well then, mother, they didn't grow strong or brave"

"How can we tell, dear, what they are learning and doing now?"

Kenneth looked long into his mother's face; and gradually a light seemed to come into his eyes, and he said, "Do people go on learning *after they die*, mother?"

"I feel sure they do, dear; how can it be otherwise? How could we ever be perfect as Jesus told us to be, unless we could go on and on, for ever learning more and growing better?"

"I never thought of it before, mother," said Kenneth gravely; "but I like to think of it now; I think it is a grand thought."

"Yes, it is; and it would be too dreadful if our progress were to stop when we died. I believe and hope that we shall learn and grow better a great deal faster in the next world than in this." After a little silence the mother added: "but about enduring hardness, Agnes, there is one little story which I meant to tell you. A little boy who was very timid and easily frightened was sent to a large school, where there were many boys, who soon found out his weak point, and they did everything they could to tease and frighten him. They dressed up as ghosts and hid behind the doors, and glided out on him; or they made horrible noises to scare him. He led a

miserable life; he knew he was silly, but he only grew more and more miserable. Over and over again he resolved to write and ask his father to take him away; but he never did, because he had a sick mother at home, and he never told about his troubles, but wrote every week a cheerful letter to his mother that he might not grieve her or make her unhappy. He bore it all as bravely as he could, and from love to his mother he endured hardships which to him were really terrible; and at last his reward came, for by slow degrees he grew braver and hardier, and learnt not to be timid. His character was strengthened, and he had borne the test that was put upon his love."

"Poor small chap," said Kenneth; "only I'm very much afraid I should have joined in the ghosts if I hadn't heard the story from the little boy's side."

"Well, Kenneth," said his mother, "it would have been thoughtless unkindness, such as many boys show; but it would not have been right or kind; and perhaps my little story may now and then make you think twice before you join in being unkind to people whom you think silly. You should always try and stand in your 'neighbour's shoes.' The temptation to tease is one of the tests for *your* character to try what stuff you are made of."

"I'm afraid it is not at all very good sort of stuff, mother; but there's hope for me yet, and I'll try."

"And now good night, my children; I have kept you up longer than I meant to do."

CHAPTER X.

COURTESY.



ONE evening when the children had done their lessons, Kenneth said to his mother, "We had rather a hard lesson to do to-day, mother, at school; we had to write a composition on courtesy."

"A very good subject, Kenneth, I think; did you find it difficult?"

"Well, yes; I found it difficult to be sure what courtesy is exactly."

"What did you say it was?" said his mother.

"I said it was good manners; and when my master gave me back my paper he said a funny thing: he said, 'good manners are courtesy, but courtesy is not only good manners.'"

"Yes, I think that is true, Kenneth."

"How should you define it then, mother?"

"I think I should call it 'respectful consideration for others showing itself in good manners.' I think what your master meant you to understand was that there are good manners which are what I should call only 'skin deep,' and others which spring from the inner nature, and express a great deal that is there,—unselfishness, for one thing, ten-

derness, thoughtfulness for others, and perhaps even more good qualities."

"Oh mother, what a lot! I thought courtesy only meant such things as a man taking off his hat to a woman, or letting her get first into a cab, or not using rough words to her,—and so on."

"It does not only mean these things, though these are *expressions* of courtesy; that is, they are courtesy which is in the heart coming out into expression in actions. But sometimes these acts which should express courtesy that is in the heart, are only outside actions put on. They are like lacquer which people put over metal to make it look like brass. They are put on to make people look as if they felt courteous. If you rub the lacquer sufficiently it comes off, and has to be done again; so with these manners which have no root in the character; much rubbing rubs them off, and shows the metal below. But if instead of being lacquered your door handles were solid brass, then the more you rubbed them the brighter the metal would shine and show how solid it is,—alike all through; and so too with the manners: if they are the expression of a solid inside, *the same all through*, you cannot rub them off any more than you can rub out a man's character."

"There, Kenneth," said Agnes; "there's one of mother's parables. I can always remember things afterwards when she makes parables. I shall always remember that manners musn't be lacquer."

"Yes," said Kenneth; "I wish I'd thought of that in my composition, it would have been *telling*; but then you see it's *mother's* parable, and I didn't think of it."

"I think when I was a little girl," said his mother,

“that there was much more courtesy than there is now. Children were brought up from the beginning to feel more consideration for others than they are now. I see several signs of this in the manners of children and young people now.”

“What are they, mother,” said Agnes, “tell us some.”

“For one thing, no boy when we were young would have thought of calling his father ‘governor.’”

Kenneth laughed. “Why is ‘governor’ bad, mother?”

“Because it only expresses a part of a father’s relation to his boys. He *does* govern them; but if they felt a true love and respect for him all through they would not like to insist on only his *governing* them. I know that it has become so common that boys do not mean it disrespectfully now; but it certainly does not show any courtesy in their hearts. ‘Father’ is a complete and beautiful word, and consistent with all best feelings.”

“I think it is worse than that to call one’s mother ‘old girl,’” said Kenneth.

“That is worse, because it is very rude,” said his mother.

“And one day, mother,” said Agnes, “Bob called his mother ‘old girl’ to Kenneth, and Kenneth told him not to say it; so Bob called *you* the same, and so Kenneth boxed him and made him cry.”

“Well, I hope he understood that kind of teaching, though very likely he would do just the same again. I think Bob is just one of the children I was speaking of, who has not been brought up to be courteous at heart.”

“Then is it a thing that may be taught, mother?” said Kenneth.

“Yes; or at least it may be *cultivated*. I told you that

it is respectful consideration for others. Little children are always ready and glad to be considerate to others if they are encouraged. Think of little Jim,—how eager he is to ‘help mother.’”

“Oh yes, mother,” said Agnes; “and Freddy and little Elsie; when they could only just walk Freddy wanted to carry the basket for his mother, and Elsie had to have the umbrella. They said ‘me, me,’ and even when they got very tired, poor little trots, they wouldn’t give up, and toddled sturdily along. And when Mrs. Somers had to put a lot of things in the basket at the shop, Freddy *would* keep hold of the basket, and was so anxious to help that Mrs. Somers was obliged to carry nearly all the things home in the corner of her shawl, that he might help her by carrying something.”

“It wasn’t much *help*, I fancy,” said Kenneth.

“Well, but, Kenneth,” said his mother, “that is just where I think Mrs. Somers did quite right, and it is why all her elder children have real courtesy, and not only ‘good manners.’ It would, as you think, have been much less trouble to carry the basket full of things herself; but she respected her little boy’s wish to ‘help,’ and she let him help up to his strength. Even if she could have carried all the things more easily herself in the basket, including the parcel that Freddy *did* carry, that would not have satisfied his wish to help.”

“Oh, of course she could have carried it all, mother,” said Agnes; “she only left two oranges and a little parcel of pepper in the basket. When he got home he popped the basket down on the floor, and jumped round it, and said ‘*Me* tallied dat for muver.’”

Kenneth laughed. "Funny little chap," he said; "but he is a nice little chap, mother."

"Yes, and Mrs. Somers never thinks of herself or her own trouble at all, but helps the children to be helpful and considerate. Do you remember the story of the little boy who was so anxious to help the servant to clean the rooms that when he saw that she wanted more water he went and tried to get a pailful of water? It was too heavy for him, and he spilt a great deal on the floor; and then the servant was angry because he had given her more trouble, and she scolded him for slopping the water about, and he was very much hurt, for he had only meant to help her. In this way many people help to kill out courtesy from little children, for they find that they are not allowed to do things, and the desire to help dies out; and so they grow more selfish and intent on their own affairs, instead of looking to see what others want."

"Yes, I know that is so," said Agnes; "for I asked Nellie once why she let her mother do everything for her, instead of trying to help her mother, and she said, 'O, mother doesn't like us to help, she says we bother her.' I told her that *you* weren't bothered, and that we did lots of things to help *you*, mother. Do we bother you when we try to help you?"

"No, dear, not at all; for even if I could do things better myself I would much rather that you should do all you can, and should learn to do better and better. You know I like you to make your own clothes as much as you can. For if I were to do them all for you because it was troublesome to set the work for you, or because I could do better, you would never learn to work well."

"Well, mother, Nellie's mother won't let her make her clothes: she says 'it's more bother than it's worth.' Nellie and I were talking about our sewing, and she can't do back-stitching at all,—and she says her mother won't help her."

"I am very sorry for Nellie then, Agnes. But if we care for the children more than for our own trouble, we shall let them go on doing things, and only try and teach them to do *better*. If you have little children to look after try and remember that you must never save yourself trouble by doing things instead of letting them 'help'—however much the 'helping' may hinder you."

"Then wanting to help is part of courtesy, is it, mother?" said Kenneth.

"Yes, it is consideration for others, and comes out in one form of good manners."

"I should like to think of some more things which belong to courtesy; I think I'll write my composition over again for my own amusement. Tell me some more things, mother."

"It is perhaps easier to give instances of *want* of courtesy than of courtesy itself. One Sunday a lady had to teach a large class of boys in a school. When they went into the class-room the boys rushed in first, seized some forms and sat down round the fire; one boy seized the only chair in the room, and set it right in front of the fire and sat down on it, all the boys leaving the lady standing."

"Impudent rascals," said Kenneth. "Did no one behave more decently?"

"One boy took hold of the chair behind and tipped it up, shooting the boy who was on it on to the floor, and saying, 'Get off, that's teacher's chair.' All the boys laughed at the fall of their comrade."

“Well, there was certainly no courtesy there, except in that one boy,” said Kenneth.

“No, because you see there was no consideration for others. They selfishly only thought of themselves. Another thing in which people show want of courtesy greatly, is in smoking. To smoke in a railway carriage, or an omnibus or coach, without finding out whether it is disliked by others, is great rudeness and selfishness; and to go into a shop with a lighted pipe or cigar, and fill the place with tobacco is also most inconsiderate. I think there is more selfishness and less courtesy shown about smoking than about any other habit.”

“Yes, so many people can't bear smoking, that it is a great shame to *make* them breathe smoke whether they will or no,” said Kenneth. “I think smoking is like drinking, it makes people so selfish that it's much better to leave it alone and do none of it. People who once begin always seem to think they *must* smoke; and yet people who don't smoke are all right; ever so much more so than people who do. I don't mean ever to smoke, it is a nasty, dirty habit.”

“There is another discourteous habit which I have noticed very much lately, and I think it has grown worse of late years, and that is the inconsiderate way in which a number of lads, men, or children will stand or walk about filling up the whole width of the pavement, so as to oblige passers-by to walk out into the muddy street if they wish to get past them. That too is for want of being brought up to think of other people. These are only *habits*, and instances of what we may call small things; but they are all signs of what the inner mind is like; and if the heart was full of consideration and respect for others, these

little actions would be quite different. In passing along a crowded street the other day a very poor ragged boy accidentally knocked against the bag I was carrying; he was going very fast, but he stopped at once and turned round and said, ‘Beg pardon, ma'm.’ That boy had true courtesy.”

“Yes, I think I see it now, mother. I understand your parable about the lacquer quite well. Courtesy isn't polish put on the top of a thing, it's the whole thing itself; it's what it's made up of.”

“Yes, that's it, Kenneth. A gentleman was going through a street, when he saw a crowd of boys; he went to see what they were about, and saw sitting on a step a very old woman: she was crying, and the boys were laughing at her a little and staring at her a great deal. The gentleman put them aside, and went up to the old woman and asked her very gently what was amiss. At his kind manner she looked up gratefully and said she was so weak and tired, and she had to carry that heavy basket of washing home by eleven o'clock, and she could not carry it. He felt so sorry for her, and spoke gently to her and said, ‘Let me help you up; you shall show me where to take it, and one of these lads and I will help you. Here boys, who will help to carry this basket? Two or three boys came forward, no doubt hoping for a few pence for doing it; but the gentleman took one handle, and one of the boys took the other, and the old woman showed them the way. The other boys laughed, but off walked the little party, the old woman pouring out her gratitude, and quite happy now because she should get the washing home by eleven. ‘This is indeed much too heavy for you to carry, had you no one else to carry it for you?’ said the gentleman; and she

poured out all her story to him till they reached the door of the house, and then setting down the basket he gently bade her good-bye, and said to the boy, 'Thank you, my lad;' and the boy felt ashamed of looking for pennies, and went off. That gentleman was a true gentleman, and had true courtesy in his heart, which came out in his manners."

"Yes," said Kenneth; "lots of fellows would have thought twice before they carried a basket of washing for a poor old woman."

"Would you have done it, Ken?" said Agnes.

"Well,—I hope so;—yes, I hope so. Mother, I'm not at all sure; *I'm afraid I'm lacquered!*"

With this both the children and their mother laughed.

"Well, Kenneth," said Agnes, "perhaps you're not *that* even! For sometimes I think you *can* be rude."

"Very likely,—you small chit, But I think it's oftenest when I'm angry."

"Yes, but that is just one of the things to test you," said his mother. "A true gentleman never loses his courtesy, even if he is angry. You may be angry (if you mean indignant at what is wrong) without being rude to anyone. But now you have enough to think about, and it is late and you must go to bed, so good night my children."



CHAPTER XI.

LIBERTY.



FRIEND of Kenneth's, named Oliver, came to stay with the children, and the evenings when they were all at home were very happy times to them all. One evening as Kenneth's mother came into the room she found the three children talking eagerly, and just as she opened the door Oliver said, "Well, wait till I get my liberty, and then I'll do as I please."

Kenneth turned round to look at his mother, and they both laughed.

"Now, mother," said Kenneth, "here's your chair,—come and help us out; we're getting into a mess."

"What do you call 'getting your liberty,' Oliver?" said she.

"O, when I'm big, and can do as I like," said Oliver.

Kenneth and Agnes looked at their mother to see what she would say.

"And how soon do you expect to be 'big' enough to do as you like, Oliver?"

"O, well,—I don't know, exactly, Mrs. Stirling. When I'm grown up, at any rate. Anyhow, when I'm twenty-one, because then I shall be of age, and no one can prevent my doing what I like *then*."

"Well, but Oliver," said Kenneth, "all grown-up people don't do just what they like."

"Our father and mother are grown up," said Agnes, "and I don't believe *they* do what they like."

"Well, no," said Oliver, "I suppose not *always*; but of course they *could* if they chose."

"I think a good many people are apt to think as you do, Oliver. I knew a boy some little time ago, who was full of the same idea. He grew up, and when he had a little money in hand he got married. When he started his home his one idea was that now he was going to do as he liked. He liked drinking, he liked gambling, and he liked bad company; and he went on getting worse and worse. When he married he had started a pretty little home; but because he did as he 'liked' he soon came to want money; then he took the things in the house and pawned or sold them, and his nice little home looked desolate and miserable. And, strange to say, though he did as he 'liked' he was not happy, he was miserable, and became more and more a slave to his bad habits and bad companions. But there was another grown-up person also in his home,—his wife, She was grown-up, so she had also a right to do as she 'liked.' Do you think she *did*?"

"Oh no," said Oliver; "of course she couldn't like to lose the things out of her house, for one thing."

"And do you think if she had done what *she* liked she would have had her husband coming home in the early

morning drunk, and scolding, and quite unfit to go to work next day? Would she have had the black eyes which he often gave her? Would she have sat and cried alone in grief?"

"What a *scamp*," said Kenneth; "why didn't she give him over to the police?"

"And when they had a little girl, and she was three or four years old, he came home so mad and angry with drink and quarrelling that he pulled the child roughly out of bed and beat her."

All the children were silent. Then Oliver said, "But, Mrs. Stirling, he was a *bad* man; I didn't mean that I would do things like that."

"No, my boy; of course you did not; no more did that man, when, as a boy, he used to use the very words that you used: 'Wait till I get my liberty, and then I'll do as I please.' He did what he pleased,—a little at first, then more, then more, till at last one night he treated his wife so ill, in the street, when she tried to get him home, that he was taken away by a policeman; and he was shut up in prison."

"Served him right," said Kenneth; "I hope he stopped there."

"Yes," said Oliver, "of course it was his proper place."

"Yes," said Mrs. Stirling, "but why, Oliver, For then the man lost his 'liberty,' though he was grown-up. Was that right?"

"Oh yes, because he was bad," said Oliver.

"Then you see it is not being grown-up only that gives a man his liberty. What does it need besides, in order that he should have his liberty?"

"That he should be good," said Oliver.

"And what if he is *not* good?"

"Then he must be *made* to be good," said Kenneth.

"Yes; and what do you mean by being good?"

The children were silent; and then Agnes said, "Not being naughty!"

Kenneth laughed, and said, "Bravo, chit!"

"Well," said her mother, "that's not a bad answer. Now think a little, children. When you play games,—cricket for instance, do you all do exactly as you like."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "because we all like to play well."

"Yes, Kenneth, that is exactly the thing; but if every boy wanted to do what he liked best,—if every boy wanted to be 'bat' at the same time where would be your game?"

"Why nowhere, mother, there would *be* no game: every-one must obey the rules, or else we can't have a game at all."

"Then to make the game go right everyone must follow the rules, and not do what he 'likes'?"

"Yes, of course, that's the only way to play at all," said Oliver.

"Well now, you will find it just the same in other things. Our life is like a game; if everyone does as he 'likes,' nothing will go right; but there are rules which we must all obey, just like the cricket rules. To obey these is, as you would say, 'the only way to play at all.'"

"Is it?" said Oliver, rather puzzled. "I always thought liberty was a first-rate thing. About the best thing worth a man living for. If a man is a slave, what good is his life to him?"

"There are slaves and slaves, I think," said Kenneth."

"What do you mean, Kenneth?" said Oliver.

"Well, that rascal mother told us of talked about liberty, and thought he had got it, and he was a *slave* himself, I am sure, if ever there was one."

"Yes, Kenneth," said his mother, "that is quite true. And when his liberty was taken from him, and he was put in prison, what was that to compel him to do?"

"To make him behave himself, mother, and give up ill-using his wife and child."

"Yes, then you see there is someone who has the right to step in and interfere with a man's liberty. What are the police for?"

"To keep people in order," said Oliver, "and keep them from breaking the laws."

"Yes,—now you have come to what I wanted you to find out; the 'laws' are like the rules in your games. What are the 'rules' made for?"

"To make fellows play fair, mother," said Kenneth.

"And that is just what laws are for,—'to make fellows play fair,' as you say."

"I see," said Kenneth: that man did not 'play fair,' because he took all the liberty himself, and did not leave his wife any."

"Yes, his taking more than his share of 'doing as he liked' obliged her to have less than her share. If I gave you and Agnes two battledores and one shuttlecock to play with, and then left you at liberty to play as you liked, and if you then ran off with the shuttlecock, and left her without it, you see you would have deprived her of her share by taking more than your own. In making the most of your own 'liberty' you would have been unjust to her."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "we ought to share and share alike."

"Well now, you will understand that no parent or guardian would, if he could help it, let the weaker children suffer from the stronger ones being selfish or tyrannical; and in the same way the governors of a country make rules or laws to protect the weak people from being overpowered by the stronger. All must obey these laws, and it is only by *all* obeying them that *all* can have 'liberty.'"

"Then," said Oliver, "having liberty *can't* be doing what one likes!"

"Not without thinking about other people too," said Kenneth, "because it wouldn't be fair to them."

"*Everyone* wants liberty," said Agnes; "and how are they all to have it, mother? It isn't fair if they *don't* all have it, and yet if one man takes all he wants someone else has to give up,—like Ken and me with the shuttlecock."

"I think the reason people are so puzzled, Agnes, is because they confuse 'liberty' with something which is *liberty run wild*, or licence."

"O, mother dear, I wish I knew what you meant!"

"I will try and explain it better. Two boys who were at school had a half holiday given them, and they set out full of fun and determined to enjoy themselves. It was well understood by all the boys at school that there were certain rules which all must obey; and these rules held good on holidays as well as work-days. Some of these rules were that none of the boys must either bathe in the river or boat on it without an elder boy with them: that they must not go to the inn, or drink beer, and such things; but these two lads being out 'for a spree,' as they

called it, first clambered over a wall and gathered just a few apples out of an orchard; then they opened the gate of a field and turned a pony out to 'see him run;' then they bought some pipes, and smoked, and set some hay on fire with their lights; then seeing it burn they ran away; after smoking, they were thirsty, and went to the inn and got some beer; and then to cool themselves they bathed in the river; then being tired they got into a boat, and being too lazy to row they floated down the river in the boat till they got further than they knew; and when they tried to row up again against the stream they found it such hard work that, finding it was growing late and they ought to be back at school, they ran the boat to the shore and left it, and walked back; but they did not get back till past midnight, and their holiday doings got them a good sharp punishment. Now what they did was not using 'liberty,' but 'licence.' Do you see the difference? It was what I mean by 'liberty run wild.'"

"Yes, mother, I quite understand that now."

"Well then, Mrs Stirling," said Oliver, what *is* liberty; for if rules and laws are always coming in to stop people, I don't see how they are ever to have their liberty."

"The laws and rules do not stop anyone except those who want to disobey them. If there is a law made that anyone who steals another man's things shall be punished, that law doesn't 'stop' anyone except the thief. Should you like all thieves to have liberty to steal as much as they like?"

"O, no, of course not; that would be taking away other peoples' liberties."

"And if there is a law that people must not murder one

another, that does not come in the way of any quiet, peaceable man; the only 'liberty' it takes away is liberty to be very wicked."

"Oh yes, mother," said Kenneth, "I do see now;—how nice and clear it is! Laws are made to keep bad people in order, and to let everyone get their rights; they aren't in anyone's way who doesn't *want to be naughty*. That's a first-rate arrangement,—don't you see, Oliver?—don't *you* see, chit?"

"I think I do begin to understand," said Oliver.

"Yes," said Agnes, a little doubtfully; but still, mother, I don't see that it's quite plain, because with so many people wanting the same things they can't all get what they want."

"That is quite true, dear; you see we are all like a large family, and everyone has to give up something for the sake of others. But true liberty for everyone is not either running wild without laws, or purposely disobeying them, or disregarding everyone except yourself. The only person who has real liberty is the person who accepts the laws and obeys them willingly, so that they do not seem to restrain him at all because they are the expression of what he wishes to do. The laws against stealing never trouble the honest man; he doesn't go about saying, 'O, I wish this tiresome law did not exist,—I *should* like to take John's silver tea-pot, but I can't because there is a dreadful law against it.'"

The children laughed at the idea of John's silver tea-pot.

"All right, mother," said Kenneth, "I'm sure we know better now what we were talking about when you came in."

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Stirling," said Oliver; "and when I'm twenty-one I hope I shall not be one of the fellows that is bothered because he mayn't have another fellow's silver tea-pot or his money. I'll get my liberty by what you say,—keeping laws instead of fighting them. Is that what you meant?"

"Yes, Oliver, exactly; a very good way to put it."

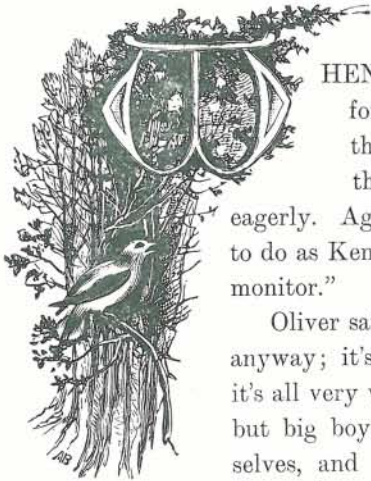
"I shall always remember what you meant, mother," said Agnes, "by the man who wanted to steal John's silver tea-pot!"

With a good laugh the children ran off to bed, making up for themselves other stories about people who were "stopped" by good laws from licence: "not *liberty*," said Agnes, "that's different. Good night, Kenneth; good night, Oliver!"



CHAPTER XII.

OBEDIENCE.



WHEN Mrs. Stirling came into the room for her evening's work and talk with the children the next day she found the three children talking loud and eagerly. Agnes said, "Well, Oliver, you ought to do as Kenneth says, at any rate, because he's monitor."

Oliver said, "It's not *your* business, Agnes, anyway; it's all very fine about monitors, and it's all very well for little girls to be obedient; but big boys can do as they think best themselves, and I'm not going to obey unless I choose."

"Well," said Kenneth, "we shall see: as long as I'm monitor I mean to do my best."

Mrs. Stirling wondered what it was all about, but she did not ask, and when she had got her work and sat down in her corner, Agnes glanced with a troubled and anxious look from the boys to her mother. As Oliver had snubbed

her she did not like to interfere; but Kenneth saw her look, and whispered "All right, chickie;" and after a minute or two more he said, "Mother, Oliver and I have got a difficulty between us."

"No, *don't* Kenneth," said Oliver; "you needn't bother Mrs. Stirling."

"But it doesn't bother her, she *likes* it, said Kenneth; "you *do*, don't you mother, dear?" said Kenneth, peeping into her face.

They all laughed, and then Mrs. Stirling said, "Yes, Kenneth, I like very much to hear all your difficulties if you like to tell me. And Oliver must not mind either. You see, Oliver, you are my boy while you stay here. Now what is it?"

"Well, it's this, mother. You know bathing time is coming on now, at school. Mr. Taylor gave us a talking to to-day about it, because if it's fine we are to begin to-morrow. Our bathing place is in the river; and what Mr. Taylor said was that the bathing was all to be between the big willow tree and the little bridge. He said the river below the bridge was not safe for any boys, as it is both deep and swift; and that above the willow tree there are some awfully deep pools. When he said this, there began to be a murmur among the bigger boys, and one boy spoke up and asked whether the good swimmers could not go below the bridge, as it was quite safe for those who could swim. Then Mr. Taylor said, No, he could not let anyone go to bathe at all who did not do as he said; there was a lot of grumbling, and the fellows said some of them could swim better than 'old Taylor,' and they knew *he* went below the bridge, and it was all spite. Well Mr. Taylor blew his

whistle and ordered silence ; and then he said that he had no more to say, that we could bathe if we did it where he said and nowhere else ; that he expected to be obeyed, and he told the monitors to see that he *was* obeyed."

"He *didn't* expect to be obeyed," said Oliver ; "we all know that, and a lot of chaps aren't going to obey such senseless orders."

"But I say he *did* expect to be obeyed," said Kenneth, "and I say too that as I'm one of the monitors I'm going to be obeyed."

"Well, then you just *aren't*," said Oliver. "You think yourself very grand, but I can tell you I'm just as good as you any day, and a better swimmer, and I'm not going to make myself into a silly baby and obey *you*."

Kenneth gave a cool little smile ; and Agnes' face grew very red : she looked at her mother.

"Stop, boys, don't let us get hot about it, or we shall need a bathe at once to cool us," said the mother. "Why do you think Mr. Taylor didn't expect to be obeyed, Oliver ?"

"Oh, because no one could expect big boys and good swimmers like us to obey silly rules."

"Do you suppose Mr. Taylor thought it a silly rule ?"

"He couldn't think anything else, Mrs. Stirling, how could he ? We boys in our class can everyone of us swim perfectly well, and there isn't a scrap of danger."

"I see *you* think so, Oliver ; but you cannot possibly know all Mr. Taylor's reasons. And when a much older person gives an order to young ones he often has reasons that they do not know of."

"Oh, yes, sometimes, I know ; but there can't be any reason in this."

"And when we any of us receive orders from a person who is in authority over us, it is our duty to obey, whether we see the reason or not."

"Of course it's a schoolmaster's place to give orders," said Oliver ; "but of course the big boys may decide for themselves whether they obey or not."

"There I think you are quite wrong, Oliver. As long as you are under Mr. Taylor it is your duty to obey all that he tells you."

"Oh surely not, Mrs. Stirling. We only obey just as much as we *must*, and we get out of all we can. Sometimes we're found out and get punished, but lots of times we get off, and it's never found out."

"That's what I don't like, mother," said Kenneth. "It's not 'playing fair' with the master. We take his orders and show a fair face, and then go away and do what he doesn't like, underhand. It's not honest. I declare sometimes when I've joined other fellows in it I almost wished we *might* be found out, for I felt as if I was a humbug."

"I expect you did, Kenneth. Have you often done so ?"

"Not often, mother, for I don't like to have anything behind and to hide up. And I am sure Oliver is wrong, and that Mr. Taylor *does really* expect us to obey him."

"It's all very well for you, Kenneth," said Oliver. "You're a monitor, so you are in a way as bad as Mr. Taylor, and you are bound to obey more than we are."

"What makes boys monitors in your school ?" said Mrs. Stirling.

"Oh *I* don't know ; favouritism : the goody boys are monitors."

"*Oliver !*" exclaimed Agnes ; but Mrs. Stirling and Kenneth laughed.

"What are 'goody boys,' Oliver?" said Mrs. Stirling.

"Well,—I don't know exactly: boys that stick to the governor, and do what he tells them."

"Boys that obey, that means: then you see Oliver you put what you said in the wrong order; and it is not only true that boys who are monitors are bound to obey, but that they were made monitors because they *did* obey."

"I ought to have been a monitor before Kenneth; I'm older, and higher in our class."

"Only a month older," said Kenneth.

"But if you'd been a monitor," said Mrs. Stirling, "you would have been what you call Kenneth, 'in a way as bad as Mr. Taylor.'"

They all laughed.

"Oh, I don't *want* to be a monitor, I hope I never shall."

"I wish you were," said Kenneth, "and then you'd find out that it isn't nice work trying to keep other chaps in order who are always at war with the master, and trying not to do what you tell them."

"Oliver, when I was a girl," said Mrs. Stirling, "I had an older brother who was a schoolmaster. He was extremely fond of his boys, and gave his whole mind and heart to his work, but sometimes he came home very sad and much disheartened; and he used to say that the thing that pained and troubled him most of all was the feeling that the boys *would* look upon their schoolmaster as their natural enemy, to be disobeyed, and thwarted, and hindered in every possible way."

Oliver looked surprised. "Do schoolmasters care about the boys? I thought they were only meant to see that

they do their lessons, and to prevent them doing what they like."

"Yes, certainly, they care immensely about the boys. They are not only cramming machines, as you seem to think: they know all their boys' characters; they think about how best to make them like to learn, and how to teach them best; they think of them night and day; they grieve when they are naughty, they plan how they can best show them where they are wrong; the punishments they have to give hurt them more than they hurt the scholars; and then the only reward that the thoughtless boys give them is to say that part of their business is to prevent boys doing what they like!"

Oliver was silent. Then Kenneth said "You see mother's brother was a schoolmaster, so she knows."

"I had no idea that masters were like that. I'm sure they aren't *all*; I believe Mr. Taylor delights to take away our pleasures, or to flog us when we have been enjoying ourselves."

Kenneth said angrily, "That's all *you* know about it!"

"Well, what more do *you* know then, if you're so wise?"

"I *do* know more; but I won't tell you, because you only mock."

"Oliver," said Mrs. Stirling, "I did not think you were an ungenerous boy; but if you speak in that tone I shall be afraid that you are."

"Well then I won't 'mock.' Tell us what you know Kenneth."

"Well, Mr. Taylor called all the monitors into the study only yesterday; and he said that he was pained to see a spirit of misrule and disobedience growing among some of

the boys ; he said he did not care half so much about a few disobedient things done in the school ; but he did care extremely when he found a spirit of rebellion, and desire to disobey for the sake of disobeying. And he talked to us about what we ought to do, as monitors ; and he said how anxious he was and how sorry it made him ; and he spoke as if every boy was his own boy, and as if it hurt him ; and I declare I was awfully sorry ; and I vowed to myself that if every boy hated me for it I'd stick to Mr. Taylor and be a first-rate monitor, and try and do all he wanted : for I think he's a brick ! So *there* Oliver ; it's out now, and I don't care who knows. So here's one to stand by Taylor," cried Kenneth ; "now Oliver you'd better look out, if you don't want to have a sort of elephant down on you !"

"I am very glad that you feel as you do, Kenneth," said his mother. "I believe that neither teachers nor scholars will have the useful, good, and happy life they should lead together till they feel as you do, that they are both aiming at the same ends and working *together*,—not the teacher ordering arbitrarily and the scholar fighting against his orders, or shirking them,—but the teacher planning what he thinks right and best, and the scholar willingly believing that he does so, and trying in all things to be true and obedient to him."

"It is the same with girls, mother, isn't it ?" said Agnes.

"Yes, just the same. Do you remember, Agnes, the talk we had one day when you had been punished, and you said Miss Lucas liked punishing you ?"

"Yes, mother, and I was ashamed afterwards."

"Well, you were then just in the same state that

Oliver was to-day. But when you thought about it you came to see things differently."

"Oh yes, mother, and when I went and told Miss Lucas how sorry I was, you can't think how kind she was. She *kissed* me, mother, and she said I had made her happy ! Only think of that ! Till you talked to me I had no idea that we children could make our teachers happy !"

Her mother laughed. "Hadn't you ? Yes, both happy and unhappy ; it depends on you to make them both. I have no doubt Oliver makes Mr. Taylor very unhappy sometimes."

"How odd," said Oliver. "I always thought we big ones should obey only as much as we were quite obliged, and that we should be as independent as possible."

"Don't you remember, Oliver, how we talked about liberty yesterday, and how you all understood then that the only real liberty was gained not by resisting laws, but by accepting them and helping to carry them out ?"

"Yes, Mrs. Stirling, I think I did understand it then."

"There is a law that if a man drinks much spirit he gets drunk ; if he resists that law and says he won't mind it he only gets drunk again and again. Does he show 'independence' then, and assert his 'liberty' ?"

"Oh no, of course not in that case."

"That sort of law is what we call a law of nature. We must obey these laws if we are to be free or independent in any sense. And there are laws of men, too, which in the same way we must obey. There are laws to protect people's property : one man may not take another's goods from him : if he disobeys this law he has to be punished. He does not show 'independence' in breaking this law : he only allows his wicked greediness to run away with him."

"Yes, I understand that. Of course he has to be made to obey those laws. But I thought it was only children, and people like thieves, and those who aren't fit to look after themselves who had to obey."

"What do you think of soldiers, Oliver? What would happen if *they* did not obey? What sort of chance would a battle have, without obedience? And what could you have more manly and noble than the entire and unquestioning obedience which takes a body of men right in the teeth of danger and death, regardless of everything but duty?"

"Oh yes, soldiers of course! I didn't think of them."

"And sailors too: think how in shipwrecks and accidents at sea all depends on instant obedience. If each thought for himself, what confusion and ruin it would be."

"Yes," said Kenneth, "I am sure obedience with these is manly, Oliver."

"Yes, so it is. We shouldn't think much of either soldiers or sailors who could not obey."

"And you would never think of calling them childish, because they have to obey, and do obey, should you?" said Mrs. Stirling.

"Oh no, certainly not," said Oliver.

"I think the mistake with you boys at school, Oliver, has been that you have set yourselves against authority, instead of working under it. If instead of fighting *against* rules and believing that they are all made simply to vex and annoy you, you tried to work *with* the rules and carry them out loyally, you would find yourselves set free from bondage, and not tied down. You remember that we found out yesterday that the laws against stealing are not

the least burden to the honest man, and only fret and worry the thief. So the rules made for order and discipline do no injury to anyone who is willing to be obedient, and only fret and chafe those who strive against them."

"That's it, mother, you have hit the right nail," said Kenneth. "That's what I wanted to say to you, Oliver, only I couldn't find the words."

"I think that sounds true, Mrs. Stirling, and I think I begin to see better. But sometimes people tell you to do what is wrong. Are you to obey *them* too?"

"If a boy who knows it is wrong to steal, Oliver, is sent out by a wicked father to pick pockets, is he to do it?"

"He would get thrashed if he didn't," said Oliver.

"Yes: and the martyrs were put to death for refusing to say what was false; but they didn't think *that*, even, reason enough for telling a lie," said Kenneth.

"Then, Mrs. Stirling, it *is* right sometimes to be disobedient," said Oliver.

"To whom were they disobedient, Oliver?"

"To the people who wanted them to do wrong."

"Yes: that is that they were obedient to the Right, in disobeying the Wrong. Were they then disobedient?"

"No," said Agnes, "much more obedient than if they had obeyed naughty people; because they obeyed God."

"Yes, Agnes, that is right."

They were all silent for a little while, and then Oliver said: "But about Mr. Taylor's rules: how am I to know that they *are* good, and that I ought to obey?"

"Well, Oliver, I do not think anyone could pretend for a moment that there was anything in itself either wrong or right in bathing in one place or another. What makes

it wrong to bathe below the bridge is that Mr. Taylor has told you not to do so ; and as he is your master he has a right to give you the orders that he thinks best, about what you shall do. In things like these you have nothing to do but to obey. And the boys who have respectful and docile dispositions will not conceitedly rebel, as if they were the best judges of everything, but will throw their zeal and energy into their obedience, and heartily enjoy their bathe within the lawful bounds, with minds not preoccupied by angry and rebellious feelings."

"It isn't nice to be stopped in what you want to do, though," said Oliver.

"No it isn't, my boy. But you see we all have to 'endure hardness,' and we never can do and have everything we should like. We should all be thoroughly spoiled, and worth nothing. All our lives we are learning to give up, and to do without what we should like. This must be so with everyone; and if we are always rebellious, and fight against it as 'unfair' we shall have no peace, and no freedom of mind. Self-sacrifice is continually demanded of us; and it must be *willing*."

"It is nice to give up to people one cares for," said Oliver, "but not to everybody, and when one can't see any good in it."

"I hope by degrees we shall get to care for everyone enough to be glad to give up to them. Till we can feel this we have often to do it as a duty ; but it is plain to see that it *is* a duty. And as to not 'seeing the good in it,' I am afraid you expect too much, Oliver, if you expect to see the reason of everything. You must remember that young boys cannot see the reason of everything, and they must trust that others see the reasons that they can't see."

Oliver was again silent ; and after a time he said humbly, "I'm awfully cheeky, I see. I am ever so much obliged to you, Mrs. Stirling. I will try and not *want* to be disobedient, and then I shan't mind having the rules so much. I've always been accustomed to think the moment I heard of a rule that we must do all we can to break it. I don't think so now. And Kenneth, we'll go and bathe to-morrow between the willow and the bridge, and you may be as strict as you like, and I'll back you up, old man."

"All right," said Kenneth, "then we're agreed ; and that's ever so much better than being at war. I want to be a soldier, but it's not the like of *you* I want to fight !"

They all laughed, and Agnes looked very much relieved. The boys ran off to feed their rabbits, and Agnes took up a story book for a short read before going to bed.

THE END.