

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

THE GOAL.

BY LEILA B. RAMSDALL.

Ye widely scattered Faithful,
Where'er your true hearts burn,
Where'er your lots are portioned,
One way all eyes do turn.

O waiting Church Expectant,
O Church, contending here;
Ye both are upward gazing,
One sight to both is dear.

To you 'tis as the dawning,
Who calmly watch on high;
To us, a space of glory,
Rent through a cloud spread sky.

O life, for which we battle,
O life for which they bide,
How blest to breathe thy fulness,
With them so dear beside.

With nearer, fuller vision,
Th' All-Glorious to adore,
Beyond this unsufficing
To live forevermore.

—Parish Visitor, N. Y.

A PRAYER.

Wilt thou not visit me?
The plant beside me feels Thy gentle dew;
Each blade of grass I see
From Thy deep earth its quickening moisture
drew.

Wilt Thou not visit me?
The morning calls on me with cheering tone,
And every hill and tree
Has but one voice, the voice of Thee alone.

Come! for I need Thy Love
More than the flower the dew, or grass the
rain;
Come, like Thy holy Dove,
And, swift descending bid me live again.

Yes! Thou wilt visit me;
Nor plant nor tree Thine eyes delights so
well,
As when, from sin set free,
Man's spirit comes with Thine in peace to
dwell.

—Jones Very in Parish Visitor, N. Y.

BEN, THE GORDON BOY.

The Gordon Boys' Home is the National Memorial to General Gordon, and is situated at West End, Chobham, near Working, about three miles from Brookwood station on the S. W. R. It owes its origin to a suggestion once made by General Gordon himself, and is intended for friendless and destitute boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. The boys receive a thorough and general education, and are carefully instructed in various trades according to their individual tastes. The choice of a career, whether naval, military, or civil, is left entirely to the boys; the object of the committee being simply to qualify them to become good citizens and to follow the example of the hero Gordon.

CHAPTER I.—BEN'S MOTHER.

'So you've turned nurse, Ben, have you? Why don't yer leave the litt'un to the mother. I'd never stand about a holding of a little brat like that, no, not for nobody.'

The speaker was a pale faced, sharp featured boy of fourteen, Ned Willett by name. The keen wind blew through his threadbare jacket, and his hands blue with cold, were thrust into his trousers pockets. His voice had a ring of satire, and probably he meant the words to sting, as sting they did, though Ben would

have died rather than let Ned know that they touched him in the least.

Ben was also about fourteen, scarcely so tall as Ned, but with a square built frame and a round chubby face, which did not tell the story of hunger so plainly as Ned's. On that score the boys were quits, for they both knew well what hunger meant, and rarely sat down to a meal that could by any means be called satisfying.

Just as Ned spoke a sound had issued from the bundle that Ben carried. One could only guess that it was a baby, for it was rolled up in a big shawl, and might have been a mummy for all that could be seen of it. Ben heard the sound, and knew it told of pain, and he knew too that the baby was hungry like himself. He might have been a well trained nurse, by the way in which he gently rocked the baby to and fro. If only she would go to sleep again, and forget the pain and hunger a little longer.

'I say, Ben, can't yer leave the brat and come along o' me?' said Ned, in a more pleasant voice.

'Why, what are you up to?'

'Up to? why, trying to get something to eat. Maybe you've had a good breakfast.'

'Well, where are you going to?'

'Umph, yer wants to know, do yer?' said Ned, with a laugh. 'I've heard of a lady as gives away tickets for that new Coffee House down the Somerset road, and I'm going to see if she'll give me one. I thought perhaps you'd 'ave gone too, and so you might if it wasn't for the brat. I s'pose your mother's gone to work, as you've got to mind it?'

The last words were added with a laugh, which told plain enough that Ned knew better than that. Ben could hardly help the sting being seen this time, so he turned to go indoors to hide the crimson flush that had mounted to his cheeks.

'Then you won't come?' called Ned, as he saw him disappear.

But Ben vouchsafed no answer, and so Ned went on his way, singing a light song as he went, as if there were no pain, no hunger, or at least as if he had nothing to do with it.

It seemed strange that Ben had not sought the shelter of the house before. A cold north-east wind was driving down the street, so that mothers with warm cosy nurseries had kept their little ones at home. Within half a mile of where Ben stood, there were many happy nurseries where merry children's voices could be heard, but for the most part they thought little of him or the baby that seemed so precious to him. But once inside, no one would wonder that Ben thought even the shelter of a doorway was better than what he called 'home.' No bright fire burnt in the grate, no kettle gave forth its cheery sound; and on a chair in the corner of the room sat a woman sleeping the sleep of the drunkard. It was not difficult to see where Ben had come by his well rounded limbs, for the woman that lay there was his mother, a woman in the prime of life, one that might have been an ornament to any poor man's home. Two or three small children played with a headless doll in another corner of the room, but now and again they lifted up frightened glances at their mother, satisfied if they could see that she was still asleep.

In another room at the back of the house lay the father, stretched upon a miserable bed, also deep in a drunkard's sleep, while close beside him stood his workman's tools, unused to-day, as their owner could not wield them with his unsteady hand.

The New Year has just come in. It was only two days old. Not a very hopeful beginning for Ben's parents, and yet the words had been upon their lips, 'A Happy New Year,' words that to them seemed only mockery.

Things were not always quite so black in Ben's home as they were on this 2nd January, 188—. Benjamin Collins, the elder, had been

a soldier, and at one time had been as smart and fine looking a young fellow as anyone would wish to see. He had served his time and then retired to be the happy recipient of a small pension.

But what might have been such a blessing, in Ben's case, became a curse, and each quarter, as the small sum became due, saw him and his wife drifting lower and lower. All the children except baby Nell had learnt to dread 'pension day.' Their friends were always specially friendly as pension day drew near, and Ben found himself 'treated' in an unusual manner on the last day of the old year. Then when the New Year dawned, and Ben was seen approaching the postoffice with his wife, it was only natural that these kind friends should rally round him, and what could he do less than 'treat' them in return? And so pension day, instead of being a red letter day in poor Ben's calendar, became a very black letter day indeed, and things seemed to be blacker now than they had been before.

Of course Ned Willett knew that Ben's mother had spent the greater part of the previous day at the 'Hunters' Arms,' and when at last she was turned out at closing time with her baby in her arms, she had dropped her precious burden, and other hands than hers had picked it up. The baby had put up a piteous wail, which Ben had recognized, for he was not far away, and it was the boy's strong arms that at last had hushed the little sufferer to sleep.

A few minutes after Ben had turned away from Ned Willett a girl entered the house. She was evidently the next child in age to Ben. Like him, she was strongly built, but with a face that lacked his candor.

'This is all I could get,' she said, turning out the contents of her apron; 'Old Sarah was stingy this morning, and said she could give me nothing but these pieces, and they're as hard as brickbats.'

'Never mind,' said Ben quickly, 'I'll run and ask Mrs. Baker to give us some hot water, then we'll soak them. Here, Bess, take the baby.'

He handed the baby carefully to his sister as he spoke, and before long he returned with a jug of hot water. The children by this time had left their headless doll, and were clamoring for the scanty food, but Ben took care that the baby should be first cared for. The first few mouthfuls were eaten ravenously, but no coaxing on Ben's part could induce the little one to take more. Then the food was carefully divided between the other children, none of them apparently noticing that Ben did not claim his share.

They had scarcely finished when a noise was heard in the passage, and a tall, stout woman appeared at the door. Her loud voice had the effect of rousing the sleeping mother, and rubbing her eyes, she sat up and looked around her. The children's voices sank at once, and obeying a nod from their older sister, they wisely trooped out of the room, leaving their mother and her friend to make fresh arrangements for a day's outing.

The kindly neighbor, Mrs. Baker, who lived in the adjoining house, saw the crestfallen look upon the little faces as she stood talking to the grocer on the step, and her quick motherly heart noticed the heavy breathing of the poor baby, and well knew how things stood in the house.

'Are you going to take the baby out, Bess, this cold, cold morning?' she said kindly.

Yes, Mrs. Baker, I've wrapped the shawl tight around her.'

'Suppose you bring her in here for a bit. It's not much fire as I can get, but you may as well have the comfort of it as well as I this cold morning.'

So Ben had the satisfaction of seeing baby Nell taken to warmer quarters, and at last found himself free to go his own way.

(To be continued.)