

Sunday School Advocate.

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A STRANGE HOUSE WITHOUT ANY LIGHT.

About a year ago I was in the habit of instructing a very interesting class of boys in a Sunday-school. One Sunday a little fellow said to me, "If I could always live in this world I should be perfectly happy. He was a bright boy, and his fine dark eyes sparkled as his fancy pictured a world upon which the shadow of death never rested.

"Perfectly happy, Johnny?" I slowly repeated.

"Yes, if I could have as much money as I wanted."

"But why can you not be happy now?" I asked.

"God has given you everything you need, and he will let you live as long as he has any work for you to do." The child did not reply, so I repeated the remark.

"Why," he answered at length, "I don't see any use in studying, or working, or anything else, when we must die so soon; and why should we love any body, when perhaps as soon as we have got to loving them they will die or else we shall!"

"Are you afraid to die, Johnny?"

"Yes," he sadly replied.

"Why, my child?"

"Because it seems," said the lad, somehow like going into a strange house in the night without any light."

"And yet, Johnny, there have been people who have been not only fearless when death came to them, but were very glad and thankful to leave the world. Do you understand how it could be?"

As he looked perplexed and shook his head, I tried to explain it to him. I spoke of strong men, delicate women, and even tender children, after terrible sufferings, calmly falling asleep, because they trusted in Jesus; how loving mothers had left helpless children in the world without pain, because they believed that God would fulfill and keep all his promises, and they felt him very near them. Then in a low tone while the piercing eyes of the child fastened on my face, I told him how Christians toiled, studied, and loved in this world that they might do much for Christ, and rest with him throughout a blessed eternity; and even while they work thus for their Master, they feared to live more than they dreaded to die. Before he had time to reply the hour came for closing the school, and I said "Good-bye" to my class. Ere I met those dear boys again the heat of summer had faded into the chill of autumn, sickness having called me away.

One day, soon after my return, some one rapped at my door; a note was handed to me which I found to be from Johnny's mother. She said her dear boy was very ill, and wished most earnestly to see me. As soon as I possibly could I went to the house of his parents. As I entered the room I saw a sight which I hope never to forget. The dying child, whose countenance was perfectly radiant with holy joy, reclined in the arms of his father, while the mother, who was sobbing convulsively, held his hand. The setting sun illuminated every corner of the apartment; while a little canary whose cage hung in the window, warbled his joyous music. It was a strange sound in that chamber of death. Yet why should it seem so? Surely triumphant songs are met when the narrow stream of time widens peacefully into the ocean of eternity. As soon as the child's fast dimming eyes met mine he exclaimed: "I am not afraid to die now, dear teacher; Jesus, who was with the martyrs, is right here, and

he makes it very light." I pressed my lips to his brow, but spoke no word.

"Sing, father," said he, "sing, 'There is a fountain filled with blood.'"

The father endeavoured to do as he requested, but his strong voice failed him, and he stopped; but the mother, with faltering utterance, commenced the hymn. The first verse she sang through alone, but in the second the manly tones of the father guided her. When they had finished they looked long and earnestly into their boy's face. With the sound of earthly hymns still in his ear he passed away, while angels' songs would seem but the echo of his mother's voice. On the headstone marking his resting-place you may read, "Not lost, but gone before."

Dear reader, are you afraid to die? Does eternity seem to you like going into a strange house in the night without any light? Go where Johnny went, to the foot of the cross; and with Christ for your light, you need not dread the darkness of the tomb; it will be but the earthly shadow on the entrance of that city which hath "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

INFANTINE INQUIRIES.

"Tell me, O mother! when I grow old,
Will my hair—which my sisters say is like gold
Grow grey as the old man's, weak and poor,
Who asked for alms at our pillared door?
Will I look as sad, will I speak as slow
As he, when he told us this tale of woe?
Will my hands then shake, and my eyes be dim?
Tell me, O mother! will I grow like him?"

"He said—but I knew not what he meant—
That his aged heart with sorrow was rent.
He spoke of the grave as a place of rest,
Where the weary sleep in peace, and are blest.
And he told how his kindred there were laid
And the friends with whom in his youth he played
And tears from the eyes of the old man fell,
And my sisters wept as they heard his tale!

"He spoke of a home, where, in childhood's glee,
He chased from the wild flowers the singing bee;
And followed afar, with a heart as light
As its sparkling wings, the butterfly's flight;
And pulled young flowers, where they grew 'neath
the beams

Of the sun's fair light, by his own blue streams;
Yet he left all these through the earth to roam!
Why, O mother! did he leave his home?"

"Calm thy young thoughts, my own fair child!
The fancies of youth and age are beguiled;
Though pale grow thy cheeks, and thy hair turn
grey,
Time cannot steal the soul's youth away!
There is a land of which thou hast heard me speak,
Where age never wrinkles the dweller's cheek;
But in joy they live, fair boy! like thee—
It was there the old man longed to be.

"For he knew that those with whom he had played,
In his heart's young joy, 'neath their cottage shade—
Whose love he shared, when their songs and mirth
Brightened the gloom of this sinful earth—
Whose names from our world had passed away,
As flowers on the breath of an autumn day—
He knew that they with all suffering done,
Encircled the throne of the Holy One!
"Though ours be a pillared and lofty home,
Where Want with his pale train never may come,
Oh! scorn not the poor, with the scorner's jest,
Who seek in the shade of our hall to rest;
For He who hath made them poor may soon
Darken the sky of our glowing noon,
And leave us with woe, in the world's bleak wild!
Oh! soften the griefs of the poor, my child!"

FIVE CENTS.

BY MRS. F. W. BEECHER.

What a lovely Sunday! The lilacs were out and full of fragrance, and our six maples had each the flag of a red leaf to fling out on their naked bodies in token of what *would* be. Other people's maples were full of leaf and ripple. Our little garden-mounds had each a ring of sweet grass, and an inside flowering thing. But many a flower bloomed around in neighbor's beds and gardens, and yesterday's rain yet swelled and ran in lines of silver between sweet breasts of green. Children, like morning themselves, went by in the bright air to Sunday-school; little boys hugging up their books to clean jackets, and little girls as fresh and clean as the summer but more in crimson, and blue, and pink, and orange than summer or morning. One little boy—well, what was he doing? He had a basket on his arm, at any rate; and he had—no, not a new cap on his head, an old, a shabby one, and a shabby jacket and flowers. And he was holding up no Sabbath-school book to his little breast; but on he trudged, with the sunshine in the fringes of his hair, and kind to him, and sweet all over upon him, as if he had been a Sunday-school scholar, just the same. Was the sunshine right? On a sudden, as we looked, the little fellow stopped on the sidewalk. What was the matter with him? Not to smell our handful or bushful of lilacs, not to see the blossoming, flowering things we had in our circles of deep grass, not even to swing our new gate, with its fascinating fixture and iron tassel which so many boys had stopped to swing. No, he has lost something. It is something of importance, for he is troubled and sets down his basket. He is coarse and homely, this little boy; he has a coarse mouth, and he begins to talk to himself with it, and to be more and more troubled, looking around him for something.

It is a little stick he looks for, and he pokes with it in one of the cracks of the sidewalk. Oh, it must be his money has rolled away. He was going to buy bread to put in that basket, or something which his parents have sent him for; and now his money is all gone, and he don't know what to do.

The mouth is coarse; but when it begins to tremble and look sorry, and when the big tears come, and the poor little dirty jacket sleeve goes up to wipe them off, that the poor little eyes may see plainer to peep in the crack, who would care for that? I don't know anybody that would. Anybody would have ran out quick to say, as we did:

"Little boy, what have you lost?"

"Five cents."

"Oh, five cents. Never mind. Don't hunt for it. You never can get it out of there. You never could, you know. You shall have another five cents, don't cry."

The big tears stopped rolling; the basket was picked up; and with another five-cent piece in his hand Tommy, or Tony, or whatever his name was, stepped on at peace again. I saw him come back with his basket filled. I saw him stop thoughtfully at that memorable crack—the grave of his five-cent piece—as though he never could get over it. I know he will ruminate, and stop every time he ever crosses it. But I saw the Sunday sun follow him kindly as he trudged; and I saw the young red leaf of my maples swing when he was gone; and I was glad so slight a thing had healed his broken heart.

There is many a slip between the cup and the lip, but more slips after the cup has been drained by the lips.