

III. THE ABSOLUTION.

The subject of absolution has already been taken up (see *Lesson X.*) God has "promised forgiveness of sins" (Jer. xxxiii. 8). The Priest or Bishop (see *Rubric*) is His ambassador (2 Cor. v. 20), sent to deliver the message of pardon. He speaks with authority (St. John xx. 21, 23; St. Matt. xvi. 19). But the message of pardon and deliverance is only for those who "with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him."

Notice four things in this message of pardon—
1. "Have mercy." 2. "Pardon and deliver." 3. "Confirm and strengthen." 4. "Bring to everlasting life."

IV. THE COMFORTABLE WORDS.

The sayings of our Lord and His Apostles, although not found in any other Liturgy, are very comforting to those who feel the burden of their sins to be intolerable, as they have just declared in the confession.

Answer the following questions by reading the verses one by one. When we are weary of fighting, and the cares and sorrows of life weigh us down, how can we "renew our strength, and mount up with wings as eagles?" Answer, "Come unto me," etc. How can we come to Him, and be saved from perishing? (See *second text*). But are not these promises only for the righteous. (See *third text*). Suppose we again yield to temptation, Who will plead for us before the Judge? (See *fourth text*).

Family Reading.

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

LIVES LAID DOWN.

Last Sunday we thought about sacrifices, how it is possible to make them in every-day life quietly and simply without any fuss. Well, I believe one step leads to another.

If you give up your will in little things, if you make small sacrifices day by day, you are ready for the great ones when they come before you.

I can't believe that a man who is easy-going, and has always done just what he likes, could do a great and noble deed, such as laying down his own life to save another. No, you may be sure it is the self-denying common life that leads up to the hero-life!

People don't jump to self-devotion all at once. It must be a gradual advance from the small to the great. True, sometimes the Spirit of God helps men on by "leaps and bounds," but still they can't manage the very hard things just at first.

So, as you read last Sunday, begin, my boy, with the small, common, every-day sacrifices; there are plenty of them, if only you look out for them. They cost you something, but never mind that. It is precisely that which makes them sacrifices.

By and by, maybe, you may have a great opportunity of self-sacrifice. Shall you be ready for it? I hope so.

Ah, even to give your life! I wonder if by God's grace one should have courage for that! To give up this beautiful world, and the sense of being warm and alive, and enjoying a great many delightful things, to die. And to die in order that somebody else might live!

You are quite sure there is a life beyond the grave, and yet too everybody feels that looking towards death is like looking at a great black curtain, which seems to shut out everything behind it.

Should you be able to meet Death of your own accord, fearlessly, for the sake of others, because you love the Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down His life, and you want to be like Him?

I pray God we might keep up bravely and nobly when it came to that. I dare say there would be a sort of fear of death; and very painful fear always is, perhaps, worse than feeling bodily pain. But then that would be a part of the sacrifice, and that thought would help us to bear it.

And perhaps in the midst of the fear and dread there would come, swift as a ray of sunlight, the thought that though it is beautiful to live, it is sometimes still more beautiful to die.

I don't suppose the thought would be put into proper words, and yet I believe that in that hour of mental dread it would come, and lift up our sinking, failing hearts.

Terrible pain of body must make death much worse, much more awful.

There is a story told of an American engine-driver named Ingram. He was on a train going at full speed, when he suddenly saw another train on the same line of rails coming to meet it. He knew there would be an awful shock, and the thought came to him, "Leap off the engine and save yourself." But no, he stood firm at his post, with certain death staring him in the face, and reversed the engine, so as to lessen a little the awful force of the shock. But when the trains dashed into each other there was a fearful wreck such as no words could describe! When Ingram was found he was half buried in the ruins of the engine, and his back was against the boiler; he was jammed in, unable to move, and actually burned to death! But in spite of fearful agony, he called to those who came round him to keep away, as he expected every minute the boiler would burst. They tried, however, to drag him out, but in vain, and at last his pain ended in death. That was literally laying down his life for the sake of others.

Here is another story of self-sacrifice.

Once the captain of a Dutch ship was away from her for a few hours, as he was dining on board another ship. A storm came on in his absence, which completely wrecked his own vessel. And down in the cabin were his own two little boys, of four and five, under the care of a negro. There was one large boat, and of course everybody crowded into it. The black carefully placed the children in a large bag, gave them a little jar of sweets to eat, slung them across his shoulder, and put them into the boat. He was just stepping in after them, when some one stopped him. "There is no more room; either you or the children must stay behind."

"Very well," he said, quietly. "Give my duty to my master, and tell him I beg pardon for all my faults." And then he let himself sink.

What a noble death, wasn't it? No boasting or fuss, or what boys call "swagger," but a calm giving up his life that the little children who were his charge might live. People, it is said, have wept over that story.

Can a boy lay down his life to save another? Listen. Once at Bridgnorth two boys from the Grammar School strolled into a church that was being repaired. It was mid-day, the workmen were all gone to dinner, no one was about, and there were the tall ladders leaning against some scaffolding high up in the roof. How tempting for the boys! They climbed up, and had a good scamper in and out among the rafters. At last, when it was nearly time for the men to come back, a plank, loosened by their scampering about, gave way. The two boys fell, how far they hardly knew. Not all the horrible distance down, however, for the younger one had presence of mind to catch hold of a beam of wood, and the elder one caught hold of him, and so the two hung, for what seemed a fearfully long time. They listened and listened with desperate eagerness for the sound of the men returning below, but all was silence. At last the big boy said to his friend, "Harry, I believe you could hold on a good bit longer if I let go, couldn't you?"

"Yes," answered Harry, faintly.

"Then give my love to my mother, and good-bye," said the brave lad, and there was a heavy dull thud heard directly on the pavement below.

When the men came in the boy lay dead on the floor of the church, but his friend was alive, and was rescued, and he it was who told the story.

So you see that now-a-days, and in England, there is here and there a noble deed done, a noble case of self-sacrifice; and those who give their lives to God are not soldiers, nor saints, nor even strong grown-up men, but sometimes lads like yourself are in the

"Noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid;
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain;
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train."

--The truth may always be spoken in gentle, warm, earnest love without offending any one. Only you must be sure, and your hearer very sure that it is in love.

"The Touch of a Vanished Hand"

BY MARGARET J. PRESTON.

Oh, why should the world seem strange,
With its beauty around me still?
And why should the slope of my swarded path
Seem suddenly all uphill?

I had gone, with a buoyant step,
So cheerily on my way;
How could I believe so calm a life
Could turn to so chill a grey?

And wherefore? Because the hand
That held in its clasp my own
Whose touch was a benediction such
As only the blest have known—

Was caught by the viewless hand
Of an angel, and upward drawn.
What hope, what comfort, what guidance now,
Since the stay of my life is gone?

"But a stronger is left to thee,"
Some comforting whisper saith
"The arm that shall carry thee safe to him
When thou crossest the tides of death."

If Christ in His mortal hour
Had need of the chosen three
To watch with Him through the awful throes
Of His dread Gethsemane,

Oh, surely His human heart
Will pity and understand
That speechless yearning, too deep for words,
For the "touch of the vanished hand!"

Forbearance.

If I were asked what particular virtue or good quality in married people was most necessary to the making of a happy home, I should say *Forbearance*. Neither man nor woman can be perfect; and it is best in the honeymoon not to expect it, because disappointment is certain to ensue.

Just in those early days everything does seem very perfect, I know; but when, a little later, it comes out that Bill has a temper, or Sally a tongue, what is to be done? You can't put Bill in the corner till he is good or order Sally not to speak for the next five minutes, as you would do if they were children. No, that is impossible. But if Bill is forbearing, and lets Sally pour out her stream of sharp words without a sharp answer; nay, if he thinks "she's a bit tired with the long day and the baby crying," and actually sets to work to put the things straight she is fretting and storming about, peace will not be long absent from that house.

In the same way when Bill's bad temper—he had it from a child, his mother will tell you, she has leathered him often for it!—breaks out, and Sally rather surprised and disheartened, wants to cry, or to reproach him, if instead of that she answers gently, bearing his perhaps unjust accusations, forbearing to "give as good as she gets," then all goes well, and God's angels watching over that house are glad.

"Give peace at home," one of our very oldest hymns asks of God.

Yes, He can give it, but He expects us all to try and keep it.

And forbearance with other's faults will do this better than fretting for impossible perfection.

Lying.

What is lying?

It is the intention to deceive. It does not matter whether we gain much or little by the act; if we intend to conceal in any shape the truth, we are guilty of this sin. And, perhaps, there is no sin so common under different shapes and appearances, from the blushing child that strives to conceal his detected fault by a flat denial of the truth, to the slight mis-statement of the woman who makes the best of a good story; the servant that conceals an accident from her mistress by an evasion; the youth who saves himself punishment by concealing the truth under the mask of some school-boy name, which means lying, though it does not express it; the tradesman who makes the best of a bad article or adds a penny unduly to a bill; the rich man who denies his being at home when he is watching his visitor from his window; all these and many more are guilty in the eyes of