

CHRISTIAN AND HOPEFUL DELIVERED FROM THE NET.

They went then till they came at a place where they saw a way put itself in their way, and seemed withal to lie as straight as the way they should go. And here they knew not which of the two to take, for both seemed straight before them; therefore, here they stood still to consider. And, as they were thinking about the way, behold a man, black of flesh, but covered with a very light robe, came to them, and asked them why they stood there? They answered, they were going to the City, but knew not which of these ways to take. Follow me, said the man; it is thither that I am going. So they followed him in the way that but now came into the road, which by degrees turned, and turned them so far from the city that they desired to go to, that in a little time their faces were turned away from it; yet they followed him. But by and by, before they were aware, he led them both within the compass of a net, in which they were both so entangled that they knew not what to do; and with that the white robe fell off the black man's back; then they saw where they were. Wherefore, there they lay crying some time, for they could not get themselves out.

Then said Christian to his fellow, now do I see myself in an error. Did not the shepherds bid us beware of the flatterer? As is the saying of the wise man, so we have found it this day, "A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet."

HOPE. They also gave us a note of directions about the way, for our more sure finding thereof; but therein we have also forgotten to read, and have not kept ourselves from "the paths of the destroyer." Here David was wiser than we; for, saith he, "Concerning the works of men, by the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Thus they lay bewailing themselves in the net. At last they espied a shining one coming towards them with a whip of small cords in his hand. When he was come to the place where they were, he asked them whence they came, and what they did there? They told him that they were poor pilgrims going to Zion, but were led out of their way by a black man clothed in white, who bid us, said they, follow him, for he was going thither too. Then said he with the whip, it is a flatterer, "a false apostle, that hath transformed himself into an angel of light." So he rent the net, and let the men out. Then said he to them, follow me, that I may set you in your way again; so he led them back to the way they had left to follow the flatterer. Then he asked them, saying, where did you lie the last night? They said, with the shepherds upon the Delectable Mountains. He asked them then if they had not of the shepherds a note of directions for the way? They answered, yes. But did you not, said he, when you were at a stand, pluck out and read your note? They answered, no. He asked them, why? They said they forgot. He asked, moreover, if the shepherds did not bid them beware of the flatterer? They answered, yes; but we did not imagine, said they, that this fine-spoken man had been he.

Then I saw in my dream that he commanded them to lie down; which when they did, he chastised them sore, to teach them the good way wherein they should walk; and as he chastised them, he said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent." This done, he bids them go on their way, and take good heed to the other directions of the shepherds. So they thanked him for all his kindness, and went softly along the right way, singing.—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

AN ANSWERED PRAYER.

CARLISLE B. HOLDING.

Benny was the youngest boy in the family, and for that reason was a favorite with his brothers when a child, and when he was older they loved him the more for his real worth and kindness. His mother called him her "baby boy," even when he was so big that he put on his father's collars by mistake for his own. It is not right clear that this petting did not make Benny feel younger than he really was, and made him more childlike in his ideas and his actions about some things. He loved his

"I believe in God, mother; I believe he can hear all I say, and knows even what I think before I say it. But he is not going to hurry along his work to accommodate me, if I should happen to ask him for something. Now, suppose I wanted a harvest apple in March, or a strawberry in December; suppose I was sick, and these would save my life; do you think God would set the harvest tree a blooming when the snow was yet on the ground, or thaw the sleet off the strawberry bed to accommodate me? Folks ought to be reasonable in their requests in prayer, and not pray for things out of season. At any rate, if they do pray

of going to college, and naturally indulged in pompous language that amused his mother.) "God does answer prayer, but he answers through natural processes and in seasonable times."

"I understand, my son," she said, with a smile, and went out, leaving Benny to his own thoughts, which were very complimentary to himself, above the old foggy notions of his mother. "Mother is good," he said to himself, "but she doesn't try to get away from the errors of her childhood."

Benny had been to college but one month when he wrote home, saying among other things:

"I get up mornings with a dull headache; don't want to eat; drag through the day, and go to sleep over my books at night. I believe I am lazy."

When this letter was read at home, his mother said:

"He is not lazy. He is overworking, and not taking enough exercise. I fear he will be down in bed soon."

The rest of the family went about their usual work, and thought no more of Benny's ills; but his mother at once busied herself with preparations for the possible home-coming of her "baby boy." The upper room was cleaned, freshened in many ways, and daily treated to sun baths from wide-open windows.

The usual weekly letter did not come the next week. The family said:

"Wonder why Benny does not write. This is the first time he has missed since he went away."

Benny's mother was not surprised that the letter did not come. She was not looking for any. That evening she said to her eldest son:

"Sam, if you can just as well as not, I wish you would put off that hunting expedition a few days, until we hear from Benny. He may be sick."

"Just as well as not, mother. You are not alarmed, are you?"

"Not at all, Sam; but if he is sick he had better come home, and I would like for you to go and bring him."

"The hunting will be better a few weeks later, any way," said Sam, reflectively.

Three days after, Benny was moaning and tossing in his bed at the boarding-house where the doctor called to see him.

"You are a pretty sick boy, my man, but I will get you out of this in a couple of weeks!"

"Couple of weeks!" exclaimed Bennie. "Couple of weeks! I have been sick a month already!"

"Be patient, and you will get well quicker. Three days are not a month, by a long shot," said the doctor, thumping his phials to make the ugly looking powders roll out.

"Ugh!" shuddered Benny. "Do I have to take more of that nasty stuff?"

"Unless you want to die," the doctor answered.

"In just clear water!"

"I can give it to you in muddy water, if you prefer," said the doctor, gravely.

"Ugh!" shuddered Benny again, and swallowed the bitter dose, remembering how his mother would have hidden the mixture in jelly or jam, and would have a glass of lemonade ready to follow the medicine.

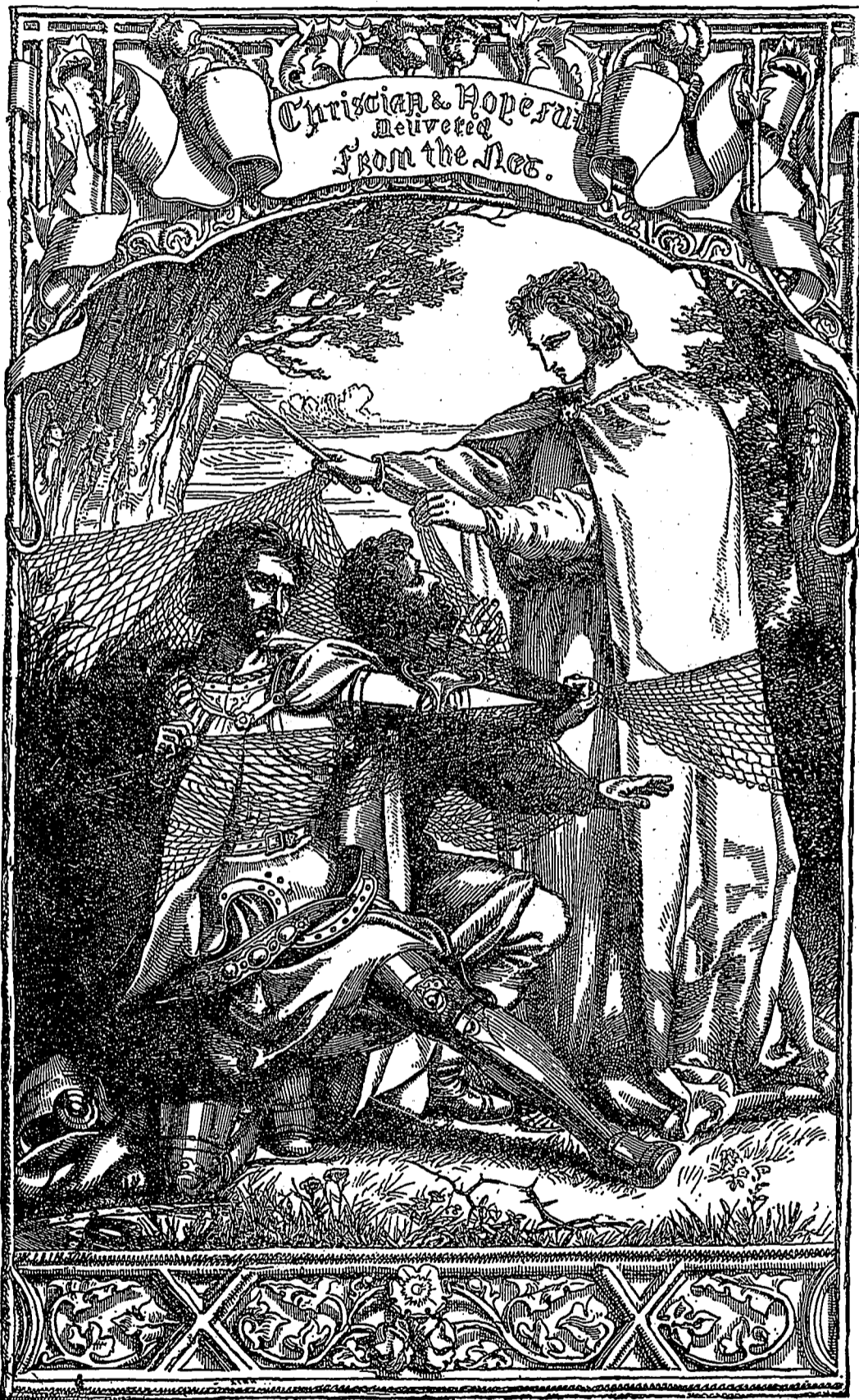
"Doctor, can I go home?"

"Not for a week yet. You are at the crisis now, and must not be moved."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Benny, hiding his face in the pillow.

"Brace up! brace up!" said the doctor, sharply, and then added in a kinder tone: "I will be up to see you after dinner. If you need anything, ring the bell, and some one will come."

A very few minutes had passed when Benny rang the bell. He wanted to send a telegram home. He was sure he was



mother as fondly as she loved him, and leaned on her judgment and yielded to her influence long beyond the time when most boys think they are in duty bound to cut the "apron strings" that bind them to their mothers.

But Bennie was skeptical on some points, and one was that God could and would answer prayer, and especially that he would answer it right away. One day, when talking to his mother on this subject, he said, with a tinge of haughtiness that was intended to show that he was thinking for himself, and though ready to learn from her he felt it his duty to give her the benefit of his own research and conclusions:

for them, they ought to wait until the things get around in the ordinary course of events."

His mother smiled and said kindly:

"Wait until you are older, Benny, and you will change your mind, perhaps."

"Older, mother? What I say is true and reasonable, and no lapse of time can change the truth or make reasonable things unreasonable!"

"That is so, Benny, but you can not measure the sky with a tape line, or weigh the earth in balances."

"Well, this is my proposition, mother, and I want you to remember it, so we will see how it comes out." (Benny was on the