

alone; and the people are not to say a word of it after him. Is not that the way of it?

W. Yes, that is right.

T. And what is the reason the people must not say this after the Minister?

W. Why, because it is the Minister's business to declare to the people the Lord's forgiveness of sin.

T. O, then, the *Absolution* is not a prayer; but the Minister stands up, here, to tell the people of God's mercy in pardoning sin: and we are to remain humble upon our knees, to receive a message of mercy so much greater than we deserve.

W. Yes, that is the meaning of it.

T. Well, then, it must be a strange mistake to repeat this *Absolution* after the Priest,—as many people do.

W. Why, certainly, that is quite contrary to all sense, and it spoils the whole meaning of it; for the *Absolution* is not a prayer from the people, but a message to them.

T. Why, then, as far as I can understand you, there has not yet been much that could properly be called prayer.

W. Why, no. So far all may perhaps be considered as a sort of preparation for the prayers that are to come afterwards.

RECAPITULATION.

T. Yes, I see. For, first, the Minister reads a sentence or two out of the Bible—then he speaks to the people in the *Exhortation*, and calls upon them to confess their sins. After confessing, and pleading for mercy, the Priest declares to them their pardon in the *Absolution*. But do you really think, William, that everybody in the church is pardoned and reconciled to God, just because the Priest reads the *Absolution* to them?

W. Why, Thomas, if you will only give another look at this *Absolution*, you will see that no such thing as that is meant by it.

T. It reads thus: "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live, and hath given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins: He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." I think I see now that it is Almighty God, and not the minister who pardons the people. I have heard people make objections to this *Absolution*,—but it must be because they do not understand it; for we see, when we come to examine it, that it is all right,—it is God, not man, that pardons.

W. Right: and for fear that anybody should make a mistake here, the minister repeats it, and says, *He*, that is, *God*, pardoneth and absolveth.

T. Then I see that the Minister does not tell us that the Lord pardons *all*, but only "those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel;" and it is the business of the Minister to declare and pronounce to such as these, that the Lord pardoneth and absolveth them.

W. Yes, that is it.

T. Well, it is wonderful to think of, that there should be such merciful pardon for us, if we truly repent and believe. And I must think, that when we hear of our sins being forgiven, this greatly leads us to be thankful for such mercy; and we can then with more heart join in prayer and praise, and call the Lord our Father. But there is one thing, William, that I should like to know, and that is, whether there is Scripture for all this or not. I like the prayers wonderfully, as far as I see into them; and I have a great notion that those godly martyrs would not have given us anything wrong, if they knew it; but yet, you know, Scripture is above all. We must look to that.

W. Yes, Thomas, that is certain.

T. Well, then, do you think that, according to the Scriptures, God "hath given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins?" And do you think that we may depend upon the truth of this, that "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel?"

W. Yes, I do certainly.

T. But why?

W. Why, because I find that the Scripture assure us, that through the merits of a Saviour, there is a complete pardon for such persons. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

T. Well, as this is so, it surely is the business of the minister to deliver God's gracious message to his people. This message is indeed "very full of comfort." But do you think that we may all take this comfort to ourselves?

W. Surely, all to whom it is delivered:—all, that is, who "truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." Here, you see, true repentance is required and unfeigned faith.

T. Well, then, it is no message at all for the sinner.

W. Why, now, neighbor, it seems to me to be a message *on purpose* for the sinner; not, indeed, for him who wishes to *continue* in sin, but for him who is truly *sorry* for his past sins, and is *heartily* striving to forsake them:—for this, you know, is true repentance. And if we have *such* repentance and "a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ," we may hear the *Absolution* with joy, and take to ourselves all the benefits and all the blessings of it. But, as these good gifts come from God alone, the minister begs us to join in prayer "to beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit," that our present worship may be acceptable to him, "and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy;" for, with such preparation, we may hope at the last to "come to his eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

T. Well, William, I am sure I am obliged to you for trying to make me understand these things. And now I think it must be getting towards church-time, and I should by no means wish to be late; for I would not, on any account, lose the part of the service we have been talking about. And, perhaps, some other time, you will try and explain a little more to me.

W. To be sure. If what we have been talking proves to be of any use to you, I shall be glad to have a little more conversation with you on these matters, some time or other.

T. Well, I thank you, neighbor, I am sure; and I hope I shall not forget what you have told me. And somehow, now, I feel quite a pleasure at the thought of going to church.

*The Catechism.

POWER OF A SWEET VOICE.—There is no power of love so hard to get and keep as a kind voice. A kind hand is deaf and dumb. It may be rough in flesh and blood, yet do the work of a soft heart, and do it with a soft touch. But there is no one thing that love so much needs as a sweet voice to tell what it means and feels; and it is hard to get and keep it in the right tone. One must start in youth, and be on the watch night and day, at work and play, to get and keep a voice that shall speak at all times the thoughts of a kind heart. But this is the time when a sharp voice is most apt to be got. You often hear boys and girls say words at play with a quick, sharp tone, as if it were the crack of a whip. When one of them gets vexed you will hear a voice that sounds as if it were made up of a snarl, a whine and a bark. Such a voice often speaks worse than the heart feels. It shows more ill-will in the tone than in the words. It is often in mirth that one gets a voice or a tone that is sharp, which sticks to him through life, and stirs up ill-will and grief, and falls like a drop of gall on the sweet joys at home. Such as these get a sharp home-voice for use, and keep their best voice for those they meet elsewhere, just as they would save their best cakes and pies for guests and all their sour food for their own board. I would say to all boys and girls: "Use your guest-voice at home. Watch it day by day, as a pearl of great price, for it will be worth more to you in days to come than the best pearl hid in the sea. A kind voice is a joy like a lark's song to a hearth and home. It is to the heart what light is to the eye. It is a light that sings as well as shines. Train it to sweet tones now, and it will keep in tune through life."

THE WAY TO HAPPINESS.—"The happiest child I ever saw," says the Rev. J. C. Ryle, "was a girl

whom I met once travelling in a railway carriage. She was eight years old, and she was quite blind. She had never been able to see at all. She had never seen the sun and the stars and the sky and the grass and the flowers and the trees and the birds, and all those pleasant things which we see every day of our lives; but still she was quite happy. She was by herself, poor thing! She had no friends or relations to take care of her, but she was quite happy and content. She said when she got into the carriage, "Tell me how many people there are in the carriage, for I am quite blind and can see nothing." A gentleman asked her if she was not afraid. "No," she said. "I have travelled before, and I trust in God, and people are always very good to me." But I soon found out the reason why she was so happy. She loved Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ loved her; She had sought Jesus Christ, and she had found him." "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches."

Children's Department.

A CHILD'S STORY.

With rosy cheeks and golden hair,
And joyous smile, just turn'd of three,
He came and said that he must tell
A tale to me.

"Three little people," so he spoke,
"Went out to seek for God above,
And two of them were Faith and Hope,
The other Love."

"They wander'd near, they wander'd far,
But never found the God they sought,
And Faith and Hope were lost and gone
And came to nought."

I asked of Love, and where was he.
"Oh, mother, he is strong to bear;
He struggled on to God at last—
And now is there."

"And I must go, and I must play."
He danced away with laughing eyes,
Blue as the glacier's sapphire depths,
Or summer skies.

But in my brain the baby tale
Reiterated o'er and o'er,
As if it were the last true word
Of this sad hour.

Oh, hope deferred! oh, faltering faith!
Weak forces doom'd to droop and die,
Not yours to find man's mystic God,
Now or eternally.

In Love, as yet but faintly known,
Lies all the future of our kind,
Cling to him, that on some far shore,
Faith, Hope, ye find.

A LITTLE TALK TO BOYS.

When I meet you everywhere, boys—on the streets, in the cars, on the boat, at your own homes, or at school—I see a great many things in you to admire. You are earnest, you are merry, you are full of happy life, you are quick at your lessons, you are patriotic, you are brave, and you are ready to study out all the great and curious things in this wonderful world of ours. But very often I find one great thing lacking in you. You are not quite gentlemanly enough. There are so many little actions which help to make a true gentleman, and which I do not see in you. Sometimes when a mother or sister comes into the room where you are sitting in the most comfortable chair, you do not jump up and say, "Take this seat, mother," or "sit here, Annie," but you sit still and enjoy it yourself. Sometimes you push past your mother or sister, in the door-way from one room to another, instead of stepping aside politely for them to pass first. Sometimes you say, "the governor," or "the boss," in speaking of your father; and when he comes in at night you forget to say, "good evening, sir." Sometimes