

LITERATURE.

Tales from the Canon Schmid,
AUTHOR OF THE WOODEN CROSS.

The Fire.

A TALE.

In five Letters addressed by Lewis May to his Mother.

LETTER V.

Concluded.

"Dear Miss Amelia," said Bellini, "the loss of my house and a great part of my property, was, undoubtedly a great misfortune for me, my wife, and children; but we and many others, drew therefrom a still greater blessing. We learned more clearly the fleetingness and futility of all earthly goods; we learned that we have no fast resource but God alone; we were compelled to fly to him as our only refuge. How earnestly did our neighbours, who were themselves in danger pray to God for help! How fervently did we ourselves pray to Him, in the peril of our beloved children? We had an opportunity of practising patience and resignation to God's will; and many others had an occasion of practising charity and benevolence. I must gratefully acknowledge, that many great merchants remitted to me no inconsiderable sums, and furnished me with new wares upon credit. Many—very many of my neighbours who had nothing to gain or lose by it, cheerfully assisted to extinguish the fire. Without such calamities as this—without fires, hailstorms, pestilences, and the like there would be no room for the exercise of the most beautiful of all virtues, confidence in God, patience in suffering, benevolence to the afflicted and oppressed, heroic self-devotion, charity, and gratitude to our benefactors. And are not these virtues incomparably more precious than all the goods of this world?"

"Most true!" cried Mr. von Walther; "even to myself although I live many miles from you, your misfortune was a most lucky occurrence. I discovered the hypocrisy of Fein, who had cleverness enough to worm himself into my confidence, and who tried to cheat you (after you had already lost so much by the fire,) out of a large sum of money beside. Of him, thank God, I got clear.—Mr. May's innocence was discovered and I took him back again into my house. The courage with which he risked his life for your children, makes me prize him infinitely more than before; and just as you are happier in your children, now that they are restored to you, than you were before, even so it is with me in him. Thus it is, that God knows how to change into joys, all the sorrows which he sends us!"

Madam Bellini told the boys that as they

were to start at a very early hour in the morning, they should go to bed in order to sleep well and be fresh for their journey. They stood up instantly said Grace, kissed Mr. and Mrs. Walther's hand, in acknowledgement of their hospitality and asked their father and mother's blessing before they should go to bed. I proposed to accompany them home. Madam von Walther sent for a box, and while the carriage was being prepared, packed in it for the children large pieces of cake, whole pie, and as many of the delicious fruits which were on the table as it would hold.

"You have been this long time ogling the nice rosy apples and yellow pears," said she; "and still you were so modest as not to ask for one: that was very good and now you can eat them on your journey."

"Oh no!" said little Anthony, "we will bring the beautiful apples and pears home to our brother and sister."

"Yes," said Frank, "and the pie and the cake too. My brother could not come with us because he had begun his studies; and my sister, too, could not leave school. But now they will be delighted with what we are bringing them."

"You are bringing up your children extremely well, Madam Bellini," said Von Walther; they will prove a source of happiness to you."

"God grant it!" said Madam Bellini, "He has given me back these two children a second time and I have vowed to bring them up for him, with renewed zeal. But it is so difficult. There are other dangers which threaten children more alarming than fire and water. In fire or water, we can suffer but a temporal death; but sin plunges us into eternal ruin. God grant me wisdom to guard my children from all dangers, both of body and soul; and if they ever be in peril of temptation to rescue them from it, with the same courage as their valiant deliverer here drew them forth from the flames!"

When I returned after leaving the children at home, Mr. von Walther rose up solemnly from his chair.

"My dear Sir," said he, "I owe you a great reparation for the injury I have done you, and I wish to reward your noble action, as well as lies in my power. My firm henceforth shall be 'WALTHER & MAY.'" I give you one half of my property, and, in addition, I give you my daughter as your wife. I have observed that you are mutually attached to one another. My wife and I have approved your union, and your mother will not object. Join hands: Signor and Madam Bellini, are witnesses of your betrothal, and will be