

A SERMON IN RHYME.

[The following piece is well called "A Sermon in Rhyme." It is moreover a Sermon which everyone can preach—in his life.]

And it's wonderful what attentive listeners we should all find, along our daily paths! And how many weary hearts would be glad, and tearful eyes be made bright; if we were all preachers after this sort!]

If you have a friend worth loving,
Love him. Yes, and let him know
That you love him, e'er life's evening
Tinge his brow with sunset glow.
Why should good words ne'er be said
Of a friend—till he is dead.

If you hear a song that thrills you,
Sung by any child of song,
Praise it! Do not let the singer
Wait deserved praise long.
Why should one who thrills your heart
Lack the joy you may impart?

If you hear a prayer that moves you,
By its humble, pleading tone,
Join it. Do not let seeker
Bow before his God alone.
Why should not your brother share
The strength of "two or three" in prayer?

If you see the hot tears falling
From the brother's eyes,
Share them. And by sharing,
Own your kinship with the skies,
Why should any one be glad
When a brother's heart is sad?

If a silvery laugh is rippling
Through the sunshine on his face,
Share it. 'Tis the wise man's saying—
For both grief and joy a place.
There's health and goodness in the mirth
In which an honest laugh has birth.

If your work is made more easy
By a friendly, helping hand,
Say so. Speak out brave and truly,
Ere the darkness veil the land,
Should a brother workman dear
Falter for a word of cheer?

Scatter thus your seeds of kindness,
All enriching as you go—
Leave them. Trust the Harvest Giver,
He will make each seed to grow;
So, until its happy end,
Your life shall never lack a friend.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

BY HESBY STRETTON.

CHAPTER VIII.—GOING HOME.

When Ishmael had obeyed her, and gone away from her death-bed, Ruth had for a little while lain still in utter solitude. After the echo of Ishmael's and Elsie's footsteps had died away, not a sound had reached her ears. She was accustomed to be alone; but this loneliness seemed terrible in her last hours. An unutterable yearning came upon her to see her boy once more, to know what he was doing, and what was befalling him. He had gone into danger at her bidding; and until she knew what became of him, she felt as if she could not turn her thoughts even to the God in whom she trusted. If only Humphrey would come home, she would prevail upon him to follow Ishmael to the cave, and bring back word, or send some one to tell her what was going on. How could she die in peace while her boy was in instant danger? She lifted herself up, and strained her ear to catch some distant sound of voices or footsteps, but there was nothing save utter silence and solitude.

Then a feverish strength, the strength of the dying, came to her. To be somewhere near where Ishmael was, to have faces about her, and hear the voices of her neighbors, seemed absolutely needful to her. With feeble, yet hurried hands, she dressed herself in the poor old clothing she had laid aside for the last time, and with faltering feet she descended the steep ladder. The fresh air of the evening blowing softly in her face revived her, and made her feel as if it had only been because she had been lying in bed, in the hot, dark loft that she had thought herself dying. But as she crept on through the tangle of brushwood, with barely strength enough to part the hazel twigs which beset her path, the numbing hand of death weighed more and more heavily upon her. She

heard the voices of her neighbors passing to and fro in the woods, but she could not catch loud enough to make them hear. The thrushes sang in the topmost branches of the trees where they could yet see the lingering sunset light, but below her path was all in darkness, and the power of seeing was fading out of her eyes. Half-blind, stumbling over the roots of the trees, fainting with weariness, yet urged on by her passionate love for her son, Ruth reached the cave at last. She was come to die somewhere near where Ishmael was.

"Didn't he say his mother lay a-dying?" exclaimed some of the crowd, as they fell back to make way for her. But as soon as they caught sight of her face by the light of the lanterns they knew that she was dying. She tottered forward with stumbling feet to the end of the cave, and sank down on the ground breathing fitfully, whilst her sunken eyes gleamed with a bright light. Nutkin shrank away in awe of her; but she smiled faintly, and beckoned with her hand that he should watch and listen still at the post he had held since Ishmael had entered the old quarry. But he stood, pale and panic-stricken, looking down upon her as if she had been one come back from the dead.

"Ruth," cried Mrs. Clift, the schoolmistress, coming forward from among the villagers, "how did you get here?"

She sat down on the ground beside her, and drew the grey old head upon her lap, and Ruth looked up thankfully, and summoned all her failing strength to answer.

"I was afeared," she whispered, "never to see Ishmael again. And God helped me. The poor lad 'ud fret so if he never saw me again; and it'll be easier to die here than all alone at home yonder."

"Some of us ought to have thought of you," said the schoolmistress.

"It's best here," she whispered again, "near Ishmael. God's been very good to me all my life; and He's very good to me now I'm dying. I'd rather wait here for him to come back than anywhere else in the world. Only I shall miss seein' Humphrey, and he was a good husband to me once."

"Ruth Medway," said the squire, speaking slowly and distinctly that she might hear him, "don't you be troubled about your son. I will see after him, and make a man of him; I promise you solemnly."

Ruth looked up inquiringly into the squire's face; an unfamiliar face, looking blurred and misty to her failing eyes.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"The squire," said the schoolmistress, gently.

"I thank you humbly, sir," she said, making a great effort, "but it's too late now, I'm afeared. He's goin' away to a country where there's a better chance for him as soon as I'm gone. He won't leave me, sir, not as long as I live, if he starves for it. But he'll go as soon as I'm dead."

"I'll make it worth his while to stay at home," said the squire.

"There won't be no home when I'm gone," murmured Ruth, "he's never had a home these five years; like Him that had no place to lay His head."

She closed her eyelids, and lay still, breathing heavily and fitfully; whilst all around her her old neighbors looked on in mournful silence.

"He's long in coming," she murmured at last, "and it's growing dark, very dark. It's time to sing 'Glory to Thee,' it'll cheer him, may be, wherever he is. Only I can't begin."

"She wishes us to sing 'Glory to Thee,'" said Mrs. Clift, looking round at the circle of grave and sorrowful faces surrounding them; she says it will cheer Ishmael; and it will if he can only catch a distant sound of it. Some of you belong to the choir; please start it, for I cannot."

Her voice was broken and low, and for the first two or three lines the hymn was sung very tremulously by the villagers. But Ruth's eyes brightened, and a smile broke over her grey and withered face, as the familiar strain and old words reached her dull ear. Her lips moved, and now and then the feeble whispering of a word or two was heard by the schoolmistress. But when the "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow" had been sung in a loud, clear, hearty chorus of every voice, there came, in the silence that followed, a sound as of an echo repeating it in the winding galleries of the old quarry. Ruth lifted up her head, and with sudden strength, raised herself to her feet, and leaned against the opening to listen.

"I can hear him," she said, joyously, "and I shall see him again. I bid him go, for I was afeared he hadn't forgiven

Nutkin; but my heart went with him. He's the only one of 'em all as cares for their old mother; it's the way of young folks," she added as if to excuse them herself; "but Ishmael was loth to leave me, for fear I should die afore he got back. But I'm here, Ishmael, my lad; I'm close beside thee. Thee and me'll see each other again."

She sank back, slowly back to the ground; and the neighbors gathered round her again. She was only a poor, old, toiling woman, for years well known to them all, and little thought of; but there was not one of them who did not grieve for her, or say to themselves how they could have made her hard life a little easier for her. Nutkin knelt down beside her, and his red, sunburnt face looked more full of life and health than ever beside her thin, pinched, pallid features.

"Ruth, forgive me," he said. "I'd rather have had my right hand shot off, if I'd ha' known it before. It were my wicked hate as did it. I'd ha' winked at any other lad robbing a pheasant's nest; but I hated the very name o' Medway."

"I never thought myself as there were anything to forgive," she answered. "It's the law, I know; and the justices are wise men. But Ishmael couldn't forgive it, not till now."

But before any one could speak again, there came a shout through the narrow opening, and the sound of a child's voice calling "Father." Ruth lifted up her head again, and turned her smiling face to the opening.

"He's coming," she said. "God is very good to us."

Yet a few minutes passed away, long slow minutes, before they could hear Ishmael's footsteps, and his voice speaking gently to the child, who was chattering back again, as if he felt no fear of him, or of the strange place they were in. Very soon the child's tear-stained face was seen crawling back through the archway; yet no one stirred or spoke but Nutkin, who caught his boy in his arms, and hushed him into silence. Ishmael was coming back; and his old mother was leaning forward with her eager, dying face, waiting to see him once more. The lad crept out slowly and reluctantly, unwilling to face so many of his old neighbors, and anxious to get away out of sight. His dazzled eyes saw nothing but a cluster of faces about him; and he did not perceive his mother until her feeble voice broke the utter silence which astonished and affrighted him.

"Ishmael!" she called.

"Mother!" he cried, in a loud, shrill tone of surprise and gladness, as he flung himself upon the earth beside her, and put his arm about her, drawing her head down upon his breast.

"I couldn't keep away," she murmured, "and God helped me to come. Be good, Ishmael. God sees us, every one, always. I shall watch for thee on the door-sill—to come into the Father's House—boldly—and then we'll be at home again—with Him."

The words dropped slowly, one by one, from the failing lips which were growing stiff with death; and the bright light in the sunken eyes flickered and died out. But there was still a faint, patient smile on the wrinkle face, and as Ishmael called to her for the last time, in a voice of bitter grief and loneliness, she tried to raise her head, and look again into her boy's face.

"Ishmael," she whispered, "because the Lord has heard thy afflictions."

CHAPTER IX.—A NEW HOME.

It was a solemn and almost speechless procession that marched through the midnight woods, waking up the sleeping birds in their nests, and frightening timid rabbits in their burrows. The moon shone down from the cloudless sky, filling the open spaces with a white light, but deepening the shadows where the high hazel bushes grew thickest. Elsie walked beside Ishmael with her hand in his; remembering, oh! how keenly, that day five years ago, which had laid the foundation-stone of all his sorrow. But beyond the present sadness there shone a bright hope in the future, though he could not at this moment catch its light. Only a few days and she and her mother were going to sail for America; and now, when Ishmael had seen his mother's feeble worn-out body laid in the churchyard, he would be free to go with them, and begin his new life in a new country.

They found old Humphrey lying in a drunken sleep on the damp floor of the hut, at the foot of the ladder, which he had not been able to climb up, and they had to drag him on one side to carry their burden to its resting-place in the loft overhead. He was an old man, with a brain softened and soddened with drink, and he could not be made to understand what had happened, or be persuaded to let Ishmael remain even for a few hours in his old home. It was only now and then when his father was away during the few days that intervened before the funeral, that he could steal in to look at his mother's calm and placid face, from which the wrinkles, 'graved sharply on it by many troubles, seemed almost smoothed away. But every house in the parish was open to him, the cast-away who had been driven from his home, and thrown upon the world. He followed his mother to the grave; and stood for the last time amid his father and brothers. There was a whole crowd of villagers and neighbors gathered about the grave; and Nutkin was there, with the little boy whom Ishmael had sought and found in the windings of the old quarry.

"I'd like to shake hands with all the Medways," said Nutkin, as the crowd began to melt away, "and let bygones be bygones. And, Ishmael, the squire bid me say, is there nothing as he can do for you; nothing as 'ud make it worth your while to stay at home, 'stead o' going to America?"

"Nothing," answered Ishmael, "there's no home for me now mother's gone. It was her as made home sweet, and I shall never have another."

But ten years after when Ishmael came back to England, not to stay but only to visit the old place, he had made a home for himself, with Elsie in it for his wife. He owned a farm of his own, and was prospering in every way. He found the old hut fallen into ruins, for his father had died in the work-house the year after he left England and no one had lived in the desolate hovel since. The old door-sill was there yet, though the thatched roof had long ago mouldered away; and he could almost fancy he could see his mother sitting there, and looking out for him. The trees behind the ruins tossed their green branches in the wind, and the blue sky, flecked with clouds, shone above them, as in the bygone days. There were the old pleasant sounds, the song of the birds, and the hum of insects, and the rustling of myriads of leaves; but still it was no more home. His mother, who had made this poor hut a home for him, was no longer there.

"I remember," said Elsie, softly, with her hand in his, "how she said 'I shall watch for thee on the door-sill, to come into the Father's house, boldly, where He's gone to prepare a place; and you and me'll be at home again, with Him.'"

THE END.

FACTS IN REFERENCE TO CHINA.

Now that a revision of treaties between the United States and China is under consideration, the newspapers are presenting many statements concerning the Chinese, some of which seem to be made to order, and for the purpose of affecting public opinion with reference to the proposed treaties. It is not strange that there should be some uncertainty with respect to a people so distant from us, and until recently so little known. Yet there are men who have lived in China, not merely on the outposts, like Hong-Kong and Shanghai, but in the interior, and who have scanned the whole Empire, not solely in the interests of trade, but of a broad philanthropy, and it would seem as if their reports should be credited. Dr. Legge, now Professor of Chinese at Oxford University, England, who is admitted to be the best authority on the religions of China, said at the Mildmay Conference, "I have met with travelers who had been in India and China, and who would give me almost the lie to my teeth when I was telling of what God was doing there. They had been to these countries, they had seen nothing of such things as I and my missionary brethren reported. How