

so close to Him without due preparation. We are taught to prepare ourselves *each time* we receive that Sacrament by meditation and study of the Scriptures, by confession of sins and prayer for God's help; but it is plain that there must be a special solemnity when we receive for the *first time* so great a blessing. And therefore it is appointed that there should be a special preparation for first communion, and this is given in the *Apostolic Rite of Confirmation*.

I. CONFIRMATION: ITS PLACE.

Read what is said at the end of the Baptismal Service, "Ye are to take care," etc. All baptized persons are to be brought to the Bishop for Confirmation. But when? "So soon as they can say," etc. Look also at the words before the Confirmation Service, "The Church has thought good to order," etc. *Instruction*, therefore, must be received before being confirmed. The instruction required by the Church is based upon the three things which every Christian should learn, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments ("in the vulgar tongue," that is, the language of the country). These are contained in the Church Catechism (see its title, showing that it is intended as a preparation for Confirmation). Every child should aim at knowing the Catechism perfectly, not merely to please his teacher or clergyman, but because the Catechism contains the principles (or foundation stones) of all Christian faith and practice. It will also be found a sure guide in laying up afterwards a more complete knowledge of the Scriptures. (Note S. Luke i. 4: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed," or, in the Greek, "*catechized*.")

After Instruction comes Confirmation. (The teacher will question the class to see that they know in what the ceremony consists.) Refer to Acts viii. 14-17; xix. 5, 6. In Acts viii.: Philip, a very holy man, who had converted the Samaritans to the Christian faith, *could not confirm them*. Only Apostles and Bishops, who hold the same office of chief shepherds, can administer the rite.

II. CONFIRMATION: ITS MEANING AND BLESSINGS.

Read Heb. vi. 1, 2. See the importance of Confirmation. The "laying on of hands" is here classed with the "principles of the doctrine of Christ." Note what these are. They may be called the *alphabet* of the Christian religion.

What, then, is the meaning of Confirmation? (1) It is a renewal of vows made in Baptism. We publicly take upon ourselves the promises made by our godparents. We *confirm* them, that is, we make them *strongly binding* on ourselves. See the question asked by the Bishop in the service. (2) It is a means appointed by God in His Church to *confirm* us, that is, to strengthen us in living a Christian life. This *confirming* is by the gift of the Holy Ghost, which accompanies the laying on of the Bishop's hands. This is seen in Acts viii. 17. In the times of the Apostles extraordinary gifts were added, as tongues, healing, etc. These were for a sign to others in the infant Church. But for our own help we receive as much as they did, namely, the ordinary gifts. These are mentioned in Gal. v. 22, 23; Isa. xi. 2 (the "seven-fold gifts"). The chief of them all is love (1 Cor. xiii). If we come to confirmation with an earnest desire for God's grace, He undoubtedly gives us His Holy Spirit, and a large measure of these spiritual gifts, which will increase in after years if we persevere. If we have received the Spirit of Christ, let us not delay to receive Christ in the Holy Communion. And let us resolve that our first Communion shall be the beginning of a higher life, in which He shall be the continual nourishment of our souls.

To-Day

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HOOD'S PILLS cure constipation by restoring the peristaltic action of the alimentary canal. They are the best family cathartic.

Family Reading.

Harry and Archie; or, First and Last Communion.

"You'll water my geranium, Nannie, dear, when I'm gone, won't you? and think of me when you do it; eh, dear?" and the little lad brushed a tear from her cheek, and looked up so lovingly in Nannie's face.

"Hist! hist! Harry, boy; you're a foolish lad; you're always for making me cry with your talk. Water the geranium, aye, to be sure; and why shouldn't I?" and Nannie looked as if she laughed; but it wasn't quite a laugh either.

"I'll be far away this time to-morrow, Nannie, dear," and the little boy's voice choked with tears, and he burst out crying on his sister's neck.

It was a small window, four pair of stairs, in a back attic, in one of the dingiest alleys of St. Giles's. The hot September sun was sinking behind the red tiles on the other side. The top row of miserable attic-windows overlooked the room from the houses on the other side. A few half-withered flower-pots stood out scorched up on the sooty window-sills. Down in the street below, which seemed a dizzy depth underneath, a few squalid women were quarrelling, with their dirty cap-strings untied, and their arms covered with huge and tattered plaid shawls. The intense heat of the summer day had dried up the last little pool of water which had served for two dingy hens to drink out of the last week; and a stall; where a woman was selling plums and pears, completed the scene from Nannie's window. The sky looked as blue as it can look in London, over the opposite roofs; and the rays of the sun were dazzling and scorching from the ruddy tiles and gaunt, irregular chimney-pots.

Nannie had just lost her mother, and she and Harry had followed her poor funeral that day week. It was a poor funeral; first, the coffin and the dirty white of the pall, looking as if it had covered many and many a one in their last journey; and behind it Nannie and Harry drest up in what odd black things the neighbours would lend them. She had been at work, poor girl, night after night, to put together the pieces and bits of black she had scraped together; and a strange, tattered concern it was; still she was proud of it. It had cost her so much work, so many toilsome hours, while the tears ran down her cheek, she felt quite proud of it; and even little Harry smiled for the first time since "mother died," to see himself dressed in the patch-work black trousers which Nannie had bought at a clothes-shop and mended up. "For they would put her dear mother in the ground respectable." It moved along the hot dusty street, and the two orphans behind it; and holding up their white handkerchiefs to their eyes, they truly did cry, though more than once Harry stole a glance round to see if no one noticed his black things. No one seemed to care for or heed him; and he soon began to cry again behind his handkerchief, because "mother was dead, and he did love her so!" So the poor funeral wound on, street after street; some stared after it from curiosity, and a few from pity; and Harry at last found that they were not looking at his black.

When the funeral was over, and they came back, the house did look so desolate; there was mother's bed, just where she lay, and all the things about, and the little bed she lay on—the only little bed they had—and it looked just as if she was there now; and the place where the minister knelt, and just the way the pillow was put to help her lie easier.

"Oh, Harry, Harry, isn't it just as if she was there still; isn't it like when her white face was alive, she spoke about our First Communion, and all just after she had taken her Last Communion? And didn't she speak sad-like to us, brother; eh, Harry, boy?" and Nancy burst out crying.

"First Communion? yes," said he, "yes; I will prepare for it with my whole, whole heart."

It was dreary work to come back to the old room again where she had lain, and not to have to nurse her any more. To see just the bed

stand up in the corner where she had been so many weary nights, with the dim light of the rushlight shining on her pale face, which Nannie used to love so to watch, and feel so thankful when it was quiet in sleep. But it was all past now; and the room was so still, and looked so sadly clean and tidy,—the very patchwork quilt had been washed. When they came into the room, the two orphans stood a moment without speaking. They seemed to be having the same thoughts with each other, and the silence was broken by Harry bursting into tears on Nannie's breast.

"Oh, Nannie, Nannie, what shall I do? what shall I do? I can't bear it; I can't bear to see the bed. Oh, mother, do come back again!"

"Hist, hist, Harry, boy, ye mustn't take on so, boy, for hear what she said to ye the last thing—to be patient in God's hand, and to try and follow her; and now you're not patient, Harry, boy." She did get to the end of what she said without breaking down, but it was all she did do.

"Oh, but Nannie, Nannie," said the little boy, "how can I go away and leave you? What shall I do when I am so far off? You'll have the old room to be in, and the old things to look at, and mother's grave to go to. But I shan't have any body out there. I shall be so lonely."

"Now, Harry, you mustn't take on so. If mother's in the room now, she wouldn't love you for it; she'd frown upon you, and wouldn't have the sweet smile she had when she died." This thought seemed to comfort the little boy, and he was calm.

"Well, Nannie, then I won't take on so. I'll go happy. But you know I must get ready for First Communion, as she said I was to lose no time; and how shall I ever get ready for that among strangers?"

"Why, isn't the same God everywhere, Harry; and can't He keep you there as well as here?"

(To be Continued.)

Praying for Others.

The way in which we should speak to God is by *intercession*, or praying for others. See James v. 16: "Pray for one another." Some of us get our minds so full of our own work, and troubles, and cares, and pleasures, that we hardly ever think about other people's. This is being sadly unlike our Lord, who, we are told, is always praying for others. Oh, try to imitate Him in this: think over the temptations, the sorrows, the difficulties of your friends, and then pray about them. "What good can I do them by my prayers?" you are perhaps thinking. I believe you can bring them great blessings.

I Am Not Good Enough.

The following story was once told by a great mission preacher: When he was vicar in a large town there was in his parish a very steady man who came most regularly to church, but who could never be persuaded to come to Holy Communion. His answer was always the same, "I am not good enough." At last the vicar said to him, "Well, will you let me know when you think you are good enough?" "Oh, yes," replied the man; "I should not think of coming without letting you know." "Then," replied his vicar, "when you come and tell me that, I shall say to you, get you gone, you blind Pharisee, who think yourself good enough—I will never give you Holy Communion then, nor should I, or any clergyman, dare to receive it ourselves, or to give it to any one else, if we waited till we were good enough."

Tools of the Pyramid Builders.

A two years' study at Gizeh has convinced Mr. Flinders Petrie that the Egyptian stone workers of 4,000 years ago had a surprising acquaintance with what have been considered modern tools. Among the many tools used by the pyramid builders were both solid and tubular drills and straight and circular saws. The drills, like those of to-day, were set with jewels (probably corundum, as the diamond was very scarce), and even lathe tools had such cutting edges. So remarkable was the quality of the tubular drills and the skill of