

## Led by a Child.

(By Helen White, in English Sunday School Times.)

'And a little child shall lead them.'

It was the month of February, with the snow falling in large flakes, whirled hither and thither by the cold north wind, when Pastor James, one afternoon at four o'clock, returned to the manse close by Salem Chapel from visiting his flock, scattered over a wide area of hill and dale, forming a wild and romantic district in the North of England. Having divested himself of his big overcoat, hat, and leggings, he entered his little study at the further end of the house, overlooking the river which flowed past the manse garden adjoining. Without all was cold, deary, and cheerless; within there was every appearance of comfort and cheeriness. Worn and faint with the exertions of his pastoral work, he quietly laid himself down on the couch close by the cheery fire.

Mrs. James, who had been busy all the afternoon writing a serial story for one of the magazines circulated in the district, laid aside her writing material on the appearance of her husband, saying, 'Well, dear, I hope you are done for the day; I am sure you must be thoroughly exhausted after all those hours of visitation among the sick and afflicted.'

'Yes, Mary, I am; but there is, I am sorry to say, every appearance of the epidemic increasing. Dr. Muir told me to-day he had seven new cases and two deaths yesterday; and he was on his way to the village of Garstang, where he was afraid it was making its appearance.'

'How did you find old Betsy?'

'Ah, Mary,' said Pastor James, 'she seems to be sinking, but I found her calm and cheerful. She said, with a smile on her face, 'I am wearying to get home; my journey has been a long one, but I am patiently waiting to be carried over in the 'King's ferry-boats' across the mystic Sea of Death.'''

'She is one of the most intelligent and matured Christians I have visited,' said Mrs. James.

'Yes, Mary, I always come away from that obscure little cottage much blessed. I read at her own request Psalm xxiii. When I came to the words, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," she said, softly, 'Ah, that's it, Thou, Thou, with me, with me," which she repeated again and again, her face beaming with a hallowed joy'

'Well, dear,' said Mrs. James, 'I am sure you are ready for tea, you look so fatigued.'

Just then the door-bell rang, and Maggie, the servant came, saying, 'Please, ma'am, there is a man at the door wants to see the master.'

'Who is it, Maggie?' asked Pastor James.

'I think it is Mr. Macdonald, the shepherd from the upper hamlet,' said Maggie. 'He says his little daughter Eva is very ill.'

'Tell him to come in, Maggie,' said Mrs. James.

'He can't, ma'am, he has the horse and trap to drive the master back.'

'Oh, then tell him I will be with him in a few minutes,' said Pastor James. 'Now, my dear, just get me a cup of tea or cocoa and biscuits,' said Mr. James to his wife.

In a few minutes Pastor James was on his way to Newbury, a small hamlet four miles distant from the village of M—, where Pastor James had resided for over twenty years. It was a cold and dreary drive; the snow was still falling, and the north wind very keen and penetrating.

The Macdonalds had long resided in the district, and were much respected. There were four brothers all married and doing well. Thomas had one little daughter, Eva, aged nine, the idol of her father's heart, who now lay at the point of death. Thomas was not like his brothers, who were men of a deeply religious nature, and did excellent work as local preachers in connection with the Wesleyans. Thomas attended the Congregational church occasionally of which Mr. James was minister, and little Eva belonged to the Christian Endeavour Society in connection with the branch Congregational Chapel in Newbury. Macdonald took little interest in the work of the little Bethel, held himself aloof from religious work of all kinds, occupying his mind more with the things of the world, and year by year he was drifting more and more into the whirlpool of worldliness.

After a cold and dreary drive they arrived at the Macdonalds' home, where they were welcomed by the mother of little Eva.

'It's a sair trial this, Mr. James,' said Mrs. Macdonald; 'our wee lammie is far spent, and I am afraid she will hardly pull through.'

'As long as there is life there is hope,' said Pastor James.

'True, sir,' replied Mrs. Macdonald, 'but the licht o' hope is very dim.'

'Has Dr. Muir been to-day?' asked Mr. James.

'Yes; he called on his way to Garstang, but gave us very little hope; it would be a hard struggle, he said, to pull through. She is so far spent and takes so little nourishment.'

Very soon Pastor James found himself by the bed of the little patient. She had just wakened out of a few hours' refreshing sleep, and seemed much better, although there was a languid look about the eyes.

'Well, Eva, my dear, how are you?' asked Mr. James.

'Oh, sir, I feel so weary, weary,' she said softly. 'Will you read about the many mansions?'

'Yes, dear. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also."'

'Yes,' murmured Eva, 'He will come again.'

'Do you wish him to come again, Eva?' said Mr. James.

'Me hope he will come soon and take me home,' said Eva, softly.

'There is no night of sickness nor weariness in heaven, Eva,' was Pastor James's reply.

'I am so weary, weary; no be weary there,' murmured Eva.

'My darling,' said her mother.

She smiled. Suddenly her countenance changed, and we thought she had gone, but were relieved by seeing a beautiful smile, like a little sunbeam, light up her countenance. Opening her lips she feebly said, 'O, me thought I was there.'

'Where, my child?' said her mother.

'Hark!'

We all bent down to listen.

'Hark, they whisper; angels say, Sister spirit, come away.'

Just then the bedroom door opened, and daddy entered as the words 'Come away,' like a summer zephyr, were wafted to his ear.

'Where, my darling?' asked the distracted father.

'Many mansions, Daddy,' said Eva, softly. 'Daddy.'

Angels beckon me away,  
And Jesus bids me come.'

Gathering all her remaining strength, she said feebly, 'Sing, sing, Mr. James, 'Shall you, shall I.' In a clear, tender voice, thrilled with emotion, Pastor James sang the favorite hymn very softly—

'Some one will enter the pearly gate,  
Shall you, shall I, shall you, shall I?  
Taste of the glories that there await,  
Shall you, shall I, shall you, shall I?'

'Daddy, shall you, sh—' and the gate opened and she passed in.

Pastor and parents in the presence of death knelt in silence before God, and then passed quietly out.

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Many weeks after we had laid little Eva to rest in the old burying-ground by the side of the hill, Pastor James sat in his study deeply absorbed in his subject for the following Sunday. It was one of those spring mornings that always remind one of the words of the Psalmist: 'Thou renewest the face of the earth.' All Nature was pulsating with life. Pastor James looked up. The view that met his gaze was charming. The apple and pear-trees were covered with blossom, the thrush and blackbird were making the air melodious, while the river went murmuring by. A voice he seemed to hear. He had often heard it before—the voice of inspiration!

'Arise, and come away; for, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land.'

He arose, lifted down his hat, and went out into the garden across the little wooden bridge which spanned the river, and entered a shaded grove which led into a sheep path that led across the hills to Newbury. The air was soft and balmy; verdure, fragrance, and beauty were everywhere. It was a time that peculiarly appealed to the soul of a devout Christian, reminding him of the goodness and beneficence of the great Creator, and Pastor James felt it that spring morning as he walked across Nature's green fields and up the grassy slopes. Turning round one of the hilly slopes, he was accosted by an old friend, Peter Macarthur, one of the oldest local preachers in the Methodist Connexion—a very eccentric man, but very popular at chapel anniversaries and harvest festivals.

'Good morning, Pastor James,' said Peter; 'have you heard the news, sir, about Thomas Macdonald?'

'No, Peter; I hope it is good news. I have not seen the Macdonalds since last Sunday week.'

'Well, sir, it is good news indeed. Thomas has been attending our special service held the last ten days in Newbury, and last night before we closed the meeting he died.'

'Dear me, Peter, that was sad. I thought you said the news was good news?'

'And so it is, sir,' said Peter.

'Well, Peter, you do puzzle me. How could such an event be called good news,' said Pastor James.

'Well, you see, Thomas has long held aloof from religious services and religious work, but since the wee lassie's death he has been sairly upsit, and hasna been himself away. Last night he was in the meeting, and was much impressed by what our preacher said; but it wasna the preacher that did it, it was the singing at the close