

THE HISTORY OF POOR SEPPELY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

If you, dear children, ask your mother whether she can remember the winter from 1816 to 1817, she may answer you with a sigh: 'Alas! yes, that was a hard winter.' For at that time a great famine was in all lands, and many a poor child whose father could procure for him no bread and no potatoes, died miserably of hunger. It was during that sad winter that a poor boy, of twelve years of age, whose name was Joseph, but who was called at home Seppely, slept one night into a lonely farmer's yard, in order to seek there a shelter for the night. He looked pale and pined away, and hunger stared out of his hollow eyes. His clothes were miserable rags, which ill protected him against the cold evening air, and the only thing he carried with him was a bag, in which he seemed to have something heavy. When he stepped through the gate of the courtyard, a great dog rushed forward out of his kennel, with loud barking, and certainly he would have done some harm to the boy, had he not happily been chained. Seppely rushed back frightened, but took courage again when he saw the dog was chained. He stepped cautiously into the yard. The barking of the dog drew the attention of the people, and a maid-servant came to see who was there. Seppely asked timidly, whether he could rest for the night in a shed. The servant, who was compassionate, went in to her master, and spoke to him of the boy. The master at the moment was in a good humour, looked through the window, pushed towards the servant a warm potato, and said, 'There, take it to him and lead him to the stable.' The maid-servant took another potato from her own supper, brought them to Seppely, addressed him kindly, and led him into a warm corner of the stable, where she spread him a bundle of fresh straw for a resting-place. No sinner was Seppely alone in the dark but warm stable, than he threw himself on his knees and prayed thus:—

'Dear Saviour, I thank Thee that Thou hast given me something to eat. Thou hast known that I was very hungry, and now Thou hast thought of me, and hast not suffered me to starve. I pray Thee reward a thousandfold my benefactors, and give them a beautiful, holy heaven for it! Dearest Saviour, I thank Thee also, that Thou hast protected me to-day in all my ways, and that now Thou givest me a shelter where I can sleep soundly and need not freeze to death. Let thy holy angels be with me, that they may protect me. I pray to Thee also, to console my poor father at home, and my dear brother, and my dear sister. O Lord, do give *them* also something to eat, and do not forsake them! Yes, Lord, bless us.'

Thus prayed Seppely, then he ate his two potatoes, lay down, and soon fell asleep. Now, dear children, I think it is time to tell you where Seppely came from. He was the oldest child of a poor weaver in Graubundten, in Switzerland. This weaver had honestly but barely maintained himself and his family by means of his trade, and brought up his children in the fear of the Lord, in which his wife helped him greatly. She was a God-fearing woman, and a faithful mother to her children. To her Seppely clung with his whole soul; for she had always nursed him with the most tender mother's love, she had herself instructed him in reading, taught him sweet psalms and hymns, and especially told him daily stories about our Lord Jesus. Then Seppely learned to love the Saviour; and nothing gave him greater joy, than when his mother took him with her into her quiet closet, kneeled down with him, and prayed to the dear Saviour. Thus the boy's heart was made new. Now came the famine of which I spoke before, and with the poor weaver in Graubundten the misery and distress became great; he could no longer earn anything, nor procure bread for his children.

The mother worked day and night in order to appease their hunger. But, from grief and sorrow, she became ill, and because she had no attention, and no medicine, her illness became worse and worse, and she herself felt that she would soon die. On the eve before her death she called her Seppely, now twelve years old, to her side, laid her cold trembling hands upon his head and blessed him. Then she took a Bible, which she had formerly bought for her Seppely, gave it to