

YOUTH'S CORNER.

THE PEACHES.

Translated from the German.

A farmer brought five peaches from the city, the finest that were to be found. But this was the first time that his children had seen any fruit of the kind. So they admired and greatly rejoiced over the beautiful peaches with red cheeks and soft pulps. The father gave one to each of his four sons, and the fifth to their mother.

In the evening, as the children were about to retire to sleep, their father inquired, "Well, boys, how did the peaches taste?"

"Excellent, dear father," said the eldest. "It is a beautiful fruit, so juicy and so pleasant. I have carefully preserved the stone, and will cultivate a tree for myself."

"Well done!" said the father. "This is husbandry to provide for the future, and is becoming to a farmer!"

"I ate mine," exclaimed the youngest, "and threw away the stone, and mother gave me half of hers. O, that tasted so sweet, and melted in my mouth."

"You," said the father "have not acted very prudently, but in a natural and childish manner. There may be time enough in your life to practise wisdom."

Then the second began, "I picked up the stone which my little brother threw away, and cracked it open; it contained a kernel that tasted as good as a nut. And my peach I sold, and got for it money enough to buy twelve when I go to the city."

The father patted him on the head, saying, "That was indeed prudent, but it was not natural for a child. May Heaven preserve you from being a merchant."

"And you, Edmund?" inquired the father.

Frankly and ingenuously Edmund replied, "I carried my peach to George, the son of our neighbour, who is sick with fever. He refused to take it; but I laid it on the bed and came away."

"Now," said the father, "who has made the best use of his peach?"

All exclaimed, "Brother Edmund."

But Edmund was silent; and his mother embraced him, with a tear standing in her eye.

WILBERFORCE.

The town of Hull in Yorkshire has the honour of having given birth to WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, the deliverer of the African slave. His father was a respectable merchant in that important place of commerce and navigation. Little William was small of stature, of weak eyes, and of a delicate constitution generally. But his mind was vigorous, and his disposition very affectionate. In the year 1766, he began attending the Grammar-School of his native place, being then seven years old. There he enjoyed the instructions of the Rev. Joseph Milner, author of a well known and valued Church History, and of that Clergyman's brother Isaac, who became afterwards President of Queen's College, Cambridge, and Dean of Carlisle. His father's death, in 1768, transferred him to the care of an uncle who lived in London and its vicinity, where William was placed in a boarding-school for two years, and acquired the character of "a fine, sharp lad."

Religion had not, so far, interested him much; but his aunt was a great admirer of the Reverend George Whitefield, who was united with the celebrated John Wesley in those early movements which at last resulted in the formation of the Methodist Society. During the vacations which William spent at his uncle's, he found religion to be treated as a matter of interest; and his mind was impressed with the importance of religion to himself. From the letters which he wrote to his mother, it was perceived that he was engaged in a lively manner with the things concerning his soul: the alarm was taken; for his mother, though a woman of superior mind, and not unconcerned about religion, entertained a great dread of religious enthusiasm; and she unfortunately fancied that seriousness at her son's age was a very dangerous thing, and must be dissipated as quickly as possible. She proceeded to London, in order to remove William, who was then twelve years old, from the influence which was affecting his character.

With deep-felt grief, the boy left his uncle and aunt, towards whom he entertained gratitude and affection; and was brought back to Hull, where indulgence during school-hours, and amusements out of them, combined to lead him away from serious thoughts. He himself says of this time of his life: "No pious parent ever laboured more to impress a beloved child with sentiments of piety, than my friends did to give me a taste for the world and its diversions." He had acquired a rare skill in singing, was ready and interesting in conversation, and greatly excelled his school-fellows in his compositions, though he always left the work to the last hour when he was obliged to write, and then he wrote with rapidity. His active mind could not remain without cultivation, notwithstanding the self-indulgence which became his habit during this period; and when he proceeded to the University of Cambridge, in 1776—being then seventeen—he was considered a very fair scholar.

By this time, his grandfather and his uncle died; their abundant means had become the property of the young student,

under the sole guardianship of his indulgent mother. He fell into the company, at first, of young men addicted to hard drinking and bad language, whose conduct disgusted him. After a time, therefore, he formed to himself a select circle of associates, among whom there prevailed a regard to propriety, but no search beyond the things which minister to levity and temporal interests. At a later period of his life, he lamented the inconsiderate advice which was given him by men of maturer years, with whom he had intercourse: they told him that he was a good classical scholar, and with his ample fortune it mattered not for him to fag at mathematics—in fact, he was too clever to require them. Thus they encouraged him in idle habits, and he had afterwards to regret his neglect of those studies which require closeness of thought, and encourage mental regularity.

His grandfather's mercantile establishment had been kept going, on purpose that he might undertake the management of it when his minority expired; but his taste was not for that kind of pursuits. By the time he had finished his course at College, he had made up his mind to try for a seat in Parliament.

A dissolution of Parliament came on just as he had arrived at the age of majority—twenty one—and he succeeded in being elected member for his native town Hull, which was a great triumph, for he had powerful competition to contend with.

On his arrival in London, he was welcomed into every circle as a young man likely to pursue a creditable, perhaps a splendid career. Gambling was among the temptations which immediately met him. He was rescued from the danger by an occurrence which marks the generosity of his mind. One evening, he won £600, and it was evident to him that his companions who were the losers could very ill afford to pay. He felt much pained at their annoyance, and from that time relinquished the ensnaring amusement of the gaming-table.

Among his intimate friends at this period was the celebrated William Pitt, son of the Earl of Chatham, and afterwards Prime Minister of England during the greater part of the long struggle between Great Britain and the revolutionary party in France.* They were of the same age, and were elected into the House of Commons during the same session. Their places of recreation were also the same, and yet both of them alike paid great attention to their parliamentary duties. Wilberforce was much distinguished by the King's ministers, and it was at one time fully expected that he would be appointed to some high office under the crown, particularly when his friend Pitt joined the ministry. But Wilberforce preferred having no office, because by that means he remained more free to judge for himself of the doings of ministers, and to vote with them when he thought them right, but to oppose them if they attempted to do anything which he did not think for the good of the nation. When the Parliament was not in session, he lived in the country, and Pitt spent a great deal of his time with him. In the midst of his amusements, he had the good sense to pay greater regard to the opinion of old and experienced men than to the taste of his gay companions. The old Lord Camden, who had been Lord Chancellor and was a man of thought and of weighty words, cured him of the monkey-trick of mimicking people by which he had often drawn roars of laughter from his younger associates. One day, Lord Camden was asked to witness his powers as a mimic; upon which the old Chancellor refused, saying loud enough for Wilberforce to hear, "It is but a vulgar accomplishment." The young man did not neglect that lesson; he felt the truth of it, and applied his powers to nobler objects.

To be continued.

SO MANY CALLS.

A SKETCH, BY MRS. BEECHER STOWE.

It was a brisk, clear evening in the latter part of December, when Mr. A— returned from his counting-house to the comforts of a bright coal fire, and warm arm-chair, in his parlour at home. He changed his heavy boots for slippers, drew around him the folds of his evening gown, and then lounging back in the chair, looked up to the ceiling and about with an air of satisfaction. Still there was a cloud on his brow—what could be the matter with Mr. A—? To tell the truth, he had that afternoon received in his counting room the agent of one of the principal religious charities of the day—and had been warmly urged to double his last year's subscription, and the urging had been pressed by statements and arguments to which he did not know well how to reply. "People think," soliloquized he to himself, "that I am made of money; I believe; this is the fourth object this year for which I have been requested to double my subscription, and this year has been one of heavy family expenses—building and fitting up this house—carpets—curtains—no end to the new things to be bought—I do not really see how I am to give a cent more in charity—then there are the bills for the girls and the boys—they all say they must have twice as much now,

* See BEREAN, last volume, p. 168.

as before we came into this house—wonder if I did right in building it? And Mr. A— glanced unceasingly up and down the ceiling, and around on the costly furniture, and looked into the fire in silence—he was tired, harassed and drowsy, his head began to swim, and his eyes closed—he was asleep. In his sleep he thought he heard a tap at the door; he opened it and there stood a plain, poor looking man, who in a voice singularly low and sweet asked for a few moments' conversation with him. Mr. A— asked him into the parlour, and drew him a chair near the fire. The stranger looked attentively around, and then turning to Mr. A— presented him with a paper. "It is your last year's subscription to Missions," said he; "you know all of the wants of that cause that can be told you; I came to see if you had any thing more to add to it."

This was said in the same low and quiet voice as before, but for some reason unaccountable to himself, Mr. A— was more embarrassed by the plain, poor, unpretending man, than he had been in the presence of any one before. He was for some moments silent before he could reply at all, and then in a hurried and embarrassed manner he began the same excuses which had appeared so satisfactory to him the afternoon before. The hardness of the times, the difficulty of collecting money, family expenses, &c.

The stranger quietly surveyed the spacious apartment with its many elegances and luxuries, and without any comment took from the merchant the paper he had given, but immediately presented him with another.

"This is your subscription to the Tract Society, have you any thing to add to it—you know how much it has been doing, and how much more it now desires to do, if Christians would only furnish means—do you not feel called upon to add something to it?"

Mr. A— was very uneasy under this appeal, but there was something in the still, mild manner of the stranger that restrained him; but he answered that although he regretted it exceedingly, his circumstances were such that he could not this year conveniently add to any of his charities.

The stranger received back the paper without any reply, but immediately presented in its place the subscription to the Bible Society, and in a few clear and forcible words, reminded him of its well-known claims, and again requested him to add something to his donations. Mr. A— became impatient.

"Have I not said," he replied, "that I can do nothing more for any charity than I did last year? There seems to be no end to the calls upon us in these days. At first there were only three or four objects presented, and the sums required were moderate—now the objects increase every day, all call upon us for money, and all, after we give once, want us to double and treble and quadruple our subscriptions—there is no end to the thing—we may as well stop in one place as another."

The stranger took back the paper, rose, fixing his eye on his companion, and, in a voice that thrilled to his soul, said:

"One year ago to-night you thought that your daughter lay dying—you could not sleep for agony—upon whom did you call that night?"

The merchant stared and looked up—there seemed a change to have passed over the whole form of his visitor, whose eye was fixed on him with a calm, intense, penetrating expression, that awed and subdued him—he drew back, covered his face, and made no reply.

"Five years ago," said the stranger, "when you lay at the brink of the grave, and thought that if you died then you should leave a family of helpless children entirely unprovided for, do you remember how you prayed—who saved you then?"

The stranger paused for an answer, but there was a dead silence. The merchant only bent forward as one entirely overcome, and rested his head on the seat before him.

The stranger drew yet nearer, and said in a still lower and more impressive tone: "Do you remember fifteen years since that time, when you felt yourself so lost, so helpless, so hopeless, when you spent days and nights in prayer, when you thought you would give the whole world for one hour's assurance that your sins were forgiven you—who listened to you then?"

"It was my God and Saviour!" said the merchant with a sudden burst of remorseful feeling—"Oh yes, it was he."

"And has he ever complained of being called on too often," inquired the stranger, in a voice of reproachful sweetness; "say," added he, "are you willing to begin this night and ask no more of Him if he from this night will ask no more from you?"

"Oh, never, never, never!" said the merchant, throwing himself at his feet—but as he spoke these words, the figure seemed to vanish, and he awoke with his whole soul stirred within him.

"Oh, God and Saviour! what have I been saying? What have I been doing?" he exclaimed. "Take all—take everything—what is all that I have to what thou hast done for me!"

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