

Choice Literature.

THE CHILDREN.

(Found in the desk of Charles Dickens after his death.)

When the lessons and tasks are all ended,
And the school for the day is dismissed,
And the little ones gather around me
To bid me "good-night" and be kissed;
Oh, the little white arms that encircle
My neck in a tender embrace!
Oh, the smiles that are halos of heaven,
Shedding sunshine and love on my face.

And when they are gone I sit dreaming
Of my childhood, too lovely to last;
Of love, that my heart will remember
When it wakes to the pulse of the past,
Ere the world and its wickedness made me
A partner of sorrow and sin,
When the glory of God was about me,
And the glory of gladness within.

Oh, my heart grows weak as a woman's,
And the fountains of feeling will flow,
When I think of the paths steep and stony
Where the feet of the dear ones must go,
Of the mountains of sin hanging o'er them,
Of the tempests of fate blowing wild;
Oh, there's nothing on earth half so holy
As the innocent heart of a child!

They are idols of hearts and of households,
They are angels of God in disguise,
His sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,
His glory still beams in their eyes;
Oh, those truants from earth and from heaven,

They have made me more manly and mild,
And I know how Jesus could liken
The kingdom of God to a child.

Seek not a life for the dear ones,
All radiant, as others have done,
But that life may have just as much
shadow

To temper the glare of the sun;
I would pray God to guard them from
evil,

But my prayer would bound back to my
self;

Ah! a seraph may pray for a sinner,
But a sinner must pray for himself.

The twig is so easily bended,
I have banished the rule and the rod;
I have taught them the goodness of know-
ledge,

They have taught me the goodness of
God.

My heart is a dungeon of darkness,
Where I shut them from breaking a
rule;

My frown is sufficient correction,
My love is the law of the school.

I shall leave the old house in the autumn
To traverse its threshold no more—
Ah! how I shall sigh for the dear ones
That meet me each morn at the door!
I shall miss the good-nights and the
kisses,

And the gush of their innocent glee,
The group on the green, and the flowers
That are brought every morning to me.

I shall miss them at morn and at eve,
Their song in the school and the street;
I shall miss the low hum of their voices,
And the tramp of their delicate feet.
When the lessons and tasks are all ended,
And death says the school is dismissed,
May the little ones gather around me
To bid me "good-night" and be kissed.
—Charles Dickens.

"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM."

BY GEORGE H. HEPPWORTH.

Yes, that is my name, Wardle—John
Wardle; or, to be more explicit, Rev. John
Wardle.

Thank you, I am very comfortably
seated. I am one of the few Americans
—the only other I ever saw was in my
narrow—who dislike a rocker. This heavy
oaken air has something sturdy and un-
yielding about it, and that is very agree-
able to me. You are quite right in say-
ing that the seat is hard; but I prefer
it so. I don't care for soft things, like
cushions, or soft people's looks, for in-
stance. No, you are not quite right in say-
ing that my acquaintance must therefore
be somewhat limited. Carlyle's "mostly
rough" phrase became very famous, when
he said it, not, or rather spluttered it;
but it has since become infamous. The
world is brimful of common-sense; and
if you proceed on any other theory, you
will probably have a bad shaking up.

Now, as to Silas Quench, about whom
you ask me, the story is a long one, and
perhaps your patience will give out be-
fore I get through. Still, that is your
concern, not mine. If you want it, you
must take all or none. You are anxious

to hear it, eh? Well, if that is the case,
I shall be only too glad to tell you all
I know. It is one of the rare experien-
ces in a long life, a sort of Kohinoor
in a basketful of ordinary gems.

When I came to this village of Wood-
bine some seven years ago, Silas Quench
was my sworn and open enemy. I don't
mean that he had any personal grudge
to satisfy, for I had never cast eyes on
the man; but he denounced all preachers
as humbugs and all preaching as folly.
I can't say what got into him so twist-
ed and kinked intellectually, have never
been able to find out; but he was ex-
traordinarily bitter, talked about typewriting,
and rotting creeds and churches crushed
under the weight of a mortgage bond,
and made himself thoroughly disagree-
able. People let him alone; and he stood
at his smith's forge, an ugly, frowning,
and at times exceedingly profane sort of
creature, grumbling and growling at ev-
erything and everybody.

In physique, though, Silas was worth
looking at. He had a chest as big as
the bellows behind his forge, and an
upper arm that felt as though some
one had carved it out of marble or gran-
ite; and his heart was of due propor-
tions. "Hit Silas on the right side,"
people used to say, "and he is as gen-
tle and kindly as a woman; but if you
hit him on the wrong side, you wake
up a stormy-tempered demon."

He was like one of those volcanoes
which are prepared night or day to thun-
der and fill the air with cinders and
smoke. His veins ran with molten iron,
and his eyes as black as charcoal flashed
with the brilliancy and the menace of
lightning. I never saw such a man be-
fore. Mind you, I don't want you to
think I was afraid of him; on the con-
trary, we were on good terms after a
few months, and I had his confidence, as
far as he gave it to any one. He
never came to hear me preach, and he
called me an idiot for having any faith
in Providence, or in a future, and with-
al was very brusque about it; but still
it was plain that he honestly believed
his lie, and honestly repudiated my truth.
Under such circumstances, to take ofence
was impossible. I pitied him, wept over
him, and prayed for him. I have argued
with him by the hour, and always found
him skilled with the sword in these
duels. He could parry and thrust in a
way that proved him to be a man of
nettle, and when it was all over, he
would laughingly say:

"Well, Parson, you go through the
world lugging a lot of useless rubbish in
the shape of a creed, and I go free arm-
ed, that's all."

"Yes," I replied on one occasion; "but
when you get on the other side you'll
find that you've been making a very
stupid mistake."

He worked away at the bellows,
chuckled to himself and then retorted:

"H'm! all I want is to go to sleep,
and not wake up. I shall have had
enough of it by that time, and shan't
care to go into the harp or orchestra,
or chorus business."

"You have no desire to live again?"
I asked, in surprise.

"Not an atom," he growled. "I couldn't
if I would, and I wouldn't if I could.
These little fairy tales when you recite
from Sunday to Sunday are all very agree-
able in their way; but, Parson, they
really are foolishness; and a man with
your sense ought to know better than to
talk about them seriously. At the very
best you are like a child with a sawdust
baby. It believes the thing is alive and
you don't want to hurt its feelings by
zipping it open with your pocket-knife and
letting the sawdust out."

Of course I became enraged, and an-
swered as well as I could; but he was
a hard case, and could see only his own
side. However, I remembered one day
standing in the doorway of his smithy,
after an encounter of this kind, and say-
ing:

"Silas, the time will come when you
would give your right hand to believe
in any one of these fairy tales."

I can hear his sneering laugh now: it
followed me as I sped along the village
street, my cheeks flushed and my heart
full of sorrow.

After a while a boy baby came into
his family, and Silas acted as though two
cubits had been added to his stature; he
wasn't so much conceited as he was proud.
If the full moon had been presented to
him, or a couple of fixed stars with all
their attendant planets, he couldn't have
felt more gratified. He would first pound
on that old anvil, giving shape to a
horseshoe, and then stand still, looking
into my face with those blazing eyes,
and talk about that boy baby, using his
hammer to make gestures with. The iron
cooled, of course, and then he would
chuckle and say: "You see, Parson, what
a fool a man becomes when he has a
baby."

"I don't want to boast," he said, on
another occasion, "but it honestly seems
to me that I've got a remarkable boy.
Have you ever noticed the size of his
head, Parson? It scared me at first; but
the doctor assures me that he is perfectly
healthy organ, which means in my
judgment, that the brain is going to be
Websterian. We shall hear from that
youngster some day;" and again he
chuckled.

"All right, Silas," I said, "providing
you feel him on Gospel truth, and develop
in him the muscle of moral principle."

"Bah!" he replied, with withering
scorn; "he's going to play the role of
St. George to the Church's Dragon. He'll
be a fighter, that fellow will, or he
hasn't my blood in his veins. When he
gets old enough, you just listen, Parson,
and you'll hear some one breaking things.
There is to be no nonsense or flummery
about him. I am not going to give him
any of you old dogmas or a rub-
ber ring to chew on when he is teeth-
ing."

"That is all very well," I retorted,
rather sharply; "but you forget one
thing, Silas."

"Ah?"

"It may be that your plans will not
come out as you expect them to."

"H'm?" sneeringly; "we shall see
about that."

"You are not running the world, Silas.
Behind your will, there is a stronger
will."

"Oh, yes," impatiently, "I know all
about that. It's been dinged into my
ears ever since I was knee high to a
hopper-grass; but when that boy grows
up—"

"Suppose he shouldn't grow up,
Silas?"

The idea had apparently never entered
his head. His eyes snapped, and I could
see the lips tremble. He brushed my sug-
gestion aside, however, with—

"Nonsense, Parson. By the laws of
inheritance the little fellow is in posses-
sion of a first-rate body—that's what his
mother and I have given him—and as far
as the Lord is concerned, why, the boy's
entitled to the regulation threescore and
ten, isn't he?"

"No, I think not, Silas. He is not en-
titled, as you call it, to anything. The
Lord knows better than we about these
things, and He will give whatever time is
thought best; that's all. The child may
live to cover a century, and on the other
hand—"

"Hold up there, Parson," cried Silas
vehemently; and he fairly stared at me.
There was a look of terror in his face.
He scowled, he raised his big, brawny
arm as though to strike some visible
foe. At last he said:

"Parson, why do you scare me with
such a bugaboo as that? The boy will
come to manhood, never you fear; but
if he shouldn't—" and the blacksmith's
whole frame trembled with passionate ex-
citement.

"Then you will say, 'Thy will, not
mine, be done,'" I remarked quietly.

"No, I won't—no I won't," he cried.
"I'd not submit to an injustice of that
kind. I expect to be treated fairly in
this matter. I'm not asking anything out
of the usual, only a proper time for that

boy to show what's in him. If the Lord
don't think its within the limits of
square dealing, I do, that's all. And if
He don't choose to grant me that much,
why, why?"—Silas suddenly grew pale,
but he proceeded to hammer vigorously
at some hot iron on his anvil until I
turned to depart. When I had reached
the door he had evidently recovered him-
self; for he sang out, jocosely: "Say, Par-
son, don't borrow any trouble, man.
It's all right. I guess I'll be treated at
least decently. Good-morning."

Silas was quite justified in being proud
of the boy. Jim was a rare creature,
one of those phenomenal children, who
get disgusted with the world in early
life and straightway go to Heaven. Some
of the questions he asked his father, when
he was only five years old, were at a
white heat; and Silas got his fingers
badly burned. The youngster had wing
under his little frock, and he might use
them any day. I saw that, and the good
and patient mother saw it; but somehow
Silas didn't see it, and nobody dared
tell him. He had fixed it in his mind
that the Lord would do certain things
respecting the child, and made his ar-
rangements accordingly. I think the
first time he caught a glimpse of a
possible disappointment, the first time it
occurred to him that, after all, he
wasn't running the affairs of this life,
was on a summer afternoon in '92; that
is about a twelvemonth ago. The sun
was just sinking in the west, redding the
sky like the reflection of a prairie fire,
and giving to nature a strange, weird
supernatural appearance. It was almost
time for supper, and Jim, as usual, was
on his father's lap. He leaned back
against the giant's body, and clasped
his little hands about his uplifted knee.
There was a far-away look in his eyes,
and it was evident that some grave ques-
tion was trying to get through his lips.
He sat thus for ten minutes, not utter-
ing a word, but looking, looking as
earnestly as though he had caught a
glimpse of the minarets in the great
Beyond. At last he heaved a sigh, and
said, hesitatingly:

"I say, Pop!"

"Yes, Jim; what is it, boy?"

There was another silence, not broken
by the child, for his question had not
quite taken shape in his mind, and not
broken by Silas, because a sense of awe, a
sort of foreboding was creeping over his
soul. At last, however, Jim began again,
rocking back and forth the while.

"H'm! I say Pop, what is that place
way off there, anyhow?"

"What is what place, Jim?" the
giant answered, rather tremulously.

"Why," and Jim smacked his lips as
children do when they are serious and in
doubt, "don't you know what I mean?
What do you pretend you don't for? You
are a naughty Pop."

"Well, Jim, tell me, and then I'll know
for sure;" and the giant's heart began to
beat fast.

"Well, what's the place that you look
at when you don't see nothin', cos there
ain't nothin' to see? Way off, behind
the clouds, where the stars come from
at night? Why don't you tell me Pop?"

"Off there, Jim?" What was it that
made the blacksmith's voice tremble?

"Well, I suppose that's the sky."

Five memorial-stones of an addition
to Stockwell Orphanage, to cost £4,000,
were laid last week by the father, the
brother, and the son, Charles, of the
late Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, and by Rev. Dr.
Pierson, and Mr. T. H. Olney.

The United Presbyterian Church of the
United States has collected statistics as to
the number of men and women, respective-
ly, in the membership of the Church. It
is found that of 100,548 members, 39,383
are males, and 61,165, females. Strange
to say, the proportion of male members
becomes large as we go west. In New
York the proportion of men is lowest; in
Kansas, California and Columbia it is the
highest. Taking the whole country, the
women members number 60.8 to 39.2 men