

CUMBERED WITH MUCH SERV- ING

Christ never asks of us such busy labor
As leaves no time for resting at His feet :
The waiting attitude of expectation
He oftentimes counts a service most com-
plete.

He sometimes wants our ear—our rapt at-
tention—

That He some sweetest secret may impart :
'Tis always in the time of deepest silence,
That heart finds deepest fellowship with
heart.

We sometimes wonder why our Lord has
placed us

Within a space so narrow, so obscure,
That nothing we call work can find an on-
trance ;

There's only room to suffer—to endure.

Well, God loves patience : souls that dwell
in stillness,

Doing the little things or resting quiet,
May just as perfectly fulfil their mission.

Be just as useful in the Father's sight.

As they who grapple with some giant evil,
Clearing a path that every eye may see,
Our Saviour cares for cheerful acquiescence,
Rather than for a busy ministry.

And yet He does love service, where 'tis
given

By grateful love that clothes itself in deed.
But work that's done beneath the scourge of
duty,

Be sure to such He gives but little heed.

Then seek to please Him whatso'er He bids
thee ;

Whether to do, to suffer, to lie still !
'T will matter little by what path He led us.

If in it all we sought to do His will.
—Selected.

From the Sunday at Home.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER VI. (Continued.)

Ishmael sat silent, with his eyes fastened
on the pale yellow light in the sky
behind the tops of the trees, across which
a bat was flitting to and fro ; but he did
not see the sunset light, or the flight
of the bat.

"Ay!" she said, almost joyously, "and
to-day I knew He'd heard ; for Mrs. Clift
and Miss Elsie came to see me ; and Ish-
mael, my lad, they brought grand news for
thee. They're going away across the seas
to that country where folks go for a better
chance than they've got here ; and they've
promised to take thee with them ; for Mrs.
Clift said, 'It was all along of Elsie that
Ishmael got into trouble and disgrace ; and
folks won't think badly of him there ; and
I'll be like a mother to him,' said Mrs.
Clift. And I knew then that God had
heard my affliction again."

"Oh mother!" cried Ishmael, "I couldn't
leave thee, never ; not if the Queen of Eng-
land sent for me to go."

"But oh, my lad," she answered, "if
the Lord doesn't take me home afore the
time comes for thee to go, thee must leave
me. Ay, and I should die happier,
knowin' thee were safe away, and havin' a
chance to be a good man, than leavin' thee
here to be tempted and drove into sin.
Ishmael, promise me thee'll go, whether
I'm alive or dead, when the time comes.
Oh, my dear, dear lad, promise to obey
me."

"I cannot, mother, I cannot," he
sobbed ; "I'll go gladly if thee art dead ;
but so long as thee can speak to me, and I
can look at thee, I cannot go."

"They're not goin' afore hay-harvest,"
she said softly, "and, please God, I may
be dead by then."

But as she lay awake at night, thinking
of Ishmael, who was sleeping soundly in his
old shelter, the cave in the limestone rock,
she wondered what would become of him
if she could not prevail upon him to leave
her for ever, whilst she was still living.
There would be no one who loved her to
close her dying eyes, and hold her dying
hand, and whisper last words of love into
her dying ear, if Ishmael were gone.
But oh, how gladly would she rather die in
utter loneliness if she knew that he was safe,
and would have a new start in life.

The days passed slowly ; and the grass
grew in the fields around, and blossomed,
and ripened for the scythe ; but still life
seemed to cling to Ruth, weary as she
was to die and set Ishmael free. She
could no longer come down the ladder
which led to the loft where she lay in

darkness, but whenever Humphrey was
away, Ishmael was beside her in the
darkness, within reach of her hand, as in
the old time when he was a child. There
was no stint of food for him now, for Mrs.
Clift came every day with Elsie, and Mrs.
Chipchase sent from the farm, or called in
to see Ruth herself, and neither of them
came empty handed. It was only when
the time came each day for him to escape
out of the way of his father that he felt him-
self still an exile from his home.

"I'll not leave thee to-night," he said,
one evening when she seemed worse than
he had ever seen her before ; "I can't leave
thee to-night. Maybe thou'rt dyin'."

"Nay," she answered with a long, low,
sad sigh, "nay, Ishmael, there musn't be
a fight 'twixt thy father and thee over my
dyin' bed."

"He'll come home drunk," he said
almost fiercely, "and I can't leave thee
alone with him."

"I'm not afraid to be left alone with
thy father," she replied. "He was a good
husband to me once, and he is not be hard
with me when I'm dyin'. I wasn't always
as good a wife as I might ha' been ; and
I've a many things to say to him. Hark !
they're runnin' to tell thee he's comin' up
the lane. Go, Ishmael ; kiss me, and go
quickly."

"I cannot go," he cried clinging to
her ; "pr'aps I shall never see thy face
again, never ! Oh, mother, I cannot go !"

But as he still held her in his arms, and
she pushed him feebly away, Elsie's clear
young voice was heard in the kitchen be-
low, calling hurriedly.

"Ishmael," she cried, "little Willie Nut-
kin is lost in the old quarry behind the
cave, and we want you. Nutkin, and the
squire, and everybody ; we all want you."

CHAPTER VII.—HER LAST COMMAND.

Ishmael loosed his hold of his mother,
but he did not rise from the place where
he was kneeling beside her. A faint gleam
coming up from the room below lit up
Ruth's face as she looked earnestly and
searchingly into his.

"I can't quit my mother," he answered,
speaking in a loud but forced tone ; "she's
dyin' and if I go maybe I shall never see
her again."

"Ishmael," said Ruth, "thee has never
forgiven Nutkin yet."

"Nay," he muttered, "no, it's been too
much to forgive. He drove me away
from home ; and I'd have been a man by
now, instead of a wastrel, if he hadn't
been hard on me. Thee'd not ha' worked
thyself to death, mother, if it hadn't been
for him. No ; I've not forgiven him. Let
him find his little lad for himself."

"You must come, Ishmael," called Elsie.
"Willie's been missing five hours or more ;
and we can hear him crying in the old
quarry ; and nobody knows it like you do ;
and the opening's too small for a man to
crawl through, and it's no use sending in a
boy, if any of them would go alone. Oh,
come quickly ! Suppose he strayed into one
of those pools you told me of, and was
drowned. Come down this minute !"

But Ishmael did not move, holding his
mother's hand between his own, and gazing
mournfully into her beseeching face.

"If I bid thee go," she murmured, "thee
would not disobey me now I'm dyin' ?"

"Don't send me," he cried ; "don't bid
me go."

"Nay," she said tenderly. "I'm bound
to bid thee, and thee art bound to go. It
ud be no comfort to see thee nigh me,
if I couldn't die happy for thinkin' of the
little lad in the pit. And it's partly be-
cause thee hasn't forgiven Nutkin. And
if we forgive not men their sins, neither
will our heavenly Father forgive ours.
That's what the blessed Lord says. And
oh, if thee forgives him, the Lord will for-
give thee. Go, Ishmael, I shall see thee
again—not here, maybe—but in some
better place."

"I'll go," he said, looking into her face
very sorrowfully ; "but, oh, if I never see
thee again in this world, it'll seem hard to
wait till we get to heaven."

Still Elsie's impatient and entreating
voice reached their ears, urging him to
make haste, and his mother's sunken eyes
were fastened upon him with a look in
them as if she was beseeching him to go.
It might be the last time he would ever see
her face. With a deep and heavy sob Ish-
mael stooped to kiss her, and as if afraid
to trust himself to linger another moment,
he sprang down the ladder, and pushing on
through bramble and brushwood, quickly
reached the entrance of the cave.

It was no longer dark and solitary
Many of the villagers were there, and the
glimmer of several lanterns produced a lurid
and fitful light. Nutkin knelt at the far
end of the cave before the low and narrow
inlet, through which, when there was a
moment's silence, he fancied he could hear
in the black darkness the voice of his child
crying.

"The men will be here with pick-axes
soon, Nutkin," said the squire, who stood
beside him, "and we'll get the little fellow
out in a very short time, my man."

"I'm more afraid of the picks bring-
ing the old roof in than aught else, sir,"
answered Nutkin, in a voice of despair,
"there's been a deal o' heavy rain o' late,
and there's been two or three hollows given
in above ground ; and if the roof gave way
betwixt us and the little lad he'd die o'
fright before we could dig him out. If the
hole was but big enough for a man to
creep through ! But nobody could creep
through a hole no bigger than a rabbit-
bury ; only a teeny creature like little
Willie."

A profound silence followed Nutkin's
speech, for no man or woman there could
risk the life of any of their boys by sending
them into the workings of the old quarry.
And amid the silence there was heard plain-
ly enough a low, stifled voice speaking.

"I can crawl through," it said ; "I know
every step o' the old pit."

"Ishmael Medway!" shouted half-a-
dozen voices, joyously, "he's the lad, if
there is one."

He felt himself pushed forward to the far
end of the cave, where the light was strong-
est. The thin, stunted, under-sized lad, in
his tattered clothing, and with his mournful
face, stood in front of the squire, and of his
old enemy, who gazed at him half in
shame and half in hope.

"Mother's sent me," he said, touching
his old ragged cap to the squire. "She's
dyin', and I don't s'pose as I shall ever
see her again ; but she couldn't die happy
with the little lad lost in the pit. And
mother says if I forgive him here God'll
forgive me ; and take me some day, some-
where, to the place where she's goin' ! I
slept here last night, and I heard the
ground give way. Don't set any picks at
work."

Ishmael did not wait for an answer, but
lying down on the ground, crept through
the narrow, winding tunnel he had often
crawled through as a boy. He called
back to them when he had reached the
shaft, where he could stand upright, and
they saw that he had struck a light ; but
presently all sound and sign of him was
lost, and Nutkin and the squire rose from
their knees where they had been watching
and listening, and the fitful light of the
lanterns shone upon the tears in their eyes.

"I'll make a man of that lad," said the
squire, in a broken voice.

"God Almighty bring him and Willie
safe back," cried Nutkin, sinking down on
his knees again, "and I'll treat him as my
own son, I will ; as long as ever I live. So
help me, God !"

So silent for some time was the crowd
of villagers now thronging the cave that
they could hear the heavy splashes of
water falling from the rain-sodden earth
into the little pools collected below in the
subterranean alleys of the old pit ; and
once a low rumbling like distant thunder,
telling of the earth giving way in one of
the many galleries, made them hold their
breath in speechless dread, and look anx-
iously into one another's faces. But as if
Ishmael too had heard it, and wished to
reassure them, there came the sound of his
voice, calling back to them from the hidden
pathways.

"God bless him!" exclaimed the squire,
a smile for a moment crossing his anxious
and clouded face.

"Ay!" cried Chipchase, "he was as
good a lad as ever breathed before he went
to gaol for stealing them pheasant's eggs ;
and old Ruth, his mother, you might trust
her in a room full of golden guineas. She's
as good an old soul as ever lived. Ish-
mael said she was a-dying, didn't he, sir ?"

"Yes," answered the squire.
"And she'd send him away from her to
save Nutkin's little lad!" said Chipchase,
"that's what I call being a Christian. Any
minute might bring the roof over his head,
and bury him alive ; and old Ruth knows
it. But if any soul in Broadmore be-
lieves in God, it's Ruth ; and please God,
I'll be a better man myself from this day
forth."

The farmer's voice trembled as he fin-
ished speaking, and he turned his face

away from the light, ashamed to let his
neighbors see how much he felt.

"Old Ruth's had a hard, bitter life,"
said Mrs. Chipchase, sobbing ; "she was
near broken-hearted when Ishmael went
to gaol ; and she's never been the same
woman since. He was like the apple of her
eye, Ishmael was ; and he'd worse luck
than any of her children, thanks to Nut-
kin, I always said, and always shall say to
my dying day. What was a boy's taking
a few paltry eggs, I'd like to know."

"I'll treat him like my own son," mut-
tered Nutkin, not looking up.

"We must make it up to him," added
the squire. "If I'd known he was a good
lad, he should never have gone to gaol."

"Hush!" cried Elsie, who was stand-
ing beside Mrs. Chipchase. Instantly there
was a breathless stillness in the cave, and
every eye was turned towards the low outer
entrance, through which they could hear
the dragging of weary footsteps. Bent
almost double, and tottering as if every
step must be the last, came old Ruth her-
self.

"Where's Ishmael?" she asked, look-
ing round at her neighbors' faces with eyes
dim and glazed.

(To be continued.)

TEXTS AND THEIR TREATMENT.

BY REV. E. PANTON HOOD.

No doubt texts have been used, for
the most part, merely as mottoes, but
still, even in that case, descriptive of
the topic of a discourse ; and sometimes
they have had so mysterious a ring
that the mode of their treatment has,
at first, seemed enigmatical. But
these are exceptions to the general law
in the choice of texts, and the great
principle has always been homage to
the Book. Thus chapters are selected
from it as lessons in the service, and
texts are taken from it because every
minister is supposed to believe that this
Book is singular and solitary among
all books and all literature—a super-
natural voice—that it alone of all books
has such an accent as entitles the
Christian teacher to call it the Word of
God. This sets aside, then, at once,
the foolish talk and more foolish usage
of those who select texts from Shake-
speare or Goethe ; from the Koran or
the Vedas ; from Homer or Plato.
From all these sources, and countless
others, great texts might be taken and
good sermons preached. Shakespeare
is full of texts ; but, however great such
writers may be, the Christian minister
does not confound their authority with
the absolute authoritativeness of the
Bible. As to Voltaire's nonsense about
a short text being made the subject of
a long discourse, it would be just as
reasonable to ridicule the idea of a
small seed being the first substance of
a large tree. All the great words of
the Bible are seminal. It cannot be too
constantly remembered that all the an-
ecdotes, narratives, stories and histor-
ies of the Bible are great doctrines ; and,
besides this, all teachers utter lengthy
discourses on short texts—the chemist,
the geologist, the astronomer, the meta-
physician. The elucidation of a sum-
mary aphorism may be even neces-
sarily extended over an hour—perhaps
through many discourses ; so that,
from every point of view, human and
divine, reasons alike warrant and au-
thenticate the minister of the Word in
always prefacing his discourse by words
from the Bible.

It is true that texts have very often
been taken very much as mottoes—per-
haps very justifiable and very remem-
berable mottoes—to a train of thought.
Perhaps this has been especially the
case with funeral sermons. John Howe
has been regarded as truly seraphic in
the reverence of his nature ; but there
was something exceedingly apt in his
text, in 1690, for the funeral sermon
of Esther, the wife of Dr. Henry Samp-
son, a physician, both members of his
church. The lady died on a Sunday,