

# Youngs' Department.

## THE DISINHERITED SON.

"I am glad to see you all here in good time," Miss Walton said, addressing herself to her class, as she entered the sitting-room of the Vicarage, and found all the girls seated waiting for her. "I have a true story to read to you when the lesson is over."

"That's right!" cried half a dozen; "we haven't had a story for two or three Sundays."

"I hope it's a very long one," said Emily.

No, Emily, it's very short," replied Miss Walton, I shall read it all to-day."

"Oh, I like a long one best," she replied.

"Never mind," said little Ruth, "I dare say Miss Walton will begin another when that's done."

"A great many short ones are as good as one long one," said Margaret.

"You must stop talking," said Miss Walton, "or there won't be time for even the short ones which displease Emily so much. So stand up, and I will ask you a few questions of the Catechism." She did so, but as she only catechised them on one, we need only give it:—

"Who gave you this name?"

Hester,—"My Godfather and Godmother in my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Miss W.—"What does 'inheritor' mean?"

Mary,—"One who will come into property."

Miss W.—"We said it was as members of Christ that we are—?"

"The children of God," continued Agnes.

Miss W.—"Yes, to-day we shall see that it is as children that we are—?"

"Inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," said Anna.

Miss W.—"Just so; the order in which our privileges stand in this answer is not accidental, but is arranged so as to show how we receive every good from our union with Christ. First, we are made—?"

"Members of Christ," answered all.

Miss W.—"And as His members?"

"Children," said Rose, "and as children, inheritors."

Miss W.—"The answer in the Catechism does not say we shall be inheritors."

Rose,—"No, it says in baptism we were made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

Miss W.—"Just so; as children we are already in part inheritors. Is it not among men? Do not children enjoy part of their inheritance even while their parents live?"

Mary,—"Yes, Ma'am, all that they have comes from their parents."

Miss W.—"We may truly say, then, that we are in part inheritors, even now, though we look for the full enjoyment of our rich inheritance—where—?"

All,—"In heaven."

Miss W.—"What will Christ say to those on His right hand at the last day?"

Bessie,—"Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (See Matt. xxv. 21. See also 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

Miss W.—"To whom do you say these words will be spoken?"

Agnes,—"To those on the right hand."

Miss W.—"Will there, then, be also some on the left hand?"

Several,—"Yes; 'He will set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left.'" (See Ver. 25.)

Miss W.—"This thought, girls, leads us to see that the great blessings we have been considering do not belong to all. There may be those who dwell with the flock, and are not of the flock; those who are still outwardly members of Christ's Body, yet do not spiritually belong to Him, because they have cut themselves off by sin; those who partake of some of the blessings of God's kingdom on earth, and yet will not be inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. It is truly a very awful thought, but we must not turn away from it.—Let us see how this comes to be. We have seen that all who faithfully receive holy baptism, are at the time made partakers of these blessings to the full, but while these good things are given unto us, is nothing required at our hands for their continuance, as we grow up to know right from wrong. What is expected from each branch of Christ's Vine?"

Several,—"That is should bring forth fruit?"

Miss W.—"And what will become of the unfruitful branches?"

Mary,—"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away." (St. John xv. 2.)

Miss W.—"And what is expected of us, members of Christ's Body?"

Several,—"That we should try and be good."

Miss W.—"Yes, and although God may in mercy long spare us without cutting us off from the Vine, yet unless we bear fruit, the life we receive in baptism does not grow in us, the sap from the root does not nourish us. The prodigal son had received his portion, but he wasted it, and was thereby well nigh lost; so we may receive our portion in baptism, but by our own grievous fault lose it, and be cast away. For whom alone is the future inheritance reserved?"

Rose,—"For living members of Christ."

"For fruitful branches," said Ruth.

Miss W.—"Let us take good heed, then, that we be not mere outward members, and by our own choice of evil be receiving no life from the Body; let us take heed, that though made children, we be not disobedient children, and so come to be disinherited heirs—no eternal life in glory in store for us. By sin we lose not only our present blessings, and come to be in want; but by continued sin we lose our heavenly inheritance even as a disobedient, unfruitful son if cast off by his parents, loses the blessings of his father's house, of his favor, his help and protection, as well as his future inheritance on his father's death. And this leads me to the recollection of my promised story of the 'Disinherited Son.' I read it a day or two ago, but I think you will understand it best if I tell you the story in my own words:—

More than three hundred years ago, there lived a powerful knight, and David Earl of Crawford, a descendant of the Scottish family of the Lindseys. He had one son named Alexander, who was the heir of all the estates and honors of Crawford, and not only so, but during his father's life-time he held the earldom in fee, that is to say, he held the land, but acknowledged his father as superior. Is not this the way," asked Miss Walton, "that God deals with us? He not only makes us heirs of Heaven, but gives us a present taste of our inheritance."

"Please, Ma'ma, that was what you said in our lesson," answered Mary.

"Yes," continued Miss Walton: "and this is an example of the same kind of dealing among men. Besides the earldom of Crawford, Alexander also held the barony of Glenesk, so that he had plenty of riches, and was able to live as he liked, independent of Earl David, his father. It was his father who gave him his riches, but by being independent of him, I mean that his father did not control him in the use of them; and I am sorry to say, that instead of using them wisely and rightly, and honoring his father for his kindness in giving them to him, he joined himself to a band of ruffians, seized his father's fortress of Dunboy, and spent his days as a common robber, or bandit, as such robbers are called."

"A robber! although he was so rich," cried the girls.

"Yes," continued Miss Walton, "it was not because he was in want that he turned robber, but from the love of plunder and violence. He oppressed his tenants, was cruel to the clergy, and by force compelled all the surrounding country to pay him a tax called 'black mail.' If any had refused to do so, he would have driven away their cattle, and destroyed their homes. In those days men of rank often led this kind of life, and yet were not looked upon as robbers are in these days. They often had many good qualities, and were free and generous in disposition, which made them beloved by their followers, and even by others also; but this was not the case with Alexander. So reckless, so cruel, and so wicked was he, that he was surnamed the 'wicked or evil master of Crawford.' But now I will tell you the most wicked thing of all about him; he was not only cruel to his own tenants, but he actually attacked his old father in one of his castles, and threatened to kill both him and his mother. So much dread did Earl David feel of his son that he appealed to the king for help and protection against him. When the wicked master heard that his father had done this, he was frightened, and professed great sorrow for his past conduct; and going to the Archbishop of St. Andrew's, persuaded him of the truth of his penitence, and entreated him to intercede for him with his father. The kind old man was only too willing to listen to the Archbishop, and in a very short time received his reckless son with hearty goodwill into his father's arms, agreeing to forgive him in the loss of the earldom, on condition of his not returning to his evil ways, and of his banishing from his company all his wicked followers. But on the other hand, if he did not keep these conditions, the earldom was to be taken from him. The wicked master

made false promises, and professed sorrow for his behavior to his father. This did not, however, last long. No sooner did he think himself safe in his possessions, than his evil nature again broke out with greater violence than ever. He robbed, and often murdered all who came in his way, and was guilty of all kinds of violence. He again besieged his father's castle, with the intention of murdering him, and at length actually succeeded in capturing him, at a place named Finhaven. Something, however, made him desist from murdering the poor old man, and instead of doing so, he imprisoned him in one of his own dungeons, and kept him there twelve weeks. Do you know what a dungeon is?"

"Please, Ma'am, it's a cold, dark cellar, underground, isn't it?" asked Hester.

"Yes, not always perhaps quite dark, but very nearly so, and cold and dismal. In such a place this wicked master shut up his old father. At the end of twelve weeks Earl David gained his freedom, but was again captured and carried by force to Brechin where his son once more confined him for sixteen days. Alexander also stole a great deal of money and all the valuable papers he could find. Still, however, this wicked son was restrained from imbruing his hands in his father's blood, and once more Earl David gained his liberty, and a second time appealed to the king. Now, he said, he could show no mercy, but should certainly disinherit his rebellious son. The wicked master did not pretend to deny anything which was laid to his charge, and throwing himself before the king he begged for mercy. The king said, however, that he could not show any mercy, and according to the Scottish law, he was condemned to death, and all his lands and possessions were to be taken from him. The heart of the father, however yearned towards his son, and though he wished him to be punished, he could not bear that he should be put to death hoping, perhaps, that he might still repent. Through the intercession of the father, the king agreed to spare the life of the wicked master, but at the same time that his life was spared, he was himself disinherited, and all his posterity were forever cut off from the succession to the estates and honors of Crawford."

The wicked master acquiesced in this punishment, and with his own mouth and free will renounced all right, title, and claim to the lands of the Earldom of Crawford, confessing at the same time that he had sinned grievously and enormously against his father. He then, in the presence of his father, in a public street of the town of Dundee, stretched out his right hand, and bound himself to the renunciation of all right of succession. The property was then, by Earl David, willed over to another person, who became heir instead of the wicked master, not by birth but by gift. I must tell you what became of Alexander afterwards. In about a year from this time he was killed in a fight with a cobbler of Dundee; and his poor old father, worn out and broken-hearted, soon died also, after a lingering illness, in one of his own castles." (See the Lives of the Lindseys, vol. i.)

"Oh, what a wicked man he was!" cried Agnes. "he did really kill his father after all!"

"Yes," replied Miss Walton; "his conduct surely did. But now, I hope, you will remember why I told you this story. As by his own sin this wicked master lost his inheritance, which he was in part enjoying during his father's life-time; so we, by our own sins, may lose our heavenly inheritance, even though we have been baptized, and made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

"Please, Ma'am," said Ruth, "the father was patient with his son for a long while."

"Is not that, too, like God's dealing with us?" asked Miss Walton.

"Yes, Ma'am," replied two or three.

"He spares us long," said Miss Walton, "and continues to us our present blessings, when by our own sins we have justly forfeited them. But do not let us be like the wicked master, and abuse God's goodness towards us, but rather let his goodness lead us to repentance."—*Lesson in Catechism.*

Like to the grass that's newly sprung,  
Or like the tale that's just begun,  
Or like a bird that's here to-day,  
Or like the pearly dew of May,  
Or like an hour, or like a span,  
Or like the singing of a swan,  
Even such is man, who lives by breath,  
Is here; is there; in life; in death,  
The grass decays, the tale doth end,  
The bird is flown, the dew doth spend,  
The hour is short, the span not long,  
The swan's near death, man's life is done!