

THE CHILDREN'S PORTION.

THE SPARROW'S SHELTER.

Some time ago, a poor little hedge-sparrow was seen to be pursued in the open field by a hawk. Half paralyzed through fear, and naturally less swift of wing than its fierce enemy, it bade fair to become an easy prey. There was neither bush nor hedge at hand where it could hide, and its enemy was terribly near, when, oh, blessed thought! coming near a man who was watching the chase, the terrified, helpless sparrow flew right into his bosom; and thus, by action more eloquent than words, mutely claimed the shelter of his pity and his power. The hawk, in his turn terrified by the angry shout of the man, flew off disappointed.

This little story is full of precious instruction; for it shows just how Christ's bosom is to the sinner, the *only*, the *near*, the *loving*, and the *perfect* shelter which he needs.

Jesus is the *ONLY* shelter of the soul. In the dire extremity of our need, His bosom is alone open to us, as the man's was to the frightened bird. Read Acts iv. 12; John xiv. 6. As there was *one* ark to escape the flood; *one* way through the Red Sea to safety; *one* pillar-cloud to guide the wandering Israelites; and, later on, but *one* way through Jordan to the promised land; so is Jesus the *one* refuge from wrath, the *one* way to salvation, the *one* guide, and the *one* door to heaven and eternal bliss.

Jesus is the *NEAR* shelter of the soul. The little sparrow found, when heart and strength were ready to fail, the man close beside it. Just so is it with Jesus. He is ever nigh in the hour of need, "a very present help in trouble." Read Psalm cxlv. 18, and xlv. 1. As He was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the furnace, and beside Ishmael in the desert, and "heard the voice of the lad," so is He nigh to all that call upon Him.

Jesus is the *LOVING* shelter of the sinner; just like the man whose whole soul was stirred through love and joy, in that the bird had quite cast aside its natural fear, and had trusted its whole future to his care. We know that the greatest grief of Jesus is that we will not come to Him; His greatest joy when we trust Him. Read John v. 40, and Luke xv. 5. Did not His hunger and fatigue all vanish, when the poor, outcast woman believed on Him at Sychar's well? Do we not read also that He "rejoiced" in the success of the mission of the seventy; and that nothing else so fills and satisfies (Isa. liii 11) His soul?

Lastly, Jesus is the *PERFECT* shelter of the sinner. The strength of the man to defend the sparrow against the assault of the hawk is but a feeble image of the power of Jesus to defend the least of those who commit themselves to Him. He says to such (Mat. x. 31, with John x. 28), "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," and "shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of My hand." Was it not so with Elisha at Dothan? Was it not so with David many a time and oft? What more heart-stirring songs of praise for deliverance and for shelter have we than his Psalms? Look at Ps. lxi. 1-4, and lxii. 5-8.