

consciousness to come to his aid and consign to oblivion his accusing memory. It was a cold, grey afternoon. Mrs. Maxwell's little kitchen was in perfect order; the fire shed flickering lights on the bright dish-covers on the wall, and the blue and white china on the old-fashioned dresser was touched with a ruddy glow. Mrs. Maxwell herself, seated in a wooden rocking-chair, in spotless white apron, was knitting busily as she talked; and Milly on a low stool, the tabby in her arms, with her golden-brown curls in pretty disorder, and her large, dark eyes gazing earnestly into the fire, completed the picture.

"Do you like winter, Mrs. Maxwell?" she was asking. "Well, my dear, I can't say as I don't prefer the summer; but there!—the Almighty sends it, and it must be right, and I don't think folks have a right to grumble and go rushing off to them foreign parts, a-leaving their own country and the weather God gives them, because they say they must have sunshine. I always think they've no sunshine in their hearts, or they wouldn't be so up and down with the weather."

"I think winter is a very lonely time, Mrs. Maxwell, and I'm sorry for the trees. I was out this morning with Fritz, and I talked to them and tried to cheer them up. And I think they feel they're nearly dead, poor things! and they were shivering with cold this morning; they were, really. I told them they would be happy when next summer comes, but they sighed and shook their heads; it's such a long time to wait, and they have nothing to do—they can only stand still. I was very sad this morning; after I had talked to them, I went down to the plantation at the bottom of the lawn, and on the way I came to a poor dead frog. Fritz sniffed at him, but he didn't seem to be sorry. I don't know how he died; I thought perhaps he had stayed out in the cold and got frozen, he felt so very cold. I took him up and buried him, and I wondered if his mother would miss him; and then I went on a little farther, and there were some little bird's feathers all in a heap on the ground. I felt sure a cruel cat had been eating it up, and I couldn't help crying, for everything seemed to be dying. And when I got to the plantation I was a little comforted, for the fir-trees looked so comfortable and warm—they hadn't lost their leaves like the other trees—but do you know, in the middle of them all was a tall, thin, bare tree—he looked so lonely and unhappy, and he was the only one without any leaves."

"One of those birches, I expect. My man, he said the other day that the fir plantation yonder wanted weeding out." "Well, I couldn't bear to see him so sad, so I crept right in amongst the firs until I got to him, and then I put my arms right round him and cuddled him tight. I told him God would take care of him, and give him a beautiful new green dress next summer; but he seemed to feel the cold, and I expect the other trees aren't very kind to him. I always think the firs are very stiff and proud. I—I kissed him before I came away; it was a sad morning."

Milly's tone was truly pathetic, and Mrs. Maxwell, who loved to hear her childish fancies and never laughed at them, now looked up from her knitting sympathetically.

"You're sad yourself, dear. Is your uncle pretty well to-day?"

"I think he is getting better, but he mustn't talk, and nurse won't let me see him. I think it's winter makes me sad, Mrs. Maxwell."

There was silence for a few moments. Milly stroked her cat thoughtfully, then she said—

"If Uncle Edward had died, what would have happened to me? Should I have had to go to the workhouse?"

"Bless your little heart, no! Why, my man and I was saying the other day that it's most sure as you'll be mistress of the property one day. Sir Edward he have no other kith or kin, as far as we know. Workhouse, indeed! A place where they takes in tramps and vagabonds."

"I heard some of the maids talking about it," pursued Milly; "they said they wondered what would happen to me. I think he is my only uncle, so I couldn't go anywhere else. I wish I had a father, Mrs. Maxwell, I'm always wishing for one. I never remember my father. My mother I do, but she was always ill, and she didn't like me to bother her. Do you know, I thought when I came to Uncle Edward that he would be a kind of father; Miss Kent said he would. But I'm afraid he doesn't like me to bother him either; I should like him to take me up in his arms and kiss me. Do you think he ever will? I feel as if no one cares for me sometimes."

"I think a certain little apple dumpling as I put in the oven for some one is smelling as if it wants to come out," was Mrs. Maxwell's brisk response as she bustled out of her chair, her old eyes moist with feeling.

In a minute Milly's pensiveness had disappeared. A baked apple dumpling had great charms for her, and no one would have believed that the light-hearted child with the merry laugh, now dancing round the room, and climbing up to the dresser for a plate was the same as the one who had so sadly discoursed a few moments before on the mournfulness of winter and of her orphaned state.

"Did you make such nice apple dumplings for Tommy?" she asked presently, busy with her fork and spoon, and looking supremely content with herself and surroundings.

"Ah! Didn't I? I mind when he used to come in on Saturdays from the forge, I always had a hot pudding for him; he used to say there was no one as cooked as well as 'mother.'"

"He's a long time coming home, isn't he, Mrs. Maxwell? I get so tired of waiting. I wish he would come for Christmas."

"I'm not tired of waiting," Mrs. Maxwell said softly, "and I've waited these nine years, but it sometimes seems as if it is only yesterday as he went off I feel at times like fretting sadly over him, and wish I knew if he was alive or dead, but then the Lord do comfort me, and I know he sees just where he is, and he'll let me know when the right time comes."

"I'm expecting him every day," said Milly with a cheerful little nod. "I was telling God about him last night at my window on the stairs—and it seemed as if God said to me that he was coming very soon now. I shouldn't wonder if he came next week!"

The keeper entered the cottage at this moment, and Milly jumped off her seat at once.

"I'm afraid it's time for me to be going back. Nurse said I was to be in at four. Are you going to take me, Maxwell?"

"Don't I always see you safe and sound up at the house?" Maxwell said good-humouredly, "and do you know it has struck four ten minutes ago? When you and my old woman got together to have a crack, as the saying is, you don't know how times passes. We shall have to run for it."

Milly was being rapidly covered up in a thick plaid by Mrs. Maxwell.

"There now, my dearie, good-bye till next I see you, and don't be doleful in that big house by yourself. Your uncle will soon be well, and nurse will be better able to see after you. I don't know what all those servants are after that they can't amuse you a bit."

"Nurse doesn't like me ever to go near the servants' hall," said Milly; "I promised her I wouldn't. Sarah stays in the nursery with me, but she runs away downstairs pretty often. Good-bye, Mrs. Maxwell."

It was getting dark. Maxwell soon had the child in his strong arms, and was striding along at a great pace, when passing a rather dark corner, a man suddenly sprang out of the bushes and took to his heels.

Maxwell shouted out wrathfully: "Let me see you in here again, and it will be the worse for you, you scoundrel!"

"Oh, Maxwell," cried Milly, "who is it?"

"One of them skulking poachers—they're always in here after the rabbits. If I hadn't a-had you to look after and had my thick stick I would a-been after him."

"But you wouldn't have hurt him?" "I should have taught him a lesson, that I should!"

"But, Maxwell, you mustn't, really! Only think, he might be—Tommy coming home! You couldn't see who it was, could you? It would be dreadful if you chased away Tommy."

"No fear o' that," Maxwell said in a quieter tone. "My own son wouldn't skulk along like that. He was a ragged vagabond, that's what he was."

"Prodigal sons are nearly always ragged; he might have been some one's prodigal son, Maxwell."

"He was just a poacher, my dear, and I think I know the chap. He's staying at the Blue Dragon, and has been a-watching this place for some time."

"Perhaps he is one of God's prodigal sons," said Milly softly, "like Jack was." To this Maxwell made no reply, but when he set her down in the brightly-lighted hall a little later, he said—

"Don't you fret about our Tommy. I should know him fast enough. He wouldn't run from his own father."

And Milly went in, and that night added another petition to her prayers:

"And, please, God, if the man who ran away from Maxwell is a prodigal son, bring him back to his father for Jesus' sake. Amen."

(To be continued.)

LESSON NOTES.

SECOND QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE ACTS AND EPISTLES.

LESSON XII.—JUNE 20.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Rom. 14. 10-21. Memory verses, 19-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.—Rom. 14. 21.

OUTLINE.

1. Living to God, v. 10-12.
2. Living in Love, v. 13-18.
3. Living for Others, v. 19-21.

Time.—A.D. 58.  
Place.—Written by Paul while at Corinth.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Personal responsibility.—Rom. 14. 10-21.
- Tu. Pleasing others.—Rom. 15. 1-7.
- W. Giving no offence.—1 Cor. 10. 23-33.
- Th. Warning against offences.—Matt. 18. 1-11.
- F. Loving one another.—Rom. 13. 7-14.
- S. Love for others.—Mark 12. 28-34.
- Su. My neighbour.—Luke 10. 25-37.

QUESTIONS FOR HOME STUDY.

1. Living to God, v. 10-12  
What two questions of judgment are asked?  
Before whom must all stand?  
What Scripture is quoted, and from whence? See Isa. 45. 23.  
To whom must all give account?  
What says John of that final test? Rev. 20. 12.
2. Living in Love, v. 13-18.  
What will love prompt us to avoid?  
What says Paul about clean or unclean?  
To whom then does anything become unclean?  
When does one walk uncharitably?  
What should we carefully avoid?  
In what does the kingdom of God consist?  
Who is accepted of God and men?
3. Living for Others, v. 19-21.  
What should Christians seek for?  
How may we distinguish between pure and impure?  
What law will govern those who live for others? Golden Text.  
Whose example do we thus follow? See Rom. 15. 3.

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

1. Trust God for just judgment. Be kind, charitable, patient, forgiving; "help a little," and hinder none.
2. Deny self to help others. Live to do good. Meat and drink are trifles in comparison—righteousness is everything.
3. May a Christian dance? Go to the theatre? Play cards? Drink wine? For the sake of a clean example a Christian will not wish to do any of these things.

STORY OF THE QUEEN'S LIFE.

IV.

LIFE AT OSBORNE.

When Osborne House was ready to go into, the Queen and her family had a house-warming. It was a gay and merry and happy time. There is a beautiful hymn of Martin Luther's which the Germans often sing at house-warming. And Prince Albert, being a German, and keeping a tender liking for the pleasant home-customs, repeated it at his house-warming. Here it is:

"God bless our going out, nor less  
Our coming in, and make them sure;  
God bless our daily bread and bless  
Whate'er we do—whate'er endure;  
In death unto his peace awake us,  
And heirs of his salvation make us."

Prince Albert's motto was *Treu und Fest*. That is German, and means True and Firm. It is a very good motto, too. Prince Albert was born at Roseneau. There is an old red tower on the side of the Castle of Roseneau, which is a capital place to play in.

One day a party of boys were inside the tower and another party were on the outside. Those on the outside were going to storm the tower, and those on the inside were to defend it.

They had a hard fight, but the party on the outside could not get in. Albert belonged to the outside party.

"I know a place at the back where

we can get in," said one of the boys to Albert.

"But," replied Albert, in great scorn, "that would be most unbecoming in a Saxon knight, who should always attack the enemy in front." So you see, he always acted up to his motto, even then.

Well, these little princes and princesses had very good times at Osborne. On their mother's birthday they had a fine present. You could never guess what it was, so I will tell you.

It was a lovely Swiss cottage, a grown up cottage, not a play-cottage, with grounds all about it. And these grounds were given to them too.

Here each one had a garden, where they raised vegetables and flowers. They had hot-houses and forcing frames so they could have flowers and vegetables as early as other gardeners. Each had a set of garden tools, marked with his or her name, from Victoria to Beatrice.

The two eldest boys built a fort. It was small, but it was perfect in every part, just like a real fort. They even made the bricks!

Every Saturday night they carried in their bills for work and their father paid them.

In the pretty Swiss cottage was a kitchen, where the princesses cooked and made pickles and jellies. There was a pantry and dairy and closets with every thing as complete as possible.

I suppose they had heavy bread and starchy cake and half-cooked things just as we all do at first. But they are very good housekeepers now and they learned a good deal of their housekeeping, no doubt, in the little Swiss cottage at Osborne.

Of course they made collections of things just like other boys and girls. They had a museum of Natural History with stuffed birds, and bits of rock, and specimens of flowers. They had a big telescope too for star-gazing. It was a happy, happy time.

When Prince Albert was a boy in Germany he and his brother Ernest collected specimens. These specimens have been added to and now form what is called the Ernest-Albert Museum of Natural History.

"HEARTSHINE."

A little fellow called a smile a "baby laugh," but another gave a still better definition when he said that if the light from the sun was sunshine, then smiles must be "heartshine." Wasn't that a beautiful definition? How many of you, little workers, are trying to make heartshine? If you haven't already tried much, what a good time this is to begin!

Here is another thought too: If smiles are "heartshine," then frowns must be "faceclouds," eh? and crying—well, crying is just thunder. Now, who wouldn't rather make "heartshine" than "faceclouds" or "thunder"?

Mrs. Keith Hamilton, M.B.

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