

## A FOOLISH LITTLE TRAVELLER.

**N**EXT Sunday I am going to preach a sermon to the children first," said our minister, "just a ten minute sermon, before the big people get theirs."

All the sleepy little people in the pews roused up, and smiled at the pulpit; and the pulpit smiled back at them. Then they sang "Jesus, the very thought of thee," and stood up for the benediction.

All the way home from church, the girls and boys got together in twos and threes and talked about their sermon, and wondered what it would be like. And the next Sunday morning the pews in front were running over with children, long before the bell tolled or the organ began to roll.

"Well, children," said the preacher, looking down on them from the pulpit; "this looks for all the world like a flower garden, with every blossom turned up to catch the sunshine. But it is enough better than any flower garden that ever bloomed, for even the sweetest flowers wither and die, and there is no more of them, but every one of you, please God, may bloom eternally in the garden of God, where never a cloud can come, nor chill nor tempest.

"But I mustn't waste my ten minutes talking to you about flowers, when my sermon is to be about a traveller. Yes, children, a traveller whose journey is now ended: I saw him end it only last week, and he himself told me to tell you this true story.

"He was quite a little boy when he set out on his journey, and soon after he had started, a Friend came to him, and offered to be his guide, and protector, and benefactor, and to stay with him to the end.

"O, no," said the little boy, 'I'd rather go myself, I thank you,' so he ran on, and heard no more of his Friend. Did he get on well without him? Well, tolerably: the sun shone brightly, the flowers bloomed along his path, and many of his friends were going the same way. True, he did not have as much joy and gladness as his Friend had intended to give him, and he failed to learn much that his

Friend would have taught him, but he got on pretty well, he thought.

"As his body grew bigger, and his mind opened wider, when he got to be a young man in fact, this journey was not quite such a simple matter: the road was rougher, there were steeper climbs, and slippery paths, sometimes, and enemies sprang up along the way to destroy and deceive him.

"Again his Friend offered Himself to our young traveller, and O, what sweet and tender nobleness shone in his face! But the lad was strong, and proud of his strength, and was less ready than when he had been a child, to put his hand in this Friend's hand and say, 'Thy way be mine.' And so he turned away from him the second time, and said he would go alone.

"Still, he had fair success on his journey, though he stumbled into wrong paths, and had to turn back often: though he met cruel foes, and received many a wound and scar, still he struggled on, and now middle life was upon him, and the road was rough, and his strength was less, and his foes thickened around him. The friends who had set out with him were rapidly falling by the way, and he often longed for that Friend and Guide who had once or twice been at his right hand. He sometimes caught a glimpse of him, indeed, but far off now, and dimly seen through mist and fog, over torrent and ravine; he could not touch him nor hear his voice, and he had no time, no strength to go in search of him.

"On and on the weary traveller toiled, with bleeding feet, and aching heart, lonely and discouraged. And now before his eyes rolled a deep, dark river which men call Death: cross it he must, but O, how could he go alone into such a raging flood!

"Blessed be God, the Friend appeared to him again, patient, uncomplaining, loving, no ingratitude had angered him, no waywardness had turned him off, and now the poor, feeble, battered traveller clung to him with infinite joy. I saw him as his feet went down into the cold wave, and I asked if it was well with him now.