

Youths' Department.

SOME LEAVES FROM THE BOOK OF NATURE.

THE LIGHT OF TRUTH.

"Detestable Phantom!" cried the traveller, as his horse sank with him into the morass; "to what miserable end have you lured me by your treacherous light!"

"The same old story for ever!" muttered the Will-o'-the-Wisp in reply. "Always throwing the blame on others for troubles you have brought upon yourself. What more could have been done for you, unhappy creature, than I have done? All the weary night through have I danced on the edge of this morass to save you and others from ruin. If you have rushed on further and further, like a headstrong fool, in spite of my warning light, who is to blame but yourself?"

"I am an unhappy creature, indeed," rejoined the traveller; "I took your light for a friendly lamp, but have been deceived to my destruction."

"Yet not by me," cried the Will-o'-the-Wisp, anxiously—"I work out my appointed business carefully and conscientiously. My light is ever a friendly lamp to the wise. It misleads none but the headstrong and ignorant."

"Headstrong! ignorant!" exclaimed the Statesman, for such the traveller was—"How little do you know to whom you are speaking! Trusted by my King—honoured by my country—the leader of her councils—ah, my country, my poor country, who will take my place and guide you when I am gone!"

"A guide who cannot guide himself! Misjudging, misled, and, though wise, perhaps, in the false laws of society,—ignorant of the glorious laws of Nature and of Truth—who will miss you, presumptuous being? You have mistaken the light that warned you of danger for the star that was to guide you to safety. Alas for your country, if no better leader than you could be found!"

The Statesman never spoke again, and the Will-o'-the-Wisp danced back to the edge of the black morass; and as he flickered up and down, he mourned his luckless fate—always trying to do good—so often vilified and misjudged. "Yet," said he to himself, as he sent out his beams through the cheerless night—"I will not cease to try; who knows but that I may save somebody yet! But what an ignorant world I live in!"

"Cruel Monster!" shrieked the beautiful girl in wild despair, as her feet plunged into the swamp, and she struggled in vain to find firmer ground—"you have betrayed me to my death!"

"Ay, ay, I said so! It is always some one else who is to blame, and never yourself. When pretty fools like you deceive themselves, you call me 'monster.'—Why did you follow a 'monster' into a swamp?" cried the poor Will-o'-the-Wisp angrily.

"I thought my betrothed had come out to meet me. I mistook your hateful light for his. Oh, cruel fiend, I know you now. Must I die so young, so fair? Must I be torn from life and happiness and love! Ay, dance, dance on in your savage joy."

"Fool as you are, it is no joy to me to see you perish," answered the Will-o'-the-Wisp. "It is my appointed law to warn and save those who will be warned. It is my appointed sorrow, I suppose, that the recklessness and ignorance of such as you, persist in disregarding that law, and turning good into evil. I shone brighter and brighter before you as you advanced, entreating you, as it were, to be warned. But, in wilfulness, you pursued me to your ruin. What cruel mother brought you up, and did not teach you to distinguish the steady beam that guides to happiness, from the wandering brilliancy that bodes destruction?"

"My poor mother!" wept the maiden—"What words are these you speak of her? But you in your savage life know nothing of what she has done for me, her only child. Mistress of every accomplishment that can adorn and delight society, my lightest word, my very smile, is a law to the world we move in."

"Even so! Accomplished in fleeting and fantastic arts that leave no memorial behind them—unacquainted with the beauty and purposes of the realities around you, which work from age to age in silent mercy for gracious ends, and put to shame the toil that has no aim or end. Oh, that you had but known the law by which I live!"

The maiden spoke no more, and then she ceased to struggle. The Will-o'-the-Wisp danced back yet another time to the edge of the black morass; "For," said he, "I may save somebody yet. But what a foolish world I live in!"

"I see a light at last, papa!" shouted a little boy on a Shetland pony, as he rode by his father's side along the moor. "I am so glad! There is either a cottage or a friendly man with a lantern, who will help us to find our way. Let me go after him, I can soon overtake him." And the little boy touched his pony with a whip, and in another minute would have been cantering along after the light, but that his father laid a sudden and heavy hand upon the bridle.

"Not a step further in that direction at any rate, if you please, my darling."

"Oh, papa!" expostulated the child, pointing with his hand to the light.

And, "Oh, my son, I see!" cried the father, smiling; "and well it is for you that I not only see, but know the meaning of what I see at the same time.—That light is neither a gleam from a cottage, nor yet a friendly man with a lantern, as you think, though for the matter of that, the light is friendly enough to those who understand it. It shines there to warn us from the dangerous part of the bog. Kind old Will-o'-the-Wisp!" pursued the father, raising his voice, as if calling through the darkness into the distance—

"Kind old Will-o'-the-Wisp, we know what you mean, we will not come near your deathly swamps. The old naturalist knows you well—good night, and thank you for the warning." So saying, the naturalist turned the rein of his son's pony the other way, and they both trotted along the beaten road as well as they could by the imperfect light.

"After all, it was more like a lantern than those pictures of the nasty Will-o'-the-Wisp, papa," murmured the little boy, reluctantly urging his pony on.

"Our friend is not much indebted to you for the pretty name you have called him," laughed the father. "You are of the same mind as the poet, who, with the license of his craft, said—

"Yonder phantom only shines
To lure thee to thy doom."

"Yes, papa, and so he does," interposed the boy.

"But, indeed, he does no such thing, my dear—on the contrary, he spends all his life in shining brightly to warn travellers of the most dangerous parts of the swamp."

"But the shining seems as if he was inviting them to go after him, papa."

"Only because you choose to think so, my dear, and do not enquire. Does the sailor think the shining of the lighthouse invites him to approach the dangerous rocks on which it is built?"

"Oh, no, papa, because he knows it is put there on purpose to warn him away."

"He only knows by teaching and enquiry, Arthur; and so you also by teaching and enquiry will learn to know that this Will-o'-the-Wisp is made to shine for us in swamps and marshes as a land-beacon of danger. The laws of nature, which are the acted will of God, work together in this case, as in all others, for a good end. And it is left to us, as both a privilege and a pleasure, to search and trace out, and then avail ourselves of the mercies as well as the wonders of the Great Creator. Can you think of a better employment?"

The fire was very bright, and the tea was warm and good that greeted the travellers, father and son, on their arrival at home that night. Many a joke, too, passed with mamma as to the sort of tea they should have tasted, and the kind of bed they should have laid down in, had they only gone after the Will-o'-the-Wisp, as young Arthur had so much wished to do.

And for just a few days after these events—not more at that time,—for children's wisdom seldom does, or ought to, last much longer—Arthur had every now and then a wise and philosophical fit, and on the principle that, however much appearances might be to the contrary, the laws of nature were always working to some good and beneficent end, he eagerly and gravely reproved his little sister for crying when it hailed; "For surely," said he, "though we cannot go out to day, the storm is doing good to something, or somebody somewhere."

It was a blessed creed! though it cost him, for a while, a struggle to adhere to it, when the lightning flashed round him, and the thunder roared in the distance, and he saw from the windows dark clouds hanging over the landscape. When some one said the storm had been very grand, he thought—yes, but it was grander still to think that all these laws of nature as they are called—this acted will of God—was for ever working night and day, in darkness and in light, recognised or unheeded, for some wise and beneficent end.

Yes! when he was older he would try and trace out these ends—a better employment could not be found.

Meanwhile the Will-o'-the-Wisp had heard the kind good night that greeted him as the travellers passed by on that dark evening, and his light shone brighter than ever, as he said, "I am happy now. I have saved the life of one who is not only thankful for it, but has given the hand that saved him." With these words he cheerily danced back again to his appointed post.—*Scottish Ecclesiastical Journal.*

Selections.

THE NEW MAP OF EUROPE.

Attributed to Louis Napoleon.

"As neither the moderation nor the patience of the great cabinets, nor the efforts of diplomacy, nor the sufferings of industry and of commerce, have sufficed to disarm an ambition which threatens the whole of Europe, it is necessary that the war, which has become inevitable, should be at least energetic and decisive."

"A power whose foreign trade is very restricted, which possesses an extent of coast relatively very small, has no colonies to protect, has been for half a century accumulating formidable naval forces. Constantinople, first, and the Mediterranean countries, are the object of all its attempts, and the present sovereign of Russia is preparing to act as executor of the founder of his race."

"Doubtless the resources of Russia are great, but not from her annexed provinces, rather than from the body of the monarchy, that she draws her forces. The possession of Finland gives her the domination of the Baltic, and the possession of the Crimea makes her mistress of the Black Sea. By these means, in the north, as in the south, she has become a naval power of the first rank. Since the partition of Poland, the largest and richest portion of which she seized, she weighs on Germany, which she hates and despises. The Russians say, when they speak of a German, is known, 'God has used him ill enough: he has made him a German.' Lately again, in the Hungarian war, the pride of Russia deeply wounded the military spirit of Austria, and the armies of the Czar committed the error of reducing the memory of their services humiliating."

"Thus Russia advances westward, driving back European civilization at each step. Is it by her boasted elegance and bastard Christianity that she pretends to impose upon civilized nations? How has she made them forget the impudence and violence which were most of her titles to possession. Spoliation and despotism govern her conquered provinces. The fair daughters of Poland are periodically carried off and sent to a far exile, to renew the blood of their conquerors. Those conquerors themselves, who are they? Some thousand corrupted patricians, bending fifty millions of men under the knout."

"A fanatical and servile clergy lives at the expense of this ignorant population, which is regularly educated in every degree of social hierarchy by the slave-traders and judges. Reforms are not possible, for Russia despotism is strong in evil, and is powerless to do good. The principle of authority, so salutary restricted within proper limits, is even vitiated by this adulterous mixture of the sacred and the profane, which troubled, even to madness, the spirit of the Caesars of Rome."

"In the life of nations, prescription for injustice never acquired. If the weaknesses of the French cabinet under Louis XV. permitted the first partition of Poland to the profit of the Czars, if the revolutionary agitations of 1792 prevented France from opposing a second dismemberment of the Turkish empire and the last partition of Poland, it is for France of 1834, to quail under a strong government, to repair, as much as is in her power, the faults committed in the preceding century."

"France, in drawing the sword, demands nothing for herself; she wishes nothing, she stands in need of nothing. The greatness of a country is not measured by the extent of its territories, but by the influence of its policy and the expansive force of its ideas. England, our cordial and powerful ally, does not eye anything either, as the reward of her concurrence. Like us she acts in the sense of her national tradition but also in the sense of the liberty of the world."

"This disinterested attitude, supported by reiterated and solemn declarations, leaves no doubt upon the mind of any man. The western powers would call therefore, be the more authorized to raise the question of remodeling the map of Europe."

"Has not the moment come for openly declaring what all think and whisper below their breath? What illusion does there still exist on the nature of the conditions upon which Europe must dictate a destiny?"