

self what at present she so much wished to know; and the day when grandmamma and aunts were to dine out, appeared so suitable for the attempt, that with unqualified pleasure she heard

Mrs. Martha was to exercise the rights of hospitality on the same evening. Maria's education had been far from neglected. She could read very well, had begun to learn to write, and had received lessons in geography and history, though, from the dry tedious manner in which they were administered, her ideas of time and space were very confused. She had formed a theory of her own, that all celebrated persons of different countries whose names began with the same kind of sound, were contemporaries; that, for instance, Queen Anne and Hannibal, Queen Mary and Marius, Brutus and Bruce the traveller, might have known each other if they had but lived near enough. Her ideas of geography were not much less vague, as may be inferred from the fact, that she believed certain mounds in the churchyard to be really what Mrs. Martha asserted them to be, the graves of the infants slaughtered by Herod. Her grandmamma told all her friends what very great pains she took to give Maria good principles. Her lectures on these points might all be reduced to five heads; namely, to put every thing in its proper place, to do every thing in its proper time, to keep every thing to its proper use, to be genteel, and to hate the French. It will not be surprising that, with such training, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, a copy of which had recently been presented to her, gave an entirely new bias to her thoughts. So sorely puzzled was she to guess how much of it might be true, when, one day as they were driving out in the carriage, she saw at a little distance from the road a very handsome house. On some one asking the name of it, she did not hear the answer distinctly, but was quite sure she heard the word Beautiful; and as they immediately began to descend a hill, she immediately concluded that it was the palace Beautiful, and that the hill was the hill Difficulty. One great point was now ascertained, that there were really such places; but she began to be sadly distressed when it occurred to her that they were travelling in the wrong direction from what they ought to be doing.

Oldtown was a town where fewer changes occurred than in more populous and modern places, and Maria scarcely recollected ever to have heard of any one's leaving it. Certainly she had never heard of any one going on a pilgrimage, and she wondered very much how her aunts, who had told her the *Pilgrim's Progress* was so very good a book, should have read it without thinking it necessary to take the advice it conveyed.

The rector of the parish happened to call the very next day at Mrs. Walker's, and as he was going away, inquired so kindly after the little girl, that she was called in from the garden to see him. He asked what book it was she was reading, and when she said it was the *Pilgrim's Progress*, he stroked her head, and said he hoped she would not delay setting out on her pilgrimage till she was the age of Christian, adding that a youthful pilgrim was the most interesting object he knew. This last observation was addressed to her aunts, who assented to it, as they did to every thing Mr. Roberts said, and it confirmed the resolution which Maria had already taken of setting out alone. I need hardly add, that the day she fixed upon was the one to which we have already so often alluded.

The party assembled in the housekeeper's room had just reversed their cups in their saucers, as a signal that they did not wish them replenished, when one of the party requested Mrs. Martha's permission to bestow a piece of bread, thickly buttered, and covered with sugar, upon Miss Maria—we presume, as a token of gratitude for keeping out of their way. Consent was obtained, but as Miss Maria was not to be seen, the whole party issued forth into the garden in search of her. Every walk was explored, but in vain; and at last a little gate leading into a wood being found open, the wood was searched but with no better success. What anguish did Mrs. Martha suffer when she thought how faithfully she had promised not to let the child out of her sight! They retraced their steps to the house, some one suggesting that she might be there. But no!—all their search was in vain. Hannah thought she might have gone to buy some barley sugar, but she had not been at the shop, nor on the road to it, for Hannah stopped to ask every one she met if they had seen the child. Hour after hour was spent in an unavailing search, and at last the ladies arrived at home, when a scene of confusion ensued that baffles description. In the midst of it a boy arrived with a little shoe, which he said he thought must belong to young madam: of its being her's there could be no doubt; and many were the tears shed, over what, Mrs. Martha said, was all that now remained of Miss Maria. The boy could give no information as to where this relic was found, for a woman whom he did not know had given it to him to bring to Mrs. Walker, saying only that she had got it from a man, whom she did not know, who said he had found it, but she did not ask where; but she had heard that a little lady had been lost at Oldtown, and she thought, if it was her's, it might be a comfort to her friends to have something that had belonged to her.

But it is time that we should return to Maria. When she had made up her mind to set out, it was a distressing thought to her that she knew not the direction in which to turn for the purpose of finding the path she was to pursue, and she was determined to ask no one by the way, for fear of encountering Mr. Worldly

Wiseman. The road by which they came in the carriage, she knew, did not bring them through the Wicket Gate. She concluded, therefore, that there must be some different route through the fields to the foot of the hill Difficulty, which she could distinctly see from the garden; so she resolved to make her way through the fields for the chance of finding it; but should she not succeed in getting there by the right path, she would at any rate get there; and when she reached the porter's lodge, at the gate of the palace, she would there ask them to take her back to the beginning of the path, which she was sure some of them would do. She set out, then, expecting every moment to hear her name called from behind her; for she remembered that Christian's friends were clamorous that he should return, and she naturally supposed her's might be so too; but she was firmly resolved to pursue the same course that he did, and put her fingers in her ears, that she might not hear. She had her misgivings certainly, as to the propriety of leaving home; but then she thought Mr. Roberts had so distinctly recommended her journey, that her aunts could not blame her very much, particularly as it had not escaped her observation how cordially they had agreed with him as to the necessity of it; and they had so often on a Sunday evening exhorted her to do during the week all that Mr. Roberts had enforced in his sermons, that she thought, or tried to think, that for once they would have no cause to complain. She scrambled over or through several hedges, without seeing any thing at all like a path through the fields; still she fancied she was gaining upon the hill, and she thought if she reached the Palace, they would allow her to sleep there, although she had not come in by the Wicket Gate, since she really wished to go through it; and she amused herself by wondering whether she should sleep in the same room where Christian had slept, and whether they would give her any armor, or whether it was only worn by men pilgrims. She was interrupted in her reverie by seeing a number of cows running, as she feared, towards her; so she began to run too, and it was not till she had climbed a gate into the next field, that she missed one of her shoes, which had fallen off in her rapid flight—that same shoe which caused so much lamentation at home. She durst not go back to look for it, as a dog was still chasing the cows; but she thought she could manage to walk without it, as the grass was so very soft, and she was sure either Prudence, Piety, or Charity, would give her a new one. At last she reached the high road, and began to ascend the hill. By this time she was very tired, very sleepy, and very hungry, but she remembered Christian had felt sleepy here also; and she resolved, however tired, not to sleep in the arbor for which, however, she looked in vain, and concluded it had been pulled down: she could not help feeling very glad of it, as with her tired little limbs it certainly would have been very difficult to resist the temptation. She was very much shocked to see how many people were coming down the hill, and that no one but herself was ascending it. At length she saw two tall big men apparently running a race down, and her little heart beat more rapidly as she thought how very awful the lions must look: for if these were not Timorous and Mistrust themselves, she did not for a moment doubt that they were terrified in the same manner. She had not seen any lions the day they passed in the carriage; and she had sometimes almost ventured to hope that they no longer existed; but how the poor little thing trembled, when, on reaching the bend of the road, where it swept off to the lodge she had before seen, there appeared, reposing under the shade of two beech-trees, two enormous lions! Maria was no great naturalist, or she would have perceived at once that they were made of stone; but she never for a moment doubted that they were really the lions! She stood gazing and trembling for some time, continually repeating, "The lions were chained, but he saw not the chains;" and then, summoning up all her courage, she ran swiftly between them, passed through the gate, and knocked with all her little might at the door of the lodge. It was opened by a tall, good-humoured-looking man; and Maria, awe-struck at beholding at length one of the individuals of whom she had thought so much, dropped a curtsey, and said, "If you please, sir, are you Watchful?" "Why, Miss, as to that," said the man, smiling good-humouredly, "I hopes I be; what did you please to want?" "I want Discretion, if you please, sir," replied Maria. "I say, Missis," said the man, looking over his shoulder at his wife, "didst ever hear the like of that?—here's a little maiden says as how she wants discretion." "Well, I've seed many a one as wanted it afore, but never one as owned to it." A sharp featured, vinegar-looking woman now appeared, looking very unlike any thing Maria expected to see so near the house Beautiful. "So you want discretion, Miss, do you? Well, I wonder if there's any thing else you want?" "I thought," said Maria, trying to feel brave, "I might perhaps be allowed to sleep either here or at the palace."

A private confabulation now took place between the husband and wife, in which it was agreed he should take Maria to the quality at the great house, as may be they would make something of her: Maria felt very proud when she found herself with her hand in that of Mr. Watchful, and actually on the way to the palace. Her guide left her outside, while he asked to speak to Mrs. Adams, to whom he said that the little lady's intellects seemed

all of a heap together; it was such a queer thing to hear a child like her talk of want of discretion, though no doubt it was all very true. Mrs. Adams told him to get a horse ready that she might send him off to the friends of the little girl, as soon as she had ascertained who they were; and she came and led Maria by the hand into the drawing-room so tenderly, and looked so very kindly, that Maria began to feel quite reassured. She was delighted to see three young ladies in the room, who, of course, were Piety, Prudence, and Charity. Mrs. Adams, as soon as she had given her a large slice of bread and butter and some new milk, said, "Now, my dear, you'll tell us what your name is, and who your papa and mamma are." "My name is Maria Walker, but I never had either a papa or mamma," replied Maria, with the utmost simplicity. "And where do you live, dear?" "At Oldtown, with my grandmamma." "And where were you going, my love?" "I did not want to go farther than this house to-night. I always intended to sleep here." "And does any one know you were coming here?" "No, Ma'am. No one knew exactly that I meant to come to-day; but our clergyman, Mr. Roberts, strongly advised me to come, and he said I could not set out too soon." "And what was your object in coming, Maria?" "I wished to set an example to all the people in Oldtown," was the answer, and both Mrs. Adams and her daughters were quite at a loss what to think of their little visitor.

Maria, however, had gained so much courage, that she thought she might now venture to ask a few questions, and began with "Do many children come here, ma'am?" "Yes, sometimes, we have children here. We're all very fond of them when they are good." "And have you got any armor for little girls, ma'am?" "This was almost too much for the gravity of Mrs. Adams, but she determined not to let her see how very much amused she was, but rather to encourage her in asking any questions she pleased, hoping by that means to obtain a clue to the very extraordinary state in which her mind seemed to be. "Oh no!" she said; "but why do you want to know?" "I was afraid you had not," said Maria, and then looking very serious, "Please, ma'am, tell me is this house very near the Valley of the Shadow of Death?" "My poor little child," said Mrs. Adams, drawing her close to her and kissing her, "that, none of us can tell; it may be nearer than we think." "But you won't send me there to-night, will you?" and the child half cried as she asked the question, "You'll let me stay and sleep here?" "Yes, that you shall, dear little wanderer, and I think you must need sleep very much, for you look tired, and your little hand is very hot." "I suppose nobody ever comes back here that's been through the valley," continued the child, almost as if thinking aloud. This touched a chord in every bosom present, that thrilled through them, for their mourning was yet new for one very dear to them, who had been suddenly hurried through that valley of which Maria spoke. "I've been thinking, ma'am, it would be a terrible thing for a little girl like me to go there alone without any armor; oh! please do let Piety go with me—oh, pray do!" said the child, wondering what she could possibly have said to make them all cry so. At this moment the porter arrived to say he was ready, and Mrs. Adams desired him to tell Mrs. Walker her little Maria was safe, but very tired, and she would either take her home in the morning, or would be very happy to see the ladies if they liked to come and fetch her. "I don't want to go home," said Maria; "I only want to go back as far as the Wicket Gate, that I may begin at the beginning." "Oh, now I see it all!" exclaimed she whom Maria was sure must be Charity; "you dear, delightful little creature, you've been reading the *Pilgrim's Progress* till your little head is turned, as I'm sure mine would have been at your age, if I had not had a good mamma to explain it all to me; and as you never had a mamma, how could you know any thing about it?"

A few judicious questions now drew forth from Maria the whole story of her pilgrimage, and when her aunts arrived before breakfast next morning, they were quite surprised to find her looking so well and happy and rational, as they had been very much frightened by Mr. Watchful's account of what he called her lightmindedness and want of discretion.

Mrs. Adams begged she might be allowed to stay a few days with them; and before the time came for her departure, the beautiful allegory which had so much perplexed her, was made so very plain, that she thought she must have been extremely stupid not to have found out the meaning for herself.

My young readers will, I am sure, be glad to hear that Maria, who has now little girls of her own, has long since found the true Wicket Gate, and is anxious to show to others the privilege of being permitted to enter it. Few in the present day have not greater advantages than she had; and if any are induced to ask themselves the question, whether, with superior instruction, they are equally in earnest to obtain in the days of health Piety for their companion through that dark valley, which sooner or later all must tread, my story will not have been written in vain.

The man who is principled in good, does well by virtue of a good will, and thinks well by virtue of a right understanding, not only before the world, but also when he is left to himself in private; but it is otherwise with the man who is principled in evil.