

"THE SPONSOR'S DUTY IS TOO WEIGHTY FOR ME."

It is pleasant to hear some one estimate properly the much neglected sponsor's office. But is it *too* weighty an undertaking? Some person, in case of the parents' death or inability, should watch over the child's spiritual interests. They have chosen you as suitable for that purpose, and why should you decline so charitable a work? If the orphan's *temporal* affairs required a guardian, there would be no want of friends and relatives to undertake *that* duty; that would not be too onerous; but is it not as necessary that some one should guard the orphan's heavenly inheritance; some particular persons who may feel a special interest therein? Is the child's soul to be exposed because none will attend to it? "But the promises are beyond my ability. I cannot answer for its renouncing all sin, believing all God's word, and keeping all His commandments. I can hardly answer for myself, much less for another." From these remarks you evidently misunderstand the sponsor's duty. For the answers which you make to the minister, being for the child, do not bind *you*. The transaction is between CHRIST and the infant, the minister being CHRIST's agent, and the sponsor the infant's agent. And as what the minister says does not bind him personally, he acting in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; so what the sponsor says does not bind *him* personally, he acting in the name of the infant. Such answers not only do not bind you, but they do not *create* the obligation which binds the child; for in private baptism, where there are no sponsors, the child is bound by the act of baptism alone. What then, it may be asked, is the use of the sponsor's answers, if they do not bind the sponsor? Their use is to express the nature of the covenant, which consists not only in privileges received, but in duties to be done; to do for the unconscious child what you would do for a dumb adult, who, unable to speak, answered through your mouth as his interpreter; to place baptism in its true light before the people, that they may be reminded of their obligations, and to keep before the sponsors the great object of certain duties which, by the sponsorial office, they *do* undertake, and which are, "to see that this infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he hath here made;" to "call upon him to hear sermons, and chiefly" to "provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." These, and the other qualifications of sponsors expressed in the exhortation in the Public Baptism of Infants, are perfectly practicable. If these be done and the child yet be lost, the sponsor is in no way responsible. Says Bishop Griswold, in his Pastoral Address to the Eastern Diocese, "It is an error to suppose that the promises of baptism are made by sponsors in their own name and behalf. The whole engagement is made in the name of the child, and nothing more or less is required and intended. The sponsors express audibly that engagement which baptism lays on the infant; they act as agents for another in the performance of a charitable work, and what they engage is not for themselves, but for the child only They promise to perform *nothing*, not even that they will teach the child religion, or bring him up in the faith and fear of God. But it is highly necessary that this should, by some one or more, be done: in the nature of the thing it is most proper, and it is generally expected that they who present the child for baptism, should see to the performance of this most