

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

TAKE US ASIDE.

Take us aside from every hind'ring care;
Be this, O Lord, Thy servant's daily prayer;
From every fault we show, and sin we hide,
O Thou who seest us, take us aside.

Speak Thou the word, our ears shall opened be;
Touch Thou our tongues—be all the praise to Thee;
O Thou, who perfect, knowest our distress,
Behold our prayer, and hearing, Saviour, bless.

Guide Thou us on, from every danger free;
Do ill encounter, let us rest in Thee;
When high the battle rages far and wide,
O Thou who sleepest not, Thy people guide.

We would Thy blessing every passing day;
Be Thou the Light to lighten on our way;
Shine Thou on us, when other rays grow pale;
Be our Defence, when all defences fail.

Thou art, O Lord, our Sun of Righteousness;
Thine ours to seek Thee, Thine it is to bless;
Be Thou our Help, O Saviour crucified;
From every ill and sin, take us aside.

—Rev. R. W. Lowrie, in Church and Home.

JESUS LOVES A LITTLE CHILD.

I know 'tis Jesus loves my soul
And makes my wounded spirit whole,
My nature is by sin defiled,
Yet Jesus loves a little child.

How kind is Jesus, oh! how good
'Twas for my soul he shed his blood,
For children's sake he was reviled
For Jesus loves a little child.

When I offend by thought or tongue
Omit the right, or do the wrong—
If I repent, He's reconciled,
For Jesus loves a little child.

To me may Jesus now impart
Although so young, a gracious heart;
Alas! I am oft by sin defiled
Yet Jesus loves a little child.

TWO FRIENDS.

[CONTINUED.]

"Let me see the letter, Lily. You are not strong, and I believe you are fancying things. All the same I am sure for your own sake, it will be best for you to go. So you see you have your desired end, whatever my opinion of Miss Everson may be."

"Shall I not read it to you?" asked Mrs. Lacy, putting her empty hand into that which he held out.

"No, dear, you would only tire yourself. We can talk it over afterwards."

"It does trouble me, Arthur," said Mrs. Lacy, as she gave the letter to him. She kept her eyes anxiously fixed upon his face as he read it through, and then turned as she herself had done, back to the beginning again. This was the letter:—

"DEAR MR. LACY.—Reginald is in the enjoyment of perfect health. His studies are progressing, though his spelling is not at all what I should wish it to be, and his writing leaves much to be desired, especially as regards the formation of the capital letters. I have never attempted to give you my ideas as to his character, which at his age is necessarily very unformed. We all know that children are full of faults, and I have had no reason hitherto to think him more thoughtless and careless than children in general. I have occasionally mentioned his being stubborn and sulky, but I had hoped he was improving, and also becoming more truthful."

Here Mr. Lacy, who had smiled over the first few lines, closed his mouth very tightly, and his eyebrows seemed to make one straight line across his forehead.

"I am grieved to have to inform you," the letter went on, "that I find I have been mistaken. Reginald has for some time been carrying on a course of deception. I blame myself for ever having allowed him to go out of my own sight except when with my faithful Hannah, in whom I place implicit confidence. But at his age I did think he might be trusted to play in the garden by himself for an hour. While we suppose him to be there he has been in the habit of making his way into the lanes.

How long this has gone on I know not, nor how far he has wandered, for he obstinately refuses to confess. But there he has been and consorting with the lowest company. It distresses me to tell you, but there is no doubt whatever of the fact. I happened to drive along the road and caught him myself. I need not say that we have kept the most careful watch over him since, but he seems quite impenitent, and refuses to express the slightest contrition. I write to you on the subject, because I am sure this will distress you both, and in Mrs. Lacy's delicate state of health you may prefer keeping the intelligence from her, or at least breaking it to her gently. And also because Mrs. Lacy's letters to Reginald are so very kind and affectionate, and I feel that in a case of this sort a more stern reproof than she could bring herself to write, might perhaps have some effect."

There was more of the same purport, but no further details of Reggie's transgression.

When Mrs. Lacy saw her husband begin the letter again, she could keep silence no longer.

"I must go, Arthur, don't you think so? The poor child must want one of us."

"The poor child!" he exclaimed, "Stubborn, sulky, untruthful, and fond of low company! I little thought what a letter I was giving you, Lily."

"Arthur, dear, do not condemn him in that hasty way. I am sure there must be exaggeration. I am more sure than ever that Miss Everson is not a fit person to have care of a child. The poor little fellow, he is only eight years old."

"Lily, dear, if you cry and make yourself ill, I shall only feel more angry with him. We must be reasonable even about our own. These are worse than childish faults, and they are, they must be distressing."

"Let me go home, Arthur. That must be the best thing to do in any case."

"I don't know, dear, I am not even sure that it would be best for Reginald. And for you, it would bring you more trouble and anxiety than you are at all able to stand."

"Don't you think it would be worse here, Arthur? It is not as if I could not go. You yourself was saying that you would like me to go at once."

"Yes, but I never dreamt of this!"

"My little Reggie! Oh, Arthur, dear, even suppose he has done wrong things, poor child, surely he must want us all the more to help him. I am sure he wants mothering and loving. And you will not be very long coming after me; you must remember that, if you share in Miss Everson's doubt as to any capabilities."

She tried to smile, but it was not a very successful attempt. Mr. Lacy again walked up and down the verandah.

"You would have to start almost immediately, you know, Lily. The steamers will be crowded at this season; in fact, I doubt if you could get a passage."

"We could telegraph, Arthur."

"And I don't like to think of your going alone."

"I am sure to find friends on board. Arthur, dear, just think, don't you feel that I ought to go? Suppose," her voice faltered, "suppose that what Miss Everson says is all true. I don't for a moment believe it. I believe she is a good woman, but hard and prejudiced, and—well, perhaps the poor little fellow has gone wrong and been afraid to tell, and so got into worse and worse trouble. Suppose the very worst, Arthur, does it not make it more right to go—to go to seek our own little stray lamb if he has got out into the wilderness?"

"My dear, you shall do exactly as you think best," said Mr. Lacy. "Only don't agitate yourself."

"But I want you to think it best, too, Arthur."

"You unreasonable woman! Is it not enough for you to have your own way, but I

must say I am glad for you to go away and leave me! Yes, Lily," he added, in a graver tone, "I do believe you are right. Like you, I cannot think that the poor little lad is such a hopeless subject. But you must remember that we neither of us really know much about Miss Everson. Some people who write very strongly are nevertheless weak in action, and it may be so with her. You will have a good start, and must try to get Reggie into something like order before I come. If not, it will be my turn next. Only don't set me up as a bugbear!"

"As if you did not know that is the very last thing I should think of doing. I shall try and teach him to wish to please you. It does seem strange that I should want to leave you, Arthur."

"Well, as you are sufficiently hard-hearted so to do, I will try to speed the parting guest, and will telegraph at once to have your passage taken. When can you be ready to start?"

"By next mail, Arthur."

"It would be all the better, but that only leaves two days for your preparations. Surely that will not be enough?"

"Plenty of time. Will you help me by getting some present for Miss Everson, and some pretty things for Reggie?"

"Lily, dear, you are not going home to spoil him?"

"Arthur, you know my one great wish for him. You know it is our life-long prayer that he may be 'Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end,' surely you do not think that I would willingly act against that prayer?"

"Forgive me, dear. I am sure you would not mean to do it. If only Reggie had been always with you, I should have no fear. But he might take kindness for encouragement in his faults."

"I feel sure there must be some mistake about this, of which Miss Everson makes so much. I do wish she had been more definite in what she says. And in any case it will have been long past; the poor little fellow cannot have been kept under a cloud all this time."

"Well, I will go and execute your commissions so far as I can. You must make me out a list of what you want done."

"You are very good, Arthur. You are sure you don't think I ought to wait for you?"

"It is all settled now, dear; for the best, I hope. You must not trouble and perplex yourself, but just set to work at your packing."

Mrs. Lacy seemed to occupy herself much more about arranging for her husband's comfort during her absence than about her own preparations. But yet they went on apace. No time was wasted in fussing, and when things are done instead of being only talked about, they advance much more rapidly than otherwise.

(To be continued.)

HEARING THE SERMON.

A little girl used to go to Church. She was only between four and five years of age—quite a little girl. But she listened to her Minister; she knew that he would tell her about Christ, and she wanted to learn. Once, when she reached home from Church, she said: "Mother, I can tell you a little of the Minister's sermon. He said: 'Touch not the unclean thing.'"

Wishing to know whether her little daughter understood the meaning of these words, she said: "Then if the Minister said so, I hope you will take care in the future not to touch dirty things."

The little girl smiled and answered: "Oh, mother, I know very well what he meant."

"What did he mean?" asked the mother.

"He meant sin," said the child; "and it is all the same as if he had told us, 'You must not tell lies, nor do what your mother forbids, nor play on Sunday, nor be cross, nor do any things that are bad and wrong.' The Bible means that a sinful thing is an unclean thing mother."