



THE THIEF AND THE CHILD.

In the neighbouring town there was a fair, and therefore all the people were gone from the village to the town. In the village, when evening came, it was quite silent.

Twilight sank down gradually over everything. When the merry noisy birds had crept into their roosting places, the queer little bats glided forth from holes in the tree-stem, and flew gently and softly about through the evening sky.

A man came round the corner of a barn. He crept silently and in fear along the wall, where the shadow was strongest. He glanced around him with anxiety to see whether any other men were out who would see him.—When he believed himself unobserved, he climbed over the wall; then he crept along on all-fours like a cat, till he came to an open window of a house, and then he disappeared through the window.

The man had bad thoughts in his heart: he was a thief, and had determined to rob the people of the house.

When he entered by the window he found himself in an empty room, and close to this room was a chamber. The door leading into the chamber was not locked.

The thief imagined it possible, that although the people were gone to the fair, some one might still be in the

room; therefore he listened with his ear against the door.

He heard a child's voice, and looking in through the keyhole, by the glimmering light from the window, he saw that a little child was sitting up all by itself in its little bed praying. The little child was saying the Lord's Prayer before going to sleep, as it had been taught by its mother to do.

The man was pondering how he might best rob the house, when the child's clear, loud voice fell upon his ear as it prayed these words:—

"AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL!"

The words smote the man's heart, and his slumbering conscience awoke. He felt how great was the sin he was about to commit. He also folded his hands and prayed: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And our dear Lord heard him.

By the same road that he had come he returned, and crept back into his chamber. Here he repented with his whole heart of all the evil he had done in his life, besought God for forgiveness, and returned thanks to him for the protection he had sent to him through the voice of a pious child.

He has since become an industrious and honest man.—*Dial of Love.*