

BEGINNING A JOHNNY-CAKE.

All things have a beginning, and it is well for us sometimes to trace back the stream to the fountain-head, and find the beginning of things which we see around us. John Spicer, writing in the *Wide Awake*, tells a story of a little girl who said to her mother:

"I want to begin at the beginning and make a johnny-cake. How does it begin?" Her mother said, "If you want to begin at the beginning you must go into the kitchen and begin it with meal." She went to the kitchen and said to Bridget, "Does a johnny-cake begin here? I want to begin at the beginning and make a johnny-cake. Please give me some meal." Bridget said, "If you want to begin at the beginning and make a johnny-cake you must go to the grocer's. Meal comes from the grocer's." She went to the grocer's and asked him, "Does a johnny-cake begin here? I want to begin at the beginning and make a johnny-cake." The grocer said, "If you want to begin at the beginning you must go yonder to the miller's. My meal comes to me from the miller." She went to the miller's and said to him, "Does a johnny-cake begin here? I want to begin at the beginning and make a johnny-cake." The miller said, "If you want to begin at the beginning you must run over the fields to the farmer's. The farmer brings corn to my mill, my mill grinds it into meal for the grocer, the grocer sells meal to people living in houses, and people living in houses make the meal into johnny-cakes." She ran over the fields to the farmer's and said to him, "Does a johnny-cake begin here? I want to begin at the beginning and make a johnny-cake." The farmer said, "The beginning was last spring when I planted my corn. When the snow had all melted away I planted my seed. From the corn seed sprung up cornstalks. All summer these grew and grew, taller and taller and taller, and when summer was over there were gathered from them bushels of corn. I sell the corn to the miller, the miller grinds it to meal, and sells the meal to the grocer; the grocer sells meal to the people, and the people make it into johnny-cakes. But you see if you begin at the beginning it takes all summer to make a johnny-cake. If you want to begin at the beginning, come next spring and plant some seed-corn."

This was about as far as a little girl could go, but she was yet a long way from the beginning of the johnny-cake. To find that, she must go back through the corn-fields year after year, for centuries, tracing the corn-crop back to seed, and the seed back to the previous crop, and so on, for hundreds and thousands of years, following it from one end of the land to the other, wherever it has been planted and grown, until she at last finds

the first stalk of corn that ever grew, "in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens and every plant before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew." Gen. ii. 4, 5. Here is the beginning of the johnny-cake, as here is the beginning of everything else. The first book in the Bible is called Genesis, which signifies "Beginning," and as we open it we read, "In the beginning, was God."

BEGINNING AND END.

The progress of dishonesty is not hard to trace. The only safety of character is in resisting the beginning of evil. There are three hundred and sixty degrees in the circle of a cent as well as in the circle of the equator—and so is there as much dishonesty in a boy's theft of a cent as in a man's theft of a thousand dollars. Two pictures below will illustrate this. Here is the beginning:

A schoolboy, ten years old, one lovely June day, with the roses in full bloom over the porch, and the laborers in the wheat fields—had been sent by his uncle John to pay a bill at the country store, and there were seventy-five cents left, and uncle John did not ask him for it.

At noon this boy had stood under the beautiful blue sky, and a great temptation came. He said to himself, "Shall I give it back, or shall I wait till he asks for it? If he never asks, that is his lookout. If he does, why, I can get it again." He never gave back the money.

The ending: Ten years went by; he was a clerk in a bank. A package of bills lay in the drawer, and had not been put in the safe. He saw them, wrapped them up in his coat, and carried them home. He is now in a prison cell; but he set his feet that way when a boy, years before, when he sold his honesty for seventy-five cents.

That night he sat disgraced, and an open criminal. Uncle John was long ago dead. The old home was desolate, the mother broken-hearted. The prisoner knew what brought him there.

THE SUN.

One evening when it was already dark, an industrious mother was returning home from her field-work with her two children, when, lo! there stood a lamp lighted upon their table.

George cried out with surprise: "There certainly was nobody at home: who can have kindled the light, then?"

"Ah!" said Margaret, "who can it be but our father?—he has certainly come home from the town while we were away."

The children ran to seek him, and, to their great delight, immediately found him in the next room.

On the following day, the parents and children went to finish haymaking in their large meadow. The

sun was shining with unusual splendour and beauty, and the children showed their delight at it.

"Now, my children," said their father, "you readily guessed yesterday that it was I who made the light burn in our room; but as you now behold that beautiful and glorious light, the blessed Sun, above us in the sky, should it not occur to you who it is that has kindled that?"

"Oh, yes!" said Margaret, "the blessed God has done it. The smallest lamp cannot light itself: and so there must be One who has lighted up the sun."

"So there is!" cried George, joyfully; "God has made all things. The sun, the moon, the stars, the grass, the flowers and trees and everything that we behold around us here, are His work."

"The glory of the earth, and heaven above, Proclaim alike th' Almighty's power and love."

THE THREE BEST BOOKS.

An old and pious man, who lived in a poor solitary cottage, had such great knowledge and understanding that he was able to impart good council and wholesome instruction to every one.

A learned man, who visited him, was astonished at his wise remarks, and said to him, "Whence have you this wisdom? I see in your cottage no collection of books, from which you could have learned so much of what is good and beautiful."

The old man answered, "And yet I have the three best books that exist, and I read them daily: these books are, the works of God above me and around me; conscience within me; and the Holy Scriptures."

The works of God, the heaven and earth, are like a large book opened before us; they proclaim to us the almighty power, the wisdom, and goodness of our heavenly Father. My conscience tells me what I have to do and leave undone. But the Holy Scriptures, that book of all books, informs us how God revealed himself to man from the creation of the world; and how the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, came into this world, and what he commanded and promised, did and suffered, in order to make us holy and blessed."

"In Nature, Conscience, and the written Word, Behold the threefold volume of the Lord; Here duty's path distinctly traced we see, And in each page Faith, Hope, and Charity."

THE RAIN.

A merchant was once riding home from the fair, with a knapsack full of money behind him. It rained heavily, and the good man was wet through and through. He was discontented in consequence, and complained bitterly that God gave him such bad weather for his journey.

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DIED.

At Oakland, California, on July 1st, 1886, Thomas Frederick, third son of the late Thomas J. Preston, Esq., and brother of the late Revd. Canon Preston.

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His way led him through a thick wood. Here, with horror, he saw a robber, who pointed a gun at him, and pulled the trigger. He would have been killed without a chance of escape, but, owing to the rain, the powder had become damp, and the gun did not go off. The merchant put the spur to his horse, and quickly escaped the danger.

When he was in safety, he thus said to himself: "What a graceless simpleton I was when I cursed the bad weather, and did not rather take it patiently as a dispensation of God! Had the sky been brighter, and the air clear and dry, I should now be lying dead in my blood, and my children would have waited in vain for my return home. The rain, at which I grumbled, has saved both my property and my life. In future, I will not again forget what the proverb says:—

"Howe'er conceal'd from us the kind intent, The ways of God are all in mercy meant."

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