

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

BY M. H. C.

I send you as a literary curiosity the following form of prayer taught me as a child by an English mother, which I have never heard or seen elsewhere. I am anxious to know if the 'additional' lines to the well-known vesper hymn belonged to the original, or if not, by whom were they added?

I give you the entire ritual of our morning and evening devotions.

After kneeling and repeating the Lord's Prayer, we were required to stand, while the following questions were asked:

'Who made you?' 'God.'

'Who redeemed you?' 'Jesus Christ.'

'Who sanctifies and preserves you?' 'The Holy Ghost.'

'For what did God make you?' 'To serve Him.'

'How should you serve Him?' 'In spirit and in truth.'

Then kneeling the usual child's prayer to bless father, mother, etc., for Jesus's sake, was said.

Then invariably what follows:

'Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep—
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take
Into eternal happiness,
Where I may be with Him,
Forever and ever.' Amen.

—Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.

THE CAPTAIN'S LESSON

BY THE HON. KATHERINE SCOTT, AUTHOR OF
"MISS BROWN'S DISTRICT," ETC. ETC.

"Life is not only play,
But school-days to us all; the world is not
our holiday."

The afternoon sun was making Rake School scorching, and Mrs. Ellis was longing quite as much as her scholars for the church clock to chime four.

She was ashamed of the number of times she had looked at it, and at the first preliminary creak which heralded the strike she rang her bell, and opened the harmonium for the usual hymn. The children were all on their feet in an instant, and the necessary banging of desks and clatter of putting away slates was speedily got through.

"Hymn beginning—

"We are but little children weak,"
gave out Mrs. Ellis, and the children started. The harmonium groaned as harmoniums are wont to do, and the children, tired and hot, sang out so wanderingly that the last line of the third verse,

"A weary war to wage with sin,"
sounded very weary indeed.

Mrs. Ellis's back was to the door, so she did not hear the click of the handle, and was startled by a man's melodious voice—

"When deep within our swelling hearts,"
and louder and cheerily came—

"Then we may stay the angry blow,
Then we may check the angry word,
Give gentle answers back again,
And fight a battle for our Lord."

The children were all attention now, and every little face was watching the singer, and carried on by his voice.

It was "The Captain," and it was thoughts of the Captain which had made the afternoon school so interminably long to both mistress and scholars.

He had keen blue eyes and a very freckled

door, in his undress uniform, with his cap in his hand. He stepped forward as the hymn ended.

"Mrs. Ellis, I've just looked in to say good-bye to you and the children. We're off to-morrow, you know."

"Yes, Captain, so we heard, and we wondered if we should get a sight of you again."

"Oh! I couldn't go without that; besides, you know, I have some treasures to deposit safely at the Rectory," and the Captain's smiling face was clouded for a moment, and then he looked around cheerily.

"Little ones and big ones, I am off to Egypt to-morrow, and I've come in to wish you good-bye, and to leave you all my good wishes and this advice. Be obedient, be brave, be tender. You know I am off because my Queen and my country send me, and I shall have a lot of hard work to do before I see you again, if God bring me safely back, but by God's help I will do it, for it is my profession, which I am bound to follow; and you girls, you have a lot of work to do too, so don't you shirk it, dawdling over your copies and your spelling, and getting out of temper with your needles and your thread, and grumbling over a bit of scrubbing and hard work; remember that 'the courage to dare and the courage to bear' are one and the same, so don't you big girls cry over the newspapers when you read of brave deeds, and sulk when your mistresses give you a few hard words and a bit of hard work. And, my children, be tender to one another; let all those hands be tender, let all those tongues speak gently. And remember that I in Egypt, and you in this dear home, are all in one Captain's keeping, all in His army, so we must bear all, do all for 'Jesus' sake.' Good-bye, Mrs. Ellis; good-bye, good-bye!" The Captain was off as suddenly as he had come in, and the children dispersed in rather a subdued mood. The Captain was the Vicar's son, and his visits to the village were always hailed with delight, for he came like a fresh bracing breeze, and left a healthy cheerfulness behind him which seemed to put new life into everyone. This time he was leaving the best part of his own life behind, and there was a general sympathy for the old Vicar and the Captain's mother, but very specially for the sunny-haired young wife and the baby girl who was just learning to toddle. Mrs. Ellis was pouring out her husband's tea with rather a grave face that hot afternoon, and Mr. Ellis himself was very silent.

"John, did you have the Captain in at your school this afternoon? and what did he say to you and your boys?" John seemed very much preoccupied by the sugar at the bottom of his cup.

"Eh! what, my dear? The Captain? Oh, yes, we did have him. But come now, Annie, you're not given to feminine curiosity, and I shall not tell you what he said to me and my boys, nor ask what he said to you and your girls. Depend upon it, if you and yours practise what he preached, and I and my boys do the same, you'll find out in due time what it was. Not that the Captain's few brave words can be called preaching, but they are all like a trumpet-call to rouse us."

"True, they are indeed! and I'll ask no more, but try and do my part;" and Mrs. Ellis smiled at her husband from behind her teapot and was silent.

At last Mr. Ellis remarked.

"There's a chance of seeing the Captain with his detachment of the regiment to-morrow morning."

"The Captain and his soldiers?" inquired Mrs. Ellis eagerly. "Oh! I should like to see that! What time will it be, John?"

"Most likely about nine in the morning, but he wasn't sure. I should like to see him myself, and I'd have gone to Portsmouth if I could have left the school. But there! I'm

and John rose, with a sigh and a laugh. The nine o'clock school-bell was just giving its concluding "tings" next morning, when wafted on the fresh breeze came the strains of "The girl I left behind me," and down the hill past the Rectory, along the flat bit of road by the school, was heard the tramp, tramp of the soldiers, the Captain and his men. Every window in the little street had an outstretched head and hands; handkerchiefs and aprons were waving; not a boy in the place but was following, and Mr. Ellis stood scholarless at his gate.

Mrs. Ellis and her flock rushed out in time to have a nod from the Captain and a farewell look from the bright, kind face, and then the sharp turn in the Portsmouth road hid them from sight, the music died away, and the excited little faces looked very blank indeed.

Mrs. Ellis's eyes were full of tears as she shaded them from the bright morning sunshine in the vain endeavour to catch another glimpse, and then turned into the school, which to mistress and scholars at that moment looked exceedingly dull and prosaic.

So let the little tongues go for a while, and then the usual routine of lessons had to be gone through, leaving, as she thought would be best, any reminder of the Captain's farewell words till the close of school. The afternoon brought some "half-timers," who went out to little places in the morning and to school in the afternoon, and as it happened, these gave Mrs. Ellis an "opening" for her little discourse.

One girl from the Rectory and one from the little village shop, had very red eyes, and Ella Smith from the Rectory kept up so much chattering that Mrs. Ellis had to call her to order in stern tones. School ended, she began with rather a quiver in her voice at the thought of the cheery face here yesterday, and the aching blank at the Rectory home to-day.

"Now, girls, you remember the Captain's last words to us yesterday. I want you each to try and carry them out—not to day only, but every day. Please God, he will be back again amongst us by-and-by, and you know he will expect to find us each improved in some way, and each doing all 'for Jesus's sake,'" and Mrs. Ellis's voice was reverently lowered.

"Oh! please, ma'am," began Ella, "I have been thinking so much of the Captain to-day! I'm sure I've hardly been able to attend in school this afternoon."

"That you certainly have not, Ella," said Mrs. Ellis rather sarcastically.

"And this morning, ma'am, I cried till I felt quite ill, and missus she said I wasn't fit to take the little girl out, and I had to go and wash-up instead."

"And served you quite right too, Ella. I am ashamed of you! You at the Rectory, too! the very place where you ought to have tried most to be of use, crying and giving way like that! Child, you forgot your duty to-day."

"Oh! ma'am, but just think what my feelings were, seeing the Captain come and say good-bye to missus and the Vicar and the old lady."

"Feeling, indeed! why was your feeling to be thought of to-day? You've missed the very point of the Captain's lesson, if you've not understood that he meant you to serve faithfully *always*, forgetting yourself."

"Well, I do feel it a privilege to be in the house, and I did do my very best the last few days while the Captain was there; and he said to missus he hoped I was going to do well and be a comfort to her."

"And because no one saw you to-day you neglected the plain work set before you, and missed being of use. I am ashamed of you, Ella!"

"Please, ma'am," began Katie Duncan from the shop, "it would be easier to be good if our work was not every day the same, and if we could now and then do some great thing that everybody would hear about, like they hear about the soldiers."