

BOYS, DO YOUR BEST.

Boys, do your best; if you heed this advice,
It will never lead you astray,
And many a friend
It will gain in the end,
If the precept you choose to obey

If put on your honour, be certain to prove
That confidence in you was right;
Although long the day
I'll abundantly pay,
And your sleep will be sweeter at night.

Boys, do your best; if allotted a task,
Set about it, at once, with a will,
"A thing well begun,
Is nearly half done,"
Is an adage of truthfulness still.

Don't expect to be told every day of the week
That commendable zeal you have shown,
For praise to the face,
Is oftentimes out of place,
Yet your efforts for good, are all known.

Boys, do your best; how little you dream
That your actions are weighed every night,
The balance each day,
You tip either way,
But be sure you tip it aright.

If a schoolmate should ask you to join some scheme,
And your conscience should whisper you "Nay,"
Just turn a deaf ear
When the tempter you hear,
And you'll find in the end it will pay.

Boys, do your best; wherever in life
Your pathway of duty may fall,
If you do with your might,
What is manly and right,
You'll be loved and respected by all.

And then, when the days of your pilgrimage end,
If honest and faithful you've been,
You'll hear at the gate,
Where an entrance you wait,
The sweet salutation, "Come in."

NEMO

OR

The Wonderful Door.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIE'S OLD ORGAN."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MIDNIGHT KNOCK.

Amos little thought, when he bade Abel Grey good-night at the close of that sorrowful evening, how long it would be before he saw him again. No sleep came to refresh the poor little man that night; he tossed about on his bed, feverish and ill, and aching in every limb. In the morning he was obliged to knock on the wall for his next-door neighbour, for he could not get out of bed, and he was afraid that he should die before any one came to him. She was a kind-hearted woman, and at once sent for the doctor, and undertook the charge of him in his illness.

The doctor was very attentive, but poor Abel grew worse and worse. It was a bad kind of low fever, which had been brought on by sorrow and anxiety, and which was kept from abating by the sore aching at his heart, as day by day he missed his boy more and more.

When, after many weeks, the fever left him, Abel was as feeble as an infant. His kind neighbour came in and out, and brought him all he needed, and he lay at other times alone in his bed in the silent house, listening to the footsteps of the passers-by in the street, and to the ticking of Betty's old clock in the kitchen.

It was during that weary time of weakness that Nemo's prayer was answered, for Abel Grey began at last to knock at the door. God had not sent him that sorrow in vain; it had brought him to himself. As he lay on his bed, he repeated over and over again this prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, Lord, open to me!"

Very earnestly, very humbly, he prayed, but for some time no comfort came. Satan troubled him with doubts. He could not believe that the door would be opened to him. He had neglected to knock for so long, he had turned away when the invitation to come had been

given him, now he feared it was too late; he almost fancied that he heard the voice from within the door saying to him, "I know you not." But it was wonderful how, at that time, all Nemo's texts and hymns, which had been taught to him by Amos, and which he had so much loved to repeat, came back to his poor little foster-father's memory as he lay on his bed. And yet it was not wonderful, for was it not the voice of God speaking to his soul?

There was one verse to which Abel especially turned for comfort: "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." It does not say, said the poor little man, "every one that knocks early, or that begins to knock as soon as ever he sees the door; it just says, 'To him that knocketh it shall be opened.' I suppose that means any one who knocks, at any time before the door is closed forever. I should think, then, it might take me in, though I've been such a long time about it."

And at last Abel could say, humbly and thankfully, a verse of one of Nemo's favourite hymns—

"If I ask him to receive me,
Will he say me nay?
Not till earth, and not till heaven,
Pass away."

Little by little, very slowly and gradually, strength came back to him. He was able at length to get up, to creep downstairs, to put his own kettle on, and to sit propped up by cushions near the kitchen fire. But he had not gained sufficient strength to cross the street and to mount the stairs to Amos' garret, before a very strange thing happened.

Abel had gone to bed early, for the evenings were long and dreary for him now, and he had fallen fast asleep. The kitchen clock had ticked on unheard and unnoticed, and had struck several hours since Abel went upstairs. Nine, ten, eleven, and twelve had all gone by, when there came a heavy knocking at the shop-door.

It soon awoke Abel, who slept very lightly, and he sat up in bed trembling with terror. At first he thought it was a drunken man who had mistaken his house, and he determined to remain in bed and to take no notice of him.

But the knocking went on so long that at length he crept out of bed, and, opening his window a little way, he peeped cautiously out.

"Does Abel Grey live here?" said a loud voice from below.

"Yes, I am Abel Grey," said the poor trembling little man.

"All right; you're wanted," said the voice. "Put on your clothes as quick as you can, and come with me."

"But I can't come," said Abel, in a voice shaking with fear; "it's impossible for me to come. I haven't been out for weeks; I've been very ill. Who it is wants me at this time of night?"

"Well," said the man, "what I was told to say by them as sent me was this, 'Nemo wants you.'"

"Nemo!" said the little man, trembling more than ever. "My little lad, Nemo, do you mean?"

"Ay, I reckon it will be the little lad," said the man; "a little chap of eight or nine or thereabouts."

"It's my little Nemo!" said Abel, with tears in his eyes. "If Nemo wants me, I'll come at once."

As fast as his trembling fingers would allow him, he put on his clothes, and, coming down to the door, he found his midnight visitor—a stout young countryman with a whip in his hand.

"That's right," he said. "I've brought the trap to the door: Jump in."

It was a high cart, something like a milk-cart, and the young man, seeing that Abel was quite unable to obey him by jumping in, lifted him in his strong arms like a baby, and put him in his place on the high seat. Then they drove away in the darkness as fast as the tired horse could be urged forward.

On the way Abel tried to find out where they were going, and when and how he had met Nemo, but the young man did not seem willing to tell him. All he would say was that he had been well paid for his job, and that his job was to fetch Abel Grey at once, and to keep a still tongue between his teeth.

They drove on for some hours, and at length, just as day was breaking, they came in sight of a village which Abel had never seen before. "We're just there now," said the young countryman. He stopped before a thatched cottage, left the horse and cart at the gate, and, opening the door, he called several times, "Mother! mother! mother!" But as no one answered the call, he beckoned to Abel to follow him, and led the way through the house into a little farmyard, at the end of which was a barn or hay-loft.

Entering this barn, he again called, "Mother! mother!"

"I'm up here," said a voice. "Have you brought him?"

But before the young man could answer, a child's voice from above rang out with a cry of gladness that Abel would remember to his dying day. "Oh, Abel, Abel, Abel, have you really come?"

A steep ladder led up to the loft, but Abel, in spite of his weakness, quickly mounted it. No sooner was he at the top than two small arms were round his neck, and his lost child was in his arms again, sobbing for very joy at the sight of him; and there, on a bed of hay at the other end of the loft, lay the strange gaunt man who had tracked their footsteps, gasping for breath, and evidently dying fast; whilst beside him sat the old woman of the cottage, wiping his face with her handkerchief, and trying to make him take a spoonful of milk from a cup that stood on an old box beside her; and as his feet were stretched the lost dog, which recognized Abel at once, and came forward to meet him. Poor little Nemo told his foster-father afterwards, that in the long miserable time which he had passed, the poor dog had been his greatest comfort; in the midst of his terror at being carried away it had comforted him a little, and he had felt that, whilst he had the dog, a little bit of the old happy life with Abel was left to him.

The dying man held out his thin hand to the dwarf, and told him he was glad that he had come, for he wanted to tell him something before he died.

"Leave us alone a bit, good people, will you?" he said. "A blessing on you for your kindness to a poor out-cast!"

"I needn't go, need I?" said Nemo, who was clinging to Abel as if he was afraid to let him go out of his sight.

"No, you must hear it, too, Nemo," said the dying man, "for it is your story I am going to tell."

When they were alone, the strange man bade them sit close to him, so that they could easily hear what he had to say, and then began his strange story.

"You remember Everton?" was the first thing he said.

"Yes, Abel, you know," said Nemo. "Where the little girl in pink lives. And it was him I saw peeping out of the bushes that day, when you wouldn't believe me. Abel, it was him, because he's told me so."

"Yes," said the man, "I was there. Now, mark my words—that house, that park, that estate, every inch of it—belongs of right to that child, and to none other;" and as he spoke he pointed with his thin finger at Nemo.

Then, with the greatest difficulty and with many pauses, he told them all he had to tell. He said that his real name, though he had passed by many others, was Mark Weston. He said that he was brought up to service, and after being in several families he became the valet of a Mr. Gilbert Prescott. His master told him, when he engaged him, that he travelled a good deal, and the very next summer they spent in Switzerland and the north of Italy. One day, when they were among the mountains, staying at a small hotel, his master pointed out to him, in the hotel garden, a gentleman and a lady.

He told him the gentleman was his cousin, Mr. John Oakley, who had been married about a year, and who was travelling with his bride abroad before settling down on his father's estate in England. He also told him, either on that occasion or soon after, that he himself was the next heir to that estate, and that if his cousin had not married he would have succeeded to that property.

Soon after this the cousins became very friendly, and planned many expeditions together on the mountains; in some of these a guide accompanied them, but others, which were less dangerous, they attempted alone, only taking Mark with them to carry their luncheon and coats. On one of these expeditions an awful thing happened. The valet was left behind by his master at a roadside spring, and told to fill several small bottles with water for them to drink by the way. His master and Mr. Oakley went on together, saying that they would wait for him at the top of the hill. When they had gone, he filled the bottles as quickly as possible, and hastened after them. The narrow path lay on the side of the steep mountain, a cliff stretched overhead, a precipice lay below. It was a winding path, not much of it could be seen at once, and for some time Mark saw nothing of the two young men. But at length, just as he turned a corner, he suddenly came in sight of them—and a terrible sight it was. He saw them before they saw him, and he saw that a struggle was going on, and that his master was in the act of pushing his cousin over the brink of the

precipice. The servant rushed forward but was too late to save him, and as he looked down he saw his mangled body a hundred feet below.

And then his master tempted him. He was offered an enormous bribe to say nothing of the affair, but to stand by his master as if nothing had happened. A large sum of money was to be paid to him every year on that fatal day, if he held his tongue.

The temptation was too strong for him. He accepted the bribe, and, as he told Abel and Nemo, he had never known a moment's peace or happiness since.

They went back to the hotel, and broke the terrible news of her husband's death to the poor young wife. It was an awful scene which followed; and he shuddered on his dying bed as he thought of it. Then the next day fresh difficulties arose, for a little boy was born, a new heir to the estate. The child seemed to be healthy and likely to live, and Gilbert Prescott had committed the murder for nothing. Everton was as far from his reach as ever. Mark, too, saw that there was little chance of his master being able to pay the enormous annual bribe he had promised him, and he had almost determined to go to a magistrate and relieve his conscience of the secret.

But as he was wandering about the little Italian town a man begged of him, an Englishman, who implored for help from a fellow-countryman. The man told him that he had come out to Italy as gardener to an English gentleman, who was a resident there, but that he had been suddenly dismissed from his service, and had no money to take him back to England. For this he wanted help. Mark would have passed him by without notice, had not the man gone on to say that his case was the more sad because his wife had had a little baby born a fortnight before, and it was now lying dead in the house, and they had no money with which to bury it.

Another temptation of Satan was now spread before Mark Weston. Here he thought, was a way out of the difficulty. The babies might be changed. The young mother was unconscious, and apparently dying, she could know nothing; the dead baby might be laid by her side, and the living child, the little heir, be made over to the gardener. His wicked plan was laid before his master, and was approved by him. The gardener's wife was brought to the hotel as an English nurse for the baby. Soon after, the poor young mother died, and the next day it was given out in the hotel that the baby was dead also.

(To be continued.)

"The Ripened Leaves."

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

Said the leaves upon the branches,
One sunny autumn day:
"We've finished all our work, and now
We can no longer stay.
So our gowns of red and yellow,
And our sober cloaks of brown,
Must be worn before the frost comes,
And we go rustling down."

"We've had a jolly summer,
With the birds that built their nests
Beneath our green umbrellas,
And the squirrels for our nests.
But we cannot wait for winter,
For we do not care for snow,
When we hear the wild north-westers
We loose our clasp and go."

"But we hold our heads up bravely,
Unto the very last,
And shine in pomp and splendour
As away we flutter fast.
In the mellow autumn noontide
We kiss and say good-bye,
And through the naked branches
Then may children see the sky."

TAKE CARE OF THE MINUTES.

In an iron mine was a boy whose work it was to open and shut the gates as the carts passed. Sometimes there would be an hour between the carts. It was very tiresome for the little fellow, until one day he found on the road an English history. Then as by magic the time grew short. He read over and over the stories of kings and queens. He lived in a wonderful new world. Next he borrowed from a kind minister a history of Greece. Soon there was scarcely a story of olden times that this lad did not know. He did not stay long in a mine. Such a wise man as he grew to be was needed up in the sunlight. It is not well to waste the minutes. Each is like the cell of a bee-hive store it with honey.