

their awakened souls, be totally ignorant of the true response; nor need they be so liable, as the unindoctrinated are, to be caught by plausible, partial statements of truth, or to lapse into fundamental error.

3. It is a great, but not uncommon, mistake to suppose the Shorter Catechism is adapted to the capacity of children only; whereas in fact it transcends their capacity. They learn it very much as they learn Latin and Greek—principally with a view to prospective benefit. Its critical analyses, nice discriminations, orderly consecutive arrangements, brevity, yet wonderful comprehensiveness, demand the application of a mature, vigorous, and trained intellect for their full appreciation. A child's book, indeed! Yes, verily, as the Bible itself is, wherein are shadows in which a child may wade, and unsounded deeps where Leviathan may sport himself.

4. Since the memorizing of the Catechism is so important in the religious training of the young, as a *reco* against error, a guide to truth, and a most efficient aid in its clear and definite comprehension, it follows that adults, no matter what their age, station, or intellectual stature, who unfortunately have never committed to memory this compend of truth, should diligently set themselves about it. They should make it their daily companion, next to the Bible. They should treasure up its pregnant words, ponder and inwardly digest them. One answer a day will carry them through its one hundred and seven in a little more than one short summer. Let them not think it a mere childish matter. However wise and learned, one can never outgrow the Shorter Catechism.

—W. P. V.

Little Willie.

Our class was a large one; more than a hundred little souls greeted their teachers each Sabbath day with a cheerful smile. The varieties of the species were many—as many, or nearly so, as the faces. Not two alike: some gay and frolicsome; some grave; others (as often happens among the poor) prematurely old; little girls more like women, who know more of house keeping at six years old than many young ladies do upon leaving their "finishing school;" some all attention and interest, others all play.

Of the last class were three boys, belonging to one family, and of the respective ages of four, six, and eight years. Bright, healthy boys, full of fun and frolic,—they were as much like children as children should be. Search when you would, you might expect to find among the three, playthings enough to stock an old lady in business in the toy line; so that when the teachers failed to interest them they had always the means of interesting themselves—in their pockets.

One Sabbath morning a message came to the school to say that Willie, the eldest of the trio, was ill, and wanted to see his teacher. He was so ill, indeed, that they did not expect him to live, and each succeeding day he had with increasing earnestness asked for his teacher. How strong is the tie that binds the child's heart to the heart of his teacher! No sooner ill, than the little mind wanders after those who show sympathy and love for it.

None of Willie's family knew where his teacher lived, until at length, late on the Saturday night, some one had directed them where they might know. But it was then too late, so the Sabbath morning brought the

message, and soon saw us by the bed-side of our little pupil. The room was large and well furnished, for the parents were respectable trades-people. We found him strangely altered in one single week, and his little body was swollen to twice its natural size; dropsy had laid hold on him, and the doctor despaired of his recovery. We inquired about him, and found that all had been done that a mother's love could prompt. But there was one request, oft repeated and as often denied (oh! how he had begged for that, and begged in vain),—"Pray, mother, *do pray*." This was the continued request of the child; but the mother, poor soul! knew not how to pray. We learned, also, how anxious he had been to see his teacher,—a common thing among the little ones; but here was more unmistakable anxiety about another world, to which he was fast hastening,—no childish fancy, but, as the sequel proved, intense earnestness about heaven. We spoke to him of "gentle Jesus," gave him a few books, and, promising to come again, departed.

The evening found us once more at the house of Willie's father, a simple-minded man, who did not appear to be a native of this country, and was, alas! "without God and without hope in the world." He did not ask us to enter, but told us that Willie was dying, and that he had been for some hours insensible. He spoke, too, of his child's anxiety—to him altogether inexplicable. "I did not think the child had so much in him," said he; "he talks of things of which I and his mother know nothing,—about *Jesus* and *heaven*; and he says, '*Pray, mother?*'—we don't know how to pray. I hope he been good boy at school; I hope he go to heaven." Never shall I forget that father who thus spoke, while the tears fast coursed down his face, of things new and strange to him, and brought to him by one of "those little ones;" and earnestly did we pray that the trial might be sanctified to them all.

All this only increased our interest in the child, and the father at length said, "Perhaps you would like to see him once more." "Indeed we should," we replied; but ere we had well crossed the threshold Willie's sister came down to say that Willie had asked for his teacher, and was now sensible. How strange that the teacher's influence should be so great!—insensible for hours, and yet to talk of "teacher" calls back the wandering faculties once more!

A few moments, and we were by the death-bed of Willie. Eight brothers and sisters, and several friends, had gathered there; the mother, worn out with grief and watching, had laid down on a bed by his side. All were sobbing. It was a solemn scene; for the first time death had entered that dwelling, and he entered with unknown terrors to all but little Willie. We gazed upon his face, so marked with suffering, and said:

"You are very poorly, Willie."

"Yes, teacher," gasped he, "very!"

"Teacher has brought you a little hymn book—will you have it?"

"Please, teacher." He took it in his little hands, and pressed it to him; but immediately gave it back, saying, "Please read me a hymn, teacher."

"Which, Willie, dear?"

"'Around the throne of God in heaven,' please, teacher."

We read or rather repeated it, and the countenance of the little sufferer meanwhile beamed with joy.

Said we, "Can we do anything for you, Willie, dear?"

We could say but little to him, but it was the second time he had made the request. "Pray, teacher." We wished, however, to see if this were real anxiety or merely the force of habit gained in the Sabbath school. We did not immediately comply, but stood pensively musing upon the touching scene. Presently his countenance brightened and his lips moved; we stooped down and put our ear close to him, and asked,—

"What did Willie say?"

"Jesus—died—on—the—cross,—teacher."

"Yes, and for Willie, and for all."

We felt we could not prolong the scene, but knelt down to commend him to the Good Shepherd. As our voice poured forth our petition, little Willie tried—oh, how he did try!—to repeat the words after his teacher (as our custom in the infant class was). Sobs broke in upon us; it was, we felt, hastening his end. The effort to pray with us was too much; he had only breath to snatch a word here and there; but the "Amen" from those dying lips we never can forget. We rose from our knees, wished him good night, kissed his cold forehead, and left.

We called the next evening; little Willie was in his coffin.

UNCLE JACOB.

—Bible Class Magazine.

MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCE.

Missionary Conference at Ootacamund.

A Missionary conference was recently held in the Madras Presidency. The place selected, as the most convenient for the missionaries of South India and Ceylon, was Ootacamund, on the Nilgerry Hills. On the 19th of April last, thirty-two European and American missionaries met as delegates from various missionary bodies, and entered upon the work as previously arranged. The list of subjects brought under the notice of the Conference embraces almost all the points of deepest interest in connexion with the Christianisation of India. The following are some of the more important topics:—Vernacular Preaching, Native Agency, Missionary Education, Female Education, Orphan and Boarding Institutions, the Government System of Education, Native Christians, Village Congregations, Caste, Missionary Success. Papers, drawn up by parties specially qualified to guide the judgment of the Conference, were read on these and other subjects. Resolutions were passed on all these subjects, which, though not in all cases unanimously carried, must be of great value in directing aright the efforts of our various missionary societies.

It would be difficult to overestimate the value of such conferences. The isolated efforts of individual labourers are brought to bear on the missionary work in general. The experience of each is made available for the benefit of all. But it is not the missionaries merely that derive benefit from such conferences. They are equally valuable in removing misconceptions, and