

had fallen from his lips, had aroused a new and dreadful thought; that thought would not go to sleep, would not depart. Was it possible that her father had done something wrong long ago in his life, and that the remembrance of that wrong—that sin—was what ailed him now? Was it possible that her Uncle Jasper, who always appeared so frank and open, had deceived her? Was it possible that Hinton knew that she was deceived? These thoughts did not trouble her much in the daytime, but at night they rose to agonies. They kept sleep far away; so much so, that in the morning she often came downstairs heavy-eyed and weary. She blamed herself, then, for her mean suspicions; she said to herself, as she gave her father his morning cup of coffee, that no face could be more incapable of concealing a wrong than that noble old face opposite to her, and she tried to atone for her feelings by tenderness of voice and manner. But though this revulsion of feeling came with the morning, the night brought back the same agony. She now disliked even to think of Mrs. Home, she never spoke of her to John Hinton. He watched for her to do so, but the name of this young woman which had so intensely interested her never passed her lips. When Hinton told her that little Harold was better, and that on a certain day he and his mother would be in Kentish Town once more she colored slightly and changed the subject. Hinton rather wondered at this. Uncle Jasper also remarked it. It was now a week to the wedding-day, and Charlotte was nerving herself for an effort. She had firmly resolved that before she really gave herself to Hinton, she would read her grandfather's will. She felt that nothing else would completely set her mind at rest. She dreaded doing this as much as she longed for it. Each day as it dawned she had put off the task, but when the day just a week before her wedding came, she felt that she must overcome what she called a weakness. She would learn the worst that very day. She had little or no idea how to carry out her design. She only knew that the will was kept at Somerset House, that if she went there and allowed herself to go through certain forms she should see it. She had never seen a will in her life, she scarcely knew even what it would look like. Nevertheless, she could consult no one. She must just go to the place and trust to circumstances to do the rest.

On the thirteenth of April she resolved as she put on her dress and hurried down to meet her father at breakfast, that before that night came she would carry out her design. Her father seemed better that morning. The day was a specially lovely one, and Charlotte said to herself that, before that time to-morrow, her heart would be at rest. She would not even allow herself to glance at a darker alternative. Indeed, happy in having at last firmly made up her mind, she became suddenly scarcely at all fearful, scarcely anything but completely hopeful. She resolved that nothing should turn her from her purpose to-day.

Her father kissed her, told her she felt certainly better, and went off to the city. Immediately after her uncle Jasper came in.

"Lottie, child! I can take you to the private view of Mrs. —'s pictures; I have just got an invitation. You know how wild you are to see them. Be ready at two o'clock. I will call for you then."

"I am very sorry, but I cannot go with you this afternoon, Uncle Jasper."

"Oh! You have made an engagement with Hinton. Can't you put it off? This is the last day for the pictures. You can go with Hinton to-morrow."

"It is not an engagement with John, Uncle Jasper. It is something else, and I cannot put it off."

All the time a rather loud voice within was saying to her, "Go and see the pictures. Put off the reading of the will. Be happy for one more day." But because this voice which suddenly became so loud, frightened her, she would not yield to it.

"I am very sorry," she repeated; "I should have liked it greatly. But I cannot go."

"Well! it is a pity, and I took some trouble about it. However, it can't be helped."

"No, it can't be helped," repeated Charlotte.

Uncle Jasper went, feeling some annoyance, and also a little curiosity.

"Strange cattle—women," he said to himself.

self. "I confess I don't understand 'em. Charlotte, wild to get to that private view two days ago, now won't go because of a whim. Well! I'm glad I never took a wife. I rather pity Hinton. I would not be tied even to that fine creature, Lottie, for ever."

Jasper Harman had scarcely turned the corner of the street, before a cab drew up at the house, and Hinton came in. Charlotte had not left the breakfast-room.

"Ah! my dearest, I was afraid you might be out. I must hurry away at once; but I just called to say that I have had a telegram from Webster. You know how I have longed for you two to meet. Well, he is coming to town to-day, and I want to bring him here at three o'clock. You will be sure to be at home."

"I am afraid I can't, John; I have an engagement."

"Oh! but you must put it off, you really must see Webster. He is my greatest friend, and is to be my best man. You really must Lottie! and he telegraphs that he is coming up from Oxford on purpose."

"I am ever so sorry. Could not you telegraph to him to put off his visit until to-morrow?"

"No, my dear; he has started before this."

"I am very sorry; I am unfortunate," repeated Charlotte. A certain degree of obstinacy, altogether foreign to her nature, had crept into her voice.

Hinton looked at her in undisguised astonishment.

"You don't mean to say that you are not going to see Webster, when he is coming up to town on purpose?"

"John, dear, I will see him at five o'clock, I shall be home then. But I have an engagement at three."

"I cannot bring Webster here at five, he must be on his way back then. You must put off your engagement."

"I really cannot," Uncle Jasper has just seen here, and he asked me to go with him to see the private view at Mrs. —'s studio. He took some trouble to get the invitation for us both, but I could not go with him, nor can I stay in. Mr. Webster must wait to make my acquaintance on our wedding-day, John."

"And I am to tell him that?"

"Say everything as nice and polite as you can. Say that I am most truly sorry."

Hinton turned his back on his promised bride; there was a cloud on his brow, he felt both hurt and angry.

"Lottie! what is your engagement?" This was said while pretending to look down the street.

Charlotte came close and put her hand a little timidly on his shoulder. "I know you will be vexed," she said, "but I cannot tell you."

Hinton held up his hand to a passing hansom.

"Yes, I am vexed," he said, "but I cannot wait any longer now. You know I hate secrets, and I think you might have obliged me, Charlotte."

"I wish I could," she said, and now her eyes filled with tears.

Hinton scarcely kissed her before he rushed away, and Charlotte sank down on the nearest chair. The unaccountable feeling which had prompted her to refuse both her uncle and her lover, and to fix just that hour of three o'clock to visit Somerset House, was so strange and strong to be overcome. But the hope which had brightened her breakfast hour had now all departed. Her heart felt like lead within her breast, she dared not fully contemplate the realization of her worst fears. But they thronged like legion round her path.

(To be Continued.)

THE "FRIEND OF MISSIONS" gives the following incident, which ought to have influence with British Christians: "A native missionary doctor was one day preaching to a crowd of passengers on a Chinese river-boat. Almost all were interested; some were touched, till a man asked angrily: 'We are to think that the missionaries are our very good friends, are we?' 'Indeed they are,' said the doctor; 'they have come thousands of miles on purpose to benefit us, and to tell us that Christ died for sinners.' 'And to bring us the opium!' said the man with intense scorn; 'and to bring us the opium!' The company of interested listeners slunk away like men ashamed of themselves, and the English missionary sitting by was silenced through his country's sin."

HINTS TO TEACHERS ON THE CURRENT LESSONS.

(From Peloubet's Select Notes)

October 21.—I Samuel 8: 1-10.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

I. "The good Samuel with bad sons." Lord, I find the genealogy of my Savior strangely checked with four remarkable changes in four immediate generations: (1) Rehoboam begat Abia i. e., a bad father begat a bad son; (2) Abia begat Asa, i. e., a bad father, a good son; (3) Asa begat Jehoshaphat i. e., a good father a good son; (4) Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram i. e., a good father and a bad son. I see, Lord, from hence, that my father's piety cannot be entailed; that is bad news for me. But I see also that actual impiety is not hereditary, that is good news for my son.—Thomas Fuller, in *Good Thoughts in Bad Times*.

II. "Rejecting God." "Why does it have to do something instead of God? Virgin Mary, priest, crucifix, wafer, church, popular preacher,—something is eternally crawling in between the soul and its maker." *Wm. M. Baker in His Majesty Myself*. "I cannot conceive how a man can live without a belief in revelation, in a God who orders all things for the best, in a supreme judge from whom there is no appeal, and in a future life. If I were not a Christian I should not remain at my post for a single hour. If I did not rely on God Almighty, I should not put my trust in princes. I have enough to live on, and am sufficiently genteel and distinguished without the chancellor's office. Why should I go on working indefatigably, incurring trouble and annoyance, unless convinced that God has ordained me to fulfil these duties? If I were not persuaded that this German nation of ours is in the divinely appointed order of things, is destined to be something great and good, I should throw up the diplomatic profession this very moment.—Prince Bismarck.

III. "Foolish prayers answered to our sorrow." A minister praying over a child apparently dying, said, "If it be Thy will spare." The poor mother's soul, yearning for her beloved, exclaimed, "It must be His will, 'I cannot bear it.' Contrary to expectation, the child recovered. But the mother, after almost suffering martyrdom by him when a strippling, lived to see him hanged before he was two-and-twenty.—Foster. Our father in heaven gives "good things to them that ask him" (Matt 7: 11). Let our prayer then, be—

PRACTICAL.

- "Not what we wish, but what we want, O let thy grace supply:  
The good I asked in mercy grant,  
The ill though asked, deny;"
1. Virtue is not acquired by inheritance.
  2. The occasion of sin may not be found the cause.
  3. While the voice of the people may prove the voice of God, it may not indicate the ultimate purpose of God.
  4. A prayer seemingly successful may not be a prayer of faith.
  5. Answers to importunate prayer may not prove blessings.
  6. We may err in asking now for what God in his own time designs to give.
  7. There may be sin and danger, as well as folly, in the desire to be like other people.
  8. Wilfulness withstands all appeals to reason.
  9. When we are in doubt whether our displeasure is right or wrong, the solution may be found in prayer.
  10. Self-will may serve the purposes of the divine will.
  11. Even though our teaching be disregarded, never despair, the issue is with God.
  12. We may resist wilfulness too long. It is better to yield and conquer.
  13. An ungodly people need different rulers from a godly; judges were best for an Israel abiding in faith; kings might be necessary for an idolatrous nation.
  14. God accepts and endures our decision to reject him.
- SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.
- We have here a lesson upon rejecting God. (1) The occasion of it (vers. 1-3). Samuel's age and his sons' degeneracy. This was a mere excuse. They had wanted a king since the days of Gideon. The disease now comes to the surface. The sin now shows itself. (2) The rejection determined upon (vers. 4, 5). It is a representative movement; the chief men lead, deliberately, and seek the

sanction of God's prophet. (3) The desire granted, the sin permitted (vers. 6-10). Note Samuel's zeal for God's honor, the solemn words of divine condemnation and answer, and Samuel's acquiescence.

BUSY MOTHERS.

I know you feel quite weary to-night, busy mother, and that basket of mending seems to have grown larger since you left it twenty-four hours ago. You give a tired sigh as you pick up one of its many stockings and think what a busy day you have spent.

I wonder if all the energy and effort you have put forth to-day have been expended in the right direction. It would be a pity to waste so much strength, and yet I fear that a great part of it has been misapplied. Let us talk it over.

Your little baby boy came to you with a very sore heart this morning. Some one had broken his whip and lost his marbles; life seemed very hard to him just then. But you had risen early to finish a letter which you felt must be mailed at once, and with a hurried kiss and "Never mind, darling," the little heart was forced to be content.

Later in the day your little girl came in from school, so eager to discuss some plan her companions were forming, and to ask your opinion of the side she had taken. But you were packing a missionary box, and told her to wait till dinner; you could not stop a minute.

Your eldest daughter had some very serious words spoken to her in that afternoon drive, but when she came in all flushed and excited you were far too much interested in your sewing to dought but say, "The drive has given you quite a color. Do come help me finish this dress."

Still later, your husband returned home tired with his day's work. He hoped to find you all alone, ready to discuss some business changes he anticipated, but you were busy trying to get him something very nice for tea. Now tea is over, and you are ready to listen, but he has fallen asleep over his newspaper, and you are almost content; for this has been a busy day, and you are glad to have a quiet moment. As you think of its many duties you feel almost pleased to think nothing had been neglected.

And to a certain extent you are right. That letter and that box surely ought to have gone off to-day; that piece of work and the agreeable supper were certainly most important, and yet were they not every one of the "mint, anise, and cummin," compared with those other "weightier matters of the law"? Surely our children's demands should be our first consideration. They need our sympathy and our interest infinitely more than does any other cause. It will not matter in after years whether their dresses were fashionably made, but it will matter a great deal whether they always had their help or not. What they want is not our handiwork, but our sympathy, our very hearts. Would it not be sweet for them to remember that in their childhood they never failed to get "mother's ear" when wanted?

I once heard a merry girl laughingly say, "If I wished to arrange a private wedding I could never get any help from mother. She is always too busy to talk to me." And that mother was, without exception, the most unselfish and devoted I ever knew, but was, as her daughter said, always too busy to talk to her children. Afterwards, when I heard that that girl had married against her parent's wishes, after a long secret engagement, I wondered if her mother remembered that speech. I did with a pang of sorrow, for I felt that even then that young heart was yearning for counsel.

Every outside duty, whether for church or society, every outside engagement, for no matter what cause, ought always to be regarded as second, for all of our time belongs first to our children. May God help us all upon whom he has laid the precious burden of motherhood. From the time the six months' old infant looks knowingly into our eyes till the day that death dissolves the tie, our responsibility cannot be over estimated, and we have need to feel that only in God's strength can we conquer, only by his help can we overcome. Daily, hourly, we have need to cry, "O God, guide us with thy counsel, and afterwards receives us into glory."—*Illustrated Christian Weekly*.