

was the weak spot. It ruined him.

Boys, girls, the sins of youth, the evil habits of childhood, do for your characters what the hatchet-cuts did for that young apple tree. You may overcome them, repent of the sins, but those habits those sins, leave weak places in your characters. When you grow to be men and women the world may forget—and so may you—those early habits of evil. You may entirely overcome them, but if a strong temptation comes you may fall before it, and be guilty of that very sin you committed so many years before. Beware of evil habits: they are cuts in the strength of your character; they may grow over and be hidden, but they stay there; they weaken you. Give them up at once.—*S. S. Visitor.*

WEST AFRICA.

WORSHIPPING THE DEVIL.

One of the idols worshipped by the people of Abeokuta is Eshu or the Devil. A few years ago, one of the Society's Missionaries, now entered into his heavenly rest, was going on his rounds and came into contact with one of these priests. Let me tell you in his own words what happened:—

The heathen priest was in the market, and had his idol with him. While he was walking from place to place, showing his idol, he saw me coming. Very soon, the look of pleasure which was on his face, gave way to a fearful frown; and he changed his appearance so he changed his position. He spread his feet apart, one from the other, and stretched himself right across the footpath, saying,—

"I mean to stop you, sir."

"So I see I replied. But *why* do you mean to stop me?"

"Nerer mind; I tell that I mean to stop you," and this was all I could get from him. His wish was, no doubt, to annoy me, as there were hundreds of his own people standing about,

Seeing that he had no immediate intention of moving out of my way, I asked, "What have you got in your hands?"

"This is Eshu," he replied, and he looked me full in the face as he spoke.

"What are you carrying the Devil about for?"

"For worship, for worship and for sacrifices, is it not so?" He turned his face to the people as he spoke. And the great crowd raised a cry, "It is, it is."

I waited awhile until all was still and

silent. Then I enquired again: "*What do you say your idol is?*" And I put my face closer to the idol, that I might examine it with care. The priest made no objection. It was made up of fifteen or twenty strings of cowries (a cowrie is a shell which takes the place of money in West Africa), a few kola nuts, and several pieces of black wood, about ten inches long. A few charms, on which seemed to have been sprinkled the blood of a recent sacrifice, completed the collection; and all was fastened together with a large piece of string, so as to be held in the hand.

Such a chance of preaching the Gospel no missionary would allow to pass by, and such a chance of speaking openly against idolatry could not fail to be used. Turning from the priest to a native woman, I asked, "Do you worship the Devil?"

"I do," she replied.

I put the same question to a native man.

"They all worship him," said the priest "Is not that so?" he inquired, looking around on the people for an answer.

"It is, it is," replied a hundred voices.

"Wait now," I said, "and listen to me awhile. I will tell you what I know of the Devil."

"That thing in the priest's hand is dead, and powerless, and helpless. But not so the Devil. Is it that bundle of shells and sticks and kola nuts which you worship? The nuts came from the farm, the sticks from the forest, the shells from the sea. you don't pray to *that*, surely?"

"No, no!" said the priest, "not to this; but to Eshu himself, whom these things represent."

"What representation have you there of him?"

There was no answer given, for the old priest, I am quite sure, could not tell.

"What do you know about the Devil?"

"Obvru ju." (He is very wicked.)

"Do you pray, then, to a wicked being? Can a wicked thing be expected to do you any good?"

He explained that they did not expect this from Satan. They sacrificed to him that he might not do them harm.

"Who offers the sacrifices?"

"Gbagbo wa" (All of us), said one man.

"What do you offer?"

"Cowries."

"Who takes them away?" I looked at a large bag which the priest had hanging by his side, and into which I knew the "cowries" went.

No one dared answer this question;