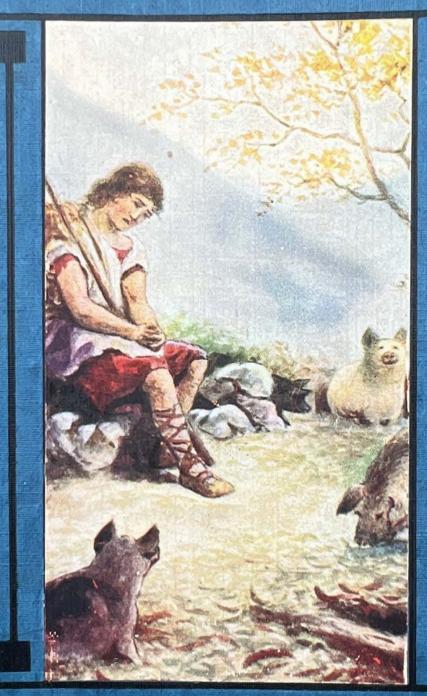
BOYHOOD SCENES OF SCRIPTURE



By A. J.

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OF

SCRIPTURE.

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A. J.

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PREFACE.

THE Bible is full of rich, sweet stories, not only interesting, but also very profitable.

"Even a child is known by his doings." Most of the boys referred to in the following pages began life well. They sought the Lord in their youth. And as they grew in age, and in stature, they grew in grace, and in the knowledge and love of God. And having themselves received "the blessing from the Lord," they were used by Him as a means of great blessing to others.

It is well that every child should notice that such great men as Joseph, Samuel, David and Daniel, sought the Lord while they were boys.

Above all, let us ever remember that Jesus, as a child, and as a man, has left all of us an example, that we should follow His steps. May we search the Scriptures, for they testify of Him.

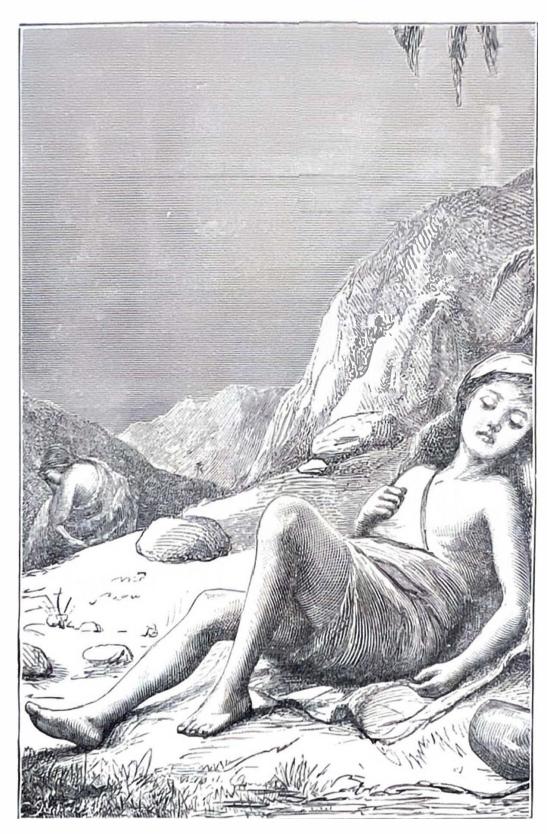
A. J.

Newport, Isle of Wight. 1880.

CONTENTS.

THE MOOKING ISHMAEL	•••	5
THE OBEDIENT ISAAO	•••	13
THE LOVING JOSEPH		21
MOSES, THE FAIR YOUNG NOBLE	•••	29
SAMUEL, THE CHILD PROPHET	•••	39
DAVID, THE BRAVE SAEPHERD BOY	•••	47
THE THREE BOY KINGS OF JUDAH	•••	55
THE FOUR BOY CAPTIVES	•••	63
THE HOLY CHILD JESUS	**	73
CHILDREN THAT BAW JESUS	•••	89

THE MOCKING ISHMAEL.



THE MOCKING ISHMAEL.



THE MOCKING ISHMAEL.

SHMAEL was for about fourteen years the only son of Abraham. His mother's name was Hagar, a bond-woman. His father, Abraham, had been blessed by God with great riches. He was "very rich in

cattle, in silver, and in gold." He had also a very great household; for, on one occasion, we read of his marching to rescue his nephew Lot, with no less than three hundred and eighteen of his own trained servants; all armed, and all of them being members of his own household. The inhabitants of Canaan addressed Abraham as "my lord," and spake of him, as being "a mighty prince" among them. (See Gen. xxiii.)

And all the while that Ishmael was Abraham's only son, he was doubtless made a good deal of, because he was the *only* son of so great a man. And Abraham evidently loved Ishmael

very much; for, when God made a promise to Abraham that in process of time, his wife, Sarah, should bare him a son, Abraham said, "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee." The desire of Abraham's heart was at that time contented with Ishmael, but Isaac, and not Ishmael, was the son that God had promised to Abraham.

The Lord fulfilled His promise; and the aged Sarah bare Abraham a son in his old age. "And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me . . . And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned" (Gen. xxi. 5, 6, 8).

It was, indeed, a time of great rejoicing, and doubtless a very great company rejoiced together with Abraham and Sarah, in this their great joy—their own beloved son, Isaac—the child of promise. But there was one present who shared not in their joy, nor cared for the rejoicing. "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking." Why did he mock? Was he jealous of Isaac, and displeased because Isaac was made so much of? Ishmael was by this time old enough to understand that it was God's will that his brother Isaac should hold a more digni-

fied position than he himself could hold. Isaac, the young Isaac, was chosen by God to be Had Ishmael meekly sub-Abraham's heir. mitted to this, the will of God, and honoured his younger brother Isaac, he would no doubt have been allowed still to remain in his father's house. But he did not bow to God's will. Sarah saw him mocking, and demanded of Abraham that both Ishmael and his mother should be "cast out." This was very grievous to Abraham, for he loved Ishmael much, but God told him to do as Sarah had said. God had taken notice when Ishmael mocked, and Ishmael was to be sent away; although God still took care of him, and blessed him, for his father's sake.

Little did Ishmael think when he was mocking, that God took notice. But God notices all our actions. "There is not a word in my tongue, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether." My little readers, let the record of Ishmael's sin, and its punishment, prove a warning to you; and may it prevent you from mocking.

The Lord cannot tolerate mockers; but He says, "To-day, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." And if you are as willing to listen to "His voice," as the child Samuel was willing to listen in his day, the Lord will speak peace to your soul.

But, perhaps some little boy may say, "I have mocked, and I am now afraid that the Lord will not listen to me." Ishmael did not mock when he was lying exhausted under the shrub, and death stared him in the face. His mother, Hagar, then sat weeping aloud at some distance off; for she said, "Let me not see the death of the child;" and Ishmael, thus left all alone, "cried," and God "heard the voice of the lad." God, who had been so displeased to hear Ishmael mock, was "very gracious" to Ishmael at the voice of his cry. And the angel of God said to Hagar, "God hath heard the voice of the lad, where he is." And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink. This is just what you see in the picture. What a good thing it is in all our troubles to cry unto God. He heard, and He saved Ishmael from death. And although Ishmael was not allowed to return to his father's house, we read, "And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

So that, my dear reader, although you may have mocked, you may now, like Ishmael, cry, and the Lord will hear. "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee" (Isaiah xxx. 19).

When I was a boy, and was in a class at Sunday-school one Sunday afternoon, our teacher was absent. We went to our own class-room as usual, after singing and prayers, and we kept very quiet, because no one should notice that we were without a teacher. But the time soon began to drag heavily upon our hands; and Satan, who finds plenty of mischief for "idle hands to do," soon had it all his own way.

To while away the time, it was proposed that we should have a mock "Revival" meeting. Accordingly, one boy kneeled down, and pretended to be crying to the Lord for mercy; while another (amid laughter), kept telling him to look to Jesus. This dreadful mockery went on for some time. I was not then a Christian, but I had godly parents, and I knew enough to know that this awful scene was displeasing to God. I longed for some one to open the door, and stop it; but I had not the courage to prevent my fellow-scholars from carrying out their purpose.

Of the ringleader of this affair, I know not whether he is now alive or dead, nor do I know if he has ever left off to mock. But of the other boy, I am so very pleased to tell you, that not a very great while after this very event, instead of only pretending to pray, he really did seek and obtain mercy of the Lord.

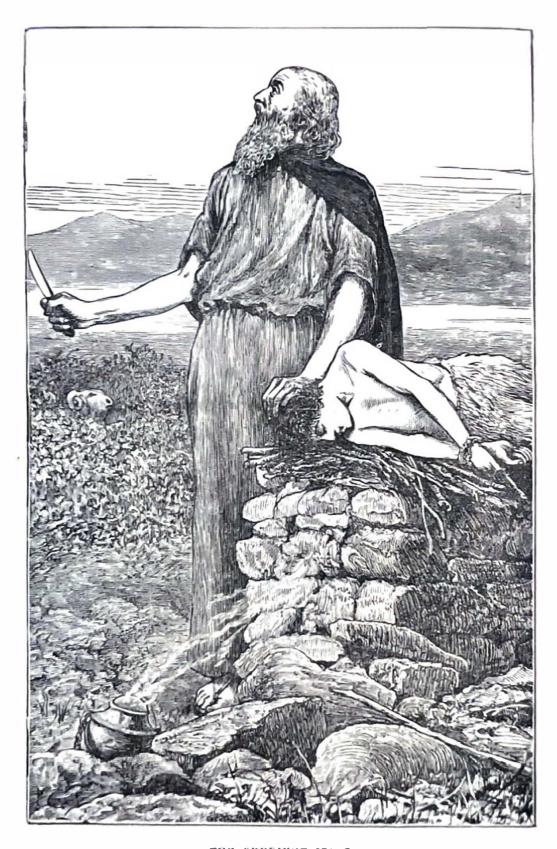
He became sick unto death, and as he died, he clapped his hands, saying,—

"Oh, how happy we shall be, For our Saviour we shall see Exalted on His throne."

The Lord had in grace saved the very lad who not long before had mocked Him.

Dear readers, "Be not mockers," but rather "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." He will answer you. He will save you.





THE OBEDIENT ISAAC.



THE OBEDIENT ISAAC.

that does not delight either to hear or to read the interesting story related in the twenty-second chapter, ter of Genesis? For, in this chapter, the Spirit of God informs us, in words so simple that even children are able to read, and to understand, how Abraham obeyed that wondrous command, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

We are told that Abraham started early in the morning, taking with him Isaac, and also two of his young men, and that he journeyed on until upon the third day he came to "the place of which God had told him." And there, upon Mount Moriah, he actually took the knife to slay his own beloved son Isaac. This he would have done if the angel of the Lord had not prevented him. And God richly rewarded Abraham for his obedience, by blessing him, and his seed. God also promised him, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice." This meant that "when the fulness of time was come," the Lord Jesus Christ should be born of "the seed of Abraham;" and that all the nations should be blessed in Him. So that this was a very important day in Abraham's life.

I seem, even now, to see the young Isaac, a strong active lad, starting upon this journey with a light heart, bidding his beloved mother Sarah, a loving farewell; and perhaps waving his hand fondly to her as they set out, telling her that he should be back soon, just as any of my young readers might do this very day, if they were leaving home. And then, as they went on their journey through that beautiful country, may we not suppose that Isaac's merry voice was often heard, telling out the joy he felt, upon what was no doubt to him then a very delightful journey. For Isaac did not then know the real object of their journey. It was best for him not to know this, until the proper time came for him to know it.

It was well that he did not know how his father's heart was yearning over the son of his love, and that he knew not the anguish of his father's spirit, as Abraham thought how soon

that sweet merry voice, would be hashed in the stillness of death.

But Abraham believed that God was able to raise up his son Isaac again from the dead. (Heb. xi. 19). He also believed that God would restore his beloved sons' life: for, when Abraham and Isaac left the young men behind, Abraham said unto them, "Abide ye here with the ass: and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." This shows what great faith Abraham had in God. Before he came back to his young men, Abraham expected by the awful stroke of the knife, to take away his son's life, and if he had not believed that God would raise up Isaac again from the dead, would he not have said to them," I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and I will come again to you"?

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together." This verse presents a lovely sight. An aged man, and his young son, "went both of them together" to worship God. "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, my father; and he said, here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" What a question for his fond father to answer at such a time.

"And Abraham said, my son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering;" and now a second time occur the words, "So they went both of them together." They started to go up the mount "together," to worship God; and they went on "together," believing that God would provide a lamb.

"And they came to the place which God had told him of;" and, my dear readers, just think of it; there, in the presence of God, and his father, Isaac had to learn the painful secret so long pent up in Abraham's soul. He now knew that he himself was to be the offering. He must expect to die. Did Isaac begin to cry? We are not told that he wept. Did he try to run away? If he had tried so to do. could his aged father have caught him? We do not read of a single struggle, nor of a single murmur coming from Isaac's lips. We are not told that Isaac even asked his father to let him live just for one more hour. And yet life was as sweet to Isaac upon that day as it is now to any of us. Surely he loved his mother as much as any of us love ours. But she was now far away, and perhaps knew nothing of this great trial. Would Isaac ever see her again? God had spoken. God's word must be obeyed. And Abraham obeyed God; while his son Isaac obeyed Abraham in the Lord. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.'

"And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood." Had Isaac struggled, his father would have been obliged to bind Isaac first: instead of which he built the altar first; and bound Isaac last.

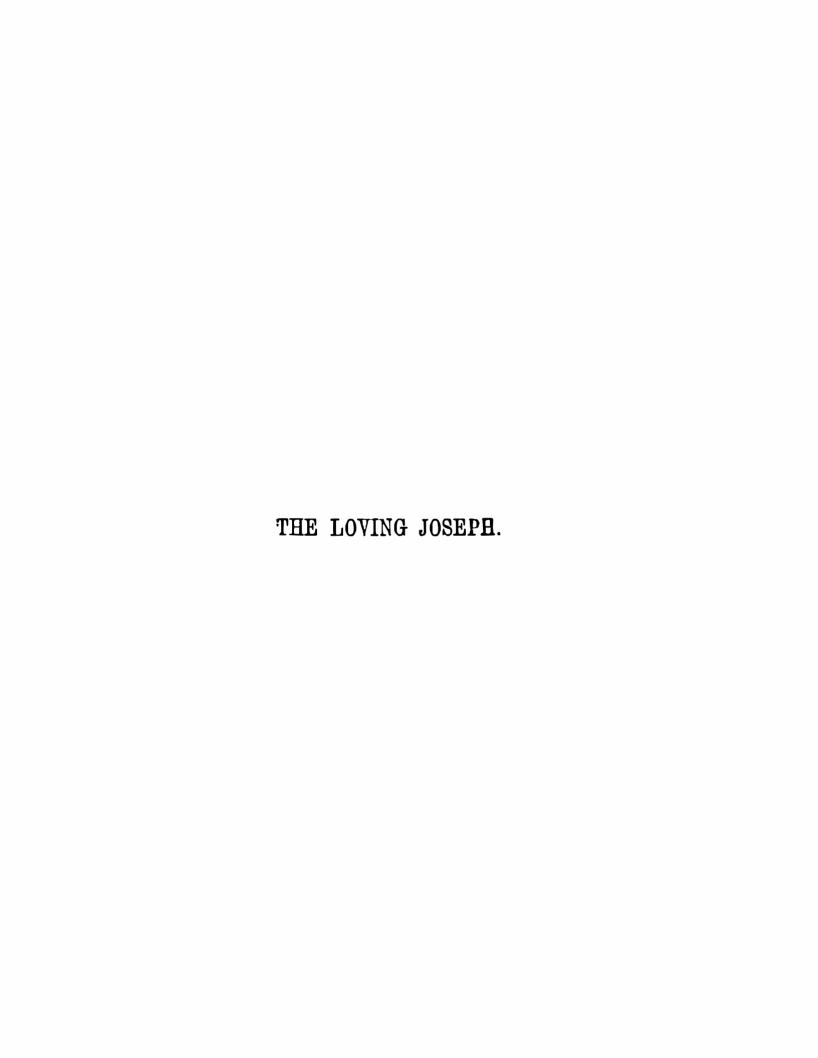
Then came the most trying moment of all. "And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." At that moment a voice was heard. Was it the cry of Isaac, as he expected the awful thrust of the knife? Was it his fond father's sigh of anguish because his son must die, and not himself? It was not the voice of Abraham, it was not the voice of Isaac; but it was, indeed, a very welcome voice, to both father and son; a voice well known to Abraham.

"And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." What joy filled both father and son at these words. How happy they both must have been that God's commands had been obeyed; and yet Isaac's life was spared. "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld behind him a

ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh"—this word means "The Lord will see, or provide."

With great joy they could now both return home: and oh! what a story Isaac had to tell to his mother. Then surely Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac, rejoiced together, because of the goodness and mercy of God.

I am sure that all my little readers are glad that Isaac's life was spared. Yes, God spared Isaac's life; but He did not spare the life of His own beloved Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. He gave His life for the sheep. It was for your sakes, and mine, that Jesus "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the crosc." He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. And now, dear readers, I want you all to think of Isaac, and to be obedient even as he was: but, above all, I desire each reader to "Look to Jesus," and to believe on Him. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.



JOSEPH'S DREAM



THE LOVING JOSEPH.

HE ten elder sons of Jacob were, in their early days, a source of great trouble and sorrow to their father. Joseph, however, who was the eleventh son of Jacob, as a child, was obedient and faithful, so that he was a great comfort to his father.

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." Joseph had done them no harm, nay, he loved them, oh, so much: yet he lived among his brethren as one alone. He "was separate from his brethren." How keenly poor Joseph must have felt it, when he "was feeding the flock with his brethren;" or, if he

was at home with them, never to hear a kind word from one of them.

Joseph was worthy of his father's love, for he was obedient—he was faithful—and he did that which was right. But his brethren, alas, did that which was evil. He could not leave off doing what was right; and they would not leave of doing what was wrong. And they would not love him as he loved them; but "they hated" Joseph without a cause. Joseph had told his father the truth about his brethren, when they had done that which was evil; but we do not read that he ever told his father anything about the hatred they bore to himself. His father appears to have been ignorant of all this.

But God knew all about it. And the Lord would not allow Joseph's heart to be cast down with overmuch sorrow. He caused Joseph to dream a dream. He dreamt that himself and his brethren were binding sheaves in the field, and his sheaf arose, and stood upright, while all his brethren's sheaves bowed to his sheaf. Joseph told this dream to his brethren. Perhaps he hoped that they would be pleased to hear his dream: but they only hated him the more. A second time he dreamed, and in this second dream, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to him. He told his father this dream, as well as his brethren. And his

father at first "rebuked him," but he "observed the saying." And his brethren envied him.

God taught Joseph by these dreams, that he would some day be so much exalted above his brethren, that all of them, yea, even his own father, should bow down to him. Thus was that loving heart sustained during those early days of sorrow. The young Joseph had found favour, not only in his father's eyes, but he had found favour with God.

Dear little readers, if you are treated unkindly at any time by your little companions because you are doing that which is right in the sight of God, do not be cast down. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

One day Joseph's brethren were far away from home with the flocks, and Jacob sent Joseph to see how they were getting on. And Joseph went from Hebron to Shechem, a journey of about sixty miles; but he found his brethren were gone on to Dothan; so he went on to Dothan, which is ten miles from Shechem. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." When his brethren saw Joseph coming, they did not stop to consider how very tired he must be, after taking such a very long journey, but they made up their minds to kill him. Reuben, however, prevented them from killing Joseph; so they stripped him of his coat of many colours, and then they cast him into a

pit. Having so done, they coolly "sat down to eat bread." Presently they saw some Ishmeelites coming, and they then agreed to sell Joseph to these Ishmeelites as a slave, instead of killing him. They "saw the anguish of his soul;" he "besought" them, but they "would not hear;" and they sold their brother for twenty pieces of silver. And having dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of a kid, they then went home and told their father a lie, thus seeking to hide their guilt.

I would like to go on to tell you what happened to Joseph in Egypt; how Joseph acted in the house of Potipher—how he became a prisoner because he would not do wickedly, and sin against God—how the Lord was ever with Joseph, even when he was in prison; and how God brought him out of prison, and made him lord over all the land of Egypt, so that he was next to Pharaoh himself; but you can all read this in the thirty-ninth, and following chapters of Genesis.

The Word of God says, "Many waters cannot quench love." Joseph did not, he could not, hate his brethren, though the cruel hatred that they bore to him had caused him to suffer so much. When he was "lord over all the land of Egypt, he did not say to himself, "My brethren did me all the harm they could—they are not worthy of my love—they deserve

to be punished, I will now punish them." But Joseph sought for an opportunity to reveal to his brethren how much he still loved them.

If Joseph "spake roughly" to his brethren, was it not because he knew that it was but right that they should be exercised in heart about their awful sin?

"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Joseph's brethren learnt this. Many years had passed away, and all of Jacob's sons had little ones of their own, but God brought their sin to their remembrance. They had to feel "anguish of soul," and that, too, in a strange country, when they feared that Benjamin, their youngest brother, would have to be left behind in Egypt. Yet, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Joseph's brethren confessed their sin, and they were forgiven.

And Joseph soon found out then, by the mouth of Judah, that because Benjamin was the object of their father's love, he was beloved by all his brethren. They did not hate Benjamin, but they loved him, for the very same reason that they had once hated Joseph. When Joseph found this out, he "could not refrain himself." Weeping aloud, with loving words, yea. with kisses, Joseph then let them

all see how much he still loved each one of them. He was their loving brother still.

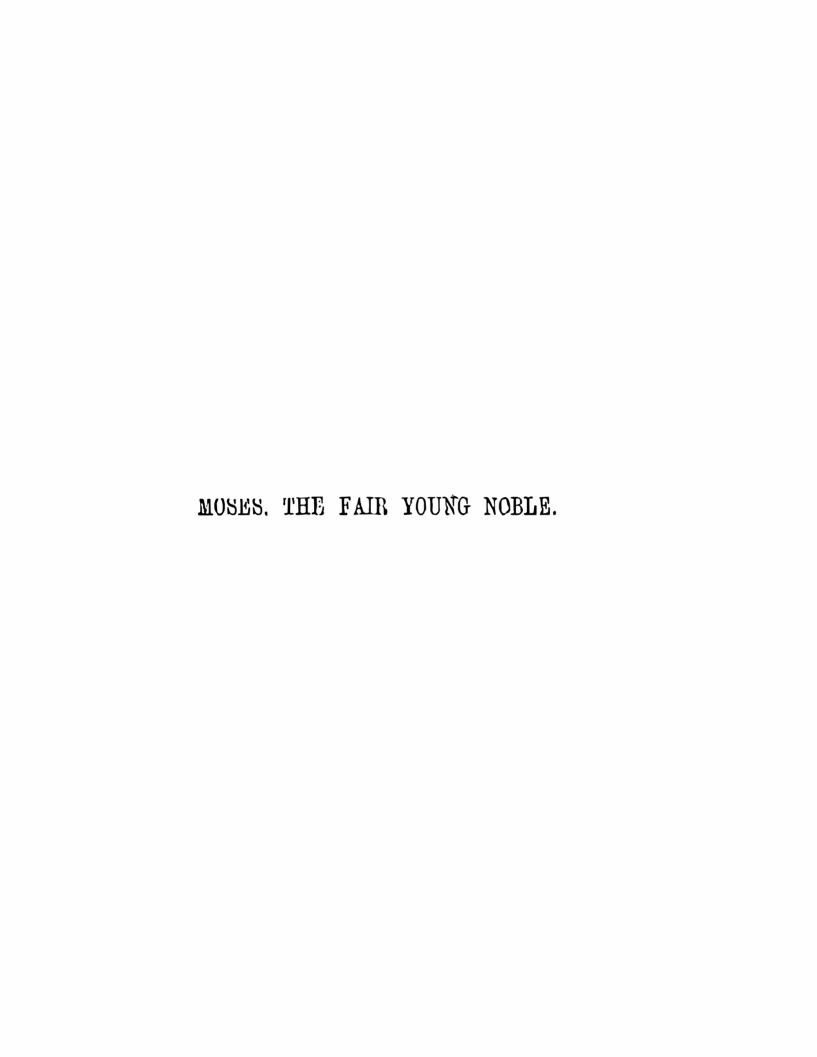
But how shall we speak of the love of Jesus? He loves above all others:—

> "Oh, how He loves! His is love beyond a brother's, Oh, how He loves!"

Those that hated Him without a cause were more than the hairs of His head; yet His love is so great that it is

"Love that no tongue can teach, Love that no thought can reach; No love like His."

For He died upon the Cross, to save even us. Does my dear reader know His love? Would you like to know it? "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John v. 9).





MOBER, THE PAIR YOUNG NOBLE.



MOSES, THE FAIR YOUNG NOBLE.

AD, very sad, was the condition of the children of Israel when Moses was born. They were living in Egypt, a strange country, far away from the land which God had given to their fathers. Joseph was dead, and the Egyptians had begun to treat them very cruelly. They set cruel task-masters over them, who "made their lives bitter with hard bondage."

Why did the Lord allow the Egyptians to be so cruel? Alas, the Israelites too soon had followed the bad example set them by the Egyptians. These Egyptians worshipped many idols, and many of the Israelites did as the Egyptians did. They defiled themselves with the idols of Egypt, and when the Lord said to them, "I am the Lord your God," they rebelled against Him, they would not hearken unto Him, "They did not every man cast away the

abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt" (See Ezek. xx. 5-9). "Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder" (Ps. cvii. 12-14). The Lord raised up a deliverer, even Moses.

Dear reader, the Lord Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters;" we are now each one serving the living and true God, or else we are led captive by Satan at his will. May we each one "serve the Lord Christ."

Before Moses was born, the Egyptians had made a very cruel law. Every little Hebrew boy that was born, was to be cast into the river, to die. But the parents of Moses had faith in God. They saw that their little boy was a "proper child"; they were not afraid of the king's commandment, and they hid Moses for three months. Then they could no longer conceal him. What could they do? The word of God says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 5-6). Did not He who has taught every little bird how to build its nest, "direct"

the mother of Moses to make an ark of bulrushes, that her darling son might be saved from death? This little ark was so made that the water could not leak into it, and into the little ark his fond mother put her darling son.

Who can tell how his mother wept, and prayed, because she was obliged thus to "cast out" (see Acts vii. 21) from her home her lovely boy? She had done all that she could: she could do no more, save, "trust in the Lord." And she did not "trust" in vain. And Moses' sister stood afar off, watching, to see what should be done to him.

"And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child; and, behold, the babe The child Moses "was exceeding wept." fair;" and when the daughter of Pharaoh saw such a lovely child weeping, "she had compassion on him." Could she order him to be thrown into the river, to die, as the king had said? No. But what could she do with so young a child? And it may be that the babe wept all the more when he looked up and saw strange faces, and not his own mother's face Moses' sister now came near, and asked if she

might fetch an Hebrew nurse. The princess told her so to do, and, who did she bring but the very mother of Moses.

We cannot describe the joy of his fond mother, as once again she clasped her precious son to her own bosom. To think that the Lord should have chosen in His mercy to save her son's life in such a wondrous way. Of course she thought more of her little boy than she did of the wages the princess had promised to give her.

But if Moses' life was spared, she could no longer claim him as her own son. She was to nurse him until he was old enough to be taken to the princess, who now called Moses her son. "And the child grew,"—soon his fond mother must give up her lovely boy, and he would be brought up as a young prince. He would be "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," —would he be taught that he must worship idols as the Egyptians did? There was no Bible in those days for his mother to pack up with her little boy's things; for, as far as we know, there was at that time, no part of the Word of God written. But the same God thathad saved Moses from natural death, it was He, and He alone, that could deliver her beloved son from all the evils to which he was soon to be exposed. It may be, that from his mother's own lips, he first learnt to trust in God.

In due time his mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She it was that named the little boy, Moses. The word Moses means, "Drawn out." "And," she said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

My dear readers, many of you have godly parents, and these have taught you to lisp the name of Jesus; and you have often been told of His wondrous love, and you can read of all this in the Bible for yourselves. You also know full well, that if you gave your young hearts to the Lord, you would do that which is pleasing in His sight; and, at the same time, your having done this would cause your parents' hearts to be full of joy. How different was the lot of little Moses! Brought up amongst heathens, in a court where idols were worshipped, his real mother looked upon as hardly better than a slave; and the princess, who called him her son, may have tried to teach him to worship the gods of Egypt. Yet this very Moses, after having been brought up in such a place, when he was come to years, by faith "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto

the recompense of the reward" (Heb. xi. 24-26).

Yes, Moses did "Abhor that which is evil;" because he would "Cleave to that which is good." And will not you, beloved readers after all you have heard and have read of the love of Jesus? Will you not, even now, yield your heart to the Lord?

"Come, then, to Jesus now,

Jesus is here;

And low before Him bow,

Jesus is here.

Oh! ye that know your sin,

And coming long have been,

Now find your rest in Him,

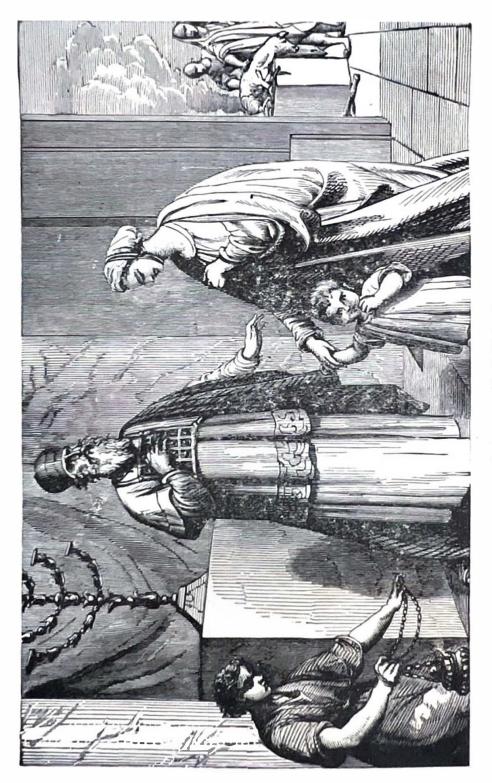
Jesus is here."

When the poor Israelites were groaning beneath their heavy burdens, if they looked up and saw Moses, the fair young noble of Egypt, dressed like a prince, driving past them in a beautiful chariot, which of them then thought that God would by this very same Moses deliver Israel from Egypt? Yet it came into Moses' heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. "For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not." A wicked Israelite "thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" Moses then fled, and the

Israelites remained in bondage for another forty years.

Dear readers, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." Will you remain any longer in bondage? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" from the bondage of sin and death.





SAMUEL, THE CHILD PROPRET.



SAMUEL, THE CHILD PROPHET.

HE priest of the Lord, Eli, was quietly sitting "upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord:" and lo, a woman named Hannah, came near. She was the wife of Elkanah, a godly Israelite, who had come up to Shiloh with his household "to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts." "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and went sore." She was indeed full of sorrow, for she had no child, and so she prayed very earnestly unto the Lord, and she vowed a vow-If the Lord would but grant her her heart's desire, and give to her a son, then she would "give him unto the Lord all the days of his life."

The Lord heard and answered her petition. He gave her a son; and she called his name Samuel, which means, asked of God. Surely Hannah loved the little boy that the Lord had given her, but when Samuel was weaned, she took him up with her to Shiloh; and there she left her darling son, because, as she told Eli, "I have lent him to the Lord."

Many a little reader has godly parents, and often in their prayers your parents have "lent" you to the Lord. Say, little reader! Have you given your heart to Him who has said, "My son, give me thine heart?" When the young child Samuel was brought by his fond and good mother before the Lord, what did the little boy do? We read, "And he worshipped the Lord there."

Yes, young as Samuel then was, "he worshipped the Lord there." This is the very first thing that we read that Samuel did. Little readers, you have done many things—have you yet worshipped the Lord? Will you not, even now, go to your little bedside, or to some place where you can be alone with God, and there bow before the Lord, and tell Him that you desire to do His will for Jesus Christ's sake? He will hear you, and if you truly seek Him He will be found of you—He will save your soul. Every one of my dear readers may thus worship the Lord. And here let me say that the Holy Child Jesus worshipped God even before He was as old as Samuel then was. He only, of all the children of men, could say, "Thou art my God from the moment of my birth."

Hannah, who had once been so full of sorrow. was now so full of joy, that she sang a very lovely song of thanks and praise to the Lord. As for the little boy Samuel, he seems to have been quite at home "before the Lord," although his dear father and mother were living far away at their own home. And the Lord gave Hannah, besides Samuel, both sons and daughters. Once every year did Hannah make and bring up for her son a little coat, and then Samuel could see his father and mother, and also his dear little brothers and sisters. But when the feast was over, they all went home, leaving little Samuel still at Shiloh, yet we never once read of his asking to be allowed to go back home with them.

"And the child did minister unto the Lord, before Eli the priest." Do my little readers desire to "serve" the Lord? Samuel served the Lord far away from his own home, but it may be the Lord's will that you should serve Him at home. Wherever we are, may we be found serving the Lord.

"And the child Samuel grew before the Lord." Do you, my readers, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge and love of God," as fast as you can grow in stature?

But I have sad news to tell. Eli the priest had two grown up sons, Hophni and Phineas; they were by birth "priests of the Lord," but,

instead of serving the Lord as priests, they served Satan. They behaved very wickedly. They led the people into sin, and did not teach them the right way. Their father, Eli, was a good man himself, and he heard of all the wicked actions of his two sons: and he rebuked them, but "he restrained them not." Had Eli honoured the Lord in this matter, and thrust from the priesthood his wicked sons (see Neh. xiii. 28, 29) this would have pleased the Lord. (See Deut. xxxiii. 9). But Eli allowed his two wicked sons to remain priests, and they went on in their evil way, adding sin to sin, until the Lord became very angry, not only with them, but with their father Eli also. nice it is that we know that the child Samuel did not follow their bad example. We read, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men." While these sinful men displeased the Lord, the child Samuel pleased Him. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

One night Samuel, he was still a child, was laid down to sleep: when he heard a voice, calling, Samuel. He thought it was Eli calling him, and so "he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down." Again he heard the same voice, and again he ran to Eli, but Eli said as before, "I

called not, my son; lie down again." Then a third time the voice called, and a third time Samuel ran to Eli, but Eli now perceived whose voice it really was that Samuel kept hearing So he told Samuel to go and lie down as before, and if the voice called him again, he was to say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place."

I once knew a little boy who did not like to lay awake in the dark night; for then, when all around was quiet, he heard, as it were, a voice entreating him to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and "be saved." It was the Spirit of God calling him—in love the Spirit of God was speaking to that little boy's heart through his conscience. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." Sad, sad to say, this little boy did not then want to hear "His voice;" and he hardened his heart against the pleadings of that loving voice. But at the very same time he listened to another voice, which told him to wait a little longer before he gave his heart to the Lord; although he knew that this last was the voice of Satan. Thus this little boy was willing at once to hear what Satan had to say, but he did not want to hear the voice of the Lord. Are any of my dear readers doing the same as this little boy did? But the boy grew older, and the Lord by His Spirit still called, and at last, he listened. And the Lord spake peace to his soul. Had he but listened before he would have saved himself much sorrow.

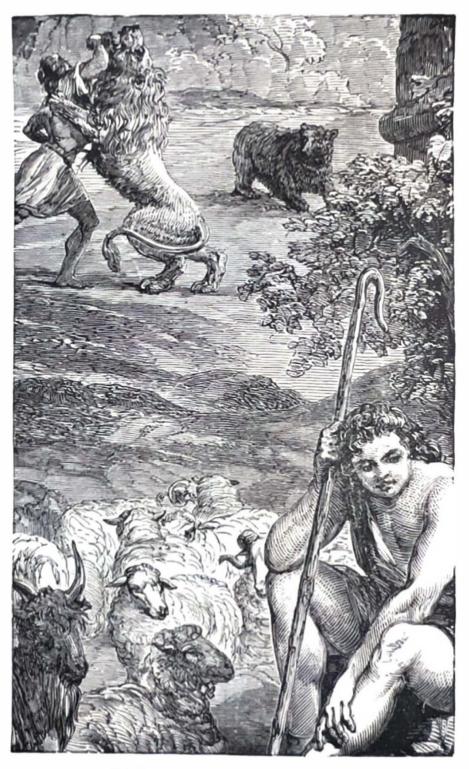
Little Samuel was much wiser than the little boy of whom I have told you. He was willing at once to listen. He knew that it was the Lord who called him. "The Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel." It was not a dream, the Lord was really there present, even as now we read; the Lord is "at hand." When Samuel heard again "His voice," he reverently answered, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." Are my little readers as willing to listen to the voice of the Lord, as the child Samuel was? He did not say, "Speak, Lord," as Eli had told him to reply; it may be that his little heart was at that moment so full of childish awe, that he dared not utter the word "Lord." But the Lord knew he was willing to listen, and the Lord spake to Samuel that very night.

It was sad news that Samuel had then to hear. The Lord told him that He was about to punish Eli and his two sons, for the sins which Eli knew about, but did not prevent.

"And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." The Lord did what He told Samuel He would do, Hophni and Phineas were slain. Eli died; and worse than all,—the ark of God was taken by the Philistines.

Could Israel any longer inquire of the Lord? Yes. Such was the goodness of the God of Israel, that before the ark of God was taken from them, "all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.





DAVID, THE BRAVE SHEPHERD BOY



DAVID, THE BRAVE SHEPHERD BOY.

HE little city of Bethlehem is often called the "City of David," because it was the birth-place of David.

In this city David spent most of his youthful days.

He was the youngest of eight sons of Jesse, and it was his duty to feed his father's sheep. And David in his youth was a very brave and good shepherd boy. Did he love his father's sheep? Ah! better than this, he loved the Lord.

At this time there was a king reigning over Israel, whose name was Saul. The Lord had given the kingdom to Saul, yet Saul was a king who did according to his own will; he did not obey the Lord's commands, for his heart was not right in the sight of God. So that the Lord chose another to reign over Israel. The prophet Samuel told Saul that the Lord had refused him, and that he would give the king-

dom to another; one better than he was. Then the Lord sent the aged prophet Samuel to Bethlehem, that he might there anoint one of Jesse's sons, to be the next king over Israel.

And Jesse brought his seven eldest sons, one at a time, before Samuel; and when Samuel first saw Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

The Lord takes more notice of the state of our hearts, than He does of what men call beauty of person. Absalom was praised more than anyone else in Israel for his beauty; "From the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Yet the Lord brought evil upon Absalom (2 Sam. xvii. 14): for Absalom could not hide from the Lord the wickedness of his own heart. The Lord can read all our hearts, far easier than we can read this little book. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13).

Next came Jesse's second son: he was not the one whom God had chosen. Then the third—it was not he. Then the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh sons of Jesse, each passed before Samuel. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these." So that Jesse had to send for David, his youngest son, who was even then keeping the sheep. And no sooner did Samuel see David, than the Lord said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." David had beauty of person; yes, better still, his heart was right in the sight of the Lord. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."

Then David returned to keep the sheep as before.

David is called in the word of God, the "sweet psalmist of Israel." It may be that even while as yet he was but a shepherd boy, he composed, and sang, some of those very psalms which we now have in our Bible. Perhaps he often sang "The Lord is my shepherd," &c., as he was keeping the sheep. And did David, the brave shepherd boy, delight to "Praise the Lord upon the harp," and to "Sing to the harp with a psalm of thanksgiving?" Then what shall hinder youthful voices now from singing the praises of Jesu's name?

King Saul, sad to say, went on from bad to worse. And "an evil spirit from the Lord"

troubled him. Saul was miserable. What was to be done? His servants sought for one who could play well upon the harp: and David was sent for that he might play before the king. The man who proposed David, gave him an excellent character, and then added these words: "And the Lord is with him." Could the same be said of all of us? And David played before Saul, and Saul loved him greatly: and when the evil spirit was upon Saul, then David played upon the harp: "So Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

But I will now tell you a little about David's bravery. One day, while David was minding the sheep, there came a lion and took a lamb out of the flock. Then David, young as he was, went after the lion and fought with him, and slew the lion. Thus he delivered the poor little lamb. Again, a beartook a lamb, and David killed the bear as easily as he had killed the lion: and thus the lamb was rescued. We do not read that David was any stronger in body than others, but David was "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

After this, there was war between Israel and the Philistines. The army of the Philistines stood upon a mountain, and the army of the Israelities stood upon a mountain opposite, so that the valley of Elah lay between the two

armies. And there came out from the army of the Philistines, a giant, whose name was Goliath. And he drew near to the Israelites, and defied them to send out a man that could fight with him. There stood the giant, clad in armour, bearing terrible weapons; and when the men of Israel saw him, they every one felt "greatly afraid." Day after day came the giant, yet no man of the army of Israel had the courage to fight with him. For forty days the giant came thus torth, proud of his own strength and skill, nor thought he once of the Almighty power of the Lord God of Israel. And could no Israelite be found that would honour the Lord, and put this boasting giant to shame? Saul sought in vain to find such a man—he could not find one—even though he offered great rewards to the man who should fight with, and kill him. But God, who "hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty," knew of one who could, and who would, not only fight with Goliath, but would also overcome him, because he had great faith in God. this was David, the brave shepherd lad of Bethlehem.

Jesse sent David unto the army, just to see how his brothers were getting on, and David came into the camp, just as both armies were ready to fight. And lo, the giant came as before, and all the men of Israel fled from him. and were sore afraid. But the brave shepherd lad felt no fear. He boldly said that he would go and fight with this giant. He thought more of honouring the Lord, than he did of the weapons, and the strength of Goliath. the king would not let David go at first: until David told him that he had already fought with a lion, and a bear, as we have said. David was not ashamed to tell the king also, that his sole trust was in the Lord. Saul said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." And Saul thought to help David: and he gave him some armour to put on. But David had no confidence in this armour, so he took it off, for his confidence was in the Lord alone. David went forth to fight the giant, dressed more like a shepherd than a warrior; he had neither spear nor sword, but he had his staff in his hand, also his sling, and five smooth stones which he took out of the brook.

It appears that both armies watched these two champions draw near to each other, and that all of them could hear all that was said by David, and by Goliath. It humbled the giant's pride to have to fight with a shepherd lad, and he became very angry, and cursed David, and uttered a most awful threat. But David cared not if the giant was angry. Let the giant curse on—David knew no fear—he boldly told

his enemy before them all, that his own confidence was in the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel.

We all know the sequel. David ran, and slang a stone with a true aim, and the stone smote the giant in the forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell senseless to the ground. Then again David ran, and stood upon the fallen giant, and David cut off the giant's head, with his own sword.

Thus "by faith," David won a great victory on that day. For, when the Philistines saw that their great champion was dead, they fled: while the Israelites, nerved by the noble example, and the victory of their young champion, rushed with a shout upon the Philistines, and slew them as they fled.

Dear readers, we are not called upon to wrestle with flesh and blood; but we are told to "Fight the good fight of faith," and to "Lay hold on eternal life." We have not to fight with a human giant—ours is a more terrible cnemy—but we have this promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." David overcame his enemy by his faith. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."



THE CROWNING OF JOAEH.



THE THREE BOY KINGS OF JUDAH.

HREE of the kings of Judah were crowned when they were boys. I will tell you a little about each one of them.

Joash was the first of these boy-kings. He was the youngest son of the wicked King Ahaziah. And I am very sorry to say that the grandmother of Joash was even more wicked than his father Ahaziah. name was Athaliah; she was the daughter of the wicked Jezebel; and she is called in the word of God, "Athaliah, that wicked woman" (2 Chron. xxiv. 7). And so bent upon wickedness was Athaliah, that ever after her husband, King Jehoram, died, she led her son, King Ahaziah, into sin until he died. Still she went on from bad to worse. When her son died, she made up her mind to reign herself; and, for this purpose, she cruelly murdered all she could find of the "seed royal of the house

of Judah:" that is, all who could claim any title to the crown.

Poor little Joash! He was scarcely twelve months old; yet his own grandmother would have killed him, young as he was, if it had not been for the faithfulness and kindness of his aunt Jehosheba. This brave and good woman dared to hide little Joash and his nurse in a bed-chamber. And thus, by the grace of God, the life of the little boy was preserved, whose right it then was to be the king over Judah. Now Jehosheba was the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest, and little Joash was with them hid in the house of the Lord six years.

All this while the wicked Athaliah reigned as queen over Judah. But when Joash was seven years old, the good and wise Jehoiada told some of the great men of Judah, whom he could trust, that little Joash was still alive. Then these men went about in Judah, and gathered the people together. And when the people were assembled, Jehoiada told them about Joash, and they all agreed to crown little Joash as their king. And great and brave men stood in the temple, all around the little boy, with their weapons in their hands, ready to defend him if the wicked Athaliah came and tried to kill him. Then, when they were all ready Jehoiada brought forth the crown, and put it on the head of Joash, and anointed him in the presence of all the people. And the people were so glad that they clapped their hands, and shouted, "God save the king."

Athaliah heard the shouting, and she came to see what it meant: and when she saw her little grandson, standing in the temple where the kings were wont to stand, and that he had the crown upon his head, she cried, "Treason, Treason!" But the people were tired of having her as their queen; they would not let her kill Joash, but she was killed instead.

Then Joash reigned in peace over Judah. And as long as Jehoiada lived, King Joash "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," and Joash was very zealous to have the house of the Lord repaired. But there is one thing, dear reader, that Joash did not do. He did not seek the Lord with all his heart. And when Jehoiada was dead, a time of temptation came. Wicked courtiers enticed Joash, and he gave heed to them, and they led him into sin. So that the good boy-King Joash, became the wicked man-King Joash.

Well does the word of God say, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Had Joash in his youth, "sought the Lord," the Lord would have stablished him, and kept him from evil (2 Thess. iii. 3).

And the Lord sent prophets to Joash, and to

his people, but they would not give ear. Then, last of all, the cousin of Joash, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, spake to Joash, and to all the people, by the word of the Lord; and he told them, that as they had forsaken the Lord, He also had forsaken them. But Joash would not listen, and he set the people on to stone his own cousin to death, in the court of the house of the Lord. And King Joash came to a bad end.

Dear reader, if you seek the Lord, He will be found of you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever. Do not forsake Him as Joash did.

Manasseh, the second boy-king, was twelve years old when he began to reign. He was the son of the good king Hezekiah. But little Manasseh grew up to be so wicked a man, that he did worse than the heathen.

He built altars for Baal, &c.—he profaned the temple of the Lord by setting up a graven image in it—he made his son to pass through the fire—he used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit—and he shed innocent blood very much. Oh! those were awful days! Too dreadful to dwell upon, and to think that it was a son of the godly Hezekiah that grew up to be such a monster of wickedness. Perhaps little Manasseh often sat upon his father's knee, while his father declared to him

the works of the Lord (see Psalm xliv. 1). Could Hezekiah then have foreseen how wicked his beloved son would grow up, would it not have brought down Hezekiah's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Perhaps little Manasseh in those days did what many boys and girls are now doing. I do hope that not one of my readers are among the number of those who make up their minds to seek the Lord some day: but they do not seek Him now. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Well, the Lord became very angry with Manasseh. And the Assyrians came up, and they carried Manasseh away, a captive in chains, to Babylon. Then, when Manasseh was in affliction, he repented. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Manasseh forsook his wicked way, he did indeed "return unto the Lord;" and the Lord had mercy upon him. Then did Manasseh serve the Lord; but alas, he could not undo all the evil he had done (see 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4). How sorry he must have been as he thought of his past life. Dear reader, I beseech you, take warning. Had Manasseh sought the Lord when he was a boy, how much good he

might have done before he became a man. We can never make up for lost time.

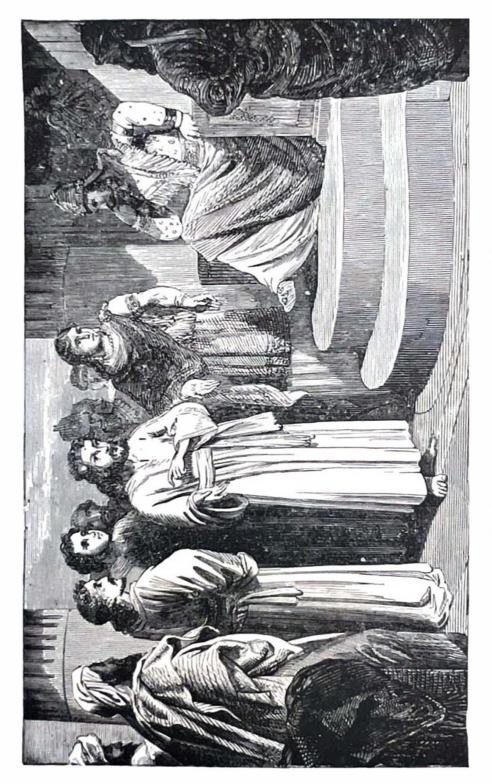
Josiah was the third, and the best boy-king. Although Josiah was the son of the wicked king Amon, and began to reign when he was but eight years old; we read something very nice of Josiah's youthful days. We read. "While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father." &c. a good character indeed that the Word of God gives Josiah (see 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-3). And 1 here request my readers to turn to 2 Chron. xxxiv. and xxxv., and there to read how much good this good boy grew up to do, during his lifetime. In his youth he sought the Lord; and the good boy-king became the good manking; for his heart was right in the sight of the Lord. And the people of Judah loved their good king very much; so that when after a prosperous reign of thirty-one years, he died, their grief was very great: "And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah." And for many many years afterwards, the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations.

And may every youthful reader learn a lesson, and follow Josiah's good example, and seek the Lord in their youth. Would you as children please the Lord." The Lord says to each one, "Seek ye my face;" and if you from

the heart answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek"—He will be found of you—you shall know that all your sins are forgiven you for Christ's sake—and you will be enabled to rejoice in God your Saviour.

"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chron. xxviii. 9).





BELTESHAZZAR, SHADBACH, MUSHACH, AND ADEDNEGO.



THE FOUR BOY CAPTIVES.

N the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, unto Jerusalem, and besieged it." Now in the reign of the good King Hezekiah, another king, the King of Assyria, led a very great army into the land of Judah; and he threatened to destroy Jerusalem. Then "Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven." And the Lord in answer to their prayers sent an angel, which slew in one night, one hundred and eighty-five thousand men of the king of Assyria's army. "Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the hand of the

King of Assyria. But Jehoiakim was a wicked king, and his people were very wicked; and we are told that it was the Lord who raised up the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty

nation," that by them he might punish the king and people for their sins. And so these "terrible and dreadful men, who "had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age;" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 17), came up against Jerusalem; having horses "swifter than the leopards," and "more fierce than the evening wolves."

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hand of the King of Babylon; and the Lord even suffered this heathen king to take away some of the vessels of the house of God, and to carry them back with him to Babylon. And he also took some of the little boys of Judah away from their homes, their friends, yea, from all they loved upon earth: and forced them to go to Babylon.

Oh, how sad a sight it must have been, when fond parents wished their little boys good-bye, without knowing whether they would ever see them again in this world. Yet these little boys had to leave their weeping parents—the beloved city—and the temple of the Lord; and go into a strange country; and all because of the wickedness of the king and the people of Judah. Oh, what a dreadful thing sin is. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Ps. xxxii. 10.



DANIEL IN THE LICHE' DEN.

I dare say the eyes of these boys were dimmed with tears as they started, but on they had to go, day after day, until they were brought to a strange, but a very grand city.

It was the city of Babylon, with lofty walls, great gates, and many very beautiful buildings. And as these children entered the city, they doubtless saw many grand sights; but one thing was not to be seen in Babylon—there was no temple of the Lord there—for the Babylonians worshipped idols. These little boys were now strangers in a strange land, and far away from home and friends, so that we cannot won home and friends, so that we cannot won home and "wept" as they remembered Zion: nor, if their hearts were too full of sorrow to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land."

But I am very pleased to tell you that four of these little boys knew that if their parents were far away, the Lord was near them, even in Babylon. And the Lord sent these four little boys to Babylon for their own good (Reæd Jer. xxiv.). And it appears that these children were not long in Babylon, before, by command of the king, the best looking and the cleverest of them all were picked out from among the rest, that they might be taught the learning and the wisdom of the Chaldeans. And the four little boys I have spoken of, were among

those who were selected for this purpose. I will tell you the names of these four, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. But now their names were altered to Belteshazzar Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Now the king gave orders that all of the chosen children were to be fed with food sent from his own table. Of course, whatever came from the king's table would be sure to taste very nice, but the four boys, whose names I have given, felt that they would sooner not eat all these nice things. Why? Because they were afraid of defiling themselves, by eating the flesh of some unclean animal, such as the pig, and the hare; or they might have to eat or drink something that had been offered to idols.

They feared the Lord, and rather than transgress the law of the Lord, they earnestly requested that they might be allowed to eat pulse (that is, peas, beans, &c.), and drink waters instead of eating and drinking what the king had sent them.

The Word of God says, "In all thy way; acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." These young captives acknowledged the Lord in all their ways, and He directed their paths. God brought Daniel "into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs," so this great man was not offended when

Daniel made this request to him. But he told Daniel that he was afraid of offending the king. Then Daniel asked Melzar to let him and his young friends eat pulse, and drink water for ten days. And at the end of ten days they looked fairer and fatter in flesh than all the rest. So that Melzar allowed them to eat the pulse, and drink water, as they had requested him. Thus these young captives honoured the Lord in a strange land. I hope that my dear readers honour the Lord in their own homes.

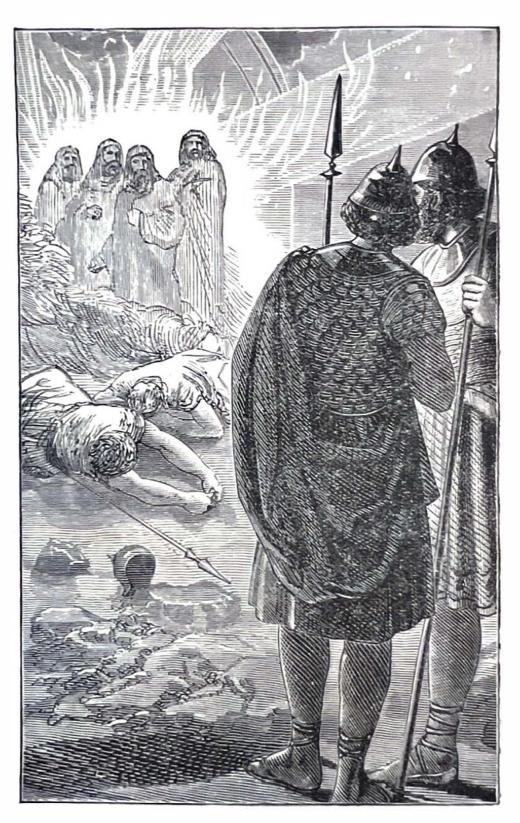
"Them that honour me, I will honour." At the end of three years, all the children who had been selected for the purpose, were brought in to be examined before the king. This was done in order that the king might pick out the wisest of all these clever children, and retain them as his own ministers of state. And these four children, who served the Lord, were found to be wiser than all the rest. Therefore the king chose them, and he soon found them to be ten times better than the wisest men he could find. For the Lord gave these four "Knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

After this, it came to pass that the king dreamed a dream, so strange, and so wonderful, that he could not sleep for thinking about

Yet he had forgotten what the dream was.

So he called in all his wise men, and asked them to tell him his dream. The Lord taketh the wise in their own crastiness. These crafty men could have easily made up something to tell the king, if they had known what his dream was; but they were obliged to own that they could not find out what the king had This made the king so very angry that he ordered that all of his wise men should be slain. Then Daniel went in boldly, and promised the angry king that, if he would but grant him time, he would tell the king his dream. Then Daniel went to his house and told his young companions; and they all prayed to God to show this secret to Daniel. God answered their prayers, by revealing the secret to Daniel in a night vision.

Now mark. The very first thing Daniel did then was to bless "the God of heaven." His second act was to prevent Arioch from killing the wise men of Babylon; and then, last of all, he went in before the king. And he told the king both the dream, and its interpretation. And the king was so pleased with Daniel for this, that he made Daniel a "great man, and gave him many great gifts" &c. and the king said that Daniel's God must be "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings,"&c.; for Daniel explained to the king, that it was his God that had made known to him the secret. Then

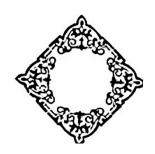


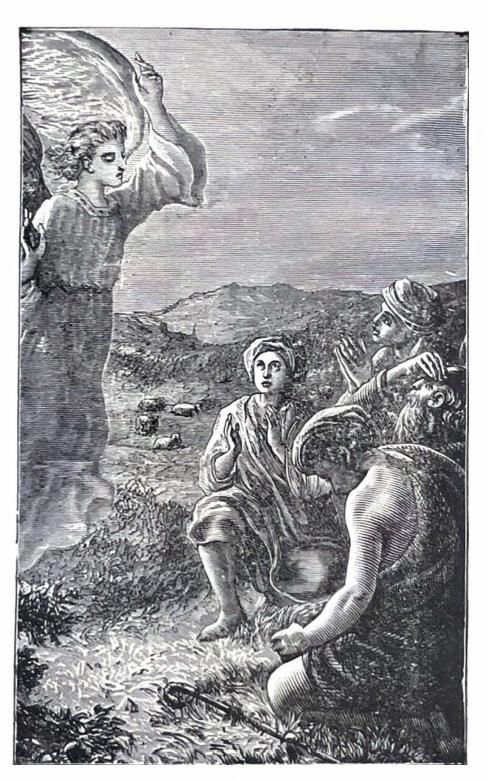
THE FIERY FURNACE.

Daniel remembered his companions who had so kindly helped him by their prayers, and he spake of them to the king, so that the king promoted them as well as Daniel.

I would so like, if I had space, to go on to relate how Daniel's three friends were cast into the burning fiery furnace, because they refused to bow down and to worship an idol. But God would not allow the fire to burn them, and they came out of the fire unhurt (Dan. iii.). Daniel, also, was cast into the lions' den, because he would not leave off praying to the Lord. And he, too, came out unhurt (Dan. vi.).

Dear reader, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (P-ov. iii. 5-7).





THE ANGEL AND THE SHEPHERDS.



THE HOLY CHILD JESUS.

with God, and He was God. Before the worlds were made, the Son of God was ever the delight of the Father (Prov. viii.). To Him the

Seraphim (Isaiah vi.), and the Cherubim (Ezek. i., &c.), have never ceased to cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (Rev. iv.). Millions of angels bow before Him, and rejoice to serve Him; yea, every creature in heaven is full of joy in His presence: all of them delight to praise Him, and to own Him to be God over all, blessed for evermore.

But on the earth there was not such joy; for, sad to say, man had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. All we like sheep have gone astray, and we were all afar off from God by sin and wicked works.

And the Son of God saw our sad condition, He saw that we all needed a Saviour, and because He loved us, He laid aside His glory, and came into this world—the world that was made by Him—and was born a babe in Bethlehem. He did not send an angel to rescue us, but He came Himself to redeem us: and the name He chose to be called was Jesus; which word means Saviour; for He came to save His people from their sins.

Of Him all the holy prophets had spoken (Luke i. 70), and Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, had foretold His speedy coming (Mal. iii. and iv.). And as the day of His coming drew nigh, signs and wonders were wrought in Israel. A full account of these signs and wonders is to be found in the first chapter of the gospel by Luke; so that I will now only briefly refer to them.

An elderly priest, Zacharias by name, was one day burning incense in the temple of the Lord; when lo, the angel Gabriel appeared to him, and told him that his wife Elisabeth should bear him a son, whose name should be called John. He also told Zacharias that this son was to be the forerunner of the Lord. This news seemed to Zacharias to be too good to be true; and he was smitten dumb for his unbelief.

After this, the angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary at Nazareth; and he then told her that God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. And Mary believed what the angel had said to her.

And Mary arose in those days, and went to

visit her cousin Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias. And at the coming of Mary, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and with a loud voice she blessed Mary, whom she addressed as "the mother of my Lord." At this Mary's heart was so full of joy that she sang the lovely song, which commences, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke i. 46-55). So these two women rejoiced together, because they knew that Jesus, their Lord, was soon to be born into the world.

And as the time of His birth drew nearer and nearer, there was yet another sign of His coming. The son promised to Zacharias was now born, and at eight days old he was circumcised, and he was called John, as the Then the mouth of the angel has foretold dumb Zacharias was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And with great joy, Zacharias, being filled with the Holy Ghost, blessed the Lord God of Israel; and he spake of his own son John, that he should "go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways." John (when he grew up he was called John the Baptist) was indeed to be a great man, he was to be "the prophet the Highest:" but now Zacharias knew that a greater than John was coming. Even He who is "the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

An angel also appeared to Joseph in a dream, and told him that Jesus was to be born of Mary (Matt. i. 18-25).

And "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son" into the world. Yet for all the signs and wonders I have referred to, when Jesus was born into this world, man was not prepared to receive Him. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own (the people of Israel), and his own received him not."

Had He only been the son of an earthly king, what a great to-do there would have been at His birth; but when Jesus, the Son of God, was born in the little city of Bethlehem, He was laid in a manger, because there was no room for Him and His mother in the inn (Luke ii. 1-7). And it seems as if none would have noticed the actual birth of the Son of God, if an angel of the Lord had not appeared to some godly shepherds of that city. The angel told these men that a Saviour, Christ the Lord, was now lying a baby in a manger in Bethelehem.

No socner was the good news thus told, than "a multitude of the heavenly host" praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." For the angels sang His praise with as much delight on earth, as they had hitherto praised Him in heaven.

Then the shepherds left their flocks to seek Jesus. And having seen Him, they spread the good tidings abroad. Many "heard" and "wondered," but alas we do not read that many went to worship Him.

When the infant Jesus was about forty days old, Joseph and Mary brought Him into the temple.

In order to show you in what manner Israel might then have received the Son of God, I will tell you a little of the manner in which, many many years before this, their fathers had once brought up the ark of the Lord.

King David had during his reign brought up the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion; but I suppose that you all know that God would not allow David to build the temple. But his son Solomon was allowed to build it. And when everything was finished and in readiness, King Solomon gathered all the people of Israel together, that they all might take part in the bringing up of the ark, and be present at the dedication of the temple. With gladness they assembled, and when all was ready, the Levites came forward, and reverently took up the ark, to bear it upon their shoulders from Mount Zion into the temple. Then Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, sacrificed before the

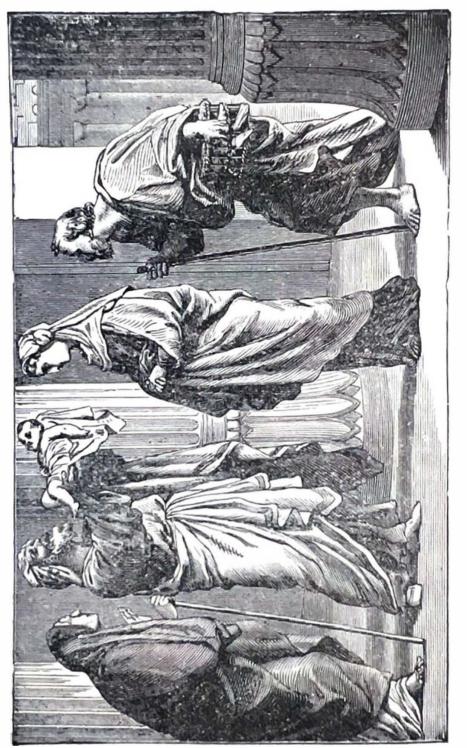
ark, so many sheep and oxen, that they could not be told nor numbered for multitude. was a day of gladness! "The singers went 'efore, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels." Then "little Benjamin, with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their counsel, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali"—yea, then all the people rejoiced before the Lord their God. Then godly men with full hearts, called upon one another upon all nations—yea, upon everything that hath breath to praise the Lord. Upon that day, thousands of thousands of people, entered "into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." And when the ark of God was borne into the temple, the reverent prayer arose, "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; Thou, and the ark of thy strength."

Then again, within the temple, we read that the sacrifices were so very many, that the great altar could not hold them all; and a great heap was made of the sheep and oxen which a willing people had offered in sacrifice to their God. And as the singers and the trumpeters were as one, in raising one harmonious song of praise, the cloud filled the temple. And after Solomon had prayed, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed all the sacrifices, "and the glory of the Lord filled the house." Then all the

people "bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." And with great joy and gladness they kept the feast for fourteen days (2 Chron. vii. 1-10).

Oh, if there was such joy when the ark of God was first brought into the temple, how much greater Israel's joy might have been, when the Son of God first entered its gates. If Israel had but known, and God's people had but considered (see Is. i. 3.), thousands of voices might have sung, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in" (Ps. xxiv.), as Jesus passed within the portals of the temple. Yea, all the people might have assembled, and sang with joy, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Is. ix. 6.)

But the child Jesus was brought as an ordinary poor child into the temple, and the only sacrifice that we read of as being offered at His coming, was the two turtle doves which His own mother had brought: for she was too poor to buy a lamb. Well said the prophet Malachi, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall



SIMEON AND THE CHILD.

suddenly come to his temple, &c." (Mal. iii. 1.)

Yet if the whole nation "received Him not," the heart of Simeon overflowed with joy upon that day. For he saw a sight which kings and prophets had longed to see. And there in the temple, Simeon took the child Jesus up in his arms, and blessed God: for in Him he saw God's salvation, and "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel"—his eyes had even seen the Son of God. The desire of his heart was now satisfied, he wanted to see no other sight upon earth, but he was now willing to "depart in peace." And the aged prophetess, Anna, "gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 8-38).

To look upon Jesus, the Son of God, was to gaze upon a sight better far than the sight of the ark of God. And if, as we know, all Israel did not receive Him, we read, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 12-13).

Perhaps some might say, "All Israel might not have known as yet that Jesus was born into the world."

If there were any that did not know, God did not allow them to remain long in ignorance of this great event. For soon there came some wise men from the east to Jerusalem, and they earnestly asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." This question troubled "Herod," and "all Jerusalem with him." These strangers had, at the sight of "His star," left their homes, and had taken a long journey, because they wanted to worship Him. And Herod called "all the chief priests and scribes of the people together," and these all agreed in saying, that Bethlehem was the city in which Christ was to be born. The prophet Micah had foretold this (Micah v. 2).

Yet although all these men knew this, we do not read that one of all of them went to Bethlehem, to seek Jesus. But the wise men, guided by the star, went there; and there they worshipped Him, and presented before Him the gifts they had brought. And then they returned to their own homes. They had seen His star in the east, and they had sought and had found Jesus at Bethlehem.

After all this, how could any person in Israel say that they had not heard of His birth? Why, then, did they not all seek Him?

Are you seeking Jesus? If you seek Him,

He will be found of you. You, too, may rejoice in God's salvation.

Though Israel did not seek Jesus to worship Him, King Herod sought the young child to destroy Him. Oh, how dreadful! When God in love to us had sent His Son into the world, this wicked man sought to murder Him. Herod sent his cruel soldiers to kill all the children of Bethlehem from two years old and under, but the child Jesus was not slain. For before the soldiers came, an angel had warned Joseph to take Mary and the young child, and to flee with them into Egypt.

And He was gone—the Son of God was gone. He had departed from Israel, and was fled to a strange country. What a solemn day this was in Israel's history? Yet we do not read of any tears being shed to mourn His departure, none noticed when He fled. Was He missed at all? Was He sought after by any? Did no one anxiously cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him."

Presently Herod, the enemy of the Lord, died. And Israel sent no swift messenger to bring Him back from Egypt. But God called His Son out of Egypt. As none had noticed when He fled, so no one seems to have noticed His return. And Joseph was even afraid to return with Jesus to Bethlehem, so he turned aside to Nazareth, an obscure city of Galilee.

And in this city, the holy child Jesus was brought up; and there, for nearly thirty years, He lived unnoticed and forgotten by Israel.

Let me now say a few words about the "holy child Jesus."

He was as much the Son of God when He lay a little child in His fond mother's arms, as He was when He was grown up, and had become the man Christ Jesus.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was once a little baby. And as He grew up, He learned the taste of things in the same manner as you have done—He ate "butter and honey;" He learned to "refuse the evil," and to "choose the good" (Is. vii. 14-16). He had the feelings of a child, He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet He was without sin. And from the moment of His birth, until He ascended up to heaven, it was His delight to do the will of God. He never ceased to serve His God. He was holy; the only holy child, the only holy man, that ever walked this earth.

And when He could walk up and down the hills of Nazareth, He acted in obedience, as a good fond son, to Joseph and Mary. He never said a naughty word, He never told a lie. He never said an unkind word, He never called another boy bad names. He did not despise His mother, if she was but a poor woman. He did not go with wicked boys to

do evil. Those boys and girls who do such things, did not learn them of Jesus. For the language of His youthful heart was, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." He never sinned Himself, but it grieved Him much to see boys and girls, or men and women, sinning against God. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word"... "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Ps. cxix).

Are we in this like Jesus? Alas! how little do our own sins, or the sins of others, really burden our hearts. Surely as a child He could say, "I am small and despised; yet do not I forget thy precepts." No other little child served the Lord as He did. Never before, never after, was there a child, a man, who pleased God in all that he did. Minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, month by month, year by year, He glorified God. His whole lifetime was spent in doing the will of God. And He alone, as a man, was called, "The Holy One of God."

He could ever look up to God, His Eather, and say, "Oh, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day." And again, "I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold"..." The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

And yet again, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps. cxix).

Even when He was a child, He had more understanding than all His teachers, and He understood more than the ancients. He went "to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day." And at the age of twelve years, He was found doing His Father's business in the temple.

Jesus chose good companions: as it is written, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Ps. cxix).

As a child, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour both with God and man."

Yes, godly men loved the holy child Jesus.

And God, the Father. looked down upon Jesus, the Son of His love, with ever-increasing delight. Jesus was the beloved Son in whom God was ever well pleased.

Then why did He die upon the shameful cross?

Because He loved you and me.

When he was about thirty years old, He was once again presented to Israel: and by all that He said, by all that He did, and by the miracles which He wrought, He proved Himself to be the Christ, that should come into the world. Yet He knew that we were all sinners, and

thus unfit to stand before an Holy God; so He gave His life for us; yea, He willingly shed His own precious blood to cleanse us from all sin.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii. 16, 17).

Was ever love like this? Oh, that every reader may respond, "We love him, because he first loved us."

And now He sits exalted at the right hand of God, and "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him."

Then come, beloved ones, accept at once His loving invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Worthy of homage and of praise;
Worthy by all to be adored:
Exhaustless theme of heavenly lays!
Thou, Thou art worthy, Jesus, Lord."



CHILDREN WHO SAW TESTIS.



CHILDREN WHO SAW JESUS.

"Fairer than all the earth-born race,
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;
Replenish'd are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart.
God ever blest! we bow the knee,
And own all fulness dwells in Thee."

this earth, Jesus is the "chiefest among ten thousand," and the "altogether lovely." Many during their lifetime did "virtuously," but the Lord Jesus, during His sojourn on earth, excelled them all. And as in all other things, so also as the lover of little children, He has the pre-eminence. And even before He was born into this world, the Lord loved and cared for children. The infant Solomon had also another name given to him, "because of the Lord." He was called Jedidiah, which word means, beloved of the Lord —for "the Lord loved him" (2 Sam. xii. 24,

25). And when the prophet Jonah was very angry because God had spared Nineveh, then the Lord told the angry prophet of the more than sixscore thousand infants, that were at that very time living in that great city (Jonah iv. 10-11). If Jonah had not thought of them, the lives of all these little ones were precious in the sight of the Lord.

Yet it was when He was on earth, that the Lord Jesus displayed before all men, how great was His love for children. He never was too busy, or too tired, to "gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." And in order to show you His matchless love for "the lambs," I will tell you a little about the children who saw Jesus on earth.

In three of the gospels, we read of a little boy who not only saw Jesus, but, as Mark tells us, the Lord Jesus actually took the little fellow up in His arms (Mark ix. 36-37).

The disciples had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. And in order to teach them humility, the Lord was pleased to call this "little child unto him." Now we are not told whether the little boy was at play, or what he was doing at the time when Jesus called him; but this we do know, that when Jesus called him, he came to Him. Oh! that every boy and girl would come at once to Jesus. Then Jesus set this little boy in the midst of

His disciples, and there the little fellow stayed, while Jesus taught them humility. If the child did not understand all that He said to them, it was very nice to be so near Jesus. And Jesus took the little boy up in His arms, and said to them, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me" (Mark ix. 37).

These words show what a tender regard the Lord has for His "lambs." To do them a kindness is to do that which pleases Jesus. poor little cripple child that believes in Him, has perhaps to lie still indoors, while other boys and girls can run about and play. little act of kindness, done to such an one for Jesus' sake, it may be only to carry the poor cripple child a bunch of flowers, yet it pleases the Lord just as much as if it was done to Himself. But on the other hand, if any one is unkind to a little boy or girl that believes in Jesus, the Lord will remember that unkind action, just as much as if it had been done to Himself (see Mark ix. 42).

It appears from Mark ix. 42, that this little boy already believed in Jesus. The Lord is as pleased to own the faith of a little child, as He is to own the faith of a grown up person The "little ones" that believe in Jesus on earth, shall for ever praise Him in heaven.

And there was a little girl who saw Jesus when she was about twelve years old. Just before this, she had been taken very, very ill, so ill that she was dying. What was her father to do? Who could save his little daughter from death? Jesus only. So he went to Jesus, and entreated Him to come and heal his dying child. "And Jesus went with him;" but before they reached the house, the child died. And it may be before she died, she had asked for her father, and had been told that he was gone to ask Jesus to come. How her fond mother must have longed to see Jesus coming. And how she must have wept to see her daughter die.

And there came in minstrels, who wept and screamed aloud, but the child heard them not —for she was dead. There was a loud tramping of many feet in the street, and a noise of the mingling of many voices, for a great multitude came with Jesus; but the little girl heard nothing of all this—for she was dead. "And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden." And having put the minstrels out, He "took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise."

She had not heard the minstrels, she had not heard the multitude, but she heard the

voice of Jesus; and at the sound of His loving voice, "her spirit came again;" and she arose, and walked, for He had made her strong and well. But how her heart must have beat with joy, when she opened her eyes and saw Jesus, there, in the very room. She had died before Jesus came, and it was a time of sorrow; but she awoke when Jesus called, and it was a time of great joy and gladness.

So is the resurrection of the just. Little boys and girls have wept much, when one they loved fell asleep in Jesus; and when they saw the body laid in the silent grave. This is to all of us a time of sorrow. But when Jesus comes again from heaven, He will speak, and

The dead in Christ will hear Their Saviour's loving voice; Will rise to meet Him in the air, And will each one rejoice.

But there were many children who saw Jesus during the days of His ministry.

There were thousands of men, women, and children assembled at one time, to listen to Jesus as He fed the souls of all who had "ears to hear," with the Word of life. For Jesus often spake so simply, that even children were able to understand all that He said. And having fed the hungry souls (see Matt. v. 6), He thought with compassion of the hungry bodies.

The prophet had also said of Jesus, "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom" (Isaiah xl. 11). Who has not heard of Jesus blessing little children? He that has blessed us will surely bless our dear little ones—so they appear to have thought who "brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray." Why it was we do not know, but we are told that "the disciples rebuked those that brought them." And the fond parents might have turned back, sadly disappointed, but "Jesus sawit," and "he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms put his hands on them, and blessed them." (Mark x. 13-16).

Little boys and girls often sing—

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
'Let little ones come unto me.'"

It was indeed a happy glorious moment in the lives of these dear little ones. To be in His arms, to have His hands fondly placed upon their heads, to hear His gentle voice blessing them, and to be able to look right up into His loving face, oh! how happy these little ones must have been! These infants saw Jesus, and He blessed them.

But was there anything that little children could do to please Him who loved them so much? Yes, there was one thing, hat the children of those days could do—and little children in these days may do the very same—they could praise Him.

Great was the joy of the multitudes, on the day when Jesus rode, as a king, into Jerusalem. Then "many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." So Jesus entered Jerusalem, and "all the city was moved" at His coming, saying, "Who is this?" Alas, in Jerusalem there were many that did not love the Lord, and these were displeased to hear the shouting, so that the voices of men after a while, appear to have ceased to sing His praise. Then it was, in the very temple itself, that the children took up the strain, and cried aloud, " Hosanna."

At this the chief priests and scribes "were sore displeased, and said unto him, hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

It had pleased Him to feed His lambs, He was pleased to bless dear children, and now it pleased Him to listen to the voices of those little ones who sang His praise. These children saw Jesus, and they praised Him.

Was there one childish voice unheard, or unnoticed by Him? Not one. And when boys and girls in these days, blend their voices to sing His praise, does He listen? Oh yes! He is as pleased to listen now, as ever He was while He lived on earth.

But the Lord has spoken of two classes of children (see Luke xx. 34, 36). "The children of this world"—these are called in another place "children of wrath," because they are unsaved. Is the reader one of these? Then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. The other class are called "the children of God"—these, being born again, have already passed from death unto life—they have eternal life through Jesus. To the children of God I am pleased to say—you that love Him on earth, shall for ever praise Him in heaven. May the Lord bless every one of my little readers for His name's sake.

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