

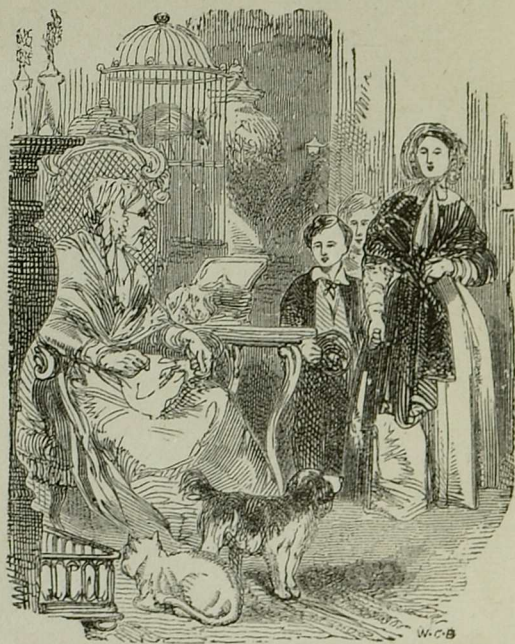
THE
LITTLE QUESTIONERS.



LONDON:
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;
Instituted 1799.

56, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCHYARD.

[418.]



THE 'LITTLE QUESTIONERS.

THE
LITTLE QUESTIONERS.



LONDON :

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ;

Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD ;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

THE LITTLE QUESTIONERS.

THERE was living a little while ago in the town of Shrewsbury a widow lady, who was a very wise and kind person. She had met with many misfortunes, having lost her little children as well as her husband, and, last of all, the greatest part of her money. Upon the occasion of this last loss, she was advised to open a school for little boys in her nice large house, where she had found so much sweet employment in training her own little children for heaven.

The windows of this house opened behind into a pleasant garden, sloping towards the river Severn; and from her sitting-rooms she could see the boats sailing on the river, the wide green fields on the other bank, and the distant country and hills beyond.

Mrs. Hill, for that was the name of this lady, had many kind friends who

recommended scholars to her, and, in a very little while, the number of children she proposed to receive was nearly completed. Two vacancies only remained, but after a few months these were filled up by two little boys, who arrived on the very same day; and the following story will be about the behaviour of these little boys, during the first part of the time they spent in Mrs. Hill's school.

The eldest of these children was called Frederick, the youngest Charles, but Frederick was only a few months older than Charles.

Charles's mother came to the house first, and when she had seen Mrs. Hill, and had asked her how she did, and a few more questions, she called her little boy to her and said to him, "This is the lady who I told you would be so kind as to be a mamma to you as long as your papa is ill, and I am obliged to travel about with him." Then she bade him walk up to Mrs. Hill, and Charles did so, and he looked up very earnestly in her face, and answered very civilly several questions which she asked him without seeming afraid of her; but as soon as he

thought she did not want him any longer, he slipped back to his mamma, and stood quite close to her, without speaking, till she left the room, from time to time looking round the room, and examining as well as he could, in the place where he stood, such things as were new to him. He listened also to the discourse that passed between Mrs. Hill and his mamma, from which he might have discovered, had he been a little older, that they thought very much alike upon most subjects.

This conversation was still going on, when another carriage drove to the door, and the servant brought in a card, and a very smartly dressed lady followed, rather in a bustling way, holding her little son Frederick by the hand. She spoke civilly to Mrs. Hill, and as soon as she was seated she said that she wished to place her little boy with her, for she was sorry to say, though she did not speak as if she was sorry, but rather laughed, that he was now becoming a little too unmanageable for his sister's governess, and she thought he would do better from home.

Mrs. Hill then asked several questions

about the child, and some further conversation took place relating to him ; and while this was going on, Frederick walked about the room looking at every thing, and sometimes touching such things as he thought pretty, or wished to examine, and afterwards he sat down on a chair exactly opposite Mrs. Hill, knocking his boots against the frame of the chair, and looking at her with a very fixed stare.

Presently his mamma called him to her and took his hand, and looking at him with a countenance of great satisfaction, she proceeded to say to Mrs. Hill : “ My little Frederick is a child of a most singularly inquiring mind, and has a thirst for knowledge quite extraordinary at his age. He has never been accustomed to have his curiosity checked, and I dare say, Mrs. Hill, that you will indulge him with an answer to all his questions.”

“ I am in the habit,” replied Mrs. Hill, “ of conversing with my little pupils, and love to encourage a spirit of proper inquiry.”

“ And you will not mind his being a little unseasonable sometimes,” added the lady smiling ; “ indeed the spirit of cu-

riosity which this dear boy possesses is rather troublesome, but it must not be repressed. I have the greatest dread of the child being made dull, like so many children one sees." As she said this, she looked at little Charles, but turned away her eyes in a moment.

Mrs. Hill did not thoroughly understand the lady's meaning, and was considering what answer to make, when she began to speak of something else relative to the boy, and very soon afterwards took her leave, telling Mrs. Hill, as she went away, that most likely she should not be at home at the next vacation, for she was going with her family on the continent, and she commended her little son to her especial care.

Charles's mamma went away very soon afterwards, and both the children were out of spirits at parting with their mammas, and did not talk a great deal; and Mrs. Hill, having a good deal to do, with making some arrangements for them and with attending to her other children, had not an opportunity of judging very much about them that evening.

The next day was one in which the

children of the school had leave to visit their friends, and it so happened that all the little boys in the school had some engagement, except the two strangers, and therefore, as Mrs. Hill herself had a visit to make in the town, she determined upon taking these little boys with her, and perhaps you may like to hear how they behaved on the occasion.

The lady whom they were going to see was an elderly person, and she lived in an old house looking towards the Quarry-walk. The Quarry-walk is a beautiful wide gravel walk, with trees on each side of it, and part of it runs along the banks of the Severn, and the ladies and gentlemen of Shrewsbury are fond of walking in it. Now as Mrs. Hill was passing along this walk, and holding the little boys each by the hand, she said to them, "We are going to visit a very nice old lady; she is very sensible and clever, and what is better, she is very good, and she has travelled in distant countries, and her conversation is very entertaining, and you may learn a great deal in many ways from listening to her; but she is not strong, and cannot bear a noise or a

bustle, so you must sit still and be quiet all the time you are in her house." The children promised to remember this, and presently they came to the door of the lady's house, and the servant who opened it showed them into a large pleasant parlour, where, by the fire side, sat a tall elderly lady in a high-backed arm-chair, engaged in some kind of needle-work. A very small dog with a silky coat, and a large white cat, lay on the rug, and a parrot in a cage was at one end of the room. The walls were hung with Indian paper, and there were several Indian fans and China jars, and other eastern ornaments about the room; and there was a pleasant smell of hyacinths, which grew in blue and green glasses on the chimney piece.

As Charles came into the room, he said to himself, What a pretty place! but he did not speak to be heard.

The lady got up from her seat and walked to meet Mrs. Hill, and seemed very glad to see her, and then she spoke very kindly to the children, but there was something in her manner which made Charles feel a little afraid of her. At

first the two children kept quite close to Mrs. Hill, and neither of them spoke ; but after a while Frederick slipped away without being observed, for the two ladies were soon engaged in earnest conversation, and he made his way towards the parrot, and stood opposite to her, and began to call her Mrs. Poll in rather a loud voice ; then he put his fingers within the wires of the cage, which offended the bird, and he was very near getting a sharp bite from her beak ; so he made an outcry, and turned away, but not before Mrs. Poll's mistress had called to him, and warned him not to go too near the cage. Then he began to examine many things about the room, making a noise with his shoes as he walked. Presently he came to a very beautiful little ship, made of ivory, in a glass case, with masts, and sails, and ropes, all complete, but very delicate ; and having looked at it for some time, for he thought it very pretty, he called out, " Charles, come and see this beautiful ship." Charles did not move or speak. So then he cried out, " Mrs. Hill, come and tell me, is this a man of war ?"

Mrs. Hill was listening at that moment to something very particular the aged lady was telling her, for she was just returned from a long journey, and they had not met for some time, and she did not notice what Frederick said, though he repeated his question in a louder voice; so he ran up to her, and pulling her glove somewhat roughly, he said, "Mrs. Hill, I say, Mrs. Hill, is that a man of war?"

"I cannot answer you now," replied Mrs. Hill.

"And why not? why cannot you tell me?"

"I am engaged," said Mrs. Hill, "I cannot attend to you; sit down, and be quiet."

The child uttered a faint murmur, stood still for a few minutes; but it was only a few minutes, for he was presently at another end of the room with a fan-like ornament in his hand, delicately cut in fine wood, and with this he amused himself till it fell out of his hand, and a small part of it was cracked. The noise of this interrupted the ladies in their conversation, and the elder lady, turning to him, said, "In my younger days it was

the fashion for children to be seen and not heard ; be so good, my dear, as to put that fan back again into its place."

"Is it a fan?" asked Frederick, not at all out of countenance by this reproof.

Upon this Mrs. Hill rose, and taking the ornament from Frederick, she put it back in its place herself, saying at the same time, "This is the third occasion on which you have interrupted us; come and sit down by me." So the child being a little frightened by the mischief he had done, obeyed Mrs. Hill, and remained pretty quiet by her side, saving that he was continually pulling Charles by the hand, and trying to engage him in play.

After a while Mrs. Hill began to think that she had made her visit quite as long as she ought to do, and she was preparing to go; which the old lady perceiving, said to her, "You must not go away yet. I want to show that little boy, whom you call Charles, some of the curiosities in my dressing room up stairs."

Charles looked with very bright eyes at Mrs. Hill, and she smiled.

"And I will come too," cried Frederick; "I like curiosities."

“No,” answered the old lady, “you will meddle with them, and break them, you must not see them to day;” so she took Charles by the hand, and they went up stairs together.

There is not room to tell of all the things that were shown to Charles; but one curious thing was a number of little balls, one within another, cut out of one piece of ivory. There was also a set of chessmen, beautifully cut, with knights riding on horseback, and other pieces dressed after the fashion of the east. There was also a model of a Chinese villa, with winding walks and bright flowers, and water, and little boats about it; but what pleased Charles most, was the model of a little church, the shape of the church he went to every Sunday when he was at home. But banyan and palm trees grew where this foreign church stood, while elm and yew-trees grew about his church at home. That distant church had been lately built in a valley amongst rocks and hills, which had never before echoed to the sound of any other worship than idolatrous shoutings. but now sabbath-

bells were heard weekly there ; and the sweet sounds of Christian hymns.

There were also in the lady's dressing-room stuffed birds of all colours, gold, and green, and purple, and scarlet, which glittered, and changed their hues as the sun shone upon them, and some of these birds were very small indeed.

There was also a live cockatoo with a top-knot on his head, but he was not better tempered than the parrot down stairs. Charles, however, was careful to keep out of the way of his beak.

As soon as Charles had seen every thing which the lady thought it convenient to show him at that time, she gave him a large piece of cake, and when he had thanked her for it, he asked her if he might give some of it to Frederick.

"Yes," answered she, "and you may tell him that when he has left off asking troublesome questions, and meddling with things he has no business to touch, I shall perhaps show him the things which you have seen to day."

Then she led the child down stairs, and soon afterwards Mrs. Hill took her leave.

In the Quarry-walk she met a friend who went to her house door with her, and the two children walked before her, talking together, so that during their return home nothing passed between Mrs. Hill and the children about the morning visit; but after dinner a conversation took place upon the subject, some of which shall be now related.

Mrs. Hill, taking Frederick by the hand, and smiling kindly upon him, said to him, "Now, Frederick, as we are quite by ourselves, and nobody to interrupt us but Charles and Mrs. Puss, I shall give you leave to ask me as many questions as you please.

Frederick laughed, and said, "Then I know what my first question will be."

"And what will it be?" said Mrs. Hill.

"Was not that lady very cross to day?"

"Oh no," cried Charles; "she is the kindest lady I almost ever saw."

"You thought her cross," said Mrs. Hill, "and Charles did not; what caused the difference in your opinions? Now, dear Frederick, think before you speak."

"Why I suppose," answered Frederick,

after being silent a few minutes, "she thought me troublesome."

"And were you not troublesome?"

"No," answered Frederick, "I only asked questions, and mamma always lets me ask any questions I please, and you know that she said to you I was to ask questions."

Mrs. Hill did not seem to take any notice of the manner in which Frederick said this, though she did not think it very civil; she only answered him in these words:—

"And you know I told your mamma that I should encourage in you a spirit of proper inquiry: I did not promise any more. But your inquiries or questions this morning were not proper."

Charles looked up, and said, "Please to tell me, Mrs. Hill, if there was any thing improper in asking questions about a ship."

"My little boys," answered Mrs. Hill, "when I said the word proper just now, I meant unseasonable. Frederick's questions were unseasonable."

"Why were they unseasonable?" said Frederick.

“It is unseasonable to interrupt persons engaged in conversation with a question that is of no consequence. Suppose one of the servants were to come into the room, and ask us a question just as we are engaged in conversation after dinner, it would not particularly please us; and if it were a question the servant could answer without troubling us, we should be still less pleased.”

“But I did not know you were talking,” cried Frederick.

“Then you ought to have known it, my child. People who do not observe what their friends are doing, and do not mind being troublesome to them, are selfish; that is, they are only thinking of themselves. You would not wish to be selfish?”

“No,” said Frederick.

“And besides this,” said Mrs. Hill, “children, you know, owe respect to old people, and should be more particular in interrupting them than their own companions, when they are engaged in conversation.”

“I never heard that before,” cried Frederick.

“Perhaps not,” said Mrs. Hill. “And I have another thing to say; you know you undertook, when I told you where we were going, to be very quiet; and people should keep their promises.”

“Yes, I know that; but then I wanted to know about the ship.”

“And could not you have waited to ask your question, till somebody was at leisure to answer you?”

“No, I do not like waiting.”

“But you must learn to be able to wait, my little fellow, if you are to go patiently through this world. But now you must answer me a question; did you ever see a real man-of-war?”

“Oh yes! when I went with papa and mamma to Portsmouth, they took me all over one, and I saw a great many other ships besides.”

“Well, then, suppose that this morning, when you had found out that you could not have your question answered immediately, you had considered with yourself what made the difference between the man-of-war and the other ships you saw at Portsmouth, and then whether the model of the ship under the glass was

most like a man-of-war or any other ship you had seen ; perhaps, if you had done this, you would have been able to answer the question yourself."

"Oh yes ; but that would have been so much trouble."

"That is, you would have given trouble to yourself instead of giving trouble to the old lady, and then perhaps she would not have thought you troublesome, which you now suppose she did, and she might have shown you her curiosities as well as Charles."

Then little Frederick gave a sort of sigh, and Mrs. Hill went on :

"I believe that it is not always from the love of knowledge for its own sake that children ask so many questions, but from the love of getting knowledge without giving themselves trouble."

"Oh ! but I do love knowledge ; mamma says I do. I love knowledge better than Charles."

"How do you know that ?" cried Charles.

"I will have no unkind comparisons made between you," said Mrs. Hill ; "you are little brothers while you are

here, and I must not have you setting up yourselves one above the other. I dare say you both love knowledge, but Charles may perhaps have learned a better way of getting it than Frederick, and if he has he will be glad to teach it; I am sure he ought, for I dare say a great deal of trouble was taken to teach him the right way."

"What is the right way?" said Frederick.

"We have seen the wrong way," answered Mrs Hill, "and that is to be selfish, or impatient, or idle, or disrespectful in our way of getting it, as many children and some older people are. And now we will inquire what is the right way."

Just at this minute there was a knock at the hall-door, and a servant came in to say that a person wanted to speak to Mrs. Hill; so she rose, and smiling as she left the room, she said to the children, "Who likes this interruption?"

As soon as the children were by themselves they began to speak about different things, such as little boys like to talk of, and Charles showed Frederick a new knife which his papa had bought for him the day he left home; but after a while

he put it up, and said, "I wish Mrs. Hill would come back."

"What for?" said Frederick.

"Because I want to know whether she has any maps in the house."

"To be sure she has," answered Frederick "or else she would not be a governess; but what do you want to know that for?"

"Because I want to look for those high mountains the lady was talking of this morning."

"What high mountains? I did not hear her talk of any mountains."

"It was when you were going about the room she was telling Mrs. Hill about some missionary she knew of who was trying to do good among those mountains, and she said she had been on them herself, and she described the fruit, and the flowers, and the birds she had seen there; I think the mountains were called the Himalaya mountains."

"Well, I never heard one word about them."

"But I did," said Charles, "for you know Mrs. Hill told us to sit still and listen to that lady, she was so wise."

“ I hate sitting still and listening,” cried Frederick.

“ But you are very fond of knowledge, you say.”

“ But not if it is to be got in that stupid way ; and I hate looking at maps.”

“ Then how do you like getting knowledge ?”

“ Why in the way mamma lets me. When I want to know any thing I ask questions, and sometimes I read about it, if it is not a dull book.”

“ Well, that is a droll way of learning. Papa and mamma often tell me that if I want to know any thing to any purpose, I must not mind a little trouble.”

Here the discourse about knowledge dropped, and the children talked of other things till Mrs. Hill returned ; and Charles asked her the question he proposed about the maps, and she promised to show him after tea a very nice map of the country where the mountains stood, and some pictures also of the birds and flowers found amongst them.

Tea-time came and went, and the map and some beautiful coloured engravings in a large portfolio were laid on the table,

and when these were shown by Mrs. Hill, Charles asked a great many questions about them, but they were not silly questions, such as with a little thought he might have answered himself; and Mrs. Hill seemed to have a great deal of pleasure in explaining the things he inquired about.

Frederick also asked some questions, and they were not all silly ones, and though he did not like looking at the map, he was pleased with the pictures; but, after a while, he got tired of these, and he got off his chair, which had been placed on one side of Mrs. Hill, and walked up to a round table standing near a sofa, at the other end of the room. There were several books and magazines lying on this table, and first he took up one book, and then another, and with these he seemed to be amusing himself as he half lay on the sofa.

Mrs. Hill did not appear to be noticing him, but from time to time her eye was fixed upon him, though he did not perceive it, and when the time came for the children to go to bed, she had gained more knowledge of their respective habits

than either Charles or Frederick, or indeed any person not accustomed to observe children, could be aware of.

The next day Charles and Frederick were examined, and put into the classes and books that suited them best. By this examination it was found that Frederick had begun to learn more things than Charles had, but that he knew nothing so well as Charles did, so that, all things being considered, it was found that Charles was able to work in a higher class than Frederick.

It was the custom of Mrs. Hill to have her little boys a great deal with her, and she would talk to each child separately as occasion required, but it so happened that after the day just described, she was not again left with only Charles and Frederick together for several weeks. This event, however, did occur again, and it was at the return of the pleasant season of spring, for it so happened then that on one particular holiday, on a Friday, and that a very fine day, all the children were again invited out, except Charles and Frederick, who had no acquaintances in the town of Shrewsbury.

There was a part of Mrs. Hill's garden into which the children were never allowed to go, unless taken by her: it was a green bank sloping down to flower beds, intermixed with turf and low shrubs, and on the top of the bank was a terrace-walk, looking towards the distant hills, and there was a seat where one might, in a warm day, sit and read, or look at the view a long way off, or listen sometimes to the bells from a neighbouring church, or the little birds in the trees of the surrounding gardens. The children were always pleased to be admitted to this place, and Mrs. Hill would often take one child alone on a Sunday afternoon to her favourite seat, when she wanted to talk to him about a world far more lovely than any place we can see on earth. Charles and Frederick were, therefore, very much pleased when Mrs. Hill told them that, as it was a very fine day, she would take them after dinner to the terrace seat, whilst they shared with her of her last dish of walnuts.

As soon as these were finished, Mrs. Hill began to point out to the children the early spring flowers in the borders

below, and asked them if they knew their names, and then she attended them to run down the bank, and to gather one of each sort of flower. And when they brought them to her, she showed them the beauty of the petals of some, and the delicate painting of the cups of others, the gay colours of the hepatica, the glossy surface of the crocus, and the arched form of every segment of the blossom of the snowdrop. Then from an examination of the outward fading beauty of these flowers, she led them to answer several questions, which she put to them, as to who was the Creator of these lovely things, on which of the six days they were created, and how their creation showed the love of God, what lesson our Saviour would have us learn from their rich attire, and how the springing of flowers out of the ground after winter reminded us of the resurrection. And many other things she might have asked to the same purpose, or she might have asked scientific questions about the natural history of the flowers, but she never thought it well to try to teach too much at once.

Charles answered her questions very

well, and Frederick answered some, and he could have answered them all had he given his mind properly to the subject ; but Frederick was impatient, and did not like the trouble of fixing his mind, though he was not so impatient as he had been a few weeks ago.

As soon as the flowers were put away, Mrs. Hill drew from her bag a note, and said to the children, with a smile on her face, " I have received an invitation from the lady with the parrot and cockatoo to take you both to spend our next holiday with her."

" Oh, how nice!" cried Charles and Frederick, both jumping up from their seats ; " and have you said we shall go, Mrs. Hill?"

" My answer does not depend entirely upon my will ; we are only to go upon certain conditions."

" Oh," said Frederick, " it is if I will sit still and ask no questions."

" No, not quite that, you must be reasonable and seasonable in your questions."

" But I am better than I was, am I not, Mrs. Hill?"

“Yes, certainly you are.”

“Then we may go, dear Mrs. Hill?” cried Charles.

“I hope we may,” answered Mrs. Hill; “but I should like to have a little more conversation with Frederick, before I can quite say yes. I want to talk to him about the right way of getting knowledge, and of the end of knowledge, or the use to which it is to be put when it is gained.”

“Oh, Mrs. Hill,” said Charles, “that is the same thing you were going to talk about after dinner, the day we first called on the old lady, and the day the servant interrupted us.”

“Yes, it is to the same purpose.”

“And then, Mrs. Hill,” replied Charles, “you will let us go afterwards.”

“Oh, I hope so,” cried Frederick. “Dear Mrs. Hill, I will listen and be so good. What are you going to teach me?”

“I want to teach you to be a bee, and not a butterfly. The bee you know goes from flower to flower; and gathers from every herb the things it wants, and then carries them home, and puts them to their

right uses ; while the butterfly alights upon whatever flower or leaf it pleases, without any seeming object."

"Oh!" said Frederick, "I am the butterfly, and Charles is the bee, I suppose."

"Charles wishes to be a bee, I dare say," answered Mrs. Hill, "and why should not you wish and try to be one too?"

"I will try," cried Frederick. "And now, Mrs. Hill, please to begin and tell me all about getting knowledge ; the right way, I mean."

"Well then, you must be very patient, and listen, and answer the questions I ask you. Can either of you tell me the difference between knowledge and wisdom?"

"Why they are the same thing, are they not?" cried Frederick.

"Oh, no," said Charles in haste.

"What do you think about it then, Charles?" asked Mrs. Hill.

"I remember once hearing papa say that wisdom was the end and knowledge the means, but I did not quite understand him."

“Well,” replied Mrs. Hill, “we will take this explanation, and consider knowledge as one means of gaining wisdom. And if you want to know what wisdom is, you must study the Bible; it would be a nice employment for you to mark the texts in the Bible about wisdom as you come to them, and then write them down neatly in a copy book.”

“Oh, I should like that very much,” said Charles.

“And now, if we are right so far, I think it is quite plain that no knowledge is good that does not lead to wisdom more or less directly: and therefore curiosity about things that would do harm to our hearts and morals must never be indulged for a moment; and curiosity about vain and trifling things which would not improve our mind is foolish, and too much curiosity about things that are beyond our power to understand is not good.”

“And what else, Mrs. Hill?” asked Frederick.

“And then I do not think it profitable to be over curious about things that are not likely to be of any use.”

“But, Mrs. Hill,” cried Charles, “I heard papa say that he always tried to learn from other people any thing they could teach him, and I heard you ask that gentleman, who dined here last week, how iron was got out of a pit, and how it was worked. Now, Mrs. Hill, you are not going to work in a pit.” Here the children both laughed.

“Certainly,” answered Mrs. Hill, “I am not going to work in a pit, nor is there, as far as I now know, any particular use to which I can put the knowledge I gained from that gentleman you speak of; but as I had an opportunity of hearing from him a very clear and plain account of the way in which iron is got out of the ground and worked, I thought I should have been silly to lose it, especially as it seemed to give him pleasure to tell us what he knew.

“And perhaps if we had not talked on this subject, we should not have spoken about anything else that would have been more improving to us. And then, too, when you hear of the plan and forethought with which clever people manage their business, you may often learn some-

thing which will help you in your work, though your work may be very different from theirs. Besides, you know, I only said we were not to be over-curious about things not likely to be immediately useful to us; I did not say we might not be curious at all about them."

"Then there is no harm," said Charles, "in reading little books about trades."

"No, certainly, if they interest you, and if you read them at proper times; and it is very well to visit manufactories, and places of that sort, when you have an opportunity of doing so. But you must remember that life is too short, and your time for learning is too short, for you to spend a great deal of it in getting knowledge which does not seem to have much to do with your own proper business."

"What is our proper business?" said Frederick.

"What it will be by and by I cannot say; but at present, that work which your papas and mammas have appointed for you, is to learn patiently and obediently whatever I teach you, and not to turn away from the instruction I would give you for the sake of amusing yourselves

with knowledge that is not immediately necessary for you. I have heard of little boys who would hardly look at their lesson-books in a school-room, and yet would be very fond of reading at play-time."

"Perhaps the play-books were entertaining," said Frederick.

"And perhaps the little boys were self-willed and impatient; at any rate they were idle, and more like butterflies than bees."

While Mrs. Hill said this, Charles looked at Frederick, and Frederick coloured.

"And talking of reading at play-time, makes me think of one thing which I must not forget to say. There are so many books now in every body's house, that wise little children will not turn them over and choose for themselves without consulting some one who is a better judge about them than they can be, and they must not put down a book just because it does not amuse them for the first minute. Children who do so I am sure are butterflies, for it is not reading a

great many books carelessly, but reading with attention what we do read, that improves us."

"But, Mrs. Hill," said Charles, "you have not told us every thing about the right way of getting knowledge."

Mrs. Hill answered, "There is a great deal more to be said than you can understand all at once; but I have been thinking that I could make what I am wishing to say to you this evening more plain if I were to tell you something that I know about a wise little boy you never saw. And perhaps the account of him might make you remember also the conversation we had together, a few weeks ago, on the day we made our first visit to the old lady, about the wrong way of getting knowledge."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Mrs. Hill," cried Charles.

"And then, after that story," said Frederick, "you will tell me if I am to go and see the old lady. Please to begin now."

"No," answered Mrs. Hill, "not now; we have been talking a long time, and

we must rest a-while. You shall go into your play-ground till you are called to tea."

So the little boys ran off to play till tea-time; and after tea, when the curtains were drawn, and the candles were lighted, Mrs. Hill said to the children, as they sat on low stools one on each side of her, "I will now tell you about the wise little boy."

"Did he die when he was very little; as young as we are?" asked Charles.

"No," answered Mrs. Hill, "he lived to be an old man with white hair."

"What was his name?" asked Frederick.

"We will call it Martin."

"I suppose you cannot remember him when he was very little," said Frederick, "because you are not so very old, Mrs. Hill, and your hair is not white."

"No," answered Mrs. Hill, "I did not know him when he was little; but I have heard those people speak of him who remembered him as a bright-eyed little boy with curling hair, very fond of innocent play; and I have seen a picture of him with two little sisters, and I have

been told that he was very kind to these sisters."

"How old was he when you knew him, Mrs. Hill?" asked Charles.

"I cannot tell you now; but it is a long while ago since I can first remember him, and I always loved him; for he was very kind to me, and when he died I was very sorry, though I felt sure he was gone to heaven."

Then Mrs. Hill wiped her eyes and stopped speaking till Frederick touched her hand and said, "Please to go on, Mrs. Hill, and tell us all about him."

"Martin had a very wise papa and mamma," said Mrs. Hill; "and in his very early days they taught him to love Jesus Christ, and desire to be a child of God, and to long to be really wise. They told him that there were several great hindrances in the way of children getting knowledge, and amongst these were idleness, and impatience, and conceit; and they taught him that good children ought to pray, and watch against these sins. They set before him also the example of the most wise and holy of all children, who had no such hindrances, for he was without sin."

“Oh!” said Charles, “I know who that was; but do we ever hear of our Saviour learning?”

“We hear of him,” answered Mrs. Hill, “when he was twelve years old, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions; and we know that when he was doing this he was about his Father’s work; for he said as much to his mother when she came to look for him. And we know, too, that though his understanding and answers astonished all that heard him, yet he was not made proud and conceited by it, for he went home and was subject to his mother, showing all children that if they would follow his example, they ought to become more humble as they learn and know more.”

“And did Martin follow this example?” said Frederick.

“Yes, he tried to do so; for he loved secret prayer, and studying the Bible, even its deep things; and he was very humble, though he was so fond of getting knowledge.”

“And what did he learn besides the Bible?” said Charles.

“ He learned first the things that were to prepare him for the profession he was to follow when he grew up. And then he tried to get any knowledge that he had a good opportunity of gaining, either by reading, or listening to wise and clever people. But he always shut his ears against any knowledge he had better not learn, and he was never impertinent or troublesome.”

“ And did he ever play ?” cried Frederick.

“ I have been told,” answered Mrs. Hill, “ that he was very quick and clever at games of play, and I believe that little boys who are industrious in learning, often know how to play the best. Martin’s father used to say to him, ‘ Play while you play, and work while you work.’ ”

“ Did you ever hear of a little boy, Frederick, who does not like trouble at lessons, and who sometimes loiters about in the play-ground instead of running about with the other children ?”

“ Perhaps that is on a cold day,” answered Frederick.

“ Martin was never listless either at work or at play,” said Mrs. Hill, “ and

what was better, he never was ill-tempered at his play, and was mild and gentle, and good-natured with his companions.

“Oh, how I should have liked to have known Martin,” said Charles; “I wish he was a little boy now.”

“You must try to be like him,” answered Mrs. Hill.

“I suppose,” said Frederick, “when he grew up, he was a very clever man.”

“Yes, he was,” answered Mrs. Hill, “and, when he was old, he was as apt to teach those who were younger than himself, as he had been apt to learn from those who were older than himself when he was a child. If we cherish humility while we are young, it will increase as we grow older. Keep it in your hearts, my little ones, like a lily in a garden, and water it well, and it will smell very sweet.”

The boys smiled, and then Charles said, “Did Martin ever teach you anything, Mrs. Hill?”

“Yes, very often,” answered Mrs. Hill. “Sometimes he would let me come into his study and read to him, and sometimes, in the fine weather, he would take me out to walk, and show me the

rare flowers among the woods and hills, and tell me their names and uses, and point out beauties in them which I should not have noticed. In the ferns and the lichens, and even the stones under our feet, as well as the birds in the trees, he would find him something pleasant and useful to talk of. His conversation was always full of cheerfulness and instruction; and often when he had been teaching me, he would ask me questions very pleasantly to find out whether I remembered what he had taught me, and he would draw sweet holy lessons from the things he showed us. The very last walk I took with him, he bade me look at the beautiful purple and scarlet clouds about the setting sun, and he said they made him think of heaven; and when he said this his eyes were very bright, and he looked very happy."

"Mrs. Hill," said Charles, "you must be so good as to teach us some of the things which Martin taught you, when we go out walking."

"Was Martin ill," said Frederick, "when he took you that walk and showed you the bright colours?"

"No," said Mrs. Hill, "but he was

going away from me to another house, and I did not take another walk with him, but he did not live very long afterwards. And he was still humble when he died, for he did not put any trust in himself, but in the Saviour who had died for him. And now Martin is numbered among the wise who shine as the brightness of the firmament."

Here Mrs. Hill stopped speaking, and presently Charles said, "Oh, Mrs. Hill, will you tell us something more about Martin?"

"No," answered Mrs. Hill, "not now; you have heard as much as you can remember at once. Some time or other I may perhaps tell you more about him; but if you like it, I will show you some texts which Martin once told me to write down about knowledge and wisdom; they are chiefly out of the Proverbs, though many more might be added to them out of all the books in the Bible."

"And we will look for those other texts, and do as you told us before tea," said Charles.

Then Mrs. Hill brought out her texts, and showed them to the children, and they were very much pleased.

“I will put them down for you by and by.” And Mrs. Hill promised that she would provide blank books for them against another day, “and when you write down the texts;” she said, “you must remember what I heard a young gentleman say, who had just taken what are called honours at the university.”

“And what was that?” asked Charles.

“That nothing made young men study so well, and get on so well with their books, as having true religion in their hearts.”

“That was very nice,” said Charles.

Then Mrs. Hill taught the children a little prayer about knowledge and wisdom; to be used by children before lesson-time, or any other occasion of improvement; and she showed them also some pretty verses in rhyme.

When all this was finished, bed-time for Charles and Frederick was come; but before the children said good night, Mrs. Hill told them that she was pleased with the attention Frederick had paid to her instruction that evening, and that she did hope he would behave himself properly if she took him to visit the old lady, and therefore she should write to

accept her invitation for the next holiday. Charles and Frederick were very much delighted indeed with this, and thanked Mrs. Hill with all their hearts, and they went to bed the better, it is hoped, for this pleasant evening, and the account they had heard of Martin.

And now there is not much more to say, than that a note was written to the old lady, and, that when the next holiday came, Mrs. Hill took both the little boys to her pleasant house, and before they went, the prayer I have spoken of was used by both the children of their own accord.

There would not be room to tell all that passed on that occasion; how fast the parrot talked, and how the cockatoo took biscuit from Frederick; or of the many curious things from different quarters of the world, which were shown to the children. And how wisely and seasonably both the children questioned the old lady about distant countries, and their different habits and productions. And how this good lady tried in her replies to give the children the knowledge they were seeking, and also to fill their minds with

desires to do good, as far as might ever lie in their power, to the poor ignorant people who lived in some of those distant countries.

Frederick behaved very well during the whole of the evening, and the lady was very kind to him, and gave to him, as well as to Charles, a very nice and useful book. They both returned home wiser for the knowledge they had gained. This knowledge had not made them conceited, but it had been given them in such a way as to do good to their hearts, as well as their understandings.

It is to be hoped that Frederick will never forget what Mrs. Hill tried to teach him about the right and wrong way of getting knowledge, and that both he and Charles will put to a good use all the knowledge they do gain. Knowledge, like riches, is a talent we must answer for, and not employ only for ourselves. And it is to be hoped that they will remember that the most valuable knowledge, and that which excels all other knowledge, as the sun outshines the stars, is the knowledge which makes us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE ABOUT KNOWLEDGE
AND WISDOM.

The Lord giveth wisdom : out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding, Prov. ii. 6.

There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord, Prov. xxi. 30.

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips, Prov. xvi. 23.

Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right, Prov. xx. 11.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge, Prov. xix. 27.

Be not wise in thine own eyes ; fear the Lord, and depart from evil, Prov. iii. 7.

Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge, Prov. xxii. 17.

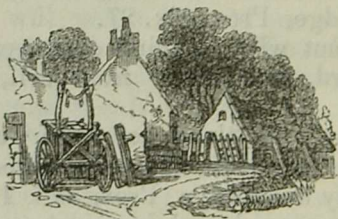
Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end, Prov. xix. 20.

Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way, Psalm cxix. 104.

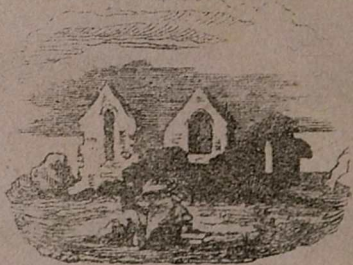
The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple, Psalm xix. 7.

From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. iii. 15.

They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever, Daniel xii. 3.



37131 039 910 385



THIS is the way to know the Lord,
And this will please him too,
To hear and read his holy word,
That tells us what to do.

He lives in heaven, and does not need
Such little ones as we ;
But God is very kind indeed,
And even cares for me.

Then let me love him for his care,
And love his holy word,
Because he teaches children there
To know and please the Lord,