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The thief who does not get an opportunity of stealing considers himself an honest man.

Do not despise any man, or consider anything impossible: for every one has his time, and everything has its place.

You will avoid evil if you remember three things: where you came from, whither you are going, and before whom you will be judged.

The tyrant, the liar, the hypocrite, and the scandal-monger have no standing in the house of eternal joy.

Worship is not the raising of the voice in prayer, but the uplifting of the soul to heaven.

The worst trouble is always the present one.

Do what is right and throw it into the sea. (It will float, and righteousness will ultimately prevail.)

Teach your tongue to say, 'I don't know.'

Hospitality is a part of Divine service.

Don't go to an auction if you have nothing to spend (avoid temptation).

He who increases his flesh increases food for worms.

Be reverent to those above you; gracious to those beneath you, and faithful to all.

Silence is the wall that surrounds wisdom.

Consider not 'who spoke?' but what was spoken.

Whoso knows himself and knows his Lord, evil will not easily prevail against him.

The sin of laziness is like that of idolatry.

There is a vast difference between the man who is ashamed before himself, and the man who is only ashamed before others.

He who eats and drinks without thanking God deserves the punishment of a thief.

Whoever puts a stumbling-block in the path of another is far from the gates of Paradise.

The good deeds that you do in this life take on personality and follow you into the next.

In the Study.

Jael.

A Study in Early Ethics.

'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.'—Jg 5^{24}.

In the study of the Old Testament it is of the highest importance to remember that the revelation of God was a gradual process. It is true that under the Jewish dispensation there was a lower standard of religious perfection altogether than under the Christian. This is proved by innumerable facts in the Old Testament history that even the greatest of those of whom we read, prophets, priests, or kings, were in many respects not enlightened beyond their time, so that even the least in the kingdom of Christ is greater than they. But, more than that, there was a different standard at different times, according to the growth of the knowledge of the true God and His righteousness. If, therefore, we are to understand the character of Jael and to form a right judgment upon her famous act, we must know something of the particular period of the history of Israel in which she lived.

What do we find to be the moral features of Hebrew society in the period of the judges? Did any decisive changes take place in the community of Israel which would tend to develop the national and individual conscience, and make it a controlling force in speech and act as between Hebrew and Hebrew, and Hebrew and foreigner? Were the three prime qualities, rectitude, chastity, and magnanimity, largely exemplified? How did the occupations of the people and their general social environment affect them? It must be confessed that the virtues most likely to be encouraged were those of the heroic or semi-barbarous type. Courage, endurance, fidelity to clan, family, and companions in arms, must have been often and signally displayed. The long struggle with the native Canaanites, over wide areas or in isolated holdings, for the possession of fortresses, fertile valleys and plains, vineyards and olive groves, or with various swarms of foreign invaders, played a principal part in moulding the Hebrew temper into strength, elasticity, and hardness. It was this discipline that gave to Israel the resisting and recuperative power which was and is the marvel of the ancient and the modern world.

Not very much can be said of influences favour-

able to the development of the rarer and more precious moral endowments of a people. In a community trained to irregular warfare, swift reprisal, deadly revenge, little stimulus could be afforded to any latent or incipient openness or candour which might have been educed in the more peaceful occupations of earlier days. Ehud (Jg 3) can be a moral hero only to those who hold that no means are reprehensible which can secure a desirable end.

I.

1. Jael was by birth and associations as well as in feeling and instinct a true child of the desert. Of the moral law as revealed to Israel she would have known little or nothing. Certain instincts of right and wrong no doubt she had; but they were shaped, cramped, dominated, perverted, by the traditions of her race and tribe. Her ideas of murder and treachery were not ours; they were not even those of average civilized communities in the heathen world: they were in keeping with the fierce, wild, wandering life of a savage tribe, living by force and upon sufferance on the outer confines of an early civilization.

Jael's husband, Heber the Kenite, was chief of a band of Bedouins, as we should now call them, who had parted from their fellows in the southern desert and had pitched their tents in the upland valley of Zaanaim, near Kedesh-Naphtali. This movement was probably due to their wish to associate themselves as far as they might with Israel, as the people who had the fullest knowledge of him whose name they had learned from their own ancestor Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses.

No doubt this tie of blood, such as it was, would have recommended them to the Israelite garrison of the neighbouring stronghold of Kedesh-Naphtali; and, on the other hand, Jabin had enough on his hands to wish, if he could, to be on good terms with an Arab tribe in his neighbourhood, which could easily have given him trouble; so that there was in this sense peace between Heber the Kenite and Jabin the King of Canaan.

2. Briefly told, Jael's story is this: Sisera, when he fled from the battlefield, sought refuge in Heber's encampment, knowing that he was in alliance with Jabin, his master. Jael, his wife, invited him into her own tent, and there assassinated him in cold blood, after she had disarmed all suspicion by a succession of friendly acts of hospitality.

¶ An incident which happened to me may explain why Heber was found upon this plain at the time of the battle. With a guide from Nazareth, I once crossed the lower part of Esdraelon in the winter. It was then full of Arab tents, and at first I felt a little nervous, but my guide assured me there was no danger, for he was well acquainted with those Arabs. Their home was in the mountains north of Nazareth, towards Safed, and they only came down there to pass the cold months of winter. This was the very thing, I suppose, that Heber and his tribe of Kenites did in the days of Jael. None of the Bedawin women I saw that day seemed at all heroic, though some of them looked as if they could drive a nail into the temple of a sleeping enemy.[1]

II.

1. Jael's deed is to be judged, not by itself in the abstract, still less by the light of the Gospel, but in reference to the code under which she lived, in reference to the knowledge of the Divine will then published among men; and so judged, it is not requisite that it should have been free from all blame in order to obtain praise. The presence of much that is evil would not be a bar to her gaining the lofty commendation, 'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.'

¶ Do we count cunning and falsehood and cruelty sinful in the dweller in wild woods? Is the Arab of the waste a criminal because he is a robber, because he has fits of uncontrolled animal emotion, like an ignorant, passionate child? Do we blame lust in a monkey, or murder when done by a dog?

Has the reader ever watched a dog hunt down and kill another dog in wantonness or jealousy? I have seen it done. Straight as an arrow she flew, a quarter of a mile across the grass; there was no fight, scarcely a movement of resistance, as she overtook her victim and pinned her to the earth; driving her great teeth into the other's windpipe and holding them there till breathing had ceased. It was mere murder. And she came to me immediately afterwards, tingling with satisfaction in every nerve, with no trace of uneasiness or remorse, plainly expecting that I would sing over her deed just such a song as Deborah sang over the deed of Jael.[2]

2. The disgraceful treachery of Jael has been thought to be palliated by the sacred historian, and it has been supposed that Christians were bound to defend it. No such necessity is laid upon us. The act was utterly indefensible, and was rendered more completely so because it is an Eastern custom,

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, 217.

[2] W. J. Clennell, *The Historical Development of Religion in China*, 34.

and no doubt was so in the days of Jael—a custom which scarcely the most treacherous and unprincipled Arab ever fails to observe—that any one who has partaken food under a man's roof is safe from molestation, at least as long as that roof shelters him. We recall the scene in Scott's *Talisman*, where Saladin is made to say, 'Had he murdered my father, and afterwards partaken of my food and my bowl, not a hair of his head could have been injured by me.'

¶ The Bedawin have always been celebrated for their hospitality, a quality rendered all the more conspicuous by their dishonesty, treachery, and cruelty. Their oral laws or customs are very stringent on this subject, so much so that men who are liable to suffer from the revenge of individuals escape harm by contriving, for instance, to eat bread and salt in the tents of their enemy. The ideas entertained by these people respecting the duty of hospitality interpose a great and salutary check upon their lawless propensities, and especially upon that law of retaliation which requires the nearest relation of a murdered man to avenge his death upon his murderer, thus engendering 'blood feuds,' which often last for a generation. Indeed, were it not for the powerful influence of this tent law of hospitality, the desert could not be trodden, most of the year, by any but the Arabs themselves.

The Arab, however, is passionate, and under the influence of anger or hatred will sometimes break the laws of hospitality, and even trample upon the most solemn oaths.

Take, for instance, the story of Sofuk, the sheikh of the great tribe of the Shammar. He had been a noted chief of the tribe for many years, obtaining the title of King of the Desert, and having strengthened his influence by carrying off and marrying Amsha, the daughter of Hassan, sheikh of the Tai, who had been the theme of Arab poets for her beauty and her noble blood. Sofuk's conduct toward his adherents growing more and more tyrannical, they gradually left him, and pitched their tents around that of his cousin, Nejris. He could not brook this humiliation, and employed expostulation, violence, and every wile, but all in vain; nothing could induce the wild children of the desert to return to his authority. He invited Nejris to an interview; but as the latter could not trust his treacherous rival, he sent him his son, Ferhan, to whom he pledged himself by solemn oath that no harm was intended. Nejris, to show his confidence in Ferhan, declared that he would accompany him alone, upon his mare, to his father's tent. They had scarcely reached it, however, when they both clearly saw the treachery about to be perpetrated. The tent was filled with blood-thirsty adherents of Sofuk, whom he had called together to aid him in consummating the work of revenge. Nejris was no sooner seated than Sofuk began to address him with invectives, to which he fearlessly responded. Upon this Sofuk sprang to his feet, and, drawing his sword, rushed upon him. Nejris, unarmed, cast himself upon the protection of an uncle, who had the baseness to hold him down while Sofuk cut his throat. Ferhan nearly lost his life at the hand of his infuriated father in the vain attempt to save his relative and guest. He now stood at the door of the tent rending his garments, and calling down curses upon the head of his father for violating the laws of hospitality, and the latter was with difficulty prevented from striking him down with his reeking sword. The Shammar were not won back to Sofuk by this act of treachery, and he, ere long, himself fell a victim to the arts he had employed to destroy his rival. He was murdered by a party of Turkish soldiers, sent ostensibly to aid him, and his head was carried in triumph to the Pasha of Bagdad.[1]

She stood, the mother-snake, before her tent,
She feigned a piteous dew in her false eyes,
She made her low voice gentle as a bird's,
She drew the noble weary captain in;
Her guest beneath the shelter of her home,
He laid him down to rest and had no fear.
The sacred old alliance with her clan,
The trustful calm immunity of sleep,
Sealing security each more secure.
Ah, surely, he was safe if anywhere
Beneath the mantle which she laid for him.
He was too noble to mistrust her much;
His fading sense felt her insidious arm
Folding him warmly. Then he slept—she rose,
Slid like a snake across the tent—struck twice—
And stung him dead.[2]

III.

1. What motive had Jael for doing what she did? The instinct of self-preservation has been suggested as a motive. To understand this, we must imagine the circumstances in which she found herself. Jabin, with whom her husband, in violation of long-cherished ties, had made an alliance, was utterly defeated; his general was flying in haste from the field of battle. The victorious Israelites under Barak and Deborah were in hot pursuit; they knew well the part that Heber had played, in their eyes a most perfidious part; she feared that he must pay the penalty for his crime unless something desperate was done to avert it.

Barak would soon be upon them, for their camp was right in his way, and she was certain that, once in his grasp, all his anger and indignation would break out against the man who had deserted him, and she and her husband and all that they had would be utterly exterminated. So on the impulse of the moment she conceived the horrible idea of murdering the guest to whom she had offered every token of hospitality and friendship. It was the only thing to save her life. Barak's hostility, she felt, would be disarmed, if only she could satisfy him that, repenting of having joined Jabin, she had done all that she could to atone for

[1] H. J. Van-Lennep, *Bible Lands and Customs*, 410.
[2] John Leicester Warren.

the treason of her house; she had slain Sisera, and had done it with her own hand. And we can imagine the confidence with which she went out to meet Barak: 'Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest.'

If this be the right interpretation, it was a most revolting act; and it was perpetrated, not, as is so often said, out of zeal for God's people, not from any high motive that can be legitimately imagined, but simply for personal safety.

2. But a higher motive has been suggested. Israel was then a free community, which existed for the good of all its members. This was a striking contrast to every other national constitution in the world. Suppose that this surprising and important fact was present to the mind of Jael, together with the knowledge that this people professed to be the receptacle of a special Divine promise, which gave them an inalienable right to the land of Canaan. She believed that Israel represented the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, and that the Canaanite represented the cause of evil. She believed that the Canaanitish rule was a curse, a scandal which cried aloud for removal, and that it was the design of an avenging and a compassionate Providence that this plague should be extinguished. Well, God had just crowned the courageous effort of Israel with success, a great battle had been won; and now the flying Canaanite leader is brought by an apparent chance into her very tent; he is in her power, and she can 'bruise the head' of the corrupt race, and destroy the Canaanites in their chief. She immediately pronounces it to be an opportunity put in her way by Providence—that Providence which plainly designed that this sacred race should possess the land in the place of the old stock. She kills Sisera as an enemy of God.

¶ 'Have you heard the earth crying?' said Vassily Vassilitch.

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'Why,' said he, 'I've heard her crying as I lay in the grass, with my ear to the ground. I heard her. Like this, oo-m, oo-m, oo-m. It was the time the soldiers were being mobilised and women were sobbing in every cottage and in every turning of the road, so it may only have been that I heard. But it seemed to me the earth herself was crying, so gently, so sadly that my own heart ached.'[1]

3. Lastly, it has been said that in forming our estimate of Jael's act, we must remember who the person she put to death *was*. He was not a common Canaanite, but the Canaanitish general and leader, especially the mark of the Divine wrath; and against whom principally, as the representative of the Canaanitish power, the thunderbolt was aimed and the decree of destruction sent forth—'I will deliver *him* into thine hand.' He was not even an ordinary Canaanitish leader. There is evidently something extraordinary about this man, Sisera. It must strike any reader as remarkable that we hear nothing about Jabin personally in this war. He takes no part, he does not appear on the scene, and is a cypher; while the man who does all and wields the whole force of the Canaanitish kingdom is, as far as appearance goes, a private person, who has risen to extraordinary power and to the head of the army. Jabin is a nullity; Jabin's general is everything. To kill the general Sisera is less awful than if she had killed King Jabin himself; and at the same time it has rid the land of an aggressive and ruthless man, to whom war was a cruel and ready instrument of his ambition.

¶ When the news of the Cawnpore massacre reached England, Lord Macaulay, a man as humane as he was just, wrote thus in his diary: 'It is painful to be so revengeful as I feel myself. I, who cannot bear to see a beast or bird in pain, could look on without winking while Nana Sahib underwent all the tortures of Ravaillac.'[2]

¶ In the person of the Primate Sharp was incarnated for the extreme Presbyterians all that was impious against heaven and detestable in the sight of man. At a time when passions were inspired and distorted by religious exaltation, it was in the nature of things that some wilder spirits should deem his destruction to be but the just judgment of heaven. Yet in this case it was not as in that of Cardinal Beaton: his death was not the result of careful premeditation but of convenient opportunity interpreted as a divine sanction by religious frenzy and the bitterness of hate. On the 3rd of May Sharp was returning from Edinburgh, and, seated in his coach with his daughter, had reached Magus Muir, some two miles from St. Andrews. That day twelve men, including David Hackston of Rathillet and John Balfour of Kinloch, all outlawed for their religion, had been diligently seeking one Carmichael, an agent of Sharp's who had made himself peculiarly obnoxious in Fife. Carmichael had received a hint of their intentions and had bestowed himself safely; but, just when the twelve began to despair of finding their victim, they received information that the arch-enemy himself was at hand. With one mind they hailed his appearance as a divine interposition. They came up with the coach, and made their work more ghastly by the very frenzy of their ecstasy. Successive shots fired into the carriage failed to execute their purpose, and at length dragging him forth,

[1] Stephen Graham, *The Fiery Cross*, 92.

[2] G. W. E. Russell, *The Spirit of England*, 42.

amid the pitiful outcries of himself and his daughter, they cut at him with their swords and finished their work of pious atrocity.[1]

IV.

The Poetic Version.

In the light of the last view the poetic version of the story becomes intelligible. Although highly coloured, it expresses in the liveliest terms the triumphant feeling of patriotic Israelites at the death of their mighty oppressor.

1. All critics are agreed upon the antiquity of the poetical version; indeed there is nothing in the Old Testament of the same extent and integrity which can be placed earlier. The style and language, equally with the subject-matter, belong to an archaic age; the religious temper and the political situation are both those of the period of the Judges; and the whole song glows with the passionate enthusiasm of a poet who was keenly interested, and perhaps took part, in the heroic deeds of which he sings. The antiquity of the poem, then, may be taken for granted, and its value as historical evidence must be admitted at the same time.

A woman had successfully initiated the war, and a woman brings it to a triumphant conclusion. Jael, by a bold stratagem, slays Sisera as he stands drinking in her tent.

The Hebrew patriot could not tell of such deeds in bare prose. The recollection of that eventful day stirred her to praise Jehovah and recount the victory in passionate song. Thus we have preserved to us not only the finest ode in Hebrew literature, but also the most venerable authority for a page in the history of ancient Israel.

¶ The Poet is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of differences of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs; in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.[2]

2. But what is the moral standard which Deborah acknowledges when she praises the act of Jael, and according to what standard is her praise given? It is evident that this makes all the difference in the nature of the praise, and upon the question whether it was praise in the fullest sense or not. This praise is obviously given, then, according to the standard of the time, as involved in the dispensation of the time, publicly received in the Israelitish body of that day as a religious community. This was the only standard which was known to Deborah; and it was impossible that she should give her praise upon any other.

The revelation which is made in Scripture is made up of different dispensations; and different successive manifestations of God's will and character. The only dispensation which was known to Deborah was the dispensation under which she lived—the dispensation under which the Israelites established themselves in Canaan. But this dispensation was in no disagreement whatever with the estimate of the act of Jael as a virtuous and a right act. It was a dispensation which supposed a defective state of moral ideas in the people, and which required for its own reception an erroneous standard of morals. The praise therefore bestowed under that dispensation upon a particular act did not imply moral correctness, according to a universal standard, in that act; did not satisfy the Bible as a whole, because it satisfied a part of the Bible. Deborah represented the dispensation of the time, and Jael satisfied the dispensation of the time. Deborah's praise, therefore, was worthily given; but it did not imply its being given according to a universal standard.

¶ Of Jael, Mary Slessor says, 'not a womanly woman, a sorry story; would God not have showed her a better way if she had asked?' And of part of Deborah's song she remarks, 'Fine poetry, poor morality.'[3]

¶ John Bright was once walking with one of his sons—then a schoolboy—past the Guards' Monument in Waterloo-place. The boy caught sight of the solitary word 'CRIMEA' inscribed on the base, and asked his father what it meant. Bright's answer was as emphatic as the inscription: 'A crime.' It was indeed a crime, a grave, a disastrous, and a wanton crime, that committed Christian England to a war in defence of the great anti-Christian Power. 'I have never,' said George Anthony Denison, in *Notes of My Life*, 'I have never forgotten the day when I saw the Cross and the Crescent on the same flag in the streets of London . . . With whom remained the honours of the Crimean War? With whom the substantial success? I believe both to have remained with Russia. On one side was Russia; on the other, England, France, Italy, and Turkey. Russia could not save her city, but she saved her honour, and was content to wait, and bide her time.' Now that, sixty years later, we are fighting side by side with Russia, it is a pleasure to recall those words.[4]

[1] P. Hume Brown, *History of Scotland*, ii. 321.
[2] W. Wordsworth.
[3] *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, 299.
[4] G. W. E. Russell, *The Spirit of England*, 28.

3. If it were certain that the words, 'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent,' were spoken by one who was inspired in this, as in other utterances, to express the mind of God, we should have no alternative but to bow the head in submission before an unintelligible mystery; unintelligible because to our finite mind it certainly involved a grave contradiction to what is elsewhere revealed about the Divine character. But there are reasons which seem to justify us in believing that it is not necessary to assume such an attitude for the right understanding of the benediction.

There is another interpretation of Deborah's prediction, which, if it can be maintained, entirely removes the necessity of justifying her in saying that Jael would be blessed for her deed; for Deborah is only expressing her conviction that Jael would earn the lasting gratitude and benediction of the women, whose maternal instincts had been ruthlessly outraged by the scourge from whom by her assassination she had delivered their country. There was not a woman in the land who would not rejoice that she had avenged their shame and wrong. In the eyes of every 'mother in Israel' Sisera was the incarnation of lust and rapine; hated and dreaded, not because he had laid waste their husbands' fields or burned their houses and plundered their cattle, but because in every incursion he had seized their daughters, and, as we said, carried them off for a life of degradation and dishonour. We know how 'the mother of Sisera,' in her son's harem, 'looked out of her window' for his triumphant return; how she and her attendants wondered whether he had failed to carry off the Jewish maidens for his soldiers. 'Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two?' This it was that stirred the righteous indignation of the mothers in Israel, and made Deborah sure that every woman in the land would honour the memory of Sisera's murderess; and we need feel no surprise, provided she was only giving vent to a woman's feelings, under the circumstances we have described, at hearing her declare that 'Jael should be blessed by the women in the tent.'

I of the bleeding heart, bent head, and stricken tongue,
Old, old with years, and honours, and despairs,
Watch them go forth to fight and die, last heirs
And children of my womb, the happy young.
I took the challenge, by the oppressors flung,
I and my peers,—and far my beacon flares,
'Up, up, ye lion cubs, from out your lairs!'
Wide o'er the world my cry of need has rung.

They came, my splendid daughters—to the fray—
India and Australasia and the Isles,
Swart Afric, and my swift cold Canada—
With ardour, and with laughter and with smiles;
And, though my every son of Britain fall,
With these no man shall hold me as a thrall.[1]

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Virginibus Puerisque.

I.

Flitting.

'And the children of Israel removed.'—Nu $33^{5f.}$.
'Here we have no continuing city.'—He 13^{14}.

1. What a month May is! It brings everything with it to make us happy—the new green dresses of the trees, nest building, the singing of the blackbird, the apple blossom, lovely spring flowers. Then we have only to get away out to the country fields to feel all the delicious scents of Nature. In May, too, it is long daylight; and every boy and girl knows that no outdoor games are so enjoyable as those they play in the early summer evenings after their lessons are learnt. We grown-up people

[1] Dorothy Frances Gurney, in *The Fiery Cross*, 37.

can remember the glorious fun of our Saturdays in May. Truly, the world may be a very delightful place to live in.

2. But May brings more than flowers. It brings something that mother does not like—the furniture wagon. Going along a city street on the 28th of the month, you see here and there collections of house furniture on the pavement, ready to be put into a covered wagon or on to a cart. If we were allowed inside any of the houses from which furniture is being carried, we should in all probability see the mother looking very worried indeed, while the boys of the family might be enjoying themselves to the full outside—I once saw quite a crowd of little fellows riding on the shafts of a furniture wagon.

One special circumstance I remember in connection with a flitting-day was hearing a caged blackbird singing most beautifully. The cage was hung in an open window—a window belonging to the very house where a flitting was going on. But you may be sure the mother there would have no ears for the lovely song; and I believe she would forget there was such a thing as apple-blossom in the garden and may-blossom down by the river. No mother likes flitting day.

3. There are some beautiful stories about removals in the Bible. You remember how Abraham had to flit—first from Ur of the Chaldees, and then from Haran. I believe he felt a sort of calm happiness the morning he left Haran. He had heard the voice of God saying—'Get thee out of thy country.' Sarai would be the one to feel sorry; an eastern woman loves her home, even if that home should only be a tent. Afterwards, the children of Israel removed very often. Their flittings must have been easy, for they had very little furniture, and they were full of hope. They were flitting from a place where they had been oppressed to a land where they were promised freedom. I can imagine the mothers amongst *them* being pleased. Every other day they would be seeing some new place. Even when they were really making very little progress the moving about gave them the impression that somehow they were getting on. In these cases flitting was part of God's plan.

A flitting may mean something very serious, even to you boys and girls. It is a common thing for children to have to go to a new school if their parents flit. Some of you may already know what this means. At first the new school seemed very interesting; but one day you found yourself in trouble; you looked round for your old chum, and he wasn't there. How you missed him; for you used to tell him all your secrets. The boys in the playground too seemed altogether different from your old classmates. Some of them, you felt, were better than yourself. But all the time your heart was elsewhere.

4. We are all meant to flit. Flitting is a law of life. April goes to May, May to June, and so on. And we are not even allowed to remain in this world. I know a very lovely story about the last flitting of all. It was told of an old woman called Janet. She lived in a lonely hut on a Scottish moor, and was dying at last. She breathed heavily and, it seemed, painfully. Her brown old Bible lay open on the counterpane. The minister came just in time. 'And hoo is't wi' ye the noo, Janet?' he enquired, bending over her wrinkled but radiant face. 'It's a' weel, it's bonnie,' she cried; 'but, man, I'm *a wee confused wi' the flittin'*'! What a blessing it would be if every one of us felt like that when it was time to go. With old Janet death was just like the flutter and worry of a house-flitting. Boys and girls, if we have God as our friend, why should it be otherwise with us?

II.

The Right Kind of Feet.

'He speaketh with his feet.'—Pr 6^{13}.
'Feet was I to the lame.'—Job 29^{15}.

To-day I am going to talk about the right kind of feet; and this time we have two texts, one in Proverbs and the other in Job. We shall take the text in Proverbs first—'He speaketh with his feet.'

At first sight I am sure you will think this is a very queer text. The writer of the verse seems to have got hold of things by the wrong end. You would have expected him to say, 'He speaketh with his mouth,' or 'He speaketh with his tongue.' If he had written, 'He speaketh with his eyes,' you would have seen some sense in it, for people, you know, can say a lot by a glance; or if he had told us, 'He speaketh with his hands,' you would not have been surprised, because you have seen people who are deaf and dumb talk with their fingers; but how can any one speak with their feet?

If you look back to the twelfth verse you will see

who 'he' is. He is the 'naughty person,' and he makes signs to his accomplices by 'shuffling'—as the margin of the revised version tells us—with his feet. The shuffle is a sort of agreed signal between them, and when they hear it his friends know what he means to say just as well as if he had spoken so many words.

But it isn't only the 'naughty person' who speaks with his feet. We all speak with our feet every day of our lives; in fact our feet really give away quite a number of secrets about us.

1. First, our feet tell *who we are*. Have you ever noticed that you can often know who has come into a room or who is going upstairs just by the sound of the step. Even shoes sometimes tell tales. When Robert Louis Stevenson was a boy he sometimes went to visit his grandfather at the Manse of Colinton, near Edinburgh. There he used to meet some jolly cousins, and the children had great times together in the manse garden. But the old grandfather was very strict and very particular that no footprints should be left on the flower-beds. It was whispered that every night he went round examining the little muddy shoes which had been left out to be cleaned, and that he was ready to fit them into any tracks which had been left in the flower-beds. So the children were very careful where they stepped.

2. Another way in which our feet speak is by telling *what we are feeling*. When we are happy they skip and run, when we are sad and dull, or unwilling to go to school, they drag. When we are angry they stamp.

3. Again, our feet tell *our characters*. I know the boy who is aimless and lazy by his loitering step. I know the boy who has a purpose in life, and means to be a man, by the way he puts down his feet.

Now, if our feet give away so many secrets about us, it is very important that we should have the right kind of feet. What are your feet saying about you?

Well, I hope they are *firm feet*—feet that tell that you know your own mind and that you won't be easily made to go just wherever any foolish companion wants you to go.

I hope they are *swift feet*—feet that are ready to run on a moment's notice and to come back in the shortest possible time.

And I hope they are *reverent feet*—feet that tread softly in God's house, or where there is sorrow or pain.

But, most of all, I hope they are *helpful feet*—and that is why I have chosen the second text, 'Feet was I to the lame.'

It was Job who spoke these words. You know he was a man who had had a great many troubles and had lost his children and his possessions. He was looking back to the days of his prosperity, and one of the things he was able to say about himself was that he had been feet to the lame.

Now what did he mean by that? Well, I think he just meant that he had helped the lame people to get what they wanted: when they couldn't run, he had run for them: he had helped lame dogs over stiles.

There are lots of lame dogs going about the world. Not only are there those who have lost a limb or lost the power of a limb, but there are the old people who are too frail to run and who need young feet to run for them. And there are people who are lame in other ways. There are people who are stupid: we can help them to understand their difficulties. There are people who find it very hard to be good: we can make it a little easier for them by believing the best that is in them. There are those who are sad or sorry or sick: we can help them to bear their pain by trying to cheer them.

Two thousand years ago there lived a Man in Galilee who went about doing good, and of Him it might be truly said that He was 'feet to the lame.'

Wherever He went sick people became well, sad people became glad, sinful people good, and weak people became strong. And at last He went where no one else could go, because He alone of all that dwelt on earth could walk aright. He went to Calvary so that we, who were lamed by sin, might henceforth be able to walk straight.

We can never have the 'right kind of feet' until Jesus takes our poor crooked, sin-spoiled feet in His hands and makes them whole, and we can never be sure we are walking in the right path until we ask Him to direct our ways.

III.

Another volume of nature studies appears this month. Its title is *Nature Talks for Primary Workers* (Allenson; 1s. net). The author is May Coley. Let us give the first of all the talks by way of example.

A Story about Baby Leaf-Buds.

'Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top.'

Objects for Demonstration.—A picture of a Baby in a cradle. A twig taken from a Beech tree in January, showing the spiral leaf-buds. A leaf-bud opened and showing the golden-brown scales, and the tiny, silky green leaf within. A picture of a tree in spring or summer-time.

Once upon a time it was cold and windy just as it is to-day; oh, so cold, and oh, so windy!

'Need I go out, mother?' said Molly. 'It's so cold, and I'm not very big. I think the wind will blow me away.'

Then mother laughed. 'Oh no, the wind will help you to grow strong, and so will the cold. Run and fetch your warm coat and cap, and I'll take you for a lovely walk and—I'll tell you a story. But first I must put baby to bed.'

'Hush-a-bye, baby,' sang mother, and as the tiny eyelids closed she put baby into his cot and off he went to bye-bye.

'It must be so warm in a cradle,' said Molly.

'Yes, it is,' mother answered, 'and I'm going to tell you about the cosy little cradles in the trees, where the tiny baby leaves lie asleep.'

Should you like to hear the story Molly listened to? Ah, yes, I know you would. All your dear little eyes are saying, 'Yes, please,' as well as your rosy lips.

Let's pretend we are going for a walk as Molly did. It is very cold and the trees are so brown and bare. Where have all the leaves gone? Why, the wind blew them away last autumn. They fell on the ground, the rain came and soaked them, and then they sank deeper into the earth, where the good little worms bite them up and turn them into more rich earth where flowers can grow.

Soon the bare trees will be covered with leaves. Where do they come from, these lovely new leaves? Look up into this Beech tree. 'I can't see any leaves,' you say. No, but what can you see?

'I can see lots of branches; big branches and little branches.'

Well, let me break off a little branch and show you. What are those funny little things at the tips of all the little stems? They are golden-brown, and shaped like slender, spiral shells. Can you guess what they are?

They are cradles! 'Cradles!' you say.

'Oh, what funny cradles. Then where's the baby?'

Well, the baby is inside, but it is wrapped up in so many blankets that we can't see it. Shall I take them off? I must do it with a pen-knife. I think we will call the outside covers the cradle, and the inside ones the blankets, though grown-up people call them all scales. Oh, dear, what a lot of brown blankets to wrap one little baby in! One, two, three, four, five, six. The cradle is smooth and shining, and that keeps the wet out, for the raindrops slide off it. The blankets keep the cold out. Whenever shall we get to the baby? Seven, eight, nine, ten. Can you count up to twenty, and more?

Ah, here's the baby—a little, tiny, baby leaf-spray, so pretty and so green. Oh, you lovely, lovely little baby! What pretty silvery hair you have. God has made you very lovely, and He has given you lots and lots of blankets and such a cosy cradle. You are a little leaf-spray wrapped up in scales. Look, children, there are lots of leaf-buds, lots of cradles on the branch. Look at the Beech tree. There are hundreds and hundreds of baby leaf-buds up there. Do you see how the wind shakes the branches? Let us sing a little song, something like mothers sing to their babies:

'Hush-a-bye leaf-buds on the tree-top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock.
Though the boughs bend you never will fall,
God watches over leaf-buds and all.'

Do you know who wakes the baby leaves and tells them when it is time to get up? God does. He sends the wind to rock the cradles, and then, in March and April, when the babies and the cradles have grown bigger, He will send the sun to kiss the babies awake. Then the blankets will fall to the ground and we shall be able to pick them up, and we shall look up into the trees and say, 'Happy birthday, little leaf-babies. We are so glad to see you. Thank you for waking up and making the bare trees so green and lovely.' If God takes such care of little leaf-babies, I'm sure He will take care of us.

Point and Illustration.

The Bishop of London has issued another volume. Its title is *The Potter and the Clay* (Wells Gardner; 2s. 6d. net). First there are eight good sermons with a wonderful amount of thinking and food for

thought in each of them, considering their shortness. Next there are three addresses to the Clergy, on 'Messengers,' 'Physicians,' and 'Fishers of Men.' Then there is an address to Girls, on 'What a Girl can do in a Day of God'; and an address to Boys, on 'The Effect of the Holy Ghost on Human Character.' And lastly there is an essay on 'The War and Religion.' And from first to last, whoever the auditor and whatever the subject, there is a fine combination of concreteness and imagination. The speaker touches reality—the reality of the War above all else—in every utterance; yet every utterance lifts the hard facts of the daily experience into the very presence of eternity and the eternal God.

The Bishop of London quotes poetry freely. And not only a verse—he has that on every second page—but whole long poems. We shall repeat two of his poems. The first appeared in the *Spectator*, the second was contributed by Mr. Barry Pain to the *Westminster Gazette*.

Christ in Flanders.

We had forgotten You, or very nearly—
You did not seem to touch us very nearly.
Of course we thought about You now and then,
Especially in any time of trouble:
We knew that You were good in time of trouble—
But we are very ordinary men.

And there were always other things to think of—
There's lots of things a man has got to think of—
His work, his home, his pleasure, and his wife;
And so we only thought of You on Sunday—
Sometimes, perhaps, not even on a Sunday—
Because there's always lots to fill one's life.

And, all the while, in street or lane or byway—
In country lane, in city street or byway—
You walked among us, and we did not see.
Your feet were bleeding as You walked our pavements—
How *did* we miss Your footprints on our pavements—
Can there be other folk as blind as we?

Now we remember, over here in Flanders—
(It isn't strange to think of You in Flanders)—
This hideous warfare seems to make things clear.
We never thought about You much in England—
But now that we are far away from England,
We have no doubts, we know that You are here.

You helped us pass the jest along the trenches—
Where, in cold blood, we waited in the trenches—
You touched its ribaldry and made it fine.
You stood beside us in our pain and weakness—
We're glad to think You understood our weakness;
Somehow it seems to help us not to whine.

We think about You kneeling in the Garden
Ah, God! the agony of that dread Garden—
We know You prayed for us upon the Cross.
If anything could make us glad to bear it,
'Twould be the knowledge that You willed to bear it—
Pain—death—the uttermost of human loss.

Though we forgot You, You will not forget us—
We feel so sure that You will not forget us—
But stay with us until this dream is past.
And so we ask for courage, strength, [and pardon—
Especially, I think, we ask for pardon—
And that You'll stand beside us to the last.

The Army of the Dead.

I dreamt that overhead
I saw in twilight grey
The Army of the Dead
Marching upon its way,
So still and passionless,
With faces so serene,
That scarcely could one guess
Such men in war had been.

No mark of hurt they bore,
Nor smoke, nor bloody stain;
Nor suffered any more
Famine, fatigue, or pain;
Nor any lust of hate
Now lingered in their eyes—
Who have fulfilled their fate,
Have lost all enmities.

A new and greater pride
So quenched the pride of race
That foes marched side by side
Who once fought face to face.
That ghostly army's plan
Knows but one race, one rod—
All nations there are Man,
And the one King is God.

No longer on their ears
The bugle's summons falls;
Beyond these tangled spheres
The Archangel's trumpet calls;
And by that trumpet led
Far up the exalted sky,
The Army of the Dead
Goes by, and still goes by.

Look upward, standing mute;
Salute!