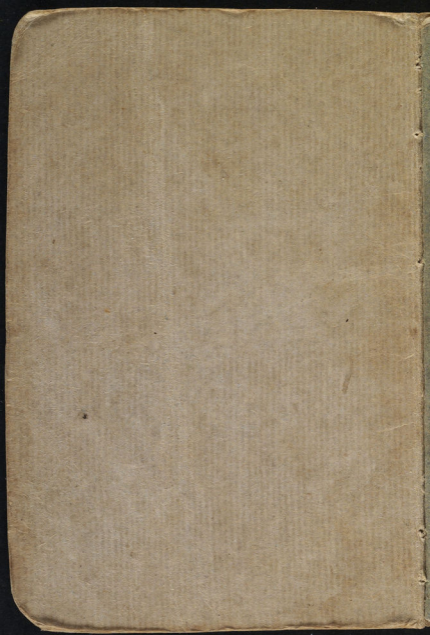


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THE

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LITTLE WOODMAN,

AND

HIS DOG CESAR

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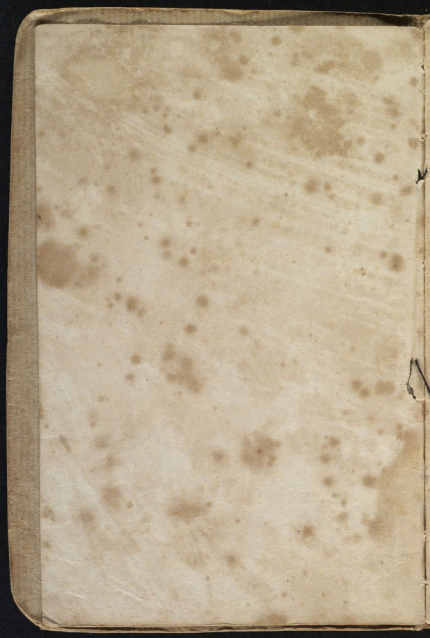
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Charles W. Perkins -

From his affectionate

son Samuel H. by

1828 -



THE
LITTLE WOODMAN,
AND HIS
DOG CÆSAR.

BY MRS. SHERWOOD,

Author of "Little Henry and his Bear," &c. &c.

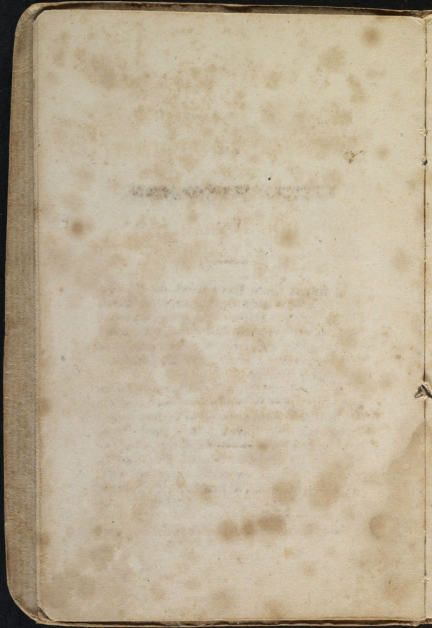
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THE
LITTLE WOODMAN,
Ec.

IN former times there lived, on the borders of a very wide forest, a certain wood-cutter, named Roger Hardfoot, who had seven sons. I cannot tell you the names of the six elder sons; but the youngest, who was born several years after his brothers, was called William.

The wood-cutter's wife died when William was very little: so the care of the boys was left to their father only. He was an industrious man, and gained a very good livelihood by cutting wood in the forest, and tying it up in faggots. These he carried to a small town at some distance; and with the money for which he sold them, he brought back such things as he had need of for himself and his family.

He made his sons also work with him; and,

as they were hearty lads, the elder ones soon became able to do almost as much as their father: so that the earnings of the family were very abundant, and they might have been very happy, had not that one thing been wanting without which no family can be happy. The wood-cutter was so sinful as to neglect to teach his children to serve God: and this was the more wicked, as he had himself been taught the word of God by his mother when he was a little boy.

But the wood-cutter neither thought of his Saviour nor of his poor mother's instructions, until God brought him to reflection by a dreadful accident. One day, while he and his sons were cutting down a tree in the forest, the tree fell upon him, and he was so dreadfully hurt, that he never was able to work any more. His hurt caused a disease which, by slow degrees, brought on his death. But while death was drawing on, he suffered great pain of body, and his mind was filled with many bitter thoughts: all the sins of his past life were set before him by the almighty power of God; particularly his neglect of his mother, who was a widow, and from whom he had run away many years ago. And now he began to remind his sons of their duty to God; often speaking to them of their Saviour, and of the world to come.

From day to day the poor dying woodman

earnestly besought his sons to turn to God; but they mocked at him, and would not hearken to him. He could now work for them no longer, nor provide them with what they wanted: so they followed their own business and pleasure, hardly taking care to furnish their sick father with common food or clothing. One only of all his sons took pity on him, and hearkened to his advice, and waited upon him. This was little William, his youngest child. He was just five years old at the time when the tree fell upon his father, and his heart was not yet grown hard, like the hearts of his brothers.

Fathers and mothers, you should lead your children to love God while they are little, and while their hearts are tender. And you, little children, lose no time, but give yourselves up to God before you become hard and stubborn, like William's brothers.

William was now the only comfort his poor father had in this world. When the wood-cutter lay sick upon his bed, William sat and watched beside him, and was always ready to bring him every thing that he wanted. And when his father crept out into the forest, which he sometimes was able to do, in order to take the air, William followed him; and when he sat down, this little boy sat by him; and when he knelt to pray,

little William knelt by him, and prayed with him as well as he could.

One day, when the woodman's eldest sons were gone out to steal deer in the forest, the woodman and his little boy sat at the door of their hut; while Cæsar, little Wil-



liam's dog, lay down at their feet. And as they sat together the woodman thus talked to his little boy:—

“Oh! my little child! my only comfort!” he said, “how wicked was I when your brothers were young like you, that I did not try to lead them to God! But that time is past, and I can do nothing for them now. They will not hearken to me; they turn against their dying father; and I deserve this treatment at their hands.”

“Why do you say that you deserve it, father?” said William.

“For many reasons, my dear boy. I was an undutiful son; and for this cause, if there were no other, I deserve to have undutiful children. My mother was a widow, and one who loved God. Her house is in this forest; but three or four long day’s journey from this place. I was her only child. She brought me up with the greatest care, and taught me early the word of God. But when I grew up I became a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God; so I ran away from my dear mother, and have never seen or heard of her since.”

“And is she alive?” said little William.

“Oh! my child, I do not know,” said the wood-cutter; “but whether she be alive or dead, I shall never see her again in this world. I only wish that she could know how deeply I repent of my sins; and that I have fled at length to the merits of a gracious Redeemer, as my only hope of being saved from everlasting punishment. And O, my sons! my sons! I pray for my sons in the bitterness of my soul: for as I was formerly a wicked son, so I have since been a wicked father. I neglected to teach my children the word of God while they were little; and now they despise me, turning a deaf ear to my instructions, and hardening their hearts against my reproofs!”

“But,” said William, “perhaps the Lord

Jesus Christ may change their hearts even now, father. Let us pray for them."

"Yes, my child! my comfort! my delight!" said the wood-cutter, "we will pray for them. Every day while I live I will pray for them. This is all I can now do for them."

So William and his father knelt together at the door of the hut, earnestly praying that God would, in his good time, change the hearts of the young men.

The wood-cutter did not live long after this discourse had passed between himself and his little son. In a few days he took to his bed, from which he never rose again. William now became more attentive to him than ever; and never left him but to fetch him water, and such things as he asked for. William sat by him, and Cæsar lay at his feet; and whenever the woodman was heard to lift up his voice in prayer, his little boy prayed with him.

On the morning of the day on which he died, he told his little boy that he trusted his prayers had been heard, and that his sins were forgiven him for his Saviour's sake. He then prayed earnestly for his elder sons; after which, kissing little William several times, he besought him to remember his Saviour in the days of his youth.

Towards evening, William's brothers came in with a deer which they had killed in the

forest, and a cask of brandy which they had bought from some travellers; when making a great fire in the hut, they roasted part of the venison, and opened their cask of brandy. They took no notice of their poor dying father, though they could not help knowing the state he was in. However, they invited William to come and feast with them; but this kind little boy would not leave his father. He sat beside him till he grew very drowsy, and then laying himself down by him on his bed, he fell asleep.

In the morning, when he awoke, he found his father quite dead, and his brothers lying asleep in different parts of the hut. So kissing his poor father, he sat crying by him till his brothers awoke.

But, not to make this story too long, I must tell you, that the young men buried their father, the day after his death, in a dark corner of the forest, not far from the hut. And when they had closed up the grave, and covered it with sod, they returned to the hut, leaving William and Cæsar sitting by the grave.

After returning to the hut, the young men sat down to regale themselves with the remainder of the venison and the brandy. And they began to plot mischief against their little brother, whom they sorely hated, because his ways were not like their ways. "We

must not keep him with us," said one of them, "lest, when we kill the king's deer, he should tell of our practices."

"But we will not kill him," said another, "lest his blood should rise up against us."

"Let us take him three days' journey into the forest," said a third, "and there suddenly leave him. He will then never come back to tell tales of his brothers."

"But we must take care to tie up Cæsar in the hut," said a fourth, "or we shall find him very troublesome. There will be no getting him away from the child."

"To-morrow," said the fifth brother, "we will set out. We will take an ass with us to carry the child; and we will go three long days' journey into the depths of the forest."

"But we must carefully conceal our purpose from the child," said the sixth, "that we may not be troubled with his cries."

So these wicked young men having settled their horrible plan, they got up early the next morning, and, preparing one of the strongest of their asses, they took their little brother out of his bed, and, hastily helping him to dress, set him upon the ass.

"Where are we going?" said William, who thought no evil.

"We are going," answered the elder bro-

ther, "three days' journey to hunt in the forest, and you are to go with us."

"What! hunt the king's deer?" said William.

His brothers made no answer, but looked at each other.

Cæsar was ready to follow the ass on which his little master rode, wagging his tail, and capering about, to show that he was in a hurry to be gone; but one of the brothers came with a cord, which he fastened round the poor dog's neck, and dragged him into the hut.

"May not Cæsar go with us?" said William.

"No," said the elder brother.

"But we shall be away several days; will you not leave him something to eat?" added William.

"Mind your own business, child," answered the brother: "we will take care of Cæsar."

So Cæsar was tied up in the hut; and all the brothers being now ready, they gave the ass a stroke with a stick, and began their journey into the forest.

They first went down a deep, dark path, where the trees were so thick that the light of heaven was almost shut out: then they began to ascend a steep hill, sometimes turning to the right, and sometimes to the

left. Thus they went on as fast as the ass could trot, pursuing their journey till noon; when they stopped under a large oak tree to feed the ass, and to take some refreshment themselves, which they had brought in leathern bags upon their backs.

After an hour's rest, they began their journey again, and went on till evening; when they came to a cave, in a deep hollow way, near which a spring of water gushed out of the rock. At the mouth of this cave the brothers lighted a fire, for fear of wild beasts, and having eaten their supper, they laid themselves down to sleep.

The next day they continued their journey into the depths of the forest, where they saw many deer, which peeped at them from among the underwood, and then ran away. At night they slept on a little circle of grass, which they found in an open part of the forest. But one of the brothers was obliged to watch all night, to keep up a large fire, which they had lighted for fear of the wolves, whom they heard all night howling and baying around them.

The next morning they began their last day's journey. The ass was much tired; but this, however, did not disturb these hard-hearted young men. They drove the poor creature forward without mercy, taking little rest, till they came, towards dusk, to a place

where four ways met. Here they halted, and having lighted a fire, they sat down to eat and drink.

“We have been travelling three days,” said little William; “are we now at our journey’s end?”

“Do you think we are come far enough?” said the elder brother, laughing.

“I do not know what you are come for, brother,” answered William.

“To steal the king’s deer,” replied the young man.

“But there are deer much nearer our hut than this place; why should you come so far to steal deer?”

“You will know soon enough,” was the only answer they returned.

So after they had eaten their supper, they all lay down to sleep; every one without saying his prayers, excepting little William, who, though he was much tired, fell upon his knees to pray. He joined his little hands, as he had been taught to do by his father, and called upon God, in the name of his Redeemer, to take care of him. “My father is dead,” said he to himself, “and my brothers speak roughly to me. I have no friend in this world to care for me. O my God! do thou take care of me, for my dear Saviour’s sake.”

When he had finished this prayer, he lay

down by the ass, and was falling asleep, when he fancied he heard these words: "*I will. Be not afraid.*" At this, he raised up his head, to see if any one spoke, but his brothers were all asleep about him, except the one who was watching the fire, who sat silently with his elbows upon his knees. Then the little boy thought that these words had been put into his mind by his heavenly Father; so he felt comforted, and lay down again to sleep.

Now little William was very much tired, and he slept so soundly, that he never heard his brothers move: for these wicked young men, got up before break of day, and, leading away the ass silently, went home, leaving William in a deep sleep upon the grass.

William continued to sleep, till the sun was high enough to shine hot upon him through the upper parts of the trees. Two birds singing in a branch above his head now awakened him; when he sat up, and looked round him. The ground was covered with flowers; and birds of various kinds were hopping about, singing and chirping among the trees. It was a lovely morning; and the leaves of the trees were scarcely moved by the gentle wind.

William at first could not recollect where he was, or how he came into that place.—

But when he perceived that his brothers were gone, and that he was left quite alone, he began to cry bitterly, and to call out aloud for his brothers. His voice sounded through the wood, but no answer was returned. His brothers were already many miles distant from him.

“Oh! my brothers! my cruel brothers!” said William, “did you bring me here in order to leave me in this place? Oh! my father! my poor father! could you now see your little boy, how grieved you would be! But you are happy. I hope you are with God. Yet though you cannot see me, God can see me; and he will pity me, and take care of me. If the wild beasts should eat my body, my soul will go to heaven. My Saviour will pity me. I am a sinful little boy; but my Saviour came to die for sinners.”

Then little William did what all children should do in trouble; he knelt down and prayed for God's help, and he prayed very earnestly.

After he had done praying, he thought that he would try to follow his brothers: but then he recollected, that as four ways met in that place, it would be impossible for him to know which way they went. He looked to see if there were any marks of fresh footsteps in any of the roads, but could not find any. He then returned to the place where he had

slept, and, sitting down on the grass, began to weep bitterly. But he never allowed a word of complaint to proceed out of his lips: only from time to time he prayed earnestly for help from heaven; and his prayers were always made in the name of his Saviour.

Sometimes it came into his mind that his brothers were only gone a hunting, and that they would come back again in the evening; and this made him unwilling to leave the place in which they had left him.

Towards mid-day, being very hungry and thirsty, he began to look carefully about for any bits or scraps of bread and meat which his brothers might have left on the grass. He found some, which he ate thankfully; and in searching among the bushes he met with a little spring of water, of which he drank and was refreshed.

Thus God provided him with a meal in the wilderness, where no man dwelt. So poor little William was very thankful, and his trust in God was made greater by this kindness.

My dear little children, when God sends you smaller blessings, be thankful for them. God loves a thankful heart. It is a sign of an humble mind; and God loves an humble mind; for it is written in the Bible, "God

resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble.”

And now the time of William's hardest trial came on; but his heavenly Father remembered him, and had provided a place of comfort for him. But you shall hear now it was.

As evening came on, the wood became more and more gloomy. The birds ceased to sing, and went to rest upon the boughs of the trees; the crickets chirped among the dry leaves; and great bats began to fly about, among the branches above his head. Poor little William began now to think how he should spend the night, and where he could be safe from the wild beasts; for he had given up all hopes of his brothers' return. He looked about for a tree into which he might climb, for he was not able to get into a very high one, being but a little boy. After some time he met with one, which he contrived to ascend, and among the branches of which he endeavoured to fix himself firmly. But he feared that he could not keep himself awake all night; though he did not dare to go to sleep, lest he should fall down from the tree.

Soon after this it became very dark, and the wind arose and whistled dismally through the woods. But what was still worse than

the wind, he heard the distant howling of a wolf, which made his little heart to beat; so he sat trembling from head to foot. His fear, however, had the right effect: it did not make him cry; but it urged him to pray. He prayed that his heavenly Father would be with him in his trouble; and his prayer was made, as before, in the name of that Saviour, to whom his father, the poor woodman, had for the last few months of his life, taken so much pains to lead his young heart.

The tree into which William had climbed was directly facing one of the four ways I before spoke of; and while he was praying, suddenly he perceived a light, as of a candle or fire, which seemed to be at the end of this way or path. This was a sign that some person was near, who, perhaps, might take pity upon him. He did not wait a moment, but lifting up his heart in thankfulness to God, he came hastily down from the tree, and ran towards the place where he had seen the light. But being upon the ground, he could see the light no longer; nevertheless, remembering the direction in which it had appeared, he ran that way with all his might; for he was in great fear of wolves, with which the forest abounded.

The path he had taken went over very uneven ground, leading him sometimes up hill, and sometimes down. So when he had gone

on for about half a mile, and had reached a higher spot, he saw the light again, which looked nearer and brighter than before. This comforted him greatly; and though he did not stop running, he lifted up his heart in thankfulness to heaven. He lost sight of the light, however, almost immediately, the path just then leading him down into a deep valley or bottom.

As he was running down into this valley, some clouds rolled away, and he saw the moon. It was not the full moon, but the new moon, which looked like a beautiful silver crescent rising above the woods. By its cheering light he could perceive that a stream of water ran across the bottom of the valley; and this filled him with fear, not knowing how deep or wide the water might be, nor how he should get across it. But he still kept running on towards it, till his little feet began to ache sadly.

And here he had a most dreadful fright—for as he was running on, he heard feet padding after him, like the feet of some wild beast, and a panting, which he supposed to be that of a wolf. It came nearer and nearer, till at length poor little William was so terrified that he could run no longer, but fell down at his full length upon the ground, believing that the next moment he should be torn to pieces. And now the creature came close up

to him, putting his head so near to William's cheek, that the affrighted child could per



ceive his breath; and presently he felt the tongue of the animal, put out, as he thought, to begin to devour him. But instead of biting or hurting him, the creature began to lick him, and to utter a cry of joy, by which William knew him to be his faithful dog Cæsar, who had broke the rope that bound him at home, and had come all the way through the forest in search of his little master.

O! how delighted was the little boy when he found that, instead of an enemy, it was his only earthly friend! his dear Cæsar! He soon got up from the ground, and hugged Cæsar round the neck; while the poor dog capered about, and played all manner of tricks, to show his joy.

At last William remembered that he was still in the wood, in a place of great danger; so he began to run forward again, and went on as fast as he could, till he came to the water I before mentioned. There he was quite at a stand, not knowing how deep the water might be; but hearing the howling of a wolf not very far distant, he stepped into the water, and tried to make his way through it. But the stream suddenly bore him off his feet; and he certainly would have been drowned, had not his faithful Cæsar dragged him up, and brought him safely to the opposite side.

Little William felt his heart full of gratitude to his faithful dog, and more so to him who had sent him such a friend. But there was at present no time for delay: he shook the water from himself as well as he could, and then began to climb the further bank, followed closely by Cæsar. And now the clouds rolled over the moon again, and made it quite dark: but still William felt comforted by the presence of such a friend as Cæsar.

So they went on together, and had almost reached the top of the hill, when William saw in the dark, not far before him, two glaring eyes of some dreadful beast; and at the same time he heard a snarling noise like that of a wolf. He stood still, while Cæsar

came before him and began, in his turn, to growl angrily. At length William saw the eyes move, and perceived the wild creature to spring upon Cæsar. For a few minutes there was a dreadful noise and a horrible battle between the faithful dog and the wolf; for this creature was, indeed, a wolf, who was lying in wait for prey on the side of the road.

The woods sounded on all sides with the cries of the two furious animals: and little William not willing to leave Cæsar, though unable to assist him, continued on his knees lifting up his hands and eyes to God: for he knew very well, that if the wolf overcame Cæsar, he would next fall upon him.

For a few dreadful minutes William knew not which would be the conqueror. At length the wolf ran howling away; and the next minute Cæsar came up to his master, and pulled him by the coat, as if it were to persuade him to hasten forward.

William then ran on, and Cæsar with him, till they came to the top of the hill; when, O what a pleasant sight! they saw, not a hundred yards before them, a cottage standing in a garden: for the light from the window was so strong, that they could see even the garden-rails, and the little wicket. William set up a shout of joy and thankfulness, and ran down the gentle slope to the gate, which

he opened in a minute, and shutting it after himself and Cæsar, began to knock at the cottage-door. But so great was his impatience and fear lest another wolf should come after him, that he knocked three times before an answer could be returned.

At length he heard the voice of a woman within, saying, "Who is there?"

William answered, "A poor little boy, who has been lost in the forest, and who would have been killed by a wolf, if his dog had not saved him."

"Come in, then, come in," said the old woman, opening her door. "Come in, poor little fellow: you and your dog are both welcome."

When the door was open, little William saw an old woman stooping with age, dressed in a clean blue woollen gown, and having a white cap tied under her chin. And her house was as neat as herself.

"And now my little boy," said the old woman, "as you have made your dog easy," (for she could not get the child's attention till Cæsar had been taken care of,) "tell me, had you no other friend with you in the forest except this dog?"

"No," said the little boy.

"Well then, my child, endeavour to make yourself easy. You are now safely housed. To-morrow you shall tell me who you are,

and where you came from: but now you shall have something to eat. I must first however, wash your poor little weary feet, and dry your clothes; and you shall then go to bed."

Little William could not help crying, when the old woman spoke so kindly to him.

"Why do you cry, my little boy?" said she.

"To think of God's goodness to me," answered William. "A very little while ago I expected to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, and now I am come to you, and am made so happy!"

"Poor little boy!" said the old woman, "if I can make you happy, you shall be happy." And she kissed his little wet cheek.

Then she put some milk upon the fire, with bread broke into it; and while it was warming she took off William's wet clothes, and having washed the dust and mire from him, she wrapped him in a blanket, and laid him in her bed, hanging his clothes to dry till the morning: after which she brought him the warm milk and bread, and fed him with her own hands.

"I cannot go to sleep till I have thanked God," said William, "and till I have kiss-

ed you, for you are as kind to me as my dear father was."

"And have you not a father now?" said the old woman.

"No," said William, "for he is dead. I have six brothers, but they don't love me: and, after my father died, they brought me three days' journey into the forest; and last night, when I was asleep, they left me to be eaten by the wolves. But God had pity on me. He brought me to you; and now I will be your child, and love you as I did my father."

"And you shall be my child," said the old woman. "I will love you; and we will serve God together, for you ought to love God very much, seeing what he has done for you."

"My father taught me to love God before he died," answered William, "but he could not persuade my brothers to hearken to him, when he would have taught them about God."

Then little William told the old woman many things which had passed before his father's death; and how his father had talked to him about his former life, and had repented of his sins, and died trusting in his Redeemer.

While William spoke, the old woman trembled, and was obliged to sit down on the

bed by which she was standing; for she began to have some suspicion that William's father was her own son, who had run away from her many years ago, and of whom she had never since received any tidings. For some minutes she could not speak. At length, she said, "Tell me what was your father's name."

"Roger Hardfoot," answered William.

"Oh!" said the old woman, putting her hands together, "it is even so—Roger Hardfoot was my son! my only son! And did he die repenting of his sins, and trusting in his Saviour? Then my prayers have been heard for him. And are you his child? are you my own little grandson? Were you sent by kind Providence to take shelter in your poor old grandmother's house, and to be the comfort of her old age?" Then she fell upon his neck, and they both wept for joy.

"Indeed, indeed," said little William when he could speak, "this is a wonderful day! And we will thank God together. And did my brothers bring me so far that I might find my grandmother? I shall now love Cæsar more than ever, for I never should have come here, if Cæsar had not helped me through the water, and fought that dreadful wolf."

Now little William was very much tired, and soon fell asleep; but his grandmother

(whose full heart would scarcely allow her to close her eyes) spent most of the night in praise and thanksgiving. She thanked God that her son, who had caused her so many hours of sorrow, had died in faith; and that her grandchild had been brought to her in so wonderful a manner. Moreover, she prayed that God would turn the hearts of her elder grandchildren, those wicked young men who had used their little brother so cruelly.

William continued to live with his grandmother till he grew up to be a man, and he did every thing in his power to make her happy. He took care of her goats, and her fowls, and worked in her garden; and she taught him to read his Bible, and to write. They took great care of Cæsar as long as he lived, and when he died William buried him in the garden.

William lived very happily with his grandmother, because she brought him up in the fear of God; and while he was little she punished him when he was naughty.

She often used to say, "I loved your father so foolishly that I never corrected him, so God corrected me. But I will love you, my little grandson, with a wiser love, and will not fail to punish you when you are naughty."

When William grew up he thanked his grandmother for having preserved him from

doing wrong. And thus their days were spent happily in diligent labour; while their evenings were closed with reading God's book and praying together; till at length the pious old woman died.

At her death, she left William her house, and all that she had; and he mourned for her many months. At length, finding it melancholy to live alone, he chose himself a wife, who feared God; and God blessed him with several children, whom he brought up in the way of holiness.

When William was forty years old, or more, he was sitting at his door one fine evening in summer, with his wife and children about him, and his youngest daughter was reading a chapter from the old Bible which had belonged to his grandmother, when six very miserable looking men came from the way of the forest. They were pale, and seemed to be worn with disease and famine. On their shoulders they carried old leathern bags, which seemed to have nothing in them. They had neither shoes nor stockings; and their ragged and tattered garments hardly hung upon their backs. They came up and stood before the paling of William's garden, and humbly asked for a morsel of bread.

"We are poor miserable men," they said, "and have been many days without any other food than such wild nuts and fruits as

we could pick up in the forest; and for several nights past we have had no rest, through our fear of the wolves."

"I ought to pity you," said William, "for when I was a little boy I passed a whole day, and part of a night, alone in that forest, and should have been eaten up by one of those dreadful creatures, had not my faithful dog, whose grave is in this garden, fought for me, and saved me."

While William spoke, the men looked at each other.

"But you seem weary and hungry," said William; "sit down on the grass, and we will quickly bring you something to eat."

So William's wife ran into the house, and prepared a large mess of broth, into which she broke some brown bread, and gave it to one of her sons to set before the men.

The poor half-starved and ragged strangers received the broth with thankfulness, and ate it greedily; after which, they arose, and, bowing low before William, they asked him, if he would allow them to lodge for that night with his goats. "For," said they, "we have had no place of safety to repose in for many nights, and are so spent and worn out with watching against the wolves, that we are like men at the point of death."

"I have," said William, "a little barn, in which I keep hay for my goats; you are

welcome to sleep in it, and we will supply you with blankets to cover you. So sit down, and be at ease."

The men were exceedingly thankful; and William opening his gate to them, they came into his garden, and sitting down round him upon the green turf, he entered into discourse with them, while his wife and children went about their work.

"And whence," said William, "do you come? and where do you propose to go to-morrow? You seem to have made a long journey, and to be in a very forlorn condition; some of you also appear to be in bad health, and look like men who have suffered much."

"Sir," answered one of the men, who seemed to be the eldest, "we were woodmen, living in the forest, about three days' journey from this place; but some years ago falling under the displeasure of the governor, our hut was burnt, all our things were taken from us, and we ourselves were cast into prison, where we lay many years in a lonesome dungeon, so that our health was utterly destroyed; and when we were set at liberty, we were unable to work, and, having no friends, we have wandered ever since from place to place, suffering all imaginable hardships, and being often many days without food."

"I fear," answered William, "that you committed some crime, by which you offended the governor."

"Yes, Sir," answered the oldest of the men, "we were guilty of deer-stealing. We will not deceive you. We would now live honestly, and lead better lives: but in our own neighbourhood no one will look upon us, and we cannot raise money to buy even a single hatchet to cut wood, otherwise we would follow our old trade, and endeavour to maintain ourselves; though indeed we are now so feeble that we could do but little."

"But," said William, whose heart began to feel pity for these poor men, and to be drawn strongly towards them, "have you no relations in your own country? Are you all of one family?"

"We have no other relations," answered the old man; "but we are all brothers—children of the same parents. Our father was a wood-cutter: his name was Roger Hard-foot."

"And had you not a little brother?" asked William, getting up and coming close to them.

The men looked at each other like persons in a great terror, and knew not what to answer.

"I am that little brother," said William. "God preserved me from death, and brought

me to this house, where I found my grandmother still living, and a parent she was indeed to me; and here I have lived in peace and abundance ever since. Be not afraid, my brothers; I freely forgive you, as God, I hope, will forgive me. You have done me no harm; and now Providence has brought you hither, I will assist and comfort you. You shall suffer want no more."

William's brethren could not answer him,—but they fell at his feet, shedding tears of repentance; for God had touched their hearts in their prison, and had made them sensible of the great and horrible sinfulness of their lives.

William tried to raise them, but they would not be lifted up till they had received his pardon. "We never have prospered since we left you, our little brother, in the wood," they said. "Our lives have, from that day, been filled with trouble, though they were for years afterwards spent in riot, confusion, and sin."

William, at length, persuaded them to rise, and to feel assured that he freely forgave them, earnestly begging them to apply to God for forgiveness through his beloved Son.

The poor men were comforted by William's kindness; but whenever they looked at him and remembered how they had treated him,

they were filled again and again with shame and sorrow.

The next day William and his sons began to build a hut close by his own cottage for his brothers; and his brothers gave all the assistance in their power to the work.

When the hut was finished, William provided them with mattresses to sleep on, and sheep skins to cover them. He gave each of them a knife, a spoon, a wooden stool, a pewter plate, and a horn drinking-cup. He gave them, also, a table, and several other little articles of household-goods; while his wife and daughters supplied them with coarse clothing of their own spinning.

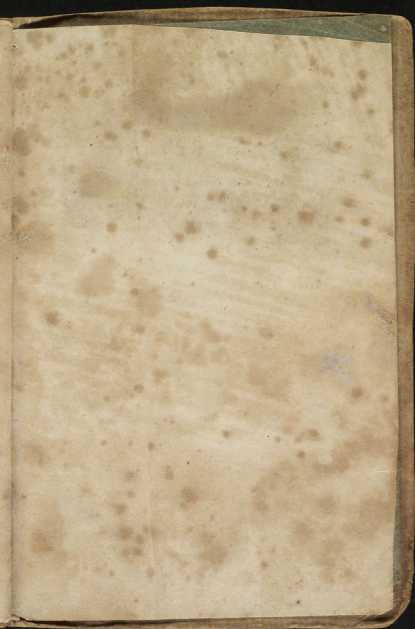
William was so kind also as to bestow upon each of them a hatchet, which enabled them to maintain themselves by wood-cutting without being a heavy burden on their brother, although he constantly supplied them with many little comforts from his own house.

But what was better than supplying their bodily wants, he took unwearied pains to lead their souls to God. He read to them every evening out of their grandmother's Bible; and it is believed that they did not hear the word of God read in vain: for they became very humble, daily lamenting their sins, and died at last in hopes of being forgiven for their Saviour's sake.

William and his wife lived many years after the death of his six elder brothers, and had the pleasure of seeing their children's children growing up in the fear of God.

And now, my dear children, I would have you learn from this story to make God your friend: "for such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth;" while "they that be cursed of him shall be cut off." *Psalms* xxxvii. 22.

THE END.



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