THE STORY

OF THE

BOOK OF APPIN:

A

Fairy Tale of the Middle Ages.

WITH

AN INTERPRETATION,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ALCHEMY AND THE ALCHEMISTS;" "SWEDENBORG A HERMETIC PHILOSOPHER;" AND "CHRIST THE SPIRIT."

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A few words upon recent publications of Fairy, and other Mystical Tales and Traditions: with Explanatory Notes upon a Story in Campbell's Collection of West Highland Stories.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

Within a few years past many volumes have been published in England and on the European continent, under the titles of Fairy Tales, Nursery Tales, Popular Tales, &c., embracing stories of all kinds, many of them preserved by tradition, handed down in different countries from unknown sources. We have Keightley's Fairy Mythology ; Thorpe's Yule-Stories, and his Northern Mythology ; Campbell's Popular Tales of the West Highlands, and Dasent's Popular Tales of the Norsemen, &c. : then we have Fairy Tales from all Nations by Montalba ; Halliwell's Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales ; Taylor's

edition of the Fairy Ring (translated from the German), and a valuable volume of translations from Grimm's Popular German Tales, &c.

In several of these volumes the editors warmly congratulate themselves that they do not feel called upon, in the present state of public feeling and opinion with respect to such Tales, to apologize for their publication, alleging that, nowadays, *grown* children are taking a profound interest in them. They even affirm that wise men are discovering hidden treasures, concealed wisdom, in many of these marvellous stories about giants ; and about kings and queens, with (usually) *three* sons or *three* daughters, the interest of the stories commonly turning, like that of the story of Cupid and Psyche, upon the youngest child.

A few years ago the disposition to seek for hidden meanings in Popular Nursery Tales was, no doubt, carried to excess; and, as might have been expected, the disposition fell under the lash of a class of *smart* writers, apt in the use of that potent weapon ridicule, but not very sharp after all in "seeing into things out of sight;" and for a time it was doubtful whether any new editor would have the courage to appear in public. Experience has shown, however, that the interest of the public in popular Tales and Traditions has gone on increasing, if we may judge by the number of volumes of that character recently published, until no intelligent student can now excuse himself for not examining this species of literature and coming to some conclusion as to its import.

It is worth remarking that one of the greatest of recent German writers has introduced into his works two Fairy Stories in particular, to say nothing of the symbolic character of his writings in general, full of valuable meaning to those who understand them. We refer to the New Melusina in Meister's Travels, and the so-called tale in the story of the German Emigrants. No one who can dive into the sense of these two tales will hastily conclude that all fairy stories are mere senseless fictions, addressed to the fancy and capacity of childhood. But while this must be admitted, it is evident, on the other hand, that the supposition of a profound sense in all popular tales indiscriminately, would be the extreme of folly in the other direction: it would be as absurd as to attribute in

good earnest all modern jokes to one Joe Miller.

If some of the stories in question do really enclose an interesting, not to say a profound rational sense, and in other respects furnish valuable materials for study, which can hardly be doubted, it becomes an important question, as to how the reader is to discriminate between such tales and traditions as have value, and the no doubt much larger class of fictions void of sense and utterly worthless. How, it may be asked, is the reader to separate the wheat from the chaff, and feel any tolerable security that he is not practising a delusion upon himself in the study of these products of the fancy or the imagination ?

Doubtless this is an important question ; but it is not the purpose of the writer to dis-

cuss it at this time. He has already had something to say on this subject elsewhere, and will here only remark, that the interpreter of mystical writings, especially those that have reached us from antiquity, cannot be too careful in securing his fast hold upon what is called truth and nature, or, more appropriately, the truth of nature ; for this alone is the true key to whatever has been written in the spirit of that truth. With this precaution, however, no one need be particularly exposed in searching out a hidden sense in Fairy or other mythological tales, though it may not be worth while, after obtaining the key (often drawn from the study itself), to bestow much time upon this species of study. Books in general are designed to serve a particular purpose ; and when that purpose is

accomplished they may be consigned to the past, as respects the student, or, to the future, to repeat their service to a rising or coming generation.

It is certain, meantime, and this should be well considered, that the best of ancient learning was couched in proverbs and parables, as Lord Bacon himself has told us ; and Solomon has left, as a perpetual record, the declaration, that—A wise man will hear, and will increase learning ; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels, [so as] to understand a proverb and the interpretation ; the words of the wise and their dark sayings. If there are those who imagine that the wise king would have excluded Fairy Tales from the contemplation of wise men, then let them not claim a divine

sense for the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

There are those who believe that the imagination is a great creative power in the soul; which, in itself, "is vague and unstable;" and that it is the duty of the artist "to regulate and to fix it, and at last to exalt it into visible presence." When thus disciplined, it is supposed that the imagination may "body forth the forms of things unknown, and give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name" far more enduring than the visible forms of external nature. But we will not discuss this point.

It may just be remarked here, that while some of the Fairy and other tales, recently brought to light, have a heathen origin, probably in part Druidical, and some have what

is called a profane or unreligious source ; there are others again, which are like those of the *Gesta Romanorum*, entirely Christian in their character, for which we are undoubtedly indebted to the monks of the middle ages, who were at one time in possession of most of the libraries and nearly all of the learning of the Christian world.

The writer of these remarks, in the hope of discovering some grains of gold amid "the dust of the middle ages," has recently been looking into Campbell's collection of West Highland Stories, and, mixed up with a good deal that most readers would, no doubt, consider little better than rubbish (though it might not be well to be over bold in passing judgment), he has found some tales, and not a few either, which have given out what seems

to him a most rich and valuable meaning, in the highest degree instructive.

One of these peculiarly constructed tales may be found at page 87 of the second volume of the collection just named ; but as the book may not be conveniently at hand for the general reader, we will copy the Tale entire, omitting no syllable of it, and will then, by way of notes, append what we understand to be its import.

It is requested, however, that before examining the notes, the reader will slowly pass the story before his eyes, silently pondering the question—What was the purpose of this story ? and let him lay his mind to it in that spirit of earnestness which, in the church, takes the form of prayer. If he does not readily discover the meaning, then let him

read the explanatory notes, and decide whether the imputed sense is or is not in the story.

The story purports to account for the manner in which a certain mysterious RED BOOK came to be at a place called Appin, in Argyleshire ; and it is recorded, according to tradition, as recited by one JOHN, whoever he was, who began in the approved style of all fireside story tellers.

An elaborate explanation is given here of one story ; but a volume might easily be made, beginning with pretty full explanations and closing with a few hints only, leaving room for the exercise of the reader's ingenuity, or rather his candor, for mere ingenuity alone will hardly carry any one into the heart of that peculiar style of writing. Four other stories

are added, viz.: "The Six Swans," "The White Dove," "Dummling and the Toad" (from the "Fairy Ring"), and "The Fox's Brush," with a very few words which will serve to give the clue by which the reader may be guided into the interior meaning of these fanciful tales. It is not hidden, nor is it far off.

The story of the "Six Swans" illustrates the case of a man who has commenced "a hunt" after the "stag"—Truth—in the "great forest" of the world, and has been carried by his peculiar genius away from his companions. At length—perhaps in the "evening" of life—he comes to a stand, having discovered that he has lost his way. He has mistaken either the true object of pursuit or the "way" to it. The world now confronts

him in the character of a witch, for the world is a witch to many who have no belief in witchcraft. The pursuit of Truth—misdirected or misconducted, we may suppose—having failed, the man is in a fit condition to accept the temptations of the world, which appear in the form of a fascinating daughter—a daughter of like nature, probably, with her mother. I have thus put the key into the lock : let the curious reader turn it for himself ; it will move more easily, and he will see how the ever-recurring Truth may be transmitted in a fairy tale from age to age, to be recognized by those whose eyes the Truth has opened.

In the story of the White Dove, again, the Young Girl represents the principle of Truth, or a genuine faith in man or woman ;—the

"master and mistress" with whom she is driving, are the body and soul. In mid life the party are assailed by a band of robbers, who rush out upon them from the thicket of the world's temptations, and destroy all that was destructible of it. But the principle of Truth passes safely "through the midst," as it did in John, when Jesus was sought to be taken by violence, or in another instance when he retires to Bethabara beyond Jordan —that is, when he conceals himself behind the Letter of the Word.

The world figures in these stories in infinite ways—sometimes as a whole and often in some of its particular aspects. It is a witch, a giant, a monster. In a still larger sense Nature appears in endless forms. She is a "hedgehog" over whose "fretful quills" we

may pass our hands with impunity so long as we pass them in the right direction; but if we pass them in the opposite direction, we are wounded and lacerated: if we persist we are destroyed. At one time the true principle is described as a "simpleton," as in Dummling and the Toad, because Nature goes steadily but with the utmost simplicity to her work, and never deviates from it. She gives us a thread to walk by, but if we lose the thread we fall into manifold difficulties. One may enlarge at pleasure on the principle illustrated in this simple way. The thread is the clue of Ariadne; it is the dæmon of Socrates. If we wander into the wrong path, we must find the thread again; there is no other way, for Nature always does one thing, and by one method, notwithstanding her end-

less diversities. She insists on obedience; and those who do not go willingly with her she sometimes saves in the character of a Fox, allowing the lost one a seat upon her tail, as in the ingenious story of the Fox's Brush. A deep and significant story this. The eyes at first are "holden" and do not discover the principle of Life in the Fox; nor are they opened until the two extremes —the head and tail—the two thieves—are cut off.

Nature, in her truth and simplicity, is the true "mother," ever kind and gentle, wounding only to save. When insulted by wilful neglect she becomes a "step-mother," and when violated she becomes the most inexorable of masters, wearing the terrible face of a tyrant.

No mere fanciful theory can touch the core of this matter, and it is useless to quarrel with the "dish" in which a certain "golden fruit" is presented to us. We had better make friends with the Fairies and find out what they mean; for sometimes they represent angels; and these again represent very familiar friends if we put ourselves in a right relation toward them. In many of these stories we read of a marvellous well, or a spring of clear water, widening into what seems a lake, in the bottom of which may be descried a magnificent city. So, in these little pools of fairy legend, extraordinary wonders may be discovered by those who have eyes to see.

WASHINGTON CITY, *January* 2, 1863.

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"Once upon a time there lived a man [note 1] at Appin, Argyleshire, and he took to his house [2] an orphan boy [3]. When the boy was grown up he was sent to Herd [4]; and upon a day of days, and him herding, there came a fine gentleman [5] where he was, who asked him to become his servant, and (promised) that he would give him plenty to eat and drink, clothes, and

great wages [6]. The boy told him that he would like very much to get a good suit of clothes, but that he would not engage till he would see his Master [7]; but the fine gentleman would have him engaged without delay: this the boy would not do upon any terms, till he would see his Master. 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'in the mean time, write your name in this Book.' Saying this, he put his hand into his oxter pocket, and pulling out a large Red Book, he told the boy to write his name in the Book. This the boy would not do; neither would he tell his name, till he would acquaint his Master first. 'Now,' said the gentleman, 'since you will neither en-

gage nor tell me your name [8] till you see your present Master, be sure to meet me about sunset to-morrow, at a certain place.' The boy promised that he would be sure to meet him at the place about sunsetting. When the boy came home he told his Master what the gentleman said to him. 'Poor boy,' says he, 'a fine master he would make; lucky for you that you neither engaged nor wrote your name in his Book [9]: but since you promised to meet him, you must go; but as you value your life, do as I tell you.' His Master gave him a sword [10], and at the same time he told him to be sure and be at the place mentioned a while before sunset [11], and to draw a circle

round himself with the point of his sword in the name of the Trinity [12]. 'When you do this, draw a cross in the centre of the circle [13]; upon which you will stand yourself; and do not move out of that position till the rising of the sun next morning [14]. He also told him that the gentleman would wish him to come out of the circle to put his name in the Book; but that upon no account was he to leave the circle. 'But ask the Book till you would write your name yourself [15], and when once you get hold of the Book keep it [16]; he cannot touch a hair of your head, if you keep inside of the circle' [17].

"So the boy was at the place [18]

long before the gentleman made his appearance; but sure enough he came after sunset: he tried all his arts to get the boy outside of the circle, to sign his name in the Red Book; but the boy would not move one foot out of the place where he stood [19]; but at the long last he handed the Book to the boy, so as to write his name therein. The Book was no sooner inside the circle, than it fell out of the gentleman's hand inside the circle [20]: the boy cautiously stretches out his hand for the Book, and as soon as he got hold of it he put it into his oxter. When the fine gentleman saw that he did not mean to give him back the Book, he got furious; and

at last he transformed himself into a great many likenesses, blowing fire and brimstone out of his mouth and nostrils [21]: at times he would appear as a horse; other times as a huge cat, and a fearful beast [22]: he was going round the circle the length of the night: when day was beginning to break he let out one fearful screech; he put himself into the likeness of a large raven, and he was soon out of the boy's sight. The boy still remained where he was till he saw the sun in the morning [23], which no sooner he observed than he took to his soles home as fast as he could [24]. He gave the Book to his Master [25]; and this is how the far-famed RED BOOK was got."

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

NOTE 1. Once upon a time *there lived a man.* MAN is the subject of this story, as he is of most stories and tales of all sorts; and, truly, Man is the subject of all the wonders and marvels of the world. He is the great miracle of nature, and is said to carry within himself the greatest secret in the universe. What he signifies in this story must be left to be disclosed by the general sense of the Tale.

2. The man took *to his house.* By the expression *his house*, we may understand the man himself. Man is often called a house in Scripture; and the story we are considering, as will soon appear, is a symbolical illustration of one of the greatest mysteries of Scripture; and not one merely, but the entire course of Christian doctrine. Man is called a house: Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live, 2d

Kings 20, 1; that is, set thyself in order, and prepare for death. Again: The house of the righteous shall stand; but that of the wicked shall be overthrown, Prov. 12, 7, and 14, 11. Again: we read in Hebrews 6, 3, that Christ is a Son over his own house, whose house are we, if, &c. Again: Every man went into his own house, John 7, 3; that is, after a certain discussion with the Pharisees, every man of them returned to his own opinion. Again: Jesus enters Peter's house; that is, the Spirit of Truth enters Peter himself,—and *cures* or corrects *his* opinion of the visible church, the mother of his faith; faith being the daughter of the church, and Peter's wife. But in Scripture the expression house, as also that of wife, is used in various senses.

3. The man took to his house *an Orphan Boy.* An orphan has neither father nor mother: and thus far he becomes a good figure for Melchisedek, who was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; and he was made like unto the Son of God. Heb. 7, 3. He is called also king of righteousness; and after that,

King of Peace,—or, as we may read it, the Prince of Peace. This is the most mysterious personage in Scripture next after Him, to whom he is said to be "like:" but the likeness itself is a mystery, and is no other than the secret of the Lord.

Let the reader apprehend, if he can, the idea of one who has neither father nor mother, beginning of days nor end of life; and then let him compare this idea with his idea of the Son of God, who was, according to John, with God in the beginning, and was God; his own Father and his own Son. By thus contemplating the inward idea until it takes the form of faith, he may at length perceive the force of the simile of the Orphan Boy,—which the man took to his own house, that is, to his own soul.

4. The Boy was sent *to Herd.* That is, he was sent into the wilderness of the world, to encounter that class of people called by the Baptist a generation of "vipers," Matt. 3, 7, bipeds with quadrupedal names.

In a similar sense, we read the instructions to the disciples, Behold, I send you forth as sheep amidst wolves, Matt. 10, 16. This is a usual comparison in

Scripture. Sometimes particular passions, or tendencies, or principles are figured by particular animals, as by the lion, the leopard, the lamb, and the kid, as also by the bear, the serpent, &c.

We read that on the first appearance of Christ from the Jordan, he was taken into the wilderness "to be tempted of the devil;" and we now come to the image of this in the story before us.

5. There came (to the orphan boy) *a fine gentleman.* This is no other than a certain personage who appears in the 6th verse of the first chapter of Job: Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and *Satan came also among them.* This is the gentleman who offered the Lord "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," —if he would fall down and worship him;—that is, if he would become his servant, as expressed in this story. The story represents this personage as a fine gentleman: and, in truth, he finely represents the world and the temptations thereof. He offers the boy plenty to eat and drink, and clothes; but keeps out of view the doctrine, that the life is more than meat, and the body

than raiment, Matt. 6, 25. He makes many promises, and among them

6. *Great wages:* but he omits to tell the boy that the wages of sin is death; and that sin and the exclusive service of the world are synonymous expressions. He does not remind the boy of the text: Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The boy, however, is not easily seduced by this Mephistopheles: he tells the tempter that he will make no engagement till he can first see

7. *His master.* Who now is the Master of this mysterious boy? This we must determine by the character of the cautions and commandments he gives the boy, and by the conduct of the boy himself, which we shall soon see.

8. The boy refused to give his name to the fine gentleman. This signifies that the worldly man, called by St. Paul sometimes the carnal and sometimes the natural man, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. . . . Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. 2, 14. St. Paul intimates the same thing when he speaks of the life of

the true disciples as being *hid* in Christ. Such men may be said to be invisible to those who are devoted to the world, or to a merely worldly life, and the latter asks in vain the *name*, that is, the signification of such a life.

9. The boy had been desired to write his name in a certain book, held out to him by the fine gentleman, and was commended by his Master for not doing it.

To write one's name is a pledge; and to write one's name in a book held out by the world and its enticements, is to surrender the hope of life into the grasp of death. Turn ye, turn ye,—for why will ye die, O house of Israel; that is, turn ye from the service of the world to the service of God, often figured in Scripture by the expressions death and life; for these expressions, thus used in Scripture, do not refer to the body. St. Paul tells us that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; and a greater than St. Paul gives a sufficient warning, to those who will receive it, in the language: For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

As the boy is now about to encounter the fine gentleman, that is, the world, his Master, besides many verbal cautions and instructions, gave him

10. *A sword.* The sword is the emblem of courage; and in the conflicts of the spirit with the world this virtue is greatly needed. When Moses gave his last instructions to the children of Israel, to go over and possess the Land of Promise, Deut. 31, where the Heathens were to be destroyed, he exhorts them to be strong and of good courage; assuring them that God (their Master) would not fail nor forsake them: and he gave the same encouragement to Joshua "in the sight of all Israel," Be strong and of good courage,—the language being repeated to give emphasis to it; by which we may understand its importance.

The figurative character of this Mosaic history has been sufficiently pointed out by Origen and others; the transition from Egypt to the Holy Land signifying the passing over of the Israelites from a material to a spiritual life, to which end it became necessary to destroy the worldly passions, figured by the Heathen.

But we will return to the matter in hand, in illustration of the figurative use of the sword.

In Ezek. 30, 24, we read, that God gave his sword (in other words he gave his spirit, or his power) to those who fought the good fight of faith in his name. We read much in the Scripture of the sword of the Spirit; the Spirit, indeed, being compared to a two-edged sword.

11. The boy was directed to meet the fine gentleman before sunset. This signifies that he was directed to encounter the world before any dimness should pass over that Light which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" that light which whoso foregoes becomes an early victim to the fine gentleman in the form of riches, of honors, or of pleasures, for he takes many forms; for here is the *broad path* we read of in Scripture, and many there be who go in thereat. These riches, honors, and pleasures often figure as giants, or other monsters, in these mythical stories of the middle ages; and we often see them destroyed by the youngest child of wealthy parents—not without reference to the power of the Spirit, which, though latest in birth, from

a material view, is first in power. For who may abide His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? It was He who, in the person of Samson, killed the lion. It was He who, in the person of David, slew the giant of Gath, and who killed both the lion and the bear while yet a youth; and here the student may consider whether the giant of Gath, the lion and the bear, though killed of old, are not yet, nevertheless, in the world, going at large to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it; for the history of the past can only furnish "ensamples" for our instruction and guidance.

To guard against the fine gentleman, that is, against the world, its giant temptations and its magical enchantments, figured in many of these tales of the middle ages as a witch (the very serpent in Eden, and no less the beast in the Revelation), the boy was directed to draw a circle round himself in the name of

12. *The Trinity.* We see plainly here, that this story originated with a Christian, and must have been told in the interest of Christianity. We may therefore

expect to find in Christianity the key for disclosing its meaning.

The boy was further directed

13. To draw a cross in the centre of the circle, and *to stand upon it.* The circle expresses the limit or boundary between holiness and sin, which have no inter-communication the one with the other: and the boy was commanded to stand upon the cross, and not to move from it until

14. *The rising of the sun the next morning.* The cross is the emblem of Christianity, and stands here for the church of Christ. We read particularly of two Lights in Scripture: one is compared to that of the Lamp; and this is the Law, the Divine Law of Moses, which to the psalmist, was as a lamp to his feet, and threw a light upon his path;—but his pathway led to that other Light which is compared to that of the sun; and this is Christ, the spirit of both, the Law and the visible church. Christ is "the end of all," in whom, or in his church, the Christian is commanded to "abide," if he would overcome the world; that is, if he would overcome the fine gentleman. He must stand by or

upon the cross until the rising of the true Light, which is compared to that of the sun. This is the light of (whom) the Baptist is a witness, and as the Baptist is the forerunner of the light, so does the visible church precede the coming of the same light to the phenomenal or natural man.

Let us explain this a little further; and, for this purpose, we will refer to Dante; who, for aught any one seems likely to know, might have been contemporary with the author of the story under examination.

In the Vita Nuova of the great Italian poet, the visible church (of his day) is figured by a woman; and she is represented as midway, directly in line, between the poet and his Beatrice; and by Beatrice he means his Blessing. Now, he sees his blessing beyond, or through, that is, by means of the church. The woman who represents the church he calls Joan; telling us, himself, of the likeness of this name, an arbitrary name chosen by himself, to that of the Baptist, as the forerunner of Christ; so openly does the poet hint to us the meaning of his mystical writing. He tells us, also, that this woman, this Joan, was by

some called Primarina, or Spring; and he gives as the reason, that the Spring precedes the Summer, connecting this statement with the vision of his Beatrice; thus intimating that the two, the Spring and the Summer, are emblematic of the two women, Joan and Beatrice; who represent themselves, the visible and the invisible church, the latter being the true light of the former; the same two being the law and the true Gospel thereof. Whatever other meanings may be discovered in Dante, this single point seems to stand out with great clearness. Dante, we may suppose, contemplated the church until its spirit rose before him, and this spirit he personifies in Beatrice.

In like manner, according to the method of Dante's teaching, the boy was directed to stand upon the cross; that is, he was required to "abide" by the church, represented by the cross in the *centre* of the circle (the Spirit in the "midst"), while exposed to the dangers and temptations of the world, until he should see the rising of the sun in the morning; or, as Dante might say, until the vision of Beatrice should rise before him. This is the Light so much spoken of in Scripture, of

which the Scripture itself is a witness, represented by the Baptist, who baptizes in water, the symbol of the Letter—the baptism by fire being the Spirit of the letter. Isaiah points to the conditions under which the Light may be received, and exclaims—Then shall thy Light break forth as the morning (the reader will notice the simile), and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; and the glory (that is, the Light) of the Lord shall be thy reward; ch. 58, 8. The expression, "thy righteousness shall go before thee," states a truth of inexpressible importance, whether designed or not. The rewards of the world follow the life, or the visible actions of man in the world, but in the life of the Spirit, they go before the disciple, who thus sees his reward already in the future,—a doctrine which we may consider presented in a figure in many places of Scripture; in the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day, guiding the children of Israel in their exodus from Egypt; as also by the star which led the wise men to the true Light. Besides the passage just recited from Isaiah, the prophet refers to the same Light in many other places:

as, in ch. 60, 20: Thy sun shall no more go down, (after the coming of the true Light); neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. The sun and the moon here represent reason and faith, above which there is a true Light supporting them both.

The Scriptures are full of references to this Light, whose possessors were called the children of Light; but the figurative character of the expression is apt to mislead a student who imagines that he can see this Light bodily, or anything like it: hence the Law against making or bowing down to any graven image, or *anything* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. But let us return.

The Christian must stand upon the cross, or "abide" in Christ, until he comes out of darkness into *his* marvellous Light, 1. Pet. 2, 9.

This Light preceded that of the sun and the moon, whether these be taken figuratively or not; for we read that God said, on the first day, Let there be Light,

and there was Light, when, as yet, "the sun was not, neither the moon." The Law is said to be Light, Prov. 6, 22, because it teaches the "way" to the Light; and those who stand upon the Law (or "do" the will of Him who gave it) shall see the Light; that is, they shall see Him who published himself as the Light of the world, declaring that those who follow Him (that is, those who stand upon the cross) shall have the Light of Life, whose rising in the soul is compared, in this story of the Red Book, to the rising of the sun in the morning, the very simile of the prophet Isaiah, as we have just shown.

The reader need not imagine that, in treating this subject, there is a contradiction in speaking of Christ as both the *way* to the Light, and as the Light himself: as the "way," he is the Law (the "flesh," Phil. 3, 3–6), and he is the visible church (the "body" of Christ, Ephes. 2, 22, 23, Col. 1, 24); but as the Light, he is the eternal, the unspeakable *Word.* We see that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews falls into a seeming contradiction, in that, whilst he speaks of Melchisedek as without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore

eternal, he tells us that he was *made* like unto the Son of God; and even John, whilst in one place he tells us that the Word was with God and was (?) God, tells us also that the Word was *made* flesh. But let us return once more to our story.

His Master told the boy that the gentleman would wish him to come out of the circle, to put his name in the Book; that is, the world is continually enticing us to pass beyond the limits prescribed by the Divine Law; but the boy was directed on no account to leave the circle: "But," continues the Master, "ask the Book till you would write your name

15. *Yourself!*" Man is not saved by proxy: he is commanded by St. Paul to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The virtues of another are encouragements to all good men; but it is the duty of every man for "himself" to open the door when Christ knocks, or He will not enter: without this, Christ will "sup" with no man.

Whatever speculations may be made about the will, its freedom from or dependence upon a higher power—a certain necessity for freedom in the Life-Spirit may

not be a contradiction, except to that discursive understanding which cannot comprehend how that which is eternal can with propriety be said to be "made." In any view of the mere speculative reason, those who look to the Law cannot fail to see that an awful alternative is offered to us in the language: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy Life;" Deut. 30, 19, 20. To obey the voice of the Lord, and to cleave unto Him, has the same meaning as the expression, to stand upon the cross.

16. The boy was commanded *to keep the Book* when once in his possession. When the true man once grasps the Spirit represented by the Book, which was RED, the color of blood, the symbol of life, he must on no account relax his hold: he must be sure "to keep it," and not fall away from grace once attained; for, if he thus falls, "his after state shall be worse than the first:"

but he has the promise, that so long as he keeps within the circle of Light whose centre is Christ (his Church or his Spirit), the fine gentleman

17. *Cannot touch a hair of his head.* The boy must not allow himself to be drawn beyond the limits of the circle, no, not by the persuasions of the fine gentleman in the exercise of "all his arts" and blandishments.

18. The boy was at the place of meeting—&c. This *place* is indefinitely called a *certain place;* not any specified place: because the fine gentleman may be met in all places, and so, also, at all times. We are always in the world while in the body, and are more or less exposed to its influences,—for which reason we are told to "watch" and to "pray" continually, lest we fall into temptation.

19. The boy would not move one foot out of the place where he stood. This presents a fine picture of that unshaken faith which "overcometh the world;" that is, which overcometh the fine gentleman.

20. *The Book falls from the hand* of the gentleman, the instant it passes within the circle. The hand is the symbol of power; and we are here taught that

the power of the evil one is absolutely paralyzed within the circle where Christ is the acknowledged Prince. The "name" of Christ, which is said in so many places to work as a charm, as also the "name" of God, signifies the Divine Law, obedience to which, represented by the figure of standing upon the cross (Christ being the fulfilment of the Law), arms the true disciple against all the powers of evil, and even gives him control over them. The devils (the bad passions?—Luke 10, 17) were subject to the disciples through the "name" of the Holy One; that is, through his power, which comes as a Light to those who perseveringly stand upon the cross, or "abide" in Christ; or, again, in the Law, which served as a schoolmaster to St. Paul to bring him to the Light; at which time, the Law in the Letter, called the "flesh" of Christ, "was done away with," or was "left behind." Thus also, the boy was free to leave the circle after he saw the true Light, represented by the rising of the sun.

When the fine gentleman is convinced that the Orphan Boy, who figures, among other things, the Spirit

of Truth, is sustained by a power above him, over which he has no control, he becomes furious,

21. *Blowing fire and brimstone out of his mouth and nostrils.* Thus, in like manner, as we read in the Revelation: And I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued smoke and brimstone.

The fine gentleman, thus disappointed in his designs upon the Orphan Boy, assumes all sorts of forms, among others that of a horse, and finally that of

22. *A fearful beast:* and although we are not told, as to his heads, how many he had, we need not doubt that he took the precise form of the beast we read of in the Revelation. If any one asks here, why so much is said in Scripture of four beasts, especially in the Revelation, he may be reminded that all antiquity saw or recognized four elements, and four only, in visible nature (the world). They saw also seven, and but seven planets, in the "midst" of which there was one said to be like the Son of God; for the Son of God

is in the "midst" of his works; as he also "stands among" us, even "when we know him not."

At the breaking of day (or the dawning of the divine reason in the soul, affirming the Divine Law), the beast disappears out of the sight of the boy; who has been until then the very figure of the true "heir;" as a "child," differing in nothing from a "servant;" Gal. 4, 1.

The beast disappearing, the Orphan Boy nevertheless remains steadily upon the cross until he sees

23. *The sun in the morning:* when he enters into that "liberty" declared by St. Paul for all those who are made "free in Christ," the true Light, or Light of Truth. Until thus made "free indeed,"—John 8, 36, —the Orphan Boy, being yet a "child," was bound to stand upon the cross; which means that he was in "bondage" to the forms and emblematic ceremonies of the visible church, the mystical bride of the Lord: but this bondage was for the good of the boy, as a means of bringing him into that "marvellous Light" which made him free indeed—free from the obligation of an unintelligent obedience to the external Law, or to the visible church, because he has received the

spirit of both, by which he has entered upon his true inheritance, the Holy Land, or has received a foretaste of it; and this is the "manifestation of Christ" in the soul, according to the promise—"I will manifest myself to him, who hath my commandments and keepeth them"—that is, to him who "abides" in Christ, or stands upon the cross waiting this manifestation.

But what use does the boy make of his freedom? He no sooner sees the sun arise—no sooner receives the true Light, the Gospel, or Truth of the Law—than

24. He passes *to his home*, as fast as he could: and where is the proper *home* of a Christian? We are told that here we have no abiding place, and that our proper home is in heaven; but this is to be in Christ, who is received by those who stand upon the cross, waiting His coming.

Almost all allusions to this mystery in the Scripture are figurative and symbolical. The loved disciple in the Gospel of John, is represented as receiving the Mother of Jesus as his own Mother, and is said to have taken her to his own *home*, (ch. 19, 25–27): but this means that he received her to his own *heart;* and this

signifies, again, that the loved disciple found his own house in the heart of his true mother, called by St. Paul the Jerusalem (or Church) above, the mother of us all; Gal. 4, 26. The true home of a Christian is often called a Rest, and is figured by the Sabbath. It is an inward experience infinitely removed from all possibility of adequate external representation; and hence it is, that it has been written about mystically in all ages. It is called by St. Paul a great mystery, in the Epistle to the Ephesians (5, 32), where he speaks of it under the figure of a marriage, the most holy and sacred of all human ties, yet falling immeasurably below that sense of unity with the divine nature which is the consummation of all divine teaching.

The boy having now received the Red Book, the emblem, as we have said, of the true blood,

25. *Gave the Book to his Master.* This is a figure by which the final duty of all men is taught; for in the end, all men are called upon to surrender to God, the true Master, that "gift of Life" by which man has been placed in a temporal scene of trial, where he has the power of writing his name in the Book of Life,

or of surrendering his claims to the true life by falling down in worship before the powers of the world, often called the powers of darkness (the beast of the Revelation)—figured in this most remarkable story, with exquisite taste, as a fine gentleman; because, the seductions of the world are never effective except when they present themselves in some attractive form.

Let not the simplicity of this tale suggest a doubt as to its deep import. It is one among thousands of figurative and symbolical teachings, one design of which is to leave the soul free while yet they teach; so that he who receives the teaching, however grateful he may be to the teacher, may nevertheless, in the language of St. Paul, "give all the glory to God;" for it borders on inspiration, and is said to rest on a principle incommunicable, directly from man to man, all writers agreeing that it is the gift of God, and not to be purchased, except by the sweat of the brow: Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money; Acts 8, 20. But this, rightly understood, ought to be an encouragement to the lover of Truth, instead of

being felt as a weight upon the heart, as it often is, for we may be sure that what is called the gift of God must be beyond the power of man to destroy. Hence the injunction: Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

Our book of Life (we call it ours) belongs to another, to whom we must deliver it when summoned by Him: and then, happy are they who find the words written in themselves: Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

It is proper now to notice the fact already stated, that this story of the Orphan Boy is said to have been told by one JOHN; and certainly not without reference to that John who tells the story of Jesus so sublimely, and who saw the vision in the Isle of Patmos, himself being in that isle.

There seems nothing wanting to show the connection of this story with Christianity, and that it is a living picture of the everlasting doctrines of the Gospel;

visible now, as ever, to those who are privileged to feel themselves the friends of God; Wisdom, 14.

It would be easy to enlarge or extend this interpretation by numerous additional references to Scripture, illustrating more fully many points; but, for those who know the "way" to the Truth, this would be superfluous; while for those who do not, it might be without profit. This Orphan Boy (in many other stories he is figured as a *foundling*)—represents one (who) is compared to the wind, which, as we read, bloweth as it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: for so, is every one that is born of the Spirit. The sons of God, we may suppose, are content to know that they are heirs of salvation, and ask no questions as to whence they came or whither they go. In them hope has, most surely, given place to trust; and fear, that perpetual shadow of hope, being banished, they go on their way rejoicing in the Lord, who is their portion. To them the language must be clear: I am the Light of the world: whoso believeth in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life. To them

the sun has risen, that sun which, we are told, shall never set: and this is to be a Christian, and such a Christian as was before Abraham.

There is not a more certain truth in the universe than that which is shadowed out in this unpretending story from the middle ages. The story itself is like the Spirit it celebrates: it is an orphan springing up "like a root out of the dry ground" of the past. No one knows its parentage in a worldly sense; and yet, most certainly, there are those who perfectly know the *family* to which the story belongs, and, in some sort, its very father and mother; for God never leaves himself without witness in the world.

THE SIX SWANS.

THE SIX SWANS.

A KING was one day hunting in a large forest, and he chased a stag so eagerly that none of his huntsmen could follow him. When it was evening, he stopped his horse and looked around him, and saw that he had lost his way. He sought everywhere for some path out of the wood, but all in vain. At length he saw an old woman, with a shaking head, coming toward him; but she was a witch, you must know. The king accosted her, and said, "My good woman, can you show me the way out of the wood?"

"Oh yes, sir king," answered she, "I can easily show you the way, but only upon one condition; and if you do not agree to it, you'll never again get out of the wood, and must die here with hunger." "What is the condition?" asked the king. "I have a daughter," said the old woman, "who is so beautiful, that her like is not to be found in the world, and who is well worthy to be your wife; if you will marry her and make her your queen, I will show you the way out of the wood."

The king, in the trouble of his heart, consented, and the old woman led him to her cottage, where her daughter was sitting by the fireside. She received the

king as if she had expected him, and he saw that she was very beautiful; nevertheless she did not please him, and he could not look at her without a secret dislike. When the king had lifted the maiden upon his horse, he placed her behind him, the old woman showed him the way, and at length the king reached his palace,[1] where the marriage was celebrated.

The king had been married once before, and his first[2] wife had brought him seven children,[3] six boys and a little girl,[4] whom he loved more than the whole world besides. Now he feared lest their stepmother[5] should not treat them well, and that she might do them some harm;

1 his own house or heart

2 conscience

3 an indefinite number of passions & opinions

4 true spirit

5 sin

so he took them secretly to a lonely castle, which stood in the midst of a wood. It lay so hidden, and the path to it was so hard to find, that the king himself would not have made it out, had not a wise woman given him a clew of thread of wonderful power: when he threw it on the ground, it unwound of itself, ran before and showed him the way. But the king went so often to visit his dear children, that the queen began to wonder at the cause of his absence; she was full of prying curiosity, and could not be easy until she knew what he did all alone in the wood. Then she gave his servants gold and silver, and they revealed to her the secret, and told her of

1 His secret thoughts in his heart in the midst of the labyrinth of worldly passions
2 Reason
3 Conscience
4 Returned to his former thoughts
5 In silent contemplation
6 By forced his sentiments by temptation and flattery

the clew of thread which could show the way.

The queen had now no rest until she had found out where the king kept the clew. Then she made some little shirts of white silk; and, as she had learnt the fairy art from her mother, she sewed into them a magical charm.

And one day, when the king was gone out a-hunting, she took the little shirts, and went into the wood, and the clew of thread showed her the way. The little boys, who from afar off saw some one coming, thought it must be their dear father, and ran joyfully to meet him. Then the queen threw one of the little shirts over each of them; and as

1 Discovered the way to his heart

2 False representations in pure semblance

3 Unsuspecting

4 Perverted each thought by giving a different dress —

Flew into the world to sow wild oats

soon as it touched their bodies, they were changed into swans, and flew away over the wood. The queen returned home in high glee, and thought she was now rid of her stepchildren. But the little girl had not run out with her brothers, and the queen knew nothing of her being in the wood.

She was invisible to sin

To recover his thoughts

The next day the king came to the castle, to visit his children; but he found the little maiden all alone. "Where are thy brothers?" asked the king. "Alas! dear father," she answered, "they are gone away, and have left me all alone." Then she told him that she had seen from the window how her brothers had been changed into swans,

and had flown away over the wood; and she showed him the feathers they had let fall in the courtyard, and which she had picked up. The king was very sad, but he could not think that the queen had done such a wicked deed; and, fearing that the little maiden would also be stolen away, he wished to take her with him. But she had a great dread of her stepmother, and begged the king to let her stay one night longer in the castle.

Then the poor little maiden thought to herself, "I can no longer stay here; I will go and seek my brothers." And when night came on, she ran away, and went straight into the wood. She rambled the whole night through the

Indications of external life

1
In secret silence

2
Recovery the perverted sentiments

wood, and the next day also, until she was ready to drop from fatigue and could go no further. Then she came to a lonely cottage; so she went up the stairs, and found a room with six little beds in it. She did not, however, dare to lie down in any of them, but crept under one and laid herself upon the hard floor, to rest for the night.

1 House of humility

2 Not long afterward, as the sun was going down, she heard a rustling noise, and saw six swans come flying in at the window. They seated themselves on the ground, blew upon one another, and blew all the feathers off them, and stript off their swan's skin like a shirt. Then the little maiden looked earnestly at them,

2 In the hour of contemplation they throw off the mantles of sin

and knew them to be her brothers; whereat her heart leaped with joy, and she crept forth from under the bed. The brothers were no less rejoiced when they beheld her, but their joy did not last long. "Thou canst not stay here," said they; "this is a house of robbers, and when they come home and find thee here, they will kill thee." "But cannot you protect me?" asked the little sister. "No," answered they; "we can only put off our swan's skin for a quarter of an hour every evening, and during this time we have our natural form; but then we are changed again into swans." The little sister wept, and said, "But cannot you get free?" "Alas! no," answered

Evil thoughts that were liable to enter and destroy the good nature

they; "the conditions are too hard; for six whole years thou must neither speak nor laugh, and in that time must sew for us six little shirts of star-flowers.[2] If a single word falls from thy tongue,[3] all the labor is lost." And when they had so said, the quarter of an hour was past, and they were changed into swans again and flew away out of the window.

But the little maiden thought in her heart that she would set her brothers free, even if it should cost her her life. So the next morning she went out, plucked a basketful of star-flowers, and began to sew. She could not talk to any one, and she had no mind to laugh; so she sat quietly at her needle, and

1 Six days of labor in silent penitence
2 Heavenly thoughts
3 Masonic silence

Matt 20.28

work of redemption

never once took her eyes from her work. She had been busied thus for a long time, when it happened that the king of that country was one day hunting in the wood, and his huntsmen came to a tree in which the little maiden was sitting. Then they called to her, and said, "Who art thou?" But she gave no answer. "Come down to us," said they; "we will do thee no harm." She only shook her head. But as they went on teasing her with questions she threw them down her golden necklace, thinking that would satisfy them. Yet still they did not leave off; so she threw down her girdle, and, when this also was of no use, she flung them her garters, and one thing

The Pattern or the Soul

The true spirit gradually unites with the soul — She sends down the garments, but

not the seamless coat

after another, all that she could spare, until nothing was left but her little shift.

But the huntsmen were not to be put off thus; they climbed up the tree, lifted the maiden down, and led her to the king. The king asked, "Who art thou? what wast thou doing up in the tree?" Still she did not answer. Then he asked her in all the languages he knew, but she remained dumb as a fish. But when the king saw how beautiful she was, his heart was moved, and he fell deeply in love with her. He wrapped his cloak round her, set her upon his horse, and brought her to his palace.

See p. 35 Note 8.

Note her to his own home, house, or heart

Then he ordered her to be clothed in a rich robe, and she shone in her

beauty like the bright day; but not a word could be got from her. The king seated her by his side at table, and her modest behavior pleased him so much that he said, "This is the maiden whom I shall marry, and none other in the world;" and a few days afterward the wedding took place.

But the king had a wicked mother, who was very angry at this marriage, and spoke ill of the young queen. "Who knows what slut this is, who cannot speak a word?" said she: "truly a pretty wife for a king!"

At the end of a year, when the queen brought her first child into the world, the old woman took it away from

Beauty of holiness

Divine marriage

The Devil

Truth reviled

Good results and pure ideas contemned and misrepresented

by the evil spirit

her, and besmeared the floor with blood while she lay asleep. Then she went to the king, and made a complaint that the queen was an ogress. But the king could not believe it, and would not suffer any harm to be done to her. Meanwhile the young queen sat steadily at her work, sewing away at the shirts, and had not a thought for anything else.

Silent work of redemption

The next time, when the queen had a fine little boy, the false old mother-in-law practised the same trick; but still the king could not bring himself to believe her story, and said, "She is too good and gentle to be capable of such a thing; if she were not dumb, and could speak for herself, her innocence would

come to light." But a third time the queen had a little child, and the old woman stole it away, and accused the queen as before. She however said not a word in her defence; so the king was obliged to give her up to be judged[2] in the court, and she was condemned to die.

When the day came on which the sentence was to be executed, it happened to be the last day of the six years during which she was neither to speak nor laugh. She had freed her dear brothers from the power of the spell; and the six little shirts were all ready sewn, except that the last one still wanted a sleeve for the left arm. Now when she was led out

1 Mark XIV. v. 60-61 & XV. 4-5

2 Before Pontius Pilate

Restored the stray & wayward passions & gave them clean garments

Not quite perfect

to be put to death, she hung the little shirts upon her arm; and just as she was going to be killed, she looked up, and there came six swans flying through the air. Then she saw that her deliverance was near at hand, and her heart beat with joy. The swans flew to her, and let themselves gently down, so that she could throw the little shirts over them; and no sooner were they touched by them, than the swans' skins fell off, and her brothers stood before her in their natural form, fresh and handsome; only the youngest wanted his left arm and had instead a swan's wing on his shoulder. Then they embraced and kissed one another, and the queen went

Matt. VIII. 3 & 16

to the king, who was lost in amazement, and opened her lips and said, "Dearest husband, now I may speak, and declare to thee that I am innocent and falsely accused." So she told him all the arts of the old queen-mother, who had taken away her three children and hidden them. Then they were brought back again, to the great joy of the king, and the wicked old queen-mother was put to death.—But the king and the queen, with her six brothers, lived many years in peace and happiness. And if they are not dead they live there still.

truth brought to light + the trinity (3 children) unveiled