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KEEP IN STEP.

Those who would walk together must keep in step.

As the world keeps moving forward,
Like an army marching by;
Hear you not its heavy footfall,
That resoundeth to the sky?
Some bold spirits bear the banner—
Souls of sweetness chant the song—
Lips of energy and fervor
Make the timid-hearted strong!
Like brave soldiers we march forward;
If you linger or turn back,
You must look to get a jostling
While you stand upon the track.
Keep in step!

My good neighbor, Doctor Standstill,
Gazes on it as it goes;
Not quite sure that he is dreaming,
In his afternoon's repose!
"Nothing good," he says, "can issue
From this endless 'moving on,'
Ancient laws and institutions
Are decaying, or are gone.
We are rushing on to ruin,
With our mad, new fangled ways."
While he speaks, a thousand voices,
As the heart of one man, say—
"Keep in step!"

Be assured, good Doctor Standstill,
All-wise Providence design'd
Aspiration and progression,
For the yearning human mind.
Generations left their blessings,
In the relics of their skill,
Generations yet are longing
For a greater glory still;
And the shades of our forefathers
Are not jealous of our deed—
We but follow where they beckon,
We but go where they do lead!
Keep in step!

One detachment of our army
May encamp upon the hill,
While another, in the valley,
May enjoy "Its own sweet will;"
This, may answer to one watchword,
That, may echo to another;
But in unity and concord,
They discern that each is brother!
Breast to breast they're marching onward,
In a good, now peaceful way;
You'll be jostled if you hinder,
So don't offer let or stay—
Keep in step!

(From Illustrations of the Shorter Catechism, by John Todd, D. D.)

THE FEMALE SEMINARY.

Ques. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery.

Ans. God having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did not enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

"Oh dear!" said Edward; "was there ever so hard a question?"

"The question is easy enough. It's the answer that's hard," said Crawford.

"Well, answer it is, then!" replied the lame boy. "There are no less than three things which puzzle me."

"What are they?" asked Crawford.

"First, why should God elect some, and leave others? Second, why should he do it from eternity, and not at any time? And, thirdly, why should he do it out of his mere good pleasure, without any reason for it? I am sure I don't choose things without having some good reason for it! 'Mere good pleasure!'"

The boys were sitting together in a kind of frame in the garden, which was covered over with grape-vines, and were now to finish the lessons of the day, by getting their answer in the catechism. They saw Mary as she passed the window, and said:

"Mary, won't you send out Mr. Fox here to help us?"

"I send out Mr. Fox!" said Mary. "Pray what power have I to order him out to you?"

"Oh, we don't know that,—only we know that he will do anything that you ask him to do. We heard him say so to you this morning!"

"Nonsense!" said Mary.

"Well, if you won't send him, won't you ask him to please to come?"

"That sounds more like it," said Mary.

After a while, Mr. Fox came out into the garden, apparently very reluctantly, either because he dreaded the catechism, or else because he found the company of the young ladies quite intolerable in the house.

The boys stated their difficulties, but not very clearly.

"Let us take one thing at a time," said Mr. Fox.

"What is the first difficulty?"

"The doctrine of election," said Crawford.

"Well, what of it?"

"That God should elect some to everlasting life, and leave others to perish," said Crawford. "It seems wrong."

"You make me think of Joe Hunt," said Mr. Fox.

"One beautiful moonlight evening, Joe Hunt and Samuel Stearns agreed that they would get over into my friend Mr. Napier's garden, and steal his peaches. So, about ten o'clock, they got over the fence very carefully and still. But Mr. Napier was walking in the shade of the house in a piazza, and saw them. When they had shaken one tree and had gotten their pockets filled, he went towards them. They both ran, and he ran after them. By and by, Sam Stearns tripped and fell, while Joe Hunt escaped. So Mr. Napier seized Sam; but the boy struggled and tore, and tried to get away; but my friend was a strong man, and so he held him fast.—Nay, he led him back to the house, and spoke kindly to him. He was very unwilling, at first, to tell his name, or to go into the room where there was a light; but he did go in, and then he told Mr. Napier how he was a poor, fatherless boy, how he had been led into temptation, and how he was sorry for his faults, and promised that he would never be guilty again. In short, he appeared so penitent, that Mr. Napier not only forgave him, but became his friend. He sent him to school, and watched over him, and he became a good and useful man. But Joe Hunt grew worse and worse, till at last he was sent to the state's prison. But he always quarrelled with the election made by Mr. Napier. Though he ran away with all his might, and kept away, and associated only with the wicked, yet he always stood to it, that if Mr. Napier had only caught him, and held him tight, and talked to him faithfully, he should have been good, and become a good man! He always insisted upon it that it was this partiality of Mr. Napier that ruined him! Just so men feel and talk about God. Like Joe, they break over on forbidden ground. If God takes hold of them, they struggle to get away, as Sam did. And if they can, they do get away,—choose to get away from God, and choose to be left, and then complain that God has done them an injustice by not choosing them! Had Joe any right to complain, or charge his subsequent wickedness upon Mr. Napier?"

"I think not," said Edward.

"Well, what next?" said Mr. Fox.

"Why, that God should choose men from eternity," said Crawford.

"When could he choose them, if he chose them at all?"

"When they repent and become good," replied Edward.

"But suppose that from eternity God knew just who would repent, and everything, just as fully as after they had done this; then how could he help choosing them from eternity?"

"What matter is it when God makes up his mind to do what he does, since he knows everything that ever will or can take place? Are we through with your difficulties?"

"One more," said Edward. "The answer says, God, 'out of his mere good pleasure,' elected some to everlasting life. I don't see how it would be right for him to save some men, and leave others to perish, without any reason for it?"

"Nor do I. But who says it would?"

"Isn't to do anything out of 'his mere good pleasure,' the same thing as to do it without any reason?"

"By no means. Where did you get that young peach-tree which you planted in the garden?"

"I got it in Mr. Atwood's nursery," said Edward. "He told me I might dig up any one that I chose in the whole row."

"Very well; did you dig up the largest or the straightest of them all?"

"No. There were many larger and straighter," said Edward.

"Well, you had some particular reason for taking the one you did. Perhaps you can remember the reason. Try and see. I don't want you to tell it to me. But can you remember it?"

"Yes, I can; and I thought it a good reason."

"Very likely it was a good reason. Have you ever told anybody why you chose that particular tree?"

"No," said Edward.

"Well, then, suppose I should say that you had your choice of a long row of tree, and out of your own pleasure you chose that tree, that is, you have never told the reasons; would that be saying that you had no reasons?"

"No, I think not."

"So I think. And when we say that God did anything out of his mere good pleasure, we mean that he has not told us the reasons why he did it. But we do not mean that he has no reasons. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Now let us talk a little more about that peach-tree. You remember how you told me, last year, that you made a bargain with it, that if it did not bear fruit that was good, you would cut it down,—and that it did not bear good fruit, and yet you did not cut it down, as you said you would. Do you remember telling me so?"

"I do," said Edward. "But I made a new bargain with my tree."

"Will you please to tell us what it was?"

"Why, I went over to Mr. Camp's and got some buds of grafted fruit, and put in five, and then told the tree that if it would cherish the new buds, and cause them to grow and bear good fruit, then I would not cut it down, but would take good care of it. This I called my new bargain."

"Very well; this is just what I wanted.—Your peach-tree illustrates an important truth. If it had borne good fruit without budding, you would have kept your first agreement.—But as its fruit was worthless, you got your buds, and thus brought it into a state of bearing good fruit. Just so God has done for the human race. He told Adam that if he would live holy and not sin, and bring forth the fruits of holiness, he should live in his garden, and be blessed forever. But, as Adam brought forth only the fruits of sin,—and so does every one who has sprung from him,—

he has provided a new way—made a new bargain, and, by a Redeemer, has brought them into a state of salvation. And as it is the bud which you put into your tree that produces good fruit, so it is the grace which God puts into the heart of man that brings forth the fruits of holiness in him. Thus God brings men into a state of salvation by a Redeemer. Have I now answered all your inquiries?"

The boys were silent for a few moments. At length Crawford said,

"After all, I can't see why God chooses some to everlasting life, and leaves others."

"Nor can I," said Mr. Fox. "But we know he does. He chose Paul, and left Judas to his own way. Nor can you see why Edward should be lame, and unable to get about, except with his little crutches, while you and I have sound feet and legs. God does not tell us why he does this or that, but we know that he has good reasons for every thing he does."

"How do we know that?" said Crawford.

"Because we know that he is good, and wise, and powerful; and such a being cannot do anything without having the best reasons for it."

"Shall I ever know why I am lame?" said the little lame boy.

"Certainly, if you are a child of God, he will hereafter explain it to you, and to your entire satisfaction. But supposing you had been born with sound limbs, and then you had broken your bones yourself, because you did not want to be beholden to God for sound limbs; could you then blame God, if he let you be a cripple all your days?"

"By no means," said Edward.

"I once knew an interesting, though not an uncommon instance, of the manner in which the grace of God operates. Do you wish to hear it?"

"Yes," said Crawford; and "Yes," said Edward.

"My story," said Mr. Fox, "is not marvellous or strange. I was once acquainted with a large Young Ladies' Seminary, at which were gathered the daughters of anxious parents, all over the land. With tears and misgiving and fears, fathers and mothers consulted long, before they could decide where to send their daughters. Many warnings were given, much good advice bestowed, and many prayers offered, as they left their homes. Not a day passed in which the names of these daughters were not mentioned at home,—their good traits of character spoken of, and their good desired. Not a mother but watched every mail, and opened every letter with a throbbing heart. Not one but thought of her child the last thing before closing the eyes in slumber. At the school, everything was done for them that care and labor and expense could do. The buildings were an ornament to the place, combining the comforts of modern homes with the elegance of Grecian architecture. The grounds were adorned with trees and shrubbery, gravel-walks, marble-pavements, fountains, and thriving gardens. Seen in a soft summer evening, it seemed like a fairy land; and the moonlight seemed softer, and the breezes seemed sweeter, and the murmur of insects more happy than anywhere else. In the arrangement for teaching, everything was done to secure talent of a high order,—care that was unwearied, and patient labor that was unremitted. Above all, the young ladies were given to understand that all this was to lead to a higher end; that the education of the soul for eternity was the great design of the institution; and that, so far as it fell short of this, the desires of its friends were disappointed. In the midst of one of the summer sessions, when the mountains around were rejoicing in their strength, and valleys sent up a thousand murmurs of gladness, God came