



Der kleine Knabe und der Mond.

„Warum scheinen Dinge, in dem Raume fern,
Anfangs wohl dem kleinen Kind so innig nah?—
Warum wünscht, ersehnt das Kleine wohl so gern,
Daß das Ferne zur Verein'gung wäre da?
Was mag, Mutter, uns wohl dieß vom Kinde lehren?—
Daß wir sein Entfalten fördern und nicht stören.
Daß, eh' sich die Dinge in dem Raume von ihm winden,
Es die Ein'gung zwischen sich und ihnen möge finden.“

XXV.

THE LITTLE BOY AND THE MOON.

Why does the white moon, floating fur
In distant realms of blue,
And shedding thence its lustre mild,
Seem so much nearer to your child
Than e'er it seems to you?

It is not that he sees amiss,
Or that your eyes are dim:
Herein a higher truth is taught—
Make it a part of your own thought,
Then give it back to him!

He stretches now a baby hand
To grasp the heavenly light.
Oh, may no barrier ever rise
To make him with the years less wise,
Or dim his longing sight!

Then hasten not to break the spell
Which holds him in sweet thrall;
Translate it rather, that it seem
In years to come no childish dream
To be at one with all!

This song was suggested by an incident from real life. The motto explains the symbolic import of a phenomenon which is recurrent in child, and especially in boy, life. We too often ignore the child's wonder at the moon and the starry heavens. Hence it collapses into formless and empty astonishment. We should recognise in

such wonder a question asked by the soul, and should so answer it as to prepare the child for a true apperception of the heavenly bodies. Thus it is easy to direct the attention of even very young children to the way in which the moon seems to swim through the clouds, and to her often clearly perceptible spherical form.

The wonder of the soul in presence of the heavenly lights also opens for us a path over which we may guide the child towards some inner apprehension of the being of their Creator. In an age when all detached and outward phenomena are instinctively grasped in identity with an inner and unifying life, it is easy to direct imagination from the heavens to Him whose glory they declare. A hint as to the method of doing this will, however, be given in our next song.

Confronted by objects whose nature he is not able to apprehend, the child accepts with simple faith the explanations of his elders. Whether such explanations be true or false he believes them with equal ease, and this is especially the case when they are connected with and seemingly verified by his own perceptions. Hence, by false explanations the child may be led to conceive the moon as a man and the stars as gold pins or burning lamps. On the other hand, by means of true though necessarily partial explanations, he may recognise in the former a beautiful, shining, swimming ball, and in the latter great blazing suns which look so tiny only because they are so far off.

The one way of looking at moon and stars de-

spite its apparent life is barren and lifeless; the other bears within it a seed of thought which may later develop into rational insight. Why should we withhold from the child the living and life-giving explanation and weigh him down with a dead one? Truth is harmful never; error is harmful always, even though it may sometimes lead to the truth.