

PLAIN WORDS FOR CHRIST

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Being a series of readings for working men

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CHRIST ***

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PLAIN WORDS FOR CHRIST,
BEING
A SERIES OF READINGS FOR WORKING MEN.

BY THE LATE
REGINALD G. DUTTON, M.A.

Curate of St. Martin's, in the Fields.

”Lord, as to Thy dear cross we flee,
And hope to be forgiven—
So let Thy life our pattern be,
And form our souls for heaven.”
John Hampden Gurney.

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Dedicated
TO THE WORKING MEN OF ENGLAND:
AMONGST WHOM I CAN NUMBER
MANY FIRM FRIENDS.

PREFACE.

As the following pages are addressed to working men, I have touched only on those topics upon which I thought they were likely to need advice. The language

throughout is as simple as possible, so that all may understand it; and, following the example of Holy Scripture, I have, wherever I have found it possible, illustrated my meaning from the teachings of nature.

That the book has many imperfections I am well aware; but I humbly trust that He, Whose guidance I have so often and so earnestly sought in writing the following pages, will be pleased in His mercy to grant that the words here written for His cause, and for His people, may "not return unto Him void," but may "accomplish that which" He shall please, and may prosper in the thing whereto He sends it.

R.G.D.

HINTON HOUSE,

1880.

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LIFE.

"He liveth long who liveth well!
 All other life is short and vain;
 He liveth longest who can tell
 Of living most for heavenly gain."
Bonar.

There are two distinct classes of people who enjoy God's gift of life, and who look upon that gift from two utterly different points of view. The worldly man looks upon life as a time in which to gratify his desire for pleasure, or in which to pursue his business schemes. The Christian looks upon life as a preparation for death, which shall lead him, as it were, through a gateway to the life to come. Nay, more than this, so nearly are these two connected, life and death, that the way in which men spend the former, mainly depends on the view they take of the latter. To the man who believes only in the things of time and sense, there practically appears no life to come. Death is the end of all things; he neither sees, nor cares to see anything beyond it. But how different is it with the Christian man! To him life is a growing-time—a time for growing in grace. What the spring-time and early days of summer are to the corn, what the April showers are to the tender shoots, so is life to him! He lives with a consciousness that death is hovering near, and often nearer perhaps than even he may think; but so far from making him wretched, or discontented, the thought of his departure rather causes him joy. To him life is but a shadow, a vapour, a short, passing, wintry day; death is but the dark valley—necessarily dark, for he too is but mortal—but beyond this darkness there is light, light unearthly, light glorious, which will lighten his eyes in death.

Life has often been compared to a ship, sailing over stormy seas, but always pointed towards the haven of rest, which is on the heavenly shore; meeting with many disasters, suffering many losses, till at length, "with rent cordage and shattered deck," she reaches the port of Heaven.

There is a story told of an ancient Greek teacher, who was asked what kind of ship he considered the safest to weather a storm—if he thought one with a pointed keel, or a flat-bottomed boat the best for resisting the violence of the waves? The old man answered, "The only really *safe* ship I know of is the one which is drawn up upon the shore." And oh! reader, is not this true of life? Have you never felt as you sailed across life's troubled sea, and met with ships of all kinds crossing towards the same harbour, have you never felt that none could really be called *safe*—safe amid the changes and chances of life—none safe until they were drawn up high and dry upon the heavenly shore? The best ship ever built may be wrecked in a storm, the most experienced pilot ever known may miss his way in a fog; and the most God-fearing, upright, honest Christian may be, nay certainly is, liable to faults, mistakes, and failings. "The only safe ship I know of is the one which is drawn up upon the shore!" There, out of reach of the violence of the waves, far from their stormy tides, the ship rests safely. It makes but little difference whether the ship be flat-bottomed or pointed as to its keel; it makes no difference at all whether the man be rich or poor, whether he be bond or free. It is to the same harbour both are bound, it is to the same Master each

will be accountable for deeds done in the body. Only be sure that you are living now the life that Christ would have you live, and that you can say with S. Paul, "the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.[#]"

[#] Gal. ii. 20.

MY BIRTHDAY.

"My birthday! ev'ry minute tells
 Me time is passing by,
 And bids me look to One Who dwells
 Beyond the starry sky;
 A frowning past would seem to say:
 'What moments have been thrown away.'

Great God! as birthdays come and go,
 And mark each fleeting stage below,
 Be Thou my hope, be Thou my aid—
 The only strength which cannot fade—
 And when the throbs of life have passed,
 O take me to Thyself at last."

John Burbidge.

Reader, just think what a birthday is. Your birthday is the day on which you were born. The day on which God sent you into this world, giving you a free will to fight for Him or against Him. And every year regularly since that day you have had a birthday. You have been getting every year nearer and nearer to the grave, nearer and nearer home. And what is the home to which you have been drawing nearer, God's or Satan's? Has every fresh birthday found you growing in grace as well as in age? Can it be said of you, as it was of our blessed Lord, He "increased in *wisdom* and stature, and in favour with God and man?" Remember that such wisdom as that mentioned there is not to be got out of learned books. It is the same kind of wisdom that Solomon had, the gift of Almighty God. Learned

men write learned books, and we read their writings with delight. But a queen even took a long, a toilsome journey in person to hear the wisdom of Solomon, for he was the wisest man on earth.

Just think for a moment how old you were last birthday. How many of those years can you truthfully say have been spent in the service of Christ? Jesus Christ passed thirty years here on our earth, thirty weary, sorrowful years, and He can truthfully say that every day of those thirty years was passed for you and for me! Yes, reader, every day and every hour! He bore the mocking laughter of the Jew, and the idle scoffing of the Gentile, that He might know what ridicule meant, and might help you to bear it too. He worked in the carpenter's shop that He might know what labour was, and understand what weariness means. He saw that foxes had holes, and the birds had their nests, while He had no place in which to lay His head; and all this He suffered, that He might know the full bitterness of the cup of misery drunk by the houseless, homeless poor. And He knew too that each year, each birthday, brought Him nearer to death, and what a death it was! Oh! have you ever thought of the pain of knowing all this beforehand? Perhaps now and then, (but very rarely,) you sit down on your birthday to think of your death-day. But God has mercifully hidden from your eyes the manner and circumstances of your death. It wasn't so with Christ. Whenever the thought of death came into His mind, there would rise up before Him a vision of three crosses of wood on a hill outside a city. Crowds of people would be standing round, and Roman soldiers keeping guard. On two of the crosses would be nailed thieves; on the centre one Himself, the Lord of life and glory. I remember seeing a picture a few years ago in London by a well-known artist. He had painted a boy standing near a carpenter's bench in a village workshop. He had been working hard, and was now resting, and in the act of stretching Himself. Both arms were extended at full length, and the head leant slightly on one side. A woman, kneeling on the floor behind Him, was looking at some treasures in a large chest. The sun falling upon the figure of the boy, cast a shadow upon the floor, a shadow of a figure stretched as if it were ready for crucifixion, and the artist had well named his picture "The Shadow of Death." Reader, you may be young, as young as that boy in the picture; but near you too may be standing the shadow of death. The boy Jesus, in stretching His weary limbs, strangely cast a shadow on the ground of the death of the man Christ. And though you know it not, death may be standing quite as near to you as it was to Him—or nearer.

Oh then be up and doing, working for the Master Christ, ere the night cometh. Rather let each birthday as it comes find you nearer to your Father in heaven, and more prepared to meet Him. And then those beautiful lines shall be true of you, and of your life:—

”To Thy saints, while here below,
 With new years new mercies come;
 But the happiest year they know,
 Is their last which leads them Home.”

TEMPTATION.

”When wounded sore the stricken heart
 Lies bleeding and unbound,
 One only Hand, a piercèd Hand,
 Can salve the sinner’s wound.”
Mrs. Alexander.

What is temptation? A good man was once asked that question, and he said—
 ”The border-line between sin and holiness. Not sin itself, but the surroundings,
 the outer crust, as it were, of sin.” And that is the best answer I can give you.

Well did the Master know what temptation was; and in His godly wisdom
 He has given us a special petition in His own Prayer against it. ”Lead us not into
 temptation,” we continually pray, and we often say those words thoughtlessly
 and carelessly enough, but none of us ever know how many temptations these
 words keep us from. God gives us trials, and they are good for our faith; but it
 has been well said, that what is a trial in the hand of God becomes a temptation
 in the hand of Satan.

You should always try and remember, when tempted, that Jesus is near you
 and looking on—that no temptation can befall you, save what He allows. If you
 call to Him for help, He will hear you, and answer: not always to remove the
 temptation, but to give you His grace and strength to withstand it.

There is a story told of a young workman in the Black Country, who was
 converted to God, and was in consequence subjected to great persecution from
 those who were employed with him in the forge. One day they stripped him
 naked, and placed him in front of the furnace fire, while a number of men and
 lads stood by using filthy language. They threatened to keep him there until
 he swore, but he remained silent; till at length one, in whom there was more
 humanity than the rest, freed him from his tormentors. The clergyman happened
 to hear of it, and sent for him, and asked how he felt when in that fearful case.

”Sir,” was his simple answer, ”I never felt before that Jesus was so near me as then.” Don’t you think that Christ had given that young man a large portion of His Spirit? Don’t you think that he was a martyr—a witness for Christ? It was the same, you know, with those three children thousands of years ago at Babylon. The great King of Babylon had taken them captive; and he commanded them to fall down and worship a golden image which he had set up. There they were in Babylon—far from the temple, where they used to worship God, far from their friends and relatives. They were only three young men among thousands of strangers. And after all, would it have been so very wrong, just for once, to fall down and worship, as the king commanded? Yes, it would have been wrong, very wrong; and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego knew it would have been wrong; and so they refused. And what was the consequence? Why, the names of those three heroes, for heroes they certainly were, have been recorded in the Bible, and translated into every language under heaven, and to this day we hold them up as examples for our sons to follow.

Reader, if you and I resist the devil, and overcome temptation, there is no likelihood of our names being written in the Bible. No children yet unborn will read the records of our history; no scholar will translate the story into other tongues. But our names, and the account of the temptation, and how we resisted it, will all be written down in the Lamb’s great Book of Life. And is it not worth striving against any temptation in order to obtain such honour? Is it not worth while bearing witness for Jesus, if in return we wear the martyr’s crown? But I would have you look higher than this. Jesus Christ died to save us; and should we not be grateful to Him for that? It is very little we can do for Him Who has done all for us. But we can do this. The weakest, and the poorest, and the most sinful among us can, when the temptation comes, put up a prayer to Jesus to ask His gracious help. And I know of none shorter, and certainly of none better, than the words He Himself has taught us—”Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen[#].”

[#] S. Matt. vi. 13.

DRINK.

”When you see a drunken sot

From out the tavern reel,
 Be thankful for a better lot,
 And turn not on your heel.
 Go warn him of the dreadful glass,
 And save him, if you can;
 But never scorn him as you pass—
 Remember he's a man."

John Burbidge.

Drink! Why is it that when we speak that word we instinctively tremble? Is it not because we feel that it is the great enemy of our country and our race? Is it not because we call to mind strong men and women reeling under its influences? Neglected homes, ragged children, and general wants rise up before our eyes at the first mention of that word, Drink! Have you ever been in any of our large towns late on a Saturday night, and watched a woman waiting patiently outside a public house for the drunken husband, who is spending his time and his wages within? Perhaps there is a babe at her breast, and a ragged child crying at her side. Crying! yes, crying, because it knows that this means no supper, no comfort, no peace. It is an awful sight. I don't know any sight more sad; no not even a weeping mother mourning her only son.

Look into the newspapers again, week after week filled with cases of drunkenness. A horrible murder is committed; and if it should be peculiarly brutal in its details, we are almost certain to find that the murderer was drunk. Yes, it is drink that fills our prisons to overflowing; it is drink that fills the mad-houses of the country; and it is drink which indirectly taxes every single member of the society in which we live. Then, again, drunkenness leads to the commission of countless other sins. Apart from sins committed under the influence of drink, there are many sins to which drink leads. I have known a case in which a woman, who began life with high motives and honest intentions, being afflicted with a great and deep sorrow, was advised by her friends to seek consolation in drink. The glass which she then took led to another, and that one to another, and so on, until to-day that woman is pronounced by those very friends to be a hopeless and confirmed drunkard. As I said, before she took to drink her character was good; now it is far otherwise. And I am told that so great are her thefts, that everything in that house has to be kept under lock and key.

Oh, don't you think that is a terrible picture of the influence of drink? Don't you think that at the Day of Judgment God will blame the friends, however kindly they may have meant it, who first advised her to drown her grief in drink? Reader, that is a true story. It is no made-up tale. That poor woman is well known to me;

and so far as I can see, the few years more she may have to live, and they cannot be many, must be passed in sorrow, in suffering, and in pain. And, unhappily, this curse of our nation does not end in our own land. Wherever the English tongue is spoken, wherever the English foot treads, there the curse follows. From the swarthy African, who knows the white man's "fire-water," which maddens his brain and dulls his senses, to the red Indian warrior who changes the skins of wild beasts for English gold and English spirits on the shores of Lake Ontario, all men know of the Englishman's curse: and knowing, learn to dread it.

It is drink which destroys our navy and our army alike. It is drunkenness which saps the strength of many of our greatest minds before they have left the university. And what can I say of our country villages,—of our young men, who year by year are growing up and beginning for themselves the labour of life; of the boys who, almost as soon as they leave school, learn, in many cases, to follow the example of their elders, and find the public house a convenient meeting-place?

It is for the young men of England to redeem their country's honour. It is for every individual soul to do battle with this mighty foe. Let the work be begun in our villages, in our homes, in ourselves. Let us be moderate in our living, in eating and in drinking; and then, by example rather than by precept, by deed rather than by word, we shall have done what we could; and when we lie down in death, it will be our comfort to reflect that little as it was we did, and poor and weak as were the efforts of our heart, we did it to the Lord and not unto men.

IDLE WORDS.

"O, never say a careless word
 Hath not the power to pain,
 The shaft may ope some hidden wound
 That closes not again.
 Weigh well those light-winged messengers;
 God marked thy needless word,
 And with it, too, the falling tear,
 The heart-pang that it stirred."
Anna Shipton.

Our Lord, in S. Matthew's Gospel, tells us "that every idle word that men shall

speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment[#].” Now there are so many forms of speech which may be called “idle words,” that I think it would be best to consider each separately. And so we will divide them under three heads. 1. Needless words. 2. Impure words. 3. Careless words.

[#] S. Matt. xii. 36.

1. Now all “idle words” are needless. You may be sure of this, that if God had made, as He has made, many expressions necessary to our ordinary conversation or adapted to our daily wants, such could never be “idle words.” I do not mean to say, nor would I have you think by this, that any expressions of joy or merriment, that any of the amusing stories we hear, or any of the ordinary conversation of life, comes under the head of “idle words.” But what I do mean by “idle words” and needless words is all that we commonly call gossip. Now gossip is quite needless. It is generally taken up with talk about our neighbours; rarely, very rarely, is any thing said in their favour—most often are their characters blackened. Now you know it is so easy often to say an unkind thing of a person, and so hard to say a kind one, that men prefer the easier method, and the character suffers thereby. But would this be so, think you, if we always remembered that for these and such like “idle words” God would bring us into judgment?

2. Then again there are *impure words* and swearing. Now I daresay when you swear you don’t think of what it means. When you turn round upon a fellow man and curse him, it does not occur to you that you have solemnly called upon God to give his soul over to everlasting damnation. God Almighty alone can tell what effect that curse, so carelessly spoken, may have. I cannot and do not believe that it will affect the soul of him *against* whom it is launched. But I do believe, for God has told us so, that that word, however carelessly and thoughtlessly spoken, will one day be brought up against the speaker, and for that and any other “idle words” he may have spoken, he “shall give an account in the day of judgment.”

And the same is true of impure words. They may be said thoughtlessly, but they may yet for all that do as much harm as if you had thought over them before speaking. Suppose you throw a stone into a pond, the stone sinks and you see it no more, and all you can see is a widening circle spreading ever farther and farther until it ripples at your feet upon the shore. And this is true of life. You speak an impure word, or you tell an impure tale to some of your friends, and you go away and forget it. But the word or the story may have been heard by a little child perhaps, and that word or story may be the first step on the road to its ruin. “For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account in

the day of judgment.”

3. And what shall I say of careless words, for they are words so often spoken even by the very best among us? We speak the words, and often we regret them as soon as spoken. But we are too proud to recall them. It may be that a word which we have carelessly spoken may be remembered years after, when we ourselves have passed away. Besides which, careless words, needless words, and impure words pass upwards before God, and He hears them and notes them down against that day when men shall give an account of every idle word.

”By God’s eternal dwelling-place,
 Those words went floating by,
 And still the echo wanders on
 Throughout eternity.
 And whispering yet within thy heart,
 ’The still small voice’ is heard,
 And thou shall cry, ’O God! forgive
 My needless bitter word!”

Yes, reader, God may forgive the words, and will do so, as He has promised; but, as that verse says, ”the echo wanders on throughout eternity.” And the consequences wander on too. And though God may have forgiven the utterance of the word, yet since it was idly spoken, you will have to ”give an account thereof at the day of judgment.”

It has been said, that the words spoken here ”wander on” through eternity, and that we shall one day confront again the words which we have spoken in the flesh. How careful then ought we to be of every idle word! How particular that none escape us! For think of the torment it will be to the purified soul to meet in the everlasting city with the echoes—even though they be but the last dying echoes—of the idle words which the lips have spoken on earth.

EXCUSES.

”Make not vain excuses;
 God gives strength to all,
 Sets His guardian angels
 Round us, lest we fall.

In the hour of trial
 Call upon thy Lord,
 Fight thy battle bravely,
 Think upon His Word,

'I will never leave thee,
 I am ever near,
 In My strength go forward,
 Cast away all fear.'"

E.C.O.

How natural it seems to make excuses. If we are found fault with, we have an excuse ready to our tongue. If we have to confess that we have been in the wrong, we do so with an excuse. Ever since the day when Adam and Eve fled from their Maker's Presence in the Garden of Eden, ever since Adam spoke those first words of excuse, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," ever since then man has made one excuse after another, until excuses come so readily that it is difficult to speak without making one. We are all of us very fond of trying to shift the blame from our own shoulders on to those of others. If a railway accident takes place, it is most difficult to find out who is to blame for it. If an army is cut to pieces in battle, the blame is generally laid upon the dead. But if a praiseworthy action is done, and men talk about it, and it gets reported in the newspapers, there are always plenty of people quite ready to come forward and lay claim to having done the brave deed. And what is true of our earthly life, the life of the body, is true also of the life of the soul. When we fall into sin, when we come on our knees to confess the sin to Almighty God, how very often the confession is spoilt by excuses. Just as Adam laid the blame on Eve, and Eve in her turn blamed the Serpent, so we lay the blame on somebody else, and expect God will accept our excuses.

Now there are so many excuses that the devil teaches men, that it would be quite impossible for me to deal with nearly all of them; but there are one or two of the commonest, against which I can put you on your guard.

One of the excuses most frequently made for not coming to Christ is, "I am not good enough." Reader, which of us would be good enough for Christ, if He required us to be perfect? But He wants us to come just as we are, to come with our sins, and lay them upon Him, Who bore them long ago "in His own body on the tree."

I have read of an artist who wanted to paint a picture of the Prodigal Son. He searched through the mad-houses, and work-houses, and prisons, to find a

man wretched enough to represent the Prodigal, but he could not find one. One day he was walking down the street and he met a beggar; he thought the man would do, and he told him he would pay him well, if he would come to his room, and sit for his picture. The day came, and the man appeared at the artist's door, and reminded him of his appointment with him. But the artist looked at him and said, "No, I have never seen you before. I made an appointment with a ragged beggar, not with you." But the man persisted, and named the place where they had first met; so the artist asked him what he had been doing. "Well," answered the beggar, "I thought I would dress myself up a bit before I got painted." "Then," said the artist, "I do not want you; I wanted you *as you were, not as you are now.*" And, reader, Christ wants *you as you are*, when He first meets you. Without excuses, poor, sinful, and miserable; a broken and a contrite heart He will not despise.

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad."

Another very common excuse is, "There is no hurry." Men, and especially young men, think, "Oh! I've got life before me, why shouldn't I amuse myself a bit now? and then, when I'm old, too old for amusement, I'll give the days of my life to God." I have heard a story, that on one occasion Satan gathered his wicked spirits together, and they took counsel as to how they could best ruin mankind. And some said one thing and some another. One, for instance, stood up and said, "I'll go and tell them that there's no God." But Satan said, "No, that won't do; it's too old a story; it has been tried and failed." And another rose up and said, "I'll go and persuade them that the Bible is not true." And Satan replied again, "No, that won't do either; you might persuade a few, but you would not convince many. But," he added, "I'll tell you what to do, go and tell them that there's no hurry, they'll all believe that." And from that day to this Satan has been telling us that there's no hurry, and we all *do believe that*. Yes, the very best of us and the very wisest, as well as the worst and most ignorant, still think that there's no hurry. Morning after morning the sun rises, and every evening he sinks beyond the distant hills. Year by year, spring follows winter, and summer follows spring. Every year we gather in a new harvest, and then the winter evenings are with us once more; and because these things come so regularly and so naturally, we are apt to think that there's no hurry.

Reader, if you are still persuading yourself that there's no hurry *for you*,

make the excuse no longer. Jesus invites you, saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." God's ministers invite you, preaching the Gospel of the Blessed God. The open church and the pealing bells invite you, "the gay green earth" and the open sky, the birds and beasts, all these invite you to look at them, in and beyond them, to their Maker's love.

I wish I had time to say more about these excuses. They are as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. But I suppose if I did exhaust them all, Satan would be quite ready to give you fresh ones.

God "willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and *live*." Oh! think of that joyful life, immortal, everlasting, around the throne of Christ. Think of your dear friends who have gone before; think, it may be, of the pious mother, who first taught your infant lips to say "Our Father, which art in heaven." And she, too, is there! And then, reader, think of the punishment of sin; there's no escape from that! Our Lord Himself has told us what that will be—"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth[#]."

[#] S. Matt. xxv. 30.

POVERTY.

"God sends us poverty or wealth,
 Whichever He thinks best;
 The best for earthly warfare here—
 The best for heavenly rest.
 If God has sent you wealth, it is
 Not yours, but only lent.
 If He has sent you poverty,
 Then learn to be content."

R.D.

One of the questions, which men have wasted many weary hours in trying to answer, is the question of the uneven division of wealth in the world. Great men and clever men have tried, and all alike have failed; nay, some have gone further,

and have declared that since an unseen Being has divided wealth so unevenly, it is for them to redistribute it. And these, too, have failed. And I suppose as long as the world lasts we shall never have an answer to the question—How is it that one man in this world is so rich that he really does not know what to do with his money: he buys horses and carriages, and stocks his house with lovely and costly treasures, and with wrought silver and gold? And how is it, on the other hand, that a man, living perhaps at the rich man's very gates, a man as religious, as honest, as straightforward as he, how is it that he must needs rise early and go late to rest to gain his daily bread? How is it that sometimes even with all his daily toil he feels an anxiety quite unknown to the other, as to where the next meal is to come from? Can you answer that question? I think not! And, reader, you are not alone in your ignorance; for I have never heard of anybody yet who could give any cause for this uneven division of wealth.

No, of all God's gifts to men, none are so unevenly distributed; and none cause so much bitterness between men, as His gift of riches. The great thing then to remember is, first, that both poverty and wealth come from Almighty God. If we have riches, God has given them, not to use them selfishly for our own purposes, but in order to benefit other people. While, if we are poor in this world's goods, we may be rich in heavenly treasure, and still look upon our poverty as the gift of God. "But," you may say, "it is all very well for you, with everything you can want, to talk to us about poverty being a blessed state, and a gift of God, but you can't know anything of the troubles of poverty." Now, there may be and there are certain troubles which a poor man necessarily feels, and which a rich man does not, and these of course I don't pretend to know. There may be moments in your life, in which you feel that God has forgotten you, that starvation must be very near! But do remember that God never *forgets* His people. He never fails to help and govern those He has brought up in His steadfast fear and love. The same kind providence watches the poor man's humble cottage and the royal throne. The same God will mark what is done amiss in both cases, and will most surely punish it.

Our Lord and His Apostles were poor working men. He had made all men, and had only to speak the word, and the kings of the earth would gladly have flocked in eager to be His disciples; but no, He passes over all these, and He goes down to the seashore, and He finds some plain fishermen mending their nets, He bids them follow Him; and, just as if it was the most natural thing in the world, they get up, and leave behind them their few earthly possessions (probably little else than fishing-tackle), and they follow Him without delay. They know well that they are going after a poor man, but they never think of the poverty. They know that theirs will be no bed of down, when the toils of day are over, for He whom they follow has "not where to lay His head[#]." They know that the man

they are following has no earthly home, and that when they leave their father and the ship, they leave all that they have and all they will ever have on earth. I wonder, reader, if you have ever thought of these Apostles of Jesus leaving *all* to follow Him, and of their reason for doing so. And what was the reason—was it hope of worldly honour? I think not; if so they would very soon have been bitterly deceived. Or was it, think you, to have their names and history written down in the Bible, that all men might read of their self-denial? I hardly think that likely, for when they started to follow Jesus, they knew but little of Him, and nothing at all of a Bible, in which their names should appear. No, what these Apostles had is what we want so much, rich and poor alike. God's great gift of *faith*. Faith to believe God, as Abraham believed Him. Faith to take Christ at His word, as the Apostles did. Faith here, which shall guide us through this world of sin, and land us, whether rich or poor, on the eternal shore beyond it. To us, then, poverty or wealth alike would come as God's gifts, and we should thankfully accept them as such, and we should no longer complain of our hard lot and our little grievances, but should think more of Christ, and less of ourselves—more of His riches, and less of our poverty.

[#] S. Matt. viii. 20.

OUT OF WORK.

”Be it good or ill,
 Be it what you will,
 It must help me on my road,
 My rugged way to Heaven, please God.”
C. Rossetti.

As this book is written specially for working men, it could hardly be complete without a few words on the above heading.

Now I am not going to enter into the question of why it is that so many people are constantly out of work. In some cases, it may be the fault of the master: in some cases, that of the men. There may be, again, hard times in which it is difficult to get work, and for some perhaps quite impossible. But what I want to

do is to offer a few kindly words of advice to such as may be out of work. And, first of all, if you have ever been so, you must have felt, and I hope have felt keenly, the blessing of practising habits of saving. We all know what is meant by putting aside something against a rainy day; and those of us to whom the rainy day of wanting work has come, have probably had cause to regret a good deal of wasted money, spent in the public house, before that evil day came. We have felt that if we had kept the money we had wasted in this way, it would have greatly helped in keeping the wolf away from the door.

But the great point for Christian men to remember is that whether they are out of work or not in a worldly sense, they are always, or ought always to be hard at work in a heavenly sense. If we are out of work, it may be our master's fault, or it may be our own. But if we are out of work for Christ it is never His fault, and so it must always be ours. Our work for Jesus begins as soon as we enter this world, and ceases not till we leave it. If you were to go to a far-off country, where there was no other human being near you, you would still have to be working for Jesus. There is always the battle with self, the daily self-denials, the oft-repeated doubts to be silenced; and this we shall find quite enough work for us to do. Each Christian has his own separate work to do for God; and we may be quite sure of this, that God will not take us out of this world until that work be done. Some time ago, in an English dockyard, a great ship was to be launched. An immense multitude of people came to see it glide down the slides that were to carry it into the water. The blocks and wedges were knocked away; but the massive hull did not stir. Just then a little boy ran forward, and began to push the ship with all his might. The crowd broke out into a laugh of ridicule; but it so happened that the vessel was just ready to move; the little push the boy gave it was all that was needed to start it, and away it went into the water.

Now we have each of us got some work to do for the Master. It may be great, or it may be small; but if we will but look for it, there it is. It may be our business to speak a word to a friend who is living in sin, or it may be we may have to speak to multitudes. It is certain that we all have to set a good example, and to live a Christian life. Yes, even when we are out of work, we can show that we are working for the Master. We can try and be content with our hard lot, and God only knows how very hard that lot sometimes is. We can refrain from speaking against our employer, or saying anything unjust or untrue of him. You know it is always easier to say an unkind word, or to think a hard thought of one who has done us harm, than to speak or think kindly of him; and because it is easier we generally do so. You may say this is but natural. So it is. But there are a great many things which come quite naturally to us, which are wrong, and forbidden in the Bible; and if we would go to heaven, nay more, if we would please God, we must deny ourselves in some of these very things which come so naturally to

us. And do remember, reader, that though masters may be, and certainly often are unkind to their servants, and unfaithful to their trust, it is not for us to judge them. God has told us that vengeance is His, and He will repay. Masters and men alike have hard times: and though the masters may have more money, they have more calls upon their purse and heavier expenses than the poor. For failing crops do make hard times for the farmers, and loss of wealth means hard times for the merchant, just as hard in its own way as any the poor have to suffer when they are out of work.

DISCONTENT.

”Some murmur if their sky is clear
 And wholly bright to view,
 If one small speck of dark appear
 In their bright Heaven of blue;
 And some, with deepest love are filled
 If but one ray of light,
 One star of God’s good mercy gild
 The blackness of their night.”

Trench.

Discontent in any form, and among any class of people, is indeed a disagreeable, and a wicked thing. It is disagreeable, because it makes one’s neighbours uncomfortable. It is wicked, because it is a sin against God. It is bad enough and wrong enough when we find it amongst the poor. It is worse than wrong when we meet with it among the rich. ”Godliness with contentment is great gain[#];” and so often do these two go hand in hand, that they have come to be looked upon as almost inseparable. A discontented man is always an unhappy one, and we may say, too, generally manages to render those about him unhappy. We have given us in the Bible, for our warning, an example of discontent in the person of Jonah. Jonah, as you will remember, was sent to a city called Nineveh, to warn its sinful inhabitants of the wrath of God. So he went, and preached throughout her streets that after forty days the city should be overthrown. But, contrary to the expectation of Jonah, the King of Nineveh and his people humbled themselves before God, and repented of their evil ways. And Almighty God, with that forbearing

love which He is wont to show to His repentant children, heard the prayer of the people of Nineveh, and they and their city were saved. But, strange as it may seem to us, this forbearance "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry[#]." He was angry because Nineveh was saved, and because it seemed to him that his was now a false position. And so this discontented man went out of the city, and there he made himself a booth, or tent, to keep off the hot rays of the noonday sun, and he wished that he might die. And then Almighty God taught Jonah a lesson—such a lesson as it would be well for each one of us to learn. He caused a gourd to grow, to ward off the heat from Jonah; and when Jonah began to be glad because of this tree, God sent a worm to its roots, and one after another the leaves fell off, and the tree died; and discontent again prevailed in Jonah's heart. Then God called him, and said, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; and should not I spare Nineveh, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left[#]?" How many houses there are in England, which would be happy ones were it not for this demon form of discontent. How many families have been made wretched, and homes broken up, all through discontent. There are people, who enjoy the best of health, the fruits of the earth in their season, and many other gifts of God Almighty's providence, and who yet amongst it all lack His great gift of contentment. And there are others who lie upon beds of sickness, or beds of pain, in our crowded hospitals, or in loathsome dens in the back streets of our great cities, and these have that gift of contentment which the world never gave them, and can never take away. There are little children, who play happily and contentedly in our great thoroughfares, who have never seen a country lane, a cornfield, or wild flower. And there are many grown-up people, to whom these are sights of every day, and who fail to recognise the hand of the great Giver.

[#] 1 Tim. vi. 6.

[#] Jonah iv. 1.

[#] Jonah iv. 11.

The dew of heaven only falls on those parts of the earth which most need it—gardens, grasslands, and cornfields. Little, if any, is wasted on the barren rocks, or on the unthankful sea. So, too, is it with contentment. God does not lavish it where it will not be gratefully and thankfully received; but where few of His good things come, in hospitals, in orphanages, and very often among the poorest of the poor, there He rains down His great gift in rich abundance, that all men

who see it may wonder, and thank the great Giver of all.

"I WANT TO BETTER MYSELF."

"We've no abiding city here:
 This may distress the worldling's mind,
 But should not cost the saint a tear,
 Who hopes a better rest to find."
Kelly.

"I want to better myself!" How often we hear those words. A man has a very comfortable place, he has a kind master, a good home, pleasant companions, and yet he throws up everything and makes a fresh start in a new place, and all because he says he wants to better himself. Now I am not going to say one word against a man's trying to better himself. Not only is there no harm in it, but it is everybody's duty to try and do so as far as he can. But I hope to shew you, before you put down this book, that there is more than one way of bettering yourself; that it is quite possible to change your place, and to get more money by the change, and yet not to better yourself at all. Do try, first of all, to get out of your head the idea that money is the great thing. It is not. It is, of course, necessary to have money, but it is not good for any body to have too much. You generally find that an increase of wages means fresh disappointment, while if a man has just enough to live on he learns to be content. Oh! I know it is the same with all classes. The rich are quite as bad as the poor; nobody ever has enough.

Now undoubtedly the first thing we ought to look out for, though very few do so, when trying to better ourselves, is a greater opportunity of practising our religion. Ask yourself the question, "In changing my village, am I likely to be any nearer to my God? Shall I read my Bible more often? Shall I get more time for prayer?" Be sure that the time thus spent in the service and worship of Almighty God will not be wasted, for He will make it good.

Again, another question to ask is, "Shall I find as comfortable a home, and as nice companions, as I have here?" For, I trust, we all know the influence companions have upon each other. Man was never made to be alone always, and therefore it is most necessary that his companions should be good and pleasant men. And who can rightly estimate the value of a good home. A place to which

a man can go at night, instead of the public-house. A place to which the angels love to come, and bring down stores of happiness from the presence of God.

And then there is one way more in which a man may better himself; and that is what most people put first instead of last on the list; I mean, by money.

Your wages may not be sufficiently high, and you may know of a place where they are higher. But don't be deceived by the pay given for work being higher, for other things may be higher too. For instance, in some country places the wages are twelve shillings a week, while in London they may be one pound. But in London, clothes are dearer, and you would want more of them. Lodgings are dearer and harder to get, and, reader, people are harder too!

But perhaps you will say, "How is it that so many men leave their work in a place to better themselves, and return without having bettered themselves at all?" The answer to that question is plain and simple enough. They thought it was only a question of money, and they looked no further, and so failed. But if you really wish to better yourself, ask yourself the questions I have asked above, and don't be satisfied until you get an answer. Ask God to help you to better yourself, and He certainly will help you to do so. If He sees it would be good for you, He will allow you to better yourself in this world; and if not, then He will take you away, in His own good time, that you may better yourself in the world to come.

MASTERS AND MEN.

"God has given each his station,
Some have riches and high place,
Some have lowly homes and labour,
All may have His precious grace.

And God loveth all His children,
Rich and poor, and high and low,
And they all shall meet in heaven,
Who have served Him here below."
Mrs. Alexander.

Now I want to say a few plain words about the relations of masters and men to

each other. In these days of unhappy differences between them, days of constant strikes and lock-outs, it is surely not out of place to say a few words in the interests of peace. There have no doubt been faults on the side of the masters, and no doubt faults too on that of the men. All alike are human, and as such are open to make mistakes, and very often the mistakes they make are difficult to correct. There is no doubt that the old spirit of familiar intercourse between masters and men has passed away. Days when the master was indeed a father to his people, and when all his workmen loved him, and honoured him as such. Those days and that spirit have gone from amongst us. In the country among the farmers we have a different class of men altogether. In towns the employers of labour are different too. The labouring class have changed and are changing still. Working men in the country change their work much oftener than they used to. But there are certain golden rules which, if carefully followed in spite of all changes, may still be of use to masters and men. And, first, there is the grand old rule of "give and take" (the bear and forbear of scripture); without this no society can hold together, no two classes can live together in unity. Masters must always give their men the benefit of a doubt in all cases, and the men on their part must always be ready to acknowledge that their master wishes to act justly and fairly towards them.

Another golden rule is always to be ready to receive and gratefully acknowledge kindness. And this too applies quite as much to the master as to his men. The man who, passing by his master's hayfield, finds that cattle have got in and drives them out, does his master service. And the master who knowing of it does not acknowledge the service, deserves most richly to lose his crop. And the man who in time of sickness receives from his master wine or other necessaries, and does not gratefully thank him for the same, deserves to lose his place for his ingratitude.

I have spoken in another chapter of civil speaking. Nowhere is it more needful than in the dealings of masters and men. If a master speaks uncivilly, or harshly, or unkindly to his men, how dare he expect that they will care to speak civilly in return? And if the men do not speak civilly to their master, it is certain he won't care to hold much conversation with them. But, above all, if you would know the right and proper relations between masters and men, you can't find it better put than in the Bible. There, either in the dealings of Christ with His Apostles, or in the epistles of St. Paul and St. James (notably in the sixth chapter of Ephesians), you will find a fit example for you to copy in your daily life. St. Paul warns the Ephesians against eye service. And is there any more necessary caution than that in these days. Men are so apt—we are all so apt—to slur over our work, to do it carelessly, that we need to be cautioned that all work is hallowed, and is done to the Lord. And the masters too will find a word for them. They are

warned against threatening their servants, or speaking harshly to them, for they too have a Master in heaven, Who will one day be their Judge.

If you are a master, an employer of labour, then remember that poor folks have their troubles. They may not be your troubles, and you may not understand them; but oh, do speak kindly and, if you can, feelingly. There are some poor fellows working on our English farms and in our large warehouses who have never known what a kind word meant; whose earliest recollections carry them back to an ill-tempered mother, or a drunken father, and to them a kind word would be a comfort indeed.

And if you have to toil, reader, in the sweat of your brow for your daily bread, remember that your master has his troubles too. Failing crops or losses in business tell upon his purse, and sometimes on his temper, and then perhaps he may speak harshly. But it will soon be over; all the work, all the angry words, all the sorrow, and the great Master Himself shall enter the harvest-field, and the golden sheaves shall bow before Him, as they did in Joseph's dream, "for that harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels."

FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS.

"Oh! never bear malice, 'twill poison the breast,
 The storm is all over, then, there let it rest.
 The hot word of rage has been truly unkind,
 But the sting of deep sorrow may linger behind.
 'Twere better to yield than for ever be foes,
 One look of compassion strikes harder than blows;
 'Tis human to injure—to wound—or to threat,
 But oh! 'tis divine to forgive and forget."

J. Burbidge.

In that beautiful prayer which our blessed Lord left to His disciples, we have amongst other petitions, one especially directed to the forgiveness of sin. We ask God to forgive us what we have done amiss against Him, and call Him to witness that we forgive our brother who has sinned against us. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." You see it is as much as saying to God, that we *don't* want Him to forgive us, *unless* He sees that we have

freely forgiven any who may have sinned against us. Now it is very much easier, is it not, to speak an angry word, or to think an unkind thought of anyone who has offended us? It may be they have not even *sinned* against us. Perhaps they have said something about us which in our hearts we know to be quite true, only we don't want the neighbours to know it, and so we pretend it is false; and we pretend to think we have been injured, and that we have something to forgive. And many of us I fear go farther still and refuse to bestow forgiveness at all. I have known forgiveness withheld from people for the smallest reasons. A family have not received the pew in church they wanted, or their name has been omitted by mistake from a dinner list, or they were forgotten in a Christmas charity, or something of the kind. And for such trifles as these they blame the clergyman generally, forgetting that his parish work may have taken up his time, and so the mistake may have arisen. And yet these people are nothing loth to kneel before their Father in Heaven, and with this unforgiven trespass on their hearts they pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Perhaps you may say, "I don't see that it matters much to people whether I forgive them or not. I am but a poor man, and my love or my hatred can't make much difference to them." But reader, I answer, whether your friend be rich or poor, if he be a true friend, it will always make the greatest difference to him, if he have done you hurt, whether he have your forgiveness or no. And more than this, it matters very much indeed to Him who has said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." And just think what an awful feeling it would be for you, if you heard that a person with whom you had a quarrel, had died suddenly, and carried the sense of his unforgiven trespass into the world to come.

A short time ago in the South of England there lived two friends. They were always together; they loved each other, and could not bear to be apart. For a long while, the greater part of a lifetime, this friendship continued, and as they were both religious men, their friendship was blessed and strengthened by Almighty God. But after a while it pleased God to try their love for each other, and like the dead fly in the ointment, or the worm at the root of Jonah's gourd, he sent a slight cause of disagreement between them. So slight a matter was it that it was difficult to say which of the two was to blame, but it was sufficient to come between them. And so little by little a coldness arose, each being too proud to say he was in the wrong, until the coldness ripened into anger, and so they separated. For some years they lived apart, hearing nothing of each other, until one morning when one of them was reading the newspaper, he found the report of his friend's death. So sudden and unexpected was it that it took him quite by surprise, and he never recovered the shock. Night and day he kept thinking of years gone by, when they were firm friends, and then he would remember the

evil day when their disagreement took place, and then came death!

Reader, if you have been living, or are living in enmity with anyone, go *at once* and ask their pardon, or if necessary grant it. So shall you pray with some hope of acceptance the oft-repeated words, and show not only with your lips, but in your life, that you really mean what you say when you pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

"Then forgive and forget!—'tis a rule of such worth,
That 'twould scatter rich blessings all over the earth;
Turn deserts to gardens of beauty and peace,
And bid half the storms of contention to cease.
As we act to ourselves, we should act to another,
And look on each man that we meet as a brother,
In hope that when nature lays claim to her debt,
Our God will in mercy forgive and forget."

HARD WORK.

"Work is sweet, for God hath blest
Honest work with quiet rest—
Rest below, and rest above,
In the mansions of His love,
When the work of life is done,
When the battle's fought and won.

Working ere the day is gone,
Working till your work is done:
Not the work that pain imparts,
But the work of honest hearts;
Working till your spirits rest
With the spirits of the blest."

Anon.

I have spoken so often in these passages already on the subject of work, that but little remains to be said. And yet there are so many kinds of work, and hard work

too, that we can do on earth, that it seems as though we could never get to the end of them. There are, for instance, home work, warfare work, praying work, and a great many other kinds of work, of which it would take too long to speak now. Of some of these I have spoken already in this book, but I want to say a few words about *warfare work* in this chapter.

Warfare work is perhaps the hardest kind of work of all, because it is work of the spirit. It is a work that must be always going on, while we live here; so long as Satan lives to tempt man to sin, man must war against it. In the sixth chapter of S. John we read in the 28th verse, "Jesus said unto them, this is the work of God that ye believe on Him, whom He hath sent." It is no easy thing to believe; nay, it is very hard to believe simply in Jesus Christ; and yet in the above passage He Himself speaks of it as the work of all others, which is to be done for God. When our hearts get crusted over with sin and selfishness, it is no easy matter to take again the heart of a little child and simply believe our Father's word; and yet this is needful work for His children.

But besides this inner struggle, there is another that affects more our outward life. All have a besetting sin to fight against—drunkenness, lust, or such like. Very different, however, are the ways in which this warfare is waged. Some struggle because they can't help it, and are like "the dumb driven cattle"; others are so feeble that they soon

"By the roadside fall and perish,
Weary with the march of life."

Others try to conceal, even from themselves, that they have a conflict to maintain. It is the Christian only, who going forth in the strength of Another, can hope to work joyfully and successfully.

And now having said thus much about warfare work, let me add a few words about everyday labour, by giving a few hints to those who may be doing hard work. First, then, *be punctual*. Time is a gift from God. And if we choose to mislay our own portion, we have no right to take that of those around us. Just look, for instance, at a case which happens almost daily. A man starts to go on a long journey. Say, if you will, he is going to Manchester. His train is so timed, that he reckons it will arrive in London half-an-hour before the departure of the Manchester train. In that half-hour, he will have to collect his luggage, and cross London. The train arrives in London ten minutes late, the man misses the train for Manchester by five minutes. It may make a difference to him, all through his life, that he missed that train. And so you see the need of punctuality. Secondly, *be thorough*. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it *with thy might*." Do not try and do more than you are able; but what you do, do well. It is better to do

one thing well, than half-a-dozen badly. There is nothing too small to be done thoroughly—no work so unimportant, that you can say, "It doesn't matter *how* I do it." And this thorough spirit, you will find, will prevent your delaying doing your work. You won't wish to put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day.

Thirdly, *be straightforward*; never mind anybody seeing *how* you work. Never do evil that good may come. The devil has so much power over the mind of man that he will readily suggest the evil, but he will keep back the good which might follow. The Christian's road is the straight road, where none can lose their way. Any duty that has to be done secretly is not duty at all, but a sham! The truths that must be made pleasant by worldly methods will lose their truthfulness, and fail of their effect.

Fourthly, *be patient*; God doesn't care about your success, He looks upon the unwearied arm, the patient heart. If you measure your work by that of others you will grow impatient, for in many cases they may seem to do much more, and to succeed much better than you. Be patient when your employer speaks sharply to you. It may not be deserved; it may be he blames you where he should blame someone else; never mind, be patient. "If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest, for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil[*#*]."

[*#*] S. Luke vi. 35.

Lastly, reader, *be spiritually minded*. Never let work of any kind interfere with the worship of God. Remember, He is your Father and your Friend, as well as "the great Work-master." If we are to work hard in our earthly business, it must, if it is to prosper, be softened and mingled with our heavenly work; that so "passing through things temporal we finally lose not the things eternal."

And then after work comes rest! The body, so worn with sickness, so faint with toil, so weary with fatigue, will enjoy its rest. Nor will it rest merely in the green "sleeping-place," which has been beautifully called "God's acre," beside the quiet river, or by the ancient church; but it shall rise to take an active part in the great hereafter of the sons of God. And who shall dare describe to us the rest of the troubled spirit in the Father's house? Who shall tell us of its wanderings, its joys, its occupations? It is enough for us to know that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God[*#*]." A rest we cannot understand, we must not seek to know, until that day, when we shall find ourselves in that heavenly presence, "where

the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest[#].”

[#] Heb. iv. 9.

[#] Job iii. 17.

COURTSHIP.

”Still in the pure espousal
Of Christian man and maid:
The Holy Three are with us,
The threefold grace is said.

For dower of blessed children,
For love and faith’s sweet sake,
For high mysterious union,
Which nought on earth may break.”

Keble.

As this book is intended especially for young men, it would manifestly be incomplete if I were to avoid any subjects upon which young men were likely to need assistance. And so now I propose to say a few plain words upon courtship. I know that this is what is called a delicate subject, and I know too that any words from a stranger upon this subject must be both carefully and thoughtfully spoken, if they are to find acceptance. Now courtship, like almost everything else, is open to abuse; and, like very nearly everything else too, it very often is abused. It is often made a pretext for impure conversation and indecent liberties. Have you any right to expect that any marriage, however suitable the match may be in other ways, if it follows such a courtship as this, will be blessed by the Almighty, and happy in the end?

Courtship is almost as old as the world. It is the same in all countries, wherever man is found there courtship exists, in some form or other. But though courtship is a necessary step to married life, yet it is by no means necessary that it should be made an excuse for indulging in impure and filthy conversation. Young men and young women should remember that wherever they are, and whatever

they may be doing, whether it be work or amusement, they have a duty to perform as Christians which must come before all other duties whatsoever. I know it is hard for young men, living in country villages, and continually indulging in what is called "free talk," to keep such guard over their lips, as to prevent anything passing but what is strictly pure and right. But it must be done; for, as I said just now, if the marriage is to have God's blessing, (and what marriage can be really happy without it?) then the courtship must be free from sin.

Many young men, again, think it no harm to keep company with a young woman—to walk with her, as they say—without ever having any serious thoughts of marrying her at all. Now, this again, is wrong—all wrong. It is one of the links in the devil's chain, with which he seeks to bind the souls for whom Christ died. It is one of the many ways by which he tries to draw souls into his net by teaching them to do wrong, all the while pretending that there is no harm. Therefore, my advice is, don't keep company with any young woman you do not mean to marry in the end.

And now one word upon the choice of a wife, for this is most important. I do not think a man can be too careful in this respect if he wishes to have a happy home. And this is one of the great benefits of courtship—it enables a man to get an insight into the character of her whom he intends to make his wife. Now, of course, there are always many things which must be left to the man to choose for himself; and different people will choose very differently. But there are, I think, certain qualities which, if they were to be found oftener in wives, would completely change the tone of many of our English homes. Such qualities are good-temper, cleanliness, cheerfulness, patience, contentment, and love. I might name many more, but I have no time to speak of them now. But though at first sight it may seem strange, the qualities which I have named above are those we most rarely meet with.

But, above all things, it is essential that a man should have a godly wife, first for his own sake, then for his children's. One who will look upon prosperity as the gift of a kind Father, Who thinks of the happiness of His children; and upon adversity, if it come, as part of a necessary discipline, sent by the same loving Friend. Then the man may confidently and hopefully take such an one to be his wedded wife, "to love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other[#]," keep himself only unto her, so long as both shall live. And then when the weary days of sickness, or the solemn hour of dying shall come to him, the wife will be there to nurse the sick, or close the dying eyes, and to whisper words of comfort to the departing soul.

[#] Marriage Service.

MARRIAGE.

"Husband dear, 'twas your loving hand
 Showed the way to that better land,
 Oh! how often you cheered me then;
 'Things will be better, dear wife, again.'

Hand in hand, when life was May,
 Hand in hand now our hair is grey,
 Shadow and sun for every one,
 As the years roll on.

Hand in hand, when the long night-tide
 Gently covers us, side by side,
 We will trust, though we know not when,
 God will be with us for ever then!"

Before entering on this great and solemn step in life, every man should read through the service in the Prayer Book for the solemnization of matrimony. Therein you will see with what awe and reverence it is spoken of, as a thing "not to be undertaken lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God[#]."

[#] Marriage Service.

You will find that it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort of the man and woman, that they ought each to receive from each other both in prosperity and adversity. Each man and woman is solemnly reminded of "the dreadful day of judgment," when "the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed[#]."
 Could any words be more solemn, or full of warning? And yet how many enter upon marriage with but little thought of the solemn vow they then take before

God. And this, I think, is quite sufficient to account for the unhappy results of so many marriages; for the bitterness and quarrels between husband and wife, and the frequent applications for divorce. I have already spoken of how careful you ought to be in making choice of a wife during the days of courtship. Many men are taken with a pretty face, or a fine dress, or a bright, cheery manner; but unless there is a good, honest, God-fearing heart underneath, you may be sure you will not be happy with her when trials and troubles come, as come they surely must into the lives of each of us.

[#] Marriage Service.

Now let me earnestly beg of you to think of what you are going to promise in the Marriage Service. You take each other, as those words so beautifully express it, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish," *until death parts you*. Remember this—marriage is not merely a passing engagement you can enter into for a short time and give up when you like. It is not like courtship. No, it is lifelong. Some, alas! do not look upon it as binding. But never allow yourself to forget how God looks upon such a sin; and the Bible tells us that the most terrible judgment awaits those who have broken their marriage vow. God's laws are written in the Bible, and no Act of Parliament can change them. The Bible must be the Christian's rule of life, and its precepts he must follow.

Let yours, then, be a *Christian marriage*—one on which you may trust God's blessing will rest. Try throughout your life to fulfil what you then promise, and to make your wife a good, true, and loving husband. Be good-tempered and forbearing with her. When troubles come, try and share them bravely together; so that she who has helped to bear your burden, when the troubles are past, may also be "a helper of your joy." Your wife has often much to put up with—home cares, troubles with the little ones, delicate health, a hard struggle, perhaps, "to make both ends meet;" therefore, when you come home after your day's work, always have a kind word ready for her. Do not keep an undue share of your wages for yourself, for amusement, or for drink, but share it with her, giving her enough to make her home and the children comfortable. In short, learn to take your rule of life straight from God's Holy Word, where it is written, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ[#]."

[#] Gal. vi. 2.

But, above all, try and help each other on the way to Heaven, and to live not for yourselves, but for God and for others. Then, indeed, you will be, as the Marriage Service says, "heirs together of the grace of life;" not merely of the few short years spent together in this life present, but of that blessed life beyond the grave, where "there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage, but they are as the angels of God[#]."

[#] S. Matt. xxiv. 38.

KINDNESS.

"I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And to wipe the weeping eyes:
And a heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathise."

A. L. Waring.

A little kindness goes a long way! There are many people in the world, nay about our own homes, whom respectable people have given up, as being hopelessly bad; and who have become what they are because they have never known what kindness meant. If you were to go through our prisons, you would find that there is a vast number of criminals in them who can trace their first step on the road to ruin to the want of a word kindly spoken. They have never known, what you and I, reader, have enjoyed perhaps from our childhood up, a mother's tender love. The word "home" suggests to their minds thoughts of a drunken father, more a beast than a man; and of a mother who was so taken up with the cares of this world, that she had no love to give to her children. Yes, I have often heard of cases, in which a word of kindness, spoken at the right moment, might have gladdened the whole afterlife. I have known some cases in which even murder might have been prevented, if only a kind word had taken the place of an angry one.

Reader, a kind word costs very little, and goes a very long way. Even a

kind look will do something. I once knew a deaf and dumb man, whose look was so kind that little children would run up to him in the street, though he was quite powerless to speak kindly to them. I have spoken of forgiveness of others—kindness and forgiveness are very nearly connected. A really kind man is always a forgiving man; and he who knows how to forgive is always a kind-hearted person.

Kindness shows itself in all the relations of life. A kind man is kind to his wife, kind to his children, and kind to his friends. But nowhere does real kindness show itself more strongly in a man, than when he is kind to animals. They quickly understand and are thankful for kindness; and in their way repay it. For instance, everybody who has had anything to do with horses knows how far a little kindness will go with them. Very often a horse's temper is upset for a whole day, because he was unkindly treated at starting. Then there are numbers of horses whose tempers have been completely ruined by their having been ill-treated when they were young. Oh! yes, a little kindness goes a long way; and it amply repays the bestower to see how gladly and how thankfully it is received.

We have, many of us, heard the story of the soldier who was killed in battle, and whose dog, unknown to him, had followed him, until he fell; and how when night descended on the battlefield, the faithful creature, mindful of his dead master's kindness to him, refused to quit the corpse, but stayed there to protect it. We have heard, many of us, the story of the poor beggar, with no friend on earth but one little dog, who, in return for his kindness in giving it food, followed him in his weary walks, until at last, on the cold and snowy high road, when the poor man lay down to die, it was his only companion. When in the morning a party of travellers passed along the road, they found them lying dead together, with a shroud of pure white snow covering them both. Then again you may have, seen Landseer's beautiful picture of "The Shepherd's chief mourner." The room is deserted, and the coffin is alone in the middle, with the shepherd's plaid thrown over it; alone, yet not alone, for there, with his head resting on his master's coffin, sits "the shepherd's chief mourner," the sheep-dog, who had followed him in life, and will not leave him, even after death. And if kindness, heaven-born kindness, goes so far with the lower animals, it has an equal, may I not say even a greater influence upon mankind. Which of us has not felt sometimes the benefit of kindness? It may have been in a time of sickness, or sorrow, it may have been a kindly word spoken as we passed away from a new-made grave. But whatever may have been the circumstances under which it was spoken, there can be but few whom a kind word has failed to reach. And if this is so; if we have derived joy and happiness from a kind word, why not speak a kind word to others, after the example of our God, "for He is kind, to the unthankful and the evil[#]."

[#] S. Luke vi. 35.

Strive, then, to practise the golden rule of kindness, in whatever station God has placed you. Be genial, be kind, be civil to all, following the Apostolic rule, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another: even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you[#]."

[#] Ephesians iv. 32.

OUR PARENTS.

"Who sat and watched my infant head,
When sleeping on my cradle bed?
And tears of sweet affection shed?
My Mother!

Who taught my infant lips to pray,
And love God's holy Book, and Day,
And walk in wisdom's pleasant way?
My Mother!

And God, Who lives above the skies,
Would look with anger in His eyes,
If I should ever dare despise
My Mother!"

Our earliest recollections are of our father and mother! All through our childhood they were near us, joining in our play, nursing us in sickness, comforting in pain or trouble. All that made us happy, or that made the world seem bright to us, they gave us. They were always ready to reward us when we were good; they were always grieved when we did wrong. We never can repay our parents for all their kindness to us in our infancy. All the labour which supplied the bread we ate and the bed we slept on; and shall not we do what we can for them in

their old age? If your parents, reader, were religious people, they prayed for you besides, and you will never know on this side the grave how many early temptations those prayers may have kept off. You can understand now why it was that your parents sometimes punished you for doing wrong, though you might not have seen the wisdom of it then. And the day will come, believe me, when you will learn—it may be only “through much tribulation”—the wisdom of the punishments inflicted by our Father in heaven. “For *now* we see through a glass darkly; but *then* face to face: now I know in part, but *then* shall I know even as also I am known.” And now, in all humility, do let me say a word to those parents into whose hands this book may chance to fall. I have spoken of influence and its wonderful power in the other parts of this book. I have repeatedly dwelt on the necessity of setting a good example; let me do so once again here. I cannot put what I wish to say into better, or shorter, or simpler language than it has been put by a recent writer, who speaks as follows—“Old friends,” he says, “fathers, mothers, whose heads are filled with the snows of age, whose brows are furrowed deep with the traces of life’s cares and burthens, perhaps with the thorns of its crown, we look to you to teach us all that God means by death; all the blessings with which the angel who guides our pilgrimage comes laden, when he advances to clasp our hand, to be to us a rod and a staff through the glooms that hang about the threshold of the ever-lasting home. We look to see you with something of the brightness of the heavenly home upon you now; a gleam in the eyes, a tone in the look and bearing, which have been caught from long communion with the things and beings, whose full glory awaits you there. No complaints, no sadness, no sorrowful looking back to the world which you are leaving, and where your place, to which you thought yourself all-important, is already filled.”

Lastly, let me return for a moment to those to whom this book is specially addressed. Young men, it is your duty and your privilege alike to take care of your parents, and to provide for their wants when they are too old or infirm to do so for themselves. Be laying by a little store of money now against that day, if it be only a few pence a week that you can save out of your wages, you can’t think what a help it may be hereafter. You wouldn’t like your children to leave you to die in the workhouse; you wouldn’t like, when old age comes, to feel that you and your wife, who had lived happily together for years, were now to be taken to live within high walls in a pauper’s dress, and not be free to go in and out as you pleased. You wouldn’t like to find that you were suffering all this want, while your son, who was quite able to keep you out of it, was drinking away his wages in the nearest public-house. And if you wouldn’t like this yourself, why should you treat your parents so? This, as you know, is not a made-up case; it is happening every day in almost every village in the country. God gave us parents, first, that they might take care of us; and then, if need be, that we should take care

of them. The earthly parent should be in every way a pattern of the heavenly, for He is good, "even to the unthankful and the evil," to the just and to the unjust alike.

Reader, if you have not been doing your duty to your parents hitherto, go and begin at once. Try and make the old folks comfortable. Let them feel that their son is indeed a comfort to them, and a stay in their old age. And then, when old age comes upon you, God will repay you. In the hour of sickness He will be with you, comforting and blessing you: until the time come when you too have to lean on your staff for very age, while the shadows grow darker and darker round you.

OUR CHILDREN.

"Oh! there are times when to our sight,
E'en on this side the grave, is given
A glimpse revealing in full light
The triumphs gained on earth by heaven.

In Him our little ones are great,
In Him our feeble folk are strong;
And childhood sits in high estate
Amid the martyrs' noble throng."

R. Tomlins.

God has committed no more solemn charge to our care than that of our children. Over and over again in the Gospels do we find that Jesus called attention to little children. On one occasion you will remember that strife having arisen among the disciples, as to which of them should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus, perceiving it, took a little child, and set him by His side; and from this simple circumstance He taught His disciples that in order to enter into that kingdom, they must receive His message with the same simple, trustful faith, as would a little child. And once again, we read that the parents brought their little ones to Him that He might bless them; and when His disciples, being vexed that their Master's time should be taken up with what they doubtless considered a trifling matter, Jesus, we read, rebuked them, and said, "Suffer the little children to come

unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God[#].”

[#] S. Mark x. 13.

Reader, the times have not changed so much, since Jesus walked upon our earth, that we can afford to disregard His words. Do remember that if you use bad language, or tell an impure story, or even speak an unkind word, you may be putting a stumbling-block in the children’s way, and keeping them from Christ.

And now let me say a word concerning Baptism. I do not believe, and our Church nowhere teaches her children to believe, that a child who dies unbaptised is in danger of eternal damnation. But she does tell us that *the parents* who keep their children back from that sacred ordinance, are in danger of punishment. She goes straight to the Bible, as her authority, and points out the blame which our Lord attached to the disciples, who would have kept the children from Him, teaching us thereby that the same kind of blame belongs to those parents who keep their children from holy Baptism now.

And when your children are baptised the great thing to remember is example. Parents, set a good example to your children at home. Children very quickly notice anything that is wrong, and as quickly copy it. And then they go out, and teach it to other children, and so by your bad example at home, you may have destroyed the happiness of many lives. Teach your children rather that they may have an interest beyond the grave, that for them there is laid up a rich reward in our Father’s kingdom. ”I pity,” says a recent writer, ”the son, who has never had an interest beyond the grave; but I pity far more the mother, who has never told him of the rest that remaineth for the people of God.”

There were once two fathers, both of whom God had blessed with children. One lived on the river Mississippi, in America. He was a man of great wealth. Yet he would have freely given it all to have brought back his son from an early grave. One day that boy had been borne home unconscious. They did everything that they could to restore him, but in vain. ”He will die,” said the doctor. ”But doctor,” cried the poor father, ”can you do nothing to bring him to consciousness, even for a moment?” ”That may be,” said the doctor, ”but he can’t live.” Time passed, and after awhile the father’s wish was gratified. ”My son,” he whispered, ”the doctor tells me you are dying.” ”Well,” said the boy, ”you never prayed for me, father, won’t you pray for my lost soul now?” The father wept. It was too true he had *never prayed*. He was a stranger to God. And in a little while that soul, unprayed for, passed into eternity. Young man, the day will come, when you perhaps will be a father too. If your boy was dying, and called on you to pray,

could you lift your burdened heart to Heaven? Have you learned this sweetest lesson of heaven or earth, to know and hold communion with your God? And before this evil world shall have marked your dearest treasures for its prey, oh learn to lead your little ones to a children's Christ. But what a contrast was the other father! He too had a lovely boy, and one day he came home to find him at the gates of death. "A great change has come over our boy," said the weeping mother; "he has only been ill a little while, but it seems now as if he were dying fast." The father went into the room, and put his hand on his son's forehead. He could see the boy was dying. He could feel the cold damp of death. "My son, do you know you are dying?" he asked. "No, father, am I?" said the boy. "Yes, my boy, you can't live till the evening." "Well, then, I shall be with Jesus to-night, shan't I, father?" "Yes, my son, you will spend to-night with the Saviour." As he turned away, the little fellow saw tears trickling down his father's cheeks. "Don't weep for me," he said; "when I get to heaven, I shall go straight to Jesus, and tell Him that ever since I can remember, you have tried to lead me to Him." Reader, if God should give you a son, and should see fit to take him again to Himself, would you not rather he should carry such testimony as that to your Master, than have all the wealth of the world rolled at your son's feet?

Once more, then, let me earnestly pray you to set a good example. Young man, set a good example to the boys who work with you on the farm or elsewhere. They will be ready to pick up anything good or bad from you. And if they once learn it, it will be very hard to unlearn it again.

And to all who read this book, whether their work lie in the farm, in the counting-house, in the barracks, or on board ship, my last words are the same; the great secret of example is purity of heart and life. Never do anything or say anything that you would be ashamed for God to hear. And if you yourself have never thought how little it would profit you to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul, I beseech you not to let another sun go down before you think out that great question.

HOME.

"Friend,—when in trial and suffering,
 Where dost thou find thy home?
 Where in thy pain canst thou seek relief,
 Where in thy sorrows come?"

Where from the world's rude conflict
 Canst thou find a calm retreat?
 Where learn afresh with courage
 Thy trials and sorrows to meet?
 Where is thy shield from adversity's dart?
 Friend, thy *home* is a loved one's heart.

Man,—when thy heart is torn with grief,
 When thy hopes are for ever gone,
 When adversity's cloud hangs over thy head,
 And earth's troubles weigh thee down,—
 When those whom thou lovest have turned away,
 And cruelly slighted thee,—
 When thy heart is crushed, and thy joys are gone,—
 For shelter, oh! where canst thou flee?
 Man, though from comfort on earth thou'rt driven,
 Thy home and thy joys are with God in Heaven.”
L. Jewitt.

Home! What a word that is. Is there any word like it? Any that brings so much joy, or so much sorrow, into the human breast? The fisherman who has toiled all night and caught nothing, looks anxiously for dawn, because he knows that then he will return home to wife and children. The sailor, toiling over the endless sea, rejoices as he thinks that each moment he is nearing home. The labourer in the fields is glad when the hot sun sinks towards the west, because it is nearly time to go home. The boy at school longs for the holidays to come because it means home, and to him home is everything. The weary traveller, well-nigh dead with fatigue, who sees his distant home from the top of a neighbouring hill, gathers fresh strength from the sight to continue his journey.

But the home can only be really home in the truest and best sense of the word, when the people who live there make it home-like. It need have no costly adornments, but every member of the family should have "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." There should be no display of angry tempers, or of hard words. Kindness should reign there; gentleness and love should be practised there. In short, that home can only be a happy one which is a copy of the home in heaven. Parents have a very solemn and important duty to perform here. It is for them to make their homes not nurseries of vice and sin, but homes of love and happiness, where Jesus and His angels will be glad to come. How many men and women there are who can trace an evil,

misspent, sinful life back to their early home. It was, may be, from a father's lips they first learnt to swear; perhaps from a mother's example they first learnt to lie. And the children, too, have a solemn duty to perform with regard to home. There are life lessons which must be learnt at home, if we would learn them at all. Obedience, purity, love, and piety, all must be learnt at home; and if these are indeed to be found there, the home on earth is a fit type of the home in heaven.

Reader, are you doing your utmost to make your home on earth like the home beyond? Perhaps you have never thought much about it. Perhaps you have never considered that there was any connection between them. But there is; there should be. They should be, as it were, the same home, separated indeed by a narrow gulf, but joined by a bridge over which all must pass, even death itself.

Some people look upon death quite wrongly, for this reason. If one of their children die, they almost think that when the earth covers it they will never see it again; but the Bible does not teach that. Rather should we feel, in the beautiful words of the hymn, that our little ones are going home—

”They are going—only going—
 Jesus called them long ago;
 All the wintry time they're passing
 Softly as the falling snow.
 When the violets in the spring-time
 Catch the azure of the sky,
 They are carried out to slumber
 Sweetly, where the violets lie.

All along the mighty ages,
 All adown the solemn time,
 They have taken up their homeward
 March to a serener clime,
 Where the watching, waiting angels
 Lead them from the shadow dim,
 To the brightness of His Presence
 Who has called them unto Him.”

Yes, it is even so, ”they are going, only going,” from the home on earth to the home in heaven. Going from pain and sorrow and sin to a better home, where there is no bitter parting, no more sorrow, and no more death. And looking at it in this light, would you wish to keep them, would you even seek to stay their departure for one short hour. The home on earth is subject to sickness, to

sorrow, and partings. But the home in heaven knows none of these. We cannot always stay at home on earth, but must needs go out to work for our living among strangers. But when we once reach the many mansions of our Father's house, we shall go no more out. There will be no more sleepless nights, or sunless days, for the Sun of righteousness shines on all alike, "and there is no night there."

Strive then to dwell together in unity on earth; doing *your* best to make home what home should be, and God will do the rest.

HEAVEN OUR HOME. PART I.

"There is a blessed Home
 Beyond this land of woe,
 Where trials never come,
 Nor tears of sorrow flow.

There is a land of peace,
 Good angels know it well:
 Glad songs that never cease
 Within its portals swell."

Baker.

Our thoughts, as Christians, must needs often turn upon our heavenly home. The labourer toiling in the hot harvest-field often thinks of his distant cottage. The sailor upon the lonely sea is often thinking of those at home. And the Christian, in the midst of his troubles and temptations here, must often think of his home beyond. Heaven is the dwelling-place of God. It matters little how far away it is. God is there, and that is enough. We often feel sad when we think of our dear ones who have left us. But if we could look beyond the veil into the eternal city, we should see the Good Shepherd leading them by the green pastures, and beside the still waters. Our friends, who have died in the fear of God, are not lost to us for ever, only gone before. They had a desire "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better"—better than the suffering, and the sorrow, and the toil. And Christ has given them their wish. And He has told us that if we would rejoin them one day, and be with them for ever, we must not lay up treasure on earth, but in heaven. Earthly treasure, gold, silver, land, popularity, and the praise of

men, these may be taken from us, and given to others. But heavenly treasure—purity of life, love to God, helping travellers on the road to heaven—these we may lay up now, with the certainty that we shall never lose *them*, either in this world or in that which is to come.

I read a story the other day of a rich man in America, to whom a person went to try and interest him in mission work. The rich man took him up to the top of his house, and said to him, "Look yonder over that beautiful rolling plain, that is all mine as far as the eye can reach." He took him round again to the other side, and showed him thirty miles of pasture, with horses and cattle feeding. "They are all mine," he said, "I have made it all myself." Then he pointed proudly towards the town, and showed him streets and warehouses, and a great hall named after himself, and said once more, "They are all mine; I came into this country a poor man, but my own industry has done it all." The other listened patiently until he had done speaking, and then pointing upward to the sky, he asked, "And what have you got there?" "Where?" asked the rich man. "In heaven!" said the other. "I have got nothing there," he answered bitterly. Alas, he had lived his three-score years and ten, and must soon enter eternity, and yet he had no treasure in heaven!

Reader, where is *your* treasure? "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also[*#*]." There is no harm whatever in your feeling pleasure in your cottage, or your garden, or your field. But when these things shut out thoughts of God, and thoughts of heaven, from that moment they become sinful.

"I'm but a stranger here;
 Heaven is my Home.
 Earth is a desert drear;
 Heaven is my Home.
 Danger and sorrow stand
 Round me on every hand;
 Heaven is my Father-land;
 Heaven is my Home.

What though the tempest rage!
 Heaven is my Home.
 Short is my pilgrimage;
 Heaven is my Home.
 And time's wild wintry blast
 Soon will be overpast;
 I shall reach Home at last;
 Heaven is my Home.

There at my Saviour's side;
 Heaven is my Home.
 I shall be glorified;
 Heaven is my Home.
 Then with the good and blest,
 Those on earth I love the best,
 I shall for ever rest;
 Heaven is my Home."

[#] S. Matt. vi. 21.

HEAVEN OUR HOME. PART II.

"While I do my duty,
 Pressing through the tide,
 Whisper Thou of beauty
 On the other side.
 Tell who will the story
 Of our now distress—
 Oh! the future glory,
 Oh! the loveliness."
J. M. Neale.

I have thought it best in writing on so wide a subject as "Heaven our home," to divide it into two parts; so that in this chapter I shall finish with a few practical thoughts on the subject we entered upon in our last. I there spoke about laying up treasure in Heaven. I gave you the advice our blessed Lord gave when He was upon earth, and pointed out how very much more valuable to the Christian man would be a little treasure laid up in Heaven, than all the wealth this world could give rolled together at his feet.

You know how, when you used to go to school, prizes were sometimes given. And you know, if ever you brought home a prize, how your brothers and sisters would come round you, eager to get the first look. Well, it is just the same in life! This life is but a school-time, a growing-time, a running-time, in which

we all set out to win a prize, and that prize is the home in Heaven. Try and get the first prize, reader, in this life-school. How to be most like Christ, that is the lesson given you to learn. "As for the prizes that God has ready, I cannot tell you about them; for they are more beautiful than anything you have ever seen, or can fancy. In that glorious country where our Father's home is, you will have such prizes as you never could have dreamt of." When the time to receive the prize will come I cannot tell; that will depend partly upon the way in which the lesson is learnt—though some there are, alas! who never learn it at all. Never trouble yourself about the time; "Whenever it is time for you to go home, our Father will send for you." I remember a noble boy who gave promise, if he had lived, to do something good and great; he was sunshine in the house, and made his parents' hearts like summer. In the morning he was full of health and spirits, ready to enjoy to the full all the games and sports of the holiday; in the afternoon he was dying from an accident—not in pain, but calm and quiet. The next day, when he had gone home to God, his little sister came to their mother, and said, "Shall we crown him, mother?" "Crown him! yes, by all means, for he is a brave little soldier, who has fought for Christ. He tried to be like Jesus—obedient, unselfish, and loving, and now he has gone back to his Father's home, where they will make a wreath for him of fadeless roses and lilies of light. Yes, crown him with many crowns; you can find none so beautiful as those which the angels have been weaving for him in Heaven."

Now I want you to look at "Heaven our home" in two different ways: 1. as our reward, 2. as our rest. First, then, as our reward: God rarely gives man a command without giving him a promise also. It was so, you know, with Abraham. In Genesis xii. 1, we read, "The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee"—that was the command. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing," and that was the promise. And I could name a number of God's saints in every age, to whom He has given commands, but seldom or never without a promise.

Reader, God has given you a command, the command to follow Him, and work for Him, and love Him; and He has given you a promise, that if you serve Him faithfully here you shall reign with Him eternally hereafter in Heaven. And, oh! think of the kindness of our Heavenly Father! Just compare the two—a few years of sickness, sorrow, and labour here, and then an eternity of rest and perfect happiness there.

Secondly, look at Heaven as our rest. And perhaps there is no way of looking at it which gives us more thankfulness than this. Sorrow and labour we must have here, but there we shall have rest, and our "rest shall be glorious." "Everything round us here has a capacity for rest as well as action. The stormy winds

and restless waters can at times be calm and still. The city, with its ceaseless hum and stir of voices and footsteps, lies hushed and quiet in its nightly rest. The railway, with its snorting engines, its crowded stations, and lightning speed, seems as if it knew no rest; yet a moment after the flying train has gone there is no sign of life or motion along its iron rails." And so, too, is it with life. The most active Christian will one day be at rest. Like the stormy waves, or the whistling train, he cannot work for ever, and after his work is over then will come rest.

Oh! reader, Heaven is indeed a home worth working for. Where is the home on earth, in which we never hear an angry word, or never see a cold or passionate look? But it won't be so in Heaven! In our Father's kingdom we shall hear no angry words, and we shall have nothing but the kindest looks. God is there, and Jesus is there; and there too we shall meet our friends who are now "absent from the body," but "present with the Lord." The mother who first taught you to speak the name of your Heavenly Father will be there. The father, whose bright Christian example you remember as a child, will be there. Your brothers and sisters will be there. All, in short, will be there, who by their bright Christian examples have helped you on the road to Heaven; for all God's saints will be there, enjoying their reward and resting from their labours.

Young man, the same Heaven is open to you as to them. The same battle-field lies before you; the same cross and the same crown. The same heavenly watchers as welcomed them are waiting to receive you into your heavenly home. It is for you to say whether you will accept their invitation to come. It is for you to show by your daily life and conversation whose side you have chosen in the battle of life, whose home you will live in hereafter.

SUNDAY.

"Oh! pass not hence so swiftly,
 Bright Sabbath hours, we pray;
 None other tell so sweetly
 Of regions far away.

No breath of flowers at eventide,
 When the rain-cloud's store is spent;
 No cooling airs so softly glide
 From the sultry firmament;

No waveless calm along the deep,
 When its fever-pulse is still;
 No visitings of dew-like sleep
 To eyelids worn with ill.”
F. C. Boyce.

The word "Sabbath" means *rest*. And such indeed God intended Sunday to be. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God[#]." Our Saviour indeed teaches us that the stern and strict way in which the Sabbath was kept by the Jews was an unnecessary and painful discipline. He told the people it was quite lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, even though that good might be misinterpreted and misunderstood. He taught us that Sunday was a day sacred to God, and not to man, and that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath[#]." You know the old words—

"A Sabbath well spent
 Brings a week of content,"

and if you will try to put that old maxim into force, you will find as you give up the Sunday to God and His service, so surely will He be with you during the week. For now the old Jewish Sabbath has given place to the Christian Sunday—our Lord chose "the first day of the week" on which to rise from the grave, and the Church has fitly chosen the first day of the week as the best on which to meet together to worship her ascended Lord.

[#] Exod. xx. 8.

[#] S. Mark ii. 7.

Sunday was never meant to be a dreary day, or a wretched day, any more than it was meant to be a working day, or a drinking day. And if you give the day to God, be sure He will give you plenty of amusement, and plenty of happiness. His is no wearisome service, His is no tiring Sunday task, but in His worship you will find peace, and His service is perfect freedom.

Sunday, again, is most valuable to working men as a *day of rest*. During the great French Revolution, those who were at the head of affairs determined that they would neither fear God nor regard man; and so they passed a law to the effect that none should pay any heed to Sunday, to its services, its lessons, or

its rest. And what was the consequence? Why, these ungodly men, looking at it only from a worldly point of view, found that it was quite impossible for the body or mind of man to keep on working day after day, and week after week. And so the plan failed, and Sunday came to be restored again. You must have felt the need of Sunday rest, after the week's toil sometimes too; you must have felt ready to cry out, in the words of the Postman's song,

"We ask one day in seven,
'Twas ours since time began—
Sent by the love of heaven,
In pity for toil-worn man."

Look once more on Sunday as a *thinking day*. Men, and especially working men, need some quiet hours, when they can cease work and let their thoughts turn to the world to come. And this is one great use of Sunday. There is a quiet calm in the air; no sound of the threshing machine or the ploughman's voice breaks the stillness; man can feel that he is *alone with God*. And so wandering out into the fields at eventide, or sitting in his cottage garden, or by his hearth when the little ones are in bed, he can think of his prospects and hopes here below, and still more of those in the world to come.

Lastly, Sunday is a *day of learning*. On Sunday we go up to church, and learn from God's minister's lips the lessons of His love. We sit at home and we read our books, and most of all the Bible, that Book of books, which is specially fit for working men to read. We go out walking in the fields, and see God's works in nature, and from them too we learn something; and as we learn these lessons on earth, they serve to bring us nearer to our Father in heaven.

But do remember this; that Sundays on earth are meant to be as far as possible copies of that eternal Sabbath rest above. The service of prayer and praise with which our churches re-echo on earth, are but copies of the grand and perfect worship in the courts of heaven. The evening hours spent with our family before going to rest, are but a type and shadow of the eternity we shall spend in that family of which God is the Head, and Jesus Christ the Elder Brother. And the comfortable home, which God has given us on earth, is after all but a faint picture of those many mansions, "where the sun shines for ever, and the flowers

never die.”

CHURCH.

”The Church’s one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new Creation
By water and the Word:
From Heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride,
With His own Blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.”

S. J. Stone.

How very often it happens, when the subject of religion is mentioned, that we hear people say, ”I go regularly to church.” And this is thrown in the teeth of the clergy, as if the very fact of church attendance was quite enough in itself to save the soul. But do you think that Jesus Christ would have left His Father’s throne in heaven, and lived those thirty troubled years, and died that terrible death, if salvation was so easy? Do you think that if men could be saved by merely going to church, our blessed Lord would have made use of such expressions as ”*Strive*” (that is, toil, labour hard) ”to enter in at the strait gate,” or again, ”Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able”? I hardly think He would. Religion was made for man, and not man for religion. It was given him as the means whereby he might speak to God, and hold frequent communion with his Maker. It is quite possible to be a most regular attendant at church, and yet to go away without receiving the slightest benefit.

Some time ago I heard of an old woman who regularly went to a place of amusement, where she had been accustomed to go as a child. And though she became at last quite deaf, and nearly blind, she still persisted in going. And, reader, there is such a thing as deafness of the soul. The beautiful words of Scripture, the grand soul-stirring music, the touching words of our Church’s prayers, may all pass by unheeded, unless the soul is waiting upon that God Who is her helper and deliverer. But there is quite another class of persons, who receive no benefit from our Church’s services. I mean those who never go to church at all. Sometimes

when the clergyman goes to see them they find it convenient to tell a lie, and say they are chapel people; but they never go to chapel. They live from day to day, and from year to year, as if there was no God, no church, no minister, no Bible. And when they come to die, what then? They go down into that dark hereafter of uncertainty; uncertain indeed to them, for they have neglected during their life everything that kindles and keeps alive the hope of a better world.

Reader, if this is your case, if you have neglected church-going, let me implore you to do so no longer. The day will come when you will have to confess your sins, not to man but to God. There will be no concealment then; no shirking, or hiding your real motives under cover of a lie. The eyes of Almighty God will look you through and through; and if you take any excuses to Him, be sure they will not avail you.

Some people, again, there are who stay away from church for the following reason. They feel that they believe the Word of God, and all the great truths written in the Bible; but they also feel that they love the world very much, more indeed than they love Christ, and if they become Christians they think they will have to give up all pleasure and go through the world with a long face, and never smile or laugh again. But, believe me, no greater lie was ever forged than that. The devil started it thousands of years ago in sunny Eden; but there is not one word of truth in it; it has been well called "a libel on Christianity." It does not make a man gloomy to become a child of God. Do you think that if a man is dying of thirst and you give him a drink of water, that the *drink* makes him gloomy? Do you think that when the Queen's gracious message of pardon comes to a condemned murderer, that the *pardon* makes him a gloomy man for the rest of his days? Oh, no. And that is what Christ and Christianity are to the soul of man. What the water is in the one case, what the Queen's free pardon is in the other, so is religion, so is church-going, so is Bible-reading, so is Christ to the soul. Oh, then, come to church, the church of your baptism, the church of your fathers. Come to it as God's own blessed appointed means of salvation. Join in the prayers and praises. Listen to the lessons and the sermon, and ask that your heavenly Father may send His blessing upon your hard and stony heart. And don't forget this most important duty, without which all church-going, all prayer, and all sacraments will be worse than useless,—don't forget to practise in the week the lessons you have learnt in church on Sunday. You will learn there the lessons of life, the lessons of holiness, therefore act up to what you hear, and "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify"—*not you*, but—"your Father which is in heaven[#]."

[#] S. Matt. v. 16.

HOLY COMMUNION. PART I.

”Once, only once, and once for all,
 His precious life He gave;
 Before the Cross our spirits fall,
 And own it strong to save.”
Canon Bright.

It is such a very sad sight Sunday after Sunday to see so many people, and especially young men, go out of church when the Holy Communion is going to be administered. In so many churches, even in those where the congregations are large, we see the great bulk of the congregation getting up, as soon as the sermon is over, and leaving church. You may perhaps often have been among the departing guests, you may have sung the words,—

”My God, and is Thy Table spread?
 And doth Thy Cup with Love o’erflow?
 Thither be all Thy children led,
 And let them all Thy sweetness know.”

Yes, you may often have sung those words, and yet left the church with the rest, directly after singing them. You had been asking Him that *all* His children might be led to His Table, and yet you yourself walked out of church among the first. And yet you say, perhaps, many people do it. My friend, is that any reason why *you* should do it? When God comes to judge you, He will not ask you what *many* people did, neither will He ask you what your friends and neighbours did, but He will ask you what *you* did.

Our Saviour told His disciples of a certain broad way, and of a great company who were walking along it. He told them moreover of a wide gate by which the multitude entered, but which opened on destruction. And again He told them of a certain narrow way, and of a straight gate, leading unto life, and of this gate He added, ”few there be that find it[#].”

[#] S. Matt. vii. 13, 14.

Now one of the great helps to travellers on the latter road is this Communion Feast. To the worthy partaker, to the travel-stained and weary wayfarer there come "times of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah[#];" times when he may turn aside from the rugged way, and rest awhile before resuming his march heavenward. God has provided many helps for Christian soldiers, but I know of none so mighty, so comforting, so refreshing as that of the Holy Communion of His Body and His Blood.

[#] Acts iii. 19.

Now we often hear objections raised to coming to Holy Communion. And one of those most often given is, "I am not good enough to come." Reader, which of us is *good enough* for that sacred feast? If you are waiting until you are "good enough," I fear you will have to wait until your hair grows white with age, and even then you will not be "good enough." It is like a man who has never been into the water, standing on the river brink, and saying he wishes to bathe. And I go to him, and say, "Why don't you go in? there is the river, there are numbers of bathers already in the water, you can see what it is like, why not go in?" And he answers me, "I won't go into the water until I can swim." What could you say to such a person as that? Would you not tell him that the only way for him to learn to swim was by going into the water? And that is just the mistake people make about Holy Communion. They think it is intended for saints, not for sinners. But this is not so; Holy Communion is for the sinner, who feels his sin and feels his need of a Saviour. If you feel that you are a sinner, and that you want to get the better of your sin, and to lead a new life; if you really hate your sin, and really love Christ, then come to Holy Communion: for Christ has appointed it for you especially. He will not ask you to give Him any promise that you cannot keep. All he requires is that you should try and do your duty, your duty to God, and your duty to man, and to do it lovingly and cheerfully, "as to the Lord, and not unto men[#]."

[#] Col. iii. 23.

HOLY COMMUNION. PART II.

”O agony of wavering thought,
When sinners first so near are brought!
’Tis my Maker—dare I stay?
My Saviour—dare I turn away?”

Keble.

I felt that in one short chapter it was quite impossible to grasp all, or nearly all the objections to coming to Holy Communion; and so I propose in this chapter to speak of one more objection, commonly brought forward, before closing this subject.

You will remember that in the last chapter we considered the objection of not being good enough. Now another very common objection, and one very often heard, is, ”I am afraid of being laughed at!” Perhaps you will say, ”I never have said that.” No, reader, you may never have *said* it with your lips, but have you never *thought* it in your heart? This power of laughter, or ridicule as it is called, is a terrible one indeed. There is hardly a weapon in Satan’s armoury which he uses with such deadly effect upon the souls of men. Very many a young man goes up to the Bishop for Confirmation, and the Bishop lays his hands upon his head, and then as those grand old words, which have been spoken over the heads of so many, are said over him, ”Defend, O Lord, this Thy child with Thy heavenly grace,” the Holy Ghost enters into his soul, and for the moment he feels that he can go out and conquer. But his good resolves—and they are really good—are too often like the seeds which fell in stony places, which ”had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.” And then the young man leaves the church, with his good resolves fresh made; and from that moment there begins within him the struggle, which is to end in Heaven or in Hell. He goes and joins his companions, and if he says anything about religion he gets laughed at, and in too many cases he forgets his Confirmation vows, and the good in him quickly dies. I cannot help thinking that the reason why so many young men fall away after Confirmation, is because they neglect to go *at once* to the Holy Communion of Christ’s Body and Blood.

Oh! yes, ridicule is indeed hard to bear, even for the best amongst us. "Almost any man," says Canon Farrar, "will confront peril with a multitude; scarcely one in a thousand will stand alone against a multitude when they are bent on wrong ... for martyrdom (or bearing witness for Christ) is not one, but manifold; it is often a battle-field where no clash of earthly combatants is heard; it is often a theatre no wider than a single, nameless home."

But just think for a moment of this laughter of your friends. How long is it likely to last? and when it is over (for it must end some day), what is there to follow? Think of that when you are tempted by ridicule to turn aside from doing what is right. It would be hard indeed if you could not bear a laugh for Christ, Who could bear death for you!

Some time ago a very young boy went to school for the first time. He was a mere child, only eight years old, and he had never seen so many boys together before. The boys slept in large rooms, about fifteen boys in each room, and when he came, he was put into one of these, without knowing a single boy in the room. Now this child had been carefully and religiously brought up, and before the little fellow left home his mother had talked to him about the school to which he was going. Amongst other things she had told him never to forget to say his prayers. So, accordingly, the first night the boy got to school he knelt down to pray. No sooner, however, was he on his knees than the whole room was in an uproar. Some of the boys threw their slippers at him, some laughed, some shouted, or hissed, but still he kept on his knees. At last he rose and the tears stood in his eyes, for remember he was only a child. The next night he knelt down again, with the same result; boots and slippers were thrown at him, but still he persevered. For many nights this went on, until at length one night a little fellow came and knelt beside him, and said, "Mother told me to say my prayers too, but I was afraid." And so for some nights the two knelt side by side, and got an equal share of the slippers and the laughter. But at length a change came over the room. The good example had borne fruit, and one after another the boys in that room knelt down regularly and said their prayers.

I have read of the greatest victories by land and by sea. I have read accounts of the Duke of Wellington's campaigns, and of Nelson's battles; but nowhere have I read of a greater victory, won under more trying circumstances, than that child's victory over his companions' laughter. And will you be beaten by him? Will you, a strong man, give in, where a weak child of eight years old would not? Will you deny Christ, and break your Confirmation and Baptismal vows, because you can't stand the laughter of a few? Just look on a few years ahead—it may be only a few hours. You will be standing before a great white throne, while on it will be sitting your Judge. Around that throne stands the noble army of martyrs—men who laid down their lives in torture and pain for the sake of Christ crucified.

The charges against you are read out, charges of carelessness and neglect of God and of His Sacraments; and then the Judge turns to you, and asks you if you have any excuse to make. And you answer Him, "Yes." And then God turns to you again, and He looks at the martyr band, and thinks of all that they have suffered, as He asks you—"What?" And then I fancy I can hear you saying that you made good resolutions, and that you intended to keep straight, but your companions laughed at you, and you fell away. Do you think Almighty God would be satisfied with such an excuse. I think not. Do you think that you would deserve a place in the same kingdom as that in which the martyrs of Jesus rest?

Reader, go to Christ when the world laughs at you, and ask Him to strengthen you against temptation. He is well able to do so, for when He was on earth, men "laughed Him to scorn." He suffered the rebukes of many, for "He bare the sin of many. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed[#]."

[#] Isaiah liii. 5.

THE BIBLE.

"There is a Book, who runs may read,
Which heavenly truth imparts;
And all the lore its scholars need,
Pure eyes and Christian hearts."
Keble.

There is no book that is so frequently given as a present as the Bible. It has been translated into every tongue, and carried to every shore. In the king's palace, and in the lonely hut, from one end of the world to the other, wherever Christianity is preached, the Bible is read. I have often seen a picture of a lady reading a book intently. She is represented as sitting near a table, with a shawl thrown loosely round her, and a widow's cap upon her head. That lady is the Queen of England, the greatest woman in the world; and the book she is reading is the Bible, the Word of a greater than she. Underneath is written, "The Secret of England's

greatness." Yes, the Holy Bible, or rather the study of the Bible, is indeed the secret of England's greatness, just as drunkenness is the secret of England's weakness. It is not because the Queen of England alone reads the Bible, but it is because the Bible is read in so many English homes.

Now there are several ways of reading the Bible. It is quite possible for a very clever man to read the Bible, and not understand it; and it is quite possible, too, for a poor unlettered man, if he have faith, to read, and understand. Some people read the Bible as a history, and a very good history it is, and so they get what they want. Some, again, read it to try to find fault with what they read. Some read it to try and draw out words in support of their own peculiar views, and if they can get only a few words, which they can so twist as to satisfy their easy consciences, then they are quite content that their religion is right, and all else wrong. But some there are, quite different from any of these, who read the Bible, not to make out some new doctrine, or plan of salvation, but as the Word of the Living God. To these, every word they read is as the voice of God, and every text a guide on the way which ends in Christ. Instead of picking out texts and founding a new sect upon them, and so adding to the already too numerous divisions amongst us, they diligently "search the Scriptures[#]," and by them they make proof of their religion. Love to Christ as their Head, and obedience to His laws, these are their two great doctrines; and these shall inherit the promises, and "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven[#]."

[#] S. John v. 39.

[#] S. Matt viii. 11.

Yes, depend upon it, there is no book to take the place of the Bible. It has brought comfort to the souls of many, who could find no comfort elsewhere. It has soothed the pillow of the dying, and its holy words are repeated over the dead to comfort the mourner. It is read and accepted by men, who cannot agree on many other points. Its plain homely truths are suitable for all, rich and poor alike. But it is eminently the working man's book. "It is chiefly the inspired sayings and doings of working men; from David the shepherd, and Amos the herdsman, Peter and John the poor fishermen, up to One chosen out of the people, of Whom it was said in contempt, "Is not this the carpenter?"

Reader, you will find as you go on in life many books and other things to interest you. You will find companions gather round you, and make much of you, and some perchance may try to turn your heart away from Christ and His Word; but the day will come when you will grow tired of the books, delightful

though they may appear now; and the day will come when the companions will drop off or die, and you will find that the only companion you have left will be the old Book; the Book out of which in early childhood you first learnt the lessons of life—lessons of a warfare with evil, lessons of a Saviour’s love. And oh! what a comfort is the Bible in the long weary hours of sickness and of sorrow. I have known men who have lived godless lives, and never opened their Bible, or thought of their Saviour; I have known such, at the very first touch of sickness, send for a person to read to them something from the Bible. The Christ they had neglected all their lives through, was only sought for on the bed of death, and the unopened Bible plainly bore witness how little they cared while in health for their Saviour’s words. We should think but little of a child who was in the habit of receiving money and clothes and frequent presents from his father, and who, when that father wrote to him, put his letters regularly by unopened. Reader, you are ready to blame the child; are you quite as ready to blame yourself for neglecting to read the letters of your heavenly Father, which He has written in His holy Word?

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

”Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed
 His tender last farewell,
 A Guide, a Comforter bequeathed,
 With us to dwell.

And every virtue we possess,
 And every victory won,
 And every thought of holiness,
 Are His alone.”

Harriet Auber.

We say in the Belief, ”I believe in the Holy Ghost.” And we need to think often of what these words mean, for many hardly stop to think who He is, in Whom they here profess to believe. People know of God the Father, and His love to sinners. They can speak of Jesus as the Saviour of a lost world. But the name of the Holy Spirit rarely enters their thoughts, and seldom perhaps occurs in their prayers.

But is this right? Is not the Holy Spirit quite as much God as Jesus Christ is? It is His special office and pleasure to help mankind. With what loving care He does this the lives of individual men can shew. When a sinner is converted to Christ, a lost sheep restored to the Fold, it is the work of God's Holy Spirit. When we feel that we want to lead better or holier lives, when we feel grateful to Christ for all He has done for us, when we seek to please God, or to deny self, this again is the work of the Holy Spirit. At Holy Baptism He is present at the font; He washes away sins in the Blood of Jesus; He gives a new heart, and a right spirit to the repentant sinner, and leads our feet into the way of peace. Sometimes we see a man who has been leading a life of sin suddenly turn from his evil ways and become a consistent, God-fearing Christian, and we wonder at the change, and say how extraordinary it is; and we ask each other if it will last—and if it does last we wonder still more, never thinking for a moment that it is only an instance of the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

I have spoken of how very near the Holy Spirit is to us at Holy Baptism. He is near us always; He hears every word we speak, and notes down every thought of our heart; but there are special occasions on which He is specially near us: Holy Baptism is one of them, Confirmation is another. He is present when a young man or young woman kneels before the Bishop to be confirmed. He loves to hear and answer the prayer, "Defend, O Lord, this Thy child, with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto Thine everlasting kingdom." Yes, young man, He was with you at your Confirmation, and heard and noted down the promises made by you then—promises to give up "the devil and all his works, the carnal desires of the flesh," not to "follow or be led by them;" promises to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days" of your life. And though you may have forgotten that you made those promises, He has not. And He, too, promised something in return. He promised that God's "Fatherly Hand should ever be over you," and that He Himself would ever be in you, as you travelled onward on the road to heaven. In Holy Matrimony, again, the same Holy Spirit is ever near. He joins the man and woman in an unseen union, as a great and good poet has it—

"A high mysterious union
Which nought on earth may break."

And when at Ordination the white-robed priests and deacons of our Church pass up to kneel before the Bishop, the Holy Ghost is there. And, lastly, at the bedside of the dying Christian, while weeping friends stand round, the Holy Ghost is there. He is above all things *the Comforter*, and He loves to comfort those that

mourn. With His gracious influence He cheers the dying spirit, pointing away from earthly things and earthly dwellings to a "Paradise of God," where "there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying," and where "the former things," that is the things of earth, "are passed away, and all things have become new."

GOD'S MINISTERS.

"Lord, pour Thy Spirit from on high,
And Thine ordained servants bless;
Graces and gifts to each supply,
And clothe Thy Priests with righteousness.

So, when their work is finished here
They may in hope their charge resign,
So, when their Master shall appear
They may with crowns of glory shine."
James Montgomery.

What is a Minister? The word "*Minister*" means "*a Servant*"—and the ministers of God are God's servants. Now, of course every Christian man and woman is a servant of God. But ministers are men who are specially set apart, by His Holy Spirit, for their high and holy work.

Just as in the days of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit told the Church to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work of the ministry, so now the principal question in the Ordination Service is that of the Bishop, who asks the candidate—"Do you trust that you are *inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*, to take upon you this office?" And that is only another way of asking—"Do you think you have really received a call from the Holy Spirit?"

There is no work on earth so noble as the minister's work—the work of taking care of souls. Just as a doctor cures the body, by giving proper medicine to the patient at the right moment, so it is the duty and privilege of the Christian minister to give the right medicine to the soul.

Now if you will take your Prayer Book, and turn to the Service for the Ordering of Priests, you will find that the first words spoken by the Bishop to the Archdeacon, who presents the candidates, are these, "Take heed that the persons,

whom ye present unto us, be apt and meet” (that is to say, well fitted) ”for their learning and godly conversation to exercise their ministry.” So you see that two things are required of those who come up for ordination,—1. that they should be well-instructed; 2. that they should be godly men.

Of the first of these it might be and has been objected—”What is the use of having a learned clergy, so long as they have the love of God in their hearts?” To this objection, I would simply answer, that while doubtless it is far more important to have a godly than a learned Ministry; still the Bible has given us two special instances of great learning among the servants of God. In the Old Testament, ”Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds[#].” While in the New Testament S. Paul was ”brought up at the feet of Gamaliel[#],” a doctor of the Law. And surely I need not attempt to prove from Scripture that God’s ministers must be godly men. Experience and common sense alike teach us that unless they are godly, their learning can profit them but little. For if God’s ministers are to do God’s work, the work of doing good to others, it is most important that they should set a good example in their daily life. A man may preach the very best of sermons; he may draw together immense congregations; his services may be reverent, beautiful, impressive; but unless his daily life aims at strict accordance with his Sunday teaching, that man’s religion is vain.

[#] Acts vii. 22.

[#] Acts xxii. 3.

And now, having spoken on the duty of God’s ministers, let me say a few words as to the duty of the flock towards their clergyman. First to respect and reverence him as ”the Servant of the living God[#].” We do not indeed respect the man himself more than he deserves, but we respect God’s minister, on account of his office, and for the reverence we feel for the Master at whose hands he holds it. Secondly, if we really respect the office, we shall readily obey the advice God’s minister gives; we shall gladly and frequently go to church, and frequent the Holy Communion—we shall listen with care to his sermons, and act upon the advice contained in them; and thus we shall find ourselves daily growing more and more fit for joining the Church in Heaven. Thirdly, we shall do all in our power to help him in his work. Everybody can do something. Some no doubt can do more than others, but all can do a little. If you hear things said of him, which you know to be untrue, say so. When God’s minister stops to speak to you, shew that you are glad of the opportunity of speaking to him; for if we will,

we can always get some good from the words of a good man. And then if you get into any trouble or difficulty, go and ask his advice. There can be no doubt as to this being the right and proper course. God's minister has been set over your parish, as a person found "meet for his *learning* and godly conversation" to exercise his ministry. In some parishes the Vicar is the only person of education, and by going to him for advice in a difficulty, instead of to the publican or the nearest neighbour, a great deal of trouble might be saved.

[#] Dan. vi. 20.

But perhaps you will ask, "How is it that we see some of the clergy leading evil, or even immoral lives?" Reader, I understand your difficulty; it is one I have often felt myself. But just ask yourself this question. Is there any profession on earth, of which it can be said, that *every single member* is living up to what he professes? I do not for one moment defend immorality or evil-living among the clergy. It is terrible indeed to think that they to whom we might most reasonably look for example should be setting a bad example, and poisoning instead of curing the souls that Jesus died to redeem. But these men are few and far between. And thank God, there is another side to the picture. The greater number of the clergy of the Church of England, are men leading high, noble Christian lives; many of them men who have given up wealth, comfort, and a happy home, to serve Christ and His poor in our crowded cities, or in our country villages; men who have learnt Christ as "the truth is in Jesus[#]," and whose one desire is to give that precious truth to others also.

[#] Eph. iv. 21.

As to the others, it is not for us to pronounce their doom; we may safely leave them in the hands of that God Who has said, "Woe be to the shepherds that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks[#]?"

[#] Ezekiel xxxiv. 2.

And I am quite certain that if we do not help God's ministers in this work, God

will require a reason from us for this. How many of us I wonder ever pray for our ministers, and yet the prayers of the people are one of the greatest helps the ministers of God can have. Then again we can help him in his choir, and in many other ways besides. The young men of a parish especially can help the parson. He looks to them as having been trained in his schools (baptized it may be by him), to fill up the gaps in his church, and above all to set a good, manly, Christian example when they are out of his sight.

There are a great many people, especially in country villages, who are always speaking against God's ministers, and do all they can to hinder their work. But the day of sickness comes, and they are laid by for a time, and money and victuals get scarce, the very first place they send to is the Vicarage, and the man from whom they ask help is the minister they have abused. And very rarely is this help refused. For though it is often given with a heart, heavy at the thought of the little thanks he is likely to get, and the little good it is likely to do his Master's cause, it is yet given ungrudgingly, for he remembers his Lord's words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me[#]."

[#] S. Matt. xxv. 40.

Oh! then think kindly of God's minister whom He has set over your parish. He thinks of you and of your wants, and of your troubles, more often than you suppose. He is more frequently at the Throne of Grace, asking God to bless His people, than you may think; and in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, it will be known how many souls owe salvation to the prayers, frequent and earnest, of the ministers of God, and how many jewels by their means will shine for ever in the Master's crown.

PRAYER.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That kindles in the breast."

Montgomery.

What is prayer? Prayer is the uplifting of the soul of man to heaven, in silent communion with its God. Prayer is the telling out of our wants, of our weaknesses, our temptations, and failings to our Father in heaven. It has been known ere now to bring down marvellous and unexpected answers to the children of men. Homes have been saved from destruction; armies delivered from slaughter; sinners converted to Christ—by the power of prayer. As John Keble has taught us, in his beautiful morning hymn—

"New mercies each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven."

You remember the answers to prayer recorded in the Bible. Elijah prayed that it might not rain; and God withheld the showers. On another occasion, he prayed that fire might come down on his sacrifice, and fire came down. Hezekiah prayed for an increase of days; and we are told that "there was added unto his life fifteen years." In the New Testament again, our blessed Lord, we are told, spent whole nights in prayer to God. In the history of the Early Church too, there are many instances of answers to prayer. There is the beautiful story of St. Augustine, who after leading a wicked and immoral life, was brought to Christ through the prayers of his mother. But why quote more? You and I, reader, I trust know and value this power of prayer. To be able, in the midst of the most pressing business, or the hardest toil, to retire into the secret chamber of our heart, as it were, and there tell to God our most urgent needs in prayer is one of the greatest comforts of our life.

And God often answers prayer in a way we little expect; so little, indeed, that we are apt hardly to realize it as an answer at all. A few years ago, there was an awful storm on the east coast of England, and a ship was seen to be in peril about a mile from the shore. The life-boat was launched, but owing to some delay, it seemed likely to be of but little use. As the boat was nearing a dangerous spot, one of the men cried, "Boys, shall we turn back, it is almost certain death to go on? The ship seems to have gone down, and, no doubt, all hands have perished." But one of his mates answered, "As I ran along the cliff, I saw behind a hedge two ladies praying. I am a wild chap, yet I do believe God hears prayer; we shall save some lives." Then on went the life-boat, with her gallant crew, ploughing her

way through the dangerous breakers. The ship had gone down when the boat reached the spot, and no sign could be seen of her crew. The life-boat drifted four miles. In those four miles the sailors picked up first one poor fellow, then another, until eight lives had been saved. The shipwrecked sailors often told the tale afterwards, how that in answer to those ladies' prayer, the life-boat held on its way, and the little crew were saved. Yes, and I could tell you of more wonderful answers to prayer than that, but my object is not to tell you interesting stories, but to strive to leave a lasting impression, by God's grace, upon the heart. I have told you how God answers prayer, in a way which, though kind and loving, was quite unexpected. Sometimes God's answers may not seem to us kind and loving, but may at first appear to be harsh. We find in the end, however, that He knows best what is good for us. Oh! it is impossible to pass through life without feeling the power of prayer. The life of every separate person must testify to its power; the death of every Christian is an exhibition of it. "Pray without ceasing," then. Whenever you feel inclined to speak an *idle word*, say a few words to God instead. You can speak quite easily to your father on earth, why not speak as easily to your Father in Heaven? Nothing is too small, or too common, to tell Him about. The little daily troubles; the differences between masters and men; the question of your wages; the home troubles, the field troubles; the wet season, or the summer heat; the insects which destroy your garden, or the sins which are destroying your soul—these and such as these are not too small, or too simple to take up the attention of our Father in Heaven, "Who feedeth the young ravens that cry unto Him," and without Whose knowledge not even a sparrow falls to the ground, and dies.

ON BEING ALONE.

"Call it not solitude to be alone,
 Call it not solitude, for God is nigh:
 And holy angels from His heavenly throne
 Breathe round us love, and comfort from on high.

Then go we forth to work and struggle on,
 Onwards our steps, and upwards still our hearts;
 Let all men see the strength, the power supreme,
 One precious hour of solitude imparts.

Oh! never, never let us turn away
 From one such blessed hour that God has given,
 One moment when we can in silence pray
 And raise our hearts unto our home in heaven.”
Anon.

There are but few people, I suppose, who care to be alone. Man, you will say, was made for society; he was made to be of use to others, and not to dwell alone. True, it is not good for man to be always alone; and yet there are times when it is well to withdraw ourselves from the busy world, and to go into some solitary place, and be alone. It is a want that we all feel more or less. David felt it, "Oh that I had wings like a dove," he cried, "for then would I flee away and be at rest[#]." The Master felt it, for He continued whole nights alone in prayer to God. And God's saints in every age have felt it. In this busy life of ours we must often feel rest and solitude acceptable. How glad we are, for instance, when the evening comes, and we know that the day's toil is over, and that we can be alone. And when Saturday night comes we are more glad still, for we know that it means not merely a night's rest, but a day's rest too. Now I want you to think of being alone in three separate and distinct senses, 1. Solitude. 2. Loneliness. 3. Isolation. And first, solitude. A recent writer, speaking of our blessed Lord's frequent nights spent alone on the Mount of Olives, says,—"There is something affecting beyond measure in the thought of these lonely hours; the absolute stillness and silence, broken by no sounds of human life, but only by the hooting of the night-jar, or the howl of the jackal; the stars of an eastern heaven raining their large lustre out of the depth; the figure of the Man of Sorrows kneeling upon the dewy grass, and gaining strength for His labours from the purer air, the more open heaven, of that intense and silent communing with His Father and His God."

[#] Ps. lv. 6.

Yes, there is something wonderfully solemn and grand in that kind of solitude, the solitude of prayer. The intense silence of the world sleeping below Him, the cold night air upon His brow, the kneeling figure and earnest words; these all we can picture to ourselves, and say such *solitude* is good!

Then, again, there is loneliness. Who has not felt lonely? It may have been that as we stood round an open grave and listened to the beautiful words spoken by our Church over the departed, we first learnt what loneliness meant. I have

been told that nowhere is the sense of loneliness stronger than on hearing the service for the Burial of the Dead at sea. I have been told that there comes over the spirit an untold sense of loneliness when one of a vessel's crew is committed to the deep, far from land, in the midst of the ocean, "looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead;" and the living comrades stand around the corpse and see the cold waves close over their mate's remains. But solitude is no mere feeling of the mind, it is a stern reality. It comes as a necessary part in the life of all men, and so it must be met.

Lastly, there is isolation. And this to men is the hardest trial of all. To be obliged to mix with people with whom we have nothing in common, to go about and live with those who have no fear of God before their eyes, to work with the blasphemer, to toil for the vicious, to mix with the depraved; oh! it needs a Christian spirit indeed to bear up under such a trial. But Christ knew well what it was to do this. He was as much alone in the crowded street as ever He was on the cold hillside. He was as truly alone when He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house as He was while walking on the sea of Gennesaret. Oh yes, isolation is the portion of all true Christians as it was of the Master. We can talk to men of the world, we can mix with men of the world, and we can do good to men of the world, and yet all the while we are alone. Oh! don't you know what it is to long to ask advice, and yet have none of whom to ask it? Don't you know how easy it is to make hundreds of acquaintances, but how very hard it is to have one true friend? And this is what Jesus felt, and felt for us. He went through it all, all the solitude, all the loneliness, all the bitter isolation for you and for me, that when the time came that we should be alone, we might remember His loneliness and take courage. Reader, the day will come when you too will have to be alone. You may surround yourself with friends now, you may take pleasure in counting the number of those who are proud to know you; but, believe me, it won't be so always. Alone you will have to pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, alone you will have to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Alone you will have to give "that strict and solemn account" of the way in which you have used your time, your influence, and your power on earth. But there is One, One who knows what loneliness is, Who has promised to be with you, if you ask Him; promised to take care of you over the dark valley, for the darkness is no darkness with Him, and He has passed over that way before. Go then to Jesus, the lonely Man of sorrows. Make a friend of Him, and tell Him that you want His help in your solitude, His guidance in your loneliness, His presence in your isolation; ask Him to come to you as He came of old to His toiling, weary, lonely disciples on the Galilean sea; ask Him to come and guide your ship into quiet harbours, and safe resting-places, and to bring you into a better country, even an heavenly,

where none are sad, or sick, or lonely, for all are filled with the Presence of God.

ON SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE.

”Poor indeed thou must be, if around thee
 Thou no ray of light and joy canst throw,
 If no silken cord of love hath bound thee
 To some little world through weal and woe.

If no eyes thy tender love can brighten,
 No fond voices answer to thine own,
 If no brother’s sorrow thou canst lighten
 By daily sympathy and gentle tone.

Daily struggling, though enclosed and lonely,
 Every day a rich reward will give;
 Thou wilt find, by hearty striving only
 And truly loving, thou canst truly live.”

Harriet Winslow.

There is no subject of those on which I have written as yet in this book, or of those on which I shall write, that I believe to be of greater importance than that of setting a good example to others. Amongst other things our influence on one another has been compared to the action of the sea. And indeed the comparison is a good one. The sea is a mighty power, stronger perhaps than any other natural force. It is constantly and silently at work. We stand on a rock in the midst of the ocean; a rock that looks so firm, and seems so hard that it blunts the sharpest tools to work it. And yet, quite silently, the restless sea is eating into its very heart with its ceaseless beatings. And so is it with influence, or example. Silently, but none the less surely, do we make our influence felt upon each other. The influence may be bad or good; it may be a bad or good example we are setting, or a bad or good word that we speak, still there are always plenty of people ready to take it up and copy it. Probably for every person we can see to be influenced by our example, there are at least ten of whom we know nothing. Reader, these are solemn thoughts. The idle word you spoke yesterday has gone beyond recall; but

God heard it and noted both it and its effect upon those who stood by. And you may one day find that that word has caused a world of sorrow to spring up around it. Yes, we cannot unspeak a word carelessly spoken, or unthink one evil thought. How often we hear it said, "Alas! I possess no influence, what can I do?" Now it is true that many have no wealth, no beauty, no rank, no intellect, no learning; but there never has been a heart created since the world began, that has not received and exerted the precious, though much-abused gift of influence. How is this? Just because every heart has the power of loving! There is a story told of Cecil's little daughter, who was asked by her father how it was that everybody loved her so much. "I think, dear father," replied the child, "it must be because I love everybody." Here, then, is a work we all can do, and we all have to do. "Love is power." The sunshine has to do its work; it penetrates the darkest places, the dirtiest streets, the most dismal prisons; it brings light and heat to the chilled and cold; it gives colour to the flower, and ripeness to the fruit. And so it is with good influence. The influence of one loving heart may do a world of good. It may not be a powerful heart; it need not be the heart of a learned man; still less need it be the heart of a rich one; so long as it is a loving heart it will go about cheering and lighting up, warming and colouring and ripening all things like the sun.

Many good people seem to think it a duty to keep their hearts locked up tight from their fellow men. Have you ever thought seriously of the sin of doing this? Have you ever thought that such a course makes the religion of your gentle, kindly, warm-hearted Master appear in a cold and disagreeable form? Have you ever thought that as the Lord Jesus looks upon the cup of cold water bestowed on a neighbour as given to Him, so He will look upon the wounded feeling, the repulsed confidence, the bruised spirit, you have occasioned as given to Him too? Oh! it is a sad thing to fold up in a napkin the talent of *manner*; to lose, as it were, the key of the door which opens the hearts of men.

But if you are using your influence, don't be afraid to use it for Christ; to be an out-and-out Christian! Those are the sort He always blesses in the end, and their works follow them long after they have passed onward to their reward.

Not long ago, in a Sussex village, there lived a young man, a farm-labourer. He had often wished to stay in church for Holy Communion, which he knew well would help him, beyond all else, in the good and earnest life he was trying to lead. Still the fear of his companions' laughter held him back. One Sunday morning, however, after praying much for God's help to aid him to do what was right, he knelt on, when the others had left the church, and went up to receive the Holy Communion. On coming out of church his friends began to laugh at him for staying, but he said nothing, and walked quietly home. Sunday after Sunday he persevered, though it was hard work, and he was often tempted to give way. Months passed, and one Sunday another boy came and knelt down

beside him, instead of leaving church, and he too received the Holy Communion. A few Sundays after they were joined by another, and after that more and more of the young men of that parish began to follow their example. Nor did the good resulting from this end there. These young men are now banded together in that parish, working together for the same great Master Christ, each in his own occupation, and leading others to the knowledge of the Saviour. And all this came from the courage of that one brave soldier of Christ, who used his influence in his Captain's cause. Reader, will not you go and do likewise?

Hitherto I have spoken only of the good influence we may exercise upon our companions and on strangers. What shall I say of the influence we may exercise on our home? Ere this, one Christian man has been known to change the whole manner of life of a household. St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to Timothy to "shew piety at home;" and after all it is *in our own homes* that we must bear witness for Jesus Christ. Speak up for Christ when occasion demands it, above all live a Christian life, and then the lives of those around you will be brought more under the influence of religion. But to young men particularly is the call to influence others loudest and clearest, and to set a good example their plain duty—

"Young men be strong for Jesus,
To toil for Him is gain—
And Jesus wrought for Joseph
With chisel, saw, and plane."

HELPING OTHERS.

"The cowslip and the spreading vine,
The daisy in the grass,
The snow-drop and the eglantine,
Preach sermons as we pass.
The ant within its cavern deep
Would bid us labour too,
And writes upon its tiny heap—
'There's work enough to do.'

To have a heart for those who weep,
The sottish drunkard win;

To rescue all the children deep
 In ignorance and sin;
 To help the poor, the hungry feed;
 To give him coat and shoe;
 To see that all can write and read—
 Is 'work enough to do.'"
John Burbidge.

Of all the different kinds of work that God has given us to do here on earth, there is none more important, none more satisfactory, than this work of helping others. Ever since Jesus Christ stood upon the shore of the sea of Galilee, watching two fishermen mending their nets; ever since He spoke to those two, saying, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men[#]," the command has been binding upon all Christians. To go out upon the grand field of philanthropy, of love of men, is the noblest occupation that our poor life can have. To spend and be spent in the service of our fellow-men is a work that is so specially blest by Christ, that I hardly think that a chapter on "helping others" will be in any sense out of place here.

[#] S. Matt. iv. 19.

But perhaps you will say, "How can I, I who am so poor, help others?" Reader, you have only to look for such work, and God will give it you. It may be you can help others by giving them your time. For instance, if you have an aged or infirm neighbour, too feeble to dig his own garden, it would no doubt be a great help to him if you were to go and offer to do it for him. Some time ago, in a country village, there was a young man, who wished to try and help others in some practical way, for the Master's sake. For a long time he could not find anything to do; but at last one of his neighbours, an old man, became very ill, and bedridden. He was very poor, and his old wife almost too infirm to attend to him properly. For the last two years this young fellow has gone in in the morning, before going to his work, and done all he could for him in the house; and every night on returning home, he goes again, settles him for the night, and reads the Bible to him before leaving. One day, when he was praised for doing this, he said, quite simply, "I do like to do it, it seems like helping Christ: whenever I go there, I say to myself, 'I was sick, and ye visited Me.'"

That young man understands the true meaning of the words "Inasmuch as

ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me[#].”

[#] S. Matt. xxv. 40.

Reader, there may be no sick neighbour for you to help, but there is no doubt you can find work to do if you will only try. Oh! don't stand idle all the blessed hours of youth, that God has given you to work for others. Stand up like men, ready to go and fight for Jesus, the Great Captain of the Lord's host. Ask God to give you strength and victory, and to fulfil the promise He once gave to His chosen people, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint[#]."

[#] Isaiah xl. 31.

”Come labour on!
 Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain,
 While all around him waves the golden grain?
 And to each servant does the Master say,
 'Go, work to-day.'

Come labour on!
 The toil is pleasant, the reward is sure,
 Blessed are those who to the end endure;
 How full their joy, how deep their rest shall be,
 Oh! Lord, with Thee.”

Yes, the end of helping others lies in the Master's kingdom. The reward of

serving Christ in the person of His poor, awaits you in the many mansions. You may meet with coldness, and hard words, from those you would seek to help; but generally, you will find them only too glad of it. And what matters it what men say and think of your work, if the Lord approves of it? What will it matter whether your friends did not help you, if Christ helps you here, and gives you your reward in heaven?

It is especially a young man's calling to help others. He need not give up the least bit of his ordinary daily work or daily pleasure to do so. All he needs is a ready will to undertake the work as soon as Christ gives it him to do.

I cannot close this chapter better than by quoting some remarks, made some years ago by one of the London clergy. Preaching to young men upon the words, "Young man, I say unto thee arise!" the preacher said—"We need young men, fired with the thought that they are called by Christ to be the saviours of society from the sins that are wasting it, to render to their country and to humanity the noblest service, by fighting with voice and hand against those deadly foes that menace our very life; and will, if they are allowed to run riot, certainly drag us down to hell. Young men, rise up to stand against it and destroy it. Lift up against it the Standard of the Cross. Be known as Christ's soldiers, banded and pledged to overthrow it. Let your conversation be pure from all taint of uncleanness; and never let the glass rob you of your power to stand up for Christ against sensual sin. Rebuke and frown down the young man's talk, and the habit of life it engenders; you know what I mean. Say to those who love it, it is just this that is destroying us as a people. Unless our young men rise up together, as one man, and make drunkenness and harlotry shameful and hateful, I see no hope for our country, but a hope of growing decay."

Those are wise words, carefully and thoughtfully spoken. God grant, reader, that you and I may lay them seriously to heart.

OUR COMPANIONS.

"A friend I had, long, long ago,
 And one I learnt to prize,
 He taught a truth that all should know—
 In work true honour lies.
 A frank and cheerful face had he,
 And a heart as light as heart could be.

* * * * *

He has found his rest in Heaven above,
 But has left a golden fame;
 For the neighbours tell his deeds of love,
 And the children bless his name;
 And comrades too for many a day

Shall roughly wipe their tears away.”
John Burbidge.

There are, perhaps, few things so important to a young man as to make a right choice of companions. How much depends on this. How much of our present and future happiness; nay, more, how much of our eternal welfare depends upon those with whom we mix on earth. Very many a young man has begun life with the best intentions and the holiest desires; and all these have been dashed to the ground by his having made an unwise choice in selecting his companions.

Now there are several things to be thought of in making this choice. And I shall try to put a few of these before you. First, it is most important that your companions should be God-fearing men. I don't think any friendship can be really happy, or even lasting, unless this is the case. For remember that there are friendships which do not end with life; that true friendship, blessed by Almighty God, is only begun here below, and is carried on in that distant spirit-land beyond the grave.

Secondly, don't think that because your companions should be godly men, they must needs be gloomy or dull. A man may be godly, and at the same time quite able to laugh with others, and make as good jokes as they; but his laughter will never be turned against religion, nor his jokes made at the expense of the people of God. A man who is a drunkard, for instance, will never be a good or even pleasant companion for you. His conversation in his sober moments is rarely interesting, and when he is in liquor he is worse than a beast. And as to his example, what can I say of that? It will be an example which God grant, reader, you may never follow; but it is an example which it is better you should not even see. In a word, as a recent writer has put it, my advice to you is, "Make friends with sober men, who can talk and laugh without incessant liquor."

Now it may be you think you are quite strong enough to resist temptation. It may be you think that as you pass through this world yours will be a life of temptation, and you feel that if you can't resist it now, you never will. It was said of Sophronius, a wise teacher in Ancient Greece, that one day when his daughter Eulalia came to ask permission to visit a worldly friend, Lucinda, Sophronius forbade her. And when Eulalia, trusting in her own power to overcome the temptations of her evil companion, replied, "Dear father, you must think me childish if you imagine I should be exposed to danger by going." Sophronius took, in silence, a dead coal from the hearth, and gave it to his daughter. "It will not burn you, my child: take it," said he. Eulalia did so, and behold! her hand was blackened, and, as it chanced, her white dress too. "We cannot be too careful in handling coals," said Eulalia in vexation. "Yes, truly!" replied her father; "You see, my child, the coals, even if they do not burn, blacken."

And so, too, is it with companions. The coals may not burn, but only blacken; and companions may not leave any lasting impression for evil on the heart. Their example may not even appear to the conscience as being black and evil, but they blacken the character, at any rate for the time, none the less, if not in the sight of men, undoubtedly in the sight of God.

And there is one point more. Do remember, that even the worst of us, the most degraded, are being constantly watched by people above us in society. And very often they don't care to have anything to do with us, *because of our companions*. I once heard a foreman, who employed a great number of hands on a certain work, say of a young man, whose name had been recommended for employment, "He keeps such bad company." And though I knew the young man in question well, and knew that whatever his companions might be, he himself was pure and good, still it was of no use my speaking to the foreman, because he *was* keeping bad company. Depend upon it, reader, there is truth in words written down in our Father's Book, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, baring *promise of the life that now is*, and of that which is to come[#]."

[#] Tim. iv. 8.

THE BOOKS WE READ.

"There is a Book, who runs may read,
Which heavenly truth imparts,
And all the lore its scholars need
Pure eyes and Christian hearts.

The works of God, above, below,
Within us and around,
Are pages in that Book to show
How God Himself is found."

John Keble.

There are few things which have so mighty a power for good or evil, on the lives of most of us, as the books we read. Nor is it easy for us to read nothing but what

is profitable and good. From the Bible, of course, we can always get wholesome reading, and always gain fresh stores of knowledge; but we cannot always be reading the Bible. And there are in these days many books and papers which a young man may come across, which can hardly fail to do him harm; books with perfectly innocent titles, and apparently quite harmless, and yet the reading they contain is as poison to the human soul. But there are plenty of good books too, thank God; and almost every village has its library, and every cottage home its books.

But even if you are ever so careful as to what you read, it is almost certain the devil will put something into your hands that you should not read. He does so to us all. Rich and poor, young and old, all alike read a good deal that they should not—for rich people have their temptations too, and very hard they are tried sometimes. Well, the only safeguard I know of is, whenever you read anything you know to be bad shut up the book at once, and read no further. And whenever you read anything that you are doubtful about, take down your Bible and ask God to shew you, out of His Word, whether what you have been reading is right or wrong. You know, I daresay, that all along a part of the south coast of England there are a number of round towers, built at certain distances from each other. And the object of these towers was this. Many years ago we expected a foreign foe to land on our shores, and we built these watch-towers to guard against surprise. And it is just the same with the Bible. God has said, I won't prevent the devil trying to persuade you to read these bad books, and I won't prevent your reading them; but I give you the Bible, which, if you compare its words with the words of the books you read, they will, like the men in the watch-towers, give you warning of the enemy's approach. Reader, if you require plainer words than those written in God's Bible, I fear you will never read them on earth, and you certainly will never read them in heaven. How often we hear men say, "I'm no scholar." And this is given as an excuse for not coming to church, and for not reading the Bible, and a lot of other things too. But there's many a man who will tell you he's no scholar, if you ask him to read the Bible; but if you give him a newspaper and tell him there's an account of a horrible murder in it, he'll take that gladly, and he won't tell you he's no scholar then! He'll very soon find that either his wife or his children can read to him about the murder of a fellow creature, but he won't take the trouble to ask them to read to him about the death of God's only Son.

Oh, reader, be honest with God. He is honest, and means what He says. Man may not see through your excuses. He may go away and pity you for your want of learning, and you may be sitting at home thinking how cleverly you have deceived him. But all the while, though you little think it, God is holding up your character, and He sees through you, and every bit of what He sees, is

written down in His great book to be brought up against you at the last day. Some people give as an excuse for reading bad and immoral books, that they can understand them. They say they *can't understand* the Bible. No doubt that is true. God says the carnal man—that is the man who loves this world and things of the flesh—cannot understand spiritual things; and the Bible is a spiritual book. How can the unwashed heart understand the Bible? Well, you say if it is a sealed book, how am I to understand it? The word of God, I answer, may be and is darkened to the worldly man, but the way of salvation is written so plainly, that a little child of six years old can read it, if he will. And oh! if you come across any impure or sinful book, do be careful what you do with it. Don't let it lie about. A little child may take it up and read it, and it may be, through your carelessness, its first step on the road to ruin. Don't say, that's not my look out! Reader, it is your look out; and God will lay it to your charge. If you stop under a hayrick to light your pipe, and you carelessly throw the lighted match away among the hay, so that the rick catches fire, isn't that your fault? You didn't mean, I daresay, to set fire to the rick; you didn't leave home, and go to that particular place in order to set that rick on fire, but I think that any magistrate in the kingdom would make you suffer for your carelessness. And so it is with God. He looks at results as well as at intentions. And if you carelessly leave a bad book about, and it happens to do harm, the punishment of that harm, be it little or be it much, will rest upon your soul in the life to come.

TRUE MANLINESS.

"There are other battles to fight, my boy,
 Than the battle of which you speak;
 There are battles which none can win, my boy,
 But the lowly in heart and meek;
 There are battles in which earth's mightiest fail,
 And the strong ones are the weak.

There's a battle, my boy, with the world's rude laugh
 At the lessons our Saviour taught,
 And many a battle with self, before
 We can do the things we ought;
 A battle which, not for the praise of men,

Is in secret and silence fought.

If in the battle of life, my boy,
 Thou would'st stand on thy Captain's side,
 With the white-robed hosts that follow the Lamb,
 The called, and chosen, and tried,
 Thou must take up thy cross, denying thyself,
 And follow the Crucified."

From "The Child's Book of Ballads."

There is nothing a young man desires more than to be thought manly. At school he is constantly told to be manly. And indeed true manliness is a grand thing. How often we hear our young men say that they want to be more independent. You may have said so yourself, reader; what harm if you have? Isn't it a fine thing, and a noble thing, and a right thing to be independent? Certainly it is; and I hope before the end of this chapter to have shewn you the difference between true and false independence, and true and false manliness.

Now let us deal with manliness first. What is it to be manly? To be manly means to be man-like—like a man. And He Who was our great pattern man, the only perfect pattern that ever lived, has shewn us in His own life what true manliness means. He knew well how fond young men in all ages would be of trying to be manly, and so He gave them His advice how to be so. Listen to it. He said, "Except ye be converted, and become *as little children*, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of Heaven." As little children! Young man, do you hear that? you must become as submissive, as obedient, as trustful and believing as a little child, if you would be manly.

And one of the greatest marks of true manliness is respect paid to women. A true man is ever courteous, and careful of his words and acts in the presence of a woman. He indulges in no thoughts of impurity or lust; but if they arise he drives them out. Like Joseph, when he is tempted to sin against his master's law of purity, he says to himself, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" I know no surer test of manliness than that. To be careful of woman's virtue, and to be mindful of God's commands. To help the weak and those who cannot help themselves, to think for those who will not think for themselves, is manliness indeed; and he who will do these things in the midst of a mocking crowd, shews that he is truly manly.

And next, let me say a word about independence. So many young men nowadays seem to think that independence consists in being rude to every one they meet. But if this is your idea of independence you may be sure you are on

the wrong road, and the sooner you get right the better. Real independence is, as I said, a fine and noble thing. An independent man can walk through the world with his head up, and give every one a civil answer, for he is as good as they. Oh! learn, reader, to be more truly independent. Learn to withdraw your dependence from man, and put it all on God. It is quite possible to be too dependent on man; it is quite impossible to be too dependent on God. Whether you wish it or not, you must depend on Him. He sends you life and health, food and raiment, all that you have, and all that you hope for. If you have saved enough money you can take a cottage, and live comfortably and independently in your old age; but if you have saved ever so much money, you can never lose your dependence on God.

Lastly, let me in all earnestness say a kindly word to young men. You are just beginning life; everything is before you; and perhaps you feel, as indeed you ought to feel, that as you grow in years you wish to grow in true manliness and independence. Very well; take a kindly word of advice from a stranger; it is this, always be civil to everybody. A little civility goes a long way, farther often than you think. Be civil to your superiors, and they will think the more highly of you for it. Be civil to your equals, and they will respect you for it. Be civil to your inferiors, and they will look up to you for it. It costs very little to give a civil answer, and we often have reason afterwards to regret an uncivil word, uncivilly spoken. I do believe that this is a most important thing in going through life. We so constantly hear whole masses of men classed together and unfairly judged because of the conduct of one of their number who may chance to have been met. I have so often heard railway porters, for instance, described as a most civil class, and no doubt they find their civility paying. Above all, reader, to look at it from a higher ground, civility is pleasing to God. Of Christ it was said, "When He was reviled, He reviled not again[#];" and if He set us this example of civility it was to shew us that we can be truly manly, and truly independent, and at the same time truly civil, and truly Christian in heart.

[#] 1 Pet. ii. 23.

HONESTY.

”’Tis but a flash that spans the sky,

A few short hours of joy to wreathe:
 Reader! this moment you and I
 Might cease to breathe!

Then, live more worthy of a soul
 Implanted by a Hand Divine!
 Press onward to a richer goal!
 While yet there's time!

He who can so secure his fame,
 Has nobly filled his narrow span,
 And future times shall write his name,
An honest man!
John Burbidge.

"Honesty is the best policy" is a saying we frequently hear. And we may have said, "Ah! that's all very well for thieves and such like, but it doesn't apply to me." Reader, you may be honest, strictly honest in the sight of man, but are you strictly honest in the sight of God? You may never have taken so much as a pin that did not rightly belong to you, but are you quite certain that you have never taken of the things of God?

Now let us just consider this for a few moments. To-day, we will say, is Sunday, God's holy day! To-day, of all days in the week, God has chosen to be set apart for His worship. He has given you time to be so employed. He has given you an open church to go to. He has given you health and power to go, and yet perhaps you reject all, and never go at all. Don't you see that you have taken of things of God, that you have taken His gift of health, and His gift of Sunday rest—things given that they might be spent in His service, and in worshipping Him in His church. And yet you accept these gifts, you take them as the most natural things in the world, and use the gifts of Almighty God for your own selfish purposes. And is this honest? Certainly not.

But we will take another and a commoner case, if you like. God has perhaps given you influence among your fellows, and as you go about among them, you hear some person spoken against in terms which you know are not true. And yet you allow the matter to pass, because you are afraid that if you spoke, you might lose your influence. You forget that even if you lost it for the time, God, for Whose sake you spoke, would surely give it back, if He thought it good for you; and besides this, you would have the consciousness of having done an honest deed, and of having done it in an honest fearless way.

And so you see that it is quite possible to be a strictly honest man in the sight of men, and a very dishonest man in the sight of God. And which, think you, is the best? Which will stand you in good stead at the day of judgment, your character as it has appeared to men, or as it appears to God? I think the latter. For in the Bible we are taught that the sight of God and that of men are two utterly different things, "for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Some time ago in Edinburgh two gentlemen were standing at the door of an hotel one very cold day, when a little boy with a poor thin blue face, his bare feet red with cold, and with nothing to cover him but a bundle of rags, came and said, "Please, sir, buy some matches." "No, don't want any," the gentleman said. "But they are only a penny a box," the poor little fellow pleaded. "Yes, but you see we don't want a box," the gentleman said again. "Then I'll give you two for a penny," the boy said at last. And so to get rid of him the gentleman who tells the story says, I bought a box of him. But then I found I had no change, and so I said I would buy a box tomorrow. "Oh do buy them to-night, if you please," the boy again pleaded, "I will run and get you the change, for I'm very hungry." So I gave him the shilling, and off he started. I waited for him, but no boy came. Then I thought I had lost my shilling; still there was that in the boy's face I trusted, and I did not like to think ill of him. Late in the evening I was told a boy wanted to see me. When he was brought in, I found it was a smaller brother of the boy that had got my shilling, but if possible still more ragged and poor and thin. He stood for a moment diving into his rags, and then said, "Are you the gentleman that bought the matches from Sandie?" "Yes." "Well, then, here's fourpence out of your shilling; Sandie can't come, he's very ill; a cart ran over him, and knocked him down, and he lost his cap and his matches and your sevenpence, and both his legs are broken, and the doctor says he'll die, and that's all." And then, putting the fourpence on the table, the poor child broke out into great sobs. So I fed the little man, and went with him to see Sandie. The two poor little things lived alone, father and mother both dead. Poor Sandie lay on a bundle of shavings; he knew me as soon as I came in, and having told me how his legs were broken, he added, as his eyes fell on his little brother, "Oh Reuby, little Reuby! I'm sure I'm dying, and who'll take care of you when I am gone?" Then I took his hand and said, I would always take care of Reuby. He understood me, and had just strength enough left to look up at me, as if to thank me; the light went out of his blue eyes. And in a moment—

"He lay within the light of God
Like a babe upon the breast,
Where the wicked cease from troubling

And the weary are at rest.”

That story was told in the noblest church of our great city. It was reported in the papers the following day. And I have no hesitation in saying that beautiful as are the words in which it is told, and wonderful as the effect may have been on the hearts of those who heard it, it was a sight far more wonderful than any we can imagine, when that story was told in the courts of the kingdom of heaven.

Reader, think of little Sandie when you are tempted to say you are honest, and ask yourself the question, ”Can I lay my hand upon my heart and say, My God, I am honest indeed, honest as that poor child was, honest before my neighbours, honest before Thee.”

BEARING THE CROSS.

”Take up thy cross,’ the Saviour said,
If thou would’st My disciple be;
Deny thyself, the world forsake,
And humbly follow after Me.

’Take up thy cross,’ nor heed the shame,
Nor let thy foolish pride rebel:
Thy Lord for thee the Cross endured,
To save thy soul from death and hell!

’Take up thy cross,’ and follow Christ—
Nor think till death to lay it down;
For only he who bears the cross,
May hope to wear the glorious crown!”

C. W. Everest.

Bearing the cross, or self-denial, as it is sometimes called, forms a necessary part of the daily life of every Christian man. Every one of us can give up something for the good of others. A rich man is called upon to give up one thing, a poor man another. But let none think that his riches or his poverty, as the case may be,

will excuse him from bearing the cross of Christ. And indeed in the heart of any true servant of God, there will be no wish to shirk the hard and disagreeable part of His service. His heart will be so filled with love and devotion to Christ, that he will gladly bear the cross, "despising the shame." It may be we are called upon to give up our time to go and see a sick neighbour, or it may be we are asked to do a neighbour a good turn by going on an errand for them when we wish to go elsewhere. But whatever it may be, it is certain that opportunities for practising self-denial occur in the lives of us all. "If any man will come after Me"—Christ has told us—"let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me[#]." There is the command, now hear the promise made to such as fulfil the command,— "and where I am, there shall also My servant be[#]."

[#] S. Matt. xvi. 24.

[#] S. John xii. 26.

Self-denial may be in very simplest matters, and yet be quite as acceptable to Christ as would be the most costly gifts bestowed by the rich upon His service. You remember when Jesus was on earth, how one day He was sitting over against the Treasury, and as He sat there He kept taking notice of all the pieces of money that were cast into the Treasury. Now there happened to come by some very rich people, and they put large sums into the box, and passed on their way. And again others came, and they too being rich, "cast in much." But after awhile there came by one who is described as "a certain poor widow;" and "she cast in all she had, even all her living." How much it cost her to give that one farthing Jesus Christ knew well. Instead of keeping it to spend upon her own needs, she brought it up to the temple Treasury and gave it back to God. And that is just what you must do. I do not say it is necessary, or even right, that people should in these days give everything they possess to God. In one sense indeed we ought to give up *all we have* to the service of Christ; I mean by this that we ought at all times to be ready to part with things earthly, if they interfere with the cross we are called upon to bear. And I do say that we ought to deny ourselves some little comfort or pleasure, and make a rule of giving the money that we should thus have spent upon ourselves to the service of Almighty God.

It is told of a great and good man who lived many years ago at Cambridge, that on one occasion, being disheartened by the wickedness of many of those with whom he came in daily contact, he retired to his rooms, and taking his Bible he asked God to give him such help from its pages as would serve him in his trouble. He opened the Bible at the twenty-seventh chapter of S. Matthew's

gospel, and his eye quickly fell on the thirty-second verse, "And as they went out they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear His Cross." Charles Simeon, for it was he, rose from his knees comforted and strengthened. The likeness between his own name of Simeon and the Cyrenian's name of Simon, struck him forcibly; and he came to the conclusion that it was the will of his Father in heaven that he should bear the cross under which he was labouring.

Reader, yours, like his, may be the cross of ridicule, of your friend's laughter at the things of God; and a bitter cross it is to bear! But try and look upon it as a cross laid upon you by your Saviour, a cross which He has borne before you up that bitter hillside of Calvary. Remember it is not merely that you are called upon to bear the cross, but, like Simon of Cyrene, that you should "bear it *after* Jesus." Therefore ask Him to give you strength to take up your cross daily, cheerfully and lovingly, and bear it after Him. Then self-denial will be less hard for you to practise than it is now. I do not say it will be pleasant, for that it can never be, but the sting of it will be taken away; indeed for the Christian, it long ago was taken away and laid on Him Who bore the burden of our sins on Calvary. So let yours be a life of obedience here, a living for others, a pleasing of others, not of yourself; "For even Christ pleased not Himself[*#*]," but "was made sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him[*#*]."

[*#*] Rom. xv. 3.

[*#*] 2 Cor. v. 21.

HUMILITY.

"Fain would I my Lord pursue,
 Be all my Saviour taught;
 Do as Jesus bids me do,
 And think as Jesus thought:
 But 'tis Thou must change the heart,
 The perfect gift must come from Thee:
 Meek Redeemer, now impart
 Thine own humility.

Let Thy Cross my will control,
 Conform me to my Guide;
 In Thine Image mould my soul,
 And crucify my pride;
 Give me, Lord, a broken heart,
 A heart that always looks to Thee:
 Meek Redeemer, now impart
 Thine own humility.”
Toplady.

Reader, do you know what humility is? It is quite possible to be very proud indeed, and yet seem quite humble. Indeed, humility is often made the cloak of pride. And yet nothing can be more different than these two. Pride enters so much into the hearts, even of the very best of us, that there is but small place left for humility. We often hear it said of a person, "Oh! he feels *proper pride* about such and such a matter." But is there any such thing as *proper pride*? I can't find it in the Bible. I do find, indeed, written there a great deal about pride and proud people. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble[#]," for instance. I turn again to my Church's Prayer Book, and I find nothing there about *proper pride*; but I read there that the Church teaches her children to ask God to deliver, or save, them "from all pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy." I find that in the prayer, to be used in time of war, we ask God to abate our enemies' pride. But neither here, nor anywhere else, can I find *any sort* of pride commended to Christians. And so I have come to think that we have got hold of the wrong word, and that the word we ought to use is *delight*. It is quite right that a man should be delighted with his children, or his garden, or his goods. It is quite wrong that he should be proud of them.

[#] S. James iv. 6.

Now humility is just the very opposite to all this. Pride makes a man put forward his own opinions, and hold to them, good or bad. It makes him think all his possessions better than those of other people. Humility, on the other hand, makes a man ever ready to listen to the opinions of others, and to take advice. And humility teaches him that the best possessions earth can give, are but poor compared to those of Heaven. Just as in a cornfield the lightest ears of corn stand up straight and attract attention, while those which carry most grain hang

down and are kept concealed by their weight, behind the others; so, too, is it with humble-minded men. They shrink back from the gaze of men, behind their comrades; and because they are quiet, and seldom speak much, men think but little of them.

I have somewhere read a story of Benjamin Franklin, who once went to call at a friend's house. On his leaving, his friend told him he would shew him a shorter way out. They passed down a narrow passage, talking to each other, when Franklin's friend suddenly cried out, "Stoop, stoop." "I did not know," says Franklin, "what he meant, until I felt my head hit against the beam." His friend, seeing what had happened, said, "You are young, and have to go through the world. Stoop as you go through it, and you will miss many hard knocks."

Reader, that was good advice. It is as suitable to you as to Franklin. Will you not take it? Never be ashamed of doing anything that humility calls upon you to do, and "you will avoid many hard knocks." Try and look upon all work, however distasteful and unpleasant, as work for God. If Jesus Christ had been proud, do you think He would have borne all the taunts of those thirty bitter years? If S. Paul had been a proud man, do you think he could ever have written down that glorious list of troubles and hardships, suffered by land and by water, in the eleventh chapter of 2nd Corinthians? How often we hear it said of a man, "He's a nice man, he's got *no pride about him*." And if pride in others doesn't please you, do you think if you shew pride it will be likely to please God? It was He who gave you that hatred of pride in others; but He gave it that you might correct it in yourself.

And the day will come when pride will be destroyed. It is one of the greatest sins. Other great sins are covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, sloth. And the virtues which are contrary to these are humility, liberality, chastity, gentleness, temperance, patience, diligence. Ask yourself to-night before you lie down to rest this question, "How many of these last virtues can I say I am practising? Am I humble? Do I give, as I am able, of my time, or my money, or my sympathy to help any of my neighbours? Am I thoroughly pure in thought, word, and deed? Am I gentle and kind to all around me? Am I moderate in eating and drinking, and temperate in my habits of life? Am I patient under suffering, sorrow, or misfortune? Do I do my best to serve God and man, working hard in that position of life to which Almighty God has called me?"

Reader, if you can say *yes!* to all those questions when your conscience asks them, you need not have much fear of God's reckoning day. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Trusting in Jesus for complete salvation, living in love and charity with your neighbours, you will pass the waves of this troublesome world, and land upon the everlasting shore, out of reach of the ocean waves. And down from the gates of the heavenly city will come to meet you, Jesus

Christ our Lord, with the words which He has graciously promised to speak to all that humbly follow after Him here, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord[#]."

[#] S. Matt. xxv. 21.

MARTYRDOM.

"Not by the martyr's death alone
The saint his crown in heaven has won;
There is a triumph robe on high
For bloodless fields of victory.

What though he was not called to feel
The cross of flame, or torturing wheel:
Yet daily to the world he died,
His flesh, through grace, he crucified."

John Keble.

What is martyrdom? We sing every Sunday morning in Church the words, "the noble army of martyrs praise Thee;" we bless God every Christmastide for his martyr S. Stephen, and yet I suppose there are many people who regularly attend Church who have no idea of what a martyr is. Now I will tell you. A martyr is a witness! Any man, woman, or child, (for there have been children martyrs,) who bears witness to the truth, and suffers for it, is a martyr. If you or I, reader, bear ridicule; if our friends laugh at us for going to Church, or for staying for Holy Communion, then we are martyrs. The man who lives in an ungodly society, and by his life and example bears witness to the truth of Jesus, and suffers for so doing, he is a martyr. As I write these words I can recall a vast number of martyrs' names; for the martyrs, like the saints, are of every age and of every Church. Just as every cornfield has its poppies; just as every poor man's garden has its little plot set apart for flowers, so every Church has its martyrs. I can recall the name of Xavier, the great Indian missionary, dying alone upon the seashore, with the cruel blasts of a Chinese winter freezing his very bones. Or I think of Bishop

Patteson, already mentioned in these pages, dying by the clubs of the natives, far off amid the Southern seas. I could tell you the now well-known story of David Livingstone, of his wonderful power over the African mind, of his noble conflict with slavery, and his patient death in his lonely hut at Ulala. But I will tell you one story of martyrdom which happened quite lately, nearer home than any of these, a story of how a boy, scarcely ten years old, gained the martyr's crown. About a year ago, a boat with seven young boys went out on the coast of Scotland. The boys rowed out from the shore some little way, until suddenly seeing something in the sea, they all rushed together to the side of the boat to look over into the water. The boat was upset, and they all went over into the sea. One boy alone could swim, and, one after another, that boy saved five of his companions; in trying to save the sixth, he himself became exhausted, and sank to rise no more. That night there was joy, the joy of recovery, in five happy homes; and I dare say the parents, in their joy at getting their boys safe back, hardly gave a thought to the brave little swimmer who had given his life for theirs. But I can imagine that his Saviour gave him a warm welcome in Paradise that night, and in return for his bravery, gave him the martyr's crown. For that child was a martyr! God had given him a brave spirit, and on a sudden He called upon him to shew it, and he bore witness for Christ.

Reader, your witness and mine may be very different to that. But it may nevertheless be as truly called martyrdom. If we are ready to confess Christ before men, He will not forget our names before His Father's throne. But if we are cowardly here below, and deny Him now, He will certainly not recognise us in His Father's kingdom.

Even little children can be martyrs. As the hymn says:—

”When deep within our swelling hearts
 The thoughts of pride and anger rise,
 When bitter words are on our tongues,
 And tears of passion in our eyes;
 Then we may stay the angry blow,
 Then we may check the hasty word,
 Give gentle answers back again
 And fight a battle for our Lord.”

Under the Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 304) a great number of children suffered martyrdom. They were brought up and condemned to die, not for any sin they had committed, but because their parents had taught them to worship God.

A child called Hilarion was one of those who suffered. He was brought

up before the Roman Consul, (a person with somewhat similar power to our magistrates,) and the Consul threatened to have him flogged; but the child only laughed at him. "I will cut off your nose and your ears," said the governor; but Hilarion answered, "I am a Christian still." And so he was led away to prison and to death.

Reader, do not the accounts of these brave and noble lives and glorious deaths make our own lives seem poor and selfish and wretched? Do they not make us feel how very much grander and nobler these kind of lives were than anything we can shew nowadays? I remember seeing a book once, called, "Is life worth living?" I never looked further than the title-page, but the title struck me. Look round at your neighbours, look at our country villages, look at the overflowing public-house, and at the empty church, and then ask yourself, "Is life worth living?" And the answer must be, No! But look once more at your own life, look at those good people who are labouring among Christ's poor in our crowded cities, look at the holy lives of many of our clergy, and then ask again, "Is life worth living?" and the answer must be, Yes!

You may not be able to live among the poor in our large towns, it may not be your calling to be a minister of Christ, but still it is quite possible to be a martyr, to bear witness for Christ in the station in which He has placed you. The clerk at his desk, the mechanic in his workshop, the labourer in the field, the sailor in his ship, the servant in his situation, all can shew that they are martyrs. The greatest battles are not those fought on the battle-fields of earth, but in the secret chambers of the human heart. There is many a brave man who will face a horde of savage foes on the field of battle and die bravely like a soldier, but who dare not and will not face his own evil heart; and there is many a poor creature, with a suffering body and a feeble mind, who cannot bear a harsh voice or an unkind word, and yet who has gained the greatest possible victory, the victory over self.

REPENTANCE.

"There was a soul one eve autumnal sailing
 Beyond the earth's dark bars,
 Towards the land of sunsets never paling,
 Towards Heaven's sea of stars.

And as that soul went onward, sweetly speeding
 Unto its home and Light,
 Repentance made it sorrowful exceeding,
 Faith made it wondrous bright.”
Mrs. Alexander.

What is repentance? The word which in our New Testaments is so often translated "Repentance," means "a change of heart." Yes, that is what repentance really is, and not merely a desire to serve God; not an anxious longing to lead a new life, but actually leading that new life, and treading new ways by the help of God's Holy Spirit. Many people believe and teach the doctrine of instantaneous conversion, as it is called. And by this is meant that the heart of man is changed in a moment from a state of sin to a state of holiness; that all the old desires pass suddenly away, and new affections take their place. Thus some men will tell you that they can name the day and hour of their conversion, and that whatever they may do in the future, they will eventually be found in Christ. We do not by any means deny that there are such things as instantaneous conversions; but we say that they are few, and that what seem to be such are often neither lasting nor real. True repentance is no easy road to tread. Very often it takes a man his whole lifetime, and even then his repentance may not be complete.

I have spoken of what repentance is not, now let me say a few words as to what true repentance is. First, then, you will feel, if you have truly repented of your sins, a true desire to give up the whole of your heart to Christ. I cannot dwell too strongly on the necessity of giving up *the whole* heart. Christ will not take less. He never will reign there, while Satan holds a part of it; He will have *all*, or none. In your own strength you cannot do this; the world, the flesh, and the devil will try hard to prevent you. Of himself the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, "neither can ye do good which are accustomed to do evil." But if your repentance is real, the desire to give the whole heart to Christ will be so strong as to shut out all other claims. Another sign of true repentance will be a distrust of self. There will be an increasing desire for guidance other than your own, the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Need I add that this guidance, without which it is impossible to go right, is never kept back from those who ask it of God in prayer, for His dear Son's sake.

One more sign of a real repentance is perseverance in the face of failure and backsliding. If your repentance is real, the new life will seem so far better to you than the old, that you will persevere in it, in spite of failure. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God[*#*]." And no sinner, who has once repented of his sin, and then is frightened

at his failures, or discouraged by his difficulties, can call his repentance real.

[#] S. Luke ix. 62.

And the last sign of true repentance that I shall give you is trust in God's love for Christ's sake. Your perseverance will depend entirely on your faith or trust in God. In common life we know that as we put a greater distance between ourselves and any object at which we may be looking, it becomes less and less distinct; whereas, the nearer the eye approaches any object, the more distinct that object becomes. So is it with man in his relation to God. The further he wanders from God by sin, and the greater distance he puts between himself and his Maker in this way, the less he knows about Him, and the less he is able to trust Him. But the nearer man comes to God in true repentance, the more he learns of that great Being, and the more he learns to trust God's love to him for Christ's sake.

Reader, may you and I learn such true repentance as this, and having learnt it, may we "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." May we cultivate a sense of our own nothingness, and of God's greatness; and may we put a generous trust in our good Lord, Who has done so much for us. "May we never indulge unworthy thoughts, measuring our Lord's tender mercies by ours; but let us in every trial and temptation, nay, even in the hour of surprise or sudden fall, yet cling the closer to Him, Who is the true Refuge of sinners, and Who is ever willing to receive those who in sincerity return to Him."

FAITH.

"Faith is the Spirit's sweet control,
 From which assurance springs;
 Faith is the pencil of the soul,
 That pictures Heavenly things.

Faith is the lamp that burns to guide
 Our bark when tempest-driven;
 Faith is the key that opens wide

The distant gates of Heaven.”
John Burbidge.

I spoke in the last chapter of faith being one of the signs of true repentance. Repentance, as I then showed, was that grace whereby we forsake sin; faith, on the other hand, is the grace whereby we believe and trust in the promises of God, made to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now it is not always an easy matter to exercise faith in God. Many people believe in God’s judgments, and when these are in mercy sent upon them, they are quite ready, like Ahab of old, to humble themselves before their offended Master. But take away the punishment, stay the uplifted rod, and let them receive instead of judgments, mercies, and then where is their faith? It is no easy thing to believe in God! to believe, that is, that prosperity and adversity are alike gifts of the same Father. To believe Him as Abraham believed Him, whose faith ”was counted unto him for righteousness.” To believe Him as Job did, so that not even the loss of worldly goods, or terrible pain inflicted on the body, or even the advice of her he trusted and loved more than all other on earth, could cause him to blaspheme. To have such faith in Christ as the Apostles had, who ”left all and followed” Him; nay, more, such faith that one of their number could exclaim, ”I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, ... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith[#].”

[#] Phil. iii. 8.

Yes, reader, that is the kind of faith you and I shall need when sorrow and troubles come upon us; that is the only kind of faith which can carry a man peacefully through life, and bear him up in death, till his eyes rest upon the everlasting city.

But there are many people who have faith, but only a very little. Their faith is like S. Peter’s. It is strong enough to make them desire to be with Jesus, but not strong enough to carry them to Him. Just as St. Peter tried to walk over the dark waters of the sea of Galilee to go to his Lord, so these try, and often try hard, to walk over the waters of sin to go to Christ. But when temptations arise, or doubts arise, they begin to sink, as it were, that is to say, their faith begins to fail, and they cease to please God. St. Peter’s fault was not that he had no faith, but that he had *too little*. That he had some, who can doubt, for if he had not,

he surely would never have left the ship, and his companions, to walk upon the water to Christ. And so it is with us. Many of us have God's great gift of faith: sufficient faith to leave the world, and start to go to Christ, but we find that our failures are frequent, that when we would do good, evil is present with us, and so, like St. Peter, we begin to sink, it may be just as we are nearing Christ. What we want, then, is more faith, and we must ask God for this, for He alone can give it.

But what shall I say of those who have no faith at all; those who never start on the journey whose end is Christ? Are they not, think you, in a dangerous state? True, they may be living happily enough *now*, but the end must come one day, and *what an end that will be!* Think of that, reader. Think if it be not better to suffer the Master's rebuke for having *little faith*, than to receive no rebuke at all, because you have *no faith*. Once more, faith is necessary to those who would live godly lives, because there are certain mysteries in religion which are left to faith, and which we must accept as facts, though we cannot understand them. For instance, we are told that there are three Persons in the Blessed Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and yet though there are three distinct Persons, there is but one God. We cannot understand that, but we must believe that it is so. Just as in nature there are many things we cannot understand, but which we accept as true; and if we do so in matters relating to man, are we not equally bound to do so in such as bear reference to God? It is such a common thing nowadays to hear silly people, who wish to be thought clever, say, "I won't believe anything I cannot understand!" But there are many things which these very people accept as true, but which they in no way understand. For instance, I suppose they all believe that the grass which is eaten by geese, by cows, or sheep, will by a process of digestion turn to feathers on the geese, to hair on the cows, and to wool on the sheep. But do they understand how this happens? No, they do not; but though they cannot understand it, they nevertheless believe it.

And, reader, there are many who cannot understand many things in God's world of nature, and they do not want to, for they accept them as matters of faith. But if there is anything in religion they cannot understand, they must needs disbelieve it at once, or else be guilty of seeking to pry into "the deep things of God."

Learn, then, this one lesson from these few words on faith; namely, that there are things which Almighty God has purposely hidden from the sons of men, both in the Church and in the world; many things of which it is written, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter[#]."

[#] S. John xiii. 7.

THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE.

”Brief life is here our portion;
 Brief sorrow, short-lived care:
 The life that knows no ending,
 The tearless life, is *there*.
 The morning shall awaken,
 The shadows shall decay,
 And each true-hearted servant
 Shall shine as doth the day.”

S. Bernard.

The ancients had a saying, ”Whom the gods love, die young.” By which, I suppose, they meant that the best men, and those whose lives were of the greatest promise, died in early youth. Whether this is true or not, I cannot pretend to say. Certain it is that many die in early youth, long before we have had a chance of seeing what they were likely to turn out. And indeed the shortness of life is evident to us all. From the child who dies in infancy, to the old man whose grey hairs are brought down to the grave in sorrow, all have experience of the shortness of life.

And what is life? What does the Bible say of it? ”It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away[#].” ”Vanisheth away;” yes, reader, just like the steam which issues from boiling water; just like the mists which cling for a while to the hillsides, before they melt into nothingness, so is life. We see it for awhile, a little while, and then like a morning mist, life vanishes away.

[#] S. James iv. 14.

Life has often been compared to the sea. At times the sea is ruffled by the winds which pass over its surface; and then again, the wind drops, and the sea is calm and still again. And so is it with life. The winds of passion or of discontent pass

over it, and angry temper ruffles the calm of life, and then by degrees the peace of God comes down upon us, and life is once more happy. But true happiness, in life or in death, is only to be found in Jesus. He is the only sure haven of rest, the only hiding-place from the storm, and in Him alone can we find rest until we pass the waves of this troublesome world.

Some years ago a young man went out, full of hope and energy, to take charge of a mission which we had planted among the Southern seas. He could not tell when he left our shores whether his life was to be long or short, whether it would be rough or smooth; but he went forth trusting in his God, and he went forth to die. He reached his diocese in safety, and for some years Bishop Patteson, for it was he, preached the gospel, and baptised, and planted missions among those wild people, for whom he had given up his English home. But at length one day the bishop went to an island where the people did not know him, and where at the time they happened to be angry with white men. And so when the good bishop came ashore, they pressed round him, and he soon saw that all was not right. At length one, bolder than the rest, drew near and knocked the bishop down with his club, and then the others closed round him, and so he died. "And they put the young martyr bishop in an open boat," says one, "to float away across the bright blue water, with his hands crossed as if in prayer, and a palm branch on his breast."

That life was not a long one, but who will dare to tell us that it was not a useful life, and a glorious death. It may not be given to you to win the martyr's crown, or to die for Jesus Christ. But it is given to you to live for Christ; and remember there is a living death, a killing of self, which you may do, a death of which St. Paul speaks, when he says, "I die daily[#]."

[#] 1 Cor. xv. 31.

For, after all, what think you was life given to us for? Was it to amuse ourselves, or to enjoy ourselves in? Was it not rather to do good to others, and to work for Jesus Christ? Surely the best lives, and the noblest lives, and the happiest lives are those spent in the service of others. And the Master has told us that He will reward such: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me[#]." And who are Christ's brethren? In every cottage home, in the lonely hut, wherever man is found, whether he be rich or poor, king or beggar, nay the worst specimens of humanity, the murderer and the drunkard, these all are the brethren of Jesus. It is for these He has bid us work, and toil, and pray. It is for these He has commanded us to live and, if need be, to

die.

[#] S. Matt xxv. 40.

And no life is too short for this kind of work. The youngest child can do something in the Master's vineyard. It may be only given us to speak a kind word to a companion. But very often a kind word, spoken in the nick of time, has saved a soul from condemnation. Live your life here, then, as Jesus lived His, Who went about doing good; Who sat at meat with the Pharisee and the sinner alike; and Who even allowed a sinful woman to approach Him, and did not turn her away.

THE DEATH OF FRIENDS.

"Whene'er the Christian's eyelid droops and closes
 In nature's parting strife,
 A friendly angel stands where he reposes,
 To wake him up to life.

The mourners throng the way, and from the steeple
 The funeral bell tolls slow;
 But in the golden streets the holy people
 Are passing to and fro;

And saying as they meet, 'Rejoice! another,
 Long waited for, is come;'
 The Saviour's heart is glad, a younger brother
 Hath reached the Father's home!"

J. D. Burns.

There is nothing so sad as parting. There comes over the heart such a feeling of utter loneliness that we know not where to turn for relief. It may be the mother who has lost her darling child, and sits counting the weary hours, and missing its baby prattle. It may be the wife of the sailor who sits alone in her cottage

with the cruel letter in her lap, which tells of how her husband sank, and died. Or it may be the severing of heart and heart; the parting of two friends who have lived together, and loved each other with a friendship stronger than death. But in whatever way it comes, it is ever the same; the same bitter feeling of loneliness, casting its shadow over the life.

And there is but one way that I know of in which we can get rid of this feeling of loneliness; only one Person to Whom we can apply for relief with any certainty of success. The Man of sorrows, Who could weep tears of human sorrow at the grave of Lazarus, and speak words of sympathy to that troubled multitude who stood around his grave; He alone can sympathise with us in our bereavement, and comfort us in the death of our friends.

The Bible is full of beautiful passages on this important subject. Who, for instance, can read those beautiful words in the seventh chapter of the Revelation, and not receive comfort? "I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Reader, if any of your relations or friends have gone before you to Paradise, if they have died in God's holy faith and fear, and if, after reading such beautiful words concerning their heavenly state as those above quoted, you still wish them back on earth, then your heart must indeed be of the earth, earthy. Oh, think for one moment of the troubles and trials of this present life, and then turn your thoughts to the state of the blessed dead. No more sickness or sorrow for them; no more care, no more trial; no more sleepless nights or anxious days, for they are as the angels of God. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may *rest from their labours*[#]."

[#] Rev. xiv. 13.

There are times in the life of every man, when God comes specially near to him;

when He says as it were to the soul of man, "Look unto Me, I am thy salvation[#]." One of such times is when we are standing by the death-bed of our loved ones. It may be we have given them the love which rightly belonged to God, and so He has seen fit to take them. Or it may be that we have loved them too little, and lightly valued them here, and so to teach us the value of friends, God has taken them to live with Him above. It may seem to you and to me a hard method of dealing with the human soul, but remember that the dealings of Almighty God are clothed with mystery, "and His ways past finding out[#]."

[#] Ps. xxxv. 3.

[#] Rom. xi. 33.

Lastly, there is one thought more, which may give comfort to those who are mourning the loss of their dear ones. The day will come when we shall meet them again, on "the far eternal shore." But if we would meet them there we must live as they lived; we must serve Christ as they served Him; and love God as they loved Him. And then He will bring us together again on the ever-lasting morning, "when the day breaks and the shadows flee away[#]." "When we are to leave this present state," says Alford, "is a matter hidden from our eyes, and not dependent on ourselves; but how we will leave it, whether as the Lord's blessed ones, or with no part in Him, this is left for ourselves to determine. There is set before us life and death. May we choose life, that it may be well with us, and that we may wake from the bed of death to find ourselves for ever with the Lord."

[#] Cant. ii. 17.

"Therefore let us be of good cheer concerning them that have fallen asleep in Jesus; and let us be of good cheer concerning ourselves. Good as it is to obey and serve God here, it has been far better for them to depart, and to be with Christ, and it will be far better for us, if we hold fast our faith and our confidence in Him

firm unto the end.”

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

”There is no death! the stars go down,
To rise upon some fairer shore;
And bright in Heaven’s jewelled crown,
They shine for evermore.

There is no death! an angel form
Walks o’er the earth with silent tread,
And bears our best loved things away,
And then we call them dead.”

Lord Lytton.

I have spoken in the earlier part of this book on the general subject of death; I now want to add a few words on that which so many, even of the best of us, feel, the fear of death.

I suppose there have been times in the lives even of the best and bravest men when this fear rose up before them. Times when the dark valley looked darker than usual, and life seemed sweeter than it really was. It is but human to fear what we can in no way understand, and certainly none of us can understand death. His is a message which comes to all alike; to rich and to poor, to young and to old; the soldier on the battle-field, who lays down his life for his country; the sailor, who sinks into a watery grave, and whom the dark wave covers; the missionary, who dies for his Master’s sake; to these and many more the angel of death comes, and, whether they are ready or no, they have to yield to his bidding. But of this we may be sure, that God never takes any one away from this world until his work is done. We all of us have some special work to do, either good or evil, and until that work is done we shall be kept from danger and from death. The right way then to look upon death is as the gate that leads us to a better world, the pathway leading to Christ. And the prayer of our heart should be this—

”Let me be with Thee where Thou art,

Where spotless saints Thy Name adore;
 Then only will this sinful heart
 Be evil and defiled no more.

Let me be with Thee where Thou art,
 Where none can die, where none remove;
 Where neither life nor death can part
 Me from Thy Presence and Thy Love.”

And if that is the feeling that you have with regard to the life to come, death can have no terrors for you. “The sting of death is *sin*,” but Jesus died long ago to wash your sins away. If then you are free from sin, that is from wilful sin, you will have but little fear of death. It is Satan who gives us this fear; it is Christ who takes the fear away.

But in order not to fear death, we must be prepared for it. If a man *really* loves God he is prepared to die anywhere and at any moment, and so he does not fear death. “Unto the godly,” says David, “there ariseth up a light in the darkness.” And so we may say now that to the Christian there ariseth up a light greater and brighter than any David knew of in the darkness of death, even that light which came “to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of His people Israel.”

I came across a story the other day of a courtier who had passed his life in the service of his prince. He had fallen dangerously ill, and now lay dying. The prince went to see his faithful servant, and was touched with the sad spectacle of suffering. “Is there anything,” he asked, “that I can do for you? Ask it, and you shall not be refused.” “Prince,” said the dying man, “give me a quarter of an hour of life.” “Alas,” said the prince, “what you have asked is not in my power to give; ask something else if you wish me to help you.” And the story runs that the dying man cried out in the agony of his soul, “I have served you for fifty years, and you cannot give me one quarter of an hour of life! Ah! if I had served the Lord thus faithfully, he would have given me not a quarter of an hour of life, but an eternity of happiness.” Very soon after he died. Happy for him if he himself profited by the lesson which he gave to others on the nothingness of human life, and the need of working out one’s own salvation.

Reader, the day perhaps will come when you too will wish to ask for a quarter of an hour’s life. It may be you will rise to-morrow morning, and God’s sun will be shining bright, and everything will look peaceful and happy as you leave home, but the angel of death may have started on his errand; and instead of your walking in, gaily whistling, in the evening when your work is over, there may come down the village a mournful company bearing a wounded man upon a hurdle. That man may be yourself; and as you reach your own door the films

of death may be gathering over your eyes, and the one request you would like to make would be, "Oh! that I might have but a quarter of an hour to make my peace with God." It has been the prayer, ere now, of many a one more hardened in sin than yourself. The richest men have felt the longing, and they would have given half of all their hard-earned gold to get that quarter of an hour. The poorest men have felt it too; and if they could begin life again they felt that they would live very differently, and Christ and not Satan should be Master of their hearts.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God[#]." It is a fearful thing to live a life of wickedness, and to die with unforgiven sin upon the soul. But the remedy is in your own hands. The Lord Jesus waits to be gracious; He loves you, He toils for you, He weeps for you, as He wept for Jerusalem of old, and all He asks of you is to give Him your heart now, and then there will be no such thing as fear in death; for the perfect love wherewith He will teach you to love Him, will cast out all fear and all terror, and in your case there will be no pain in death, but the spirit will pass away from earth to meet Him at last on the shore of heaven.

[#] Heb. x. 31.

SORROW AND SUFFERING.

"'Nobody knows but Jesus!
Is it not better so,
That no one else but Jesus,
My own dear Lord, should know?"

When the sorrow is a secret
Between my Lord and me,
I learn the fuller measure
Of His quick sympathy."
F. R. Havergal.

"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward[#]" is a very true saying. And I suppose there will be few people, if any, of those who read this book, who will

not know something about sorrow. Yes, we all feel sorrow, more or less. Some people feel it more acutely than others. To some it is a real burthen. From the little child who cries over its broken toy to the old man who weeps over his lost wealth, all are partakers of sorrow.

[#] Job v. 7.

Suffering, again, might be "sorrow's own sister," so closely are the two connected here below. For instance, God sends a great and crushing sorrow; say, for instance, the death of a dear friend, or the sickness of one we love; and to us the news of this sorrow brings intense pain, deep suffering. And you may ask, why is this suffering necessary? You tell us it is sent by God, and that all He sends is for our good, what is the need of suffering? I will tell you. A friend of mine who had been in Eastern lands, told me he once saw a shepherd who wanted his flock to cross a stream. The shepherd went into the water himself and called them, but no, they would not follow him into the water. What did he do? Why, he went in among the flock, and lifting a little lamb under each arm, plunged right into the stream, and crossed it without even looking back. When he lifted the lambs, my friend said, the old sheep looked up into his face, and began to bleat for them; but when he plunged into the water, the dams plunged in after him, and then the whole flock followed. When they reached the other side he put down the lambs, and they were quickly joined by their mothers, and there was a happy meeting. My friend told me, too, that he noticed that the pastures on the other side of the stream were much better, and the fields greener, and on this account the shepherd was leading them across. And in like manner does the good Shepherd, even Jesus Christ, having found his oft-repeated call to men to look up to heaven vain, so also does He often take from His flock a little lamb, and crossing with it the stream of death, places it down amid the green pastures and still waters of Paradise. And by this means he often causes the parents to look up to the same place, for right well He knows the truth of His own words, that "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.[#]"

[#] Matt. vi. 21.

And so, perhaps, you begin to see that suffering used by Almighty God has its uses. It very often is the means, in cases where other means have failed, of

weaning a soul away from earth, and fixing its hopes on the things of heaven. It very often is the first warning given to the soul of man, that here has he no continuing city, but must seek one to come. Reader, it may be as you have walked along life's troubled way, you have as yet had but little taste of suffering. But it will come one day. It comes to us all; and very often, the best men, and the holiest men are the greatest sufferers, under the chastening hand of God. You remember the case of Job in the Bible, what a sufferer he was! And yet Job was a good man; for when the temptation came to him to curse God and die, he recognised it as the voice of Satan, even though the words were spoken by the one nearest to him on earth.

The great thing for us all to recognise in the day of suffering and the time of sorrow alike, is the good hand of our God upon us. To understand that there is such a thing as being "perfect through suffering," and that we, even as the Master Himself did, may learn obedience by the things which we suffer. That a smooth existence without sorrow and without suffering may be a life of mental anguish, while a life of sorrow and suffering may be a life of joy, of hope, and of triumph, are doubtless lessons hard to learn; but for all that we must needs learn them. And if we cannot learn this lesson from the lives of those around us, it may be God's good pleasure to teach it in our own.

DEATH.

"There is a Reaper whose name is Death,
 And with his sickle keen,
 He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
 And the flowers that grow between."
Longfellow.

So solemn a subject is that of death, and so near have many of us been brought to it, either in our own homes or in those of others, that we cannot but approach it with a feeling of awe. To the worldly man death can never be a pleasant prospect. At best it means to him the cessation of all hope and of all action. All worldly pleasure is then at an end, and for him there remains no such rest as is the hope and stay of the people of God.

Another class there is that looks upon death in another way. These do not

really enjoy life here below, still less do they enjoy any hope of life to come. For such persons death is but a leap in the dark; a bridge across the dark valley from the mists of earth into a far more misty future; a passage from the darkness here into the deeper and blacker darkness beyond.

But how different all this is in the case of the Christian man. He has been preparing, all his life through, for the world to come. His conversation—his "citizenship—is in Heaven[#]," and in death he recognises the method by which his dear Lord calls him home. There is no sting, no agony, in the Christian's death; Jesus, his Saviour, took that away long ago. There have been death-beds, on which men lay with bodies racked with aching pains, or horribly mutilated, and yet the look on their faces was perfectly happy. The body indeed was suffering agony, but the mind was feasting on visions of a far-off land. and a kindly Saviour ready to receive the redeemed one home. Oh, yes, there is something grand and striking about the Christian's death. The invisible spirits of God ascending and descending, as of old they did to the sleeping Jacob at Bethel, keep bringing stores of comfort to his soul.

[#] Phil. iii. 20.

Among the many grand and noble deaths which history records, I know of none grander in its simplicity or more precious in its lessons, than that of Commodore Goodenough in our own day. He had gone ashore with a boat's crew, on one of the South Sea Islands; when he was surrounded, and attacked by the natives, who were exasperated at the cursed man-stealing trade which has brought discredit on the English name. The Commodore was wounded by an arrow, which chanced to be poisoned; but this he did not know. Nor was it till his ship was nearing Adelaide, that he discovered that his wound was mortal. And then beneath the open sky, far from his English home, on the deck of his vessel in which he had sailed over those summer seas, he called his men around him; and as the rough seamen, one after another, gathered quickly round their dying chief, he looked upon them, with the films of death already settling on his glazing eyes, and said, "My men, I want you to serve God." These were the last words he ever spoke to them, and then his spirit passed away to join the vast multitude before the throne of that God he had loved and served so well.

The death of a Christian is indeed precious from the lessons we learn from it. But in order to die a Christian's death, remember you must live a Christian's life, and then you may say with Balaam—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his[#]."

[#] Num. xxiii. 10.

LAST WORDS.

”On what has now been sown
 Thy blessing, Lord, bestow;
 The power is Thine alone
 To make it spring and grow.”
Newton.

We have now reached the last chapter of these readings, and the last words must be spoken.

We have thought together upon life and death; upon humility and self-denial, those ”two graces peculiarly Christian.” I have spoken of our duties to our parents and to our children respectively; of work of various kinds on earth, and of rest in our Father’s kingdom. And now, reader, that it is almost time for us to part, let us ”gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost[#].”

[#] S. John vi. 12.

Have you learnt anything, do you think, that you didn’t know before, from the words of this book? Are you any nearer to your Father’s house than you were when first you opened it? Has the Bible seemed in any degree more precious to you, or has it in any way increased your regard for the things of the Spirit, and the peace that passeth understanding? If these, or any of them, have been attained, I have gained my object. If this book has in any way put before you the old, old story in a new light, then my purpose has been accomplished, my work is done. But if there is any one who rises from reading this book, feeling still careless about God, or holiness; if there be any who, like Felix of old, intends to put off repentance to a more convenient season, which season may never come, let me earnestly beg of him in these last words to repent, ere it is too late.

The present time is yours—the future is God’s. And remember that you must give up sin *entirely* if you would be a follower of Christ. Don’t rest content,

as I well know too many do, with being no worse than others. Don't go with the multitude to do evil. Christ wants you to try and be better than others, and not as good or bad as they.

Set a high standard before you, even the standard of the God-man Himself. Rise higher than the low standard aimed at by those around you. "Rise higher—learn from Christ, Who was lifted up, how to draw all men unto you, learn to think for them, to feel for them, to work for them, to suffer for them." And oh! don't think such occupations as these will make you a gloomy man, or a dull companion. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment[#]."

[#] Eccles. xi. 9.

Arise then, young men, in the strength which your God has given you. Go forth and shew the world and your fellows what true manliness and self-control will do for a man; enjoy life, but use it and don't abuse it, and so "be faithful unto death," and you too shall receive "a crown of life[#]."

[#] Rev. ii. 10.

There in the heavenly home your sins will never be mentioned again. Jesus Christ waits to bear them for you. The angels wait to welcome you. The Holy Ghost waits to take possession of your heart, and make His dwelling there. And will you disappoint all these? Take your Bible, and turn to the beautiful story of the lost sheep in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, and there read how "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over *one* sinner that repenteth." As one has beautifully put it—

"And all through the mountains thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a cry to the gate of Heaven—
'Rejoice, I have found My sheep.'
And the angels echoed around the throne
Rejoice! for the Lord brings back His own."

Go to Him just as you are, poor and wretched and sinful, and He will wash you from your sins, and clothe you in His own righteousness. And when you have found Him, tell others about Him too. Philip was not satisfied to follow Christ alone, but he went and told Nathanael. The woman of Samaria was not content to stand and listen to the Saviour's gracious message, but she went and called her friends and her neighbours, saying, "Come, see a man which told me all that ever I did." And so it will be with you. "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." Speak to them often privately about the love of Jesus, as you have opportunity, and neither in this world, nor in the world to come, shall you in any wise lose your reward.

One word more. Don't be down-hearted. If you find the devil strong, if you find the flesh weak, don't be down-hearted. Those conversions are seldom lasting which are the work of a single day. You will have much sorrow and much trouble as long as you are in the world, but be of good courage, for Christ has "overcome the world[#]."

[#] S. John xvi. 33.

Young men stand up for Christ, and He will stand up for you, when you most need His help. Don't be ashamed of *being called* Christians, or of *being* Christians. Be more *truly* manly, and you will be more truly humble; be more independent of men, of their praise or blame; and then you will be more dependent upon God. In a word, don't mind sharing your Master's shame here, if you wish to share His glory hereafter.

And my last word of farewell advice to all who may read this book, is this—"Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord[#]."

[#] 2 Tim. i. 8.

THE END

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