

ROBERT MILLIGAN'S
DIFFICULTIES

OR

Struggle and Triumph

A SCOTCH LIFE STORY.

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following pages were written during a holiday which was unfavourable for outdoor exercises. They contain, mainly, a record of facts—names apart—coloured by the imagination. The writer's aim was to trace in outline a veritable human life, and to exhibit it in relation to the circumstances and persons amidst which it was spent. This necessitated the portraying of customs and characters, the knowledge of which is essential to the proper understanding of the habits and manner of

existence which obtain in a small Scotch town. The story is a simple tale without literary pretension and is issued to gratify friends and to promote the cause of evangelical religion and temperance.

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ROBERT MILLIGAN'S DIFFICULTIES;

OR,

STRUGGLE AND TRIUMPH.

A SCOTCH LIFE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS AND CONDITION.

"BLESS'D memory, guide, with finger nicely true,
Back to my youth my retrospective view ;
Recall with faithful vigour to my mind
Each face familiar and relation kind,
And all the finer traits of them afford,
Whose general outline in my heart is stored."

—H. KIRKE WHITE.

"WELL, I have often thought of that, and if I am to do anything in that line I must do it now, for I have all but reached the allotted time of man's sojourn in the earth—three score years and ten."

These words were uttered in reply to a suggestion made by a neighbour—after I had been telling part of the story of my life—to the effect I should write in a somewhat consecutive manner the principal events of my early days, and tell about many of the eventful scenes through which I had passed.

"Why not begin at once then," said a young member of the group around me ; "you have leisure, quiet, and a fair measure of strength. It will brighten your spirits to live your life over again in memory, tracing how the Lord has led you, and it will be a source of delight to us to learn what occurred in these far-off days."

Others chimed in with approving words, which gave definiteness to my conception of duty.

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Not long after, when spending a holiday in the country, my resolution was formed to put in black and white a sketch of my early career, and thus to let those who care to read my words know the manner in which many of the years of my pilgrimage were spent, and the influences which played in on my inner being during the Spring and Summer of my existence.

My name is Robert Milligan, but, according to the manner of the people among whom I lived, I was seldom called by any other name than Rab. I was born about the time when the whole country was in a state of intense excitement about the Reform Bill, which Lord John Russell, in a moment of weakness, designated in the House of Commons a "final measure." At that period, money was scarce, bread was dear, and work, which could keep the pot boiling, was difficult to be had. Riots had taken place in some of the larger towns, and the spirit of unrest and discontent had found its way to many villages and hamlets. In the obscure Scottish town where I first saw the light of day, the general discontent prevailed, and the depression of trade and scarcity of food were keenly felt. It was always a poor place, and money was a rare sight to the common folk. Those who were privileged to live in the historic castle near by, or in the mansions of the local gentry, might have heavy purses; but the pockets of the inmates of the humble dwellings were, generally, both light and empty. As it was my lot to begin life in one of the poorest of these dwellings, I could not have been, in these circumstances, a very welcome visitor. Perchance, those who had first charge of me did not look upon my small face and strange form with that joy which Scripture says belongs to those who see a man-child born into the world. The conditions in which I found a foothold on this planet were not of the most favourable description. They were not even of an average favourable character. Indeed, if I were an

Astrologer, I would say I was born under a very adverse star.

Of the place of my birth I do not want to say much. What one said of Jerusalem I can say about it, "Its very stones to me are dear." It is an old-fashioned, or rather *was* an old-fashioned town—for it has of late years been the subject of many modern improvements—situated in Scotland somewhere between where flows and ebbs the Solway tide and the River Tay. Though not well known, owing to its geographical position, it is nevertheless an ancient burgh, its charter being granted by the merry monarch, Charles the Second. Why it should have been so honoured, by such a king, is not known. At the end of last century, one who travelled through Scotland writes concerning it—"The inhabitants are mechanics, labourers in husbandry, a few ale-house keepers, and two or three shopkeepers. The houses are low, ill-built, thatched with straw, and very imperfectly repaired within. A sashed window was lately a curiosity not to be seen here."

If this is at all a true description of my native town about the year 1800, it had made great strides in the way of improvement during the first quarter of this century. At the time of my birth it consisted of a main street, containing some excellent dwelling-houses and shops, which runs along the side of a gently-rising hill, and a few houses branching therefrom. Being a Royal Burgh, there was a Town Council, with its Provost and Bailies, court house, jail, officer of law, a parish school, and at a little distance the parish kirk, three public-houses, sundry shops, and the usual trades carried on in an agricultural centre. As might have been expected, from its situation and business, it was a dull, sleepy place, with little public spirit, and many a time a ball from an Armstrong gun could have been sent up the street at noon without any one of human kind being injured. An Irishman, it is said, happened to stray into the town, and did not know how to get out again. "Troth," he exclaimed to a knot of

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hangers on at the Cross, "Ye should add *Finis* to the name of this place, for, by St. Patrick, it is the end of creation."

If, however, the houses and streets were not of an architectural character to command attention, the surrounding country made up for what they lacked of interest. The surrounding scenery is exquisitely beautiful. Woods are near at hand, in which the oak, the ash, the fir, the elm, and the birch grow to a stately size. At the foot of the hill, on the side of which the town is situated, there is a fine broad meadow through which a clear river flows, and which broadens into a magnificent loch. Here and there among hazel, elder, and willow trees, numerous rivulets seek their way to larger streams. Undulating hills rise on every side, covered with verdure to the top, and not far distant massive mountains, some of them more than two thousand feet high, can be seen in their solemn grandeur. To the inhabitants many of the glens and solitary spots are rendered sacred by their association with the prayers, sufferings, and death of the sons of the Covenant. The entire district of country is considered, by those who understand such things, to be suited to the tastes of those who delight in the rod and the gun, while the artist can easily find scenes which, when transferred to his canvas, will be things of beauty to the æsthetic eye and mind. In the midst of such picturesque environments I originally found myself, and before I was far on in my teens, to them I clung as to my dearest of friends.

As to my parents, so far as I know, I never had any. The first consciousness memory recalls was that of being in the arms of an old woman whom I afterwards called Granny. Granny was old when I first knew her—so old that she never seemed to become older—bowed down as with labour, gray-haired, somewhat withered in face, and with hard and crooked hands. Her voice was pleasant; her face bore a kindly expression, and her ways were peculiar to herself. There was but one other inmate in our small home—a young boy, John

Sloan, who was three years older than myself. The old woman was the sole support of the three, and the guardian of the "twa laddies," as she used to call us, whom she watched over with fondest care and provided for. During the winter nights we formed a semi-circle round the fire which burned on the ground, Granny being the central figure, with a boy on each side. This was our position, when she opened her wonderful store of folk-lore and quaint stories, which never appeared to be exhausted. Little bits of family histories, in which ghosts, witches, and fairies had much to do, were narrated, with a solemn utterance and serious expression of countenance, which added greatly to their effect. These were believed in by us young ones, as firmly as the facts of the Bible, and at these times, it would have been no surprise to my wondering mind, if I had seen a ghost or a fairy make its appearance, descending from the heavens down the wide chimney. Though they never came, I never doubted they were not far off, playing mischief with cattle, or deceiving and frightening human beings.

Now and then the monotony of our existence was broken in upon by the arrival of a lodger for a night, who slept in a small box-bed in the "ben" end of the dwelling. These strangers were of all sorts, and, in many instances, were taken up with my pranks. I was not like other boys in more ways than one. My body was a little misshapen, and as Richard the Third hinted, the mind is made after the pattern of the outer man. To please these passing visitors, I was made, when very young, to dance and sing, and they in return endeavoured to instil into my susceptible mind the glories and mysteries of the big world they lived in, and the advantages of an idle life. Granny paid no attention to their treatment of me, and in this respect showed that I had less claim upon her than John had. The lodgers were not allowed to toy with him, and advise him as they advised me.

This led me one day to say—"Granny, was

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John's mither my mither, and was John's faither my faither?"

"Hoot, boy," she replied, with a push of her hand, "haud yer tongue and away to the streets to play. I'm the Granny o' ye baith, an' that's eneuch for you."

I had to obey and take to the street, but I was not satisfied. Granny, I thought, knew more about my parents than she cared to let me know. Months after, I returned to the same subject, but made no progress as regards the knowledge of my parentage, which to this hour is involved in mystery. The likelihood is, that I was the offspring of some poor unfortunate woman, who was driven by adverse circumstances to seek the shelter of Granny's lodging-house, there to die of a broken heart, soon after pressing her weakly babe to her bosom. Be this as it may, I was denied the use of the richest, sweetest name on earth—mother. That treasured word, which stirs in most breasts memories dear and tender, was never on my lips, and was to me little more than an empty sound.

Granny, to me, took the place of both father and mother, and she was far from unkind to the foundling whom Providence had cast upon her care. Along with John, I shared her frugal meals, and received what attention and aid she could afford to give. Her position, so far as I was concerned, was not an easy one, for both temper and patience were frequently severely tried. When about ten years of age I occasioned her not a little anxiety and trouble by my out-of-the-way and lawless conduct. On these occasions she instituted a little court, which was held in the evenings. Assuming the position of judge, she took her place in her huge arm chair, with a little table before her, on which the big Bible was solemnly laid. John was placed at her side, where he sat as quiet as a mouse, ever and anon looking up into Granny's face with an innocent expression, which was as much as to say, "I'm all safe, come what may," and I was set on a three-legged stool straight before her. In a sedate manner she adjusted her spectacles, tying them on

with a woollen thread, opened the sacred book, and read a portion suited, as she thought, to the particular fault committed. Then followed an exhortation, which was far more difficult to endure than any punishment which could have been inflicted. As a rule, the exhortation, on my part, provoked hostility rather than softness of heart, and I would speak back, till she became angry and rushed at my collar, which she was seldom able to grasp; for by an agile motion I was either under the bed, where she could not reach me, or out into the wide close before the door, and then to the street. When there with my romping companions, Granny's wrath and good words were very soon forgotten.

I remember on a certain occasion I had to undergo a serious examination about taking a few apples out of a neighbour's garden, which was thought by many a trivial fault in my young days. Granny thought otherwise, and paid thorough respect to the spirit and letter of the ten commandments. When the court was formed and the culprit placed in the dock, the eighth commandment—"Thou shalt not steal"—was read and enforced. Stealing was pointed out as not only a sin against man, but also against God. Though she did not see me do the bad deed, One did, and I would require to stand before His bar and answer for it some day. So she went on for some time; but all Granny advanced did not convince me of my wrong-doing.

I plead—"I didna steal the apples; I only took them, as I saw ither boys dae. I couldna dae wrang, Granny," I added, "for I was hungry, an' ye had nae piece to gie me."

"That's nae excuse, ye wicked laddie," she replied with severity; "the apples werena yours and they werena mine, and it was a big sin to tak' them as ye did."

"I canna see that, for Sam'l M'Kie has plenty o' apples, an' we've nane," I remonstrated.

My argument did not commend itself to the honest, old woman, and she sternly asked me—

"Rab, dae ye ken where bad bairns go tae wha steal apples oot o' ither folks' yards?"

To which I impudently answered—"I dinna ken an' I dinna care. I'll tak' them again when I'm hungry, for Sam'l M'Kie has nae mair richt to hae apples than we hae."

These words were accompanied with a few tears, which, in spite of my resolution to brave it out, would force their way through my eyelids, and must have had an effect on my judge's softer nature, for she immediately shut the book, took off her spectacles, and dismissed the prisoner at the bar with the words—"My wee manny, dinna dae it again; an' when ye're hungry, come to Granny, an' she'll gie ye a bit o' bread, though it be the last she's got in the hoose."

Although an ocean of time has flowed between that period and now, the interior of that little broken-down house and these scenes are present with me still. The restless waters of active life, which have washed away many impressions from the sands of my youthful memory, have but served to give tone and colouring to these far-off hours. The image of Granny has followed me all the way through my chequered life. I have thought of her kind counsels and tender words when there was no human being near, and when the dark billows were rolling over my soul. She always did her best to be a father and mother to the fatherless and motherless boy. Out of her scanty store she provided food and clothing when no other one cared for me. Nor did she confine her charitable deeds to those under her immediate care. Not a beggar passed her door without being assisted with a handful of oatmeal or other gift. And many a homeless wanderer sought and found shelter, without reward, under her humble roof. Such actions are not so uncommon among the virtuous poor as some may think, and they prove that their hard lot, instead of robbing them of humane feelings, enlarges their sympathies and increases their liberality.

My Granny was a genuine philanthropist, who

delighted to do good, as if it were by stealth ; and her self-sacrifice, her deeds and words of kindness, though many of them were unknown to her nearest neighbour, were all known by Him who said—" Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, shall in no wise lose his reward."

CHAPTER II.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOWS.

"HEAVEN lies about us in our infancy ;
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy."

—WORDSWORTH.

It has been ordained by a wise Providence that the experiences of boys and girls are not of a permanent character, whether they be those of joy or of sorrow. They change like the aspect of the sky on an April day. Sunshine and shade, light and darkness, appear in the horizon of the mind, and add to the richness of the mental landscape, while the wind blows alternately, with calmness and with storm. I have seen boys laugh till tears fell like rain on the ground, and in a short time afterwards they were cast down and sad. I have also seen them weep, and refuse to be comforted, and in an hour after, dance with very glee. In the main current of existence all young life is happy life, and this is true of rich and poor alike. Happiness, as Socrates says, depends not on wealth, houses, or clothing, but on a contented mind. When boys have health, they have good appetites, and when their natural wants are supplied, they feel like little kings with kingdoms of their own, over which they rule, which fills them with gladness and song. My boyish life was far from being miserable, notwithstanding my many deprivations and difficulties. I had no fine

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suits of clothes to wear as the sons of gentlemen had, and had not to be careful of what I possessed. I had seldom a penny in my pocket, and in fact had seldom a pocket which would have contained one. I did not reside in a grand house, with fine policies or gardens attached, but in a thatched cottage with a "but and a ben" and "windows sma'," yet for happiness I was equal with any in the parish. I was not burdened with etiquette, had not to attend to social customs, and was not afraid of what society would either say or think concerning my procedure. A glorious freedom was mine, which I enjoyed to the full in running, playing, fishing, scouring the woods, climbing the mountains, gathering nuts in the season, bathing in the burns in the hot days of summer, and playing mischief all the year round. Time did not hang heavily on my hands, and life was as one long holiday so long as Granny was well and John able to act as my slave, which I made him do when the old woman's eye was not on us. In these days I cared for nobody, was as cheery as the larks, and envied not the estate of the great, or the position of those who possessed all they desired. Happy boyish days! While they last, heaven is not far off. Their music finds a place in the chambers of the soul, from whence it comes in cheering memories when weariness and sorrow cross the path on which we walk. Without a happy season in youth, life would seem dull, and its meaning would not be understood.

My first real sorrow was experienced when I was made to realize that Granny was not so strong as she used to be. The spirited old woman held out against increasing physical weakness as long as she was able, and only yielded when she could hide her weakness no longer. "I'm no sae souple as I used to be," she would say; "but the auld biggin' will dae a while langer yet. I canna aye be young and smart. My certie, I hae seen the day I wouldna hae seen some o' ye in my road. Though the flesh is wake, the speerit is aye as strong as ever."

Notwithstanding her determination to attend to her duties, and do her work as formerly, she had gradually to yield to her position, and acknowledge it to herself and others. She brought her bodily condition and her fears about her health before John and me one Sabbath evening towards the end of May—it was on the night of the Sacrament Sunday, a peculiar solemn season to her and to most of the people who had the least regard for religion. She had been in a more than an ordinary serious frame of mind during that whole week, read her Bible with diligence, and kept “crooning” away at some of the Psalms. On the Fast-Day morning (Thursday) she spoke most sympathetically about the minister, the Rev. Thomas Welsh.

“He’s a guid man,” she said, “an’ he’ll hae hard wark this week, an’ will be sair dune oot wi’ his spiritual exerceeses, an’ making his action sermon. Speak as they like, it’s no a canny thing to be a keeper o’ souls. I trust the Lord will be wi’ him on Sunday when he fences the tables, an’ forbids a’ that shouldna gang forrit frae gaun forrit to tak’ the Sacrament. Puir man, he has an awfu’ responsibility on his heid, an’ naebody can help him. He maun just look to the Lord, an’ he’ll no leave him without succour.”

She then told us that, though not very strong, she would like to go to the service in the kirk that day, for it might be the last Fast-Day she might ever see. Having dressed herself in her best, as was her wont, she folded the Bible in her white handkerchief, got her penny for the ladle in her hand, along with a few sprigs of mint I had asked from a neighbour for her, and turned to us and said—

“Noo laddies, ye may gae awa’ for a walk till I come back. Mind ye,” she said with an earnest shake of her head, “this is the Fast-Day, and ye manna whistle or sing, and ye maun keep it like the Sabbath.” Enjoining us once more to remember her advice, she then walked slowly up the hill to the kirk.

The Sacrament Sunday morning saw Granny up early, and the breakfast was over an hour

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sooner than usual. She made us sit down beside her while she read, with tears in her eyes and emotion in her voice, the parts of the Gospels which record the sufferings of Christ in the Garden and on the Cross. After instructing us not to go far from the doors, and to behave ourselves with more decorum than usual, she took her way to the House of God, from whence she did not return till the afternoon. As a rule, the Sacramental service lasted from eleven in the forenoon till between three and four in the afternoon, during which there were two sermons, addresses, numbered by the tables served, solemn Psalms and Paraphrases sung to minor tunes, and a closing exhortation given. There were two neighbouring ministers present to assist Mr. Welsh in serving tables, and all that was said, sung, and done was of the most impressive description. These seasons were times of refreshing to many. They were the chief "pools of ordinances," whose waters the angels stirred, and by which the faithful were healed. And few derived more spiritual blessing from these sacred feasts than our Granny, who ever delighted in this way to partake of the Bread of Life.

The evening of the Sacrament Sunday referred to was calm and beautiful, and I could not, wild boy though I was, help being deeply impressed by the sedate habits and look of the people which I saw coming from the kirk, and especially Granny. When John and I had, along with our old mother, partaken of the evening meal, the Bible was laid on the table, and the spectacles brought into use. She read with faltering accents a Psalm, which I afterwards found was the twenty-third, for I remembered there was something in it about the "valley of the shadow of death." Then followed a pause, during which she looked at us boys with a manifestation of tenderness which made itself felt. She then said—

"My dear sons (she never called us this before), this has been an unco sacred day to me. I hae sat down at the Lord's Table, and he was present to feed me. The Table has aye been blessed to me

as a means o' grace. I waited for the Lord there, an' he wasna lang in comin' to his puir, weak follower. When I took the cup in my han', with the red wine in it which represents his bluid, he, as it were, said 'Ye'll no be lang here in the earth, for I'm gaun to tak' ye to mysel'. Ye'll no sit doon at anither Sacrament in this kirk, but ye shall sit doon wi' me at the marriage supper o' the Lamb in heaven.' I heard his voice, I thocht, and then, when I had a sort o' come to mysel', I heard dear Mr. Welsh, the minister, saying, 'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood shall have eternal life.' A' this has led me to think that my time wi' you, my laddies, will no' be lang. In gaun up the brae to the kirk the day I was awfu' wake, an' am sair forfoughten wi' the day's services. I canna be lang here noo, and I'll hae to gang awa' when the call comes, whether it's sune or late. Never min', my wee laddies, a' will be weel."

There was a weirdness in Granny's look when she said this which made her words enter into my very heart, and awed my spirit. As soon as possible I crept away to my bed, and turned my face to the wall. I thought of Granny being ill, being carried away to the churchyard, and leaving John and me alone. A feeling of oppressive solitariness was produced thereby, so great that my heart was like to break. Tears came to my aid, and I cried with stifled sobs till I fell asleep.

Next morning, when I arose, I felt as if I had lived for years. I was the same boy, and yet not the same. I knew more of myself, more of my relations to the world and those around me, more of life and more of death. The simple, sensuous life I had lived in common with the birds of the air and the lambs of the fields, had given place to a human life with its forethoughts, its afterthoughts, and its relations to things unseen and eternal. A crisis had been experienced which ushers into greater trials, sorrows, joys, battles, and, perchance, victories.

Granny's words had been prophetic, for, from

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that evening she spoke and acted as if she had lost the most of her interest in the affairs of this world. She was not so active in her household duties as she used to be, nor did she care to listen to the gossip about what was going on in the town which the neighbours were ever ready to indulge in.

Every day I watched her with an eye which had acquired a new power of discerning what was passing in her mind, and every day I was convinced she was failing in strength, and was approaching her latter end. In the course of a few months, when the days were short and the nights long, she was unable to rise, and had to be attended to as she lay in bed. The doctor came to see her, and she said as he retired, "It daes me muckle guid to see his kind face, and hear his kindly word."

An old stonemason came in now and again who read and prayed with Granny.

During some of these visits I half concealed myself behind the door, and watched what went on. The old man, with his white locks, benevolent face, and subdued voice, is vividly before my mental eye still. He looked in on Granny as she lay in her humble bed, and spoke to her of a world where there was no weakness, anxiety, sorrow, nor death. Taking out of his pocket a small book, he read a little, and then kneeled down at the bedside with Granny's hand in his and prayed. I had but a dim conception of the Being to whom the old mason was talking, but the way he spoke made me feel He was not far off, and could, in some mysterious manner, render aid to the old and weak woman the mason prayed for. It was enough for me to know that he earnestly addressed One who was interested in making Granny well again, and that He could do no wrong.

These visits made me more anxious, and at the same time they confused me. I could not understand what they all meant, nor yet what they had to do with my aged guardian.

Not long after one of these interviews with the pious mason, Granny raised herself on her

elbow, drew aside the curtains, and called on John and me to come to her bedside. We instantly obeyed the summons, and, knowing there was something important to be said or done, we looked her straight in the face. There was a peculiar light in her eye and power in her words which prepared us for the message she delivered.

"Tak' han's my sons," she said with difficulty, "till I speak to ye baith, maybe for the last time. I think my time is near an end, and I'll hae to gang the way o' a' the leevin', and leave ye here in this cauld warld. Ye ken, ye hae been my boys in my hoose, and ye maun aye be brithers. I want ye to care for ane anither and help ane anither when Granny's awa'. The Lord has promised, in his Word, to keep ye as a shepherd tends his sheep; but ye maun haud fast by his han', an' dinna let go. He has been wi' me a' my days, an' I have never wanted hoose, freens, and a wee bit to eat. I hae naething to leeve ye but an auld mither's blessin', but my Saviour has tauld me ye'll never want what is guid, if ye keep in wi' him. Noo, John and Rab, when I dee, dinna greet aboot me, like bonnie bairns, for I'm awfu' wearied and wad like to be hame and at rest. Will ye baith promise to meet Granny in heaven, and begin and seek the way to that happy place noo?"

Here her strength failed; she stopped, and we both answered "Yes," more mechanically than reasonably. Our answer pleased her, for she smiled, clapped us on the cheeks, and then resumed her usual position in her bed. From that time she spoke little, but murmured a great deal to herself, talking of her Lord and Saviour as her Shepherd, her Surety, and her Friend. The names John and Rab mingled with these broken sentences, the meaning of which we tried to apprehend, but could not. At last she lifted up her arms suddenly, as if to receive some one, and cried "Lord Jesus." Then they fell as suddenly as they were lifted. A faint groan succeeded, and then a stillness which made us both feel so eerie that we ran out of the house to our next door neighbour,

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and told her we thought something serious was wrong with Granny. The neighbour and daughter alarmed at our information, at once left their work and made their way to the house, we boys following. Having lit a candle, for it was dark, they looked into the bed, and then turned to us and said, "Granny is dead," words which made us tremble with an undefined fear. When we recovered from the shock we looked into each other's eyes, through blinding tears, threw our arms around each other's neck, and wept with unrestrained and boyish grief. By that common sorrow we were drawn closer to each other than we had ever been before, and this baptism into its dark waters made us brothers for life.

What became of us that night memory has no record. Nor of the days immediately succeeding do I remember much. The funeral took place on the third day, and was attended by a few of the poor people of the town and the Provost, school-master, and minister. As the little company passed to the city of the dead, John and I followed in silence at a distance hand in hand, wondering what the end of all this would be, and if ever Granny would come back to stay with us in the old home.

The gravedigger, an old soldier who had fought at Waterloo, after his work was over, and the company had retraced their steps homeward, spoke kindly to us and told us, as we lingered at the newly filled grave, to go home. This was a difficult task, for all that we loved and cared for on earth was associated with the spot where the body of Granny had been laid. If we had not been hardly pressed, we would most likely have sat down on that sacred spot, and remained till hunger would have compelled us to depart. The gravedigger, seeing our desolate condition, sympathizingly took one in each hand, spoke to us in a cheerful manner, and led us to his own dwelling. His wife received us with many motherly words, and said she would keep us till the morning, and then her husband would see who would be our

future protector, and where we would find our future abode. So far as I was concerned, the world, for the time being, was a blank, and it mattered not where I was placed, and who was to watch over me.

Such orphan experiences are not rare things in the earth, and should make the wisest pause and meditate on the mysteries of divine Providence and the problems of physical suffering in a world made and governed by God, and visited by his Only-Begotten and Well-Beloved Son.

CHAPTER III.

SCHOOL DAYS AND SCHOOL CUSTOMS.

“I saw the school and playground too,
The haunts of other years ;
And as my mind recall'd the past,
It brought back joys and tears.

—SMEDLEY NORTON.

FIFTY years ago there were no Parochial or School Boards, and no regularly-levied Poor or School rates. Officialism had not the same existence in social and civil life as it has now, and, to a larger extent, every person was allowed to do very much as he pleased. Parents were not necessitated by law to educate their children, nor were the rich, the well-to-do, and industrious compelled to keep the poor and the destitute, or to provide for the lazy and the profligate. Orphans, like myself, were not, however, on this account altogether neglected. The authority which took charge of them consisted of the parish minister and the elders of the kirk—the members of the session. They took, or were expected to take, a fatherly interest in all the parishioners, and where money help and special guidance were required, they were to supply these benefactions. The benevolent machinery was simple, and its motive power was Christian charity, not legal authority, and although sometimes it did not move very rapidly, it did so without noise or

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detriment to the feelings of those for whose benefit it was set in motion.

Because of this parochial arrangement, John and I fell into the hands of the minister and his session after Granny's death. They had to see after us, for we had no relations to which, in the hours of our desolation, we could turn. The Ruling Elder had us brought before him, who spoke to us in kindly words after his own fashion, and told us, now that we were left to his protection, we were to be good boys, go regularly to school, attend the kirk and Sabbath School, and that the Session and Mr. Welsh had arranged we were to stay in the old house with a woman called Jean M'Cubbin, who would take care of us as Granny did. Clapping us on the head, he told us to run away home, and he would see to it that we should be provided with food, raiment, and shelter till we should be strong enough to provide for ourselves.

This Ruling Elder was a remarkable character, and had his own ways of speech and action. He was by far the greatest and most influential person in the town after the minister and schoolmaster, and in certain relations was more esteemed than either. He was a bachelor, and had a sister a few years younger than himself to keep his house. The Town Council had elected him to be the chief magistrate *in permanence*, and everybody knew him as the Provost. On week days he was seldom out of his place of business, where generally he would be found seated on a three-legged stool behind his desk. On Sundays he was regular in his attendance at the kirk, and was in his glory when he pushed the ladle for the collection, at the end of the sermon, along the seats which belonged to his "loft." Having his mind made up for forty or fifty years that the Established Kirk was the only place of worship which should be allowed to exist in a free and Christian nation, he looked upon a dissenter as little less than a profane person or a criminal.

One of the very few of this class which resided in the parish was a shoemaker, who, when he deigned to

give the State-paid minister a hearing, sat in the Provost's gallery. When the time for the collection to be lifted came, it was with more than wonted energy that the Provost placed the ladle before this voluntary, and did not remove it for a few moments. The dissenting shoemaker was as determined as was the ruling elder, and refused to support with his pence the servant of Cæsar. One Sunday the old man allowed his temper to flow over in the words—

“Ye blockhead, ye hae nae richt to come to the kirk ava if ye'll no gie a halfpenny to God's puir.”

These words were uttered loud enough to be heard by us boys in the corner of another gallery, and made us smirk and laugh. No one thought aught of this ebullition on the part of the Provost, for he was known, and it was fully understood his bark was worse than his bite. Moreover, he could be excused in his urgency to secure as large a collection as possible, for the money gathered in that way was not for church purposes, but wholly for the poor of the parish. This was all they could depend upon, and if all had acted as the dissenter did, many deserving, needy persons would have had cleanness of teeth, and few, if any, comforts.

What was collected on Sunday by the ladles was dolled out on Monday morning at the Provost's shop. The old, the weak, and those who were unable from physical causes to provide for themselves, came to get their share. This was given them in a blunt, friendly way, which, all the recipients fully understood, meant no harm. The sum given to each was small, but few complained, and all spoke as if they were thankful such a provision had been made for their material comfort. One old woman, when the Provost put two shillings into her hand and two little parcels containing tea and sugar, held the money up and said—“Provost, this wee pickle siller woudna keep a crow an' her young for a week, let alane me and my auld man.”

“Gang awa' wi' ye, Nanny,” said the elder with a smile, “dae ye expect us to keep you and Jamie like the gentry? It woudna be weel for either o'

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ye if we did, and besides we canna afford it. Ye'll maybe get mair the next time if we dinna a' become dissenters before next Sunday."

"God forbid it," said Nanny; "Jamie and me wad rather starve than that the parish wad be sae disgraced. We want nane o' thae bodies here, wha think they ken mair about speeritual things than Mr. Welsh, an' wad mak' us a' Whigs."

"Ye're richt there, my guid woman," said the kirk official, "an' this should mak' us a' content wi' oor lot."

I suppose it was out of this fund that Jean received a few shillings every week to keep John and me, and because of this arrangement the Provost-Elder had a right to look after my morals and education. Such persons and arrangements are impossible in these passing days. Whether the condition of the poor is improved or not, I cannot tell. All I know is, it is much changed, but movement is not at all times, as history abundantly proves, improvement.

One day I was sent for to speak to the Provost. No sooner had I got within his shop, where all kinds of merchandise were sold, from iron nails to broad cloth, and tea and sugar to pens, ink, and paper, than I understood the business in hand was serious.

He began, "You blockhead," a favourite expression of his, "ye ken ye hae nae faither or mither. Noo, sin' Granny's awa', ye are left aither on the parish, wha'll hae tae provide for ye, body and soul. The minister and Session hae axed me to look after ye, an' if at a' possible, mak' ye a man. A hard task this truly, Rab, for ye are aye in some mischief or anither, forby the maister tells me ye'll no gang to the schule an' attend to your lessons. Noo, ye blockhead, this will never dae, an' canna be allowed. Ye maun gang to the schule, an' if ye dinna, we'll see and mak' ye. Will ye promise?"

In reply, I honestly said, "I dinna like the schule. I hae nae books like the ither boys, and the maister gies me the tawse every day because I canna say my lessons."

"That's nae excuse, ye wee wicked cratur," said the Provost. "If ye get nae education, ye'll aye be a burden on the parish, for ye hae nae body to fit ye to haud the pleugh, or drive a nail in wood. We hae been speerin' a' the tradesmen in the toun, an' they'll no hae ye as a 'prentice at ony price. Ye maun gang to the schule an' learn or else ye'll hae to starve."

Thinking it was best for me to capitulate, I said, "Weel, I'll gae to the schule if ye'll tell the maister no to lick me, an' I'll learn my lessons as weel as I can."

"That's richt, my wee chiel," said the Provost, and, thrusting two peppermint lozenges into my hand, he opened the shop door and showed me out, apparently well pleased with the arrangements made.

Next day saw me at the school. The master spoke in a friendly manner, gave me all the books I required, and told me to take good care of them, an injunction by no means superfluous. For a few days I carried out my resolution, and attended to the instructions received, but a week had not more than passed before I yielded to the many temptations which sought to lead me to my careless, wild life. It was in my nature to love play better than books, and frolic better than thought. Jean did all she could to keep me in doors to my lessons at night, but I never failed to escape her eye, and was out among the boys and girls who filled the street with noise and laughter. My principal books were swapped for marbles, and the want of lessons brought the dreaded tawse into frequent operation. This state of matters did not make my relations to the master more pleasant, nor the school and its discipline more loved. Still, I visited it now and again, and succeeded in obtaining a fair education according to the standard of these days. I was taught to read, write, and do sums, was thoroughly versed in the mysteries of the Shorter Catechism, and drilled well in the narrative portions of the Old and New Testaments. We were also made to commit to memory the Psalms and Paraphrases,

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and those who excelled in this were praised. In this way, what in more modern days is called by the high-sounding title of "religious education" was given with due regularity and reverence, and I doubt not has proved one of the factors which have gone to make Scotchmen and Scotchwomen what they are. There was little of the sentimental or doctrinal in the Bible teaching, but it became as the sowing of good seed in the soil of the young mind which would fructify and bring forth a harvest in after life. This I know, if it had not been for the Bible instruction I received at the parish school, the Bible would not have been to me the familiar friend it has been, and its wonderful revelations would not have had that powerful influence on life which even in my most careless days they exercised. The Godly upbringing of the young, as Knox desired and did much to carry out, must lie at the basis of any nation which is destined to be strong and great.

The great occasions of the school, when there was more than the ordinary liberty and excitement, never found me absent. These were not so many, nor so elevated in exercises and tone as those which take place in modern systems of education. What they lacked in refinement they made up in spirit, and thereby suited the rustic, youthful mind as much as present exhibitions are in harmony with the advanced culture of School Board requirements. These were principally two, the Examination and Candlemas, and were looked forward to with brightest hopes, and enjoyed to the full by all, except a few who thought at the Examination they should have received prizes, and did not. These were the boys and girls who had been made to believe by their indulgent parents they far outstripped all others for ability and perseverance, whereas in reality they were the dullest of their classes.

I took little interest in the Examination compared with what I took in the great festival which was enjoyed on the second day of February. "Candlemas Bleeze," as it was called, was the most marked of all the institutions when I attended

the parish school. This was a festive day, and the one in all the year in which the solemn and somewhat stern face of our teacher relaxed into a smile. All things, for the time being, were changed in the schoolroom, which was turned into a sort of parlour. The master's desk was occupied by an old gentleman who, with shaky voice, was ready to say a happy word to each pupil who was called before him. When he mounted the seat of honour, amid the applause of the youthful assembly, there was placed into his hands, by one of the senior class, a full list of the scholars made out in alphabetic order. As their names were called out, they marched up to the desk, clothed in their best garments, with a sum of money in hand, which, with a bow or curtesy, they gave to the old gentleman. This he received with a gracious smile and a pleasant "thank you." When all had given their money gifts, the supreme moment arrived, when the names of the King, Queen, Prince, and Princess were to be announced. These royal personages were determined by the amount of money given by them; and hence they were generally found among the upper class. This was not always the case, for sometimes the democratic feeling asserted itself in a few poor pupils giving to one of their number a portion of their gifts to raise his sum above that of the minister's son or the large farmer's daughter. There was great cheering on my part, and sundry gyrations, when the royal names were announced, and when their bearers marched up to the centre of the school, receiving on the right hand and the left the homage of their subjects. The old gentleman congratulated them on their exaltation, and informed them that to the King and Queen belonged the prerogative of giving a holiday, each, according to their royal pleasure, and in that respect, and to that extent, the school-master would own their sceptre. This was a joyful announcement, and was not forgotten, for, as a rule, the King and Queen had no rest from deputations till they had exercised their royal will. This was frequently done on a Monday when the ice was

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bearing in the lochs, and two double verses of a Psalm had to be repeated.

This annual school festival did not end here. The educative part of it had not, indeed, commenced. While the previous ceremony was proceeding, amid the expressed joy of the youthful company, my eyes were every now and again wandering in the direction of the fires at both ends of the school, on which two huge tea-kettles were sending forth volumes of steam. To bring them into use the old gentleman descended from his elevation, and took his seat at a table on which a large punch-bowl was placed. Beside the table sat a stone jar full of whisky, which was employed, along with the boiling water, to make toddy for all the school. As the old gentleman brewed the punch, his face was radiant with smiles, and his speech full of wit and humour. The occupation suited him well, and he seemed to be in his most pleasant element as he performed the honoured task assigned to him, and ever and anon tasting to see if the beverage was of the proper strength for the recipients. When the ruler of the school for the day announced that all things were ready, a biscuit was given to every pupil, after which came a round of whisky toddy. In some instances two glasses were received, and sometimes even three, by those who were quick enough to change their forms unobserved. The fun grew fast, if not furious. There were no bounds to the hilarity which prevailed unchecked. When the buoyant spirits ran highest, a deputation was selected to go for a fiddler, who could play three reel tunes, and who looked forward to the day with delight. When he arrived, with his young escort, he was seated in a corner and scratched his gut, producing thereby a sort of music which enabled the boys and girls to dance and shout as they pleased. This they did with all their heart for an hour, when a halt was called, and the whole juvenile assembly was sent home. Some of the boys so felt the toddy in their heads, or professed to be under its influence, that they staggered as they went home from side to side, and uttered incoherent expressions to those

who accosted them. They thought it manly and becoming to be under the power of intoxicating drink, and this they pretended they were, whether they were or not. The master whom they feared and respected had provided the feast, and they could not do what was wrong if they followed his example. I cannot say this school festival had not an influence on my after life. It had, I believe, in more ways than one. And I must confess, when I write about it many years after, it makes my old heart young again, and before me the merry faces rise, and the old tunes of the fiddler fall on my ear. But such scenes are long since gone, and will never be re-enacted. Bands of Hope and the Temperance enterprise have made them things of the past. School Boards and School Inspectors provide quite other recreations than toddy fuddles and dancing for those under their charge.

Notwithstanding these strange customs and other primitive methods of drawing out the mental and moral powers of children, a good substantial education was given and received at our parish school. The dominie was a perfect dungeon of learning, and took an honest and earnest delight in his work. He grounded his pupils well in the rudiments of the English language, and those who were willing to be led to the summer fields of classic lore he was most willing to stimulate and guide. While it was his aim to give all under his charge an excellent common education, there were a number whom he initiated into the subtilties of advanced grammar and geography. A lesser number had a smattering of Latin and mathematics given them, and two or three had Greek added sufficient to enable them to enter one of the Universities. With the "scholars," as they were termed, the master took great pains, and when they left his school he followed them in their after career with personal interest, and felt that an honour was done the parish and himself when they were in any way publicly acknowledged. Their success in learning or in trade was viewed as if it were his own. Our dominie was, in a way, a father to all his scholars,

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but his tenderness was never fully known till his pupils had grown to be men and women. Then it was he allowed his real nature and character to be seen.

The schoolmaster did not fail in his duty to me. Many a good advice he gave me, and many a warning was closed with the words, "You will soon find out by bitter experience that I am right."

Somehow or other I was wild, self-willed, and wayward, and did not feel any responsibility rested on me. I never was anybody's boy, and I felt I did not even belong to myself. Education was of no use, I thought, for I had no plan of life, and partook largely of the notion, not altogether uncommon among boys, that if each day provided for itself, all would be well. Somehow or another what was necessary for existence would be sure to be forthcoming. It had been so in the past, and good luck, which had out of her well-filled store provided in the past for my daily wants, would not forsake me in days to come. Along with these sunny thoughts, others of a more serious kind now and again forced themselves on my attention only to be made to depart by a loud laugh or song. At that period it was a most difficult task to entertain a solemn view of life, or to think I had more to do with making good my place in the world than had the flocks and herds in the fields or the fish in the sea.

In this condition of mind the years fled past, and I found myself fifteen years of age, and ready finally to leave the school for work. What to turn my hand to I did not know, and cared as little. For a season I was like a voyager cast upon a foreign shore without knowledge, friends, or money. I had a weak body, an active, though not well furnished mind, an erratic will, and without much moral balance. When told in the plainest possible manner by the Provost, Jean, and others, [I had come to the age when I must work for my daily bread, I ran off for a scamper among the hills. These hills had to me in such moments a great attraction. They were so calm amid the storm, and so bright under the sunlight

that fell so peaceably on their rugged forms, that I felt as if I were a child of their open bosom, and was made to wander among them under heaven's blue sky. They presented such scope for the free exercise of my limbs, and were looked upon as much mine as anybody's else, that during the summer months I wandered among them as long as light lasted. When troubled with Jean's grumbling, afraid of the Provost's eye, or the schoolmaster's tawse, I took to the hills and skipped about like a connie till hunger and night brought me to my senses, and made me seek the abodes of men. I naturally therefore took to my old haunts, when informed I had to work for myself in the future; and when Jean said she could keep me no longer if I did not pay for my board and lodging. When amidst the silence of the mountains, with no human being near, I felt both lonely and sad. The image of Granny came before my mental eye, and I wondered if she was far from me, and would come to my aid. Since she had departed I never had the like burdened feeling of being friendless, forsaken; and under its power I was like to sink. Are there many such young souls as I then was in the earth now? is a question I frequently put to myself as I sit in my arm-chair at my own fireside. The very thought that there may be such forlorn lads, awakens within me emotions of tenderness and solicitude for boys just beginning to feel the pinch of personal life and responsibility for their conduct and sustenance. Their youthful days are behind them, and the gates of the future stand open before them. These gates are numerous, and much of the here and hereafter depends on the one which is chosen and entered by the young pilgrim as he presses on in his life's journey.

CHAPTER IV.

PLAY PAST, WORK BEGUN.

"The youth who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended.
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

—WORDSWORTH.

BOYHOOD is the season when castles in the air are readily built, and when almost anything can be believed in. This kind of dreamland is not inhabited by the prosperous only, but by the poor and the struggling as well. Though the latter live in miserable houses and are clothed in rags, they have their hours when, in imagination, they ride in carriages, live in palaces, visit distant lands, are clothed in scarlet, and possess thousands of silver and gold. During these seasons, they do deeds which mortal man never did before, and display heroism and bravery the like of which never dazzled mortal eyes. They live like fairies in fairyland.

Like other boys, I had these hours which entranced me, and stirred my whole being with aspiration while lying on the hillside or in my little bed. Many were the castles I built, the glorious deeds for my country I achieved, and the exalted positions I filled in these day dreams. For the time being I was absorbed by them, and refused to believe they were not real. They were indulged rather than shunned, and this gave them no ordinary power over my thoughts and emotions. Life was viewed through this highly-coloured medium, and frequently looked as if it were an enchanted scene.

This tendency, which was natural to my ardent temperament, was strengthened from two sources. One of these was the stories of Granny and the more questionable stories of her lodgers, and the other was the conversations I had with a strange old gentleman who lived much alone, and who

ultimately took a peculiar liking to the misshapen boy. This old gentleman was a retired naval doctor, who had served under the great Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar and elsewhere. It was said that in one of the battles in which he was engaged he had his brain affected by a splinter from a shell, and on this account was not altogether balanced in mind. His dwelling was a small attic room in a public-house, from which he never descended except at regular hours to take his walk, or have a seat on the top of the hill overlooking the town. A large granite stone, which bore the name of the Doctor's Seat, was placed for his use at a spot from whence he could obtain an extensive view of river, meadow, and wood. When in his usual condition, the Doctor was taciturn and most peculiar, and seldom spoke to anyone inside or outside the house. His bearing was that of a soldier, and his speech and manners were those of an educated gentleman. The school-boys used to torment him in his walks, go behind him to listen to his mutterings, or put thorns or whins on his seat. On being so annoyed he would flare up like a volcano, utter oaths never before heard in these parts, would rush to his garret, and not be seen for several days. After such seclusions he generally made his appearance on Sundays, when in a stately form he marched to the church, and marched home again without exchanging a word with anyone.

This singular and unknown character had a strong hold on me, and I used to go to him as he sat on his stone seat. At first I did not speak to him, but merely looked at him from a distance, tumbled head over heels, danced to my own tune, and finally squatted down on the ground. This attracted his attention, and made him smile and utter a few unintelligible sounds. Seeing I had secured his favour, I came back, and did the same till I thought I might venture to share his seat, and put my hand in his. At last his interest in me and my ways was manifested. He began to speak in pleasant tones, and told me about boys he used to know and love so long ago. Some of his wonderful exploits

on sea and land were described with animated look and lively gesture. Advices were also given, which, if practically carried out, would make me, he said, one of the sons of Britain of which my country might be proud. It pleased the old Doctor thus to talk by the half-hour, and I, looking up into his glowing face and flashing eye, was both pleased and proud that he treated me as if I had been a full-grown man, and suitable companion for such a learned gentleman.

These conversations lingered in my mind, and produced plans, determinations, and schemes of life of a most extraordinary character. Could they be of use to me now, when I had to provide for myself? was the question which presented itself more than once for consideration and answer. As I considered them, aerial castle after aerial castle at once crumbled to utter ruin, and scheme after scheme faded away like mist from the mountain-top in a fine August morning. A beginning required to be made, and there was nothing to begin with. Pots of gold were discovered in day dreams, but not in the dens and caves of the real earth. After more than two years, I was fairly baffled to get regular employment, could not tell which way to turn, or how to take the first step in practical life.

While I had been so studying the situation, others had been doing the same. Jean, who had become increasingly annoyed at my unprofitable way of living and difficulty of meeting all her demands, said to me one morning—

“Rab, the Provost has sent word he wants tae see you, and ye’re to gae and see him to-day. I dinna ken exactly,” she added, “what he wants wi’ you, but I was thinkin’ it’s aboot hoo ye’re to mak’ a livelihood for yersel’. I was tauld they couldna gie me the weekly siller I hae been gettin’ for yer keep ony langer. Ye see John has got on sae weel wi’ his weavin’ he can keep hissel’, and ye maun jist dae the same. I canna keep ye langer this way, although God knows I wadna like to see ye starvin’. Gang awa’ to the Provost, and dinna provoke the honest man wi’ yer queer ways ony mair.”

"Jean," said I, a little touched by what she said and the way she said it, "ye're no like Granny. She wadna hae sent me oot o' her hoose as ye're gaun to dae. But I'll be a man an' a great man yet. I'll gang to the sea an' fecht for my country, as the Doctor tells me boys dae, or I'll be a sodger, and maybe a general, or something like that."

At this deliverance Jean smiled with a disdainful smile, and replied, "You be a sodger, ye insignificant, almost invisible, little old animal. They wadna hae ye; ye're sae ill-faured and wee. Awa' to the Provost's wi' ye in an instant."

She had touched a tender place when she referred to my bodily weakness and infirmities, and this all the more because the description given was not her own, but one the Doctor gave of me when I was among the boys who tormented him. I therefore winced under her words, and, without giving a reply, slipped out and made my way to the Provost's shop.

This worthy old man was standing at his door smoking his famous copper pipe, which was made out of the bad coin he had gathered in the ladles in the kirk on Sunday.

"Weel, man," he said, when I approached, "ye're come to see me aboot what ye're to dae for yer daily bread. Ye ken, Rab, the Apostle Paul said, as the minister reminded us no lang syne, that he that didna work, neither should he eat, an' we're a', on account o' Adam's sin an' oor ain, to eat oor bread in the sweat o' oor ain brows. Ye canna get oot o' this condemnation nae mair than the lave o' us. Dae ye hear that, Rab?"

"Yes," I quietly answered, having at the same time my own thoughts about sundry questions of theology suggested by the reference to Adam's sin.

"The minister and the session," continued the Provost, "hae been considering yer case again. They stan', by the Providence o' God, in what is ca'ed *in loco parentis* to ye as a foundling, and they hae resolved, sin' ye canna dae onything for yersel', tae dae their best for ye regarding this world, as weel as the world tae come."

"I am much obliged to them," I meekly said, and the words expressed the feelings of my heart at that moment.

"We have trained ye," the Provost went on to say, "on week-days and Sabbaths in the fear and nurture o' the Lord, and Dominie Young hasna forgotten the ever-needed injunction o' Solomon, 'He that spareth the rod hateth the child.' An' we want to start ye in life, an' think if ye wad become a packman, or, as the gentry wad ca't, a 'travelling merchant,' ye wad dae real weel. A' body kens ye, an' though ye hae been a thorn in the side o' a great many in the parish, they'll forgi'e a' that when they see ye men' yer manners, and live like an honest, thrifty young man. What say ye to this proposal?"

This proposal startled me at first, but with Jean's words sounding in my ears, I felt like a hunted roe which had been started from the sheltering copse wood, and was glad of any refuge that first presented itself. I, therefore, at once answered the Provost's question thus, "I think this is the best thing I can dae. When will I begin?"

"The sooner the better," said the old man, relieved and much pleased I had fallen in so readily with the proposal about which he evidently had felt some doubts. "I wad hae had a' thing ready that ye nicht hae started to-day, but I wasna sure how ye wad tak' to it. Ye ken the auld saying, 'ae man may tak' a horse to the water, but twenty canna mak' him drink,' an' ye hae aye been sic a stupid blockhead a' the days o' yer life, that we didna know what ye wad say to oor proposal. But I'll get it a' ready for ye, box an' a, in the course o' this week. There's twa shillings to gie tae Jean tae keep her quiet till ye mak' mair." So saying, our interview ended.

I walked slowly home that forenoon to tell the news to Jean and John. My usual mode of locomotion had hitherto been running. I ran to the school, and ran from it, ran into mischief, ran from merited chastisement, and I ran laughing and

gay in the woods and meadows, and left care far behind. I felt as if I had been born to run; but now when nearing the goal of manhood, I felt it was necessary to slacken my speed, and put away youthful manners. Hence I walked down the street in a sedate and ordinary fashion.

As I wended my way homeward, pondering over the Provost's proposal, the prospect brightened at every step. I saw it was the very thing which suited my disposition. As a travelling merchant I would be my own master—a great consideration; would never be long in one place, which answered my restless spirit; would be brought into contact with people in their gayest moods, as at fairs and such like, and then it might be, and, as I thought, it was sure to be in my case, the first round of the ladder which would lead me to a position of wealth and honour.

In the course of a fortnight, during which I had become an important personage in my own eyes, all things were ready for beginning my business. The Provost had selected my stock with the greatest care, his varied experience having taught him exactly what was necessary. He had paid for it all out of the funds of the parish, so that I started without debt, and was, as he said, "a guid sight better off than I was when I opened my shop."

The time when I was to make my start as salesman was fixed to be the annual Fair Day, which would occur in a week's time, and meanwhile the news spread through the parish that "Rab was to have a stall at the Fair." This advertisement spread from mouth to mouth and hamlet to hamlet till all the folks of the country side knew about it. Never did any one look forward to a day in which he was to enter upon an important engagement with more eager expectation than I did to that Fair Day. I turned over and marked and re-marked my wares, almost daily, counted my gains, and speculated what I would do with them. Sleep forsook my eyes and slumber my eyelids during many hours of the night, and in the day-time I walked up and down the street as if the

town contained no one more important than myself. In stating this, it will be seen that, notwithstanding my bent body and poor surroundings, I had more than the common share of vanity, and thought a considerable deal of myself, no matter how much others despised me. This has ever led me to bear with, and even admire, those who are a trifle vain. The world would have lost a great deal if there had been no vain souls created. Their vanity serves as a motive force which, when developed in individual action, tends to the well-being of homes and the progress of society.

On the morning of the Fair Day I was early up, and, as became a young merchant, dressed myself in my best clothes. Jean had done her best to make "auld claes look amaiest as weel as new," and thus clad I proudly made my way to where the business was to be carried on. Already all was stir and bustle, and everything betokened a day of lively activity. To many this was the day of all the year. It was the event which dwarfed all others into insignificance. Births, marriages, and deaths were not reckoned by the calendar, but as so long before, or so long after the Fair. Wide and varied was the collection of human beings it brought into the town. I set to work to erect my stall, in order to be ready for work before the crowds arrived, and spread out the goods with all the taste I could command. There soon gathered around a number of those who had been with me at school, and who had saved up their pence to invest in my wares. Some boys were there whom I had tormented every day I was at school, and when not there, used to waylay them on their road home. Young girls came dressed as if it were a grand holiday, and looked on at a distance to see the sales beginning. One girl, with dark eyes, raven hair, and a fine open face, named Mary Bell, was deeply interested in what was going on, and whose satisfaction at my start in life could not be hid. Mary was not unknown to me, for she had done me sundry good turns when others were my enemies. Sometimes when she thought I was

hungry she would come rushing up, thrust a piece of bread and cheese into my hand, and depart as quickly as she came. At other times, when a gang of boys, who dare not meet me singly, would set on me with fury, and thrash me till they were wearied or till I was forced to cry by reason of the pain I felt, she would come and comfort me in my affliction and dry my tears with her pinafore. She was my only girl friend at school, and was not afraid to help me with my lessons when she could, and be so far identified with the outcast boy as to speak words of cheer and commendation when others had only bitter reproaches. On this morning Mary was determined to be the first purchaser, and when I saw this, I resolved she should be. The Provost came along from his shop door to see how the stall looked, and see how his parish *protégé* was getting on. When he came near, the youthful crowd made way for the man in authority, who expressed himself greatly satisfied. As ten o'clock rang out from the town steeple, Mary Bell pressed forward, bought my best brooch, and hurriedly withdrew. The Provost bought a purse—the dearest one I had—and wished me “Guid luck.”

The Fair now began in earnest. Lads and lasses from farms near and remote came into the town by the score. All manner of vehicles, from the old cart with a sack stuffed with straw for a seat, to the handsome waggonette, brought in their passengers. The noise of conversation, ballad singers, cheap Jacks, the barking of dogs and the loud laughter of ploughmen, shepherds, and country girls, filled the air. Business of all kinds was being done, such as buying and selling horses and cattle, hiring men servants and maid servants, and purchasing sweetmeats, earthenwares, and trinkets. I was liberally patronized by all classes, and the triumph of my successes for the day was reached when Archibald Welsh, the eldest son of the minister—whom I had thrashed many a time out of pure mischief, whose fishing rod I had wantonly broken because I had none of my own, and whose

fishing lines I had stolen when set in the loch—stepped forward, bought my most expensive knife, and congratulated me in his own name and the name of his father. "Surely," I said, "a' will go on wi' me noo sin' the minister wishes me weel." I was overjoyed.

In the afternoon I watched the crowds becoming less with complacency, for I was sold out. Many in these crowds shouted and sang at the top of their voices, and carried themselves with an unsteadiness which told they had not been drinking water all day. Quarrels, ending in serious fights between men of different parishes, were not wanting, in which the fiercest interest was manifested. When the evening came, the street was deserted except by those who had their remaining wares to attend to. In a short time I gathered together all that remained of my belongings, and with pockets full of copper and silver I took my way to my abode, thinking my future success was secured. It might have been, but there's many a slip between the cup and the lip.

CHAPTER V.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

"MISTHINKING, idle, wild, and young,
I laughed and danced, I talked and sung,
And proud of health, of freedom vain,
Dreamt not of sorrow, care, or pain."

—PRINCESS AMELIA.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."—SOLOMON.

THE opening consciousness of manhood seems to be synonymous in the thought of most with the feeling that they can do as they please, depend upon themselves, and be their own masters. This is always a dangerous period of human life, one which requires careful consideration if it is to be used rightly. Prodigals or filial sons and daughters

are determined at this stage of human development, and it is just at this point, as a rule, that the foundations of character are laid, either on the rock or on the sand. As the choice is made, so shall the outcome of life be for a long season.

This, I did not think of, when, on the morning after the Fair, I counted my gains and thought over what was next to be done. All who had assisted me in the undertaking and put me into the position I occupied were all but forgotten. To my own self I gave all the credit of the good start which had been made. Like the heathen king who walked at the end of the year on the walls of his city exclaiming, "Is this not the great Babylon I have built?" I thought, that to my own power and cleverness I owed everything, and on these I must needs rely for the future.

Both Jean and John congratulated me on the opening of my business, and in a quiet way urged me to let the Provost and my other friends guide my future actions and direct my path. "Ye shouldna," said Jean, "forget that they ken mair o' the warld and its ways than ye dae, nae doot, but they would do a' they could tae get ye on, and mak' ye dae weel for yersel'."

John chimed in with his sensible remarks, which, though few, were practical. He never wasted either time or strength in long sentences; and dealt largely in epigrammatic sayings, which were composed to a great extent of the proverbs of the common people.

"Dinna forget," he said, "the coo which has gi'en ye the milk, Rab. Mind ye, it's easier to lose freens than to get them. Never seek to be ye're ain master, my man, till ye can stand firmly on ye're ain legs, an' ye're nae sae strong as to gang yer lane yet."

"I'm nae sae wake as a' that, John," I smartly answered. "Ye see what I did yesterday. No ane in a' the Fair did better than I did, an' if I had my ain way o't in buying my guids where I liked, an' daein' my business, I wad let ye see how I wad get on."

"Hoots man, haud yer tongue, yer heid's carried, and ye dinna ken what ye're speakin' aboot," said John, rather annoyed at the spirit I displayed. "They wha carry their heids sae high, hae sune a dooncome. The prood man has aye mony crosses and losses, but he wha is humble can enter ony door without trouble. Dinna cast oot wi' the decent Provost, or it'll no' be sae weel for ye."

All this and more of the same kind of advice was given with the view of impressing me with the duty and expediency of being obedient to the will of those who had befriended me, and taking their advice as to how I should prosecute the career I had by their kindness been enabled so auspiciously to begin. Advice of this kind does not go for much in certain conditions of mind, and in this case it was all but wasted.

To make a show to Jean and John that their good words had not been altogether in vain, I went up the street and called on the Provost. The old man was glad to see me, and rubbing his hands, he said—

"How are ye this morning after ye're hard day's work? Did I no' tell ye that it was the very thing for your wake body an' nae very strong mind? No offence is meant by the last words; ye ken there's nane o' us as wise as we should be. Ye maun stick in noo. Get mair goods, visit a' the houses o' the parish, then go to a' the villages within a circuit of ten or twenty miles, and, my certie, before ye get ower them a', you'll be able to look out for a wife. Dinna follow my example, and be an old bachelor." The latter sentence was uttered with a broad grin at his own jocularly.

"This getting mair goods to sell is what I hae come about, Provost," I responded. "I was thinkin' the best thing for me to dae would be to gang wi' the carrier to Kilmarnock or Glasgow, and buy what I needed. I could pick them out better for mysel', and maybe get them a little cheaper."

A change passed over his soncy face, and it was

apparent he was both displeased and hurt. He did not speak for a moment or two, and then said sternly—

"I see, sir, ye're the same ill-thinkin' cratur, and hae not a spark o' gratitude in ye're hale soul. I am sure ye hae been a trouble to the minister and me since ye were born, and noo when ye hae got a few shillings in your han' ye think ye can do without us and manage for yersel'. Weel, weel, ye maun just try; for, from this morning, I'll neither seek to advise ye what ye should say or dae. If ye do weel, it will be better for yersel', and if ye do ill ye'll hae to bear the consequences. Gang awa' yer gate, and naebody will be happier than the minister and me if ye turn out a sober, decent man."

I was on the way out of the shop without saying a word in reply, for I thought I could not do so judiciously, when he cried "Hi Rab, come back. I'll no treat ye as a reprobate and mak' ye an exception to other lads o' the town when they start in life. There's a Bible and the Shorter Catechism, ye're to tak' frae me as a present. Put them in your pack, and carry them wi' ye wherever ye go. Read a bit o' the Bible noo and again, and learn ane o' thae questions every night before going to bed. This is my last advice, Rab, and see ye attend to it."

Handing over the books, the Provost turned into his shop, affected by the turn our conversation had taken. Though rough in his exterior and frequently strong in his language, the Provost was a genuine and genial old soul. Many a Bible and Catechism had he given away to lads and lasses leaving the place, or getting out of their apprenticeship. These gifts were always accompanied with a few words of worldly and other-worldly wisdom. Though his theology was a jumble and had little effect on young minds, his practical religion had. The thoughtful among them were led by its out-working in deeds of kindness and charity, to see that the religion which stood the strain of life best was to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly

with God. Let me have one more look into your honest face, Provost of my youthful days, before I turn your portrait to the wall.

Though feeling a little uncomfortable at the way I had got out of the Provost's and minister's hands, I was secretly glad I had done so. I was now my own master—could buy, sell, and do what I pleased. Shortly afterwards I visited some of the larger towns, and gathered together a new assortment of wares and started on my rounds. My reception, by many, was different from what it formerly was. The first thing I noticed was, that people who used before to pass me by without the slightest recognition, now stopped and asked, "How are you to-day?" Others courted my company who used to avoid contact with me as if I carried the poison of a plague in the skirts of my garment. Frequenters of public houses, who in former times sneered at my deformity and called me by opprobrious names, were glad when I mingled in their company. They praised my antics, applauded my sallies of wit—which was never very great—and encored my songs. Indeed, I was in a short time a favourite with a considerable circle, and my company was sought after and seemingly enjoyed. All this was gratifying to my natural vanity, and puffed me up immensely. Little did I understand that this recognition and companionship had within them the elements of temptation and danger, and that the more I was flattered the nearer I was led to the edge of a precipice over which many had fallen and been dashed to pieces. Especially was there imminent danger where flattery was associated with strong drink and the public-house, which it most frequently was. When "wine is in," it is said, "wit is out." This proved true in my case. When the day's work was over, I either stayed in a public-house or repaired to one to spend the evening. As a stranger and a traveller who had all the news of the farm-houses and villages in the neighbourhood, I was placed in the chair. My gossip and stories were relished by the company, and I was treated for the enjoyment I imparted,

and in gratitude I treated all present in return. This went on till the landlord warned us it was time to break up, when everyone sought, as best he could, his own abode. As the trade increased, such carousals became very frequent, so that, though sales were more numerous, my riches were not augmented. There is such a thing as putting money in a bag with holes; and this is what I did during the months I carried on the business of a travelling merchant.

A year had not passed over my head before I discovered that, instead of making progress in the acquisition of money and goods, I was becoming poorer in both. I had become careless as to pushing my wares, and lay in bed far into the day after every debauch. My love for drink and company had become the ruling passion of my life, and I planned my course more with the view of securing these than of making sales.

How long this sort of life would have continued I do not know—it could not have been very long—but it was brought to an abrupt termination in a way I had not at all anticipated.

I was plying my business in a small town about fourteen miles from my native place, and had taken up my quarters in an unpretentious public-house, kept by a widow and her daughter. On the first night after my arrival, a fellow came whose name was Charlie—he boasted his name was Charles Randolph Montgomery—and who used to be a lodger with Granny years before. Charlie did not look upon himself as an ordinary tramp, but claimed to have relations to the nobility. His habit was to visit only castles, manors, and the seats of noblemen, from whose inmates he would take no coin less than those made of silver. In this he succeeded to a wonderful extent, and seldom or never wanted money. With the exception of Granny's, he was never known to take up his abode in a common lodging-house. He could not condescend so low as that. A public-house was his choice resting-place. Charlie had once been good looking, was tall, with black hair

in ringlets, a fine forehead, and penetrating black eyes. He said that when a boy he had got his head injured by a nobleman's carriage, and since then could not rest in one place. He also sang well, and his ditties were the newest comic songs, got by him, most likely, from Music Halls in the large cities he frequented during the winter.

When Charlie saw me in the public-house he was surprised, inquired how I happened to be there, what I did, how I was succeeding, and other things necessary to know my whole history, present condition, and future prospects. He became confidential, explained how he was about to enter upon his kingdom, and that his rich relations were about to provide him with a permanent home and an annual sum of money to keep him comfortable all the rest of his life. His age warned him, he said, it was about time he had settled down quietly, and he was just taking his last round among his patrons and friends before doing so.

Being pleased with the confidence reposed in me, I confided in him in return; told him how much money I had, where it was hid, what I intended to do, and hoped to accomplish. He listened to my story with deepest interest—affected no doubt—and praised me for wisdom and acuteness. We were at once fast friends, and drank and sang together with a few "hail fellows well met" till the morning.

This revelry and debauch continued for some nights, culminating in a great carousal the last evening I was to spend there. Charlie was in his freest and most excitable mood. His songs were sung with spirit, and his jokes and stories made the company roar with laughter. Frequent references were made to me as an old friend he had known and loved for years, and to the grand house where, as he informed the company in a short speech made in my honour, I had been brought up by a worthy grandmother of sacred memory.

"I can assure you, gentlemen," he continued

with an audacity which took away my breath, "our friend, for he is the friend of all as well as my friend, did not require to take up the occupation he has chosen and follows with so much credit to himself and advantage to the community. He can count among his intimate acquaintances, whose houses are open for his reception, the venerable Rev. Thomas Welsh, whose eloquent sermons have thrilled and, I humbly think, blessed my own soul; the chief magistrate of his native town, the wise and highly respected Provost Macnab; and the learned master of the Academy of that place, Mr. Young, whose distinguished scholar he was. But gentlemen, my friend scorned to go through the world for the mere purpose of enjoying life's pleasure. He was determined to be a man who would make his mark, and, if I may use the expression, be an honour to the place of his birth and his family. Like other Scotchmen of note, he will not rest contented till he has reached the highest round of the social ladder, and represents his native county in the British House of Commons. I therefore propose the health and prosperity of our friend, whom duty calls to leave us to-morrow morning."

There was a boisterous noise when Charlie resumed his seat, and the bell was rung for more drink. I did not know what to do or what to say. Charlie's eye was on me, and he was ready to intervene if I had attempted to explain that all he said was exaggeration and lies. He filled up a glass of the newly brought-in drink, and thrust it into my hand, saying, "Drink to the health of the company, my friend, and drain your glass to the dregs, that they may see your gratitude is great for their recognition of your worth." This I did, and shortly after ceased to be conscious. What further transpired, and how Charlie wound up the night's revelry, I do not know. I was told by the landlady's daughter next day he was the only one who could go on his feet to bed.

It was about noon the following day before I opened my eyes and knew where I was. A violent

headache and general uneasiness in body made me feel I had passed through a rough time of it the night before. After dressing, I felt my hands shake, my legs tremble under me, and I could scarcely walk. The landlady kindly asked after my condition, and brought me half a glass of whisky, and said it was "a hair of the dog which had bit me." A little breakfast was hurriedly swallowed, and I felt it was time I was preparing for my departure. I looked first for the money I had hid in a hole in the wall behind my bed, and to my horror it was not to be found. I then sought for my pack in the small room where Charlie slept, and where I was advised to put it for safety, and it was not to be seen. I rubbed my eyes, commenced to look wildly about me, and then to question my personal identity. "Am I mad or bewildered? What does this mean?" I boisterously asked. "Where is my money? Where is my pack?" The landlady declared most solemnly she knew nothing about them, and her daughter said the same. The thought then struck me that Charlie might know. On making inquiries about him, I was informed he had risen early, got his breakfast about seven o'clock, and had not been seen since. This gradually explained all, and accounted for much which transpired the evening before. I sat down with my aching head in my hands, and felt utterly wretched and undone. I was a ruined young man, and once more was friendless, solitary, and forsaken. "Oh that Granny had been alive!" I said to myself; I would have fled to her, confident that she would have, with open arms, received the prodigal; but there is no such friend of mine in the whole world as she was. The iron entered the core of my heart, and bitter were the thoughts I had of myself and of all human kind. Of God I did not, dare not, think. His Bible I had neglected, his service I had shunned, and his commandments I had broken. If he dealt with me at all, it could only be in wrath and judgment. Crushed, bleeding in heart, and forsaken, I gave myself up to a feeling akin to despair.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNWELCOME RETURN HOME.

"THERE is a thing, which in my brain
Though nightly I revolve it,
I cannot in the least explain,
Nor do I hope to solve it.
While others tread the narrow path,
In manner meek and pious,
Why is it that my spirit hath
So opposite a bias?"

—ANON.

IT is most difficult to find the depth of a soul's possibilities, and to know all that a human being can endure. He may be, as one would say, the lowest of the low, bereft of all which is precious to a moral creature; he may be stripped of money, character, friends, hope itself, and yet not have reached the deepest depth of loss and emptiness. Strange to say, when on the descending scale, and a long way down the incline, he may have more or less clearly defined in consciousness the delusion that he is a victim more than an active agent, in the production of his own misery, and that others are to blame for his condition more than himself.

This was, somewhat, my state of mind a few hours after I had discovered that my ruin was all but complete. Though I felt it keenly, I had no self-upbraiding, no self-condemnation. Others were to blame, but I could not very well have done otherwise than I did; and it would never do to acknowledge that the wrong and the wreck lay at my door. I would require to brave it out, and was determined to make the most of myself in the sad plight into which I had fallen.

Naturally, my thoughts turned in the direction of my native town. There was no other place to which I could go with the slightest chance of being aided. I knew that those who previously were acquainted with me, and who had marked my behaviour with a feeling akin to disdain, would sneer at the travelling merchant who was soon to ride in his carriage. The Provost, minister, and

those in authority would say, "Did we not tell how it would end when he scorned our advice?" Jean would not, I was certain, take me back into her house if she could possibly avoid it. And even John might not be so submissive to my will as he used to be, when we were younger. Notwithstanding all these evil forebodings, I could not see an open door anywhere except in the old thatched cottage in which I was born.

As the day wore on, it became abundantly evident that all my goods and money were gone for ever. The box I had my wares packed in was found broken to pieces in a field near the public-house in which I had spent the night. Charlie, if he were the depredator, had the start of a good many hours, and the constable of the district could not be seen—had been, if the truth was to be told, drunk the night before, and had joined his boon companions that morning. There were no telegraphs at that time by means of which to raise the hue and cry, so that I was shut up to take my loss without hope of recovery, and seek shelter where it was possible to be had.

For my old home I started next day with heavy heart and a cloudy outlook. The road was wild, lonely, and bare. There were few travellers ever found thereon, and seldom did the wayfarer see a human dwelling. Mountains rose up in some parts on each side, and barren moors, through which murky streams ran, stretched away to the horizon. The day was blasty, alternating with sunshine and rain, corresponding somewhat to my experience. When I reached a part of the road near which stands a monument in honour of a learned Scotchman who was born in a shepherd's hut near by, I sat down to rest my weary limbs and heart a little. The profound silence which prevailed around was broken by some one whistling a familiar air, and on looking from whence the pleasant sound proceeded, I saw a shepherd lad approaching with a book in his hand and a dog running before him. He was about fourteen years of age, tall, and well built, with a singularly bright eye and intelligent

countenance. As he came up to where I was sitting, he remarked—

"Rather a changeable day this, sir," and then asked, "Dae ye ken whase monument this is? Maybe ye're a stranger in this pairt o' the country?"

"O yes," I responded, "I ken the name o' the great linguist, and I remember the big man frae Edinburgh wha cam' to lay the foundation stone. He was a fine-looking man, wi' a remarkable head and face, and had lang hair ower his shoulders. But where is the hoose the great linguist was born in? It's near here, is it no?"

"It's roon' the hill there," said the lad, pointing in the direction, "and we live in it. I was born in it, and though it is an auld biggin' noo, an' the laird wants to poo it doon and big a new ane, faither says it'll dae him a' his days, and he wadna like the auld hoose made sae famous, to be destroyed. He's richt, for we're a' prood o't."

"Nae wonder, an' maybe anither great man will come oot o't, for I see ye're takin' tae books tae. What hae ye been readin'? I thocht ye wad be ill aff for books in this oot-o'-the-way place."

As he pulled another book out of his pocket, the lad replied, "Thae twa are a Greek New Testament and a Latin grammar. My faither bought them last year when he was in the toon, and I hae been trying to learn frae them ever since. I'm sae far on, that if a' gae weel on at hame, I'm to be sent to Mr. Young's schule for a year, an' then to the college. An' I'm daein' my best, an' getting on nae sae bad. When the minister was visiting a week sin', he put me through my lessons, and said he was surprised I had made sae muckle progress. He's promised to help me if I gang to the schule and college. But guid day, sir, I maun awa' up the hill, and see after the sheep."

So saying, the youth departed with a joyful bearing, and I watched him till he was far up the hill. This short interview did not make me happier, for it led me to contrast the buoyancy of the blithe shepherd boy with my own miserable condition. It was, therefore, with even a heavier

heart I rose and resumed my weary way, which became more difficult the further I proceeded. Old night had spread her sable curtains round that part of the earth when I reached the top of Jean's garden. I moved as noiselessly as possible down the well-known path, and reached the door. It had been closed for the night, but from the light which could be seen through the little window, it was evident that the inmates had not retired to rest. I knocked—my well-known boyish knock—and in an instant the door was opened, and I sprang in before Jean had time to remonstrate against my admission. So soon as I looked into her scowling face, I saw that the evil tidings had been before me, proving once more that ill news travel fast.

Holding up both her hands, she said, "Rab, ye canna stay here. We've heard aboot yer awfu' ways, yer bad company, and how ye hae lost a' thing. Ye canna stay here, I say. My certie, what wad the worthy Provost an' the guid minister say if we harboured sic a ne'er-do-weel as ye hae turned oot to be. Oot o' my hoose in the instant, and look for lodgin' whaur ye've spent yer money. Tam Glen, o' the Red Lion, will maybe tak' ye in noo. Ye ken the last time ye were here, ye stayed in their braw hoose, and didna come to Jean's but and ben."

Here, her anger waxing hotter with her words, she screamed—

"Awa' wi' ye, ye profligate, ye're just like Esau, the brither o' Jacob; ye hae sold yer birthright to the deil, and become a reprobate. Awa' wi' ye."

I was about succumbing to Jean's torrent of abuse, and made a move to retire, when John, who had sat at the fireside with his head down all the time, looked up and interposed on my behalf.

"Jean," he said, "ye're far too sair on Rab at the present meenit. Ye're takin' advantage o' his distress, an' kickin' him when he's doon. This is no' fair. Puir chiel, he likely has suffered eneuch on account o' his sins withoot you an' me makin' his punishment worse than Cain's. I ken auld Granny, after gi'ein' him as guid a scolding as ye

hae dune just noo, wad hae ta'en him in, gi'en him his supper an' a bed, at least, for the night. There couldna be much wrang in daein' that at onyrate."

These words of John at once modified Jean's wrath, and the allusion to Granny fairly broke me down. Ascribing my painful countenance and my moist eyes to feelings of repentance and sorrow for my past conduct, and not to their real cause, she said—

"Weil, John, maybe ye hae the richt end o' the string this time. The minister tauld us weil on Sabbath hoo we're to feed oor enemies, an' pray for them wha speak ill aboot us." Turning to me, she added, "ye may stay here for the nicht, Rab, and we'll see hoo things are to gae on wi' ye in the mornin'."

My supper was soon provided, and partaken of, and then John and I withdrew to the old bed where we lay in each other's arms when boys. The situation awakened memory, and though weary and sad I could not sleep. I thought of the sunny days when as a boy I used to roam among the woods and hills, and on my return could always calculate on an admonition, sometimes a slight box on the ear, and with both food and kindness from our old mother, who was gone. Her death-bed came to my mind, and her last words, "John and Rab, will ye meet me in heaven?" were, as it were, whispered into my ear. Heaven! I thought there can be no heaven for me. Jean is right; I am a reprobate, and I shall never see Granny again. I did not speak to John about the thoughts which passed through my mind, but they kept me awake, tired though I was, till far on in the morning.

From the events of the preceding night, I soon discovered that my success with Jean lay in securing the friendship of John. I, therefore, immediately set about to besiege the kindly-disposed weaver, and win him over to my side. I told him how much I had missed his advice, how I had thought a great deal about him and Granny, and their kindness to me, and hinted that I never stood in more need of friends than at the present moment. I

would never, I vowed, forget his action if he could arrange with Jean to keep me for a few days, till work of one kind or another would turn up. I professed to be deeply interested in his own success at the loom, and endeavoured to draw out of him if he had saved money, and how much.

To this course of inquiry he cautiously replied, "My wark, ye see, has been constant. I hae been at it frae Monday mornin' till Saturday nicht, an' this soon tells on the length o' the wab. Besides, ye maun understan', the agent has learned he can reckon on me bein' at the wab's en' at the richt time. This has favoured me a great deal, an' I hae aye, I'm thankfu' to say, got the very best pieces o' wark which come into the place. Ye couldna help me much, Rab, except ye wad fill my pirns, for Jean aye grumbles at this when I push her a wee, and forby she's no guid at it. I wad hae been the better o' Granny noo, for she was a gran' filler o' pirns, an' was sae prood she could keep up wi' Tammas Sproat, the quickest weaver in the hale countryside."

"I could dae this for ye fine," I interposed, in a hopeful tone, "for Granny used to teach me when I was a wee boy, an' sometimes we wad see which o' us could fill a hātfu' soonest an' best. I'm sure ye wad get on quicker wi' yer wark if I kept ye in plenty o' pirns, an' Jean wad jist be as glad if she hadna this kind o' wark to dae."

John quickly nodded his head in token of assent to my proposal. Although I had not learned all I wanted to know, I had gained the honest weaver's support, and this for the present was enough.

He arranged matters with Jean, whom I learned was no longer mistress of the house—which was taken in John's name—and was only the house-keeper. The work of filling pirns, though not dignified for a man of my age, suited me for the time being even better than other work could have done. It kept me within doors, and for a week I was never seen out on the street during daylight. Gradually I made my appearance, and used every opportunity which presented itself to make a little money.

These opportunities occurred most frequently in connection with coaches, carriers, and farmers' carts, which stopped at the Red Lion public-house. Imperceptibly my old life revived the more money I got, and in proportion as I got rich the less I attended to John's kindly warnings and Jean's threatenings. It is said the "burned bairn dreads the fire," but this is not always the case. It was not so in my experience. Notwithstanding all I had suffered and lost through drink and public-houses, they were still the attractions which held me spell-bound. They drew me toward them with an all but irresistible cord. Work, reading—of which I was ever fond, especially of a certain class of books—home comforts, and friendship, were set aside for the companionship of those who spent much of their time in the course of the day and in the evenings under the roof of Tam Glen. The craving for drink was strong within me, and in certain circumstances it demanded satisfaction so loudly that I was compelled to attend to its demands so long as I had a penny to spend. There are few slaves more firmly held than the slaves of strong drink, and only those know the strength of its chain who have been captives under its terrible power. This I felt very early, and from the realisation of this much of the bitterness of my life sprung.

It was when I attended the stables, kitchen, and public parlour of the Red Lion I came under the influence of one of my old school-fellows, who belonged to the better class. Albert Craigie was the only son of his mother, who was a widow, and was distinguished for her benevolence and her Christian walk and conversation. He was about the same age as myself, and when under Dominie Young was generally in the same class. No one was more admired than he was by his school companions, for he was always neatly dressed, with a fine linen collar folded neatly over his blue jacket, and was called the "little gentleman." Albert was related to the minister, to whom, when even a mere boy, he showed a most unaccountable aver-

sion. The mother designed him to be a soldier; and after he had finished his education at the parish school, he was sent to a military academy to be trained as an officer in the British Army, as his father had been before him. He had not been a full term there till word was sent home that he had fallen under the influence of a "fast set," and required to be dealt with firmly. After visiting home between terms, Albert returned to his studies, followed by the good wishes of his friends, and the prayers of his saintly mother. In about three months after, it was whispered a message had been sent to his guardians that he must be at once removed from the academy, for his habits were calculated to demoralize the whole of the pupils. In a short time he was quietly withdrawn, and not long after he made his appearance at his mother's home. Albert soon made his presence known in the little town and neighbourhood. He fished, shot, played during winter at curling, neglected the church, railed at the minister, and drank with all those who did not fear to drain the flowing bowl. I soon became a very slave to Albert, followed him in the field, on the loch, by the river side, and into the public-house. My reward for the little things I was able to do for him was now and again a few shillings and drink. When we were alone he would indulge in loud and bitter denunciations of the minister, his relatives, sometimes including his own mother, and many of the respectable inhabitants.

To stir up my anger, he would say—

"I say, Rab, they never did you any good. Since you were a child they have treated you like a beast, and left you to perish so far as their help was concerned. I often wonder where your spirit is, when with the memory of your wrongs you do not seek reprisals."

To such suggestions I would generally reply I was powerless. They could easily crush me, but added, "I hae na dune wi' them yet."

Whether on account of these conversations with Albert or not I cannot tell, but the spirit of

revenge took a firm hold on me, and made me for months its own. The feeling I entertained was not against any one person in particular, but every individual who did not in one way or another recognize me. This spirit manifested itself in various strange ways, during the long dark nights, and generally after I had been at the Red Lion. The most serious of these, and the one which awakened the greatest indignation and grief was the destruction I wrought in the fine garden attached to the manse. Knowing every gate and every gap in the hedge where a cat could get through, I sallied forth one evening by a circuitous route to the manse garden about the time the minister had family worship in his study, which was on the other side of the house from the garden. I soon found admission, and made straight for a well-built and carefully furnished summer-house, rendered all the more sacred to its possessor because his first wife planned it, and superintended its erection. As noiselessly as possible the work of destruction was begun, and accomplished to my heart's content. I then groped my way to a favourite statuette, which stood in the centre of a grass plot immediately before the dining-room window. It took all my strength to get it down, and cast it through the hedge into a deep ditch on the other side. I then smashed the wooden pedestal to pieces. After a few other less serious things of a like character were done, off I ran with the swiftness of a hare when the hounds are after her in full speed. I entered and passed through the kirkyard, through field after field, till, all out of breath, I reached the other end of the town from where the manse stood, and then went slowly down the street, home to bed, wondering what would be said about this wanton mischief next morning.

Next morning found me in a very industrious frame of mind, and early at the wheel filling John's pirms. Jean went out to get milk for the morning meal, and in a shorter time than usual returned in a most excited condition.

"The whole toon's asteer, John," she cried as she

laid down the pitcher. "Jeams, the minister's man, has been doon for the constable, for somebody has a' but knocked doon the manse, destroyed the gran' summer hoose and the praying angel in the garden. The minister himsel', puir man, when he saw a' the destruction that had been dune, commenced to greet like a bairn, an' said he didna think there was ane in a' the parish wha wud hae troubled him in sic a way. I could greet for him mysel'," added Jean, lifting up the corner of her apron to wipe away a tear which stood in her eye.

John looked serious, shook his head, and slowly said, "Them that hae dune this will sune fin' oot the way o' transgressors is hard. Ministers an' widows are black craws tae shoot at, and they wha dae sae, waste mair than their pooder."

I stopped the wheel, and listened with intense interest and a good deal of tremor, venturing to ask, "Hae they foun' oot yet wha did it?"

"They dinna ken yet wha has been at the bottom o' this disgrace to the parish and harm to Mr. Welsh," Jean answered, "but Mrs. Smith said, in my hearing, to a' in her milk shop this mornin', 'It's no common folk wha hae dune the like o' this. They hae nae cause to harm the minister, and knock doon his wee bit hoose in his garden. It's mair like ane o' oor betters, wha hae mair siller than sense, an' eat a guid deal mair than they work for. If I were the constable,' Mrs. Smith said, wi' ane o' her queer shakes o' her head, 'I wadna look far awa' for the scoondrel. He must hae kenned a' about the manse an' the minister's ways, or he wadna hae tried on sic desperate tricks as he has dune. It may be the fulfilmen' o' the words o' Scripture—A man's faes are them o' his ain hoosehold.'"

Here the conversation ended, and we commenced our breakfast in silence. Mrs. Smith had Albert before her mind as the culprit, for he had never hidden his animosity to the minister. She was not alone in her surmises, for others thought the same. The minister, after the constable had examined into the matter, had, it was said, come to the same con-

clusion, and told the representative of the law to make no further inquiries ; it was better to allow the matter to drop, for he would rather suffer himself than that one of his parishioners should be punished.

A few weeks passed away without much to attract attention to me or my doings. During this period I was quieter and more regular at work than I had been for a long time. I felt exceedingly relieved when the story of the outrage on the manse garden died away, for I had not in the least calculated it would have touched the hearts of the rich and the poor of the parish as it did. If I had been found out at that time, my punishment would have been accompanied by the ill-will of the whole population.

But for a season I escaped the suffering which I so richly deserved. How this was I did not seek to inquire into at the time, but often since I have been led to say, "This was the doings of the Lord, and wondrous in my eyes." The Shepherd to whom Granny committed the care of her "twa laddies" who were always to be "twa brithers" did not forget her prayer, nor ill repay the confidence the old woman reposed in Him. He watched over the wandering sheep who sillily sought unforbidden pastures. In the hour of greatest danger He protected him by His power, and blessed him by His love. Whoever could deny a special personal Providence, I could not. All through my wanderings in days of sin and darkness, as well as those of light, His hand was present, and His shepherding care was made known ; and never more strikingly than at the time when, with recklessness and sin, I insulted and injured the man who, under Christ, should have been the bishop of my soul.

CHAPTER VII.

ARRESTED AND TRIED.

"AND in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

—MILTON.

THERE may be such a being in the world as a totally depraved human soul, through whose thoughts and heart no good ever passed, but I cannot say such an experience was ever mine. In the darkest moment there was, at least, a faint streak of light seeking to enter and possess my inner man, and the time never was when whispers from the better world did not fall on the inner ear. These good visitants may have been like angels' visits, "few and far between," but they came and did make themselves known. They did not, however, permanently affect the general current of my life. They may have stopped its outflow for a season, or made it seek a new channel, as a big boulder does when cast into a mountain stream, but it soon returned to its old way. The evil and wanton spirit was still present, and would soon make an outlet for itself. What was needed for this was an impulse from without, a spark to set the fuel of my passion into a flame which would devour whatever it touched.

Such impulses were not wanting, and they came from different sources. They were frequently given when not intended, and became seriously operative in directions of the most diverse nature.

Some of these were received in the smithy, where I used to foregather with the grumblers and politicians of the town, and where all manner of topics and persons were freely and fully discussed. The chief meeting of these worthies was held on Tuesday morning, when the weekly newspaper arrived, and its main contents were read aloud. At such times, Old Vulcan, a shrewd old man, nearly seventy years of age, with shaggy locks and bronzed

countenance, laid down his hammer, and allowed the bellows to remain in a quiescent condition till the reader for the day had made known the principal news the paper contained. One Tuesday I was sent with Albert's pony to get shod, just as the smith's youngest son brought in the much-prized paper. It was soon opened and greedily devoured. The news it contained was that morning of the most exciting description. The Chartist movement was then in its full swing, and the working classes were everywhere joining it in thousands. Large meetings had been held, and riots had taken place in several cities. Rumours were abroad to the effect that the physical force party were buying rifles in numbers, and were being drilled secretly at night. So intense was the excitement that the Duke of Wellington had taken command of the troops in London, and the Houses of Parliament had to be protected by a strong military force. All this was read out amid breathless attention.

"That's gran'," said Dick Small. "They mean real wark this time. We hae been far too lang in letting the big folk ken oor power. It maks my bluid boil in me tae think that the struggle is to tak' place, an' me no' to be there."

Dick was a tailor, who made loud professions of courage at public meetings, and was noted for his strong language and extreme political views.

"Ye needna vex yersel' sae muckle, man," said Old Vulcan, "the struggle's no' begun yet. There's plenty o' time for ye to get to Glesca before the Government is put doon. Ye're yaul, and if ye like ye can be amang the Chartists the morn's nicht. They nicht mak' ye a general o' the rebel forces," added Vulcan, with a twinkle of his eye.

"It's nae fun," said Dick, "an' it's no' to be lauched at in that way. The producers o' the hale wealth o' the country hae been hadden doon lang eneuch wi' the rich and the prood. We maun hae oor way noo, an' then we'll ken, as the French dae, what's the meaning o' the glorious words—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity."

"Ye're quite richt, Dick. We're a' slaves, an'

the tyrants must be put doon. I go in for a' the points o' the Charter, an' I'm no ashamed to say I'll follow O'Connor to the bitter en'. Richt glad am I that the po'ers that be are shakin' in their shune. They'll shake waur by-and-bye, or I'm cheated."

These words were uttered by a little weaver, Geordie M'Math, who spent more of his time at the street corner than on his loom, and who looked upon himself as an authority on most matters.

Old Vulcan looked down on the speaker with a look of supreme disdain, and asked, "Dae ye expect much guid frae the like o' Fergus O'Connor, an' sic lood-moothed talkers?"

"Na," he added, "I hae nae faith in thae chaps. They talk too lood and brag too much to do onything o' a practical natur'. It's no' to them we maun look to get things that are wrang, richted. I fear their e'e is aye on themsels. Whan the time comes for fechtin', they'll no' be there, or I'm a leer."

"That's too bad, Vulcan," cried several voices at once.

"We maun hae oor richts, or we'll fecht for them, that's a'," said Dick quite boldly.

"Doun wi' the rich and the oppressors o' the puir," cried Geordie at the top of his voice. "There's the lord in the castle. What has he dune that he should live in sic a big hoose or ride in a carriage? He works nane, and has been the maist o' his days livin' on the Continent, wastin' ither folk's siller. An' yet he lives at heck and manger, an' we an' oor wives an' weans maun starve. There's something wrang in this, Vulcan, surely. We maun a' hae a share o' what's gaun, and chaps like them must come doon amang us, and dae their pairt o' the wark."

Albert, who had come into the smithy during Geordie's speech, to see why I had not returned with his pony, here interjected the words, "Let them be swept off the face of the earth, never more to return."

"An' you amang the lave," said a hitherto silent member of the group in an under tone, "for

ye're guid for naething but mischief an' drinkin' whisky."

I left the smithy in a most revolutionary state of mind, determined to let my power be felt somewhere, and on some person of influence, and thereby emulate the rioters who had become so famous as to have their deeds recorded in the newspapers and discussed by so many people. In this spirit I planned an attack on Mr. Young, the schoolmaster, who at that time, because of some passing incident, was not a favourite with those who attended to drink rather than work, and to the public-house more than their own fireside. I set to work one evening in the most determined manner after I had spent the afternoon in a public-house not far from the riverside. Having secured some tar, I put it on the handle of the school door, which the master would require to open not long after for his evening class. A small gate was noiselessly taken off its hinges and placed in the shade of gooseberry bushes across the path by which he was sure to go to the school. Succeeding easily in these preliminaries, and being emboldened by previously escaping detection, my wantonness increased, and in a moment of thoughtlessness I lifted two stones, and threw them with violence at the window of the large room of the school-house which was nearest the public road. The noise made by the smash of the panes of glass was loud, and attracted the attention of two men who were at the instant passing into the town. They immediately rushed through the gate into the garden, from whence they rightly judged the stones had come, and made straight for where I was hiding behind an apple tree. In a moment, after seeing the figures approaching, I was off, believing if I had a few yards' start they would never find me. But alas! The pit I had dug for another was the one into which I had tumbled headlong. In my alarm and unexpected encounter, I forgot all about the gate I had placed to entrap the schoolmaster's feet, and over it I stumbled and fell with great violence on the road. For a moment I was stunned, and

when I endeavoured to rise and run, a firm grip was taken of my collar, and the constable (for it was he) said, as with his teeth set most firmly—

“Ye scoundrel, I have got you now; taken you in the very act. You have escaped me for a long time, but ye’ll no get out of my power now.”

Calling on the person who was with him to come to his aid, he took out his handcuffs and baton and said, if I did not surrender peaceably, he would dash out my brains. All the schoolmaster’s household were, in a few minutes, around me, and the master himself was present as white as death, and trembling like an aspen leaf. He said nothing, only gave a sigh, and with an expression of sorrow on his countenance, returned immediately to his house, and left me in the hands of my captors. They then dragged me along in the direction of the constable’s house, where I had to stay under guard till the Provost was consulted. In about an hour after I was placed in a dark dungeon, called popularly the “Black Hole,” and there on a pallet of straw I had to lie for the night.

The news soon spread that Rab had been caught in the very act of breaking Dominie Young’s windows, and had been lodged in jail. A crowd soon gathered round the door of the wretched cell, and boys and girls mocked me through the small opening, without glass, about four inches wide and two feet long, which was all the window the place had. They cried after me, “Travelling merchant! Where is your carriage noo, Rab? When are ye gaun to the Hoose o’ Commons for the Burghs?” and the like. There seemed to be no sympathy for me in my fearful plight, and my friends, if I had any, had not the courage to come and intercede on my behalf.

I had passed through much suffering, agony, and misery before, but all I had endured was as nothing to what I had suffered that dreadful night in that dark dungeon. Death would have been welcome, for hell itself, I imagined, could not have been much worse. In the darkness I gathered myself together into a corner, and sat and

sighed, utterly disconsolate, with now and then a flare up of bitter anger against all mankind. During these outbursts, if I could have only done some desperate deed of cruelty, and then taken away my own life, I would have been satisfied. But these feelings lasted only for a moment, and then came back the dull emotion of utter sadness and isolation which rolled over and crushed me to the very dust. Once or twice I said aloud, as if to ease the terrible mental strain, "I'm thankful Granny's deid. I wish I was deid too. Poor John! I'm vexed for him, for he will be awfully downcast by what's ta'en place, an' the disgrace I hae brought on him." During the whole long night I could not sleep, and found out that John's words were true—"They wha sow thorns only get mair thorns, which mak' bad pillows to lie on."

On the morrow I was removed to a cell up stairs, and was more comfortable. It was determined that my trial was to be before the Sheriff at the County Town, twenty miles off. When the constable called on the Provost, and told him the details of the crime or crimes I had committed, and the evidence he could furnish in support of the charges, the old man said, "Tak' him to the Shirra; I dinna want onything to dae wi' the cratur'. Get the papers a' ready, an' I'll sign them for ye. He's been a terrible blockhead a' his days, but his feet 'ill be laid fast noo."

The evidence was got up, and witnesses were subjected to the preliminary examination by the constable, who did it with all the airs of a person of supreme authority. He could not, even before me, hide his pride at his successful capture; and all the more so that he had been blamed by the public for remissness in getting hold of the depra-dators who had plagued the neighbourhood for years. When the Court day arrived I was conveyed to the County Town in an open car, and during the journey I never uttered a word. My own thoughts and fears occupied my attention too much for me to pay heed to the scenery or the houses, villages, and people we passed on the way.

At length the spires of the churches of the town appeared in view, and this made me sadder, for I knew in a short time I would be shut out from the society of my fellow-men, and left to my own self and God.

The Court sat at twelve o'clock, and I was taken into the Court-house by two policemen, and placed in the dock. The Sheriff, an intelligent-looking gentleman with a fine forehead, about sixty years of age, was on the bench. The Clerk immediately rose to read the legal indictment against me—a large and formidable-looking document. It seemed to me to contain every crime possible for a person to commit; and I waited to hear that murder was included among the bad deeds I was charged with. When the Clerk resumed his seat, the Sheriff asked—

“Are you guilty or not guilty?”

Not answering the question at the moment, and, indeed, not being sure what to answer, for I did not understand the full import of all the legal verbosity and terminology I had heard, the question was repeated.

The constable then explained. “His Lordship is asking, Are you guilty or not guilty? Say yes or no.”

I stammered out, “Yes; I broke the schule-maister's window, and did a wheen ither things o' that kin'.”

“That is, I understand,” said the Sheriff, “you plead guilty as libelled.”

“I suppose so. Yes,” I again muttered.

“Let that be taken down,” he said to the Clerk, and asked, “Have you, Robert Milligan, any witnesses you would like to call as to your previous character?”

With a feeling of helplessness I looked round the Court to see if any one would come forward and say something on my behalf. To my astonishment I saw Albert seated near the door; he had come down that morning to see how it would fare with me. Would I name him? was the question which flashed through my mind. As quickly I answered my own inquiry in the negative. He could not

say any good about either himself or me. I therefore shook my head in reply to his Lordship's question.

The Sheriff then said—"Before passing sentence in this case, I would like to know something about the antecedents of this young man. Call the constable of the district."

The constable who captured me stood forward and was sworn. He was interrogated by the Judge. "Does the prisoner belong to the place where he has committed the offence?"

"Yes, your Lordship, he was born and brought up in the parish."

"Has he been there and in the neighbourhood all his life?"

"Yes; so far as I know, he was never far away from where he was born."

"Has he been previously convicted of any crime? Has he been in the hands of the authorities before for any misdemeanour?"

"No, my Lord," answered the policeman, and thinking he might be blamed for this on account of lack of zeal or ability on his part, he added, "We never could get evidence that he broke the law previous to this depredation, although no doubt he has committed many offences."

"Precisely," said the Sheriff. "You wish to put your suppositions forward as if they were proved. This is neither law nor justice, and should never be done by a police-officer. Are his parents alive?"

"No, your honour, he never knew his parents; he was a foundling, and brought up by an old woman who died many years ago."

"Oh, I see," responded the Sheriff; "he has had no relatives to look after him, and has had a great deal of his own will and way. Can you tell me why he indulged in such lawless conduct as that which has brought him here? Was it out of mischief or for some gain?"

Being intensely stirred by all these questions and answers, at this point I cried out—

"My Lord, it was bad company, drink, and public-houses that ruined me and brocht me here."

72 ROBERT MILLIGAN'S DIFFICULTIES.

I was ordered to be quiet, and the policeman replied, "I cannot say what led the prisoner to do such lawless deeds, for his criminality did him no good, but a great deal of harm. He has been, ever since I was appointed to my present office, a pest to the country-side, and always doing some evil thing."

"That will do," said his Lordship. Turning to me, he said—"Robert Milligan, you have been charged with a most serious offence, to which you have pled guilty. The offence is one which could not be passed over by any rightly constituted community, and especially by a kingdom like this, where law and order are so much prized. There are elements in your case which lead me to be as favourable to you by way of punishment as I possibly can. You are young, and have a future before you, in which, if you give attention to your duty, you can partially redeem the past. You are not, it appears, a hardened criminal, for your violations of law have not been committed with criminal intent so much as in a wanton and almost thoughtless spirit. You seem to have a restless disposition, and an energy which, if employed in the walks of industry, might be beneficial to yourself and others. In these circumstances I feel it to be my duty to impose upon you the punishment of twenty-one days' imprisonment, without the option of a fine. Take warning in time, and bethink yourself during your confinement. Do not come before me again, or the penalty will be much more severe. Twenty-one days' imprisonment. The next case."

A hand was laid on my shoulder, and the policeman said, "This way," pointing to a door. Through it I went a condemned man, a criminal. In a few minutes more I stood in a small cell with a stone floor, high ceiling, a small grated window near the ceiling, a stool, a little table with a Bible on it, and a small wooden bed. The jailer said in as pleasant a manner as possible, "Milligan, this is your abode, I hope you will find it comfortable."

Going out, he shut the heavy door behind him, and with a peculiar sound, which, often since, I

have heard in my dreams by day and night, the lock was turned. I stood for a moment overwhelmed. The strain had exhausted my whole being, and the reaction set in violently. My head began to be giddy, a faintness took away the power of tongue and limb, and I sank on my prison-bed broken-hearted and wretched.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRISON EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS.

"WITHIN my earthly temple there's a crowd ;
 There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud ;
 There's one that's broken-hearted for his sins,
 And one, unrepentant sits and grins ;
 There's one who loves his neighbour as himself,
 And one who cares for naught but fame and pelf—
 From much corroding care I should be free,
 If once I could determine which is me."

—ANON.

THERE is no doubt but that there is a difference between punishment and chastisement, but what that difference is it is not easy to determine. Where the one ends and the other begins who can tell ? or whether they are co-existent and co-operative it is not, perhaps, possible to decide. In considering the subject, it has appeared to me they may be both the same, objectively considered, as philosophers would say, and that they differed only subjectively, or as experienced. What, therefore, would be mere punishment to one person would be only chastisement to another ; and on the other hand, what would be wholly chastisement to one would be wholly punishment to another. In both cases suffering would be endured, and would be experimentally differentiated—to use another philosophical phrase—by the spirit in which it was borne. If it were borne in a meek and submissive spirit, and with the consciousness it was needed or deserved, it would be chastisement ; but, if endured with a bold, defiant, and rebellious will, it would be punishment, and, instead of softening the heart and

educating the mind, would harden and corrode the feelings, and deteriorate the whole moral nature. If these thoughts are correct, every one who passes from the dock to the cell can determine whether he is to be benefited or hurt, chastised or punished, by what he is to endure.

It was thus, doubtless, in my case, as well as in that of others. So soon as I had recovered from the stupor which overcame me after reaching the cell—during which I received not a little kindness from the jailer and warder—the words uttered, and the advice given by the Sheriff, came home to me with power. He seemed to think I was not hopelessly lost, that I possessed energy of will which, if employed rightly, might result in benefit to others and myself; and that my confinement in prison was a fitting time to reform. This was an encouraging and hopeful view of my position, and drove a great deal of the bad, bitter feeling out of my heart. I will take his advice, I resolved, and see if I cannot yet become something like a man who could in honour and honesty walk with others in fellowship and peace.

So long as these and such like thoughts were the predominating ones I mused over, I felt no restraint—I was free, though confined. But the prison walls contracted, the light became darkness, when hope died within me, and my feebleness of will once more manifested itself. There was a war in my innermost being—sometimes the good and at other times the evil having the mastery. As this war was going on, I stood, as if it were, at a distance, and watched the conflict, looking at it as if it did not belong essentially to myself. When the good prevailed, I was led to ask, "What shall I do? What can I do to be better, stronger in spirit, a new man with new impulses, new aims, and new aspirations?" No one was near to answer these and such like questions which day by day tormented my distracted mind.

When exercised in this manner on the afternoon of the first Sunday I was a prisoner, I turned to the Shorter Catechism, which was bound up with

the Bible provided for my use. I rather dreaded to open that wonderful compendium of theology, for some of its questions and their answers had made me, when very young, have hard thoughts of God and dismal surmisings about the human race. I opened it, however, and read it from the beginning with a more earnest desire to understand its meaning than I had ever done before. I endeavoured to grasp the ideas which were contained in the words, and apply them personally to myself as I went along, and consider my past life and present condition in the light of what the Catechism contained.

When engaged in this course of reading and introspection, the jailer ushered in a lady who, he said, had come to give me some religious instruction. Her name was Mrs. Gordon, and her sombre dress betokened she had lost her husband.

"Mrs. Gordon will read the Bible to you," said the official. "She has been a blessing to many who have been under my charge, and I hope she may be a blessing to you too, Milligan."

With this introduction he withdrew without locking the door behind him.

"I am come," she said quietly and kindly, "to see if I can be of any use to you in understanding the Scriptures, the way of salvation, and God's gracious dealing with you. It will be a great privilege if I can help you in the least in these all-important spiritual matters."

She paused, and evidently expected me to reply, which I did not for a minute, during which I was debating with myself whether I should tell her all the doubts and difficulties which oppressed me so much. At length I resolved to open my mind fully to her, and said—

"I'm much obleeged to you, my ledy, comin' here to seek my spiritual wellbein', an' I'll gladly tak' what help ye can gie me to understan' baith mysel' an' the Bible. I hae a great many doobts an' difficulties about God, my soul, an' the future as weel as the past, an' these hae gi'en me a deal o' trouble, an' made me often very miserable."

"Would you confide in me, and tell me your chief difficulties, and I will then see if I can help you?" she asked.

"I'll sune dae that, my ledy," I replied, "for I was thinkin' aboot them when ye cam' in. Ye see I hae been readin' the Question Book, an' if a' there be true, I was a reprobate before I was born, an' will be lost for ever. But, mem, I canna see how I should be punished this way, for I couldna help daein' a' the bad deeds I hae dune."

"How can you come to such a terrible conclusion?" asked Mrs. Gordon, with visible agitation. "It is a temptation of the enemy of souls, the work of the evil one who ruined our first parents in the garden of Eden."

"Here's hoo it stands as I see't, my ledy," I answered. "We're telt that we're a' made for the glory o' God, an' that we micht enjoy Him for ever. That's what I can understan', for it's like oor Maker. But—"

"It is a glorious doctrine," interjected Mrs. Gordon, "that we are all made by a loving and holy Being for Himself and to promote His glory, and we should hold to that, and live up to it."

"But, as I was goin' to say," I continued, "hoo can that be true when we're also tauld that God, for His ain glory, has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass? What am I in jail for? Is it no for breakin' the maister's windows an' sic like things? If I was frae everlasting foreordained to dae a' thae wicked things an' a' the ill things a' my life, hoo am I tae blame, and why should I be here in this cell?"

"That is one of the divine mysteries which we cannot understand," said Mrs. Gordon. "It is not for us poor short-sighted creatures to pry into the councils of the Eternal. 'Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another to dishonour?' These are the words of the Apostle Paul, and we must let the matter rest there."

These words of Mrs. Gordon had a powerful effect upon me, and roused me to ask—

"Dae ye mean to tell me I'm just in soul an' in body this meenit as God wants me to be, an' that He has made me the ill-faured, coorse, and mis-shapen vessel that I'm in character? Did He mak' me curse and swear, lee and drink, break windows, pu' doon gates? Did He dae a' that?"

"You shock me," replied the good lady, hurt by my violent language. "I fear you have dwelt upon these things too much. As I have already said, they belong to the secret things of the Lord, and should be let alone. 'Secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children.'"

"If they're sae secret, hoo did the folks ken to put them in the Question Book?" I inquired in all sincerity.

"Such thoughts as these you should for ever banish out of your mind," Mrs. Gordon replied, "and all we should think about is our sins and our Saviour."

"I think o' my sins a great deal," I said. "They trouble me the hale day, and mony a time a' nicht tae. I ken I hae a bad heart, an' oot o't hae come a' the black actions o' my life, as tigers oot o' their lair. But I hae serious and guid thoughts tae, an' between them I hae a sair time o't."

"This is so far true of all," said the lady, "for all are sinners. This is the reason why God, in his boundless mercy, has provided a way of escape, so that those who deserve death and woe may, through the merits of Jesus Christ, receive life and heaven for ever more."

"Haud a wee there, if you please, mem," I impulsively said. "What you say is sae far true, but thae blessings are no intended for a' the sinners in the warld. I hae just been readin', 'God, out o' his mere good pleasure, hath from a' eternity elected some to everlasting life.' Some, ye see, my ledy; some, an' I'm fell sure I'm no in that some. I never had faithier, mither, hame, or freens like ither folk. I never had onybody to care for my body or soul but auld Granny that's deid lang syne, and John. I hae been a wicked loon a' my

life, an' noo I'm in jail, an' a' this tells me I'm no ane o' the elect. I'm a reprobate, as Jean says, an' there's naething but hell for me at last."

"I am deeply sorry for you," said my visitor; "you should not brood over the past so much. What is dark to us now will be made clear hereafter. We should turn our attention to the simple things of God's Word, which even a child could understand, and more particularly to the life, words, and death of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Would you like if I would read a few verses of Scripture before I retire?"

To this request I could not do otherwise than answer "Yes," though my difficulties as to my position spiritually being determined for me and not by me, before I was born, were as great as ever.

Mrs. Gordon opened her New Testament, and read with much gentleness the third chapter of John's Gospel. She was a trained reader—trained in the school of the Holy Ghost. Her emphasis was that of the heart, and her love was that of the Son of Man—tender, almost tearful. When she ended her reading, she knelt down and offered a short prayer, of which I and my darkness and fears were the burden. Under its influence I felt more peaceful, and was refreshed as by a rill of the water of life from heaven.

After this conversation with Mrs. Gordon, I became more determined than ever that this period in prison should be the turning point of my life. If I could not become another and better man, avoid drink, idle, dissolute ways, and bad company, I would rather die. The Bible was made the man of my counsel in my leisure hours, and I sought in its pages to find the pearl of great price. I turned to the old and well-known stories which had delighted me at school—the life of Joseph, the story of Samson, and the record of the deeds of David and Goliath. To my surprise they had largely lost their charm, and appeared as if they had been all changed. I could scarcely read them through, so little were they suited to my taste. They did not fit into my wants at that moment,

and I found out that Scripture narrative, without adaptation to present circumstances, cannot satisfy the hungry soul which asks for the Living Bread. Paul's epistles were then looked into, as parts of the New Testament from which the minister frequently took his texts. These also failed to supply the spiritual nourishment I required. Here and there a verse was appreciated and thought about, but the meaning of the Apostle in the entire epistle was not even dimly apprehended. To the Gospels I then turned, and at once found they contained what was both serviceable and easily understood. They were instinct with power, and drew me to them with ever-increasing strength. I read through the four Evangelists more than once, so often indeed that all their principal incidents were riveted on my mind, and many of the sayings of the Lord were stored in the memory. Though I delighted in the exercise, no great change was produced in me by this course of sacred reading. Nor was there any conscious blessing received by means of the conversations I had with the pious Mrs. Gordon, who was most assiduous in her ministrations. This was not a fruit-bearing, but a sowing-time—a sowing in tears, that a harvest might further on be reaped with joy. By it, I afterwards learned that even an outside knowledge of the Word of God is of unspeakable value. It is in the soul like wood and coal in the grate before the fire is kindled. A spark of fire may set the whole into a blaze which may warm, illumine, and purify. The Divine Book is never read in vain, and when it is perused in prison it may be the means of blessing and power in some of the crises of existence.

The days passed into weeks, and when the third one of my imprisonment had begun, I took into consideration what I should do when I was restored to liberty. I dreaded the time as it drew near, for I knew that then the real battle had to be fought and the allurements to my old bad ways resisted. To the old place I must needs return, and had written to John to see if he would once more be-

friend the friendless and take me home. In a long letter I told him my resolution to break off my former habits, and that I would rather die than be as I had previously been—a plague to my neighbours and an enemy to myself. John's reply was characteristic, but kind. He said—

"It's easy for a bird in the cage to say, 'When I get out I will flee only among flowers and on the high branches of the trees, and never among briars and thorns to spoil my feathers.' It means well, but it does not know its own weakness and tendencies. So, Rab, it is fine and easy for you to say, you will do this and that when ye come home, but ye forget your own strength is as dust, and your powers of resistance are like paper walls. As auld Granny used to say, 'Empty barrels mak' maist soun,' so weakest souls make most boastings. But come to your old home, Rab, and you will get a bite of meat and a bed as long as I can give them. We were always to be 'twa brithers,' and I cannot give you up yet."

Two evenings before I would be a free man once more, the jailer came in to my cell and sat down on the edge of my bed, a thing he had never done before. He at once said—

"Milligan, your time will be up by Thursday morning at eight o'clock, and I suppose you have made up your mind what you are to do. You have behaved well during your time, and have not given any trouble to me or the other officer, and we both wish you well. But wishes, Milligan, on our part or your part, will do no good, for as your Scotch proverb says, 'If wishes were horses beggars would ride.' There must be more than wishes and good intentions. You must resolve, Milligan, you will be an honest, industrious, God-fearing man."

"This," I replied with firmness, "I hae resolved to be, for I've seen through the foolishness o' my past conduct. Like Saul, the big king, I hae played the fool, and I'll play it nae langer. Ithers lauched at me an' my tricks, but I hae had to bear the disgrace an' shame. God helping me, I'll no

come back here or to ony place like it. I hae learned a hard lesson I'll no' soon forget."

"That's right, and Heaven will help ye," said the jailer most heartily. "One article of my creed is, God helps those who help themselves. He is never behind, with aid, when He sees any of His creatures fighting for bare life against the devil and his allies. I'm not much of a religious fellow myself, by way of talk. Enlisting early, I did not get a great education, but learned always to attend to three things—Fear God, honour the King, or rather I should say the Queen, and do my duty. These have been my watchwords all through my soldier's career, and especially since the night before I was first under fire. Ah, sir, that was a solemn night and a right glorious time! A few of us met together, sir, on that memorable occasion, to read the Bible and pray. My blood glows when I think of Richard Morley, who that night cried to God for us all, and made us feel that the Heavenly Father's arms would be around us when in the fray next day. But I forget what I was saying to you. That scene excites me, sir, after all these years. Oh, yes. Fear God, do your duty, and your future will be bright and successful."

"What wad ye advise me to dae?" I asked the old soldier, who was at that moment my friend as well as jailer. "You understan' the temptations o' the warld better than me, an' hoo to meet them."

"Meet them!" exclaimed the soldier. "Never meet them; flee from them as quick as you can. A strange advice this, you say, for an old soldier to give, who has fought the French in Spain and Waterloo, and never turned his back to these foreign rascals. But your battle is different from those I have seen, and your enemy is too strong and well-entrenched for your weak arm. And although you flee from your foes you will not show the white feather of cowardice, but will display generalship and skill. We had to retreat behind the lines in Spain, and if we had not done that the glorious victory of Waterloo would not have been gained."

"But what will I flee frae?" I asked seriously,

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for I did not apprehend the practical bearing of his words. "I canna flee frae mysel', and I am my warst enemy."

"True, true," was the response, "but the enmity of your heart is fed from without. Flee bad companions, and those who live in idleness. Flee from public-houses and the strong drink they sell there. Flee from all those who do not fear God, honour the King, the Queen I mean, and do their duty. And flee to the house of God, to the assembly of good people, and to your closet. That's an old soldier's advice, Milligan, who has fought many a hard-fought battle for his country, and I humbly hope for my God. Think over it."

When these words were uttered, the jailer abruptly rose, went out, and left me once more alone to my own meditations.

This conversation had a most bracing effect upon my spirit. The old, kindly warrior had imparted to me some of his own fervour, practical piety, and courage. No matter what my destiny was to be, I thought it could not be wrong to do what was honest and right. This, I once more resolved would henceforth be my manner of life. Before retiring to bed I knelt down and prayed, with fear and trembling, that God would in some way or manner reveal if he cared anything for a poor wretch like me. Whether it was an answer to my fearing cry to heaven or not, I cannot say, but I had a sound and sweet sleep, and rose up next morning refreshed in body and mind and the possessor of a calmness which was little short of miraculous.

Within twenty-four hours from that time, I was bidding farewell to the little cell where I had spent the most wonderful three weeks of my life, to the jailer, warder, and Mrs. Gordon, who had come to utter a motherly word before I would go. She also gave me a New Testament, with my name written on the fly-leaf in a lady-like hand, and which I have treasured more than any other thing ever since.

As I stepped out of the gate of the prison into the street, and was once more under the open

sky, a peculiar sensation was experienced. I felt as light, as if I could fly as I walked along the road, and the most familiar objects appeared strange to my vision. A mile had not been passed till this feeling passed away and my old relation to the earth was established. The sun shone forth with cheering rays and awakened all nature into a song. New resolves were formed which pointed to a better life and brighter things. The past was dead, and it should live no more. It had been buried in the cell of the county prison. To what lay before me I looked with hope, not altogether unmingled with doubts, and in this spirit I pursued the journey to John and the old home.

CHAPTER IX.

IN SEARCH OF BETTER THINGS.

"What am I?

An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry."

—TENNYSON.

"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—PAUL.

THOSE who violate the laws of the land become by that very act marked, and marked off from others. They are criminals, and constitute a class by themselves, a class, too, which is distrusted and despised. Their term of imprisonment is not all the punishment they are called upon to bear—is only a small part of it, and the part most easily borne. The social punishment which overtakes the transgressor of law immediately after he leaves the gate of the prison is worse to endure than the legal penalty, and it seems as if it never would come to an end. A criminal draws around him a circle within which he is compelled to live and move, and beyond whose circumference it is almost impossible to pass. Good resolutions, earnest protestations that the evil is in the past and will not be repeated, even

burning tears of repentance, do not frequently break down the wall of partition which separates such an one from his fellows. If it is to be done at all, it must be by a long course of good conduct and the cultivation of a humble and docile spirit which will stand to be tried and tested as if by fire. This, too, can only be accomplished in reference to those who have within them the spirit of Christ. The worldling and the worldly never forgive. They hunt to death their poor unfortunate brethren, who have in overacts run against the laws by which society is held together. And in doing so they pride themselves they are performing virtuous deeds, which should commend them to their neighbours, and secure the smile of heaven's righteous King.

This social ostracism was mine after I returned from the jail, and was most keenly felt. I was shunned, for a time, by many of my former acquaintances, and held at arm's length by my former friends so soon as I attempted to mingle with them in the common affairs of life. I was becalmed, like the Ancient Mariner, in the very region of my folly, the hot sun of an awakened conscience beating down on my poor heart. "O Time," I was sometimes forced to cry, "thou who dost elude the grasp of busy men, come and be my friend. Thou dost dry the widow's tears, and lay to sleep by thy gentle influence the orphan's sorrow. Let thy kindly breath blow upon the drooping sails of my being, and bear me from the dead sea of a present shame to the living waters of human recognition and friendship."

There was one place where I was not treated as an outcast, and that was in the old house with the but and ben. To this haven of rest I went straight when I returned from the county prison. John and Jean were both in, and evidently expecting my appearance. Jean did not seem to be in good humour, and scarcely spoke. Her looks plainly told that, if her will and wish had been consulted, I would not have been allowed to cross the threshold. John, in his usual quiet, un-

demonstrative manner, made me feel that his interest in me was as great and strong as ever.

"We're richt glad to see you back again, Rab," he said, "an' I'm sure ye're tired wi' the lang journey. Ye hae got settling sowans this time tae yer supper, an' ye'll hae learnt ye hae driven yer hogs to a puir market."

"That I hae, John," I replied, "an' I hae dune wi' that kin' o' wark. It disna pay ava. There's naething like a crack wi' yersel' for three weeks tae bring ye tae yer senses. I see through a' the folly o' my ways noo."

"I'm proud to hear ye say that, man," said John, with a smile, "for I'm sure ye hae had eneuch o' the evil ane an' his deceptive ways—he was aye a murderer—an' will noo look to Ane that's stronger and wiser than yersel'. I hae been unco troubled aboot ye, an' wad hae liked to hae come to see ye, but I shrunk frae the ordeal like a coo'ard."

"Thank ye, my true freen," I said, "for saying that, but I wadna hae liked to seen ye if ye had gaen yon'er. It's nae the place for honest folk like you to visit. But it has dune me muckle guid, an' I may yet thank the Lord and the Shirra for my twenty-one days under lock and key."

So we talked to far on in the evening, when we passed to more personal matters, which gradually brought back a sense of my sad condition. Though I had the weaver's sympathy in my fears and forebodings, I fairly broke down, and thought it was impossible for me to face the world again. When in this desponding condition I wished I was back to my cell with the old soldier-jailer, where no one could see me, and there end my days. I felt as if I was of no use, had no friends, was unable to work, and most likely could not get work even if I were able, and that I would be pursued by the ill-will of all the respectable inhabitants of the town, as if I had been their enemy. Overwhelmed with these dark clouds, I could do nothing but bemoan my fate. I had sown the wind, and was reaping the whirlwind.

Though John very seldom allowed his feelings to manifest themselves, he could not altogether hide them on this occasion. He expressed his sorrow at seeing me so downcast, and endeavoured to cheer me by assuring me that I might redeem myself yet. Many, he said, had been far greater sinners, and more destitute than I had been, who afterwards had risen to positions of usefulness and respectability.

"You shouldna forget, Rab," he impressed upon me, "Granny's words, 'Confess'd faut is half amends,' and thae ither words she tauld us, when we were laddies, that had been a great source of consolation to her, 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity.' Tak' tent o' this, my man, be o' guid heart, and ye'll wunner what ye'll yet be able to dae. I was thinking when ye were awa', the Lord has mair use for ye in this warld yet, or He wad hae taen ye oot o't lang syne. That's my creed aboot ye, an' I think it's soun'."

"I fear He'll no' be able to dae much guid wi' a broken reed like me," I answered.

"Hoot, man," said my friend, "see what He made o' the great sinner David, the persecutor Saul, an' even Peter wha denied the Lord Himself. Ye hinna done thae things yet, Guid be thanket. The Lord can dae wunners wi' gey queer tools. Dinna provoke Him ony mair, an' keep a firm haud o' His han'."

Little did John know when he was speaking that the desire of my heart was to get hold of the hand of the Good Shepherd, who alone could succour me from evil, and make me strong.

Next morning found me in a far better frame of mind. I resolved to shake off the fear of men, which had haunted me like a spectre, and act, as far as possible, a manly part. My endeavour would be to let those who treated me with scorn know I was not utterly bad and finally lost. With the new day came a brighter sky, and its light dispelled not a little of the gloom with which I had become enveloped.

About noon I ventured out, went up the street,

and almost involuntarily entered the Red Lion kitchen, where a few of my old cronies were assembled to discuss the affairs of Church and State, and have their mid-day dram. My appearance acted upon them like an apparition, and they started and stared, as if under a sense of horror. This attitude was more assumed than real, for I well knew that some of them had been before the Sheriff oftener than I had been. In an instant the landlord stepped forward, and cried out in angry tones—

“What’s brought you here amang respectable folk? Leave the Red Lion this instant. Nane o’ yer kin’ are wanted here. Tak’ to the door as fast as ye can. I wunner at yer impudence; it beats a’.”

Here the landlady rushed from her arm chair, and putting her hand on my shoulder, said in a great rage—“What an awfu’ thing it is that ye’ll come straight oot o’ the jail to my respectable hoose to pollute it wi’ yer presence, and set yersel’ up among my honest, decent customers. Get away this meenit, ye wee crooked wretch, or I’ll sen’ for the constable, an’ he’ll sune tak ye back to whaur ye cam’ frae. Off wi’ ye,” she added, with a push which nearly knocked me over.

During this virulent attack of his wife, the landlord stood aside, and evidently admired the way his better half used her tongue in abusing me. Seeing me stagger he came forward, took me in his arms, and half threw me into the street, saying—

“Dinna darken my door again, ye wicked cratur, or it’ll be warse for ye. Keep tae yer ain kin’.”

My temper was now fairly up, and I would have struck back, and most likely been in the grip of the law again, had I not bethought myself, and remembered the resolution I had solemnly made to redeem my character. Besides, my wrath was restrained from expressing itself in violent acts, by recollecting I deserved all I had received at the hands of the publican and his wife. Though I

determined to refrain from committing a breach of the peace, I could not refrain from crying out in wounded pride and anger—

"Is this the way, Tam Glen, ye use me noo? You and yer drink hae been my ruin, an' the ruin o' mony ithers in the toon. If it hadna been for you and yer drink I wad never hae been in jail, for I was aye maddened wi' yer cursed stuff before I did ony wrang. Ye never put me oot o' the Red Lion when I had a penny to spen', but ye kick me oot noo when I hae neither siller nor freens. But I tell ye, Tam Glen, I'm no dune wi' ye yet. Ye think I'm an ootcast, an' sae I am, but I'll seek po'er where it can be had, an' that's no in yer gill stoup. I'm determined I'll poo doon that which is aboon yer door," pointing to the gaudily painted sign, with the figure of a red lion on it. "I'll close yer hoose, for yer just a murderer o' bodies an' a destroyer o' souls. I'll do't, min' ye."

"Ye'll do it?" said the landlord with a scowling sneer. "Will ye? ye miserable jail-bird, will ye? Awa' wi' ye to the jail; they shouldna hae let ye oot to disgrace the toon. I wouldna be seen speakin' to sic a ne'er-do-weel ony langer." So saying, he entered the kitchen of the Red Lion, slamming the door behind him, leaving me flushed and excited in the midst of a number of boys and girls who wondered at the scene which was enacted.

Smarting under the treatment I had received, from those who should have been my friends, I determined to take the advice, though unkindly given, never to darken that door again. The landlord's action and the landlady's words sent the nail of conviction home, and clenched it on the other side. Drink and I separated at that spot and time, and, henceforth, it was to be treated as an enemy to the happiness, health, and well-being of my neighbours and myself. The friendship of the bar and public-house parlour was proved to be a sham and a delusion; and the honeyed words of the smiling landlady and the forced laughs of her husband were proved to be hollow. I was determined after this to keep the outside of the Red

Lion, for I now saw it was by far the best side, and its burning drink would be kept on the outside of me. Such incidents, as the one which had occurred, have more powerful effects and produce more far-reaching results than numerous temperance lectures and sermons. They are practical illustrations of the evils of the drink system, and go home to the heart of even the most abandoned. It was so in my case, as my after life made abundantly evident.

For a few days after this encounter in the Red Lion, I remained in the house, and employed my time reading, thinking, and exchanging views on many things, sacred and secular, with John. I was still anxious to get myself right in relation to God and to man, but the task baffled me completely. In search of the light I visited a rather peculiar person of the name of Walter Bayne. He was a reputed infidel, and liked to have an opportunity of expounding his views to one who would listen to his talk. He was a great reader, never went to church, because, he said, there were plenty of hypocrites in the parish without him being one, always sneered when religion was mentioned, and spent his Sundays during the summer time in watching birds in the woods, or gathering flowers by the river-side, and during the winter, as he said, in writing a book which was to be printed after he was dead. Walter had often talked with me, when passing through the stages of boyhood and budding manhood, but I was then too thoughtless and inattentive a listener for him to experiment upon at any length. He was never very effusive, was most even in temper, and treated all who visited him, be they rich or poor, in somewhat the same fashion. As was to be expected, his influence was dreaded by the minister and the fathers and mothers of the neighbourhood. Hence, to be too well-acquainted with him was not a recommendation to other households.

To this old man I went for the purpose of seeing if he could afford me the assistance I required to solve the problems which had, to a greater or lesser extent, been a source of my mental disquietude ever

since I commenced to think. I wanted to know if God existed and had a relation to man ; why he created me, and sent me into the world, weak and miserable ; whether I had a soul ; and, above all, whether it was possible for me to be better than I had been, and escape perdition at last ? Such were the crude questions which every now and again presented themselves before my mind, which no one had been able to answer to my satisfaction, and which good Mrs. Gordon, with all her reading of the Scriptures, earnest prayers, and gentle influence, had left where they were. The hard treatment I received since my imprisonment, made them more impressive and real than ever they had previously been.

With all these burdens on my soul, I directed my steps to the humble dwelling of Walter Bayne, determined to hear what he had to say concerning them. When I called he was in his garden, but after expressing himself, in a friendly way, about seeing me back after, as he called it, "my terrible escapade and madness," he invited me into his house. I was not long seated till I opened up my case, and frankly told him how I felt, what were my doubts, and fears, and wants.

He listened with both patience and interest, and said as he looked up in my face—

"Ay, my man, I see ye hae been thro' the woods, an' got amang the briars. Puir chiel', ye're a' scratched an' torn, an' nae wunner. Mony better-educated an' wiser men than ye'll ever be hae been torn tae pieces wi' the same subjects, for they're awfu' deep—awfu' deep, Rab. But are ye in rale earnest to ken the truth o' thae matters ? for, if ye're no', I hae nae time to waste on ye."

"O yes, Walter," I replied, "I'm in deid earnest, or I wouldna hae come here the day."

"Weel, weel, let me see," Walter went on to say slowly. "I'll no' say much aboot the existence o' a great First Cause. I hae just been readin' this mornin' a wheen letters in the "Reasoner," by Gillespie an' ane ca'ed Aliquis, on that subject, an' I rather think Gillespie has the better o't."

"I didna speak about the First Cause," I said; "it was about the existence o' God I was anxious to ken, the Being that made the heavens, the earth, and mysel'."

"It's a' richt. They're the same," said Walter, "only different names for the same Being. Look at this," he continued, taking up a pocket knife and opening it. "That knife could not mak' itsel'. It has a num'er o' pairts, an' they are put together so as to fit an end. The knife was made to cut, to shut, so as no' to be dangerous when in ane's pouch. This proves design, intelligence, and mind."

"That's plain," I responded.

"Well, then," he went on to say with evident pleasure at his success in teaching, "we maun gang back a step. If the knife couldna mak' itsel', and demands an intelligent maker, surely it is but reasonable to conclude the knife-maker, if he did not always exist, would himsel' need a maker. Ay, ay, Rab, I canna get ower that, so we maun believe, if we think ava, that there must be a great First Cause; that is, God. Sometimes darkness comes into my mind on this matter, but I'm no mysel' then. When I'm at my best, an' thinkin' right, I see clearly this warld wi' man on't, and a' the suns an' stars in heaven, are the works o' a great, wise, an', I hae strong hope, if we understood everything, guid and loving Being. Let that, therefore, be settled."

"I'll think over a' ye hae said," I answered, "for mind ye, I hae aye thocht God had tae dae wi' me, and that he governs this warld; but this maks the questions about sin and punishment a' the queerer."

"Ye're richt there, Rab," said Walter. "But dinna ye see, thae a' hang on the Bible, an' it's no what folk tak' it to be? I hinna time the noo to enter into the arguments that settle that question beyon' dispute, but I'll just gi'e ye a book or twa ye can read at yer leisure, an' they'll put ye a' richt aboot the Bible an' sin an' the like."

So saying, he went to a press containing a number of books, selecting Paine's "Age of

Reason" and a volume of the "Reasoner," issued at that time by George Jacob Holyoake, thrust them into my hand, saying, "Put these in yer pouch, read them, and tell me what ye think o' their contents."

I took them from Walter with a trembling hand, stuffed them into my pockets and departed. Instead of going home to read them at the fireside, I started for a quiet spot on a hill top, about a mile off. The walk, the blithe air, the notes which came from hedge and tree, and the grand scenery of hill, dale, and stream, had an elevating influence on me. It appeared as if all nature was illumed with a supernatural radiance, and filled with conscious life. This natural scene spoke to my inner self, and made me feel it was not the work of a dead power, but the handiwork of a living Creator, and that I also was his workmanship. Walter Bayne's argument about the knife, simple though it was when stated, was made a hundred times stronger by what I saw and felt at that moment.

Sitting down with these emotions swaying my mind, I took out the two volumes Walter had given me, and commenced to read Paine's "Age of Reason." I had heard of it before as a dangerous book, one which proved the Bible was not a true historical record, and that Christianity was little better, perhaps worse, than an old wife's fable. Nevertheless, I resolved to see and understand what it contained, and derive what good I could from its pages. I read and read on for more than an hour, and found it laborious and unprofitable work. I persevered with the anticipation that I would by-and-bye reach the powerful parts which would enable me to get free from my spiritual burdens, and obtain freedom from the evil habits which held me in bondage. At length I closed the book, more profoundly dissatisfied than ever. The statements and arguments had not the slightest effect on my mind, and did not touch the outer edge of the dense darkness which brooded over my daily experience. I knew I could not be in my right condition till I myself was changed for the

better, and what I read had, if anything, changed me only for the worse. To the cry for bread Paine presented a stone; to the demand for an egg he had offered a serpent, whose sting would produce a burning despair. I was disappointed. Infidelity was not a remedy for my ills. The physician and the balm needed must be sought for elsewhere.

Next day I returned to Walter Bayne's with the books, and told him I had read one of them half through, and found that instead of what I read doing me good, it had increased my dejection and misery.

"Ae thing, Walter," I said, "they hae dune, and that is, they hae let me see that tho' the Bible was proved no' to be the Book o' God (which the maist folk believe it to be), that wouldna tak' the sting oot o' my conscience or lessen my restlessness."

"I'm no' sae sure o' that, Rab," he replied. "It's the Bible that tells a' aboot sin an' hell and frichtens folk. If it werena true, but fou o' myths and fables, they wouldna be sae fear'd aboot themselves or their future as they are."

"I'm clear sure of this, Walter," said I, "that the Bible did not mak' me sin, it did not put me in the jail, mak' me curse and dae ill, injure the minister and maister. It was Tam Glen's whisky that did that, and wad hae done it whether there had been a Bible or no."

"But," said the old man, now fairly roused to the task of making me a convert, "ye'll no' deny it's in the Bible we're tauld that Adam sinned, and that his sins are made oors? Ye ken little aboot it, Rab, for ye hinna read the auld divines as I hae. Read them—auld Boston, for example, and Willison—and ye'll fin' they'll tell ye, that we hae eneuch o' Original Sin in us, when we're born, to send us to everlasting burnings at last, an' this they get oot o' the Bible, an' naewhere else. Na, na, Rab, ye dinna tak' in the hale o' the situation, or ye wad see if what the Buik says aboot the fa' o' man be na true, it's a' wrang thegither."

"I'm no able to see't that way," I said. "My

sin's my ain. I dinna understan' hoo it has come, but it's in me, and sine it comes oot o' me, an' mair o't than I like. I read the ither day in ane o' John's auld books what I thocht was beyond dispute. It was to the effect—If we werena in Adam in the yaird when he fell, ae thing is certain, an' that is, auld Adam an' his ways are in us. I want him oot, Walter; I want him and a' bad things oot o' my heart, an' then I wad be richt."

"A-weel, if ye explain things that way," answered Walter, "ye maun ken, there's nae help for ye but to ebeey the laws o' Natur'. God has made thae laws, and it's oor duty to atten' tae them. If we put our finger in the fire we'll be burn'd, an' that canna be help'd; so if we brak' other laws, we maun just stan' the consequences. That's something like Paine's teachin', an' it's the richt thing."

"It's puir teachin' that, Walter," I said, with earnestness. "It wad dae for the guid angels, an' for us, if we had been a' wise, guid, an' strong. It's no' for the like o' me, forbye, it doesna speak weel o' God. Will he no' dae onything for the wake, ill-deservin', and thae wha hae tint their way, an' are wan'erin' like silly sheep amang deep holes and steep rocks?"

"Man, Walter, yer God is nae sae guid as yer-sel'," I added, "for I am sure if ye saw me burnin' in the fire, ye wad risk yer ain life to pu' me oot. That ye wad, I ken."

"Maybe I would," said the old man, a little softened. Turning to his loom, he said, "Ye'll keep yer opinion, an' I'll keep mine, an' we needna quarrel aboot it. After this, Rab, tak' my advice, an' gang to the minister wi' yer doubts and questions, an' no come to me. He's paid to atten' to yer soul, if ye hae ane, an' should be glad to do't."

"Thank ye for a' yer trouble," I said, and then took my way homeward, thinking over many things which had been suggested by the conversation. The one subject which occupied my attention more than another was, Has God done anything to aid mankind who had sinned, and who

had been made to suffer by reason of their departures from the path of duty, the law of right? Are we all left to the action of natural and moral law, and must the transgressor bear the penalty of his wrong-doing, and that to its utmost extent?

Walter Bayne seemed to think that was inevitably the case, and that the soul that sinneth would die as certain as that gunpowder would explode when brought into contact with fire, or that a stone cast into the air would again return to the earth. If such were the divine method of action, there was no hope of deliverance for me. I had sinned, and must continue to suffer.

Before retiring to rest that night, I opened the New Testament Mrs. Gordon gave me. As if by chance, I opened it at the seventh chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and began to read at the fourteenth verse. "We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." These words appeared as a full explanation of all I had ever experienced. The struggle they spoke about was going on within me every day, and becoming more fierce and painful. When I reached the words "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," I realized I was led into a region which was unknown, but where liberty and life were enjoyed. Would that blessed experience ever be mine? was the question which came to my lips, but no answer came along with it.

When I finished my reading I laid down the New Testament with the firm faith that whosoever wrote that chapter, knew me, my thoughts, and the intents of my heart. Its words were like the living voice of a present friend, and appealed to my experience. They were as a revelation by some pure and higher being of myself to myself, which I knew to be true, and that without argument. And so it turned out that the conversation

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I had with the so-called infidel gave me a keener realization of my spiritual state, and led me into a deeper insight into the nature and meaning of the Oracles of God.

CHAPTER X.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MINISTER AND DOCTOR.

"CANST thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"

—SHAKESPEARE.

It is said that through much tribulation we enter the kingdom. This is a principle which is universal, and accounts for many things which the most earnest and devoted are called upon to do and endure. If the finest souls have had their dark hours to pass through, and their storms to encounter before they reached the haven of rest, how much more are such things required by coarser spirits and more uncultivated sinners before they are ushered into the full consciousness of being children of God.

I can see all this clearly when I look back on how I was led, but it was hidden when, in days of darkness and sorrow, I was groping after light and God if, haply, I could find them. Life cannot be understood in detached portions, or when viewed partially. It is only seen in its true nature and meaning when viewed as much as possible as a whole. For the whole modifies the parts, and the parts can be only perfectly known when the whole is perceived.

If this had at all been apprehended by me after I left Walter Bayne, and meditated on what I had read out of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it would have saved me from many weary thoughts and disconsolate feelings. For I afterwards became more restless, less patient,

questioned the goodness of God in regard to my whole existence, and was approaching the condition of those who think they ought to curse God and die. I communicated somewhat of what I experienced to John. I told him I had seen Walter Bayne, and that he had told me I should henceforth go to the minister with my doubts and difficulties, and not come to him.

John replied, "Rab, Walter Bayne is richt."

"Dae ye think sae?" I asked.

"I'm sure," said John.

"The minister is a learned, guid man, an' kens a' about religion. I dinna, I must say, get a' my questions answered by him oot o' the poopit, and I never went to the manse to speak to him aboot them, but I hae nae doot he can answer every ane o' them. Maybe Bayne's the wisest man after a', and ye should tak' his advice. Ae thing is certain; ye canna be much waur than ye are."

This determined my action. I resolved to face the minister of the parish, and speak to him about what concerned my soul and inner and outer life.

This required determination, for I knew the Rev. Thomas Welsh was a sort of aristocrat in his way, proud, and not at all versed in the difficulties which would oppress a foundling like myself. He was a son of the manse, and his grandfather and great grandfather had been parish ministers of a dignified type. It was thought that some of his ancestors were more than tinged with Moderatism, and the doctrines they preached were set down by some as a "cold morality." Our parish minister was not exactly after this sort, although he did now and again preach after this fashion. On these occasions it was said he preached his father's sermons, of which Jeams, the minister's man, declared he had a large stock. He was, when in his usual condition, an effective and able preacher. His sermons were most carefully composed, contained many eloquent and pathetic passages, and were much appreciated by the best educated and ablest judges in the parish. From his pulpit he gave pungent deliverances on the principal events

of the parish when these did not please him. When he did so, he waxed wroth with what some old women used to call "a holy anger," and made the Bible frequently feel the strength of his arm.

Out of the pulpit Mr. Welsh was social, attended dinners of a public and semi-private character, and on the former occasions always replied in a genial speech to the toast of "The Clergy." He never mingled with the poor of the parish nor with the lower stratum of the middle class, except on the ice, when curling was going on. He was by far the keenest curler of the neighbourhood, was skip of the best rink, and liberal in treating all his fellow-curlers to refreshments, which generally consisted of whisky, beer, and biscuits.

Once in a few years Mr. Welsh visited his flock, going from house to house to do so. These were important events in the several households, and the whole affairs of the domestic circle had to be arranged so as to make this visit as agreeable to the minister as possible. The poorest as well as the richest vied with each other as to who would entertain him in the best style, and much gossip took place on the evening of his visits as to what he said, how he prayed, and what he ate and drank.

I remember Mr. Welsh paying only one pastoral visit to Granny. She was greatly excited when it was announced that her spiritual teacher would be in the house on a certain day at twelve o'clock. To make all right for the great occasion, Granny set about sweeping the floor, dusting the walls, scouring and setting in order her bits of furniture. Out of her small store of money she purchased from the Provost a gill of port wine and the like quantity of whisky. The baker was then visited, and a few of his finest biscuits bought. These were put on a tray, covered with Granny's best towel, and set on the drawers-head ready for service next forenoon.

On the morning of the important day, Granny dressed herself in her best, her venerable head, with its silver locks, being covered with a "high-backed

mutch" as white as the driven snow, while John and I had our faces and hands scrubbed till they were quite red and sore. When the minister's knock was heard at the door, a slight flush on the wrinkled cheek betrayed the excitement experienced. After taking the seat offered him—the best Granny had—he inquired after Granny's health, expressed pleasure that she was still able to attend the church, and hoped she profited by what she received of good for her soul. John and I were then called up, and we took our place before the much-feared Mr. Welsh. After we had, in answer to a question, told him our names, he asked—

"What is the chief end of man?"

John answered, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever."

"Very well done, my boy," said the minister, clapping him kindly on the head.

Turning to me, he asked out of the Mother's Catechism, which I had been taught at school, "Who made you?"

I at once replied quite boldly, feeling my ground sure, "God made me, the Question Book says so."

"Right, my little boy; God made you, and you should fear and honour Him," said the minister with an approving smile.

John then was tackled with the more difficult question, "What is Effectual Calling?"

He made sundry efforts to get the answer, but failed, the only words he managed to stammer out being "Effectual Calling—Effectual Calling is the work of God's Spirit."

Mr. Welsh came to his aid, and gave the full answer contained in the Catechism. He then remarked he hoped we both attended school regularly, and that we behaved ourselves when there, to which we answered in the affirmative. He then rose from his seat, and advancing to a chair before him, put his hands on its back, and offered up a short prayer, in which he besought God to bless the widow and the boys. As he was leaving, a glass of wine or whisky was offered him,

the former of which he accepted, not doing more, however, than tasting his chosen beverage. With a "Good day" and a shake of Granny's hand, he brought the visitation to a close.

These were all the spiritual instructions the parishioners received from their pastor, except those given out of the pulpit in formal discourse on Sabbath, and these were the only seasons when the teacher and the taught had any intercourse one with another. Boys and girls, instead of being taught to look up to the minister as a friend, teacher, and guide for instruction and encouragement, were trained from their earliest days to dread his presence and make obeisance to him when he happened to pass them in the street or road. The effect of this was that the young soon became afraid of their spiritual teacher, careless of spiritual things, and many of them yielded to influences which did not promote their temporal or eternal well-being.

I have thus dwelt on the minister, his position and relations, that the reader may more fully understand the fear I had when I took my way one forenoon to the manse. On my arrival, and without delay, the servant ushered me into the presence of Mr. Welsh, who was surprised to see me. Knowing me well by sight, and more by report, he did not require to be told who I was. Without inviting me to be seated, which I wished much at that moment to be, he asked, without lifting his head from the desk at which he was writing—

"Well, Milligan, what do you want? I suppose you know the session and parish have nothing to do with you now. We are glad we have no responsibility concerning your conduct, and, therefore, do not share in the dishonour you have brought upon yourself. No doubt your criminal ways have so far disgraced the whole town and parish; but this will not be laid to our charge, as your ways are well known."

Having finished his short speech, he stopped, as it were, for breath, and I interjected the words, "Mr. Welsh, I am no' come to ask for anything o' money kind from you or the parish; I hae come, at

Walter Bayne's advice, aboot a far more important matter."

"Walter Bayne!" he exclaimed. "He could put no good into your head, and you are in fit company when ye take up with infidels of his sort. Criminals and infidels should always go together."

"You mistake my errand a'thegither, minister," I said. "At the advice o' Bayne, I hae come to you as the keeper o' the souls o' the parish, to speak to you on religious matters, and to see if ye can tell me how I am to be made better and stronger than I am. I want to gie up plaguing folks as I used to dae—yourself amang the rest. I wish to be a sober and decent man, and, as the jailer said, 'Fear God, honour the Queen, and do my duty.' I would like if ye would tell me how my soul is to be saved, if it can be saved ava."

"What do you mean by putting such a question?" asked the minister. "It is one I have read about in tracts, but I never heard it before in this parish."

"The mair's the pity," I answered. "For we a' need to be saved, an' require to be mended."

"You may speak for yourself," he sharply replied. "But those who have received Christian baptism, been trained in the fear of the Lord, and wait on the means of grace, do not require to excite themselves about their spiritual condition as ye do."

"Maybe no. Ye ken best aboot that," I said. "An' that's the reason I've come to consult you on thae religious matters. I want tae be converted."

"I do not understand you at all, Milligan," said Mr. Welsh, "and you need not try to impose upon me. I know your doings, your drunkenness, your blasphemies, and your lawless, criminal ways. It ill becomes the like of you to take the sacred name of religion into your lips. I really can do nothing for you, for you seem to have lost your reason, or are playing the knave."

"I am no' doin' onything o' the kind as playin' the knave, as ye say, Mr. Welsh," I replied

firmly, "nor hae I lost my reason. I never was wiser than I am just now. I hae come here because I thought you were the very person who, o' a' in the parish, could hae tauld me how I was tae be richt wi' God, ither folk, an' mysel'. If ye canna or winna help me, I'll hae tae look elsewhere for advice an' counsel, for I'm determined tae be a slave tae the deevil nae langer."

He rose from his seat, and looked at me from head to foot, and then said—

"Milligan, it seems to me, from your appearance, that you are suffering from nervous trouble, and that the proper person to go to for advice is Mr. Duncan, who would be able, after he has examined you, to tell you what to do. You know the doctor, and if you would call on him, I will give you a note which will explain what I think he should do."

At first I did not at all relish the idea ; but as I did not wish to altogether break with the minister, and as I knew the genial doctor, I thought I would just do as he desired me. I replied—"Very well, sir, I'll gang an' see Dr. Duncan if ye think I should dae sae."

Mr. Welsh then resumed his seat, wrote a letter, and handed it to me, saying—"Take that to Dr. Duncan, and he will, I am sure, give you something which will put a great deal of that morbid thought and feeling out of your mind. Henceforth," he added, "see that you walk worthy of the Christian parish to which, by a mysterious Providence, you belong, and do not bring more disgrace on it and yourself."

Taking the letter, I left the manse, wondering in my mind if, after all, there was reality in religion, and if all my pangs of conscience and fears of condemnation arose out of a bad stomach or a diseased brain. The matter had never presented itself to me in that light before. The minister might be altogether right in his surmises, and if he were, he acted a wise part in sending me to the physician of bodies.

To Mr. Duncan's residence I repaired in the

evening, when I knew he would be at leisure to receive a call. I was shown into the consulting room by a servant, who took good care, by her manner, to make me feel that she was my superior, and did not want in any way to come into contact with me. With the doctor himself, I knew I would not be ill at ease. He was of the good old sort who are all but extinct. He was a father, friend, and doctor to all his young patients, and was loved and respected sincerely by all who knew him. Being constantly employed in professional work, he took little or no part in the public affairs of the town or countryside, and entered the homes of those who called upon him for medical aid with a smile which betokened hope, and in many cases did as much good as his medicines. It was occasionally said he did a little too much in bleeding, blistering, and giving mercury pills; but those experiments were tried on only the comparatively strong, who were sure, no matter what was done to them, to pull through. The tender and those whom Death had claimed as his own were gently dealt with, and their path and pillow made as smooth as possible. Dr. Duncan did not use his lancet for amputation in almost any case. He would nurse a bad finger or foot for months. "It is not so easy," he would say to his patient, "to replace such a member; and if I can save it to you, I will do so, no matter what trouble it will cost." With the poor, Dr. Duncan was as great a favourite as with the rich. He was at the call of every one, and was ready to give advice, which he was most capable of doing, whether it pertained to the body or the soul, time or eternity. Though he was an elder of the kirk, and attended the church regularly, sitting in a seat near the door, ready to go at the call of duty if required, he did not take part in the work of the session, nor judge in the cases of discipline, which not unfrequently came before this reverend court.

When the good old doctor came into the consulting room, he said—"Well, Milligan, what is wrong with you to-night?"

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"Naething, sir," I answered ; " here's a letter I brought ye frae the minister."

Having kindly asked me to be seated, he sat down and read the letter twice, and said—" Do you know, Rab, what this is about ?"

" I dinna ken a'thegither, but I suspect it is about me an' my health an' reason," I replied.

" That you may understand its import, I will read you the part that concerns yourself," said the worthy man, " and I will then all the more easily determine the nature of your case. Here, then, is what Mr. Welsh says about you—

" ' I send this letter by the bearer, Rab Milligan, who has called upon me in an excited state of mind, and spoken in a most incoherent way about himself, his soul, salvation, and the like. From his whole language, manner, and wild look, he seems to me to be on the borders of losing his reason. I do not wonder, after all he has come through, out and in jail, that such should be his unhappy state. He urgently requires medical treatment, and though he deserves no favour at the hands of the session or myself, I hope you will prescribe for him, and send in your bill to the Provost, chargeable to the parish.' "

" Do you understand that, Rab ? " asked the doctor.

" I understand perfectly well aboot it," I responded. " He seeks tae mak' me oot insane, an' that the spiritual troubles I hae are imaginary, an' wad gang awa' if I had some o' your physic. I wadna like tae say ill things aboot the minister, wha is wiser than me, but it's liker he was gaun aff his heid than me. I never was wiser, doctor, for I want tae be a better man than I hae been. I'm wearied o' my bad, wicked ways, an' am fully determined tae leave them a', nae maitter what the minister says or daes."

I uttered those words with both determination and feeling, and the doctor's eye kindled as he said—" I see, Rab, you understand perfectly the meaning of what Mr. Welsh has said, and that your mind is not at all detrimentally affected.

My advice to you in your present circumstances therefore is, that you should leave the town and neighbourhood for a season, seek for some light work which you could do, read your Bible, pray before you go to bed at night, and God will make all things clear to you yet. That is my prescription. Go." So saying, he shook my hand with a kindly grip which made me feel a great deal stronger and calmer.

I left the doctor's house absorbed with what I had heard, and framing plans regarding my future movements. I had not gone far when, in the darkness, I ran up against some one, who turned out to be Mary Bell, whom I had not spoken to for months before. I expressed my sorrow for having so rudely pushed her, when she said—"There's nae hairm, Rab; I hinna seen ye for a lang time. Puir fellow! ye hae been in difficulties o' late, an' ye hae nae freens tae advise ye. Never mind, there are ithers in the toon wha hae plenty o' money an' freens, wha are far worse aff than ye are. I hope ye will disappoint a' yer enemies yet."

She next asked what I intended to do. I told her the advice the doctor had kindly given me, and that I thought I would carry it out, if it were at all possible. She was of the opinion it was the very thing I should attend to, and at once. "Maybe," she added, "ye'll come back a new man, an' we'll a' be prood o' ye. I hae never lost faith in ye, Rab, an' my prayers will follow ye where'er ye gang. Ye're God's as weel as the rest o' us, an' He is a Faither wha cares for His children whether they live in big hooses or sma' cots, or whether they hae siller or hae nane. Guid nicht."

With these words, Mary Bell hastened on her way to her father's cottage, and I took my way to my old abode, thinking it would be the last night for a long time I would sleep within its walls.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SOUGHT-FOR DELIVERANCE FOUND.

"SUDDENLY a star arose,
It was the Star of Bethlehem ;
It was my guide, my light, my all ;
It bade my dark forebodings cease ;
And through the storm's and danger's thrall,
It led me to the port of Peace."

—KIRKE WHITE.

NEXT morning brought with it the settled conviction that Dr. Duncan's advice was the one which I ought to follow. No other course was open to me, and it appeared as if I were shut up to adopt it. Not that I had a definite idea where I should go, what I should do, or how I was to better myself by the change. All these questions would require to be settled practically as events would fall out in the course of time. An inward impulse pressed me forward, and peace of mind was an attestation the impulse was not from below, but from above—a sort of divine call similar to that which Abraham received when he was called upon to leave home and country to go to a land he knew not of. Divine calls have not ceased in the experience of men. They are not so often recognized as they should be. If oftener heard and obeyed, there would be more real success attained and wondrous works achieved of a beneficial and progressive character. The earth and man on it are God's, and his Providence is a main factor in human history.

As I bade the industrious weaver good-bye, thanking him with grateful heart for all he had done for me in my extremity and distress, John said—

"Keep the straight road, Rab. It's never richt tae dae wrang, an' the crooked way is aye the longest."

"I hae found oot that already," I said, "an' lang an' wearisome has been the way I hae travelled."

"But the langest lane has aye a turnin'," John responded, "an' ye hae reached that bit o' the road, I think. I'm no a prophet, ye ken, but it's borne in on me that we'll see ye yet when the sky will be clearer abune yer heid. I'll min' ye at night when I gang tae my bed, an' maist likely will be wunnerin' where ye are. But I never forget that the Shepherd himself looks after the strayed sheep, an' maybe he'll manage to bring him back to the fold. Here, Rab," he added, "are a few shillins to keep yer pouch. Money answereth a things, an' ye may need them afore ye get wark."

With staff in hand, I passed out of the little broken-down house, and, turning to the left, went up the hill to where the cross roads met. Which way should I take—right, left, or straight forward? After a moment's delay I directed my steps towards the road that lay straight before me, which led past the doctor's seat, the school-house, the kirk, with its silent graveyard, and on the other side the manse and the garden where I had done so much mischief. These places awakened within me diverse thoughts and feelings, all of which deepened the conviction that my past life had been a failure, of which I should be ashamed. This tended to strengthen the resolution to turn a new leaf, and with it to begin a new and brighter page in my career.

When I was pressing on and thinking in this way, I was startled out of the reverie by a voice coming from the roadside. It was that of Albert Craigie, who was seated on a gate which separated the main road from a pathway which led down to the river.

"Holloa, Rab!" cried Albert. "Where are you bound for at such speed so early this morning? I have not seen you since you returned. How did you like your confinement? What do you think of your friends who sent you to jail? It makes my blood boil to think of these fellows, how they have oppressed you, and sought to destroy your every chance in life. I know," he continued, with an oath, "they would have done the same to me if

they could. But they cannot, dare not. I am not destitute of money and friends, and as long as I have these, these sneaking dogs will let me alone."

"But," I interposed, "are ye so sure that onybody is seekin' to injure you, Mr. Albert? For I think noo, it was kind o' them to send me to jail as they did. I was just gaun mad an' rinnin' as fast as I could to ruin. The jail gaed me time to think an' consider my ways, an' I hae come oot determined to be a different man a'thegither."

"That is news, indeed," said Albert. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? If they can, so may you, Rab."

"It's worth tryin' onyway," I answered. "An' noo I ken my ain weakness, I will look abune for strength."

"I dare not say you will do wrong if you do that," said Albert, "for that is what my mother insists I should do too, and then I would be, she thinks, good soul, a paragon of perfection."

"Sae ye might be, Mr. Albert," I said in as polite a way as possible. "I often thought aboot ye when in my sma' cell. I thought that, wi' yer guid mither, yer fine sisters, yer big hoose and braw things, ye could dae a deal o' guid to a' roon' aboot if ye liked. But ye canna dae that till ye leave aff gaun to Tam Glen's tae waste yer money on drink. A'body likes ye, I'm sure, an' wad be glad to tak' yer aid if ye wad gie it to them."

With a loud whistle, Albert exclaimed, "Is Saul also among the prophets! Has Rab Milligan become a preacher and moralist? No, no, Rab, ye do not understand me, or you would not speak as you do. I have heard it all before now from far more eloquent lips than yours. Poor fellow, you mean no harm. But I must be off to the river for a day's sport, and, if ye like to come, you will find me in Newton at the 'Murray Arms' about five o'clock."

"I canna be there though I wished," I said. "But I hae dune, I trust, wi' public-hooses an' sic like places. I am gaun to seek wark far awa' frae

this, where I'm no kent, an' I'll no' be back for a lang time, if ever."

"Perhaps," said he, "that is the best thing a homeless fellow like you can do. I hope you will succeed in your undertaking. You will need some cash for your journey. Take that from me," he added, giving me half-a-crown. "It may be the last you will ever get from the same hand."

Before I had time to thank him, Albert was through the gate on his way to the river, which ran like a streak of light down the beautiful valley about a mile off.

The day was bright, and all nature was attired in its best autumn dress. It had rained the night before, but there were no signs of it now, except a peculiar freshness which the rain had given to every green thing. The air was balmy and exhilarating, and in ordinary circumstances would have made the traveller feel he was made stronger rather than weaker by every step he took on his way. It had not that effect on me. Altogether the morning and the natural pictures which lay before my eye at certain turns of the road were calculated to drive away the ghosts which were ever ready to haunt my brain, but they failed to either cheer or elevate my spirits. I was too much occupied with my position and plans to allow the healing influences of the natural world to have upon me their full effect. Nature is doubtless a wise teacher, but she needs an apt and receptive pupil before her lessons are understood. I was neither that day, but a careworn anxious soul who, with staff in hand, had gone forth to seek my fortune where and how I knew not.

When nearly giving up the task of determining where my destination should be, all at once it came into my mind that I should make my way as speedily as possible to a village of considerable size, named Ringwood, fully thirty miles off. It was a place I had never been near in the days of my prosperity. No one would know my name or history there, and besides it was commonly reported a considerable amount of work of various kinds

was done in the neighbourhood. An opening might therefore be got in this new sphere, whereby I might begin to earn my bread in an honest manner. To this village I resolved to go and see what could be done to further my design.

When the evening of the first day of my journey came on, I found I had still six miles to go before I reached Ringwood. A humble cottage at the roadside afforded me shelter for the night. Next day I resumed my travel about noon, and reached the village a little past three in the afternoon. My first inquiries were as to where I could get lodgings till Monday morning. A shopkeeper, to whom I applied for the information, directed me to a lodging house kept by a respectable old woman, who, in a motherly way, said she would keep me if I were honest and sober, and would promise not to use bad language. Having given her my word I would fulfil all her conditions, I took my place at her fireside and table, thinking I should rest quietly all Sunday, and start in search of work on Monday morning.

Sunday morning in a Scottish village had certain characteristics, at the time of which I write, some of which do not exist now. There was a peculiar quiet in all life, animal and human, on the sacred day. The dogs, cats, cows, and domesticated animals generally seemed to know the day of rest had come, and, whenever they moved, it was with less animation than on other days. It has been known, for example, that a postman's dog, which always bounced out before him with a joyful bark when he went his rounds on week days, when he was called upon to do duty on Sunday, the dog would accompany his master to the door, and then return with a sorrowful expression on his countenance, and, with a low growl, stretch himself before the fire. The children all participated in this spirit, and, with their Sunday dress, put on their Sunday manners. The household duties were discharged without noise or song, and the morning meal was partaken of with conversation on a lower key than usual. Worldly matters, such as trade

and politics, were excluded, and things humane and divine were the main topics of conversation. Religious books, chiefly the Bible, were read, and newspapers were kept out of sight. In many abodes there was family worship in the morning, after which preparation was made for attending the kirk and the public services of the sanctuary.

This Sabbatic spirit entered the lodging-house where I had spent the night. The old woman who kept it was reading her Bible when I first saw her on that morning, and was neatly and cleanly dressed. She had previously prepared the frugal breakfast for her other two lodgers and myself. So soon as I presented myself, she said, in an upbraiding tone—

“The breakfast has been ready mair than half-an’oor, an’ ye maun tak’ it as quick as possible, for it’ll nae be lang till kirk time.”

I at once sat down to what the decent woman had provided, thinking it mattered little to me whether it was near or far off to kirk time, for the kirk would not see me that day. Finishing my meal, I sat down by the fireside during the time the room was being put into its usual condition. When this was done, the landlady said—

“It’s mair nor time ye were makin’ ready for the kirk. It gangs in here at eleven o’clock.”

“I’m no gaun tae the kirk the day,” I answered. “I hae nae claes tae fit me tae gang amang the braw fouk there. I’ll jist stay at hame an’ read my Bible.”

“Ye maun gang tae the kirk, my man,” she said, in a commanding manner; “nane o’ my lodgers are alloo’d tae stay in my hoose on the Lord’s Day. I lock the door an’ put the key in my pouch, so ye maun get oot o’ this hoose at aince, whether ye like the kirk or no. This is a law wi’ me, an’ maun be obeyed.”

Again remonstrating that I was a stranger, had no proper clothes to appear at the church with, and that I did not know where to go till she returned, I sat still till the bells began to ring.

The old woman's temper was touched, and she was determined her rule was not to be violated. In a high tone she said—"Oot o' this hoose ye maun gang on the instant, gang whaur ye like. Dae ye think I'm sae daft as leave my hale hoose at the disposal o' strangers like you? My certie, I'm no' sae stupid. They wha will burn me for a fule will lose their fire, I tell ye."

As if bethinking herself, she added—"Oh ay, noo that I think o't, there's a wee meetin' held every Sunday forenoon in the Toon Hall by some queer kin' o' fouk wha preach tae themsels. Ye can gang there brawly if ye like. They'll be very glad tae see ye, tho' ye hae only on yer everyday claes. They're no ower particular that way."

"But wha are they?" I asked, "for I wad like tae ken something aboot them afore I wad be seen amang them."

She answered—"Fouk say they're guid enouch in their ain way, but I ken naething aboot them. I aye stick tae Mr. Smith—oor minister—an' the 'Stablisted Kirk, an' dinna gang in wi' thae new-fangled notions."

"What notions dae ye refer tae?" I further asked, "for I hae far ower mony notions in my heid already. I want nae mair new-fangled things frae onybody."

"The bells are a' but rung oot, an' me here arguin' wi' a stupid man like you," she said passionately. "Get ready quick, an' I'll show ye the place as I gang by. I'll be late the day—a thing I dinna like tae be. My faither was aye in afore the minister, an' I like tae be the same."

After making sure I would first be welcome where I was going, and, secondly, that I would not be personally taken notice of, I consented to take the good woman's advice, on which more hung than either she or I at the time dreamed of. Trifling actions sometimes produce momentous results, and this was proved to be true in this instance.

A few steps along the street brought us to the hall door. "There's the place," said my landlady; "gang straight in, an' tak' the first seat ye see."

I'll be hame frae the kirk at half-past twelve, or thereby. Mr. Smith disna gie us lang sermons."

In I went to the hall as if I had been a condemned criminal, and took my place on the back seat, on which no one sat but myself. When I entered there were not more than twenty persons present, and they sat in perfect stillness. One after another came slowly in, till there would be about sixty of a congregation. I wondered what sort of a meeting it would be. Was this a church? There did not seem to be either a beadle, precentor, or minister. Neither was there a pulpit nor a Bible. And yet, all the congregation had books in their hands, and were evidently prepared to use them. Sitting on my back seat, I could see all who were present, and I derived no little consolation from the fact they could not see me. By-and-bye, a tall, fine-looking man appeared, with bronze face, large brow, and benevolent countenance, to whom every eye was directed. This was assuredly the preacher. From his dress and otherwise, I could at once understand he was a shepherd from the hills, and not a regular minister from the college and manse. He wore a suit of clothes suited to his avocation, as a keeper of sheep, had a plaid slung over his shoulders, a strong hazel staff in his hand, and, following close behind him, a fine collie dog, which bore himself with a dignity and serenity which showed he was conscious of the Sunday, the church, and the position of his owner. Having divested himself of his plaid, out of the corner of which the shepherd took a large-sized Bible, he mounted the few steps which led to the little platform, and his dog lay down straight before him, resting his head on his stretched-out fore limbs, and fixing his eyes on his master.

The service had not been far advanced till I felt there was an earnestness and unction in what was being said and sung with which I was utterly unacquainted. Every one present entered into the exercises with spirit. The service was opened by singing the sixty-seventh Psalm, "Lord bless and pity us," after which there was a

short prayer, which seized hold of me in a most powerful manner. It was from the heart, and had in its every word the accent of deepest conviction and trust. The shepherd talked to God in an earnest, reverential tone, as if God's ear was open to hear what was said, and his heart ready to respond to his requests. A like spirit pervaded a longer prayer which, from beginning to end, was a most devout soul-stirring utterance of a child to the Heavenly Father. Sometimes, in the intensity of desire and trustfulness, the preacher would fall back on his mother tongue, as if the English vocables were far too slim to make known the burden of his desires.

"Thou art, O Lord, a great Shepherd," said the prayer-leader of that little congregation. "We ken, Lord, what that means. It means, O Lord, thou wilt not let the puir wanderin' thochtless sheep gang alane their ain gait, to be devoured by the wild beasts of the wood, an' to fa' ower precipices to be destroyed, but thou wilt gang after them into the wilderness to bring them back to thine ain fold and bosom. "O Father," he exclaimed, "thou art righteous, an' wantst a' thy children to be like thyself. Mak' us righteous this day by thy Holy Spirit, who makes known to our souls thine only begotten and well beloved Son." He prayed for all present, and as he mentioned class after class, he entered into the condition of each in such a way as to manifest a thorough knowledge of human wants, sorrows, and aspirations. Before he finished, the shepherd-preacher came as near me as possible in the words, "If, O Father, there be any stranger here among us to-day, we bless thee he is here, an' no' where there is neither light nor hope. If he be a puir wanderer from thee, an' stranger to thy love, put thine ain han' on him. Dinna let him depart till he feels thy love an' knows thy saving power. Give him a sight o' himsel' an' his sins, an' abune a' give him a sight o' the Lamb o' God wha has taken away the sin o' the world."

He then prayed for a sick child till tears blinded my eyes, and when he finished I felt

burdened with a sense of my own unworthiness and overawed by a strange, solemn feeling.

In all this remarkable prayer there was no addressing God as Eternal, Invisible, and Omnipresent, or as if he dwelt in some far-off world. There was no mention made of "superiors, inferiors, and equals"—words I had heard every time I had attended the church of my boyhood, and by which I knew when the end of the prayer was to be expected. The literature and balances of the sentences might be, and were incomplete. But what was lacking in such things was more than made up by its fervency, trustfulness, and pleading power. It was the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, and would avail much with the prayer-hearing One.

The singing of the hymns was also something new, and their lively tunes attracted my attention not a little. The company stood while they chanted forth with expression their sacred songs. This was so different from the sedate and mournful manner the Psalms were sung in the parish church where the Rev. Thomas Welsh officiated. In his church all tunes required to be on the minor key, and those with repeats were piously proscribed. Coleshill, Martyrdom, Irish, French, and Bangor, were repeated Sunday after Sunday with a long drawl, which frequently had the tendency, especially in the summer months, to send farmers, their servants, and boys, and girls to sleep. The hymns sung in the hall were, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," "Rock of Ages," "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," and with a heartiness which elevated my whole being, and made me to feel as if I too should sing and praise the Lord.

When the time for sermon came, the little congregation occupied the position of expectancy. Bible in hand, each one looked the shepherd in the face, ready to catch the words of the text. These were announced, "I will arise and go to my Father" (Luke xv. 18). So soon as I heard the words read, sympathetically, twice over, I said, "Does he mean me? Am I to arise and go to my

Father?" I had greater cause to ask myself these questions before the sermon was closed.

It would be impossible to put down in words that discourse. It was composed of far more than uttered speech. The whole man was in the sermon, and it grew in pathos and spiritual power to the end. There were earnestness, personal influence, with a heart moved by the Holy Ghost, as the trees of the forest are moved by the wind, and a dealing with the conscience, the like of which it had not been my lot to experience. This was not achieved by means of grand rounded periods, and the building of sentence upon sentence till the climax is reached. Nor would I say that, artistically viewed, the discourse was equal to those of Mr. Welsh's ordinary ministrations. But it had more grip, more grapple with the hearers, more directness, and more—no other term will answer better—unction than the ordinary or extraordinary sermons of parish churches. The character and downward career of the prodigal were depicted in nervous language. Every sentence added, as it were, to his misery, degradation, and destitution. The illustrations employed were taken from real life, and applied to my case so minutely that, long before the description of the prodigal was finished, I inwardly said, "That's me he is speaking about. He knows all my character and life."

The reception of the wayward son by the old father was, to me, even more melting than the previous part of the discourse. There was no hesitancy on the part of the preacher in declaring that the prodigal, though a prodigal, was still a son, and that the father never ceased to think about him, love him, and yearn for his return from the far country. In the old man's kiss "a thousand pardons lay," and this one act obliterated the past, with its sins, gave the returned lad a new departure and the old standing in the home and family. This condition of reconciliation and restoration to the full enjoyment of the father's love and family could only be enjoyed by the soul who would say, "I will arise and go to my Father."

God would give all needed grace to bring the wanderers back to himself. He held nothing back necessary for the sinner's conversion, and his unanswerable question to the prodigal in the fields of degradation and want was, "Why will ye die?"

These are mere fragments of a sermon which lasted for little short of an hour, and which might be characterized, from beginning to end, as a pleading, in the name of Christ, for God with my soul. It was a personal wrestling with my doubts, fears, and forebodings. The effect it produced on me could not be expressed in words. If a word could at all be appropriately employed to describe my condition, it would be the word overwhelmed. For the time being I lost consciousness of all but Christ, with his pierced hands and tender look, dealing with me, bruised, broken, and condemned. This was my state of mind all through the concluding exercises, and after the meeting was dismissed. The first thing which brought me back to the realization of where I was, was a hand laid upon my shoulder, and a person asking me—

"Are you a stranger here? Do you reside in the village?"

Looking up, I saw it was the shepherd who was bending over, and who had so feelingly addressed me.

"I'm a stranger here in this toon," I stammered out. "But I'm nae stranger tae you. Wha tauld you a' my bad life, an' that I had been in jail?"

"My dear friend," said the shepherd, in a quiet, reassuring manner, "I do not know you or your life, an' did not refer to you in my sermon. The young man I mentioned, who had gone astray through drink, and was put in the jail for assault while under its influence, was a freen o' my wife's, and lives far awa' frae this. But, thank God, it made him say, 'I will arise and go to my Father.'"

"Ah, but ye meant me," I answered. "I ken, a' ye said aboot sin o' a' kinds and drink was true. I'm a puir prodigal th' day, withoot hame or freens, a wanderer like Cain, an' dinna ken whaur to

gang or what tae dae. I'm hungry and forsaken, an' naebody cares for me."

The shepherd sat down before me, took my hand in his to assure me of his interest and to calm the agitation which all but overmastered my judgment, and said—

"It's true ye hae sinned. God kens a' that, but he has not withdrawn his eye and love frae the world because it has left him. Did ye ever think about what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote to the Romans, 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'? If we hadna been sinners, Christ wad never have died on Calvary's Cross for us. What he did in his life and death it was for us—us, remember. This wee word, my dear friend, takes in you and me."

"Say that again, sir, if ye please," I said, not apprehending the full import of his statement. "What did ye say about us, you and me?"

"I said," he responded, "the wee word 'us' is an important word, and takes in you and me, and me and you. It's like that ither saying o' inspiration, 'All we like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' The 'all' in the first clause takes in you and me, and the 'all' in the last clause does the same. So you see, dae ye no'? that oor sins, yours an' mine, were laid on Jesus Christ, an' that he bore them that we, you an' me, might be pardoned, saved, brought back to our Father and to the heavenly home."

"But is this true, or is't a new-fangled notion?" I asked, remembering the landlady's words. "I never heard it put in that personal way afore. Dae ye think that God wad tak' Rab Milligan, wha has drunk, swore, dune a' kinds o' bad things, an' been in jail, wha never had faither or mither, an' mak' him a son to love and obey him? Dae ye think he wad?"

"I do not only think," said the shepherd, with an emphasis on the last word, "but I know he would, and tak' ye this minute, where ye sit, if ye gie yersel' to him in the name o' Christ."

"I'll do't, I'll do't," I exclaimed, rising to my feet. "Christ tak' me an' dae wi' me what ye like!"

Turning to the shepherd, I added, "This is what I hae been seekin' for a' this time, an' it was to gie me this blessin', an' no' to fin' wark, the Lord brocht me to Ringwood. He has queer ways o' workin', but it's a' richt he does."

"That is true," said my teacher. "He doeth wondrous things, an' to him be all the praise and glory."

"Amen" came from both my heart and lips.

The hour of my salvation had come, and I felt as if the weight of a world had been rolled off my soul. The dense gloom of a long night had been dissipated by a light brighter and more mellow than that of the sun. What passed within me in that hall that Sunday forenoon was as real as my own personal being, and no amount of argument could have persuaded me that my experience was of the substance of which dreams are made. This one thing I knew, once I was blind, now my eyes were opened. How this took place, I could not, perhaps, philosophically explain, but of the fact there could be no manner of doubt. All old things had passed away, and all things were in the space of half-an-hour made new.

Years have silently rolled past, with their seasons, since that sacred hour, but that scene ever stands vividly before my inner eye as the mount of transfiguration where first I saw Christ in his glory. To me, as to Ezekiel, the heavens were opened, and I had visions of God, and in the centre of these visions was the only begotten Son of the Father, full of truth and grace, tenderness, and forgiving love. That beatific vision has never left me, but has, through days of darkness and sorrow, sunshine and gladness, sanctified all my life. From its contemplation I have received strength to tread, though sometimes with faltering feet, the path which will terminate in the home of the repentant prodigal and the feast of redeeming love.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHEPHERD'S HOME AND FAMILY.

"THE cheerful' supper done, wi' serious face
 They round the ingle form a circle wide,
 The sire turns o'er with patriarchal grace
 The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride ;
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare :
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care,
 And ' Let us worship God,' he says with solemn air."

—BURNS.

THERE is much said now-a-days, and perhaps well said, about development and evolution. When development is confined to the natural sphere of things it may be all right when properly stated and guarded. At the same time it does not exist as a method of action in things moral and spiritual, so far at least as man is concerned. Man, it is true, can be developed, and there are certain germs in his higher being which can be evolved. But he needs more than development and evolution. He requires, before he can attain to his own ideal, or even get, on the way of reaching it, new impulses, new principles—in a word, new life. The old life, or rather death principle, developed or evolved, would bring forth moral weakness, unrest, and malformation of character. The old Adam, which is in all, cannot become a new Adam in any. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor a polluted fountain send forth a pellucid stream. Hence the necessity for the operation of the supernatural, the grace of God, before the new life can be imparted, and the new man produced. We must needs be born again, born from above, before we can see the kingdom of God.

These truths I learned not from books or sermons, for concerning them I had neither read nor heard, except in a dim and indistinct way, previous to that Sunday morning in the hall at Ringwood, when the shepherd-preacher expounded to me so

fully the way of salvation. He then spoke of the necessity of the new birth, and made known to me the Gospel which is the incorruptible seed by which we are to be born again. God's Spirit was in, with, before, and after his words, and used them to convince and convert my soul. By means of them I experienced a change, which it would be an utter abuse of language to call either development or evolution. It sprang from causes not in and of myself, but from without. These causes wrought efficiently, leading me from darkness to light, a "marvellous light," and from one king to another, even Jesus Christ. I was a new creature, a new creation—old things, thoughts, desires, fears, and determinations passed away, and all things had become new. A metamorphosis had taken place. I was changed, and yet I was the same person. I was a living paradox—myself and yet not myself. I felt as if all my bad and black past had been taken, not out of my memory, but away from me as a condemning power. A feeling of rest at once took possession of my spirit, and peace like a river filled my soul. The dark cloud which ever seemed to hide God from my view had passed away, and I beheld him as one who looked upon me with ineffable interest, and desired me to feel towards him as a child does to a father. In a word, I was exalted to a new plane of existence, and the forces of a new life pulsated my whole being. How this took place was not to me at that supreme moment a matter of inquiry. That it did take place I was as certain as I was of my existence. My eyes were opened, and I saw, albeit my vision was not strong nor my horizon extended.

"Where do you stay?" asked the preacher, after our conversation on sacred things had come to an end. "I have not time to remain here with you any longer, and must return to my duties on the hills. I was wunnerin' if you couldna come hame wi' me for the afternoon, that I might further instruct you in the words of eternal life."

"I am stayin' wi' an old woman in a lodgin'-hoose doon the street," I replied, "but I'll gladly gang

wi' you where ye like, if ye'll tak' me. I wad like to ken mair than I yet understan' o' thae matters, for I'm awfu' ignorant aboot religion."

"Go then," said my friend, "an' settle with the old woman as quickly as possible, and we can arrange other affairs when ye get to Hillside, where I live."

A few minutes after I was in the lodging-house, where I found the old landlady seated, full-dressed, as she had returned from the church. She was resting herself after her walk, and had the Bible lying on her knees. On entering, she scanned me minutely, and, like many of her sex, was quick in perceiving a change in my looks and manner. What she saw excited her not a little. Holding up her gloved hands, she exclaimed—

"Guid gracious me! Hae thae folks been turnin' ye upside doon tae? They tell me they hae converted, as they ca't, a guid wheen queer folk in the village, an' some o' them gang aboot an' tell ithers they are saved an' a' that. Sam'el Sproat, the drucken weaver, an' Sandy M'Cormick, the bletherin' smith, are amang them, an' they pray an' preach tae, I'se warrant ye. They are no canny, I think."

"I'm no' acquainted wi' ony o' the folk," I replied, "but a' o' them I saw the day were decent enouch to look at."

"Oh ay, I daresay," said the old woman; "Satan himself appears as an angel o' licht, till he grips ye in his lang fingers, an' then he shows his clouts. Tak' care, my wee manny, or they'll convert you."

"That's just what I need, my guid woman," I replied, and added, "We wad a' be the better o' bein' converted o' oor bad ways."

"That's just the way they get ower the folk that hear them," said the landlady, and, holding up the Bible into my face, she continued, "This is the book I bide by, an', as Mr. Smith says, 'if they speak not according to this, they're a' in darkness.' But, losh man, ye nicht tell a body what they say and dae."

Not wanting at that moment to say anything

about them or my spiritual condition, I asked her to tell me how much I owed her, because I would not be back, having been asked to stay for the night with the minister. This news startled her yet more seriously. She looked amazed, and said—

“Guid preserve me! did ye ever hear the like o’ that? They maun be queer Christians when they tak’ up wi’ strangers like you, an’ change ye sae much in an hour or twa. Tak’ care o’ yersel’, my man, is my advice, for there’s nae sayin’ what they’ll mak’ o’ ye yet wi’ their new views, as they ca’ them. Ae thing I can tell ye, they’ll no convert me. Na, na, the auld way is the best way, an’ I’ll stick till’t.”

On returning to the shepherd, we at once set out on the journey up the hills. The walk was a memorable one, and my spirits were elevated all the way. All nature appeared as bathed in a new light, and clothed with a new and more lovely garment. The sun was pouring forth his rays, which were tempered by the thin clouds through which they passed. The undulating hills looked as if they nestled in each other’s bosom; the trees, bronzed with the breath of autumn, were sparkling as if covered with gold; the atmosphere was genial and cool, and the whole was glorified to my eyes, because now associated with that Heavenly Father, who had sent his Son to enter into closest possible relationship with men, not to condemn them, but that through faith they might have eternal life.

As we walked along, my companion did not talk to me about my religious condition, past life, repentance, or faith. His conversation was religious in spirit and tone, but far from being formally so. I could see his endeavour was to lead me out of myself, away from my experiences, and to excite the conviction that all I saw in the material world was connected most intimately with the present action of a living person, and that person was God. This he did in natural speech, innocent of philosophical words or phrases, and with such freeness as made me understand he did not assume this style of conversation for the time being, but that it was his

usual manner of speaking with his companions. The miles were soon overtaken, and I had no thought I had walked so far when I received a hearty welcome from Mrs. Armour to Hillside.

The family to which I was so unexpectedly introduced consisted of the father, mother, three daughters, and two sons, ranging from the ages of seventeen down to about seven. The mother was a fine specimen of the class to which she belonged. Her appearance indicated she was a clean, thrifty, pleasant, and intelligent housewife. In her manner of speech, and her way of going about the discharge of her domestic duties, one could see that she possessed a refinement which does not usually belong to those in her humble position. The eldest daughter was a superior girl, on the borders of womanhood, and it was soon apparent she had received a good education. I learned afterwards that she was clever with her hands, and rendered valuable assistance to her brothers and sisters, and used her spare time for the cultivation of her mind. The rest of the family were such as might have been expected in a comfortable and well-regulated home. They so acted towards one another and the stranger who had been brought under their roof that I soon was at perfect ease, and became as one of the family circle. A cheerful atmosphere pervaded the whole household, and there was much unostentatious brotherly and sisterly affection displayed by all the inmates. What pleased me most was the becoming and unrestrained honour paid by the children to their parents, and the delight taken in carrying out their wishes and anticipating their desires. The home was a Christian home, sanctified and pleasant—a garden for the growth and training of men and women, who, in the broad field of the world, would play their parts with brave and noble spirits, and aim unselfishly to benefit and bless others while they did their duty. Such homes constitute the foundations of society, and are the sources of a nation's prowess and glory.

The whole of the afternoon was devoted by the shepherd to my instruction. He, Rover, his faith-

ful dog, and I took to the hills, and made our way to a place of eminence, from whence he could tend his flock. When he reached the top of the hill he sat down and gave Rover his instructions, which were received with evident enjoyment and intelligence. The faithful dog bounded off with manifest glee to fulfil them, and was soon beyond the reach of call and almost of vision. When duty had been thus discharged, the shepherd turned to me, with Bible in hand, and read out several portions of the sacred Word which speak of God, his purposes, his character, and desires, as made known in Jesus Christ. He viewed these subjects from a standpoint which was peculiarly his own. What he said was fresh, vigorous, so different from what I had been accustomed to think, and so full of self-evidencing power, that I drank it in as a thirsty traveller would quaff the living water from the cooling spring. When I spoke to him of the dark thoughts I had entertained of God and my own existence, he said—

“You may speak to me freely about these dark forebodings of yours, for you should ken that you have not been alone in gaun through this gross darkness an’ horrible experience. I had a’ these doubts and difficulties to struggle with for years, an’ bitter were the days I spent in thinkin’ over them.”

“I wunner at that, Mr. Armour,” I said, “for ye hinna been like me in yer ways. Maist likely ye wad be a God-fearin’ man a’ yer life. Hoo did sic wicked thochts an’ strange ideas come into yer heid?”

“They came tae me very soon,” he replied, “an’ were awakened first when I was at the school. Ye ken, Rab, we become, in this land o’ Bibles and Catechisms, theologians far too early. I was a theologian when I commenced my teens. What troubled me maist in these days was to understand how God had fixed all things, an’ yet I was free and responsible, an’ that if Christ died only for the elect, how the reprobates were to be punished to’ eternity for not believing on him. But these things sit light on me noo.”

"Hoo did ye get rid o' them?" I asked. "I hae been troubled wi' them, I may say, a' my life; an' it is only the day I hae got quit o' pairt o' my burden."

"Your deliverance," said the shepherd, "has come frae Jesus Christ, your Saviour, and been, what may be called, experimental. But if ye dinna come to understand mair than ye do now, about God, his Word and ways, the old doubts and difficulties may come back with all their force, and overwhelm ye."

"That's what I'm feared for," I said. "When I gang amang strangers wha canna understan' thae things ye hae been explainin', I may be perplexed an' sent back to whaur I was. I feel, the noo, that my feet are on a rock; but ye're beside me, an' I kin'-o'-ways haud on by Christ through you."

"What will give you strength," said my instructor, "is to remember that ye may explain darkness by means o' light, but light cannot be understood by darkness. So soon as I saw that, I was delivered from all trouble an' put on the way to understand God's words and providence."

"Hoo will this come aboot?" I inquired. "Ane wad require the wisdom o' Solomon to dae that."

"You're mistaken, my man," said the shepherd. "For instance, ye say ye hae been perplexed about the decrees of God an' his ways of dealing with Adam an' the race o' man through him. Ye hae been at a loss to understan' why God made you an' sent you into the world as you are. All these an' many mair o' the same kind are difficult questions, profound problems which we may never fully understand here. But because they are surrounded with such darkness, we should the more earnestly see if there is any light granted by God's Spirit which we can bring to bear on them, so that they may be seen more clearly."

"But is there licht onywhere?" I asked, looking up into the shepherd's face with an earnest look. "I wad like to see into thae things," I continued, "for naebody ever could explain them tae me."

"O yes, Rab," answered my instructor. "There

is light, glorious light. There is, ye ken, 'The Light o' the World.' Let us look at the difficulties in creation, the Bible, and human nature in the light Christ imparts, and it is wonderful what we can know of God an' his ways to man."

"Maybe that's true," I said, somewhat doubtfully, "but I dinna see't exactly."

"Look here," said the shepherd, addressing me with increased fervour. "There can be no doubt about the fact that God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son to save that world. That world includes you and all mankind. God, therefore, so loved you as to give his Son to die for you. This his Son did when, as the Scriptures tell us, he tasted death for every man. Weel, then, dae ye think, if God so loved you as to mak' this great sacrifice for you, that he would otherwise do onything to injure you, or destroy yer soul? What dae ye say to that?"

"I maun just say," I replied, "I canna understand' hoo he could. It wadna be very consistent like to lift up wi' the ae han' an' knock doon wi' the ither."

"That's what I think tae," he said. "All God's ways are the result of his love, though we may not understand' them. We are bound to believe that, for he wha has given the greater gift will not keep back the lesser. Noo, that's what I call explaining darkness by light. I explain a' the dark providences an' the dark passages o' the Bible by the light which comes from the Cross. In this way I live by faith and not by sight, an' hae learned to trust where I canna trace."

"I will dae my best to carry this thought wi' me," I responded. "An' already I can see a wee bit farther into my life, an' understand' its meanin', than I used tae dae."

Much more was said by way of illustrating and applying the principle laid down as I sat at the feet of my newly-found teacher on the hill top that beautiful Sunday afternoon. Before Rover was called in from his watch-tower, I had vouchsafed to my wondering gaze glimpses of heavenly things,

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not so curious and perplexing as those of the prophet, but adapted to one who had newly passed from death unto life. There was then and there rooted and grounded in my deepest being the faith that God ruled and treated me in love, and that all I had passed through of sorrow and suffering was intended to educate me in the knowledge of the bitterness of sin, the bondage of iniquity, and to shut me up to Jesus Christ, before whose light all difficulties would ultimately vanish, and the mists and shadows roll away.

When the calm hour of evening came, the family altar was erected, and the inmates of the peaceful home seated themselves round the common table to join their hearts and voices in the Creator's praise. The big ha' Bible was laid before the father. The rest had a Bible placed in their hands, I receiving one also. I have to confess, when I took it into my hands a thrill approaching fear came over me, for that sacred volume had not been in my hand for family worship for many years. The shepherd announced the Psalm, which he read with solemnity. He raised the tune, and we all joined in the sweet song of Zion. The singing was, to my ears, the most impressive I had ever heard. With a voice trembling with emotion, I sang—

“He took me from a fearful pit,
And from the miry clay ;
And on a rock he set my feet,
Establishing my way.”

The reading of the Scriptures followed, the passage selected being Luke xxiv. 13-35. Each one read a verse, the one falling to me being, “And it came to pass that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus drew near and went with them.” When I read it, I thought of the shepherd and myself on the hill side, and wondered if Christ had been near us that afternoon. That he had been became to me a certainty when I heard the shepherd himself read, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while

he opened to us the Scriptures?" Our hearts were aflame as we talked, and the meaning of many parts of the Bible had been opened to our understandings. Surely the Lord was in that place, and we knew it not.

After the reading was over, we all knelt down, and the father led his household congregation in prayer. The prayer was full of pathos, tender and touching, of reverence and filial feeling, fatherly solicitude and Christian earnestness. It was simple in its language, direct in its effects, and trustful throughout. With language of gratitude he thanked God for all he had done for the poor and the lost children of Adam. When those on their knees were remembered, I thought the voice faltered, though the tone was that of robust faith. The Lord was entreated to watch over the lambs of the fold, to preserve them from the sins and follies of youth, and the corrupting ways of the world. The mother was mentioned as if she formed part of his life, and the prayer was presented that she and he, with an unbroken family, might dwell in the home from whence no lambs ever strayed. When the shepherd prayed for me he did so as fervently as if I had been his own child, who had returned from a far-off land, and God was thanked for the merciful deliverance I had that day enjoyed. After the Amen was reached, there was a minute of impressive silence, and then we rose from our knees. The Paraphrase then was sung, which begins with the words—

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend his cause;
Maintain the glory of his Cross,
And honour all his laws."

The benediction closed a service which could not but sweeten home life, purify family relations, and go to the formation of honest characters. Burns understood what such services meant when, in his immortal poem on the "Cottar's Saturday Night," he says—

"From scenes like these auld Scotia's grandeur
springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad."

The members of the family bade each other "Good night," and retired to rest, with the exception of the shepherd and myself. When all had departed, he took me into what his eldest daughter called the "prophet's chamber," which was the room used by her father when he studied and prepared his sermons. It contained a box-bed, not seen till a door was opened, a writing table, and a bookcase full of well-thumbed books. These latter were great treasures to my host, and he looked upon them with no little pride. Among the books were pointed out "The Confession of Faith," a very old copy, which belonged to its possessor's grandfather, "Erskine's Works," "The Marrow of Modern Divinity," out of which there had been many precious morsels obtained, "Theron and Aspasio," and "Meditations among the Tombs," by Hervey, Ambrose's "Looking Unto Jesus," "The Pilgrim's Progress," "Ferguson's Astronomy," "Burns' Poems," "Tannahill's Poems and Songs," "The Scots Worthies," "The Cloud of Witnesses," and other volumes of a kindred character. The controversial theological literature was abundant, and had, its owner remarked, occupied a great deal of time and attention. With a smile, he said, "I take to that sort o' thing as a duck takes to the water. I aye liked to inquire into and to argue on the deep things of God, and mony a nicht I hae sat up here readin' thae works."

"I ken naething aboot thae subjects frae books," I said. "I tried to read Paine's 'Age of Reason,' but it fair beat me. There didna seem to be ony reason in it."

"I hae tackled Paine in my day tae," said the shepherd, "but it did not shake my faith in the Bible in the least. He takes the negative way of gaun to work, but I take the positive. For example, Rab, I could give a number of reasons why ye should believe that the world is not a globe, but

they wad satisfy naebody who had a positive reason to believe it is not flat but round. So with Paine and the rest o' his kin'. The reasons I hae for believin' the Bible to be the Word of God are so numerous that his negative arguments, as he ca's them, have not the weight of a feather on me."

In this way the shepherd went on, every book he lifted suggesting some new line of observation, till far on in the morning. He did not seem to weary in speaking, and I did not weary hearing him. The conversation was both instructive and elevating, and did not flag for a moment. I had so much to ask, and he was so ready to answer all my questions to the extent of his ability. At last, on looking his watch, he said, "It's more than time we were in bed. 'Good night,' we will resume our crack in the morning."

So closed the most momentous and fruitful day of my life. Only one such day can occur in the history of any human being.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SHEPHERD'S WORK AND INFLUENCE.

"HOWE'ER it be it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good ;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

—TENNYSON.

THE race of man has been frequently represented as a chain, each link depending on the one which went before, and sustaining the one which comes after. This is a true representation. We depend on one another. This takes place in social and intellectual life, and it is not unfrequently true of moral and spiritual life as well. There are many who hang on God and Christ through another. They believe in the unseen verities of the eternal world, because others do so, rather than from rational evidence believed in by themselves. This is, of course, the position of all children, and some

of us seldom become other than children in things religious. Our faith is a childlike trust, and its ground-work is frequently unknown.

This I knew when, after, what I must call by the old terms, my conversion, I dwelt in Hillside, and lived near the shepherd-preacher. I was afraid to leave him for fear I would leave my Christian standing and my faith. From the moment I heard him pray, I knew he was far better acquainted with divine things than I was. He knew, I understood intuitively, more of God, Christ, moral providence, and the Bible than I did. I therefore believed in him, and was persuaded what was dark to me was full of light to him, and that what I did not at all understand he understood perfectly. On him I consequently leaned in my endeavours to walk as a Christian child, and from him I required to learn the way of life more perfectly if I ever was to become strong. In a very real sense he was to be my shepherd, to lead, guide, and feed me with the bread of life, the manna from heaven.

It was with a sense of relief, consequently, that Mr. Armour said to me on the Tuesday morning succeeding the Sunday I went to Hillside—

"Now, Rab, I dinna want you to look to me, as ye're apt to do, but to a higher Power, who is ever near you; but you are only as yet a weakling, ye're like one o' my lambs that can scarcely walk. You require to be attended by an earthly pastor, who would pay special attention to your being grounded in the faith. I am willing to do all I can to nourish your spirit, and make it strong. We have been speakin' over the matter, an' ye can stay here if ye like for a few days. The change may do ye good in mony ways."

"Thank ye," I said. "This is what I need. I was feared I wad require to gang awa', an' my mind is sae ill furnished, ither evils wad come in an' mak me waur than afore."

"Yer quite welcome to stay here," interjected Mrs. Armour. "We're a' interested in yer welfare, an' will mak' ye as like oorsels as we can."

We're a' the Lord's bairns, and should cherish ane anither wi' pure hearts fervently."

It was, therefore, at once arranged I should remain at Hillside, and that during my sojourn among the hills I should attend to the wants of my body—sorely reduced in strength—and my mind. Liberty was granted to accompany the shepherd on his journeys, and I was to have the use of his library. Both privileges were a real boon, and I took advantage of them to the fullest extent. My hunger for books was richly satisfied, and the contents of many a volume were made mine in a few days. Rover was not a more devoted follower of his master than I was. A shepherd's life during the autumn months is most exhilarating and health-imparting. It was so to me, who liked the freedom of the hills and the bracing effect of the cooling breeze.

In our rounds we remained in the open air for hours when the weather was favourable. Our conversations on these occasions were almost always on subjects of profit and pleasure. When talking on matters in which he delighted, the shepherd displayed an ability and insight beyond the common. He had been a thoughtful reader all his days. His Bible for years had been of a very truth the man of his counsel, and he never wanted it. With philosophy and theology he was well acquainted, and never wearied in discoursing on some aspect of the queen of sciences. As might have been expected, his knowledge of the objects of nature—bird, fish, insects, trees, and flowers—was minute and extensive. He could tell the stars and planets, and spoke of them with a rapture which approached inspiration. And he took a deep interest in the social questions which were discussed then, as now, with keenness by philanthropists and reformers. The temperance enterprise, though then a tiny thing, had his support, and with marvellous lucidity he explained the nature of alcoholic drinks, and how they got such a terrible power over their poor victims. All these things were previously out of my reach, and

of them I had heard next to nothing. They, therefore, came upon me like a revelation from a higher sphere, and opened up whole worlds for thought and meditation.

When seated one day on a rock, from whence a far-reaching view could be obtained, I asked the shepherd about the greatness of the sun, the size of the earth, and the number of the stars. This question had been caused by what I read with amazement out of "Dick's Christian Philosopher," which he had told me to look into the day before.

"Ah!" he said with animation, "you should have heard Dr. Chalmers on these subjects. It was my fortune to hear the maist o' his grand 'Astronomical Discourses.' They lifted me up to a great height, and made me see, as never before, God's greatness and man's too."

"Whaur did ye hear Chalmers preach? I never heard o' him where I cam' frae."

"It was in Glasgow, where I happened to be at the time. The sermons created a great steer. They were delivered on week days, an' the merchants left their shops to hear them, and they were riveted by the preacher's eloquence. An' nae wonder. It was like a perfect torrent."

"But what did this great preacher say about the sun and the earth?" I asked.

"He said," replied the shepherd, "this earth is sma' when compared with the sun, but it is big for a' that. Its bigness is not perceived with the eye o' the astronomer, but the eye o' the Christian."

"What made me feel so queer," I said, "when I read a' Dick says about the great number o' the stars, the bigness o' the sun an' the sma'ness o' the earth, was that God couldna care much for this world, an' couldna tak' up his attention wi' the like o' me. This made me feel as if I had lost my Faither in heaven."

"That's just," Mr. Armour said, "what Chalmers, gran' man that he was, saw, an' this led him to say, 'Tak' your telescopes and look to the infinitely great, but dinna forget to tak' your microscopes also, an' look at the infinitely little.' God

cares for all his creatures. Nothing is too sma' for him to observe, and nothing too big but he can perfectly understand. He made the butterfly which flies from flower to flower during its short life, an' he created an' upholds the archangel that bends before his throne. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's knowledge, and we are o'more value than a' the birds and butterflies that ever existed."

"That may be true," I answered, "but still I dinna like to think o' thae things for fear I tinea the sense o' his presence, an' be led to think that if the earth is sae sma' an' man on it sae wee, when compared wi' the big stars which are far away frae us, he will not think o' puir cratures like us wha hae broken his laws."

"Yer difficulties may increase," said the shepherd, "as ye get mair knowledge aboot the creation. They dinna trouble me noo at all. Their power has been broken, an' I'll tell you hoo I was delivered from them."

"That's what I want to hear," I said.

"We maun gang to the Master an' be his scholars if we are to get the light we require. Christ tells us that the soul of man is far more valuable than the whole world. We'll tak' this to begin with. Why is this the case, Rab?"

"I couldna answer this at ance," I replied, "for I hae never thocht aboot it."

"The reason," said my teacher, "why man's soul is far more precious than the world is, it is made like God himself."

"Hoo can that be?" I asked, with wonderment.

"We canna compare oorselves wi' the great Creator surely."

"Yer no seein' the point I'm drivin' at," said the shepherd keenly. "The soul of man is like God, because it's moral, it's spiritual, it's religious, and shall live for ever. Yes, Rab, your soul an' mine are all that, or Christ would not have died for them. God's Son would not have died for the earth or the stars. From this I reason, material greatness is nothing to moral and spiritual great-

ness—man has spiritual greatness and worth, and it is this God values. He is made in the divine image an' likeness, as Moses tells us. And this is the reason he is more an object of heaven's interest than a' the matter in the universe. Ye'll understand these subjects better some day, Rab, than ye do now, if ye haud on readin' an' thinkin' as ye hae done."

I thought at that moment I would require to do so, for I only saw what the shepherd meant as through a glass darkly. His words were not altogether lost on that account. For from that moment I began to think and read on these and other kindred topics—a course of conduct which has greatly enriched my experience.

One afternoon, as we returned from the village, an incident occurred which must not be unrecorded on account of what it afterwards led to. As we passed a house on the roadside, we were attracted by hearing loud voices and terrible oaths proceeding therefrom. We stood for a moment, when a woman, about sixty years of age, rushed out in an excited state, weeping and wringing her hands. She came up to the shepherd, and, naming him, cried, "For God's sake, come in; John is murdering his faither. Oh, its awfu' wark this."

"What's wrang?" inquired Mr. Armour.
"Surely John has done Mr. Reid nae harm?"

"I'm afraid he will, if he's no' prevented. He has been oot a' day at the village, an' come hame the waur o' drink, an' demands mair siller. We hinna it to gie him. Gang in an' see what ye can dae to quiet him, an' I'll be much obliged to ye."

We went in and found a young man, about twenty-two years of age, standing over an old man who sat cowering on a chair at the fireside. He had his clenched hand raised as if about to strike, and, with a thick voice, was swearing he would do for his father if he did not get what he wanted.

When the shepherd saw what was going on, he stepped forward quickly, took a firm grip of John's arm, and as he brought it down from its threatening position, said—

"John Reid, do ye ken what ye're doing?" This is no' like what a son should do to such a good faither as yours has been."

John staggered back, and sat down on a chair and muttered, "I'm kept here like a beggar. I have no money, and not allowed more than a few pence to keep my pockets. Other fellows are not so treated, and I'm determined I'll have it if it is in the house."

This was said with the stuttering which is begotten of strong drink. At the same time it could be easily seen the speaker was not a mere country lad, but one who had received a good education. It was apparent by his whole demeanour that he was roused to a great degree of excitement, and was under the control of both passion and the intoxicating cup.

The father replied, "I wunner, John, ye can speak in that way to either yer mither or me. We hae dune a' we could for ye, an' spent mair money on ye than on the lave o' the family. And noo, when I'm no able to work for mair, ye wud tak' the last penny an' spend it on drink, to ruin baith your body and soul. We hinna money to gie him, Mr. Armour," he said, addressing the shepherd, "an' if he gangs on at this rate, he'll bring baith his mither's an' my gray hairs doon in sorrow to the grave."

The old man sobbed when he uttered these last words, and covered his face with his hands.

The shepherd, addressing the son, said—"John, this is no' what I wad hae expected from you, a well-educated young man, wha ought to have been a credit to yer family an' yer neighbours. Ye maun promise me ye'll no trouble yer faither or mither any more, nor speak to them about money till the morn. Ye're no' yersel' the noo. Will ye tak' my advice, an' go tae yer bed? an' then to-morrow I'll come down an' we can talk the matter over. There's no fear but by that time ye'll be satisfied, an' a' will be richt."

The young man had become quieter, and at once resigned himself into the shepherd's hands. He

rose to carry out his suggestion, and made for his bedroom in the attic. On the shepherd motioning his mother, she followed him and assisted to get him to bed. In a short time she returned, shutting the door after her, and told us he had fallen asleep.

"Do not disturb him," said Mr. Armour, "and by the morn he'll hae slept aff the drink, and be himsel' again."

Promising to call, if possible, next day, we resumed our journey to Hillside.

The shepherd did not for some time utter a word. He walked as if there was no one near him. At length he commenced to, as it were, soliloquize by saying, "There is no curse like this drink. See how it enters the homes of our virtuous population, and blasts all the happiness and prosperity of families as with a withering curse. No class is spared; the learned as well as the ignorant, the rich as well as the poor, the hope of fathers and mothers, those who have been the children of prayers, as well as those who have been nursed on the lap of vice and crime, have all been destroyed by it. When shall the Church and the State see their duty in regard to this evil, and roll away this stone of stumbling and rock of offence? Poor Mr. Reid, he is to be pitied, for John was once a braw lad, and bade fair to be an honour to his parents and a credit to us a'."

"What has led John Reid into this condition?" I timidly asked, and checking thereby the flow of the shepherd's speech. "Has he been lang given tae drink?"

"His history, Rab," he answered, "is like that o' mony a young man who has left this side o' the country, and gone to a large town. John was a fell scholar at the parish school. The maister advised his faither to gie him education an' fit him for the college. Mr. Reid had a sma' farm, an' he and the lave of them wrought hard and saved a' they could to gie John a' the learning which would fit him for being a doctor. Ay, but he was a nice lad, an' used to gang with his faither an' mither every Sabbath to the kirk, an' was real

fond o' them. The minister, Mr. Smith, was also proud o' the lad's parts, an' thought he wad be a credit to the parish. A' was right for the first year he was at Glasgow College, an' when he came hame he was respected by a' body aboot, an' ta'en oot tae the big hooses. The second time he came back he was different; an' he wasna lang away the third time before he returned, terribly altered, deep in debt, an' a' his faither's money squandered. Since then, for mair than a year he has been gaun about doing naething, drinking when he gets money, an' affronting a' his freens by his conduct. The auld man has nae money to gie him, and this is what the quarrel was aboot the day. It's a sad case, Rab."

The shepherd was touched by his own mournful tale, and so was I. I, too, understood the power of the drink demon, and knew how difficult it was to get out of his grasp when once in it. Could nothing be done to rescue this victim of intemperance from his degrading vice? was the thought which rose in my mind. I therefore asked—

"Dae ye no' think John could be made a sober young man yet? He is surely no sae far doon as I was, an' wad be easier lifted up. The Christ that saved me could save him tae."

"Nae doobt o' that," was the answer given. "He can save to the very uttermost all who come unto God through him."

"That's what I was thinkin'. Why dae ye no' try an' preach tae him as ye preached tae me?" I asked.

"The difficulty lies here," said the shepherd. "He does not see the evil o' his ways as ye did. He thinks he has not been well used, an' is no' to blame for being as he is. Besides, his parents, his minister, an' his freens think that wine, whisky, an' the like, are a' guid creatures o' God, to be taken wi' thanksgien. Until this notion is oot o' their heids, they will never see the nature o' strong drink an' the evils of intemperance in their true light."

"Can ye no instruct them in thae things, Mr. Arm-

our?" I asked, thinking that they would be as ready to learn of the shepherd as I was, and added, "Ye ken a' about the evils o' public-hooses an' drink, an' could soon set their minds richt on thae things."

The shepherd smiled, and replied, "It wadna be sae easy as ye think. Auld prejudices are waur to uproot than ignorance, especially when they hae to do with auld customs, an' hae the power o' appetite on their side. But we'll see what can be done."

When we reached Hillside the family was told what had transpired. In narrating the events which had taken place, the father took occasion to point out that learning, good parents, and the good wishes of friends would not save those who took intoxicating drink from the ravages of intemperance, and that no one was safe who indulged in the wine that mocked and the strong drink that raged. At family worship that night, John Reid and his parents were not forgotten. In earnest words God was besought to bless them, and bless all the means to be used for their comfort and wellbeing.

Next morning the shepherd was up early, and, with Rover, had been attending his flock before the others were astir. After breakfast and the usual morning prayer, he said, "I'll have to gang in to see John Reid this forenoon. I want to deal faithfully wi' him at this time, for he has the making o' a good man in him, if he was set on the right road." "Rab," he added, addressing me, "ye'll stay at hame the day, for maybe he'll speak mair freely if nae strangers are present. Tak' a book in yer han', an' away to the hills till dinner time."

"That will be the better plan," said Mrs. Armour, "an' see, Alec, an' do the young man a' the guid ye can. Ye ken he's doted on by his mither, wha must be grieved at heart at the way he has been gaun on. Maybe he'll yet be a bright trophy of redeeming grace."

The shepherd went away, and returned in the afternoon, but did not say much about what was said and done at the home of John Reid. "Some things are too sacred for words," he said, "an'

the transactions between parents an' weans, God an' the soul, are among them. A guid beginning has been made, and He wha has begun the guid work will perfect it in his ain way, if we're a' faithful. There's nae fear but he'll dae that."

What was meant by these words was made plain when I saw the young man at the Town Hall on the Sunday following, with a calm countenance. The shepherd and he had several interviews during the week, and he, too, was brought into a right relation to God, his neighbour, and himself. He felt the power of the Holy Ghost, and was clothed in his right mind. Wonderful changes these, but they are real, and have occurred since the cowardly Peter, in Pilate's palace, became the heroic Peter of Pentecost, till now. They constitute the living evidences of the power of the Gospel, and can be read and understood by all men.

Other incidents as striking as this one took place during the few weeks I was privileged to remain at Hillside. By means of them I was enabled to understand that not a man in the neighbourhood had a better or stronger influence than the humble shepherd I had looked up to as my spiritual father. Few days passed without his aid, in one form or another, being solicited. No sooner was it asked than it was given. Sick persons desired he would call in passing, and give them, as they said, a word of prayer and read them a few verses of Scripture. Widows were visited and encouraged, and not unfrequently assisted out of his slender store. A neighbouring shepherd's child died, and Alec Armour was the one who was sent for, to administer the consolation so much required, for it was an only child. An accident took place at the mines near by, where he used to hold kitchen meetings. When the husband was borne home by his fellow-workmen, and laid on his bed, which the doctor said was his death-bed, the weeping wife said, "Will I send for the minister, Willie?" "Na, na, dinna send for the minister," said the dying man, "he disna under-

stan' chaps like me. Send for the shepherd. Tell him I'm deein', an' want to see him quick."

"What a power this man possesses," I said to myself, as I came to see how much he did for those who required his counsel and aid. "I wish I could do something to benefit my fellow-men as he does." When alone with him one evening in the "prophet's chamber," I ventured to hint as much as this, and he at once took it up and said, "I can dae naething that's popular or attractive. My talents are neither great nor many. But what I hae an' can dae, I place at the disposal of my Saviour an' Lord. An' so may ye, Rab, an' what's mair, ye should do't in the instant, for what ye get o' truth an' light is no' to be hoarded like a miser, but to gie it aboot as bread at Sacrament. If ye dinna dae this, what ye hae got will be taken away, an' ye'll be poor indeed."

This little sermon was listened to with deepest interest, and formed itself into a resolution which largely shaped the course of my future life.

CHAPTER XIV.

INSTRUCTION AND CONSECRATION.

"Jesus lives ; his life is mine,
Then my all to him I'll render ;
I would make my heart his shrine,
Swept and garnished, pure and tender.
To the weak a shield is he,
This my confidence shall be."

—"Gellert," translated by Rev. Dr. JOHN GUTHRIE.

SENTIMENT is a means, not an end. We are not made that we may simply feel and enjoy existence. Out of feeling should spring action—work, work of a kind which is calculated to lessen the evils of the world, and promote the advancement of love and righteousness. This is pre-eminently the case with the highest and most valuable of all emotions or sentiments, the religious. It is not an end in itself, although too many think it is, and imagine

feeling and profession exhaust all that pertains to a religious life. This is not so. Work in this sphere, as elsewhere, is the end of sentiment. Jesus recognized this when he said to his disciples, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." He told them also, that if they desired to know whether his doctrine was from God, they were to do the will of his Father. In their action they would find the evidence of his own divinity and the truthfulness of his own wonderful utterances.

This was the line of thought along which the shepherd endeavoured to lead me after he had instructed me in the way of life more perfectly.

"Now, Rab," he said, "I have to confess ye hae made great progress in understandin' the Scriptures, an' a' the precious truths which pertain to your standing before God. But ye maunna rest there. There's work for ye to dae, an' ye must mak' up yer mind to dae it. There should be nae idlers in the Lord's vineyard, an' if there be, they'll soon be like Pharaoh's lean kine, thin eneuch."

"My difficulty," I said, "is to fin' oot what I can dae o' a religious sort, or, indeed, o' any kind. I'm stronger than I was, but I'm no fit for hard wark yet, an' ither kin' o' wark is no' easily got."

"Dinna gang wrang there," the shepherd said. "The work ye are called upon to dae is just the work ye're fit for. I hae known not a few who wanted to work for God and man, but they wanted to dae it in their ain way, an' that way was a big ane. They werena content wi' little things, but aimed high—to be ministers or speakers to crowds, or something of that sort, an' they were aboot as fit for thae positions as they were to be the Prime Minister o' the nation."

"I hae nae sic ambition as that, Mr Armour, I can assure you," I responded. "A very sma' openin' wad satisfy me."

"That's the richt spirit to cherish," said my friend, "an' the ane which will lead you to be useful. The Lord never intended ye, Rab, to be

much o' a worker in the world, or he wad hae gi'en ye a bigger body an' stouter arms, an' he never ettled ye to be a gran' preacher in a big kirk, or he wad hae made ye a better speaker, an' maybe a better scholar than ye are."

"That's true, I'm sure," I said. "Ye say I maun work for the Master an' mysel', an' I'm willing to dae what I can, but I dinna see where I can begin, or what I should try to dae first."

"There ye go," said the shepherd, with earnestness. "There ye go. Ye want a' things made plain before ye, from the beginning to the end, before ye start. Ye want to ken where ye're to go, what ye're to do, how much money ye're to get for your labour before ye put forth yer hand. There is nae faith an' trust in that kind o' life—nane ava."

"But we're no' to reckon on God too much," I said. "That wad be presumption, an' we wad be made to pay weel for it."

"Nonsense," said the shepherd, in a most vigorous manner. "Trust God too much? That's impossible. What dae ye think Christ wad hae done, if the disciples had said to him, as he put into their hands the five barley loaves and the two small fishes, 'We can do nothing with these, for what are they among sic a crowd? We'll just keep them till ye gie us more!' What wad he hae said to these faithless anes? He wad hae looked on them wi' pitying eye, and said, 'O ye o' little faith, wherefore dae ye doubt? Go, do your present duty as I command ye. Gie out what ye have got in hand, and when thae loaves an' fishes are finished, ye'll get more, till a' are satisfied.' So wi' you, Rab. Do what ye can humbly, trustfully, an' in a tender spirit, as becometh those who are redeemed, and God will attend to the rest."

This conversation originated out of a statement of mine, to the effect that I had desired to return home, and get into a position where I could do something for the well-being of others as well as provide for my own sustenance.

During the weeks I had been an inmate of the

shepherd's home at Hillside, I had kept up a regular correspondence with John. In my letters, which were numerous and long, I had freely and fully explained all the incidents of my experience and observation. These letters had deeply interested the weaver, who first wondered at the changed tone of my correspondence, and then took a personal interest in the truth of the Gospel, as I presented it. In one of his letters he said—"Your letter fills me with amazement, and has made me to think that, notwithstanding all our waywardness and wrong thoughts, we are no' such orphans in this world as we were apt to think. If we're no' enjoying life and filled with light, it's no' because God wants us to abide in darkness. I have been wondering if our good and dear Granny did not understand all you write about God's love to all men, even the worst. She had some strange experiences in her life, which she sometimes spoke about, that were riddles to me. She said she understood them herself. I think it's time you were coming home, for I am wearying to see you."

This and other communications of a like nature strengthened the desire to return to the old place, where I trusted, with God's help, to redeem my character, and prove that there was a way of salvation for the lowest and most despised. At length I fixed the date of my departure, and told the shepherd I would leave his home a week hence.

On the evening of the day I had told Mr. and Mrs. Armour that I had resolved to leave their hospitable dwelling, John Reid called, and he and I were seated along with the shepherd in the "prophet's chamber." John had called to have a conversation about what he should do in the future, and how he should prepare himself for his life's work. The conversation was free and unrestrained. I began by asking—

"Dae ye intend gaun back to College? or will ye tak' anither coorse o' life than that o' a doctor?"

"That's what I have come about," said John. "I want Mr. Armour's advice as to the coorse I should pursue. My parents, brothers, and sisters

have done all they could for me in the past, and this has been a great deal considering their circumstances, and I must not depend on them more. I would like to go back to College if I could."

The shepherd paused for a moment, and then said, "That could be managed, John, without drawing much on your faither, if ye'll tak' the advice I wad give you. You're a good scholar, and I'm sure you could either tak' a bursary if ye tried, as Willie Barbour did last year, or else ye could get private teaching, which wad pay for your classes an' lodgings. As to your meat, ye'll no want that sae lang as the carrier goes to Glasgow."

"That's not a bad plan, and I'll see if it can be carried out," said John Reid, much relieved by what he heard suggested. He added, "It does not take so much money to keep a student at College after all, if he does not spend it on drink and foolishness, as I did."

"Hoo, John, were ye led into the ways o' drinkin' an' the like?" I asked hesitatingly. "But these days are past noo," I went on to say by way of an apology for my impudence in putting such a question.

"Oh, it's easily explained," he answered. "When I left home for the first session, I was warned most solemnly about the temptations which would meet me at every turn in the big city to which I was going. My father and mother made me promise I would go to church, read my Bible, attend to what was good, and avoid bad company. This I faithfully and honestly promised to do, and thought it would be an easy thing to carry out my intentions. For the first week or two I attended to all they had said, and my landlady declared she never had a quieter, nor better-behaved, student in her house. She had a different opinion of me and my ways after the first three months. I got in with a fast set who had come to College with plenty of money, and with no serious intent of studying. These soon became my boon companions, and their ways and influence proved my ruin."

"I noo see clearly," I said, "that education an'

attendin' College will no' mak' men sober except they hae it in them. We hae a great need to wail oor companions, tak' heed to oor ways, an' abune a', hae naething to dae wi' public-hooses an' they wha gang there."

"Yes," said the shepherd. "This is another lesson, that man in his lost estate is weak an' liable to temptation, an' corroborates the words of the Apostle, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' John, my man, ye hae been taught yer ain weakness by experience—a lesson yer professors couldna hae taught ye—and ye hae also been led, thank His sacred name, to seek succour in One wha is able to keep ye frae falling. Carry oot your resolution, my lad. Gang to the College, an' fit yersel' for the Lord's work—either curing the bodies or healing the souls o' men."

"My mind is fully made up," said John. "I have given up the idea of being a doctor, and will henceforth devote myself to study for the ministry. My heart's in the work, and God may use me for the spreading of his Gospel either at home or abroad. I have thought and prayed over it, and the longer it's before my mind, my way becomes the clearer and my resolution the firmer."

"Bless the Lord for that," exclaimed the shepherd. "Many prayers have been answered in this determination. Gang to the College, I again say, an' get a' the learning ye can to lay it on the altar of Christ's service, for we should aye gie him oor very best an' oor all."

The rest of the evening was spent in settling the details of John's next session at College, and in pointing out what I in a humble sphere could do for others and myself. Ere we had closed the happy and instructive conversation, the shepherd said he thought it was a duty incumbent upon us both to give our hands in Christian brotherhood to the people of God, as he believed we had already given our hearts to God. To do this, he said, we should partake of the Lord's Supper next Sunday, and thereby let the world know which side we were on. This we at once consented to do, to the

joy of Mr. Armour, who responded, "God bless you in the deed, and make you blessings to others."

Sunday morning came. It was bright, cool, and inspiring. Some of the trees had lost their leaves, and others were crowned as with a variegated crown. The hills looked calm and restful, and the heavens were all but cloudless. It was a Sabbath in nature, and its calm had a soothing influence. Rover knew it was the day of rest, and either lay at peace or walked about with a quietness unusual on other days. Within the home the Sabbath spirit reigned, and the conversation was in low tones, and pertained to those things which required immediate attention. The shepherd had been early up and on the hills, and after breakfast and worship went into his room to prepare for the duties of the day. I was in a devout frame of mind, and spent hours in reading the history of our Lord's passion, and the account of the transactions of Calvary. I had never previously sat down at the table of the Lord, and my old feelings of the awfulness of the proceedings, as stirred within me when a boy by Granny, came back and oppressed me. Was I doing right in going forward to the Sacrament of the Supper? I asked myself, and I did not exactly know the answer I should give. Here, too, I had to fall back on the shepherd. He knew best, and in this I rested.

When the time came, we started for the Town Hall, and the journey was accomplished without many words being uttered. Mr. Armour was occupied with his own thoughts, and I knew it would be wrong to disturb him. This restrained me from putting some questions, the answers to which would have been most acceptable. The meeting was assembled, when the shepherd entered and took his place on the platform. I found a seat on the same form on which I sat when, by the Providence of God, I originally entered that hall. The service was most impressive and instructive. Prayer, service of song, reading, and sermon all bore, more or less, on the sufferings and death of Christ, and their relation to the sins and

salvation of men. The discourse was of a kind similar to the action sermon in the Parish Kirk, and was delivered with even more fervour and pathetic power than usual. After the public service was ended, the Lord's Supper was dispensed. It was not an elaborate service like that of the larger churches, but a simple, unpretending ordinance which appealed to faith, not to sight. The shepherd presided, and on his either side sat an elder—two old, venerable-looking men with silver locks. The elements—the bread and wine—were before him on a little table, covered with a spotless white cloth. After a minute's silence,—the little company, with bowed heads, apparently engaged in silent prayer—four verses of a paraphrase were given out to be sung. The first verse is—

“’Twas on that night, when doom’d to know
The eager rage of every foe ;
That night in which he was betrayed,
The Saviour of the world took bread.”

The tune was the plaintive tune Rockingham, and its solemn cadences moved all present. A short address was then given by the shepherd, in which, after showing the nature of the ordinance as symbolical of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord, he dealt with the questions—Who are those who should sit down to the Lord's Table? and what are their qualifications? Regarding the latter he said—

“My dear friends, we are apt to forget the attitude of soul we should occupy as we sit here in the banqueting house of the Lord, when his banner over us is love. We are not worthy to sit here, an’ tak’ the sacred symbols into our hands. Instead of being worthy, what we need is to feel we are unworthy, an’ will be that a’ the days o’ our lives. All the worthiness we require is to feel our need of Him. We are here to eat that we may be strengthened, to drink that we may be cheered, an’ we are to do this before ane anither, the angels, an’ Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost, to express our faith that by Christ's broken body we live, and by his blood we're saved. Oh, brethren, we eat and drink worthily when we think plenty o' Christ, an' little o' oor-sels."

Words would fail to express the thoughts and feelings which filled my soul as I took into my hands the bread and wine. The presence of the Christ who suffered, died, rose again, and liveth for evermore, was felt as if spirit touched spirit. I was enabled by my experience to understand how that some who partake of the Lord's Supper have come to believe that the bread when consecrated is no longer bread, and the wine is no longer wine. Christ was in both to me, and concerning him at that moment I could have said, "Whom having not seen I love, and believing in him I rejoice."

I was roused from my meditation by the shepherd saying—

- "We have had with us to-day, brethren, two young men who have recently given themselves to the Saviour. One of them is a stranger, an' has been brought into our midst in a most wonderful manner. Truly the Lord has his ain way o' dealing wi' souls, an' he has led our brother by ways he knew not. The other, the most o' us ken something about, and he also has been led by the Spirit to rest and peace after being tossed about by the winds o' the enemy. I'm glad to be able to tell ye that our young brother, John Reid, has seen it to be the right thing for him to do to gang forrit to study for the ministry. He shall have our sympathy an' our prayers, that he may be furnished wi' a' grace an' learning to mak' him a workman who needeth not to be ashamed. We'll gie them both the right hand o' Christian fellowship, an' commend them an' a' that concerns them to the Word o' God an' his grace."

We two were called upon to stand up, and the shepherd, leading his flock, stepped down and shook us warmly by the hand, and said, "God bless you, Rab. God bless you, John." The elders followed, then all the little company. Before anyone resumed

his seat, prayer was offered and thanksgiving rendered. In this prayer it was mentioned we had put our hands to the plough, and should not look back. We had enlisted in the army of the Cross, and should never desert the Captain of our Salvation. We had our names enrolled in the family register of heaven, and we should never be prodigals. This prayer was like a dedicatory prayer uttered in our name, and was a giving us over to the Lord's service and his keeping.

Another paraphrase was sung, the 66th, to the tune St. Asaph, in a triumphant spirit. When I sang—

"How bright these glorious spirits shine!
Whence all their white array?
How came they to the blissful seats
Of everlasting day?"

I imagined I saw Granny's face peering through the misty veil which hid heaven from our sensuous view, and heard her say, "Ye'll meet me in heaven." The benediction ended the unpretending service, one which never ought to be forgotten, and never can be repeated. This was my public espousals to Jesus Christ, my Saviour, and my open confession of his name.

When I left the hall, I turned my steps in the direction of the lodging-house where I had spent the first night in Ringwood, and whose keeper had led me to what proved my ark of safety. The old woman had newly returned from church, and was glad to see me.

"Really," she said, "it's amazin' what I hear aboot ye an' ithers. There's that lad, John Reid, wha cam' to the kirk wi' his mither an' faither before he went to Glesca College, but has broken their hearts since. They tell me he's away to the hall tae. They say he's sober noo, never gangs to the Black Bull, an' that he sometimes prays in public. Thae are queer gangin's on, an' mak' ane think the world is comin' to an end. I'll no say ony ill aboot the folk, but it's no what my faither, wha was a respected elder o' the kirk, wad hae ap-

proved o'. But we leeve in altered times, when shepherds frae the hills pray and preach in public, an' hae what they ca' a kirk though they hae nae learnin'."

How long she would have gone on in this style I do not know, but, as my time was short, I stopped her by saying—

"Never mind the folk the noo. I hae come to thank ye for yer kindness when I cam' here and kenned naebody. Ye hae been a blessing tae me, for if ye had not ta'en me to the hall that Sunday, I might hae still been a puir wannerer on the face o' the earth, wi' neither hope for this world nor the world to come. I just ca'ed to say, if ever I can dae ye a guid turn I'll only be too ready to do't if ye wad let me ken. I gang hame the morn if spared to see't."

The old woman was softened by my words, and looked as if she thought there was something mysterious in all that had occurred. When I took her hand to bid her farewell, she gazed at me as if she would look me through, and said—

"Weel, weel, I'll say nae mair but this—the Lord kens best hoo tae work, an' he is aye kind. Maybe he'll lift the screen that's before my een, an' let me see mair o' his truth an' sel' than I hae seen. Guid-bye; I'm sure I wish ye weel."

The remainder of that Sabbath-day was spent in a quiet, pleasant way. I had the last walk on the hills with Mr. Armour and Rover. The church in his house was like a Bethel, and when I retired to bed God gave me what he gives to his beloved—sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

RETURNING TO THE OLD PLACE.

"Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,
And I said in under breath—'All our life is mixed
with death,
And who knoweth which is best?'

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed
around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest."

—E. BARRETT BROWNING.

THERE never was a truer word written or spoken than the words of Carlyle, to the effect that the eye sees what it brings the power to see. It does this, no more, no less. If it has the power of appreciation of the beautiful and sublime, it will see these all around and above. If it has no such divine faculty, it will gaze on all objects of nature and man with the look of one of the dumb driven cattle. This power of vision is not a physical power or capability. It has its seat and centre in the heart, out of which flow the issues of life. If that is right, open to the reception of the harmonious, beautiful and grand, all Nature will be seen as a picture gallery crowded with the works of the Great Artist, and the music of creation will float in on the spirit with every breath that is drawn. When the inner man is changed, elevated, purified, all things are seen changed as he looks upon them. Once they were known as so much matter and no more, now they are transfigured, and their glory becomes apparent.

So I felt as on that Monday morning, staff in hand, I took farewell, for a season, of the shepherd, his wife and family, and turned my steps in the direction of my old home. A few weeks before I had trod the same road with weary foot and sad foreboding heart. Nothing which my eye

looked on attracted my attention or sent a wave of gladness through my being. The very opposite was the case. The movement of the sheep on the hill sides, the calmness of the woods whose leaves scarcely stirred, the romping of the children at the doors of the cottages as I passed, and the playfulness of the shepherd's dogs—all were offences, and made me feel ill at ease. I had made my own prison, built its walls round my spirit, and these were becoming more irksome day by day. So much was this the case, I felt I would have been better and easier in mind if I had been still an inmate of the prison cell.

Since the dawning of the spiritual light, all these troubled, dark, and darkening feelings were gone. My eyes were opened and my spirit was changed. With light foot and joyous heart I walked the same road, whose every object seemed to be calculated to add to my strength, knowledge, and serenity. The warbling brook, the soaring lark, the whirring covey of partridges which crossed the path before me, the sportsman in the field with his dogs and gun, and the varied scenes on which I gazed all tended to brighten my life, and were seen to be well adapted to make the enjoyment of the world a possibility to those who, like myself, did not own a square yard of ground. Man makes his own world, of this I was sure, and that we were made to make it a pleasant and profitable world I was just as certain.

These thoughts of mine were illustrated in a rather pleasant and unexpected manner by a talk I had with a boy about twelve years of age, who became my companion for a few miles of my journey. He had a little bundle, and was neatly dressed, and, as I found, intelligent. After a few words about the weather, I asked him where he was going, and where he came from.

"I come," he said, "frae the Lumloch farm, where my mither bides, and I'm gaun to my auntie's, to the village of Carsethorn. She has sent for me to spend my vacations wi' her, but I must be back in a week for the schule."

"Ye're still at the schule," I said, "and I hope ye like it."

"Yes, I'm at the schule," he replied, "and my mither says I'll need to gang a' this winter again, but next summer I'll hae to gae tae work, for she's no' able to keep us a' noo as she wad hae dune if my faither had been leevin'."

"Yer faither is dead, is he?" I inquired as gently as possible, for I observed there was a quiver in the boy's voice when he mentioned his death.

"He met in wi' an accident when working the threshin' machine," said the lad, "about twa years syne, and we hae been a' alane since then. There's my mither, wee Jeanie, Tommy, Mary, an' me. I'm the eldest. My mither works for us a', and I'm anxious to begin to work and help her."

"That's the richt kind o' spirit," I said. "Yer a noble fellow, and God will bless you if you'll attend to yer mither and the rest o' the family. I'm sure ye'll no' hae mony days o' pleasure noo, when ye hae naebody but yer mither to look to for your meat and claes."

"Ou ay, we hae plenty o' fun yet," he said, with a smile. "My mither says she wants us to be as cantie as we can. On Sunday nights, she tak's us a' in and speaks to us about our faither, and then tells us that he is in a grand place, full of joy and singing, and that he wants us a' to be like himsel'. If we're guid," she says, "we'll a' be happy here, and then we will a' be thegither, faither an' a', at last."

"Dae ye believe that, my wee man?" I asked, to understand how the boy had been trained in religious matters.

"Believe it, ay, I believe it. My mither tells nae lees" was his answer.

"I'm sure yer mither wadna tell ye what wasna true, an' ye're aye to believe what she says an' you'll no' gang far wrang," I responded, and then asked, "Does your mither ever sing to ye to mak' ye happy?"

"She's a gran' singer," said the boy, with a

sparkle in his eye, manifesting pride in his parent's accomplishments, and proceeded, "She sometimes greets tae, but she doesna like us to see her, an' turns awa' her heid frae us, but she sune turns roon', and laughs to make us a' happy again."

In this strain my little fellow-traveller went on, and his prattle was more full of wisdom than many sermons. When I bade him good-bye, I said, "Ye're a brave little fellow, honour yer mither, fear God, an' hate whisky, an' there's nae fear o' ye."

After pushing on a few miles further than Carsethorn, I came to a shepherd's cottage, where I arranged to stay for the night. The home here was not like the one I had left behind. Neither husband, wife, nor children were good specimens of the peasant class. They were not at all interested in the subjects which occupied my mind, and I could not carry on a conversation with them to advantage.

After being refreshed with some food, I made my way up a high hill near by. As I rose, the landscape became more diversified and beautiful. When I reached the top the sight was one of the finest I had ever seen. There were huge mountains in the distance, one especially towering its head to the heavens, and nestling in the clouds as if they were the bosom of immensity. Hills of lesser size, in many forms, were nearer at hand. Woods studded the sides of some of these hills, till they ran down into the valley, through which a clear stream was flowing. Rocks stood here and there along the margin of the stream, as sentinels to watch its steady flow. The heavens above were of a deep blue, and towards the west the horizon was like burning gold. In the midst of this dazzling glory the sun was gently descending to its rest. The scene had a powerful effect upon me. I had before endeavoured to utter words that had the semblance of poetry, but at this moment I felt what the most inspired poet alone could make known in uttered

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speech. As I sat and mused, the fire burned within, and I was constrained to write the following lines, which are inserted here not because of their value, but because of the occasion on which they were penned—

A SUNSET.

I sit and gaze at the orb of day,
As in glory it seeks its western rest ;
Its life it diffuses in each ray,
And imparts to all things what is its best.

It has run its race, and now descends,
Over the mountains it covers with gold,—
Like a mighty soul, whose virtue blends
With those true spirits whom its thoughts enfold.

But, as I gaze with my inner eye,
A Sun more bright and gladdening I see—
(One which prophets of old did espy,
Which never began nor shall cease to be.

Its glories transcend the highest heaven,
Its pure light no darkness did ever know ;
By it power and life are given,
And from it all beauty and love doth flow.

It never sets in a western sky,
But gives out of its heart's core all along,
Streams of vital bliss that ne'er will die,
To make beings rejoice and life a song.

O Christ ! thou who art that unseen Sun,
Look on us with thy loving face benign,
That when our temporal race is run,
Behind us many mountain-tops may shine.

About two o'clock the next day I had reached the part of the road where the Parish Kirk came into view. Just as my eyes were turned in that direction, the solemn kirk bell began to toll, by which I learned that a funeral of some one of the

better-to-do inhabitants was taking place. Before I reached the kirkyard, the mournful procession, walking slowly and silently, came in view. I immediately hid myself behind a thick hedge, through a part of which I could see unobserved what was going on. So soon as the hearse reached the gate which led from the main road to God's silent acre, the procession was formed, and among the chief mourners were the minister, clothed in deep mournings, the provost leaning heavily on his staff, the schoolmaster, the old doctor, and a large number of the inhabitants of the town and the neighbourhood. Following behind these, a little distance from them, was a number of women, many of them old widows whom I knew, and who seemed to be bewailing a heavy loss. Boys and girls were also there with subdued countenances. Who was dead? I would like to have gone out of my hiding-place and asked this question, but thought it more prudent to be silent. Whoever it was, it was evidently one much respected, and who had left behind a rich memory for good deeds. All such are appreciated in such a place as the town at the foot of the hill. They may not be much acknowledged when alive and active, but when the lamp of their earthly life is extinguished, they then begin to take hold of the heart of the people they benefited, and their praises are on every lip. The dead are not forgotten if, when living, they have dried tears, relieved burdened hearts, cared for the fatherless, and comforted the widow.

After the way was clear, I stole as quietly as possible out of my position, and, instead of keeping the main road, I sought a bye-path, which, to escape observation, I had often used before. In a few minutes I was in the old house with Jean and John. The former was a trifle indifferent, and looked at me as if she would penetrate the secrets of my mind. But John was free and open, welcoming me with a heartiness unlike that which he generally exhibited.

"Strayed sheep," he said, "are aye welcome hame. It's a wise wean that seeks its mither's

airms. There's nae freens like the auld anes if they hae been well tried. 'Ay, Rab, I'm proud to see ye back again, and lookin' sae weel. The doo is never sae well aff as when it's in its ain nest. Ye're come to yours, an' I hope ye'll bide."

"Thank ye, John," I said, feeling that every word said was the genuine expression of the honest weaver who had ever befriended me. "If it's possible, I'm no gaun away again, but will stay here with you if you'll let me, an' we'll so live as to honour my Saviour, and prove the greatness o' his grace."

"Dinna speak that way, Rab," said John, "as if the hoose wasna yours as well as mine. It belongs to us baith, for Granny said we were aye to be brithers, and so we will, and a' the mair sae sin' ye hae got yer wild oats sown, and foun' oot the harvest is dust an' ashes. Ah, man, Providence is a wonnerfu' teacher. It teaches to profit. Some folk say it's like experience, it teaches fules, but na, it's wise folk, no' fules, that baith Providence an' experience teach. They hae been teaching you, and they hae been teaching us baith. And though I hinna said much aboot it tae onybody, I hae had my ain think aboot a great wheen things, as the Heilanman's craw is said tae hae had, and I hae come to the conclusion that we might a' be better and mair useful to ane anither than we hae been."

"I'm glad to hear that," I responded with joy. It showed me that John's reading, thought, and earnest attention to duty had not gone for nought.

"I'm glad to hear your statement, John," I repeated, "for I hae come hame in a like spirit, and though we're no much in the toon, an' hae nae wealth or gran' position, we'll be able to dae a little for those wha are puirer and mair ignorant than coorsels. But tell me, John, I had forgotten, wha was buried the day? I saw the funeral when passin' the kirkyard, and the minister was there in deep mournings."

"Oh, did you no' hear, Rab?" he asked, "it's the kind Mrs. Craigie wha's deid and buried. A' the

folk i' the toun are waefu' aboot her death. It has come sae quick, and been caused, it is whispered, by the conduct o' her ain son."

"I didna see Albert there at the funeral," I said. "If I had seen him there I might hae kenned wha was buried, for there was a crood o' the puir widows and women and weans ahin' the procession that made me sure it was some kind body that was deid. Where is Albert?"

"He hasna been heard o' for twa or three weeks," said John. "Before he gaed awa' he abused his mither, guid woman, and his kind sisters awfully. He was aye the waur o' drink, and when in that state he was neither to bin' nor to haud. Some folk said he struck his mither when she tried to tak' ane o' his sisters oot o' his road. Onywise she has never been oot o' her hoose since, and she deid without Albert seein' her. She deid o' a broken heart, an' mony will miss her."

"That's true," I said. "There's no anither in the whole parish like her. Ye remember hoo she used to come an' speak sae nicely to Granny, and hoo she seldom came but she brought wi' her some nice tasty thing to eat, or a few grapes oot o' her ain garden. But she was a' body's freen, and was never aff the road visitin' here and there, wherever there was trouble or death. It is strange that she was sae weel liket by every ane but her ain son. But he hasna been hissel' since ever he got his money twa or three years since. He has spent it richt and left, and maist o't on drink. It had a fell po'er ower him, and when he took much he was as wicked as the deil."

"Puir woman, she's maybe better away," said John. "It's sair on the heart tae see yer ain flesh and bluid turn yer warst enemies. I was wonnerin' what the minister thinks o' a' this, and whether he'll try and dae onything to stop the drinkin' that's gaun on, and a' the mischief that's bein' dune by the Black Bull. If Albert had been kept frae that hoose he might hae got on, but it proved his ruin, and it has been the ruin o' mony mair."

"Yes, it ruined me, John," I interposed, "but

I was thinkin' something maun be dune about drink and a' its results, and if nae ithers will tak' up the wark, you and I will do it, though we twa will mak' queer hands at the job."

This idea seemed to take John by surprise, and at first he shrunk from the conception of becoming a reformer and an advocate of temperance.

"I dinna like," he said, after a pause, "to see sole leather becoming upper shune. It's no' for the poker to place itself where the walking stick should be. A' things in their ain place, I say, and you, Rab, and me in oors. What wad the minister and the Provost think if we were setting oorsels up to teach them an' ithers their duty? They wad sune let us ken oor places, and mak' us haud oor tongues."

"I ance thought that way tae," I replied, "but I see differently noo. What's the use o' us if we canna try and benefit ane anither, especially when there's sae much to be dune, and nae ane to dae it. If oor religion does not mak' us work for God an' oor fellow-men, what's the use o't?"

"That's true enough," answered John, "for Mr. Welsh preached last Sunday from the text, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' It was a mighty discourse, I thought, though auld Peggy Sproat, comin' doon the brae, shook her heid, and said there was nae religion in't, just cold morality."

"Surely Peggy," I said, "had never read in the Gospel o' Matthew about the great Judgment Day. We are weel tauld there wha are to get a welcome into the kingdom prepared before the foundation o' the warld. It's no the folk wha can speak Greek and Latin and Hebrew, though it's a' guid enouch to ken a' these foreign languages, but it's those wha gie what they hae o' blessin' to those wha got nane. If ye dae that to the puir and the starvin', Christ says ye dae it to him. That's why Mrs. Craigie was aye gaun aboot wi' her basket ower her airm, visiting the sick and the

puir, and I see clearly noo that was the reason Mrs. Gordon came to me when I was in the jail. She came to me because Christ wad say to her at last, 'When ye visited Rab Milligan, ye visited me.' That's gran' wark, John," I continued, with great warmth, "an' it's no' for ministers and elders only, it's for a' folk wha hae the heart of their Saviour to dae it."

"Upon my word, Rab, ye speak like an apostle," said John, with a smile. "Hae ye been preachin' up the hills before the sheep?"

"Ah, John," I continued, without noticing his interruption, "I wish ye had heard the shepherd, and he wad sune hae tauld ye yer duty. He was never at a college, he was a puir man wha had to work for his breid a' his days. But he said, sae sune as he came to know that God loved him an' a' the warld, he couldna haud his tongue. He commenced there and then to tell everybody that wad listen tae him the glad tidings. Then he saw a' the folk wha were ruined wi' drink were God's creatures, whom he loveth and wished to make his children and heirs. This faith led him to gang forrit wi' the Gospel in one hand and the temperance pledge in the ither. They should aye gang thegither, for the ane should come oot o' the ither as the apple comes oot o' the branch."

John listened to this long lecture in patience and in silence. He did not object to what was advanced, but simply said, "Some seeds require to be steeped afore they grow. What ye hae been saying may be a' richt, but it maun lie in the mind a wee before it will come abune the grun'. I'm glad, man, to see ye hame, an' I think we'll noo gang tae bed."

Jean at that moment opened the door of the little room we were in, and said she thought we had forgotten ourselves, for it was past ten o'clock. I told her to come in for a moment, and, turning to John, said, "I wad like to hae family worship before we gang to oor beds."

"What's that?" said Jean rather snappishly.

"What dae ye mean, Rab? We can a' say oor ain prayers for oorself."

"Oh ay, Jean, but it'll maybe be better we say them a'thegither the nicht," said John, whose word was law to Jean, "and we'll jist do't if Rab will tak' the buik."

I saw it would not do to urge John to do it himself, so I got the New Testament, read a portion of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. We three kneeled down for prayer, when I spoke for us all to the Heavenly Father. What I said I could not tell, for words soon failed me, and the place might have been called Bochim, for when we rose it could easily be seen there was not a dry eye. Jean's last words were the kindest I had ever heard her speak, and John simply said, "The days o' miracles are no' ower yet."

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER VISIT TO THE MANSE AND WHAT CAME OUT OF IT.

"Life is too short to waste
In critic peep or cynic bark,
Quarrel or reprimand ;
'Twill soon be dark ;
Up ! Mind thine own aim, and
God speed the mark !"

—EMERSON.

IF any practical work is to be done for man it must begin at a centre, and that centre should be the individual worker himself. To work for others, while the duties at hand are left untouched, will never advance any cause which is good. The greatest of all reformers, Jesus Christ himself, recognized this principle when he told his disciples to begin at Jerusalem. Their mission was to embrace the whole world and had relation to every creature, but to accomplish it in harmony with his method, which was the wisest of all methods, they were to begin where they were—in Jerusalem. From this starting point they were to

work outward, till all nations were to hear the glad tidings of great joy.

A like plan should be adopted by all who desire to be successful in good doing, no matter in how small a degree. Begin at home, for good deeds, like charity, should begin there, but they should not end till they have embraced all in their help-bringing embrace.

Such was the sort of plan which I had shadowed in my mind, as to the course I should follow in the little sphere in which I could attempt to do good. The quiet way was suited to the whole circumstances the best, and if more public work should be required, a sort of basis would thereby be formed on which it could rest.

My first object was to secure John's hearty goodwill and co-operation. Without that nothing could be done. It was because of his kindness I had a home to live in, and without his aid I could not take a practical step to help myself. To my joy I found in a few days the weaver had come to the conclusion he could stand by me if I made a little attempt to bring the matters of personal religion and temperance before the old and the young in the neighbourhood.

"Deed, Rab," he said, "I dinna see hoo the folk will ever be led into better ways except somebody speaks to them. Guid craps o' oats and barley dinna grow o' themselfs. They maun be sawn by somebody. Weeds and thistles can show their heids where they're no' wanted withoot wark, but this is no the way o' the things the farmer likes best. I dinna think it'll be different wi' man than natur'. His thorns and thistles will grow too, withoot any ane fashin' their heid aboot them, but the guid fruit o' a sober and religious life requires to be attended to, and somebody must dae that."

"That's soond philosophy," I said, "an' neither the minister nor Walter Bayne could dispute it. What is wanted is to saw the guid seed, an' look to God for the blessin'."

"That's my mind," said John, "an' it carries

common sense alang wi't. We needna expect a harvest if we dinna saw seed."

"Yer makin' great progress in yer theology, John," I remarked. "For we were aye tell't to wait at the pool o' ordinances till the angel wad come an' stir the waters, an' we could dae naething till then."

"That'll no' dae, Rab, in every case," said John. "For we're tauld, we're tae come to the help o' the Lord against the mighty. We maun plough, harrow, and saw the seed o' God's word, an' no sit doon like a wheen Turks if we expect to dae guid. Do what ye can in that way, an' I'll help ye a' I can. But what about the minister? It'll no' dae to gang richt in his teeth. Decent man, he maun be respectit, and naething maun be dune to vex him. He hasna had his ain sorrows to seek, I'se tell ye, for he has had mony a sair heart o' late."

"That's what I was thinking mysel'," I said, glad to get the opportunity of placing my little plan before John. "I had made up my mind that I should ca' at the manse, and see Mr. Welsh, and tell him a' I hae experienced, and my determination to get some o' the town folk to hold a meeting on Sunday nichts to read the Bible, hae prayer, and urge them to gie up drinkin' and sic evil ways. He canna object to that surely, for the kirk is aye oot at ane o'clock, and he has nae meetin' after that."

"Maybe ay and maybe no," said John. "Ye ken the minister disna like meetin's in his parish, and I'm feared he wadna like the likes o' you leadin' such gatherings to pray and speak o' sacred things. He'll think, I'll wager ye, an' say 'every shoemaker should stick to his last, and everybody to the condition in which they find themselves.' He'll tell ye, Rab, to gang an' attend to ye're ain affairs, and never mind ither folk's. That's what he'll say, Rab, an' as Granny used to say, 'forewarned is to be forearmed.' Ye'll hae to think what ye'll say to a' this."

"Oh, I'll dae what is richt, at least I'll try," I replied, "for there is little use trying to dae onything if the minister's against it."

Meantime I had private talks with those who would speak to me on the subjects which lay near to my heart. I found the soil far better prepared than I had thought it would be. Indeed, it was thought by not a few that it would be a wise and profitable thing to hold a meeting on the Sunday evenings. There was no impediment in the way so far as liberty to attend was concerned, for, as many said, "time hangs heavy on our hands, and we lounge about all Sunday afternoon, and weary till bed time."

This was the real state of the matters. The church came out in the winter and summer time between one and two o'clock, and there was no other service that day. Dinner had then to be attended to. After this both young and old took what they called "a walk down the wood," roaming in the fields, or by the riverside, according to their own wills. When the tea hour came, all the walkers had returned, and they generally spent the remainder of the day in reading, gossiping, and the like. Even if it were only for a change of life, I thought they would gladly come to a little meeting for the unpretending exercises of reading, praise, and prayer. So I thought, and others came soon to think with me.

I had a considerable reluctance in visiting a second time the minister in his manse. I had a vivid recollection of my former visit, and how he had misunderstood my case. To see him, however, I must go. This I did one Tuesday forenoon, when I learned he would be at home and at leisure. When I made my appearance, the servant asked in a blunt manner, "What do you want?"

"I want," I answered, "to see the minister on important business if he be at home, and no' engaged."

"Stay there," said the servant, "and I'll see if you can see him," turning into the house, and leaving me on the doorstep. After a few minutes she returned, and said—

"Step this way. Mr. Welsh will see you in his study."

When I entered, the minister was standing with his back to the fire, and his hands behind him. He looked at me for a moment as if meditating whether he would open the conversation, or allow me to speak first. He then said—

“Well, Milligan, you’re back again to the town, I have heard, and I hope you have come in a much sounder mind and a stronger body than when you left. You know we must have peace in the parish and good behaviour.”

“That’s what I think too, Mr. Welsh,” I said, “and it’s to see hoo this can be brought about I hae called on ye to-day. For I’m o’ the opinion ye can help us to get the parish into a far better state than it has been in for a lang time.”

“What do you mean, Milligan?” asked Mr. Welsh, colouring as he put the question. “Do you expect the minister of the parish to associate in any manner with you who have disgraced it so much? This cannot be thought of for a moment.”

“You misunderstand me a’thegither, Mr. Welsh,” I responded. “I never for a minute thocht you wad work with puir ignorant folks like me. I never had sic presumption as that, for I ken ower weel hoo I dinna deserve to be spoken to, no’ to speak o’ workin’ wi’ me for the guid o’ them wha hae been gi’en o’er to drink, and what drink brings to them. But what I cam’ for, was tae get yer leave to haud a meetin’ in the town on Sunday evenings to teach the young lads and lasses, an’ the big folk that like to come, their Bible, and to speak to them about their souls and conduct.”

“Never,” said the minister, sternly. “That cannot be. Think of it! You, Milligan, not long out of jail, known to have been a pest to the respectable inhabitants of the place, beginning to assume the position of teaching and praying! Why, sir, it would be a scandal to religion, and such a procedure on your part would be worse than your previous behaviour. Pray, who has put such absurdities into your head? Has Walter Bayne done this to get his infidel views spread?”

“Walter Bayne has naething to dae wi’t,” I said

with rather a tremulous voice, for I was touched by what he said, and the manner of saying it. "I'm sorry, Mr. Welsh, to hear ye speak that way. I ken I hae nae richt ava tae set mysel' forrit as better an' wiser than ithers. But I wad like to tell ithers folk, if they'll hear, what the Lord has dune for me, and what he's ready to dae for them, and to advise them to stop drinkin', as sae mony o' them are dacin' to their hurt. This is a' I intend tae dae, and I thocht it was my duty to come and tell ye an' ask ye're sanction. I'll be glad if ye gie it freely, for it wadna look as if there was any design to mak' parties in the parish, or that they shouldna attend the kirk."

"Milligan, I could never sanction such a movement as this one you speak about," said Mr. Welsh as firmly as ever. "It would be almost as bad as breaking my ordination vows. The like of you praying and preaching is not to be thought of, and I will be much disappointed if any of my parishioners would give such irregular proceedings the smallest countenance. This is my answer about this business. Anything else, Milligan?"

"There's mony things I wad like to say," I answered, "but I fear to say onything aboot them noo. I'm sure I hae nae intention to dae what wad be wrang, and I'm awfu' vexed ye tak' sic a view o' what I propose to dae. Ye're the servant o' Christ, and I humbly think I'm the same, tho' no' in the same way. Ye're an ordained ambassador o' the Lord's, and I'm only a private follower o' the Master, but I hae learned I'm no' my ain but his, and I maun work for him wi' the ae talent he has gi'en me. I hope I hinna dune wrang in callin' in on you, for I thocht it was my duty."

"You have done no harm by calling," said Mr. Welsh, a little more kindly, "and you will find if my advice is taken, and you attend to your own duties, it will be the better for you, and those with whom you associate. Good morning, Milligan, and think seriously on what I have said."

I retired from the minister's presence considerably downcast. My first effort had, so far as the

chief man in the parish was concerned, proved an utter failure. I hesitated about going farther with my plan, and felt as if the whole of my enthusiasm had evaporated and left me without motive force.

When I reached "the doctor's seat," I sat down and surveyed the whole situation. I went back in thought over my whole life. It had been chequered, strange, and in some parts all but miraculous. It was impossible to doubt that the divine hand had been guiding me, and the Spirit had blessed me. Surely this was for an end, a purpose not to rest on myself but on others. The words of Peter came to my relief, "We ought to obey God rather than man." These settled the conflict. I had no desire to offend Mr. Welsh or his elders and friends, but a higher than he called upon me, saying, "Go, work in my vineyard." I would go, the Lord strengthening me, and do my little best in his spirit and for his glory.

When I reached home I sought out for John, who was in his shop on the loom. So soon as he saw me he stopped his work, laid aside his shuttle, and said—

"Well, hoo did ye get on wi' his reverence? Did I tell ye richt when I tauld ye he wad tell ye to min' yer ain business?"

"Yes, ye're a prophet this time, John," I said, "for he just said what ye forewarned me aboot. I didna think he wad dae sae, for he kens as weel as onybody there's need for reformin' work in the town. If he didna ken afore, he might hae learned it frae the funeral o' Mrs. Oraigie he attendit nae lang syne. But he's against a' meetings, an' thinks I shouldna pray before folk, since I hae been in jail. We'll no min' what he said, we'll just begin on Sunday night if ye'll let us hae ye're weaving shop. It'll dae fine for a beginnin'. There'll no' be mony there, an' that'll just be as weel."

It was there and then settled that the meeting would be held at five o'clock next Sunday evening in John's shop. Before the day came I went about and told a number of people that it was to be held,

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asked them to attend themselves, and especially to send their children.

On Saturday night, when John and I were talking over what should be done, I said, "We maun begin at ance to get the folk to sign the pledge, but this canna be dune without a society. It strikes me we should form a society the nicht. Hoo wad this dae? Ye'll be president and I'll be treasurer and secretary, and baith o' us will be the society."

"The'll naebody beat ye, Rab," said John, with one of his heartiest laughs. "This'll dae fine. I hae ne'er been a drinker a' my days, and was aye vexed for the puir fules wha wadna tak' tent and keep their mouths shut when pushen was near. I believe it's best tae keep aff the ice, and then you'll no' slip through and be drooned."

A pledge was written out in a small book, and John's name and mine subscribed. Other arrangements were made, and these laid the burden of the work on me. John would not take any part. "I wasna made to be a speaker," he said, "an' I'm inclined to believe, in my case, guid silence is no' far frae holiness. But ye can speak for us a', Rab, an' we'll a' listen."

When the evening came there was a large number of the town folk present, so many, indeed, that the shop was packed, and those who could not get in stood in the doorway and round the windows. The announcement had been made from mouth to mouth that Rab Milligan was going to pray, and this wonder excited a great interest. Some came out of curiosity, just to see what would happen. Others came to sneer and ridicule the whole proceedings. Others still came because some of their acquaintances were going. A few came with a serious intent, and with the design of helping if they could. I need not write of the exercises in detail, for these were of the simplest character. The hymns sung were lively, and these had a stimulating effect. I read and said a few words on the parable of the Good Samaritan, and applied it to my own case. I said—

"Ye a' ken me, and hoo I used to live amang ye.

I was like the certain man. I was on a journey, and I fell amang thieves. There are plenty o' thieves roon' about us, and they come an' owerpo'er us, and leave us mair nor half dead. I fell amang the thieves o' drink, bad company, and a' kin' o' mischief. They stole a' I had frae me, wounded me sair, made me hate mysel' an' a' ither folk. I was stripped o' claes, character, freens, and left lying on the roadside as if I had been useless. But Ane came by, and he took me up, and noo I'm his, an' I hae come to tell ye a' hoo the Lord has been gracious to me, bad though I was, and made me his ain. My freens, what Jesus Christ has dune for me he will dae for you. Ye're no' like me. Ye were never in jail and an ootcast as I hae been, but ye hae a' sinned, and ye need a' tae be saved, and Christ can, and is as anxious to save ye this nicht. An' when ye're saved ye'll no swear, ye'll no drink, ye'll no lee and cheat, ye'll leave aff a' the ways o' the world, and be anxious to please yer Lord and Saviour. I want ye a' tae tak' the temperance pledge the nicht, an' never taste drink again. We hae a society, an' ye should join it."

I then prayed, but could not proceed far with the petitions I wished to present to the prayer-hearing One. I would have broken down entirely if I had not fallen back on the Lord's Prayer, which I managed to repeat to the end.

At the conclusion of the meeting a number of persons wanted to take the pledge, and to speak about their religious experience. John, who was never previously so moved in public nor in private, so far as I knew, spoke freely to those who were near him, and told how he too could tell of the wonders of God's grace. "Ae thing," he said, "I hae learned I didna ken before as I ken noo, an' that is, God's the Faither o' us a', and he wants us a' to remember we're his weans. God's weans hae a' thing, and dinna need to gae to the gill-stoup to get their happiness. It comes oot o' the heart o' God in muckle streams."

The strong blacksmith, whom I had never before heard say a word about the value of religion or on

behalf of sobriety, testified to the need there was of kindly talk on these subjects. He said—"We can a' talk plenty on politics and aboot each ither, but we are dumb dogs when the truths o' the Bible and the things o' the soul are brought before us. This shouldna be, an' Rab has made a start the nicht that'll set us a' a-thinkin'."

A shoemaker, who had spent some of his years in England, and who had taken part in evangelistic mission work there, was also of the opinion that the effort to attract the attention of old and young should be continued. Among those who remained to say a cheerful word was Mary Bell, who said, "Prayers are now answered, and the little stream of influence would grow." Some of the jeering class were a little ashamed, and let it be understood they meant no serious opposition. Thus, the small meeting had made a start, and one for which John and I thanked God in our little chamber before we closed the day.

In the town there was little else talked of next day and during the whole week. Between the puffs of his pipe, the Provost said, "Aweel, the Lord can use gey queer tools if he uses Rab to pray. He used to be able to swear better. He's a wunnerfu' blockhead. But he'll dae nae ill, and should be let alane." The minister condescended to make inquiries about what had transpired, and what he heard had modified his attitude, which was not so hostile as I had expected, from the words he employed in the manse. The common people were favourable, and, with the exception of a few drouthy fellows who hung about the public-houses, there was not such a thing as opposition, even in words. Tam Glen shook his head, and thought it was worse than a farce for "Rab, the jail-bird," as he called me, "havin' the impudence to put hissels' forrit in any sic a way. It wad hae become him better if he had never come back, and sought to get his breid elsewhere. But his impudence was aye great."

The meetings continued for months. By them, and other agencies, not a few were set to think, the kirk was more regularly attended by some who did

not care for it previously, and the ministrations of Mr. Welsh were more appreciated. Lecturers on temperance and kindred subjects were brought from a distance, and pledges were taken till nearly the half of the parish had joined the society. Many homes were made happier, and I believe that many were impressed with the truth of God and made new creatures. Spiritual results cannot be tabulated, and God keeps the only accurate roll-book of his kingdom. On this point, therefore, I say no more.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONVERSATION WITH WALTER BAYNE AND OTHER MATTERS.

"BLACK terror made my earthly life a dream
Of judgment and perdition. Better taught,
I sing of Faith and Hope, and Joy and Peace,
And Loving-Kindness infinite from God,
Flowing to every soul on every world
In the wide universe His Word has made."

—T. L. HARRIS.

It has been rightly questioned whether there ever was in the world a single person who could be truly represented as not believing in a Supreme Being. Atheists of a speculative turn of mind there may be, and are, and to doubt that God exists may not be altogether impossible. But an out-and-out disbeliever in the divine existence seems to be beyond the range of human experience. In like manner there are some, if not many, who, for one reason or another, entertain doubts regarding the divinity of Christ and Christianity, who have seasons when their doubts are shaken to the foundations, and when they would be ready to receive light and direction if kindly granted unto them. This I have been taught again and again in my way through the world, and it was first brought before me in an interesting manner shortly after I endeavoured to influence my fellow-men for good.

It was on this wise. On passing Walter Bayne's house some weeks after I had returned home, he called out—

"I say, Rab, ye never ca' on me noo. Hae ye, like the lave, given me up in despair? Come in a wee, an' hae a seat an' a crack."

"I will gladly dae that, Walter," I said, "an wud hae been to see ye afore this, but I thocht ye didna care to talk wi' the folk that gang to the kirk an' prae."

"Ye're mistaken there, Rab, and sae is ithers," said Walter, in a pleasant manner. "I'm human, like the rest o' ye, an' like to be neebourly. I'm no' a misanthrope, an' dinna keep ony bad feelings to ony o' God's cratures. Noo, tell me, Rab, hoo has a' this change happened wi' you? Ye're no the same cratur ye were a while since, an' abody has been wunnering aboot hoo ye're sae much altered. Hoo did it come aboot?"

"Weel, Walter, if ye want tae ken seriously," I replied, "I'll tell ye as far as I'm able, but if it's for argument and discussion, I'll no begin, for it's far too sacred tae get heated and angry wi' ane anither aboot."

"I'm real serious, Rab, I can assure ye," said Walter. "It may dae me guid, man, for there's naething like genuine experience to the like o' me."

"Dae ye think that experience is to be depended on?" I asked, remembering my former conversation with Walter.

"What else, Rab, has a wheen o' us to depend on, if no' experience?" he replied. "What's true in yer heart and life canna be fause anywhere else. That's my doctrine."

"That's just what I believe tae," I replied. "I'm no book-learned, an' never studied what they ca' theology, as ye hae dune. But I ken what's guid for my soul the way I ken what's guid for my body by the way it affects me."

"No' bad reasonin'," said Walter, "an' if ye stick tae that naebody can confound ye. Noo, tell me what ye hae found religion to be and dae for ye."

"It's no' religion ava, man," I said. "That's where I think ye aye mak' a mistake. It's Jesus Christ himsel' that does the wark first, an' then religion comes after."

"I'll no dispute that wi' ye," said the old man. "Gang on wi' yer story."

I then began to narrate all that the reader already knows, and marked out more particularly how I was led along the way till I sat at the shepherd's feet that Sabbath morning in Ringwood. I pointed out that this was not of my own seeking or by my own direction. I was led to that place and man, as certainly as a mother leads her child along a path she knows, but the child knows not. I then spoke of how the truth of the Gospel was so presented as to meet my whole case. It broke me away from the bad past, gave me a new start in life, and filled me with new thoughts, aspirations, and joys. The whole was tantamount to a new creation, and could not be less than supernatural and divine. Walter paid attention to my statement, and then, as if he communed with himself, said—

"Wunnerfu'! It does look strange. I dinna weel see hoo a' this could come aboot withoot a cause. The cause must be equal to produce the effect. What has made Rab guid canna be bad. What has lifted him aboon hissel' canna come oot o' his ain nature. That seems clear. But where does this lead me to? I dinna care, it canna lead me far wrang at onyrate."

Turning his attention to me, Walter asked, in a peculiarly earnest tone, "What, Rab, did ye say about the thing that moved ye maist?"

"What affected me maist," I replied, "was the fact that God had ae Son, an' that he sae loved the world and me, as a part o't, that he gied his ain Son to dee for me and everybody else, that we might be his children, guid and obedient. This fairly broke me doon, an' made me see what an awfu' sinner I had been in vexing sic a glorious Being."

"Is that true, Rab?" asked Walter. "This is

what I hae aye had doots about. I hae aye thoct that the God preachers tell about was nae better, an' sometimes a wee waur, than mysel', that he did things we wadna dae, and haud up oor heids amang folk. But this is a new way o' thinkin' o' him."

"Ay, I ken it is a new way, but it's the auld way for a' that," I said. "The deil has been playin' tricks wi' us, an' leadin' us to believe God was like himsel'. Look at God as oor Heavenly Father, wha, rather than let the warld perish, delivered his only Son up to the death for us all, an' ye'll sune see he is fu' o' tenderness an' love."

"Ye've touched the noo on ane of my difficulties," interjected Walter. "I canna see hoo it can be justice to mak' the innocent suffer in that way for the guilty."

"Justice has naething tae dae with it," I answered. "It's a' love. I'm sure, Walter, ye ken fu' weel the innocent dae suffer for the guilty. Look at good Mrs. Craigie, wha had her heart broken by the wickedness o' her ain son."

"But she was Albert's mither, an' couldna but feel for him," said Walter, "but Jesus Christ is no' so nearly related to us. He was, ye say, God's Son, far aboon us."

"Ye're wrang again," I said. "Did ye never hear he was oor elder brother, ane born to adversity. He was ane o' oor ain flesh an' bluid. Forbye, he wasna sent against his will. He was gled to come to save us, an' what he did an' suffered was what we couldna dae an' suffer for oorsels."

"That's no' badly put, I'm thinkin', an' if I could see him in that licht, I think I could tak' him for my Maister, and serve him faithfully," said the old man in subdued voice.

"Read yer New Testament, Walter," I said, "without prejudice, and let yer heart get into the words, an' tak' oot o' them what is in them to yersel'. If ye dae, I'm fell sure ye'll soon fin' oot the truth that will put away the darkness that hides the face o' God from yer soul."

"I'll try, Rab," said Walter, "for I'm no' sic a

hardened infidel as some think. I hae my doots and difficulties, but we'll see, we'll see."

We turned to other matters of conversation, and as I left the reputed infidel, it was with a lighter heart than when I entered his dwelling. The truth is all-powerful, I thought, and there is "a present help in time of trouble."

As the time of the Licensing Court drew near, all the necessary preparations were made for opposing the renewal of the license for the Black Bull. Tam Glen had forgotten what I had threatened to do, or professed to have done so, but I had not. I had watched how the business was carried on, and had counted up the young men who had become drunkards by attending this public-house. When the Court day came I was there, and appealed to their Honours on the bench to refuse the application. This provoked great hostility on the part of the applicant and his friends present, but I stood my ground. One fact after another was urged as reasons why my prayer should be granted. They could not be denied, for they were notorious. The matter hung in the balance for a few minutes, when silence prevailed, and their Honours were making up their minds. The presiding Magistrate said, "In the face of the facts stated, which have not been disputed, I cannot see my way to grant a renewal of this license meantime, and will, therefore, vote it should be refused." Other two took the same course, and the result was—three were against the renewal, and one was in its favour. When the decision was announced, there was some applause and some hissing. I retired from the Court, and Tam Glen followed me. He was confounded, and red with anger. He addressed me in the strongest language.

"Has it come to this," he said, "that we're to be ruled by a canting hypocrite that hasna ae penny to rub on anither? Ye're a wretched cratur," he exclaimed, "a perfect disgrace to the town, and ye maun gaun and destroy ither folk's way o' making their daily bread, an' try an' mak' them beggars like yersel'!"

I was about to reply, when he cried out, "Don't speak to me, ye miserable wee wretch. Ye think ye hae gained a triumph, but bide awee; I'll gang to the Justices, an' they'll no' be fules to listen to yer lees."

"But I'll gang there tae," I responded, "though it takes my last sixpence. I'm no' seeking to dae ye ill but guid, if ye only saw it. I'm seeking tae prèvent ye daein' ill to yersel' an' ither folk, that's a'. It's mair than time yer sign was doon, and yer door shut. Maybe I'll hae power wi' the Justices as weel as wi' the Magistrates."

He was out of the way of hearing my closing words before I finished, and was hastening down the street to his home.

The landlord of the Black Bull and his friends were fairly roused by the proceedings of the Court, and poured abuse on all and sundry who in the smallest degree took part in the agitation against the renewal of the license to sell intoxicating drink. Sympathy was evoked, and threats were made to deter the opposition from moving further. If the tongue could have broken bones, I would have been crushed to pieces.

John was in high glee over the matter, and did what he could to cheer me. He said, "Never min' them, Rab. Jouk an' let the jaw go by. They may bark, but they canna bite. The warst wheel o' a cart makes maist noise, an' the empty barrels mak' maist soun'. The richt is sure tae come oot at last." So I bore on, encouraged not a little by the kind words of mothers and fathers who were afraid of their children following in the evil ways others had gone before them.

The Quarter Sessions were to be held in the county town, and I had to repair thither to state the case against the granting of the license before the Bench of Justices. The last time I had to visit the place, I was conveyed in a public car at the public expense. I was then a prisoner, and was about to be tried for breaking the laws of the land. This time though, I was going to do public

work and purify the public life somewhat by shutting up a fountain of evil, and I had to do it at my own expense. With staff in hand, I walked the whole way, and was rather wearied when I took my seat in the Court-House. I had reason to remember so well. There were several appeals discussed, and their merits *pro* and *con* were laid before the Bench by agents, who seemed to me to be able to make the worse appear the better reason. As they went on, I thought my case was gone, for no one would speak on my side, and I could not successfully contend against such able and learned men. When the Black Bull case was reached, a gentleman stepped forward with paper in hands to represent Tam Glen, who sat at his side. He began in the most polite manner, as if the opposition was a mere shadow, and got up for passing effect. "A mere trifle," he said, "which centred mostly in a poor fellow who had, unfortunately for himself, got into trouble with the law, and had been sentenced to a short term of imprisonment. Out of revenge for this, thinking that my client had something to do with his committal," he went on to say, "he vowed vengeance, and has succeeded so far as to sway the mind of the Magistrates in the discharge of their duty. But that their decision has not given satisfaction is seen by the influential petition I hold in my hand, signed by a number of the respectable inhabitants in favour of Mr. Glen receiving a renewal of his certificate, which he has held for a long course of years. I will not," he added, "take up the time of the Court with any additional observations. The case is so simple and the opposition so—I will not say disgraceful, but uninfluential. I need not detain you longer. I therefore ask your Honours to sustain the appeal of my client, and grant what he asks."

The agent then resumed his seat with a smiling face, which showed most plainly he at least thought he had secured his end, which state of feeling was evidently shared by Tam Glen and his friends. They looked at me as much as to say, "Surely after this there will be no more about it."

I felt embarrassed, shook, hesitated what to do, and then, by an impulse as if from behind, I rose and went forward till I faced the Chairman, and stammered out—

"I object to this, Mr. Justice of the Peace. I'm the fellow who was spoken about, and wad like to say a few words. My name is Rab Milligan, and the Rev. Mr. Welsh there," pointing to that gentleman who sat on the right hand of the Chairman, "kens me an' a' aboot me an' my life. I was here afore in this Coort-Hoose, no' far frae where I'm stan'in' the noo, and was sentenced to twenty-one days o' the jail. An' what brought me here? It was drink. Whaur did I get it? At Tam Glen's. Did he ken I was a wicked cratur, and wad dae a' manner o' mischief when I was under its po'er? Ay, he kenned that well eneuch, but he never minded, an' aye gied me drink when I had money, an' only kicked me oot o' the Black Bull when I had nane. His license gied him the po'er to dae this. I'm no' alane either. There are plenty o' ither young men wha hae been ruined in body and soul by drink as well as me. They hae broken the hearts o' their mithers and faithers, an' some o' them hae dune things I darna speak o' before the folk that are here. Ask," I said with a loud voice, "Mr. Welsh, the minister. He kens a' aboot it as weel as onybody, and he'll tell ye I'm no' come here to tell lees, but to plead for a guid cause."

Feeling, after the appeal to the minister, who listened to what I said with attention, that it was impossible for me to proceed further without an utter breakdown, I resumed my seat. On doing so, there was a hum through the Court, a pause, and then the Chairman looked at Mr. Welsh, and said, "Have you anything to say on this case, Mr. Welsh?"

"I am sorry," the minister replied, "that I have to substantiate all that Milligan has said about the evil influence of this house on the young people of my parish. I have had complaints again and again from parents about their sons, with the request that I would use my influence to get the

license withdrawn. Certain circumstances have of late occurred, such as the depredations of Milligan and the conduct of others, which have led the most of my parishioners to think that it would be better for all concerned—Mr. Glen, who is a respectable, honest man, among the rest—that this public-house should be closed. Of course Milligan's opposition would be nothing in itself, but I must honestly confess he has not spoken too strongly regarding this case."

After a short consultation, the appeal was dismissed and the license refused. I was wicked enough, when I passed Tam Glen and his agent, to say to the former, "Ye see I hae kept my word; I tell't ye I wad pu' doon yer sign. It's doon noo, an'll never be up agin."

The success which attended the effort to close the Black Bull brought me into a public position I was by no means able to fill. Requests came in from various places that I should visit them and deliver addresses and lectures on temperance and kindred topics. This I had never done, and knew I could not do with any degree of pleasure to myself or profit to others. Addressing meetings did not lie in the line of my duty. The attempts I had been necessitated to make in this way had proved failures, and left behind sleepless nights, which warned me of danger. Notwithstanding this, in a thoughtless moment I consented to go to Newton, a village three miles off, to speak on temperance and to tell the story of my own life. Other speakers were also to be there, but they relied on me to take the principal part of the proceedings.

So soon as it was known in Newton and neighbourhood that Rab was to address a public meeting, considerable interest was awakened. The country people who used to know or hear about me in former days, and who had heard of my wild and wicked exploits, were anxious to hear and see me now.

When the evening came, they flocked in numbers to the "Whig Kirk," where the meeting was to be held, and packed it to the door. Many had to

stand in the passages, and some stood on the outside. The chair was taken by the Rev. Robert Thomson, the minister of the congregation, and John, the blacksmith, and the other friends were with me. The preliminaries were gone through in the usual manner. The Chairman gave an earnest and, as I thought, telling address. A divinity student belonging to his church said a few words, and told how the subject of temperance had been forced on his attention when he was working among the poor in Glasgow. He had to take that into the slums of the city along with the Gospel if he was to do any good. I was then introduced in a kindly way by Mr. Thomson, who said, "No doubt ye have come to this meeting in such large numbers mainly to hear what Mr. Milligan has to say on this subject. He can, I need not assure you, speak from experience, bitter experience, and I am sure you will give him close attention and a sympathetic hearing."

I got up into the pulpit for the first time in my life, but, before proceeding, a stool had to be brought for me to stand upon, so that the people might see me and I might see them. I had prepared and written out an address with all the care and ability I could command, and this I clutched with the firmness of a death's grasp. I shall never forget the impression produced upon my mind when I looked on the sea of faces before me, and realized all those eyes were looking straight at me. I used my will to balance myself both physically and mentally, but without much success. What I had written down as an introduction was looked at, and then I began—

"Mr. Chairman and dear freens." Here I halted and repeated the words, "Mr. Chairman and dear freens." Another halt, and then I proceeded, "Ye a' ken me, and ken what I hae been." There was applause at this, which did not add to my calmness, but the opposite. It made me more confused and shaky. Again I commenced, looked to the paper, then to the audience, glanced down pitifully at the Chairman, and then stammered out a few more words. To my horror, the whole house, and

all the people before me, gradually seemed to move and get mixed one with another. The lights danced, then went out, and darkness ensued. I plunged on in this state for a second or two, and then all of a sudden consciousness was lost. I fell backwards, head down and heels up, and nothing was seen of me but my feet hanging over the pulpit. I was tenderly carried into the vestry, and when I came to consciousness, Mrs. Thomson, the minister's wife, was bathing my brow with cold water. In a short time I revived sufficiently to appear before the meeting, and was then able to say a few things to them, which they received with every manifestation of approval. The Chairman encouraged me by saying all young speakers had a somewhat similar experience to the one I had passed through that evening, and told me to hold on and I would overcome it. He also declared he had been roused by the whole proceedings, and would form one, if any would join him, to start a society to promote the Temperance cause. A number at the conclusion of the meeting agreed to do the same, so that the meeting was fruitful of beneficial results, though my prepared speech had not been delivered.

On going home, John said, "I see, Rab, ye were never made to flee high. Ye maun aye flee laigh, and then ye'll no' fa' far. The high fir trees catch maist win', and ye canna stan' the storm o' public een on ye. Tak' my advice, an' dinna get into the poopit again, keep to the floor, an' there's nae fear but ye'll work yer way to the hearts o' the folk."

"That's true, John," I answered. "I'm no made for speakin' to meetin's. The shepherd, wha was aye richt, said God didna mean me to be a speaker to crowds, an' tauld me tae keep to the individuals. There's nae way o' learnin' like tryin'. I hae tried and failed, an' I'll no' try again." And I never did. That was my first and last attempt at public oratory.

Although I have not mentioned it hitherto, I had during this period been attending to my own personal concerns, and had established a fair business with John's assistance, which did more than provide

for my daily wants. I was still under the weaver's roof, and Jean attended to us both. She had not improved much in her feelings towards me, though not outwardly hostile, so I thought it would be better for us all if I had a house of my own. I never really knew what a home had been, except for those weeks I lived with the good shepherd at Hillside. Who was to keep my house? if I had one, was the practical question which required to be settled. Should I look out for a wife? or should I do as John had done, and get a woman to keep my house, as Jean did? I could not take one step in the direction of a house of my own without John's advice and sanction, for Granny's words, "Ye're aye to be brithers," were never to be forgotten.

One evening, when taking a walk before we went into the house for the night, I opened my mind to John, and told him what I had been thinking about. He did not seem at all surprised, and perhaps understood me better than I understood myself.

"Ou ay," he said, "sae ye hae been thinkin' o' leaving me and Jean, hae ye? Ye're no' sae far wrang in this, Rab. Ye see oor hoose is sma', and no' sae comfortable as I wad like mysel', but I never like to think o' leavin' the auld biggin'. I hae aye been in't, an' Granny leaved here a' her days. It's a kin' o' sacred place, and it does me fine."

"It's the same tae me, John," I said, thinking he might imagine I had learned to despise the little dwelling.

"Oh, I ken that weel eneuch," said John, not at all ill-pleased at my words. "But, Rab, notwithstanding, tak' my advice and tak' a hoose o' yer ain; dinna dae as I hae dune, but look'oot for a sensible woman, like yersel', an' tak' her for yer wife. Ye ken weel eneuch every couple disna mak' a pair, and try and be weel-matched. When tow and fire gang thegither there's aye a bleeze. Get ane wha thinks like ye, and wad help rather than hinner ye in yer work. Some o' them brak their elbows at the kirk door. Ye ken the auld proverb, 'The guid or ill hap o' a guid or ill life, is the guid or ill choice o' a guid or ill wife.'"

"That's a guid advice, John," I replied, "but whar will I get her? I'm feared there's nane here-aboot wad hae a gift o' me."

"Ye're very modest," he said, with a smile and a knowing look into my face. "Ye're far too modest, for I'm gey an' sure ye could get sax, and ane'll serve ye. It aye tak's a stout hert tae a sty'e brae, an' if it's hard to fin' a wife, ye maun jest put a' yer strength to dae it. That's a' I hae to say."

"My difficulty is to what airt tae look," I said, wondering if he would name the person which I sometimes thought about in this connection.

John at once replied, "There's Mary Bell, a douce, decent young woman, wha wad suit ye fine, an' wha has aye been yer freen. Try her, Rab, an' I dinna think she'll refuse ye."

"I'm no' so sure o' that," I said. "But I'll see, noo that ye hae set me on that track. I'll be cautious, an' dae nothin' rash."

"That's richt," said John. "Ye shouldna be in a hurry to tie what canna be untied, except by the fingers o' death. Women are, like young colts, queer cratures, an' no easily managed. Whan ye get a guid ane she is an angel, but if she's bad, she may try an' kame yer hair wi' a cutty-stool."

This conversation settled the matter so far, and gave a new bent to my life. I was careful to keep John's advice to myself for a considerable time. My approaches to Mary Bell were very gradual, and I came to the conclusion, if I failed there I should not make experiments elsewhere. She had always been friendly to me, and had aided me. Her conduct and conversation were such as I enjoyed. But I ever looked upon her as being in a station of life higher than the one I occupied. By attention to business I had, however, bettered my condition considerably, and was able to offer her a comfortable home. After a while she accepted the offer, and, to the astonishment of some, we were married. The Rev. Mr. Welsh performed the ceremony, and John acted for the first and last time in his life as groom's man. The home Mary and I

entered, is the one we live in now, and has been during all the years the abode of peace and happiness, social intercourse, and domestic contentment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN SEARCH OF A WANDERER IN GLASGOW.

"I PASSED through many an alley, many a lane,
Until I reached a low half-open door,
Whose panels bore the marks of blotch and stain,
And with foul words were smirched and scribbled
[o'er.

This was the house I sought ; I entered in,
And climbed at once the narrow winding stair
Which led me to the dark abode of sin,
A dismal chamber, wretched, poor, and bare."

—CANON BELL.

IN a dark and stormy day of November I was sitting thinking on many of those who were my school companions, in the same classes with myself, and what had become of them. Not a few had gone the way of all the living. Their young lives had gone prematurely out, and their names were forgotten except by a few that stood near them in their every-day existence. Others had taken their departure to the great centres of trade and commerce, and were pushing their fortunes in the broad field of the world. Some of those bade fair to be persons of influence and wealth. A few, a very few, remained under the old roof-tree, and were to be successors to their fathers, and never aspired to be more.

As I meditated, the thought then came into my mind with peculiar power, where is Albert Craigie, who had not been heard of for a long time. No one seemed to know or care anything about him. His home had been long since broken up and the property sold. His sisters had left the place, and the only persons likely to know his history and whereabouts would be Mr. Welsh, but he never mentioned his name. When these thoughts were occupying my attention, a letter was handed me

bearing the Glasgow post mark. I did not know from whom it could come, for the handwriting was not familiar to me. I opened it with eagerness, and found it was from John Reid, the student who had gone back to the University of Glasgow to continue his studies. The letter was long, and entered into details of his own plans and experiences; but these things did not, for the moment, interest me so much as the reason he gave why he had written to me. He explained his action thus:

"You will be surprised to receive a letter from me at this time, but somehow or other I have been constrained to write after a talk I had to-day with a young man who says he belongs to your town. I went out this afternoon with Alec Mackintosh, the missionary, whose district is in one of the lowest parts of the town, that I might see the kind of people he wrought amongst, and learn how to deal with them. I could not describe the scenes I saw of wretchedness, squalor, vice, and all manner of abomination. The evidences of the terrible power of drink were to be seen on every hand, and especially in the two low lodging-houses we visited. In one of these the young man I refer to was staying. At first he was sour, taciturn, and would not speak to Alec or me. I kept at him, however, telling him where I came from, what I was doing, and what I intended to do. He became a little more talkative, and I soon saw he was well educated, and did not belong to the class he was surrounded by. I, by-and-by, put it to him if he had not been once better off. With a sardonic laugh he said, 'I should think so. I am a gentleman's son, and if I had got fair play would have been an officer in the army, as my father was before me.' He then got excited, and denounced, with clenched fist, some persons whom he named. He eventually told me his real name, Albert Craigie, and where he came from, saying, 'No one knows how I am or where I am. They would not care either. Since my mother's death I have had no friends, and I don't want them.' The poor fellow looked the picture

of misery, and has been on my mind ever since. Do you know anything about him? If he is as respectably connected as he says, surely something should be done to rescue him from his present degradation and vicious companions. Let me hear from you as soon as possible, for he may be away out of the city soon."

I laid down the letter with a feeling of surprise that I had been thinking about Albert so intently when it was put into my hand. Was that not a message to me to do something for this perishing young man? He had been kind to me, in his own way, when I was poor and despised, and now no one seemed to care for him, or endeavour to bring him back to the paths of virtue and sobriety. I called in Mary's aid, and she suggested that I should go to Glasgow at once and see how he was situated and inclined, and then bring his case before the minister and his friends. Other ends, she pointed out, of a business character could be secured by my journey to the large city.

That very night the journey was fixed upon and arranged for.

When I reached Glasgow, I made straight for John Reid's lodgings, which were in the southern part of the city, not far from the station at which I arrived. He soon arranged with his landlady to keep me for the few days I proposed to stay. That being settled, we talked over the best way to act so as not to offend Albert's pride, which was not subdued, though he was not in the social position he used to fill. It was thought better John should go and see him in his lodging-house, and ask him to come to his room to see one who came from the same place, than for me to go and see him in the midst of his degraded companions and wretchedness.

This resolution John carried out next afternoon, and found him in and in a mood to acquiesce in all he proposed. When he heard my name he shook his head and said, "Rab Milligan, say ye? I can be of no use to him now. I have no money and no influence here, and could not help him in the

least. What brought the fellow here? Has he been in a scrape again and run off?"

"Oh no," John Reid replied, knowing by his words he had not heard of me for a long time. "You must know Mr. Milligan is a changed man, and needs no one to give him money. He has been in business for himself for more than three years, and is getting on well. He is much respected by all who know him."

Albert, when he heard this, gave an oath, rose from his seat, and said, "Well, here's a miracle! Rab Milligan changed! There's hope for some of us yet. I really would like to see the fellow if all you say about him is true."

"Come on then," said the student, "and you will see him, for he is staying in my lodgings."

They were not long in passing down one street, along another, across the bridge, and reaching my temporary dwelling. When they came in, John Reid did not say a word to me, but set a chair for Albert, and told him to sit down. Whether he knew me or not at first I do not know, but I did not recognize him, and would not have known him if I had met him among others. His clothes were dirty and partially ragged. His face was disfigured and blotched, and his features had become coarse and heavy. Oh how unlike the countenance of the little gentleman of the parish school fifteen or sixteen years before! He did not look at me, but cast his eyes to the ground. I fixed my eyes on him for some moments before a word was spoken. I then rose and went forward, stretched out my hand, and said, "Albert, is this you?" He looked up, and by a peculiar twitch he had in his eyelid, I saw the old face in a moment, and knew that he was the one I had come to seek, and if possible rescue.

"Yes," he said, "it is me, don't you know me? I'm the old fellow still, and have gone through a few things since I saw you last. But, 'pon my word, you look better than you did, Rab."

"Indeed, I dae that, Master Albert," I replied; "but I'm vexed I canna say the same o' you. You're awfu'

changed, an' I scarcely knew you. What are ye daein' here? Are ye in a situation?"

"No, I have not anything to do at present," he said quite boldly; "but I have got a position in a bank, and am expected to begin on Friday morning. My difficulty is about clothes. Unfortunately, I got my wardrobe reduced in my last apartments, and I have not been able to make it up since. Of course I will lose the place, I fear, for my agent cannot send me money till the beginning of next week. A trifle would do till then."

This was said in such a plausible manner that it never occurred to me it was not true. I therefore asked—

"How much money wad you need to get a' the things ye require?"

"A little would do me at present," he said; "say twenty shillings. I shall certainly hear from Dalziel, my agent, in the course of a few days, and then I will get rigged out properly."

"I will gladly gie ye a pound," I said, "if that will dae. It wad be a great pity to let the place gang by ye."

"Certainly," said Albert; "it would be a pity, but what could a fellow do in my circumstances, if he had not what was necessary to enable him to appear at his desk dressed as becometh a gentleman? When I am in the bank, I will soon succeed to get into my old condition, and be able to repay your kindness with a large percentage."

Taking out the money and handing it to Albert, I ventured to say, "I hope you'll keep a' richt, an' attend tae yer business, for I suspect they like sober folks tae attend tae their money affairs in the bank."

"No fear of that, Rab," was the response. "I know what will suit in such a position of responsibility, and will attend to my duty regularly, and do all I can to satisfy my superiors."

"Ye'll get on a' the better, Master Albert," I said, venturing on dangerous ground, "if ye'll keep oot o' the public house, and dinna mak' freens o' them that gang there. That is my experience, an' it'll be yours tae, I'm gey sure, if ye'll try it."

"That's true," chimed in John Reid. "No good can come of frequenting such places. I am certain Mr. Albert will understand that by this time. It is bad in the country to be a constant attender at the bars of hotels and public-houses, but it's far worse in this city, where characters of all kinds are constantly on the watch to entrap the young and inexperienced."

"I am neither the one nor the other," said Albert. "I am now over twenty-six years of age, and as for experience, you have had more of all kinds than I have had. No fear of me being entrapped. I am too old a bird to be caught with chaff. But I must be off and make arrangements about my clothing. I will call and see you, Rab, on Friday night, and tell you how I like my new place, and what prospects I have of bettering my position by attention to business and good conduct."

"Be sure and ca' then," I answered, and added, "It is possible I'll go hame aboot midday on Saturday. I canna stay lang noo that I'm in business and married."

"You are getting on and up with a vengeance," said Albert with a subdued sneer. "I'll take care to keep my promise. I like to be a man of my word."

So saying, he went away in apparently high spirits.

The impression made on both John Reid's mind and mine by Albert's demeanour was not altogether favourable. There was on his part a want of seriousness and candour which suggested he did not realize his condition of misery and degradation, and desire to leave it. He had not explained how he had come to be in such a wretched den and amid such surroundings as John Reid had found him in. Nor did he let us know how he had been offered a place in the bank, to which he was to go on Friday morning. His whole tone and bearing, moreover, had prevented me saying more than I did about his conduct and history. So that, when he left, we agreed all things were not so bright as we would have liked them. But it was not long

to wait to see if he would fulfil his promise. It was Wednesday night, and he was to return and see us on Friday. We might then have a better opportunity of accomplishing the desire of our hearts.

When Friday evening came both John Reid and I were in a state of excitement as to the appearance of Albert, and how we were to deal with him. Knowing his temperament, and haughty, defiant spirit, I pointed out that he must be dealt with cautiously, and, as it were, with guile. Our preparations were all in vain, for the hours passed over, and no Albert made his appearance. We waited till nearly ten o'clock, when I asked John Reid if we could not go to his lodgings and see if he was still there. This we did. Through the dark, dirty streets we went our way, the pavements of which were filled with poor shivering creatures, who bore many marks of destitution and vice. Out of the open doors of public-houses, before whose bars stood men and women in rags and in all degrees of intoxication, came loud voices, oaths, hoarse laughter, and the fumes of drink and tobacco. As we looked into these dens, which seemed like mouths of perdition, we shuddered. From one of these places there reeled out before us a woman clothed in a filthy, tattered dress, bare-headed, with hair, dishevelled, hanging down her back and about her face, and with a child in her arms. She was screaming in a wild manner, staggering to and fro, and, just as we rushed forward to catch her, she fell with a crash on the ground with the child under her. There came involuntarily to my lips the words of Paul, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain" because of drunkenness. A crowd immediately assembled, and the policeman was soon there bending over the prostrate body and roughly calling on the woman to rise. I was about to interfere, when John Reid said, "Come away; it will do no good. Such things as these are so common in the 'Briggate' that the policemen get hardened in their work. It is a dangerous thing to stay here in such a crowd."

We passed on, and every step we took seemed to lead us to fresh signs of the depravity and destitution of slum life. At length we arrived at the house, which was crowded with a motley company. Young and old, and all ages between, were represented, and the noise was deafening and the atmosphere was unbearable. We were looked upon with suspicion, and the remarks made, more particularly by the younger portion of the inmates, were, so far as I could understand them, not very complimentary. Our inquiries were fruitless for a time, but, when we assured those we asked we wanted Albert, as friends, a boy said he thought "he had been run in," and if we would go to the Police Office we might get him there. When this was told us, we looked at one another in astonishment, and I felt a sinking at the heart which made me all but faint. I said to John Reid, "Come oot o' this place as fast as ye can. We'll gang to the Police Office, if ye ken where it is. Come away at ance."

The youthful group which had gathered around us sneered and jeered at this, pointed me out to others as "the old-fashioned cove whose mother did not know he's out," and danced round me with wildest glee. I took a firm grip of John's arm and drew him to the door. As we went out there was loud laughter and much merriment at our expense. This I did not care for. I never was more thankful to be able to look up and see through the smoke and clouds the half-hidden moon and the stars. These things had been to me common objects before, and not heeded when they could be seen in all their glory far from the dense atmosphere of a city, but they became as revelations of God when I lifted my eyes from grimy houses, muddy streets, reeking, filthy homes, slatternly men, women, and children, to the heaven and to the points of light that rested in its open bosom. At that moment I longed to be back to the country and its simple people. John Reid brought me back to present duty when he asked, "Will we go to the Police Office? It is not far from here, and we will then

have done all we could to find him. If he is in the hands of the police he will not have given his real name. They used to call him Allan in the lodging-house, and this will most probably be the name he will give to the police."

"Yes, by all means let us gang," I answered. "It's a' we can dae. If we fail here, we can dae nae mair. What vexes me is, he has fa'n sae far as tae tell sae mony lees aboot himsel'. He'll no' be easy reclaimed. What wad his mither hae thought if she had been leevin'? She's better away, for she was a Christian lady."

To the Police Office we went, and inquired at the officer on duty if such a person was there. He did not know by our description, but turned to the charge-sheet and read out the names of a number. At last he came to one of the name of Allan, who had been apprehended that evening about seven o'clock in suspicious company and having no lawful employment. We asked to see this person, but, it being after ten, we were told we could not be allowed to do so, but that we could see him tomorrow at the court, which commenced at ten o'clock.

With downcast minds we retraced our steps homeward, and on our way the evil birds of the night and of darkness were to be seen every few steps we took. Some were so drunk they could scarcely walk. Others were prowling about seeing what they could pick up. Quarrels were taking place at corners and public-house doors. Ever and anon unearthly cries could be heard, and policemen's whistles resounded through the streets. After crossing the bridge the streets were quieter, and we were enabled to press along at a speedier rate. At length we reached our abode, wearied, downcast, and all but overwhelmed with the thought of the sins and sorrows of the great city. They had altogether passed my imagination, and I wondered that Heaven's vengeance had not descended upon it and burned it up with consuming fire. "It's oot o' God's mercy," I said to John, "that it stands this nicht. When we're sae vexed wi' what we

hae seen, hoo maun God be vexed when he sees a' its wickedness and hears a' its oaths and curses? Truly his tender mercy is ower a' his works. If it werena for this we wud a' be consumed."

After a broken night's rest I was up early next morning, and got ready to go to the Police Office at ten o'clock. Being Saturday, John Reid could accompany me, for there were no classes to attend that day. We were early there, and got a seat where we could both hear and see all that transpired. Before the magistrate took his seat on the bench the court-house was crowded with one of the most remarkable audiences I had ever beheld. In the majority of cases the persons present were poverty-stricken and of the lowest orders. They talked in anxious tones about some of those who were to be tried. And generally there was much sympathy expressed for them.

When order was called, a prisoner was brought forward, then another and another. Boys and girls were there with most marked features. They looked like little old men and women, withered in skin, and with a keenness of eye which was not at all natural. They frequently spoke back to the magistrate and the prosecutor with a leer and a sarcastic laugh as if they did not care what they did to them. A pitiable sight! A number of women were charged with rioting and fighting, whose faces bore evident marks of the fray. Some of them were old offenders, and were severely dealt with; others were only sent to jail for twenty-four hours. There was near the end of the proceedings a whole row of those marked in the charge-sheet we had seen the night before "D.D.," drunk and disorderly. They were treated in the mass, and were fined ten shillings or five days' imprisonment. We were beginning to think that Albert was not there, when three men were placed in the dock, the centre one being the stray sheep we were in search of. They were charged with being without lawful employment, the companions of thieves and dangerous characters. They pleaded not guilty. Evidence was led against them by police officers and detectives, and they

were sentenced to leave the city within twenty-four hours, or ten days' imprisonment, securities being required in the former case. They were hurried out of the dock by the officials, and the court came to an end.

"What a schule is this coort," I said to John Reid. "It has been a painfu' place tae me. It has brought to my min' when I was a prisoner mysel' an' hadna onybody to befreen me. But I wasna, when at my warst, sae bad as thae folk. They're no' like human cratur's ava. I didna think there could be sic beings as these on the face o' the earth."

"They are," said John, with sympathy, "but specimens of thousands in the city of Glasgow and such like places. Alec Mackintosh, the missionary, has shown me hundreds as bad as these. He tells me they just swarm in his district, and are saturated with drink, and neither fear God nor regard man."

"This is fearfu'," I said, and then coming back to Albert, I asked, "Will we no try and get Albert oot o' the han's o' the police and oot o' the toon? I think we should try."

"Most certainly," answered John. "We will go at once and try and arrange the matter."

We went to the office we had been in the night before, and were sent to another office where they dealt with the cases after sentence. We told what we wanted, and were interrogated as to our knowledge of Allan. Did we know where he came from? Had he ever been in prison before? Had he any means of living, or any employment by which he could honestly earn his livelihood? In answer to all these and other questions of a similar kind, we told what we knew, and stated we would be security if he would leave the city at once. "You had better see him immediately," the officer said, "before he is removed to the jail, and come back and tell me what you propose to do."

When we entered the cell he was standing up against the wall, a most dejected and miserable sight. There were about twenty others in the same cell, but he stood aloof from the rest as if he

had in loathing withdrawn from them. When he saw us he was deeply affected, and visibly shook from head to foot.

"You're here, Albert," I said. "I'm vexed to fin' you in sic a place. But we're no come to upbraid ye. This is no' the time for that. Are ye willin' to leave the toon the day if we become security for ye? For, as ye heard, ye maun either dae that or gang to jail for ten days. Ye should gang away where folk ken ye, and tak' yersel' up, gie up drink, and become a decent, sober man."

"I'll do anything, Rab," he said in a broken voice, "if ye take me out of this horrible place. I am most wretched, and wish I were dead. I cannot stand this."

John Reid said, "We will at once arrange to get you relieved, but we must be able to tell where you will go to. If we cannot do that, the authorities will not set you free. Where do you purpose to go to?"

"I do not know," Albert replied. "I have no fixed place of abode. My friends would not receive me; of this I am certain. Besides, my pride would not allow me to cringe at their door for bread. The better plan will be for me to go to my former agent. I daresay he would aid me till I could manage for myself. At least I would try him. I will go, therefore, to where he resides. But I have no money, no property. All I have is a pawn ticket for my gun, which I pawned for ten shillings yesterday."

He handed the pawn ticket to me, and said, "Take that, Rab. The gun is worth a good many pounds, and you should take it out and sell it, and get the money you lent me in this way. I kept my gun to the last, but parted with it to get money to treat these blackguards who have been my ruin."

Returning to the officer, we informed him of the arrangement made with Albert. On learning we were not householders, he would not entrust us with carrying out our plan, but told us to leave the money necessary for the fare, and he would see Albert was sent off with the midday train to the town mentioned.

The money was given. A hasty farewell was taken of Albert as he was led past us to a room in which he was to receive some food before his departure. He was despatched under the charge of the guard, and that was the last authentic news I heard of the "little gentleman" of my school days. Rumour said he was ultimately sent to the United States of America, and some of his old school fellows had seen him as a loafer at New York Harbour, a wreck in body and mind.

With the aid of John Reid I got ready for my homeward journey, and was glad when I steamed out of the station with my back towards the scenes that I had passed through during the last four days. These had widened my knowledge of society and of men, and made me doubly thankful for the goodness of the Lord and his salvation. They had also enhanced, in my estimation, the value of a loving wife and a comfortable home. Though it was nearly midnight before I reached Mary and my own fireside, we both kneeled down and thanked the Heavenly Father for his saving and protecting power and his constant and all-embracing love.

CHAPTER XIX.

ENDINGS AND THE END.

"So flows my life through scenes of joy and woe ;
 Around me now sweet summer flowers blow,
 And now I seem the dreary desert's guest ;
 Yet, like the river, ever on I move
 To the vast ocean of Eternal Love."

—WILLIAM COWAN.

My visit to Glasgow made a lasting impression on my mind. The large city, its busy streets, its wealth and trade, and, above all, its poverty, vice, and wretchedness confounded me. I could not understand how such a state of things could exist under the government of a righteous, supreme Ruler, and in a Christian land. There was included in the larger subject, which was often talked over by John, Mary, and myself, the lesser one of the career

and sad condition of Albert Craigie. His life had, in all respects, been so different from my own, that they stood out as a perfect contrast. Our heredity and environment, to use words of recent date, were of an opposite character, and the outcome had not been such as to favour the doctrine that circumstances make the man, and that our character is determined for us, and not to any extent by us.

This was observed by John before I saw it clearly. He had been thinking about it, and had determined to have, as he said, "a crack aboot it, for it forms," he added, "a problem a philosopher wad fin' it no' easy to understan' or explain."

"Ye see, Rab," he said one winter's night as we sat round the fire, "it beats a' the things o' the kin' I hae seen or read aboot. Just look at it for a meenit an' ye'll understan' what I mean. To begin at the beginnin', ye were born in the sma'est and maist unfit hoose to bide in, in a' the toon, an' Albert was born in the biggest and brawest hoose in the whole place."

"Hooses dinna mak' men," interposed Mary, rather sharply, thinking there was in the reference a reflection on her husband's position. "The kin' o' hooses we're born in hae nothing tae dae wi' oor characters and lives."

"Very true, my woman," said John quite calmly. "Hooses dinna a'thegither mak' or mar us. I ken that weel eneuch. If we were born in a stable we wadna be horses, an' if we were born in a byre it wadna mak' us kye, although," he added with a laugh, "some o' us micht be gey like calves. But, Mary, it's a fine thing to be born an' brought up in a weel furnished an' ordered hoose, an' Albert had that advantage ower Rab and me."

"Nae doobt o' that," I said, "an' this used to hae a wicked effect on me when I was a boy. I was angry when I thoct Albert had a' he wanted, and stayed in Riverview, an' we had tae bide in oor auld tumble-doon hut. I ken better noo."

"Then, look again," said John, "Albert had his kind and pious mither, and his nice sisters, to train him an' watch ower his ways, keepin' him richt

when he was wantin' to gang wrang, an' ye had nae-body but Granny, wha had little time to tent ye."

"Granny was aye a guid guide," I said, "an' I dae believe I couldna hae got a better, search all the country through."

"Very true," John replied, "but the guid auld soul had neither the time nor learnin' that Mrs. Craigie had, though she had the heart and the will. Noo, here's the problem—Hoo can ye account for Albert, when he became a man, bein' sae far doon in the mire o' sin an' the clay o' iniquity, without a hoose ower his heid, a wannerer in the earth, and ye, Rab, sae comfortable at yer ain fireside, no tae speak o' mair sacred matters? This beats me a'thegither tae explain."

"So daes it me," I answered. "We canna say it's a' God's daeings, for that wad mak' him the author o' a' the sin Albert has committed. Nae doobt but that he has been seekin' to get at Albert's heart as he got at mine. Nor can we say it's a' man's wark either, for I ken if I had been left to mysel', I wad hae been as far doon as Albert, puir chap, is this nicht."

"We manna shut God oot o' his ain warld," said John, "or else we'll mak' a bad job o' understandin' life. I like to think o' him watchin' ower us a', guid an' bad—thae wha hae come hame again an' thae wha are still in the fields herdin' swine. As I grow aulder I'm mair o' the opinion that God daes the best he can for a' his creatures. But some o' us resist this Speerit, and, like the Jews o' the Saviour's day, will not let him rule ower us. When I think o' Christ himsel' on the Mount o' Olives, greetin' like a mither ower her prodigal son, an' sayin', 'I wad, but ye wad not,' I'm mair convinced than ever that the reason why a' folks are no' on the road to heaven is no' God's fault, but their ain."

"It's mysterious to us short-sighted creatures," said Mary in a womanly spirit. "It'll be made plain some day. We'll then see licht in God's licht, an' be satisfied. Till that time comes, let us live by faith, and no' gie place to doobts."

"Very weel said, Mary," said John. "But we manna forget that thae wha saw beans never get peas, an' we never expect ingins when we saw carrots. Paul said as much as that, an' he kened. What we saw we'll shear, an' the harvest will just be like the seed."

So the subject was left, so far as speaking was concerned. It has, however, proved the theme of many hours' reflection since that time. The human, divine, and the angelic and devilish agencies are all so inter-related in every human life, it is most difficult to determine where the one ends and the other begins. The web we weave in the loom of time has many threads—some are white, others red, black, or blue—and these are determined by the thoughts and feelings we cherish and the actions we do. But where do the thoughts and feelings come from? This question is not to be answered fully in this world. Suffice it meantime to rest in the assurance that nothing but goodness and truth can come from above, and that all moral evil comes from ourselves and beneath. This is what scientific men would call a good working hypothesis, and one which should satisfy those who may have faith but cannot know.

In the spring of the year a great calamity befell me, in the death of John. It came suddenly in the end, though he had not been strong for more than a month before he was confined to bed. At first he refused to see the doctor, and said he would soon be his old self again. At length he had to yield to the progress of the disease, when the doctor declared it was a severe attack of typhus fever, which then prevailed in the neighbourhood. From the time he knew his actual condition, John resigned himself to his bed and to whatever was prescribed for him. He obeyed, like a child, and strove to give Jean and Mary, who waited on him, as little trouble as possible. Nor did he speak much to any one, and seldom alluded to his getting better or worse.

As it approached the gloaming one afternoon near the beginning of his illness, he said to Jean, "Ye can gang oot a wee an' get the air, an' Rab

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will sit beside me. Ye may hae some erran's to get, an' dinna stay ower lang."

When Jean was gone, he said, "Rab, come an' sit near me, for I want to speak aboot some matters I want settled."

I did so, taking a seat at the bedside, and in such a position as enabled me to see his face.

"Man, Rab," he said, "this trouble is a queer thing, an' I hae been kin' o' expectin' it for a while. My mind has been a great deal taken up wi' the ither wairld an' the folks that are there. Sometimes I thoct it wad be gran' to see them a' in the licht o' God's face, hear their sangs, see their croons, and ken what they were daein'. There are some I wad like awfu' weel to see that I never saw wi' my een. What a glorious thing to see Jesus Christ, we hae talked an' read aboot so much, to listen to his words, and hear him ca'ing ye by yer name. He'll be the centre an' grandest o' them a'. Ye're no tae think I'm daft when I tell ye, Rab, I wad like to dee, to see auld Abraham, an' Moses, an' Paul. An' then there's Granny; I wunner if I'll ken her when I'll see her. She'll no' be auld an' withered noo, but young an' fair. I hae been thinkin' this way to mysel' for lang, an' maybe I'm to gang hame wi' this fever."

"I trust no, John," I said with an effort, for he seemed to forecast his latter end, and speak from a knowledge no one could possess but himself. "I hope the Lord will stay this trouble an' mak' ye a richt soon."

"We dinna ken what's afore us, Rab," he said, "an' it's guid for us we dinna. Death comes in an' speirs nae questions. He's no blait, an' has nae freens. I'm no feer'd for his darts. They're gey blunt sin' he had the wrastle with Jesus Christ in the garden."

"He has nae sting noo," I said, "an' can hurt naebody that trusts in the Lord."

"Ou, ay, oor lives are in sure keepin', an' he'll no tyne us I'm certain," said John. "Though we're puir and needy, the Lord will think aboot us, an' we'll be safe."

After a rest, John turned to me and said, "I want tae tell ye afore Jean comes in that if I dee an' gang hame, ye'll look after Jean for the wee while she'll be here, for my sake. The bits o' things in the hoose will be hers as lang as she leeves, an' there're twa or three pounds in the kist drawer ye can spen' in lookin' after her. Ye'll fin' the key in the hole o' the wa' near the window. Ye can tak' a' my books tae yer ain hoose; thae're the best things I hae, an' I want ye to get them. That's a' I want to say. I feel real comfortable noo, an' I'll just let the Lord dae wi' me what he likes. He'll no' dae what's no' richt an' lovin'."

Before I could reply, Jean was in, and I merely bowed acquiescence to his requests. He lay back on his pillow with a smile of satisfaction on his countenance, which was never seen except he was in an exalted frame of mind. Before leaving for the night, I read the Twenty-third Psalm, and when I finished, he said, "Amen." This was the last word I heard him utter. Next morning he was in a state of delirium and unconsciousness, out of which he never came. It was distressing to see his writhings for two days, at the end of which he relapsed into calmness, and in this condition passed away.

On the evening of John's funeral who should call upon me but Walter Bayne, who himself had followed the remains of my friend to their last resting-place. He was now an old man, and the evening shades were gathering fast over him. For some time previously he had spoken little to any one, but more to John than any one else. John had come to love the old man, and always said to me in a whisper, when his name was mentioned, "He'll come a' richt yet. He's beginnin' to see things noo, no' a'thegither as we dae, but no' far frae it."

After Mary and the children had left the room where we were sitting, Walter said—

"I hope ye'll no' be offended at me comin' to see ye the nicht. I felt I couldna gang tae my bed till I had a bit crack wi' ye. Ye hae lost a true freen', an' sae hae I. We'll miss him much."

"That's true, Walter," I said. "The warld will no' be the same to me sin' John's awa'. I'm only consoled when I think he's far better where he is than he ever could hae been here, an' he'll no lose his interest in those he's left behin'."

"I wish," said the old man, with a faltering voice, "that I was sure o' that. Man, Rab, it's a terrible thing to doobt an' disbelieve for years. It mak's a' things uncertain, an' fairly breaks ye doon in the kirkyard. I had nae comfort the day when I looked into the dark grave."

"It was no' the same wi' me, I can assure you, Walter," I responded. "My faith cam' an' filled me wi' licht an' hope. I steek't my een, an' then I saw him the Beloved Apostle saw in the Isle o' Patmos, an' he said to me, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth on me shall never die.' John's no' deid. He leeves, as sure as ye an' I leeve. If I didna believe that my heart wad break."

"I wish I had yer faith, Rab, an' maybe I should hae it noo," said Walter. "I'm sure ye'll be glad to hear that I hae come the length o' believin' that Jesus Christ is the only ane wha can satisfy my desire to be a real man, an' gie me what I aye wanted—satisfaction and peace. I hae tried him sae far. What he said he wad dae he has dune for me, but I'm no' sae far forrit yet as tae see hoo he can assure me we'll leeve again after we're deid."

"Ye canna stan' lang whar ye are, Walter," I said. "Ye maun gang forrit a guid bit yet. Ye forget Christ is a leevin' Saviour, an' no' a deid ane. Though he was deid, he is alive again, an' his resurrection life is a pledge o' oors. 'Because he lives,' says the Apostle, 'we shall live also.' Dae ye think he will leave us in the muils, when he has done sae much for us already? Na, na, Walter, that canna be. He'll look after them that trust in him, I'se warrant ye, an' no' let death hae the victory."

The old man sat for a considerable time in silence and meditation. When he looked up it was with a pleasant countenance, and with a smile he said,

"That's a gran' view o' Christ an' his relation to us an' death. I dare say it's the true ane, for it comes into ane's heart, at sic a time as this, wi' po'er an' demonstration o' the Speerit. It has greatly relieved my mind, which has been a' this afternoon sae much oppressed wi' the thocht that the bodily organism was the whole man, and that when it fell tae pieces it was a' ower wi' him."

"That could never be," I replied, with a degree of warmth. "My body is no' mysel'. It's mine, as the shepherd used to say, an' no' me. I feel there's within me a real soul, that's different from my han's, heid, an' heart. This is the me, mysel', that shall be unclothed by death, only to be clothed upon with a hoose no' made wi' han's, eternal in the heavens. 'Though the outer man perishes, the inner man is renewed day by day.'"

"The whole subject opens itsel' wonderfu' to me," said Walter, "when ye present it in that way. Maybe I'll understan' it better by-and-by. I hae eneuch to think aboot for a while, an' we'll speak nae mair aboot it the nicht. If John is in the ither warld, he'll ken a' aboot it noo, an' we'll no' be lang ahin' him, Rab, especially me. I'm auld and frail, an' canna see mony mair new years."

Neither he did. After this Walter Bayne came and saw me frequently, and with him I held much sweet converse. He mellowed in spirit rapidly, and ere he departed this life he became docile as a child. To his last days he made no outward profession of religion, but to me he confessed he had changed his opinions regarding God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible. His faith in immortality became strong, and he frequently said he would, when he died, meet John in the world where all true souls would live for ever more.

John's death had a serious effect not only on my spirit, but also on my health, not too robust at any time. For a season I was not fit for any kind of work, and had to be tenderly nursed. At length I was restored sufficiently to be able to attend partially to my business, but no more. This led me to modify my course and give up all kinds of

work which was not necessary for my own and my family's wants. This I did with great reluctance, but it was inevitable. In this way I have spent, with frequent periods of sickness, the last twenty years of my life. During these years one after another of those who have been made to play their parts over again in these pages have been gathered to their fathers. The old provost is no more seen at the door of his shop in the summer evenings enjoying his pipe and a talk with the passers by. The Rev. Thomas Welsh, after being honoured by his brethren by being made Moderator of the General Assembly, had to yield to disease and death. The manse is now occupied by another, who brought with him to the parish new methods of work, and a great deal of the new spirit of the age. The schoolmaster has been succeeded by a young man, who considers passes and fears inspectors rather than drill a few favourite scholars in the old fashion. Tam Glen took to farming when he left the Black Bull, and lived to thank me for getting him out of a business in which he could neither have peace day nor night, week days nor Sunday, and he and all his household are no longer seen under the sun. The kind old doctor lived till he was nearly eighty years of age, and when he was no more, was succeeded by a youthful physician, to whom the mothers did not take kindly for years. The shepherd and his family have crossed the Atlantic, and are settled in the great Republic of the West. He still preaches the same old Gospel to a regular church Sunday after Sunday with interest and success. I alone remain in the old burgh, and the shadows of the eventide are gathering around me. The ripple of the Jordan is reaching my feet, and soon I shall be at rest with those who have gone before, where struggle is ended and triumph fully enjoyed.

THE END.

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