

THE SUNDAY AT HOME

O DAY MOST CALM, MOST BRIGHT! . . .
THE WEEK WERE DARK BUT FOR THY LIGHT.—*Herbert.*

THE DALRYMPLES.

CHAPTER V.—RIGHT AND WRONG.



THE CONVERSATION LANGUISHED.

“SO you have never blamed me for my long absence, Hermione?”

More than an hour had passed since Harvey's first sight of his young cousin. Mr. Dalrymple, after taking a cup of tea, and declining cake, had returned to the library, rather to Hermione's surprise. This was usually his accessible hour, if callers chose to come. Three callers did choose to come, and they stayed long,

but Mr. Dalrymple failed to re appear. Hermione acted hostess with perfect ease and grace, introducing her newly-arrived relative, dispensing tea, and keeping up conversation, her sunny sweetness never for an instant eclipsed.

Harvey watched her in some wonder. He had not expected this development, as a result of her “rustic” training and retired life. Perhaps the absence of self-consciousness surprised him most;

she had been such a "vain little puss," he told himself, at eleven; and then he almost thought that a touch of girlish shyness at nineteen may be prettier than too complete self-possession. Yet how could he wish anything altered when the entire effect was so charming? And, after all, was there really no consciousness of others' very patent admiration? Not a conceited consciousness, certainly, but a happy, smiling confidence in being able to please everybody. If it were so, was that a blemish?

At length the callers departed; and then it was that some observation of Hermione's drew from him the above remark: "So you have never blamed me for my long absence." He had not yet divulged to her his "chief item of news," having avoided the subject while Mr. Dalrymple was in the room, and having been since prevented by the presence of strangers. Now the time had come for speaking out.

"I do not quite know," she answered, looking up at him with her sunshiny eyes. Harvey wondered if those eyes ever could be sad or grave. "Only perhaps, sometimes, when my grandfather seemed so worried, and I could not think what kept you away. But Marjory would not let me blame you."

"Marjory must be a very charitable individual."

"I don't know that she is. She does not try to excuse everybody."

Harvey laughed. The idea of Marjory making excuses for him was amusing.

"I am very much obliged to her," he said. "Seriously, however, I ought perhaps to have run home once or twice, if only for a few days, for my uncle's sake."

"Yes; I have always thought so," she said, with a curious little touch of rebuke which immediately put him on the defensive. "It is not as if you had been really unable."

"That is hardly a question about which you can come to a fair decision," he said, somewhat nettled.

The blue eyes were grave enough now.

"I thought you asked what I had felt," Hermione said calmly. "Marjory has always insisted that we could not understand; that you must have reasons of your own. I have let her say so; but I am not sure. Very often you have been too far away to get home easily; but from Germany or Italy surely it was possible. I do think dear grandfather has had a right to see you, at least sometimes. I think you have been wrong."

She might have been a woman of thirty, sitting in judgment on a boy of ten, so gently resolute was the manner. It was hardly to be expected that Harvey should succumb to her judgment, he being a man of thirty-two, and she a mere girl under twenty. He was alike too gentlemanly and too good-natured to show anger to a lady; but considerable meaning underlay the brief response—

"You think so!"

"Unless, of course, you had reasons," pursued Hermione, as if sweetly willing to hear what he had to say for himself.

"I had reasons, undoubtedly."

"But——" Hermione looked at him and hesitated. Was she going to demand those reasons? "But you will stay now, Harvey—now that you have come?"

"Two or three nights."

"Not more! After eight years!"

"Hardly possible, I am afraid. You know a great deal about me, evidently,"—there was a touch of irony here—"still you are not quite acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. There happens to be a lady in the question. I hope you are prepared to congratulate me."

The sunshine flashed back, and in a moment Hermione was again all winning loveliness.

"Are you going to be married? Oh, I am very glad. Grandfather will be so delighted. He has often said lately that you ought to think about marrying. Who is it? What is her name?"

"Julia."

"And how old?"

"Twenty-one."

"Is she like me?"

"Not in the least."

"Pretty?"

"That may be a matter of opinion."

"And her surname?"

"Dalrymple."

"How strange. Is she a distant cousin?"

"I am not aware that we have any cousins. Her name is Dalrymple now. A month ago she was Julia Pilchard."

"A month ago! But you cannot mean—it is not possible—you are not married already!"

"Yes. So you see I have, after all, something of an 'actual tie' abroad—so long as Julia remains there."

Hermione was silent. Her face was grave once more, with a gravity amounting to severity. She sat upright, one little hand lying over the other on her knee. How very young, and fair, and sweet she seemed! Yet Harvey, lounging in a chair opposite with his air of gentlemanly *insouciance*, had an odd "naughty-boy" sense of being called to account by her for his misdoings.

"Julia is an orphan, like yourself," he said, hiding the feeling of embarrassment under a light manner. "She has only one sister, a widow, Mrs. Trevor, several years older than herself. I met them in Algeria last autumn, travelling for the sake of Mr. Trevor's health. Three months ago I came across them again in a Swiss hotel. Mr. Trevor had died before Christmas."

No answer came. Had Hermione taken unknowingly a leaf out of her grandfather's book? She seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Mrs. Trevor is a most charming person. You will be delighted with her. They were both in great trouble when I found them at Chamouni—not alone from the death of Mr. Trevor. Mrs. Trevor had just heard of a lost lawsuit, which meant ruin to herself and her child—and to Julia also."

Hermione spoke at last in a low voice of displeasure. "Married! and without a word to my grandfather! Does he know?"

"I told him immediately. That was my object in coming here."

"But not till a month afterwards! And all the love and kindness he has shown—Marjory will not try to defend this!"

"Marjory's opinion can be of no importance in the matter."

"Was that why he seemed so unlike himself when he brought you in? Yes, of course—I see now. I did not understand. Harvey, you will excuse me, please. I am going to him."

Harvey rose as Hermione stood up. "Remember," he said, "my uncle claims no authority over me. He could not claim it rightly. Whether I should have acted with greater wisdom in speaking to him earlier, is a question about which there may be two opinions. You, not knowing all the circumstances of the case, hold one view. I hold the other."

Hermione's eyes met his reproachfully. "Authority—no," she said. "But he ought to have heard: he had a right to know. It was wrong not to tell him. Nothing can alter that."

"In your opinion," Harvey quietly observed.

"I cannot imagine any circumstances that would make me think differently."

"Possibly not."

"Right is right, and wrong is wrong. Nothing can change wrong into right."

"Nevertheless, the question does occasionally arise—What is right, and what is wrong?"

"It may always be answered."

"Not always with absolute certainty."

"Yes; there is never any real difficulty, where one is determined on doing the right. If one is merely bent on pleasing oneself—"

Harvey made a slight mocking bow, as if in acknowledgment of her opinion.

"I am not jesting," she said, and the blue eyes, attractive in their soft gravity, were again lifted to his. "It is a serious question, not at all a matter for jesting. So much depends upon the way in which we do things. You know very well that a thing right in itself may be wrongly carried out."

The sweet incisive tones paused, for Mr. Dalrymple entered. He looked pale still, yet it was with a smile that he came forward, and laid a hand on the young man's shoulder. To Hermione's surprise there were no tokens of annoyance or displeasure in his bearing.

"I did not intend to stay so long," he said. "More than an hour, is it not? I must have been asleep, I think. Slade announced callers, but I told him I would rest. My head is strangely heavy this afternoon—as if thunder were near. Are you both inclined for a stroll on the terrace? Not a ride to-day, Hermione—somehow I do not feel equal to it. Besides, I must see the most of this dear fellow while he is with us. Perhaps on Monday a ride all together will be pleasant. He must renew his acquaintance with the country."

"Very pleasant," Harvey assented, privately wondering whether he would find it possible to carry out his plan of two nights only at Westford. If not, what would Julia say?

Hermione had drawn close to her grandfather, and was gazing wistfully into his face.

"Come," he said. "Have you a hat at hand? I shall like a little fresh air."

The terrace, a broad gravel walk with huge flower-pots along it at intervals, bounded one side of the house and ran then for some distance round a lawn of green velvet, enriched by flower-beds. The roses were in full luxuriance, showing every possible tint from pure white to deep red-black; and geraniums bloomed in scarlet and crimson masses.

Hermione held one of Mr. Dalrymple's arms, unwontedly silent, as he paced the terrace. He too was still a little absent and dreaming, though he pointed out his favourite plants, from time to time, to the young man.

It might have been expected that the three would have had more to say one to another, after eight years' separation. Conversation languished greatly. So long as Hermione declined to assist, Harvey's efforts seemed to be useless.

He gave her a glance now and then, growing a little provoked as the minutes went on. Evidently hers was a silence of calm and judicial displeasure, acted out as a duty. She was looking wonderfully pretty in her white dress and straw hat, the summer sunshine lending brilliance to her presence. But, after all, what business had she to take him to task in this fashion?—she, a mere child comparatively, only nineteen in age, two years younger than his young wife. And what did Hermione know about the matter? He could not, of course, explain to her the old man's intense desire for that which never could be, and never could have been.

No, never! Harvey felt this now, more than ever. Fascinating as Hermione might be, formed by nature to reign over the hearts of others, she would never have done for him, even if he had not met with Julia. "Much too angelic and infallible a being for a lazy fellow like me!" he thought with an inward laugh, while gravely responding to an observation of Mr. Dalrymple's: "The Baroness Rothschild, yes, a particularly fine specimen—splendid bloom—if only it had a scent."

But Hermione could not know of Mr. Dalrymple's long-cherished desire, once plainly uttered to Harvey. And Harvey would not have cared to admit even to himself, much less to anybody else, the undefined sense of weakness, which had made him so dread the moral coercion of a stronger nature and will than his own, that he had absolutely stayed away all these years from the fear of it. Then, when at length he was taken captive by Julia Pilchard, a half-cowardly dislike to the worry of possible opposition had come into play, and he had deferred speech until opposition should be useless.

He was not indisposed now to allow politely that a different course of action might have been on the whole better. But to submit his deeds to the judgment of Hermione was another matter. If she had excused him, he would have blamed himself—moderately. Since she blamed him, he stood upon the defensive.

There is a right and a wrong in all things, sometimes absolute and intrinsic, sometimes pro-

portionate and relative. Some deeds are right or wrong always, in all places, for all people. Other deeds are right or wrong according to circumstances, and may at the self-same time be right for this person, wrong for that person.

Hermione, earnest, conscientious, decisive, saw plainly the bald fact of right being right, and wrong being wrong. Harvey, not half so conscientious, not half so earnestly bent upon doing the right, knew practically far more than did Hermione of the possible perplexities which may, and do, arise in connection with this ever-recurring question. But he knew also, if only he would have allowed it to himself, that there had been no such perplexity connected with the subject lately discussed.

So much for Harvey's train of thought, as the trio walked the terrace side by side. Hermione's ran on a parallel line, being chiefly occupied with him. She was not grieved after the fashion of Marjory Fitzalan: for Hermione's was not like Marjory's hero-worshipping nature. If Hermione worshipped any human being at all, it was all unconsciously her most sweet and attractive self. But then, of course, it was unconsciously. Other people she looked upon with a calm and gentle kindness, ready to administer praise, blame, or advice, as might be called for. Why not? Hermione was accustomed to find her praise welcomed, her blame submitted to, her advice followed. Almost everybody in her little world looked up to her, as Marjory had said.

It was a somewhat unwonted position for a girl of her age, enhanced by her extreme prettiness, grace, and cleverness—not altogether a safe or wholesome position.

Mr. Dalrymple's train of thought was less definite than that of either of his companions. For he was grieving still over his shattered dream, grieving yet more over his unconquered wilfulness, and struggling against an unwonted sense of inertia and weariness. He wished to be kind and chatty with his great-nephew: but it was not easy.

CHAPTER VI.—IVY-LEAVES.

THIS was Saturday. Harvey had purposed remaining until Monday, then spending one night in London, and starting for Paris next day. He had told his young wife as much; almost promising not to be longer away. Happily the promise had been modified by a condition—"if I can possibly help it." He began to see that he hardly would be able to help it.

"I do not think I can go into business matters to-night. My head is so heavy still—there must be thunder brewing," Mr. Dalrymple said after dinner. "I have always been sensitive to thunder. We must have our talk on Monday. You will stay with us till the middle of the week, at all events."

"I think I must say Tuesday," Harvey answered. "As you suggest, we can go into business on Monday morning; and a ride in the afternoon would be pleasant. I should like to visit old haunts."

"I must not ask more. We will be content

with so much at the present moment. But you will bring your Julia to pay us a long visit soon."

Harvey was touched again, as he had been before, with the old man's gentle acquiescence in disappointment. "Then you will give her a welcome!" he said.

"My dear fellow! You and she are one now."

Harvey wondered if the widowed sister and her child would be welcomed also. He did not care yet to confess having promised a home for the present to those two. Mrs. Trevor was a very agreeable person; and, since she had nothing now to live upon, his action was undoubtedly most kind. Nobody could question that fact. But he had somehow a vague sense of having been "managed" in this arrangement, and he objected to others guessing what he suspected. After all, if he chose to add to his household, it was his own affair; certainly not Hermione's.

Hermione seemed more willing to converse after dinner, though her first eagerness and warmth of manner had vanished. She showed Harvey all due courtesy and attention as to a guest, not sisterly affection as to a brother.

Mr. Dalrymple dropped asleep in his armchair, and Hermione remarked that he often did so in the evening, for ten minutes; only this day it proved to be for a good deal longer than the specified period. He slept on heavily, and, when roused by the entrance of coffee, he dropped off again, leaving his cup untasted. "I cannot think what makes him so tired," Hermione remarked uneasily; and Harvey was struck anew with Mr. Dalrymple's aged and wan look. He wondered that Hermione had never spoken in her letters of a change. Could it have crept on so gradually as to be unnoticed?

Sunday morning broke more cheerfully as to the household atmosphere, though outside in clouds and rain. For once Mr. Dalrymple did not appear until late. He had overslept himself, he said—the first time for years past—and he inquired curiously if nobody had heard any thunder. The air certainly had been charged with electricity the night before, and this morning he had quite a headache, so very unusual with him. But neither Hermione nor Harvey could speak of the most distant peal or flash, and Slade, when appealed to, stated the same in his suppressed tones.

"Well, well—it is an old man's fancy, I suppose?" Mr. Dalrymple remarked; and then he sat down to his breakfast, but did not seem able to eat.

"You will not go to church to-day, I suppose, as you are not well," Harvey remarked to Mr. Dalrymple, but the old man seemed astonished at the suggestion. Nothing short of absolute inability would have been counted by him a sufficient reason for staying at home.

Rain had by this hour ceased, and the walk was pleasant, in the soft grey June atmosphere, clouds still low, but a bright promise of future sunshine gleaming through them, and all trees and herbage rejoicing in the past downpour. Hermione wore one of her favourite white dresses, simple enough in make, and Harvey, of course, bore her waterproof on his arm.

"You don't use the carriage for this?" he asked, as they neared the church. It was a good half-mile of distance.

"No, no—not unless it were a matter of necessity." Mr. Dalrymple said. "I like my men and horses to have as much as possible of a Sunday, besides myself. Hermione and I are able-bodied people."

Then they were within the old building, replete for Harvey with childish recollections. He seated himself purposely on that same side of the square pew where he had been wont, long ago, to sit beside his fair young mother.

Mr. Dalrymple and Hermione occupied another side of the pew, where Harvey had them in full view. As the service went on, he was much struck with the old man's exceeding reverence of manner, and look of deep devotion. There was no lounging, no seeking after positions of ease, no occupation with others present. Mr. Dalrymple, albeit pallid still and manifestly not well, stood, and sat, and knelt as required, with no apparent relaxation in his fixed attention. That was genuine worship, and Harvey knew it.

He did not trouble himself to question what manner of worship his own might be. Marjory Fitzalan claimed his attention next. She was in a pew near, and she too looked pale, even suffering. The long bout of continuous sitting and kneeling was a trial to Marjory's physical powers, and the body was not with her subservient to the spirit, as with Mr. Dalrymple. She wore a worried and depressed expression.

Then there was Hermione. Harvey came back to her, casting little glances from the hymn-book which he decorously held open, without any attempt to join in or even to follow the words of praise. He could understand Sutton's administration. Her face was lighted up now with a glow of reverent devotion, which might almost have been a reflection of her grandfather's. Was it quite so genuine as his? and was she at that moment absolutely absorbed, absolutely unconscious of the pretty picture she made? Harvey was disposed to answer both questions in the negative. Like most people who are very lenient to themselves, he was not very lenient to others; not disposed always to take the most charitable view of their actions or motives.

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To Harvey's astonishment the service was at an end, and only the sermon remained. He had scarcely heard a word of the whole. As for any amount of prayer, praise, or adoration on his part, the less said the better, perhaps.

The sermon following was good, forcible, and well worked out. Harvey was not much in the habit, however, of listening to sermons. He sat

through them as a kind of duty—whether a duty to himself, to the clergyman, or to society, he would have been at a loss to specify—but he did not commonly take in their sense. Listening means trouble, and Harvey disliked trouble. His attitude of polite endurance was a contrast to the earnest attention of the two seated opposite. Harvey did not even notice the text.

That window, how well he remembered it! The green ivy-leaves clustered around it outside still as of yore; and here came a gleam of sunshine, filtering softly through the leaves and the tinted panes. The vivid fancy of his childhood came back too, and once more in imagination he seemed to see his mother, clothed in white, mounting upwards, by a pathway of wreathed leaves and glowing light—upwards to a far-off land of joy.

Only a child's fancy, of course; but Marjory had declared that children "see farther" sometimes than grown people. After all, why not? A child's picturing may well approach nearer to some grand reality than a man's forgetfulness of it.

Had Harvey any belief in such a land now? Well, yes, after a fashion, no doubt. Practically he knew that this little life may not go on for ever, and he hoped for something agreeable beyond, when that beyond had to be reached. He was in no hurry at all to go to heaven; still, he did not, of course, wish to go anywhere else after death, except to heaven.

"But, now, 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy!"

Marjory's quotation flashed up suddenly; he had heard the words years before, and had forgotten their existence, till Marjory recalled them. Now they obtruded themselves persistently, not to say impertinently. He could shut off the sermon, but he could not shut off Marjory's quotation. It haunted him, buzzed about him, so to speak, drowning the quiet voice of Mr. Fitzalan, winding in and out of the green ivy which circled the window, saying itself over and over, dying away and reviving again.

"But, now, 'tis little joy—little joy—now—now—now—'tis little joy—to know I'm farther off—farther off from heaven—farther off from heaven—than when I was a boy—a boy—than when I was a boy!"

Harvey roused himself with a slight start at the sound of Mr. Fitzalan's, "And now—" to find the sermon ended, the congregation rising. He had been sound asleep in his corner. He could only hope that nobody had observed the fact.

But Hermione's eyes wore a look of rebuke; and Marjory's quotation stayed by him still.

FALSE STANDARDS AND THE TRUE.

BY THE REV. JOHN MONRO GIBSON, D.D.

"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth."—*Psa.* cxix. 142.

"He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—*John* xii. 48.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."—*Heb.* iv. 12, 13.

THE Apostle Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, says: "They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing." Our own experiences at once tell us how true this is to nature. But, while we all know what it is to have thoughts accusing and thoughts excusing, there is a vast difference between different persons as to the things which conscience will excuse, or for which it will accuse. How very elastic some consciences are! What power of excusing they have! And how tender others are! How slow to excuse; how ready to accuse; and how severe the accusation often is for things which to others seems scarcely worthy of thought or of mention!

The reason of the difference does not lie in the conscience itself, but in the standard by which it is guided in its decision. Some have a very high standard of right and wrong, and others a very low one, while many are content to strike a kind of average.

But how comes it that the standards vary? There can be only one true standard. To have more than one would introduce the greatest confusion. Suppose, for example, that one half the people in London were to make ten shillings instead of twenty the value of a pound. It is plain that they could have no dealings with the rest. Certainly gold would not circulate freely among them. And suppose every one was allowed to have just as many shillings in his pound as he liked, there would obviously be an end to all business. Plainly, there must be one fixed standard, in order that justice may be done to each. And so it must be in things moral. There must be one fixed standard for determining duty and obligation; and, when we find that there are various standards, the only conclusion we can draw is that all but one of them must be at fault. There can be only one true.

Surely, then, it must be of the utmost importance to have the true one. It will not screen a man in an English Court of justice from the guilt of dishonesty in giving light weight, that he can produce a private scale of his own according

to which the weight was good enough. No more will it in the court of heaven. "False balances are an abomination to the Lord," as they are to the British Government, and to every honest government. It is the business of the merchant to see that his weights are standard weights, such as would pass government inspection; and it is the business of every reasonable man to see to it that the standard which he follows in determining what is right is the government standard—a standard that will not be discredited in the court of heaven. Let us, then, look at some of the standards which are current among men, and consider how far they can be trusted.

One very common standard is public opinion. Every one notices the power of public opinion in regulating matters that are purely conventional, but its power is not restricted to these matters. The conventional indeed is seldom purely conventional; there is generally a moral element in it. In the Latin language the same word stands for morals and for manners, and in our Old English writings the word "manners" is often used for morals; but besides the moral element which so often enters into those "manners," which it belongs legitimately enough to public opinion to regulate, it is quite remarkable what an effect public opinion has in fixing the standard in regard to questions of duty. One of the most familiar illustrations of this is to be found in the matter of Sunday observance. The same man, who was very strict in Scotland, will have his strong views modified by a residence in England, and, unless he has a much higher standard than public opinion, will become utterly lax by a residence in Germany. "When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do," may be allowed to pass so long as it is applied to matters purely conventional, to mere "manners;" but when it comes to moral questions the danger is manifest. Public opinion never can be a safe criterion in matters of right and wrong. In a country like ours it is on the whole good so far as it goes. As a rule public opinion here condemns vice and approves virtue, it condemns meanness and approves benevolence; and accordingly the man who is guided by public opinion is far in advance of the man who follows only his own selfish inclinations.

But, while on the whole it is good so far as it goes, we have no assurance that it goes far enough. In fact it is manifest that it cannot; for in the first place, it is but the expression of the average morality of the people of the community, and in a community where there is so much evil mingled with the good, it cannot be that the average is high enough for a standard; it cannot be that it will satisfy the aspirations of man's moral nature, still less that it will satisfy the requirements of the "Holy One that inhabiteth eternity." Then, in the second place, besides being the expression of a mere average, it touches only a part, and that the least important part of men's lives—their external conduct, to wit. It takes no cognizance of the inner life which is the proper sphere of morals. Many a man whose outward conduct is irreproachable has a heart full of evil; and on the contrary many a man whose actions are strange and not according to conventional propriety, and who therefore does not stand high in public estimation, may have a heart which entitles him to a place among the excellent of the earth. It is very evident that public opinion is an unsafe guide, and a very inadequate standard of duty.

Another standard, one which seems very satisfactory to many men, is their own sense of honour, and here again we do not deny that self-respect and a sense of honour are of great value in morals. There is nothing more deplorable in the downward career of the sinner than the loss of self-respect and the sense of honour; but it is manifest that as a standard this will never do. Is every man to be a law unto himself? How would you like to have your treatment adjusted by the sense of honour of any man who had dealings with you? You may depend upon it that your sense of honour and his might not always agree. Evidently this is no standard at all. Everything depends on how much honour a person has, and very often those who talk most about it have least of it. Sometimes it seems as if it were all *sense* of honour, and very little of the honour itself. The apostle very wisely says, "They that measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves are not wise." For a man to measure his honour by his own sense of honour is altogether too much like keeping a private scale. How does he know that it will pass muster with the government?

Setting aside then both public opinion and private opinion as unsafe and inadequate guides, may we not find some help from experts, from those who have made a special study of the subject, from the moral philosophers? Well, the writers on ethics are good enough in their way, but two short questions are enough to dispose of them as standards: (1) Who reads them? (2) Who minds them?

Who reads them? Students only; and they read them for the sake of their theories, and not for their practice. Did you ever hear of anybody who took up an ethical treatise for the purpose of bettering his life? Such treatises may let a little light sometimes into some peoples' heads, but who ever heard of any one taking them for a

light to his feet and a lamp to his path? Yes, few people read them; and nobody minds them. There is some force in public opinion, for the eye of the public is on a man, and there is power to punish him if he transgresses; but ethical philosophy has no eye to watch a man, and no power to touch him. And then, what right has even the philosopher to make a standard of duty for man? We still miss the government mark on them all.

The unsatisfactoriness of these standards leads us to ask the question: Is there no standard on which we can depend as true, which will not reflect the faults of the age or of the community, or indulge the failings of individuals? which will go down to the deepest recesses of the heart, and at the same time speak with authority and power? Our texts supply the answer. In the first we read: "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth." In the second we are told that the word which Christ has spoken is that which shall judge us in the last day. And the third is very explicit: "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Here we find everything that betokens the standard we are in search of. The more we think of it the more we shall be convinced that the moral standard of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament, has every mark of truth, that it has evidently the Divine imprint upon it. Think, first, how high it is. Even those who refuse to accept its teaching on everything else, admit that its morality is peerless. Its doctrines, its history, its references to nature, are discredited by many; but few ever think of impeaching its ethics. There is, indeed, a disposition in some quarters, to criticise it on the ground of its being too high—its urging self-sacrifice to such a degree as to render it hopeless to reach it, and indeed we are willing to grant that it is hopeless for any one to attempt to reach it by his unaided efforts. But then, the same word which sets before us so high an ideal of life, shows us also the way by which we can certainly reach it. The same Word which calls us unto holiness, promises the Holy Spirit to all who ask. We grant that the standard is high, very high; but does not that prove that it is not of earth, but carries the signature of heaven? No one can say that it reflects the morals of the age or of any community. No theory of evolution will account for its lofty standard. Think of the New Testament issuing so pure from a province of the Roman Empire in the corrupt days of the first Cæsar; so full of charity from such a hotbed of bigotry as the Jewish soil, so true and real and fresh from amid surroundings of hollowness, hypocrisy and cant. It is manifestly of God; or it could not have been so lofty, pure, and true.

Think, next, how incisive it is. It deals little with the outside, but how it penetrates the soul. Our third text quoted above brings this out very forcibly: "it pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit."

There is no experience more familiar to one who preaches the Word than to have this one and that one say: "You must have been thinking about me when you wrote that sermon; you must have known something that has happened to me within a few weeks"—when the preacher was conscious of nothing whatever but an attempt to open up the Word and apply it to the conscience. Have we not in this an evidence of the penetrating power of the word? Remember what the woman of Samaria said to her friends of Him who had spoken to her by the well: "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Was not her reasoning good? And when we find, as every one does who faithfully uses them, that these Scriptures search us and try us, detect for us lurking sins, remove disguises, anatomise our spiritual natures—is it not evident that in them we have the word of God? Do we not see here again the Divine signature?

Think, next, of the power of the Word. Did you ever hear of any one after reading a book of moral philosophy, ancient or modern, crying out, "What must I do to be saved?" Where do you find any word of man that moves the conscience, that stirs men's souls, and makes them agonise to enter in at the strait gate of a pure, and holy, and heavenly life? But this Word has done it in hundreds and thousands of instances, and is doing it still every day. There are, indeed, many who have no experience of this power, because they do not read it, or read it in such a way that it does not get at their conscience at all. But, whenever it reaches the conscience, it not only penetrates deep, but it has power to move, to change, to renew, to transfigure.

And how has it such power? Because it is living ("quick"). He whose word it is, is ever present with it, "Lo, I am with you always," he says. Aristotle's Ethics are an interesting study, but they are dead. And the writings of our modern Aristotles (if there be any that deserve that name) are just as dead. The authors may be alive, but they do not even know who read their books, and, whatever authority they may have on questions of philosophy, they have not a fraction of authority in the domain of the conscience. But *these* "data of ethics" are living and powerful. An eye that never dims or grows old looks out from these pages. "Thou God seest me," is written all over them. He is ever near, whose Word it is; and "there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

We can now see how appropriately these words come in. The inspired writer has been setting forth the word of God as the true standard, because it is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But these are the very reasons why men shrink from it, and wish to find some lower standard. They dread to have the recesses of their heart explored. They do not like the piercing and dividing asunder. There is too much life and too much power in it

for them. Fain would they escape this heart-searching and spirit-moving process. But it is in vain; these secret things are not secret. An Eye is on them all. A searching eye—an all-seeing eye. There is no creature that is not manifest in His sight. Absolutely all things are naked and opened before Him. And it is with Him you have to do. You have not to answer to society; you have not to answer to the moral philosophers, but you have to answer to Him. No other standard will be recognised when you and I come to give our account. "The word which I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day."

Is this a very dreadful thought? It need not be so. It need not be so at all. Read on. Read on from the 12th chapter of John, and you come to Christ's intercessory prayer, His suffering, His death. "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died." Or, read on from the later text: "We have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God . . . not a high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was tempted in all points like as we are." He knows all the evil that is in us; but He knows all the frailty too. And He is touched with the feeling of it. He sympathises deeply with us. He looks down into the depths of our heart, not to condemn—not at all to condemn—but to save. It is not to a cruel inquisitor, but to a kind and loving physician, that we are asked to open heart and conscience.

In view of the subject we have had before us, there are two courses open to each of us, and each one of us will certainly take either the one or the other. The first is the easier course in the meantime. It is to take some of the lower standards that are current and live according to them. By doing this one may get on very comfortably for a while, perhaps all his life. We may manage to keep an easy conscience to the very end or very near it. But when he comes into the presence of Him with whom he has to do—what then? Let me beseech the reader with all earnestness not to take this course, it will end in everlasting ruin.

The other is the course to take. It is much harder now. It has a strait gate and a narrow way at the entrance; but it leads into green pastures and still waters presently, and at last up the eternal heights. It is to take—honestly to take—the word of God for our standard. Let it have free and full access to the conscience, let it penetrate to "the thoughts and intents of the heart." Then we shall see the need of the great High Priest, of His atonement for our sin, and His intercession for our help. We shall be often found at the throne of grace, asking mercy to pardon and grace to help us in the time of need. We may be often discouraged when we think that the standard is so high, and our lives so far below it; but we shall be comforted by the thought that our Lord sympathises with us, and succours us so that we are really helped onward and upward; and, when at last we come into the presence of Him with whom we have to do, we shall have no reason to be afraid, because we have taken His word for our guide, His Son

for our Saviour, His holiness and perfection for the good of our lives. Then shall we find to our great joy that “there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Then shall we realise what a blessed thing it was to have our hearts thoroughly searched, our lives thoroughly tried, while Jesus the Son of God was standing by with eyes full of sympathy and hands stretched out to save.

Yes! in the light of the Gospel of Jesus the

Son of God, “Thou God seest me” is a thought full of comfort.

“Thou know’st our bitterness—our joys are Thine;
 No stranger Thou to all our wanderings wild;
 Nor could we bear to think how every line
 Of us, Thy darkened likeness and defiled,
 Stands in full sunshine of Thy piercing eye
 But that Thou call’st us Brethren: sweet repose
 Is in that word—the Lord who dwells on high
 Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows.”



“OLD MORTALITY” IN DAUPHINY.

“He considered himself as fulfilling a sacred duty, while renewing to the eyes of posterity the decaying embers of the zeal and sufferings of their forefathers, and thereby trimming, as it were, the beacon-light, which was to warn future generations to defend their religion unto blood.”—*Old Mortality*.



GRENOBLE.

GRENOBLE AND JACQUES ROGER.

RELIGION is not the strong point in the character of the good citizens of Grenoble. The neighbouring narrow, fertile plains, and the grassy slopes on its girdle of mountains furnish materials for the commerce of a gay, busy, noisy city. As I watched the ever-changing crowd in the Place Grenette and listened to their loud, light-hearted talk, I could not without a violent effort recall the far different scene which the same place presented on the 22nd of May, 1745. Then, there was a scaffold and a gallows; an aged

minister, escorted by fifty soldiers, was the victim, his crime was that of having exercised the functions of the ministry in baptizing and marrying members of the persecuted Protestant churches in the adjacent mountains of the Vivarais. This was contrary to the law, which prohibited these offices from being administered save by the Roman Catholic clergy.

Drums and fifes drowned the sentences of his dying exhortation to his fellow-penitents to continue firm, and his own devout expression of serene and joyful acceptance of the crown of martyrdom for Christ. After twenty-four hours

of exposure the dead body was thrown over the stone bridge into the Isère. Three days afterwards it turned up on one of the sandbanks in the river-bed and was buried.

At the same time that mobs in England were attacking John Wesley and his congregation, against the law, the mobs in Dauphiny were inciting the government to put in force the shocking laws against Protestantism which made it an offence, punishable with death, to exercise any ministerial act, or to assist in it; and an offence punishable with transportation for life, to be present at any Protestant religious assembly of any kind; and consigned to imprisonment and hard labour for a term of years all who should give asylum or hospitality to any Protestant preacher.

The martyr on this occasion was one Jacques Roger; an heroic, steadfast Protestant, seventy years of age, who had been from his very youth converted, and, after an education and training at Lausanne, had devoted himself to the work of preaching the gospel and organising churches throughout the mountains of Dauphiny and Provence. He did this with perfect knowledge of the rigours of the law, and with terrible instances before him that those rigours would be enforced to the death, but he believed it to be his paramount duty to preach the gospel, and to form and supply churches, and keep up the organisations of the Protestants, thereby preserving them from the wild fanaticism which had begun to display itself owing to their want of rule, and instructing them in the Scriptures and knowledge of Christ.

He did this with fervour, loyalty, devotion, and success for upwards of forty years, and was universally beloved and respected by his co-religionists throughout the south-east of France.

Roger was in correspondence with the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, as well as with the reformed churches in Switzerland and Germany. But all could not save him. The records of his trial show his firmness, faith, and patience. After examination, the following sentence was pronounced against him: "The Court declares that the said Roger has been duly judged, and convicted of having exercised ministry and preached in sundry assemblies of religious people, in sundry places in the province, in punishment for which he is condemned to be delivered to the executioner and hung or strangled till dead."

Jacques Rogers' life was one of constant peril, self-denial, and suffering. He was hunted by the emissaries of ecclesiastical vengeance for thirty-six years, and had days of privation and a death of shame always in his contemplation. What sustained him? Some years since there was found concealed in the garden once belonging to one of his family at Boissures a MS. strongly bound in parchment, containing entries of his sentiments and opinions, and memoranda for his sermons. I transcribe and translate from this his views of the central truths of Christianity, as affording a sufficient answer to the question, and showing the grounds of his peace and joy in the midst of a lifelong persecution.

"The first place in the gospel system of redemption belongs to Christ, at once man and God. In the nature of things it was fitting and even necessary that the Redeemer of the human race should Himself be man.

"The second thing to be considered is what He has done for our salvation.

"His innocence was perfect. This was absolutely needful, as well to supply merit to us who had none as also to constitute a sacrifice for us.

"It is evident that Jesus by His death has bought us from eternal death by making expiation for our sin, our original sin, and our actual and personal sin. The idea which the Scripture gives us concerning the death of Christ is, that it was a propitiatory sacrifice in which the innocent victim suffers the penalty and satisfies the Divine justice. The efficaciousness of this sacrifice was confirmed by the resurrection of our Lord. By His ascension, Jesus placed the finishing stroke to the perfection of His priesthood, and the assurance of our salvation."

These propositions are sustained by numerous quotations from Scripture showing his deep knowledge and profound study of the word of God.

It is reckoned that the old parliament of Grenoble, from the year 1744 to 1746 inclusive, sentenced to death, and to the galleys for life or for various terms, degradation of rank, or stripes, three hundred persons for the avowal of Protestant doctrines, all of them good citizens, loyal and useful subjects. The reformed in the provinces alone were fined £200,000.

Can it be wondered at that half a century after these tragic events the people rose against the royalist edicts, and that here the first battle for the liberties of the French people was waged, and here, in a local convocation of the States, was struck the first blow for constitutional liberty in the autumn of 1787? The beautiful Castle of Vizille, situated at the opening of the valley about eight miles from the city, was the actual place of assembly, the very cradle of the revolution.

LOUIS RANC, A YOUNG HERO OF THE VIVARAIS.

THE Vivarais is an irregular tract of land on the west side of the Rhone below Lyons. It is a chain of hills rarely rugged, but for the most part having fine slopes of pasturage and therefore eminently a cattle country. It does not abound in towns or even villages or hamlets, but in large single farms, and is occupied by a race of herdsmen. In this hilly and grazing district, for some reason or other, evangelical truth has always found a home, and the farmers here, in consequence, largely shared in the persecutions which France has always in time past directed against all who espoused the cause of religious freedom.

The town of Prades is on the east side of the region, and from it the green hills ascend up into mountains. On one eminence, about five miles from the town, is the village of Ajoux, where in the year 1719, in a family of some social position, Louis Ranc was born. Notwithstanding his expectations as eldest son, and his prospect of

riches from a childless uncle, and in spite of the disadvantages of pains and penalties of a suffering sect, young Louis early declared his decision to devote himself to the proscribed Protestant ministry. At the age of seventeen, amidst recent martyrdoms and present persecutions, he had the courage to volunteer as confrère to Jacques Roger, the firm, fearless restorer of evangelical order in Dauphiny and the Ardèche. He soon manifested piety, courage, and prudence, and was entrusted with important services amongst the believers on the banks of the river Drome. He ministered the gospel in secret assemblies, and was hunted from town to town, and place to place, with the faithful ones, who assembled under difficulties to hear the good word of the gospel.

The last assembly of this kind in which he presided was in the valley of Combes, near Livron, where the present railway crosses the river and connects the line to Marseilles with that to Nismes. A few days afterwards, whilst on his journey, he rested one evening to baptise a child of an old Protestant named Cloison, and, when too late, he learned that the soldiers were on his track, set on by the Roman Catholic priest of Lessie. The family of his host concealed him from the searchers in a barrel covered over with faggots of vine-wood. The soldiers made diligent but ineffectual search, and were about to retire, when a pair of slippers in a corner of the room induced them to continue the search.

Still they failed; but the pastor, fatigued by constraint and in the dark, unfortunately touched his repeating watch, and the sound at once betrayed his hiding-place, and he and the son of his host were seized and taken to Valence as prisoners, and thence to Grenoble.

The following day he was arraigned on the accusation of having undertaken ministerial

functions contrary to the law. Great efforts were made in court to save him from the capital sentence. His very judge felt that his youth, piety, and sincerity furnished extenuating circumstances; but the bloodthirsty demand of the Romanists prevailed. He was required to abjure his ministry, and promised that in that case he would only be condemned to the galleys for life. He maintained a dignified silence, and was delivered over to the executioner.

The sentence was not carried out at Grenoble, but at Die, the route being by Valence and Crest. His demeanour on the sad progress was serene and even triumphant. He was plagued by the attendance of a Franciscan monk, but, in the opinion of his escort, he confuted the arguments of the ecclesiastic. He was also accompanied by faithful friends, and experienced great composure and tranquillity of soul in the prospect of death by martyrdom.

He sang on his way—and particularly the 142nd Psalm. On the day of his execution, he sang the first seven verses of the 118th Psalm, repeating twice—verse 2. In the afternoon he was taken round the streets of the town accompanied by ten drummers who ceased not their distracting noise until his life was gone. He displayed quiet fortitude during the dismal tragedy; he was strangled, then beheaded. His body was drawn round the streets in contumely and scorn. This was on the 12th of March, 1745, a date removed by nearly two centuries from parallel cases in our own country.

The martyrdom of this bright young confessor left an indelible impression on the inhabitants of the district. Hymns and poems in his praise and commemoration are still sung by the people of Dauphiny and the Drome. Flowers are still annually in spring-time planted on his grave.

S. R. P.

JEW IN THE EAST.

IT is very wonderful, how in every part of the world, wherever the foot of a man has trod, there lives and flourishes the Jew. Wherever he can obtain a footing there he plants his business and his worship, and there he flourishes, self-contained, mixing with none, living in a most unostentatious manner, but making himself a power and gradually insinuating himself into every business or trade in which money can be made or influence secured.

The Jew in Eastern lands is a man marked by his dress, no less than by his fair complexion. The swarthy Jew so familiar in our own western streets, with prominent hooked nose and thin black corkscrew ringlets stiffly arranged round his head, is an unknown sight in Eastern countries. In India there is a most curious and interesting colony of what are called Black Jews, at Goa on the western coast; and another large colony at Bombay of Jews who go under the name of Beni-Israel. At Calcutta the Jews are

fair in complexion and pleasing in feature, and are easily distinguished from the natives of the country around them, both by their fair skins and by their own peculiar dress. The men uniformly wear on their heads a small round cap like a smoking-cap, entirely made of needlework done in very bright colours. These are worn from boyhood, and are generally the work of their mothers when they enter into membership of their church at twelve years old. They wear tight-fitting linen trousers, and a loose white linen coat with long open sleeves. Over this all wear a bright-coloured waistcoat, generally of needlework of the same description as the head-dress. The little boys as they grow up are miniature editions of their fathers, and always wear their caps when in the presence of their parents.

The girls are very lovely. Most have masses of coal-black hair neatly braided at the back of the head, soft creamy skins, bright black eyes, and regular sloping features. They generally

dress in fanciful chintz-like frocks well open above, displaying their neck and shoulders; their sleeves are loose and shortish like the men's, and in front all wear a piece of bright-coloured needlework called a "breast-plate," worked for them by their mothers. Of course, in a country where no woman is allowed to be seen in public, these young Jewesses of the lower classes must have some protective dress for going to and returning from school. This they have found in the Punjab yashmak which swathes them from head to foot. The yashmak consists of a small round piece of coarse cotton cloth which fits on the top of the head. To this is sewn, in very full folds, a long straight drapery of the same, and in front is a short straight mask for the face in which are two holes for the eyes of the wearer. This garment the girl puts on, and, wrapping its folds around her, she is entirely hidden, and may walk to and from school in safety.

One fact impressed me much. I talked with many Jews and Jewesses, Jews of good social position and those of the humbler sort; and though all said they were Jews of Bagdad, and even seemed proud of the fact, none could tell to what particular tribe he or she belonged. Among them even the tribe of Levi seems to be merged in the general nationality, and those who ministered in the synagogue seemed to be chosen indiscriminately from among the people. These Jews were very friendly, and several times invited me to visit their synagogue.

Let me describe what I saw on the Day of Atonement, a day which varies in its dates each year, its recurrence being regulated by that of the Passover. This is now chiefly remarkable as being the one day in the year on which women may, if they like, worship in the open area of the synagogue. Of course, in Eastern countries all services are held at an early hour of the morning, and the Jews fall in with the habits of other creeds; so, in order to attend the service, I had to make a very early start.

It was very curious to go on foot at a very early hour in the morning along those streets which later on one would not think of entering except in a carriage, and which would then be crowded with representatives of every nation under the sun. Then to thread the narrow lanes and alleys, between rows of closed and shuttered shops, where later on would be displayed endless wealth of Eastern fabrics, and where the Hindu shopkeeper would do battle with the foreigner intent on cheapening curios. Street after street we passed in the quiet and stillness of the early morning, till at last I found myself in front of the principal entrance of the synagogue. A handsome flight of steps led up to the door, crowded with endless pairs of shoes. How can any one be ever sure of his own again out of such an assortment?

Entering the synagogue, I found myself in a great assemblage of men and boys, all, or almost all, dressed alike, in white linen coat and trousers, with the outer coloured waistcoat over all, and on their heads a bright-coloured smoking-cap. Of course, all feet were bare; and, as a sign of respect or worship, each wore over the head and

hanging down behind the "talith," or fringed cloth. The "talith" seemed to vary with different persons, with some it was a mere fringed scarf of muslin; with others it was of lace; and with others of spotted net; but all alike wore it over the head and hanging down behind. Some of the younger Jews who had gone into business, and who were in daily contact with Gentiles, and had adopted Gentile dress, merely left their patent-leather shoes at the door and walked about in their socks, wearing the "talith" like the rest over their hard bowler hats.

I was conducted through this throng of men and boys to the women's gallery, where I sat down and looked down into the synagogue while I tried to listen to the service. The whole centre of the building was occupied by a great raised platform, approached on one side by a flight of steps. This is called the tabernacle, and on it the priest stood to read or intone the service, the congregation, meanwhile, sitting or lounging on their benches. There was no choir, but the musical parts were chanted in a sort of monotonous drone by priest and people.

Behind the tabernacle stood arranged, in a semicircle of two tiers, twenty-four very handsome embossed silver cases containing the rolls of the Law. When the time arrived for the reading of the Law, two attendants took the required roll with much reverence from its niche and bore it to its desk upon the tabernacle. Then the priest beckoned to one of the congregation, who approached reverently, and, opening the roll, read the appointed portion.

It was an interesting service and sight, but I could not understand anything, for all was in Hebrew; and so far as I could learn there was little distinctive in the service for the day. All of the old ceremonial is gone. There is no High Priest, no Holy of Holies, no Mercy Seat, no scape-goat flying out into the wilderness, and the service seemed chiefly commemorative. No doubt, hope for the future added somewhat to the life of the service; but the hope seems rather national than individual, as the Jewish community is prosperous, and contented with its lot.

As soon as service was over and the roll of the law replaced, the congregation broke up, and every one began to converse with his neighbour. I waited till the men had all gone, and then descended from the gallery with the women. The steps were clear; every man had taken his own shoes and had gone, and I too went home to breakfast.

In the late afternoon some of us went again to the synagogue; and there, in the gloaming, saw the most distinctive feature of the day's observances. All was dim within the building, but there was a continuous stream of Jewish women and maidens, all dressed in their best, filing silently along in front of the rolls of the Law. As they passed along, each bent the head and kissed the sacred caskets one by one, sighing mournfully as they went, over the lost glories of their Day of Atonement. Then, folding themselves in their yashmaks, they passed silently down the steps and out into the darkness.



The Master's Dog.

"HE is coming again—he is coming, Roe,
 Oh, how I wish I could tell you so!
 Those wistful eyes, with their yearning look,
 Scanning my face like an open book;
 That long, low whine of pathetic pain,
 Going and searching, turning again,
 Asking as plain as if dogs could speak—
 Where is the Master, where shall I seek?
 They thrill my heart, and it needs not, Roe—
 I am not grieving, because I know!
 It is well with him, he is glad and free,
 He is sailing fast on the breezy sea;
 Weakness and pain will pass from him there,
 On the wings of the blessed Atlantic air.
 He will come again—with joy we will greet him,
 His faithful Roe will bound to meet him.
 Glad hearts re-united will quickly forget
 The parting, the weeping, the care and the fret;
 Meanwhile the sorrow is thine, poor Roe;
 The gladness is mine, *because I know!*"

* * * * *

Another day, after months had gone,
 She bowed her head with a bitter moan,
 On the shaggy head of the faithful hound,
 Who sprang to meet her with one glad bound,
 But hushed his glee, in a moment's space,
 As he looked up awed in her ashen face;
 For he read the sorrow, the anguish there,
 Which he could not comfort, he could but share.
 But each mute caress was lavished in vain,
 Of that breaking heart what could ease the strain?
 "He will come no more to us, Roe," she said;
 "We shall see him no more, he is with the dead."

But, as days stole by her with anguish fraught,
 There came to her slowly a healing thought,
 As if One who cared for her bitter grief
 Bent over her gently and breathed relief—
 "I am touched with the feel of thine earthly woe,
 Yet I am not grieving, *because I know.*
 Couldst thou see thy loved one now with Me,
 On the farther shore of the mystic sea,

Thy heart for rapture would change its pain,
 And ne'er couldst thou wish for him back again.
 But thine eyes are holden—it must be so,
 E'en I cannot show thee whilst here below.
 To My love and My power no bounds are set,
 It is thou that art held and imprisoned yet
 By the needful chain of thine earthly sphere,
 Which would snap too quickly were all made
 clear.

Meanwhile the sorrow is thine and the woe,
 The gladness is mine *because I know*,
 Yea, the gladness is *ours*—thy beloved abides
 With Me in the calm beyond mortal tides.
 He knoweth My secret, My joy kept in store;
 So trust Me, and mourn him in anguish no more!
 Be the tears that must fall fraught with healing
 and peace,
 Until in My presence for ever they cease.”

D. A.

The Royal Law.

CHAPTER III.—THE LITTLE FISHERS' RETURN.



THE RETURN.

AS the afternoon wore away, Paul began to feel a little uneasy. He thought he ought to be going home, and yet it required an effort to tear himself away from the beautiful old garden and the lovely flowers; but he did not want to be there when the fishing party returned. He shrank from meeting Aleck; and he always felt afraid of Alfred and Gerald, he had seen them point and whisper and laugh at his patches, and he could not help his clothes being shabby. So, after he had finished his tea, he wished Mrs. Vincent good-night, caught his cap from the stand and rushed down to the boat-house to find his rod and tackle. He held the flies with their glistening wings tenderly in his hand and turned them over and over. Then a sudden happy thought struck him and he retraced his steps to the house, and sprang lightly through the open window to speak to Mrs. Vincent.

“I have only come back for a minute, Aunt Agnes,” he said in an apologetic voice; “but I thought Aleck would like these flies,” and he laid the pocket-book down on the table; “he knows all about them, and I expect he would want them to-day, but he can have them now if he likes.”

“I don’t think he deserves them,” replied Mrs. Vincent; “Aleck has grieved me very much to-day.”

“Oh, but I want him to have them, Aunt Agnes, and I don’t care a bit to take them home; I have never anywhere

to fish unless I go with Aleck.” Then, seeing the grave expression on Mrs. Vincent’s face, he added—but he spoke almost under his breath, “I say, Aunt Agnes, you won’t punish Aleck, because you know he only forgot me, and it hasn’t been so very bad, after all. Uncle gives me a drubbing sometimes, when I displease him, but Aleck didn’t do anything wicked, and he will want to tell you all about their sport when he comes home.”

Mrs. Vincent wondered what wicked things Paul had done, but she gave the promise that Aleck should not be punished, and she sent him away with another kiss and a happy mind.

Aleck’s mother sat for a long while alone in the grey twilight of that summer’s evening: she was listening for her boy’s step, but she was thinking grave thoughts. The bright gladness which stirred her heart in the morning had faded, and a sore little pain had taken its place. The soft flickering shadows fell on the sloping lawn and the great trees waved their branches as the light breeze played among the leaves; the sky was bright with crimson and purple clouds, and the copse beyond the meadows was glowing in the beams of the setting sun. Mrs. Vincent leaned her elbows on the window-sill and watched the outside world. The cows were slowly wending their way down the hill from the green pastures,

and a distant peal of bells was the only sound she heard, as it floated to her through the still warm air; but, as she mused on Aleck's heedlessness, the words—

“Evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as want of heart—”

clung to her closely, and she felt that perhaps she had failed to reprove him seriously for his faults and selfish actions. Her devotion had not blinded her to his failings, but her heart forgave him always because she loved him so. Yes! she had loved him tenderly but had it been wisely? She felt she had not taught him the “Royal Law.”

Aleck was a high-spirited boy, with a healthy frame and a stout heart, in which there was a rich spring of love for his mother. A pained look from her grey eyes was often sufficient to curb the angry temper and the proud will; and, unknown to her, he often sobbed himself to sleep after he had been wilful and naughty, and remembered that he had wounded the feelings of another through the day.

The fishing party returned home much more sober than they set out; there were no boisterous laughs as they rowed the boat through the river-weeds and trailing plants, past the water-dock and bulrushes, which grew on the marshy banks; but every stroke of the oar reminded Aleck of his broken promise to Paul. He could not even join in the song of the Midshipmite, which Gerald and Alf were singing; and without his clear young voice, the chorus—

“With a long, long pull,
An’ a strong, strong pull,
Cheerily lads, yo ho!”—

sounded very flat, and the sounds soon died away.

And Doris had not enjoyed it at all; she was very unhappy when she found out that Paul was left behind when he expected to go, and her little heart ached for him all the afternoon.

It was later than they intended when they reached home, and Aleck ran quickly through the big garden, after saying good-bye to his companions, for fear his mother should think him late, and be uneasy on his account.

“Where’s mother?” was his hurried question at the door; and then Mrs. Vincent heard his springing step as he bounded up the stairs, taking two or three at a time. He threw open the door with a jerk and tossed his cap upon a chair.

“We have had such splendid sport, mother!” he cried, after he had kissed her, “just look at these fine fellows”—and he opened his basket and revealed five large well-fed and prettily-spotted trout. “I let Alf and Gerald take the biggest lot, because they are such a party at the Laurels now; but you will not be able to eat more than these, will you?”

“Scarcely, dear,” she answered; and she would have smiled at the idea at any other time, but she felt pained to see Aleck in such good spirits as though he had never given a thought to Paul through the day.

“And you have had a happy day, Aleck, as well as good sport?”

“Oh, jolly, mother,” he said, after a moment’s hesitation, but a faint tinge of colour crept into his cheeks.

“Then I am sorry for it, my son, I would rather hear you had been miserable and unable to enjoy anything.”

“Whatever do you mean, mother?” Aleck asked the question lightly, but his eye sank abashed beneath the grave expression of hers.

“I think your conscience will answer, if you will let it. Have you done unto others to-day, Aleck, as you would like them to do to you?”

“Oh, you mean about Paul, I suppose,” he said, with an outward show of indifference he was far from feeling; “I only forgot him, mother, and I don’t like to be scolded for nothing at all. I don’t suppose he troubled his head much about it.”

“We will talk about Paul’s feelings presently,” was the quiet reply; “how was it that you forgot him, Aleck?” she drew him nearer to her and took his hand in hers.

“Well, I don’t know; I expect it was because those other boys turned up, and I didn’t want him then; but nobody does think much about Paul, do they, mother? He must be pretty well used to being forgotten, and Gerald and Alf would only have poked fun at his shabby clothes, so he was better away.”

“I think he was, Aleck; he spent the day with me, and I felt it was of little consequence what he wore, so long as he possesses such a noble little heart, and the ‘meek and quiet spirit’ which, in the sight of God, is of great price.”

Aleck tapped his foot restlessly on the floor; he was in a wilful mood, and there was an ill-tempered look on his usually happy face. Mrs. Vincent was even afraid she caught the words “sneak” and “pest,” but they were spoken under his breath, and his mother would not notice them. A battle was raging in his young breast; he felt strangely uncomfortable, and yet his rebellious will was urging him to brave it out; the tears were not far off, but he hated any one to see him cry, and he tried to think there was no need for the tone of grave displeasure in his mother’s voice.

Mrs. Vincent saw the workings of quick feeling as well as of quick temper in the misty eyes that would not meet her own; she knew he was struggling with his naughtiness, and, as she looked down at him, she smoothed the rumpled hair from the downcast face.

“Are you ready for your supper, Aleck? I hope, dear, you will think differently about Paul’s disappointment and your own selfishness to-morrow; I know my boy will feel sorry, and I am sure I do. Shall I say good-night to you now, Aleck?”

“No, mother; you know I hate saying good-night when I feel like this, and I don’t want any supper.”

But when he looked up in his mother’s face, and saw the sad expression that rested there, a quick sob burst from his lips instead of the wilful words. The ill-humour vanished; and as he whispered, with a great effort, “Tell me about Paul,” the little head with all its bright curly hair was buried on his mother’s shoulder, and he hugged her tightly round the neck.

“I did care, mother,” he cried. “I was full of sorry feelings, but I did not want to tell you. I quite forgot Paul until we were a good way up the river and Alf asked me for the flies. Then I tried not to mind, and kept shouting real loud; and I tried to think it was jolly and to enjoy myself, but I didn’t; and all the time they were laughing and singing I felt ever so miserable and bad, because I knew Paul wouldn’t have forgotten me; he never breaks his word, and—that—verse Paul thinks about so much kept running in my mind, though I tried to drive it away; you know what I mean, mother, that about the ‘Royal Law;’ Paul calls it his wonderful secret, and he tries to love others better than he does himself.”

Thus, in broken words, the boy’s confession was sobbed out. He wondered—now he was in his right mind—how he could ever grieve such a dear, tender, mother! And, while Mrs. Vincent clasped her son closely to her, she gave Paul also many kind thoughts. She felt she was finding out more and more about his young life, how he had even influenced Aleck; and she secretly thanked God for watching over the desolate child, with the love and pity he had known from no earthly father. Then she raised the face, still wet with tears, and said, while she softly kissed the crimson cheeks:

“Aleck, my darling, will you ask God to help you to keep the ‘Royal Law?’ It is such a happy thing to try and

do right; to obey the One who gives us the command to please others instead of ourselves. You know how to get His help, dear."

"Just by asking for it, mother," and he smiled up into her face; then he put his arm round her neck, and said in a low whisper: "You are not vexed with me now, mother, are you? I do think sometimes, I don't always forget; oh, I say, was poor Paul awfully cut up?"

"He was terribly disappointed, Aleck, he had set his heart on this pleasure; he had counted the hours until the day came; his life is such a lonely one that the promised treat was much more to him than it could have been to you; he awoke with the first ray of sunlight, his mind full of delight at the thought of the fishing, so he was very unhappy when he reached the boat-house and found you had gone."

Aleck was very quiet when his mother was speaking; but, when she went on to tell of Paul's generous love in wishing to screen him, he dropped his head in his hands and sat for some time without speaking; then he looked up eagerly as if a new thought had struck him.

"Are you afraid I shall grow into a bad man, mother?" he spoke quickly and earnestly; "because I won't"—and the dirty fishy little fingers stroked her cheek.

"God forbid, Aleck," she said, laying her hand on the clustering curls and folding him closer to her; "but I should like to have a talk with you, darling, about being selfish. I have thought sometimes that my son is never very happy in his play, unless he is leader and has everything his own way, and I want you to learn to be yielding and unselfish, and to think about making others happy. You know, Aleck, there is a love that 'seeketh not its own,' and this love will help you to overcome all selfishness and to think of others before yourself; and, when you find pleasure in being kind, you will feel far happier than you do now, and you will be obeying the Royal Law, which is to love your neighbour as yourself. Will you try and think about it, dear?"

"I do, mother, often," he said; "but I find it harder than Paul does, because—" he hesitated.

"Tell me why, darling."

A shy smile trembled on Aleck's lips before he spoke; then he said, with a wistful look in his big blue eyes—

"Oh, you know why; because Paul loves God more than I do; he talks about Him as though He were close beside him, and I think He seems ever so far away."

"And yet, dear, Paul is right; God is always with us; always near to help us, though we cannot see Him, and it pleases Him to know that His children are loving one another, gentle and kind in their play, and ready to give up their own will, because they are trying to serve Him, and to keep His commandments. Do you remember the hymn, Aleck, about God being always near you? You used to say it to me when you were a very tiny boy.

* Through all the busy daylight,
Through all the quiet night,
Whether the stars are in the sky,
Or the sun is shining bright.

* In the bedroom, in the parlour,
In the street or on the stair,
Though I seem to be alone,
Yet God is always there.

* Whatever I may do,
Wherever I may be,
Although I see Him not,
Yet God sees me."

Aleck nestled very close to his mother while she repeated the lines in her sweet voice; then he suddenly broke away from the loving arms and ran upstairs to bed.

"Come and wish me good-night, mother," he shouted, in recovered spirit, from the top of the oaken balustrades.

When Mrs. Vincent went into his room half-an-hour later, she found the moon shining in through the small window with a soft shifting brilliancy, the beams rippling over the floor and on the white coverlid of the little bed, and Aleck amid the downy pillows with his arms tossed over his curly head.

"I say, mother!" he cried springing up, "I think Paul is splendid. I never found it out before; but I always knew he was one to be trusted, and I am awfully sorry, mother, I haven't tried to make him happy, because his life is dull enough to mope him to death. I am going to have him for my chum now, I always shall, he is ever so much nicer than Alf and Gerald, and"—Aleck dropped his voice to a whisper—"he is not a muff, is he? Alf said he was, and he called him a coward too, but he has plenty of pluck, hasn't he, mother?"

"Yes, my darling, Paul is no coward; he is a brave, noble-hearted little fellow." Then Mrs. Vincent kissed him, and tucked him up in bed, and left him to sleep away the fatigue of the day.

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA.

NO. II.

1. He that would follow Christ must deny this and take up the Cross.
2. The land from which Solomon procured gold.
3. A title of respect coveted by the Pharisees, by which our Lord was addressed on several occasions mentioned by John alone.
4. This is said, when good, to be better than precious ointment and rather to be chosen than riches.
5. A constellation mentioned in Job and Amos.
6. On this was to be placed the plate bearing upon it "Holy to the Lord"; here did a giant receive a fatal blow; and here also did a king show the first sign of a dread disease.
7. For attempting a friendship with the king of Egypt Hosea was punished by the powerful king to whom he was a vassal.
8. Thus did Peter follow Jesus on His way to the high priest's palace.
9. There are two of this name in the Gospel narrative: one was restored to life by our Lord; and the other formed the subject of one of His parables.
10. A modest queen who was punished for daring to disobey her lord's command.
11. The name given in Revelations to the angel of the bottomless pit.
12. This "worketh patience"; and through it have come those who are before the throne of God.
13. The subject of the dream of a king; and that which he afterwards made as an object of worship.
14. One appointed by Ahab to restore to the Shunammite her house and land, after her seven years' absence in the time of famine.
15. A ruler of the Jews to whom our Lord addressed a remarkable discourse.

The initials form a title given to our Saviour in the prophetic utterance of Zacharias; the initials, a name first spoken in derision, but which has been cherished and honoured ever since by His followers.

A. E. B.