

THE SUNDAY AT HOME

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



A SUNDAY STORY.

AMUSEMENT.

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SOME of us desire to know how far they may indulge themselves with amusement; and when they look at our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in all things our example, they see a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who says to them: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." They have, on the other hand, from all sides an eager propaganda of theories of amusement. Amusement is exalted in our day quite to the level of a positive duty. They follow the lead of the prevailing tone of sentiment without much thought; they do not analyse the motives or principles of the vast majority of persons, who seem so like themselves, however indifferent they may be to the kingdom of Christ; and thus these half-hearted and uninstructed Christians become puzzled, and the light of life fades away from their souls.

The love of pleasure, which is one of the greatest enemies of wisdom and the strongest allurements to folly, has of course shown itself in a thousand ways, in every phase of society, and at all periods of history. At that we are not surprised. But it is really astounding amongst people who are professedly Christian, and who would be deeply hurt if they were told that they did not understand the true spirit of Christ, to find what an eagerness exists for all kinds of excitement. "Have you had a good time?" that is the prevailing cant of the day. The questioner means to enquire, whether, in the time in view, there has been an unceasing round of gaiety. The ordinary conversation of fashionable life is not about moral and religious progress, or things that are of lasting interest, but about the mere frivolities of the hour. "Have you been doing any plays?" "Have you seen the new exhibition?" "Have you read the last novel?" "Are you going to this party, or that assembly?" "Have you heard the last scandal?" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. These are the topics which indicate the whole train of thought.

A young man, when he comes to London straight from the discipline of his school and college, finds himself surrounded by whole tribes of eager caterers for his enjoyment. Scores of theatres, an endless choice of music-halls, clubs to suit every variety of fancy, armies of tradesmen whose main occupation it is to consult every conceivable variety of whim, all the resources of civilisation devoted to the development of every imaginable refinement of luxury, innumerable hosts of rich, gay, pleasure-loving men and women who welcome with good-humoured delight every new votary of selfishness who can contribute something to the general impulse for self-indulgence—these are the forces to which he finds himself subjected.

It is not very different with the young women of to-day. A great bishop who lately died, and whose trenchant good sense compelled every hearer to listen to him with attention, had on one occasion been preaching on the subject of activity in the service of God; and soon afterwards he received a pitiful letter from a young woman of fashion who had been present. What could she do? She gave him details of her daily life; the late hour of rising, the time spent in changes of costume and the study of dress, the innumerable notes which must be written of invitation or acceptance or excuse, the morning calls, the daily drives, the shopping, the ceaseless stream of visitors, the unending round of dinners, receptions and balls, the prolonged hours, the heated rooms, the unnatural vigils, the exhaustion of the late return home. What could she do? was she to defy her mother and give it all up? The bishop, under the circumstances, could only counsel moderation and obedience. But the correspondence showed the intolerable tyranny of the godlessness of fashion.

And the working classes follow as far as they can the spirit of those who are enjoying the resources provided for them by the prudence of their fathers. They have not the same opportunities for luxury; but they are at no loss for excitement. Everywhere the gin-palaces flare for them with unwholesome brilliance; every contrivance of architecture and art is enlisted to enhance their attractiveness. Every street resounds with the cries of hawkers of newspapers, daily rousing to fever heat their love of gambling about horses which they have never seen, and sports of which they know nothing. All through the year, in every class, the race for pleasure pursues its headlong course. There is no cessation. A depression in national prosperity sometimes checks it; but with every increase of trade and commerce it gathers redoubled energy.

There cannot be the least doubt that the godly, righteous, and sober life, as revealed to us in both Old and New Testament, is something entirely distinct from all this. Nothing can be more striking than the experience of Solomon as described by the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes. It sounds like a detailed condemnation of much of the folly of modern life. None ever had a greater chance of deriving happiness from pleasure than the wisest and richest of men.

I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of

their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour. . . . Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

It was a life of perpetual amusement, and that of the most reasonable sort; hardly a feature of modern self-pleasing is omitted; it was carried out on a boundless scale; and yet it was necessarily all a failure.

It was not the seekers of pleasure in the days of Job who were the salt of the earth or the witnesses for God.

The ungodly send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel, and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in mirth; and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?

There is a very modern ring about these trenchant observations of Job.

It was not the seekers after pleasure in the time of Isaiah, who were the hope of the nation or the supports of righteousness: "The harp, and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the works of the Lord, neither consider the operations of His hands." In all the cares and riches and pleasure of this life there is something absolutely deadening to the spiritual life.

It was not the seekers after pleasure that inspired the prophet Amos with any hope for the future of the ten tribes of Israel, when the black clouds of the coming national dissolution were impending over their reckless lives of self-indulgence:—

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria! . . . Ye that put far away the evil day, . . . that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music: that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

Self-indulgence cannot but produce hardness of heart and indifference to suffering. The more refined it is, the more satisfying and absorbing it becomes, and the less room it leaves for the love of God and man.

Throughout the Old Testament you will find that the life in the fear of God is the life that is serious, thoughtful, self-restrained. Isaiah cries out against those "that are given to pleasures, that dwell carelessly, that say in their heart, I am, and none else beside me." Ecclesiastes pronounces from the depth of an unparalleled experience, "sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made truer." "The heart of fools," says Ecclesiastes, in another place, "is in the house of mirth."

The same serious and sober view of life is held up to us in the New Testament. Our Lord had no time for amusements, of which there were plenty at Jerusalem, and in the highly-civilised Greek and Roman towns of Galilee. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." "That which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." The woes and the needs of mankind are enough to occupy the whole attention of every intelligent human being. His apostles had far too great a responsibility laid upon them in witnessing to the stupendous fact of His resurrection, and in preaching the glorious tidings of salvation and eternal life to the multitudes of the careless, the sinners, and the pagans who surrounded them, to attend combats, or games, or social displays.

St. Paul places all that in the far back-ground of what is entirely past and gone: "We once," he says to Titus, "were foolish . . . serving divers lusts and pleasures." "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," he says with penetrating boldness to his disciple, Timothy. And to the same friend he describes false Christians as "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." St. James speaks with no less pointed directness: "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth," he exclaims in words which would describe hundreds of thousands of our contemporaries, "and been wanton: ye have fattened your hearts as at a festival of sacrifice." And St. Peter writes of the self-indulgent, how "they shall receive the reward of unrighteousness as they that count it their pleasure to luxuriate for the passing day." The apostle of amusement can find no possible grain of encouragement from the apostles of Christ.

What, then, are we to say to ourselves about earthly pleasure? Are we to forswear it altogether, or are we to treat it as a dangerous acquaintance who must be kept at a distance, and only occasionally met?

Well, as there is an infinity of degrees in the rewards of heaven, and an incalculable variety in the happiness of the hereafter, so there is a great number of different types of Christian character on earth. Some are content to be saved by touching the hem of Christ's garment. For them the prize in the kingdom of God will be small indeed. Some aspire to one ideal of excellence,

some to another. Some, like the apostles themselves, are filled with a consuming zeal for the salvation of souls, and the spread of the kingdom of Christ, and are borne along by the delight of active benevolence which is the characteristic of our modern heroes of faith and love. It is impossible to lay down one rule for all. But in general we may say that for most men some kind of relaxation seems to be necessary.

There appears to be a good deal of truth in the saying of Herodotus, that if a man were to devote himself unceasingly to a dull round of study or business, without breaking the monotony by cheerful recreation, he would fall imperceptibly into idiocy, or be struck by paralysis.

"The mind ought sometimes to be amused," said Phædrus, a pagan contemporary of our Lord, "that it may the better return to thought."

"That amusement is necessary to man," says another, "the most superficial observation of his conduct and pursuits may convince us. The Creator never implanted in the hearts of all His intelligent creatures one common universal appetite without some corresponding necessity; and that He has given them all instinctive appetite for amusement as strongly as any other which we labour to gratify, may be clearly perceived in the efforts of infancy, in the exertions of youth, in the pursuits of manhood, in the feeble endeavour of old age, and in the pastimes which even the uninstructed savage nations have invented for their relaxation and delight."

And if we ask what relaxations are harmless, we find good reason in the saying of another, "that innocent amusements are those which excite moderately, and such as produce a cheerful frame of mind, not boisterous mirth; such as refresh instead of exhausting the system; such as recur from time to time, rather than continue long; such as send us back to our daily duties invigorated in body and spirit; such as we can partake of in the society of respectable friends; such as consist with and are favourable to a grateful piety; such as are chartered by self-respect, and are accompanied with the consciousness that life has a higher end than to be amused."

"It were unjust and ungrateful," said a wise Scottish theologian, "to conceive that the amusements of life are altogether forbidden by its beneficent Author. They are the wells of the desert, the kind resting-places in which toil may relax, in which the weary spirit may recover its tone, and where the desponding mind may resume its strength and its hopes." "It is exceedingly deleterious to withdraw the sanction of religion from amusement; if we feel that it is all injurious, we should strip the earth of all its flowers, and blot out its pleasant sunshine." "If those who are the enemies of innocent amusement had the direction of this world they would take away spring and youth; the former from the year, the latter from life."

"Mere innocent amusement," wrote the sagacious Archbishop Whately, "is in itself a good, where it interferes with no greater, especially as it may occupy the place of some other that may not be innocent."

"Encourage such amusements," said the tem-

perate and Christian essayist Addison, "as may disemitter the minds of men, and make them mutually rejoice in the same agreeable satisfactions."

And there is truth in the apothegm of another, that "those amusements should be selected which, while they interest the mind, afford exercise to the body."

But while we make these concessions to human weakness we must never forget that, as Christians, we have engrossing duties which would require every moment of our time, and every penny of our resources, if we were stronger and more loyal. "The pleasures of this life choke the word, and ye become unfruitful." That was the deliberate view of our Lord, of amusement pursued for any other cause than as a very occasional and wholly necessary relaxation.

To this truth Cicero is an unconscious witness: "There is a certain limit to be observed even in our amusements, that we do not abandon ourselves too much to a life of pleasure, and, carried away by such a life, sink into immorality. Sport and merriment are at times allowable; but we must enjoy them as we do sleep and other kinds of repose, when we have performed our weighty and important affairs."

"Amusements allure and deceive us," said Pascal. "Amusements, though they be of an innocent kind, require steady government to keep them within their due and limited province." "The habit of dissipating every serious thought by a succession of agreeable sensations is as fatal to happiness as to virtue; for when amusement is universally substituted for objects of mental and moral interest, we lose all that elevates our enjoyment above the scale of childish pleasure."

"Even the amusements of a man of fortune," it has been wisely said, "should be founded in utility."

"Amusements are the most properly applied to ease and relieve those who are oppressed by being too much employed. Those that are idle have no need of them; and yet they of all others give themselves up to their seductions. To unbend our thoughts when they are too much stretched by our cares, is not more natural than it is necessary; but to turn our whole life into a holiday, is not only ridiculous, but destroys pleasure instead of promoting it."

But the best kind of Christians are those who desire above all things to work while it is day, because the night cometh, when no man can work. They see themselves surrounded by vast areas of ungodliness and wrong. They know that the servants of God placed here and there as outposts are enfeebled for want of support both in money, help, and friendship. They know that every penny they can spare, every moment they can sacrifice, is needed a hundred times over for the work of the kingdom of Christ. While they make excuses for others, there will be no great temptation to themselves to waste their energies in perpetual relaxation.

The question was debated at a congress of the Church two years ago. Much was said; but the

which we placed in the blind woman's hand. The perfume delighted her, for she had still the sense of smell: indeed, the flowers seemed to give life to the room. We wondered if she ever breathed the air.

"Ah, yes!" she said. "I have a bath chair given to me by kind friends. They collected the money and bought it, my good teacher helping."

Here again was compensation. Books and farewells were exchanged, and we took our leave.

A walk through several streets of crowded Kentish Town, and we reached a tall house, to the topmost floor of which we mounted.

"I am glad to see you," greeted us. "I have been much puzzled by the verse in St. Matthew, 'Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' You know I am a soldier's daughter, and I don't understand what that means."

The speaker was a tall woman of middle age, who was engaged in needlework. Her room was scrupulously clean, and had a bright and cheerful look. There were sundry ornaments on the mantelshef, and two immense books on the white deal table, near which an old man was seated. He was the husband of the woman, and looked as carefully tended as the room. There was a soft light in his blue eyes that indicated inward peace, but she, alas! was blind. Yet was she housekeeper of the small establishment. He was invalided, and the weight of office fell on her.

While the teacher was trying to explain the verse that puzzled her, she continued her work of mending a dark dress. Her fingers plied the needle almost as rapidly as if guided by the eye.

"My father was quartermaster serjeant, and I went everywhere with him," she explained. "In those days the children could follow their father. I was twenty-five years in foreign parts. I was in Russia at the time of the war; at Inkerman, and Sebastopol. I knew Miss Nightingale well. I have been to Greece, India, Malta, America, Egypt, and seen much of the world."

This in answer to enquiries. Then she told us that she lost her sight from the extraction of a tooth: that fortunately she could work well before that trouble came upon her, and that she was still able to "make and mend." She showed us a child's white diaper pinafore trimmed with lace, that she had made for a lady, and, marvel of marvels! she showed us how she threaded her needle. She placed needle and thread against her tongue, and, by some subtle gift of touch, the thread passed into the needle's eye. She tried to explain it, but we failed to understand. The operation did not last long, not much longer than the ordinary needle-threading of the sighted. The husband looked on with quiet pride, and although past work himself, took pleasure in the talents of his wife. And no wonder, for she was very remarkable. She was tall and erect, as became a soldier's daughter, and her dark hair was smoothly braided. Our little bunch of cowslips was received with the words, "I have lost the sense of smell;" but she handled them lovingly nevertheless.

One of the large volumes on the table was a

portion of the life of Whitefield, in which she was much interested; the other contained one of the Gospels. The teacher read part of a chapter, and the scene was impressively pathetic, but in no wise sad; indeed cheerfulness pervaded the apartment, into which the sun was shining brightly. We left with regret and hoped to go again.

Our next call was on a blind organist, who was out, and thence we proceeded to St. Pancras Alms-houses. Here there was an oasis in the desert of streets. A large plot of well-mown lawn, surrounded by three sides of a square of pretty and picturesque dwellings, erected to "provide homes for sixty-four aged men and women, rate-payers of the parish, who have seen better days and who have not received relief from the rates." In one of these we found a blind gentleman and his wife, who, reduced in circumstances, were thankful for this peaceful refuge from the ills of life. Here our young guide seemed quite at home, and he and his father were warmly welcomed. Seven years ago the blind inmate of the pretty little sitting-room lost his sight under very painful circumstances; and six months ago he was struck down by paralysis. He had been a great reader, and had mastered both the Moon and the Braille type during his time of probation; but now he was unable to read himself, and depended on his bright and still active wife for everything, mental and corporeal. Our good teacher read to him, and said afterwards that it was truly sad to see him as he was. Before the stroke he was able to discuss books and passing events; now, the speech was affected and it was difficult to understand him. But he had many comforts; above all, he had his devoted wife. He enjoyed the little joke we made when we ventured to call his two rooms on the ground-floor his "flat," and he said there were three flats in each small dwelling. All honour to the benevolent founder, who, in addition to the dwelling, added a pension of seven shillings a week for married couples, and four and sixpence for single men or women. Should the wife survive the husband, she will still retain the rooms and receive the last-named sum. Friends are making an effort to procure her a pension of ten pounds per annum, from the "Aged Pilgrims' Society," and if they succeed, she will be thankful for "new mercies." In spite of many trials she was quite ready to say: "They are renewed every morning," and the faith and patience of the blind and paralysed man have been, the teacher said, truly remarkable. Assuredly, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." Here the cowslips came as a little glimpse of the gardens of another world, and were speedily placed in water. Our intelligent and patient young guide took leave of his friends, with a tiny bunch in his button-hole.

Possibly our readers are, by this time, wearied with visits, and are beginning to enquire what are the origin and intention of this form of philanthropy? We will pause awhile and try to satisfy their curiosity, while our companions pursue their daily round of calls, readings, prayers, and Chris-

tian sympathy, till the day declines: for all through the week, the blind teachers and their youthful guides either thread the mazes of the crowded streets of the north-western portion of the metropolis, or confine themselves to the pleasant region of Hampstead or Hendon.

The Home Teaching Society for the Blind was originated some thirty-five years ago, with a view to enabling our sightless fellow-creatures to read for themselves the Holy Scriptures in Moon's embossed type. All the teachers are blind, and have, at their own homes, a library, the books of which they carry from house to house, and exchange as we have seen. They become a sort of perambulating Mudie's. The metropolis and its suburbs are divided into districts, some of which have three teachers, and no place appears to be omitted in the list.

We can readily imagine the work done by the seventeen teachers. In addition, some sixty country branches have been established, and the Society is always glad to aid in forming new ones.

To judge from our small experience, the teachers must be good walkers; and to judge from statistics they assuredly are. In visiting over twelve hundred blind in London and the neighbourhood, during the year 1890, the number of miles travelled have exceeded forty-one thousand. A curious calculation. In making it the arithmetician had to wander through workhouses, unions, and other public institutions, for wherever the sightless dwell, there the teacher penetrates. It is truly touching to hear of his difficulties, and how he surmounts them. He finds aged people who cannot read, and naturally say they are too old to learn; but when he induces them to try, it is often wonderful to see their aptitude. Some master the art when over seventy. One man who had been blind seven years, learnt when seventy-seven, and "now reads diligently the Word of Life, which he had neglected for nearly fifty years."

The extreme depression caused by sudden blindness is often relieved by the effort to learn. All that distracts the mind from brooding over sorrow is good, and to find a sense in the tips of the fingers which supplies in a measure the loss of sight, seems almost miraculous. The feeling often is, that "a blind person is better out of the world than in it," and when the teacher tries to combat it, he finds that the Word of God alone takes any effect. Either by teaching or reading the Blessed Book, he gives hope and comfort to the soul, which need not be blind or hopeless.

The blind have now many aids. There is the Normal College at Norwood; there are schools here, there, and everywhere; there is the Circulating Library in Belsize Road for their use; the Santa Lucia "Magazine" in Braille type; the Convalescent Home at St. Leonard's, which renders help of another sort. We have already described a system of pensions. There are monster teas provided for them in London. The Gardner Bequest of more than a quarter of a million, is also a comfortable nest-egg, to which all the societies resort when their own particular nest fails. Still, funds will decrease from many causes. The Society for Home Teaching is

realising this fact after having laboured in London for the last thirty-five years. As they aid in sustaining nearly sixty branches in the provinces, this is not surprising.

In turning over some of the old reports, it is interesting to read the name of the Earl of Shaftesbury as president. He was replaced at his death by Viscount Midleton. Reports, however, are accounted dry, though excellent in their way, and one likes to see with one's own eyes what institutions are doing. This we did only yesterday. At the office, 31, New Bridge Street, Blackfriars, E.C., we met nine of the seventeen teachers and their guides. In one room we found the nine juvenile guides, male and female, standing before a heap of books in Moon's type and yearly Reports, which they were making up into parcels for their masters. These were in most cases their parents; for happily the children of the blind are usually sighted. The guides receive three shillings a week for their work, and this sum adds to the family comforts. In another room we found the nine blind teachers seated in a semicircle waiting to meet their kind friend the secretary. They were all respectably dressed in black, and looked what they were, servants of the Lord. This they subsequently proclaimed, 'when quietly giving an account of their month's labours, and responding to questions on the 15th chapter of St. Luke, chosen as the portion for the day. No sighted pastor could have better explained the business of the publican; the parable of the lost sheep; the meaning of the word "parable;" the joy of the angels over "one sinner that repenteth;" or the history of the Prodigal Son. One, who had lost his sight when working in Somersetshire, gave a touching account of his observation of the difficulty of inducing sheep to cross the water. "But when the shepherds put the lambs on their shoulders and go before, then the sheep followed," he said. Another described the ninety-nine as "safe in the fold, and our Lord, the Good Shepherd, seeking the lost one until He found it;" a third illustrated the parable of the Prodigal Son, by an example. One of his scattered congregation who had, with much persuasion, learnt to read, would not believe that she could be saved. "I never can be good enough," was her repeated plea for lack of faith. But at last the story of the Prodigal as told by the Divine teacher Himself, removed the blindness of the soul, and she learnt to rejoice in Christ Jesus.

Looking from one to another of these sightless men, we were struck by the serenity of their faces. It seemed as if the peace which passeth understanding, had been given to them, instead of the vision they had lost. One of them gave the history of his blindness. He had been a goldsmith and jeweller, and had lost the sight of one eye when at work, by some of the vitriol he was using spurring into it. Still labouring on, he lost the other by a piece of the stone he was manipulating entering the pupil. Then he told how he had attended classes for the indigent blind, how the late Dr. Armytage had helped to get him into the Euston Road Blind School, and



By permission.]

[After Margaret J. Dickree. Ex. Royal Academy, 1891.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

how, after fourteen years' work and nine years' application for the post, he became one of the teachers of the society in which he was then thankfully working.

The accounts of the various visits paid were very interesting, and when we tried to realise that these blind teachers are employed every day and all day long, and that their scholars vary in age from eleven to over ninety—we quote from the last report—we were greatly astonished. One was there from Croydon, and it was pleasant to learn that his salary is paid by subscriptions gathered in his district, and that the parent society is not burdened by it. There is a man who is deaf, dumb, and blind in his scattered school, and who yet appreciates the books lent him, and knows not "what he should do without them." This reads like a problem, but as an hour was the time allotted for the teachers' meeting, we had neither leisure nor opportunity to solve it.

The guides had still their little parts to play. They stood up to repeat a few verses of the 119th Psalm, learnt during the previous month, for which exercise of attention or memory they received each one penny.

"Please, sir, I have not learnt my verses," said a girl-guide, in pitiful accents.

"It is not her fault. She has lost her mother," put in one of the teachers, with a voice more pitiful still.

Poor child! She looked sad enough in her black frock! It is needless to say that, like the last comer to the "Lord's vineyard," she also received her "penny."

When the business, secular and religious, was completed, we all knelt down. One of the teachers offered prayer. Then the little service was concluded with Our Lord's Prayer. It was only when all was over that we became fully conscious of the noise outside that quiet room; that trains were constantly running beneath the very window of that upper storey, and that the traffic of New Bridge Street and Ludgate Hill sounded on all sides.

Although the allotted time was spent, our friends asked for a word with us. A fresh voice and a few cheerful sentences are ever welcome to the blind. A great many questions and answers were interchanged in a short space, and we were gifted with the "freedom," if not of "the city," at least of those two homely offices. We shook hands all round, teachers, guides and scribe, and were finally thankful for the escort of the good secretary through the mazes of that crowded portion of the monster metropolis. How the blind were to thread them we scarcely dared to think. But they reached their distant suburban spheres of labour safely. We trust that those who are blessed with sight will, to use the words of the now nearly obsolete appeal, "Pity the poor Blind."

ANNE BEALE.

TOM HERON OF SAX.

A STORY OF REVIVAL TIMES.

CHAPTER II.—THE GREAT FOLKS OF SAX.

THE far-back Fortescue who had built Rookwood had certainly understood the advantage of aspect. The main living-rooms in the big pile of building all faced due south, and the lower windows opened upon a wide terrace (always flooded by sunshine), terminated by a wide stone balustrade, broken at intervals by flights of shallow steps, which led down to the gardens beneath and commanded an excellent view over fish-ponds and park.

The great dining room was situated in the east angle of the south front, and had a large window to the east, so that no brighter place could well be found upon a summer's morning; and as the Fortescue family sat together at their late breakfast this sunny day in April, the whole of the handsome apartment was flooded with golden light, the shadows being even dislodged from the high vaulted ceiling where they gathered and lingered as the day went on.

Squire Fortescue was dressed for riding, high boots and tight-fitting breeches taking the place of the long silk stockings and low shoes worn for the most part at other times. He was a very

fine-looking man, in the prime of middle-aged manhood, with the square-cut, but handsome and regular Fortescue features, a rubicund face, and an expression of jovial good-humour, only slightly tinged with the imperiousness which was plainly visible in the countenance of his wife, and was said to belong in no scant measure to the whole of the Fortescue family. He wore the flowing wig, which was still almost universal, and the long, wide-skirted coat of the period. But his dress was plain and workmanlike, and a decided contrast to that of his son, who wore a long, richly-embroidered waistcoat, a laced coat of tawny golden cloth, with the whitest of white ruffles at the wrists, and a mass of snowy pleats in the front. This young exquisite had also adopted a newer fashion of hairdressing, such as may be seen in Hogarth's drawings of the day—the wig consisted of a bushy heap of well-powdered hair in front and at the sides, whilst behind it was plaited into a tail, tied top and bottom with a black ribbon. Yet notwithstanding the care and elegance with which Fulk Fortescue attired himself, he was a manly young fellow to look at,

one of the boldest riders and best shots in the county, though he had combined with his father's sporting tastes much of the imperious grace and autocratic temper of his mother.

"Madam" having finished her delicate breakfast was now leaning back in her chair, idly toying with a feather fan. She was still a very lovely woman—it was hard to believe her the mother of that tall son. Her complexion retained all the exquisite bloom of girlhood, and was set off by the cunning little black patches she still wore, despite the change of fashion. Her abundant hair of pale gold was rolled up upon her head and crowned by a small cap of the Mary Stuart shape, whilst her dress consisted of the loose *sacque*—flowing free from the shoulders, with a fitting under-robe and small hoop. Simplicity was all the rage of that day—ladies even at Court affecting the shepherdess style, and playing at Arcadia. It was perhaps the natural recoil from the over-elaboration of the former century, and certainly in the country the simple style of dress was both suitable and pleasing.

Irene, the only daughter of the Fortescue family, was a fragile-looking girl of eighteen, shrinking and modest and very silent, though the expression of her face showed that her silence was not the result either of apathy or ignorance. Hers, indeed, was the most intellectual of the faces round the table, and her dark eyes shone with a light that might have been akin to genius itself. She was dressed for the saddle, in the flowing riding-habit of the day, and a plumed hat and pair of gauntleted gloves lay with a whip upon a side-table. Riding was almost the only form of exercise in vogue for ladies in those days, and Irene gladly availed herself of the permission from time to time afforded her of accompanying her father upon his morning round.

The Squire was just talking to his son of certain matters on the estate which he considered in want of personal supervision, when a stir in the hall without seemed to indicate the arrival of guests, and the next moment the door was thrown wide open to admit the Rector and his son, the dashing young Captain, in all the glory of military bravery, of which men were not then ashamed in private life.

"Why, George," cried the Squire, rising from his seat and giving a warm grip of the hand to his clerical brother, who was exceedingly like him in everything but dress, "what brings you here so early, man? Sit down, sit down, and have something to eat. You have ridden, I take it, from Hownston to-day? Is it business or pleasure that has brought you over?"

"I came early lest I should find you gone," answered the Rector, as, after saluting his sister-in-law and niece, he took a seat at the hospitable board and commenced a second breakfast with excellent appetite: "I wished to consult you about a difficulty which we have now to face. I have feared it might come—yet hoped it might pass us by; but there is no such good fortune, it seems. The Methodists are coming to the town at last, and there is to be preaching in the market place on Sunday."

"What? the mad Methodists?" cried the Squire

leaning back in his chair and laughing, "Well, George, let them rant and rave their fill, I should say. It won't last long—and people soon come to their senses when the madmen have gone on their way again."

"That's all very well," answered the Rector; "that's what I said to myself once, when I heard of these strange goings on in other places. I always thought it a pity to interfere—let the men come and go, I said, and they will be forgotten fast enough when their backs are turned: but since I have enquired a little more, I find it is not such a simple question as it seems, and I have had all the town authorities at me yesterday about it."

"And what have they got to say?"

"Why it seems that these men stir up riot and strife and tumult wherever they go. They set the authority of the law at open defiance. And then over and above that, they stir up divisions in families. They set children against parents, and parents against children, servants are encouraged to disobey their masters, and mere lads and children are taught to go about rebuking their elders and setting themselves up as patterns. They claim to have attained to a sinless perfection, or some such exalted condition: and they begin to have some secret organisation amongst themselves—a system of espionage and confessional altogether foreign to the spirit of the nation."

"Ah," exclaimed Madam in her silvery tones, that with all their sweetness were full of imperious resolution and command, "I have said so all along—from the very first—it is all some vile popish plot. These men are in league with those wretched Jacobites—they are paving the way for another rebellion, such as has only just been quenched in blood on the field of Culloden. Under the guise of simple shepherds, they are in reality ravening wolves. George—as you have any regard for the Church or State—put down these meetings with an iron hand. Take any measures that may be necessary, but do not suffer the men to speak within the bounds of your parishes. They are guilty of both treason and sacrilege. Who are they to set themselves up above the clergy and the nobility of the land? Put them down with a high hand, I say. If ever they dare to set foot within the limits of my husband's estate, I will soon have them shown how Fortescues treat such miscreants!"

"Bravo, Aunt," cried the Captain with heartfelt approval, "that is just what I have all along said. Put them down and keep them down. They will do untold harm if they are allowed to go on at the present rate. I have seen something of them in the army—they hold meetings, deny their followers meat and drink—teach them to spend their time in fasting and prayer, and in going about rebuking every one else not of their way of thinking. I have been dimming the same lesson all this while into my father's ears: but he is too much disposed not to interfere. Well, he must go his own way: but we can go ours. Fulk, my boy, there are a few honest lads in Sax, who would not be above a little Sunday diversion, I take it. I was thinking of the thews and sinews of that excellent Tom Heron, as we rode

along to-day. You and I, with a score of stout fellows of his class, would be able to make short work of any meeting in Hownston market place. Don't you think so?"

Fulk's lips parted in a smile, and he gave an emphatic nod.

"It would be work after Tom Heron's own heart," he said. "With half a dozen such as he I would undertake to rout the whole mob and send them flying. Why does your father hesitate? They want a lesson, these rangers—and they shall get it."

"I do not know what to think," said the Rector; "I am not fond of disturbances and riots: but if let alone these men will set the whole place by the ears. What I dislike and distrust even more than their teachings and preachings, is the extraordinary effects these have upon the listeners. The stories I have heard are scarce to be believed, save that I have them upon testimony which may not be doubted. One would almost believe that Satanic agency was at work following in their steps, for those who hear them appear to be suddenly possessed by the devil. They fall down like men struck by an unseen hand, and wallow on the ground foaming in mortal agony. Men, women and children are alike struck, sometimes by ones or twos, but more often by scores—at least when some of these men are preaching. For days sometimes these fits and agonies continue. The preachers profess to have power by praying over their victims to exorcise the evil spirit, and in some cases I believe they succeed: but frequently the poor wretches fell back into their former condition, and many have become permanently deranged. Others have fallen into a state of deepest melancholy and gloom, from which nothing can rouse them: whilst others rush to the other extreme, and become filled with a species of ecstatic rapture, declaring themselves to be freed from all sin, and henceforth to be beyond the power of falling into evil."

"Horrible," exclaimed Madam with a little shudder, "I cannot imagine any form of teaching more revolting or blasphemous. George, I trust you will use every means possible for hindering the spread of this disease—for I can regard it as nothing else—the foul outcome of rebellion, Popery and defiance of all law and order. I hope your son and mine will both be ready to do their duty in stamping out the fatal sparks, before the flame can be kindled. Squire, I should wish it to be well understood in Sax, that any person going to these preachings, with any purpose but that of interfering to prevent their taking place, will at once cease to be a tenant of ours. No Methodist shall be permitted to dwell in Sax. We have evils enough to cope with without that."

"The Methodists have not appeared yet, my dear," answered the Squire as he rose from his seat. "Well, George, if you will ride with me, we will talk this matter over together. Irene, you can be my companion another morning instead. Your uncle and I have business to talk over together to-day."

Irene, who had not spoken a word all this time, although she had been listening with close attention to everything spoken, replied

submissively to her father; and the Captain observing that she was in riding trim, suggested that they should go, together with Fulk, to pay their respects to the ladies of Ernscliff, a suggestion which appeared to give satisfaction to all. Irene's face brightened, and Madam smiled as she said—

"Yes, that would be an excellent plan, and Irene, my daughter, be sure you speak to Mary Ernscliff of the menaced danger to these parts, and bid her keep all her tenants at home on Sunday, that they be not attracted to Hownston. Mary is not always as firm as she should be: but she is a good girl, and tries, I believe, to do her duty. Put her upon her guard. A woman is so often taken advantage of by those under her."

"I will tell her everything I have heard," answered Irene; "I always like talking things over with Mary."

Fulk quickly retired to make the necessary change in his dress, and was ready by the time the horses came round.

It was a beautiful morning for a ride, as the three cousins started forth from Rookwood, and cantered their horses over the soft turf of the park. The Captain was very full of his plan of getting together a band of choice spirits to interrupt the proceedings of the "maniac" on the coming Sunday, and Fulk was quite ready to enter into the spirit of the thing, which he regarded rather in the light of a jest. As they passed the village forge, they saw Tom Heron at work inside, and called him out to speak to him. Tom was, in spite of his reputation for wildness, a great favourite with the young men of the Fortescue family. He was the best farrier for miles round, and clever with animals of all kinds. He was invaluable to them in many little ways where sport was concerned, and his fearlessness and recklessness had won him a decided reputation of his own. His face lighted as he obeyed the summons of the gentlemen and advanced, hammer in hand, to meet them. But Irene's face clouded over slightly. She felt sure she knew the purpose for which her companions wished to stop and converse with the young blacksmith: and with a whispered word to her brother, she herself rode on, leaving them to finish their talk as they would.

She rode on along the main road, and then turning sharply to the left up the wooded lane, cantered along in the pleasant flickering shade made by the early green of chestnut and sycamore for about a mile. Soon she found herself close beside the river banks, and saw before her, within the silver horse-shoe formed by the curious double bend of the shining stream, the wooded cone of rising ground crowned by the twisted chimneys and many gables of the old house of Ernscliff. The road followed the outer bend of the river, and led straight to the house. It was plain that Irene was no stranger here, for she took the road to the stable-yard, instead of that to the house; and when a servant came forward to hold her horse, she dismounted, and walked to a small side door in the building, and made her way unannounced into the presence of its inmates.

"The ladies of Ernscliff," as they were frequently called, consisted of old Mrs. Ernscliff and her granddaughter Mary, the only child of her only son, who was the real owner of the property. Mrs. Ernscliff had lived in that house ever since she was twenty: Mary had been born there, and had never known any other home.

Irene plainly knew the ways of the house, and where its owner was to be found at this hour of the morning. Entering the fine old hall through a swing door from the passage she had followed from the offices, she crossed the slippery oak floor and opened a door, which admitted her into a bright little parlour, whose one occupant was a young lady, busily engaged in writing at a solid-looking table.

"Irene!" exclaimed a clear, low-toned voice, as the guest made her entrance; and the next minute Mary Ernscliff had crossed the room and given a welcoming embrace to the intruder.

"Am I interrupting, Mary? Are you busy?"

"Not too busy to give you a welcome: but I always have plenty on my hands in the morning."

"Fulk and George are on their way," said Irene, sinking down into the one easy chair in the room, into which Mary pushed her. "They are coming to pay their respects to you and Mrs. Ernscliff."

Mary Ernscliff resumed her seat with a smile and a slight compression of the lips, as though this last piece of news was not altogether welcome. There was something rather remarkable in the appearance of this young land-owner and heiress (although from a money point of view she was by no means wealthy), and people when they saw her for the first time always put her down as "a woman with a history." Her history is soon told. Left an orphan at the early age of sixteen, with a landed property to manage, subject only to the control of her grandmother till she was twenty-one, she had given herself over to her duties and her people, and had become graver and more thoughtful, as well as more independent, than women of her age and station generally were. At eighteen she had become betrothed to a distant kinsman living in the same county, to whom she was devotedly attached, and who seemed in every way the right husband for her. She was to have been married on her twentieth birthday. The preparations were complete, her happiness and welfare in life seemed fully assured, when just one week before the appointed wedding-day Francis Talbot was killed by a fall from his horse in the hunting field, not two miles from Ernscliff, and was carried there to die, breathing his last an hour after he was brought beneath the roof of his affianced wife, with her hand clasped closely in his.

Before the grave closed over the earthly remains of her lover, Mary Ernscliff's beautiful brown hair had turned quite white. It was this which gave something distinctive and peculiar to her appearance—the soft darkness of her eyes, with their pencilled brows of a silky blackness, the soft, youthful bloom of the face, upon which time had scarce laid a hand, and the snowy whiteness of the wavy hair, whiter by far than that of her grandmother. Mary always dressed in grey,

and with exceeding simplicity, and though three years had passed since the tragedy of her life, she had never gone out into the world, but lived entirely for her home and its dependents. Irene was her one intimate friend, and Rookwood the only house she cared to visit, though she occasionally accepted an invitation from the Fortescues of the Rectory at Hownston. Latterly, however, it had been growing plain to her that Captain Fortescue, whether from motives of policy or affection, was attempting to win his way to her especial grace. She was finding that the world declined to look upon her as one whose life was buried already in the grave, and that there were still experiences for her to pass through, which once she had told herself had closed to her for ever.

But her quiet calm of temperament and demeanour was not easy to ruffle or disturb. She made no comment upon Mary's piece of information, but listened with both interest and attention to her further talk which told of the discussion lately heard at the breakfast table between the girl's kinsfolk, the intent and thoughtful look deepening upon her face as she did so.

"Mary—tell me what you think—what are these men, and ought they to be interfered with? I dislike a great deal that I hear of them. It seems to me to be a strange and irreverent thing to go about the country preaching in market-places, and at street corners, and in the fields, and stirring up strife and riot and tumult in the name of religion. I would not go to such a preaching myself for any consideration. And if it be true that people fall down in fits and convulsions, as if possessed by the devil, it may scarce be wise to let it go on. And yet—they *do* come in the name of God—and some say they are good and holy men, and strive to save souls. If so, one fears to speak against them and their work, and it cannot be a right thing to raise a riot to drive them forth."

"I was speaking but yesterday with Mr. Latham about this very thing," answered Mary thoughtfully, "and he told me many things I never knew before. He has been long watching the work of these 'Methodists,' and he is one who would counsel men not to interfere. Irene, it seems that he was at Oxford with these men, Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, and he tells me that they are sounder churchmen than many who hold benefices, and that the doctrine they teach is to be found not only in the Bible, but in the Prayer Book and the Canons of the Established Church. If men drive them not forth from that church, they will never willingly go: and, albeit they take to open places and fields for their preachings, since pulpits have been denied them, they do but follow in that the example of Christ Himself, and we may not say that they do ill, even when we feel that it is strange and scarce seemly."

Irene's eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Is Mr. Latham a Methodist? Oh, I hope mother will never know. I fear she would have him sent away; yet he is a good man, and we all love him and learn from him."

Mary smiled slightly.

"I think, Irene, that the less we have to do with such names the better. Is it wise to revive again the old habit—'I am of Paul, I of Apollos'? Is it not enough that we are all of Christ? baptised into His body, members of His Church? If these men preach any other but Christ, let us not hear them, let us warn all men against them, but if it be in His name they come, then let us not drive them forth from us, but hold out the right hand of fellowship, and look where we be agreed, smoothing away, if possible, all difficulties that lie in the way of perfect accord. Some day we know—some happy, blessed day—Christ will

return to call His own, to make them one fold beneath one Shepherd. Let it be our work, in as far as lies in our power, to smooth and prepare His way, loving all those who love Him, and calling them brothers, not foes."

Irene's face lighted up with a glow of happiness. "Oh, Mary," she said, "if only everyone would speak and think as you do. But they will not, I know they will not, and then——"

But she could not finish her sentence: the door was thrown open by a servant, and Captain Fortescue and his cousin stepped in, bowing low to the mistress of Ernscliff.

A CONGREGATION WITHOUT A CHOIR.

THE following communication relating to a subject already discussed in this magazine,¹ comes from Mr. J. Spencer Curwen, and will be read with interest by all, even by friends north of the Tweed, whatsoever their view, who desire the fitting and profitable conduct of public worship.

AMID the disputes that are constantly taking place as to the relative spheres of the choir and the congregation in the music of public worship, it is instructive to discover a congregation that manages to get along without any choir at all; a congregation, too, that sings with a readiness and enjoyment, a ringing, lusty voice, that is perhaps unequalled at the present time. In writing about this church and describing its musical doings, let it not be supposed that I am casting a slur upon choirs; far from it. I believe in choirs. I think that congregational music and choir music may and should flourish side by side; that each has its excellences; that neither should extinguish the other. I consider that the choir has two duties: first, to lead the congregation, and second, to sing once in the service an anthem, or other specimen of high class sacred music, while the congregation reverently and worshipfully listen. I consider that the congregation has its musical duty no less than the choir, the duty of using its voice in those parts of the service music which belong to it; parts which I would keep rigidly simple, and often repeat, so as to be within the capacity of the slow and dull. But though these are, as it seems to me, the relative spheres of the choir and congregation, we all know how in practice they are overstepped and confused. The congregation, when it attempts to join in elaborate anthems, invades the rights of the choir, and so great are the earnestness and enthusiasm of organists and choirs that, consciously or not, they often invade the rights of the congregation. In some churches the chants and hymn-tunes are so often changed, so high in pitch, so catchy and chromatic, that the ordinary worshipper has no chance of joining in them. The consequence of this is that congregations are baffled and silenced in their attempts to utter words which it is their duty and privilege to utter. But in contending for plain music for the congregation, there is no reason at all why we should not equally contend for the very best music

which the choir is capable of singing in their own part of the service. Let us have in church, wherever possible, both branches: the music of the skilled and the music of the unskilled. The carts and carriages on London Bridge were hopelessly blocked and disorderly until some one hit upon the plan of having two rows of traffic—one for those vehicles that wanted to go slowly, and one for those that wanted to go quickly. Now the two kinds of traffic go on side by side in perfect harmony. It is the same in church—the choir wants to go quickly, and the congregation wants to go slowly. Let each do what it wants, and let neither hinder the other. This is a long exordium, but it will, I hope, prevent misunderstanding.

The church I am about to describe musically is St. James', Holloway, of which the Rev. E. A. Stuart is the well-known vicar. In the fifty years of its life there have only been two other vicars, Mr. Bell Mackenzie and Mr. Boyd Carpenter, the present Bishop of Ripon. The building, which is crowded at all times, sometimes by 2500 people, is very far from ecclesiastical in style. The modern church architect forbids galleries, but at St. James' there are two tiers of them, one steep and broad, going right round the four sides of the church, and above it a narrow one, just as steep, which hangs by rods from the ceiling. The old-fashioned pulpit still survives. Mr. Stuart reads the service from the ground and then mounts up to preach the sermon. There is but little singing in the service. The Psalms and responses are said, even the Kyrie in the Communion Service has no music. The canticles are sung either to Bunnett's unison setting, or to chants from the Westminster Chant Book, the pointing being that to which the congregation has accustomed themselves. The arrangement has lately been put into print under the editorship of the organist, Mr. Livesey Carrott, as a help to strangers and new-comers to the church. At an evening service, when Bunnett happens to be used, you will be astonished at the vigour and life of the singing. Look round and you will scarcely see a mouth closed. Nor do the voices give forth that respectful whisper that is continuously heard in so many churches. Everybody sings loudly as if with heart and spirit.

But the largest outlet for the musical feeling of the people is in the hymns. At St. James' they are great hymn-singers. There are three in the morning and four at the evening service. Bickersteth's "Hymnal Companion" is used, but well-known and popular tunes are always mated to the hymns, whether they happen to be those prescribed

¹ See SUNDAY AT HOME for April, 1891, p. 394.

by the book or not. The singing being by ear and in unison, it is of the first importance to have a tune that the popular ear can quickly catch and hold in memory. The hymn with which the evening service begins is intended to promote the decorum of the services. Crowds of non-seat-holders attend in the evening. They line the passages and staircases in single file, waiting for seats unoccupied. Seats used to be free at the beginning of the Psalms, and Mr. Carrott used to play a voluntary on the organ for five or ten minutes before the Psalms began, while the strangers were getting to their seats; but this plan has been changed, and now a hymn is sung, followed by an organ voluntary while the empty seats are being filled, after which the service begins. The hymn-singing, especially at the evening service, is most inspiring. It is rough and homely unison-singing. Sometimes you hear grace notes that are not in the printed copy, but these very qualities give it a naturalness that appeals straight to the heart.

Some readers will find it hard to understand how the singing is managed. What, no choir! Who starts the tunes; who leads them? don't they break down? The organist, after playing the tune over in a tasteful way, starts the people, and they need no support. He adopts now and then a semi-staccato style of playing, but there is no dragging, and, except now and then, in a minor tune, no flattening. As for breaking down, the people have the melody in far too firm a grip for that. After all, this congregation of St. James' is in exactly the same position as the Lutheran and Reformed congregations throughout the whole of Germany. In the choir which they sing so loudly they have no help but what the organ affords. When the evening service at St. James' is over, an after-meeting is often held, generally attended by about five or six hundred people. While the evening service in the church is proceeding, there is a mission service going on in the lecture hall, attended by four or five hundred working people. The hymn-book used is Sankey's "Songs and Solos," and there is a choir of working men and women, numbering thirty or forty, to lead. On Festival days, Jackson's *Te Deum* in F is sung in the church, this representing the highest musical point which the St. James' congregation reach. There is no direct musical link between the Sunday school and the church, but four or five times a year there is an afternoon children's service in the church. The hymn-book which the children use is that published by the Church Sunday School Institute. Only once has a solo been sung in the church service, that was at a midnight service on New Year's Eve some years ago, when Mr. Stuart sent up to the organ-loft, where Mrs. Carrott was sitting, and asked her if she would sing the Sankey hymn, "Man of Sorrows." The congregation listened in hushed attention, joining in readily with "Hallelujah, what a Saviour." It was deeply impressive.

Mr. Livesey Carrott is himself a good musician, and if he is contented with the simple heart-felt unison that surges round him as he sits at the organ, it is not because he knows nothing of better music. He is a medallist of the Royal Academy of Music, a member of the National Society of Professional Musicians, and has had experience in more ornate services, having been also private organist to the Earl of Aberdeen at Haddo House. Mr. Carrott takes a real interest in his work as a spiritual ministry. He is a member of the Children's Special Service Mission, and gives addresses at their seaside and other meetings. The organ at St. James' is in the west gallery. Mr. Carrott thinks this

is the wrong place; the people have their backs to it, and he fancies they would respond to its lead more quickly if it faced them. He would also like to see a congregational practice; there was one once, but it was held at nine o'clock on Wednesday evening, too late for the people, and was a failure.

Mr. Carrott has held his appointment for nine years, and is thoroughly at home in his work. As we talk on the subject of a choir, he says: "A choir at St. James' is impossible, because we have no place to put it in, owing to the church being so crowded with seats. Even if we had room, I do not think the people would tolerate it. They would look upon a choir as an invasion of their rights, and fancy that their singing was going to be curtailed." And, continuing, he adds: "It is quite impossible to my mind that choirs should much longer be allowed to monopolise the music of the service as they do in some places. If there is one thing in particular which gives the Church a hold upon the people, it is the large share of the service which the congregation can call their own. In most Dissenting places of worship it is the minister who prays, preaches, and does everything save singing the hymn, but in the Church of England the people have so much provided for them. The question I should like to ask those who are responsible for this state of things is: For what does the church exist, for the people, or for the choir? It would be well for the clergy to consider this question, for certainly they seem to be responsible in a great measure for thus making the worship of God a performance. The question may be asked, whether the congregation will sing if the choir is taken away? Most certainly; if the people know there is no one to sing for them, they will do their duty, and rejoice in being allowed to do it. The singing at St. James' is not musically beautiful, but it is heartily, as to the Lord, and it is that which makes the service of all acceptable in His sight."

It is new to hear an argument of this sort, especially coming from a cultivated and tasteful musician. Mr. Carrott has so sunk the artist in the worshipper as to rejoice greatly in the plain service which he leads. Without doubt all that he says of the heartiness of the singing is true; the people at St. James' delight to sing, and the air rings with their voices. One reason for this is that the congregation belongs to the lower-middle and trading classes, and these people are more forthcoming and natural than the social layer next above them, who are paralysed by a false gentility which makes them fancy that it is not good form to let their voices be heard. Another reason is that, as Mr. Carrott says, the entire responsibility for making and continuing the sound is thrown upon the congregation.

As I have already said, I decline to disparage choirs and believe that they may help the congregation. The experience at St. James', Holloway, presents one side—the church congregationally; but it is a side that has been much neglected, and the study of this earnest and vocal congregation is of especial value at the present time. The "school" to which St. James' belongs does not concern us here. All parties in the church have shown themselves eager to promote congregational singing. The introduction of Gregorian tones has always been with this object, and the clergy assent unanimously to the principle that the people's part of the service should be said or sung by the people. One may therefore ask all to study carefully the influences which enabled this Holloway church to realise in London something of the full and tumultuous worship-song which has hitherto been confined to Germany.



"FATHER JACK."

I.



WHEN the sun goes down, red and sullen, almost to the margin of the sky, and does his daily round out there in the distance, as though he were very much offended, and wanted to get right away from the world, it is then winter-time in the land. Have you ever thought, I wonder, what winter-time means to thousands of poor children, who are not blessed with happy homes like you? To you it means a pleasant shivering by bright fires, as the biting wind howls fiercely without, or the rain beats fast and furiously upon the rattling windows, or the snow piles itself up in great drifts against the walls. To you it means the welcome glow which comes of merry games in the frosty air, as, dressed in warm wraps and thick boots, you run out to play with your acquaintances. To you perhaps it means long, happy evenings, when, the blinds drawn, the lamps lit, the fire built up high against the back of the grate, you sit in a warm, comfortable corner, with loving friends around you, and listen to the storm without.

Have you ever thought, I wonder, of what that same winter night means to thousands of poor children? If not, please think of it now, and let your hearts be touched with pity. It means huddling together in bare rooms, through which the wind hoots and shoots with its icy breath, while the guttering, flickering candle throws a sickly gleam around. It means no fire in the grate, and no food in the house. It means an agony of cold and hunger as, with nothing but rags to cover their chilled little bodies, and nothing on their cold little feet, many suffering bairns are forced to walk the cold wet streets with begging or homeless parents. This was what it meant to Jack. But Jack did not notice it very much, because he was so used to it.

Jack was quite proud when he was able to take one room for a home. To have one room of your very own, for which you can pay three or four shillings weekly—this is a wonderful good fortune in Jack's walk of life. Jack held his head up, and there was quite a little strut in his walk on the day when he "moved into" his one room. We are told that comparisons are odious, but they are not always so. They were not so, for instance, when Jack found he had one room for a home. Comparisons were very pleasant indeed just then. His home before this had been the open street, and one room is better than an open street any day. Jack had no need, any longer, to go round a corner to shelter from the frosty wind. There were four walls all around him, now, and he felt quite like a gentleman, because he was protected from the wind on every hand, without any trouble at all. He did not need, any longer, to search out for a doorstep on which to sleep. Here were beautiful warm boards waiting at his feet to receive him! How snug and comfortable they felt, after the cold stones! Jack must have imagined that he was seeing high life as he settled down upon them with a sigh of delight. After the doorstep in Angel Alley, they seemed like a bed of down. Here, again, comparisons were very pleasant. Jack

went to sleep in a state of blissful delight and freedom from all care. His mind was quite at ease now, for, you see, he would not be told to "move on." Occasionally, it was true, he would dream, through force of habit, that the policeman's lamp was shining full in his face, and then he would start up and mutter, "All right, guv'nor, I'm a movin';" and would sink back again, with a happy smile, when he found that he was lying safe and snug on the boards of the room, with the morning light peeping in through the small window, and his little brothers huddling close to him for warmth.

The one room in which Jack lived had a very funny appearance without and a very melancholy appearance within. Without, it bulged over the side of an outhouse into a dark court, in a very grotesque and ridiculous manner; and a tumble-down chimney, leaning over the edge, caused it to look very much like a man with his hat on one side of his head. Within, it was sad and mournful in the extreme. The walls were dirty and discoloured by reason of the rain that flowed in through the crazy roof in wet weather. The small window did its best to let in the light; but when you come to think of it, a window cannot be expected to do much with only one pane to work upon. All the other panes were stuffed with rags or brown paper. The ceiling had given way here and there, and when the wind blew, sent down showers of lime and dust to the floor. There was an unpleasant odour about, which came of rain and dirt and darkness mingled together. In short, it was a bare, cheerless, wretched room. But it was the most beautiful place in the world to Jack, after he "moved in" from his home in the streets. And he used to dance on the shaky boards so vigorously, that he was sometimes in danger of going through altogether.

But you will want to know why this little man of whom I write was called "Father Jack," and how it was he got his own room. I will tell you the story from the beginning.

Jack's memory did not go very far back, for he was only twelve years of age when he moved into the one room; but three things stood out clear and distinct in his memory. First of all he could remember the death of his father, an honest dock labourer, who had always lived a sober life and paid his debts. That was the beginning of a sad time for Jack. A black shadow had henceforth rested on the family. The mother had fallen ill, the furniture had been sold for food, the rent had "got behind," and then came homelessness and starvation. The second thing Jack could remember was walking the streets with his mother, singing for bread. If you had asked Jack what it was he was singing, he would have told you, "I am comin'," for those were the only words, in those days, in which he could join; but the title of the hymn really was "Hold the fort." Thirdly, he could remember his mother's final illness and death, and the breaking up of the poor little home.

It was on a bitter winter's day that it happened. Jack had been out all the morning, endeavouring to earn some money to take home, for there was no bread in the house. He had hung about the railway station, in the hope of "'oldin' a hoss," or "carrying a parcel." There had been no "hosses," and no parcels, at least not for Jack. Then he had aimlessly made his way towards the Bank, and along Cheapside. "Carry yer bag, sir,"—"call a cab, ma'am,"—"old yer hoss, sir?" Jack had tried them all, one after the other, until his voice had grown hoarse, and his little feet

were very weary. The morning wore on, and Jack began to feel that it would have been very pleasant to have something to eat. Still he bore up manfully, and his grey eyes were as bright and active as ever. For a few minutes he stood at the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard, in the hope that "suthin' would turn up." A policeman had gruffly bade him "move on," and Jack had commenced to retrace his steps along Cheapside. It was when he was nearing the Bank that a wonderful stroke of good fortune came to him. His quick eye, looking round for chances, lighted on an old lady who, in the act of taking her purse from her pocket, had pulled out a portion of her silk-handkerchief, and had left it hanging in a tempting position for pick-pockets. Jack darted off like an arrow from the bow.

"Please, mum," said he, touching his hat, "your handkercher, mum, a-'angin' out o' yer pocket, mum."

"Dear me, dear me!" exclaimed the old lady, turning round and clutching quickly at her handkerchief. "You are a very honest boy. What is your name?"

"Jack Spriggins, mum," answered he, touching his hat again.

"Dear me, dear me!" repeated the old lady, as she fumbled nervously in her purse. "How careless of me to leave my handkerchief out in that manner! You are a very honest boy. Here is a penny for you!"

Jack was almost ready to shout for joy, when he felt the precious coin safe in his hands. He would not even himself have believed that he could run so fast as he then ran along Threadneedle Street, and so through Bishopsgate. He neither looked to the right nor the left, nor paused for a single instant, until he darted into the baker's shop in the street near his home. There he waited until the rolls had come out, hot and steaming, from the oven. It was a sore temptation to him, as he held one of these dainties in his hands, to assuage that hunger which he felt so keenly, by eating it himself. He looked at it longingly, and then shook his head.

"No," he muttered, "that's for poor mother, that is. She allus ses as how it is more blessful to give than to receive."

"Here, my boy," said the kindly baker, almost before the words were out of Jack's mouth. "Here's some more bread you can have."

And he held out a thick piece of stale bread, half of which Jack, who was almost bewildered at his good fortune, vigorously munched, and the other half of which he kept for his two brothers.

Thus fortified, Jack hurried on home. Down the courts and up the narrow alleys he ran like a young hare. Poor Jack! He little thought, as he ran, that the Angel of Death had been there before him, and that his mother was beyond the reach of poverty, and hunger, and all other painful things for ever! Jack arrived at home to find himself an orphan, a mere speck on the world's tossing sea, with two younger brothers clinging to him for support.

God's voice is in the stillness
That hushes all the world,
His favour in its fulness
Is over us unfurled;
To-day the hills seem clearer,
The skies more blue and fair,
And heaven to earth comes nearer
Because our thoughts are there.

We thank Thee, loving Father,
For all Thy Sabbath brings;
For classes where we gather
To speak of heavenly things.
Teach us to value truly
The precious moments there;
And never be unruly
Within Thy house of prayer.

Help us that we may treasure
Its rest from work and play,
Not doing our own pleasure
Upon Thy holy day;
From sin and folly shielded,
May every Sabbath be
An offering gladly yielded,
Well-pleasing, Lord, to Thee!

MARY ROWLES JARVIS.

SCRIPTURE ENIGMAS.

NO. IV.

What is the Lord to those who follow Him,
He says they shall not walk in darkness dim?
When we in patience run the Christian race
Whom must we look to for the needful grace?
What does the page of Revelation say
Comes like the Saviour to proclaim the day?
And, when an angel speaks to Zechariah,
What is the name he gives to the Messiah?
A name denoting Christ shall be the last
When death and sin and judgment all are past?
And what is Jesus called when entering in
"Within the veil" to cleanse away our sin?
Who once laid down His life to save the sheep,
And will His favoured flock defend and keep?
What is Christ Jesus, in the words of Paul,
When He hath "broken down the middle wall"?
Who shall give light does Zacharias say,
And guide our footsteps in a peaceful way?

Each of these answers gives a sacred name
Of Him who bore our curse of sin and shame;
Initials taken off from every word
Will spell the name the first disciples heard.

L. T.

NO. V.

Find out the words left blank. Their initials give a nation of whom Paul said, "The — seek after wisdom."

1. I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ for you —.
2. They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being —.
3. Paul had determined to sail by —.
4. I supposed it necessary to send unto you — my brother and companion in labour.
5. At midday O —, I saw in the way a light from heaven.
6. The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was —.

M. A. S. M.

Children's Sunday Hymn.

O BRIGHT and happy Sunday,
That blesses great and small,
Our heavenly Father's own day,
And therefore best of all!
Whate'er our weekday sadness,
We greet its hours with praise,
And call it in our gladness
The rose of all the days.