The Woman of Samaria.

The following sermon by Mr. McNeill—who, by the way, was engaged in the railway service for some years before studying for the ministry—is taken from the *British Weekly Pulpit*. It was preached in Free St. Georges, Edinburgh, as here and there a sentence indicates. The text, St. John 4: 6-29.

This is a long story, and I must not shorten it, if by it any of you may be brought to the same point as the Samaritan woman, able to say, "We have met One who is worthy of being called the Saviour of the world." Jesus was "wearied with His journey;" if it had not been for this, this story had not been told. His weariness is the beginning of all our brightness. The Lord seems to have seen more of the fruits of His labors in heterodox Samaria than in orthodox Jerusalem. I have not time to dwell on this point, but the lesson is obvious; He sets nothing by our fancied orthodoxy; He wants souls; He does not ask what our creed is, but He does ask, Do you know *Me*?

I remember when I was a boy that this verse fascinated me, and I thought when I came to the word "thus" that there ought to be an illustration on the margin of a weary man sitting by the well; but by our spiritual understanding, we can see the scene just as it was. He sits there now waiting for us, ready to entangle us in our talk and flash in the truth on us, as He gets opportunity. The little drama took place at the bend of the road, and it is going on to-day. It it is not, you may pick up your hat and book and go home; for this is all the Gospel, put in an A B C way. It is not your coming to hear a sermon, and I preaching it, and then you taking it to avizandum, where it will likely never come out. No, I tell you you must *see* Christ anywhere, from cradle, to cross, to crown, anywhere, and it will be eternal life to you. Not to see Him in darkness and death. It is in your power to refresh God's heart; but instead of giving Him what He wants at once, you do like the woman, you begin to question. You may have gone along the road on a hot summer day, tired and thirsty, and have seen the gleam of a cottage in the distance. Suppose you went to the door and asked for a drink of water, exactly as our Lord; but your speech betrayed you, and you were asked, How do you, being a Protestant, ask drink of me, a Roman Catholic; or, How do you, being Scotch, ask of me who am Irish, for the Scotch have no dealings with the Irish? You would have ground your heel on the gravel, and vowed never to give any one the chance of so speaking to you again. But insults are just as they are taken; and you can't insult a man who wont let you. Jesus bows His head, and lets your ignorant speeches fly past Him. Only don't depend too much on that: He *may* be insulted, so take Him at His word at once when He says, Come, I am wearying for you. So far from being insulted He stays, knowing that she speaks in ignorance, that if she only knew she would never speak so.

My Christless friend, your whole case is here. You are as you are, because you are ignorant, and there would not be a better believer on God's earth—*if you knew*. Christ fastens her by the hook of curiosity. He tells her there is something she does not know, and she does not take kindly to it. Neither do you; but God helped me to dare your wrath. You may be very learned, very quick-witted and far-seeing, but if you don't know Christ, all that goes for very little. You've got to rub your eyes before you can see through this business. I wish I could awaken some benighted, belated church-goers, and goers home again to this. Christ put this woman's temper on edge; she did not like this Jew talking down to her as He did—it was a seed in her teeth for a long time. It is blindness, the deep, dense ignorance of unbelief, that is keeping out the sunshine around us. The light is come; it is beating around about thy head; it is waiting, ready to shine into any chink or cranny it can find.

Our Lord tries to find a meaning in the Samaritan's rambling, witless words, just as He bears with skepticism and difficulties. I don't mean to taunt or sneer at these, they are real enough to you; but let me tell you they are not a measure of the bigness of your intellect, but a sign of the *thrawness*, the twist, in it. The woman's words are quite correct; she has her facts all right, but they are not an answer to the Saviour's question. He next awakens her desire: "Give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." I trust some of us have got this length, when we think it must be a fine thing to be saved, to be independent of this world's gifts and supplies, safe from the chapter of accidents, possessed of everlasting life, lifted above death and the grave. I remember a procession going along the streets. It was a Salvation Army band, and one of those rude, but, I trust, saved souls, gave three leaps, shouting, "O it's a fine thing to be saved." A long-faced church-goer at my side exclaimed "Did you ever hear the like of that?" I did not mean to speak for the Army, but I asked her if it wasn't a fine thing to be saved. The wonder is that we carry our salvation so quietly. Perhaps we say nothing because we have nothing to say; and we cannot shout Hallelujah because there isn't a shout in us. It would be such a gift, this water, thought the woman; no more trudging to the well with weary feet. And such a gift is ours to-day, if we would only take it—a gift which can make us independent of all earth's joys and resources.

Surely this is a game of contraries that is going on—"Go, call thy husband, and come hither"; but Jesus is dealing with infinite wisdom. Before you can fill your pitcher, it must be empty; and if there is unclean water in it, it must be poured out and the pitcher rinsed. The tongue that has been glib enough before, is stammering now, and the blush is rising to her cheek. The shaft sent home to the conscience is a need-be; and may we all have the same honesty as this woman! Confess, own up to your sins, not to me, but to Christ, and it will be your salvation. Sin has been your hindrance all along, as your own Dr. Whyte, the best preacher I have ever heard, so often tells you. I have sat in the gallery yonder, with my heart in my mouth, while God's great servant preached the Gospel, bubbling up with this truth; and if anything makes me indignant, it is the cry that sometimes gets abroad that the great man—I hope he will pardon me this—deals too much with sin. There is no salvation in Free St. Georges or anywhere else until you confess your sin. There was a man in India, who, one evening, having nothing else to do, went to play at religion with the parson—as some of you have come here this afternoon. God help your little wits! "Religion is all very well," began the officer, "but you must admit that there are difficulties—about the miracles, for instance." The chaplain knew his man, and quietly answered him "Yes, there are some things in the Bible not very plain, I admit; but the Seventh Commandment is very plain." The man's temper rose, and he swung himself out of the tent; but a little later he came back, no longer to raise false difficulties, but to ask how a poor adulterous British officer might be saved. There are men and women here kept from salvation by what kept back this Samaritan woman. Give up that man, give up that woman, if you would be saved. The pitcher must be emptied before it can be filled.

I could not help smiling as I read the next passage. She is making a wild attempt to get away, to get off the hook. She tries to draw a red-herring across the scent, by bringing up that old religious squabble. Just like you; you will go home, some of you, and take me to dinner, while I call God and your conscience to witness that I have struck you between the eyes. Yes, you will talk about me, not about your sin; you will come near to calling me coarse, thou coarsest sinner out of hell, that lovest thy sin! Have a care, my friend!

Although only a chance word, Christ answers her soberly, as if there was something in it. So there was; and the answer serves for all time. The Lord here tore all ritual to rags; the bowings and genuflexions, the man-millinery, consecrated men and consecrated buildings—all in His sight are nothing. Is there any poor benighted sacramentarian here? May God save him from this thing of the devil! Nothing can save but the two-handed grip of Him who died upon the Cross. And here we are, Presbyterians as prelatical as Episcopalians in these matters, forever arguing and arguing about forms and ceremonies and things that are beside the point.

Not only have we here a typical unbeliever, but we see in the Samaritan a typical woman. She means to get the last word, and she very nearly managed it. It was allowing Christ to get it in the end that saved her soul. "The Messias is coming, and He will tell us all about it," says she as she stoops to lift her pitcher. "I that speak unto thee am He," was the answer, and looking again into His face with swift, keen glance, she said, by saying nothing, "He is right." Those bad characters with whom the Bible deals so much, are worth dealing with. You are hoping for the same wonderful coming as she hoped for; but open your eyes, for He has come. No salvation can come for you to-morrow, other than that which is offered you to-day. This word of Christ's is either true or a lie of hell. Which is it? What's thy verdict? Don't pick up the Psalm-book and give somebody else's verdict; but give your own.

Just then, in came the disciples, those marplots, at the moment her struggling, dawning faith broke through her unbelief. They are always tumbling in at the wrong moment; but hold, the interruption was as divinely planned as the interview. Are you a believer on Him? Then go and play this woman's part. Don't call her an ugly name. She is a lady, an elect lady; and in the Great Day, if women like this are in, and you decent women out, then the adulteresses are out, and the pure-minded are in. It was a short sermon she preached—"Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?"—but what an effect it had! She did not read it off paper; it was in her heart first, and she did not need. Christ's omniscience had taught her to believe as it did Nathaniel. What would you do if you found I knew you through and through? You'd either come to me after the service and pay me as much hush money as you could pay, or you'd take the first train out of the city to morrow morning, or the Sunday train to-night. If you have seen Christ, go back and tell about Him. Edinburgh is dying to know, and it is a sinful city. I see brother ministers here this afternoon. O if our hearts only saw Him, our preaching would be different! Speak of Him in such glowing terms that your hearers will be fascinated. Is He not worthy?

Give your sins to Him. Tell about Him. It is criminal to be silent.

Witness for Christ.

Because Christ expects and demands it. This may be clearly seen from his course with the woman who touched the hem of His garment, and was healed, drawing her to a full declaration of her experience in the matter. And it is also seen in His demand of the man out of whom He had cast the unclean spirits, sending them into the herd of swine. This man desired to be with Jesus and enjoy His company in the ship, but Jesus suffered him not, and said unto him, "Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." "Proclaim abroad the wonders of thy Saviour, God." If your soul is healed tell it.

Because it will honor Christ. If a benefactor confer distinguished gifts on a person and he be truly grateful for them, will he not love to speak of that friend and of his kindness with the very natural wish to honor him in the estimation of his friends? And has not the forgiven soul rich occasion to do this? He has received the unspeakable gifts of pardon, peace and adoption into the family of God. He has been delivered from the jaws of a "Death that never dies." He has been taken from the "horrible pit and miry clay" of sin, and his feet set on a rock. Christ has become a curse for him, has borne his sins in His own body, and has wrought out for him a great deliverance. Will he not then, in all the fulness of His soul exclaim, "Come and hear" "and I will declare what the Lord hath done for my soul?" Without this is Christ honored? Had the healed woman gone away pressing through the crowd unknown, would the Great Healer have received honor on that occasion? Would it have been the highest honor to Him had the man restored to his sanity neglected to go and declare it?

Because to own Christ will influence others. Multitudes stay away from Christ, and we have great reason to know that hundreds and thousands are perishing because believers do not properly and faithfully profess Christ the Saviour before them. A revival is often effectually hindered by the fact that those who have touched Christ don't tell the blessing received. And then how you have seen the magnetic effect upon a whole company when one honors Christ by a frank and cheerful confession of Him. The healed woman had not seen Jesus before; others who knew had told her of Him, and what He had done for them; and she felt by hearing others, there was hope for her, and she left her home and went to Jesus. So Christ knows that every confession of Him will help others.

Because it will be a means of great blessing to yourself. The woman healed of her twelve years of grievous infirmity, fell down before Jesus, and testified all, in the presence of the people. Now she heard what she could not have done without this confession, the joy-giving words "Go in peace." She would have gone away doubting, but these words from His lips cleared her doubts, and at once gave her "assurance of hope," and of adoption. She then enjoyed a condition of soul which cannot be enjoyed while there is a neglect to testify for Jesus. No soul can climb the best heights of a Christian experience by neglecting duty. If you are healed testify. If you are a lover of Jesus testify. If you have been in the "Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness in the house of David," and are cleansed, testify. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven."

Formal Preaching.

Some ministers show by their preaching that the heart is not in it. They have come to preach, and they will get through what they have to say; but their deepest thoughts and liveliest emotions would come out better at a political meeting. They have not all their wits about them when preaching. They remind me of the legend of the two learned doctors down in the fen country, who thought that they would have a day's shooting of wild ducks. They were extremely learned, but they were not at home in common pursuits. They came to a piece of water, into which it was necessary for them to wade to get at the ducks, and one said to the other, "I have not put on my water boots." The other replied, "I have forgotten my boots, too; but never mind." They both waded in, for they were keen sportsmen. They reached a sufficient nearness for shooting the ducks. Then one whispered, "Now, brother fire at them." The brother replied, "I've forgotten my gun. Haven't you brought yours?" "No," said the other, "I did not think of it." There were sportsmen for you! Their deep thoughts made them unpractical; their Hebrew roots had displaced their common sense. Have you never seen such preachers? They "are not there." Their minds are in the profound abysses of critical unbelief. The Holy Ghost spake by an ass once, but that ass showed its sense by never speaking any more. I know creatures of like kind not half so wise.—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

When Mr. Smith Missed the Train.

BY HELEN B. STARRETT.

Mr. Smith missed the train by just one half minute, and he was in a furious temper over the matter. He lived in a pretty, country-like suburban village, about forty-five minutes' ride from the large city in which he had his place of business, and he was accustomed to take this particular train every morning. Not once in three months did such a thing happen as his being late for the train; but on this occasion he felt like declaring that half the time he had to rush himself clear out of breath to reach it, or else miss it. He was in that exasperated state of mind where he wanted to blame somebody, abuse somebody; a state of mind which, in a condition of development a little nearer the savage, would impel to acts of cruelty toward anything or any person on whom anger could be wreaked. The person on whom, in this instance, he could most quickly and with the least impunity cast blame was his wife. It was all her fault. Why could she not manage household affairs so that he could get his breakfast earlier? He worked like a slave at his business ten hours a day; he gave her full control of the house and furnished money to run it; she had a servant, and it was pure and utter shiftlessness in her that breakfast could not be ready in proper time. Thus, with flashing eyes, soliloquized Mr. Smith as, with anger-flushed face, he watched the train disappearing in the distance.

It was a full hour and a half till the next train; it was nearly half a mile back to Mr. Smith's house. He paced back and forth nervously for a few minutes on the station platform, debating in his mind whether he should wait there for the next train or go back home. As he mused, his anger grew. He would go back home and give his wife such a piece of his mind as she would remember for months. She should be made to feel that it was no light matter to have breakfast five minutes late. He turned his face homeward and stamped heavily along, with the air of a man determined to do a desperate deed. His face was flushed with anger and his eye gleamed fiercely.

But, as he hastened along, somehow or other his attention was diverted by the song of a bird among the trees that lined his path. He looked up involuntarily. How brightly the sun was shining; how blue the sky was; how balmy and fragrant the air; how peaceful everything appeared as he looked off through the green spaces on either side of the village street. The trees were putting forth their tenderest green; so was the grass. He noticed the fragrance of the crab-apple and wild-plum blossoms; he distinguished the peculiar strain of a bird he used to hear in boyhood. It was the wood-thrush. He had listened to that bird when, years ago, he had walked in the meadows and lanes with the pretty, shy young girl whom his heart was then bent on winning for his wife. She was his wife now. She was the mother of three rosy, active children; they were his and hers. She was not as pretty now as she was then; she was thin and careworn. The plump rosiness and merry smile were, for the most part, gone. But what a good, true wife she had been to him. How had her economy and faithfulness helped him in getting the start he now had in the world. How little she saw of the outside world, or of diverting pleasures. How self-denying and uncomplaining she had been, and what a devoted mother to their children! And on that bright, sunshiny morning he had been thinking hard thoughts of her and meditating what sharp, cutting words he could say to her—and all for a trivial little loss of an hour from business. Mr. Smith's pace slackened; his countenance relaxed; his heart melted. On such a morning he could not, would not, by harsh words mar the harmony and beauty of the sunshine and birds and the green things growing. No; if he could not speak kindly, he would hold his peace.

As Mr. Smith neared his home, he felt a certain shrinking from meeting his wife directly. He almost feared he might betray on his countenance some of the harsh thoughts he had been thinking. So he went around the side of the house and entered the kitchen door. Bridget was standing with a perplexed and exasperated expression on her face, looking into the kitchen stove, in which smouldered a dark, dying fire.

"What is the matter, Bridget?"

"Faith, sur, it's the stove that breaks me heart intirely. The grate is broken and the stove-pipe smokes, and whin I sthrive to make a quick fire, here's the way it serves me."

"Well, Bridget, it is all my fault. Your mistress has asked me many times to bring a new grate from the city, and also to send a man to clean out the stove-pipe and chimney. I will put this down in my note-book and bring the new grate this evening, and Pat McFlynn, the tinner, shall be sent right up this morning to clean and fix the pipe."

"Oh, thank ye, sure," said Bridget, with a brightening countenance, "and could Pat fix the cisthern, too? The pump has been broken a long toime and keeps me back in my work and breaks my back drawing water wid a rope."

Again Mr. Smith's conscience smote him. How often had his wife asked him to send a man to fix the cistern?

"Yes, Bridget, the cistern shall be fixed this very day."

"Well, sur, thin I think I'll stay. I was just tellin' the mistress that I wouldn't work any longer wid sich inconvaniences, but if the stove and cistern are fixed a poor girl can get along."

Mr. Smith made another memorandum in his book and passed on through the dining-room towards his wife's room. He noticed that her plate indicated an untasted breakfast. Softly he opened the door of their room. His wife started up hastily, with an expression of alarmed inquiry on her face. Her eyes were wet with tears. The baby, still in its night clothes, was fretting in the cradle, while a little two-year-old, partly dressed, tugged at her skirts.

"And so you missed the train—breakfast was late—well, I can't help it—Bridget is going to leave, too," and the poor little woman covered her face with her hands and burst into sobs and tears. She fully expected angry complaints from her husband and, in some vague way, she felt she was to blame. She could not compass everything, and the babies were so troublesome. Oh, did every young mother have such a hard time as she did?

"Why, darling, what is the matter?" said Mr. Smith, putting his arms around his wife, and drawing her to him. "Come! don't mind. I think it is really mostly my fault. I have come through the kitchen, and I find Bridget has so much trouble with the stove being broken and the chimney smoking that I wonder she can get breakfast at all."

"I ought to get up in time to see that you have breakfast early," sobbed the poor little woman; "but Bridget is so cross this morning and I—I am so tired."

"No wonder, darling, that you are tired, with the care of these big babies wearing on you all the time. You have no business to have any care of breakfast at all, and you shall not have after this. You need your good morning nap, and you shall have it. Bridget is all right. I am going to get that broken stove and cistern fixed to-day, and then if Bridget can't get breakfast in time we'll find some other way to do. Come now, cheer up, and I'll help you to dress these rogues; I have plenty of time before the next train."

How wonderful is the effect upon the physical nature of a spiritual impulse! How quickly can an uplifted and strengthened spirit energize and strengthen the body! Everything seemed instantly changed for poor, dejected little Mrs. Smith. She laid her cheek on her husband's breast, feeling what a haven of strength and peace it was. How dear and precious was his love and protection. Her eyes brightened and her cheeks glowed. Her weariness and depression, which had been utter misery, gave way to a delightful feeling of repose and loving happiness. In the midst of the most prosaic surroundings, her heart was full of the finest and most inspiring emotion.

"Dear, dear love, how good you are," she said. "How you have changed the aspect of everything for me this morning. Had you reproached me, as many husbands would have done, I would have sunk in the deepest anguish. Now I feel strong—strong and happy."

Releasing his wife with a tender kiss, Mr. Smith took the baby from the cradle and merrily drew its stockings and shoes on its little, plump, kicking, rosy feet. Then he brushed out the other little fellow's curls and buttoned his shoes. Willie, the oldest, had slipped out of the house, and Mr. Smith went to look for him, and found that he had taken advantage of an insecure lock on the gate to run off up street. Bringing him back, Mr. Smith got the hatchet and in a few minutes had the gate fixed so that Master Willie could not open it. His wife smilingly opened the front door, and, seeing what had been done, exclaimed: "Oh, I am so relieved to find that Willie cannot get out of the yard. It has been such a trouble that he could open the gate."

And now it was time to start for the next train, if he stopped to order the stove and pump man to do the promised work. So, gaily kissing his wife and children, once more Mr. Smith started for the station. As he walked along with a light and cheerful heart he mused:

"How cheap a thing is happiness, after all, and yet how easy a thing it is to turn it into misery! If I had given way to my temper this morning, I would have gratified a momentary impulse of unreasonable anger, and left behind me aching and discouraged hearts. Thank heaven for the influence of the song of bird and scent of flower; and thank heaven, too, for all the gentle influences and sweet affections that can make the most uneventful life a blessing. Dear, good wife! and dear, precious little children! Thank God, I have left them happy this morning, if I did miss the train."—*Interior.*

Henry Clement, Almonte, writes: "For a long time I was troubled with Chronic Rheumatism, at times wholly disabled; I tried anything and everything recommended, but failed to get any benefit until a gentleman who was cured of Rheumatism by *Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil* told me about it. I began using it both internally and externally, and before two bottles were used I was radically cured. We find it a household medicine, and for croup, burns, cuts and bruises, it has no equal."

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—I asked Mr. Spurgeon once how he prayed, and he said to me: "I always find a promise appropriate to the need, and then, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and for his sake, I simply plead that promise."—*Dr. Wayland Hoyt, in National Baptist.*

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