

The Religious and Antislavery Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

REV. E. McLEOD.

"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

Peter.

[Editor and Proprietor.]

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THE SAVING WIFE.

By J. De Liefde, of Amsterdam.
CHAPTER III.

(Continued.)

HOW THE SHOEMAKER'S WIFE TRIED TO CHANGE HER HUSBAND'S LIBRARY, BUT COULD NOT CHANGE HIS HEART.

You know, madam (thus continued the minister), that the great bulk of the Protestant people, though formally professing that the Bible is God's word, yet never, or very seldom read it. With the spirit of neology and indifference which, since the beginning of this century, has invaded our poor country and filled the heads of our people to a large extent with such bare and wretched notions about religion, as Mrs. R.— was from her childhood trained up in; the good old custom of the fathers of beginning and closing the day with family prayer and Scripture-reading has been discarded in most houses, and the blessed book of books is only kept as a piece of Sunday ornament in the hands of church-going women. So you cannot be surprised when I tell you that Mrs. R.—, when given herself to intensely reading that holy book, found herself carried into a sphere of thought and fact in which she felt a perfect stranger. Still the contents of this wonderful book excited an interest which increased with every page. She read it under the influence of some instinctive and traditional conviction, which she always had maintained, that all she was reading was true and trustworthy. She soon became aware that the image of God, as pictured in this book, widely differed from the representation that she had made of him hitherto. What especially struck her forcibly was, the deeply earnest tone in which the Bible spoke of God's justice and holiness. She was reading about a God who, merciful and tender-hearted as he was, yet was able to destroy a whole generation of men with a deluge, and to burn up cities with fire from heaven. She learned that this book most decidedly declared that there was such a thing as a hell and everlasting pain; that it was not only possible that man should be lost for ever, but that there were such lost men indeed, and that it was true that God had provided a means of salvation from such an imminent danger, but that this salvation could only be brought about at the price of His own beloved Son's blood. All this failed not to leave deep impressions upon her mind, and though the new notions which she now imbibed were too much cramped by her old opinions to produce in her conception anything more than a confused mixture of truth and error, yet this much she felt, that life was connected with responsibilities for the present and dangers for the future, infinitely more serious than she ever had been in the habit of supposing. Gradually her anxiety about her own state, and that of her family after death, increased, and in the measure of this increase the contrast between her and her husband became more conspicuous. While he was growing in merriment and carelessness she sunk deeper and deeper into a state of uneasiness and depression. Her aversion to his light-minded and all-denying opinions strengthened every day. It became a perfect torture to her to hear him talk about religion and man's destiny, and she shopped him continually with the most decided contradiction, appealing to as many texts from Scripture as she could recollect from her recent reading. These weapons, however, proved ineffective, for he frankly told her that he believed not a word of all that was written in that book. To be convinced of error he required arguments taken from nature and human reason. She appealed to the feelings of her heart, but he granted these no place in their dispute, since he called them traditional prejudices. She then would call him an unreasonable, self-conceited man, who thought himself to have the monopoly of wisdom, and he would return the compliment by pointing his forefinger to his head, and saying that there was something wrong in her upper story. So their family conversation became very painful and disgusting. The domestic peace was gone. He henceforth was out every evening, spending his leisure hours in the club or at the theatre. And she, poor thing, not yet knowing the true fountain of consolation, tried to dispel her grief either by playing cards with her children at home, or by taking them to some place of amusement. As to them they showed, on the whole, an inclination towards siding with her. Their young tender hearts sympathized with her religion (such as it was) more than with their father's cold philosophy. And this, at least, was some consolation for their poor loving mother.

The merciful and wise Saviour of the lost leads the blind in a way which they know not. He looked down with compassion on the perplexity in which this contrast between the things of heaven and earth, and the things of earth and earth, had brought them. The Bible is a correct teacher, but man, as long as he reads it only by the light of his own human reason, can never discover the beautiful harmony of its truth. He may understand something of what he reads there about man, for the spirit of man knoweth the things of man. But the spirit of God searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, and until the Spirit of God opens the eyes of the reader, man will never perceive how the things of God, as held out in Scripture, can harmonize with the things of man. There are many, especially such as from their childhood are trained up under the breath of the gospel, who, when reading the Bible, find the heavenly Dove alighting upon their shoulder and whispering his divine teaching into their ears without their noticing the exact moment when, for the first time, they were blessed with this privilege. But there are many others who, in the providence of God, require some striking event in their life to be brought from a state of ignorance and deep slumber, the removal of which is indispensable for the free access of the great Guide, who leadeth into all truth. This was Mrs. R.—'s case. The perusal of the Bible had shaped her mind into some frame of seriousness such as she had not before. She took this change for the thing which she saw Scriptures denoted as conversion or regeneration. She began pleasing herself with observing that she was much more earnestly minded now than formerly, and this self-satisfaction was not a little enhanced by the fact of the obvious contrast between her piety and the ungovernable behaviour of her husband. She thought she was on the right way now, since she was not on his. But she did not know that there were many ways

that lead from the gate of heaven, and only one that leads to it. She did not perceive that error, whether laughing or weeping, whether with or without a Bible in its hand, always keeps erring. But her merciful Saviour knew that He was the Way, and he resolved to bring her to Himself, that he might give her that Spirit who only opens the heart for God's word and God's word for the heart.

One Summer afternoon Mrs. R.— was on her return from a neighbouring village, where she had paid a visit to a friend. She listened her steps as thick clouds gathered in the sky, and a heavy thunderstorm appeared to be in prospect. Her speed proved fruitless. She was scarcely half way home when tremendous thunder-peals began rattling above her head. Flashes of lightning pierced the glooming firmament, and torrents of rain fell which, in a few moments, turned the smooth highway into a pool. A labourer's cottage stood a few yards from the way, peeping through a little grove. Mrs. R.— fled to it in full speed, and pushing open the door, found herself once in a little parlour which seemed to be the only room the inhabitants could avail themselves of. At least it appeared to serve for a dwelling, a dining, and a bed-room. Between the fireplace and the window a woman of apparently thirty years was seated behind a green painted table, cleaning vegetables. Two girls of six and eight were sitting on stools at her feet playing with a doll. At the other side of the fireplace was a bed in a recess in the wall, in which a sick person was lying. The appearance of the whole showed, at the first glimpse, that this was not the abode of prosperity and abundance. Yet it was characterised by a spirit of order and cleanliness which bespoke Mrs. R.—'s respect and confidence.

"Beg your pardon, my good woman," said she to the person behind the table, while shaking the rain from her gown. "I must apologize for rushing in so abruptly, but you will kindly permit me to remain till this fearful storm is over."

"Gladly, ma'am," replied the woman in a kind voice, at once rising from her seat, and placing a chair in the middle of the apartment. "Sit down, ma'am, and take your rest. Your feet are wet, I'm sure. Let me give you a foot-stool, ma'am."

"No, thank you. Don't trouble—"

"No trouble at all, ma'am." And before Mrs. R.— could finish her sentence the woman laid her hand upon the stove, put a piece of glowing peat into the little fire-pot, and stooping down showed it under Mrs. R.—'s feet.

"What a tremendous storm," she continued, resuming her place behind the table, and taking up the beans she had thrown aside. "I am glad you could take shelter in time, ma'am. I hope you are not wet."

"Not at all," replied Mrs. R.—, "only my outer dress is a little damp."

"Give the lady a warm cup of coffee," said a feeble voice, interrupted by coughing, coming out of the bed.

"No, thank you, I really don't want it," answered Mrs. R.—, and it was only by virtue of her strongest protest that she could detain the kind woman from stirring the fire and getting the kettle boiling.

"I am sorry to find that you are sick, my good friend," said she, addressing the invalid. "I hope your illness is not of a serious character."

"Consumption, ma'am," answered the sick man. "I have been laid up for nearly half a year. I don't think there is any hope of recovery."

"Indeed," replied Mrs. R.—, in a voice of deep sympathy.

"Yes, ma'am," said the woman, "we are in painful circumstances. My husband, we have every reason to fear, will not be long with us."

"Don't say fear," said the invalid. "Our Father is about to take me home, and now I long to get there."

"Yes, you are right, my dear," said the woman. "But I only said so with regard to our present position in this life. For the rest, you are right, we have every reason to rejoice."

"To rejoice," said Mrs. R.—, in a voice of surprise. "How can you rejoice in such circumstances?"

"Because I am going to heaven, ma'am," answered the sick one.

The tone in which he spoke was so calm and deliberate, and so indicative of perfect assurance, that Mrs. R.— folded her hands from astonishment, and turning her face toward the woman, looked at her with an expression on her countenance that seemed to ask, "Did anybody ever hear the like?" When, however, she observed the gentle, joyful smile with which the woman, while nodding her head, seemed to confirm her husband's words, she again turned to the invalid, and putting her chair a little nearer to his bed, better to understand his words, she said, in a voice of deep concern,—

"It is a grand thing to be able to say so when in the sight of death and eternity, my good friend. There are but few who would have the courage to take such words on their lips in such circumstances."

"Alas! too true," replied the sick one. "It is because few know the only Saviour of lost sinners. But I hope, ma'am, you are one of them," added he in a kind, serious voice.

"Well, I think I know the Lord Jesus Christ," answered Mrs. R.—, "and I believe that he is a Saviour of sinners; but still, I should not venture to say that I am going to heaven, as you do. But I suppose you always have been a pious person from your childhood, and you have always been preparing yourself for heaven."

"No, no; far from it," exclaimed the invalid. "I am a great, great sinner, ma'am. I was walking with both my feet on the way to hell for years, and had the Lord out of my life's breath in those days, I certainly should have arrived at the eternal furnace. But he had no delight in my perdition, and in his infinite grace he remembered my poor father; and he has shown me mercy by opening my eyes, and by turning me to the only Redeemer who it was too late."

"Yes, ma'am," said the woman, "the Lord has done great things with my husband, by discovering him to himself as a lost sinner, so that he sought for salvation at the feet of Jesus. Not that he made himself guilty of great crimes or public misconduct; for he was always a quiet, honest, and sober person in society, and he regularly would go to church every Sunday, and read his Bible every morning and evening. But he did not see, ma'am, that he was an enemy of God for all that, and so he lived without Christ in his heart. But the Lord has opened his eyes to make him see that he was a barren thistle and a candle

without light, and has led him to come to the only root of life, and to be kindled at the everlasting Sun of Righteousness."

These words of the woman still more increased Mrs. R.—'s wonder. She was silent, and repeated them in her thoughts. "Always a quiet, honest, sober man," she said to herself; "regularly going to church and reading his Bible; and yet, notwithstanding all that, an enemy of God! How is that possible? What, then, am I?"

"My good friends," said she, after a pause, "are you not using too strong expressions now? Do you really mean to say that you were an enemy of God while you were living so irreproachably, and professing religion so faithfully? Was not your laudable conduct much more an evidence of the contrary?"

"So I thought, ma'am," answered the invalid. "I'll tell of self-deception was taken from my eyes. I began noticing that with all my stock of self-righteousness and religion, I had no true peace, and was constantly trembling at the prospect of dying and appearing before God. This discovery alarmed me, and I took to inquiring into the cause of it. I earnestly prayed the Lord to show it me. I read the Gospel again with this special object in view. I conversed with some friends about the matter. But I could not find it out. One day, however, when passing along the road, I saw a poor man sitting on a trunk of a tree, who seemed to be in great distress. Upon inquiring what the cause of his sadness was, I learned that he owed his landlord a month's rent, and was to be turned out with his family the next day, if he did not pay his ten shillings that same evening. The poor man's condition touched my heart; and as I then was in prosperous circumstances, I told him to call upon me after sunset, promising him a gift to the required amount. Suddenly the poor man's countenance changed; joy beamed from his eyes; he jumped up cheerfully, and clasping my hand in his, he said, 'Thank you, my kind benefactor. You scarcely can conceive what a great benefit you are bestowing upon me. My landlord is such a stern person! But let him come now. I don't tremble for him any more.' These words struck me forcibly. Going home, I could not cease thinking over them. I observed the striking similarity between that man's case and my spiritual condition. How suddenly, I thought, was that man's fear changed into joy! And how? Only by faith in me—only by believing that his debt was paid now; for he took my promise as equal to the fact. At once a light broke in upon my soul. 'Oh, how this poor beggar puts me to shame!' exclaimed I. 'He believes me at once, and he rejoices. And I have received such better promises for such a better Benefactor—yea, assurances signed with his own blood—and I continue trembling! His faithful word tells me that I will be his blood for the remission of my sins! I will believe in him—that he has paid all my debts—that he has fulfilled everything the holy law of a just Judge required of me. And yet I still continue trying to pay off my debts by my own righteousness, and to purchase heaven by my own goodness! Oh, what an insult this is; done to the perfect work and all-sufficient sacrifice of that divine and all-compassionate Redeemer! Instead of sinking down at his feet in unspeakable joy, because he has saved every one that will take his salvation, I have been all the while trying to save myself by storing up a treasure of prayers and psalms, of church-going and Bible-reading, of self-perfection and outward holiness! Oh, what a poor, self-conceited wretch I am,—thinking that by any thought or deed of my own I might contribute to the cancelling of which nothing short of the precious blood of God's own beloved and spotless Son was required and sufficient! No wonder that I never could come to peace. I have always refused to let the only Prince of Peace come into my heart. I am a Christian, but without Christ; a sacrificer, but without a sacrifice; a merchant about to do great bargains, but without a farthing in my bag. Oh, what an enemy of God and his righteousness I am,—refusing to be saved by grace, and refusing to receive the gift of God freely as a poor miserable beggar, just as that poor man received my alms, and rejoiced!'"

The sick one here stopped his animated speech, during which he, in the enthusiasm of his heart, had raised himself to a sitting attitude, the better to enhance the expression of his soul's most intimate convictions by the look of his bright eyes and the gesture of his hand. It was a most impressive sight to witness the natural and simple, but most vivid and fervent eloquence, with which that common labourer, in the dialect of his class, poured out the continuous stream of thoughts that sprung up from his heart's deepest wells. He spoke evidently inspired by that Spirit which prepared him to receive the gift of God and his righteousness. He spoke with the confidence of one who had been prepared to receive the gift of God and his righteousness. He spoke with the confidence of one who had been prepared to receive the gift of God and his righteousness.

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The chasm that hitherto had been existing between her and her husband now yawned as widely as ever. Since Christ had become to her a living Saviour now, a person in whose blood she was washed from her sins, in whose resurrection she saw her own resurrection guaranteed, in whose personal love to herself she felt unspeakably rich, and in whose communion she desired to spend so many a sweet hour of the day and of her night watches—nothing was more disgusting and horrible to her feeling than a philosophy which denied every personal relationship between God and man, and looked at the Bible as a book of fables, and at God's creation as a dead mechanism. She perceived that nothing could be more discouraging to a loving Saviour and a living Creator of the wonders of heaven and earth, than such a system, and could not help considering her husband as an enemy of God and of his Christ. Now, in this judgment she was quite right, but she too little kept in mind that she herself also had been an enemy of God, and that her Saviour had for so many years borne her enmity with patience and long-suffering. Newly converted persons, when observing the great contrast between the unconverted and themselves, often indulge a spirit of indignation, which makes them overlook that they are indignant at what they were pleased with not long since. For though Mrs. R.— never had gone so far as to systematically deny the personal existence of God, yet practically she had for years treated that God as if he were no living person at all. She had shared the benefits universally brought by his atonement, without being reconciled to him, and she had enjoyed the blessings of his creation, without glorifying him. Had she humbly kept this in mind, she would have borne her husband's unbelief as God had borne hers, with a spirit of tender compassion and prayerful patience, remembering that herself had been erring, and blind, and destitute of knowledge. But the pride of her old nature, though through her happy change before God, yet was not quite broken before him. She was to learn now that her conversion was not the end, but the commencement of her sanctification; that her sin was pardoned, but not yet extirpated; that she was quickened to begin the warfare, but that she had not yet won the victory. She had given herself as a lost sheep into the hands of the only good and faithful shepherd. But she was to experience now that she had still to unlearn many a bad custom and evil habit, of the existence of which she, until now, had been unconscious. She had experienced the joy of becoming the property of Christ now. Another and higher joy was in store for her—that of becoming his image.

The first object of offence which her holy zeal was standing out against, was her husband's abominable library.

"Truly, my dear," said she, one day when she found him in his counting-house, reading a profane pamphlet, "truly, it won't do having such wicked, God-dishonouring books in our house. They are written by the devil and his companions, to blaspheme the living God and his anointed One. The wrath of the Lord will come upon our house if you don't throw them away."

"Very well, I'll wait upon it," answered he, with a sarcastic smile, without turning his eyes from the page he was reading.

"Oh, you reckless sinner!" exclaimed she. "How dare you take such words upon your wicked lips! Where would you be, if the Lord struck you down this very moment by a flash of lightning?"

"I think I should be turned to ashes," replied he, coldly exchanging his attitude.

"What a post you have there on that shelf!" continued she, in a tone of high indignation.

"Nothing but theatre and play-books, and wicked, God-reviling, and soul-destroying publications. I tremble at the idea that one of our children some day may take one of them in his hands. I should prefer to see them hanging by the necks from the gallows, than to see them in the hands of our children."

Mrs. R.— was silent. He bit his under-lip to quell the anger that was fast rising within.

"I'm sure," continued she, "I'll take those books some day and throw them out of the window."

Here Mr. R.— laid down the pamphlet he was reading, and with an angry look, staring his wife in the face, said, in a cold but threatening voice,—

"Very well, you may try; but you may be sure you'll go after them."

With these words he took his hat and left the house. Mrs. R.— kept looking at the shelf, as if pondering whether she would carry out her threatening or not. Then bursting into tears, she sank down upon a chair, and lifting her heart to her Saviour, entreated him to give her light in these dark circumstances. And her faithful Shepherd heard her heart's prayer. He again led her in a way that she knew not.

[To be Continued.]

MEET HEARERS.

I would recommend you to be cautious that you do not degenerate into the spirit of a mere hearer, so as to place the chief stress of your profession upon running hither and thither after preachers. There are many who are always upon the wing, and without a due regard to what is incumbent upon them in the shop, in the family, or in the world, they seem to think they were sent into the world only to hear sermons, and to hear as many in a day as they possibly can. Such persons may be fitly compared to Pharaoh's lean kine; they devour a great deal, but for want of a proper digestion, they do not flourish,—their souls are lean, they have little solid comfort, and their profession abounds more in leaves than fruit. If the twelve apostles were again upon earth, and you could hear them all every week, yet if you were not attentive to the duties of the closet,—if you did not allow yourself time for reading, meditation, and prayer,—and if you did not likewise conscientiously attend to the requirements of your particular calling, and the discharge of your duties in relative life, I should be more ready to blame your indiscretion than to admire your zeal. Everything is beautiful in its season; and if one duty frequently pushes out another, it is a sign either of a weak judgment, or of a wrong turn of mind. No public ordinances can make amends for the neglect of secret prayer; nor will most diligent attendance upon them justify us in the neglect of those duties which, by the command and appointment of God we owe to society.

Again, as it is our trial to live in a day wherein so many contentions and winds of strange doctrines

abound, I hope you will watch and pray that you may not have *teaching ears*, inclining you to hearken after novel and singular opinions, and the erroneous sentiments of men of unstable minds, who are not