



MENDED CROCKERY

"...He made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the Potter to make it."

ERNEST BELL



MENDED CROCKERY

OR

SOME CLAY, SOME SAND,
AND THE MASTER'S HAND

*"He made it again another vessel, as
seemed good to the Potter to make it"*

Jeremiah 18:4

ERNEST BELL

With a foreword by

W GRAHAM SCROGGIE

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FOREWORD

It gives me much pleasure to write a few words of introduction to this brochure, first, because I'm profoundly interested in conversion, and second, because I know that the conversions here put on record are absolutely genuine. It was my privilege for nearly ten years to be the minister of Bethesda Free Chapel, Sunderland, of which Mr Bell was and is a member, and I had opportunity of seeing something of the fine work he has been doing for many years; and the fruit of his labours, as here recorded, is evidence enough of his fitness for this specialized form of ministry.

It is close up to the tragic facts and abysmal needs of human life that the Gospel proves itself to be "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth". Theological theories are of no avail in the presence of scarlet-red-crimson sin (Isaiah 1:18), nor in the hour of the soul's blank despair; at such a time, and in such a condition, the best proof that Christ's death was atoning is that it atones; the infallible evidence that He is the Saviour is that He saves.

No one can read the following record without being greatly moved, and stirred to worthier effort for the rescue of all for whom Christ died, Who died for all.

May this witness contribute greatly to the oncoming revival is my prayer.

W Graham Scroggie

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago a book by Mr Harold Begbie, called “Broken Earthenware”, was published and became immediately famous. Famous, some said, because of the wonderful stories in its pages. Famous, said others, because of the wonderful pen of its author, whose unquestioned literary ability made him the one man able to translate an ordinary drab piece of human experience into a spiritual marvel. Of this latter there can be no doubt whatever, for Mr Begbie not only has the knack of seeing the dramatic side of a situation, but also the power to paint that same situation in words of such cogency and vividness that the picture stands out intensely more living than its original. However that may be matters little here, for both the book and its critics have had their day and neither are very much heard of now.

We mention all this not because of any desire on our part to resuscitate this work – although even that would not be amiss in these modernistic and naturalistic days – but because we would dispel the idea that the unexplained and unanswered challenge of its pages was merely the outcome of a meteoric visitation of the Spirit, which, once seen, was to be thenceforward seen no more. On the contrary, we confidently affirm that from the great day of Pentecost until this present year of grace there has been an unbroken line of such works of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men – even of the “lowest of the low”. We have seen these things ourselves, we know them and can produce them at any time: men and women differing only in name and personality from those of “Broken Earthenware”.

There can be no question, in the articles to be set forth here, of either imitation or plagiarism, for, concerning the first, we do not for one moment admit our ability to rival Mr Begbie, while as to the second, we have no necessity, having at hand abundance of material of our own.

What we do intend – and this is the sole aim and object of these sketches – is to bring before the public in general, and discouraged Christian workers in particular, the fact that the great things performed in the lives of such men as the Criminal, Old Born Drunk and the Puncher are still going on in the lower parts of the earth – ay, and even greater things than these, praise God. The “conversion of the radically bad into the radically good” is still in evidence, for the simple reason is that the same Spirit worketh in hearts of men, the same God and Father ruleth over all, and the same Jesus is still able to save to the uttermost, even this same Jesus, Who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

As already hinted, there are those who would liken the subject of “Broken Earthenware” to a comet whose coming into vision every so many hundred years is a remarkable phenomenon to be seen and noted, a nine days' wonder, and then - a return to the normal again. The idea of a continual succession of such works as we are discussing is not to be thought of. And yet, strange to say, just that is the truth. Absolutely, and without any mental reservation whatever, the idea is true that a constant succession of men broken by the hand of the Potter is an established fact, with this further addition, that they did not remain “broken” but were re-made into new creations as it seemed good to the Potter to make them. Broken Earthenware they certainly were, and as Broken Earthenware we might still refer to them, but that there is a better a truer designation to be had. For not as broken humanity would we remember them, but rather as newly-

made vessels unto honour fit and worthy to be used in the Master's service (though not forgetting their erstwhile lowly estate), and so we prefer to call them Mended Crockery.

We may not subscribe to Prof. James' definition of religion, as given by Mr. Begbie in his book, nor do we follow the latter in his dictum that it is "the struggle of overmastered and defeated souls for liberty, for life, for escape from hell"; because it isn't; but we do certainly agree with him that "the phrase 'the new birth' is not a rhetorical hyperbole, but a fact of the physical kingdom"; albeit let us add, understood only in, and by, the spiritual kingdom.

In the preface to his book, Mr. Begbie writes (p.10):-"Is it possible that the vilest, the most degraded, the most abandoned, and even the most stupid of all those massed and congregated millions, hides from the gaze of his fellowmen longings and hungering aspirations which in the eyes of the angels entitle him to his place in the cosmos?"

And we answer, yes, it is possible, but it is not actual. These people live entirely upon the surface, that is, of course, as between themselves. Let the stranger appear, and not a word of intimacy or information is available until his business is known. But amongst themselves, the most intimate affairs of life are spoken of as matter of ordinary conversation, perhaps called out over the stair landing or even shouted across the street. It is quite immaterial as to who among the neighbours may be, and invariably is, listening, they are children of the open door, the open window, the open mouth, children of the moment, the past irretrievable the future all unknown, the present everything.

The study of the psychology of these people reveals the paradoxical fact that often the deepest cunning, or the lowest degradation, is

united in a person with the most open-handed *sang froid* and happy-go-lucky unconcern.

It is quite evident that Mr. Begbie when writing his book was personally unacquainted with the class of person of whom he treats. The slightly educated lower middle-class person may and does answer to many of the positions noted by him because this class *thinks*. The really lowest class does not think. You, reader, will understand what is meant when it is said these people do not think. They will scheme, plot, and act with wonderful subtlety and ingenuity, but without the slightest mental effort or concentration. As they live from hand to mouth, so do they carry out their misdeeds along the line of least resistance. Instinct, wickedly inherent cunning instinct, is theirs to command but the unnecessary effort of thought has no place in their economy. Eliminate from their conversation all that is merely of the animal, and the rest will be remarkable only for its puerility, its inane irresponsibility and vacuousness. Argument can only be sustained by them by means of their native wit, by quoting hearsay, by bullying, ridicule or quibble. Mental effort is a *terra incognita* to this class of people, and it is therefore incorrect to grant them a desire for uplift or for betterment. It is an entirely wrong conception of their psychology to imagine that they would struggle for anything outside their carnal appetites if it required from them a moment's pain or uneasiness. Nothing irksome is congenial, and uncongenial things are neither wanted nor sought. The simple satisfaction of the animal nature, the desires of the flesh, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage till the flood comes - these are all the things that matter. The future? Bah! Who can know it? What has to be will be. This, then, is the class of people to which it has been our privilege to carry the wonderful Word of Life. People without spiritual desire in any shape or form, who are not merely indifferent to the Word, but who are quite

unable to understand its necessity or meaning. Like the sow, they are perfectly satisfied with the mire. Live better lives? Why? Trust in the Lord? What for? Eternal life? What is it? Live forever? No one can do that, and besides, who wants to live forever? Go away. Tell that yarn to someone else.

It certainly does seem a forlorn hope endeavouring to find any weapon capable of piercing the armour plate of such unfathomable soullessness.

The problem is one which the sociologist has been seeking for years to solve - but in vain. The scientist and the psychologist, in spite of much analysis, have no formula. The philosopher, having no answer to its questionings, treats it philosophically. "If they won't, they won't - then let them die." Ah! But they did not die. Wonderful, transcendent mystery, they are *not* dying. *They are being saved.* How? By a way that the natural man knows nothing of. Savant or pedant, philomath or sciolist, all are dumb before the sublime, the magnificent spectacle of a soul being changed from glory to glory, from uttermost darkness to marvellous light, from the bondage of sin and degradation into the glorious liberty of the children of God; knowing nothing of the how or why, conscious only of this one fact that whereas once he was blind now he can see.

1

Beginnings

In that part of Monkwearmouth - a comparatively small part - known as the Barbary Coast, that is, the district reaching from Cage Hill to the Folly End, thence back to Look Out Hill, across to Dead Man's Lane and its adjacent streets, and so on to Society Lane- in that part, then, and right in the very centre of it, stands the dingy-looking little chapel known as Bethesda Mission, or, more popularly, Hallgarth because of its proximity to Hallgarth Square. This place it is with which we are concerned in the stories about to be narrated, for it is here that there has been manifested in a remarkable way the power of the Holy Spirit to change the "radically bad into the radically good." Here, in recent years, have been performed psychical wonders of such a character that neither the scientist nor the philosopher can place them, for, with the modern and fashionable disbelief in miracle, there is no possible situation for such things except in the unknown and the unknowable.

But with the actual facts confronting us what can we do but throw this so-called science to the winds and cry out Miracle! Miracle! for with *our* God all things are possible.

Yes, even in the Barbary Coast.

Human nature, it is said, is the same the world over. Perhaps, as a generalisation, this may be true, nevertheless the exceptions which go

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to prove the rule are both numerous and great. For although comparisons are odious, it must be noted that the ordinary slum-dweller is not the type of person to be found round about Hallgarth. When one looks back to the days of mission work in Golden Alley, old Flag Lane, and such like places, when we think of the squalor, the filth, the utter depravity of these places, they represent to us the "lowest of the low." The very houses themselves were tottering witnesses to the ruin and decay both without and within, to the hopeless desolation and despair all around. They held in their crumbling walls and timbers the very soul and spirit of the prevailing rottenness.

Passing through these social cesspools some years ago, the evangelists, Thurston, Leverton, and Wheeler, of the Open-air Mission, stood aghast. "We've got slums in London," said they, "but nothing like this - nothing."

Not so, however, is it "over the water." Here are wide streets, houses old, yet reasonably clean, in fact, with certain exceptions, remarkably clean, while the people are as different from those of slumdom as are the real Arabian Berbers from the low-down Australian aborigines. There is stupidity in plenty, but not stupor; desperateness but not despair; poverty with all its cruelty and danger, but not its numbness or languor; depravity, active, virile, savage; never passive, hopeless or dumb.

The fuddled sot and slouching hooligan of the slums gives place to the cruel dare-devil and cold-blooded brute of the Barbary Coast. One of our men, at least, bears testimony to this fact every time his hair is cut, for he carries twenty-two scars upon his scalp as mementoes of the times when his head was split open in the guerrilla warfare of the gangs. Another, who was with us for a time, was known by the

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euphonious soubriquet of Chopper Hopper from the fact that he conducted his little arguments and debates with a butcher's cleaver.

Of course, the inhabitants as a whole are not of this category. By no means. Nevertheless, it still remains that on every hand this class of person is to be met with. The gang spirit is fostered here and flourishes as nowhere else in the town. Here are the Cage Hillers, the Hill Top Gang, the Quay Hands, the Hinneys, and so on, each with its captain and deputies, each ready for any devilment that may crop up, each as keen on purely needless wanton destruction and savagery as any renegade Red Indian of the "penny dreadful." This was especially so during the years of the Great War, when, with strong fathers and elder brothers at the Front or working overtime at the yards and in the factories, the lawless spirit became rampant, even children coming into notoriety with deeds of recklessness and villainy. Parental control was at a discount. Money there was in plenty- at any rate on Saturdays and Sundays, although precious little for Monday mornings. Gambling, drinking, squandering, for a hectic thirty hours, and then back again scraping, grubbing, subbing, and pawning till Saturday came round again with its accompanying burst. What a life!

And it was in these times and to this people that we went to preach the Gospel. Man, the dry humour of it. Ha! ha! To think of the valiant bravoes of the gangs being told the story of the meek and lowly Jesus. Oh, it was too rich- the sheer impertinence of it all was really too much. As showing the native exuberance of these heroes of the streets, take this incident. Upon the night of the air-raid over Sunderland in 1916, when from the Wheat Sheaf, down George Street to Victor Street there stretched a long trail of death and destruction; when horror and grief, sorrow and suffering, were making Monkwearmouth like unto Sodom and Gomorrah, the Cage Hill gang came out on the war-path. Windows which had not been shattered by the German bombs were

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promptly broken; shops which were left unguarded were looted of all that could be carried away. One of the officers of Bethesda suffered severely in this way, and ladies' and children's garments were to be had at the most ridiculous prices for days afterwards. A grocer's shop whose shutters defied any effort to open them was stripped of its roof and every movable article was removed from its interior. All this, of course, merely by way of recreation. Nothing serious.

Strange to say, it was this very same exuberance of spirit which led to the opening up of the men's work at Hallgarth. Most curious it was and wonderful, but God *is* wonderful in His ways.

At that time Hallgarth was a mission for children only and it was in the course of a Sunday evening service with these that a number of gangsters decided to have a good time in the meeting. It is extremely doubtful if they knew anything of the nature of a Gospel service, but that mattered little. They entered the Hall and at once commenced operations. Shouting, ribaldry, heroics, and mimicry were grandly hurled about, to the huge enjoyment of the boys and the half-fearful apprehension of the girls, and of course the meeting, as such, became a farce. Towards the end, however, the leader took matters into his own hands, and assumed the aggressive. First of all locking all the doors, he addressed the would-be gallants. "You chaps," he said, "have come in here to-night for a bit of fun, and you've had a good innings, but now we are about to close in prayer, which means that we are going to talk to God (amused murmurs). Now, talking to men is one thing, and talking to God is another. Prayer demands reverence, and in case you do not know what that means, let me put it in this way - that for one minute - mark this well - for one minute only, you will remain quiet and still while the Lord is spoken to. After your evening's entertainment this is quite a small thing to ask and very reasonable. Now I want you to keep quiet for just one minute. To make it quite

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clear that I am most serious in this, I wish to emphasise it thus: that if one of you breaks the one minute silence that is demanded, he shall be brought to the platform and with this cane which I have here he shall be thrashed before you all. And now Miss Wilson will close in prayer.”

For a few moments all was quiet while the prayer was being said, then “Hoy! Woohoo! Ha! ha! Ha!” broke the stillness with startling effect. Of course the prayer was at once out of the question. Laughter and noise were preeminent. But the noise was as nothing to that which broke out when the hand of the leader twisted itself into the neckerchief of the delinquent and in spite of his unquestionable reluctance and most vigorous resistance, persuaded him to come to the platform. Then it was, indeed, that Bedlam broke loose and pandemonium reigned supreme. Standing on her seat the lady organist was wringing her hands and crying out, “Don’t! don’t! oh, don’t.” Girls were crying, boys howling, the gang vociferously expostulating, while amid it all, with the cane doing about one hundred oscillations per minute, its victim was mingling his tears with the dust on the floor.

Dear, dear, a sad exposition, surely, of the accepted principles of Christianity. Was this the way of the meek and lowly Jesus? What sort of fruit could be expected from this kind of seed?

Well, now, would you believe it, the fruit of this little episode was that these same men were won for the Lord Jesus before very long and became valiant workers in His service. Not all of them (although they all came back to the Mission), but those who stood aloof were more than balanced by the number of others who came with them and who in turn accepted the common salvation.

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And how did it come about? Well just this way. The caning having ceased, several members of the gang rushed forward with wrathful ire. Said the foremost, "What d'ye mean by setting about 'im? It wasn't 'im what made the noise."—"That's all right, old son, you're next. Come hither," and by a swift grab he found himself in chancery with the cane swishing threateningly through the air.

But it got no further. The mocking words of the archenemy when reviling the patient Job proved to be only too true of these his loyal subjects. "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." And so they capitulated. "Very well, then, let us try again. Back to your seats, every one of you." In a few minutes order was restored, and although sullen vindictiveness was apparent, the situation was mastered, and soon all became quiet and still. Short and sharp came the order, "every eye closed," and so unanimous was the response that the click of the eyelids might have been heard outside, and then, amid a silence that could almost be felt, the Lord was appealed to look down upon that gathering and in His mercy put the wrong things right and the crooked straight. If ever a prayer was answered, it was answered that night, for having dismissed the children, and, though with some difficulty, having prevented the scapegraces from escaping outside for the avowed purpose of wreaking vengeance, the leader gathered them together for a straight man-to-man talk. By degrees the revengeful sullenness became mollified, and finally, "Look here, you fellows," he said, "just why did you come in here to-night?" "Why, isn't chapels for folks to come into?" "Quite so, but do you want to sit amongst the bairns, big fellows like you?" Well, no, they didn't want that. "Well, then, here's an offer. The room at the back is not being used at present, and next Sunday night there will be a good fire on, the gas lighted, and the door left open. If you care to come in you can have the room to yourselves. There will be no stipulated time and no one in

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charge. You can choose your own recreation until the children's service is over, when I will come in and see you. This is certainly a better proposition than standing about the street corners. So there it is for you if you want it." And so, with a handshake all round and a word of conciliation they were sent out. Did they come back? Certainly they came back and brought others with them so that the little room was quite full when the Sunday night came round again.

That Sunday night was the beginning of the men's work at Hallgarth.

2

“Con”

For a time the men’s work went well under the leadership of one of the young women of the Mission. The children’s work at this time being of primary importance, it was necessary for the leader to concentrate almost wholly upon that, and, there being no male assistants at hand, the business of looking after the newly acquired men’s class was delegated to the only worker capable of undertaking it. This arrangement suited both parties. Belle entered into it wholeheartedly and was very proud of her men. They, on the other hand, conscious of their strength and the absence of any chafing control, viewed the situation with amused tolerance, and assumed a patronising protection of their little leader. This, however, could not last, and when the novelty began to die down, a different spirit manifested itself, and often the class broke up in disorder with Belle, her face bathed in tears, wholly disheartened and in despair.

The intervention of the leader was necessary now much more often than heretofore, and as these visits were invariably of a disciplinary nature, it will be realised that the character of a spiritual shepherd was not so prominent as his appearance as a master of hounds and whipper in. That such was the case is apparent from the nickname bestowed upon him. He was known as “Elmo the Mighty.” It became increasingly necessary, then, that there should be found a leader who,

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while able to control these wayward sprits, would, at the same time, by obtaining their respect and esteem, be able to win them from their waywardness.

It was just at this time that Conner (familiarily "Con.") appeared upon the scene, who, though somewhat diffident as to his capacity for the position (he had already become acquainted with the nature of the work by being called to address the class on a Sunday evening), was nevertheless thought to be the most fit and proper person to undertake it. As subsequent events proved, this was indeed a direct inspiration from Heaven itself, for, from thence begins in real earnest the production of men whose lives are bearing witness to the efficacy of that Spirit Who, and Who alone, can change the radically bad into the radically good. Being a man who had himself gone through the mill, and who, if any, had been a vessel marred in the hand of the Potter, but who, having been broken, was now a re-made vessel, regenerated in soul and renewed in spirit, he was eminently fitted to point out to other broken earthenware the way of re-creation.

He was not a native of the Barbary Coast, but was born of parents who were amongst the most respected members of Bethesda Free Chapel. Brought up in a Christian home, surrounded by everything that would tend to the uprearing of a godly character, the gaiety and temptations of the outside world an unknown quantity, he yet was not happy. Unsatisfied, he yearned to break the bonds that fettered his being. The cut-and-dried, hum-drum, trammelling round of meetings and classes was not for him. He was stifled and strangled with it all.

Liberty! Freedom! The call was insistent; the call of the wild, the urge to cast all from him, if only he might breathe, if only he might live. At the age of seventeen he ran away from home and enlisted in the Army, giving his age as nineteen. With tears in their eyes his people followed

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him and sought to win him back, but with scathing scorn he mocked their babyishness and impatiently bade them begone. Not to be outdone, however, his parents, finding all other means unavailing, disclosed his real age, which, being two years below the standard, he was unceremoniously sent home. This victory was not a success, however. Home ties were shackles he would not endure. Home love found no responsive echo in his heart. Unrestricted independence he must have. He wanted elbow room. There was, then, nothing for it but that he should have his own way, and so, like the prodigal of old, he gathered all together and took his journey into a far country and for long years was lost sight of to those who waited and waited in vain for his return.

Such men have been found in all ages. Men - unlike the missionary and the trader - without any definite aim or object in view, but actuated solely by a restless wanderlust, wholly in submissive to the claims of the social community.

Many and varied have been the theories put forward by thinkers in an attempt to explain this trait of human character.

The evolutionist speaks of such an one as a reversion to type and harks us back to the Great Ice Age, some fifty thousand (or is it millions?) years ago, when his sub-man ancestor, following his migratory instincts, fled before the oncoming frozen devastation.

The historian, with a less expansive outlook, talks of the moving spirit of the world pioneer, the inborn endowment of the empire builder.

The Mendelist mentions dominant or recessive characters as factors of his inheritance and finishes "as you were."

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The psychologist refers to his state as a neurotic condition, the reactive outcome of a repressed complex.

But in contrast to all these we have the words of a Teller of Stories, a Man of simple language, yet profound in His knowledge of men. He tells us of one such man, and He says, "He was lost"; nay, more, He says, "He was dead."

Choose you which you will of these creeds, and let the sequel show its worth.

There's a land which is fondly referred to by its citizens in moments of enthusiasm as a Land of Hope and Glory. It was to this land that our hero made his journey, and, arriving at length upon its hospitable shores, he at once began to feel the possibility of shaking off the cramps of his earlier life. Here was space, scope, latitude, the place of big things, big aspirations, big talk. He soon found work and joined the labour gangs of the railroads. As this work entailed frequent movements from place to place across the continent, living in the open, among men of most extreme views, unencumbered by ties either of home or conscience, he was at last finding himself in a condition in which he could live.

It was upon a certain dark night that, entering the city of Seattle, he found himself outside an open-air meeting. The preacher was a new thing to him. He was an apostle of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) and was holding forth in terms of lurid vehemence, and with all the violence of one of that ilk, the claims of Red Revolutionary Socialism, urging upon his hearers the momentous necessity of uniting to wage war upon the upper classes, that the masses might have freedom. Ah! that magic word "freedom," how it struck upon the heart of the interested listener.

Con

But the preacher went further still, and included in his vituperation not only the capitalist but the religionist also, calling down his abusive invective upon all forms of priestcraft, religious beliefs and worship as manoeuvres of tyrannous hypocrisy; the whole edifice a gigantic imposture. Down with them! Crush the despots! Put out that Light of Heaven - that mockery - which for so long had blinded men's eyes. God? there was no God. Man was everything; man was all.

To say that Con was interested is to put it mildly - he was startled. Somehow or other a sneaking sense of moral obligation had always been lurking within him. He had once upon a time had a kind of conviction that there was a something called sin, and although this was something becoming very dim and misty, it nevertheless exerted a certain amount of pressure upon his sub-conscious soul. But now, here was a practitioner who, with the magic of his tongue, could dispel all this illusion. There was no God - ergo there was no Devil. No Heaven, no Hell. No Commandment, no Sin. No Judgement, no Future. Blind Necessity the only Law. Might the only Right. What then? Away with all restraint, all submission; sever all bonds; defy all control. Liberty! Freedom! Emancipation! Surely the goal was reached at last.

He joined the I.W.W. and soon became one of its leading lights, revelling in the utter abandonment of all conventions. Saturated with the frenzy of the uncontrolled - and almost uncontrollable - licence afforded by the rules of the movement with its Machiavellian possibilities surging riotously and ungoverned through his being, he upheld to the full the glorious tenets of this noble institution. Down with Masters! Down with Priests! Down with Society! Down with everything that's up!

In October, 1917, the official organ of the British I.W.W. published the society's programme and plan of campaign under fifty heads. The

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character of the society can be judged in some small measure from the following selection:

“The I.W.W. uses every method which will help to win its fights. One great weapon is sabotage, which means doing anything on the job to lessen the Master’s profits or impede his business.

“The I.W.W. has developed the lightning strike (coming out without notice), the irritation strike (coming out and going back, and so continuing), the stay-in strike (folding arms while on the job), and other unique but effective weapons. It abides by no legal findings or capitalist morality, having a legal code and morality of its own.

“Its legal code is ‘Labour is entitled to all it can get’ - eventually the earth - and, ‘win by any means, but win.’ Its morality is, ‘what hurts the boss is moral; what hurts us (the workers) is immoral, and must be fought.’ Membership is barred to police, soldiers (professional or amateur), men-of-war’s men, or any other repressive and parasitical scabs on society. The I.W.W. is for men and women, not slugs or worms without backbone.”

and the annals of this society have shown it to be one of the worst criminal organisations that have ever existed.

As we have stated, Con joined the I.W.W. and was soon in the forefront of its activities. His companions were men of note in the annals of anarchy and revolution. Bitter feuds, strikes, riots, accompanied invariably by sabotage and bloodshed, were the order of the day. One of these companions, Vincent St. John, General Secretary of the I.W.W., it was who instigated the great Chicago riots in which

Con

the military were involved, when many lives were lost. This affair, occurring as it did on the first of May, was the origin of the now world-wide celebration known as Labour Day. Another of his comrades was Wm. D. Haywood, President of the Western federation of Miners, who was sentenced to penal servitude for life for the murder of Steinberg, Governor of Idaho. Others were Emma Goldman, the notorious Russian Bolshevist, Jack London, the author, and J. P. Thompson, National Organiser of the I.W.W., from whose "Anarchy" this quotation appears in the September (1929) number of "Dawn":

"People in ever-increasing numbers refuse to believe fairy tales of Gods and devils at war - one sitting on a throne in heaven, the other on a throne in hell. Most members of the ruling classes pretend to believe for social and business reasons..."

"You ask what we of Labour think of you? We are horrified - horrified at the unnecessary poverty and misery and slavery in the world, horrified at your savage gods, and we are determined to drive all of you from your thrones."

This, then, was the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the ideal realised by this young man with the instincts and spirit of a world's pioneer. Conflicts, cruelty, and venomous red ruth the end and goal, the logical outcome, of that urge which men would have us admire.

After some years he made his way into China, where he stayed awhile and then took ship for Europe and in course of time landed once more upon the shores of his native land.

His native land! He owned to no native land - the world was his only country. Mankind his only God. Himself his only hope. The future -

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oblivion. Such was “Con” when he stood once more in Sunderland amongst his old friends and acquaintances. A stranger in a strange land. Known and yet unknown. His stern and set face speaking of the cast iron nature within. His adamant heart proof against all coercion.

And then a strange thing happened.

It was in May, 1919.

One evening, in company with a friend, he paid a visit to an old acquaintance, and entering the door of his house, lo, and behold, he was in the midst of about fifty young men and women. It was Bible Class night! What his feelings were nobody knows, nobody will ever know, the doesn't know himself. But he stayed. Why? Out of courtesy? Courtesy wasn't a factor in his scheme of things. Why, then? Nobody knows - nobody ever will know. *But he stayed.*

The subject was “Sonship” and the text “If the son shall make ye free ye shall be free indeed.” What happened that night in that cast-iron, sin-blackened conscience-seared soul, nobody knows. *But when he went out he was a son of God.* The Holy Spirit had worked a work beyond all human comprehension. The old restless, violent spirit had ceased to be. A new creature had arisen. A man at rest with himself, at peace with the world, believing in God as his maker, accepting Jesus Christ as the only salvation of man, ready and willing to offer himself, yea, and if needs be, to be offered for the service of his Master - mark it well - *his Master.*

Henceforth caring for nothing but that the Gospel banner be uplifted high and that he be accounted worthy to uphold it. And now for over twelve years he has carried this out with unswerving fidelity, with unflagging energy, spending and being spent, winning men to Christ,

Con

plucking them out of the fire as brands from the burning, always persuaded than neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord.

* * *

“Con,” I said to him one day, “what was it that night that changed you? What note was struck, what process, what connecting link unites the old with the new?” “Man,” he said, “that’s the great mystery of my life. There was no shadow of premeditation, no desire, no seeking. I was converted - *but I don’t know how.*”

3

Peter

Reminiscent of the days when the old wooden sailing ships traded to the port of Sunderland stand the great mounds of sand and marl known as the Ballast Hills. There were no trimming tanks in those days and ships coming in light were ballasted with whatever was handiest and cheapest to obtain, which invariably meant sand. And so we have the Ballast Hills of Ayre's Quay, Hillfield, and the Barbary Coast. On the Northern end of this latter stood a low rambling building forming two sides of a square, which, with the side of the hill as a third, enclosed a sort of court yard open to the east. This building was a combination of courthouse and bridewell. Let into the side formed by the hill was a kind of vault or cave, at the further and innermost end of which were three compartments or cells, each furnished with those instruments of punishment known as stocks. This was "The Cage." The entrance to the vault was fortified by a stout iron studded oaken gate, and although for many years now the building has ceased to be used as a house of correction, the Cage Hill with its cage is still very much in evidence as a place of resort for pigeon fanciers, gamblers, and other such like sportsmen.

In the years following the Great War, the Cage Hill Gang was a force to be reckoned with. It was no mere band of mischievous youths, but a dangerous menace of real concern to the neighbourhood. Woe

Peter

betide the rival gangster or other person who was incautious enough to draw upon himself its vengeful attention. He would probably waken in up in bandages.

The law had no terrors for this gang and the too inquisitive or too daring policeman invariably suffered for his temerity.

On one occasion two detectives called at Hallgarth to make inquiry concerning a young man who had been reported for some minor offence. They had ascertained that he was attending the men's class at the Mission, and, in accordance with the new method of criminal procedure, were desirous that the case should be held over pending a report as to his behaviour during the ensuing month. This was being explained to the leader at the door, while the class waited in suspense to know the reason for the visit.

Protruding chins and lowering brows met the leader on his return.

"Wot did them fellers want?"

"Oh, nothing very much, but, look here, you chaps, don't let us have any occasion for trouble with the police."

"Was it me they were talking about?" asked the member whose case was the very one in question, and at once assuming the correctness of his intuition, he leapt to his feet:

"Come on, lads, we'll do 'em in."

Only a lightning movement and the threat of instant annihilation if they attempted to pass through the door, kept them in the Hall. And so passed another opportunity for a paragraph in the police court news.

Mended Crockery

Oh, they were a wild lot. And yet, as it was in the case of the Apostle Paul, this same fierce energy was, after conversion, as usable in God's hands for good, as previously it had been for evil. For instance - it was during a week of special services - some of the Mission men suggested that their old gang should be looked up, and so a visit was decided upon. It should be mentioned that the stronghold of the Cage Hillers was the above-mentioned Cage, now known as "The Ducket," and used ostensibly as a place for keeping pigeons and also for the storing of coals, these both being very useful items for the purpose of camouflaging its real character. Here the gang were secure from interference and could carry on at leisure their gambling and other nefarious practices, any inconvenient interruptions or suspicious circumstances being immediately notified to them by their touts on duty outside.

This stronghold, then, was the object of the Hallgarth attack.

The night was very dark, but the advance of an unfamiliar band of men was soon marked by the Cage Hill outposts, who at once raised the alarm, and fell back upon their fortress. All lights were extinguished and ammunition prepared. Skirmishing for position and in open order the visitors rushed forward only to be met with a fusillade of coals - a veritable black hailstorm - a complete barrage. Fortunately, owing to the inky darkness and the scattered formation of the attackers, comparatively little damage was done.

It is necessary here to explain that the defenders were in the dark in more senses than one. Being always on the alert against intruders of every description, they did not wait to know who their assailants might be, and, of course, as to their intentions they were completely ignorant. Sufficient for them that a possible enemy was entering their reservation and must be beaten off at all costs. They could not be made

Peter

to understand that this was a friendly call; the rules of gangdom didn't provide for friendly calls on dark nights, nor did they under any circumstances whatever make appointments with, or issue invitations to "chapel folks" or other religious maniacs. This could only be accomplished by "gate-crashing" as practised in the West End - only more so.

And so "gate-crashing" it had to be.

The trouble with the defenders was that it was so dark that friend could not be distinguished from foe, and so it was found advisable to retreat within the Ducket and fasten the door.

The raiders, however, were as well acquainted with the place as its occupants, and soon, with a mighty rush the door was burst open, and amid an inextricable confusion of contesting bodies a well-known voice bawled out the nature of the invasion. This was verified on the production of a light and gangster met gangster - the old and the new - face to face once more upon the old ground, but, oh, with what a difference now; a universe, a whole eternity between them. Well, the Mission party got down to business and a meeting was held - a wonderful meeting - Hallgarth and Cage Hill amongst the coals in Ducket; and for one night the gambling den became a house of God. The following night saw several new Cage Hillers at the Mission.

There were two members of the gang who were absolutely hopeless. They would come to the class meetings - why, it is impossible to say - and there make themselves the bane of the leader's life.

During the course of a meeting they would ever and anon be slipping out to the public house opposite for a "pint" and then return smacking their lips with impudent gusto. So evidently incorrigible were they that any idea of their conversion was relegated to the realms of the

Mended Crockery

impossible. So much so, that it was said to the class leader, "Look here, if you ever win these two wild men to Christ you'll get a medal." Well, well, surely truth is stranger than fiction, but the God of the impossible must have been listening, for, though it was no medal that did it, nevertheless *he got his medal*, and engraved upon it was this inscription: "1st March, 1920."

Peter was one of these two men. He was a Roman Catholic, at least, that august body claimed him as such, though Heaven alone knows what he was in reality. Brought up in one of the most miserable houses of the Barbary Coast, wherein drink and fighting were the natural order of things, he soon found himself imbibing the spirit of the home, both literally and otherwise.

On New Year's Eve - it was in 1912 - while a raging battle was being fought in the house, Peter seized a three-quarter pint bottle of whiskey and drank it, which, of course, left him in a terrible condition - he was then twelve years of age.

From this time until he was fifteen his drinking habits became affairs of everyday life, for, as he was the runner for the home requirements, he always had his own share from bottle or jug as his reward.

At the age of fifteen he set up for himself in this line, being introduced to the public bars by his cousin John, who was now a grown man of seventeen years of age, a Cage Hiller, and a most conspicuous member of the British Army, as will be seen in the next article. During this same year Peter also joined the Army, enlisting in an Irish regiment, and such was now his craving for drink, that he would do anything possible to obtain it. For instance, he would walk out of barracks with a blanket wrapped tightly round him beneath his uniform, which he would sell to the girls in the town for coating material. On one occasion he went out wearing three shirts - other

Peter

men's, of course - three pairs of pants and several pairs of socks, and next morning woke up in the guardroom, having been arrested for fighting in the streets without any clothes on save a pair of pants and some old slippers. He became the crack boxer of the regiment, and also the crack desperado. Gosport, Stafford, and Cork gaols all have his name in their records for varying terms of imprisonment, while his terms in the guardroom are too numerous to mention. Just to recall one occasion - he had been sentenced to fifty-two days' detention, and as this meant no drink, he and another prisoner decided to make a bid for liberty. The only means of escape was a window set high up in the wall, too high to look through, but, by starting with a run from the far end of the cell, and taking the bedstead in its course as a spring board, a flying leap would enable one to reach the window. The trouble was that there was no sill, and, therefore, the first man would have to go through, carrying frame, glass and all with him in his leap. Then again, the height from the ground outside, as well as the possibility of a sentry being on guard, were unknown factors, so that the thing was really a very risky undertaking.

Still, fifty-two days without a drink! Impossible. So they tossed for first man out, and it fell to the lot of Peter's companion to lead the way.

Nothing loth, but, getting a good run, he cleared the cell in fine style, crashing through the window frame with a noise sufficient to alarm the whole regiment. Hard on his heels followed Peter, leaping through the gap left by his mate, to find himself falling through the air from the top of a two storey building...

They carried him in unconscious... his companion was dead.

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And so on throughout the period of the war: absolutely untameable, caring for nothing and nobody, reckless of all consequences, so that his appetites be gratified.

On Sunday, the 10th November, 1918, while attempting to find an outpost, and under heavy shell fire, his commanding officer was shot down. Armed only with a trench axe, Peter dashed out into No Man's Land and brought in the fallen man. He woke up in hospital with his dying officer lying beside him riddled with bullets, and he himself wounded. For this he received the regiment's only distinction - the Military Medal.

It was after leaving the Army under circumstances which it is not wise to mention here, and appearing again in the Cage Hill gang, that he was brought into contact with Hallgarth. And now began another sort of war; the drunken Roman Catholic family plus the priest on the one side, the Hallgarth Men's Class leader plus the power of the Holy Spirit on the other, and Peter, the wild Atheist, in the middle.

All the inducements of wickedness that money could procure were offered him to keep away from the Mission. Pleadings from his people, threats of cursing and thrashing from the priest - he laughed at them all. Was he not the champion boxer of the Royal Irish? What could the Mission folks do anyway? He'd lick them too. But he didn't know the Holy Spirit. No natural man does. Peter had often played with fire, but this was a Fire that would not be played with. It either refined or it consumed.

Often while in the public-house amongst his cronies drinking more devilry into himself the class leader would be kicking his heels outside in the cold waiting for him to come out that he might carry him off to some convenient spot for another tussle.

Peter

And so, though all unconscious of the fact, bit by bit the citadel was undermined, the impregnable rock worn down, and the devil weakened. The Catholics were moving heaven and earth to hold him, some of the methods used being of such a character that the relation of them would never be credited by ordinary sane people.

But they fought in vain.

One night the class leader so far performed the impossible as to get him into a chapel - and Bethesda Free Chapel at that. A Special Mission was being conducted by the Rev. Seth Joshua. Mr. Joshua was no fiery orator, he had no over-powering personality, he preached only the simple Gospel, but at the end of his preaching, Peter, the wild, unbroken, unconquerable dare-devil, rose from his seat, walked down the aisle, fell upon his knees, and into the open arms of his waiting Lord, broken at last - won at length.

It was the 1st March, 1920.

What did it? To be able to answer that is to know God, for nothing that mankind had ever devised could move this man against his will.

* * *

It is now 1931, and in that time thousands of souls have been led to the Saviour by the preaching of this foolish young man. In Scotland, from John o'Groats to Lanark, throughout the whole of Northern Ireland, and in many parts of England he has been used mightily of the Lord in adding to the Church such as should be saved. Scenes of wildest enthusiasm have accompanied some of his evangelistic services. To cite only one: it was in Belfast, and was advertised to begin at 8 p.m. At half-past five the street outside the church was impassable, and so insistent was the crowd that the doors were opened at six o'clock.

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They were closed at twenty minutes past, the church being packed to suffocation. Normally it seated 4,000 persons, but no account could be given of the number present that night. In the long aisles the people stood four abreast, the lobbies were full, and even the stairways leading to the two galleries, and thus they remained until after 11 o'clock, enraptured and spellbound. Almost unbelievable scenes marked the progress of these services, and at the end of the Mission some 600 persons had professed conversion.

This only one of many.

And he is still fighting.

4

John

The conversion of Peter was a tremendous event in the affairs of gangland. The thing was disquieting, they were intensely concerned. This religion business wasn't the thing that they had always pictured it to be. This was different - entirely different - and they didn't understand it.

Religion as they understood it was typified by something soft and lovable - dressed in black with a white bow, a bland vacuous smile on its clean face, while it imbedded steamy tea and warm buns, attending christenings, gushed innocuous naughtiness with giggling girls, read the sporting news and latest French novels, and had the beer brought to the back door.

But this - this had them beaten. It was the subject of discussions in the bar, and was argued out over drinks, the dominoes, and the cards. The caricatures in the common music halls didn't get anywhere with this Hallgarth crowd. The fatuous, psalm-singing drivellers of the street corners and open-air meetings were harmless enough, and fair enough sport for the cheap sneers and ridicule of the bold lads of the Ducket, but these - well, as one of them said, these are just blooming butchers - only of course he didn't use quite these words.

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And they were troubled, oh yes, they were troubled, for the fool was being answered according to his folly and he didn't like it. There was one, however, whose troubled mind differed from that of his colleagues. *They* were troubled at the fact that this new force had not only dared to penetrate into their private seclusion, but had also begun to show a winning hand. *He*, on the other hand, was troubled at the sheer impotence of himself to be the master of his own soul, while his cousin Peter was already climbing the heights of respectability and honour, free from all the grovelling misery and wretchedness of the gambler's and drunkard's home. This was a man named John. His early life had been that of a street Arab, keeping his body and soul together from the age of seven onwards by selling newspapers in the streets. At the age of ten, however, his connection with the literary world was brought to an abrupt termination, for he found himself in the police court, charged with breaking the law, and was sentenced to a reformatory school for six years.

From a secular point of view the systems known as Reformatory and Borstal are deserving of great commendation, for, given sympathetic and intelligent leadership, the reclamation of young men and women from vice and criminality can be attended with a large measure of success. The mere fact that they are diverted from the hardening process of prison routine and influence is in itself a performance worthy of praise, and when to this is added the positive stimulus given by these institutions towards the establishment of a higher morale, greater self-determination, and a cleaner outlook upon life in general, the only wonder is that results are not more convincing than they are.

It is estimated that of those admitted to Borstal Reformatories, only 35% again come into conflict with the law, which means that of every three potential criminals so treated, two become useful and law-abiding citizens.

John

This, of course, is all to the good, *but* - and herein lies the pith of the whole matter from the Christian's standpoint - against all this it has to be conceded that no scheme has yet been devised, no system of education or training instituted, and no method of treatment found which will reform the radically bad man into a physically, mentally, and morally clean, sound, and healthy citizen. It is with him as with the rotten apple, all the polishing in the world won't make him a good one.

Christianity, on the other hand, being, in the last analysis, not a system at all, but a Person, it can be, and is, truly said of Him - we challenge all representations to the contrary - that He is able to save to the *uttermost* all who come unto God by Him, and furthermore, that there is none other under heaven who can do so. And this, again, not out of a mere sentimental deference to custom and upbringing, but from the cold, hard, unshakeable facts of practical and sometimes even bitter, experience.

In six years John was reformed.

As captain of the school he was a model of clean, upright British boyhood; admitted into close friendship with the Headmaster, by whom he was held in high respect and esteem. Thus at the age of sixteen he was ready to face the world once more, and, with earnest counsels for his future welfare and with a heart beating high with hopeful aspirations, he was sent forth again into the battle of life.

Into the Barbary Coast.

And at this same age of sixteen he became as inveterate a gambler, as confirmed a drunkard, and as vicious in his habits as any Barbary Coaster of twice his age.

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This was in 1914. The war broke out and he enlisted in the army, giving his age as twenty, and there went from bad to worse, thoroughly depraved, and utterly reckless of all consequences, so that C.B. and guard-room became quite ordinary affairs of life.

At the age of twenty he was finished with the army and came home with money to burn, and, depend upon it, he burnt it. He married a young girl and immediately turned love's young dream into a purgatorial reality. Even the wedding day itself was eloquently illustrative of the joy that was to be, for the house was broken to pieces in the fracas that followed the ceremony. Fifteen members of the wedding party stood in the Police Court dock the next day, and the bride was summarily ejected from her new home by the enraged landlord.

The character of John and his "Barbarian" companions of the Cage Hill is fitly shown in an incident which occurred about this time. One of them having brutally ill-treated another, the latter availed himself of the opportunity offered by a dark night to slash his persecutor with a razor. Mis-judging his distance in the dark, he missed the throat aimed at, and opened the man's chest from shoulder to shoulder, necessitating his immediate removal to the hospital and the insertion of twenty-seven stitches. This, however, as a lesson, seems to have been wholly ineffective, for a little while after his recovery, he was imbecile enough to provoke the displeasure of certain Cage Hillers by a further exhibition of his brutality, and so it came about that one night two of them lay in wait for him as he came past their corner, when, without any warning, he was beaten to the ground and kicked into unconsciousness. Then, with the victim helpless and at their mercy, the utterly incredible depth of fiendish savagery attainable by depraved humanity was manifested as they proceeded to batter him out of all recognition. They had almost accomplished their purpose

John

when suddenly the cry of "Police" was raised, and the assailants vanished into the darkness. Of course, nobody knew who were the culprits - nobody ever does in the Barbary Coast - and the police busied themselves with getting the wreck off to hospital where for a long time he hovered between life and death. Had the officers arrived two minutes later it would have been a case for the capital charge; as it was, the man eventually got out again, although he has never been strong since.

It was at this point in his career that the positive necessity for slowing down was forced upon John. His cousin Peter had been converted, his brother Joe had become a member of Hallgarth, and was now appearing in public in a Sunday suit, ay, and moreover, had actually contracted the habit of wearing a collar and tie, and although John had no desire to make such a ridiculous show of himself as all that, he nevertheless deemed it to be expedient that he should mend his ways somewhat.

Poor fool! For all the power he had to accomplish any such hare-brained notion he might as well have desired the new moon.

His dejection at the realisation of his utter impotency made him only the more reckless, and, giving up all hope of retrieving his miserable condition, he plunged deeper than ever into his vicious habits and endeavoured to find in them his only hope - oblivion.

It was on the 31st December, 1920, at eleven o'clock at night that John fell into the hands of the Men's Class Leader, and, too drunk to understand what he was doing, was led into the Watch Night Service at Hallgarth.

And then the strange thing happened again.

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Remember John was drunk; nevertheless the fact remains that that soul of his somewhere within him was pierced by a sword sharper than any two-edged weapon of man's forging.

The gates of that soul were thrown open and a Light that he knew nothing of shone into the black recesses of his being, undermining its foundations, tearing asunder the very warp and woof of his web of life, breaking down all those associations and ideas which four years of debauchery and devilry had built up and *he was convicted of sin*.

Sceptic, don't laugh - yet. Wait. This is no maudlin twaddle; neither is it an indulgence in common platitudes. There is a problem here which we defy all the psycho-analysis in Christendom to solve.

Come you all - every one of you - scientist, philosopher, therapeutician, alienist, or enquiring layman, and tell us by what natural process, by what power of manipulation or reasoning a drunken human being can be convicted of sin. It would be hard indeed to convince such a man of sin at all, but that he should be, of himself, convicted of it - well, now, come.

Surely it is difficult enough in all conscience to obtain from an ordinary intelligent sane man an admission of sin, how much more so a fuddled madman? Call it by some other name, say, for instance, it is human weakness or frailty and he's with you at once. Name it error or mistake and he'll follow. Condone it upon the slightest pretext or the flimsiest excuse and you're all right. They're all decent fellows at the bottom of them - every one of them - and if the end should come, you are showing the proper Christian spirit by writing over them, "Not lost, but gone before,"; or even, "Asleep in Jesus." Bah Ba! Slush, every bit of it. Forgive us if we are abrupt, but the lachrymose sentimentalism which to-day passes for Christian charity is nauseous in the extreme.

John

Sin is an incontrovertible fact which will not be denied. We've been there, and we know.

John was convicted that night in his sin-besotted soul. Perhaps someone says, being in such a condition he didn't know what he was talking about and his conviction of sin was just the result of that condition.

Well, now, that's a fair challenge, and in nine cases out of ten would be plausible and probably correct summation of the position, but John was the tenth case.

In the first place he didn't talk about it at all. *No one knew*. And, secondly, his conviction of sin was something he could not talk about, for he could not explain it even to himself. And so he went home with this new something raging within him, unknown to all save himself. But he could not sleep that night, and he did not sleep that night, and on the following morning - New Year's Day - he was so utterly miserable that he sought out the only solace that he knew of - drink. For four days he drank and drank and drank, every fibre of his being merged into one great endeavour to drown his misery. The pangs of hell gat hold upon him, and Satan was fighting for his very existence, contending and contesting every inch of the way. But was not this a brand being plucked out of the burning? We have a peep into the inner consciousness of the man just here, in an incident, small indeed in itself, yet wonderfully illuminant of the penetrating insistence with which the arrow had entered his soul. He had joined himself during these New Year days to the parents of Peter, as being probably the heaviest drinkers in the neighbourhood, and therefore the most likely to assist him in his search for the waters of Lethe, and it was on the 3rd January that, as they were coming out of a public house, the elder people carrying bottles of whiskey, and he himself following with the

Mended Crockery

beer in a pail - the only one of the household, by the way, and an all-purposes vessel at that - that the Mission party hove in sight. Now in the ordinary course of things the carrying of a pail of beer is something to be proud of, something to boast about, something to flaunt before the envious eyes of the onlookers, but on this occasion - it is scarcely believable - at the approach of the Hallgarth folks John was conscience-stricken. Gone was his bravado, gone his swagger and drunken elation and his countenance fell.

There was no time to escape, so placing down the pail on the pavement he sat upon it, and there remained until the missionaries had gone by. As soon as they were out of sight he got up his beer, gained the house, and in a sweat of wretched torment, proceeded to soak himself into insensibility.

But his struggle was all to no avail for on the evening of the next day, that is, the 4th of January, 1921, shaking from head to foot with the effects of alcoholism, sick with it all, or, as he himself says: "*wounded...* for no man on earth knows what I suffered during these four days," he slunk back to the Mission and slid into the back seat. During the service he was in wretchedness and agony, but when, at the end, the preacher offered to all who would come the peace and pardon of God's forgiveness, he, without pressure from anyone, roused himself, marched down the length of the Hall and fell upon his knees before God for the first time in remembrance.

John was saved.

Two nights afterwards his young wife knelt with him and from that time until this present day in 1931 he has been entirely free from all desire for drink, gambling, smoking, and other old habits, having said farewell to them all for ever.

John

And these last ten years? To tell of these would require a whole volume. First, with Peter and afterwards by himself, he has been doing the work of an evangelist throughout the length and breadth of the three kingdoms, doing great things, marvellous things, things which must be seen to be believed.

Just one little incident.

With a certain amount of misgiving Peter and John had opened up a campaign in Coleraine which, previous to their visit, was a noted stronghold of the stern and dour Presbyterianism of Northern Ireland and rigidly opposed to anything savouring of popular evangelism. No church would open its doors for a "Special Mission" on any account and so they wavered somewhat, but -

"O ye of little faith... if God be for us who can be against us?"

One minister was prevailed upon to open his church to them - and then things began to happen.

It appeared that this effort on the part of the two young men coincided with another movement which was at that time under way in the town. At Coleraine is situated one of the largest shirt factories in the world, and the workpeople of this factory have a "yearly box" which culminates in a monster Annual Ball and Dance. The date of this Ball was the Friday following the close of the Mission and the price of the tickets was 7/6 each. It will be obvious, therefore, that there were two rival parties at work, each seeking to counteract the other's work. By the second week of the Mission Peter and John were in full swing and the "big push" into the ranks of the unconverted began.

In one night seventy factory hands decided for the Lord Jesus Christ and seventy dance tickets were returned to the committee on the

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following morning, to the great amusement, and also, let it be said, to the sarcastic derision of that body. But when, night after night, and morning after morning, this sort of thing was repeated, the amusement died away, and the affair took on a more serious aspect. *The dance tickets were reduced to 3/9 each*, and the general public was invited to purchase - an innovation - but the ramp had set in and would not be stayed. The third - and, as arranged, the last - week of the Mission saw the Gospel carrying all before it. The church was filled each night to its utmost capacity - 2,000 persons inside and hundreds unable to obtain admission; and this, be it remembered, in a place whose total population is less than 10,000. So serious to the usual routine had this menace become that the manager of the local Picture Hall scrapped his entire programme and obtained from Scotland a special picture, entitled "Rob Roy," together with a full band of Highland pipers. Processions were instituted through the town led by the Pipers, while, on the other hand open-air gatherings and processions of young converts were organised by the Missioners. And so throughout the week.

The great Picture and Band was an utter failure. The Picture Hall manager himself admitting to a loss of £700 on the venture. And, oh dear, oh dear, to crown all this, *his wife was converted!*

The Ball and Dance committee were still hoping against hope, but when it was announced that in deference to the insistent demands of the converts the Missioners had decided to prolong their visit by another week all their hopes were shattered.

A grand farewell and winding-up meeting was arranged for the Friday night - the night of the Ball - and so it came about. And what a night! Scenes of enthusiasm, rejoicing, tears, and laughter, which we

John

prosaic folks over here would find simply unbelievable unless we had seen it with our own eyes.

And the result? Over 1,200 souls won for Christ, and the great Annual Dance an absolute “wash-out” and total wreck.

As an illustration of the out-and-out character of the conversions at this and other Missions held in Coleraine the following is worthy of mention:- In one of the chief hotels of the place a large bill hangs in the window, which reads:

CLOSED
for ever as a Public-house.
THE OWNER
has been
CONVERTED.

And so the work goes on.

Here and elsewhere John is showing to all comers the fact that the arm of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save. His greatest joy, in fact, his whole joy, in life is to carry the glad news to his fellows, a work in which the Lord is wonderfully blessing him, thousands of poor lost souls having found the fragrance of salvation through the sweet savour of his words.

5

Piper

It was now evident that a disintegrating process had set in amongst the gangs. One after another of their members became involved in Hallgarth mesh, to be eventually gathered in. Peter's two brothers came in, three brothers and sister of John were received, other gangsters, too, joined up, while parents, relatives and friends attached themselves to the various adult meetings now running at the Mission. The backbone of gangdom, though not broken, was at any rate severely fractured.

The old antipathy and antagonism to anything of a religious nature still remained with them, but its tendency was somewhat weakened by the fact that so many of their friends and relatives were now themselves "religious."

And what emerges from this fact is the certainty that there now arose a peculiar sense of being in some way connected to the place which held in its embrace so many of their own people. This is quaintly shown in an incident which occurred in the end of the year 1921. Some little adjustment was being considered in connection with the conductorship of Hallgarth and two officers had come over from Bethesda to arrange matters. By some means or other the gangs had got wind of this, and they had it in their heads that a battle was to take place - for with them, of course, difference-of-opinion and battle are

synonyms - and as such affairs were as meat and drink to them, they arranged accordingly. The appearance of the Mission leader coming down Church Street was the signal for a gathering of the clans, and, under the leadership of the captain of the Hill Top gang, a motley crowd of some forty or more gangsters came up in mass formation to greet him. Turning to the captain: "Hullo, Job, what's the great idea?"

"Oh, it's alright, sir, they're inside, but we're coming in with you and we'll soon have them out."

"So? And would you mind telling me what you are talking about."

"Why, you know them fellers wot's going to take the Mission off her? Well, when you gives the signal we just plunges for them, and they'll be down and out in a jiffy. You leave them to us, sir, and we'll make them so's their own mothers won't know them."

Well, really, you know, this was something new. This wild, uncouth rabble coming to save the Mission from the "enemy"! Ha! 'twas a great joke. But no, it wasn't a joke - these fellows were in earnest, ay, dangerously so, and they meant business. You see, their people were inside, about to be ill-treated (!) and they were going to see them righted. At this distance of time the matter seems trivial enough, but those who know these men, know that had they once entered the Hall and got a sight of their quarry, things would have been very serious indeed. Something had to be done, and that quickly. Calling, then, the gang captains to one side, they were informed with pithy brevity, without any trimmings, and in language that they could understand without the aid of a dictionary, that their assistance was neither wanted nor would it be tolerated. Moreover, that none but they themselves would be allowed inside. On this understanding then the chiefs were ushered into the back seats of the Mission, with special

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instructions as to their behaviour, while their followers were ordered to remain outside under pain of dire penalties if they disobeyed.

To say that the gentlemen outside were surprised doesn't meet the case at all. They were stunned, flabbergasted. To think that they had actually arranged all this for the benefit of the Mission, and then to be turned down! Of all the base ingratitude - *well*. And so they remained outside disconsolate and disgusted. They could not take matters into their own hands without word from their captains - that would have spelt trouble later on - in capitals. And the captains could not do as they wished with their men, because they were guests of honour inside, and must not lose prestige by being thrown out. And so the thing fizzled out.

When the two church Officers wended their way home that night, so deeply immersed in their own reflections were they, and so blissfully unconscious of the atrabilious tornado lurking round the corner that it seemed a shame to enlighten them, and so they never knew.

Thus a premature election at Bethesda to fill two vacancies was avoided.

There was one man who had not, up to this time, been brought into touch with Hallgarth, owing perhaps to the fact that he was not connected with any of the gangs. This was a man name Mitchell, otherwise the Society Lane Terror, better known as Piper. Although living opposite to the Cage Hill, he, with his four or five companions, held aloof from the regular Cage Hillers, except, it might be, occasionally for a drinking or gambling spree. The extent to which this latter goes on is little dreamed of by people outside the Barbary Coast. Within a radius of a few hundred yards, there are at least six houses where it is practiced day in and day out, and night after night, continually - this, of course, in addition to the ordinary horse-racing

Piper

and football betting and sweepstakes - and it will be readily understood that to keep up this sort of thing requires money and plenty of it. Money, then, they require, and money they must obtain, anyhow or anywhere, so long as they get it.

On one occasion a visit was paid to the shop of the local jeweller and pawnbroker by two of the Cage Hill adherents. One went inside and very civilly asked to know the right time, and being answered, he walked out again, ostensibly closing the door behind him, but in reality leaving it sufficiently ajar to preclude the ringing of the tell-tale bell. The pawnbroker returned to the back premises to attend to his business there, when in went number two - barefooted - and lifted out of the window a tray containing seventy pounds worth of gold rings, and straightway made off with them to the Ducket, where they were distributed round, each ring being allowed to count as of the value of sixpence.

Of course the detectives were soon on the search but the rings were never recovered.

At this sort of thing, however, the gangs were mere novices compared with the society Lane Terror and his mates, while at fighting and real wickedness were as Sunday School scholars to the latter. Piper's great obsession was the getting of money, and there was not a lock or bolt he could not pick or undo if a piece a wire was handy. This had been inculcated into him when he was a boy.

He had a very sweet tenor voice, and, at the age of twelve, his father would take him round the public houses to sing to the assembled companies, and these latter, being of a convivial nature, and liking to be entertained, he soon found himself to be making money in plenty. Then, when he was fourteen, the family fortunes were suddenly augmented, his mother receiving a legacy of nearly two thousand

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pounds. Of this, some twelve hundred pounds was placed in the bank and the bank book given into the keeping of the father so that it should not get lost. Doubtless feeling his responsibility, and presumably for the purpose of giving his whole time and attention to the great charge entrusted to him, the father immediately ceased working - he was an anchor-smith, earning good wages - and began to live like a Chinese mandarin, while his son entered upon an intensive study of the mechanism of locks and the practice of sleight of hand.

At the end of two years the money was finished, father and son having had nine hundred and three hundred pounds respectively. This, too, in addition to the latter's earnings in the public houses as a singer. He was now sixteen and, having had his taste of affluence, poverty was a spectre he dare not face.

He broke into a stable and took out a valuable horse and trap, and, driving it to Newcastle fair, sold the lot for fifteen pounds, which was about one quarter of its value. This brought him for the first time into the hands of the police and he went to gaol for a month. After his release from prison, he allied himself to one Billy Almond, said to be the first counterfeiter in Sunderland. Together they visited all those public houses, particularly countryside inns, where pewter pots were served with the drinks, until a sufficiency of pewter was accumulated for their purpose, and presently Monkwearmouth became notorious for the number of new florins in circulation. So many were there, that the manageress of the Havelock Hotel, in Whitburn Street, having changed away all her money one night until nothing was left but new two-shilling pieces, she awoke to the fact that something was wrong somewhere, and sent for the police. In a few minutes an inspector and sixteen constables had the place surrounded, and, there being no means of escape either back or front, Almond and his confederate dashed upstairs and on to the roof where for a long time they kept the

Piper

police at bay by stripping off the tiles and using them as missiles, together with the chimney pots and stack. Eventually Almond was captured and received five years penal servitude. He was sent to Carlisle gaol, from which he afterwards escaped, being the only man who has ever done so.

Piper evaded capture on this occasion by running down the Klondike (if you don't know where Klondike is, don't bother to find out).

He was now a full blood, continually hunted by the police, and became what is termed a "copper basher." He would go for any policeman who appeared to be coming his way, and so strong and wiry was he that as often as not the officer went down. Of course, Piper suffered for all this when they did get him. One policeman, whose nose he had broken, was so enraged at him that he declared a baton was not hard enough and so, picking up a poker, he hammered him into unconsciousness. This was an occasion on which a great deal of trouble had been experienced in bringing him to the station. He had been frog-marched by a policeman and three civilians, and, although spread-eagled, he was so violent that they dropped him onto the pavement. Immediately he twisted round and, with a sudden movement, kicked two of the civilians through the plate glass window of a large shop, whence they were removed to the Infirmary, one of them in particular being so badly cut that he was sent out on crutches. An inspector who came up during the *mêlée* carrying a walking-stick, had it snatched out of his hand by Piper, who broke it across his knee and flung it into the officer's face. As this was a gold mounted presentation stick, one can understand that the treatment meted out to the culprit was not of a very affectionate nature.

These punishments, however, had not the slightest deterrent effect upon him. Rather otherwise, and he developed into a most vicious and

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hardened criminal, his associates being men of the very worst type of villain. As we have already hinted, the men the gangs were mere blushing schoolgirls by comparison.

A single glance at a few of these companions will be amply sufficient to corroborate this, and, in fact, is all that we dare vouchsafe to the reader.

There was Joe Kirkmans, who found his paramour (he was already married) courting another man. Going into the Wheat Sheaf Inn he procured a chopping axe and hieing him to the home of his lady close by, he put the axe through her head. For this he paid the extreme penalty on the scaffold. Then there was a man named Spinox, who, in a fit of rage, cut off his child's head and threw it into the fire. He, too, was hanged. Another of these companions was J. Owens, who murdered his three children and got penal servitude. There was also Corbett. Piper was courting at this time a girl named Oldcastle whose brother was supposed to have money. This man was visited by Corbett and another of his cronies for the purpose of obtaining this money, but as Oldcastle was too drunk to do anything, and could not be coerced, they severed the arteries of his legs and he died. And so on, *ad.lib.* So dreadful were these men that anyone who believes in the existence of a Supreme Being, is hardly put to it to understand His silence in it all. This surely can be explained only by reference to His infinite patience and long-suffering.

But perhaps He was not so silent after all. Had Piper been allowed to go on, there is no doubt whatever but that he too would have ended his days upon the scaffold. At the age of thirty he had been thirty-two times in prison and cared no more for gaol than he cared for a policeman.

Piper

He was not allowed to continue much longer, however, for, some little time afterwards, he fell from the deck of a ship to the bottom of the Bridge Dry Dock, falling upon his head, and awoke to consciousness stone blind, in which condition he has been ever since.

He was now married, and as his sphere of action was seriously limited by his affliction he had recourse to tatting (collecting rags, bones, metal, etc.) for a livelihood, which he found to be a most profitable business. It has been known for him to have as far as nineteen pounds for his weeks work, and as he still continued his singing in the bars he was as well off as ever - and as vicious. But for his inability to locate her correctly, his wife had been dead before this.

All things, however, have an end, and this wild mad career was drawing to a close.

The spirits of God who go to and fro through the earth, and walk up and down in it, had made their report, the books were opened, and the voice of the archangel was heard:

“Call Piper. Piper is wanted. Go down and bring in Piper.”

It was a Good Friday evening and he was lying in a drunken half-sleep when the sound of music and singing caught his ear and stirred up his bemused senses. There is supposed to be something ethereal about music - it may be so, but there is nothing ethereal about the lives of many great musicians. Quite the contrary. Piper was as full of music as an egg is full of meat in spite of his depraved nature, and so it happened that he got up and made his way to the door and listened.

A concertina was playing and, although he didn't know the song, he rather liked the lilt of the tune. Calling one of the singers over - it was John's brother - he asked what it was. It was “Are you washed in the

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blood of the Lamb.” Well, of course, he was as wise as ever, but would they play it over again? Certainly they would, and they did. By-the-way, did he know Peter and John, the Cage Hillers? Know them? Why, he once fought John’s uncle for an hour and a half until they were both battered to a pulp; and as for Peter, had he not been Peter’s nurse until he was three years old, when the mother left him at the home of the Society Lane Terror the while she went out working? Oh, yes, he knew the Cage Hillers. Well, Peter was down at Hallgarth holding a week’s mission and he wanted to speak to him.

“Speak to me? What for?”

“Oh, come down, he wants you. Come right away, it’s Good Friday, and we’re having a great time.”

He hadn’t the smallest notion of what went on in Chapels and Missions, or otherwise he might have thought twice about it. However, one of the young men - Catchy by name - was so assiduous, so persuasive, that he went down with them, and was placed in a front seat.

But he could not make head or tail of it. He had never been in touch with religion in any shape or form in his life, not even in prison, and it was all foreign to him. “What’s Peter going on like that for?” he asked (Peter at that time preached by the sweat of his brow).

“Why, he’s preaching.”

“Oh, and what’s that? What’s he shouting about anyway?” Presently: “What’s that fellow going to do now?” “Hush, he’s going to pray.” “Pray? what...” but it was no good, he couldn’t make anything of it. And he went home bamboozled. But he liked the singing.

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On the following night, having some money in his pocket, he went out for a "pint." Just as he was entering the public house someone slammed the door and it struck him in the face. Of course he could not see how it was done but the thing so incensed him that he mentioned the fact in lurid vernacular, and turned away in a rage.

Some women passing by accosted him: "Where are ye garn, Piper?"

"A'm garn to - n' a'll not, a'll gan to Hallgarth, ay, A'll gan to the Mission."

"Ho! Ho! Ho! the feller wot can mak' ye a Chrischun can mak' a clock. Dinna be sich a feul."

Just then Catchy came by: "Coming down, Piper? Come on."

"Ay, A'm comin'. Can A get in?"

"Get in? Why, man, we're wanting fellows like you. Come on."

He went in, but it was all as before - he understood nothing of it. However, he was now in the Hallgarth net, and therefore on the following night - Easter Sunday - he was brought in again, and heard the story of Jesus, His death and resurrection.

Well, well, it was all very strange, very weird, very confusing - altogether outside his grasp. It might possibly be true enough but the thing was so utterly new, so entirely irrelative to everything that had been his life hitherto, that his brain would not absorb it. But, as has been previously intimated, there is a Light which troubles very little about the brain until it has found a lodgement in the soul; and the fact that Piper's intellectual capacity was too limited to understand the things of the Spirit was a matter of small concern. What is pertinent here is that Piper had a soul and that that soul was inconceivably dark;

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and what is still more pertinent is that the Holy Spirit was abroad, shedding His Light, and that that Light was inconceivably bright. Add to this that God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, and the only explanation that can be given is arrived at. For, explainable or not, the unquestionable fact, the one irrefutable certainty remains, that on the following day the great transaction was done and Piper was claimed by his Lord. For some years he had not seen the light of day - and never will for that matter - but on Easter Monday, 1922, the Light of Life shone into his darkness, and, although he could not sort out or fathom its meaning, or grasp the why and wherefore of this "newness," this "differentness" which now came over him, one thing he did know, that whereas he could not see, he knew he'd been blind.

Piper was converted. Not one in a hundred believed it, but Piper was converted. Not by reason, not by education, not by experience, not by conscience, not by preaching, not by pleading, not by - oh, what's the use, not by anything. But he was converted, and if Modern Science or Modern Thought can tell us how, we shall be pleased to listen.

We visited his "home" next day. What a house! In a corner a straw mattress which had been given to him. That was the bed. A "Football Echo" spread upon the stone floor. That was the table. A corned beef tin on the hob. That was both kettle and teapot. A jam jar on the "table." That was the tea service. A three-ha'penny cake of bread, quarter pound of margarine, ha'porth of tea, ha'porth of sugar, no milk. That was the feast. And last, but not least, at one side of the fireplace a square stone weighing about three-quarters of a hundredweight. That was the chair. It was this same stone which, a short while before, Piper had lifted in his arms, carried - over to where his wife lay in a drunken stupor, and dropped it on her. Only, in his

Piper

blindness, he hit the wrong place and she wasn't there, and so her life was saved, and, of course, inferentially, so was his.

That, to be sure, was all finished with now. Seated on the “chair” on this particular day, while close by one of the Mission “boys” endeavoured to break a blood vessel or otherwise permanently injure himself by blowing a mouth-organ, was Piper, the new Piper, his unseeing face all aglow with a strange light, a new enthusiasm exuding from every pore. He was holding forth with might and main, his voice stretched to its utmost limit (and that is saying something) and about three notes higher than anything Caruso had ever dreamed of. He was learning the tune of “Washed in the blood of the Lamb.” He was learning his first hymn. The words were to come afterwards.

Time has rolled on since then, but his old haunts have seen him no more. The old associations, the old habits, the old cravings and desires are just simply not - they have ceased to be.

On the other hand, nearly every Mission in the County of Durham has heard of Piper the blind soloist, and what he can't tell about the saving, cleansing, and keeping power of the blood of Jesus Christ his Saviour isn't worth knowing. And his home? Well, you've all got a standing invitation to pay it a visit. It's changed.

6

The Women

It would surely be most unbecoming to omit from these records the part which has been played by the women of Hallgarth.

A well-known author - evidently a victim of the ailment known as gynephobia - writes:

*“Lor but women’s rum cattle to deal with,
The first man found that to his cost,
And I reckon it’s just through a woman
The last man on earth’ll be lost”*

Which, of course, is a very high and noble sentiment and, what’s more, there may be a certain amount of truth in it; but, in the meantime, and between these two extremes, quite a lot of men have somehow managed to exist. We do not know how they have all fared, but this we do know, that of the number there are some - a little few - who would have it written in letters of gold that they have seen the Light of Heaven because their women folk were members of Hallgarth. Men whose lives of sin have been eternally changed by the Holy Spirit of God through the influence, the prayers, and the examples of Christian wives and mothers, ay, and of sisters and daughters too.

Another writer has said:

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“The earthly Paradise and Hell lie in the word Woman.”

Poor chap, no doubt he meant well enough but his diction was bad anyhow, and he was quite obviously suffering from spiritual staphyloma. What he should have realised was that the eternal Paradise and Hell as often as not depend upon the hand that rocks the cradle and rules the world. We have many instances of this fact viewed from both sides.

There was a man who was being dealt with by John - a most promising young fellow. For some time he attended the Mission regularly, and hopes were high concerning him. From being a wild son of Satan, he had begun to quieten down, cutting himself adrift from his late evil ways, and was shaping well for a start in the new life; in fact, he had as nearly reached the point of decision which marks the dividing line between the kingdoms of this world and that of our Lord and Saviour as it is possible to attain to without being actually over, when that woman, his... but no - least said is soonest mended.

He was found hanging in his shop early one morning, having chosen the suicide's way out.

In sharp contrast to this there is the case of the woman who for five years after joining Hallgarth prayed without ceasing for the salvation of her husband. And oh, the joy and laughter on her face when at the end of that time he walked into the Mission and accepted the Lord Christ as his Saviour.

Said he: “D'ye see that woman there? For five years she has been praying for me to be converted. Well, here I am, and here I mean to stay.” Poor fellow! on the following Friday - that is, five days afterwards - he was washed overboard from his boat and in five minutes was at the bottom of the sea.

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The dreadful news came through as his wife was reading his last letter which had just arrived. In it were these words: "Tell Con that I am still holding fast."

Dear heart alive! to think of those five years of soul wrestling and then - this. O Reason! O Philosophy! Expound to us, Why? Why? Why? But there was none to answer, for there was none that knew.

O God, Thou Who dwellest in heavens of brass, break forth from Thy silence and hear the broken sobbing of a woman's stricken soul.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.... Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up, together with them, in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Amen.

* * *

A woman came to the Mission one night in deep distress. Her baby was suffering from meningitis and was dying. The doctor had told her that twelve o'clock that night would see the end. It was her only boy and she was in great trouble. Would we go over?

"But, mother, what can we do? Is there any hope?"

"The doctor says there is none - none whatever; but doesn't it say something about healing the sick?"

"Ah, yes, but that is God's prerogative, not ours. He certainly is the Great Physician and we can always ask Him, but you don't know Him, how then can you believe that He will hear?"

The Women

“Oh, sirs, come over and ask Him and He’ll hear you. There’s no one else can do anything now. Come over or it’ll be too late.”

Two of us went over with the distracted mother and, verily, one look at the little patient was sufficient to confirm the doctor’s ultimatum. All the gateways of the senses closed - unresponsive to every attempt to induce a movement, reflex or otherwise. Alive, but dead - dead, yet living.

“Mother, your boy is past all earthly succour. There is now only One Who can do anything for him - that is, if He will. Do you believe he will?”

“Oh, I believe He will if you ask Him.”

“And if He should restore your son, what then?” and we explained to her the Gospel.

“If He will give me my baby I’ll serve Him all my life.”

We knelt down - three of us - and prayed the fervent prayers which are effectual and avail much, claiming His promise and believing His Word.

At twelve o’clock the baby was still alive.

At one o’clock the baby was still alive.

When daylight came the baby was still alive.

And on the night of the Women’s Sisterhood the mother and baby were both present at the meeting, the little chap as bright and lively as though there’d never been a sunset in the short period of his existence. The mother? Ah..; Hear the sequel. The boy grew up sturdy and strong. All the danger was passed. There was nothing now to

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worry about and the mother's ardour cooled. She became forgetful of her pledge, her first love grew lukewarm and presently the Mission saw her no more at the meetings.

By and by another baby came and anon the age of the first one at his illness was reached, when lo! this too was stricken down. The doctor was called in; it was meningitis. There was no hope, no hope at all – he could do nothing. Ah! what now, mother? Call in the Mission people? Ask for God's forgiveness and healing?

I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.

The little fellow was buried a few days afterwards in the Mere Knolls Cemetery.

* * *

Grandma was a real character. She was the friend of Hallgarth from the very first. "It's the cummin' Mission, mark my words, ay is it," she said in its early days, and she put her faith into works by "cummin'" to the place herself and establishing herself as Grandma-in-Chief of Hallgarth. She had always been a hard-working woman, and it is said that she could carry more upon her head than many a strong man could carry upon his back. Moreover, when once her load was placed, it might remain there undisturbed for as long or as far as she desired to go.

One winter's night she was disposing of the last of her goods and was in the act of taking a half-crown in payment when the coin slipped to the ground. There was a heavy covering of snow at the time and in the darkness the money could not be found, search as she would. But Grandma was not to be done that way. She was two miles from home but that was a mere item – there was a half-crown also two

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miles from home, and it had to arrive there when she did. Measuring, then, the snow for a radius of about two yards, she set down her basket and scooped up with her hands the whole of the marked off portion, leaving not a flake behind. How it was got on her head is not recorded, but there it did get, and off she trudged home with her load. Then the melting process began and eventually, at the bottom of her basket - the half-crown.

Grandma's main trouble after becoming a member of Hallgarth was her "old man." He was a hard man and hard drinker, and when he got into his tantrums, then it was "Look out, everybody."

But still he was her old man and if only he might be won over to her side - oh, how she prayed for the day that would see it. Night after night in the meetings her strong voice with its quaint expressions sent forth its petitions to the God Who neither slumbers nor sleeps. "O Lord, stretch out Thy hand and bring him in frey his evil ways, for A knaa he'll never rue when he lairns of the beautiful holiness and so we'll be altogether in Jesus and won't that be grand. Amen, for Jesus' sake."

Well, to be sure, a matter like that could not remain in Hallgarth unchallenged, and so the Men's Leader got busy in the direction of Auld Cruky.

There is a Scripture which says something to the effect that if evil is done in the green tree what shall it be in the dry? Cruky was now an old man, stern, unbending, grim. What could be done with a man like that? In his younger days, perhaps - but not now, not now. No, it was quite hopeless, the Mission folks were only wasting their time. Ah, but the Mission folks had learned their lesson and they knew better. Their God could save to the uttermost and if there was anything more utter than that, He could get there too, for His arm was not shortened that

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it could not save. And so Cruk remained on the visiting list. One day, after a prolonged drinking bout, he fell ill, and then it was that what sympathy had failed to do, calamity accomplished; that door by which love had so earnestly sought to enter was unfastened by fear. He didn't want to die; he wasn't ready to die; and he knew from what he had been told what it meant if he did die. And so he lay and thought it all out.

Thus it came about that when he got well again his hardness was less metallic, his iron nature more malleable, and presently came the day - the longed-for day - when a little band of missionaries knelt around Grandma's kitchen with the old man and his wife kneeling in the midst of them, and while the tears streamed down both of their faces, he did his best to pray to God for His forgiveness.

And so Cruk was converted. The news spread like wildfire. "Auld Cruky's converted and has joined Hallgarth," and it was all true. Gone was his drinking and cursing and he was a new man. And Grandma? Why she was twenty years younger, and her prayers and praises could be heard outside the Mission walls when she stood up in the meetings.

So things went for a time, when lo! a shadow fell upon her sunlit path; a cold wind came up against her and in its chilling blast her roses fell to the ground and withered. Ah! woe's me! her old man had "broke out," and all the goodness had gone out of life. Yes, it was even so. Old Cruky had gone back again to where he was before - no, not to where he was before; not so bad as that - but he had gone back, fallen from grace, and the face of God was turned away from the little home, and all its brightness became dark.

How now, Hallgarth? What about the God of the impossible now, Hallgarth? He saved the Peters and Johns - young men - but he couldn't save Auld Cruky. Ho! ho! the auld un's beaten them.

The Women

He came no more to the Mission, but took up his post once more at the street corner.

There was one young man, however, with whom he remained on familiar terms, always exchanging a nod and salutation as he passed to and from the Mission, and it was somewhere here that the connecting link lay between Cruiky and Life; for when he was again stricken down with illness this was the man whose company he desired. Many were the talks they had together, long were the discussions about the things that matter, but the old man was more reserved now, there were no tears of repentance this time. He knew he had broken his pledge, he had been a hard man, a stern man, and his word should have been in this as in the other things - inviolable and unbreakable, and he knew it, but he could not forget and forgive. He had broken his pledge, therefore it was irrevocably broken.

But his illness continued and the thing he had done rankled within him. It would not leave him - it would not be resisted. And so he had perforce to listen. He found himself communing with himself. With himself? Well, at any rate, with something within which gave him question for answer, answer for question, debating, challenging, sifting, proving, condemning, censuring, until finally and at long length his eyes were opened and the light came. It was in the stillness of the night with the pros and cons of his present condition open to his consciousness, with the secrets of his being all laid bare before him, that he made his decision once and for all.

The fact of his being ill mattered nothing now, he had summed up the whole situation calmly and collectedly and had settled the thing this time for good and aye. Be it long or short, evil or well, death or life, his purpose was fixed, the fiat had gone forth from his own heart, mind and soul, and now nothing would alter it. He would serve the

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Lord. He would now like to get well again, but, if not - well, it didn't matter, it was all right.

In the morning the saddened face of his wife looked into his. The ever-present, though unspoken question burned upon her lips. Would he not choose the better part? He read the message of her eyes. "Woman," he said - he was a hard old man - "don't think that I'm wandering in my mind, I've got my full senses. I know what I've done, and I know where I am - I haven't lain here all this time for nothing. You can take my word for it that I've weighed up everything and it's all settled. Whether I live or die now it is all right with me for I've made my choice, and I've chosen to serve the Lord as my Saviour. It's all settled; it's all right. Nothing matters now."

It was on Christmas morning that he passed through to the land of peace and rest. It was the day of Christmas tea at Hallgarth, but there was no tea for poor old Grandma. Between sorrow and joy her poor old heart was nearly broken. Sorrow at the loss of her life's partner; joy at the realisation that he was not lost but only gone before.

We knelt round the bedside and prayed, and then the voice of Grandma raised itself through the tears: "O Lord, Ye've seen fit to take him away, but A'm not sorrowin' like them what's got no hope, for in me heart A'm glad that Ye've tuk him instead of lettin' him fall again. Ye know how he came afore and he fell away, but, Lord, when he cum back again Ye said 'Now A'll have him afore he can slip away again,' and so Ye stretched forth Ye' hand, and Ye tuk him home to be with Jesus afore he had a chance to get away and fall, and now A know A'll see him again for when me time comes A know he'll be waiting with outstretched arms to welcome us in and so we'll be together for ever and ever with the Lord. Amen. For Jesus' sake." And that was as far as Grandma could get - the rest was sobbing.

The Women

We don't vouch for the theology of that prayer but we are sure the angel-inspector checked it through to the golden alter for its sacred simplicity and the beauty of its holiness.

7

The Outcast

St. Clair was a frail looking old body, but - you've heard of a tight handful, haven't you? She was just that. In fact, in the years gone by she had been more than a tight handful to her husband and family. Never was such a woman for blighting the home with her ways. Drinking, swearing, fighting; fighting, swearing, drinking, from morning till night, until life in the home was unbearable. Everything that could be turned into money went to the pawn shop and the proceeds were immediately turned into drink. Her children, as they grew up, refused to live with her and wandered off in various directions to fend for themselves. She was knocked about by her husband, turned out of doors, thrashed, threatened, coerced, pleaded with; but all was useless; she was beyond redemption.

It was on a cold dreary night with the drizzling rain soaking through everything that, with everyone's hand turned against her and everyone's curse upon her head, the miserable wretch was thrust forth, turned adrift into the streets to live or die - preferably the latter. Cold, wet and shivering, homeless and hopeless, she wandered aimlessly about, and was passing an open doorway in Church Street when a banging and bumping sounded from the stairs in the passage, and like a projectile came a bundle of clothes hurtling through the doorway. She went to look at the bundle, when, lo, and behold, it got

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upon its feet and disclosed itself to be - Peter! The weekly maelstrom was in progress upstairs and the boy Peter had been lending a hand. It was the woman's first acquaintance with him whose next appearance upon the page of her life's history was to mean so much. For the present, however, he meant nothing to her. Drink was what she craved for and he had none to give. What were his troubles when compared with hers? He could go back again in the morning; he had his companions for the night; he could get food and drink somehow; while the drink that everything within her demanded was unobtainable. So he passed out of her view, and she wandered on bedraggled and wretched, an outcast.

Outcast! *Outcast!* How many - nay, how few, how very few have the faintest conception of the meaning, the real meaning, of that word. Outcast! Oh, the soul-rending, wild, surging, tumult of conflicting emotions in its train. The pathetic self-sympathy, the rebellious indignation at the enormity of the punishment for the so human crime, the hopeless outlook, the stark fear, the hunger, the fatigue, the callousness, the maddening desire for retaliation, the utter, utter despair! And she, with her little baby huddled up in her arms, was an outcast. Mocked by some, shunned by all, wanted by none, surely existence had ceased to attract and death seemed bliss. But she didn't die, though how she managed to live is known only to Him Whose knowledge embraces the affairs of even the odd sparrow. Slinking into open backdoors when the darkness of night covered all with its friendly mantle, she would creep into the comparative shelter of wash-house or other outbuilding and there rest her weary limbs upon the unresponsive bosom of the cement floor, being always careful to leave again before the occupants became aware of the stranger in their midst. Then on again through the awakening streets, wandering, trudging, slouching, lounging, now on a door-step, now at

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a public-house door, wither-hither, anyhow, anywhere; a piece of human flotsam which none would claim, and with no salvage value.

Are there no homes for the reclamation of these strays? Yes, but they don't supply drink in them. What of the workhouse? No use - there's no drink there. The Police? She wasn't sufficiently troublesome to the Police to be interfered with. And so she kept her freedom, her rags, and her dirt, existing only for one purpose, admitting only one struggle, the obtainment of that which would satisfy - but never did - her unquenchable thirst. And so on throughout many months - unkempt and travel-stained; often in extremity, but never repentant; often defeated, never subdued - driftweed.

Some years elapse and the scene has changed. The strange arrangements which men call the vicissitudes of life, variously attributed to Providence or Nemesis according to their creed, had brought together again husband and wife and she was living at home. Changed? Not one whit. Drinking, swearing, fighting; fighting, swearing, drinking, and worse than ever. Unmoveable, irreclaimable, totally lost to all sense of womanhood and as hard as nails.

It was a calm evening in August and she was sitting at the open window brooding, her uninterested gaze fixed upon the building opposite. Snatches of song came through its open windows and fell upon her ears but they had no meaning for her. Hallgarth had no point of contact with her scheme of things, and she brooded on. Presently a man's voice was heard, low at first, but rising gradually higher and higher until at last she could hear the words of the speaker coming over the intervening space with piercing clarity. What a voice that man had! Surely she had heard that voice before; now who of all her acquaintances could possibly be in a place like that? There he was again, raising his voice so that every word came over to the listener

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with perfect clearness. What was he saying? *“For scarcely . . . righteous man . . . die yet . . . good man . . . dare to die.”* Oh that’s it, someone lecturing about the war and about men dying for one another. Whisht! there he is again: *“But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”* Whatever is he talking about now? While we were yet sinners, Christ . . .

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

She was a poor, uncultured, illiterate woman and knew nothing of the Word of Life, but sitting there at the open casement, something - she knew not what - but *something*, “just like a flash,” as she said afterwards, came over her, and, rousing her from her lethargy, decided her to go over the way to the mission to hear what it was all about. The speaker was the hero of the bundle – Peter - and he was expounding with no uncertain sound the Gospel of the seeking Saviour for the straying sinner.

We have no means of knowing the workings of the Spirit upon the soul of the woman on that August night, for she is quite unable to either analyse or define her feelings, but it was with her as with those of old when the angels proclaimed the glad tidings of great joy to all men. We are told that “they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them . . . But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Which is just what St Clair did. She went home and she wondered and she pondered. But the seed was sown. There was no appearance of fruit yet - not even a leaf, but the germ was sprouting below out of sight and the new life and growth had begun. She didn’t drink anymore, her bad language ceased, the continued refusal of her scattered family to hold correspondence with her began to hurt, and,

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most astonishing of all, the usual antagonism and ill-treatment of her husband was received with meekness of spirit and without retaliation. She became a regular attender at Hallgarth and in the prayer meetings she began to take part, the subject of her prayers always being her husband and family - that they might be won for the Lord, and thus it went on until November when, at a special gathering in Bethesda to bid farewell to Sister Elizabeth, she marked the occasion by standing up in the Church and openly proclaiming herself to be a child of God through Jesus Christ her Saviour. When, some little time afterwards, clad in her white robe, she was baptised and received into Church fellowship her cup of joy was indeed running over and she could sing with all the fullness of her soul -

*'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's and He is mine,
He drew me and I followed on
Charmed to confess the Voice divine.*

And who, she now asks, having had such a taste of heaven, could ever think of going back to earth? Not she, under any circumstances. Nor you either, dear reader, nor you either, *if you'd ever been an outcast.*

8

Our Mabel

The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the whole course of nature; and is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts... is tamed, but the tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison. Which same was Mabel's complaint. Language? Phew! Captain Kettle in his most lurid moments, had no chance whatever. Now a scorching, blasting, volcanic fury; anon, a vindictive, pitiless, bitter, biting cat; or again, a vile, filthy, horrible, breath-poisoning virago. Such was "our Mabel". Small of build and girlish in appearance, the sceptic might well be excused for doubting this slim piece of femininity as the source of such blasphemous oaths and profanity. Yet it was so. Her vocabulary was a revelation, her lung power marvellous; and all the priming necessary to set in motion this soul-singeing display was a "couple of gills." To be sure she had a bad husband, but then *que voulez vous?* He demanded of her what she would not deign to grant. He ordered her to spend the evenings in the house - which, by the way, was a really nicely set-up house - but she decided otherwise, and of course there was trouble - heaps of it. He threatened terrible things if she did not stay indoors; she, on the other hand, after a night spent in her usual haunts, would arrive home well fortified with the cup that inebriates but does not cheer, and would reply his blows and cruelty with such hair-raising Gehennic obscenity that the very

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demons themselves must have shrunk back into the abyss shuddering with awe and fear, with Satan himself almost blushing beneath his blistering ectoplasm. And this was “our Mabel.”

There is no mistake about it, she was a desperate proposition. And a strange paradox. When the storm was over she would sit down and weep! Not the wingy puling of the over-mastered soul; not at all; but the passionate tumultuous grief of the heart broken with bitter distress. Neither was it the reaction which brings penitence in its train. Repentance had no place in her make-up. She had no room for such sloppy tomfoolery. No, her sorrow sprang from other sources altogether. In the first place, she was physically incapable of mastering her husband. He would beat her to a jelly; while the sting of her words was partially lost upon him, seeing he was exceptionally deaf, though by no means was he dumb. Then again, her strident temper suffered such stress and strain that something had to break somewhere to relieve it; and finally, the whole ineffectiveness of the strife, the mordacious, the immitigable vengeance ever marking the winding-up of her pleasures made existence a miserable farce. And she wept. She was sick of her life - fed up.

There were several children in the house, some them up-grown, and others quite young - one a baby.

With such conditions and environment surrounding them what could be expected here but temperamental deformity? The sociologist and psychologist will certainly be at one regarding the inevitable resulting characters of these young victims, for what *could* be expected - was anything but wickedness *possible*? Undoubtedly they were a pretty wild lot, there's no gainsaying that; and when they put in an appearance at Hallgarth there were frequently sad hearts among the teachers. As wild as any was little Flo, eight years of age.

Our Mabel

Incorrigible to a degree, she was destined (if the good die young) to live to a ripe old age. But, as we have said before, God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, and Flo was the instrument of His choice on this occasion to bring about His purpose.

A social supper and dance was being held at the local public house, and Mabel, in spite of her husband's warnings and threats, was present. And this, too, in spite of trouble looming from another quarter. She had managed to get herself into the toils of a notorious moneylender in the district, who, "just as a mere matter of form, you know," had obtained her signature to a bill of sale upon her furniture, and although the borrowed money had been repaid over and over again, it was still owing (all the payments being merely interest on arrears) and now she was threatened with the loss of her home if the amount in full were not immediately forthcoming. To meet such a demand was just simply impossible, and therefore disaster was imminent. Her husband knew nothing of all this, and what would happen if he should get to know - it was unthinkable, her life wouldn't be worth a moment's purchase. And so in spite of, or perhaps, rather because of, this sword of Damocles hanging over her head, she went to the social supper and her beer.

As expected, she reaped the aftermath upon her return and on the following morning presented a sorry spectacle indeed. Her face battered and bruised, her slim figure half smashed, and the air still reeking of vitriolic brimstone and sanguinity. She cried all that day.

There was a special mission running at Hallgarth then, meetings for children being held an hour earlier than the main adult services, at which, before leaving, the youngsters were impressed with the necessity of informing their elders to come. Little Flo was one of these, and, although no logical reason or consecutive sequence of

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movements can be found to account for it, the fact remains that Mabel, accompanied by and in charge of her eight-year-old daughter, was present at Hallgarth upon the night following the social supper. Naturally, she was unable to take any active part in the service but she understood it all well enough. At the same time she understood it was not for her, for she was entirely outside the pale. She found her way outside at the close of the meeting and was met by John. He began to speak to her and pointed out more fully the way of life. Would she have it? What, she? a - fat lot of use her - - thinking of any such thing. She might at a pinch give up the drink if that would do, but to forego swearing and blasphemy, that was quite impossible. It was so part and parcel of her nature that it could never by any possibility be rooted out. She went home and wept bitterly all night. Nevertheless on the following night little Flo once more took upon herself the business of getting her mother out and away to the Mission, and so again came along to Hallgarth. The message was very plain and the way seemed so easy as explained by the preacher, but then, what did he know about life - her life? The idea that she should ever be changed! the thing was so utterly impossible, so completely beyond and outside of ordinary common sense that she felt like speaking her mind upon the subject. However, there was no opportunity here of holding forth and so, out of very vexatiousness, the safety valve was opened up and she gave vent to tears.

John came along and invited her into the Vestry for a quiet talk about it. But she only cried the more, with little Flo now joining while at the same time supporting John in his request for a talk in the other room.

But it wouldn't do, she knew there was no hope for her, that tongue of hers was an obstacle which nothing on earth could overcome.

Our Mabel

But what earth could not do perhaps heaven could. Would she not make her choice and give God a chance to prove the truth of His Word?

“It’s not a ha’porth of good, but I’ll tell you what. If He can keep me for twenty-four hours without swearing, I’ll believe that He can save me. There, that’s an offer.”

Well now, the unexplainable has to be again recorded. She had never in remembrance gone for such a period with a clean tongue, in fact she was totally incapable of carrying on ordinary conversation without using bad language. It was an integrant of her system and was both chronic and automatic. Any idea that she should forego this habit was just silly - as well ask her to forego breathing, the one was as instinctive as the other. And with that conviction firmly settled in her mind she went home.

There was no beating that night, but she was upset somehow. Something was amiss, a strangeness in everything about her was apparent. It wasn’t her husband. The home? No, that was usual. The chatter of the children? Not that either. What was it? There was a something wanting somewhere. Now what... She went to bed. Next morning she was in haze. There was queerness about, an unsettledness, and she remarked upon her perplexity when suddenly she *caught herself* not swearing. Her astonishment was tremendous. Not so much that she was not using her usual bad language, but that she had discovered herself in the act. Until now she had been quite unaware as to when she was profane, the whole thing was reflex and automatic, but now here was the involuntary entering upon the volitional plane, and she was *realising* that she was speaking without oaths. Of course she knew that she could blaspheme if she would, but she also knew that she wasn’t doing so. Previously, whether she would

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or not, she did. And the realisation of this wonderful, this astounding fact was nearly too much for her.

Have you ever been in a London particular - one of these pea-soup fogs, you know, through which the people of the metropolis grope, and fume, and fret, and lose their way?

Imagine yourself in one of these dark unhealthy mists, breathing in its damp chilling misery, and then imagine that in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, it is dispelled and the sun shines forth in all his glorious brightness and warmth and the air is beautiful and fresh with roses sending forth their fragrance everywhere; and you have a faint conception of the revelation which was Mabel's when her eyes were opened to the fact that she was speaking without vulgarity. This revelation was the centre of the first twenty-four hours within her knowledge that she did not curse and swear.

In the vestry at Hallgarth that night she gave herself into the care and keeping of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who had shewn her so very plainly that He really could save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

This was in 1922 and needless to say she has used no uncouth words since that day; more than that, she has had no desire to do so; and still more again, she has not, even in moments of stress, been tripped into any involuntary relapse. It's all gone.

On the other hand, her voice is often heard in Hallgarth giving forth the Word of Life both in song and speech, and even in Bethesda it is not unknown as also in other chapels and missions in the town and district. Her debts? All paid long since.

9

The Righteous Woman

The wisdom of the Serpent is proverbial. More subtle than all the creatures of God, Perfect in beauty, full of wisdom. And never was that subtlety more clearly exhibited than in the Garden of Eden. Why tempt Eve rather than Adam? Surely if the head be gained the body will follow? Ah! but he was wondrous subtle. One may not speculate upon the possibilities of the temptation of Adam by the Adversary. It may be he was sufficiently self-satisfied to be indifferent to the Draconian innuendoes; again, it is just possible that he would issue a demand for credentials; or he may even have resented the interference of another lord of creation. Who knows? But in any case what fellowship hath light with darkness or son of God with Satan? And yet - and yet, do they not mingle? Is there no shadow in the sunshine? Yes, if there is a substance in between. And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Not so, saith the Serpent. Hath God said...? Surely not. See the pretty thing, mark the desirable thing, the appetizing thing. Who dares? Who is brave beyond mere knowledge - who will leap without looking if only love be offered at the other end - and bear suffering afterwards without complaint? Not man; only woman; foolish, impulsive, shrinking, defenceless, dare-devil woman. How often is it said when clouds appear in men's lives, when evil shews its ugly visage among the things of virtue, "There's a woman in it"? And how often is it true? Strange being! Strange

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paradox! And stranger than all things else, - yea the strangest of all - the way of a maid with a man.

Two canny girls were Martha and Maggie, good Churchgoers, lately confirmed, regular attenders at Service and both courted by the same man - no, no, not a man, a drunken lascivious brute. Now who can understand that? What writer of fiction would offer that to his readers? Eve on good terms with the Serpent? Exactly. Such was the state of affairs way down in the Barbary Coast.

He was not a big man by any means, quite the contrary, but it was said that he was the worst man in all the district, which is a most daring statement to make. Really he was a very bad man, a low, common man, a man who, although working for a good wage as working men's wages go nowadays, found his seven pounds per week all too insufficient to meet his requirements, for he could easily get through that small sum any Saturday afternoon. He was therefore on the lookout for a good hard-working girl who could provide him with a home and all the necessaries of everyday life, or, as he himself put it: he wanted a wife, and when he got her she would jolly well have to keep him. And so he courted Martha and Maggie, and while Maggie was his fancy, Martha was the real worker and money-getter. She would get on and prosper where many would starve; was up and doing while others were wondering how. Thus it came about that Mr. Parasite, having weighed up all the pros and cons of the situation, decided that Martha was the girl for him. He therefore married Martha and went on courting Maggie. her companion. Strange psychology, stranger humanity, still stranger love! Who can know it?

Martha's is no isolated case, for, let a man be ever so degraded, ever so repulsive a wretch, he can still find a woman who will give herself to him, ay, and who, in spite of all the torment and devilry he

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may visit upon her, will yet stand loyal and true to him through all her sufferings.

Such was Martha's case. The more vile and vicious he became, the harder she worked to keep herself and her home respectable. When the children came and her responsibilities increased, the struggle became greater still, much greater, even too great, and presently her health began to fail. It was then that the real brutality of the man shewed itself. As her earning powers decreased so did his fiendishness increase. For instance, on the occasion of her father's funeral she was sitting with her sorrowing mother when her husband walked in. Without saying a word he twined his fingers in her hair, threw her down upon the ground, and in this fashion dragged her from the room, through the passage and on to the pavement outside. And why? Because he wanted money and she was idling her time there instead of getting it. What could she do? She gave him what money she had and then for many weeks saw him no more. He had gone to his lady-love.

The struggle became now most bitter. Failing health and four children, no wages coming in, outrivalled by her erstwhile bosom companion, small wonder that her grip of Christianity and all it means to the sad and the weary, weakened. If there was a God of love, as the parson said, how could He..? Why was it..? What was it all for? etc., etc. She had never done anyone harm, she had been as good as her neighbours and even better than many. She had paid her way and she was a righteous woman - she knew she was.

Yes, she was a Churchwoman, but there was one thing she lacked, one thing of which she was entirely ignorant. She knew nothing of that Power within which overcomes the world, which gives a peace and comfort different from that of the world, which witnesses with our

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spirits if we are children of the living God. The Spirit which giveth life and hope and joy was unknown. And except man have this Spirit of Christ he is none of His. "Ha!" says the Sage, "the old, old, fairy-tale; the old familiar ring of the decrepit and almost defunct traditionalism. The old puritanical literalism with all its musty savours of narrowness, of bigotry, of dogma. These things as fundamental tenets of belief, have passed and the intellectual light of modern thought has relegated to the scrap heap of unwanted shibboleths all such moth-eaten relics of superstition and priestcraft. Here is a woman who, to the best of her ability, has done what she could, and shall she not stand in the hereafter as bright as any - that is, if there be a hereafter? Why surely." But stay. What was it that changed Con – a rampant, raging, revolutionist into a God-fearing upright citizen? What was it that operated in the lives of Peter, John, Piper, Auld Cruddy and others? It was not their goodness, they had none. It was no power of their own for the thing was contrary to their nature. No, it was a power from without coming within; a Power which, coming within, inverted, everted and converted each human soul into a new creation, so that the lost became the found and the dead became the alive again.

This is no myth or fairy tale - it is an open challenge to the world with all its isms and ologies to controvert if it can. *And it can't*. Well, but then, these were evil and admittedly in need of reformation; the woman, on the other hand, was admittedly a good woman, and common justice, if not Christianity, demands that she be not turned down. She was good. Well, yes, she was good, which of course, at best is but a relative term, but, waiving that for a moment, what then? She was good, but - she was not living! To be sure she had a biological existence, but she was *not living*. Do you understand? "He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son shall not see life." This is a

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hard saying who can hear it! Nevertheless, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God.

And with all the good will in the world, an oaken beam may be a wonderfully good beam, a really good piece of wood, but it will never produce acorns, for, in spite of all argument, goodness and life are not synonymous.

Martha lacked the essential Spirit-life and as her strength turned to weakness, so her goodness gave place to complaining doubt. To her, her husband was bad enough before, but now he was unendurable. He, in turn, became so exasperated that he began to look round for means to get rid of her. If only he could drag her down, even to the workhouse, he would be happy. But she could always manage to support herself and her children and so he sought out other ways and means.

It was on the occasion of her mother's death that he lay in wait for her to come home. He had by some means procure a jar of vitriol, and, the night being dark, he chose a suitable hiding place and set himself to wait. He waited and waited - four hours he waited but she did not come. The God whom, in her misery, she had cried to and reproached, was watching, and she was prevented from returning to her home that night.

In retaliation for being thus frustrated, the man got together all her clothing and linen and, pouring the vitriol upon it, destroyed the lot. On the following day she came back home and then his drunken rage found vent, and he visited upon her all the pent-up spleen of his brutal nature. He left her half dead, her body broken, her teeth knocked out, her soul crushed, and repaired himself to the home of his paramour, Maggie, thenceforward to take up with her his permanent abode.

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Martha recovered, but was destined to be an invalid for the rest of her life. On one occasion, after a surgical operation had been performed upon her, she grew very weak and felt she was sinking. What then? Why she was as good as the next and if there was a God he would see her through somehow.

That night she had a dream (it was in the time of the Great War, when her son Tom was at the Front) and she dreamt that she heard the voice of her son calling to her from a place of radiant light and beauty.

In the midst of the horrors of war and death, Tom had been brought to a realisation of the facts of existence, and the Great Light had reached his soul amidst the Great Darkness, and he was a converted man. His mother had been informed of this and so it is perhaps not strange that in her dream he should he heard calling out to her "Be ye also ready. Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Lord cometh." Without doubt the spiritualist with his clairvoyance, his psychometry, his telepathy, his trance perceptions and other such like humbug, will seize upon this relation with glee, and will expatiate upon it at length as a proof of the verity of his *malade imaginaire*. We have no desire, however, to be supporters of any such superstitious mummery. The creed which has its foundations in the vapourings of human weakness, both physical and moral, is not to be mentioned in the same breath with that based upon the experience and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Let the dead bury their dead.

We therefore give to the dream its proper place. What really matters is the fact that she began to think "Be ye also ready - Tom's voice - well then, I must not be ready." She endeavoured to see wherein she came short, but failed to do so. What had she to do? She had done her best, what more could be demanded? And yet the dream

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was so vivid that it would not be put aside. "Be ye also ready. Be ye also ready." Oh, for light in her darkness. Oh, for an answer to her questionings.

It came in a strange fashion. She received word that her son had fallen in battle and had joined the great majority. His Testament was sent on to her with two passages specially marked off and underlined. They were these:

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not."

and,

"Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me... I go to prepare a place for you."

She began to read the Testament, a Book she had been comparatively a stranger to until now, and although she read much that she could not wholly understand, she prayed that she might get well again and be prepared to meet her God. At long length the time came that she was up and about again and then began her quest for light.

Hallgarth was over the way - what about trying Hallgarth? She had heard of things happening at this Mission. She would go over and see what was to be seen. And so she came. And then what happened? Well, now she cannot properly explain; she knows that all her light went out, all her goodness looked dark, all her life seemed death. Her pleasure, when she had any, had been of the world worldly. She had been unequally yoked together with the things of this life, in marriage and money-making, in manner and method, in misfortune and misery. She had known no peace or rest of either soul or body. Much serving

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had been her lot and the better part was unknown. Now she *knew*. A gladness came into her life, a newness, a light which she had never known before, and presently she could sing with an unexplored joy and out of a full heart:

*Oh, the peace my Saviour gives,
Peace I never knew before,
For my way has brighter grown
Since I learnt to trust Him more.*

All the bitterness of living was gone, all the puling and discontent vanished and she realised at last the difference between a member of Christendom and a soul born again. She was at last a child of God. The Serpent had lost.

This was in 1928, and from thence her life and testimony has been a bright, happy experience - a grand sweet song. For nearly two years she has been confined to her bed and during that time has used her talents to bring to all and sundry the knowledge of her Lord and Saviour. Her prayers on behalf of her friends and neighbours, and of the Mission opposite have not been returned to her void but have accomplished that which eternity alone will unfold. Her husband? Just the same as ever. His chief grumble is that he has waited 20 years to be a widower and is not one yet. May the Almighty God have mercy on him even now.

* * *

There were lots of Granma's in the Mission but Granny Laidler had the good word of them all. She was surely one of the saintliest women who ever walked this earth. Her refined voice and marvellous command of sweet and gentle language endeared her to all hearts. Over seventy years of age, her days were spent as a ministering angel

The Righteous Woman

to those who needed her womanly care or her spiritual word of comfort. Her very presence breathed the atmosphere of Heaven and where she was, there one felt the presence of God. Her last illness was slow and lingering but never aught but a smile and a word of cheer came from her lips to those who visited her. Her room spotlessly clean, unexpectedly bright and cheerful, the perfume of fresh flowers ever present, all spoke eloquently of the life ebbing out on the bed: the unselfish life of sacrifice, unspotted, unblemished, and of wondrous sweetness. No church sanctuary, no temple shrine, no holy place, ever breathed to us nearness of God and Heaven like the sick chamber of Granny Laidler. "A few more days now," she would say, "and I'll be through, but don't forget that I shall be waiting at the gate for you when you come." Shortly before the end she called the women of the Mission to her bedside, and after praying as only a saint such as she could pray, she drew them to her one by one and, with her poor emaciated fingers clasping each by the hand, and with a strange, ineffable radiance suffusing her wasted form, shining out of her bright eyes, and inspiring her words, she asked them for their promise. "I'm sinking fast, but all's well. I'll be looking for you coming. Will you promise to meet me up there, Florrie? And you, Annie? And Edie? And Sarah? Dora? Lizzie? Jane? Maggie?" ...

With the tears flowing fast down their cheeks, their utterance almost choked, they gave their promise: "Yes, I'll meet you, Granny." "Yes, Granny, I'll meet you." And they mean to. Shortly afterwards she fell asleep, and is still sleeping. God send us another Granny Laidler.

10

Jim

To a certain extent one can sympathise with the man in the street who decries religion, and labels, without respect of persons, all church-goers as hypocrites. He has both history and experience in his favour and both offer fair targets for his criticism. Viewing the matter from his standpoint one might very well be excused for misquoting Madame Roland and cry out

“Oh Religion, how many crimes are committed in thy name?”

for all the evils that mortal flesh is heir to, those connected with religion are surely the worst. No intolerance like religious intolerance. No wars like “holy” wars. No persecutions as bitter as the ecclesiastical. No tortures like those of the Church and its civil servant the Inquisition. No malice, hatred, envy, spite like those of sect and denomination. All history attests to this. Christian against Jew. Mohammedan against Christian. Roman Catholic against Protestant. Protestant against Roman. Buddhist-Hindoo. Hindoo-Untouchable. All because of their religion.

Yes, the man of the world has a good case. It will be noticed, however, in these pages that a distinction has ever been drawn between the merely religious and the genuinely spiritual. Here religion, as such, signifies no more than the noise of sounding brass

and tinkling cymbal; while the spiritual, that is, the Spirit-filled, is everything that matters. The two are not merely not synonymous, they are not even categorically related. The one is of the earth earthly, the other is from heaven. Of course we are not unaware of the fact that Christianity is known as the religion of Jesus Christ, but, generally speaking, so little is the Christianity of these days the religion of Jesus Christ, and so little of Jesus Christ is the religion of these days, that we prefer to treat of religion as a sort of psychological metaphysics consisting of a mixture of ethics, education and endeavour. It may be philanthropic, it may be humanitarian, it may be social, it may even have its creed and ritual but it has much more to hope for from the life that now is than from that which is to come, and indeed, to the really living soul, the religion of this world is of all things most miserable.

The truly born again life is as high above all such as the heavens are high above the earth. This and this alone is *life-life*-apart altogether from questions of knowledge, goodness, or strength; essentially and primarily life - the life of the Son, the life which is the light of men. Postulating this life all other things are possible.

But this is very different from the conglomeration of systematic precept and practice popularly known as religion.

Jim's parents were religious - very religious - and therein lay his tragedy. His troubles began before he was born.

You see his father was a Roman Catholic, and although a slave to the evils of drinking, swearing, gambling and other things still worse, he was nevertheless known to be a "good Catholic." The mother, on the other hand, was a Protestant brought up in a Protestant home by a mother who was an inflexible adherent to the Church of England. This Church-woman on first hearing of the proposed marriage of her daughter to a Roman Catholic, held up her hands in holy horror at such

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a suggestion. She at once took steps to frustrate the possibility of any such calamity taking place, and in spite of the girl's protestations and eventual confession, she sternly vetoed the union.

And so the marriage did not take place.

The result was that the good Catholic went his way and comforted himself with another mistress, while the Protestant girl stayed at home with her parents until little Jim was born.

It will be easily understood that his arrival was not hailed by the womenfolk with that pride and joy which usually characterises such an occasion. On the contrary his appearance was accompanied by much heart-burning and bitterness of spirit. He was unwanted - more, he was a reproach and a constant thorn in the flesh. The fond love which was his heritage by common natural right was missing. The caressing care of his little baby frame was neglected. If only he were to die all might yet be well. If - ah, yes, - if - if - but, there it is, he didn't die but continued to live and thrive in the home of his mother's parents.

For some time things went well enough but presently the fateful shadow crept up again and overcast his young life. His grandmother died - the staunch Protestant - and his grandfather looked round for a successor to fill her place. This was not at all difficult, and one was soon found. She was a widow with five children of her own to start with, and with distinct and decided views concerning the new-fangled nonsense of certain medicos anent birth control. She had no patience with such doctrines. At the same time, however, she didn't believe in the necessity for bringing up the children of other folks and so it happened that the day which heralded her entrance as the new mistress of the home was the day which saw little Jim and his mother turned out into the streets.

Jim

To the delicately nurtured this no doubt would be a dire calamity, but in the lower strata of human society these things come with a duller edge, and the pangs are not so keen - a circumstance which is, without doubt a most beneficent dispensation of Providence and one calculated to make all thoughtful minds devoutly thankful.

“When one door shuts another door opens, is a common saying amongst those whose lives are cast upon the thin edge which divides bare existence from dire necessity, and it reveals a trait of character which, though perhaps reprehensibly careless and wanton, is nevertheless the one thing which makes life under such conditions possible. Let us recognise here the hand of a wise Creator. At any rate, when Jim’s mother found the door of her home closed against her, she wasted no time in idle recriminations, but looked about her for a fresh domicile.

A refuge was found with an uncle, that is, if refuge it could be called, for verily, their abode was with a madman - yes, that is a proper description of him - a madman, and if their case was pitiable before, it was indeed a sad lot now.

Evil days descended upon the woman and her boy, and goodness only knows what would have been the outcome, when suddenly a climax was brought about by the uncle himself, who, coming in drunk one night, lit the lamp, placed it under the bed, locked the door, and went out again.

Well, the fire was extinguished before the house was burned down but the place which had been their shelter was so no more.

Surely that shadow was deepening.

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It was some time after this that Jim's mother took to herself a husband, who was about as bad a man as evil habits could make him, and it was now that a really terrible time began for the boy. He was kicked from pillar to post and went about the house in fear and trembling. Every morning he went forth with his pail to gather cinders for the day's consumption, every evening he ran about with newspapers, and what spare moments he had between whiles were occupied in running between pawnshop and public-house.

Saturday nights were his dread, so much so, that it became his custom to stay outdoors until the Sabbath morning with its resultant torpor and stagnation bespoke the only peace he knew, when he would creep into the house again.

It was a very deep shadow now.

One night he and his mother had been so battered about that he vowed he would never rest until he had "got his own back." The opportunity was not long in coming. A little while afterward he saw a man dragging a screaming woman along the street by the hair of the head, and running to the scene of the struggle he found himself face to face with his stepfather. He was only fourteen years of age, but the incessant ill-usage, the pent-up long-suffering, the forced restraint of a great hatred and rage within his vibrating young frame, now at last reached its breaking point, and all the fury and maddened desperation of a lifetime burst forth in a cyclonic passion, transforming the boy into a veritable devil incarnate. He threw himself upon the man and a furious onslaught began. Fighting back to the house, the two carried the battle indoors where, with everything moveable as weapons and missiles the warfare was intensified. At length a crashing blow from a three-gill bottle upon his scalp brought the older combatant to the floor covered with blood, and then it was that the young demon sated

Jim

his craving for revenge by breaking upon the prostate man everything that would break, finishing by snatching up the lighted lamp and smashing it over the now unconscious victim. It was half past one in the morning when they removed him to the hospital. The lad had gone, never to return.

And it was night - a dark, dark night in the life of a boy.

For a number of years he was left to his own resources, and it will be readily understood that his conduct did not attain to that eminence which has for its standard the highest ideals of morality.

To be quite candid, he didn't know anything about it, and, moreover, he didn't want to.

Strangely enough, he neither drank nor smoked, but there are evils worse than these - much worse - and he contracted habits which would in a very short time demand their wages. His early life, together with these later practices, began to tell upon his physical well-being, and the price to be paid was all too apparent as he reached manhood.

For a time he found lodgings with an uncle and aunt, but their mode of living only made more intense the profligacy of his own character. His stay with these people, however, was not prolonged, for the body of his aunt was found one night floating in the river, beside the ferry landing, whether by her own act or not is unknown.

And so in these years evil upon evil piled itself up in this human tragedy. The Blackness of darkness was personified in this soul which knew not that it had, or was, a soul. Of God or devil he had no conception whatever, conscience was an unknown quantity, religion a huge hypocritical imposture, useful only as supplying him with terms for his fearful profanity and blasphemy.

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At the age of twenty-three he married, having by some strange fortune (or should it be misfortune?) made the acquaintance of a really decent girl - a worker in the Sunday School - who, quite evidently because of her ignorance of 2 Corinthians 6:14, allowed herself to be united to this scamp.

It may be that this good woman's influence had a steadying effect upon him, at any rate for a time, for his married life became the nearest approach to happiness that he had yet known, and he experienced something of the contentment of a home as a new thing in life.

But that tragic shadow of his was not yet dispelled. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," and his health had been by now so sadly undermined that when presently unable to obtain employment, he took upon himself the task of eking out the "dole" by carrying coals from the pit-heaps at the surrounding collieries, his weakness found him out, and he was picked up one day in one of the main streets and carried unconscious to the nearest doctor's surgery. On examination it was found that he was suffering from "tobacco heart" in a very advanced stage - and he had never smoked in his life!

He was taken to another doctor by whom he was treated for excessive nervousness, blood poisoning and enlarged heart. He was sent to the Hospital to be operated upon when it was found that he was in a shocking state of exophthalmic goitre. Injections of heroin were given him, but so bad was he that the palpitations of his heart could be heard all through the night by the patients in the other beds, and it was self-evident to all that he had but a short time to live. After some weeks in the Hospital he was sent out incurable. Nine doctors had attended him, and nine doctors had stood aghast at his condition,

Jim

amazed that he could be alive, but they were all, without exception, both helpless and hopeless.

He came home.

It was just at this time that a great stir was in the town. At the Victoria Hall a certain pastor Jeffries was doing marvellous things - miracles. The blind were receiving their sight, the lame were made to walk, the sick were cured, and all at a word from a man with the gift of "divine" healing. The news was brought to Jim by a pal. "What about it, Jim? Let's go and try this feller, Jeffries." They went. Arrived at the Hall, they found themselves in the midst of a great crowd of people singing choruses, as Jim said, "like a lot of Arabs shouting," whatever they might be like.

But he was wishing he hadn't come. If anyone should recognise him in such a place as this why he'd never hold up his head again. "Just fancy! *me* in a religious meeting, Ugh!" Presently, however, when the right "atmosphere" had been produced and a sufficiently intense spirit of expectancy aroused, the "patients" were brought forward.

"Ha! look there! there's Burns of the dolly stall in the Old Market coming on his crutches. What are they doing to him? Oh! they've taken his crutches away. Look! he's walking without them. Hooray! he's walking off with his crutches in his hand."

The excitement was enormous, the people wild with enthusiasm, shouting and waving their arms.

"Here's another one, a boy blind from birth. He's saying something to him. See! he's holding up two fingers. 'Two' says

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the boy. He holds up an open hand. 'Five', says the boy. By - - he can see."

The great audience goes into ecstasies. "Glory! Hallelujah!" and the boy and his mother are hugging and kissing one another for joy.

"Here's another fellow coming. He's an ex-soldier. I've seen him at the Labour Exchange signing the book. His arm's always like that - hanging down useless - a war wound. Look! he's lifting it up! He's moving it about! (Glory! Hallelujah!) Bully, lad, there's a God after all. There must be a God. I'm going out."

Outside in the street he ran into a young fellow he knew: "I say," said he, "d'ye think that feller in there could cure this old heart of mine?"

"I don't know about that, but I can shew you a place where you can get a new heart."

"Eh! a new heart - what d'ye mean?"

"Come with me," and he led him away to a little mission in High Street. There, for the first time, he heard the Gospel message. The subject was: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

A profound impression was made upon him. He went again - and again. For five weeks he went to that mission but in the absence of anyone with an intimate personal word, his hungry soul craved for a light he could not reach. There was a God of whose existence he was now firmly convinced, but how to approach Him - how to know Him in whom he believed, he knew not.

Jim

He found himself in Pottery Buildings one Sunday morning. To his surprise he was made partaker, with other worshippers, of the Lord's Supper - he received the bread and wine of communion, which was all very new and very strange. At the close of the service the Pastor came to him and, shaking hands, said: "Are you one of us" "Well, no, Pastor, I'm not, but I would like to be converted if you'll tell me how to do it." In plain and simple language the way of Life was explained to him and then, kneeling down, he there and then gave himself to the Lord.

"How are you now?" asked the minister.

"Sir, I believe that I am now a saved man from this moment, but I'm doubtful if I shall last long enough to really know it. I've got a disease of the heart which may carry me off at any moment."

They knelt down again and prayed earnestly, fervently - not this time for the salvation of a soul, but for the restoration of a heart.

"And now," said the Pastor, "keep on in the faith and as it grows stronger so will your heart."

This was in the early part of the year 1928 and before that year was out he was working in a shipyard swinging his hammer with the best of them. He who had been unable to walk up a bank without assistance was now hearty and strong, able to do a good hard day's work with any man.

What brought it about?

Let us be really quite frank and honest about it, and with unbiased mind answer that simple question "What brought it about?" and if neither Science nor Philosophy can find us a solution - *and they can't* - let us be just and give God the glory.

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As to the so-called Divine Healing, which was the genesis of Jim's belief in God, it is perhaps to be regretted that it should have proved so effervescent. Of the three cases mentioned none has persisted. An emotional ecstasy, a great rejoicing, and then back to earth again. The ex-service man still "signs the book" with his arm still hanging down - useless. The "blind" boy sees just as well as ever with the one good eye which he has always possessed; while Burns of the dolly stall, accompanied by his crutches, has just left on a pilgrimage to Lourdes in another attempt to make psychotherapeutics and superstition perform the works of God.

With Jim it is not so. In his seat at Bethesda every Sunday morning, taking his class at Hallgarth every Sunday afternoon, convicting men with his convincing testimony in Mission and open-air meeting on Sunday evenings, he is indeed shewing the world at large that though he was "only a sinner", he has been saved by grace through faith; and that not of himself: it was the gift of God.

11

The Pincher

In the preface to his book "Broken Earthenware," Mr. Harold Begbie writes (p. 14): "To convert the worst of men into a saint is a miracle in psychology;" and again, (p. 10) "... human beings whose psychological experiences would prove of considerable, even of lasting, interest to metaphysics and philosophy;" and so on throughout his work the author makes frequent reference to this particular branch of knowledge. And what, to the lay mind, does this somewhat abstruse subject suggest? Certainly nothing supernatural or superhuman. We are told Psychology is the science of individual experience; - experience being the process of becoming expert by experiment. Its field covers the sensations and movements of an object, "Me", in relation to a subject, the conscious or the subconscious "I."

Quite.

In another department of thought we have that which deals with human conduct and character and which we call ethics. Ethics is not a science but a philosophy, and "philosophy is a process of reflection" busying itself with the operations of "unreflected moral consciousness."

So now we know all about it.

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As to exactly which, among these various processes and operations, is psychology and which philosophy, thinkers differ, especially psychologists and philosophers, and therefore between the two the layman is apt to get a little confused, but when to all this a writer comes along and synonymises the things of the Spirit with these natural processes, why then we come back upon Nicodemus with his own question and ask: How can these things be?

But the scientists are not finished with us yet. The New Knowledge has been gaining ground to such an extent, that there was some danger of the older sciences being neglected and overshadowed. One in particular, perhaps because of the non-necessity for the display of involved terminology, fine intricacies of deduction and reasoning, and problematical abstractions, has been for some time suffering a partial eclipse. We refer to the science of Physiology, the old pet science of the materialist. Like the beast of the Revelation it has been severely wounded but its deadly wound has been healed and it is rising up again in the midst of its competitors and uttering forth its high words so that all the world is wondering after it.

Thus: In the San Quentin Prison, California, two physicians, Drs. Reynolds and Stanley, have, as the result of experiments, come to the conclusion that the so-called criminal instinct may be removed from the minds of men and women by operation and that potential wrongdoing may be eliminated by treating the glands in youth.

In the course of their investigations they have found that a large number of the prisoners at San Quentin were suffering from an abnormal condition of the endocrine glands which empty into the blood system. Perpetrators of crimes of violence were found to have something wrong with their thyroid glands, and forgers and some other criminals showed an abnormal condition of the pituitary gland.

The Pincher

This pear-shaped body lies at the base of the brain. By operation on about sixty of the criminals and administering gland extract, not only the physical condition but the mental and moral condition is said to have been improved.

“What we must learn,” says Dr. Reynolds “is why one child becomes a criminal and another does not. Then we treat the subnormal child by medicine or by surgery to restore the chemical balance of the body.” By these means it is claimed that lawlessness can be banished from the world. (*This and That* vol.ii,36,3.)

From all this it will be seen that what we have looked upon as sins of the soul were in reality but physical defects of the body, and those emotions and affections of the heart which moved us so were merely affections of the glands. We must no longer subscribe to the old saying that as a man thinketh in his heart so is he, but, rather, as he is in his secretions so thinketh he in his heart.

Most of our knowledge will have to be relearned, our beliefs and doctrines will need to be revised. Even the Ten Commandments themselves will require restating. For example:

“Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land,”

will be replaced by

“Honour thy thyroid gland that thy days may be long in the land.”

“Thou shalt not commit adultery,” will be

“Thou shalt take pituitary extract every morning before breakfast.”

It is self-evident from the foregoing that all our talk about Mended Crockery, regenerated souls, being born again of the Spirit, is just

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fudge and all wrong. Begbie is certainly nearer the mark when he speaks of converted saints as psychological miracles of interest to philosophers, for he, at any rate, keeps that which is natural in the natural realm.

Under these circumstances, therefore, we feel constrained to appeal to our readers to exercise their beneficent tolerance and to treat the sketches of this series as fairy tales, or, better still, as parables, from which to draw instruction concerning the peculiar workings of the mind of a man who imagines himself to be a writer of stories of actual fact.

But stay - before doing so, let us glance at the story of The Pincher.

Perhaps those unacquainted with the Barbary Coast vernacular will wonder what a "Pincher" is. He has little or no connection with pliers or nippers (although a pincher generally begins as a nipper) but is so named because of his deftness in the use of finger and thumb as lifting instruments. In more polite society 'purloiner' would perhaps be the better term to use. In the highest circles it would, of course, be kleptomania.

But the Pincher knew nothing of these high-faluting titles, he only knew that his mission in life was to pinch whatever was pinchable.

As a boy he sold newspapers, and every night out of sixteen dozen "Echoes" sold he managed to return payment for thirteen dozen only, the remainder being accounted for by various excuses such as unsold copies, arrears of payments, etc. A better opportunity arrived presently when, obtaining a job as a shop boy with Mr. Beardall of Church Street, he found the sweeping brush an excellent passport into the office where the little stacks of gold, silver, and copper, rested on

The Pincher

a ledge. Enough said. He was never caught. At the age of fourteen he was apprenticed as a shipwright, and for a time, with the exception of cansful of candles, nails, bolts, etc., his depredations were restricted. For a time only though.

A Black Hand gang was formed of which he was leader, and workmen's tools began to vanish, to be "found" again only after a suitable reward had been offered for their recovery. This was better, but much too slow, and so another scheme was evolved. A "sweep" was organised, the prizes being a pair of rabbits, a set of carvers, and a briar pipe. Subscriptions were obtained amounting to £4 10s. Od. and 700 tickets at one shilling each were sold. The carvers were bought at "Happy Jim's" for eighteen pence, the briar pipe was a good one and cost two shillings and threepence. The rabbits - well they didn't need them as the ticket was already marked off to a winner not on a Burgess roll. Taken altogether, the sweep was a fairly successful venture, and but for the fact that the holder of the funds decamped with the money would have been a most profitable business. Of course there was trouble, any amount of it, but it was soon over. The Black Hand gang elected another captain and the place of the Pincher was not any more found in that shipyard.

Pickersgill's was the next scene of his activities but his stay was short, for the ginger-beer woman of the yard lost such a quantity of her wares that the Pincher was unceremoniously thrown out.

So it was wherever he went. Sometimes in connivance with foremen, watchmen, and others in positions of responsibility and sometimes on his own account, he became notorious for his rapacity. Wholesale "lifting" from yards or ships, became a regular occupation with him and nothing was safe where he was. (It is on record that at

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least one of our largest shipyards was brought to the verge of bankruptcy through the enormous losses sustained by it owing to the activities of such men as the Pincher.) Thus he went on for some years until at length the War broke out and he was drafted out to the Front.

He now developed his penchant for stealing into a veritable fine art. Camps, billets, canteens, all became subservient to his requirements, and army stores, parcels, eatables, cigarettes by the thousands, everything in fact that he could move, became his legitimate (?) spoil, to be turned into money if needs be, or, as now became his habit, into a means for obtaining the gratification of vicious appetites which was his latest form of depravity. He was a regular habitue of these horrible dens of iniquity - the houses of the red lamp, and not these only but wherever opportunity offered there he was to be found with his evil ways and loathsome practices.

A human cesspool. Enough! Details are not wanting but to continue to recount them is too offensive for even such a hard-bitten campaigner as a Barbary Coast Mission leader. Let them pass. Sufficient to say that after being concerned in a miniature civil war between his own regiment and that of one of the allies at a place known as Caesar's Camp, he signalled his return home by stealing a wallet containing a large sum of money, with which he lived like a son of Satan for about a week, when it was all exhausted. And so he was at home again. And what now? He would get married, - yes, he would settle down and forthwith it was arranged. The day was chosen - Thursday. The Church - St. Peter's. Time - Two o'clock. About eleven o'clock on the morning of the wedding he went over to the "Vulcan" for a drink, but as at half-past one he had not come back, his friends got concerned and went to look for him. It was as well they did, for he was too drunk to come home by himself, and so they did their best for

The Pincher

him. "Poor lad, it's just nateral for him to be celebratin' the 'casion, ye knaa, for it's only once in a lifetime. Ho'way, canny lad, keep up."

They got him dressed and knocked into shape somehow, and thus suitably attired and supported he was ushered into the bonds of holy matrimony (with an accompaniment of bottles and pails of beer in the near distance), the bonds of holy matrimony in this case being much better described in the local phraseology as "hell upon earth."

This then, was the Pincher, a drunken, thieving, lascivious piece of human cancer. What do you think of him? or, better still, what would you do with him?

You are a philosopher, perhaps. Well then, bring to bear upon this odorous bit of carnality your processes of reflection, for we would taste the "sweets of your sweet philosophy." Or it may be your forte is psychology. You will be acquainted with the Freudian system of psycho-analysis. You will treat the Pincher as a patient, drawing from him all his past life, his memories, his conflicts, his repressions and difficulties, even his dreams. You will sift these. You will bring under review the whole of the patient's personality, and you will seek to change his attitude towards life, and cause him to re-value many of his cherished notions.

You will tell us that this process, which may occupy several hours a week over a period of months may result in a sort of re-birth for such a one, and he will face life's problems with a strengthened and refined personality.

This would, indeed, be a splendid achievement and worthy of all commendation, but it fails in just one vital particular - there is one little fly in the ointment. The said fly being the Pincher himself. Do you

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imagine that this person would for one moment dream of submitting himself to any process whatever for his reformation - even for a day? Because if you do, your credulity must be abysmal and your knowledge of the Pincher nil.

“Reform? wot, *me?* garn, crackers, take it away, immedjut, d’ye ‘ear?”

H’m, well then, what about the surgeon? If this condition is simply the result of atrophied glands, what about a little operation at the base of the skull and an injection of a small quantity of extract of chimpanzee?

It sounds feasible enough and might do alright. We confess we should be really interested in the case if the Pincher, or such as he, would, like Barkis, “be willin’.”

But in the meantime, and in the absence of the proposed surgical treatment, what about it? The Pincher has felt no surgeon’s knife, he has had no medical treatment of any kind, but he isn’t a Pincher now. His bill for cigarettes (when he bought them) was ten shillings per week, but he doesn’t smoke anymore. He drank - as the waste pipe of the bath drinks when the plug is removed, but that has gone long since. And ten thousand times worse than all this he - but there, it has vanished and if you want to discuss it there’s nothing doing. It just isn’t.

What brought all this about? How did it happen? It happened one night in October, 1920, and its accomplishment occupied an instant of time somewhere between the hours of eight and nine o’clock.

The Pincher

On this wise. The Pincher had “crossed the water” to the south side of the river and was walking up Hartley Street when he ran into Peter.

“Hullo, Pincher, are you going in?”

“Going in - wot, with you? ‘Ave you broke out?”

“No, no, not in there, the other side.”

“Oh, there, wot’s on?”

“Come in with me, there’s a boxer fellow telling his experiences.”

“Ay? we’ll have a look at ‘im.”

So the Pincher found himself in Prospect Row Mission Hall listening to Bill Griffiths, the Welsh Revivalist. Con was there also and you may depend upon it his eye was upon this unexpected visitor from the “bad water side.” But Con wasn’t a surgeon, he knew nothing of psychology, and while he may have been a philosopher he didn’t advertise it. What he was the Spirit of God had made him and he was about his Father’s business, and therefore it came about that he attached himself to the Pincher.

What did he say? Well, what could he say? What would Paul say to Judas? What would you say, reader? Whatever it was there is no record left to us save that one living record - the Pincher.

For although he shewed no outward sign, spoke no penitent word, raised no attesting hand made no promise of any kind, he was not the Pincher when he went out.

He was changed - different - he was - er - he was strange - *different*. His glands hadn’t been interfered with, but he was a new creature. His evil propensities, his appetites, his vile ways, left him in Prospect Row Mission *and they haven’t come back*.

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Three times on the following Sunday he was tempted to enter a public-house and three times he heard a voice say as distinctly as a human "Come away," and, what is much more to the point, he came away. Why? All the voices in Sunderland would not have moved him one inch a week before.

He was on his way to the football match on the next Saturday - he was a red-hot football fan - when a sentence flashed through his mind, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Now where did that come from? He must have heard it somewhere. Of course - sub-consciousness. Exactly. But he didn't go to the match: that wasn't sub-consciousness. It was - well, what was it? Whatever it was it has remained there for ten years now, and apparently is likely to remain forever.

He joined the men's class at Hallgarth and became a first-class "button-holer," speaking to men individually, and by personal persuasion bringing them to a knowledge of the Truth and thus leading them to Salvation. By this means he won over his workmates to the Lord whom he served.

He visited his old shipyard, and knowing the caché wherein the "stolen" workmen's tools were hidden, chalked over the place "Be sure your sins will find you out." He is now conductor in a mission in the town - a zealous worker- never happier than when he is leading a soul to the saviour.

This then, is the story of the Pincher, and every word of it is true.

What shall we say of it - a fairy tale? Yes? Well then, God bless the fairies.

12

The Barman

A very wise man has left it on record that to every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up. This is so obviously true of things in general, that self-evidently it must apply also to these articles, and so we are impressed with the view that the time has arrived to place before our readers the concluding chapter of this series.

We feel we must guard against the unpardonable offence of outstaying our welcome, and therefore, having, as we conceive, fairly achieved and the purpose for which we set out, we offer as our final contribution the story of THE BARMAN.

We call him the Barman, but it was not as a Barman that he was first introduced into Hallgarth for he was only a boy, just a wee bit laddie. His pale, delicate face, and his neat black suit - for his mother had but lately died - proclaimed him to be of the better type of Barbary Coaster. His home was a good one and his father decent steady workman of temperate habits. The Boy attended Church Street Sunday School and was one of those who, when Hallgarth was leased, were proudly marched down to the "new Mission." Which of course was all as it should be.

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But, sad to relate, it was only for a while, for things changed in the home. Whether because the loving and guiding hand of the mother was absent, or to drown his sorrow, is not recorded, but presently the father began to drift into bad habits and evil ways. The public house became his habitual resort, and the young boy found himself with still younger brothers and sisters looking up to him for their daily requirements and attentions. As we have intimated, he was only a slip of a boy and the responsibility placed upon his young shoulders was great, but it was increased manifold when, owing to drunkenness, his father lost his employment, and with it, his conscience, for now any glimmering sense of moral obligation towards his home and its young family which had remained was totally extinguished and he threw all duty and liability to the winds.

There was no dole in those days, and it will be readily understood that the plight of the youngsters was a desperate one. How did they live? Why, just as many more have done before and since. The butcher and the grocer exploited to the utmost of their capacity, credit must be, and was, obtained by any and every artifice known to cunning minds sharpened by dire necessity and want. The landlord - "ho, ho, did ye say the landlord? And w'e might the landlord be, dye'think? Gan on wi' ye, and dinnit be se fond. Rent? - the varry idea - the impertinence of the man, daring to ask for money. He more need give poor folks some for a-caretaking of his property. Onyway ye cannot get blood out of a stone so ye can had away."

We are reminded just here of an agent who had been newly appointed to collect the rents. It was on a Monday morning that he started upon his rounds but his journey was a rough and stormy one and he was beginning to realise that his job was no sinecure. Also he was learning the necessity for caution in his approach. Stepping warily into one doorway, he found himself in a dark passage. It was very dark,

The Barman

so dark that he could scarcely distinguish the stairs running up to the rooms above. But what was most strange to him was the eerie stillness which pervaded everything in the building. There were numerous tenants but not a sound could be heard, and the thing seemed to be uncanny somehow. Of course they knew his time and most of them were “round the corner.”

There was one, however, in his room on the third storey who was sitting up in bed smoking his pipe and reading yesterday’s “News of the World,” whose last payment to a landlord had been so long ago that it had passed out of memory, and he had been written off as a bad debt, no one bothering to call upon him. Naturally the new collector knew nothing of this gentleman’s presence on the premises, and being somewhat disconcerted by the strange quietness he remained in the passage and called out in a loud voice, “Rent.”

All was as silent as the grave.

Mustering up his courage he called out louder still, “RENT.”

No answer. An unbroken solitude.

Getting desperate he put his hands to his mouth and yelled out with all his might, “RENT.”

Whereupon away up above in the shadows a third story door opened and a voice came floating down, “We’s that? What d’ye want?”

With a last stentorian effort the agent called back, “**RENT.**”

“Eh! Oh, alright, fetch it up,” and the voice went back again to bed. History makes no further mention of that agent.

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To return. Our boy, being but a boy, was not yet so adept at handling affairs as some of the battle-scarred veterans of the Barbary Coast, and so had perforce to use more diplomatic methods in his dealing with his creditors. Bit by bit the home was broken up and bit by bit the furniture went to the saleroom for the wherewithal to purchase bread. And in all conscience it was little enough that it accomplished in that direction, for scant were the rations it provided and meagre was the fare doled out to the pinched little starvelings. He went no more to the Mission now, and his case was lost sight of amid the general wrack and neglect prevailing, although it is precious little to the credit of the place that it should be so.

At the age of fourteen he gave up the struggle and, ill-nourished and ill-clad, he ran away from home and became a wanderer on the face of the earth - a tramp.

He was not yet of that depraved nature which characterises so many in like circumstances, being more sinned against than sinning, which perhaps is the explanation for his being found some time afterwards at Trimdon Grange apprenticed to a blacksmith. His apprenticeship, however, was short without being sweet. He remained eight weeks, his weakened frame being unequal to the strain put upon it, and he once more found himself a rover upon life's highway.

He came back to the Barbary Coast and, being still sufficiently obscure to have escaped a local "reputation," he applied for, and obtained, a situation in one of the public bars, and presently, clad in a clean shirt and white apron, he was put behind the counter to man the pumps.

He was a barman.

The Barman

Now it was that he saw vice in all its nakedness face to face; wickedness in its most hideous garb flaunted itself before his youthful gaze. Mephitic men rank with foul bestiality, unthinkable women-faugh! let's change the subject.

But no, we cannot change the subject - yet; for we must accompany our barman a little further. We go with him in 1916 into the Sherwood Foresters, thence into France and Germany. Here we find him reeking with the stench which assailed our nostrils in the barroom. Odoriferous to a degree and with every form of dissolute profligacy known to facinorous Tommies permeating his being and practised in his course, he had indeed become a noisome sore, a cancerous growth.

His army career - but it's not good reading so we'll miss it out.

It has been said that there were Christians in the Army during the Great War. If it is true, we take off our hats to them, for they are worthy of our worshipful respect. Personally we should much prefer to attempt the experiment in the bottomless pit for we opine it would be easier to carry out in that region.

But this does not concern the Barman.

Back again in 1919 to the bar; back again to the clean shirt, the white apron, the tainted soul, and the black heart.

Entrusted with the receiving of bottled beers and spirits, accepting "empties" as "fulls" and sharing the proceeds.

Entrusted with a vivacious young girl - a barmaid in the same house - as his wife and arriving home a demoralising drink-besotted rake.

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Entrusted with the addresses of certain females for the purpose of providing for them the means of kindling within the "human form divine" that flame which, once lit, will scorch and blast its way into the fires of an eternal hell.

A barman. A social leper.

It was on a certain night in 1925 that, leaving a billiard saloon, he sauntered up the High Street and found himself attracted by a crowd at the corner of Green Street. It was but the curiosity of idleness and bore no definite significance whatever. The crowd was formed around a band of young people who, themselves forming a ring, had one of their number in the centre holding forth with no uncertain sound the merits of, and necessity for, some abstract notions which he spoke of as Salvation, Being washed in the Blood, Accepting the Free Gift, and such like.

The Barman had a hazy idea of something of the sort being dispensed in his boyhood days at Hallgarth, but of course that was all gone long since, and any meaning it may have had once was quite submerged now.

It stood to reason, he mused, that these fellows must be a bit gone to stand there like that in a public street, talking moonshine, and wasting a good night, but then if they liked it why good luck to them. The blithering idiots.

However, as he had nothing particular on hand he would hear what this next speaker had to say. And so he stayed. Somehow or other this fellow interested him and provoked him into a listening attitude. Not that it mattered, of course, the thing was quite immaterial to him, it was bosh and all that, but still he would hear him out, which he did. An hour afterwards he was no longer the Barman.

The Barman

Yes, it had happened again - the unexplained, the unexplainable. Even at the risk of being accused of monotonous iteration we have to register the fact that once more a work had been wrought within a man's soul which can neither be explained nor explained away by any known system of philosophy or science.

We have approached the Barman, we have coerced him, coaxed him for an explanation, but it's no use. He cannot explain.

"Look here, Barman, something must have occurred to make you change so suddenly. What was it. How did it arise?" "You might just as well ask me where the wind comes from for I don't know. All I can see is that one of the young men and I had a long discussion at the close of the meeting, and that the feeling to throw in my lot with them came over me, and that I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, and that from that moment everything connected to my life has been altered. That's all I can tell you about it because that's all I know. As to its truth – well, here I am myself. I can offer no other evidence."

And indeed what evidence could be so demonstrable and incontestable?

Ask some of the old cronies who leave the bar-room to come up to the open-air meeting and watch their erstwhile Barman as he takes his part in that same meeting week by week. Ask them if it is really true. They will shake their heads, they will jeer, perhaps, but while they don't understand it at all, they know it's true.

From the time of his conversion he has been a member of Hallgarth - and oh! wasn't he surprised to find that he'd fallen in with his old mission in this strange way. He threw up his job, but was soon in another – and - better place, and as the days passed by he found his life opening out and blossoming into a glad and joyous existence. And

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when three weeks afterwards his wife knelt beside him in the mission hall and became a child of God, his cup of joy was indeed full and running over.

CONCLUSION

And so ends our tale of Mended Crockery. It is certainly not because of any lack of further material that we present this, the last article upon the subject, but simply because we conceive that the purpose and aim of these sketches has been accomplished. The end in view which we proposed to ourselves was that of shewing to the community at large and to Christian workers in particular the undeniable fact that, in certain qualifying circumstances, "there is a Power which shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will"; a Power, ay, the only Power, which is capable of changing the radically bad into the radically good, of raising the "uttermost" into the highest; a Power, too, not of man's invention or attainment but transcending all the natural and psychic forces of this created universe. We may search through the whole field of human knowledge from Sociology, the master science, down to Elementary Physics, and we shall not discover amid all the accumulation of findings, of analyses, of syntheses, of evidence proved or circumstantial, of fact or theorem, one single acknowledgement of the works of the Holy Spirit *as such*.

Granted we shall meet with The Absolute, the Great First Cause, the All-Soul, Nature, even "God" as an evolutionary idea of the Necessary as opposed to the Contingent; we shall find mention of one Jesus, of Christian Ethics, of Comparative Religions, of Golden Rules, but of Our Father, the Son of God, the Holy Ghost, not a single whisper. And when one comes to think of it that's a very strange thing. The wonders of the Universe on every hand and no known Maker! It is true we read in the Pauline epistle to the Romans:

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That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.

But then although the Bible tells us that the things of God are clearly seen, Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says:

...In the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God....

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.

Well, well, we are not Doctor of Divinity or Doctor of Science, not even A.B., but only humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, A.Ω., nevertheless as He, when only twelve years of age, found no difficulty in astonishing the Doctors of His day with His understanding and His answers, we, who believe in the truth of Holy Writ and the practise of the Presence of God, are conceited enough to believe that these wise men can still be astonished and confounded with the realities of spiritual experience as exhibited in the changed lives of, for example, the weak and foolish creatures of these records.

While we would render all due respect to, and admit the great advantages of advanced scholarship, we yet see no reason why, when dealing with things spiritual, we should look upon it with excessive awe.

For ourselves we claim no profound erudition, our critical faculties were not trained in any great seat of learning, nor are we endowed

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with a capacity for the niceties of academic phraseology, or those fine turns of subtle inference or specious deduction which mark the finished savant. We are not a Wells, or a Begbie - not even a Bernard Shaw. These writings will show all the crudities of the amateur and undoubtedly bear the stamps of the novice; but mark-and weigh it well - when all has been said that can be said, there yet remains the undiminished, irreducible, integral fact unaccounted for, namely Mended Crockery. It may be questioned What? How? Whence? till the crack of doom without any solution appearing in the columns of scientific or philosophic journals, but there it stands an uncontrovertible and indissoluble reality, a monumental altar to the Unknown God - Mended Crockery.

Say of it what you may, treat it as you will, it remains imperishable - a living witness. It was always so.

Drive it from Jerusalem, it appears in Pella. Let the weight and might of Rome grind it to the death and it shines forth from the Catacombs. Let the Devil's flood sweep over Europe and a Wesley and a Whitfield are seen in England, a Livingstone in Africa, a Moody in America, a Carey in India, a Paton in the South Seas. What wonder then that when a Barbary Coast becomes a hotbed of vice, a Hallgarth should be raised up in its midst and go forth conquering and to conquer.

Isaiah spoke of the Spirit of the Lord God sending forth to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and this is a part of that which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, and which we have called Mended Crockery.

We hold it forth as a standing challenge to all the would-be critics of the Bible's documental "Historicity" or its inspired inerrancy, be

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they atheist, agnostic or ecclesiastic; layman, bishop or pope. We hold it forth as a standing challenge to all those scientific materialists, evolutionary sociologists, and modern philosophers, who see nothing in this cosmos, save blind, inexorable, mechanical law, even though it be tempered by such side-lights as Selection, Behaviourism and Mind. And above all we hold it forth as a standing challenge to all those two penny halfpenny whipper-snappers who, sheltering under the banner of Free Speech, Free Thought, Free Love, or any other freedom they can filch from their betters, hold forth at street corners with second-hand blasphemy against all forms of religion as mercenary priest craft and hypocrisy; or, from a Communist soap-box utter invective against all and sundry who do not see eye to eye with them in their frothy mouthings concerning equality and the brotherhood of man, particularly of the wastrel.

Do they challenge the Truth? We challenge them by bearing witness to the Truth. The Truth, forsooth! and what is Truth? That which the natural man does not, and cannot, know; for, indeed, his facts of yesterday are but the fallacies of to-day and to-day's truths the falsehood of to-morrow. But he who said, I am the truth, is Jesus Christ, who yesterday, to-day and forever is the same.

As he was nineteen centuries ago to the Galilean fishermen, so He is to us at this present day. Nineteen hundred years ago He was Christ, the son of the living God; and they crucified Him. To-day we know no other gospel - we present to the world none other than this-Jesus Christ and Him crucified; to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to us who believe the power of God unto Salvation. And when we speak of Salvation we have a fairly knowledgeable idea of what we mean.

Conclusion

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

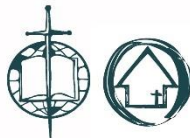
That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

And these things we write unto you that your joy may be full.

1 John 1:1-4

No one can read the following record of the work of the gospel in Hallgarth during the early 1900's without being greatly moved and stirred to worthier effort for the rescue of all for whom Christ died, Who died for all.

W. Graham Scroggie



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