

## Family Reading.

BUNYAN IN PRISON.

"I was had home to prison."

Home to prison! And wherefore not? Home is not the marble hall, nor the luxurious furniture, nor cloth of gold. If home be the kingdom where man reigns, in his own monarchy, over subject hearts—if home be the spot where fire-side pleasures gambol, where are heard the sunny laugh of the confiding child, or the fond "What ails thee?" of the watching wife—then every essential of home was to be found, "except these bonds," in that cell on Bedford Bridge. There, in the daytime, is the heroine wife, at once bracing and soothing his spirit with her leal and womanly tenderness; and sitting at his feet, the child, a clasping tendrill, blind and best beloved. There on the table is the *Book of Martyrs*, with its records of the men who were the ancestors of his faith and love; those old and heaven-patented nobility, whose badge of knighthood was the hallowed cross, and whose chariot of triumph was the ascending flame. There, nearer to his hand, is the Bible, revealing that secret source of strength which overpowered each manly heart and nerved each stalwart arm; cheering his own spirit in exceeding heaviness, and making strong, through faith, for the obedience which is even unto death. Within him the good conscience bears bravely up, and he is weaponed by this as by a shield of triple mail. By his side, all unseen by casual guest or surly warder, there stands, with heart of grace and consolation strong, the heavenly Comforter; and from overhead, as if anointing him already with the unction of recompense, there rushes the stream of glory.

And now it is nightfall. They have had their evening worship, and, as in another dungeon, "the prisoners heard them." The blind child receives the fatherly benediction, the last good-night is said to the dear ones, and Bunyan is alone. His pen is in his hand, and the Bible on the table. A solitary lamp dimly relieves the darkness. But there is fire in his eye, and there is passion in his soul. "He writes as if joy did make him write." He has felt all the fulness of his story. The pen moves two slowly for the rush of feeling as he graves his whole heart upon the page. There is beating over him a storm of inspiration. Great thoughts are striking upon his brain and flushing upon his cheek. Cloudy and shapeless in their earliest rise within his mind, they darken into the gigantic or brighten into the beautiful, until at length he flings them into bold and burning words. Rare visions rise before him. He is in a dungeon no longer. He is in the palace Beautiful, with its sights of renown and songs of melody, with its virgins of comeliness and of discretion, and with its windows opening for the first kiss of the sun. His soul swells beyond the measure of his cell. It is not a rude lamp that glimmers on his table. It is no longer the dark Ouse that rolls its sluggish waters at his feet. His spirit has no sense of bondage. No iron has entered into his soul. Chainless and swift he has soared to the Delectable Mountains; the light of heaven is around him; the river is the one clear as crystal, which floweth from the throne of God and of the Lamb; breezes of paradise blow freshly across it, fanning his temples and stirring his hair. From the summit of the hill Clear he catches rare splendours; the New Jerusalem sleeps in its eternal noon; the shining ones are there, each one a crowned harper unto God; this is the land that is afar off, and that is the King in his beauty; until prostrate beneath the insufferable splendour the dreamer falls upon his knees, and sobs away his agony of gladness in an ecstasy of prayer and praise. Now think of these things: endearing intercourse with wife and children, the ever fresh and ever comforting Bible, the tranquil conscience, the regal imaginings of the mind, the faith which realized them all, and light of God's approving face shining, broad and bright upon the soul, and you will understand the undying memory which made Bunyan quaintly write, "I was had home to prison."—*Punshon's Lecture on Bunyan.*