

FAITH.

Just to follow every day
Where God leads;
Just to scatter all the way
Sunny deeds,
Just to go, nor question why
Shadows fall,
Ever looking to the sky
Through them all,
Just to live through every day
Pure and right,
Keeping from the heart away
Cares that blight,
Just to stand with purpose strong
When I'm tried,
Learning thus my every all
To confide.

—*Menck Chambers, in New York Parish Visitor.*—

FOR PARISH AND HOME.

SOME GREAT CHURCHMEN.

VI.

JOHN NEWTON.

JOHN NEWTON, "the old African blasphemer," the fearless sailor, the avaricious slave-trader, the country pastor, the London rector, the hymn writer, the author, is one of the most remarkable and picturesque figures in English Church history. He reminds us at once of St. Paul, of St. Augustine, and of John Bunyan. He was a living monument of grace. His career has an air of romance about it. It is a story of adventure, of contact with the darker side of the world, of grace as rich as it is free, of a changed heart and a new purpose, and of a life devoted to God and good.

John Newton's father was a sea captain in early life, and later became governor of York Fort, Hudson's Bay, where he died. His mother was an earnest Christian woman. "The memory of the just is blessed," and John Newton, at the age of seventy, wrote of his mother: "She made it the chief business and pleasure of her life to instruct me, and to bring me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." At the age of eleven his father took him on board his ship, and he made five voyages to the Mediterranean. His father had been educated by the Jesuits, and, while anxious to care for his son's morals, he was unable, on account of a distant manner, to win the sympathy of his son.

At the age of fifteen he was placed in a good position with excellent prospects at Alicante, in Spain, but, in his own words, he was both "wicked" and "foolish," and threw away his opportunities. He was not, however, without religious convictions and his conscience

was aroused by his providential escape from death when thrown from a horse, and by the capsizing of a boat, which caused the death of several persons, in which he had promised to visit a man-of-war. But his religion was merely external. He "lived a Pharisee." He confesses that while he gave time to Bible study and prayer, fasted and abstained from all animal food for three months, yet it was a poor religion, and tended to make him "gloomy, stupid, unsocial, and useless." It was a religion unable to meet the first temptation to skeptical opinions, for when Shaftesbury's "Characteristics" fell in his way he read it with avidity and imbibed its opinions.

All the world loves a lover, and Newton proved himself an ardent one. His father was anxious that he should take a position on a Jamaica plantation, which offered bright prospects. Before sailing John Newton visited some distant relatives in Kent. This visit put Jamaica out of the question. Here he met Mary Catlett, who, from the day of her birth, had been marked out both by her mother and by his as his future wife. It was love at first sight, though she was then but fourteen. And for the delights of the present he was ready to sacrifice the future. Like Jacob of old, he had to spend seven long and weary years before his love was rewarded by her hand in marriage.

Instead of a visit of three days in Kent he remained three weeks, lost his ship, and destroyed his prospects in Jamaica. He now sailed with a friend for Venice, but on his return to England repeated his visit, and was impressed on board the *Harwich*, a man-of-war. The discipline was trying to him. He was placed over others to prevent their desertion, and deserted himself. When caught his anger was so great that he conceived a plan by which he purposed to take the captain's life; then, in remorse for such thoughts, he contemplated suicide, but the image of Mary Catlett stood between him and evil.

Through a fortunate circumstance, he was exchanged from the *Harwich* to a vessel bound for Sierra Leone, on the coast of Africa. He became the overseer of a slave depot on the Gold Coast, where the traffic in human flesh was carried on, the business consisting of the purchase of slaves and their sale to traders at an advance in price. He had landed penniless, and his situation was at first desperate. Then his master's wife, a black woman, took a violent hatred to him, which led to

a life of ill-usage, bordering upon starvation. Reduced by fever to utter weakness, he would often have been satisfied, like the prodigal, with the food that "the swine did eat." The demands of hunger were so pressing and imperative that at night he would pull up roots that grew in the plantation and eat them raw, though he knew that they would affect his system in the same way as an emetic. He had but one shirt, which he washed at midnight, and allowed to dry upon his back. A change of masters improved his condition, and soon after he left Africa through the kindness of a friend, a sea captain. There was no change, however, in his moral condition. His language was so blasphemous and profane that even the sailors reproved him. The voyage was, nevertheless, for his spiritual profit. It covered 7,000 miles, and was full of peril. The turning point of his life occurred one night when the ship was struck by a terrible storm, and he was awakened by the violence of the waves, when he heard a cry that the ship was sinking. As he hurried on deck, the captain called for a knife, and while he was looking for one another person supplied his place, and was swept overboard, and perished in the sea. The upper portion of the vessel was soon a wreck. Hope came with the morning, and Newton, in speaking to the captain, said, without much thought, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy upon us." Then the fear of death overwhelmed him. "What mercy," he said, "can there be for me?" He began to pray, but not the prayer of faith. It was a cry rather than a prayer, for he could not call God Father. He began to think of Jesus, whom he had often derided. The love of Christ affected him as he thought of a death for sins not His own. The ship was still in distress, beaten by the waves and driven. The captain was in a desperate mood. "We have," he cried, "a Jonah on board. Newton must be thrown overboard, if we are to be saved." But just as the dark night of despair was settling down upon them, and all seemed lost, as their last provisions were under preparations for dinner, land was sighted, and they were soon at anchor in Lough Swilly, on the north coast of Ireland. Newton was no longer an infidel. He had learned in his own experience that God both hears and answers prayer. It was the beginning of a "new life." He had not the experience of an advanced believer, but he realized that God had been seeking him all his life long, and his heart responded to the Father's