

"Listen Mary!" he exclaimed vehemently; "I do not deny that I love her, but it has been—strange as it seems to say so—almost against my will. She has dazzled and bewitched me, and taken me captive irresistibly. But, believe me, I came here with very different thoughts and wishes. Mary! indeed I was sincere when I spoke to you at my father's grave, and still even now—"

He stopped abruptly. Lurline's lovely voice still softly singing was thrilling through his heart. He could not say that he had any wish but to make her his wife as speedily as might be. Mary understood him; but her earnest prayer had earned for her great grace, and she was able to answer very gently, "Dear Bertrand, I ask this one favour of you—that you will wholly forget the past, except as regards our childhood's friendship, which I hope may continue between us to the end. A new life is opening out before us both; give me your good wishes, as I have given you mine. I trust your married life may be most brilliant and most happy; and I pray that my own in loneliness may be blameless and peaceful."

"Yours will have the blessing of the great God upon it!" he burst out, passionately; "I think you are an angel, Mary, and it will be well for me and Laura if you give us your prayers out of the holy home where you will spend yourself for others."

"That you may be sure you will have, ever and ever while I live," she answered, with a bright, sweet look, which glorified all her face. "And now, dear Bertrand, that all is settled, you must go to Lurline, and set her heart at rest. Some other time I will tell you all the future details of my future work."

And gently bending her head, while in her heart she gave him a last farewell as her one love, her Bertrand, who should have been her own, she passed away from him with her soft tread and her graceful movements, and soon had vanished from his sight among the trees.

Bertrand watched her till the last fold of her dark robes had disappeared with a sense of aching regret in his heart, even amid all the joyful exultation with which he felt that Laura was now his own. He strove to stifle the mingled remorse and tenderness which Mary had roused in him by resolving to force upon her half his fortune, which yet he knew well she never would consent to touch, and an expression of uneasiness and gloom was still upon his face, when there was a rush of light feet down the gravel path, two little white hands seized his half-frantically, and the beautiful bright eyes of Lurline plunged their gaze into his own, while her sweet voice rung out in beseeching tone, "Oh, my Bertrand! Tell me: is all well? Have you discovered that she does not love you? and are you free to make me all your own?"

"Yes, darling Lorelei!" he exclaimed, forgetting all but that he saw her lovely face before him. "All is settled, and you are my own now—wholly and for ever. Soon, very soon, you shall be my precious wife."

Then Laura breathed a long sigh of relief, and let her head fall upon his hands—her end was gained, and all her long toil was over.

To be continued.

God has placed some people in a very easy place to love and serve Him. And yet how many there are knowing this, feeling it, and yet do nothing. If such did their duty, the circumstances of others would not make it as hard to become Christians and live up to the highest professions.

THE DUTY OF BEING LOVABLE.

"A new commandment"

If my neighbour finds it as hard to love me as I do to love him, I am sorry for him. Christ's words mean something more positive than the quiescent goodwill which wishes no harm, and in an emergency, would do a kindness. But if there is nothing lovable in a person, how can you love him, except in this negative, benevolent spirit? Christ loved us in our "low estate," and his children should thus love one another. So the loyal Christian enlarges his heart and broadens his sympathies to live out the spirit of his Master. Yet human nature asserts itself. Antagonistic temperaments recoil from each other. Good people are often very disagreeable. Coarse manners and coarse tastes are repulsive, though found in the church. Tiresome people are bores, even if Christians. Our nerves are tortured, our sensibilities shocked, our temper exasperated by brothers and sisters in the church. There are some who act as if they did not want you to love them. *To be let alone* is all they want. How shall we have tenderness and sympathy and warm affection, when the heart does not find anything to fasten on?

Christ's "new commandment" must have a reflex meaning. If we are required to love, it is implied that we make ourselves lovable. Are we not to soften the asperities of our temper, "round the sharp knobs of character," change the repellent manners into a genial approachableness, and sweeten the severities of our virtues so that our condemnation of another's wrong shall be sorrowful rather than stern? Is it not a duty to avoid those habits which are uncomfortable to others; to check the indulgence of personal peculiarities which may be even more disagreeable than faults, and to cultivate those graces of heart and manner which make our presence a pleasure to others? Are we not to exercise ourselves continually in active, generous service, using all our faculties and opportunities in such a way that others can always believe in us, finding us an inspiration, strength and joy? Sir Philip Sydney speaks of

"A sweet, attractive kind of grace;
A full assurance given by looks,
Continual comfort in a face,
The lineaments of gospel books."

If we were all seeking to grow into the likeness of Christ, in little things as well as in great, this brotherly love would spring spontaneous in the heart, and we should find continual comfort in each other's faces.

I read the "new commandment" again, and underlying the familiar words I seem to see the corresponding precept: "Be lovable to one another." I look across to my neighbor over the way, and in striving to be lovable myself, lo! I find him so. Has he, too, been studying the lesson, or are my eyes just opened to see the good in him? Possibly we shall find it easier to love our neighbor than to be always deserving of his love.—*Christian at Work.*

HOLINESS IN COMMERCE.

It is quite time that the notion that we cannot be completely holy in business was exploded. Men who, in their Protestant fervor, scout the idea that peculiar sanctity belongs to a monk's cell, too often say, and in the utmost sincerity, when the claims of Christ to their full consecration are pressed upon them, "We cannot be entirely holy whilst engaged in commercial pursuits." This notion is highly dangerous, and is, moreover, absolutely false.

What is there in commerce that is defiling? Is it the goods we handle, or the men we transact business with, or is it the principles that underlie commercial life? No one would for a moment plead that the mere handling of cotton, or wool, or silk, or iron, or silver, or gold, can defile. That which touches only the outer man can never make him unholy. Unholiness is not a thing to be washed from the fingers' ends, but has its seat in the heart. Our Saviour shrank from no contact with the most guilty of his fellow men, yet he contracted no stain. Men can only contaminate as their principles, if evil, are accepted and acted upon. It is very true that the want of principle which characterizes some men in commerce is corruptive indeed, if we follow such an evil example; but need any man be dishonest because another is? Because others choose to walk in the path of iniquity, must we therefore step into the same road?

The cares of business, in an age of competition such as was never before known, are undoubtedly great. It would be very unwise to deny it. But it is altogether a mistake to suppose that business men are the only careful men. Every department of life feels the pressure of an age that is working at express speed; so that if commercial men feel the pressure, they do so in common with men of all ranks in society who live by toil of brain or hand.

It is urged that you cannot escape the contagion of wrong doing, that you must cut iron with steel and meet rascality with tricks. But is not this utterly to deny the spirit of our holy faith, which insists upon universal love, and declares that candor, truth, and regard for others' interests, should characterize the Christian man, in every walk of life. Besides, this judgment is false, or there is not a truly religious man in the commercial world. He who practices the dishonest tricks of trade, or in any way conducts his business so as to break God's commandments, is not a Christian at all. But, thank God, there are many saints among business men. And they who see the deception and meet often with impurity, and so keenly feel the smart of wrong as to complain of their isolation in regard to commercial morality, forget the lesson which God once impressed on the mind of disappointed Elijah.

There really is nothing in commerce itself contrary to the spirit of true religion. Some of the holiest men have bought and sold. Some of the noblest philanthropists that ever loved God wholly, and served their generation faithfully and well, have been commercial men; and no man, whose calling is an honest one, need fail of coming up to the highest requirements of the Gospel; whatever may be his position in life. What was said to Paul is equally said to us: "My grace is sufficient for thee." What was said by Paul may be as confidently said by us: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." We say to business men, You may carry a heart ever washed in the Saviour's blood, and therefore unstained by sin, all through your worldly engagements. It is your privilege to rise above all temptation, above all wrong, above all care, and whilst engaged in your most ordinary transactions in the world, have a Christian experience which will enable you to sit with Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

TRIBULATION may come as a flood into the church; we may be disappointed even in the brethren; but those who have the eye fixed on Christ "hold on their way;" the word which they have heard, and which they keep, is a strong link binding them to Him, who is more than all else to them.