

continued to play, but the Puritan sensitiveness had taken hold of him. An artificial offence had become a real offence when his conscience was wounded by it. He was reckless and desperate.

"This temptation of the devil," he says, "is more usual among poor creatures than many are aware of. It continued with me about a month or more; but one day, as I was standing at a neighbour's shop-window, and there cursing and swearing after my wonted manner, there sat within the woman of the house and heard me, who, though she was a loose and ungodly wretch, protested that I swore and cursed at such a rate that she trembled to hear me. I was able to spoil all the youths in a whole town. At this reproof I was silenced and put to secret shame, and that too, as I thought, before the God of heaven. I stood hanging down my head, and wishing that I might be a little child, that my father might learn me to speak without this wicked sin of swearing; for, thought I, I am so accustomed to it that it is vain to think of a reformation."

These words have been sometimes taken as a reflection on Bunyan's own father, as if he had not sufficiently checked the first symptoms of a bad habit. If this was so, too much may be easily made of it. The language in the homes of ignorant workmen is seldom select. They have not a large vocabulary, and the words which they use do not mean what they seem to mean. But so sharp and sudden remorse speaks remarkably for Bunyan himself. At this time he could have been barely twenty years old, and already he was quick to see when he was doing wrong, to be sorry for it, and to wish that he could do better. Vain the effort seemed to him, yet from that moment "he did leave off swearing, to his own great won-

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