

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### TO GO OR NOT TO GO.—A GLASGOW INCIDENT.

Mr John Dobie held a situation worth £200 a year in the Custom house at Glasgow, and had held it for fifteen years or more; for he was now about forty years old, and had a wife and eight children. I may not be quite accurate to a year about his age or the time he had been in the Custom-house, but I am sure I am right about the number of his family, and right also in saying that they were all still dependent upon his salary alone.

Mr Dobie lived in the West End of Glasgow, but not in the fashionable part, his house was as small as would hold his family, and lay in the district called Anderston. For the sake of those who do not know the second city of the empire, it may be explained that Glasgow has for its back-bone one long line of road, running nearly straight from east to west, considerably longer than Oxford street and Holborn together, with Cheapside to boot. The Custom-house lies on the river side, a little way off this line, at a point near the middle of it, where it is called Argyle street; indeed St. Enoch's Church and the square in front of it occupy all the space between Argyle street and the Custom-house. Mr. John Dobie's walk, on six days of the week, was one mile on this straight line, ending with a sharp turn to the right through Enoch's Square and into the place of invoices, registers, and bills of lading; and on the first day of the week his walk was just the same, except that he had the company of some of his children and his wife, and that he stopped at the door of St. Enoch's Church and went into his pew.

One Saturday night, in the last week of November, some five-and thirty years ago, there was a press of work in the Custom-house. The clock stood at fifteen minutes past eleven, and was hastening on to mark the close of the week, when Mr Reginald Crabbe came into the room where our friend was working and bade the porter put fresh coals on the fire. Mr. Crabbe was the head of the department, and recently transferred to Glasgow from London. When Mr John Dobie heard the order given he lifted his head and said, in a tone of wonder, but quite respectfully, "It will be Sabbath morning soon," whereupon other clerks lifted their heads also, looked at the clock and at Mr. Crabbe, and seemed as if they were of the same opinion with Mr. John Dobie.

"What difference does that make?" said Mr. Reginald Crabbe, sharply. Then remembering that he had come into Puritan Scotland, he added, "This work must be finished, gentlemen. But some of you may have scruples, as Mr Dobie seems to have, about going on to-night, and others may be tired. We shall stop at twelve; but those who don't return at ten to-morrow morning may expect to find their desks occupied by others on Monday."

Nobody spoke after Mr. Crabbe retired, and simple John Dobie went home with a heavy heart. Had he done wrong in speaking? He had spoken on impulse, in mere astonishment that the Lord's day was not to be a day of rest; ought he to have held his peace? And what course was he to take to-morrow?

He had by no means settled this question by the time he reached his door. Sometimes the plainness of the command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," seemed to settle the whole matter; but after a few steps the thought of his wife and eight children upset him, and he began to question whether it might not be his duty to go to the Custom-house rather than to St. Enoch's Church next morning. He thought it almost certain that if he did not, the rigorous new chief, Mr. Crabbe, would keep his threat, and next Monday would see him and his cast on the world. As I said, he was a very plain, ordinary man, slow at thinking, with no force about him; safe enough as long as he was in a steady round of work, but much at a loss when thrown suddenly into any new set of circumstances; and when he knocked at his own door, he was rather leaning towards going to his work instead of to church.

His wife ascribed his silence and his anxious look to extra fatigue, and so, to his great relief, she asked no questions. He had an honest, loving heart, and did not wish to disturb her Sabbath rest by suggesting that on Monday the bread-winning might have ceased. While she slept he lay and thought; but thinking was

not his strong point, and he made little of it. Even when he thought of God and his Saviour, his ideas got hazy and his feelings perplexing, for he was weary and stunned, and the little sleep he had before morning was not very refreshing. He prayed, however, and honestly committed his way to God, and went through the regular family worship with his household as usual. Some peace came after that, yet he had by no means made up his mind; and during the hour that he was alone, while his wife was getting herself and the bairns ready for church, all his perplexity came back. Only now he leaned rather toward going to St. Enoch's as he had done every Sabbath for many years, and taking the risk of what Monday would bring forth. He sat with his Bible before him and remembered having heard of persons who had been led out of trouble by finding suitable texts, and wished that such a text would come to him. But, though he shut his eyes and prayed in a confused plaintive way for guidance, no such decisive text came to him, and he was relieved when Mrs. Dobie and the children appeared ready for the walk to church. One thing Mr. John Dobie had done; he had dressed for church, not for business. It was a small matter, but it was something, he could not have put on his office coat without deciding in favour of Mr. Reginald Crabbe, and that he would not do, as yet.

The temptation was working away vigorously in his heart as he walked along Anderston and Argyle street with his wife on his arm and four children in front, even although he tried to keep up conversation; and when they came to the turning at St. Enoch's Square the struggle became violent. A dozen times he had arranged with himself that he would accompany his wife to the door of the church and there tell her, when there would be no time for argument, that he must run into his office; and a dozen times he had felt that, if he did so, he would have a bad conscience and would have no right to expect the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to rest on him any longer. As he entered the Square, he had a vision of a starving family at home and of a stout man in a shabby coat and patched shoes going about Glasgow seeking work; and on the other hand, as he crossed the Square, he had a more distinct feeling than any he had yet had that God would somehow help him through it he did what was right. He could not in the very least imagine how; but he trusted God and went into his pew, without any one except the Searcher of hearts having any knowledge of his feelings.

There was nothing remarkable about the prayers or the sermon that last Sabbath of November, 1845; but Mr. John Dobie was rather astonished to find how easy his mind became. For once the idea suggested itself to him that he had better look in at the Custom-house after the forenoon service; but he found it not nearly so difficult to dismiss that idea as it had been to put on his Sunday coat in the morning. He went home with his wife, returned to St. Enoch's in the afternoon, and conducted the evening worship with his children almost as usual. The worst time was when he was alone, and after that, when he was in bed, recalling the deeds of the day. The deed was done and could not be recalled; whatever the consequences might be, he must abide by them. His conscience was certainly more at rest, but his heart and head were sadly troubled. He could scarcely hope that Mr. Crabbe's bark would prove worse than his bite, so that it was probably not worth his while to go to his work on Monday. Still, he thought, it would be best to go and learn his fate, and then come home to tell the sad story to his wife.

There was little sleep for John Dobie that night, and his walk to business next morning was sufficiently miserable. When he reached the Custom-house, lo! his desk was waiting for him as he had left it, and not a word was spoken. He found out that his fellow-clerks had been there yesterday, but they treated him just as before, perhaps with a shade more of respect. He did not see Mr. Reginald Crabbe till Thursday, and then not the slightest reference was made to the affair of Saturday night.

When the worthy man went home to tea, his heart was very light, and his wife was glad to see him looking himself again; but he gave her no reason for the change. He thought once to tell her, but when he thought again, there was nothing to tell. It was only a fright he had had, and he was ashamed of how near his weak heart had been to giving way. He had rather groaned than prayed; it was wonderful how God had helped him. But there was nothing to talk about.

Indeed, Mrs. John Dobie, who was just as plain a person as her husband, only with a comelier face, never knew anything about it till some months had passed, and then John could not help telling her; for in May next Mr. Reginald Crabbe asked Mr. John Dobie to come into his private room. "Have you heard, Mr. Dobie, of the situation vacant at Greenock? and do you think you would like its duties?"

"Yes, Mr. Crabbe, I have heard of it," was all that Mr. Dobie could answer. He knew of the death by which it was made vacant, and he knew that it was a place of trust, with a salary of £350 a year. The thought had just crossed his mind how pleasant such a salary would be, but he had instantly reflected how thankful he ought to be to God that his own salary was going on all right.

"And do you think you would like the duties?" said Mr. Crabbe again, rather wondering that no answer had been given to that part of his question.

"The work is, I understand, sir, not so heavy as here, but the responsibilities are greater. Certainly I would like the duties, and I think I could perform them faithfully."

"That's just it, Mr. Dobie. If you are not afraid of the responsibility, I have much pleasure in saying the appointment is yours. We must have a man there with a conscience, and I know you are one who can be thoroughly trusted."

Mr. John Dobie that evening committed the extravagance of riding home in an omnibus, not that he was recklessly discounting the future, but because he was in haste to tell his wife of the approaching removal to Greenock. And when he was doing that, he could not help telling her how it all came about.—*The Sunday at Home.*

### THE DOOR OF SALVATION.

There are those who are aroused to a sense of their sin, and are anxious for salvation, but yet who want to take salvation upon their own terms, and to patch up and make perfect what God has declared complete. From first to last God alone must be recognized in the work of salvation; all our own puny efforts are as nothing at all, in so far as our title to a saved state and heaven is concerned. There are many anxious about their souls, who are indulging a laudable anxiety to be saved. But what will be the end of your seeking to attain thus simply in your own strength? What is the result in most cases? For the moment such seekers go to church or chapel—they listen to the word of God with increased interest, they assimilate the principles of this or that preacher with fresh vigour, but the upshot of it all is deadness, emptiness, and decline. These are they who are seeking to enter the sheepfold, not by the door, but to climb up some other way.

What would you think of me were I to attempt to enter this beautiful hall by climbing upon the roof and dashing in one of those window-panes, when the door stood ready and open before me? Would not you call me foolish—mad? Would not you cry, "There is the door! see it!" And yet I ask, Is not that the case with many anxious souls here? There is the open door of salvation; but no, they want to work for salvation. But it is not required for us to work to the cross, but it is required to work from it. Not until we are within the sheepfold is it our privilege to "go in and out and find pasture." Not till then can we be of any service to others. Not that I wish to decry a decent life, a life of morality; but that it is only for time; what is its use in eternity?

There are a great many people who are happy in a kind of spiritual Berwick-upon-Tweed. The peculiarity of this town lies in the fact that it is on the borders—neither in England nor in Scotland. I pity the nationality of its inhabitants, and I pity the nationality of those who are content to live in this spiritual borderland. They give neither to God, nor to the devil, nor to themselves; their allegiance sometimes going with the Lord's children, sometimes walking with the devil's kindred; and when Sabbath comes around, just because it's "the thing," trotting into church or chapel to render an outward display, because it's respectable to appear religious. From the bottom of my heart I pity them.

Something convinces us at the outset that Jesus is the door. Have you ever thought of the force of that little word "I"? "I am the door." Take God's word and apply it to yourself. Can you say, "I am the door?" Far from it. There is nothing so contempt-