

the Lord of the land has a country house in this valley, and in that house the pilgrims rest themselves for awhile, and are strengthened for the battles they will have to fight.

Believe me, reader, it is not in lofty stations, in king's palaces, and among the great men of the earth that the truest enjoyment and the highest hopes are found, but in the paths which are trodden by the lowly and the meek, and such shall one day inherit the whole earth. Passing through the Valley of Humiliation the pilgrims make it a well and the rain from heaven filleth the pools. Their God speaks comfortably to them, giving them vineyards from thence, and they sing there as in the days of their youth, and as in the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt (Hosea ii. 15).

But there are dangerous places in this valley. There is one called Forgetful-green, and here it was that Christian had the terrible encounter with Apollyon; for when people begin to forget God's mercies they make themselves like a target for Satan's darts. Beware of Forgetful-green. Do not forget either the threatenings, the promises, or the commandments of God's Word; for as certainly as you do you will expose yourselves to great peril, and the foe will gain an advantage over you. Then there is Bye-path-meadow, near to which is the castle of Giant Despair, but happily Christiana and her children did not fall within his clutches, for they found the castle demolished, and the giant's head stuck upon a pole. It was so to them; but the giant is not dead, and you must take heed not to listen to Mr. Despondency, lest he should lead you into that castle, and you should then be detained as Christian and Hopeful were. Then there is the enchanted ground where the air has a tendency to make one drowsy. It is all grown over with thorns and briars, except where you come to an enchanted arbour; and here a mist and darkness fell upon the pilgrims, so that they could scarcely, for a time, see one another. They came to an arbour where they found two men sleeping, whom they tried to awake, but they talked in their sleep, and were like men who had completely lost their senses. Is not this a true picture? Are there not many who get into the enchanted ground, and into the arbour of sleepiness, and then after all, fail to obtain the Mount Zion which they seek.

It is needful, then, whilst passing through the valley of Humiliation to be wide awake, to be ever on the alert, to take heed of bye-paths, and to be prepared to stand your ground against Apollyon and his emissaries round about. Christiana and her friends had great heart with them all the way through this valley, or I know not what would have been their lot. But under his guidance none need fear, and, ere long, the pilgrims will come up out of the valley leaving upon the arm of their beloved.

WHITHER DID IT LEAD?

To the land of Beulah. Several beautiful spots were passed on the way, such as Mount Innocent, and Mount Charity, and then, Bunyan says, after this I beheld, until they were come into the land of Beulah, where the sun shineth night and day. Here, because they were weary, they took themselves to rest, and because this country was common for pilgrims, and because the orchards and the vineyards that were here belonged to the king of the celestial country, therefore they were licensed to make bold with any of these things.

The land of Beulah is the pleasant land where the winter has passed, where the voice of the singing of birds is heard, and where the Christian pilgrim regales himself with all the fruits of holiness, and claims the richest provision as his own. It lies beyond, or within the Valley of Humiliation, and on the very borders of the Celestial City. Some find it in an early stage of their pilgrimage, but many do not until they have wandered long in the wilderness. And yet it is the privilege of all to enter it at once, and having entered it never leave it, for it means married, and here the espousals of the believer with his Lord are cemented by the strongest ties. None but those who dwell in this land know how pleasant and how fair it is. Oh, dear reader, if you want to meet death without fear, get into the land of Beulah, and you will be conscious of such sweet avowings of the Spirit as will fill you with the full assurance of hope unto the end. Perfect love casteth out fear, and it is in the land of Beulah that love is made perfect.

The river of death next appears. This river each pilgrim, as a rule, must cross alone; and now a messenger is sent to Christiana with a letter, the contents of which were these: "Hail, good woman, I bring thee tidings that the Master calleth for thee, and expecteth that thou shouldst stand in

His presence in clothes of immortality, within these ten days."

When he had read this letter to her, he gave her therewith a sure token that he was a true messenger, and was come to bid her make haste to be gone. The token was this: "An arrow, with a point sharpened by love, let easily into her heart, which by degrees wrought so effectually with her, that at the appointed time she must be gone."

Yes, death to the Christian is an arrow pointed by love, and Christiana was ready to receive it; and she called her children and bequeathed to them such as she had, and at length she entered the river, beckoning farewell to all her friends; and, though her children wept, Mr. Greatheart and Mr. Valiant tuned cymbal and harp for joy.

This river we have all to cross, but, though it may appear deep and cold, yet shall we find, as Christiana did, the presence of One who will bear us through the waters, and on the other side we shall receive a glorious welcome from the shining ones who will come to meet us, and from our friends who have gone before. O blessed consummation of the pilgrim life! Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect; the tree of life, the sea of glass, the presence of God, the beautiful vision! What mind can conceive? what tongue can describe the joys that await us when our journey ends? Just as the traveller, when he arrives at home and finds himself again in the company of his wife, and children, and friends, thinks little of the toil he has endured, of the mountains and the valleys over which he has walked, or of the storms and the tempests he has encountered in the way; so shall we, when landed yonder think little of the sorrows of this present life, or think of them only to bless God for them, as the means of preparing us for this weight of glory.

Whether Christiana met her husband in the Celestial City Bunyan does not say, for he does not follow her there, but leaves all her joy to be implied. The reunion of friends in that bright abode is, however, certain. The glorified without us are not made perfect. Their highest bliss will be realized only when all the elect of Christ are gathered home. But the event is sure, and we will therefore wait for it.

And now our pilgrims have got through the Valley of Humiliation, and are yonder on the Mount of Everlasting Deliverance. Humble they will still be, but, Oh, how exalted! Lowly they will always seem, yet oh, how dignified and great! Yes, this valley leads to light, to honour, to glory, to immortality, and it is the only way by which we can obtain them. There is no other, for he that humbleth himself, as he only, shall be exalted to the kingdom and throne of the Most High.

PRAYER MEETINGS.

AMONG the assemblies of believers on earth, if there is one most interesting and supremely blessed, it must be a prayer-meeting. It is there we sit "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"; there we more fully and practically realise our fellowship in the Lord, our companionship in journey to our Father's house, and, by anticipation, enjoy an inside view of our heavenly home. The distinctions of rank and wealth vanish; the world, with all its distracting and all-absorbing allurements, seems to be shut out for the time being. A spiritual atmosphere appears to prevail, sinful passions to subside, and even the most indifferent "assume a virtue if they have it not." I have been deeply struck with the remarkable fact that individuals who, in their ordinary walk and conversation, are very reserved and diffident, and far from being fluent of speech, have in the prayer-meeting, when called upon to address the Throne of Grace, poured forth a strain of spiritual eloquence surprising to those who knew not the power of the "Spirit giving utterance." And as springs are the source and vitality of rivers, so are the prayer-meetings the life and maintenance of the Church; and as the traveller in the desert, exhausted with the heats and labours of the journey, turns aside with delight to enjoy the refreshing comfort and coolness of the welcome oasis, so does the Christian, wearied with the business and anxieties of the busy day, betake himself to the enjoyments of the prayer-meeting, as an anticipation of the pleasures of his future heaven. All other enjoyments, no matter how highly seasoned or however varied, after a short time, pall upon the taste and grow insipid, and leave a vacuum in the mind