

FRIENDS IN HEAVEN.

“**A**ND as for our friends,” says good Richard Baxter, “there are far more, and far better, in heaven than on earth. . . . Our friends here are wise, but they are unwise also; they are faithful, but partly unfaithful; they are holy, but also, alas! too sinful; they have the image of God, but blotted and dishonoured by their faults; they do God and His Church much service, but they also do too much against Him and too much for Satan, even when they intend the honour of God; they promote the Gospel, but they also hinder it; their weakness, ignorance, error, selfishness, pride, passion, division, contention, scandals, remissness, do oft so much hurt, that it is hard to discern whether it be not greater than their good to the Church, or to their neighbours. Our friends are our helpers and comforters, but how oft also are they our hinderers, trouble, and grief! But in heaven they are altogether wise, and holy, and faithful, and have nothing in them, nor there done by them, but what is amiable to God and man.”

A HINDRANCE TO PRAYER.

**A**NGER is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant—descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over. And then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed some time through the air about his ministries here below.

And so is it ever with the prayer of a good man; when his affairs have required business, and his business was matter of discipline, and his discipline was to pass upon a sinning person, or had a design of charity, his duty met with the infirmities of a man, and anger was its instrument. And the instrument became stronger than the prime agent, and raised a tempest and overruled the man; and then his prayer was broken and his thoughts were troubled, and his words went up towards a cloud, and his thoughts pulled them back again, and made them without intention; and the good man sighs for his infirmity, but must be content to lose that prayer; and then he must recover it, when his anger is removed and his spirit is becalmed—mad even as the brow of Jesus—and then it ascends to heaven upon the wings of the holy Dove, and dwells with God, till it returns like the useful bee, laden with a blessing and the dew of heaven!

Jeremy Taylor.

MERCY FOR ME.

**I**s there mercy for me? So stained is my heart  
With the sins of a life, little hope can I have.  
Stay! Jesus is waiting such sinners to bless,  
Jesus the merciful, mighty to save.

But sad is my thought as myself I behold,  
So strengthless for good, so ready to sin:  
Be comforted, He will the power impart,  
His grace is sufficient the battle to win.

I have tried to be good, and vows I have made,  
But to promise is futile, so easy to fall;  
Abandon poor self, to your Saviour return,  
He is able and willing to bring you through all.

O Jesus, I trust Thee, whatever may come,  
I am safe in Thy care, and my sins never more  
Can trouble me, washed in Thy blood which atones  
For sinners the vilest, the rich and the poor.

Oh keep me and guide me in life's rugged way,  
Hold Thou my weak steps, on Thine arm will I lean,  
Rejoicing in hope, pressing forward to know  
The joys everlasting which eye hath not seen.

Jesse Page.

GOD OUR SHIELD.



**I**N ancient times, no warrior's equipment was complete without a shield; indeed, it was his principal means of defence. With it he turned aside the swift arrows and fiery

darts of his enemies, warded off the sharp sword-thrust, or protected himself from the shower of stones or other missiles. It was worn upon the left arm, and proved a most effectual defence while the wearer faced the foe, but formed not the least covering for a coward's back. It was considered such a disgrace for one to lose his shield, or be wounded in the back, that the patriotic Spartan matrons ended their parting salutations to their sons, "Return with your shields or upon them."

As shields were a necessity in ancient warfare, they varied in size, shape, or material, according to the notions or resources of the people. In the earliest ages, they were made of the bark of trees, osier willows, and the skins of animals; but as nations advanced in wealth and civilisation, shields were made of brass, steel and other metals, and often of great beauty of finish though none the less a means of defence.