

"Yes, I think I have. You know I regularly attend worship, and I say my prayers every morning and evening. I also read my Bible every day."

"Ah, these are very good and useful pieces of armour in the holy battle," observed the Italian; "but you will remember, Major, that the apostle bids us to put on the *whole* armour. And surely he is right there; for a soldier who has only half his weapons about him will not be able to stand against such a cunning, able, and powerful enemy as we have to deal with. Then, again, it is to be observed that some weapons are more important and indispensable in some circumstances than others. If your enemy only attacks you with his sword, you may have a fair chance by brandishing yours well. But if he attacks you from afar with darts, and even *fiery* darts, your sword is of little use for the moment; and you will be lost if you have no shield. Now, our enemy, as it appears, is an able archer. In fact, he seldom fights us hand to hand. He prefers attacking us from a distance, in the dark, from an ambush. We get his wicked thoughts quite imperceptibly. He dims our minds with all kinds of doubts and perplexities. He causes dark, dismal feelings to rise in our flesh, so that we are about to despair of everything, and walk along in a numbed state of mind, just as if there were neither a God nor a heaven, and as if the whole Gospel were but a farce. Then, again, he adroitly puts such objects before our eyes as are sure to stimulate *some* prevailing lust, some besetting sin, or he knows to put us into such a state of carnal carelessness and merriment as may open our hearts to dangerous plans and shameful purposes. Now, all this usually comes in a hidden way to us. We seldom can trace its origin. It came gradually. It came, we don't know how. Our minds are full of ungodly thoughts; yet we prayed so earnestly this morning. We are engaged in carrying out some scheme of covetousness, or vengeance, or concupiscence; yet we worshipped so devoutly when at church. We feel very much disposed to think that perhaps not half of what we are taught about God, Christ, and eternity, is true; yet we read our Bible so reverently this morning. Thus we feel unfit for heaven, and to dispel that dismal mood, we throw ourselves headlong into the business or the pleasures of this world. But that is exactly the thing our enemy wanted to bring us to. He had no other object in view, when shooting his darts at us, but to hunt us away from God, and to cause us to run into the arms of the world."

"Very true, very true," quoth the Major, looking at the soldier with surprise. "You really tell my every day's history, Bianchi. I wonder how you know all that. Has my wife told you all about it?"

"By no means, Major," answered the Italian. "I never had the pleasure of seeing your lady; nor do I want her instructions, to be able to know what is going on in the heart of a man who, like you, desires to serve God, but feels himself too weak to resist the attacks of the evil foe. I know all that from my own experience, and from the Word of God. If I have told you your history I told you mine at the same time. But it appears to me that—pardon my boldness, Major—you are committing the same fault which I have so often committed, and which I am trying to correct with all the energy of my soul."

"And what is that fault?" asked the Major in deep concern.

"You neglect to put on the *whole* armour. You leave portions of your armament in abeyance; and these are exactly such weapons as are most indispensable in the special battle we are engaged in. You remember that the apostle says, '*Above all, take the shield of faith.*' He evidently points at that weapon as the *first* piece required for a good success."

"But I think I *have* faith," answered the Major. "I do believe the Gospel. I do believe in Christ. I do not believe that anybody, or anything, can save me, except Christ."

"Ah, very well," replied the Italian, "that is the shield the apostle points at. But permit me to ask you, have you *taken* that shield? For you will admit, that it is of little use to the soldier if it is suspended on the wall of his tent, instead