

Prayer Its Own Answer.

[A TRANSLATION, in "Exotics," by James Freeman Clarke, from Jelal-el-Deen.]

"Allah, Allah!" cried the sick man, racked with pain the long night through; Till with prayer his heart was tender, till his lips like honey grew.

But at morning came the Tempter; said, "Call louder, child of pain! See if Allah ever hear, or answer 'Here am I' again."

Like a stab, the cruel cavil through his brain and pulses went; To his heart an icy coldness, to his brain a darkness, sent.

Then before him stands Elias; says, "My child! why thus dismayed? Dost repent thy former fervour? Is thy soul of prayer afraid?"

"Ah!" he cried, "I've called so often; never heard the 'Here am I'; And I thought, God will not pity, will not turn on me his eye."

Then the grave Elias answered, "God said, 'Rise, Elias, go,— Speak to him, the sorely tempted; lift him from his gulf of woe."

"Tell him that his very longing is itself an answering cry; That his prayer, 'Come, gracious Allah,' is my answer, 'Here am I.'"

"Every inmost aspiration is God's angel undefiled; And in every 'O my Father!' slumbers deep a 'Here, my child!'"

SUSIE REDMAYNE:

OR,

A Story of the Seamy Side of Child-life.

BY

CHRISTABEL.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAY OF LIFE IN PIPER'S COURT.

THE door was pushed open and Richard Redmayne walked or rather tottered into his desolate home.

He had been a man of fine presence and great respectability, but he had fallen through strong drink.

There was still an indescribable air of refinement about him, though his coat hung in tatters and his face was red and bloated. An ordinary acquaintance, who had known him when his wife was living, would hardly have recognized the wreck that he now was.

In the early part of his married life he was a prosperous coach-painter, and showed signs of artistic talent. He was then a happy and hopeful man.

But things had gone hardly with him; he had lost his wife, to whom he was fondly attached, and he had lost part of his trade without much fault of his own.

It seemed an easy way to purchase forgetfulness by taking spirits. At first a friend, seeing him low-spirited, had prevailed upon him to take just a little to do him good.

False friend, and a false step leading to an unknown abyss!

The transition from a lonely home and a grumbling housekeeper and a fretting, delicate baby, to a gin-palace appeared too pleasant to be resisted, and he fell an easy prey to the arch-fiend of strong drink.

"Here, Ralph, what hast thou earned to-day?" said Redmayne as he stumbled into a chair.

"Nothing, father; I couldn't get anything to do."

Ralph awaited what might follow with the calm courage that a good conscience gives.

A heavy blow, then a crash followed. And the little table with the few things which Susie had carefully placed in readiness, should her father require them for his supper, were strewn in fragments around the wretched room.

Susie crept in silence to bed and pressed the coverlet into her mouth to prevent her sobs being audible to her father.

Ralph stood still. He was too miserable to care what happened to himself. Only

for Susie's sake he hoped his father would not strike him.

"Here, lazy young 'un, go quick and bring some rum;" and Richard Redmayne held out a shilling, which the boy promptly took, and hastily snatching a jug ran off to execute his errand.

Fearing he would be too late he made all possible haste. He was an obedient boy, and in his anxiety to satisfy his father he forgot that the slush from the streets oozed in and out at every step from his worn-out boots.

Ralph's anxiety was useless. The gin-palaces had closed, and he had to return with his shilling and his empty jug.

That precious shilling was just now a burden to him, although it would procure them all a breakfast which they greatly needed.

Ralph said to himself many times over as he slowly retraced his steps, "I would rather go anywhere than home, and I would run away, but I can't take the shilling. I won't be dishonest. Besides, father and Susie need it. They have nothing for breakfast. Then there is the jug; if I threw it away it would be mean. And there is Susie, who is far more to me than these things. Oh, Susie! I never will be a coward and leave thee alone with father. Perhaps mother will know, and she would not be pleased if I left thee."

He looked up to the skies, and through the murky atmosphere he could see shining dimly a few far-off stars.

He fancied his mother might be looking down upon him as the stars appeared to do, and he said passionately, "Oh, mother, I will go home to-night because of Susie, and the shilling, and the broken jug."

There was one above who knew that he went home for conscience sake, and the blessing of a mind at peace with itself was given to him.

Very quietly Ralph opened the door. He hardly knew what he dreaded, but if a lion had been there he could scarcely have feared it more. A presentiment haunted him that he was treading on a crisis. Quietly too he crossed the floor and laid the shilling on the mantel-shelf.

A piece of tallow candle was burning in the socket of a shaky tin candlestick; its flickering light was enough to show to Ralph that the heavy sleep of a drunkard had laid its merciful hold upon his father, and that not yet had the dreaded crisis come.

Richard Redmayne had never struck his helpless children unprovoked. To this depth of brutality he had not yet descended. But not the less certainly did Ralph know that day by day he came nearer to it. To a sensitive and imaginative child, who is yet brave and true, the shadow of a coming sorrow is a greater torment than the trial itself.

The flickering candle died out, and Ralph groped his way to Susie's bed that he might kneel there and say the prayers his mother had taught him. It seemed a more holy and sacred place, and a more fitting place for prayer, beside the innocent child than near the degraded father.

Then the invisible hand of sleep wrapped him up, and mercifully, for a few hours, shut out from all eyes the horrors of a drunkard's home!

The morning dawned chill and cheerless in Piper's Court; and much misery and poverty was awakened from unrefreshing slumbers.

There were cracked windows and rickety doors that let in not only the keen wind but also the snow it carried along with it. And what was worse, it blew its icy breath over scant breakfast-tables, and penetrated thin garments that were only fit for genial weather.

Some of this poverty was, no doubt, unavoidable. But how much of it might have been prevented by temperance and forethought in the years that were long since past recall!

Ralph was the first to awake in the cold rooms which the Redmaynes called home. He was quickly on the alert to make the best of things; and he could manage household matters more economically than many housekeepers, for necessity had sharpened his wits.

The sight of the shilling was a real joy to him now.

The small shops in the narrow street adjoining Piper's Court were very accommodating.

If you only had a penny, you could have a pennyworth of tea.

Ralph calculated over and over again how to get the best breakfast out of the shilling; for it was an important matter to be intrusted with a coin of such value.

When Redmayne roused himself from the heavy torpor of his sleep he was very thankful to see a breakfast on the table that would ease a little the burning thirst from which he was suffering.

He knew that he already felt like an aged man, although he was not forty; and he knew also that through the love of strong drink he was fast approaching either a drunkard's or a suicide's grave.

"Ralph, thou'lt be a better man than I have been;" and a slight accent of hope pervaded the bitter tone in which he spoke.

Now when alcohol had no power over him he hated himself, and he was glad that it was not in his power to quite ruin the future promise of his boy; for he saw that he inherited his mother's firmness and stability of character, along with his own good temper.

"Father, why can't you be as you were when mother was living?" but the tone had in it no shade of hope.

Ralph had known too much of the bitterness of hoping only to be disappointed, to care ever to hope again.

"Ah!" said Redmayne, as if he were pitying himself, "if thy mother had lived we might have had a happy and comfortable home."

"When I'm a big boy," said Ralph, cheerfully, and his eyes were lit up with brightness, for it is so easy for youth to weave fairy-like visions, "I mean to join a Band of Hope, and I shall earn lots of money, and Susie shall be a lady. Won't that be grand!"

A sweet little silvery laugh was the answer from the straw bed and ragged coverlet; and Susie opened her eyes wide when she saw that there really was bread and butter and hot coffee for breakfast.

Children are acute observers, and although Susie was generally afraid of her father she knew that she could trust him in his present mood.

She climbed upon his knee, and stroked his whiskers, and put her arms around his neck as if he had been the best of fathers to her.

So readily does childhood accept the stray sunbeams that cross its path. Her father returned her caresses, and enjoyed her love, and wished as sincerely as herself that things could always be like that.

Yet at that very moment, in the midst of his remorse and shame, and the love that still remained for his children, the craving for strong drink held him so powerfully in its iron grip, that he could have sold himself into slavery that he might gratify the desire a little longer.

So full of contradictions is the character of a good-natured drunkard.

When the humble meal was finished, Ralph returned thanks reverently, and quickly got himself ready to go out to seek some work.

In the meantime Richard Redmayne slunk away, saying that it was time he was at work.

Then Ralph went to Susie and kissed her and tried to comfort her.

He was deeply grieved that he was obliged to leave her alone. No mother could have been more tender.

"Now, Susie, be a little woman," said Ralph, "and I won't stay a minute longer than I can help. Just think that you are the mistress and I'm the master. I go out to earn the money, and you keep things tidy, and have the kettle boiling for me when I come in. I feel as though I should get lots of things to do to-day, and we'll have such a jolly little dinner to ourselves; for likely enough father will not come near us any more till bedtime."

Ralph thought he would try the station to-day; and just as he ran up out of breath an old gentleman emerged from the crowded doorway, carrying in his hand a small portmanteau.

"Please, sir, can I carry it for you?" and the tones of the boy were so eager that the gentleman couldn't help looking at him. He preferred carrying his own bag, but he had a kind heart and he couldn't disappoint the boy.

On arriving at the door of his home the old gentleman, being a little curious to know what kind of a boy this was, said:

"Well, what do you expect me to give you?"

"Oh, please sir, anything you like." He held a penny toward the boy. There was a smile playing on his face though he pretended to look serious.

"Thank you," said the boy, and was about to run off.

"Wait a minute, my boy;" and the gentleman took out a silver coin, asking the boy, as he did so, what he did with his money.

"I work for my little sister and myself," said Ralph, earnestly.

"Then you have no father?"

"Yes, I have," replied Ralph; then he blushed and was silent.

"Well, I hope we shall meet again," said the gentleman as Ralph hurried away.

Then mentally he exclaimed, "That boy could be made something of!"

Ralph was delighted, and his first impulse was to run home and tell Susie; but he said to himself, "No, that would be unbusinesslike; I must go and try and earn some more."

He had some more small successes; then he went to a cook-shop and bought their dinners, and ran home as fast as he could.

(To be continued.)

HE TOOK THE WHIPPING.

ON one of the Dakota prairies there had never been a Sunday-school. The children heard their mothers tell about the Sunday-school "back East," and they wanted one very much indeed. The mothers always said, "When the Missionary Society can send us a missionary, we shall have a Sunday-school."

One day, to the great joy of the children, this very thing happened. A missionary and his wife came to live among them on the prairie, and they would open a Sunday-school the very next Sunday in a deserted school-house, if anybody could find a way to heat it. There was a stove; but it was difficult to get fuel. Why? Because there were so few trees, and it was so hard to keep those few alive, nobody would think of using even one branch for firewood. The people used "twisted hay" to cook with at home; but it was all they could do to twist enough for their own use. How do they twist it to burn? Well, they take enough hay to make a hay strip about a yard and a half long, and about as thick as a man's wrist. Then they twist this up into a figure eight, about the size of a stick of wood. It reminds one of an old-fashioned New England giant doughnut.

But how was that school-house to be heated for the Sunday-school? A plucky boy thought out a way. He arose very early one Sunday morning, and taking a basket on his arm, walked quite a distance to the railroad track, and then walked on the track until he filled his basket with coal which had fallen from the engines. This he bravely carried to the school-house, and a happy company of children had a "real Sunday-school." After this, the school depended upon our plucky Bob for fuel.

Now, I am sorry to tell you that this dear boy's father was not a Christian, and did not approve of the missionary nor the Sunday-school. When he heard what his boy had been doing, he was very angry, and said, "Bob, I'll beat you within an inch of your life if you get another basket of coal for that Sunday-school."

Bob had a pretty good excuse to lie in bed the next Sunday morning instead of trudging off at daylight with his basket, but after thinking it over and laying the matter before his heavenly Father (for Bob had become a Christian under the influence of the missionary) he decided to get the coal for the Sunday-school just the same, and then take the whipping. This he did for several Sabbaths, until his father's heart was melted, and he owned up that "there must be something in the kind of religion his boy had got hold of."

My young soldiers, this always happens. When a true soldier of Christ loves his Captain enough to bravely live the true Christ-life, the bitterest opposer to Christ will think if he does not say, "There must be something in that religion. I wish I had it!"—Selected.