

Now, when a young man is bent on going to the bad, he will not find it a hard matter to accomplish. There are plenty of people who will help him on, and help him down. The devil himself will be at his elbow to "lend a hand," and help him over the stiles. A man never has so many helpers as when he is going fast downhill. And so young Spratt found.

And, moreover, when he once begins to go down he gathers speed as he goes. Every day, pretty nearly, finds him increasing his pace. Beginning slowly at first, he gets up more and more steam until the speed becomes quite bewildering.

Poor young Spratt! He went so "fast" that he shot past church doors, and never by any mortal chance could bring himself to stop and enter there. And as for reading his Bible, or kneeling down and praying as he used to do, he was much too fast a young man for that. In fact, religion altogether was much too "slow" for fast young Spratt. Spinning along at such a giddy pace, he very soon parted with the last particle of anything in the shape of religion. He left it all behind him. Mother, father, and sisters hung on to young Spratt, to moderate, if possible, his pace. But it was of no good. He shook them off one and all, and left them weeping behind him. A runaway horse was nothing to young Spratt, so "fast" was he.

Nevertheless, he stopped at last, and how he did it I am now going to tell you.

There was an honest old watchmaker, a friend of the family, who lived not very far from young Spratt's, and who had long been watching the young man's ways. While others watched and laughed, he watched and prayed, and hoped that the time would come to put the drag on young Spratt's speed. Well, the time came, as it always does to those who pray for it, and have patience to wait for it, and eyes to see it when it does come.

One day the young man brought in his gold watch to be examined and mended. It wouldn't "go" somehow. There was something wrong with it.

The old man saw his opportunity and used it. Opening the watch, and narrowly inspecting it, he said, "You're a little too fast, sir." There was more than the words, however, for the tone of voice said infinitely more. "You want to be cleaned, sir—thoroughly cleaned. In fact, sir, you need to be taken to pieces and thoroughly overhauled. How long have you been going so fast, sir?"

"I don't quite know," stammered young Spratt, who saw the meaning of the old man's words clearly enough, but did not wish to seem to see it.

"Yes, sir," continued the old watchmaker, "thoroughly cleaned, thoroughly overhauled, and properly regulated; we'll make a good job of you yet."

Young Spratt fled, leaving the watch in the old man's hands.

But while he fled, he also thought.

"What's the good of a watch that is too fast?" he said to himself. "And what's the good of a young fellow who goes too fast? No good to anybody. And I've been actually priding myself on being fast.

Why, the watch might as well pride itself on being too fast.

"'Cleaned, overhauled, regulated.' Ah, yes, precisely so; not rubbed up without, but 'cleaned, overhauled, and regulated' within. That's it. I'm wrong inside; no doubt about that.

"And who's to do it? The watchmaker is the only one who can clean a watch, and my Maker is the only One who can do this for me. Dear me! what a long time it is since I said my prayers or went to church. I must see to that, indeed I must."

A few days afterwards young Spratt called for his watch.

It was quite ready. But when the old watchmaker handed it to him, he said, "You're not too fast, sir, now, I hope?"

Young Spratt was not quite so shy now, for he answered, "I've 'slowed down' pretty much, and I intend to 'slow down' more still. I've been too fast, God knows; but, please God, I'll keep better time."

"Thank God!" said the old man; "but be sure you go to the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the only One who understands the 'workings' of your heart, and can 'clean, overhaul, and regulate it.' Cleansed with His precious blood, renewed by His Spirit, you'll 'go' even better than this cleaned watch."

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## GOLDEN THOUGHTS.

—We must not eat to be idle, but eat to labour: labour that we may eat, and eat that we may labour.

—God's refreshments must quicken us to God's employments.

—Men that will not follow the commands, shall want the comforts of Christ. If you will not follow the light of direction, you shall want the light of consolation.

—Add meditation to hearing, practice to preaching; when you have heard a sermon, then go live a sermon.

—If thou hast a praying heart, thou wilt find a praying place and a praying time.

—God often makes us fatherless in respect of creature reliefs, that we may be fatherless in respect of creature reliance.

—If Christ had not prayed for Peter, Satan had not only winnowed him like wheat, but blown him away like chaff.

—Unbosom your hearts to the Lord if things go not well; in praises and thanksgivings, if things succeed well.

—God's people have often been alone in respect of comfort, but never alone in respect of assistance.

—God would have His people judge of the lawfulness of their undertakings, not by works, but by His Word; not by providences, but by precepts; and this, that we may learn to live by faith, and not by sense.

—Those of God's soldiers who have been most fearful in garrison have been most valiant in the field; those who have suspected their hearts most, who have been