

THE STEAMBOAT.

Early in last autumn I had occasion to travel in the north and mingle much with all sorts of men and women. Sometimes disgusted with open and hardened wickedness, or pained by thoughtless levity, and almost wondering at the strange humours and inconsistencies of my fellow creatures shown in endless variety of characters; I mourned and laughed by turns. Sometimes refreshed and delighted by the genuine feeling, and pure christian simplicity, and active christian principle exhibited in all the beauty of holiness, I went on my way, gleaning, as I hope, something profitable for my own heart, and full of interest to the beloved fireside circles at home.

From the large, noisy, busy town of Newcastle, I wandered along the coast to the ruins of Tynemouth Abbey; and, in meditative musing on days gone by, suggested by the venerable remains before me, I scarcely perceived the approach of evening, till the darkening horizon, where but one stream of golden light remained to tell how gloriously the blessed sun had sunk to his repose, warned me to retrace my steps. The screaming sea-bird seemed to reproach me as an intruder on her solitary way—the great ocean heaved darkly on, rolling forth volumes of mighty sound—making the sublimest of music. I could gaze on it, and listen to it for ever! “The sea is His, and He made it.”—Surely it speaks in a special manner His wonders and His love. I marvel at those, I pity those, who see in it nothing but a dull and wearisome monotony, I could not make such understand me. Peace be with them! They have, I hope, their enjoyments—they shall not laugh, or frown me out of mine.

Darkness gathered around me, the way was long and dreary, and, to expedite my return, I embarked at Shields on board a steamboat. The deck was crowded with a noisy and motley group of colliers and market people, and I took refuge in the cabin below. There, in a dark corner, sat three poor women, who quietly and respectfully made room for me beside them. One was a Quaker; she had retired with characteristic modesty from the confusion that reigned above, and sat the picture of neatness and peacefulness—her hands folded across her gray shawl—waiting her emancipation from so uncongenial a situation. Her right hand neighbour had a sickly infant on her knee, which she sadly mismanaged, and in piteous cries it spoke the severities of its little sorrows. There was something in the appearance of the third female that deeply interested me.—She was deadly pale, her garb was of the poorest kind, and her wo-struck, though peaceful countenance, told of many sorrows meekly borne. In her hand she held a basket of tracts and little books for sale.

At the time of my entrance, she was endeavoring to pacify her neighbour's child, and to infuse some common sense into its mother. I joined my endeavours to hers, but in vain.—“Well, sir,” she said, “it is sometimes a blessed thing to hear them cry, it shows there is strength to struggle. I have seen them when they could only moan—when I should have blessed the Lord for one such cry as this.” “Our friend,” said the Quaker, “has been sorely afflicted, but I tell her the Lord is surely with her, for she bows with the spirit of meekness.”

I asked her story, it is the story probably of hundreds. She told it with all the simplicity of truth—with all the earnestness of misery.

“My husband was a book-binder, but his health left him. He worked in his bed when he was too weak to set up. We sold our furniture to pay his doctor—but all would not do. He lay helpless in his bed for weeks with hardly a rag to cover him. I, and my seven little ones, did what we could to earn a morsel of bread—my poor John could do no more! It was the Lord and he was very merciful, for he sent a kind lady, who put my husband into the Infirmary. There he is well looked after, though if it had so pleased God I could love to nurse him myself. Oh! if he come back to me in health, I shall have more than I can desire or deserve.

About a month ago, three of my little ones fell ill of a cough—they fell sick one by one—they lay day and night—I would have given my life to ease

their pain—but it was not to be so; I saw them die one by one, and they looked peaceful when death was on them! I laid them side by side in the same grave and I tried to say, ‘They are taken from the evil to come!’ ‘I shall go to them, though never can they return to me.’” She stopped, and with the back of her hand quietly wiped away the tears from her eyes. I laid my hand on hers, and said, “Your dear children are happy, far beyond what even you could desire for them. They are in the hands of God; and He is with you in all your trouble. Underneath you is His everlasting arm, supporting you. This is his doing. He must do well. Whom he loveth he chasteneth.”

“I know it, I know it!” she exclaimed. “Thank you, sir, for those blessed words. Yet ungrateful as I am, I cannot yet love his correction. I fear I do not say from my heart, ‘Thy will be done’—not mine. I have yet another precious child sick at home, the pride of my heart, and a blessed daughter she has been to me, but I believe she must go, for death is in her sweet face. I thought when I left her this morning, I should hear her speak no more but I was forced to seek a morsel of bread for her and myself. And why should I desire to hear more words from her in this world? They cannot be better than her last. ‘Dear mother,’ she said, and smiled, all-suffering as she was, ‘perhaps I shall be gone to heaven before you come back; but I shall find Jesus Christ there, and I will pray him to come and comfort you, and take care of you.’

“Oh! sir, you are a kind Christian; if you have little ones at home, do not love them too well! May you find them again in health, and never know how hard it is to see their little dying agonies and kiss their cold lips for the last time! Yet do not think I complain, I have much, much more than I deserve. Sometimes I have thought my heart would break, but it was wicked to doubt—for God has never failed, in my greatest need, to raise up friends; and when I think of a happy eternity to come, I feel that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to it.”

She ceased—and, shall I be ashamed to own it? my tears flowed fast; yet I scarcely blessed the Christian's God, who can make his servants to triumph even over misery like this.—“Godliness is,” indeed, “profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.”

Our little voyage was done. The time had been short. Yet our hearts were warmed with a kindness as of many years standing. With the sincerest interest and respect I assisted my poor friend to disembark, and at parting put a few shillings into her hand, for the use of her invalid. “There,” she exclaimed, “did I not say right? the friend in need is sent me again.—Sir! He will bless you, who receives the cup of cold water as given to himself. I will praise Him for you and for me: He will hear the blessing of her who was ready to perish. Oh, may heaven bless you now and for ever.”

She returned to her sad home and her dying child—sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” I, to my solitary inn, where, in the visions of the night, my meditations were sweet for they rested on the reward of Christian sorrows meekly born, on purified affections—on holiness, and happiness, and heaven! Some struggling rays of comfort break through the deepest gloom, even in this dark valley; one by one, the rolling threatening clouds disperse—the Sun of Righteousness, himself, breaks forth at last, and all is meridian day!

Reader, are your best affections set on things above? If not, oh! where will your trembling soul find refuge in the bitter day of sorrow, in the awful hour of death? Lose not a moment, for “why will ye die?” Seek peace and secure happiness in the word and ways of God. He will not cast you out.

If you have laid up your treasure and fixed your heart in heaven, blessed are you;—you need no words of mine; you know and follow the paths of pleasantness and peace! Yet a little while, it may be, you must struggle ‘and fight the good fight.’ The Christian armour brightens with the using. Victory, glorious victory, shall be yours, for the

Lord is your shield! ‘Eye hath not seen nor ear heard the things’ laid up for you. Rejoice then—always rejoice. You have waited for him, and in the day when the ‘Lord of hosts maketh up his jewels,’ you shall be his.

A CHURCHYARD SCENE.

How sweet and solemn, all alone,
With reverend steps, from stone to stone
In a small village churchyard lying,
O'er intervening flowers to move!
And as we read the names unknown
Of young and old to judgement gone,
And hear in the calm air above
Time onwards softly flying,
To meditate, in Christian love,
Upon the dead and dying!
Across the silence seem to go,
With dream-like motion, wavering slow,
And shrouded in their folds of snow,
The friends we loved long, long, ago!
Gliding across the sad retreat,
How beautiful their phantom-feet!
What tenderness is in their eyes,
Turned where the poor survivor lies,
‘Mid monitory sanctities!
What years of vanished joy are fanned,
From one uplifting of that hand
In its white stillness! when the Shade
Doth glimmeringly in sunshine fade
From our embrace, how dim appears
This world's life through a mist of tears!
Vain hopes! blind sorrows! needless fears!
Such is the scene around me now:
A little Churchyard on the brow
Of a green pastoral hill;
Its sylvan village sleeps below,
And faintly here is heard the flow
Of Woodburn's Summer rill;
A place where all things mournful meet,
And yet, the sweetest of the sweet,
The stillest of the still!
With what a pensive beauty fall
Across the mossy mouldering wall
The rose-tree's clustered arches! See
The robin-redbreast warily,
Bright, through the blossoms, leaves its nest;
Sweet ingrate! through the Winter blest
At the firesides of men—but shy
Through all the sunny summer-hours,
He hides himself among the flowers,
In his own wild festivity.
What lulling sound, and shadow cool
Hangs half the darkened churchyard o'er,
From thy green depths so beautiful,
Thou gorgeous sycamore!
Oft hath the holy wine and bread
Been blest beneath thy murmuring tent,
Where many a bright and hoary head
Bowed at that awful sacrament.
Now all beneath the turf are laid
On which they sat, and sang, and prayed.
Above that consecrated tree
Ascends the tapering spire that seems
To lift the soul up silently
To heaven with all its dreams,
While in the belfry, deep and low,
From his heaved bosom's purple gleams
The Dove's continuous murmurs flow,
A dirge-like song, half bliss, half woe,
The voice so lonely seems!—WILSON.

FAMILY PRIDE.—The most lasting families have only their seasons, more or less, of a certain constitutional strength. They have their Spring and Summer sunshine glare, their wane, decline, and death; they flourish and shine, perhaps, for ages; at last they sicken: their light grows pale, and, at a crisis when the offsets are withered, and the old stock is blasted, the whole tribe disappears. There are limits ordained to everything under the sun. Man will not abide in honour. Of all human vanities, family pride is one of the weakest. Reader, go thy way; secure thy name in the book of life, where the page fades not, nor the title alters nor expires—leave the rest to heralds and the parish register.—Borlase.