

## The Sabbath School.

## The Dying Soldier.

It was during a short voyage that I became acquainted with Joseph Hughes, a Sergeant in the 93rd regiment of Highlanders.

My attention was first arrested by his sickly aspect. He appeared to be about twenty-six years of age, and, when in health, must have had a manly bearing; but his figure was now yielding, and his countenance pale and worn. There was, nevertheless, something in his eye, to which his insidious disease gave more than natural brightness,—an expression of intelligent resignation. There was no impatience in his demeanour, yet no insensibility. There was calmness, but no hardihood. It struck me that he was not only resigned, but had good reasons for resignation.

This I ventured to hope, but at the same time could not repress the question, "What if he is unprepared to meet his God? He is evidently on the borders of another world. In a few days, perhaps, his state for eternity will be unalterable. Still to-day it may be altered. The case is pressing, how shall I act?" While I thus pondered, perhaps in guilty hesitation, Providence removed every obstacle for the accomplishment of my half-formed purpose; for, in passing through the cabin, towards the deck, I saw the sergeant employed in reading a Testament. My heart bounded, and I gave joyful thanks to God. I soon joined the object of my anxiety, and the speedy union of our feelings shewed that we loved the same Saviour.

He informed me that in early life, although not blessed with religious parents, he had possessed the privilege of receiving the instructions of a faithful Sabbath-school Teacher.

I inquired if these were the means of leading him to the Saviour?

"Yes," he answered, "they were the first means that were used, and I think they were the most effectual."

"Was your heart impressed while at school?" I inquired.

"O, not in the least," he answered, "or, perhaps, I should have considered longer before I exposed myself to a soldier's life. I was a Sabbath-school scholar at the time I enlisted."

"Strange," I observed, "that while wandering so far from home, and while mixing so young with all the irreligion of your comrades, with no friend to counsel or guard you, strange it was that these truths were not driven from your mind!"

"Ah! but," said he, his whole countenance glowing with emotion, "My Sabbath school Teacher never forgot me! Many a time when in foreign lands, his earnest desires reached me; often he added short sentences to my father's letters, the whole of which, indeed, he often wrote, crying to me, to mind my soul. Often, often, these cries were repeated; and, like one drop after another upon the hard stone, they left marks behind them."

"And you were softened at last?"

"Ay, Sir, at last: I had a kind Teacher, and a still kinder Saviour. For the Saviour saw that I could easily stand out against Him, while I remained in the thoughtless company of my comrades. So he took me aside; he left me alone. There happened to be a small station in one of the West India islands, which required only a few soldiers, and I was appointed to it. It was a dreary place. It was a wilderness.—But it blossomed like the rose before I left it. I began, almost as soon as I came, to reflect very much; and as I reflected, I began to get uneasy. I thought much of the shortness of life, and the coming of a day of judgment; and these thoughts, along with the dulness of the station, made it more agreeable than otherwise to read my Bible. I always thought that the Bible was dull, and I guessed that it would just suit me. So it did; but in a very different way from what I expected. Every verse I read brought some recollections of the Sabbath-school; and the more my mind was filled with such thoughts, the more miserable I became. The truth is, my case could not bear examination. God and I were opposed

to each other: how could I be otherwise than wretched?"

"Did you ever venture," I inquired, "to express your feelings to any one?"

"No; I may say, I was quite alone.—There was, indeed, a Chaplain who came occasionally to the station, and my anxious eyes often followed him to watch an opportunity of speaking. But, ah! I fear his case was worse than mine. What would I have given had he been 'sent of God!'"

"But at this time, I remembered that there was a small company of pious soldiers who met together for religious conversation, and kept some religious books for lending to their fellow soldiers. They were stationed in another island; and to them I wrote, begging the loan of a book; this they joyfully complied with; and more than this, for they sent me a little encouragement. O, precious words! They were like cold water to a thirsty soul! It was strange that before this time, although I had often heard of Jesus Christ, I never saw what use He was of. Every prayer I offered ended 'for Jesus's sake;' and the truth never struck me after all."

"Now I began to see that unless Jesus had died, all hope for mercy was not only vain, but the very hope that a holy and just God would ever bless a sinner, had something blasphemous in it. It was just hoping that God would lie, and disgrace His whole character; for He is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;' (Hab. i. 13;) and 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die.' (Ezek. xviii. 4.) But when I saw that the Saviour died, then came the beauty of the words, 'I am the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' O, the lovely plan! God is honoured, and the sinner saved, by the same Redeemer. For Christ hath 'magnified the law,' and he who 'believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.'"

After hearing this pleasing account, I became desirous to know how far the reason which soldiers often give for not bearing the Christian profession was a just one. I therefore asked whether he found it difficult to make known his Christian character, after being removed to a more populous station.

He openly said that, at first, he had great difficulty; "For," observed he, "I was proud, and could not bear to be looked down upon, and considered weak. But go forward I could not help doing; and soon the jokes grew old, and the jeers less frequent, and I was at last allowed to take my own way."

"You do not think, then," I added, "that there are serious obstacles to a Christian profession in the ranks?"

"O, no! no! True, if a man be insincere, if he appear religious just to please his superior officer or so, (our Colonel was a truly pious man,) he is sure to be made wretched; \* \* \* for the soldiers are always on the watch. But let a man bear as much love to Christ as shall rule his whole conduct; let him be honourable, and regular, and obliging, and he is sure to be respected. He may sometimes be falsely accused, and dealt unfairly with, but his patience will outlive that; and the more opposition he outlives, not only the more strength does he get to his soul, but the more respect he gets from ungodly companions. O, that every soldier were but a Christian!"

Thus our short, but interesting conversation closed.—It was Saturday night on which it was held. On the next day the weather was uncommonly fine, and our vessel reposed quietly on the water, which was nearly calm. In these favourable circumstances we assembled on deck to worship God. A Bible was placed upon the companion, which had been covered with a large flag, and a considerable number of soldiers, and sailors, and others gathered reverently around it. We offered fervent prayer that this peaceful Sabbath might prove a true spiritual rest to our souls; and when we lifted up our voices, one might have supposed that the smooth waters rejoiced to be the bearers of our praise to their great Creator, for the sound vanished from our lips, and quickly swept along the surface. When the Scripture was read, solemnity was added to the calm; for thought-

fulness well became us all when we heard it said of the Divine Saviour of guilty men, "He is despised and rejected of men: He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Isai liii. 3.)

Immediately at the close of the service the sails of our vessel urged by gentle breathings of wind, began to strike the masts. Soon the breeze filled them. It came from a favourable direction, and gave gratification to all. The coincidence between the conclusion of our engagement, and the commencement of the favourable breeze, seemed, I thought, to dispose several who were not previously so inclined, to read some tracts with which they were supplied; so that, during the remainder of the day, the deck was whitened with opened tracts, and enlivened by animated countenances.

The Sergeant was not upon deck. The air was too strong for his weakened lungs. I therefore hastened to his cabin, to give him information of our engagements, as I thought he would be pleased to know that others had enjoyed a privilege, although it was denied to him. But I was mistaken in this latter particular; for, as I turned to descend, there sat the Sergeant upon the cabin stairs; and there he had been during all the service. The exertion, however, of sitting, and the slight excitement which his feelings had experienced, made him exceedingly weak; and he retired to rest.

On my return shortly afterwards, he said, "I have an uncommon thirst to-day."—Misunderstanding him, I said I would procure some water; when he answered, "It is not that water, it is heavenly water that I need. I long to be filled with the riches of Jesus Christ. Without him I have no happiness; and without all I can obtain of Him I cannot feel satisfied."

I inquired if he had much enjoyment of the presence of his saviour.

"Yes," he answered; "when this weary body does not weaken my mind; but much is the pain I suffer because of the hours of day when my thoughts lag far behind. This is my greatest affliction, my greatest sin. It distresses me much."

I observed, that perhaps it should not be called a sin, because God had weakened his body; and if we loved him with all our strength, even when small, it was all that He required. As I had not done so before, I ventured to ask whether he thought that he would soon see Jesus "as He is" in a higher world.

"O yes," he replied: "I am nearly gone to Him."

"The prospect," I remarked, "must be pleasing; for then we shall 'love Him as we ought.'"

"Ah, yes!" he said; "but how feeble is my faith!"

"Then," truly," I observed, "we may draw happiness from the thought, that both what we suffer, and the length of time that we do suffer, depend on the perfect will of God."

"O man!" (a common expression with the Scottish people, when the magnitude of the feeling exceeds every smaller distinction.) O man!" with great energy he exclaimed, "that is it: that is just my resting-place. I am here because my heavenly Father wishes me to be here; I suffer because He wishes it; and I shall die whenever He gives the word. Sweet repose I have on that truth."

The ingenuousness and humility displayed by this trembling, but true believer, were very pleasing. He had no brilliant expectations, no rapturous feelings; but he had the "Spirit of adoption," whereby he could call the great Sovereign of all his Father; and upon His mere will he was contented to repose. Truly, if a soldier implicitly submits to the mere will of his commander, well may a Christian submit to his God.—He is possessed not only of unquestionable authority, but of perfect love. "O, what a blessed thing it is to lose one's will, said another Christian. "Since I have lost my will, I have found happiness. There can be no such thing as disappointment to me; for I have no desires but that God's will may be accomplished."

The breeze which we received at noon increased to a gale as the night approach-

ed. It drove us rapidly before it, until, early on the second day, having completely spent itself, we were left becalmed and motionless, within sight of our haven. The morning was extremely beautiful, and peace and gratitude were shed over our spirits.

Having now resumed his usual military habit, the Sergeant came and reclined his feeble frame upon a seat on the deck, expressing uncommon gratitude for his present peaceful circumstances. While viewing with most lively interest the different objects around him, and while his attention was directed to two lofty peaks, which indicated the place of his nativity, a gentleman on board, whom I knew to be unacquainted with the Christian's experience, being attracted by his sickly and intelligent appearance, kindly said to him, "You must be happy indeed to see your native hills again, my friend."

Slowly turning his pale countenance, he said, calmly, and pleasantly, "No, Sir: I shall be done with them all soon."

Strange was the look of mingled surprise and suspicion which the gentleman sent towards me, while he seemed to say, "Can this be true?"

Yes, it was true! With perfect collectness could he contemplate death. Sound reason had he to expect a peace more calm, more grateful to the wearied spirit, than any that the earth affords. His conversation was in heaven; and this incident proved that he had so mingled his feelings, with those of the purified and the perfect, that he had already ranked the scenes of this world among the 'former things' which had "passed away." (Rev. xxi. 4.)

Reader! You cannot but wish that "your latter end may be like his." O, then, commence as he did, by carrying your sins to the Saviour.

In a short time we crossed the bay in which our vessel was anchored, and landed within a few miles of the Sergeant's house. I was unsuccessful in procuring a seat in the stage suited to his tremulous frame, and he therefore was seated on the top. As, with some effort, I stretched my hand upwards to bid him a last farewell, the thought was natural, "My friend shall soon, soon be exalted far above all the attentions of any friend on earth." Ah! how speedily was this accomplished! Fourteen short days afterwards he left the world.

After having seen his parents, who were anxiously waiting his arrival, his solicitudes speedily turned towards his former Sabbath school teacher. He was the only Christian friend he had in his native land. He was the one on earth whom he especially longed to see; for, kind as were his parents, they could not, alas! at that time, participate in his Christian feelings. His Teacher still lived, and he still loved his now Christian pupil; but he lived at a distance, and it happened that at this time he was confined by sickness; so that the last and fondest wish of the dying soldier, for some kind reason which is now explained above, was not acceded to. "Nevertheless," says the kind Teacher, "I did not forget him; but wrote to him, and encouraged him to 'hold fast the beginning of his confidence firm unto the end;' and his last message to me was, 'All my hopes rest upon Jesus, who died for my guilty soul.'—*The Church in the Army.* Edited by the Rev. Dr. Inan.

## "Only Me."

A mother had two children, both girls. The younger was a fair child; but the elder was very beautiful and the mother's pet.—Her whole love centered in this child, and she gave her the pet name of "Sweet," and lavished on her all the kindness that ardent affection could bestow, while the less beautiful child was neglected.

One day, after a severe illness, the mother was sitting in the parlour, when she heard a childish step upon the stairs, and her thoughts were instantly with the favourite. "Is that you, Sweet?" she inquired. "No, mamma," was the sad, touching reply, "it is not Sweet,—IT IS ONLY ME!" The mother's heart smote her, and from that time, "Only me" was restored to a place in her affections.

Have you an "Only me" in your family, mother? Oh, then, quickly resolve she shall be "SWEET!"