

'Bought and Paid For.'

(A true story, in 'British Messenger'.)

'I think perhaps that one will suit me best,' and a lady customer in a large and fashionable shop laid her hand upon a handsome velvet mantle that, with several others, had been submitted for her approval by the manager of that special department a man noted for his keen business capacity and his excellent powers as a salesman.

'Thank you, madam. Shall we enter it to you, or do you wish to pay for it?'

'Oh, I will pay for it now!' and so saying she laid the money upon the counter, and in a few moments the manager handed her the receipted bill, asking at the same time to what address the goods should be

mantle; it will be sent home by our next delivery.'

'Bought this morning—sent home and received by me this afternoon—yes, that will do,' and the lady rose as if to leave the shop. But not yet had she finished her business; or, perhaps (to be more correct), not yet had she begun it; for it was the King's business that had led her there just then! A letter received a few days before had told her something about the man who even then was waiting upon her—a son of many prayers (as yet apparently unanswered), whose life, with every promise of success, was lived for self and not for God; and a longing for his soul had brought this servant of the King in search of him that day.



'BOUGHT AND PAID FOR.'

sent. After giving the information, the lady, looking up, said very quietly:

'That mantle is mine now, isn't it?'

'Certainly, madam.'

'So you will send it home to me without delay, will you not?'

'It will be at your home this afternoon, madam, unless anything unforeseen happens; and with an amused and questioning look the manager eyed the lady.

'You won't keep it about here until it is old-fashioned and soiled and has lost its shine, will you? because it belongs to me now, not to you.'

Annoyance took the place of amusement now, as the man answered rather slowly:

'That is not our way of doing business, madam; we have no wish to dispute your claim to goods that you have purchased. You need have no anxiety about your

So, standing up as if to go, she looked earnestly in his face, and said:

'You seem astonished that I am so anxious about my cloak, but do you always admit the claim of a purchaser to their purchase?'

'Certainly, madam.' There was a sharpness in the speaker now, as though his patience was exhausted.

'Then, do you recognize the claim of the Lord Jesus Christ to your life? for long ago He bought you, not with money but with blood, and His word makes known this claim in very plain language; "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." And I think you know how great the price was that was paid for you! at what tremendous cost the Son of God redeemed you, even with His precious blood! and don't you think He wants His purchase? you? your

life? How often has He watched! how long has He wanted to see if you were coming home to Him in the freshness of your manhood, in your prime! He wants you now, at once, before your powers fail; He wants the best of your life. Are you going to wait until you are old and feeble before you yield to the claims of Jesus Christ? You are bought and paid for, but you've never gone home to him yet,' and with an earnest tenderness in face and voice, the lady turned and left the shop.

For a few moments the man stood as if utterly bewildered;—but the words had gone home; his very business capacity had proved a channel for their entrance, and he stood there 'convicted by his own conscience.' 'Bought and paid for—bought and paid for! You've never gone home to Him yet.' Upright and moral, he had hitherto prided himself upon his respectable life; but it was wholly for himself he lived! To make a business, to make a name, to make money—these were his aims, whilst the claim of God, the love of Christ, had been altogether ignored! The life that had been bought with the 'precious blood of Christ' had never recognized its Redeemer's rights of ownership!

A quick succession of customers proved, for a little while, a diversion to the man's thoughts, but every time the money was paid over the counter that afternoon the words came back, 'Christ wants His purchase.' Yes, as a business man he dare not detain the goods that had been paid for; they were no longer his—and deeper still the message pierced his soul: 'Bought and paid for!—bought and paid for!'

'Another ten minutes and I can be off,' he said at last, as a glance at his watch showed that closing time was at hand. 'I can't stand this much longer; I must get away.'

'Get away!' From what? From business certainly, but not from himself; for, like Belshazzar of old, it was 'his thoughts' that 'troubled him,' not his surroundings, and so where'er he went his thoughts went too, and, in spite of earnest efforts to divert them, the evening passed wearily away. A restless night followed, and indeed the next two or three days were little better, until at last he felt that, alone with God, he must face this matter and settle it.

And so one evening, instead of taking his usual walk, he turned his steps straight homeward to the lodging where he lived away from business. God's claiming hand was heavily upon him just then, not for the first time indeed, but perhaps more consciously than ever before—a double claim it seemed to be, a claim of love as well as right.

And presently the Bible, hitherto unopened and unread, was taken out—from the box where a mother's hand had placed it two long years ago. 'I wonder where those verses are that lady quoted?' And in search of them he opened it and turned from page to page until at last his eyes rested upon the words in St. Peter's first epistle: 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation. . . . But with the precious blood of Christ. . . . Eagerly he read the words, and then lifting his eyes for a moment, they fell again upon the closing words of the second chapter: 'For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd.' 'Ye were astray. . . . Ye are returned—returned to whom? 'Unto the Shepherd.' And in an