

An Old Legend.

BY GEORGE MACDONALD.

The monk was praying in his cell—  
With bowed head praying sore;  
He had been praying on his knees  
For two long hours and more.

When in the midst and suddenly  
His eyes they opened wide,  
And on the ground, behold! he saw  
A man's feet him beside:

And almost to the feet came down  
A garment wove throughout;  
'Twas not like any he had seen  
In the countries round about.

His eyes he lifted tremblingly  
Until a hand they spied;  
A cut from a chisel there they saw,  
And another scar beside.

Then up they leaped the face to find;  
His heart gave one wild bound—  
One, and stood still with the awful joy:  
He had the Master found.

On his sad ear fell the convent bell—  
'Twas the hour the poor did wait:  
It was his to dole the daily bread  
That day at the convent gate.

A passion of love within him rose,  
And with duty wrestled strong;  
But the bell kept calling all the time  
With iron merciless tongue.

He gazed like a dog in the Master's eye  
He sprung to his feet in strength;  
"If I find him not when I come back,  
I shall find him the more at length."

He hid his heart and he fed the poor,  
All at the convent gate;  
Then wearily—oh, wearily!—  
Went back to be desolate.

His hand on the latch, his head bent low,  
He stood on the door-sill;  
Sad and slow he lifted the latch—  
The Master stood there still.

He said, "I have waited because my poor  
Had not to wait for thee;  
But the man who doeth my Father's work  
Is never far from me."

"They're as different as night and day!  
Temptation is no sin."  
"I don't see how that can be," said Baxter,  
"I never dreamt it was anything else. Are  
you quite sure?"  
"Positive. You can see for yourself. Did  
Christ ever sin?"  
"No."  
"Was he ever tempted?"  
"Well, sometimes."  
"No, not sometimes, always. A boy can  
be tempted every hour of the day, yet he need  
not sin. Keep that distinction in mind, Bax-  
ter; it will save you a lot of trouble. Don't  
think it's all up because you are tempted.  
Temptation is only an invitation: sin is when  
we accept it. The hang-dog sense of being a  
hopelessly bad lot, and of concluding it's no  
use trying to be any better because we are so  
often tempted, is what often turns the finest

"You write shorthand, Baxter?" resumed  
the captain. "I heard you got the prize  
there?"  
"Yes," said Baxter. "But I don't think  
I need take down what you said. Anything  
that is dead straight like that goes into a  
fellow."  
"That's not what I mean," laughed the  
captain. "But how did you win that  
prize?"  
"Practice," said Baxter. "There's nothing  
in it. It's all practice."  
"And what made you such a good oar?"  
"Who told you I pulled?"  
"The mantelpiece," said the captain,  
smiling. "Do you think I don't know the  
Junior Eight Cup when I see it?"  
"Well," blushed Baxter. "I suppose it's  
the same thing—practice. Everything seems  
practice."

the single gun—that's me. Every day almost  
I'm bowled out. Nobody knows it. I'm the  
worst fellow ever breathed." And he turned  
away his head. I suppose he expected sympa-  
thy, but for some minutes the captain made  
no reply. Then he looked at the boy almost  
sternly.

"Baxter, this will be found out."  
"What I've done?" cried the boy.  
"Possibly, very likely; but if you go on  
being bowled out it will certainly be  
known."

"How?"  
"There are reporters at every match."  
"No, no! not in this case. It's a private  
pitch."

"But I tell you it's all written down—  
all."

"Where?"  
"On the scoring-sheet."  
"What scoring-sheet?"  
"Your scoring-sheet. Your character."

"Oh!" groaned Baxter.  
"Yes," continued the captain, almost  
mercilessly, "it's all there, every innings  
you play and every run you make and every  
ball you miss. There's not a mistake on  
that sheet, nor an omission. Character  
cannot lie. Character cannot be taken  
in. Character hides nothing. It forgets  
nothing."

"Oh!" said the boy, huskily, "this game  
—this game of life is terrible, terrible. I—  
I don't see how I can risk it."

"Risk what?"  
"Another innings. I can't face that  
bowling. And the past?—it's a frightful  
handicap."

"The past can be forgiven, Baxter," said  
the captain, quietly.

"Can it?" said the boy. "Thank you for  
saying that much. Then he broke out again.  
"But is there the ghost of a chance? Could I  
ever win? I might block for a bit perhaps,  
but I could never score."

"Baxter," said the captain, "I think you  
will win."

"You do?" replied the boy. "Why?"  
"First, because you are frightened; second,  
because you are in earnest; third, because  
your Captain never lost a match."

"But I can't always have you," sighed  
Baxter.

"My boy, I'm not your captain," answered  
his friend, taking him by the hand. "I could  
not help you much if I would. But you need  
a captain, Baxter. You must have one. Do  
you understand?"

It was nearly ten minutes before Baxter  
spoke. Then he uncovered his face and pressed  
his visitor's hand. "Yes," he whispered,  
"I know. I was almost funk-ing it. But I  
think I'll go in."

CHAPTER VI.

BAXTER'S SECOND INNINGS.

Extract from the Athletic Column, Weekly  
Chronicle.

But the feature of the  
match was the play of young Baxter, who  
made such an unfortunate spill last Saturday.  
It was clear that he meant to retrieve himself  
in the Second Innings, for he was in such form  
—at least after the first over—that the bowler  
could make nothing of him. He began by  
blocking every ball in a dogged sort of way,  
but soon started scoring, running up threes  
and fours in rapid succession. After an  
unusually brilliant drive for six, he seemed  
to become overconfident and made a narrow  
escape by cutting a ball he ought to have  
blocked, but with this exception he did not  
offer a chance, and was well up the score-list  
before time was called for lunch.

After luncheon the bowler changed to  
slows, and the batsman, who showed weak-  
ness here, had certainly a hard time to keep  
his wicket. But eventually he mastered the  
situation, and from playing a merely defensive  
game began to knock the ball about right and  
left and was into three figures almost  
immediately. Baxter kept up this form to  
the close, and after one of the most careful  
and brilliant innings we have seen, carried his  
bat for the top score of the season. Our  
reporter, unfortunately, was not present  
afterwards in the Pavilion, but we under-  
stand the usual ceremony was duly performed,  
and the lion of the hour was presented with  
the traditional cricket-bat. The captain, in  
making the presentation, congratulated the  
batsman on the resolute stand he had made,  
and expressed the conviction that from what  
they had that day seen he was sure his future  
record would be one of continued victory,  
Baxter's reply was inaudible to more than one  
or two, but he is said to have modestly  
attributed his success to a friend of the  
captain's, who (so he said) 'had never lost a  
match.'

THE END.



THE ASCENSION.—See Lesson.

BAXTER'S SECOND INNINGS.

BY

PROFESSOR DRUMMOND.

CHAPTER V.

WHY THE DEMON BOWLER WAS ALLOWED TO  
BOWL: AND HOW THE SCORING-SHEET  
WAS KEPT.

"It's a good deal blacker than I thought,"  
said Baxter. "That bowler knows his busi-  
ness. But I should like to ask a question—  
if you've finished."

"I'm only beginning," said the captain;  
"but I think it's your turn. That bowling  
would take another month to tell about. I've  
only mentioned three kinds, and there's heaps  
more—sneaks for instance, and mixtures—"  
"Mixtures?"

"Yes. When the bowler alternates. He'll  
send in one ball slow, the next swift, and the  
third perhaps a wide, to throw you off your  
guard—doggy, Baxter, isn't it?"

"It's downright low," cried Baxter.  
"That's just what my question was about.  
You won't be angry?"

"No," said the captain, "go ahead."  
"Well," said Baxter, "I hope it's not  
swearing, or whatever you call it, but why do  
they let him play?"

"They let him play," replied the captain,  
to make a good game. Every boy who is  
worth his salt likes to play in a great match,  
and there cannot be a great match without  
him."

"I thought it a disgrace to have anything  
to do with him."  
"No. It is an honour."  
"An honour!"

"Yes, the greatest honour of a boy's life.  
You have heard of the wise man who 'counted  
it joy.'"

"Joy! I count it uncommon hard lines.  
It's bad enough to call it an honour, but to  
call it joy—I find it most disgustingly miser-  
able."

"Stop," said the captain, "we are at cross  
purposes. You are talking about sin. I was  
not."

"About what, then?"  
"About temptation."  
"But they're the same thing."

fellows into sneaks—fellows who, if they only  
knew that temptation was no sin, would hold  
up their heads and play the man. The guilt  
of doing wrong, when one does do it, is quite  
enough to stagger under without feeling the  
temptation criminal."  
"Even then," said Baxter, "I don't see  
where the honour comes in."  
"When I was at school," replied the  
captain, "I was Secretary of the Cricket  
Club. Judge of my amazement when the post  
one morning brought a challenge from the  
All England eleven. That was about the  
biggest day of my life. I suppose, though we  
did not know it then, they challenged every  
club in the kingdom, and though we modestly  
declined it, and there was not a boy in the  
eleven who did not feel an inch taller for the  
rest of the season. This challenge, Baxter, is  
considerably more honourable. Temptation is  
the greatest bowler in the world."  
"All the same, I wish I had not to play  
him," said Baxter.  
"Then you would never come to anything.  
You would be a poor weak noodle to the end  
of the chapter. A boy's only chance of  
coming to anything is when he is tempted.  
That's what makes a boy play up. How  
could you score if there were no bowling?"  
"This was certainly a conundrum, and the  
boy thought hard for a minute.

"I agree," said the captain, "everything  
—down to tying your necktie. But did you  
never think what makes a good man? No?  
Well, it's the same thing that makes a boy a  
good oar, or a good shot, or a good anything:  
it's practice. A boy who never goes to the  
gymnasium or uses the dumb-bells gets no  
muscle in his arm. A boy who never pushes  
against temptation gets no muscle in his  
character. Temptation is simply dumb-bells.  
It is really a splendid thing. The more  
practice a fellow gets the stronger he can  
become. Every ball the bowler sends in is a  
chance to score."  
"I shouldn't care about scoring," said the  
boy, "if I could only keep up my wicket."  
"Baxter," said the captain, "that's not  
cricket. I see you have never read W. G.  
Grace. When you get hold of it, turn up to  
page 222 or somewhere thereabouts—I was  
reading it last night."  
"What does he say?" asked the boy.  
"He says, 'The duty of a batsman is to  
make runs.'"  
"I wish I could," said Baxter, "That's  
just what I can't do. I'm bowled every  
time."  
"Oh, no, Baxter?"  
"It's true," replied Baxter, "I'm not going  
to be a humbug to you. I'm a bigger fool  
than Bob. That castle that was taken with