

## A Parable by the Seaside.

(By Mark Guy Pearse.)

The Lord Jesus Christ was very fond of the seaside. He liked the freedom of it; he liked the beauty of it. Many of the most striking incidents of his life occurred in the villages about the coast or on the sea itself. He liked the people, their simplicity, their freedom from the haughty ways of the city, their courage, their devotion. To-day, let us imagine ourselves by the sea-side, and following the example of the Blessed Master—to sit down by the seaside.

And he began again to teach by the sea-side: And there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship and sat in the sea. . . . And he taught them many things by parables; that is, told them stories, 'earthly stories with heavenly meaning,' so the little maiden called them. Away behind him the hills rises covered with flowers; here and there a little patch of cultivated land wherein the sower casts his seed. Along the deep blue waters the villages cluster, the white houses standing out sharp and clear. At his feet the waves gently ripple to the shore; on the pebble ridge are all the belongings of the fisher-folks—the boats, the nets, the ropes. Away on the sea are the fishing-boats, their sails reflected in the still water, and about them on every side are the birds. Around him are gathered the multitude—sturdy men and comely women, and bright-faced little children.

Now for us, as for them, there wait many parables at the seaside if we have but ears to hear.

Some years ago I was going along the north coast of Cornwall—the grandest bit of coast God ever made, as we Cornish folk think. Below there stretched the cliffs a good three hundred feet—here a rugged mass of stone reared itself like a castle fronting the fierce Atlantic; here was a sheer descent where some mass had fallen and swept down to the waves below; here it was hollowed out into a little grassy spot, where the patches of furze lit it up with gold, and the purple heather and many another flower made it beautiful. Far down below the great waves, dashed in thunder and shot up in columns of spray. Then the cliff rounded and sank away into a little bay with stretch of beach, where the water changed from indigo to vivid green as the waves swept far up the yellow sands.

A little way from the shore was a group of black rocks, about which the breakers foamed and surged. Far away, up and down the coast, stood out the headlands that do shut the helpless ships as in a trap when the north-west gales sweep the coast.

Here it was that we sat together, my good friend and I, whilst he told me his story.

'You see that group of rocks out there,' he began, pointing to the spot; 'well, it happened there. It was one November day; a tremendous gale had been blowing all night, and when I went out in the morning I saw a barque off the coast. If the wind held where it was I knew there was nothing for it but her coming ashore. I got on my horse and galloped off to the coastguard station, and they got ready to come off at once, whilst I hurried back again as fast as I could. To and fro she drove, nearer and nearer, until we saw that she would come in right there. The coastguard got out the rocket-apparatus and made ready to fire as soon as she struck. Presently a great sea lifted her right on to the rocks and then went back, leaving her perched up there

high and dry. You could see the poor fellows huddled together, frightened out of their wits, as well they might be.

The mortar was fired at once, and the first shot just carried the rope right across the rigging. But, bless you! as soon as ever the fellows heard the gun fire every man rushed as hard as he could into the fore-castle and shut the door. They thought we were a set of savages trying to kill them, that we might take the ship and the cargo. It was a sight to see. There was the rope hanging over them; there was the apparatus all ready to save them, and every one of us ready to risk his life to help them, and they thinking that we wanted to kill them!

'Well, presently, the sea began to boil again, and the great waves came sweeping about her. I knew that she couldn't stand that very long. What could we do? It was just enough to make a man go mad—to see the rope dangling within reach of them, and the great seas ready to sweep them all away; and they all trembling down in the fore-castle, cursing us for a set of Cornish wreckers. What more could we do? And in a few minutes they must all be swept away.

'We just stood and looked down upon the ship, every one of us, feeling as miserable as we could live, that they should be such fools. At last one of the coastguard could stand it no longer. He laid hold of the rope and swung himself hand over hand and got on board, and taking hold of the directions he ran up to the fore-castle and shouted to them to open the cabin door. They were more frightened than ever, and thought the murderers had got them now. Somehow he managed to get the door open, and then he flung himself in amongst them all. "There, I've come to save you!" he cried.

'They clustered about him, and one began to explain to the others what he meant. Then one crept up on the deck and looked at the rope, and then saw the crowd on the cliff, and the coastguardsman got him to step into the buoy. Timidly, one after another crept up and watched, and they jabbered together in their lingo. Then another was drawn up in safety, and another, until they were all safe.

'They all stood on the cliff and watched the great seas rise up again, and come tearing the ship to pieces. Then they seemed to understand it all, how that we had come to save them, and not to kill them. Their eyes filled with tears, and they turned and flung their arms about our necks and laughed, and cried, and hugged us and kissed us on both cheeks, and did not know what to do to show us how glad and thankful they were.

'Then we took them off to the farmhouses around, and got them dry things, and plenty to eat, and found a place for them to sleep in, and took all the care we could of them until they could get away. They tried to tell us with eyes and fingers and lips what they wanted to say, but all we could make out of it was this, that at first they took us for devils, but they found out that all the time we were angels.

I went on my way and turned inland, and toward my home. But the story I have never forgotten and never shall. Fools and madmen indeed! And I have seen in my dreams the rope dangling over them, and the frightened men hiding terrified from their deliverers.

So is it that the Blessed Saviour stands, looking forth upon the world which he has redeemed, and across which he has thrown the rope of mercy, binding earth to heaven. The direction is so plain; the deliverance so easy; salvation within reach. And yet how many foolish souls do hide themselves, afraid

of the All-gracious Lord, as if he came to kill and not to make alive. So men go sinking down into perdition whilst Christ stands with tearful eyes, and hands outstretched to save them. 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.'—British Workman.

## Rented a Pew.

In talking with a man who was apparently all right morally and a good citizen, he said, with a great deal of pride:

'My wife belongs to the church, and some of my children; I rent a pew and help pay the pastor's salary; in fact, they could not get along very well without me. I think I do my part; I think that is all that is required of me. Yes, I am perfectly satisfied to leave it that way.'

'Do you think paying the pew rent and helping to support the pastor will take you to heaven?' was asked.

'Oh, I do not give myself any worry about that; I am thought more worthy than a good many other people, and my part is done when I pay the pew rent and the minister gets his salary, I am not worried at all.'

Very likely there are many other people just like this man who are attempting to buy their way into heaven. It would seem as if we, as Christians, should be straightforward and out-spoken to such people, for nowhere in God's Word are we told that renting a pew in a church and paying the minister's salary will take us through the gates of heaven. Many men and many women are trying to brace themselves upon this plan, and having been helping in this way, that is, in renting a pew, or perhaps in founding an asylum, or building a hospital or doing some great deed, are trying to pave their way to heaven without any repentance and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ.

Let us do our duty as children of God toward those who are being misled.—Union Gospel News.

## The Praying Infidel.

I remember, says the Bishop of Saskatchewan, many years ago listening with great delight to a story I heard from a missionary in North Canada. He said that some years before then a humble missionary was travelling through the Canadian backwoods. He lost his way, but presently was rejoiced at the sight of a glimmering light. Soon reaching it, to his surprise he found a large congregation of settlers gathered round a fire listening to an able discourse. To his horror he found the man was trying to prove that there was no God, no heaven, no hell, no eternity. A murmur of applause went through the audience as the orator ceased. The missionary stood up and said:

'My friends, I am not going to make a long speech to you, for I am tired and weary, but I will tell you a little story. A few weeks ago I was walking on the banks of the river not far from here. I heard a cry of distress, and to my horror I saw a canoe drifting down the stream and nearing the rapids. There was a single man in the boat. In a short time he would near the waterfall and be gone. He saw his danger and I heard him scream, "O God, if I must lose my life have mercy on my soul!" I plunged into the water and reached the canoe. I dragged it to land and saved him. That man whom I heard, when he thought no one was near, praying to God to have mercy on his soul, is the man who has just addressed you, and has told you he believes there is neither God, nor heaven, nor hell!'—Christian.