

THE COLONIAL CHURCHMAN.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE."

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was returning one evening from a summer's walk, I was accosted by two country men from the hills. They told me that they had a sick neighbour whom they were anxious to obtain some assistance for. It appeared that he was not only very destitute, but that his latter end was rapidly approaching. "Who is this poor man?" I asked. "His name is Samuel Fox," returned the elder of them. "I may possibly remember him; he was in partnership with Morris the tailor some years back. I can recollect him perfectly; he built a cottage, and owned several acres of land. He was a hardy fellow; he holds the land still, and he lives in a house but for all that, we consider him the poorest man in the town. What is the cause?" "His own carelessness alone; and business is his business," you know. He might have done very well, had he had a mind, but he kept his affairs so badly, that Morris would not go on with him. Fox carry on business alone then, afterwards he set up for himself, and stocked his shop respectably; but he bought mainly on credit, and borrowed small things to mount up till they became debts. I do not think he meant to be dishonest; he was idle and inattentive, and got more and more into debt, and then he deceived both himself and his creditors. "How utterly ruined then?" "I cannot tell the extent of his debts, but I fear it will make a sad reckoning. About two years ago he suspected he was behind hand, but he went to borrow money on pretence of buying a sack of cloth which stopped the mouths of his creditors for a time but the longest day must have come, and our poor neighbor's day is past: he has been in bed about a month since, and I do not think he will rise again from it. He does not appear to have any serious thought of his estate?" "Not," returned the man sorrowfully: "his affairs are like the thorns in the parable, (Matt. 13, 31) which seem to choke all higher cares." "What family has he?" "A young children who are all in rags, their father being a poor helpless creature at the best. He had no help during his illness." "What was the matter which we gathered among our neighbors?" "The laborer, and we wished to make him a contribution to help our subscription; he cannot give us any relief, as long as he rents his land, but if we might raise a trifle for him. My comrade and I went round the village, and we have gathered many cheerful givers, and no one alienated us." "Is there anything in the character of christianity which cannot be mistaken. In its smallest details it bears the traces of a Divine Spirit; so truly said our Saviour said. "By this shall men know you for my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13, 35.) "I was inspired by the example of my two neighbors I took a part in the work, and after some time I made them good night, with the promise that I would visit the poor sufferer on the morrow." "I continued my way homeward, I lingered only to admire the beauties of nature, which

presented themselves in inexhaustible variety, at every turn; the evening was calm and clear, and the sun resting on the verge of the horizon, marked its retreat by the shadows which lengthened across the hills. As I watched its declining rays, I was reminded of the close of life, and I felt ready to exclaim, 'the longest day must have its night,' and 'the night cometh when no man can work,' (John 9, 4.)

Early the next morning, I went, accompanied by a friend to the village where the sick man lived. Our road lay chiefly through a retired lane, whence here and there an opening in the hedge disclosed some distant view. The banks on either side were covered with fern, and other wild plants, and an occasional field of clover, displayed its waving surface of silvery green leaves and fragrant flowers. The air was exhilarating, and the mind filled with admiration was stirred up to adore the glory of God manifested in His works. What a contrast, did this scene exhibit compared with that we soon witnessed.

The exterior of the house where Fox lived, presented a very imperfect idea of its tenant's wretchedness. It was new and substantial; and we had been informed that he held it for life at a very low rent, in consideration of his having vacated a cottage which he had built for himself. We knocked at the door, and a feeble voice desiring us to enter, we advanced, and found a miserable looking elderly man sinking under his infirmities, and stretched on a tattered couch, beside which was an infant in a cradle, which, from time to time he endeavored to rock to sleep. The room was almost destitute of furniture, and every thing bore marks of poverty and discomfort. While I tried to relieve the poor man of his trouble with the infant, my friend addressed a few words to him. He seemed sensible of our kind intentions, and in the course of conversation deplored the evils which he had brought upon himself and others. I have, said he, a wife and five children who have suffered much already, and I fear they have more to look for.

At this moment a kind of scuffle was heard at the door, which was immediately succeeded by the sound of blows, and the screams of a child; and forthwith entered the unhappy man's wife, dragging along with her, a little boy about six years of age, whom she had been rudely chastising in the street.

"What has the child done," I asked the furious mother: "Done!" she replied angrily, "I gave him sixpence to pay for a fourpenny loaf, and he has spent the change in gingerbread for himself."

"Like father like son," remarked a man who stood at the door.

"Two-pence is but a small matter" observed another by-stander, "to bring down such a beating."

"It may be a small matter to you, returned Mrs. Fox sharply; "but many a one is ruined by penny worths."

A good remark, thought I to myself; and in a more enlarged sense than poor Mrs. Fox intended. It reminded me of the beginnings of evil, and of those sins which a corrupt world esteems light and venial.

The sick man, who had been an attentive observer of all that had passed, could contain himself no longer, but burst into an agony of tears.

"Like father like son," he repeated; "it is too true; small matters have ruined me."

Here his wife interposed, and was beginning to describe how he had been unfortunate in trade, when he interrupted her, exclaiming bitterly, "It was no misfortune, it was my own doing: I was careless in my business, and put off looking into my affairs, till I dreaded to do so; and while I pretended to laugh at the very idea of danger, I feared to ex-

amine my books; and then I went from bad to worse, for I borrowed money on false pretences, and wronged an honest man. Oh that I could redeem the past, but it is now too late.

A kind neighbor who had entered while Fox was speaking, now joined in our endeavors to lead the unhappy man to the only mediator between God and man; reminding him that although he had hitherto been a careless sinner, it was not too late to pray for grace to repent; Jesus Christ having promised not to cast out those who come to him in faith confessing their sins. The poor man at least seemed to receive the comforting saying that the son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19, 10.) and that unto them therefore which believe he is precious (1 Peter 2, 3.) Praying that the Divine Spirit would render these impressions abiding, we bade him farewell.

I then separated from my companion, and pursued, a path which led to a number of small cottages on the opposite side of the village. One of them was the abode of Thomas Elridge the benevolent laborer, who had accosted me the preceding evening. It was a poor looking place, but the sun had cast a cheerful gleam upon it, and I reflected with pleasure that the inmate was one in whom the true light shone. (2 Cor. 4, 6.)

He was just coming home to dinner as I approached and he gave me a hearty welcome to his cottage: As I cast my eyes around the room, I was struck with the contrast to the scene I had so lately witnessed. On a well dusted shelf, lay a family Bible, a Prayer Book and a few religious tracts, and on the table below a missionary box made its silent appeal. I was pleased with the interest shewn by my neighbor in the condition of the heathen, and expressed myself accordingly. I can do but little, he said, but the seed which is sown in weakness may under the Divine blessing be raised in power: all of us have talents to account for, and there is no one so poor and afflicted, but he may do something in his Redeemer's service. I have read that a single penny will circulate a christian tract, and a weekly penny more than secure the weekly instruction of a heathen child in a christian school. My gatherings are mainly pence, but small rain may lay a heavy dust 'you know;' I now reverted to the state of his distressed neighbor.

"Poor man," he said, "I knew him in early life, and his slothfulness was even then, his besetting sin. It has cast him into a deep sleep (Prov. 19, 13.) and he has awoken on the verge of eternity."

"Do you think he has any idea of the extent of his debts," I asked.

"I do not suppose he has; debts and sins are always more than we take them to be."

I felt strongly the truth of this remark, especially when Elridge added, "that it was one of satan's commonest devices to turn our thoughts away from all serious examination, in order that we may follow him more heedlessly."

I then inquired if he thought his neighbor's creditors were charitably disposed towards him.

"I trust so, he answered, although some had given him rough words, which a man who has lost his independence feels very keenly."

"What are the circumstances of the man of whom he borrowed money?"

He is poor in this world's goods, but he is rich in faith and knows that a little with righteousness is better than great revenues without right, Prov. 16, 8. he labours working the thing that is good that he may have to give to him that needeth, Ephes. 4, 23, and he has the satisfaction of feeling that the little he has may justly call his own.

To be concluded in our next number.