

How the Light Came to Me.

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY.

(By the Rev. John McNeill, in 'The Christian.')

I remember it was like this. I was a young fellow, a booking-clerk, about seventeen or eighteen years old. I cannot say I was terribly anxious. That is where some of you make a mistake; you think that unless you are in a terrible state of anxiety about your sins you are not ripe for being saved. Don't you raise difficulties and put conditions where God has put none:—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Don't be working up something; let yourself alone. You must come as you are; you could not come as you are not.

I knew my Bible well, and the Shorter Catechism; I could say it in my sleep—can say it yet. But our Scottish Shorter Catechism is just the Bible boiled down. Justification by faith, effectual calling, the work of Christ, and so forth—I knew it all by heart, and the proof-texts; but I was as blind as a bat to it all; I had no light and no peace. I remember I just wanted to know what it was to be saved; though, as I say, I was not very anxious, or in a state about my sins. I knew that I was getting a year older, a year harder and colder, and nearer to sin and wickedness; although I had had no outward career of cursing or swearing, or drinking or badness. But I was honest enough to feel in my heart that I was not saved in God's sight. It is a great matter when God saves you from being a self-righteous Pharisee, even though as yet true salvation has not come.

I wanted to get into the light, but I never could have stayed to an after-meeting; so I can sympathize with the people who, when a second meeting is mentioned, just bolt as if the police were after them. I was then staying all through the week in the old town of Greenock. Every Saturday night I walked to our quiet village to spend the Sabbath at home with father and mother and the rest of them. I could never have spoken about my soul to the minister. But the minister's son and I were great chums. Although I was only a quarryman's son, my father belonged to the spiritual aristocracy, and it was no degradation for the minister's son and quarryman's son to 'hunt in couples.' We used to talk together, as young fellows will talk, about sweethearts and a lot of other things; we also talked about something that was not settled, but we felt the time was ripe for settlement about becoming a true Christian.

We agreed we would try to find out, and I remember one evening I wrote to my minister from the booking-office. I said something like this:—"I cannot say that I am greatly anxious, but I do feel that I ought to decide. If I do not decide for Christ, the world won't allow me to be half-hearted." And it won't. You will have to decide one way or the other. I was very full of knowledge of the Bible, as I thought, and I fancied the difficulty was in the Bible, not in me. So I said to the minister, "I will give you a text (Acts xvi., 31), which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I believe in Jesus Christ. I am no atheist or blasphemer. I believe all about him, but do not feel one bit the better for it." And I sent away the letter with the kind of notion that I had given the minister a poser.

Two or three days passed. I remember I was at the booking-office third-class win-

dow—I never go to a railway-station but I think of it. I was just about flinging up the window to serve tickets for the sugar-brokers' train to Glasgow at 10.30, when the postman came round and gave me a letter. I looked at the letter and saw from the postmark that it was from my minister; I knew it was an answer to mine. I tore it open and read something like this, and it was a sort of prophecy:—

'My dear John, you will never know, unless you become a minister yourself' (I had no more idea then of such a thing than that lad down there probably has) 'how glad I am to get such a frank letter from you about salvation, although you may be still in the dark as yet! I am glad you have fastened on a text. It is a good one, and I will join controversy with you there. You say you believe all about Jesus Christ, but you do not feel a bit the better. Now, I put it in this way: Which am I to believe? you who, after consulting with your feelings, pronounce your own verdict on yourself and say you cannot be saved because you do not feel any the better? Or am I to believe God speaking in his Word and pronouncing his verdict, and saying that if you believe in Christ as you say you do, you are saved, and you will be saved for ever and ever?'

This way of putting it, dear friends, may do nothing for you; but to me it was just like lifting a curtain. I saw the whole thing on its human side. It was not feeling—it was believing; trusting Jesus, no matter what I felt or did not feel. And the minister clenched it by saying: 'Besides, John, I am surprised that a lad of your education and upbringing should quote Scripture so badly. It is not, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will never feel a bit the better for it." That took me down a great many pegs. Why, I saw that I was not really believing in Christ at all; I was knocking the Bible end-ways. I was believing in myself—in my own heart. And the Scripture says: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a philosopher? No—is a fool." And philosopher is often just fool, writ large.

Do you see it now? That is how it came to me. I had no great feelings; I did not shout Hallelujah! for I am a Presbyterian, and they are not of the shouting kind. But I saw what it is to trust in Jesus and be saved, just as you are, immediately, without any feelings up or down. I went out and took a walk along the platform. I thought I would not fling up the ticket-office window just yet. It was my first walk in the light of salvation. And do you know, it made this difference: I had taken that walk along the length of the platform times and times every day; but that morning I remember saying to myself: 'Has the place been whitewashed?' The very dingy, dirty, smoky old bricks looked whiter; it actually seemed as if there had been a cleaning going on there; it does make a difference!

The common air, the earth, the skies,
To me were opening Paradise.

That is all there was about it. Except this: for we are queer creatures—George, my companion, the minister's son, was also seeking salvation. Mr. Moody came along to Glasgow. George wrote to me and said: 'I have been to Moody's meetings, and I am just where I was; I have no light.' When I read that from George—would you believe it?—I went back into the dark again. I said to myself, 'This cannot be real. There is Geordie, a sharp fellow, and

the minister's son; I doubt I am wrong after all.' I actually turned away back into the dark out of sympathy with Geordie. Twenty-four hours later there came another letter from Geordie. Ho! it was nearly fizzling in my fingers. I opened it and read. He had been at another meeting. Mr. Moody had pushed the young men up in a corner with a kind of rush and rally, and shut them up to Christ; and Geordie was full of it. 'Man, John,' he said, 'don't you see it is not your feelings; it is simply taking Christ at his word.'

Next day we met, and George was full of it again. 'John, don't you see it?' 'Man,' said I, 'I saw it before you did; but because you could not see it I thought I was wrong.' And we rejoiced together. I was telling him about it when I met him lately in Brooklyn, where he lives. My old minister is gone now. Two years ago the son and I were both back in Scotland. The minister died, and my old companion and I met when laying his father's dust in the grave in the quiet old village. I believe God arranged it so.

Now, will you trust him? Look to Jesus, for he does save. Years have passed since then, and all I have been doing has been simply still looking and trusting. I have had feelings and convictions of sin—aye, deeper convictions since I was converted than before.

Do not look in wrong directions. I had one battle—just one—the next morning. I woke up, of course, the same old fellow. I had to go back to the booking-office to meet the other clerks and temptations of different kinds. And I was as cold as ice again, as if I had slept it all off. I said: 'It has been mere excitement. Here you are, as flat as a flounder! There is nothing in it.' Where I rallied was here. I said to myself in my misery and wretchedness next morning, and thinking it was all a delusion: 'Now, has the Bible altered through the night? Has Acts xvi., 31 altered? No! Has the value of the finished work of Christ altered, or the worth of his blood and righteousness and intercession? No! Then nothing has altered on which you were relying and trusting; it is only your feelings that have altered; and you are not saved by that. You are saved through faith in Christ.' Dear men and women, get over the bar of feeling and into the harbor. Trust in Jesus.

BILLY BRAY, THE CORNISH PREACHER.

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The Find-the-Place Almanac

TEXTS IN PHILIPPIANS.

Mar. 17, Sun.—Work out your own salvation.

Mar. 18, Mon.—For it is God which worketh in you.

Mar. 19, Tues.—Do all things without murmurings and disputings.

Mar. 20, Wed.—That ye may be blameless, and harmless, the sons of God.

Mar. 21, Thur.—Holding forth the word of life.

Mar. 22, Fri.—Rejoice in the Lord.

Mar. 23, Sat.—What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.