

BUNYAN IN PRISON.

Home to prison! And wherefore not? Home is not the marble hall, nor the luxurious furniture, nor the cloth of gold. If home be the kingdom where a man reigns, in his own monarchy, over subject hearts—if home be the spot where fireside pleasures gambol, where are heard the sunny laughs of the confiding child, or the fond “What ails thee?” of the watching wife—then every essential of home was to be found, “except these bonds,” in that cell on Bedford Bridge. There in the day time, is the heroine wife, at once bracing and soothing his spirit with her toil and womanly tenderness; and sitting at his feet, the child, a clasping tendril, blind and best beloved. There on the table is the *Book of Martyrs*, with its records of the men who were the ancestors of his faith and love; those old and heaven-patented nobility, whose badge of knighthood was the hallowed cross, and whose chariot of triumph was the ascending flame. There, nearer to his hand, is the Bible, revealing that secret source of strength, which empowered each manly heart, and nerved each stalwart arm; cheering his own spirit in exceeding heaviness, and making strong through faith, for the obedience which is even unto death. Within him the good conscience bears bravely up, and he is weaponed by this as by a shield of triple mail. By his side, all unseen by casual guest or surly warder, there stands with heart of grace and consolation strong, the heavenly comforter; and from overhead, as if anointing him already with the unction of recompense, there rushes the stream of glory.

And now it is nightfall. They have had their evening worship, and, as in another dungeon, “the prisoners heard them.” The blind child receives the fatherly benediction, the last good night is said to the dear ones, and Bunyan is alone. His pen is in his hand, and the Bible on the table. A solitary lamp dimly reveals the darkness. But there is fire in his eye, and there is passion in his soul. “He writes as if joy did make him write.” He has felt all the fulness of his story. The pen moves too slowly for the rush of feeling as he graves his whole heart upon the page. There is beating over him a storm of inspiration. Great thoughts are striking upon his brain and flushing upon his cheek. Cloudy and shapeless in their earliest rise within his mind, they darken into the gigantic or brighter into the beautiful, until at length he flings them into bold and burning words. Rare visions rise before him. He is in a dungeon no longer. He is in the palace Beautiful with its sights of renown and songs of melody, with its virgins of comeliness and discretion, and with its windows opening for the first kiss of the sun. His soul swells beyond the measure of his cell. It is no longer a rude lamp that glimmers on his table. It is no longer the dark Ouse that rolls the sluggish waters at his feet. His spirit has no sense of bondage. No iron has entered into his soul. Chainless and swift he has soared to the Delectable Mountains; the light of heaven is around him; the river is the one clear as crystal, which floweth from the throne of God and of the Lamb; breezes of paradise blow freshly across it, fanning his temples and stirring his hair.

From the summit of the hill Clear he catches rare splendors; the New Jerusalem sleeps in its eternal noon; the shining ones are there, each a