

In the door is a wicket, which may have suggested the wicket-gate of the allegory.

One day Bunyan overheard "three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, talking of the things of God." Their pious talk sank into his soul, "shaking it as if his breast-bone were split asunder."

A godly "Master Gifford," who in his youth, had been a reckless Royalist trooper, was the pastor of a little Baptist flock in Bedford. He was the "Evangelist" of Bunyan's dream, who first pointed the immortal dreamer to the wicket-gate of mercy. Bunyan joined his Church, and was formally baptized in the River Ouse, near Bedford Bridge. Soon he began to preach in burning words the great salvation he had experienced. The word was attended with power and with converting grace. In 1660 he was indicted under the wicked laws of the time "as a common upholder of unlawful meetings and conventicles, and as devilishly and pertinaciously obstaining from coming to church." But preach he must and would. He was, therefore, condemned to prison for three months, when, if he left not his preaching, he was to be banished from the realm, or if found therein, "you must stretch by the neck for it, I tell you plainly," quoth the judge. "If out of prison, to-day," replied the hero soul, "by God's help I would preach the Gospel again to-morrow." And not for three months, but for twelve long years he languished in that prison, whose horrors, a hundred years later, roused the soul of Howard to the task of reforming the prisons of Europe. His own words are:—"So, being delivered up to the jailor's hand, I was had home to prison."

"Home to prison," exclaims his eloquent eulogist, Dr. Punshon. "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, 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 heroic wife, at once bracing and soothing his spirit with womanly tenderness, and sitting at his feet, the child—a clasping tendril, blind, and therefore best beloved. There, on the table, is the Bible, revealing its secret source of strength. 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 the Heavenly Comforter, and from overhead, as if anointing him already with the unction of the recompense, there rushes the stream of glory.

"And now it is nightfall. They have had their evening worship. 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 his Bible

on the table. A solitary lamp relieves 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 own heart upon the page. There is beating over him a storm of inspiration. Great thoughts are striking on his brain and flushing all his cheek. Cloudy and shapeless in their earliest rise within his mind, they darken into the gigantic, or brighten 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 of discretion, and with its windows opening for the first kiss of the sun. His soul swells beyond the measure of its cell. It is not a rude lamp that glimmers on his table. It is no longer the dark Ouse that rolls its 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 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 rarer splendours—the new Jerusalem sleeps in its eternal noon—the shining ones are there, each one a crowned harper unto God—this is the land that is afar off, and THAT is the King in his beauty; until the dreamer falls upon his knees and sobs away his agony of gladness in an ecstasy of prayer and praise."

After twelve years, the unconquered soul was released, and he was permitted to preach as he chose. While fervent in spirit, the emancipated prisoner was diligent in business. As brazier, as preacher, as author, he laboured to maintain his household.

As a preacher, his rugged eloquence attracted multitudes of hearers. His biographer records that he had seen twelve hundred persons assembled at seven o'clock on a winter's morning to hear him preach, and in London three thousand persons packed the chapel in which he ministered. For sixteen years he continued to write and preach. At length, while engaged in an errand of mercy, he was caught in a storm, drenched to the skin, was seized with fever, and in ten days died, August 31, 1688. His ashes lie in the famous Bunhill Fields, just opposite City Road Chapel and the tomb of Susannah Wesley, the mother of Methodism. Near by are the graves of Isaac Watts and of Daniel Defoe, the two writers who, with himself, are most widely read of all who have used the English tongue. But his own fame throughout the world surpasses that of any other writer of the race. In over a hundred foreign lands his immortal

allegory is read in almost as many different languages. In the British Museum are 721 different works, of which the humble Bedford tinker and his writings are the subject. During his life eleven different editions of the Pilgrim's Progress appeared, and since his death, editions innumerable. It has been published in editions on which all the resources of art have been lavished, and in editions for one penny, that the poor may follow the pilgrim's pathway to heaven. It has even been translated into Chinese, and the quaint Chinese art has presented in strange garb the familiar characters of the burdened pilgrim and the Interpreter's House.

Unattractive Girls.

Oh, I wish I were pretty and attractive! I can't bear to be so plain! I never attract people as Elsie and Anna and the other girls do!"

The speaker was my neighbour, Nancy. Perhaps if I tell you what I said to her as her head lay in my lap, it may help you, if you are not among the beautiful ones of the earth.

"Suppose, dear, we face this disagreeable truth—you are neither pretty nor accomplished, nor yet even 'attractive.' You wince a little; yet consider a moment. You are not without friends; you have a good mind, good sight, you can walk with ease, and can accomplish any ordinary household duty. Now there is a constant demand for just the kind of woman you may—if you choose—become. Children take to you and you to them. You can minister to the sick, visit the poor, succour the outcast and needy, quite as acceptably as if your face were beautiful. You can easily attract the sorrowing, the sick, or poor."

A lovely woman of forty said to me the other day: "If girls only knew the rest of accepting the inevitable, they would just give up trying to be attractive, and would determine to be helpful and useful instead. Some girls ripen late, and an unattractive girl may become a lovely woman at thirty. It is the fruit that ripens latest that is the sweetest. I used to fret about my plain face at eighteen, but when I set to work to make every one about me just a wee bit more comfortable or happy because of me, I soon had no time to think of my looks."

I suddenly remembered how, on first meeting this friend years ago, I really pitied her for her exceeding plainness. But her face soon became beautiful to me. She numbers her friends by the score; while her sister, whose face is like my friend's, with that subtle difference which changes utter plainness into prettiness—what a hindrance that prettiness has proved! She is simply a pretty, petted woman. No one turns to her for sympathy or help or counsel.

We know that God says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain," yet

we do not believe him if we long for favour and beauty.

If some plain, "ordinary" girl, who reads this talk, would but aim to be a "woman that feareth the Lord," she would find life full of interest, and his Word promises her "praise."—*Congregationalist*.

The Bells of Memory when we are Old.

WHAT if it should be told a young person that, through life, every time he did a good deed the memory of it would come to him like the sound of a sweet-toned bell? When he is old, what a beautiful chorus will echo in his ears!

We know how fascinating is the sound of distant bells. Your home may be on a hill-top. In the early summer morning, when the windows are up, you love to listen to the echoes of the striking church clocks, or the distant bells of labour calling people to their duties. How mellow the rich notes, stealing over the dewy gardens and under the shining skies!

Tuneful are memory's notes echoing in the ears of old age from distant days. The far-off church-bells when they said on Sunday, "Come to worship," and were obeyed alike in storm and sunshine; when they called to some restful week-night gathering, where you heard the voices of brethren and sisters in Christ; when they summoned to some crusade for temperance or missions, in which you were a faithful knight of God, will make rare music as thus remembered. Storm and sacrifice will be forgotten, and only the happy, tuneful memory stay.

Contrast this with an old age following a life selfish, forgetful of God, and reckless toward men. One who had a retentive memory said that sometimes it was a source of misery to him, for he was obliged to remember the disagreeable things. Make to-day's life a source of happy welcomed memories for to-morrow. Let every hour, with its good deed, rise up like a tower, in which shall swing a musical bell. What an old age you will have by and by.

It may be likened to an aged pilgrim in a hushed, little "God's acre." His hair is white. Near him is the grave sacred to the memory of wife or child, brother or sister. Around him are the beautiful flowers of summer, in which he finds God's handiwork. Not far away is his peaceful, prayerful home; while in the distance winds a clear stream, pure and shining as his past life. Out of that life come what memories, like the soft ringing of far-off bells! And hark! he hears an other chorus—even the voices of his beloved in the heavenly home soon to welcome him.

For such an old age, in whose ears echo the sweet memories of earth and the anticipated harmonies of heaven, may we all prepare ourselves!