



BLESSING UPON THE MERCIFUL.

SOME years ago I spent a Sunday in the neighbourhood of some large iron-works in Shropshire.

During the service I was much struck by the devout manner of a working man who sat near me. He was, as I afterwards found, a carter employed in the works. His heart was evidently engaged in praising the Lord and seeking His favour during the prayers; and when the sermon began, he scarcely took his eyes from the preacher the whole time.

As I walked homewards with my friend we came up to our fellow-worshipper, just as he and his children passed a field in which were some horses feeding. He gave a low whistle, and three or four of them came at once to the side of the fence and put their heads over to be fed and fondled. Our road lay in the same direction, so we entered into conversation. After speaking about the morning service, I said to him, "Your horses seem very fond of you, my friend."

"Yes," he replied, "the poor beasts often teach me a lesson. When I remember how little I do for them, and yet how grateful they are to me, I am ashamed of myself for my want of gratitude to God. 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.' I often think of those words when I see them come to show their love to me. Then, too, I sometimes ask myself how it would be with me if my heavenly Master got angry with me as readily as I get angry with my horses. I try to treat them kindly,

but I sometimes lose my temper with the poor dumb things, and am ashamed of myself for it afterwards. Oh, sir, it would be a bad case for us if God was not more forbearing with us than we are with our servants!"

"Why, Jones," said my friend, "the foreman at the works says that you are as tender to your horses as if they were your children."

"I don't know about that, sir," replied he, "but they are God's creatures as much as I am. If my Father in heaven made them, I ought to treat them kindly for His sake. There's a deal in the Bible about dumb creatures, and how good God is to them. 'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.' 'These all wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season; that Thou givest them they gather. Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good.' How good and kind He must be to care for all these millions of living things!"

The good man's heart was so full of his theme that fresh illustrations of it came up all the way homeward. He felt that God was with him in his daily toil. And that, as he drove his horses to work, or fed and cleaned them in the stable, it was his Master's work, and for his Master's sake that he did it. His devout and merciful spirit was beneficial to him in many ways. It won for him the respect and confidence of his employers; it made him always happy in his work, and it was blessed to his own soul; for his daily duties became to him a constant means of grace. He seemed to be in communion with God in the common tasks of life. He was a striking exemplification of the proverb, "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul."

GOD GIVES TO EVERY ONE HIS WORK.

WHSOEVER professes and calls himself a Christian has received from the Lord Jesus his appointed work. But as the Lord has not done this in any miraculous way, it must be in the ordinary ways of Providence. His Providence makes it needful that men should work for their bread, and that society and all public and private affairs should be carried on by means of head-work or of hand-work. It is clear, therefore, that the work which the Lord hath given each of us to do means the lawful duties which belong to whatever station Providence has caused us to be born in, or by circumstances and events makes us either rise to or sink to.

One man has a weakly body and a clear understanding, and his work turns out to be head-work. Another has a powerful active body, and not much ability or habit for close thinking; his work generally turns out to be hand-work. But each of them has his work to do; the Lord hath appointed it; and when He comes again, He will examine. Yea, even now He sees and knows whether it has been done and how. Let us learn to do our daily work as God intends us.