

## Choice Literature.

RALPH GEMMELL.

BY ROBERT POLLOK, A.M.

## CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

Some of these reflections Ralph made while this work of wickedness was going on before him. For, although he had already resolved, through the help of divine grace, to give no countenance to the persecutors, and to ally himself to that scattered few whom he thought sincere in serving their heavenly Master; and the murder of this helpless female—this outrage done both to humanity and religion, excited within him a greater hatred to sin and a firmer reliance on the grace of God, which he had seen so fully manifested, in supporting, consoling, and cheering this young woman in the last and severest trial to which the Christian can be exposed.

"If these be your doings," thought he as he wandered slowly along the coast, after witnessing this horrible spectacle, "if these be your doings, ye men of power and this world's honour, let not my soul come into your secret; unto your assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. Surely the Lord will visit you for these things; and then He will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind. Oh, my Father in heaven! Thou knowest my heart. It is sinful, it is deceitful, ever deceiving me, taken up with lying vanities, ever leading me astray; but in thy great mercy, for the sake of Him who died that I might live, do Thou deliver me from its vain imaginations—from the snares of an alluring world—from the fear of its threatenings—and from the flattery of its promises. And, O give me, for Thou hast all power in heaven and in earth, give me strength and resolution to forsake all that is sinful, and follow all that is holy; to forsake those friends who would ruin my soul, and those possessions which, in a few years, at any rate, must be left forever; and to follow my Saviour, that Friend who sticketh closer than a brother—that Friend who will never forsake me—who will stand by me in death, and secure me from the fear of its terrors, who, by His own blood, hath won for me an inheritance valuable as the riches of divine grace—durable as the ages of eternity."

After uttering these pious ejaculations, Ralph began to consider whither to betake himself. To return home was to put himself in the way of all that reproach, ridicule, and alluring temptation, which he had already found himself unable to resist; and to throw himself into the society of the Covenanters was to deprive himself of every comfort of life, and to expose himself to the severest sufferings. For the present, however, he thought the last his duty. Trusting therefore to God, the all-powerful and the all-wise, he took his way to the farm-house where he was formerly apprehended. When he arrived, the old farmer, whom we formerly mentioned, took him by the hand and said, "You were once our friend, will you tell us if the soldiers are coming hither; for we have heard that you are now taking part with our enemies?"

"I did take part with your enemies and mine," replied Ralph, "but I have now left them; and I hope that my Saviour will never leave me to go so far astray again. I come to seek a night's shelter under your roof, and to be instructed by your experience."

"I cannot promise you an hour's safety in my house," said the old man, "but to what shelter it affords, you are welcome; and what of meat and drink our oppressors have left, my children shall divide with you. Come in, there is at this moment a minister in my house whom you formerly saw here. He will be glad to see you; for often have I heard him speak of your mother; and often has he lamented over you since you saw him last."

After a conversation with the old minister, in which Ralph related what had happened to him since their last interview, the venerable pastor asked him if he had ever joined in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. He replied in the negative, and added that it was his intention to take the first opportunity of publicly commemorating his Redeemer's death.

"You may soon have an opportunity," said the minister. "I am to dispense the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to-morrow, if it so please God, in a retired place, about five miles up the country, and you may go along with me."

"I would most willingly go," replied Ralph, "but I fear I am not prepared for an ordinance so solemn. It was but yesterday that I was giving myself up to profane conversation, and taking part with those who know not God."

"There are none of us well enough prepared," said the minister, "but that is no reason why we should neglect this ordinance. Indeed, if we thought ourselves fully prepared, it would be a sign that we saw ourselves not as God sees us; that we flattered our own hearts, and were really ill fitted for approaching the holy table of God. If you were lately putting the fear of God away from you, and breaking His commandments, you have more need to approach the throne of grace in the sacrament of the Supper than there you may manifest your return to His service and receive a large supply of His grace, that you may not again fall into temptation and sin against Him. We do not eat and drink the Lord's Supper unworthily because we are sinners, but because we refuse to put on the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness. Arrayed in this righteousness the guiltiest sinner shall then be welcomed and honoured by the God of holiness. If you see yourself to be naturally poor, and naked, and blind, and miserable, exposed to the curse of God's law, and unable of yourself to fulfil any of its demands; if you put all your hope of salvation in the mercy of God through His Son, sincerely desirous to love, honour, and obey your Saviour, to trust in Him—to be humbly taught by His word to hate sin—to avoid every appearance of it—to love holiness—and to be forever holy; if you have a sincere desire thus to love and thus to hate what God loves and hates, if you can fall down on your knees before that God whose eye searcheth the heart and pray to Him that you may so love and so hate, however guilty you may have been, however sinful you still are, you are called by your Redeemer to sit down at His table, and you are assured that He will meet you there in the kindness of His love. Examine yourself, my young friend, by these marks, and may the Great High Priest of the upper sanctuary give you that preparation which we all need."

Thus instructed, Ralph spent the remainder of the evening in prayer and self-examination; and after a short repose, set out early on the Sabbath morning with his reverend friend and the old farmer to the place agreed on for worshipping God and celebrating the death of His Son. When they reached the spot, which, that it might not be easily discovered, they had been induced to choose in the bosom of a thick wood, there was a considerable number assembled. The bread and wine to be used in His holy festival had been brought by some peasants from the nearest town. And as soon as the little flock was fully gathered around him the worthy old minister proceeded with the solemnities of the day. After sermon and an address to those who were to be engaged in the celebration of the Supper, the communicants, among whom was Ralph, arranged themselves together on the grassy turf, and prepared themselves for receiving the bread and wine.

Let us pause here, young reader, and think for a moment on this scene. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is so common among us—we have so often seen it from our earliest years that, whether we are engaged in it or are merely spectators, it makes but too little impression on our minds. But let us reflect upon it for a little; and is it not the most solemn, the most interesting, and the most honourable work in which man engages in this world? It is not obedience to the call of some noble friend, who hath raised us from poverty to some place of ease and distinction. It is a compliance with the invitations of our Saviour, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come and secured to us an everlasting place in the presence of God. It is not the anniversary of a mortal's birthday or death, who will in time be forgotten. It is a calling to lively remembrance the death of our Redeemer, whose praise will constitute the anthem of eternity. It is not sitting down at the table of a prince; it is sitting down at a table spread by God, at the expense of Messiah's blood; and it is our Saviour Himself who welcomes the guests. It is not a token of some king's favour, it is a pledge of the love of God, of His wonderful love to man. It is not a banquet to regale our bodies, it is a feast that fills the hungry soul with eternal life. And should you then, young reader, be backward or ashamed to sit down at this table, because the men of this world will laugh at you? Should you be afraid to tell in the presence of the universe that God is your friend, and that you are His friend? Truly, none will be ashamed to have this to tell on that great and terrible day when this world shall be judged. But, alas! those who are ashamed of Christ now, those who deny Him before men, will He deny before His Father and the holy angels.

After an address to the communicants, the old minister, who as we formerly observed, amidst all his sufferings, had a look of peculiar peacefulness and contentment, dispensed the elements; and, resuming his discourse, thus concluded:—

"Now, my friends, if you have eaten of this bread and drunk of this cup worthily, as I hope you have done, you are the honourable ones of the earth, the wisest, the best, the happiest. God is your friend, and He is the fountain of all honour. He delights to honour you. Your garments shall be ever white, your crowns are sure. He will himself place them on your heads, and no being can ever wrest them from you. You are the wisest, for God is your instructor, and He is the source of all wisdom. His Word is a light to your feet and a lamp to your path. He hath led your minds into all necessary truth. He hath made you wise unto salvation. You are the best, for you are likest God, who is holy, and just, and good. You are vested in His righteousness. His spirit is in your souls, assimilating them to His own image, warming them with love to God and man, to all that is pure in heaven and on earth. You are the happiest; for all your desires shall be satisfied. With God as your friend there is enough and to spare. You need but to ask, and ye shall receive—to seek, and ye shall find—to knock, and all His fulness shall be opened unto you. And, in the treasures of His grace, how much more is laid up than you can exhaust in time or eternity!"

"It is true, my friends, that we are now hunted from mountain to mountain, and from solitude to solitude; now reviled and persecuted; now in want, in danger, in affliction; now menaced with bonds, with torture, with death. But is it not enough to make you patiently endure present calamity, and boldly face the future, that you this moment sit at the table of an almighty Saviour, who, to replenish it for you, laid down His life? Will He who loved you so much suffer aught really to hurt you? Verily, no. I believe, my friends, and I trust you believe also, that we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. He will never leave us nor forsake us. These are His own words—the words of Him who cannot lie. What then have we to fear? Our Saviour is with us. The God of love, the God of all worlds, the God of time and eternity, hath taken us under His care; let us then go through this world, unmindful of its honours, and careless of its revilings. Let us go, singing songs of praise to Him who goeth with us—to Him who will go with us through the darkness of death—to Him who will lead us to Mount Zion, to the city and temple of our God, where we shall sigh and weep no more; where we shall be entirely holy, as we shall be completely happy."

After the services of the day were over, the little congregation dispersed, with more true gladness in their hearts than the wicked have, when their corn and their wine are increased.

## CHAPTER VI.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. In the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life.—*Psalmist.*

I should have mentioned in the last chapter that as soon as Ralph resolved to leave home, he wrote the following letter to his father:—

"DEAR FATHER,—I know what I am now to communicate to you will subject me to your displeasure. I wish I could both please you and obey my God. I tried that kind of life which you approve of. You then caressed and indulged me, and showed me all the kindness I could expect from a tender father. But still in every moment of reflection I was miserable. I cannot be an enemy to God's people; I cannot live with those who persecute them, I dare not deny my Saviour before men, lest He deny me also before His Father at the day of judgment. Iardon therefore, dear father, my disobedience. Since I have determined to associate with the persecuted party, and as I cannot at the same

time make your house my home without exposing you to the visitations of Government, I have resolved to leave you for some time. I may have to labour for my bread—I may have to beg it—I may have to encounter many a hardship; but I put myself under the protection of a kind and watchful Providence, and I fear not the frowning of the world. Perhaps the time may soon come when the party with whom I am now to associate will no longer be counted traitors, and when I might live at home without exposing you to any penalties. At that time come and if my present conduct do not so much offend you as to induce you to abandon me altogether, I will be glad to return and live with you. Do not be offended with me, dear father, for obeying the dictates of my own conscience. Forgive me for what I have done, and be assured that I am still your affectionate son,

RALPH GEMMELL."

You may imagine, young reader, how a man like Mr. Gemmell would receive Ralph's letter. He stamped the ground with his foot and gnashed his teeth with indignation. He regarded his son as a mad irreclaimable fanatic, a dishonour to his family—unworthy to be any longer remembered by him—and, without a moment's deliberation, sat down and wrote the following letter:—

"RALPH,—Return home and live with me! No, never: my door shall be forever shut against you; I will even tear your remembrance from my heart. You have not only disregarded my injunctions; you have not only rejected my kindness and disappointed my hopes, you have allied yourself to the vilest and guiltiest traitors, you have disgraced my name and my house. I blush to think that you are my son. But you shall no longer be recognized as such by me. I shall leave all that I have to Edward. And I hereby charge you never to let me again see your face, never to presume to write to me, or to say that I am your father.

GEORGE GEMMELL."

When Mr. Gemmell had finished this letter he gave it to Edward, and said, "Go early to-morrow morning," for it was on the Sabbath evening he received Ralph's letter, "go and deliver that letter to Ralph, who is no longer worthy to be called your brother. You will find him perhaps at the house where he was formerly apprehended. If not, you will probably learn there where you may find him. Go; put that letter into his hand, and stop not to hear a word from him."

Ralph had just walked out from the old farmer's (for he had returned thither on the Sabbath evening) to enjoy the freshness of the morning when he observed his brother riding towards the house. Edward came up to him, put the letter into his hand, and turned his horse and rode off happy that he had now got fairly quit of a brother he never loved, and had the clear prospect of inheriting all the possessions and honours of his father.

Ralph read the letter. He expected something of the kind, yet he was not prepared for so much. All the feelings which a lost home and a lost father could excite rushed bitterly upon his soul. It was hard to be forever forbidden a home where he had spent his childhood with the tenderest of mothers. It was hard to be disowned and hated by a father whom he had often endeavoured to please, even against his own conscience. He felt all this, and to use the language of Scripture, he "fell down on his face, and wept bitterly." For a moment he almost wished that, like Edward, he had been content to live as his father wished him. But this was only the passing thought of a moment. He remembered the stings of conscience, the anguish of remorse, and the fears of death which he had so lately felt. He remembered the love of his heavenly Father, the love of his Saviour; and although he continued still to weep, it was not for what he himself had done—it was not for what he had lost; it was that he had a father and a brother of whose eternal welfare he had every reason to doubt. But soon he betook himself to the never-failing comfort of the Christian. He addressed himself to a throne of grace, and besought his God that He would yet have mercy on his relations, and turn them from the evil of their ways, and yet magnify His grace by saving them from the wrath to come. After this fervent prayer to God for the salvation of those whom he still loved, however much they hated and despised him, peace returned to his mind. He knew that although he was disowned of an earthly father, he had a Father in heaven who would never disown him, although he was despised of his brother, he had an elder brother who loved him and would love him to the end; and although he had lost an earthly inheritance, he had treasures secured for him in heaven infinitely more valuable. These are the reflections, young reader, which fill the Christian's mind with that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

(To be continued.)

## THE STANDARD WORK.

Messrs Funk & Wagnalls, the widely famed and reliable publishers, of New York and 86 Bay Street, Toronto, have in course of preparation a single-volume dictionary of the English language, which, it is the confident prediction of many distinguished scholars, will deserve the name bestowed upon it, and be recognized as the Standard. It will embody many new principles in lexicography, and will contain nearly 2,200 pages, over 4,000 specially prepared illustrations, and 200,000 words, which is 70,000 more than any other single-volume dictionary contains. The plan of the work and its execution, so far as can be judged from sample pages supplied, have secured the hearty approval of Prof. Skeak, of Cambridge, and Dr. Murray, of Oxford, than whom there are no more competent critics living. The price of the volume, when issued, will be \$12; to those who subscribe in advance, and pay \$1, the price will be \$7. It is expected that the work will be ready in January next.

## THE GREAT BENEFIT

Which people in run down state of health derive from Hood's Sarsaparilla, conclusively proves that this medicine "makes the weak strong." It does not act like a stimulant, imparting fictitious strength, but Hood's Sarsaparilla builds up in a perfectly natural way all the weakened parts, purifies the blood, and assists to healthy action those important organs, the kidneys and liver.