

THESE BAD TIMES.

(From a Tract by the Protestant Episcopal Tract Society.)

Being called to visit a sick friend at a distance, I got into the stage coach at 8—, early on a fine morning, and as soon as I was seated I took, as is my custom, a survey of my companions—

returned from the grave of a most promising young man, "the only son of his mother, and she a widow." In his early days he showed talents, and his too-indulgent parent was led into his first great error by suffering him to choose his own place of worship, at a time of life when I fear improvement was the last thing he thought of in making the choice.

think I shall learn some useful lessons. "I hardly dare hope to teach you, Sir; but I will willingly give you the outlines of my history. My wife, happily for me, had brought up in the old-fashioned school; I had prayed to God to direct this most important step of my life, and to lead me to one whom I could look up to, as not merely a nominal, but a real Christian, and I have every reason to think my prayer was heard and answered. She knows her own sinfulness, and therefore can pity my sins. She has been taught the value of a throne of grace, and therefore is anxious to lead all around her there, to seek the same abundant grace and mercy which the Holy Spirit has shed so richly on her own heart. In what the world calls accomplishments, she is sadly deficient; but she was never taught either French or music; but she knew what was far better,—she kept accounts well, and I believe to this day can tell how every pound which passed through her hands was spent; by this means, Sir, when our family increased, or times grew bad, she knew where to contract our personal expenses best; to this, common, or perhaps I should say, uncommon, accomplishment, I am sure I am indebted some hundred pounds. Another of the Lord's mercies was our being placed in the parish of a faithful follower of Christ. Our Rector, Sir, is a friend to us all: his charity is unbounded; and as a father, he watches diligently over the souls of all committed to his care. He is ready at all times to advise, console, or admonish us; and I often think the welcome which awaits him—'Well done, good and faithful servant, thy old heart burns within me.' Has he a good wife? I inquired, for ladies are very useful helps in a parish. 'Yes, Sir, a very good one; she helps in all his labors of love; yet I never see a fault in my Rector but when I look at her.' Indeed, said I, that is the most extraordinary thing I have heard you say all day. 'Nevertheless it is true, I think he suffers too much distress in his family. I sometimes fear the fiery in the parson's pew attracts more attention from the giddy ones than the words of eternal life, so sweetly sounding in their ears. A small spot in a family like that is seen a long way off, and I hope it does not proceed from want of charity in me to name it, Sir.'—I had so often mourned over the same thing in households very dear to me, and in characters truly good, that I was glad to change the subject, and I asked him how he had contrived to save himself from these bad times as well as he appeared to have done? He replied, 'Our landlord wished to sell the farm about seven years ago, and as God had taught us that adding to our labors was not adding to our comforts, we laid by a considerable sum when corn sold well, by which means we were enabled to buy the farm, with a little assistance; and as I have been taught from my earliest youth never to consider any money my own while I owe a farthing, we continued to live in the same frugal way. Thus, Sir, when these bad times came, we were in some measure prepared for them; and having but one heart and one purse in our house, we do what we can in the way of duty, and leave the event with God. I feel persuaded if, in this great distress, we all humbled our souls before the Lord, and did individually what in him lies to lessen the load of national sin, we should do more toward mending these bad times than even the ministers can do in taking off the mait d'etat. I had now come to the village where my friend lived, and to my great joy he proved to be the farmer's good Rector, for he told me he could see his home, and his sons waiting at the gate; so indeed it proved, and behind them his two modest-looking daughters. The good old lady was at the door, and never did I see a more heartfelt welcome than awaited my old friend. I merely said, as I shook him by the hand, there is "that peace" here "which the world knoweth not of." He answered "To God be all the glory. I trust, Sir, if I see you no more on earth, we shall meet again in heaven." His heart was full, for he could not but contrast his own pious children with the victims of infidelity of whom we had so lately been hearing; and we parted; but as I found my friend the Rector much better than I had expected, I requested him to go with me before I left the parish to call on my old companion, as I was anxious to see something of his family. To this he gladly assented, saying, "I consider them as my crown of rejoicing even here; for it is unknown how much good that old couple do, by example alone. If any of my Sunday scholars go there as servants, I feel at once their souls will be as duly attended to as their bodies. Twice a day the old man collects his household around him, and solemnly commits their and his soul to God in fervent prayer. If any of the laborers or their families are sick, one or other of this excellent family minister in every way to their necessities, and prove the truth of that text—"A word spoken in due season, how good it is." The value of a few such families in a country parish cannot be duly appreciated in this world; but he who seeth in secret shall reward them openly." By this time we had reached the farmer's; the whole household was busily employed. Their pastor was received with looks of love and veneration, and even I was recognised as a friend.—There was mutual congratulation on the amended health of the Rector and the good farmer, and never did I see a family where piety and peace seemed more decidedly to dwell.

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