

tering this inviting path, he found it so thickly set with snares to catch the feet, that he was fain to retrace his steps and take to the hill, steep as it was. But chiefly his thoughts reverted to a dear companion who had been permitted to accompany him on his mission to cheer and beguile the way. And, just when this friend seemed most needed and most prized, he was suddenly taken away, and the solitary traveller left to pursue his journey alone. Then he looked forward. How could he cross the unknown and dangerous ocean? Troubles might await him yet heavier than those he had experienced. Overwhelmed by these thoughts, he wrapped his face in his mantle and wished that he might die. But ere he had long indulged this melancholy mood, some one touched him and bade him take courage and look up. The comforter was an old friend, one who had oftentimes stood by him, but whom he had just then forgotten. He held in his hand a scroll, and bade the traveller look thereon. It was an illuminated manuscript, and the wondering mourner saw with astonishment it was a chart of his own travels. He perceived that, in all his wanderings, he had been bound by the strong cords of love; that drew him many times when he knew it not. He perceived also that the easiest and most flowery paths were not the safest and best illumined, but the rugged and difficult routes were often filled with the sweetest odours and lighted up with the most brilliant hues. He saw, too, where he had been attacked by the wild animal, that on the very spot where had he seated himself was coiled up a venomous serpent, whose bite was mortal, and that his life was saved by the sudden alarm.

When he lost all his provision he found a canker worm, called Covetousness, had grown up and had destroyed all the nutritious parts, leaving only the husks and shells, which would have proved hurtful to him. It was well, too, he

could now see that he had gone up the face, and not round the hill, for there, a few paces further on, was a dreadful chasm, into which he must have fallen, had he not been turned back. He could tell, too, now that it all stood forth in emblazoned letters, why his dear companion was taken from his side. He saw, while he could take sweet counsel with him, lean upon him, find support and happiness in him, he was in great danger of forgetting the object of his mission, and was much more taken up with the flowers that grew at his feet than with the far-off kingdom. But, when left alone, his feet he saw were firmer on the rock, his eye was oftener turned upward, and his thoughts and converse were more with his king. The traveller now took courage; he wept and praised the king who had thus cared so constantly for him. He now went fearlessly into the little boat and prepared to launch upon the ocean, believing that all his way was prepared. He was much encouraged, too, to find on board a life-preserver called Faith, which, he was assured, would keep every one above the waters who put it on. It had been put on long ago by one named Peter, who, as long as he held fast to it, walked upon the waters, and only began to sink when he let go his hold.

And now, my young readers, which of you can open up this dark saying? Who can tell what is meant by this parable? Do you ask who is this traveller; what is his mission, and whence is he bound? I might answer, in the words of Nathan to David,—“Thou art the man.” Every one who takes upon him the name and profession of a Christian is not a resident, but a pilgrim here. He is bound for another home, and his great mission is, while in this present evil world, to walk through, keeping his garments unspotted. We have all arrived at the close of another distinct period of our journey, and are about to enter upon a new and untried year. Beyond the present all is unknown. We cannot read what may befall us in