

“ Afraid of the Consequences.”



L IKE showers upon the new-mown grass had the glorious gospel fallen on the little country town of B—. The Lord's children had been revived, and many unconverted awakened to their lost condition, and led to accept God's proffered salvation. Now the meetings were about to end, and a group of bright youthful faces, lit up with a new-found heavenly joy, surrounded the tea table of an aged Christian. The evangelist, whose services had been so richly blessed, had a beaming smile and an earnest word for all present, prayerfully striving to confirm the newly born souls in the faith. Specially did he press on them the blessedness of

confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus, deprecating the action of one member of a family being converted and not making it known to the others.

"Janet, that's like you," impulsively said a young man who was present to his sister; "you were converted a long time without ever speaking to me about my soul."

"Oh, surely I did, Tom," she answered confusedly.

"Well, maybe you did; if I were from home, you put it in a letter."

Come, sisters, how are we acting toward our unregenerate brothers? Are we quietly enjoying the favours bestowed on us without exerting ourselves in their behalf? May not our apathy be disclosed in a similar way? At the same time we do not seek to justify the young man's conduct in thus exposing his sister.

It was not long before Tom's own faithfulness to the truth was put to the test. A week or two later some

friends came to spend the afternoon at his father's farmhouse. They occupied a farm some miles distant, and with one of the sons, Alick, he was an intimate associate.

Alick found Tom's society unusually dull that afternoon. As for Tom, he was greatly dissatisfied with himself.

In the first transport of joy in the love of the Saviour he had found, he felt as though he could triumphantly proclaim His worth to all the world; now, when an opportunity occurred for telling it simply to a friend, he felt strangely lacking in courage. He, who had been so ready to accuse his sister of timidity, was now full of scruples himself. This grieved him intensely, and taught him his own weakness, while an earnest prayer arose from his heart, pleading for strength to tell his friends of the great things God had done for him. No such prayer remains unanswered.

“Come, Tom,” said Alick, “what is

4 "AFRAID OF THE CONSEQUENCES."

the matter with you to-day? Let us hear a song from you; have you got any new piece?"

In answer to this request Tom lifted his melodeon, and ran his fingers nimbly along the keys, accompanying the notes with his clear tenor voice. His friends listened in silence as the words fell on their ears—

"I am Thine, O Lord ;
I have heard Thy voice,
And it told Thy love to me
But I long to rise in the arms of faith
And be closer drawn to Thee."

His vocal powers were exceptionally fine, and he sang the hymn through with a pathos which thrilled his listeners. Alick broke the silence which followed the singing of it by saying,—“That is a new kind of song for you, Tom.”

“Yes,” he returned, “the Lord hath put a ‘new song’ in my mouth, and I earnestly desire that all my friends

may hear it, and be led to trust in the Lord.”

Having thus boldly hoisted his colours, the young believer experienced the peculiar joy that springs from confessing Christ’s blessed name ; and now he had done so, his timidity all vanished, he felt “bold as a lion,” and spoke earnestly to his companions, telling them how he had, as a lost, guilty sinner, fled for refuge, and found shelter in the blood of Christ.

“The Lord hath given a banner to them that fear Him, that it may be displayed because of the truth,” and once that banner is fully unfurled the battle is half won. Those who do not rank under the same ensign soon fall aloof from the standard-bearer, and Tom soon found his former companions at variance with him. This did not move him,—he was now a member of the “household of faith,” and in that relationship found many with whom he held sweet converse.

Eighteen months passed. It was the annual show and sale of cattle at B——, always a *fête* day in agricultural districts. Tom and Alick were there, each attending to his father's interests. Since the day Tom had frankly avowed his allegiance to Christ, Alick had sedulously evaded him; but that night, on leaving the market-place, he made up to him, and appeared desirous of his company. Tom quickly noticed the change in his manner, and attributed it—rightly it turned out—to concern in spiritual matters. Their ways home lay in different directions, but Tom was too earnest over his friend's conversion to allow a few miles' walk to deter him from speaking a word in season to him. Soon Alick acknowledged that ever since he had startled him by the singing of his "new song," he had been a spirit-wounded, convicted sinner. He had endeavoured to stifle the appealings of his conscience, but in vain. Next

he tried weeping and praying, but these afforded no relief. Then he thought he would wait patiently till some wondrous change came over his heart, but all to no purpose. Theoretically, he knew the gospel well, but no amount of head-knowledge will suffice to bring comfort to a sin-burdened soul.

Simply and fully did Tom explain to him the “old, old story,” how “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,” that

**“It is not our tears of repentance and prayers,
But the blood, that atones for the soul ;”**

that the moment faith lays hold of the wondrous truth that “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin,” in that moment does the soul pass “from death unto life.”

Still Alick hesitated.

“Tell me,” said Tom, with deep feeling in his voice, “what it is that stumbles you ?”

The two young men walked on for some time in silence, then Alick said, apparently with an effort,—

"I do long for pardon; my sins keep hovering like a dark spectre round me; I know the Lord Jesus has suffered for them, and that now He is offering me the gift of eternal life, but, but——"

"But what?"

"But I am afraid, if I accept it, of the consequences."

"Afraid of the consequences! Afraid of the consequences! You may well be afraid of the consequences of *rejecting* so great salvation, but afraid of the consequences of *accepting* it, you surely cannot be, when it will bring you 'love and light and lasting joy.' What do you mean by being afraid of the consequences?" rejoined Tom.

"Oh, I am not afraid of the benefits I will derive from it, quite the contrary, but I shrink from the reproach

it might bring me. For instance, you to-day preaching in the market-place, where everybody knew you, and telling the decent farmers they were lost, and except they were born again they could not enter the kingdom of God. Most of them were laughing at you, and you have made the whole country-side ring with your name. I tried to picture myself—supposing I were getting converted—testifying as you were doing, and it quite unnerved me.”

“And no wonder,” said Tom quickly. ‘you were depicting yourself suffering for Christ’s sake before tasting the wondrous fruits of His sufferings for you. To me it seems a special gift ‘not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake ;’ but with that you have, in the meantime, nothing to do. God, in grace, is now offering to you His unspeakable gift, and it is at your peril you refuse.”

More conversation followed, which

need not be related here; then Tom, who was now a long way off his own route home, retraced his steps, praying unceasingly the while that his friend might not close his eyes against the light.

Alick, left to pursue his journey alone, did so with laggard step and cloudy brow. The road led across a hill, behind which lay his home. The mental anguish through which he was passing seemed to have weakened his physical strength. He dropped on his knees on the road-side, exclaiming, "I can't go any further till I know my sins are forgiven." It was not now quiverings about after-testimony that harassed him, but deep heart-yearnings after peace. And peace came. In the deepening twilight, on the lone hill-side, streamed the light of the glorious gospel of Christ on his troubled soul. He rose from his knees animated by a new life, and, with a joyous burst of song, walked quickly

home. In the farmyard he met his sister Ellen, and with a gladsome mind he communicated to her the joyful news. She listened rather dubiously, and said, “It may be true, but it is a funny thing to happen in our family.”

It was undoubtedly something new. He was the first in that household on whom God set His seal, and very marked was the change it made in him. Previously he feared he might succumb to the taunts and jeers he would encounter, but now, realising himself to be a “chosen vessel,” it was his delight to bear the name of Jesus before all with whom he came in contact. Naturally his brothers and his sisters were his first concern. He laboured fervently in prayer for them, and was careful to let no opportunity pass of “speaking the truth in love.” His work was not fruitless. Ellen was the first to be told of his conversion, and she was also the

first he was instrumental in leading to the feet of Jesus. Marvellous was the difference in that household as one by one its members were turned from "darkness to light." In the course of three years the whole seven of them were in the divine sense of the term "children of one Father."

Blessed, glorious consequences! Oh, you who are halting between two opinions, who long to be supremely blessed, but fear to venture your soul to Jesus' keeping, lest it might bring you a scoff from your companions, a jeer from your friends, or, you fear, might hurt your business, may you be enabled to say truly,—

"Jesus, I will trust Thee,
Trust Thee with my soul!
Guilty, lost, and helpless,
Thou canst make me whole."

M. M.

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