

The "Young Believer" Series.

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*UNHAPPY MARRIAGES.*



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THESE, a fruitful source of life-long misery, may spring from a variety of causes. We will, however, do no more at present than indicate one of the chief of these, and also point out an effectual remedy. The cause we specially allude to, in addressing young believers, is marriage with an unconverted person.

When a young man or woman once takes this fatal step, it not only (unless God intervenes in grace) bars all spiritual progress, but is the beginning of a life of misery. How can two walk together except they be agreed? And how can a wife, a new creature in Christ Jesus, a child of God, an heir of glory,



walk in the close relationship of domestic life with a husband who, however amiable in outward appearance, is still a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, a child of wrath, and, above all, a *Christ-rejector* ?

A young believer must indeed have been walking very far from God, before an unconverted man could find favour in her eyes, for were she near her Saviour, and in communion with her Father, none but their friends would be counted her friends ; but the old story of Peter's fall is here repeated—first she follows afar off, and then she throws in her lot with the world.

We have often heard of the horrible Roman punishment (supposed to have been alluded to by Paul in Rom. vii. 24) of chaining a living man to a dead body ;

but what shall be said of the Christian who voluntarily brings this punishment on him or herself by marriage with an unbeliever? Sometimes, indeed, the step is not taken until the young saint has been fairly blinded by Satan, and persuaded that the future husband or wife is really in a hopeful frame of mind, and quite inclined to become a Christian. Away with such delusions, dear young believer! Do not do such an evil that good may come! When once the knot is tied, too often the young bride awakes to the sad fact that the garb of religion was but assumed, it may be not intentionally, but perhaps unconsciously, under the influence of the father of lies, who will often make an imitation saint if he can thereby cause a young believer to fall. And oh! what a triumphant



day for the arch-enemy of souls is the wedding-morning of such a pair, and what a delight to him is the long-drawn life of misery and dishonour to God that follows.

Doubtless amongst those who will read these lines there are many who have thoughts of marriage. Dear young Christians, if your affections are in any way set on one who is not a true child of God, let me plead with you, by your love of your own happiness, by your love of Christ and His smile, by your love of God and His glory, by your value of the presence of the ungrieved Spirit, to refuse absolutely, faithfully, firmly, to engage yourself to an unconverted man or woman. If, happily, you are still heart-whole, accept the earnest warning of one who writes

with instances of the awful effects of these unhappy marriages crowding on his mind, and seek that Christ may really *dwell in your heart* by faith, and then you will be secure. Watch your heart, and be loyal and true to your Lord, and give not up the smallest corner to one that is not a true friend of His. If, happier still, your affections have been won by a fellow-believer, bound in the same bundle of life, and you have waited on God, and can truly say that the engagement is not only *in*, but *of*, the Lord, you will surely have, not only the assurance of God's approval above, but a happy life below, provided only that both continue in the same God-fearing spirit in which they have begun.

And now let me recall a case or two



of unhappy marriages. An earnest young Sunday School teacher, in spite of repeated warnings, engaged herself to a promising young man, who was, however, unconverted. She acted in such deliberate wilfulness that I felt certain God's hand would be laid upon her. About three months after her marriage, she lost her peace with God, and began to doubt her salvation, and was utterly miserable. Of course she gave up her class. Within six months she was laid on her death-bed, in a most rapid consumption, that seemed to eat her very life away. I saw her shortly before she died. It was a most solemn scene. The clouds had passed away. She knew she was a child of God, but she knew also, and owned to all, that she was being taken away by His

chastening hand (see 1 Cor. xi. 30) for her sin that she now confessed. I shall never forget the gathering of young teachers who were so solemnly warned at her death-bed against such a marriage.

Another young teacher, attracted by a handsome form and face, had married an unconverted man, deceived and led by his religious bearing to hope he would soon become a Christian. For a short time apparently all went well, but soon Satan wound his chain round her husband, and led him away captive, a willing slave, and a hopeless drunkard. On the other hand, many cases recur to my mind of faithfulness to God in refusing one unworthy of Him, rewarded by the gift of a better and more suitable husband; but I forbear, for I doubt not



that the circles in which my readers move will furnish them, if they look around, with abundant proof that those who honour God He will honour, but that the way of transgressors is hard.

It may, however, be objected, that all who marry unbelievers do not die young, neither do their husbands prove drunkards as in the above cases. On the contrary, many may lead exemplary lives, and some even are converted. This is true ; but let any real Christian who has once tasted the love of Christ, but tell the hidden tale of the secret misery of living with one with whom she has not an idea or hope in common on the holiest, happiest, dearest themes to her heart ; of all her hidden sighs and tears ; of the broken-hearted

confessions of a sin of which, alas, she must now reap the bitter fruits, and few of my readers would, I think, be willing to marry even the most moral or upright person that was not a Christian.

In conclusion, then, let me entreat you, my fellow-believers, both young men and women, for I need hardly say I write for both, who may be looking forward to marriage (that wonderful type of the union of Christ and the Church), to be much in prayer to God for His guidance that He may not only keep you so near to Himself as to guard you from all danger of marrying an unbeliever, but that He would choose for you, and so guide your eyes, your tongue, and your heart, that you may be carrying out His will concerning you in this, the greatest event of your



earthly life. May the Lord graciously keep each reader of these pages from the horrors of an unhappy marriage.