

POOR RICHARD.

RICHARD E—— was a miserably poor man, living at C——, near Y——, in Somersetshire. His occupation was to carry coals about, and retail them in small quantities to the poor. He thus earned but a scanty subsistence, having a wife and five children to support. He was unable to read, and was never in the habit of attending any Church or Chapel; all his clothing, except that worn in his work, being in pawn. His life was thus spent in toiling from morning to night, exposed to all kinds of weather, endeavouring to gain a sufficiency for his temporal necessities, subjected to poverty, and weariness, and cold, with nothing in this world, and without hope or even the knowledge of another.

In the midst of all this wretchedness, disease overtook him, and he was obliged to give up his occupation, being attacked with symptoms which terminated in consumption, brought on probably by intemperate habits, and exposure to the wet and cold. His wife was then compelled to take his place with the cart, and poor Richard was left from morning to night, scarcely able to crawl about his miserable cottage, with his children crying around him, to endure all the sufferings of his poor perishing body, and with no one to attend upon him. And such was the wretchedness and filth of his dwelling, that even his medical attendant (accustomed as he was to many scenes of

the deepest distress and want) yet found it almost impossible to enter his room, but was generally obliged to stand and speak to poor Richard at the door.

But if this was his condition as to outward circumstances, how far more fearful and wretched was the state of his soul, now well-nigh arrived at the close of a life of vice and ignorance—without even the knowledge of a Saviour—a corrupt evil heart within, and with years of sin, unpardoned sin, upon him ; and besides all this, altogether unconscious of his state, and careless about his soul. But still the love of a gracious and merciful God was towards him ; sinner as he was God's heart had long yearned over him. God had long ago provided for him the precious blood of Christ, which was sufficient to cleanse him : and now the time had come when He saw fit to stop him in the course of evil, and to shew him his distance from Himself, and by His Holy Spirit reveal Jesus to his soul, and thus fit him for His own glory.

A poor Christian man, G—— S——, living in the same village, heard of his illness, and knowing the life he had led, felt deeply for his state, and went to see him. He was much touched with the scene of misery which he thus witnessed, and above all he trembled for the soul of poor Richard. He pointed out to him therefore his danger, and what a sinner he was before God ; and then spoke to him about Jesus, whom God had sent to die for sinners, and how God indeed loved poor sinners so, that He had not even spared His own Son, but given Him up for their sakes. Poor Richard's case was much pressed on the heart of this dear Christian brother, and he prayed much for him, and visited him again and

again ; and through the Lord's mercy his visits were made the means of awakening him to a sense of his real state before God. He began to know himself to be a sinner—he began to dread the awful wages of sin, but as yet he could get no peace to his poor troubled soul ; he was unable to trust wholly in Jesus, he thought he had something to do himself, or that there was something yet to be done before he could be saved.

On Saturday, June 14th, 1845, he was visited by two Christian ladies, to whom G—— S—— had mentioned his case. They found him in all the filth and wretchedness I have before described, lying on his bed, his own person, and the scanty clothes that covered him, black with dirt and coal dust, yet he appeared not the least affected by the misery of his circumstances, but his poor heart was groaning deeply under a sense of his sins. They spoke to him of the love of Jesus to the weary, burthened sinner, and repeated to him that beautiful text, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He said, “I know he's good, but my heart is so hard, I can't trust him.” They then spoke to him of the poor woman that touched the hem of Christ's garment, and was made instantly whole ; and twice he exclaimed, “Oh, that I could reach him, Oh, that I could touch him.” They tried to explain to him that the way to reach Jesus, the way now to touch him, is to believe on him ; but they were unable to give him any comfort, and left him still heavily burthened with his sins.

On the next day, Sunday, the 15th, in the evening, the same two Christian sisters again visited poor

safe for ever—but I thought I might get away from Him, and that would be so sad.” She replied, “You are not able to keep yourself, are you?” He answered, strongly shewing the true sense he had of his own weakness, “No more than a little fly.” “But Jesus can uphold you.” “Yes,” he said, “with one finger.”

On the following day, an aged servant of God, (Mr. G.) being taken to see poor Richard, happened to ask him how old he was. Richard thought he referred to his spiritual birth, and answered, “I am only four days old, Sir:” he then spoke of the last Lord’s day evening when he had found peace, and turning to the sister, through whom the Lord had been pleased thus to bless his soul, he said, “We shall talk of that evening, and praise God for it, when we are in heaven together.”

During a subsequent visit he spoke of his neighbours, how his heart yearned over them—how he wished they might every one come to Jesus as he had, and said how happy it made him to think that the Lord’s children were going about telling sinners about Jesus, whom he felt to be so precious to him. He was asked if he liked to see the Lord’s children himself. His answer was, “My heart bounds with joy when they come in, as they come to speak about Jesus.”

Two days before he died he was visited by Mr. D——, a Christian who labours much for the Lord in preaching the Gospel. He was in perfect peace, and Mr. D—— read to him Rev. vii. from verse 9 to the end, and said, “You will see Jesus before I shall, Richard, *I* should like to be with Jesus.” Richard

replied that he hoped Mr. D—— might live a little longer, as he was able to tell of the love of Jesus to poor sinners. Mr. D. then said to him, “Richard, what will you sing when you get there ; will you sing of your own goodness ?” He answered, “I’ll sing of nothing but the precious blood of the Lamb.”

In the course of the night of Friday, 4th of July, (the night before he died) he said to his wife, “Oh ! how I love you !” She asked him if he troubled at leaving her and his children. He said, “No ; for I trust the same Jesus that had mercy on me, will have mercy on you, and will care for them.” As long as he was able to speak that night, he continued saying, “Precious Jesus !”

On the next morning (Saturday) a little before four o’clock, two poor brethren in the Lord, on their way to their daily labour, went in to see if poor Richard was yet alive, and saw him for the last time on earth—consciousness was gone—he lay quite still and calm, and apparently happy,—they remained a little while by his bed-side, and prayed over him, that the Lord Jesus would be with him in the valley of the shadow of death, and that he might depart in peace. Their prayer was heard, and at half-past six o’clock that same morning he quietly fell asleep in Jesus.

In closing this little narrative of dear Richard E—, I would only desire to call the attention of the reader to one marked feature in his conversion—and that is, his unbroken joy and peace directly he was enabled *to rest on the word of God respecting Jesus*. He believed God’s testimony about the work of Christ, and he was satisfied. He did not look into his own

heart to find out *there* whether Christ had died for him, but he trusted in the word of God about it. The same word that told him he was a sinner, told him that Christ died for the chief of sinners, and that was all he wanted to know—it was enough—God had himself provided the Lamb; God had Himself caused the Lamb to be slain; God had declared that the blood of the Lamb was sufficient; and therefore, why might not poor Richard trust in its full and eternal value! He knew himself unworthy; but God said Christ was precious. He knew his own heart was hard and evil, but it was Christ who had died; and His death alone saves sinners, and not the state of their own hearts. Indeed he had unshaken “peace and joy in believing.”

May God cause many a poor wearied soul to find rest in the same blessed Jesus, as poor Richard, and may each one into whose hands this little account may fall, ask himself the question, “Have I trusted in the same precious blood; do I believe in the same gracious Saviour; have I the same peace and joy as poor Richard? If not, in what state am I? And where am I going?” Remember there are no steps to salvation, there are no preparations required. To the sinner as he is—unchanged—unwashed—ruined and lost, God proclaims the full and immediate value and sufficiency of the blood of the Lamb—“He that believeth *hath* everlasting life.”

Price ½d.