

## The Pilgrim's Progress.

BY THE REV. JOHN KELMAN, D.D., EDINBURGH.

### The Second Part.

#### From the Interpreter's House to the House Beautiful.

THIS section of the book, although it is studded here and there with jewels, yet undoubtedly falls still farther below the level of the First Part than that which we have hitherto considered. The invention of the damsel Innocent for the opening of the door is happy enough to be impressive in spite of the polite rotundity of her little speeches. The conversation about themselves overheard by the pilgrims is true to life; for, when the spirit is deeply moved, everything that happens appears to have a providential reference to oneself.<sup>1</sup> The sentence, 'One smiled, and another smiled, and they all smiled,' is John Bunyan at his best, because at his simplest.

But the fault of the whole passage is that the sense of mystery is to a great extent lost. The Interpreter's House, the House of the Spirit, must ever be a mysterious place. In the First Part the mystery is sustained. The presence of the Interpreter is one of those withdrawn and reticent facts of experience, whose occultness convinces us by its truth to life. Here all that is gone, and instead of it we have familiarity, commonplace, and far too easy and prolific exposition.

At the same time, something may be said in justification of this broader treatment. To some, the fastidious reserve of the earlier description is its most exquisite and precious quality. But delicate spirituality is not the only fruit of the Spirit. There are those also whose coarser grain or rougher experience has made them unable to appreciate those finer shades of spiritual influence. Their more vulgar capacities require a teaching which they can understand. Perhaps John Bunyan is both wiser and finer than his critics, after all, and has deliberately altered the tone of

the Interpreter's House, as a protest that the Holy Spirit's gifts are not the monopoly of those who are in this sense spiritual.

The pilgrims are shown first the scenes which Christian saw—'the Significant Rooms,' as they are strikingly called. The only note that is new regarding them is the description of the minister's portrait as 'the picture of the biggest of all,' a phrase which confirms our former estimate of Bunyan's reverence for true religious guides.

Seven additional tableaux are presented, of which only two are valuable. 'The Butcher killing the Sheep' is one of the ugliest and most revolting things which Bunyan ever wrote. It is a vulgarized and coarsened version of Isaiah's perfect image (Is 53<sup>7</sup>). Its last two sentences must have been written hurriedly. 'The King' has much more of Charles II. in him than of Him whose words were: 'The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' The three pictures of 'The Hen,' 'The Spider,' and 'The Robin' are more ingenious than edifying. 'The Hen,' indeed, reappears later, enlisted for theological purposes in confirmation of Mr. Greatheart's sermon. The chicken which 'lifted up her head and her eyes towards heaven every time she drank,' is a much more valuable bird. 'The Spider' seems to have been one of John Bunyan's special aversions: he wrote a poem on this subject.<sup>2</sup> 'The Robin' is blamed, not for any cruelty to the spider it has captured, but for being so disgusting as to seek such food. 'The Field of Straw' is but a very much weaker version of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

In 'The Garden' we enter a field of literature which has been very well wrought, both before and since John Bunyan's day. From Bacon's *Essay on Gardens*, and George Herbert's poems,<sup>3</sup> down to Thomas Edward Brown's 'A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot,' Alfred Austin's beautiful garden, books and songs, and R. L. Stevenson's curious

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Robert Browning, *Epilogue to Dramatis Personæ* :—

'When you see what I tell you,—Nature dance  
About each man of us, retire, advance,  
As though the pageant's end were to enhance  
His worth.'

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bunyan's *Books for Boys and Girls*.

<sup>3</sup> 'I blesse thee, Lord, because I grow  
Among thy trees, which in a row  
To thee both fruit and order ow' (*Paradise*).

and self-revealing essay on the same theme, much has been delicately and ingeniously written on the subject. But it is questionable if in it all there is anything more perfect than these few words of Bunyan's. The simplicity of imagination and of diction, the childlike directness and beauty of vision, are here very perfect. And it is not too much to say of it, what Mr. A. C. Benson says of the Second Part in general, that there is not quite the same romance, perhaps, but there is more tenderness and sweetness.<sup>1</sup>

'The Man with the Muck-rake' is classical both in literature and in painting; and it is probably one of the creations of Bunyan's genius which will keep their hold on the imagination of the world so long as English books are read. Its criticism upon the materialism of mankind strikes home to-day as keenly as it did of old: for heaven is still 'but as a fable to some,' and 'things here are counted the only things substantial'; while the prayer, 'Give me not riches,' is still but a 'rusty' prayer.

### Proverbs.

It is a pity that some spirit of selection and cutting down had not come upon the author, inducing him to send on such gems as these, and ruthlessly to leave out much else. Had he done this, it is safe to say that the Second Part of his *Pilgrim's Progress* would not only have surpassed the First, but would have been among the most exquisite of English writings. But his mind and imagination were profusely fertile. The allegorizing mood was on him, and sententious and proverbial remarks seem to crackle from him like electric sparks at a touch.

After the tableaux, there follows a series of thirteen of these little similes or proverbial notes. They are of various merit, but for the most part more or less trite. While still drawing from human nature, the work is conscious, and tends towards the artificiality which is the distinguishing mark of Chaucer's early romances in contrast with his *Canterbury Tales*. One almost suspects that these are 'the stuffing of his travel-scrip'—the contents of some Commonplace Book or collection of wayside notes for which he had not been able to find a relevant place in his main story. The same remark applies to the catechizings and questions which are immediately to follow. In the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. two exquisite passages from Bunyan's *Christian Behaviour*, quoted Brown, *John Bunyan*, chap. xi.

saying about women's dress he reverts to a subject which he has touched upon in the quaint poem 'On Apparel.' Since the days of Isaiah, men's remarks about women's clothing have been a curious and extensive byway of literature. It is characteristic of the times, when the Restoration had lowered all considerations connected with sex to a sensuous tone, that even religious writings tend so often to a regrettable materialism. The Second Part of the allegory, where we are in the company of noble women, has considerably more frequent references to sins of the flesh than in the former Part.

After the flesh comes the devil, in the final scene of the tree, fair with leaves externally, and yet rotten within, symbol of those professors whose heart is 'good for nothing but to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box.' Only two of the sentences may be said to have any special value. One is Bunyan's version of a sentiment found in many Puritan writers, 'If a man would live well, let him fetch his last day to him, and make it always his company-keeper.' The other is striking and full of the insight which we find so far-reaching in the Book of Proverbs, 'Whispering and change of thoughts prove that sin is in the world.'

### Incidents of the Evening and Morning.

The evening closes with supper accompanied by music and a song, which translates, in sweet and simple verses, the beginning of the 23rd Psalm.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The writer has received from a friend the following interesting note:—

'There appear to have been several versions of the metrical Psalms in use at one time or another, but none of them attained to much popularity saving those by Sternhold and Hopkins, and Tate and Brady, the latter being the compilers of the collection presently in use.

'The first verse of the 23rd Psalm quoted by Bunyan is taken from S. and H.'s collection, but he had evidently gone to some other source (possibly himself) for the last verse, afterwards sung, along with a verse of Psalm 100, in the House Beautiful. The probable explanation of this is that he had committed to memory more than one version of the psalm, and in quoting it, he had not been careful to see that the two verses were taken from the same version.

'While Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins were the chief contributors to the collection, there were three or four others who assisted, among them being William Kethe, who was an exile with Knox at Geneva. This man is memorable as the author of the only rendering now much used of the S. and H. collection, namely, "All people that on earth dwell," and you will observe that the quotation by Bunyan

Christiana and Mercy tell the story of their setting out, but without any new features. The of the last verse of the 100th Psalm is in exactly the same form as we use it to-day.

'S. and H.'s version appeared in 1562, and for more than two centuries it was the only or chief metrical provision of the Church of England. Since 1700 or so it has been called the "Old Version" to distinguish it from Tate and Brady's collection.

'Of the S. and H. version Fuller said that its authors' "piety was better than their poetry, and they had drunk more of Jordan than of Helicon"; and Campbell observed "that they with the best intentions and the worst taste degraded the spirit of Hebrew psalmody by flat and homely phraseology, and, mistaking vulgarity for simplicity, turned into bathos what they found sublime." But Keble and others have valued their work for its fidelity to the original, and their version continued to be used in many places far into the nineteenth century.'

Cf. also Milton's and George Herbert's versions of Psalm 23.

Interpreter speaks more than he did to Christian, but his speech is more conventional and tends to prosiness and excessive quotation of passages of Scripture which are not always remarkable for their relevancy. With the women his manner is caressing and fatherly, and he calls them 'sweet-heart' or 'my darlings.' Supper ended, the night's rest follows, though Mercy has little sleep for joy of her assurance. In the morning there is the garden bath in the open air, after which they are sealed in the forehead and endued with robes of white linen. Great-heart is introduced as their conductor for the next stage—a Puritan divine and soldier, who fitly represents the Church Militant in its defending power. As they set out, Christiana sings, but her song is no improvement on Christian's poorest efforts.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE PSALMS.

#### PSALM CXXVI. 6.

**'Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed;  
He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.'**

THIS Psalm should be read in conjunction with Ps 137. The two Psalms are as pendant pictures; they show us the beginning and the end of Israel's bondage in Babylon, and suggest to us the history of their intervening life. The Babylonian captivity fell upon the Jews with paralyzing force. They could but 'sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon'; 'hanging their harps upon the willows,' and with their hands fallen listless by their side, they remembered Zion, and wept. But while they wept they toiled; they sowed, and strangers gathered in the fruit. At length their own harvest came; God turned their captivity as He sent the rain-streams upon the barren south lands. He had watched their patient toil, their sorrowful fidelity; and after many years He gave them their reward. Deliverance came to them from the ruler of Babylon himself; they returned to their own land with the good wishes and the sympathies of their taskmasters. Then were they

'like them that dream'; they could scarcely believe the unexpected blessing that had befallen them. 'Their mouth was filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing.' Their heathen captors shared their gladness; they, too, rejoiced that Jehovah had visited His people, saying, 'The Lord hath done great things for them.' The Lord hath done great things for us, responded the joyous freedmen, 'The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.' They had gone, they had gone, weeping, bearing their seed basket; they came, they came, rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

A few years ago, a severe drought occurred in South Africa. For many months the sun blazed from a cloudless sky and scorched every blade of grass. The time for sowing came, and every passing cloud was eagerly scanned in hope of rain, but not a drop fell. Clouds appeared at intervals that gave much promise, but the withering north wind sprang up and scattered them. Consternation could be seen on many faces when the time for sowing was over: for it meant a year of gnawing hunger for their families.

On one of my many rides in the Somerville Mission district, I passed a man one day trying to cultivate a patch of land with a hoe. In conversation he told me he was sowing the last grains of maize he had, and that his hungry children had been crying for them that morning.