

## The Pilgrim's Progress.

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### The Second Part.

#### Incidents of the Way.

THEY come to the Cross, where Great-heart, upon request, discourses at length upon the imputed righteousness of Christ. This passage links on with the phrase 'Word and deed' used by Goodwill, and has evidently some deliberate purpose behind it. We may safely hazard the conjecture that Bunyan had been taken to task in his own day, as he has been by a narrow-minded minority of critics in ours, for defective or erroneous doctrine of the Cross and the way of salvation in the former Part. That this is the true explanation is practically stated by Great-heart in answer to Christiana's question about Word and deed, 'Yes, it was the belief of this that cut off these strings, that could not be cut by any other means; and it was to give him a proof of the virtue of this that he was suffered to carry his burden to the Cross.' One cannot but regret this answer. How poor it, and the dull and *doctrinaire* sermon to which it refers, are when compared with the wonderful story of the look and the loosened burden rolling into the empty grave. This sermon is fantastic theorizing, while these events were living human experience, red with the man's heart's blood.

After passing a wayside gallows, on which Simple, Sloth, and Presumption are hanging—a grim reminder of the tarred corpses which swung and creaked in every wind which blew across England in those days of savage justice, the company arrives at the Hill Difficulty. At this point two notes of contemporary history break through the allegory. On the one hand, the spring has been made muddy by the feet of some that have been there since Christian's visit—*i.e.* during the interval between 1678 and 1682. A hint of the same sort has already been given in connexion with the Slough of Despond. On the other hand, the paths by which Formalist and Hypocrisy wandered to their destruction have in the same interval been barred by chains, posts, and a ditch. These indications point to the heresies and impurities of

the Ranters, of whom Bunyan everywhere speaks with much bitterness, and to the Act of Toleration, which lessened the temptation to Formality and Hypocrisy. Yet it seems that the very obstructions tempted some extremists, who paraded their formal and hypocritical views from the sheer love of them.

The Hill taxes the strength of all the pilgrims, and they sit down to rest in the Arbour. Here, again, the allegory tends to get out of hand. They partake of a meal which consists of a pomegranate, a honeycomb, and a bottle of spirits—a diet surely almost as unwholesome (except allegorically) as the stolen fruit from whose effects Matthew was suffering. The Arbour of Rest is 'a losing place' in Bunyan's estimate, and Christiana must forget her bottle of spirits there as Christian had forgotten his roll—surely a sad falling off! The spot where Christian met with Timorous and Mistrust is marked now by a stage on which these impersonations of cowardice had been burned through their tongues with a hot iron for trying to persuade Christian to turn back. The savagery of this would not appear so outrageous in an age when ears were cropped and noses slit so commonly as was done under the later Stuart kings; and the incident is one more vigorous thrust at fear by the heroic and yet sensitive dreamer.

The entrance to the Church is more terrible for the women than it was for the man. This may be simply a very natural recollection of the effect of persecution upon the weaker sex, or it may have reference to some excess of cruelty from which the Nonconformists suffered in those rapidly changing days of Charles II. That this latter explanation is the correct one seems to be hinted in the note that 'this way of late had been much unoccupied, and was almost all grown over with grass.' In any case, the lions are backed by the Giant Grim, or Bloody-man, with whom Great-heart fights until he slays him. John Bunyan always brightens up at the sight of a giant. Visitors have noted that in the Galleries of Versailles, where the upper floor is hung with portraits, and

the lower with scenes of battle in which the people of the portraits are shown in action, the interest of the crowd is all in the lower galleries. Here is another instance of the same phenomenon. Like Stevenson's old sea-dog, welcoming the topsails of a Spanish battleship, Bunyan grows vital when 'there is something immediate to be done.' The giant is a very lively creation, with his backing of the lions and swearing by them, and his hideous roaring and sprawlings. It is a curious fact, in confirmation of the late Professor James' theory that terror is usually awakened more readily by sounds than by sights, that it is the roaring rather than the appearance of the giant which frightens the women. Christiana is excited by the adventure, and, oddly enough, adopts the inappropriate language of Deborah. Great-heart in conflict with Bloody-man is a vital and inspiring figure, and he gives a fine picture of the Church Militant in those fierce days.

When they arrive at the House Beautiful we find that our old friend the Porter is now 'Mr.' Watchful, and we are introduced to a new damsel, whose name is Humble-mind, at the door. The House Beautiful is true to the symbolism of the great Gothic cathedrals, whose huge doors proclaim abundant entrance, and yet narrow down to a very lowly wicket, through which those who enter must stoop in order to gain admittance. Great-heart departs, for they had only asked for his company for a stage, and the answers to prayer are limited by the faith of the suppliant. But there is a hope, afterwards to be fulfilled, that further prayer may bring the fuller blessing. This House, when they enter it, is noisier than it was in Christian's time. Its people are still the same composite characters, in which are mingled prim conventionality and warm-hearted human nature. 'Welcome, ye vessels of the grace of God,' they cry; but they add 'Welcome unto us who are your faithful friends.' In the note that supper has been already cooked for them, 'for the Porter had heard before of their coming, and had told it to them within,' we have one of those touches which distinguish the second telling of the story from the first. This is conscious and elaborate, and could not have been written in the tale of Christian's journey. The *raconteur* is thinking now of the consistency of his narration; formerly he needed no such precaution, for the tale told itself. The dream of Mercy, however, recalls the

great dreamer to his most natural and charming style; and so the book swings to and fro, between art and experience.

They stay in the House a month, and much of the time is spent in catechizing. Prudence examines each of the four boys in turn, beginning with the youngest. She questions James on the Fundamentals, Joseph on Theology in general, Samuel on Eschatology, and Matthew on Metaphysics and Biblical Criticism. The answers are, to our ears, rather desperate; and we are glad to remember the stolen apples and to remind ourselves that these precocious theologians are, after all, human boys. But in the final speech of Prudence we are refreshed by the insuppressible native wit of Bunyan. In it there is to be found a most admirable summary of the normal sources of education—a summary which may be commended to the educational theorists and experts of the present day. According to this remarkable utterance, education is derived first from the mother, then from other people, then from Nature, then from the Bible, and finally from the Church.

Two incidents of a serio-comic nature diversify the sojourn in the House Beautiful. The first is the courtship of Mercy by Mr. Brisk, a gallant who had an eye to business as well as to beauty. The name seems to have had a sinister meaning for Bunyan, and we recall that 'brisk lad,' Ignorance, who was so severely handled in Part I. Mercy comes through this little adventure with a remarkable show of common sense. But then she has had the experience of her unhappy sister Bountiful to guide her, and the touch which describes that domestic tragedy supplies one more of Bunyan's vivid *asides*, revealing a dimly seen but very living crowd of people standing in the background behind the chief actors, like James Lee in Browning's poems of *James Lee's Wife*.

The second incident is that of the sickness and cure of Matthew. This attack is indeed somewhat belated, as the trouble came of the forbidden fruit which he had eaten near the Wicket Gate. Being fruit grown in the devil's orchard, the episode fits in well with the popular superstition that all sickness is the work of the satanic agency.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Skill is introduced, a family doctor of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Masson's *Three Devils*, p. 55; and Lecky's *History of Rationalism*, i. 69-71.

old school.<sup>1</sup> He asks about Matthew's diet, diagnoses the case, and prescribes; afterwards declining the offered fee, which he tells Christiana to pass on to the 'Master of the College of Physicians.' The first prescription is the Old Testament medicine for sin, a barbarous black draught. This, however, not proving strong enough, Bunyan, greatly daring, imitates the Latin jargon of the medical schools of his day in the pill representing the New Testament cure for such ailments, '*Ex carne et sanguine Christi,*' together with promises and salt; adding in a sidenote, 'The Latin I borrow.' The human side of the cure is 'half a quarter of a pint of the tears of repentance.' After great persuasions and entreaties Matthew is induced to take the medicine, and a cure speedily follows. Christiana is so delighted with this panacea for all sickness of the soul, that she goes on her way fortified with twelve boxes of the pills. No doubt the whole passage is true to life, but it is coarse and revolting. It reminds us rather of the comic interludes which used to be introduced into miracle plays to relieve the tedium of the protracted solemnity.<sup>2</sup> The Latin is borrowed not only for its amusing verisimilitude, but perhaps also to cover a suspicion of irreverence, in which it hardly succeeds. The whole piece illustrates the danger of running into undue levity to which allegory is ever prone, and which Bunyan usually avoids with extraordinary skill.

On his recovery, Matthew proceeds to turn the tables on Prudence for her former catechizing. He asks her twelve of the silliest questions on record, and receives corresponding answers. Bunyan seems at this period to be utterly obsessed by the allegorizing habit. His very far-fetched interpretation of 'The Spider' has already been solemnly endorsed by Christiana's words, 'God has made nothing in vain.' Now, everything appears to have an occult as well as an obvious significance, from the nauseous taste of medicine to the crowing of a cock. It is the system which produced such absurd results in the theology of Origen and his followers, and which has persisted among the more superstitious schools of interpretation, forcing Scripture and life alike into unreality, to the

present day. The only glimmer of the light of truth that is to be found in such interpretations, is that sense of the unity of the natural and spiritual worlds which, while it has been responsible for many extravagances, alike scientific and religious, has also defended the world against both Manichæan dualism and scientific materialism, in virtue of the mysterious but splendid truth to which it has borne witness alike in ancient days and modern.

### The Character-Portraiture.

While we miss the firm hand and the human interest in the characters already familiar, it must be allowed that the new figures show no decline in power and vivacity, and that the individuality of each is admirably sustained. Mr. Brisk and Dr. Skill are very lively creatures. The descriptions of boy-nature are also living. Only the oldest and the youngest of the four boys are drawn in any detail. Matthew, the oldest, is as yet a poor character. His greed and disobedience, and his childishness about taking the medicine, show that John Bunyan has seen some badly spoiled children among the eldest sons of his acquaintance. But the questions he asks of Prudence exhibit him as a bore; and his conduct after his recovery makes us lose all patience. 'In a little time he got up, and walked about with a staff, and would go from room to room, and talk with Prudence, Piety, and Charity of his distemper, and how he was healed.' Surely Bunyan must have been aware that there was a good deal of the old woman about this very unpleasant young man, and that he badly needed such dealing with as a public school provides, to get rid of his mawkishness. His youngest brother, James, is a much more promising child. He cries with weariness at the Hill Difficulty, and yet his pluck is evident enough. Great-heart's chaff is very good-humoured about their going on before when there is no danger in the way, but getting behind him when the lions appear. James is an old-fashioned little man, echoing the sentiments and the language of older folk, and yet with a very brave heart in that small body of his.

The mother sustains her character well. Conventional, indeed, but strong of understanding and quick of apprehension, she represents an easily recognizable type of religious woman. She asks for a sermon, but will not accept its teaching with-

<sup>1</sup> It is to be remembered that Mr. John Gifford, Bunyan's Evangelist, was appointed to fill the place of Dr. Banister, Doctor of Physic, in Bedford, in Bunyan's time. He had probably learned medicine before the Wars.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 'Noah,' in the *Towneley Collection*.

out discussion. Her point of failure is prayer, for she does not ask for a guide who will go far enough with her and her company, and God treats her as He treats the strong, giving her just what she asks and nothing more. Finally, she again forgets to send a message of petition for Great-heart, and has to be reminded to do so by Joseph. Prayer is the weak point of many of the strong; and it is peculiarly true to life when this managing, self-dependent, thinking woman fails in prayer. Yet beneath the strong mind there is a very big and rich heart. She has a kind thought even for Madam Wanton at the Cross. Her appeal to Matthew when his life is in danger is impassioned, and although she is unaccountably weak in her dealing with her wayward son, yet the quality of her love will one day redeem that weakness. But the rich depths of her character are shown at their best in the splendid outburst with which she responds to the sermon on the righteousness of Christ. Great-heart checks it, and it is a pity that he does so. Nothing could illustrate better the expansive and generous effect of the Cross upon a human soul than Christiana's spontaneous and unrestrained sentences, which are indeed infinitely more appropriate to the occasion than the meticulous theology which drew them forth.

Mercy retains her charm, and reveals it by frequent new wayside touches. There is no lack of human nature in her, and indeed she has much of that natural and graceful virtue which is found in many who have not passed through such deep experiences as hers. Her heart is heavy with the thought of those she has left behind. Her dream is the dream of a sweet child. She is 'of fair countenance,' and therefore the more alluring, and she knows it quite well. The sight of the Robin appals her with the naïve horror at the cruelty of Nature, which every naturally tender heart must feel. Humility is her constant characteristic, contrasting excellently with the firm and confident spirit of Christiana. A favourite phrase of hers, 'if I may,' indicates that want of claim and that habitual self-distrust which she herself traces to the want of experience, and in virtue of which she would fain linger in the House Beautiful that she might learn from the Sisters there.

Her judgments of others are gentle, and one of the best touches in the story is her account of the visit to Christiana, in which she omits all reference

to Mrs. Timorous. She can, however, be firm when occasion requires it, as Mr. Brisk finds to his cost. Nay, she can be bitterly unmerciful. Of Simple, Sloth, and Presumption she says, 'No, no, let them hang and their names rot, and their crimes live for ever against them'; and she approves, quoting Scripture warrant for it, the barbarous punishment of Timorous and Mistrust. The cruelty of seducers and the dangerous wickedness of cowards move her to a state of indignation which clears her from Shakespeare's aphorism, 'Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill.'

Great-heart will improve as we know him better, but already he is worthy of his name. The Interpreter's 'man-servant,' he is from the first both man and minister of religion. He will not eat with them, however, for as yet 'Never dares the man put off the prophet.' He is there in general to keep them from taking too soft and good-humoured a view of things, an austere guide who is ever ready for discourse. But when it comes to fighting, the man is transformed, and we see in him one of the long line of soldier-saints whom Robert Browning so delights in. It is a long march from the Knights Templars to the Army of the Congregation, but the same stuff is in both, and in many an heroic spirit still in the service of the Interpreter. We take leave of him in an act of absolute and unreasoning obedience on his part. He will not go forward, even to successful and congenial work, without express orders. He returns to the House of the Interpreter.

### Ethical and Theological.

Great-heart's sermon, with its mechanical and complicated distinctions between the four different kinds of righteousness possessed by Christ, is as ingenious as his application to the subject of Christ's very simple and non-theological injunction about him that hath 'two coats.' The whole spirit of the sermon is mathematical and apart from any possible experience; hence its inevitable air of unreality. The passage in *Grace Abounding*, in which Bunyan deals with the same subject from the standpoint of his own experience,—when this sentence falls upon his soul, 'Thy righteousness is in heaven,' etc.,—should be read along with this. The difference between the two is the difference between death and life.

The gloom of Judgment Day hangs over the

dream here, and that is the thought suggested even by the crowing of a cock. Yet Joseph's answer to the question as to God's design in saving poor man, is happy,—'The glorifying of his name, of his grace and justice, etc., and the everlasting happiness of his creature.' That is like the answer to the first question of the Shorter Catechism, whose sunny belief in joy so fascinated the bright heart of Robert Louis Stevenson.

But the most striking theology of all is in the short description of the bath in the open air of the Garden. It is not, indeed, artistically equal to Bunyan's finest work, for this is a case in which the spiritual meaning breaks through the outward form of the allegory at considerable risk of grotesqueness. But, as an analysis of sanctification, the passage is memorable. The bath is in the open air—in contrast to all occult and secret initiations. Again, it strengthens their limbs, with that tenfold strength of the pure which at once recalls Galahad. The seal on the brow (contrary, it must be confessed, to all probabilities) beautifies them—just as their countenances, radiant with the new look of the holy, attracted the wonder and admiration of

the world to the Early Christians.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the test of holiness is that one sees not one's own white garments, but those of others.

The moral teaching of the passage is abundant and various, but its great lesson is the need for strenuousness, and the dangers which beset those who choose a slack or easy life. There is deep and far-reaching significance in the catalogue of the victims of Simple, Sloth, and Presumption—Slow-pace, Short-wind, No-heart, Linger-after-lust, Sleepy-head, and that immortal inspiration, 'a young woman, her name was Dull.' Nothing could be better than that, as an account of the kind of people who are tempted to fail in strenuousness. Their views of God and man, and of every detail of the nobler life, grow morbid and distorted, and they fail of all high destiny because, like the avoiders of the Hill Difficulty, 'they are idle; they refuse to take pains.' It is a picture of all that lamentable company of weak brethren who might have so easily been strong, but for the temptation that lured them into luxurious self-indulgence.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the memorable words in which Pater describes 'Divine Service' in his *Marius the Epicurean*, chapter xi.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE PSALMS.

#### PSALM CXXXIX. 7.

'Whither shall I go from thy spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?'

THE 139th Psalm is doubtless, like several of those near it, one of those written during the Captivity. It was then probably that for the first time the Jews learned fully the sense of God's omnipresence here expressed. That captivity produced many remarkable effects upon them: it modified their spoken language; it exterminated their taste for idolatry, and common sorrow deepened their patriotic feelings; above all, it brought into greater clearness some doctrinal ideas, such as the immortality of the soul, the influence of angels, and eminently the omnipresence of God. It was when the Jews were taken out of their own land, and were separated from the national temple, that they first really felt that God

could be worshipped elsewhere than at Jerusalem—in synagogue as well as in temple, in the closet as well as in the sanctuary; that His ear was open to the mutterings of prayer from the exiles in a strange land; that travel where they might they were still present to Him, and He present to them. It was then that for the first time they felt God's exceeding nearness in every spot, and yet realized His vastness: 'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.'

Agnes have passed away, and the progress of time has afforded us abounding proofs of the Almighty's greatness which were not revealed to this pious Psalmist; but no nobler words have ever been used to express the vivid conception of God's omnipresence. Geography opening up the undiscovered parts of the globe and presenting