

THE DAIRYMAN'S DAUGHTER

BY THE

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This classic of the faith was sold in great numbers when it was first published in 1810. It has continued ever since to have its inspiring effect on those who know the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in their hearts. And how important it is, in these dark days of widespread apostasy, that this classic might yet prove useful again in awakening the hearts of others, like Elizabeth Wallbridge, the dairyman's daughter, whom the Lord called to bear witness to Him in so wonderful a way, before her early death

It is a delightful employment to trace and discover the operations of divine grace, as they are manifested in the dispositions and lives of God's real children. It is peculiarly gratifying to observe how frequently, among the poorer classes of mankind, the sunshine of mercy beams upon the heart, and bears witness to the image of Christ which the Spirit of God has impressed thereupon. Among such, the sincerity and simplicity of the Christian character appear unencumbered by those fetters to spirituality of mind and conversation which too often prove a great hindrance to those who live in the higher ranks. Many are the difficulties which riches, polished society, worldly importance, and high connections throw in the way of religious profession. Happy indeed it is, (and some such happy instances I know), where grace has so strikingly supported its conflict with natural pride, self-importance, the allurements of luxury, ease, and worldly opinions, that the noble and mighty appear adorned with genuine poverty of spirit, self-denial, humble-mindedness, and deep spirituality of heart.

But in general, if we want to see religion in its purest character, we must look for it among the poor of this world who are rich in faith. How often is the poor man's cottage the palace of God! Many of us can truly declare that we have there learned our most valuable lessons of faith and hope, and there witnessed the most striking demonstrations of the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God.

The character which the present narrative is designed to introduce to the notice of my readers, is given from real life and circumstance. I first became acquainted with the dairyman's daughter by the reception of a letter, a part of which I transcribe from the original, now before me.

“Rev. Sir,

I take the liberty to write to you. Pray excuse me, for I have never spoken to you. But I once heard you preach at Arreton Church. I believe you are a faithful preacher, to warn sinners to flee from the wrath that will be revealed against all those that live in sin and die impenitent. I was much rejoiced to hear of those marks of love and affection which you showed to that poor soldier of the S. D. militia. Surely the love of Christ sent you to that poor man; may that love ever dwell richly in you by faith. May it constrain you to seek the wandering souls of men, with the fervent desire to spend and be spent for His glory.

Sir, be fervent in prayer with God for the conviction and conversion of sinners. He has promised to answer the prayer of faith, that is put up in His Son's name. Ask what you will, and it shall be granted you. Through faith in Christ we rejoice in hope, and look up in expectation of that time drawing near, when all shall know and fear the Lord, and when a nation shall be born in a day.

What a happy time, when Christ's kingdom shall come! Then shall His will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Men shall be daily fed with the manna of His love, and delight themselves in the Lord all the day long. Sir, I began to write this on Sunday, being detained from attending on public worship. My dear and only sister, living as a servant with Mrs.---, was so ill that I came here to attend in her place, and on her. But now she is no more. She expressed a desire to receive the Lord's supper, and commemorate His precious death and sufferings. I told her; as well as I was able, what it was to receive Christ into her heart; but as her weakness of body increased, she did not mention it again. She seemed quite resigned before she died. I do hope she has gone from a world of death and sin to be with God for ever.

My sister expressed a wish that you might bury her. The Minister of our parish, whither she will be carried, cannot come. She died on Tuesday morning, and will be buried on Friday or Saturday, whichever is most convenient to you, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Please to send an answer by the bearer, to let me know whether you can comply with this request.

*From your unworthy servant
Elizabeth Wallbridge."*

I was much struck with the simple and earnest strain of devotion which the letter breathed. It was but indifferently written and spelt, but this the rather tended to endear the hitherto unknown writer, as it seemed characteristic of the union of humbleness of station with eminence of piety. I felt quite thankful that I was favoured with a correspondent of this description; the more so, as such characters were, at that time, very rare in the neighbourhood. As soon as it was read, I inquired who was the bearer of it. "He is waiting at the outside of the gate, sir," was the reply.

I went out to speak to him and saw a venerable old man, whose long hoary hair and deeply wrinkled countenance commanded more than common respect. He was resting his arm and head upon the gate, and tears were streaming down his cheeks. On my approach he made a low bow, and said, "Sir, I have brought you a letter from my daughter; but I fear you will think us very bold in asking you to take so much trouble."

"By no means," I replied; "I shall be truly glad to oblige you and any of your family in this matter." I desired him to come into the house, and then said: "What is your occupation?"

"Sir, I have lived most of my days in a little cottage at.... six miles from here. I have rented a few acres of ground, and kept a few cows, which, in addition to my day labour, has been my means of supporting and bringing up my family."

"What family have you?"

"A wife, now getting very aged and helpless, two sons, and one daughter; for my other poor dear child is just departed out of this wicked world."

"I hope, for a better."

"I hope so, too; poor thing, she did not use to take to such good ways as her sister; but I do believe that her sister's manner of talking with her before she died was the means of saving her soul. What a mercy it is to have such a child as mine is! I never thought about my own soul seriously till she, poor girl, begged me to flee from the wrath to come."

"How old are you?"

"Nearly seventy, and my wife is older. We are getting old and almost past our labour; but our daughter has left a good place, where she lived in service, on purpose to come home, and take care of us and our little dairy. And a dear, dutiful, affectionate girl she is."

"Was she always so?"

"No, sir; when she was very young, she was all for the world, and pleasure and dress and company. Indeed, we were all very ignorant, and thought, if we took care for this life, and wronged nobody, we should be sure to go to heaven at last. My daughters were both wilful, and, like ourselves, were strangers to the ways of God and the word of his grace. But the eldest of them went out to service; and some years ago she heard a sermon preached at church, and from that time she became quite an altered creature. She began to read the Bible, and became quite sober and steady. The first time she came home afterwards to see us, she brought us a guinea which she had saved from her wages, and said, as we were getting old, she was sure we would want help; adding, that she did not wish to spend it in fine clothes, as she used to do, only to feed pride and vanity. She would rather show gratitude to her dear father and mother; and this, she said, because Christ had shown such mercy to her."

"We wondered to hear her talk, and took great delight in her company, for her temper and behaviour were so humble and kind, she seemed so desirous to do us good both in soul and body, and was so different from what we had ever seen her before, that, careless and ignorant as we had been, we began to think there must be something real in religion, or it never could alter a person so much in a little time." Her younger sister, a poor soul, used to laugh and ridicule her at that time, and said her head was turned with her new ways. 'No, sister,' she would say, not my head, but I hope my heart is turned from the love of sin to the love of God. I wish you may one day see, as I do, the danger and vanity of your present condition. Her poor sister would reply, 'I do not want to hear any of your preaching; I am no worse than other people, and that is enough for me.' 'Well, sister,' Elizabeth would say, if you will not hear me, you cannot hinder me from praying for you, which I do with all my heart.'

And now, sir, I believe those prayers are answered. For when her sister was taken ill, Elizabeth went to wait in her place and take care of her. She said a great deal to her about her soul, and the poor girl began to be so deeply affected, and sensible of her past sin, and so thankful for her sister's kind behaviour; that it gave her great hopes indeed for her sake. When my wife and I went to see her as she lay sick, she told us how grieved and ashamed she was of her past life;

but said she had a hope, through grace, that her dear sister's Saviour would be her Saviour too; for she saw her own sinfulness, felt her own helplessness, and only wished to cast herself upon Christ as her hope and salvation.

And now, sir, she is gone, and I hope and think her sister's prayers for her conversion to God have been answered. The Lord grant the same for her poor father's and mother's sake likewise."

This conversation was a very pleasing commentary upon the letter which I had received, and made me anxious both to comply with the request and to become acquainted with the writer. I promised the good old dairyman I would attend the funeral on Friday, at the appointed hour; and after some more conversation respecting his own state of mind under the present trial, he went away.

He was a reverend old man; his furrowed cheeks, white locks, weeping eyes, bent shoulders, and feeble gait were characteristic of the aged pilgrim; and as he slowly departed, supported by a stick which seemed to have been the companion of many a long year, a train of reflections occurred which I retrace with emotion and pleasure.

At the appointed hour I arrived at the church; and after a little while was summoned to meet, at the church-yard gate, a very decent funeral procession. The aged parents, the elder brother and the sister, with other relatives, formed an affecting group. I was struck with the humble, pious, and pleasing countenance of the young woman from whom I received the letter; it bore the marks of great seriousness without affectation, and of much serenity mingled with a glow of devotion.

A circumstance occurred during the burial service which I think it right to mention. A man of the village, who had hitherto been of a very careless and even profligate character, came into the church through mere curiosity, and with no better purpose than that of a vacant gazing at the ceremony. He came likewise to the grave, and during the burial service his mind received a deep, serious conviction of his sin and danger through some of the expressions contained therein. It was an impression that never wore off, but gradually ripened into the most satisfactory evidence of an entire change, of which I had many and long continued proofs. He always referred to the burial service, and to some particular sentences of it, as the clearly ascertained instrument of bringing him, through grace; to the knowledge of the truth.

The day was therefore one to be remembered. Remembered let it be by those who love to hear "the short and simple annals of the poor."

Was there not a manifest and happy connection between the circumstance that providentially brought the serious and the careless to the same grave on that day together? How much do they lose, who neglect to trace the leadings of God in providence as links in the chain of his eternal purpose of redemption and grace!

"While infidels may scoff, let us adore."

After the service was concluded, I had a short conversation with the good old couple and their daughter. Her aspect and address were highly interesting. I promised to visit their cottage; and from that time became well acquainted with them. Let us bless the Lord of the poor, and pray continually that the poor may become rich in faith, and the rich be made poor in spirit.

A sweet solemnity often possesses the mind while retracing past intercourse with departed friends. How much is this increased when they were such as lived and died in the Lord! The remembrance of former scenes and conversations with those who, we believe, are now enjoying the uninterrupted happiness of a better world fills the heart with pleasing sadness, and animates the soul with the hopeful anticipation of a day when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed in the assembling of all his children together, never more to be separated. Whether they were rich or poor, while on earth, it is a matter of trifling consequence; the valuable part of their character is, that they are now kings and priests unto God. In the number of departed believers, with whom I once loved to converse on the grace and glory of the kingdom of God, was the dairyman's daughter. I purpose now to give some further account of her, and hope it may be useful to every reader.

A few days after the funeral of the younger sister, I rode over to visit the family in their own cottage.

The principal part of the road lay through retired, narrow lanes, beautifully overarched with groves of nut and other trees, which screened the traveller from the rays of the sun, and afforded many interesting objects for admiration in the beautiful flowers, shrubs, and young trees, which grew upon the high banks on each side of the road. Many grotesque rocks, with little streams of water occasionally breaking out of them, varied the recluse scenery, and produced a new, romantic, and pleasing effect.

Here and there the more distant and rich prospect beyond appeared through gaps and hollow places on the roadside. Lofty hills, with navy signal posts, obelisks, and lighthouses on their summits, appeared at these intervals; rich cornfields were also visible through some of the open places; and now and then, when the road ascended any hill, the sea, with ships at various distances, opened delightfully upon me. But for the most part, shady seclusion and beauties of a more minute and confined nature gave a character to the journey, and invited contemplation. How much do they lose who are strangers to serious meditation on the wonders and beauties of nature! How gloriously the God of creation shines in his works! Not a tree, or a leaf or flower; not a bird, or insect, but proclaims in glowing language, "God made me."

As I approached the village where the good old dairyman dwelt, I observed him in a little field, driving a few cows before him toward a yard and hovel which adjoined his cottage. I advanced very near him without his observing me, for his sight was dim. On my calling out to him, he started at the sound of my voice, but with much gladness of countenance welcomed me, saying, "Bless your heart, sir, I am very glad you are come; we have looked for you every day this week."

The cottage door opened, and the daughter came out, followed by her aged and infirm mother. The sight of me naturally brought to recollection the grave at which we had before met. Tears of affection mingled with the smile of satisfaction with which I was received by these worthy cottagers. I dismounted, and was conducted through a very neat little garden, part of which was shaded by two large, overspreading elm trees, to the house. Decency and cleanliness were manifest within and without.

This, thought I, is a fit residence for piety, peace, and contentment. May I learn a fresh lesson in each, through the blessing of God, on this visit.

"Sir," said the daughter, "we are not worthy that you should come under our roof. We take it very kind that you should come so far to see us."

"My Master," I replied, "came a great deal further to visit us poor sinners. He left the bosom of his Father, laid aside his glory, and came down to this lower world on a visit of mercy and love; and ought not we, if we profess to follow him, to bear each other's infirmities, and go about doing good as he did?"

The old man now came in, and joined his wife and daughter in giving me a cordial welcome. Our conversation soon turned to the late loss they had sustained; and the pious and sensible disposition of the daughter was peculiarly manifested as well in what she said to her parents as in what she said to me. I was struck with the good sense and agreeable manner which accompanied her expressions of devotedness to God, and love to Christ for the great mercies which He had bestowed upon her. She seemed anxious to improve the opportunity of my visit to the best purpose, for her own and her parents' sake; yet there was nothing of unbecoming forwardness, no self-consequence or conceitedness in her behaviour. She united the firmness and earnestness of the Christian with the modesty of the female and the dutifulness of the daughter. It was impossible to be in her company and not observe how truly her temper and conversation adorned the evangelical principles which she professed.

I soon discovered how eager and how successful also she had been in her endeavours to bring her father and mother to the knowledge and experience of the truth. This is a lovely circumstance in the character of a young Christian. If it hath pleased God, in the free dispensations of His mercy, to call the child by His grace, while the parents remain still in ignorance and sin, how great is the duty of that child to do what is possible for the conversion of those to whom it owes its birth! Happy is it when the ties of grace sanctify those of nature.

This aged couple evidently looked upon and spoke of their daughter as their teacher and admonisher in divine things, while they received from her every token of filial submission and obedience, testified by continual endeavours to serve and assist them to the utmost in the little concerns of the household.

The religion of this young woman was of a highly spiritual character, and of no ordinary attainment. Her views of the divine plan in saving the sinner were clear and scriptural. She spoke much of the joys and sorrows which, in the course of her religious progress, she had experienced; but she was fully sensible that there is far more in real religion than mere occasional transition from one frame of mind and spirit to another. She believed that the experimental acquaintance of the heart with God principally consisted in so living upon Christ by faith as to seek to live like Him by love. She knew that the love of God towards the sinner, and the path of duty prescribed to the sinner, are both of an unchangeable nature. In a believing dependence on the one, and an affectionate walk in the other, she sought and found "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" "for so He giveth His beloved rest." She had read but few books besides her Bible; but these few were excellent in their kind, and she spoke of their contents as one who knew their value. In addition to a Bible and Common Prayer-Book, "Doddridge's Rise and Progress," "Romaine's Life, Walk, and Triumph of Faith," "Bunyan's Pilgrim," "Alleine's Alarm," "Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest," a hymn-book, and a few Tracts, composed her library.

I observed in her countenance a pale and delicate look, which I afterwards found to be a presage of consumption; and the idea then occurred to me that she would not live many years. In fact, it pleased God to take her hence about a year and a half after I first saw her.

Time passed on swiftly with this little interesting family; and after having partaken of some plain and wholesome refreshments, and enjoyed a few hours' conversation with them, I found it was necessary for me to return homewards.

"I thank you, sir," said the daughter, "for your Christian kindness to me and my friends. I believe the blessing of the Lord has attended your visit, and I hope I have experienced it to be so. My dear father and mother will, I am sure, remember it, and I rejoice in an opportunity, which we have never before enjoyed, of seeing a serious minister under this roof. My Saviour has been abundantly good to me in plucking me 'as a brand from the burning,' and showing me the

way of life and peace; and I hope it is my heart's desire to live to His glory. But I long to see these dear friends enjoy the comfort and power of religion also."

"I think it evident," I replied, "that the promise is fulfilling in their case: it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light."

"I believe it," she said, "and praise God for the blessed hope."

"Thank Him, too, that you have been the happy instrument of bringing them to the light."

"I do, sir; yet when I think of my own unworthiness and insufficiency, I rejoice with trembling."

"Sir," said the good old man, "I am sure the Lord will reward you for this kindness. Pray for us that, old as we are, and sinners as we have been, yet he would have mercy upon us at the eleventh hour. Poor Betsy strives hard for our sakes, both in body and soul; she works hard all day to save us trouble and I fear has not strength to support all she does; and then she talks to us, and reads to us, and prays for us, that we may be saved from the wrath to come. Indeed, sir, she's a rare child to us."

"Peace be to you, and all that belong to you."

"Amen, and thank you, dear sir," was echoed from each tongue.

Thus we parted for that time. My returning meditations were sweet, and, I hope, profitable. Many other visits were afterwards made by me to this peaceful cottage, and I always found increasing reason to thank God for the intercourse I enjoyed. I soon perceived that the health of the daughter was rapidly on the decline. The pale, wasting consumption, which is the Lord's instrument for removing so many thousands every year from the land of the living, made hasty strides on her constitution. The hollow eye, the distressing cough, and the often too flattering red on the cheek, foretold the approach of death. I have often thought what a field for usefulness, and affectionate attention on the part of ministers and Christian friends, is opened by the frequent attacks and lingering progress of consumptive illness. How many such precious opportunities are daily lost, where Providence seems in so marked a way to afford time and space for serious and godly instruction. Of how many it be may it be said, "The way of peace have they not known;" for not one friend came nigh, to warn them to "flee from the wrath to come."

But the dairyman's daughter was happily made acquainted with the things which belonged to her everlasting peace before the present disease had taken root in her constitution. In my visit to her, I might be said rather to receive information than to impart it. Her mind was abundantly stored with divine truths and her conversation was truly edifying. The recollection of it still produces a thankful sensation in my heart.

I one day received a short note to the following effect:

"Dear Sir,

I should be very glad, if your convenience will allow, that you would come and see a poor unworthy sinner: my hourglass is nearly run out, but I hope I can ask Christ to be precious to my soul. Your conversation has often been blessed to me, and I now feel the need of it more than ever. My father and mother send their duty to you.

From your obedient and unworthy servant

Elizabeth Wallbridge."

I obeyed the summons that same afternoon. On my arrival at the dairyman's cottage, his wife opened the door. The tears streamed down her cheeks, as she silently shook her head. Her heart was full.

She tried to speak, but could not. I took her by the hand, and said:

"My good friend, all is right, and as the Lord of wisdom and mercy directs."

"Oh, my Betsy, my dear girl, is so bad, sir; what shall I do without her? I thought I should have gone first to the grave, but"

"But the Lord sees good that, before you died yourself, you should behold your child safe home to glory. Is there no mercy in this?"

"Oh, sir, I am very old and weak, and she is a dear child, the staff and prop of a poor old creature, as I am."

As I advanced, I saw Elizabeth sitting by the fireside, supported in an armchair by pillows, with every mark of rapid decline and approaching death. She appeared to me within three or four weeks at the farthest from her end. A sweet smile of friendly complacency enlightened her pale countenance, as she said:

"This is very kind indeed, sir, to come so soon after I sent to you. You find me daily wasting away, and I cannot have long to continue here. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my weak heart, and I trust will be my portion for ever."

The conversation which follows was occasionally interrupted by her cough and want of breath. Her tone of voice was clear, though feeble; her manner solemn and collected; and her eye, though more dim than formerly, by no means wanting in liveliness as she spoke. I had frequently admired the superior language in which she expressed her ideas, as

well as the scriptural consistency with which she communicated her thoughts. She had a good natural understanding, and grace, as is generally the case, had much improved it. On the present occasion I could not help thinking she was peculiarly favoured. The whole strength of grace and nature seemed to be in full exercise.

After taking my seat between the daughter and the mother (the latter fixing her fond eyes upon her child with great anxiety while we were conversing), I said to Elizabeth,

“I hope you enjoy a sense of the divine presence, and can rest all upon Him who has ‘been with thee,’ and has kept ‘thee in all places whither thou hast gone,’ and will bring thee into ‘the land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign.’”

“Sir, I think I can. My mind has lately been sometimes clouded, but I believe it has been partly owing to the great weakness and suffering of my bodily frame, and partly to the envy of my spiritual enemy, who wants to persuade me that Christ has no love for me, and that I have been a self-deceiver.”

“And do you give way to his suggestions? Can you doubt, amidst such numerous tokens of past and present mercy?”

“No, sir, I mostly am enabled to preserve a clear evidence of His love. I do not wish to add to my other sins that of denying His manifest goodness to my soul. I would acknowledge it to His praise and glory.”

“What is your present view of the state in which you were before He called you by His grace?”

“Sir, I was a proud, thoughtless girl; fond of dress and finery; I loved the world and the things that are in the world; I lived in service among worldly people, and never had the happiness of being in a family where worship was regarded and the souls of the servants cared for, either by master or mistress. I went once on a Sunday to church, more to see and be seen than to pray, or hear the word of God. I thought I was quite good enough to be saved, and disliked and often laughed at religious people. I was in great darkness; I knew nothing of the way of salvation; I never prayed, nor was sensible of the awful danger of a prayerless state. I wished to maintain the character of a good servant, and was much lifted up whenever I met with applause. I was tolerably moral and decent in my conduct, from motives of carnal and worldly policy; but I was a stranger to God and Christ; I neglected my soul: and had I died in such a state, hell must, and would justly, have been my portion.”

“How long is it since you heard the sermon which you hope, through God’s blessing, affected your conversion?”

“About five years ago.”

“How was it brought about?”

“It was repeated that a Mr...., who was detained by contrary winds from embarking on board ship, as chaplain, to a distant part of the world, was to preach at church. Many advised me not to go, for fear he should turn my head; as they said he held strange notions. But curiosity, and an opportunity of appearing in a new gown, which I was very proud of, induced me to ask leave to go. Indeed, sir, I had no better motives than vanity and curiosity. Yet thus it pleased the Lord to order it for his own glory.

“I accordingly went to church and saw a great crowd of people collected together. I often think of the contrary states of my mind during the former and latter part of the service. For a while, regardless of the worship of God, I looked around me, and was anxious to attract notice to myself. My dress, like that of too many gay, vain, and silly girls, was much above my station, and very different from that which becomes an humble sinner who has a modest sense of propriety and decency. The state of my mind was visible enough from the foolish finery of my apparel.

“At length the clergyman gave out his text: ‘Be ye clothed with humility.’ He drew a comparison between the clothing of the body and that of the soul. At a very early part of his discourse I began to feel ashamed of my passion for fine dressing and apparel; but when he came to describe the garment of salvation with which a Christian is clothed, I felt a powerful discovery of the nakedness of my own soul. I saw that I had neither the humility mentioned in the text, nor any one part of the true Christian character. I looked at my gay dress, and blushed for shame on account of my pride. I looked at the minister, and he seemed to be as a messenger sent from heaven to open my eyes. I looked at the congregation, and wondered whether anyone else felt as I did. I looked at my heart, and it appeared full of iniquity. I trembled as he spoke, and yet I felt a great drawing of heart to the words he uttered.

“He opened the riches of divine grace in God’s method of saving the sinner. I was astonished at what I had been doing all the days of my life. He described the meek, lowly, and humble example of Christ; I felt proud, lofty, vain and self-important. He represented Christ as ‘Wisdom;’ I felt my ignorance. He held Him forth as ‘Righteousness;’ I was convinced of my own guilt. He proved Him to be ‘Sanctification;’ I saw my corruption. He proclaimed Him as ‘Redemption;’ I felt my slavery to sin and my captivity to Satan. He concluded with an animated address to sinners, in which he exhorted them to flee from the wrath to come, to cast off the love of outward ornaments, to put on Christ, and be clothed with true humility.

“From that hour I never lost sight of the value of my soul and the danger of a sinful state. I inwardly blessed God for the sermon, although my mind was in a state of great confusion.

“The preacher had brought forward the ruling passion of my heart which was pride in outward dress; and by the grace of God it was made instrumental to the awakening of my soul. Happy, sir, would I be if many a poor girl like

myself were turned from the love of outward adorning and putting on of fine apparel, to seek that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

“The greater part of the congregation, unused to such faithful and scriptural sermons, disliked and complained of the severity of the preacher; while a few, as I afterwards found, like myself, were deeply affected, and earnestly wished to hear him again. But he preached there no more.

“From that time I was led, through a course of private prayer, reading, and meditation, to see my lost estate as a sinner, and the great mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, in raising sinful dust and ashes to a share in the glorious happiness of heaven. And, oh, sir! what a Saviour have I found! He is more than I could ask or desire. In His fullness I have found all that my poverty could need; in His bosom I have found a resting place from all sin and sorrow, in His word I have found strength against doubt and unbelief.”

“Were you not soon convinced,” said I, “that your salvation must be an act of entire grace on the part of God, wholly independent of your own previous works or deservings?”

“Dear sir, what were my works before I heard that sermon but evil, carnal, selfish, and ungodly? The thoughts of my heart, from my youth upward, were only evil, and that continually. And my deservings, what were they but the deservings of a fallen, depraved, careless soul that regards neither law nor gospel? Yes, sir, I immediately saw that, if ever I was saved, it must be by the free mercy of God, and that the whole praise and honour of the work would be his from first to last.”

“What change did you perceive in yourself with respect to the world?”

“It appeared all vanity and vexation of spirit. I found it necessary to my peace of mind to ‘come out from among them, and be separate.’ I gave myself to prayer; and many a precious hour of secret delight I enjoyed in communion with God. Often I mourned over my sins, and sometimes had a great conflict through unbelief, fear, temptation, to return back again to my old ways, and a variety of difficulties which lay in my way. But He who loved me with an everlasting love drew me by His loving-kindness, showed me the way of peace, gradually strengthened me in my resolutions of leading a new life, and taught me that, while without Him I could do nothing, I yet might do all things through His strength.”

“Did you not find many difficulties in your situation, owing to your change of principle and practice?”

“Yes, sir, every day of my life. I was laughed at by some, scolded at by others, scorned by enemies, and pitied by friends. I was called hypocrite, saint, false deceiver, and many more names, which were meant to render me hateful in the sight of the world. But I esteemed the reproach of the cross an honour. I forgave and prayed for my persecutors, and remembered how very lately I had acted the same part towards others myself. I thought also that Christ endured the contradiction of sinners; and as the disciple is not above his Master, I was glad to be in any way conformed to his sufferings.”

“Did you not then feel for your relatives at home?”

“Yes, that I did indeed, sir; they were never out of my thoughts. I prayed continually for them, and had a longing desire to do them good. In particular, I felt for my father and mother, as they were getting into years, and were very ignorant and dark in matters of religion.”

“Aye,” interrupted her mother, sobbing, “ignorant and dark, sinful and miserable we were till this dear Betsy...this dear Betsy...this dear child, sir, brought Christ Jesus home to her poor father and mother’s house.”

“No, dearest mother, say rather Christ Jesus brought your poor daughter home to tell you what He had done for her soul, and I hope to do the same for yours.”

At this moment the dairyman came in with two pails of milk hanging from the yoke on his shoulders. He had stood behind the half-opened door for a few minutes, and heard the last sentences spoken by his wife and daughter.

“Blessing and mercy upon her,” said he, “it is very true; she would leave a good place of service on purpose to live with us, that she might help us both in soul and body. Sir, don’t she look very ill? I think, sir, we shan’t have her here long.”

“Leave that to the Lord,” said Elizabeth. “All our times are in His hand, and happy it is that they are. I am willing to go; are not you willing, my father, to part with me into His hands who gave me to you at first?”

“Ask me any question in the world but that,” said the weeping father.

“I know,” said she, “you wish me to be happy.”

“I do, I do,” answered he: “let the Lord do with you and us as best pleases Him.”

I then asked her on what her present consolations chiefly depended, in the prospect of approaching death.

“Entirely, sir, on my view of Christ. When I look at myself, many sins, infirmities, and imperfections cloud the image of Christ which I want to see in my own heart. But when I look at the Saviour Himself, He is altogether lovely: there is not one spot in His countenance, nor one cloud over all His perfections.

“I think of His coming in the flesh, and it reconciles me to the sufferings of the body; for He had them as well as I. I think of His temptations, and believe that He is able to succour when I am tempted. Then I think of His cross, and learn to bear my own. I reflect on His death, and long to die unto sin, so that it may no longer have dominion over me. I sometimes think on His resurrection, and trust that He has given me a part in it, for I feel that my affections are set upon things above. Chiefly I take comfort in thinking of Him as at the right hand of the Father, pleading my cause, and rendering acceptable even my feeble prayers, both for myself and, I hope, for my dear friends.

“These are the views which, through mercy, I have of my Saviour’s goodness; and they have made me wish and strive in my poor way to serve Him, to give myself up to Him, and to labour to do my duty in that state of life into which it has pleased Him to call me.

“A thousand times I should have fallen and fainted, if He had not upheld me. I feel that I am nothing without Him. He is all in all.

“Just so far as I can cast my care upon Him, I find strength to do His will. May He give me grace to trust Him to the last moment. I do not fear death, because I believe He has taken away its sting. And oh, what happiness beyond! Tell me, sir, whether you think I am right. I hope I am under no delusion. I dare not look, for my hope, at anything short of the entire fullness of Christ. When I ask my own heart a question, I am afraid to trust it, for it is treacherous, and has often deceived me. But when I ask Christ, He answers me with promises which strengthen and refresh me, and leave me no room to doubt His power and will to save. I am in His hands, and would remain there; and I do believe that He will never leave nor forsake me, but will perfect the thing that concerns me. He loved me and gave Himself for me, and I believe that His gifts and calling are without repentance. In this hope I live, in this I wish to die.”

I looked around me as she was speaking, and thought, ‘Surely this is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.’ Everything appeared neat, cleanly, and interesting. The afternoon had been rather overcast with dark clouds; but just now the setting sun shone brightly and rather suddenly into the room. It was reflected from three or four rows of bright pewter plates and white earthenware arranged on shelves against the wall; it also gave brilliancy to a few prints of sacred subjects that hung there also, and served for monitors of the birth, baptism, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. A large map of Jerusalem, and a hieroglyphic of “the old and new man,” completed the decorations on that side of the room. Clean as was the whitewashed wall, it was not cleaner than the rest of the place and its furniture. Seldom had the sun enlightened a house where order and general neatness—those sure attendants of pious and decent poverty—were more conspicuous.

This gleam of setting sunshine was emblematical of the bright and serene close of this young Christian’s departing season. One ray happened to be reflected from a little looking-glass upon the face of the young woman. Amidst her pallid and decaying features there appeared a calm resignation, triumphant confidence, unaffected humility, and tender anxiety, which fully declared the feelings of her heart.

Some further affectionate conversation and a short prayer closed this interview.

As I rode home by departing daylight, a solemn tranquillity reigned throughout the scene. The gentle lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep just penned in their folds, the humming of the insects of the night, the distant murmur of the sea, the last notes of the birds of day, and the first warblings of the nightingale, broke upon the ear, and served rather to increase than lessen the peaceful serenity of the evening and its corresponding effects on my own mind. It invited and cherished just such meditations as my visit had already inspired. Natural scenery, when viewed in a Christian mirror, frequently affords very beautiful illustrations of divine truth. We are highly favoured when we can enjoy them, and at the same time draw near to God in them.

Soon after this I received a hasty summons, to inform me that my young friend was dying. It was brought by a soldier, whose countenance bespoke seriousness, good sense, and piety.

I am sent, sir, by the father and mother of Elizabeth Wallbridge, at her own particular request, to say how much they all wish to see you. She is going home, sir, very fast indeed.”

“Have you known her long?” I replied

“About a month, sir; I love to visit the sick, and hearing of her case from a person who lives close by our camp, I went to see her. I bless God that ever I did go. Her conversation has been very profitable to me.”

“I rejoice,” said I, “to see in you, as I trust, a brother soldier. Though we differ in our outward regimentals, I hope we serve under the same spiritual Captain. I will go with you.”

My horse was soon ready. My military companion walked by my side, and gratified me with very sensible and pious conversation. He related some remarkable testimonies of the excellent disposition of the dairyman’s daughter, as they appeared from some recent intercourse which he had had with her.

“She is a bright diamond, sir,” said the soldier, “and will soon shine brighter than any diamond upon earth.” Conversation beguiled the distance and shortened the apparent time of our journey till we were nearly arrived at the dairyman’s cottage.

As we approached it, we became silent. Thoughts of death, eternity, and salvation, inspired by the sight of a house where a dying believer lay, filled my own mind, and, I doubt not, that of my companion also. No living object yet appeared, except the dairyman's dog, keeping a kind of mute watch at the door; for he did not, as formerly, bark at my approach. He seemed to partake so far of the feelings appropriate to the circumstance of the family as not to wish to give a hasty or painful alarm. He came forward to the little wicket-gate, then looked back at the house door, as if conscious there was sorrow within. It was as if he wanted to say, "Tread softly over the threshold, as you enter the house of mourning; for my master's heart is full of grief."

A solemn serenity appeared to surround the whole place. It was only interrupted by the breeze passing through the large elm trees which stood near the house, which my imagination indulged itself in thinking were plaintive sighs of sorrow. I gently opened the door; no one appeared, and all was still silent. The soldier followed; we came to the foot of the stairs.

"They are come," said a voice which I knew to be the father's; "they are come." He appeared at the top; I gave him my hand, and said nothing. On entering the room above, I saw the aged mother and her son supporting the much-loved daughter and sister; the son's wife sat weeping in a window-seat, with a child on her lap; two or three persons attended in the room to discharge any office which friendship or necessity might require.

I sat down by the bedside. The mother could not weep, but now and then sighed deeply, as she alternately looked at Elizabeth and at me. The big tear rolled down the brother's cheek, and testified an affectionate regard. The good old man stood at the foot of the bed, leaning upon the post, and unable to take his eyes off the child from whom he was so soon to part.

Elizabeth's eyes were closed, and as yet she perceived me not. But over her face, though pale, sunk, and hollow, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, had cast a triumphant calm.

The soldier, after a short pause, silently reached out his Bible towards me, pointing with his finger at 1 Cor. 15:55-57. I then broke silence by reading the passage, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

At the sound of these words her eyes opened, and something like a ray of divine light beamed on her countenance, as she said, "Victory, victory! through our Lord Jesus Christ."

She relapsed again, taking no further notice of any one present.

"God be praised for the triumph of faith," I said.

"Amen," replied the soldier.

The dairyman's uplifted eye showed that the Amen was in his heart, though his tongue failed to utter it. A short struggling for breath took place in the dying young woman, which was soon over, and then I said to her:

"My dear friend, do you not feel that you are supported?"

"The Lord deals very gently with me;" she replied.

"Are not His promises now very precious to you?"

"They are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus."

"Are you in much bodily pain?"

"So little that I almost forget it."

"How good the Lord is!"

"And how unworthy am I!"

"You are going to see Him as He is."

"I think...I hope ...I believe that I am."

She again fell into a short slumber.

Looking at her mother, I said, "What a mercy to have a child so near heaven as yours is!"

"And what a mercy," she replied in broken accents, "if her poor old mother might but follow her there! But, sir, it is so hard to part."

"I hope through grace, by faith, you will soon meet, to part no more; it will be but a little while."

"Sir," said the dairyman, "that thought supports me, and the Lord's goodness makes me feel more reconciled than I was."

"Father,...mother," said the reviving daughter, "He is good to me; trust Him, praise Him evermore."

"Sir," added she in a faint voice, "I want to thank you for your kindness to me...I want to ask a favour...you buried my sister ...will you do the same for me?"

"All shall be as you wish, if God permit," I replied.

"Thank you, sir, thank you. I have another favour to ask: when I am gone, remember my father and mother. They are old, but I hope the good work is begun in their souls. My prayers are heard...Pray come and see them...I cannot speak

much, but I want to speak for their sakes. Sir, remember them.” The aged parents now sighed and sobbed aloud, uttering broken sentences, and gained some relief by such an expression of their feelings.

At length I said to Elizabeth, “Do you experience any doubts or temptations on the subject of your eternal safety?”

“No, sir; the Lord deals very gently with me, and gives me peace.”

“What are your views of the dark valley of death, now that you are passing through it?”

“It is not dark.”

“Why so?”

“My Lord is there, and He is my light and my salvation.”

“Have you any fears of more bodily suffering?”

“The Lord deals so gently with me, I can trust Him.” Something of a convulsion came on. When it was past, she said again and again; “The Lord deals very gently with me. Lord, I am thine, save me...Blessed Jesus...Blessed Saviour...His blood cleanseth from all sin...Who shall separate?...His name is Wonderful...Thanks be to God...He giveth us the victory...I, even I, am saved...O grace, mercy, and wonder—Lord, receive my spirit.

“Dear sir...dear father, mother, friends,...I am going...but all is well, well, well...”

She relapsed again. We knelt down to pray: the Lord was in the midst of us, and blessed us.

She did not again revive while I remained, nor ever speak any more words which could be understood. She slumbered for about ten hours, and at last sweetly fell asleep in the arms of the Lord who had dealt so gently with her.

I left the house an hour after she had ceased to speak. I pressed her hand as I was taking leave, and said, Christ is the resurrection and the life.” She gently returned the pressure, but could neither open her eyes nor utter a reply. I never had witnessed a scene so impressive as this before. It completely filled my imagination as I returned home.

‘Farewell,’ thought I, ‘dear friend, till the morning of an eternal day shall renew our personal intercourse. Thou wast a brand plucked from the burning, that thou might become a star shining in the firmament of glory. I have seen the light and thy good works, and I will therefore glorify our Father which is in heaven. I have seen in thy example what it is to be a sinner freely saved by grace. I have learned from thee, as in a living mirror, who it is that begins, continues, and ends the work of faith and love. Jesus is all in all; He will and shall be glorified. He won the crown, and alone deserves to wear it. May no one attempt to rob Him of His glory; He saves, and saves to the uttermost. Farewell, dear sister in the Lord. Thy flesh and thy heart may fail; but God is the strength of thy heart, and shall be thy portion for ever.’

I was soon called to attend the funeral of my friend, who breathed her last shortly after my visit. Many pleasing yet melancholy thoughts were connected with the fulfilment of this task. I retraced the numerous and important conversations which I had held with her. But these could now no longer be held on earth. I reflected on the interesting and improving nature of Christian friendships, whether formed in palaces or in cottages; and felt thankful that I had so long enjoyed that privilege with the subject of this memorial. I indulged a sigh, for a moment, on thinking that I could no longer hear the great truths of Christianity uttered by one who had drunk so deep at the waters of life. But the rising murmur was checked by the animating thought, ‘She is gone to eternal rest—could I wish to bring her back to this vale of tears?’

As I travelled onward to the house where lay her remains in solemn preparation for the grave, the first sound of a tolling bell struck my ear. It proceeded from a village church in the valley directly beneath the ridge of a high hill, over which I had taken my way—it was Elizabeth’s funeral knell. It was a solemn sound, but it seemed to proclaim at once the blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord, and the necessity of the living pondering these things and laying them to heart.

On entering the cottage, I found that several Christian friends, from different parts of the neighbourhood, had assembled together to show their last tribute of esteem and regard to the memory of the dairyman’s daughter.

I was requested to go into the chamber, where the relatives and a few other friends were gone to take a last look at the remains of Elizabeth.

If there be a moment when Christ and salvation, death, judgment, heaven and hell appear more than ever to be momentous subjects of meditation, it is that which brings us to the side of a coffin containing the body of a departed believer.

Elizabeth’s features were altered, but much of her likeness remained. Her father and mother sat at the head, her brother at the foot of the coffin, manifesting their deep and unfeigned sorrow. The poor mother cried and sobbed aloud. The weakness and infirmity of old age added a character to her sorrow, which called for much tenderness and compassion.

A remarkably decent-looking woman, who had the management of the few simple though solemn ceremonies which the case required, advanced toward me, saying,

“Sir, this is rather a sight of joy than of sorrow. Our dear friend Elizabeth finds it to be so, I have no doubt. She is beyond all sorrow. Do you not think she is, sir?”

“After what I have known and seen and heard,” I replied, “I feel the fullest assurance that, while her body remains here, her soul is with her Saviour in paradise. She loved Him here, and there she enjoys the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore.”

“Mercy, mercy upon a poor old creature almost broken down with age and grief...what shall I do?...Betsy’s gone...my daughter’s dead...Oh, my child, I shall never see thee more!...God be merciful to me a sinner?” sobbed out the poor mother.

“That last prayer, my dear good woman,” said I, “will bring you together again. It is a cry that has brought thousands to glory. It brought your daughter thither, and I hope it will bring you there likewise. He will in no wise cast out any that come to him.”

“My dear,” said the dairyman, breaking the long silence he had maintained, “let us trust God with our child, and let us trust him with our own selves. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord. We are old, and can have but a little farther to travel in our journey, and then...” He could say no more.

The soldier before mentioned reached a Bible into my hand, and said,

“Perhaps, sir, you would not object to reading a chapter before we go to the church.”

I did so; it was the fourteenth of the Book of Job. A sweet tranquillity prevailed while I read it. Each minute that was spent in this funeral chamber seemed to be valuable. I made a few observations on the chapter, and connected them with the case of our departed sister.

“I am but a poor soldier,” said our military friend, “and have nothing of this world’s goods beyond my daily subsistence; but I would not exchange my hope of salvation in the next world for all that this world could bestow without it. What is wealth without grace? Blessed be God, as I march about from one quarter to another, I still find the Lord wherever I go; and thanks be to His holy name, He is here today in the midst of this company of the living and the dead. I feel that it is good to be here.”

Some other persons present began to take a part in the conversation, in the course of which the life and experience of the dairyman’s daughter were brought forward in a very interesting manner; each friend had something to relate in testimony of her gracious disposition. One distant relative, a young woman under twenty, who had hitherto been a very light and trifling character, appeared to be remarkably impressed by the conversation of that day; and I have since had ground to believe that divine grace then began to influence her in the choice of that better part which shall not be taken from her. What a contrast does such a scene as this exhibit, when compared with the dull, formal, unedifying, and often indecent manner in which funeral parties assemble in the house of death!

But the time for departure to the church was now at hand. I went to take my last look at the deceased. There was much written on her countenance: she had evidently departed with a smile. It still remained, and spoke the tranquillity of her departing soul. According to the custom of the place, she was decorated with leaves and flowers in the coffin; these indeed were fading flowers, but they remind me of that paradise whose flowers are immortal, and where her never-dying soul is at rest.

I remembered the last words which I had heard her speak, and was instantly struck with the happy thought, that ‘death was indeed swallowed up in victory.’

As I slowly retired, I said inwardly, ‘Peace, my honoured sister, to thy memory, and to my soul, till we meet in a better world.’

In a little time the procession formed; it was rendered the more interesting by the consideration of so many that followed the coffin being persons of truly serious and spiritual character.

After we had advanced about a hundred yards, my meditation was unexpectedly and most agreeably interrupted by the friends who followed the family beginning to sing a funeral psalm. Nothing could be more sweet or solemn. The well-known effect of the open air in softening and blending the sounds of music was here peculiarly felt.

The road through which we passed was beautiful and romantic; it lay at the foot of a hill, which occasionally re-echoed the voices of the singers, and seemed to give faint replies to the notes of the mourners. The funeral knell was distinctly heard from the church tower, and greatly increased the effect which this simple and becoming service produced. I cannot describe the state of my own mind as peculiarly connected with the solemn singing. I never witnessed a similar instance before or since. I was reminded of older times and ancient piety. I wished the practice more frequent. It seems well calculated to excite and cherish devotion and religious affections.

We at length arrived at the church. The service was heard with deep and affectionate attention. When we came to the grave, the hymn which Elizabeth had selected was sung. All was devout, simple, decent, animating. We committed our dear friend’s body to the grave, in full hope of a joyful resurrection from the dead.

Thus the veil of separation drawn for a season. She is departed, and no more seen. But she will be seen at the right hand of her Redeemer at the last day, and will again appear to His glory, a miracle of grace and a monument of mercy.

My reader, rich or poor, shall you and I appear there likewise? Are we “clothed with humility,” and arrayed in the wedding garment of a Redeemer’s righteousness? Are we turned from idols to serve the Living God? Are we sensible of our own emptiness, flying to a Saviour’s fullness to obtain grace and strength? Do we live in Him, and on Him, and by Him, and with Him? Is He our all in all? Are we “lost and found” “dead, and alive again”?

My poor reader, the dairyman’s daughter was a poor girl, and the child of a poor man. Herein thou resemblst her: but dost thou resemble her, as she resembled Christ? Art thou made rich by faith? Hast thou a crown laid up for thee? Is thy heart set upon heavenly riches? If not, read this story once more, and then pray earnestly for like precious faith. If, through grace, thou dost love and serve the Redeemer that saved the dairyman’s daughter, grace, peace, and mercy be with thee. The lines are fallen unto thee in pleasant places; thou hast a goodly heritage. Press forward in duty, and wait upon the Lord, possessing thy soul in holy patience. Thou hast just been with me to the grave of a departed believer. Now, “go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” Dan. 12:13.

THE GRAVESTONE

IN MEMORY OF
ELIZABETH WALLBRIDGE
“THE DAIRYMAN’S DAUGHTER”
WHO DIED MAY 30, 1801,
AGED 31 YEARS.

“SHE BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH.”

“Stranger, if e’er by chance or feeling led
Upon this hallowed turf thy footsteps tread,
Turn from the contemplation of this sod,
And think on her whose spirit rests with God

Lowly her lot on earth; but He who bore
Tidings of grace and blessings to the poor,
Gave her, His truth and faithfulness to prove,
The choicest pleasures of his boundless love:

Faith, that dispelled afflictions darkest gloom;
Hope, that could cheer the passage to the tomb;
Peace, that not hell’s dark legions could destroy;
And love that filled the soul with heavenly joy.

Death of its sting disarmed, she knew no fear,
But tasted heaven e’en while she lingered here.
Oh, happy saint, may we, like thee, be blest—
In life be faithful, and in death find rest.”

Note:

The mother died about six months after her daughter, and I have good reason to believe that God was merciful to her, and took her to Himself. May every converted child thus labor and pray for the salvation of their unconverted parents. The father continued for some time after her, and adorned his old age with a walk and conversation befitting the gospel. I cannot doubt that the daughter and both her parents are now met together in “the land of pure delights, where saints immortal reign!”

The grave of the dairyman’s daughter is very modest, a mere mound, with a plain slab of stone erected over it. The inscription on the monument reads, In memory of Elizabeth Wallbridge “the dairyman’s daughter” who died May 30, 1801, 31 years of age. “She being dead, yet speaks.”

“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” Numbers 23:10