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moment's hesitation. And more than that, he describes religion itself. How sure he is of the way in which religion first came into existence amongst men. Was not the very beginning of it a dream—a dream that some dead friend had come to life again? How natural it has all been. How absolutely non-supernatural. How careful God has been to leave man to find Him out for himself. The Christian Fathers may not have believed this, but Pfleiderer has no resentment against the Christian Fathers for not agreeing with him. It is to one of them he goes for his definition of religion. It is to Lactantius. And a beautiful definition it is. Pfleiderer prints it in italics as we do: *Religion is the attachment to God by the bond of piety.*

An anthology of poems in praise of the Virgin has been made by the Hon. Alison Stourton, and has been published in a very attractive volume by Messrs. Washbourne. The title is *Regina Poetarum.* There are ancient poems and modern. This is one of the modern:

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright).

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are).

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire).

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

Messrs. Washbourne have also published *A Key to Meditation*, or Simple Methods of Mental Prayer, etc. Based on the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius. Translated from the French of Père Crasset, S.J. (3s. 6d. net); and a sketch of the life of St. Francis under the title of *In the School of St. Francis* (1s.).

If any one denies that the study of Church history has entered upon a new chapter, he will deny it no longer, when he discovers Dr. Scullard's new book. It is a study of *Early Christian Ethics in the West* (Williams and Norgate; 6s.). We dare not say there is no religion in it. For Dr. Scullard is not one to think that ethics and religion can be separated. But we dare say there is no ecclesiasticism in it. And is that not a revolution in the study of Church history?

The way in which Dr. Scullard builds his book is a revolution. He lays down the ethical ideas, and then he turns to the Christian writers to see how they conform to them. He does not take his ethical ideas from Irenæus or Ambrose. He takes them from Christ. He even goes back beyond the beginning of Christianity for them. And then when he has got them he has no consideration for the ecclesiastical eminence of Irenæus or Ambrose or any other. He asks them how they meet the demands of an ethical Christianity.

The Pilgrim's Progress.

By the Rev. John Kelman, M.A., D.D., Edinburgh.

The River Side.

The opening words of this passage at once take us back to the thought and life of ancient Palestine. This river was familiar both to David and to John. The thought and metaphor of the river was a favourite one with Israel, both in Old and New Testament times. The Jews always planted their synagogues beside a river (cf. the story of Lydia at Philippi). The Jordan was, of course, their great national river; yet it was the Euphrates which, in the times of the Exile, had set the type of their thought in this, and given to them some of their finest religious poetry. That great river of Babylon was, indeed, associated with thoughts of woe and misery; yet they had felt its greatness and the quiet of its broad surface, and it was not without a pang of bitter longing that they had heard the

great words of Isaiah, 'Thus had thy peace been like the river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea.'

The haunting consciousness of such full streams, in striking contrast to the intermittent rush and barrenness of the torrent-beds of their native land, found its fullest expression in the conception of a 'river of God' that was full of water. And Bunyan was entirely justified in identifying that Old Testament figure with the River of the Water of Life, which flows through the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine. It is difficult to define and sharply to identify this stream. It is, indeed, certainly the river of divine grace, but what precisely that will mean to the individual will be determined by the circumstances and needs of each. Like all symbolic poetry, this will find a separate meaning for each reader. Of it, the story which is told of Robert Browning's 'Childe Roland' will be equally true. It is said that, on being asked what that great symbolic poem meant, he replied that it meant for each reader what each reader found it to mean.

The idyllic character of the allegory in this part leads to a poem of distinctly better quality than those which Bunyan usually writes. At least, the first two lines have a certain lingering and haunting beauty about them, which connects them in the memory with Milton's translation of Psalm 84th:

> They pass through Baca's thirsty vale,
> That dry and barren ground,
> As through a fruitful watery dale
> Where springs and showers abound.

Or George Herbert's well-known lines:

> I blesse thee, Lord, because I grow
> Among thy trees, which in a row
> To thee both fruit and order ow.

The meadow of ease, too, beside the stream, is an idyllic figure, conceived and treated with great beauty. 'Curiously beautified with lilies' is a touch of pre-Raphaelite artistry which it would tax the genius of Rossetti to surpass. It reminds us of Longfellow's *Dante* ('Purgatorio,' vii. 70):

> 'Twixt hill and plain there was a winding path
> Which led us to the margin of that dell,
> Where dies the border more than half away.
> Gold and fine silver, and scarlet and pearl-white,
> The Indian wood resplendent and serene,
> Fresh emerald the moment it is broken,
> By herbage and by flowers within that hollow
> Planted, each one in colour would be vanquished
> As by its greater vanquished is the less.

(compare also Longfellow's *Dante*, 'Purgatorio,' xxviii. 1, and see his notes on both passages).

The ethical and spiritual significance of the whole scene is plain enough. It stands for a time of pathless religious luxury, in which there are no fences at the wayside, and no sense of restraint in the conscience. Such an experience may come after a revival of religion in the soul, or in the peace that follows successful conflict, or (as in this case) in the sweetness of solitude or Christian fellowship that follows a time of uncongenial society among worldly, and worse than worldly, men. It may appear, and it may really be the case, that the pleasantness of the hour is caused by 'a clear and comfortable sense of divine love'; but yet, nevertheless, the man may find that his severe conscience of fidelity has become relaxed, and luxurious softness taken the place of self-denial, with its bracing and healthful endurance of hardness.

Bunyan feared such times. Even in his description of the trees he mentions the possibility of surfeits and too great fulness of blood. Certainly, as one writer has pointed out, it is a striking fact that more misfortunes of one kind or another befell the pilgrims during this later period than during either of the former ones, and that that part of Christian's journey spent in the austere companionship of Faithful was entirely free from misadventures of the kind we are to hear of immediately. Mr. Froude has well caught the spirit of Bunyan in his words: 'Man's spiritual existence is like the flight of a bird in the air; he is sustained only by effort, and when he ceases to exert himself he falls.' 'Oh, thought I, that I were fourscore years old, that I might die quickly, and my soul be at rest.' The whole situation is finely expressed in a sentence of Mrs. Josephine Butler's: 'I have learned in a long lifetime, now drawing to a close, to beware of *halcyon* days.'

The Stile and Meadow.

One of the greatest of John Bunyan's plagues and sorrows was that of shortlived religious impressions: 'Surely I will not forget this forty years hence.' 'But, alas! within less than forty days I began to question all again,' etc. That is but one of many such complaints with which every reader of *Grace Abounding* is familiar. The impressions are the work of a time of strain and tension; the passing of them comes generally with the renewal

of ease. So these men thought that all danger was over and behind them, 'but they were not yet at their journey's end.' Robert Browning, who knows well the perplexing and surprising character of the way of life's pilgrimage, has expressed this in rough lines, which yet fasten upon the memory:

> And where we looked for crowns to fall,
> We find the tug's to come,—that's all.

The times of victory, the apparently uneventful dull hour just after temptation, are the times in which, above all, we need to be watchful. The monks of Melrose were threatened by an English invading force on one historic occasion. They waited in silence and in fear till the Southern army, not having observed their low-lying abbey, had gone past them. Then they rang their bells in a merry peal of jubilation. But they rang too soon, for the invaders heard the bells, returned, and pulled the religious house about the ears of its inhabitants.

The lesson of this passage can hardly be, however, that ease is in itself an evil thing. 'Avoid,' says Newman, 'the great evils of leisure, avoid the snare of having time on your hands.' Yet this riverside lay direct on the path, and, for a time, to avoid it would have been to forsake the right way of pilgrimage. The sin lay not in leisure and pleasantness, but in the mood which refused to follow the way when it led away from those green pastures and gentle waters, and became again the mere dull, hard, straight path of righteousness. R. L. Stevenson, in his *Travels with a Donkey*, quotes another passage from Bunyan: 'The way also here was very wearisome, through dirt and slabbiness: nor was there on all this ground so much as one inn or victualling-house wherein to refresh the feebler sort.' At another time he notes the length of the way—'Two miles yet'—as portrayed in the inimitable little woodcut of Miss Ennice Bagster. In this case it is neither the slabbiness nor the length of the road that tires the pilgrims, but its roughness to their feet, softened with walking on riverside grass. Whatever be the peculiarity which renders the way trying at any given point, it is a folly and the beginning of sin to quarrel with it. The only thing that really matters is the fact that it is the way. With its surface or direction or length we have nothing to do. Safety lies in 'setting our hearts to the highway,' consoling ourselves with the great assurance that it is indeed the way, and that our feet are on it. He who does this has (to quote Stevenson once again) the road itself for company. His interest, his longing, and his enthusiasm are all concentrated, not on his own feelings, but on the road itself. He will yet find out the glory of going on through pleasant and unpleasant parts of the pathway, when he has at last discovered the love and wisdom of God who has made that various pilgrimage now smooth and then rough, that he may welcome at the last pilgrims disciplined and strong and worthy to arrive.

But these men are discouraged, and their feet are tender. They are quarrelling with the way, and pitying their own weak flesh. Just beside them lies Bypath Meadow, a place, indeed, of bad company, but of bodily luxuriousness very tempting to their present mood. It is so little off the way that the fact seems hardly worth speaking about. So they trudge on, grudgingly and discontented.

Just at this point comes the opportunity for escape to the softer going. The stile on the left hand comes like a set temptation, so opportune is it in its answer to their desire. Yet it was not quite an open gap. It was easy to cross the stile, and yet there was the stile to cross—some conscientious scruples to be overcome, some need for effort to persuade oneself to the defiance or the ignoring of the plain sense of duty. This, however, is beside the point. The interesting fact is the circumstance of the stile and the mood, of temptation within and opportunity without. There is little need for explaining this by the malice of the powers of darkness. The fact is that the whole length of the road is furnished with opportunities of escape from it, but we become aware of these, find them to be temptations, only when desire for escape is already at work within our hearts. No man who is quarrelling with the road will be long before he finds himself at a stile of this sort. This is well worth remembering. Temptations often assume the guise of special providences, which make the step aside appear almost a predestined arrangement. And the soul is peculiarly ready to deceive itself by taking such psychological moments as inevitable, and justifying its errant course by a daring attempt so to read the signs as to force God on to the side of temptation.

In such temptation, half-consciously self-sought and self-created, there is little chance of victory and no joy of combat. Temptation need not be a joyless and predetermined thing. It is so only in cases where the tempted man is quarrelling with the way. But where there is no such complication

of a treachery within the soul, temptation is among the most exhilarating of life's experiences. When the heart is pure from all desire of falling, and where the faith in God's character and purpose is firm, the tempted may 'count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations.' Theirs is that 'stern joy which warriors feel' upon the eve of battle. Even for them this will not warrant rashness, and to the end the wise will repeat the prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation.' Yet when temptation comes they will remember that God, who has permitted it to come, is not a general who ever sends troops of His into battle that they may be cut down for strategic purposes in other parts of the field. If the humble petition of the Lord's Prayer is unanswered, and temptation has to be faced, they may take it as a distinguished honour and a mark of special trust.

> Was the trial sore?
> Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!
> Why comes temptation but for man to meet
> And fight with and make crouch beneath his foot,
> And so be pedestalled in triumph? Pray
> 'Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!'
> Yea, but, Oh Thou whose servants are the bold,
> Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
> Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
> That so he may do battle and have praise.

Vain-Confidence.

This temptation, however, was of the different sort that has its ally within the soul, and the hardihood and unhesitating promptness of action which are seen in Christian are a poor travesty of a Christian man's assurance. Indeed, he is in every way unlike himself in this scene; and, among other things, we note his eagerness to have that inward treachery justified by external reinforcement. They see a man walking before them in the growing twilight, and after night has fallen still they follow the sound of his footsteps in the dark. Then the footsteps ceased to sound, and their hearts stood still as they heard the dull thud from that pit to whose brink he had almost led them. No words came from the mangled body, 'only they heard a groaning.' That is all the incident, and its dramatic power is heightened by its reticence. To the already troubled conscience of Christian that tragedy is his own. Vain-Confidence is just Christian in his recent mood, written large. That man, needing no company, asking for no advice, mistaking his own will for wisdom, and making it his law. He has no need of them or any others to confirm him in his opinion. He flings over his shoulder his answer to Christian's question, shouted forward to him with already a quaver of anxiety in it. There is no such quaver in the reply. He knows all about his destination; it is the Celestial Gate. The words were still ringing in the pilgrim's ears when this unhappy victim of the easy pathway in fact reached his destination, but not the one he had made so sure of. Such ruffling spirits as this should never meet with an accident. The contrast is too cruelly foolish between the swaggering of afternoon and the groaning in the dark of evening.

The Men in the Dark.

The part of the story which follows is one of utter discouragement, danger, and misery. The two strong men are like a pair of little lost children. Each feels himself alone, and Hopeful's groaning utterance is of peculiar pathos, with its pronoun not in the plural, but the singular, 'Oh, that I had kept on my way!' That deadly dark, the dull aftertime of temptation, when the desire and the glamour alike are gone, and the spent fires of its allurement no longer keep back the growing cold that gathers round the heart! How cruelly all the aspect of life changes in such an hour, and, instead of all the fascinating casuistry which at the crossing of the stile made the whole play of good and evil about the soul so charmingly poignant an experience, there is only the one dull but insistent conviction 'that it is easier going out of the way when we are in than going in when we are out.' The *diablerie* of the casuist makes the man feel so superior; the plain obviousness of the truism announces him so poor and lost a fool. Which things are happening every day, and it is well for every man to cultivate the habit of looking across from mood to mood, and to train his imagination so that it may be able before temptation to picture to him the aspect that life will assume after temptation.

In Dr. Newman's *Plain and Parochial Sermons* (v.) there is a passage so appropriate and illuminative for this scene, that it may be quoted here at length: 'And we thus intrude into things forbidden, in various ways: in reading what we should not read, in hearing what we should not hear, in seeing what we should not see, in going into company whither we should not go, in presumptuous reasonings and arguings when we should have faith, in acting as if we were our own

masters where we should obey. We indulge our reason, we indulge our passions, we indulge our ambition, our vanity, our love of power; we throw ourselves into the society of bad, worldly, or careless men; and all the while we think that, after having acquired this miserable knowledge of good and evil, we can return to our duty, and continue where we left off; merely going aside a moment to shake ourselves, as Samson did, and with an ignorance like his, that our true heavenly strength is departed from us.' . . . 'The two paths of right and wrong start from the same point, and at first are separated by a very small difference . . . but wait a while, and pursue the road leading to destruction, and you will find the distance between the two has widened beyond measurement, and that between them a great gulf has been sunk, so that you cannot pass from the one to the other, though you desire it ever so earnestly.'

They had forgotten all about the stile when it could easily have been found, and now they cannot get back to it. Mind and conscience both have been deranged by disobedience, and neither of them can get into the position where they will feel the old conscience scruples that were so lightly overcome. Their one thought is of danger, and after a few blind and futile plunges for the road, they settle down, sick with reaction and disgust, wearied out with transgression and peril, and fall asleep. One cannot but feel that strenuousness would even yet have brought deliverance. Stile or no stile, floods or no floods, why did they not force their way back to the road? Easy words to say, but the soul that has wandered knows but too well how that wandering has impaired the very power of returning to duty, and that is the last farthing of the full payment that an exacting nemesis wrings out from the sinner.

Christian in this Incident.

Christian is here unrecognizable. He never did well with ease, but here he is so completely and radically demoralized that we shudder at the change, which reveals the Protean character of even so good a man. There is always a pitiful crowd, as someone has expressed it, waiting at the cross-roads of life to take their direction from any chance circumstance. But it makes the heart sick to find Christian among that number. He who questioned Demas so shrewdly now takes one for a guide whose face he has never looked upon, who, so far as Christian's experience of him goes, is a *vox et præterea nihil*. In an unknown region of life precedent is a first necessity if it can be had, and the initial question of the wise adventurer is, 'Who goes before me?' But this Christian, at other times so sagacious, is now content that he is not the first. So long as *somebody* is on ahead, he has nothing more to ask, and at once follows the lead, without a hint of evidence as to its trustworthiness. The world would need to be by very many thousand times a safer place than it is before the mere fact that someone else had gone in any given path before would afford even the shadow of justification for such an adventure. Yet that is all that multitudes of men ask for guidance. A newspaper article, the example of an acquaintance, the mere fact that the thing has once been done, are sufficient for such easy followers of chance guidance in an age of many incompetent but unhesitating guides.

Hopeful in this Incident.

Hopeful and Vain-Confidence may stand for symbols of two different kinds of optimism. Hopeful has his scruples, and remains humble while he believes in God and in life. Vain-Confidence believes unscrupulously and only in himself. Yet hopeful is weak as yet, and all too easily led. He has not learned to say *No*, nor to think for himself upon the spur of the moment. But life is teaching him, and this very incident is manifestly doing something towards correcting his weakness. He takes the initiative, and offers to go first as leader on the way back. And meanwhile, except for a momentary suggestion of blame, his old tenderness and sweetness are only heightened by the manifestly growing manliness of his spirit. The gentle tenderness of his attitude to Christian is a notable piece of work, even for John Bunyan's pen. No wonder that it called forth the comment from the editor of one edition of the allegory: 'Dear Shepherd of Israel, thou knowest that to err is human. Keep us from erring; guide us continually; and wherever we stray, O Lord, reclaim us.' Along with which prayer, however, may well be joined George Herbert's lines:

> Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
> Is much more sure to meet with him, than one
> That travelleth byways:
> Perhaps my God, though he be farre before,
> May turn, and take me by the hand, and more,
> May strengthen my decayes.