

THE
FAMILY TREASURY

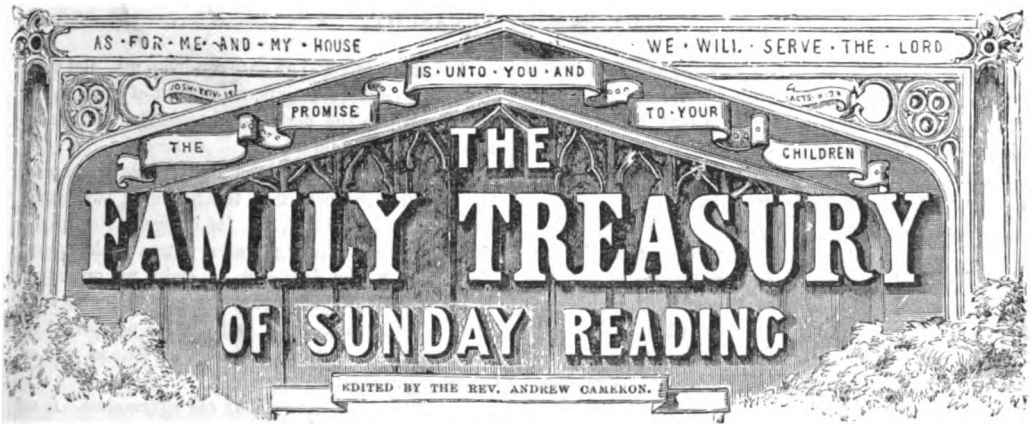
OF
SUNDAY READING.

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THE ACCUSER AND THE ADVOCATE.

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRIDGES, M.A., RECTOR OF HINTON-MARTEL.

Zech. III. 1-7.

IF we could see what is passing in the invisible world, there would be much matter for fear and trembling; still more for rejoicing confidence. Here, then, is the vision in a miraculous way put before our eyes. It is the cause of Zion pleaded in heaven against most powerful opposition, and with a most triumphant issue. The angel Jehovah (called Jehovah in the next verse) is the great and glorious Advocate. Joshua stands before him as the representative of the people of God. Like him, they are all "*brands plucked out of the fire.*" Against them all the power of Satan is employed to *resist*. On their behalf the boundless grace of the Omnipotent Jehovah is called into exercise. Here, therefore, we have before us *the resistance and the victory.*

I. *The Resistance of Satan*—resistance from a quarter where we could not have expected it. Think of Satan standing in the accuser's place (see Ps. cix. 6, 7),—acting against us here even at the mercy-seat! Accused spirit! Well does every Christian know him to be his enemy! Through him evil first came into the world; through him it still holds its empire. All the hindrances in any good work, such as those which Joshua and Zerubbabel met with, we know from whence they come; and yet more, all the hindrances in our own hearts. There is the proof of his working still nearer and more painful.

But could we have thought that "the adversary" would have made heaven itself—the holy place, the dwelling of the holy God—the scene of his enmity? What! the very mercy-seat besieged with his ceaseless accusations? Yet so the Scripture represents it. God's throne is a throne of justice (Ps. lxxxix. 14); and justice requires that, ere the suitor can gain his cause, all that can be urged against him, as well as all that is in his favour, should be brought into court. Hence Satan's accusations must be heard; and they are always at

hand. His name is "the adversary" (1 Peter v. 8). His office is, "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. xii. 10). In the earliest times, "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came with them" (Job i. 6). His pleas were in readiness against the patriarch of Uz (i. 8-12; ii. 1-8). In the text he stands forth against Joshua, and still does he present himself against the children of God, with a malignity as fierce as ever to *resist* us, when we are pleading before heaven's mercy-seat, or labouring with energy and perseverance in our Master's cause.

1. What was the matter of accusation against Joshua and his fellows, we may gather from the history. We read of their early zeal when they returned from the captivity, and laid again the foundations of the Lord's house. But the opposition of their enemies slackened the good work. Lukewarmness became the prevailing habit. Worldliness crept in, and with it unbelief. "This people say"—while living themselves in cieled houses—"the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Hag. i. 2-4). In this low and heartless state, do not we see how much material the great enemy had for his accusing work? But let us search closely near at home.

2. What may he not have to say against us? We do not clothe him with the omniscience of God; yet proof enough have we of him as a spirit deeply conversant with our hearts, thoughts, and purposes. In our natural state, awful indeed is our connection with him. He dwells, works, and rules within us—"taking us captive at his will" (Eph. ii. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 26). And even when One "stronger than he" has cast him out, yet will "he return to his house, from whence he came out" (Luke xi. 21-24), hoping to find entrance there.

Mark his continued assaults upon the children of God—how he follows them in their business and their pleasures, in solitude and in society, to the house of God

kind of colony, consisting entirely of members of their Church. Besides the family houses, there are the following public buildings,—a chapel and minister's dwelling, schools for boys and girls, an inn for travellers, and houses for the "single brethren," "single sisters," and widows, who having no family duties requiring their attention elsewhere, choose to live together in this way, but take no monastic vows of any kind. The inhabitants of the place all follow their various occupations on their own account, without anything like a community of goods, though the spirit of brotherly love and kindness is expected to be manifested by all.

There are several of such settlements in England,—Fulneck, Fairfield, Ockbrook, Tytherton; and that of Gracehill in Ireland.

The total number of stations in Great Britain and Ireland is 36, containing about 6000 members (children included).

On the continent of Europe there are 21 stations, mostly settlements, with between 6000 and 7000 members, and 2000 young people receiving instruction as pupils from other denominations.*

In the "Northern District" of America there are 24 stations, with above 6600 members; in the "Southern District" 9 stations, and about 1800 members.

In the missionary field the Brethren have 38 stations among the negroes in the West Indian islands; 11 in South America, and 4 in Central America, for the negroes or Indians there; 4 in North America for the Indian tribes; 4 for the Esquimaux on the coast of Labrador, and 4 on the coast of Greenland; 1 in Australia; and 1 in Thibet. The number under instruction, if not all real converts, is above 75,000. There are 307 missionaries (wives included), chiefly supplied by the German Churches, who, as we have seen, do not themselves number 7000 members. What other body of Christians have, *in the same proportion*, come "to the help of the Lord against the mighty?"

And now we must bring these brief sketches to a close. If the Christian reader has received from them any new information, or felt any new interest awakened, we trust it may lead him to active sympathy and more earnest prayer for the Church of the Brethren and her missions. She needs our prayers and our help. It cannot be denied, and her most faithful sons will readily acknowledge, that of late her state and progress have not been satisfactory. Various causes may partly account for this in our own country, but these should not hold good elsewhere. Not long since a Moravian minister said to the writer, "I often wonder what our Lord intends to do with us in the future. We are not *going forward* as we ought, in proportion with the other Churches of Christ. Has our Saviour no more work for

us to do? or is some great and blessed time of revival at hand, when we shall 'renew our days as of old?'"

Let us hope and pray for such a time of refreshing, for our Moravian brethren and for ourselves. Then "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" would labour joyfully together in his service, and all the Churches would be "established in the faith, and increased in number daily."

We can hardly conclude better than by taking from the Brethren's Hymn-book a fine confession of faith, composed, we believe, by John Cennick, though it has been claimed for Charles Wesley. In 1744 the Wesleyans and Moravians held a love-feast together at the Tabernacle, London, agreeing to differ on some points, but to unite in fighting the good fight of faith against the kingdom of darkness. Would that such evangelical alliances were more often repeated! They sung this hymn before separating:—

"The doctrine of our dying Lord,
The faith he on Mount Calvary sealed,
We sign, asserting every word
Which in the gospel is revealed,
As truth divine, and cursed are they
Who add thereto or take away.

We steadfastly this truth maintain,
That none are righteous,—no, not one;
That in the Lamb, for sinners slain,
We're justified by faith alone;
And all who in his name believe,
Christ and his righteousness receive.

Our works and merits we disclaim,
Opposing all self-righteousness;
Even our best actions we condemn
As ineffectual, and confess
Whoe'er thereon doth place his trust,
And not on Jesus, will be lost.

Christ is our Master, Lord, and God,
The fulness of the Three in One,
His life, death, righteousness, and blood,
Our faith's foundations are alone;
His Godhead and his death shall be
Our theme to all eternity.

On him we'll venture all we have,
Our lives, our all to him we owe,
None else is able us to save,
Nought but the Saviour will we know.
Thus we subscribe with heart and hand,
Resolved, (through grace, thereby to stand.

This now with heaven's resplendent host
We echo through the Church of God;
Among the heathen make our boast
Of Christ and his atoning blood,
And loud, like many waters, join
In showing forth his love divine."

c. c.

THE LIFE BATTLE.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUTLER.

"So fight I," says Paul, "not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." This is a phrase indicative of the sharpest, sternest efforts at self-mortification. As one who should say—I conquer my fleshly appetites by violent and reite-

* In connection with these stations should be mentioned what are called the Diaspora, or scattered flocks, calculated to number from 80,000 to 100,000 persons. These are numerous small congregations, all over Europe, ministered to by Moravian "labourers," but who, "owing to their national or ecclesiastical laws," cannot formally join the Church.

rated blows, and bring them into subjection. I lead my body along as a conquered captive. It is a *beaten* antagonist. My wicked, lustful nature is thus vanquished, "lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Here is a tremendous warning to every one of us—a warning founded on our double danger—first from evil appetites of the body, and also from evil affections of the heart. Paul, the heroic apostle of Jesus, so felt his actual danger that he tells us that he bruised and beat down his sensual passions, lest having saved others he might himself be finally lost. In the phrase before us he especially refers to the bodily appetites. "I keep the body under."

Paul, like other men of energetic make and ardent temperament, was very probably tried with strong temptations to excesses of the passions, both physical and moral. He has not chosen to let us into all the secrets of his character. He knew nothing of the modern pseudo-science of phrenology; nor would he have been one whit the wiser if he had. He does not tell us how often he fell through the sore stress of his "destructiveness," or his "combativeness." Such jargon he leaves for modern empirics in the mysterious science of the mind.

But methinks I see the wrestlings of a stern and furious struggle between the holier and the baser natures of one of God's heroes in that profound and plaintive seventh chapter of the epistle to his Roman brethren. I seem to see a stout soldier of the cross, with uplifted arm, and swollen sinew, crying out, "Ἐπιμαζω σωμα; I beat down my baser self; I give no quarter to my lusts; I strangle my appetites; I vanquish my inner foes that God may make me stronger to vanquish his foes without me; lest, having saved others, I, Paul, the converted blasphemer of Damascus, should only prove to be a pitiful wretch and castaway."

For Paul claimed no immunities from danger through his position. That a man is a professed minister of the Lord Jesus is no assurance that he may not be cast into hell. He has "like passions" with his fellow-men. The same ravening lusts that have decimated the bar and the senate-house have left their blood-prints on the pulpit stairs. Along the whole track of ministerial biography, there lie strewed, here and there, the bleaching bones of those unhappy victims who fell a prey to the spoiler. Paul, to be sure, never fell. To the last he kept his faith, and the integrity of a godly life. And the simple secret of this continence and this constancy I read in these brave words, "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air. I keep my body in subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway."

Shall we restrict the scope of this life-battle to sensual appetites alone? Paul did not; he extended it to all the wicked propensities of his mental and his moral nature. The war which every Christian has to make

must be universal and unsparing on the whole brood of interior passions. The sudden insurrections of anger—the malicious whisperings of green-eyed envy—the acid tongue of censoriousness—the clutchings of greedy covetousness—the restless cravings of unsanctified ambition—the subtle sophistries of deceit—the uprisings of bigotry and spiritual pride,—all these, and every other like them in the great *rebel army* of the heart, must be met with the same indiscriminate "war to the knife." He who would keep his conscience clean, and his life holy, must wage this life-battle without compromise, and without quarter.

I. Let us offer a few concise rules for the conduct of this spiritual life-battle. Our first counsel is—*beware of the silent marches* which the flush will steal upon you. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; the combination of body and spirit is such that each one re-acts upon the other in a manner that is most direct and yet most mysterious. The encroachments of the "flesh" upon the spiritual nature are astonishingly quiet and insidious. The cravings of healthy appetite may gradually lead to the excesses of gluttony. Put a knife to your throat. Tampering with so-called innocent stimulants has sent many a professor of religion to the grave of the inebriate. The glass of wine has led to the glass of brandy; and the glass of brandy to perdition.

With all possibilities of self-indulgence come temptations. Luxury steals silent marches on Christians when prosperity brings within their reach a fine equipage, or high living, or splendid establishments. There is hardly a Christian in New York who lives when worth ten thousand dollars a-year just as he lived when hard toiled gave him only one thousand or one hundred. Men change their habits gradually; not suddenly. A man may be converted in a moment. Backsliding is the process of months or of years. By degrees tipping grows into intemperance; by degrees the social evening entertainment prolongs itself into the midnight frivolities of the rout, the ball-room, and the play-house; by degrees a church-member exchanges the prayer-meeting for the opera. Beware of the silent marches of the enemy.

II. If you find that the contact of certain persons and places is dangerous to your weaknesses, then *avoid* those persons and places, cost what it may. If you feel the temptation of a wine-cup, then keep out of convivial company. If you have tendencies to run mad with over mirthfulness, then stay away from those circles in which you are tempted to turn the Christian into the harlequin. It is not every young Christian who can be trusted even to *walk* through certain streets in our great cities. A "besetting sin" may lurk in that very street.

A man's besetting sin is the one that jumps with his inclinations. Does he love ease? Then he always interprets those providences in his own favour that allow him to sit still, or to enjoy his rest. Does he

love flattery and *éclat*? Then he imagines that he is working for God, when he is only working for human applause. Here is a dangerous foe; all the more so from its wearing the honest guise of a friend. Look out for selfishness. It is the "old Adam" lurking behind every hedge. Like Southern slavery, it will only keep the peace on condition of having its own way. If not, then its stiletto is unsheathed in a moment. It is a polite and plausible, but a godless spirit. Keep no league with it. A Christian is never safe unless he is continually collaring every evil passion of his nature, and forcing it into unconditional submission.

III. Finally, put on the whole armour of God, the shield of faith, the breast-plate of righteousness, and the sword of the Spirit. Leave no spot exposed. Ahab was wounded through the joints of the harness. In the heat of the conflict, look to Jesus, the Captain of your salvation; and *never surrender*. Toward the sunset of the long bloody day of Waterloo, when the surviving remnant of the old Imperial Guard were summoned to lay down their arms the scarred veterans of fifty victorious fights cried out, "The Old Guards can die; *but they cannot surrender!*"

"BE YE ALSO READY,"*

MATT. xxiv. 44.

HENRY D— was a servant in a farmhouse on the outskirts of my parish, and as the church of the adjoining parish was nearer to his master's farm than my own, he always attended the services there. For this reason, and because he was a servant living in his master's house, I knew very little of him. He was a fine powerful young man. His life had been steady and regular. He had been an excellent servant, and was a great favourite with his master and mistress. He had excellent health; but inflammation seized him. He was ill six days, and now his soul is before God.

To-day is Monday. It was only on Friday morning that I heard of his illness, and of course before the day closed I visited him. On that day and on Saturday, he seemed to take very little interest in what I said to him. Oh that I had pressed the subject more, that I had been even more importunate with him! On Saturday there was some apprehension of danger, but I was requested not to tell him, as the medical man feared that it might have an unfavourable effect upon the disease. I remonstrated, but to no purpose; and I left a message that I hoped the medical man, who was expected that evening again, would tell him.

On Sunday I walked round to see him after my services, and found him better. There was hope that he would recover. There was a change also in his manner. He wished to know where the verses I had read to him were to be found; he joined heartily in the prayers I

offered up; dwelt especially on one verse I had read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new;" and heartily said "amen" to the petition that he might become such a new creature.

You will not wonder that I now dwell on these things. The end was close at hand, closer than I then thought; for this, of which I am speaking, was only yesterday, and I am writing in the early morning of Monday. I had intended to see him by nine o'clock to-day, but I was to see him before that time. This morning at early dawn I was awake by a request to go and see poor Henry. I at once feared the worst. I arose, and in a very few moments was on my way to the farm. The village was quiet, its inhabitants for the most part being wrapped in slumber. The busy smith, the stroke of whose hammer early and late has often been a reproach to me, was not astir. The birds were awake and glad in the early March morning. What a walk it was! how solemn, how prayerful! How weak I felt and ignorant! how completely dependent upon God's Spirit!

Arrived at the house, all the usual signs of sickness and watching are apparent at once. Henry, I learn, is much worse; they are applying a blister, and I must wait a few moments. In the interval, I call in the master and the fellow-servant of the dying man, that we may pray for him. As we rise from our knees, Henry's uncle, who had arrived last night, enters the room; he has been trying, he says, to arrange about his temporal affairs, but can get no definite answer. He thinks that Henry will tell me his wishes. Will I try? I refuse. I have other matters, I say, more important to attend to. They have had all night to arrange about the few clothes, the watch, and arrears of wages; I may have only a few minutes to speak about the soul. Then I ask, Has any one told him his danger since the unfavourable change took place? Can it be believed, he has not yet been told? "O God, and he so near thy judgment!" I go up stairs; he knows me, and grasps my hand. Tenderly I tell him that he cannot live. My heart is full. I beseech him to give me all his attention. He takes some ice to cool his mouth, that he may better attend to me; and then he is "ready." Ready! with that poor weak body, with that fevered brain, with that wandering attention. Is this a condition in which to transact the business of eternity? But he is "ready." Every moment is precious. His mind may wander again directly.

"Henry," I remark to him, "I want you just to think of two things—your sin and your Saviour; put all else away except just those two things. Your sin great—in thought, word, and deed. Conscience will tell you. Try to recollect. You have been sinning since you knew right from wrong; you have forgotten God, refused his invitations, often transgressed against him; your sins in his sight cry against you for judgment; they are a fearful load, and will press you down to hell."

* From a Tract under this title just issued by the Religious Tract Society.