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THE

FOX-HUNTER.

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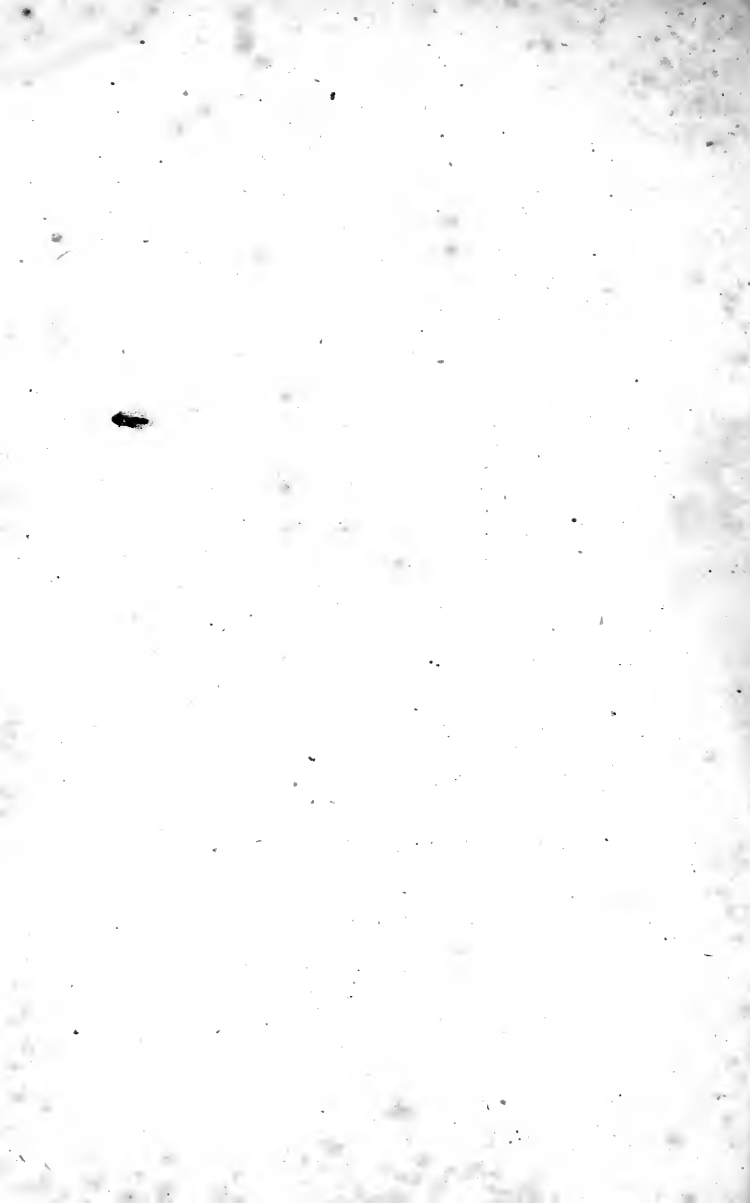
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THE FOX-HUNTER.

“TAKE us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoils the vines.”—
SONG OF SOLOMON, 2: 15.

By the foxes, may we not here understand those painful doubts, which even humble, watchful Christians still feel concerning the state of their souls, and their present peace with God?

Ask such a christian, “Is your soul perfectly happy—that is, are you sure that at this moment God loves you as his dear child? and, glorying in his grace, is it in his perfect peace that you seek to obey him? Or, do you still doubt; so that you can only hope for, but not appropriate such happiness?”

“Ah!” replies this disciple, “I would not dare to say absolutely that I am a child of God. When I look to the Saviour—to his fullness and love, I cannot but feel sure that he will finally save me; but when I consider myself, how can I think that he has already done it, since I so little resemble a redeemed christian? Indeed, would it not be presumption in me to believe I am loved of God, when, almost constantly, I deplore my unfaithfulness and backslidings?”

The doubt which this disciple entertains of the love of God, I call a *fox*; because, instead of relying only and at once upon what the Gospel says, the disciple looks first to himself; and, justly dissatisfied with his own imperfect love and obedience to God, he cannot believe himself to be the object of the divine favor, until he shall have become more faithful and submissive.

How shall this Christian be delivered from his doubts, and obtain that “peace of God” of which the apostles speak, and with which the Saviour blessed his disciples?—(Rom. v: 1; Phil. iv: 7; John xiv: 27.)

Only in one way; by leading him to a simpler trust in the

free gift, and the faithfulness of God; for if he truly believes what God says, he will necessarily appropriate and enjoy it. Then, but not till then, knowing that he is redeemed by Christ, since God tells him so, he will contend against sin; not in the strength of his own resolutions, which, sincere as they may be, are only human, but through the efficiency of that filial spirit^s which reigns in a heart purified by faith. (Acts xv: 9: Eph. i: 13.)

To illustrate this subject, the reader is requested to listen to the following authentic story. We shall here see a minister of God, a *hunter of certain souls*, which were spoiling fine vines; he disperses many painful doubts by the simple "Word of God," imparting in their place the peace of the Gospel:

Three pious persons, a gentleman, his wife and daughter, were conversing with this minister: all submitted to the authority of the Bible, but their submission was mingled with feelings of self-righteousness.

They were not *unbelievers*, to be brought to the Saviour, but truly obedient to the Son of God, and desirous only to do his will; none of them, however, dared to be sure that he was already redeemed by Jesus—was a "child of God," and thus could "glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. i: 31.)

Hence the father, after devoutly professing his sincere faith in the Son of God, added that he did not feel authorized to call himself one of Christ's flock. "I hope," he said, sighing, "but I am not sure."

"So then," said the minister, "if you should die this night suddenly, you would not be wholly at peace concerning your soul's salvation?"

"Who, sir," said the mother, "can allow himself this perfect peace? Doubtless a true Christian, since he relies on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, has a 'good hope' of this salvation, as the Scripture saith; but who would be so presumptuous as to feel sure that he has a right to be fully received of God?"

"You will think me very proud, and very presumptuous," replied the minister, "since I can truly say that I possess this perfect peace? - And I beg you not to suppose that it is because I am worthy, and thus have, as you call it, 'a right' -

to be received of God. Am I not, on the contrary, a greater sinner than any of you, since I am the oldest? Far from me be the thought that I am better than any one else, or that I have any 'right' to the place which God gives me. But since he gives it to me, it is not only my duty, as well as happiness, to know and declare it? It is pride in me to affirm it? Would it not be pride rather, not to believe it?"

"Certainly," said the father, "if you feel so. But—here is my difficulty—has God indeed told it to you? It is so easy to be deceived on this point. And it is this which mad-am fears."

"I like your remark," said the *Hunter*, "and agree with you, that it is common to be deceived on this first point. But whoever is sure that God gives him this peace, rejoices in the assurance."

"I should like to know how a person can be sure—very sure?" said the daughter, modestly.

"Whoever is sure that he believes the Bible," said the minister, "is also sure of all that it says; and I think that we four are so happy as to believe that the Bible is perfectly true. So opening it, I will read first this passage of St. John, the meaning of which is clear: 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater,' (1 John v: 9;) that is, if we believe, on his word, an honest man, much more ought we, on his word, also, to believe what God says. Allow me to repeat a well known anecdote, which you have often heard. It will illustrate what the Apostle here says:

"The Emperor Napoleon I. was reviewing some troops upon the Place de Carrousel, in Paris; and, in giving an order, he thoughtlessly dropped the bridle upon his horse's neck, who instantly set off on a gallop. The Emperor was obliged to cling to the saddle. At this moment, a common soldier of the line sprang before the horse, seized the bridle, and handed it respectfully to the Emperor. 'Much obliged to you, Captain,' said the chief, by this one word making the soldier a captain. The man believed the Emperor, and, saluting him, asked, 'Of what regiment, sire?' Napoleon, charmed with his faith, replied, 'Of my Guards!' and galloped off.

"Now, what will the soldier do? If he imitates those who, before believing, wish to see and feel, and, like the Apostle

Thomas, wait for palpable proof before relying upon testimony, he will say, 'A Captain of the Guard always wears a Captain's uniform, and mine is only that of a common soldier. I cannot, therefore, believe myself a Captain!' and the soldier would return to the ranks.

"But if, on the contrary, he believes fully and implicitly the Emperor's word, and that his rank, as Captain of the Guard, depends not upon the uniform he wears, but that the uniform must be the consequence and evidence of his rank; (and this will be his thought if he honors his Emperor), he will not hesitate because of his dress, nor will he return to the line. And such, indeed, was the conduct of this man. As soon as the Emperor left, the soldier laid down his gun, saying, 'He may take it who will,' and, instead of returning to his comrades, he approached the group of staff-officers. On seeing him, one of the Generals scornfully said: 'What does this fellow want here?' 'This fellow,' replied the soldier proudly, 'is a Captain of the Guard.' 'You? my poor friend! You are mad to say so!' 'He said it,' replied the soldier, pointing to the Emperor, who was still in sight, 'I ask your pardon, sir,' said the General respectfully, 'I was not aware of it.'

'Here, then, was exhibited a manifold faith. Since first the soldier believed the Emperor, upon his word, because he heard him, (as the Samaritans said of the Saviour,) and afterwards, on the soldier's word, the General believed the Emperor.

"You now see," continued the minister, addressing the young lady, "how a person may be sure that God gives peace: it is by believing his testimony, just as the soldier believed that of his Emperor. That is to say, as he believed himself to be captain *before* wearing his uniform; so, on the word and promise of God, one believes himself to be a 'child of Jesus,' *before* being sanctified by his Spirit."

"A striking anecdote, truly," said the father; "I hope I shall profit by it. But allow me to ask, since the soldier made Captain will necessarily wear his uniform, and since the Bible declares that the true believer must possess a certain character, how can any one think that he has true faith so long as he does not behold in himself the qualities and fruits of faith?"

And I confess it is this which makes me doubt whether I have received the Grace of God—I who have daily proof that it is not the Holy Spirit which guides me in all things.”

“Another fox!” said the minister; “and this is a large and strong one. But the Bible can take him. Listen, then!”

“True faith produces good works. The Apostle James expresses this very clearly: ‘Faith, without works, is dead.’ (James ii: 17.) But when these effects are wanting, which proves that their cause is also wanting, what does the Bible then direct us to do?”

“You, dear sir, reason thus: ‘True faith produce such and such effects; but I do not produce them, therefore I have not true faith.’ And thus far your reasoning is right and scriptural; but then, leaving the Bible and common sense, you add: ‘Since true faith produces certain effects, and these do not appear in me, I must try to produce them, in order to be sure that I have true faith;’ while you should say, arguing from cause to effect: ‘I must first have true faith, then I shall do the works of faith.’”

“Thus, for example, you know that the true believer loves to read the Bible, and to commune with God in his delight. And if you see that you have not this habitual love for the Bible, you say: ‘Ah! I must read the Bible more, otherwise how can I admit that I am a child of God?’ Thus you are like a person who should say: ‘A good fire gives heat; but this room is not warm, so there is not a good fire. Let me try to make more heat, that there may be a good fire.’”

“That would be absurd, sir,” said the lady; “for the fire produces heat!”

• “Yes madam,” continued the minister, “just as the sap produces fruit. Where there is no fruit, it is because the sap has failed. This is taught in the parable of the barren fig tree, (Luke 13.) At the vine-dresser’s request, his lord was patient with this tree. But what was the request? For three years the tree had been barren, and so the lord ordered it to be cut down. But the vine-dresser, who knew why the fruit failed, asked his lord to let him dig about the tree, and dung it. The vine-dresser, reasoning justly, did not say, ‘The tree must produce fruit, so that the sap may come; but

'there must be first more sap, that it may produce the fruit.' This wise man began with the cause and proceeded to the effect; far from reasoning as you do about your works, (which you wish to produce, to assure yourself that your faith is good!) he argued that faith—the sap—must be purer and more abundant, and then works—the fruit—would follow as the consequence."

"I understand now," said the gentleman. "Yes, I see that I must first have a simpler, purer faith, before I can produce abundant fruit, or any works conformed to the will of God."

"Certainly," continued the *Hunter*. "So will the engraver who cuts the arms upon your seal. The first impression not being to his taste, he applies himself to mend the seal and engraving, and not the impression."

"Certainly!" said the lady. "Had he made a thousand impressions, they would have been the same while the seal unchanged."

"Wherefore, madam," continued the minister, "when you saw that your actions did not correspond with the Bible-model, you should have attended first to the seal—to the faith which produced them."

"This is plain!" said the father. "But allow me to say I have still, at least in regard to myself, a great difficulty. If I am, as you say I should believe—if I am one of the redeemed of God—one of his children, he would tell me so, and I should rejoice in it; whereas it is not so with me. It seems as if everybody would be saved rather than myself. This is my great grief."

"But sir," replied the minister, "if God has told you so, and repeated it often, and you have always refused to believe him, what wonder that you do not know it, and do not possess this joy of the Holy Spirit?"

"Would the soldier have exulted in his promotion, if, though the Emperor had told him, he had refused to believe his word? The Apostle says to the Ephesians: 'After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise; (Eph. i: 13;) but you, sir, would wish to have this seal, and the joy it brings, before you believe! But though you may attempt to change the order of its operation, that grace

remains ever the same; only, by denying its presence and efficacy, you deprive yourself of its effect."

"It is, indeed," said the father, "to wish for the fruit before having the sap!"

"Listen to another proof of it," continued the minister. "I was preaching in a garrisoned town. The generals and other officers, with brilliant epaulettes, sat before me. In explaining the text, 'Faith, without works, is dead,' I had occasion to show that divine works are, in the believer, the evidences of divine faith; that is, they are the operation of the Holy spirit in the heart which he has purified; and the better to show that faith must necessarily precede works, I suddenly suspended my argument, and addressing the officers, said to them: 'Am I not right, gentlemen? You do not receive your epaulettes before your commission, but your commission before your epaulettes?' The soldiers smiled assent. I continued my discourse, and God blessed that question; for the same evening a Colonel said to me: 'Thanks to God, I now understand that I was Colonel before I wore the uniform. I believe God, who tells me he has pardoned me; even,' added he, lowering his voice, 'though I can scarcely yet perceive the epaulettes of my rank.'"

"True," said the young lady, "and yet, evidently, he was sure of it."

"Yes, my dear," said the minister; "and if I did not fear to weary you, I could tell you the reply made me by a young lady who at first had sighed as you do."

"Relate it, I pray you," said the father. "It will interest us all."

"Well, then, on a little missionary tour," said the minister, "I stopped, towards evening, at a country seat. The conversation of the evening was, as ours now, upon our duty to believe what God says."

"And were there, then," said the father, apologizing for the interruption, "these '*forces, the little forces*' which spoil the vines?"

"Several of them," replied the minister, smiling. "I had, therefore, to perform my office of hunter, and the chase was truly a good one as you will see."

"The company were the parents and their three children, the eldest a daughter named Eliza, and her two brothers.

"This young lady, who was truly pious, but troubled with doubts, which proceeded from regarding her-self, was deeply interested in our discussion. More than once she asked me how, on the simple testimony of the Bible, a person could be sure that he is a child of God. 'Especially,' she added, 'when he daily feels that he is so far from resembling the Lord Jesus.'

"I then showed her the plain declarations of the Scriptures, and I dwelt especially upon what is said of Abraham, who, on the simple word of God, though he had all reason to doubt, was nevertheless sure that he should have a son, and was also sure that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in one of the descendants of that son, and this even when that son was about to be reduced to ashes. Hence I concluded that if this young lady, on the simple declaration of God, believed first that Jesus is the Son of God, then that in Him God hath given us eternal life, and thus to Jesus, and to Him alone she must look for the pardon of her sins, relying only on the expiatory sacrifice of the Saviour, she should also believe what God further declares—that whosoever thus confides in Jesus *ought to know* that he has the pardon of his sins, and eternal life. (1 John v: 13.)

"And when the young lady asked me if it was not necessary that she should see in herself the proofs of true faith, in order to be sure that she believed in Jesus, I observed that though these proofs were indispensable as evidence and sensible demonstration of faith, they could never appear till after the existence of divine faith in a soul, and then only as consequences of their true faith.

"I then quoted the same passage on 'the testimony of God' which we have given above, and that she might well understand it, I said :

"Suppose that we were in Brazil, seeking for diamonds in a brook where we were told they were to be found. I pick from the sand a rough gray pebble and say to you: 'Ah! this is a fine diamond! Surely it will be very valuable when it shall be cut.' Upon which you ask me to devote the price of it to the erection of a school which you had spoken of to

me. I cheerfully give you the stone, and you thank me for it.

"Now," said I to this young lady, "remark that you have in your hands only a pebble, apparently of no value; but since you believed me when I told you it was a diamond, you are sure it is one; and you not only thank me for giving it to you, but when you afterwards take it to the lapidary, you do not ask him—'Is this a diamond?' a question which would prove that you had not entirely believed me; but you would only say: 'Polish this diamond for me.' And while you watch the cutting of its sparkling sides, you would not say: 'It is really a diamond'—a remark which would imply distrust of me; but you would simply exclaim: 'Oh what fine water it is.'

"And so, pursuing the subject, I showed her that, as the polishing adds to the beauty of the diamond, without making it a diamond, so the gradual sanctification of the Christian exhibits more and more the beauty of the divine nature of the believer; but that this *sanctification* did not make him a child of God, and that it adds nothing to the *justification* imparted to his soul from the moment that he believed in the name of Jesus Christ. (Rom. v: 1.)

"Thus closed the evening, and before retiring to rest, I was called upon to 'give thanks unto the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us unto the kingdom of his dear Son.' (Col. i: 12.)

"The next morning, early, as I stepped into the carriage to drive on to the next village, the father, with his daughter, came quickly down the staircase, to bid me good-bye; and as I drove away, I called out to the daughter: "Well, Miss Eliza, what are you before God *to-day*?" "A diamond, sir," she replied, "but very rough!" Simple and beautiful reply, which declared that she believed God upon his word; since, though she saw how little sanctified she was, she received and believed God's declaration, that 'whosoever believeth on the Son hath eternal life;' that is to say, 'is a diamond.' So I replied, as I drove away: "Go to the lapidary and be polished."

"Good!" said the father. "Yes, the lapidary polishes the diamond! But I now understand. He takes a diamond, and not a common stone. So the Holy Spirit sanctifies him who

is already a child of God, and not the unbeliever's heart. This is now clear to me."

"Yes!" said the mother; "but I have a scruple which prevents my believing that I am a diamond. Do I believe what God says *enough* to be assured of his promise?"

"Foxesstill!" replied the minister affectionately. "Come on! to the chase! we will take them, if God please!"

"And this *fox*, dear madam, is the notion that you make God's declaration any more true by your believing it, more or less."

"But," said the gentleman, "if I believe it but little, is it not less true *for me* than if I believed it entirely?"

"You mean to say," replied the minister, that the more firmly you believe what God affirms, the more you *enjoy* this truth, or promise; and certainly you are right. As we live by faith it is plain that the more you believe God the more you will live by him. But this is not what madam said when she expressed fears of not believing firmly enough for this to be true in regard to herself. What the Bible says is true, not because we believe it, but only because God says it. Whether it is believed or not believed does not affect its truth. It was perfectly true before I believed it, and if I do not believe it, the thing remains none the less true. For example, God tells me I am born in sin—a thing I certainly cannot feel, since I could not feel my birth, and which I shall not make more nor less true by believing or denying. If, then, I believe it, I simply 'set to my seal that God is true,' says John the Baptist; and if I do not believe it, its truth is not destroyed, but only, St. John says, 'we make God a liar by not believing what he affirms.'"

"Then, sir," said the lady, "we have only to believe that God says a thing! When we are sure he says it, are we also sure that the thing is true?"

"Certainly!" replied the minister. "If God says, for example, that he created the world of nothing, it is entirely true. He who believes it, on the word of God, is sure of it. So, if God tells a soul that he now has eternal life, this soul, if he believes God, must be sure of it."

"Sure?" returned the lady. "What, sir, at once, and without any previous preparation or disposition?"

"Judge of it yourself," replied the minister. "I open the testament at the tenth chapter of Romans, and read these words in the 9th verse: '*If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus*'"—

"Oh!" said the lady, "that I can do sincerely. Yes, thanks to God, I confess openly, and with my mouth, that Jesus is Lord—that is, God himself."

"You do not say it," asked the minister, "as so many do, merely from education and habit, without any serious conviction of it, for who in our country does not say that he believes in the Lord Jesus?"

"No!" said the lady promptly. "I believe sincerely and earnestly that the Lord Jesus came from God, and that he is God himself; God, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit."

"Let us continue, then," said the minister; "'*And thou believest with thy heart that God raised him*'"—

"That is my belief," interrupted the lady. "Yes, the Lord Jesus is in heaven, at the right hand of the Father!"

"Well, then, madam," resumed the minister, "since God says to the person who has this faith, and who declares it as you have done—*Thou shalt be saved*, what ought you to believe you will be?"

"Saved!" uttered the lady tremblingly.

"Yes, madam," affirmed the minister, "if you are conscious and sure of your belief in the truths you have expressed, and thus you do not found your belief on man's teaching, but on the word of God."

"But why do you repeat, on the *word of God*?" asked the lady. "Is it not enough that I believe this, because it is in the Bible?"

"You will not be offended if I say this is another fox," said the minister. "Let me show it to you, that you may chase it from your heart. You ask me if it is not enough to believe what is in the Bible, without the assurance that you believe it upon the *word of God*? But do you not see that the word *believing* is used instead of being *persuaded* or *convinced* that a thing is true? Now self-given assurance is not faith; since faith is not the persuading one's self that a thing

is true, but the admitting of it as true, upon the word or testimony of another."

"Let us understand this," said the father; "for I think it is very important."

"It is indeed," said the minister. "I will employ, therefore, a few illustrations. Suppose we were in Bethany, with Lazarus and his sisters, and we see a dozen men approaching, among whom one, whose exterior is remarkable for its gravity and sweetness, is evidently honored by the rest. You, sir, ask me who this person is? Just as I am about to answer, a woman throws herself at his feet, and worships him. 'Horrible!' you exclaim, 'is she a pagan, thus to worship a man?' 'She is right,' I reply, 'for this man is the Messiah—God manifest in the flesh!' 'The Messiah!' you exclaim; 'is it possible? Do I see the Messiah?' And as this personage approaches, and asks you, (as he did his disciples,) 'Whom say you that I am?' you reply adoringly, 'Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God:'—the reply which Peter made, and which the Lord Jesus declared was revealed to him by the Father. (Matt. xvi: 16, 17.) Here, then, you see, you have not declared what you *imagined* or *persuaded yourself* was true, but what was told you, and you believed because God revealed it to you."

"Then, sir," said the lady, "all who say that they believe in Jesus Christ—and, indeed, who does not?—have received the revelation from God, and have faith?"

"Ah! madam," replied the minister, "if, as I have already remarked, expressly, they say so from mere tradition and habit, or because they fancy that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, their faith is only a human persuasion. But if he who says he believes, believes because God *tells him so*, and thus receives the testimony of God, he has divine faith in the Son of God, and has then been taught of the Father."

"I understand," said the daughter. "You tell us, sir, that I must believe that the Lord Jesus is come from God, and that he is the Messiah promised from the foundation of the world—the seed of the woman, EMMANUEL;—not because I *imagine* it to be true, nor because all the world says and professes it, but simply because God affirms it?"

"Observe," said the minister. "that St. Paul declares this

when he says: 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. xii:3.) *Supposition, imagination, cannot proceed from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. To imagine and to say that Jesus is the Saviour, is one thing; but to believe it because God says it, is another thing, and this is, indeed, to confess Christ.*'

"I do not clearly understand this distinction," said the father. "Will you explain it?"

"Suppose," replied the minister, "that I embark by night at Boulogne for London, and I am told that the French ambassador is on board. I am pleased and hope to see him in the morning. And, indeed, at daylight the next morning I meet five or six gentlemen walking the deck; and noticing one of them covered with decorations, to whom the others show marked deference, I say to myself, 'That is the ambassador;' and I am right, for it is he.

"But, remark, my certainty that this person is the ambassador proceeds only from myself—my own persuasion; and, consequently, it is not faith, but only supposition, my own opinion. Therefore, it cannot be depended upon; for, on approaching him, and telling him how happy I am to see and address the French ambassador, he, in order to try me, says with surprise: 'I the ambassador?' and I blush and retire, confused, asking pardon for my mistake. But instantly he offers his hand, smiling, and says: 'Yes, sir, I am the ambassador.' Now, you see, my belief changes wholly its nature; since at first it was wholly my own persuasion, while now it springs from an assurance given me, and rests upon the veracity of him who speaks to me. This last certainty is faith, belief; while the first is only imagination, easily dispelled."

"How does this apply to our certainty of being saved?" said the young lady.

"I will tell you," said the minister. "Some Christians say confidently: 'I am sure the Saviour has redeemed me!' Why are you sure? we ask. 'Because I believe in him,' they say; and when you ask what they mean by 'believing in Jesus,' they reply: 'It is believing that he has redeemed us.' So that these persons believe, or persuade themselves that they are saved, because they believe or are persuaded that the Sa-

viour has redeemed them. Their belief, then, is the persuasion that they themselves have formed, and not a certainty proceeding from what God has told them."

"But, sir," resumed the daughter, "the Saviour does not now speak to us as God addressed Abraham, personally. No Christian can say that the Saviour has positively told him that he has redeemed him."

"And yet, dear daughter," replied the minister, "if it is not God himself who has told me what I believe respecting my salvation, what other is my belief than that human, mechanical, unreflecting faith which the Romanist has in his priest, or the Mohammedan in his fakir?"

"But, sir," persisted the daughter, "where and when does God thus speak to a person?"

"Dear Miss," said the minister, "does not God speak to you personally when he tells you, in the Bible, that you are a lost sinner? Does he not also tell you personally that pardon of sins, and eternal life are his free gift, and that this gift is wholly in Jesus, whom God declares to you to be his son?—And finally, is it not to you, distinctly, that he says: 'Who-soever believes what God says of his Son, and consequently trusts in him from the heart, is freely justified,' and ought to know that he hath eternal life?"

"I pray you, my friends," continued the minister, addressing also the parents, "does not this Book speak to us personally every time we read or hear it? Are not the words it addresses to our souls what the sound of the bell or the noise of thunder is to our ears? This sound, this noise, if general, is also individual. Observe in a city, when the authorities publish a law, although addressed to all the citizens, is it not also to each one separately, as much as if the magistrate should speak to each person?—Do you think that when the law has been published, any citizen would say it does not concern him, because the authority has not spoken to him individually?—How then, after the Bible has been published in our own language, and read in our hearing, shall we say: 'God has not spoken directly to me.' Would this excuse have been received if an Israelite had made it when God published the law in Horeb? And did the Lord speak less strongly, or individually, when he was lifted up on the cross? or when the Father

said of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him?" Just as, in the nineteenth Psalm, the heavens declare the glory of God to all men who see them, so by every man whom it reaches is the perfect law of God to be heard."

"I understand," said the daughter. "When I hear the voice of God he speaks to me, and I am bound to believe him. But, sir, I do not feel that he says I am one of his children—of his elect."

"Dear daughter," replied the minister, "please God that this crafty fox be the last! "You say: I do not *feel*!" But *do you feel* that there has been a deluge upon the earth?—And yet you are sure of it, simply because God tells you so. Do you *feel* that Jesus is the Son of God? And yet you are sure of it, and because God tells you it in his word. If, then, the same true God, in the same sure Word, tells you that the soul to whom he has given his faith which you have in Jesus, Son of God and Saviour, 'is passed from death unto life,' and that he is a child of God—if God tells it you yourself who believe in the Saviour, why will you reply to God: 'I am not sure, although thou tellest me so, for I do not feel it'? This, certainly, did not Luther, who relates, if I mistake not, in a private letter, that Satan having said to him: 'Martin, *do you feel* that you are a child of God?' answered shortly: 'No, but I am sure of it. Get thee behind me.'"

"Firm and beautiful reply," said the father. "It alone is worth a volume."

"But," said the mother, "true faith is not only knowledge, it is confidence—it is a feeling. For example: though I know and believe that Moses gave laws to Isreal, I do not believe in Moses; that is, I am not subject to him. I do not feel, then, in regard to him, what any pious woman felt before the tabernacle of the wilderness."

"If, then, Madam, using your own words," replied the minister, "you believe in Jesus^{Christ} Christ, as the Isrealitish woman believed in Moses, you must have the same kind of sentiment toward the Saviour which she had toward Moses."

"But remark, that when Moses declared anything to the children of Isreal, this woman did not say: 'The thing is not true for me, because I do not yet feel the effect of it;' but on

the contrary, she said: "The thing is true, since Moses says it;" and only after this could she *feel* the effect of it."

"I see the difference," said the lady. "Yes, I must first believe in Jesus Christ with confidence, and then I must rest in all that he says."

"Right!" said the minister. "So the Scripture saith: 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' (Rom. x. 10,) and does not regard those as true believers whose hearts are not interested in the person and work of Jesus. In the parable of the sower, for example, those only received the seed, that is, truly believed, who received the word in a good and honest heart. Though at Samaria, the magician, Simon, professed to believe, he had no part nor lot in this matter, since his heart was not right in the sight of God. (Acts 8.)

"But it is one thing to say that true faith in Jesus exists in the heart, and another thing to say that God must not be believed until after a person shall have *felt* the effect of what he affirms. God must be believed at once, and upon his word. The feeling of what he declares must therefore *follow* and not *precede* belief in his word. The believer will then say: '*I feel because I have believed* ; and not '*I believe because I have felt*.'"

"How simple this is!" said the father. "And is it thus, sir, that the Bible characterizes true believers?"

"Always," replied the minister. "When God said to Noah that there should be a deluge upon the earth, Noah believed God. Then the effect, the evidence of this faith was that 'he feared,' as St. Paul says, (Heb. xi: 7,) and 'prepared an ark.' The building of this vessel was the result, the necessary consequence of Noah's belief; and the patriarch must have said, during the century and more that this work lasted: 'I build the ark because I believe God.' Never did he think of saying: 'I am sure that I believe God, because the ark is being built.' When God told Abraham that he should be a father of nations, and wished him, therefore, to call himself Abraham, that is, father of many, though this believer could not in any way *feel* the reality of the promise, he believed it so that he laughed for joy. (Gen. xvii: 17.) But his faith preceded his joy. He did not say, 'I am sure I believe be-

cause I am glad; but, 'it is because I believe God that I rejoice.'

"It was not so with Sarah; for though afterwards she also believed God, and through faith became a mother, (Heb. xi: 11,) at first, so far from believing, she laughed from distrust, saying: 'Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?' (Gen. xviii: 13.)

"Observe the difference between Abraham's laughter and that of Sarah, and beware of saying like her: 'Can God possibly have already shown me favor, sinner as I still feel myself to be?'"

"Now I understand!" said the daughter. "First God must be believed, whatever he may say, and however apparently contrary it may be to our persuasions."

"Certainly!" continued the minister. "If in the beginning Eve had observed this principle, she would not have 'made God a liar,' as St. John says, (1 John v: 10,) by taking the forbidden fruit. So the Apostle Peter, when the Lord told him to come to him upon the water, would have walked safely; but ceasing to believe when he wished to feel, immediately began to sink. 'O thou of little faith!' said Jesus then to him. (Matt. xiv: 31.)"

"There is nothing more to reply," said the father. "This is positive. If I can be assured that I sincerely and from the heart believe in the Lord Jesus, I mean in his person and in what he has done for us, and that so I behold and worship him as being really come from the Father; as having indeed lived on earth; as having fulfilled all that the Gospel relates; and especially as having shed his blood for the remission of sins; then as being raised up and seated at the right hand of power of God; and as finally to return to us at the last judgment; if, I say, this is my sincere belief, I must also believe what God declares of the man to whom he has given this holy faith, namely, that he is passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation. (John v: 24.) Yes, sir, I see it clearly. All our doubts and difficulties are, after all, only unbelief of what God says—only self-righteousness; since with me, at least, it is wishing to put my sentiments, and my own opinions, in place of what God says. 'I see it now, and thank you with all my heart.'"

"That is to say," replied the minister, "we together render thanks to God, who alone, by his living Word, enlightens the mind and touches the heart visited by his grace. Thus in you is realized the declaration of the Lord Jesus, that the wind bloweth where it listeth. (John iii:8.)"

"Yes," said the lady, "and now, knowing that we have eternal life, we ought to walk in the light of that life, and return no more to the darkness of sin and the world."

"Yes," said the minister; "return no more, in order that we, a people of free will, may walk in the statutes and keep the ordinances of God. Is it not for this we are apprehended of Jesus Christ? (Ezek. xi:18-20; Phil. iii:12.)"

"And then, sir," said the daughter, "shall we sin no more?"

"Think you, dear young lady," replied the minister, "that the Christian can attain to a sinless state here below?"

"But," said she timidly, "does not the Apostle John say that 'whosoever abideth in God sinneth not?' (1 John iii:6.)"

"Shall I call this," said the minister, "a fox, or rather a wolf, a ravening wolf?"

"But," said the mother, "since 'faith purifies the heart,' if our faith is perfect, will there be in us any more sin?"

"My dear madam, if faith purifies the heart from error, it is the Holy Spirit which purifies it from uncleanness, but our souls will not be entirely cleansed till the divine life shall have swallowed up that which is mortal in us."

Father. "Does not St. John say, then, that the child of God absolutely sins no more?"

"Here is the passage," replied the minister, "and you can see by what precedes and follows it, that the Apostle declares that the child of God no longer practices sin—that the true disciple of the Saviour is not a worker of iniquity. The Apostle does not herein contradict what he says before, when he calls upon the Christian to confess his sins after knowing them. (1 John i:8, 9, 10.)"

"Now I am quite satisfied," said the father. "I see that though daily I have reason to say to God, 'Pardon my sins,' I am addressing a Father, and not a Judge; and I understand that so long as I shall be in this sinful body, I shall, alas!

have constant reason to repeat it. Oh! how much do I need to trust in this permanent grace, and to follow more closely my Saviour!"

"Amen!" said the minister. "This is indeed the result of true faith. By the Holy Spirit it sheds in the heart the love of God, and thus it incites this heart to please God, by keeping his commandments. St. John says it is expressly when he affirms that every man who *knows* that he will finally be glorified in heaven, purifies himself while he is upon the earth. (1 John iii:3.)"

"Yes," said the young lady, confidently regarding the minister, "when one is sure that he is a diamond, he then asks the lapidary to polish him."

"And remembering even then," said the minister, "that the labor of the lapidary is long, do not be discouraged if the surfaces are polished slowly; but imitating the husbandman who, says St. James, 'waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience,' (James v:7,) remember that 'God, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us to death, will with him also freely give us all things.' (Rom. viii:32; 1 Thess. v:24.)"

"Rest, then, with full certainty, in the 'faithfulness of God.' (1 Cor. i:8, 9.)"

"Amen!" said the three disciples; and they said it in the "true liberty of the Gospel. (John viii:36.)"

STRUGGLING AGAINST DOUBTS AND FEARS.

When darkness long has veiled my mind,
And smiling day once more appears,
Then, my Redeemer, then I find
The folly of my doubts and fears.

Straight I upbraid my wandering heart,
And blush that I should ever be
Thus prone to act so base a part,
Or harbour one hard thought of thee.

Oh let me then at length be taught,
What I am still so slow to learn,
That God is love and changes not,
Nor knows the shadow of a turn.

Sweet truth, and easy to repeat;
But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskillful, weak, and apt to slide.

But, O my Lord, one look from thee
Subdues the disobedient will;
Drives doubt and discontent away,
And thy rebellious worm is still.

Thou art as ready to forgive,
As I am ready to repine;
Thou, therefore, all the praise receive;
Be shame and self-abhorrence mine.

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