

# THE KING'S SON;

OR,

## A MEMOIR OF BILLY BRAY.

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### CHAPTER V.

#### THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.”—JAMES v. 15.

A FEW years ago there were “strange reports of wonderful cures wrought in a remote Swiss village by a Christian woman. . . . Wonders are out of date in the nineteenth century; there is a natural incredulity of everything like miracle, and the stories came and went, were told and ridiculed and dropped from year to year. Yet any one having the curiosity to visit the “pretty village of Männedorf would have been well repaid;” for there lived Dorothea Trudel, who was characterized after her conversion “by great earnestness, by singularly profound spiritual knowledge, and by a quiet, happy and modest Christian spirit. She was a worker in flowers, and came, in time, to have workers under her; and when she was about thirty-seven, four or five of her workers fell sick. The sickness resisted all treatment, grew worse, appeared to be hopeless. She was a diligent and unselfish nurse, and as a Christian her anxiety for the work-people drove her to earnest prayer and careful consideration of the Scriptures. It was during this period that, like a sudden light, she says the well-known passage from James v. 14, 15, flashed upon her. If medical skill was unavailing, was there not prayer? And could not the same Lord who chose to heal through medicines, also heal without them? Was He necessarily restricted to the one means? There was a time when His healing power went forth directly; might it not be put forth directly still? The doctors were at fault; but was not faith in God perhaps more at fault? Agitated by these questions, she sought help in prayer. And then kneeling by the bedsides of these sick people, she prayed for them. They recovered; and the thought that at first had startled her, became now the settled conviction of her life. A sickness broke out in the village, and where it did break out, her help, tenderness and Christian teaching were rarely absent. She sought the recovery of the patients in answer to prayer alone. Many got better; and as the rumour spread, persons from the neighbourhood

came or sent, and her leisure was fully occupied.

“Meanwhile she had resisted all solicitations to leave her ordinary work, and establish a kind of cure. Her proper calling, she considered, was the one which God had provided for her—that of a worker in flowers; her natural shyness and reserve made her shrink from publicity; but as increased numbers came and even besieged her doors, she was compelled to reconsider her position, and at last, with much reluctance, to receive persons into her house. This was at first out of mere compassion, when the sick had been brought from a distance and could find no proper shelter or care if she turned them away. By degrees the one house grew into three, and her days were spent in superintendence and in constant prayer; patients came from France and Germany, and even Great Britain. There came to be, in fact, a hospital at Männedorf.” And in this work she continued until her death; and whatever judgment may be passed upon it, as the able writer says from whom we have quoted, “it is worth record as a feature of the Christian life of our century. Nor is it solitary. Others are reported working similarly in other parts of Switzerland. Pastor Blumhardt of Wurtemberg has had his house crowded with patients for years. Dr. Bushnell in his ‘Nature and the Supernatural,’ reports like instances in America. There is no supposition of fraud. Will mesmerism, animal magnetism, the power of sympathy, be adequate explanation? Or is there still a prayer of faith that *shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up?*”

That there is danger of this principle being perverted and dishonoured, the “doings” of the “Peculiar People” are sufficient evidence. The slightest approach to extravagance and fanaticism ought to be carefully guarded against; and even the method adopted by our Lord when He wrought miracles for the relief of suffering men during His brief sojourn upon earth teaches the same lesson. Nature itself is a great dispensary where God has treasured up His remedies for all diseases “which flesh is heir to,” which are discoverable by patient and prayerful study, and which is a sufficient indication of His will and general method of working. But then, has He so tied Himself up to merely natural laws and processes that He has only one way of working left, only one way of healing His children? This would be to make “law” supreme and inexorable, and to concede what sceptical philosophers have always demanded—viz., that a miracle being contrary to the course and constitution of nature is clearly impossible.

So much in explanation of certain facts in Billy Bray’s life which we could not entirely pass over, and which, in fact, we gladly and gratefully record to the honour of Him whose Providence never fails, whose Wisdom is never baffled, and whose Power and Goodness can never be exhausted.

“I am about,” says Billy, “to write of a woman in whom God’s power was made manifest in a wonderful manner. I had the account from her own

lips, twice, and I will write down as near as I can what she told me. *Florence Hoskin*, for that was her name, was made a cripple by the ill-usage of one of her family, and wholly lost the use of one of her legs for seven years, and she was obliged to go on a crutch and stick. She was so weak that she was forced to drag her foot after her; and the doctor told her she would not have the use of her leg any more. But he made a mistake, for she was made sound again; our God is a God of all power, and there is nothing too great for Him to do. She was old when she was converted. In 1844, I think the Saturday night before the first Sunday in July, she went to bed greatly cast down. She prayed to her dear Lord, who is able to heal both body and soul; and *that* sister Hoskin soon found to her joy and satisfaction. She prayed away until the cloud broke from her mind, and she was made very happy in the love of Jesus. Then she said, 'Now, my dear Lord, Thou hast healed my soul, why not heal my body too?' She meant her lame leg; and when she said so, the Lord said to her, 'Arise, and go down to the Gospel-house, and there thou shalt be healed' Then she said, 'Why not be healed here, my dear Lord?' for she was in bed, and it was an easy place for a poor cripple. When she said so, the Lord's Spirit was taken away from her. Then she said, 'I will go to Thy Gospel-house, or anywhere else, only let me be healed, my dear Lord.' Her Lord said to her, 'If I heal thee here, they will not believe it, for there are many of them as unbelieving as the Jews were in Jerusalem.' And if the dear Lord had healed her in the bed, many would have doubted; there are many unbelieving people in our country, and it is hard to make them believe. The Lord told sister Hoskin to go to the chapel, so that there should be many *witnesses* of His mighty power in healing her. It was on a Sunday that she rose out of her bed to go to the Gospel-house to get healed, strong in faith; but when she got down-stairs it was as if the devil stood in the door-way, to tempt her to have her breakfast first; but she said, 'No, devil, I will not, for thou hast many times tempted me to stay for breakfast, and have had a dead meeting through being so late.' So she left home with her crutch and stick, and went away to her Gospel-house, dragging her poor lame foot on the ground. When she came to the chapel it was so early that there was no one there. When her leader came, he said, 'How is it you are down here so early today, Florence?' She said to him, 'Great things are going to be done here today; I am going to have a sound leg, for the dear Lord has told me so.' Her class-leader told her he thought she was mad; he said to her, 'If she had not more faith than he had, she never would be cured of her lameness.' So the meeting began; and while one was praying, Florence said, 'Pray away, the balm is coming.' She had faith to believe, and when the meeting was over she could walk about the chapel without crutch or stick. Some of the people that saw her walking about the chapel at Porthleven, went round the little town and said, *Florence Hoskin* is walking about the

‘Bryanites’ chapel without a crutch or stick. A great many came together to see what a miracle the dear Lord had wrought. As she was going out of the chapel, one person said, ‘Here, Florence, is your crutch and stick,’ when she answered, ‘You may have them, if you will, for I shall not want them any more.’ And she did not want crutch or stick any more while she lived. Some foolish people will say, ‘The Lord does not work miracles in these days as in the days of old.’ The dear Lord *does*, if we can believe. Florence Hoskin believed; and according to her faith it was done unto her, for she went away from her home a cripple, and in a few hours mine back healed; so it was well for her that she served the Lord. Bless and praise His name for ever!”

Here is another case as late as February, 1865:

“ I went to *Kestle Mill* (to a Wesleyan Chapel to hold a teetotal meeting), a place some miles from Newlyn. A man who lived in Newlyn, called ‘grandfather,’ who was very *lame*, wished to go with me; but when we had gone a little way he said he was so lame that he should not be able to go on. I said to him, ‘You must go; Father must heal you.’ He was going very lame when I said this; it was a great pain for him to walk. So I looked up to heaven, and prayed, and said, ‘My dear Father, heal him;’ and the dear Lord made him a sound man. He said, ‘All my pain is gone;’ and he went on to Kestle Mill as fast as I could go. When we came to the place ‘grandfather’ gave out a hymn and prayed; then he told the people what a bad drunkard he had been, but he was a teetotaller now; the Lord had converted his soul, and he was a happy man. When grandfather had done speaking, I spoke. *Twenty* signed the pledge. Then we travelled home; but I heard no more about his pain. On the Tuesday we had a teetotal meeting at our chapel in Newlyn, several Wesleyans on the platform. On Thursday, the 18th, after I had spoken in the Wesleyan Chapel at Newlyn, ‘grandfather’ rose from his seat, and told all the people in the chapel how that he was almost a cripple last week, and how that the dear Lord had healed him at once on Monday while going to Nestle Mill, and that he had not felt any pain since.”

Billy also speaks of a brother Hicks who “had been in bed seven years, and was two years without speech, whom the Lord brought out in one day;” whose cure was wrought when a good brother resolved that “he would not cease praying for him until he could speak.” Billy’s faith was unquestioning in the power and willingness of that Saviour who “is in every place and age the same.”

This is still more characteristic. At one time he had a child seriously ill, and his wife feared it would die. She wished Billy to go to the doctor, and get some medicine. He took eighteen pence in his pocket, all the money there was in the house. On the road he met a *man* who had lost a cow, and was then out begging for Money to buy another, whose story touched Billy’s heart, and to him the money was at once given. He said afterwards, “I

felt after I had given away the money that it was no use to go to the doctor, for I could not have medicine without money, so I thought I would tell Father about it. I jumped over a hedge, and while telling the Lord all about it, I felt sure the 'cheeld' would live. I then went home, and as I entered the door, said to my wife, Joey, the cheeld's better, isn't it?' 'Yes,' she said. 'The cheeld will live, the Lord has told me so,'" was his answer, and the child soon got well.

But if these were the somewhat rare and more remarkable fruits of a faith which "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," it was ever in active operation, always made him happy and contented with his lot, saved him from all anxious care, and diffused over the whole of his life a heavenly radiance, some of the rays of which fell upon others wherever he went. The deep wisdom of the principles he had adopted possibly he did not know himself, but of their reality and blessedness he was fully conscious. How beautiful, how instructive, showing how far Billy was removed from fanaticism, is the following:

"My wife said to me one day when lying on her sick-bed, William, I do not *see* anything from heaven." 'Neither do I, and what need has the Lord to show us sights,' ["Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," our Lord said to "a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum"] 'when we can believe without it?' "He continued: "If I saw the Saviour a babe in the manger, I should not believe it more than I do now. If I saw Him raise Lazarus out of the grave, I should not believe it more than I do now. If I saw the Lord Jesus raise the ruler's daughter or the widow's son to life, I should not believe it more than I do now. And if I saw the dear Lord nailed to the cross, and heard Him cry, 'It is finished,' saw Him give up the ghost, and rise from the tomb the third day, I should not believe these things more than I do now." When he said this his wife exclaimed, "And so do I believe it," and they greatly rejoiced together.

This simple faith in God and in His Word, what wonders it can accomplish. It is the "secret of power." It is a choice and powerful weapon in the Christian's armoury, which can be used at all times, and never fails. But in dealing with the sick and ignorant it has a special value. Billy speaks of an old man who had been very wicked, but who was seeking mercy. His visitor said to him, "You need not fear, for if you ask the Lord for it you are sure to find it. It is said, 'Let the heart of him rejoice that seeketh the Lord,' for they that seek are sure to find Him, and when you have found Him you will have a good prize." But the old man did not at once get the blessing, and so Billy continued: "Suppose that you were very poor, and you knew that there was a bag of money in this room, and you were sure that if you sought for it you would find it, and that it would supply all your wants, and you would never be poor anymore; then you would search the room with a *good heart*. The

Lord is here, and when you find Him you will have all you want.” As this was said, the old man sprung from his seat, exclaiming, “I have got it!” His wife heard him, ran into the room, fell on his neck, both rejoicing exceedingly in the God of their salvation. The old man said, “I never felt anything so ‘pretty’ in all my life.” But how much he lost, is Billy’s reflection, because he did not begin to serve God before. This incident reminds us of another characteristic feature of our friend’s life, but which may very appropriately be dwelt on more at length in our next chapter.