

# THE KING'S SON;

OR,

## A MEMOIR OF BILLY BRAY.

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### CHAPTER VII.

#### SABBATH KEEPING.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”—Isa. lviii. 13,14.

ONE of the most marked features of Billy's character was his love and reverence for the Sabbath. It was to him a day “most calm, most bright,” the “pearl of days,” in his estimation, to both rich and poor, to the poor especially. If the working men of England only prize the Sabbath as they should, for it comes to them freighted with health, and blessing, and comfort, they will never permit it to be wrested from their grasp under any pretence whatever. An attempt made soon after his conversion to rob Billy of this boon signally failed. He showed on that occasion great wisdom and boldness. Before his conversion he had spent his Sabbaths in idleness and sin, afterwards they were sanctified unto the Lord.

One of the levels of the mine in which he worked filled with water every twelve hours, which was then drawn to the surface. When it came to Billy's turn one Sunday to go to the mine to draw up the water, he was at Hicks Mill Chapel. The Lord said to him, “Stay here, and worship me this day.” Billy had no doubt that the Lord did thus speak, or that it was his duty to obey. “I will, Lord,” was his answer, and he left the water to find its way to the bottom of the shaft, in the full belief that no harm would come of it. On the Monday morning he went to the mine at six o'clock, for he could not safely leave the water to take care of itself on the Monday, though he could do so with great confidence on the Sunday. The “captain” interrogated him as to his absence, and Billy frankly told him “it was the Lord's will that he should not work on Sundays.” “I'll Lord's will thee!” the captain angrily said; “thou shalt not work here any more,” Billy was unmoved, “for I felt,”

he said, "that I had the Lord of rocks and hills for my Friend, and I did not care who was against me." But when his comrade told him that lie was turned away too, he quickly, said, "You must not be turned away on my account; it was not your fault, and I'll go to the 'captain' and tell him so." At this interview the "captain" told Billy he must give up that foolish notion about not working on Sundays, for men in a mine must work on Sundays. Billy replied, "For the wickedness of the wicked the land mourneth; and I have a new Master now, and he tells me I must not work on the Sabbath-day, but keep it holy; and I shall do as he tells me." The clerk in the counting-house said, if he felt like William Bray, he wouldn't work on Sundays either. The "captain" then said he might go to work if he would, and Billy's full cup ran over when he gave him such work to do as left him at liberty to go to the meetings every night of the week as well as Sundays.

About the same time a revival began at Twelve-heads Chapel, and believing it was the Lord's will he left his barrow and the ash-heap (the new work to which he had been appointed), and away to the chapel. "I was much wanted," he tells us, "for the old professors were very dead at that time, would come into the chapel with their hats under their arm and look very black at us. But the Lord was with us, and soon tore a hole in Satan's kingdom. We had, I think, nearly a hundred converted in one week, the first week I ever worked all the time for the Lord in His house." On the Friday of that blessed week, it was "taking-on" day at the mine. He thought at first he would go, but his second thought was, "No, I will stay here this week and work for the Lord." "That same night," his account continues, "two men came to the chapel to me, called me out, and said I was appointed to work with them in 'chapel's shaft,' for Captain Hosken, who a little before had turned me away, had told them to take me with them. So I stayed that week and worked for the Lord; and on Monday morning I went to see the place that the Lord had got for me. At the place I had been turned away from I got only £2 a month; and in this new place I had £5 a month or more;\* and had not to work so hard by a great deal. And so the Lord cleared my way forever from working Sundays. I did not lose by serving the Lord, but got £3 a month more than I got before; and did the will of the Lord, *which is letter than all the money in the world*" And whatever ridicule may be poured upon

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\* I am not quite sure, as the different accounts furnished by Billy's friends are not quite clear and consistent, but it is probable that his being put to work in this particular spot was intended as a punishment; perhaps his "captain" had not quite overcome his chagrin at Billy's refusal to work on a Sunday. He and his comrades could not make much progress, a great part of their time being employed in drawing off the water. In the ear of the Most High he poured his complaints. Almost immediately on resuming his work they heard a sort of gurgling with the water below, and in a little time they had a dry place to work in, and the result was in every respect satisfactory.

his statements that he heard the voice of God forbidding him to do this, and directing him to do that, or upon his belief that God would not suffer any harm to be done by the water on the Sunday, surely all must admire his fidelity to his conscience and his God, and his courage in acting up to his convictions of truth and duty, whatever the result might be to himself. And, after all, what are the incidents just related but illustrations of the Scripture, "Them that honour me, I will honour." And if men only simply and honestly believed what God has promised, such examples would be of daily occurrence, for "none ever trusted in Him and was confounded."

Much more of the same kind might be added. In the freshness of his first love, Billy had asked on a Sunday morning, "What can I do to be more acceptable in the sight of the Lord than I have already done?" The answer he received was, "*Fast this day for the Lord's sake.*" "I will, Lord," was his prompt answer. He did not take any food until eight o'clock at night; and that was the best day he had had for twenty-nine years. Henceforth he took no food from Saturday night until four or five o'clock on Sunday afternoon. His neighbours were afraid that he would starve himself, and a good man, Richard Verran by name, kindly said to him, "The devil is trying to starve thee, for he knows what great things the Lord has done for thee." Billy's answer was, "Richard, the devil shall not starve me, for I can soon know by asking the Lord, who will tell me whether I am right or no." On the next Sunday morning he knelt on a stool and said, "Lord, Thou knowest what the people are saying, that I shall starve myself if I fast; now, my dear Lord, if I must not fast make me happier than I have been," But he did not feel happier. Then he said, "Lord, must I fast?" and he says, "The power of God came down upon me, so that I fell off the stool; and I was convinced that it was the will of the Lord that I should fast." What the people said had no effect upon him now and truly, as he declares, "If the members of the churches would *mortify* the flesh more, and not *gratify* it, they would be much happier than they are." To his friends who pressed him to eat he would say, "On the Sunday I get my breakfast and dinner from the King's table, two good meals too, and I would not exchange this food from heaven for the richest dinner on the earth." However long might be the journey he had to take, he never altered his practice. And on the Sunday, incessantly occupied as he was, singing, praying, exhorting, in addition to his bodily exertions, for he would be jumping and dancing almost, every moment when not otherwise engaged, he never seemed to want food, and I never saw him appear either dull or fatigued. To him the promise seemed literally fulfilled—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; *they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.*" After rather a long journey one Sabbath to his appointments, when he was got an old man, a good friend on his return said to him, "Poor old man, come,

are you?" Billy leaped on the floor, and said, "Don't call me an old man, for I am like a boy. I could go the same journey again, for I'm not one bit weary." At another time after a very hard day's work he said to a friend, "How strong I am! I am as strong as a lion. I could run up to St. Austell (a distance of twenty miles or so), I am so strong." After he started one Sabbath morning to take his appointments at Mevagissey, he was then living at Tywardreath Highway, he felt very unwell, but to the suggestion of the enemy, as he supposed, that he had better return, he said, "No, I won't. The dear Lord can help me, and I shall go." The pain soon ceased, and if there was any remaining weakness, when he descended from the pulpit, after the morning service, he shouted and jumped it all away. Mr. Wesley's *sure* remedy for cold and hoarseness, was, we believe, more preaching. A happy meeting seemed to be all that Billy Bray required for either body or soul. On the occasion referred to above, he said, "This is the way to make old people young again. If you will get into the Lord's mill, He will grind you down, and make you come out like new ones." Then, instead of going to dinner, he went to visit the sick, it being his meat and drink to do his heavenly Father's will.

There was, too, a beautiful harmony about Billy's Christian character and consistency. He who will not "rob God" will not defraud his fellow-men; respect for the fourth commandment is a guarantee that the eighth and every other will be scrupulously observed. I am told it is the habit with dishonest miners when they have a good "take" to hide away, when they have the opportunity, some of the ore, so that they may not appear to have been getting too high wages the next "setting-day," and the hidden treasure is reserved and brought out when they are working in a place where the ore is less plentiful and a larger proportion belongs to the "tributor." Against this practice Billy set his face like a flint. "These men could not enjoy religion," he said, "and act the rogue too. What peace of mind could they have when they came to die." Against all deception, fraud, and oppression, he faithfully witnessed, whoever might be the offender, or whatever his rank and position. He sometimes brought upon himself much opposition and reproach for the time, though he carefully watched his temper, that he might not rebuke his brother in a wrong spirit, and for a suitable opportunity, that it might neither be in vain, nor wound the offender unnecessarily. Some of these parties were high-sounding professors; but he well knew if a good conscience be not maintained, of faith itself persons will soon make shipwreck.

A friend of the writer's, naturally of a rather gloomy turn, had much peace and joy during a long illness that ended in death. Speaking to his widow as to the cause of this, which seemed in one of his temperament somewhat remarkable, she said that her husband gratefully noticed the fact, and next to the hope of salvation which he had through Jesus Christ, he thought

that it was because he had *never once knowingly cheated any one of a lump of coal*, his business being that of a coal-merchant. This *practical* Christianity is *the* want of the world.