

THE KING'S SON;

OR,

A MEMOIR OF BILLY BRAY.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRIALS AND CONFLICTS.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.”—GEN. iii. 15.

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love-Him.”—JAMES i. 12.

“THE devil knows where I live,” was a common saying of Billy’s, in answer to remarks of persons that he knew but little or nothing of trial and temptation. He was tempted, so he said, to do many bad things, to swear, to tell lies, &c., and sometimes to end his life by throwing himself down the “shaft” of a mine. But he told the tempter, “*old smutty-face*” to do this himself, and see how he would like it, and not, as too many do, meet Satan more than half-way, go to him, and say, “Hae na ye some dainty temptation for me today now, Paddie Satan? I’m sair wracked for a coaxing temptation;” but Satan he always resisted, “steadfast in the faith.” Nor was he in the habit of seeking sympathy from others; but “took joyfully” everything as it came along from the hand of a loving Father. And more than all, perhaps, he thought “it not *strange* concerning the fiery trials” which were permitted to come upon him, “as though some strange thing had happened unto him.” If temptation were a *strange* thing, it would be still *more* strange that Jesus himself “suffered being tempted,” that He might be “able to succour them that are tempted.” It is marvellous that this power to succour Jesus acquired in the actual conflicts of life.

Mr Gilbert says he has heard that in coming home from the mine on one occasion, soon after his conversion, Billy was thinking of several recent accidents, which had proved fatal to some of his acquaintances. On getting near a “shaft” where one or two persons had been killed, Billy’s mind became possessed with the thought (he was not altogether free from the superstitions which still linger among persons of his class) that they would appear to him from the invisible world. His fears were greatly excited, and though, like

many other troubles, quite imaginary, they were none the less terrible to endure. But he passed the place in safety, and of course saw nothing. On coming near another “shaft,” he thought of one or two persons who had been killed there, and he trembled with the thought that he should see them. But he kept on his way, struggling with his emotions as best he could. In passing this second “shaft,” he had to cross a bridge. Just as he was about to step on it, it came into his mind that the “devil himself” would meet him on the bridge. This thought thoroughly aroused him, and he exclaimed, “The devil! who is he? what can he do? The devil is a fallen angel! he was turned out of heaven by God!—he is held now in chains! I am Billy Bray! God is my heavenly Father! Why should I fear the devil?” Then strong in the consciousness that God was his defence, he said, as if addressing a visible foe, “Come on, then, thou devil; I fear thee not! Come on, Lucifer, and all demons! Come on, old ones and young ones, black ones and blue ones, fiery and red-hot ones; come on, devil, and all thy ugly hosts!” Then, feeling himself delivered from the fears that had distressed and darkened his mind, he began to sing—

“Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky:
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly;”

when he was discovered by some of his neighbours leaping and dancing, and praising the Lord who had again given him the victory!

Not many readers will be able, we suppose, to sympathise with this experience of Billy; but he had trials of another kind which come home very closely to the understandings and hearts of many. The Lord was his Shepherd, and so he never came to want. The promise is, “Bread shall be given,” and “water is sure;” but the Lord’s people are often brought into great straits. Many an honest Christian man has found it hard work at times to provide for the daily wants of himself and family. Satan is busy in plying the temptation then that the Lord has forgotten him, and is utterly regardless of his wants. Scanty fare, an empty cupboard, an ill-furnished table, thread-bare clothing,—are these the evidences and proofs of God’s favour? And then many careless, godless persons have more than heart can wish. God thus *tries* the faith of His children, and He delights to *honour* it. Billy Bray was often thus tried, but God worked out his deliverance. He could *wait*, or *work*, or *suffer*, even *die*, but he could not *sin*, nor doubt his best Friend. He came home one “pay-day” from the mine without any money. It was a great trial to him, but he bore it meekly. His wife reproached him with being the cause of their poverty and trials, but he said to her, “The Lord will provide,” and just then a person, who had heard of his circumstances, came into the house with a

basket of provisions containing all that he and his needed. He might well sing, as we are told he did:—

“Not fearing or doubting,
With Christ on my side,
I hope to die shouting,
The Lord will provide.”

When he took some of the money that he had so hardly earned, to pay for something wanted for the chapels which he did so much to build, his wife declared, “We shall be brought to the Union if you go on in this way.” “Never mind, my dear Joey, the Lord will provide;” and so He did always, often marvellously. Here is one incident from his own lips.

“At one time I had been at work the whole of the month, but had no wages to take up when pay-day came; and as we had no bread in the house, ‘Joey’ advised me to go up and ask the ‘captain’ to lend me a few shillings, which I did, and he let me have ten shillings. On my way home I called to see a family, and found they were worse off than myself; for though we had no bread, we had bacon and potatoes, but they had neither. So I gave them five shillings, and went towards home. Then I called on another family, and found them, if possible, in greater distress than the former. I thought I could not give them less than I had given the others; so I gave them the other five shillings, and went home. And Joey said—

“‘Well, William, have you seen the captain?’

“‘Yes?’

“‘Did you ask him for any money?’

“‘Yes; he let me have ten shillings?’

“‘Where is it?’

“‘I have given it away?’

“‘I never saw the fellow to you in my life. You are enough to try any one?’

“‘The Lord isn’t going to stay in my debt very long,’ and I then went out. For two or three days after this, Joey was mighty down; but about the middle of the week, when I came home from the mine, Joey was looking mighty smiling, so I thought there was something up. Presently Joey said—

“‘Mrs So-and-so has been here today,’

“‘Oh!’

“‘And she gave me a sovereign.’

“‘There, I told you the Lord wasn’t going to stay in my debt very long; there’s the ten shillings, and ten shillings interest.’”

Coming home one Sunday evening from his appointment through a dirty road, Billy stuck in the mud, and in extricating one foot, he tore off the sole

of his shoe. Holding it up, now almost useless, he said, "Here, Father, thou knowest that I have worn out these shoes in Thy cause, and I have no money to buy new ones; help me." The Lord heard him in this time of need, and sent speedy relief. A friend the next week said he wanted Billy to accompany him to Truro; and on their arrival he took him first to a shoe shop, and bought for him a pair of shoes, and then to other shops to get some needed articles of clothing.

Billy was very poor when he was converted (a working man who is a drunkard must be very poor); a low-priced fustian jacket was his best, and he said that was better than he deserved; but false shame did not stop him from going out on the Sunday to warn his fellow-men to "flee from the wrath to come." At the request of a servant girl, an unknown Quaker friend gave him a coat and waistcoat, "which suited me," he said, "as if they were made for me and they served me for years." This reminds me of one of his facetious remarks on a similar occasion. A good friend said to him, "The 'Lord has told me to give you a coat and waistcoat, but I do not I know whether they will fit you." "If the Lord told you to give them to me, they will fit me all right, *for He knows my size exactly.*" It is right to state it was Billy's opinion that almost all the garments which he had given to him fitted him so well because "he and fashion had once quarrelled," and the breach had never been made up.

Billy's deep poverty was shared by many of his fellow-Christians, preachers and others, and his kind Quaker friends showed also no little kindness to them. When the Bible Christian missionaries went out first, their salary was very small, and sometimes they had to get meat and clothes where they could. "The love of Christ constrained them," and many of them cheerfully endured hardness for His sake. Billy relates this circumstance:—

"One of our preachers was called to preach to a very wicked people, and the Lord made him a great blessing to them. He has told me that, after he has done preaching at night, he has had no place to lodge and nothing to eat. He said that he had slept out in a cold frosty night, and when he awoke in the morning he found it very hard work to get any heat in himself. The devil tempted him that his case was a bad one, for he had neither food nor lodgings, and his clothes were very poor. He had no friends; and all the people that were pious met in other societies. A member of another society said to him one day, 'You are fine fellows for beating the bushes, but we get the birds.' The missionary then said to him, 'The Day of Judgment is coming, and then every bird-cage door will be thrown open, and every bird will fly to its own cage; and then those will look foolish enough who have got only empty cages in their hand.' This good man suffered hunger and thirst and poverty to do the Lord's will; and the devil was very busy in showing him that the Lord was a hard Master, and so tried to put him out of the way. But he could not,

for the dear brother was like St Paul, and could say, 'None of these things move me.' When his clothes got poor, the devil would say, 'See how the Lord is serving thee, for thy clothes is just done, and what wilt thou do then.' But he trusted in the Lord, and the Lord opened the heart of a Quaker friend, who asked him one day, 'Is that all the clothes thou hast got?' And he said 'Yes.' Then the friend said, 'Come to my house, and I will give thee some clothes? The Lord also opened the heart of another friend, who sent him some money. Then the missionary said, 'Now, devil, *I will chase thee all over this mission on penny loaves and water.*' So you see that this man loved souls; and he was made a great blessing in the neighbourhood, which had been a wretched one. And the dear Lord will reward the friends who helped him, for He has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me?"

It was Billy's belief that the Lord "opened" the hearts of his friends to help him whenever he needed it, and "shut" them up when help was no longer required.

Billy had other trials in his family besides those of which we have spoken. He had two sisters, and one of them, who was out of her mind, was very trying. She was sometimes so cross, that she exercised Billy's faith and patience more than a little. But he had one unfailing resort in trouble. "I cried to the Lord, and He heard me, for He made me so happy that I could not hold it in; I had a joy unspeakable .and full of glory; I had good measure, pressed down, and running over. *Now what was that trial compared with the blessing I received?* I was so happy that I felt none of these things could move me. I could say, 'I long to be with Christ now. My dear Lord, let me die, and take me to heaven.' I felt so much of the Divine glory that I longed to be there. I cannot tell what I felt." Did he not know what the Saviour meant when He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; *but be of good cheer*, I have overcome the world."

And yet one other *kind* of trial we must mention. During his wife's long illness, which ended in death, he "had many blessed seasons while praying with her, and promises from the dear Lord." At one time the words were so deeply impressed on his mind, "She is mine for ever," that tears came into his eyes. At another time he was greatly comforted by the conviction, inwrought into his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, that he himself, his wife and family, should be saved. Therefore he said, "I had no reason to doubt of my wife's going to heaven; nevertheless the devil often tempted me that, because I was not home with her when she died, it was not well with her. But the devil could not make me believe it. Since the dear Lord has settled the matter, *the old king of the blacks* does not tempt me that she is not in heaven. When the dear Lord speaks to His children's hearts, He speaks the truth; He is a God of truth, and all who love Him are children of the truth."

Thus in all these things was Billy more than a conqueror through Him that loved him.

We may give two or three incidents, as they show not only the eccentricity, but also the force of his genius. He thus repelled the tempter, when he said to him, "I'll have thee down to hell after all." "Hast thee got a little 'lew' place for me in hell where I could sing thee a song? *Thee cus'nt burn me devil. There's no grease in me;*" or, "What an ould (old) fool thee art now; I have been battling with thee for twenty-eight years,* and I have always beat thee, and I always shall." But the devil said again, "Well, I'll have thee down to hell after all." But Billy said to him, "I'd as soon go to hell with thee as not. For I'd bring Jesus Christ with me, and shout and sing, and praise the Lord, for that's a sound thee hasn't heard for two seven years, and I know thee wost-en (would not) like that."† If the temptation was that he was a fool to go and preach, as he would never get anything for it, the answer was, "Not so big a fool as thee art, for once thee was in a good situation, and did not know how to keep it." When his crop of potatoes failed, while his neighbours had plenty, the temptation was, "What a God thine is! He gives others plenty of potatoes and you none. I would not serve such a God as that." Billy's reply was, "*Then I would*, for this shows that my Heavenly Father is omnipotent, and that He can give potatoes or take them away!" and the devil left at once, and as Billy said, "*without having the manners to say good morning.*" It is long ago since Satan asked the Almighty, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" But Christians love God for what He is, and not for profit or reward; and they love holiness, not only because it is happiness, but because it is His image who is to them "the fairest among ten thousand; and the altogether lovely." It is a miserable, shallow philosophy to suppose that the Lord rewards those who are poor in spirit, and pure in heart, and patient under suffering, with mere earthly good, or that their trust, and love, and devotion, and service, can be alienated by any sorrows and evils He permits to come upon them.

In resisting temptation, Billy knew the special value of the *shield of faith*, without which any Christian's armour is incomplete. On one occasion, in his capacity as captain-dresser, he engaged to dress a quantity of ore, and had to employ a number of young persons. But the general opinion was, that the lot was all but worthless, and for a time it was a great trial to Billy as there would be nothing for him, and worse still, nothing for those under him.

* This was spoken at the opening of Penhallow Chapel, Truro Circuit.

† Billy's *daring* faith reminds us of the old Scottish believer of whom Dr. Brown speaks in his *Hora Subsecivæ*. To her pastor, who asked, "Janet, what would you say if, after all he has done for you, God should let you drop into hell?" "E'ens [even as] He likes," answered Janet: "if He does, He'll lose mair than I do." Surely that was the sublimity of faith in Him whose word cannot be broken.

“Why, the people will say, there’s that ould (old) Billy Bray, an ould Bry-anite, an ould rogue, he hath cheated the boys and maidens of their wages. A pretty Christian he!” But Billy wrestled and laboured in prayer, until he got the assurance that the Lord was on his way. (Dan. x. 9.) “I will bring thee through,” the Lord said to him one day while he was praying; to which gracious word he at once answered, “I believe it, Lord, I know Thee wost (Thou wilt); praise the Lord, amen, glory. I don’t care now what the devil says. If Thou tell me, that Thou wilt bring me through, I believe Thou wilt.” And his foot once placed upon the rock, he was not to be moved. The struggle was again and again renewed, but to all suggestions, from whatever quarter they came, his answer was, “I don’t care whether the stuff is worth anything or not. The Lord hath told me He will bring me through, and I believe Him.” And did the Lord disappoint His servant? or leave “him at last in trouble to sink?” No, no! On the “sampling” day the “stuff” was found to be more valuable than any person expected, enabling Billy to pay the boys and girls their wages, his own, and then have £5 left for himself.

His own experience taught him the only method, and his occupation as a miner the particular illustration, by which he could inspire his fellow-Christians with steadfastness and courage in the midst of trials. “The best way to serve the devil,” he would say, “is to win’en (wind him) up at the capstan. Throw the rope round ‘en,” he continued, “and turn away until you get ‘en up close to the axle, and when he cries ‘strick’ (strike), you must ‘en let go at all, but hold ‘en fast. If you get ‘en up tight to the axle, and keep ‘en there, he’ll never be able to harm ‘e (hurt you): all he will be able to do, will be to grizzle at ‘e (snarl at you).” It was evident that Billy had got the arch-foe tight at the capstan.

Who can read this account of Billy’s temptations without being reminded of Jehovah’s declaration to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed;” and the remainder of that storm of wrath which the devil poured on the head of our blessed Redeemer, he has reserved for His followers, but with the same result in many cases, thank God, as in the case of Jesus himself. Impotent is Satan’s fury if we take the whole armour of God.

Billy knew, too, how to fight the devil and his agents with their own weapons. Returning late from a revival meeting, on a dark night, in a lonely road, “certain lewd fellows of the baser sort,” tried to frighten him by making all sorts of unearthly sounds; but he went singing on his way. At last one of them said, in the most terrible tones, “But I’m the devil up here in the hedge, Billy Bray.” “Bless the Lord! bless the Lord!” said Billy, “*I did not know thee ‘wost’ so far away as that.*” To use Billy’s own expression, “What could the devil do with such as he?”

We may again quote a few sentences from Mr Ashworth’s tract:—

“He had a singular method of dealing with grumblers, and persons talking about leaving or changing their class-meetings [or societies].

“‘You know,’ said he, ‘that it is said when sick persons want to shift places, it is a sign they are dying. If Satan tempts me to grumble, shift, and change, I say to him, “Thee out first if thou art tired, and when thou art gone all will be right; bless the Lord!”’

“When found fault with for building a chapel in an out-of-the-way place, he replied—

“‘Many wicked, drunken people lived there, and Satan kept them so dirty, wretched, and ragged, they [were] ashamed to go out of the village; but we built the chapel to catch them, and fairly licked Satan out of the place; bless the Lord!’”

How just and beautiful are the following remarks respecting Billy’s piety, with which we may fitly close this chapter:—“not a benefit-club, a comfortable provision for ‘rainy days—it was a *life*. Never left behind, never put off with the Sunday clothes, never hidden before great or low, good or bad—but *in* him, flowing through him, speaking in every word, felt in every action, seen in every look—deep, true, abiding religion was with him altogether *a life*. Dead indeed unto sin, he was now living unto God through Jesus Christ.

“Billy had ‘lighted his candle,’ and resolved that it should give light to all that were in the house. His religion was not a *safety-lamp*, laid by till he should be going down into the dark valley—nor like the chapel gaslight, that burned only on Sundays and at the week-evening services. Once lighted, it was put into perhaps a commonplace sort of a candlestick, but all at home could see by it. And as the world about him was ‘a dark world,’ he thrust his candle into a lantern and took it forth wherever he went, and guided not a few from ‘horrible pits’ that threatened them into the way of salvation. One thing about this lighted candle Billy never forgot—that *it burned none the worse for every candle that was lighted from it.*”