

HENRY MOORHOUSE

The English Evangelist.

BY

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“The Christian Hero”;
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ETC., ETC.

“GOD GAVE THE BEST IN HEAVEN FOR THE WORST ON EARTH.” (Moorhouse)

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CHAPTER X.

Character.

“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.” ACTS xi. 24.

MEN of influence are usually men of marked individuality. Of this there was much more in the character of the simple “boy-preacher” than was at first sight apparent. In his later years, especially, there was little angularity; his character was well-rounded; by means of habitual self-restraint the equilibrium of his spirit was well maintained, and in his most enthusiastic moments he exemplified “the meekness of wisdom.” Yet, under the calm and child-like exterior there was a constantly-running spring of originality. He copied nobody; he thought for himself; he was himself in everything. This perfect naturalness lent a rare charm to his character, and a power which many felt, acknowledged, and enjoyed.

At the basis of his Christian character lay a decided, personal consecration, a most pronounced separation from the world. He believed he was forgiven much, and it was obvious to all, save himself, that he loved much. A joyful surrender of himself and his all to Christ was the permanent habit of his life. The cross came to him daily, as daily he came to the Cross. But he reckoned not that it came too often; he was happy, he was highly honoured in taking it up day by day, never dreaming of following the example of such as arrange for an occasional cross with long intervals of carnal ease between. What he had given to his Saviour he would not take back if he could. He had given himself to God. He kept himself for God, he found himself in God; this was the secret of his power.

Underneath the consecration of himself lay his strong faith. Strong it was in its simplicity and childlikeness. It was Christ, Christ in the Word, Christ always, Christ only. For his ministry he needed not the hundred and one helps without which most men dare not attempt to preach the Gospel. In his trust in the Word he was happy and strong. He did not think the Bible is behind the age; he knew full well the age is behind the Bible. His confidence in the sword of the Spirit was itself a sermon and a lesson to teachers and people. This was the blade with which the great Captain had cut off the head of the Goliath of hell; he was sure there was none like it, and his constant prayer was “Give it me!” It was curious, almost alarming, to see him stand up to speak amidst an assembly of learned divines and veteran Christians. In the council of war he was but a drummer-boy among generals and captains; yet somehow the beat of his drum touched the chord of sympathy, and he carried all with him.

To his faith he added courage. He was a Christian of the heroic stamp. In one of the last years of his life he requested his medical adviser to tell him the whole truth in regard to his physical condition; he was not afraid to learn he had soon to die. In reply the physician said plainly he could not live long—a certain affection in the region of the heart rendered a fatal issue only too certain, and if he continued to preach, the end would come all the more quickly. “How long do you think I may live if I desist from preaching?” inquired Henry. “Probably eighteen months,” replied the doctor. “And how long if I continue to preach?” was the next question. “Perhaps nine months,” said the other. “Very well,” said our evangelist, in his quiet, happy way, “I will take the nine months, and preach Christ as long as I can.” With this sword hanging over his head he continued in the work, and the reader will not be surprised to learn that for the rest of his time he preached with a power, a mingled solemnity and sweetness unusual for him. Not every servant of God would, in like circumstances, see his way to pursue a similar course; but, beyond question, that calm, deliberate preference of the shorter period with the preaching to the longer period in comparative silence was a real instance of heroic faith and self-sacrifice. Deeds of this stamp lift religion above the ordinary level and attest its divinity and power.

The faith that refuses to believe in impossibilities is sure to prevail. The evangelist of great power possesses the rare gift of being able to create opportunities. Many good and useful workers can labour only where a field is prepared to their hand. Give them a church, a chapel, a meeting-house, or some other convenient place for gathering the people; give them an audience; give them all needful helps and helpers in the work, and they will do the work, and do it well. But without such things as go to make an opportunity, they are powerless. The greater evangelist is able, when no such advantages exist, to call them into existence; to gather the people where they have never been gathered, to arouse a slumbering community, to create the convenient season, and thus bring matters to a solemn issue, simply in virtue of the faith that can level the mountains. “Compel them to come in,” says the King. “If they would only come in, I would do my part to serve them,” says a loyal but not heroic servant. But the servant of the loftier type goes his way to the unwilling, and somehow succeeds in compelling them to come in. The humbler order of evangelist is the bird that can sing only in the sunshine. The evangelist of high degree, like the nightingale, gives his song out of season and in the dark; he awakens sleeping men, and holds them awake by the spell of his soul-moving song. When on one occasion a country minister complained to Duncan Matheson that his field of service was too narrow, the Scottish evangelist inquired if he had gone round the

parish and spoken to every inhabitant about his soul. "No," said the minister; "that would be of no use, for they would not receive me; many of them would shut their doors upon me, if they knew my errand. What then can I do?" "If I were you," replied Matheson, "I would go round to every house in the parish, and if the doors were closed against me, I would cry in at every keyhole, "Prepare to meet thy God!" That is heroic faith. It is the will of God that this kind of worker shall succeed. Such a worker was Henry Moorhouse. Not poverty, not defective education, not the bitter remembrance of early follies, not opposition or scorn, not the coldness of friends, not bodily weakness and pain, with sleepless nights and wearisome days, not the solemn announcement of numbered months, not many things unpleasant to the flesh, stood effectually in his way: he believed on Him who sits upon the throne, and his was the courage to simply act upon his faith.

He was characterized by the warmth of his love for the brethren. There was a glow in his love; you felt its reality. At great evangelistic gatherings he could be seen busying himself in finding lodging for the strangers, in providing railway tickets and otherwise caring for their comfort, although this was probably much less his business than it was the business of others. A Christian acquaintance one day calling on him, intimated that he was preparing to go to America. Moorhouse discovering in the course of the conversation, that this man's resources were narrow, quietly slipped ten pounds into his hand, saying as they parted, "The journey is great, and it will not do to go without something in your pocket." He never could keep a shilling for himself when he saw a Christian brother or sister in want. In his simplicity he assumed that all other followers of Jesus would do just as himself did. Once a poor girl who had been converted under his ministry was in need of a dress. Henry took her to a Christian man who kept a draper's shop. "Here is a poor girl who wants a dress," said he; "I daresay you could supply her from your shop." "With pleasure," said the other, and thereupon the young woman was invited to make her choice. Henry thinking he had sufficiently explained the matter, left the one Christian in the hands of the other. To Henry's surprise, next morning the bill was brought; and to himself fell the privilege, too rarely exercised by the children of God, of leaving a handful behind for the needy gleaner. "Business is business," the pious draper would no doubt say. True, but the too rigid practice of that maxim turns Charity to the door, and scarcely leaves Honesty behind the counter.

In the house of a pastor in America, noticing that the knives and forks were worn and broken, he resolved on replacing the faded articles with a new set on his return from England. The kind purpose was not forgotten. On his re-appearance at the house of the minister, he brought out of one of

his portmanteaus a handsome set of the best ware he could find in England, his sole reward the joy of a loving bountiful heart. Nor was this a mere exception. It was his habit. Bibles and a large variety of useful things were laid up in store for every long journey, especially his American tours; and this giving away, this pleasing and making glad other hearts, he found to be not only a spring of pure happiness, but means of grace to himself and a real help in the work of Christ. Writing from America in the winter he says to his little daughter, Minnie, "Are you feeding the sparrows, Minnie? Don't waste a crumb; give them all to the little birdies." And yet, at that same time he was swimming in a sea of successful work. The love of souls did not lessen his sympathy with suffering creatures. Again and again he writes his Minnie thus, "It will soon be Christmas now; be sure and put out the crumbs for the little birds."

He cultivated a holy, scrupulous tenderness of conscience. Much did he fear wrong-doing even in little things. Especially did he watch against the insidious influence of a mercenary spirit, or of any worldly motive in his work for God. To shut the mouth of the gainsayer, who is ever ready to charge the servant of Christ with sordid aims, he was accustomed joyfully to forego his just claims. He would accept no remuneration in selling the Scriptures. Once, when Bibles were to be supplied on more advantageous terms than the catalogue prices, in order to leave a fair margin of profit, he would not hear of the arrangement. He said he "should not feel happy in making gain out of the Word of God," and greatly preferred going on as before, selling the books at the price they cost him. Viewed from the commercial standpoint, this may have been a mistake; but it revealed a noble spirit of self-sacrifice; and a high regard for even the faintest whispers of what he regarded as the voice of conscience and of duty.

One day, as he was walking with a friend, a waggon laden with hay, happened to pass. Engrossed with the conversation, Henry unthinkingly put out his hand, and drew a small handful of the hay from the cart. Suddenly, as if smitten by some painful reflection, he hurried after the waggon and thrust the few straws back into the mass. It is told of Cranmer, the great English martyr, that deeply grieved for his sin in recanting the faith, he held his hand in the first flames of the fire that consumed him at the stake, exclaiming, "This hand has sinned—this wicked right hand!" A holy vengeance on himself is permitted the Christian; and he may sometimes find it profitable to restrain, even from what is lawful, the eye, the hand, the foot, that had been wont to offend. Holiness in little things is a higher attainment in grace than many imagine, and is more difficult to reach than most suppose it is before they try.

Moorhouse was a man of deep, genuine humility. His chief ornament

was “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” In his later years, at least, he said nothing about himself or his work. One might be long in his company and never learn from his own lips that he had ever preached a sermon or won a soul. He did not count his converts; much less did he advertise to the world the round number of them. He seemed to keep a watchful eye on the approach of that most subtle of devils, spiritual pride. “Down! down! down! Henry Moorhouse,” was still his deepest heart-utterance; “And up, up, up with my Lord and Master Jesus!” Eliot, the famous missionary to the American Indians, when no longer able to preach or visit, was found reclining on his bed, in a state of complete prostration, but at the same time cheerfully exerting the last atom of physical strength in teaching a child the letters of the alphabet. In a like spirit, our evangelist could joyfully descend from preaching to thousands to the humble occupation of selling a cheap copy of the Scriptures to the rudest and most illiterate boor that ever attended a Lancashire fair.

If he had little to say regarding himself or his work, he had a ready tongue for his Master. To prefer Christian work to Christ Himself, is full of peril to the soul. This is to make a Christ of work for Him, and to make of Christ a stepping-stone to self. Not so did our evangelist. He sought to keep his heart ever warm in love to his Saviour. “Oh, I wish I could die for Jesus!” he one day said to a friend. In his thrice-repeated question to Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” our Lord did surely teach His servant that the first and chief qualification for feeding the lambs and the sheep is love to Himself. Intellect, learning, eloquence, are gifts that may be coveted; but the more excellent way is love. He who most loves his Lord is nearest the source of light and power; he is the fittest instrument for the Master to employ. May we not find here the explanation of the marvellous usefulness with which God was pleased to honour Henry Moorhouse?

He was also characterized by a certain transparency and child-likeness. A gracious simplicity is holy greatness. This opens the door and wins a way for the servant of Christ when more brilliant qualities fail. It disarms criticism, breaks down prejudice, and removes offence. “A little child shall lead them.” One will receive the bleating lamb, when he spurns the snappish dog. From the man whose character is “one-fold,” one feels he has nothing to fear. A natural openness of character, when sanctified by grace, is like the heavens for clearness. After meeting with the commonplace character that is close, knowing, and of too many folds to admit of any full glimpse of the interior—and one meets men of this type every day, both in church and market—it is refreshing and elevating to come upon the single-minded, out-and-out honest, child-like soul that suspects no evil and inspires no

fear, and resembles the well-cut diamond that reflects light at every point, rather than the richly-adorned casket which contains something, you know not what, or may contain nothing at all.

From the gentleness and sweetness of his disposition he naturally, and without affectation, conducted himself as a true Christian gentleman. He was the same man, indeed, in the drawing-room and in the kitchen; and yet with a wise difference. I have known an evangelist at the dinner-table catechise his host and the entire company one by one, demanding of each a categorical answer to the question, "Are you born again?" The intention, doubtless, was good; but so far as the adaptation of means to the end is concerned, he would have been as near the mark, had he stuck his fork into his neighbour's ribs, with the view of improving his digestion. Henry Moorhouse could be very bold and even blunt, but he did not blunder and spoil his work in that way. "Are you a Christian?" he inquired of a gentleman in America, to whom he had just delivered a letter of introduction. The answer to this question was a hearty invitation to the supper table and all the hospitalities of the house. But he assured the kind host that his Master had laid this duty upon his heart, and he dared not enter upon the enjoyment of any hospitalities until the question was answered. This persistency of love, for such it was, served to break the fetter that for a long season had bound the tongue of his host on the subject of personal religion, and prepared him for a fresh baptism of grace. But such things can only be done by men full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.

"Faithfulness, devotedness, unselfishness, love to the Master," are the characteristics ascribed to him by his most intimate friend, Mr. George C Needham, of Chicago. A consecrated man, he seemed ever to breathe the free, loving, joyful spirit of one who has lost his own will in God's. If he had a place near his Lord, the only station he coveted, it was the very place occupied of old by the woman who sat behind Jesus, washing His feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hair of her head. The remembrance of his early life never ceased to give him unutterable sorrow. He could not forgive himself. He who is forgiven by God never forgives himself. He who forgives himself has never been forgiven by God. While, in his later years at least, he entertained an habitual repugnance to any allusion on his own part to the days of his shame, he cherished the constant recollection of it, and like the sweet singer of Israel, he had his seasons and psalms, "to bring to remembrance." A sense of his infinite obligations to his Redeemer was the predominating emotion of his soul. This lay at the root of his character and work. Truly he could say—

"Body, soul, and spirit,

O Lord, I give to Thee;
A consecrated offering,
Thine evermore to be."

Twenty years of life "after the flesh," were never followed by twenty brighter years "in the Spirit," than the career of this child-like man reveals.

Moorhouse walked closely with his God. Much prayer gave him that quietness and confidence in which so largely lay his strength. It was the wise resolution of the sagacious American revivalist Nettleton, who was instrumental in the conversion of many thousands of sinners to Christ, "to aim at the greatest amount of good with the least possible noise." This can be accomplished only by a constant dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. So much was Moorhouse in the habit of prayer, that he ceased not to commune with His Lord even in sleep. This may explain his singular dreams, of which one instance may be here given. Once in a dream he thought he saw the evangelists of the day brought into a room for examination. Each was placed, like a statue, on a pedestal, with a looking-glass on his naked breast, revealing his besetting sin. A little boy, like an angel, went round, naming each in turn, and announcing to each his sin. To one, love of money; to another, praise of men; to a third, self-exaltation; and so on. Henry trembled as the little angel-interpreter approached and intimated to him that his besetting sin was the love of the praise of men. Of all present, only three were exempt from every motive save love to Christ. This was only a dream; but to the end of his days Henry Moorhouse seemed to live in constant watchfulness against the snare of human praise.

So much with his Saviour, no wonder if he grew like Him. His face shone; but he wist not that it shone. He walked so constantly in the Lord's garden that his garments were always redolent with its perfume. He carried the Rose of Sharon in his bosom, and the fragrance was diffused around. He looked for answers to prayer every day, and he got answers every day. He prayed about everything, and he was answered about everything. He was wont to pray for light on a difficult passage of Scripture, and the light was given. He prayed for clothes when reduced to a last and thread-bare suit, and the answer came in the very things he needed. He prayed for money, when his last shilling was gone, and the money was sent him. He prayed for conversions, and conversions followed. When he had no pressing necessity, he prayed for the love he had to his God. And when his prayers were not answered, or were answered "by terrible things in righteousness," he learned therewith to be content. But in his communion he ever took the Book with him. He seemed to catch its very whisper, as well

as its louder voices. He walked with God not less by the Word than by prayer. He laid the Book at the Master's feet and read it there: this was the spring of his personal holiness, and his evangelistic power. The Bible was indeed the mirror in which he beheld the glory of the Lord, and steadfastly looking, he was changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It was the Holy Spirit thus dwelling in him that made Henry Moorhouse a lowly, full-souled, happy disciple, a trusty, single-eyed messenger of the truth, whose silver-voiced trumpet has been the medium of conveying the distinct call of God's effectual grace to many immortal souls.

From hollows and knotty parts the smoothest and most perfectly rounded human character is never wholly exempt; and it were no hard task to discover infirmities and defects in Henry Moorhouse. But taking him altogether, his life as a Christian was singularly free of blame, and his course honourable in a high degree. As a monument of divine grace he was truly remarkable; as a preacher of Christ he was chief of a thousand. In his life's story we see how God stains the pride of man, both in the men He saves, and in the men He employs to save others. No man, with more truth than he, might appropriate the words of the apostle and say, "By the grace of God I am. what I am." No evangelist, no pastor, no worker for Christ in these days, has been in his service a better illustration than Henry Moorhouse of the inspired words, "For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

THE END.