

THE
WORKS
OF
THE REV . JOHN NEWTON

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LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

CONTAINING
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &C., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA,
DISCOURSES INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED
MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.

BY THE REV. R. CECIL, A. M.

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LETTER XI.

DEAR SIR,

A FEW days after I was thus wonderfully saved from an unforeseen danger, we sailed for Antigua, and from thence proceeded to Charleston, in South Carolina. In this place there are many serious people; but I knew not how to find them out. Indeed, I was not aware of a difference; but supposed that all who attended public worship were good christians. I was as much in the dark about preaching, not doubting but whatever came from the pulpit must be very good. I had two or three opportunities of hearing a dissenting minister, named Smith, who, by what I have known since, I believe to have been an excellent and powerful preacher of the gospel; and there was something in his manner that struck me; but I did not rightly understand him. The best words that men can speak are ineffectual, till explained and applied by the Spirit of God, who alone can open the heart. It pleased the Lord for some time, that I should learn no more than what he enabled me to collect from my own experience and reflection. My conduct was now very inconsistent. Almost every day, when business would permit, I used to retire into the woods and fields (for these, when at hand, have always been my favourite oratories); and I trust I began to taste the sweets of communion with God, in the exercises of prayer and praise, and yet I frequently spent the evening in vain and worthless company. Indeed, my relish for worldly diversions was much weakened, and I was rather a spectator than a sharer in their pleasures; but I did not as yet see the necessity of an absolute forbearance. Yet, as my compliance with custom and company was chiefly owing to want of light, rather than to an obstinate attachment, and the Lord was pleased to preserve me from what I knew was sinful, I had, for the most part, peace of conscience, and my strongest desires were towards the things of God. As yet I knew not the force of that precept, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," but very often ventured upon the brink of temptation; but the Lord was gracious to my weakness, and would not suffer the enemy to prevail against me. I did not break with the world at once (as might, in my case, have been expected), but I was gradually led to see the inconvenience and folly of one thing after another, and, when I saw it, the Lord strengthened me to give it up. But it was some years before I was set quite at liberty from occasional compliance in many things in which, at this time, I dare by no means allow myself.

We finished our voyage, and arrived in L When the ship's affairs were settled, I went to London, and from thence (as you may suppose) I soon repaired to Kent. More than seven years were now elapsed since my first visit. No views of the kind could seem more chimerical, or could subsist under greater discouragements, than mine had done; yet, through the over-ruling goodness of God, while I seemed abandoned to myself; and blindly following my own passions, I was guided, by a hand that I knew not, to the accomplishment of my wishes. Every obstacle was now removed. I had renounced my former follies, my interest was established, and friends on all sides consenting, the point was now entirely between ourselves, and, after what had passed, was easily concluded. Accordingly, our hands were joined on the first of February 1750.

The satisfaction I have found in this union, you will suppose, has been greatly heightened by reflections on the former disagreeable contrasts I had

passed through, and the views I have had of the singular mercy and providence of the Lord in bringing it to pass. If you please to look back to the beginning of my sixth letter, I doubt not but you will allow that few persons have known more, either of the misery or happiness, of which human life (as considered in itself) is capable. How easily, at a time of life when I was so little capable of judging (but a few months more than seventeen), might my affections have been fixed where they could have met with no return, or where success would have been the heaviest disappointment. The long delay I met with was likewise a mercy; for, had I succeeded a year or two sooner, before the Lord was pleased to change my heart, we must have been mutually unhappy, even as to the present life. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my days.

But alas! I soon began to feel that my heart was still hard and ungrateful to the God of my life. This crowning mercy, which raised me to all I could ask or wish in a temporal view, and which ought to have been an animating motive to obedience and praise, had a contrary effect. I rested in the gift, and forgot the giver. My poor narrow heart was satisfied. A cold and careless frame, as to spiritual things; took place, and gained ground daily. Happy for me, the season was advancing, and in June I received orders to re-pair to L——. This roused me from my dream. I need not tell you, that I found the pains of absence and separation fully proportioned to my preceding pleasure. It was hard, very hard, to part, especially as conscience interfered, and suggested to me how little I deserved that we should be spared to meet again. But the Lord supported me. I was a poor faint idolatrous creature; but I had now some acquaintance with the way of access to a throne of grace, by the blood of Jesus, and peace was soon restored to my conscience. Yet, through all the following voyage, my irregular and excessive affections were as thorns in my eyes, and often made my other blessings tasteless and insipid. But He, who doth all things well, over-ruled this likewise for good. It became an occasion of quickening me in prayer, both for her and myself; it increased my indifference for company and amusement; it habituated me to a kind of voluntary self-denial, which I was afterwards taught to improve to a better purpose.

While I remained in England, we corresponded every post; and all the while I used the sea afterwards, I constantly kept up the practice of writing two or three times a week (if weather and business permitted), though no conveyance homeward offered for six or eight months together. My packets were usually heavy; and as not one of them at any time miscarried, I have to the amount of nearly two hundred sheets of paper now lying in my bureau of that correspondence. I mention this little relief I had contrived to soften the intervals of absence, because it had a good effect beyond my first intention. It habituated me to think and write upon a great variety of subjects; and I acquired, insensibly, a greater readiness of expressing myself, than I should have otherwise attained. As I gained more ground in religious knowledge, my letters became more serious, and, at times, I still find an advantage in looking them over, especially as they remind me of many providential incidents, and the state of my mind at different periods in these voyages, which would otherwise have escaped my memory.

I sailed from L—— in August 1750, commander of a good ship. I have no very extraordinary events to recount from this period, and shall, therefore, contract my memoirs, lest I become tedious; yet I am willing to give you a

brief sketch of my history down to 1755, the year of my settlement in my present situation. I had now the command and care of thirty persons; I endeavoured to treat them with humanity, and to set them a good example. I likewise established public worship, according to the liturgy, twice every Lord's day, officiating my-self. Farther than this I did not proceed, while I continued in that employment.

Having now much leisure, I prosecuted the study of the Latin with good success. I remembered a dictionary this voyage, and pro-cured two or three other books; but still it was my hap to choose the hardest. I added Juvenal to Horace; and, for prose authors, I pitched upon Livy, Caesar, and Sallust. You will easily conceive, Sir, that I had hard work to begin (where I should have left off) with Horace and Livy. I was not aware of the difference of style; I had heard Livy highly commended, and was resolved to understand him. I began with the first page, and laid down a rule, which I seldom departed from, not to proceed to a second period till I understood the first, and so on. I was often at a stand, but seldom discouraged; here and there I found a few lines quite obstinate, and was forced to break in upon my rule, and gave them up, especially as my edition had only the text, without any notes to assist me. But there were not many such; for, before the close of that voyage, I could (with a few exceptions) read Livy from end to end, almost as readily as an English author. And I found, in surmounting this difficulty, I had surmounted all in one. Other prose authors, when they came in my way, cost me little trouble. In short, in the space of two or three voyages, I became tolerably acquainted with the best classics (I put all I have to say upon this subject together); I read Terence, Virgil, and several pieces of Cicero, and the modern classics, Buchanan, Erasmus, and Cassimir. At length I conceived a design of becoming Ciceronian myself, and thought it would be a fine thing indeed to write pure and elegant Latin. I made some essays towards it, but by this time the Lord was pleased to draw me nearer to himself, and to give me a fuller view of the "pearl of great price," the inestimable treasure hid in the field of the holy scriptures; and, for the sake of this, I was made willing to part with all my newly acquired riches. I began to think that life was too short (especially my life) to admit of leisure for such elaborate trifling. Neither poet nor historian could tell me a word of Jesus, and I therefore applied myself to those who could. The classics were at first restrained to one morning in the week, and at length quite laid aside. I have not looked into Livy these five years, and I suppose I could not well understand him. Some passages in Horace and Virgil I still admire, but they seldom come in my way. I prefer Buchanan's Psalms to a whole shelf of Elzevirs. But thus much I have gained, and more than this I am not solicitous about, so much of the Latin as enables me to read any useful or curious book that is published in that language. About the same time, and for the same reason that I quarrelled with Livy, I laid aside the mathematics. I found they not only cost me much time, but engrossed my thoughts too far; my head was literally full of schemes. I was weary of cold contemplative truths, which can neither warns nor amend the heart, but rather tend to aggrandize self. I found no traces of this wisdom in the life of Jesus, or the writings of Paul. I do not regret that I have had some opportunities of knowing the first principles of these things; but I see much cause to praise the Lord, that he inclined me to stop in time; and that whilst I was "spending my

labour for that which is not bread,” he was pleased to set before me “wine and milk, without money and without price.”

My first voyage was fourteen months, through various scenes of danger and difficulty, but nothing very remarkable; and as I intend to be more particular with regard to the second, I shall only say that I was preserved from every harm; and having seen many fall on my right hand and on my left, I was brought home in peace, and restored to where my thoughts had been often directed, November 2, 1751.

I am, Your's &c.

January 22, 1763.