

THE
WORKS
OF
THE REV . JOHN NEWTON

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF
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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.

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LETTER XII.

DEAR SIR,

I ALMOST wish I could recal my last sheet, and retract my promise. I fear I have engaged too far, and shall prove a mere egotist. What have I more that can deserve your notice? However, it is some satisfaction that I am now writing to yourself only; and I believe, you will have candour to excuse, what nothing but a sense of your kindness could extort from me.

Soon after the period where my last closes, that is, in the interval between my first and second voyage after my marriage, I began to keep a sort of diary, a practice which I have found of great use. I had, in this interval, repeated proofs of the ingratitude and evil of my heart. A life of ease, in the midst of my friends, and the full satisfaction of my wishes, was not favourable to the progress of grace, and afforded cause of daily humiliation. Yet, upon the whole, I gained ground. I became acquainted with books, which gave me a further view of christian doctrine and experience, particularly Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Hervey's *Meditations*, and the *Life of Colonel Gardiner*. As to preaching, I heard none but of the common sort, and had hardly an idea of any better; neither had I the advantage of christian acquaintance; I was likewise greatly hindered by a cowardly reserved spirit; I was afraid of being thought precise; and, though I could not live without prayer, I durst not propose it, even to my wife, till she herself first put me upon it; so far was I from those expressions of zeal and love, which seemed so suitable to the case of one who has had much forgiven. In a few months the returning season called me abroad again, and I sailed from L in a new ship, July 1752.

A sea-faring life is necessarily excluded from the benefit of public ordinances and christian communion; but, as I have observed, my loss upon these heads was at this time but small. In other respects, I know not any calling that seems more favourable, or affords greater advantages to an awakened mind, for Promoting the life of God in the soul, especially to a person who has the command of a ship, and thereby has it in his power to restrain gross irregularities in others, and to dispose of his own time; and still more so in African voyages, as these ships carry a double Proportion of men and officers to most others, which made my department very easy; and, excepting the hurry of trade, &c. upon the coast, which is rather occasional than constant, afforded me abundance of leisure. To be at sea in these circumstances, withdrawn out of the reach of innumerable temptations, with opportunity and a turn of mind disposed to observe the wonders of God in the great deep, with the two noblest objects of sight, the expanded heavens, and the expanded ocean, continually in view; and where evident interpositions of Divine Providence, in answer to prayer, occur almost every day; these are helps to quicken and confirm the life of faith, which, in a good measure, supply to a religious sailor the want of those advantages which can be only enjoyed upon the shore. And, indeed, though my knowledge of spiritual things (as knowledge is usually estimated) was, at this time, very small, yet I sometimes look back with regret upon those scenes. I never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than in my two last voyages to Guinea, when I was either almost secluded from society on ship-board, or when on shore among the natives. I have wandered through the woods,

reflecting on the singular goodness of the Lord to me, in a place where, perhaps, there was not a person who knew him for some thousand miles round me. Many a time, upon these occasions, I have restored the beautiful lines of Propertius to the right owner; lines full of blasphemy and madness, when addressed to a creature, but full of comfort and propriety in the mouth of a believer.

Sic ego desertis passim bene vivere sylvis
Quo nulla humans sit via trita pede;
Tu mihi curarum requies, is nocte velatra
Lumen, et in solis to mihi turba locis.

PARAPHRASED.

In desert woods with thee, my God,
Where human footsteps never trod,
How happy could I be!
Thou my repose from care, my light
Amidst the darkness of the night,
In solitude my company.

In the course of this voyage I was wonder-fully preserved in the midst of many obvious unforeseen dangers. At one time there was a conspiracy amongst my own people to turn pirates, and take the ship from me. When the plot was nearly ripe, and they only waited a convenient opportunity, two of those concerned in it were taken ill one day; one of them died, and he was the only person I buried while on board. This suspended the affair, and opened a way to its discovery, or the consequence might have been fatal. The slaves on board were likewise frequently plotting insurrections, and were sometimes upon the very brink of mischief; but it was always disclosed in due time. When I have thought myself most secure, I have been suddenly alarmed with danger; and when I have almost despaired of life, as sudden a deliverance has been vouchsafed me. My stay upon the coast was long, and the trade very precarious; and, in the pursuit of my business, both on board and on shore, I was in deaths often. Let the following instance serve as a specimen.

I was at a place called Mana, near Cape Mount, where I had transacted very large concerns; and had, at the time I am speaking of, some debts and accounts to settle, which required my attendance on shore, and I intended to go the next morning. When I arose, I left the ship according to my purpose; but when I came near the shore, the surf, or break of the sea, ran so high, that I was almost afraid to attempt landing. Indeed, I had often ventured at a worse time, but I felt an inward hindrance and backwardness, which I could not account for; the surf furnished a pretext for indulging it, and after waiting and hesitating for about half an hour, I returned to the ship, without doing any business; which I think I never did, but that morning, in all the time I used that trade. But I soon perceived the reason of all this. It seems, the day before I intended to land, a scandalous and groundless charge had been laid against me (by whose instigation I could never learn), which greatly threatened my honour and interest, both in Africa and England, and would perhaps, humanly speaking, have affected my life, if I had landed according to my intention. I shall, perhaps, inclose a letter, which will give a full account of this strange adventure; and therefore shall say no more of it here, any further than to tell you, that an attempt, aimed to destroy either my life or my character, and which might very probably, in its consequences have ruined my voyage,

passed off without the least inconvenience. The person most concerned owed me about a hundred pounds, which he sent me in a huff; and otherwise, perhaps, would not have paid me at all. I was very uneasy for a few hours, but was soon afterwards comforted. I heard no more of my accusation, till the next voyage, and then it was publicly acknowledged to have been a malicious calumny, without the least shadow of a ground.

Such were the vicissitudes and difficulties through which the Lord preserved me. Now and then both faith and patience were sharply exercised, but suitable strength was given; and as those things did not occur every day, the study of the Latin, of which I gave a general account in my last, was renewed, and carried on from time to time, when business would permit. I was—mostly very regular in the management of my time. I allotted about eight hours for sleep and meals, eight hours for exercise and devotion, and eight hours to my books; and thus, by diversifying my engagements, the whole day was agreeably filled up, and I seldom found a day too long, or an hour to spare. My studies kept me employed, and so far it was well; otherwise they were hardly worth the time they cost, as they led me to an admiration of false models and false maxims; an almost unavoidable consequence, I suppose, of an admiration of classic authors. Abating what I have attained of the language, I think I might have read Cassandra or Cleopatra to as good purpose as I read Livy, whom I now account an equal romancer, though in a different way.

From the coast, I went to St. Christopher's; and here my idolatrous heart was its own punishment. The letters I expected from Mrs. N**** were, by mistake, forwarded to Antigua, which had been at first proposed as our port. As I was certain of her punctuality in writing, if alive, I concluded, by not hearing from her, that she was surely dead. This fear affected me more and more; I lost my appetite and rest; I felt an incessant pain in my stomach, and in about three weeks time I was near sinking under the weight of an imaginary stroke. I felt some severe symptoms of that mixture of pride and madness, which is commonly called a broken heart; and, indeed, I wonder that this case is not more common than it appears to be. How often do the potsherds of the earth presume to contend with their Maker and what a wonder of mercy is it, that they are not all broken! However, my complaint was not all grief; conscience had a share. I thought my unfaithfulness to God had deprived me of her, especially my backwardness in speaking of spiritual things, which I could hardly attempt even to her. It was this thought, that I had lost invaluable, irrecoverable opportunities, which both duty and affection should have engaged me to improve, that chiefly stung me; and I thought I could have given the world to know she was living, that I might at least discharge my engagements by writing, though I were never to see her again. This was a sharp lesson, but I hope it did me good; and when I had thus suffered some weeks, I thought of sending a small vessel to Antigua. I did so, and she brought me several packets, which restored my health and peace, and gave me a strong contrast of the Lord's goodness to me, and my unbelief and ingratitude towards him.

In August, 1753, I returned to L—— My stay was very short at home that voyage, only six weeks; in that space nothing very remarkable occurred; I shall therefore begin my next with an account of my third and last voyage. And thus I give both you and myself hopes of a speedy period to these memoirs, which begin to be tedious and minute, even to myself; only I am

animated by the thought that I write at your request, and have there-fore an opportunity of chewing myself,

Your obliged servant.

January 31, 1763.