



THE
HAPPY WATERMAN.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A HYMN OF PRAISE
FOR AN ABUNDANT HARVEST.

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THE HAPPY WATERMAN.

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A GENTLEMAN and lady walking on the banks of the River Thames spied a small ferry-boat, with a neatly-dressed waterman rowing towards them : on his nearer approach, they read on the stern of his

boat these words—THE HAPPY WATERMAN. Without taking any notice of it, they determined to enter into conversation with him, and inquiring into his situation in life, they found that he had a wife and five children, and supported also an old father and mother-in-law by his own labour. The gentleman and lady were upon this still more surprised at the title he had given himself, and said, “My friend, if this is your situation, how is it that you call yourself the Happy Waterman?” “I can easily explain this to your satisfaction,” answered the young man, “if you will give me leave:” and they desiring him to proceed, he spoke as follows:—

“I have observed that our greatest blessings in life are often looked upon as the greatest distresses, and are, in fact,

made such by means of imprudent conduct. My father and mother died a few years ago, and left a large family; my father was a waterman, and I was his assistant in the management of a ferry-boat, by which he supported his family; on his death it was necessary (in order to pay his just debts) to sell our boat! I parted from it—even with tears; but the distress that I felt spurred me on to industry, for I said, I will use every kind of diligence to purchase my boat back again. I went to the person who had bought it, and told him my design; he had given five *guineas* for it, but told me as I was once the owner, that I should have it whenever I could raise *pounds*. ‘Shall the boat be mine again?’ said I; my heart bounded at the thought!

“ I was at this time married to a good

young woman, and we lived at a neighbouring cottage : she was young, healthy, and industrious, and so was I, and we loved one another. What might we not undertake?—My father used to say to me, ‘ Always do what is right; labour diligently, and spend your money carefully; and God will bless your store.’ We treasured up these rules, and determined to try the truth of them. My wife had long chiefly supported two aged parents; I loved them as my own; and the desire of contributing to their support was an additional spur to my endeavours to re-purchase the boat. I entered myself as a day-labourer in the garden of our squire; and my wife was called occasionally to perform some services at the house, and employed herself at needle-work, spinning, or knitting at home : not a moment in the day was suffered to pass

unemployed — we spared for ourselves, and furnished all the comforts we could to the poor about us, and every week we dropped a little overplus into a fairing-box—to buy the BOAT. If any accident or charity brought us an additional shilling, we did not enlarge our expense, but kept it for the BOAT. The more care we took, the more comfortable we felt, for we were the nearer the possession of our little BOAT. Our labour was lightened by our looking forward to the attainmen of our wishes. Our family indeed increased, but with it our friends increased also; for the cleanliness and frugality which furnished our cottage, and the content and cheerfulness that appeared in it, drew the notice of our rich neighbours—of my master and mistress particularly, whose rule was to assist the industrious, but not to encourage the idle.

They did not approve of giving money to the poor; but in cold winters, or dear times, allowed us to buy things at a cheaper rate; this was *money to us*; for when we counted our little cash for the week's marketing, all that was saved to us by our tickets to purchase things at reduced prices, went into 'our little box.' If my children got a penny at school for a reward, to buy gingerbread, they brought it home, they said to help to buy the BOAT; for they would have no gingerbread till daddy had got his BOAT again. Thus from time to time our little store insensibly increased, till one pound only was wanting of the five, when the following accident happened:

“Coming home one evening from my work, I saw in the road a small pocket-book: on opening it I found a bank note

of ten pounds, which plainly enough belonged to my master, for his name was upon it, and I had also seen him passing that way in the evening; it being too late, however, to return to his house, I went on my way. When I told my family of the accident, the little ones were thrown into a transport of joy. 'My dears,' said I, 'what is the matter?' 'O daddy, the BOAT, the BOAT; we may now have two or three boats!' I checked them by my looks, and asked them if they recollected whose money that was? they said, 'Yours, as you found it.' I reminded them that I was not the real owner, and bid them think how they would all feel, supposing a stranger was to take our box of money, if I should happen to drop it on the day I went to buy back my BOAT. This thought had the effect on their young minds that I desired: they were silent

and pale with the representation of such a disaster, and I begged it might be a lesson to them never to forget the golden rule of 'doing as they would wish others to do by them;' for by attention to this certain guide, no one would ever do wrong to another. I also took this opportunity to explain to them, that the possession of the BOAT by dishonest means would never answer, since we could not expect the blessing of God upon *bad deeds*.

“To go on with my story : The next morning I put the pocket-book into my bosom, and went to my work, intending, as soon as the family rose, to give it to my master ; but what were my feelings when, on searching in my bosom, it was no where to be found ! I hasted back along the road I came, looking diligently

all the way, but in vain! there were no traces of any such thing. I would not return to my cottage, because I wished to save my family the pain I felt; and in the hope of still recovering the book I went to my work, following another path, which I recollected I had also gone by: on my return to the garden-gate I was accosted by the gardener, who, in a threatening tone, told me I was suspected: that our master had lost a pocket-book, describing what I had found, and that I being the only man absent from the garden at the hour of work, the rest of the men also denying that they had seen any such thing, there was every reason to conclude that I must have got it. Before I could answer, my distressed countenance confirmed the suspicion; and another servant coming up, said I was detected, for that a person had been sent

to my house, and that my wife and family had owned it all, and had described the pocket-book. I told them the real fact, but it seemed to every one unlikely to be true; every circumstance was against me, and (my heart trembles to look back upon it) I was arrested, and hurried away to prison! I protested my innocence, but



I did not wonder that I gained no credit. Great grief now oppressed my heart: my poor wife, my dear children, and my grey-headed parents, were all at once

plunged into want and misery, instead of the ease and happiness which we were expecting; for we were just arriving at the height of our earthly wishes. I had, however, one consolation left—that I knew *I was innocent*: and I trusted that, by perseverance in honesty, all might come right at last. My resolution was, as I had certainly been the cause, though without any design, of the second loss of the property, that I would offer (alas!) the whole of our little store, to make it good as far as in my power; and I sent for my wife to give her this sad commission, but she informed me that even this sacrifice could be of no avail; ‘for,’ said she, ‘your master has been at the cottage, when I told him freely how you had found the note, but unfortunately had lost it again, and I added that I was sure both I and my husband would make the

best return in our power ; after which I produced our little fairing-box, and begged



him to accept the contents which had been so long raising, as all we had to offer ; but, Sir," said the Waterman, " conceive my agony, when she added, that my master angrily refused, saying, that our being in possession of all that money, was of itself the clearest proof of my guilt : for it was impossible, with my large family, and no greater opportunities than my neighbours, that I could come honestly

by such a sum; therefore he was determined to keep me in gaol till I should pay the whole! My unhappiness was very great: however my mind by degrees began to be more easy, for I grew confident that I should not trust in God and my own innocence in vain; and so it happened: one of my fellow-labourers proved to be the person who had picked up the note after I had dropped it, having come a few minutes after me along the same road to his work, and hearing that the suspicion had fallen altogether upon me, he was tempted to turn the accident to his own advantage, and conceal the property; which having kept in his own box for a few weeks, till he thought no suspicion would rest upon him, he went and offered the note for change, and being then suspected, my master had him taken up, and I was released.

“ The second change from so much misery to happiness was almost too much for us. My master sent for me, and with many expressions of concern for what had passed, made me give him an account of the means by which I had collected the little fund, that fixed his suspicion so strongly upon me. I accordingly related the history of it as I have now done ; and when I came to that part where I checked my children for their inconsiderate joy



on the finding the note, he rose, with much kindness in his looks, and putting

the bank bill into my hand, he said—  
'Take it!—the bank note shall be theirs. It is the best and only return I can make you, as well as a just reward of your honesty; and it will be a substantial proof to your children of the goodness of your instructions, for they will thus early see and feel the benefit of honesty and virtue!'

"This kind and worthy gentleman interested himself much in the purchase of my boat, which, in less than a week, I was in full possession of. The remainder of my master's bounty, and the additional advantage of the ferry, has placed me in comfortable circumstances, which I humbly trust God will continue to us as long as we continue our labour and honest diligence; and I can say from my long experience, that the fruit of our own

industry is always sweetest. I have now also the pleasure of being able to help others; for when a rich passenger takes my ferry, as my story is well known in the neighbourhood, he often gives me more than my fare, which enables me to let the next poor person go over for half price."

The lady and gentleman were extremely pleased with the waterman's story, and willingly joined in calling him **THE HAPPY WATERMAN**. They passed over in his ferry-boat, for the sake of making him a handsome present. And from this time becoming acquainted with his family, they did them every service in their power, giving books and schooling to their little ones, and every comfort to the old father and mother-in-law as long as they lived. They were very de-

sirous of knowing what became of the unfortunate fellow-labourer, who had gone so dreadfully aside from the principles of honesty—and they learnt that he was, after a short imprisonment, set at liberty by his master, at the earnest entreaty of the honest Waterman, as he said it was partly through his carelessness in losing the note that the temptation had fallen in his fellow-labourer's way: he had moreover a very large family: his master also was so good as to consider that he was a man who had not been blessed with a good education in his youth—so that having little fear of God before his eyes, and having a great temptation in his way, he had been more easily led to commit this very wicked action, by which he would have enriched himself at the expense of an innocent man. I have great pleasure in adding

that the thought of what he had done, together with the generosity of the Waterman, had so strong an effect upon this poor fellow, that he afterwards had written upon his cottage door—DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE UNTO. And he has resolved to follow this rule himself in future, and also taught it to all his children : indeed it became a rule well known over the whole parish : for every little child having been informed of this story, was told that he ought to consider before he did any action, whether he would like his brother or sister, or school-fellow to do the same by him ; and if not, that the action was wrong, and not to be done, let the profit be ever so great. Surely, then, those who have lived long, and seen much of life, and have had much religious instruction also, should never depart from this simple and certain rule. And it is the same to

all ranks—it requires neither learning nor abilities to “do as you would be done unto;” nor can any station, however great, no, nor can any circumstances, however trying, excuse men from giving their constant attention to this *Golden Rule*.





A HYMN OF PRAISE,

*For the abundant Harvest of 1706, after a year  
of Scarcity.*

GREAT God! when famine threaten'd late  
To scourge our guilty land,  
O did we learn from that dark fate  
To dread thy mighty hand?

Did then our sins to mem'ry rise?  
Or own'd we God was just?  
Or raised we penitential cries?  
Or bow'd we in the dust?

As when the promis'd harvest fail'd  
In Canaan's fruitful land,  
The envious patriarchs were assail'd  
By famine's pressing hand :

The angry brothers then forgot  
Each fierce and jarring feud ;  
United by their adverse lot,  
They loved as brothers should :

So here, from Heaven's correcting hand,  
Though famine fail'd to move ;  
Let plenty now throughout the land  
Rekindle peace and love.

Like the rich fool, let us not say,  
Soul ! thou hast goods in store !  
But shake the overplus away,  
To feed the aged poor.



Let rich and poor, on whom are now  
Such bounteous crops bestow'd,  
Raise many a pure and holy vow,  
In gratitude to God!

And while his gracious name we praise  
For bread so kindly giv'n ;  
Let us beseech him all our days,  
To give the bread of heav'n.

In that blest prayer our Lord did frame,  
Of all our prayers the guide,  
We ask that "Hallow'd be *his* name,"  
And then our wants supplied.

For grace he bids us first implore,  
Next that we may be fed ;  
We say, " Thy will be done," before  
We ask, " Our daily bread."

THE END.

