

*Sunday Reading.*

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THE  
**BEGGARLY BOY.**  
*A PARABLE.*

TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
A NEW HISTORY *of a* TRUE BOOK.



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THE  
BEGGARLY BOY.

A PARABLE.

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ONCE on a time a poor beggarly boy, who used to carry matches about the streets, was met by a very rich and worthy Gentleman, who observing his hollow eyes, his fallow looks, and his bent body, as well as the extreme filth with which he was covered, was touched with such compassion for the lad, that he was disposed to render him some effectual Relief; and accordingly the gentleman dropt a hint, that he had a mind to do something considerable for him. The boy, never expecting any such goodness as this, and indeed not listening very attentively, did not at first understand what was said; upon which the gentleman spoke more plainly to him, asking him whether he had a mind to have his dirty rags exchanged for a new livery coat and some clean linen? "for," said he, "if you have a mind to it I will take you into my service; and in that case I shall fit you out afresh, and I shall take

care also that your health is looked after, and when you have served me faithfully for a few years, which you may do very comfortably to yourself—I will even set you up for life.” The lad after this could not help understanding the offer; but he seemed as far as ever from accepting it, for he was now quite unwilling to believe the gentleman; and he shewed by his manner that he would have been better pleased to have sold an halfpenny worth of matches in his usual way, carrying off the halfpenny in his hand, than to have had all the fine promises which the best and richest man in the world could make to him.

This kind gentleman, however, persisting in his inclination to do the lad a service, proceeded next to reason with him: he advised him, for his own sake, to listen a little more to what was said, and then remarked to him how ill he looked, which the boy though very dangerously sick, was not sensible of himself; and represented to him the difference between leading the wretched sort of life he did, and getting into a regular and comfortable service. Nay, he went so far as even to beg and entreat him, at the same time observing, that he had no objection to the lad's satisfying himself that the person who addressed him was no cheat or impostor; and, in proof of it, he told him his name, informed him how he might learn all parti-

culars of his character, and gave him a direction to his place of abode. In short, he condescended to say every thing that could, in such a case be supposed necessary to give a poor boy confidence and encouragement. In the course of the conversation I should have observed that the gentleman, as a proof of his generosity, threw down a shilling, which the lad picked up, with very little gratitude in his countenance, but with no small conceit, at his own quickness and cleverness in seizing hold of it; after which, he grew as proud as could be of having got possession of the piece of money, not considering at all that it was a mere present, and that he had not given the gentleman a single match for it out of his basket.

I am persuaded my readers will, by this time, be aware that this was a lad who had a very mean and low mind; otherwise, he would undoubtedly have been overjoyed at such an opportunity of getting above his present base condition;—besides which, I should remark, that he had been a long time living among a set of rogues and vagabonds, who being one of them nearly as bad as another, and having seldom seen among them any persons of a different character, had learnt to fancy themselves a very creditable sort of people, and, when they got together, were just as proud, in their way, as if they had

been the greatest Lords and Dukes in the kingdom. At night the lad went home, and slept among these old companions, in a vile unwholesome room, where, though each would affect now and then to be merry and gay, yet, in fact, they were all of them dying by inches. and in the judgment of any rational or feeling man, who might condescend to put his head in among them, they undoubtedly were altogether in as sorrowful and wretched a plight as can well be imagined.

In short then, with grief and pain do I speak it, this poor beggarly boy entirely neglected the prodigious offer which had been made to him: he returned to his former company, continued in his petty trade, and dragged on the little remainder of his life in the old way, just as if nothing had happened.

I now propose, by means of this story, which is a mere allegory or parable, to expose the conduct of those persons, who are unwilling to comply with the gracious invitations of our Saviour, in his Gospel; for He is that kind and willing friend (with reverence be it spoken) who offers to take us mean and needy creatures into his service, and we, if we turn away, and refuse the offer, may be likened to this foolish beggarly boy, having nothing better to plead, as I think I shall be able to shew, than one or other of those very excuses,

uses, which, when put in his mouth, have appeared so absurd and monstrous.

Let us see whether there is not some general likeness between the two cases. I will begin by supposing our Saviour, in his Gospel, to address himself to a man who is quite thoughtless, and unbelieving.— Now such persons are commonly much more wicked than they imagine, for by following their natural inclinations, and taking no thought to their ways, they permit a thousand evil dispositions to grow upon them; the consequence of this is, that when the Gospel first meets with such persons, it finds them quite covered over with wickedness, as this boy was with dirt; though, like him, they are unconscious of it. It commonly finds them also eagerly engaged in some poor pursuit in this life, as this boy was in felling matches.

I would next observe, that, in general, when the vast and unspeakable offers of the Gospel are first mentioned in the ears of such a person as I have been describing, his mind is so ill prepared for the subject, and his thoughts are apt to be so completely turned another way, that he probably does not understand, nor even listen to what is said to him; just like this boy, when he was first spoken to, refused to listen to the gentleman, and continued to think of nothing but his common traffic.

But let us next suppose the man to have the Gospel more clearly explained to him: he is now invited to put off his sins, which have been represented by the filth and dirt, to enter into the service, and put on, as it were the livery of Christ, as his acknowledged servant, and after spending the short period of his life on earth in a state of comfortable and willing obedience to his Deliverer and Redeemer, he is then told to expect that he will be raised to Heaven, and that he shall be made for ever and ever. How astonishing is this proposal! What then is the next difficulty? It is this, that the worldly man will not believe the truth of the promise which is held out to him: like the offer to this beggarly boy, it seems too good to be true, or, rather, it is too vast to be conceived by him. "Why should this great gentleman trouble himself to think of me, or to do so much to serve me," said the foolish boy in the fable. "Why should the great God stoop so low to me, or think of sending his Son from Heaven to save me," says the fool who disbelieves the Bible? The boy, therefore, turned again to his old way, notwithstanding the offer he had met with; and the worldly man is for doing the same, though he has heard of the invitation of the Gospel; for he wants faith to trust in God, as the other did to trust the gentleman his benefactor,



gentleman; so if a man longs to be freed from sin, if he wishes above all things to cleanse his ways, to purify himself even as God is pure, and to become holy as God is holy, do you think he will not catch at the Gospel? undoubtedly he will do so. Yes, for it will be suited in every part of it to the state of his mind, and to all his wants and wishes, and therefore why should he not receive it? he will feel his way indeed, but he will by degrees heartily embrace every doctrine of it. This then is the man who will accept God for his father, Christ for his Saviour, the Holy Spirit for his Sanctifier and Comforter; the Scriptures will be his Guide; the World will be no more to him than the place of his pilgrimage; his fellow Christians will be viewed by him as his fellow travellers, and Heaven will be his home, where he hopes to be joined to the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, and to dwell in the presence of his Maker, and of his Saviour, for ever.

And now, Reader! if thou art one who hast hitherto been a stranger to religion, and hast gone thy dull and daily round without any thought of the matter, for once thou hast been met methinks on thy way like this beggarly boy, by a voice of exhortation. Even in this little tale, the offer of the Gospel, perhaps rather unexpectedly, hath been held out to thee, or

some hint at least may have been given, by which, if thou wilt attend to it, thou shalt assuredly find in the end that thy whole condition shall be altered: And yet, perhaps like this beggarly boy, thou art now returning for the remainder of this very day to thy old habits, just as if thou hadst not read this story. Some business calls thee, or some pleasure waits thee, so farewell to all thought of the Gospel, for thou must be gone.—But methinks, as thou departest, thy heart should approve of this beggarly boy, should admire his wisdom and praise the turn of his spirit, for if thou goest away condemning him, thou condemnest thyself also.—Oh! no: his case is too bad to be defended; for he, who in a wordly sense, *refuses a good offer*, is set down for a fool, by common consent of all men. But, ah! how few will be persuaded to use the same reasoning in religion, which they apply to all their wordly matters! how few will see with the same eyes, and try by the same rule, their temporal, and their eternal interests! so true is that saying of the scriptures—  
 “ that the children of this world are wiser  
 “ in their generation than the children  
 “ of light.”

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A

NEW HISTORY, &c.

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**T**HE Bible is the Book of God,  
Which he alone could frame;  
A little Child may learn to prove,  
It answers to its Name.

The great Jehovah it reveals,  
So glorious, and so good!  
So much of God, tho' God could tell,  
No other Being cou'd.

The wisest Men that never saw,  
This Book, when they have try'd,  
The character of God to draw,  
His Glories have deny'd.

Some made a spotted Bull their God,  
And some to serpents pray'd:  
Idols of Metal, Stone, or Wood,  
They call'd upon for aid.

The Bible shews *one* God alone  
*Right* Reason joins in this:  
Tho' Reason *now* in fallen Man,  
The glorious Truth might miss.

First, best, and greatest ; Cause of all ;  
A Character complete !  
How glorious is JEHOVAH's Name,  
Where all Perfections meet !

This Book contains his Holy Law,  
Th' eternal Rule of Right ;  
How happy must all Creatures be,  
Would they herein unite.

All Duty in one word is summ'd,  
That one sweet word is " LOVE."  
How short, how holy, just and good !  
May I this law approve !

" To HIM who is supremely good,  
Supreme affection's due ;  
Deal by your Neighbour as you'd have,  
Your Neighbour deal by you.

None else but God who knows the heart  
This sacred Book cou'd pen ;  
Which does detect the inmost thought  
And secret Lusts of Men.

*But what avails to know our Ail,  
Unless we know the cure ?  
This is a melancholy Tale,  
That endless woe is sure.*

*Can none escape the Wrath of GOD ?  
Are all condemn'd to Hell ?  
Who can but dread that dark abode ?  
Who can with Devils dwell ?*

The same blest Book reveals the way  
 To life above the Skies ;  
 The very chief of Sinners may  
 Receive so rich a Prize.

*Will GOD revoke his firm decree,  
 That he who sins must die ?  
 And disannul his law for me,  
 And lay his Anger by ?*

His Law can never be repeal'd  
 It is too just and good :  
 Better a thousand sinful worlds  
 Should perish, than it should.

*But how can Sinners satisfy  
 The Law which once they broke ?  
 Will Penitence for Payment stand,  
 And so keep off the stroke ?*

No, all the Sinner's Efforts here  
 Wou'd fruitless be and vain ;  
 Nor streams, nor floods, of flowing tears  
 Cou'd wash away the stain.

A SURETY must be found to pay  
 The Debt which finners ow'd ;  
 He must the holy Law obey,  
 And bear our heavy Load.

*But where shall such a one be found ?  
 What Creature is so kind,  
 Of all men who dwell on earthly Ground,  
 Or what angelic mind.*

Mankind are all involv'd in sin,  
 Nor would an angel dare  
 So great a Work to undertake ;  
 Or such a Load to bear.

No Creature truly could suffice,  
 But GOD's eternal SON,  
 For this descended from the skies  
 And put our Nature on.

Jesus, I say th' incarnate WORD  
 Did all the LAW obey ;  
 And thus its Honour was restor'd,  
 Which sinners took away.

He bore his People's countless sins,  
 And dy'd that they might live ;  
 And all poor sinners shall be sav'd,  
 Who in his Name believe.

*Had GOD the SON more love to man  
 Than GOD the FATHER had !  
 Or did he come to die, because  
 He thought the law too bad ?*

No ! GOD so lov'd a ruin'd world  
 He sent his SON to die ;  
 Then rais'd him up again to sit  
 At his right hand on high.

Christ meant to magnify the Law,  
 And ransom sinners too ;  
 He dy'd that we with Joy and Awe  
 Might Grace and Justice view.

Now God is just, yet justifies  
 Each sinner who believes;  
 Sin is condemn'd, the Law secur'd,  
 God all the praise receives.

God's Glory highly is advanc'd,  
 And Peace on Earth proclaim'd,  
 Good Will is shewn to sinful Men,  
 From Satan thus reclaim'd.

We ought indeed with rapt'rous Joy  
 To hear this joyful sound,  
 But Oh! in our apostate Race,  
 What wickedness is found!

All Men are so in love with sin,  
 They will not from it part,  
 Nor let the blest Redeemer in  
 To their ungrateful heart.

A free Salvation they despise;  
 They scorn to be forgiv'n;  
 This empty World they idolize,  
 And have no taste for Heav'n.

*Will none then own their wretched State,  
 And humbly sue for Grace?*  
 No, not till God renews the Mind  
 And doth its Pride abase.

Thus we as much GOD'S SPIRIT need,  
 Our spirits to renew,  
 As that his SON for us should bleed  
 To give the Law its Due.

*And can the Spirit by his Pow'r  
Renew the Man afresh ?*

Yes, he removes the heart of stone,  
And gives a heart of flesh.

*Are none so good, but that they need  
An int'rest in his Grace ?*

Not one by any other means  
Can see the FATHER'S FACE.

*Are none so bad, but that he can  
Their load of Guilt remove ?*

There is no Limit to his Pow'r,  
No Limit to his Love.

F I N I S.

*Handwritten signature or initials, possibly "R. H. C. C."*

*Vertical handwritten numbers 1 through 20, likely a list or index.*