

FIVE YEARS
ON THE
ERIE CANAL

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FIVE YEARS

ON THE

ERIE CANAL:

AN ACCOUNT OF

SOME OF THE MOST STRIKING
SCENES AND INCIDENTS,

DURING

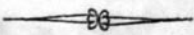
FIVE YEARS' LABOR ON THE ERIE CANAL, AND
OTHER INLAND WATERS,

BY

DEA. M. EATON,

MISSIONARY OF THE AMERICAN BETHEL SOCIETY.

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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1845.

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PREFACE.

IN presenting the following incidents to the public, I am aware that it will be differently viewed by various persons. Those whose education is superior to my own, will find much to alter and amend. But, in justice to myself, I should say, that I never intended to become an author. My journal was kept for the sake of my children; that they might know after my decease, what their father had done for the good of mankind. And I should never have thought of giving it to the public, but for the repeated solicitations of those who have heard me relate more or less of the following history.

Without being aware that I had kept a Journal, they have told me that I ought to collect these incidents into the form of a book, for the use of Sabbath Schools and families. But I have uniformly objected, pleading on the one hand, my unwillingness to exhibit myself to the public as an author, especially during my life time; my inability for the task, arising from my want of

education, and my fear that it would appear like "thinking of myself more highly than I ought to think," which I considered a frequent fault of authors. While my friends have urged on the other hand that I should be willing to do all the good in my power while living," and one gentleman remarked that the book would not be at all what was desired if written by a literary character; that the plain facts were wanted, with the spirit and style in which I had presented them while addressing congregations in different places. So I have endeavored to give them, I trust with no other motive than to do good, and I pray that many a poor sinner, by their perusal, may be led to the Savior. Should the book be the means in the hand of God, of converting one soul, it would compensate me a thousand fold for the trouble it has cost me.

I was myself converted from the error of my course when an old and very wicked man. Forty-five years had I lived in sin, but after I had once felt the conviction that my sins were forgiven, I saw so much beauty in Christ, and found so much happiness in obeying his commandments, that I felt a very strong desire for the salvation of the whole human family; and it has ever since been my prayer that I might constantly find

some place in which to labor for the promotion of his cause.

Consequently when the American Bethel Society tendered to me an appointment as a missionary among the Watermen, I readily accepted it, and at once commenced my labors on the Erie Canal. In their prosecution I hope I have not trusted in my own strength, but in that of God, before whom I must soon appear to give an account of my stewardship. I feel that he has never forsaken me when I have trusted in Him, and if, at the judgment seat of Christ, it shall appear that he has used me as the instrument of saving any souls from the gnawing of the worm that dieth not, and from the fire that is never quenched, to Him be all the praise, for by Him have I been influenced and strengthened to accomplish what little I have done.

THE AUTHOR.

## CONTENTS.

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| CHAP.                                                                       | PAGE. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| I. Commencement of Labors, . . . .                                          | 19    |
| II. Encouragement to Labor, . . . .                                         | 27    |
| III. Orphan Boys, . . . .                                                   | 36    |
| IV. Silent Ministers, . . . .                                               | 45    |
| V. Duty of Ministers while traveling, . . . .                               | 55    |
| VI. The Orphan Boy, . . . .                                                 | 67    |
| VII. The Orphan Child of a praying Mother, . . . .                          | 77    |
| VIII. Traveling Christians should not leave their Religion at home, . . . . | 85    |
| IX. More Opposition—Roman Catholics and Black-legs, . . . .                 | 94    |
| X. Conversion of a Boat's Crew, . . . .                                     | 104   |
| XI. The Swearer's Pledge, . . . .                                           | 116   |
| XII. Captain Gibbs, . . . .                                                 | 125   |
| XIII. Second Thoughts are best, . . . .                                     | 133   |
| XIV. The Colored Man and his Bible, . . . .                                 | 140   |
| XV. Two Infidels, . . . .                                                   | 146   |

# INTRODUCTION

OF MR. EATON, AND HIS BOOK TO THE READER

## *Christian Reader :*

We present you the unpretending story of an humble missionary, who has spent five years in laboring for the moral and religious improvement of the boatmen on the Erie Canal. For the sake of many to whom it would furnish gratification and substantial profit; but who, from having never heard of the man nor his work, might pass it by; the name of one occupying a more public station, is, at the missionary's request, here inserted. Yet the responsibility of introducing the laborer and his story, requires a brief statement of the grounds on which both are recommended. Here are none of the charms of style, romantic incident, profound discussion, lucid exposition or eloquent description; but autobiography of the humblest kind, and history in one of its most limited themes. Much of the rude speech of uneducated and vulgar men is here reported. And the whole is a specimen of writing, by one who is not a writer. These are our notes of warning to any who inadvertently take up the book. They will find it liable to these objections; and perhaps to others. But with all its defects, it remains a book that will repay the philosopher and the philanthropist, who may condescend to bestow upon it an hour of their valuable time. It recounts the incidents of a life that has been employed for life's highest end; it shows a door of access standing open to humanity in its most hopeless apostacy; it shows us sun-light shining upon some of the darkest places

of Christendom ; it illustrates and commends to us some of the most important practical principles of the gospel. It is in a word, the history of a man, who in his measure, imitated Christ, as he "went about doing good ;" the picture of a faithful steward, who, if his motives were like his actions, will receive a sentence more commendatory, a reward more glorious than many who with more brilliant talents, and a more brilliant career, have attracted more human admiration.

The interest and merits of the books, for which we commend it, will readily occur to him who reads. But as we write for those who have not read, we would simply state what impressions its perusal has produced on one mind. The missionary labors of Mr. Eaton illustrate a point on which the church and its leaders, (if we may in part except the Methodist branch,) are not yet fully enlightened. We allude to *the division of labor*, and the wise employment of the various talents of the church. "There is a diversity of gifts ;" and "the hand," however comely, skillful, honored and elevated above the foot, can not still say to that humble and "down-trodden" member, "I have no need of thee." The church is awaking to the fact that she has much talent which, although it may not be useful in the pulpit, may effect a kind of good that greater talents and higher functions will never accomplish. Her Sunday-school is the result of a new conviction on this point. So is her Tract distribution and her colporteur system. But she yet sees this great principle obscurely. There are millions of minds which the ministry of the gospel will never reach, if our convictions and practice are founded in truth, and if we are justified in keeping up the standard of intellectual qualifications for the ministry,

where we have placed it. The majority of mankind will not come to the gospel, it must go to them. And for the discharge of that mission in many places, some men have better qualifications than the schools can furnish. There are men, (and they the majority,) on whose blunted intellects, and more blunted sensibilities, our keen edged weapons can make no impression. The very power and polish of scholarship that fits for many of the higher stations of usefulness, has just so far unfitted for the lower. It should not be so. It was not so with our Lord. But so it is, and so it is likely to be with the present race of disciples. Few of us could live and mingle with these men, and keep up the tone of scholarship and style which the pulpit now requires, whether justly or unjustly. We must then employ other classes of the members of the church to do a work which the ministers can do only by neglecting their more appropriate employments. We have not ministers enough to reach all men, if all were disposed to receive their ministrations. But multitudes are not so disposed; they must be searched for, and brought to the gospel by laymen. The business education, the knowledge of men possessed by many laymen, is a better preparation for exerting personal influence over those who reject the gospel, than a clerical education. Of this we are firmly convinced; and when, with this conviction, we take a comprehensive survey of the present inhabitants of the world, and of even our own country, we are urged to exclaim; what can be done?

This little book gives at least a partial, and a most gratifying answer to that inquiry. Let us find out the humble-minded men of devout piety; good men, and full of the Holy Ghost, men of good temper and good sense, who have well

studied two volumes of Divinity, the Bible and Man, under that "anointing that teacheth all things;" and having found them by tens, hundreds, thousands; let the churches set them apart with fasting and prayer, and bid them go search for lost souls far away on the mountains of sin, deep down in the caverns of depravity. Let us have such men as Deacon Eaton in the field, under proper responsibilities and restraints, floating on every river, canal, lake, and sea, meeting every emigrant from Papal and Infidel lands, and following him to his remotest settlement, to proclaim to him in his own tongue, the wonderful grace of God. We have many such men now unemployed, and we have the means of supporting them. We only lack zeal and conviction. This little book is calculated to produce both. No good man probably will read it without saying, if I can find another Deacon Eaton, and a responsible committee to direct his labors, I will contribute my share of his support.

This narrative contains a most valuable exhibition of the spirit and qualifications of a useful man. To do good, it is not sufficient to go out with a burning zeal against men's wickedness, and for men's reformation and salvation. Nor will numbers convert the world. Piety enough to save one's own soul may still be utterly short of that degree by which other souls may also be instrumentally saved. If humble laymen are aspiring to the honor and glory of doing good, without being ministers, or as learned as ministers, they may see here how many and what elements of character go to fit a man for this blessed employment. And in fact there are none lifted above the benefit of such an example. We are indeed speaking of the living; and this makes us speak with trembling; for although our friend is a veteran, he is yet in

the field and in the flesh. But if we speak at all, we must speak out, and say, this is the spirit with which men should labor to bring souls to their Saviour. Here is exhibited a simplicity of purpose that secures confidence, in one interview, from the most morose and embittered and crabbed ; a kindness that turns the more to tenderness the more it is disregarded ; a meekness that can not be insulted, but always gives the right cheek when the left is smitten ; a good natured cheerfulness that destroys the suspicion of hypocrisy, a condescension that knows no place too mean to seek a soul, no soul too poor to love ; a good sense that approaches men on the side of their better thoughts and feelings, a faith in God's testimony, which at once secures earnestness in laboring for souls exposed to death, gives dignity and authority to his message, enables him to grasp the conscience, and leaves the caviler in naked contest with the Author of the Bible ; a zeal that makes opportunities, rather than waits for them ; and a confidence in God and in prayer, that God can and will honor. There will, perhaps, be a diversity of opinion in the readers of this narrative, concerning the duty of the disciples of Christ in their intercourse with strangers. Probably our friend does not sufficiently recognise " the diversity of gifts." But there is much, after every proper deduction from the strength of his positions, to reprove us all.

We regard this narrative as a delightful record of *answers to prayer*, and of blessings traceable to maternal fidelity. No part of this interesting sketch so touches the heart as the chapter on orphans. Here we behold Abraham's God remembering his covenant and his promise. Here is encouragement to mothers laboring under multiplied embarrassments for the spiritual welfare of their offspring. Here is

encouragement for mothers who are called to die while the promise is yet unfulfilled. Stay thy fainting heart, O daughter of Zion, on the promise of thy God. When thou shalt be resting in heaven, some honored messenger of God may be sent far away to find thy wanderer; and when he strikes the chord of filial love, it may vibrate again; the only one left amidst the thousand broken strings of that wretched heart. The memory of thy counsels, of thy love, of thy prayers and thy life may be God's last cord of mercy to draw him once and forever to himself. Had Mr. Eaton accomplished nothing else in his mission of mercy, than met and saved, under God, those orphan boys, it were worth his life of labor, and a thousand-fold more than it, and the pittance his labors have cost the church. Had he written nothing else, we should esteem it an honor to introduce his book.

We commend it to the sailor's friend, to the friends of human nature in its lowest forms and conditions. We suggest to colporteurs, and all kindred laborers, that while no man is perfect, nor his example a faultless model, they will find their advantage in the perusal of this plain history of a good man's labors for the glory of God and the good of men. To God we commend the writer, the book, and the reader.

EDWARD N. KIRK.

Boston, August, 1845.

FIVE YEARS  
ON THE ERIE CANAL.

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CHAPTER I.

COMMENCEMENT OF LABORS.

My first reception as a laborer on the Canal was rather discouraging. Upon the first boat which I visited, I found the Captain, and informed him that I was appointed, by the American Bethel Society, to labor as a Missionary:—to go from boat to boat, and talk and pray with the hands and passengers. I asked him if he was willing that I should talk and pray on his boat. He wanted to know what I thought I could do with boatmen; if I supposed I was going to convert them. I told him I had no expectation of converting them; that I never had converted a person in my life, and never expected to; that I intended to treat them kindly, give them good

advice, and pray for them, and that was as much as God required of me, and God would do the converting. He then wanted to know if I had a family. I told him I had : said he, " You had better go home and take care of your family, and we will attend to our business ; as for praying, you can't on my boat." I told him the Devil had told me, before, that I had better let boatmen alone, but I had concluded not to take his advice : and so long as I was influenced by a better spirit than the one opposed to every thing which tended to make man better, I thought I should not abandon my object because I met with opposition.

On my first start, I thought, perhaps, all boatmen did not feel as he did, and that I should visit other boats and see what kind of reception I met with, before I should take his advice. I talked with his hands, and with the passengers, left them some tracts, and seeing another boat coming, shook hands with the captain, and told him the next time I met him I hoped he would feel differently ; that I should pray for him, and although he would not let me pray on his boat, he could not hinder my

praying *for* him. He seemed much more pleasant when I left, than when I got on the boat. Here let me remark, that the next time I saw that captain, he treated me with the utmost kindness,—said he had altered his mind ; that he was convinced I was doing my duty. The third time I saw him, he had just buried a lovely wife. She was a Christian, and died very happy. He was very thoughtful, and spoke with much feeling on the importance of a preparation for death.

The other boat coming alongside, I stepped on board, went to the steersman, and asked him where the captain was. He said he had just lain down to sleep. I told him who I was, and what my business was. I found him a very pleasant man, though not a professor of religion. He acknowledged the importance of religion, and said he was glad that Christians had thought enough of boatmen to send missionaries to labor with them, and thought that much good might be done. While conversing with the steersman, the bowsman came along, and overhearing what we were saying, soon began to swear most profanely. I admonished him very kindly.

and told him I was very sorry to hear such language, and although he intended it for an insult to me, it was an insult to *God his Maker*.

"What do you know," said he, "about God? Have you ever seen God?" and continued to ask many other impertinent questions.

"You don't know," said he, "as there is any God. If there is a *God*, I don't believe there is any *Hell*. I don't believe God is going to punish men after they die, and you need not think," continued he, "you are going to scare us."

I remarked that he would find out there was a God, and he would find out, too, when it might be too late for him to repent, that God would punish the sinner. As I made that remark, the captain came out of the cabin in a very great rage, and coming up to me with all the fury of the maniac, he inquired in an imperious tone,

"What business have you on my boat? You need not preach up hell and damnation here; we are not easily frightened by such creatures as you are. We are Universalists."

He asked a number of questions, before I had time to answer any of them, and came towards me, as though he intended to throw me into the canal, which (he informed me afterwards) was his intention when he first came out of the cabin. I told him if he would wait till I could go to my trunk, I would show him what business I had on his boat; that I was laboring for the good of his soul, and he might throw me into the canal if he pleased; although I could not swim, yet I could get out some way or other, and the first thing I should do, after getting on shore, would be to kneel down and pray for him. His countenance changed; he seemed confused, and interrupting me, he said:

"I am ashamed that I have abused you: I have no reason for treating you so unkindly, but I was mad when I lay down. My bowsman neglected to lay over his boat, and another boat ran into her, which has done fifty dollars damage, and I have no remedy, because I was on the other man's side of the canal. I heard you talking on the boat, and got up mad, hardly knowing what I said; but

I have no right to abuse you, sir. Come, walk down with me into the cabin; I have a woman there who would be glad to see you."

Accordingly, we went down into the cabin, where we found a lady, standing by the cabin stairs, weeping.

The captain said, "My dear, what are you crying about?"

"It would make an angel cry," said she, "to hear you abuse that man, and to listen to his answers in reply. Never did I think I should hear my husband talk to a Christian, as you have talked to him."

I then turned to the lady and enquired, "Are you a Christian, madam?"

"I hope I am," said she, "and nothing could give me more pain than to have my husband talk to you as he has done."

"Well, my dear," said the captain, "dry up your tears; I am ashamed that I have abused the man."

We walked into the cabin; he handed me a stool, and I sat down.

"Well," said I to the captain, "I suppose you love this woman," for she appeared one of the most amiable women I had ever seen,

Her tears, and her taking my part, made her appear more lovely.

"Yes," said the captain, "I married her because I knew she was a Christian; I have known her for three years, and if there is a Christian in the world, I think my wife is one."

"Well," said I, "as much as you love that wife, you can not have her society always. The time will be short that you'll live together in this world: you will either close her eyes, and bear her away to the land of silence, or she will see your body consigned to the cold grave. It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment, and with the sentiment you profess, sir, while your dear wife will sing in heaven, you will lie down in everlasting sorrow."

Said he, "I am no more of a Universalist than you are; I believe in rewards and punishments, and I would freely give all that I have in the world, if I were as well prepared to die as my wife is. If I had a man on my boat who would abuse you as I have done to-day, I would discharge him. And now, sir, you may have all the privileges you wish on my boat, and if you will forgive me this

time, I promise you, that I never will abuse you again."

I told him I had nought against him.

## CHAPTER II.

## ENCOURAGEMENTS TO LABOR.

Stepping aboard the next boat, I told the captain my name and business, as usual. He took hold of my hand; said he, "I wonder if the world has at last thought enough of boatmen to send missionaries to labor with them? I have been on the canal twelve years, and the canal has been in operation nineteen years, and you, sir, are the first man I have ever seen or heard of on the canal as a missionary. We are not fools; we read your publications; we know what you are doing, and that you are sending your missionaries to a heathen world. We have no objections to that, we are willing the world should be converted, but when we think how long the canal has been in operation, and no thought taken for us, we have concluded that no man cared for our souls. I am very glad to see you, sir, and you shall have all the privileges you want on my boat."

When I prayed, he knelt with me in prayer, and was affected to tears. He gave me my dinner, and as I was about leaving his boat, he asked me if I would not wait until his steersman, who was asleep, got up. He said he was an excellent steersman, but a very wicked man, and he thought sometimes he must discharge him, on account of his wickedness. He thought if I would talk with him, I might have some influence over him. So I consented to wait until he got up. He soon appeared, while the captain and myself were talking on the bow of the boat, and the captain informed me that the steersman had just taken hold of the helm. I walked towards him, but when I started, I saw the other steersman talking with him. I concluded he was telling him that I was coming to talk with him. Before I reached him he exclaimed,

“You need not come any nearer to me, for I don’t care for all the ministers this side of hell.”

I remarked to him that I was not a minister, and if I was, I thought I should not hurt him.

"Oh, well," said he, "if you are not a minister, you may come a little nearer."

I walked up to him, and put my hand on his shoulder, and said, "My dear sir, why are you so inveterate against ministers?"

Said he, "A minister abused me once, and sent me to hell, and I don't think that is a minister's business. I don't think there is any hell, and I believe God will save all men."

I remarked that I believed the atonement was made for all men, and that we might all have the benefit of that atonement. He undertook to vindicate the doctrine of universal salvation, but was rather ignorant, and knew very little about the scriptures. I finally succeeded in taking away his weapons and he soon found himself without ammunition, and obliged to surrender the post, but said he wished he had a certain minister, (naming him,) he would put *him* down at once. I told him the truth would stand, when error and all the works of darkness would be swallowed up in oblivion. I asked him how long he had been in the belief that God would save all men. He said he had been trying to believe it sev-

eral years, but he had become fully established in the doctrine about three years since. I inquired of him how he was brought up, and whether his parents were pious. I saw I had touched a tender chord. The tear came in the eye, and his voice faltered.

"Yes," said he, "my mother was a woman of prayer, I was brought up to reverence religion, and if there is a heaven, I have no doubt that my mother is there."

Before I left that man, he acknowledged he did *not* believe in the salvation of all men, unless they complied with the requirements of the Gospel. He gave me many thanks for my advice, and with tears asked my pardon for the language he had used when I first approached him, and hoped I should soon visit the boat again. In bidding the captain good-bye, he said "he could bid me God speed." The reader will see, that whatever my former discouragements might have been, I had every reason, from the kind reception I had met with on that boat, to bless God and take courage.

This is my fifth year's labor, and now, instead of abuse, I am welcomed on every boat

I go on to. I have reason to believe, that the judgment will reveal that my labors have not been in vain, and although the world may think that our boatmen are the most abandoned class of men in the world, perhaps there is not a class of men in any employment, more accessible than they are. You must exercise the spirit of kindness, and you will soon get their confidence. I know very well that ten years ago perhaps there was not a place in America where there was more wickedness of every kind than on the canal. But my belief is, that the reason why many of the efforts which have been put forth to reform the world have been so unsuccessful, is, that the labor has not been performed in the right spirit. You must respect men, before they will learn to respect themselves. We see this plainly in the Temperance Reform. Men who have become hardened, and apparently lost all feeling, have been approached kindly by those who knew how to sympathize with them, have been taken from the ditch and entirely reclaimed, have become good members of society, and very many of them, in consequence of the kind treatment they have received, have be-

come Christians, and are now an honor to the church of Christ.

How much good might be accomplished by those whose sole business it is to reform men, and make them better, if they would exercise a little more charity, and be willing to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them, in like circumstances. It is an old adage, that "you can catch more flies with molasses than you can with vinegar," and I believe that it will ever hold good. I believe there is no class of men that may not be reformed, if they are treated as they ought to be. My object in laboring among the boatmen is to ameliorate their condition and make them better men. We have now (1845) on the Erie Canal, four thousand boats and twenty-five thousand men, women, and boys, who are constantly engaged, during the months of navigation. Of the five thousand boys, one half are orphans, and have come from almost every State in the Union. The reason why we have so many orphans on our canals, is, that great inducements are held out to them. Ten dollars per month has formerly been the wages given to boys for driving.

For example: a boy comes from a distance; he drives one summer, returns home in the fall and shows the seventy dollars he has earned on the canal. He tells the boys he is rich, that the canal is the place to get rich, and perhaps the next year he will take half a dozen other boys with him. He will get such as are left orphans and without means, consequently almost all the boys are poor when they come on the canals. Many of them have come a great distance, and are obliged to go to work for some one, so that many of them hire out to men who will keep them at work all summer, and cheat them out of their wages in the fall. This is one reason why so many of them in former years have found their way into our State prisons. I was told by the Chaplain of the prison at Auburn, that there were four hundred and eighty on the prison records that came from the canals and lakes.

He gave a very interesting account of a boy who ran away from his father, because he thought his father was too strict with him. He went to Albany, and there hired out to drive on the canal. He went on to Buffalo, the canal

closed, and he was out of business ; leaving home without an overcoat, he stepped into a public house and took one. The Court was then in session. He was brought before it, tried, found guilty, and sent to the State prison at Auburn, for three years. In the meantime, his father made diligent search for his lost son, but could hear nothing from him, until, on taking up a Buffalo paper, he saw the trial and sentence of a boy of the same name and age, as those of his own son. He wrote immediately to the keeper of the prison to ascertain whether it was his son. The keeper examined the boy, and found that he was the same one. The boy behaved remarkably well, and said he hoped his father would never know that he had been in prison, so they did not tell him his father had written. About one year before his time was out, he was converted, and gave good evidence of a change of heart. His father wrote to the Chaplain of the prison, to know when his time would be out, so that he could come after him and take him home. The roads were bad, and when the Father came within ten miles of the prison, his horse tired out.

He then left his horse, and traveled almost all night, so as to be there in the morning when his son would be let out of prison. He arrived just at day light in the morning. The Chaplain went to the prison with him, left the father in the hall, unlocked the cell, and brought the son out into the hall where his father was. Such an affecting scene, says the Chaplain, I never saw before, and never wish to witness again. The moment the son saw his father, he fell on his knees and said, "Father, can you forgive me?" The father fell on the son, and both were bathed in tears. The Chaplain remarked, that he could compare the scene to nothing better than the return of the Prodigal Son.

One reason why so many boatmen have been condemned to prison, is, they have been poor and penniless, and have not had any one to counsel and assist them. Since the missionaries have been laboring with them, there has been a very great change, and many of these have been reclaimed.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE ORPHAN BOY.

I go to the horse stations and talk with the boys, and pray with them. I give them tracts, and Bibles, or Testaments. The boys are very different now from what they were during the first years of my labor. Most of them are tetotalers, and there is not half the swearing and fighting, there was formerly.

I called at a horse station one day, in the first year of my labor, and after I had been talking to the boys, and was going away, I saw a little lad sitting on a barrel beside the barn, who looked very sad. I went along and put my hand on his shoulder, said I, "are you a driver, my son?"

"No sir," was the reply, "I have been, but I quit this morning."

"Have they discharged you?"

"No sir, but I can't be whipped to lie, and drink rum, and because I won't do that, they

have whipped me until I am black and blue, from my hips to my feet."

I asked him how old he was. He said he was in his thirteenth year. "Where are your parents?" I inquired. He burst into tears, and replied,

"I have no parents; I am an orphan, Sir, and that is the reason of my being here; my father was a poor man, and left nothing for me. I have lived with my uncle, since my father died, but he could only give me five dollars per month, and they gave me ten dollars to drive."

But, said the boy, "The money is no object, I had rather have five dollars, and live in peace, than to live here and have ten." I asked him if his parents were pious. He said, he had no doubt that they were both in heaven, that he had been brought up to go to meeting and sabbath-school. I asked him if he was a Christian? "No, Sir, I think not," was the reply, "I wish I was, but I never shall be if I stay here."

I there saw the influence that pious parents have over their children. Though his parents were both in the graves you see that the

influence of prayer and the sabbath-school seemed to throw its shield around that youth and preserve him from temptation. Such instances ought to stimulate parents to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. A great many boys who were amiable and lovely, when they came upon the canal, have been ruined by the influences that have been exerted upon them by wicked boys, for the scripture says, that "One sinner destroyeth much good." I have felt the truth of this saying very sensibly since I have been laboring on the canal. The tracts and testaments which I have given them have, I think, done a vast amount of good, which will not all be known till the judgment. This encourages me still to continue my labors.

At another station, the boys abused me most shamefully. While I was talking to them, and when I gave them my tracts, they tore them up and trampled them under their feet ; but as I was leaving the barn, one little fellow said, "If you will give me a tract, sir, I will not tear it up and throw it away, as they have, but will read it." I gave him the "Swearer's Prayer."

About two weeks afterwards, I was passing the same station; while they were changing horses, I stepped off the boat, and was going forward to get on another boat, when I heard some one behind me, saying, "Sir, are not you the man that gives the good books?" I stopped, and answered, that I gave tracts. Said he, "Don't you recollect giving me a tract a few weeks ago, at this station?" I told him I did. Said he, "I have read it through and through, and so have many of those boys who tore up their tracts. They saw you on the boat, and they dare not come themselves, but sent me to see if you will give them some tracts. I used to swear, but I think that tract you gave me has cured me of swearing forever." I sat down my trunk, and gave him a quantity of tracts, for which he seemed very thankful.

The boys have been a very degraded class, and formerly were much abused; but since Temperance has prevailed, both men and boys have materially changed. Many of these poor orphans have died, where there has been no kind friend to stand by their bed sides. They have formerly been strangers to

kind treatment, but are now generally well treated. Most of them get their pay, and very many of them bid fair to make respectable men. They are generally smart, active boys, and most of them can read. I have often been very much affected to hear the tales of those orphans. As I have heretofore stated, they have generally been left poor, which is a reason they assign where they are on the canal. I have been sensible, while conversing with those boys, that the prayers of a mother will never be lost. I have witnessed in so many instances their feelings, on asking them how old they were, where they came from, where their parents were, &c. ; when their answer has been : "I have no parents, sir." I would ask them if their parents had been pious, and many a time have I seen the lips begin to quiver, and the tear start : "Oh, yes, I had a praying *mother*," while the father has been forgotten ; and it has seemed to me, that the prayers of that mother had made an impression which nothing but death could efface.

Here I will relate a fact in point, to illustrate and prove the grounds I have taken.

In conversing with the captain of a certain boat, I found him a very amiable and companionable man, although he acknowledged that he had no reason to hope that he was a Christian. Said he, "I ought to have been a Christian, long ago," without giving his reasons for such an assertion. When the hour for prayer arrived, (I staid on his boat all night,) I asked him for a Bible. He seemed to be affected, and I did not know but he was destitute of a Bible. I told him I had one in my trunk, on the deck, and that if he had none, I would go up and get it. "I have one," said he, and unlocking his trunk, he took out a very nice Bible, and as he reached it out to me, the tears dropped on its cover. "There, sir," said he, "is the last gift of a dying mother. My dear mother gave me that Bible about two hours before she died; and her dying admonition I never shall forget. O, sir, I had one of the best of mothers. She would never go to bed without coming to my bedside, and if I was asleep, she would awaken me, and pray for me before she retired. Twelve years have elapsed since she died, and five years of that time I have been on

the ocean, five years on this canal; and the other two years traveling. I do not know that I have laid my head on my pillow and gone to sleep, during that time, without thinking of the prayers of my mother: yet I am not a Christian; but the prayers of my mother are ended. I have put off the subject too long, but from this time I will attend to it. I will begin now and do all that I can to be a Christian."

I hope those dear mothers, who may have an opportunity of reading these sketches, will inquire of their own hearts, "Will my own dear children, those little pledges of God's love, remember my prayers twelve years after my head is laid in the narrow house appointed for all the living?" Oh, could we place that estimate on the soul which we should do, in the light of eternity, how much anxiety would be manifested on the part of parents for their children, and for the whole families of the earth. The midnight slumber would more often be disturbed by cries to God, and tears for this fallen, apostate, rebellious world.

Another reason why no more boatmen have been reclaimed, is, that those Christians

who have formerly traveled on the canal, have neglected to do their duty to them. Even ministers have traveled hundreds of miles in company with these wicked men and boys, have heard their profanity, and seen their wickedness, yet have never reproofed them; or if they have administered reproof, some of them, as I have been informed, have known so little of human nature, that their ill-timed admonitions have served rather to harden, than to soften. They have told the boatmen that they were the worst class of men in the world, and ought to go to State prison. This, perhaps, was too true; but the truth is not to be spoken at all times. Men do not like to be admonished of their faults, especially if the one who admonishes them gives the impression that he considers himself much better than they are, assumes authority and conducts himself in rather an overbearing manner. You may tell men their faults, if you do it in a spirit of kindness, but it will never do to get angry while you are admonishing others, even should they abuse you. Carry out the example of the Savior. If they smite you on one side, turn the other, and

by thus manifesting a kind spirit, you will soon win their confidence. Once make a man feel that you are his friend, and that your only object in admonishing him is his good, and you can tell him his faults, he will listen, and you will be sure to leave a good impression. I have frequently heard men use the most insulting language, and try every way to make me angry, and when they have seen that I treated every insult with kindness, they have been ashamed.

I know no better way to make men love you, than to render good for evil. I have frequently been abused when I went upon a boat, and before I have left it, the same men who abused me confessed with tears that they had no right to abuse me, and many others, if they have not confessed before I left the boat, have done so most heartily the next time I saw them, and ever afterwards have treated me with the utmost kindness. In short, I have learned that if I would be successful in winning souls to Christ, I must always remember the golden rule.

## CHAPTER IV.

## SILENT MINISTERS.

I would speak of ministers of the gospel with reverence, for I love them. A faithful minister was the means in God's hands, of the salvation of my soul, and it is through the faithful servant of Christ, that we get much instruction from God's word; but we should always remember that they are but men, and liable to err. I am the last man who would wish to expose their faults, any farther than would prove beneficial to their future course in life. It is an old adage, that "what is everybody's business, is nobody's," and ministers, who are devoted good men, in traveling on the canal, have neglected to warn men, not considering, perhaps, that it was their duty to do so, but I believe that God will hold a man guilty for any neglect of duty. We are commanded to be instant in season and out of season, and I believe that we shall see at the Judgment, that we have

neglected our duty more frequently than we have ever done it. When I relate such circumstances relative to clergymen, it is with the kindest feeling, and hoping that if any of the dear ministers of Christ have hitherto neglected to do as they will wish they had done when they come to stand before Him, who commissioned them to preach the gospel, and give an account of their ministry; they will no longer neglect to carry out the design of their commission, in every sense of the word; that they will preach the gospel to every one with whom they may come in contact, and thus rid their garments of the blood of souls.

I stepped on to a boat as she lay in a lock, and the first man I met was an old gentleman, of whom I inquired if he was a passenger. He said he was. I asked him how many passengers there were on board, and he told me as near as he could guess. I then asked him if he knew how many professors of religion were on the boat. He said he was one himself, but whether there were any others on the boat, he did not know. I asked him how far he had come on the boat. He re-

plied, that he had come from Albany, a distance of one hundred and eighty miles. What! said I, have you come so far, and being a professor of religion, don't know whether there are any others on the boat? It seems to me, you have not done your duty, or you would have known whether there were any others. Said he, "Do you think it a duty to let folks know you are a professor of religion." I told him I did, that I believed I should have to give an account for every day of my life, when I should be called to an account for my stewardship.

"Well sir, said he, (pointing to the stern of the boat,) there stands a man, who, I think, is a minister. Go and talk to him, he has been on the boat as long as I have."

"What makes you think he is a minister," said I, "if you have not spoken to him."

"He minds his own business, lets people alone, reads his Bible, and appears to be a very sober man: and I think from his appearance, he must be a minister," replied the old gentleman.

"God deliver me from a *minister* who will let people alone! I believe it the duty of

ministers to sound the note of alarm," was my answer.

I walked along to the man who was pointed out as a minister, and after the common salutations, I inquired if he was a clergyman. He said he preached sometimes.

I inquired how far he had come on that boat.

He said, "From Albany."

"Have you preached on the boat, sir?"

"Why!" said he, "do they preach on the boats?"

I asked him who commissioned him to preach the gospel?

He replied, "That he hoped his commission was from Him who commissioned the Apostles."

"Well sir, how does it read?"

"Why," said he, "I am to preach the gospel to every creature."

"Well," said I, "are these on this boat creatures, or things, or what are they?"

"I supposed" said he, "it would not be advisable from what I have heard of boatmen, to say anything to them on the subject of religion. I must acknowledge, I have felt it my duty to ask a blessing at the table, and to

ask the captain if I might pray on his boat ; but the reason why I have not done so is, I was told by a man in Albany, that if I wished to get along peaceably, I must not say anything to the boatmen about religion. They appear to be very peaceable men on this boat, and have used me very well."

"Well sir," I replied, "I am only going six miles on this boat, and am in the habit where I find a minister on a boat, to get him to preach, now, will you preach to us if I can get permission of the captain?"

"O," said he, "I can't preach now, after having been here five days."

"Well sir," I replied, "there is one thing that you ought to do, if you can not preach, I shall have a meeting on the boat, and you can confess you are a minister, and that you have neglected your duty."

"I don't know but I ought to do that," said he, "I will think of it, and perhaps I will say something if you have a meeting on the boat."

I walked down into the cabin, found the captain there, told him my name and business, and asked him if he would allow us to have preaching in the bow cabin. "Certainly,"

said he, "do you preach, sir?" No, sir, I don't preach, but there is a man on the boat who does. "Did he come on with you, sir?" the captain asked, for he knew that I had just stepped on board as the boat lay in the lock. I replied no, but that he came from Albany with you. "Who is the man?" asked the captain. I described the man, so that the captain knew who was intended. "Is that man a minister, and has he come so far in silence, and now wants to preach?—Why has he not asked permission to preach before? I don't want to hear him preach: I guess he can't be much of a preacher, I will let *you* talk sir, but if a minister can be on my boat five days, and not even let any one know it, he is no minister for me. Why, sir, he has never asked a blessing, at my table, and I have boarded him all the way. Now," said the captain, 'do you think that man is a Christian? He has come with us one hundred and eighty miles, and I don't know of his having said a word on the subject of religion.'" I told him I was not to judge men, and I thought probably the man might be a good man, although I did not approve of the course he had taken

any more than he did. I then told him the reasons the man gave for his neglect of duty. "Well," said the captain, "it is bad enough that ministers neglect their duty, but worse that they must be warned by ungodly men to let boatmen alone. We are none of us professors of religion on this boat, but neither are any of us infidels. We all believe in the importance of religion. When do you suppose the boatmen will be converted at this rate, if Christian ministers can travel with us two hundred miles, and not even warn us of our danger?" I told him my labors were intended to stimulate Christians to do their duty when they were on the canal.

As soon as they had taken in water, the captain said he would go over into the bow cabin and hear what I had to say. We sung, and opened the meeting by prayer. I was sitting by the side of the minister, and asked him to make some remarks. He arose, confessed that he was a minister, and that he had been traveling five days with those whom he expected to meet at the judgment, where the secrets of all hearts would be known; and and thanked God that the old gentleman by

his side had come on the boat and had admonished him. He then began to weep, but went on, and made one of the most hearty confessions I ever heard.

I watched the captain, and it was not long before there was not a dry eye in the company. After he got through with his confession, he remarked that I had invited him to preach, and that he had selected a passage from which he would like to make some remarks, if there was no objection.

"Go on," said the captain, "and preach. I want to hear you, and I presume all the company do."

He accordingly gave us a short but very appropriate discourse, and it produced a powerful effect on all persons present.

After the meeting was dismissed, the captain took the minister's hand and said, "Well, sir, I hope the ice is broken, and you will preach to us again."

I met that captain about four weeks afterwards, in Utica, and said he, "The young man whom you got to preach on my boat, was one of the best men I ever was acquainted with. He preached three sermons more

before he left us, and prayed night and morning while he stayed with us, and the whole of his time after you left was spent in trying to do us good."

I hope the reader will not think that I feel myself better than those who have taken a different course. I have no doubt of the piety of the young minister just mentioned. I wish I was as good a man as I think he was, and I suppose that probably I ought to make more allowance for young ministers than I have. I am an old man; and this is the business to which I am appointed by the society for which I labor. Young men come on the boats, and see grey headed fathers there, and if the subject of religion is not the subject upon which the company are conversing, the young minister, who is rather retiring and modest, thinks of course that should he introduce the subject, some might think him rather ostentatious. This I know from what I have seen.

I came across a young minister from one of our large cities at the west, whose church I had addressed but a short time before, a young man of piety and deep devotion, and

one whom I should have thought would have been the last man to neglect what he should think duty, and when I found he had been on the boat all night, I said to him, I hoped he had preached the evening before. "No sir," said he. Well, then you prayed with them, I suppose. "No sir," was his reply. "I was afraid the company (and there were several gray headed fathers on board,) would think that I wished to show myself, and let the world know that I was a minister," Said he, "when you talked to my people, I thought then, if ever I went upon a boat, I should certainly do my duty, but its hard telling at all times what duty is."

I hope the reader will not condemn ministers, and I acknowledge I was rather too severe, but I hope he will forgive me, and that I shall never have occasion to chastise him again.

## CHAPTER V.

## DUTY OF MINISTERS WHILE TRAVELING.

While speaking on this point, I will relate another instance of a minister's neglect to do his duty. One evening, just at sunset, I stepped on board a boat, went immediately to the captain, and asked him if I could have a passage with him. He asked me if I should need a berth, I told him I should, as I wished to stay aboard all night. He said his berths were all taken up, and he could not possibly lodge me. I told him I was sorry, for I saw he had a large number of passengers on board, and informed him that I was laboring as a missionary. "Well, sir, said he, "I will give you my berth, and you can go on with us."

I commenced conversation with him, found that he was not a professor of religion, but had just buried his father, and felt deeply upon the subject of religion. He said his

father had been a deacon, and a very pious and devoted man; had ever been a kind father to him, and he had no doubt that he was happy. He said that since his father's death, he thought he felt more of the importance of being prepared to die, than he ever had in all his life before. "My father's prayers for me," said he, "I am sensible are closed; I have felt as though I wanted some one to direct me, and am very glad you have come aboard my boat." "I suppose," said he, "I have a minister on my boat; I am told he is a minister, but this is the third day he has been with me, and he has not said a word to me about my soul. He spends nearly all his time in reading his Bible, and says nothing to any body, unless he is first spoken to. I think if he knew how I feel, he would say something to me; but I think it is a minister's business to inquire of people as to their feelings, and this is one reason why I have not told him of my grief for the loss of my father."

He then pointed out the man he was speaking of, and I went to him; as he sat on the deck, reading his Bible. After inquiring how

far he had come on the boat, and how far he was going, I said to him, "Sir, are you not a clergyman?"

"Why do you think so?" said he.

I answered that I could *generally* recognize a minister, by his deportment, but in this case the captain had told me that he supposed he was a minister.

"I don't know how he should know," said he, "for I have not even hinted to him, or to any other person on the boat, that I am a minister; but I profess to be a preacher, and I ought not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

I then asked him the same questions proposed to the minister in the preceding chapter, viz: whether he had preached to that company, and whether he did not think it the duty of Christians, especially ministers, to let people with whom they came in contact, know that they professed to be the disciples of Christ, and so fulfil their commission by preaching the Gospel to every creature. He said that "circumstances altered cases, and in circumstances like the present, when there were so many passengers, and so much

crowded, he had seen no time since he came on board to introduce the subject of religion." I told him I thought his master would hardly excuse him, although there was a crowd on the boat, and that he could hardly expect to receive the welcome plaudit, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," when he had done nothing.

He replied, "Ministers are nothing but men, and liable to err."

I assented, and repeated to him what the captain had said to me. I told him I thought the captain was under deep conviction for sin, and that if he had been faithful to him he might have been instrumental in his conversion. I asked him if he would preach in the evening. He said he had no objections, if the company were willing to hear him, and I told him I presumed they would be glad to listen.

I then went down into the cabin, and told the passengers we had a minister on board, and if there were no objections, he would preach to us in the evening. "Oh, yes, let us have preaching then," said a number of voices. I saw by their expression that there

must be a number of professors of religion on board, and when I came to inquire, found that twenty-eight out of forty passengers were members of Christian churches. When I told the captain the man was willing to preach, he said "he should be happy to have him." Consequently, just at dark the bow cabin was filled, and those who could not get in remained around the door. The captain was very much affected during the sermon, which was a very solemn one, and made a good impression, and there was much weeping during the services. Afterwards, I made some remarks, and closed by prayer. After the meeting, I went into the stern cabin and found the captain weeping. He spoke of the solemnity of the meeting, said he was very much disappointed in the minister, and that he thought he never had heard a man preach better. The sermon *was* a good one, but the captain was in a fit situation to hear. I saw that the spirit of God was striving with him, and endeavored to improve the opportunity by making some kind remarks. I alluded to the death of his dear father, told him that God intended that chastening for his good, and that I hoped

he would improve the dispensation, and not grieve the Spirit away.

The next morning, I thought the captain's serious feelings had not abated. He asked if we could not have another meeting in the morning. The minister who had preached the previous evening had left the boat about daylight, but I told the captain we could have a prayer meeting, for I had found that there were quite a number of praying men on the boat, and the last evening's meeting had waked them up. Accordingly, after the passengers were informed that there was to be a prayer meeting in the bow cabin, they all came in, but before the meeting commenced, a lady remarked to me that her husband, who was on board, preached sometimes. I went to the man and inquired if he knew "how many more Jonahs there were in the ship." He said he could only answer for himself, but that he would try to preach. We found, likewise, before preaching, that we had an old singing master aboard, besides a number of most excellent female singers, which furnished materials to make the meeting interesting. The

captain, and all his hands who could be spared, attended.

•That day was one of the most pleasant days of my life. We had six meetings on that boat before I left it. I was on board two days and two nights, almost the whole of which was spent in religious service. There was a lady on board, whose eyes I scarcely saw dry during the last day and evening. I do not know whether she obtained a hope or not, as I have never seen her since; but I learned that the captain found peace in believing. I left the boat about 9 o'clock the third night. I called that a *protracted* meeting, and the reader will see that I had every thing to encourage me in my mission.

The field of my labors has constantly become more and more interesting from the commencement, and I have never had reason to regret that I embarked in the enterprize, but feel confident that at the judgment I shall bless God that I was appointed to the work.

One more instance of ministers' neglect of duty, and I leave them in the hands of God, with the hope that if any of them read this book, it will stimulate them so that when

travelling, they will at least always consult God to know what their duty is. I can assure the dear servants of Christ, that these incidents have not been mentioned with any unkind feelings, but with the hope that the remarks which are made in kindness, will meet with a kind reception.

I had been waiting at one time for a boat, for when I had finished my exercises on one boat, I usually stopped and waited for another. At length a boat came up, and as I stepped on board, an aged minister came out of the cabin, and shook hands with me, for he was one of my acquaintances.

Said I, "Well, brother, I have been waiting here sometime for a boat, and am glad to meet you. I hope I shall have to wait still for another boat: for I suppose you have done my business on this one."

Said he, "I have done nobody's business, not even my own; I have done nothing, sir."

"How far have you come?" I asked.

"About fifty miles."

"You have been on board then over night: did you not pray with them last night?"

"To tell you the truth, brother Eaton," said he, "I am afraid of them."

"Well," said I, "I should think a minister who has been fighting the battles of the Lord as long as you have, even until your head has grown white in the service, would not be afraid of any one."

Another old gentleman, who was standing by, and listening to our conversation, said he did not blame the man for saying nothing to them, for he would have been abused if he had. Said he, "I just spoke to the captain about swearing, and he answered me very abruptly, and told me I had better mind my own business."

The old gentleman advised me, likewise, not to say any thing to the captain, for he would surely abuse me if I did. I replied I should be in strange business, neglecting this man, when laboring to reform wicked men, for how should I meet him at the judgment? "No sir," said I, "I will go and see the captain and do my duty, if he throws me into the canal; but he won't abuse me. I want you too, when we come over into the bow cabin, to be ready to talk and pray, for I am going

only three miles on this boat, and I always insist that ministers shall do the talking and praying, when I find them on a boat."

"You must do the talking and praying yourself," said the minister, "but you won't get the captain over here to hear you."

I started to go into the stern cabin, and while passing over the deck, I saw the captain adjusting some kegs of nails. I said nothing to him, however, but went into the cabin and inquired of a lady whom I found there, if she was the captain's wife. She answered yes. I told her my business, and she said she was glad to see me, although they were all sinners. I asked her if any of them were Infidels. She replied that they all believed the Bible. I handed her some tracts, and told her I would see if the captain would let me pray on his boat.

"I know he will," said she.

I walked out and told the captain I was a missionary, laboring among boatmen, wanted the privilege of talking to his hands and passengers, was going only a short distance, and that if he had no objection, I should like to have him go into the bow cabin. He imme-

diately called his wife into the other cabin to hear our "missionary" talk. They went over with me, and I saw as we entered the cabin, that the minister looked rather astonished, for I had not been gone more than five minutes.

We commenced by singing and praying, and then after talking to them awhile, the minister said *he* felt as though he wanted to pray. He knelt down, and confessed to God that he had neglected his duty. After he closed, the old gentleman who had advised me not to go and see the captain, commenced praying and confessing, and our short meeting was a very interesting one. When I shook hands with the captain, and bid him good-bye, he wept, and said, "I wish you would stay longer, but if you can't stay now, I hope it will not be long before I see you on our boat again." He then bade me God speed, and hoped none would ever treat me unkindly.

The reason why the captain had answered the old gentleman so abruptly was, that the bowsman had neglected to "lay over" his boat in season, and another boat had run into her. If anything will irritate a captain, it is

such an occurrence: for his boat is injured, and he has no remedy. In the above mentioned instance, the captain swore at the bowsman, and the old gentleman standing by, said, "You will go to hell if you don't repent of that oath." The captain answered, that he had better mind his own business. There is always a right and a wrong way to do things, and some men have an admirable faculty of doing everything in the wrong way. This old gentleman, I presume, was a good man, but I think he was unwise, in making such a remark to the captain.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE ORPHAN BOY.

Having taken a good deal of pains to learn the histories of *boys* on the canal, and having found many of them deeply interesting, I will relate one, (that of an orphan,) as it was told to me by one who knew all the particulars. It was the more interesting to me, as I was myself acquainted with the individual.

A lad, a driver, was taken sick, but continued to drive, until he could hardly sit on his horse. In starting the boat out of a lock one day, being very weak, he fell from his horse, struck his head against a stone, cut a hole in his head, and became senseless. The brutal captain took him up, threw him into an old board shanty beside the lock, put his other boy on the horse, and drove along.

There was no one who saw him, but the lock-tender, and he was "off the same piece" with the rascally captain. The boy was in so

bad a condition that he did not know anything for some time. At length his senses returned, but he could not speak, if to save his life. He seemed to be completely palsied, and could not move any more than a dead person.

At length a man came along, and seeing him lying in the shanty, said, "Here is a boy with his head all cut open; who is he?" The lock-tender answered, that he was the wickedest boy there was on the canal.

"What are you going to do with him?" asked the man.

"Let him die," replied the lock-tender. "I wish he *was* dead."

The boy heard the answers, but he could not speak. Several other such questions were asked, and like answers given.

The boy thought he must die there, for it was a very hot day in July, and the boards were off the west side of the shanty, so that when the sun was about two hours high, it shone full in his face. He thought if he had been in possession of the whole world, he would have given it freely for a half

pint of water, but he could not speak, and had made up his mind that he must die.

Just at dusk, the "*good Samaritan*" came along and asked, "What boy is this? He looks as though he was dead." The lock-tender made the same reply as on former occasions. Said the man, (he was a Christian,) "I don't know but he is dead, but if he is alive I shall try to save him." He turned the lad over, and upon examination, found him yet living. He then told his own boy, who was with him, to run home and bring his one-horse wagon, with a bed in it. He took the boy home with him, washed his wounds, and procured a physician, but it was four days before he could speak. After a while, as he grew better, the man asked if it was true that he was the worst boy on the canal. He began to cry, and said he supposed it was; but he had constantly been treated like a slave for five years, which was the time he had been on the canal. He had never had a kind word spoken to him, he was an orphan, and had no one to take his part—had been cheated out of his wages, and he did lie, steal, and get drunk.

The man told him he might be a man, if he would only behave himself correctly, and advised him, when he got well, to hire out to some one who would pay him, lay up his wages, and go to school in the winter, when navigation would be closed. He soon told the man that he had made up his mind to do as he had advised him. He went back upon the canal, hired out to a good captain, became a good boy, laid up his money, went to school in the winter, and continued this course for five years. By this time he had an excellent business education, was appointed to the office of captain of a boat in a line on the canal, became very much respected, and obtained a good property.

About three years ago, he became very sick, was taken from his boat and carried into a house, where he expected to die. It so happened, that he was again carried into the house of a Christian ; and it pleased God to raise him again from the sick bed.

When he became a little better, the man whom he was with began to talk with him, and inquired whether he was prepared to die. He said he was not, and related to the man

the history of his past life—told him how degraded he had been when a boy, and how near dying he came, by what means he had been spared, and how kind God had been to him, and began to be much alarmed for the safety of his soul. The man continued to talk with him, and pray for him, and before he left the man's house, he was hopefully converted, and no one who knows him, has any doubts of the genuineness of his religion.

Now I wish to ask the reader whether it is right and best to try to save those boys. I know this man to be a very amiable and respectable man; and most of these boys, if they were reformed, would make equally good citizens. Two of them have already become preachers of the gospel, many others are professors of religion, besides a large number who have become respectable boys. The condition of these boys has been very much altered by the Temperance Reformation. They are now treated kindly, and most of them get their pay, although there are a great many unprincipled men yet on the canal, who will hire them in the spring, and when they have driven for them all sum-

mer, cheat them out of their wages, thus leaving a great many along the line of the canal in the fall in a very destitute condition.

I passed a boat last fall, on a cold morning of November. The driver, a small lad, was walking by the side of his horses, crying. He was very thinly clothed, had no stockings, and could hardly keep his feet in an old half-worn pair of shoes, that were twice too large for him. I asked the little fellow why he cried. He said he had been into the boat to warm him, and the captain had whipped him, and told him to clear out, that he would not have him any longer. He said the captain owed him fifty dollars, he had driven for him all summer, and now, says he, "he wants to cheat me out of my wages, but I'll stick to him till I get to Utica, for I've got friends there, and they won't see me cheated." I asked him if his parents lived in Utica; but he said he had no parents. I suppose the captain thought as he had no parents, he could cheat him out of his summer's work with impunity. Some of the boys are lazy and unsteady, and when they get their pay spend it foolishly. There was formerly :

great deal of gambling among them, but at present there is comparatively but little.

The relation of the following incident will illustrate how little some of the captains used to regard the lives of those boys. If I did not know these to be facts, I should not dare to relate them, for to me it would seem almost incredible that man, made after the image of his Maker, should be so void of all the feelings of humanity as to treat a creature, whom God made, with so much brutality.

While talking with a gentleman standing on the deck of a boat passing between Rome and New London, Oneida co., he remarked to me that he never should forget that place. He said that during the season of the cholera he was passing along there, and the captain of the boat he was on called out to the driver who was asleep, and told him it was time for him to get up. They then carried their drivers on their boats, and they drove alternately, while the one was driving, the other slept. The boy came out on deck, and my informant said he observed as he came out that he looked very pale. Said he, "Captain, I can not drive, I am very sick."

The captain looked around and said, "You have got the cholera, and must go off the boat."

"I hope not," said the boy.

"Yes you have," repeated the captain; "so go off the boat immediately."

"Where shall I go?" said the little fellow.

"I don't care where you go—only go off the boat."

It was almost a dense swamp at that time from Rome to New London, a distance of nine miles, and they were then about half way between the two places. The captain then ordered the man at the helm to lay up the boat.

The boy, foreseeing what was coming, began to cry and said, "Captain, don't put me off here; let me go to New London. I shall die if you put me ashore here, but I can get a doctor at New London."

Instead of showing the little fellow any mercy, the captain laid hold upon him and threw him upon the tow path hard enough to beat out his brains, had he struck upon his head. My informant said he remonstrated with the captain, told him it was a cruel and

unheard of thing, and said he was afraid he had killed the boy.

"Don't be alarmed," said the captain, "I know that boy better than you do. He is no more sick than you are; he is a lazy villain, and I have had him long enough."

The boy did not move so long as the boat remained in sight. The reason why my informant did not report the captain when he arrived at New London, was, that he partially believed what the captain said, although he was sensible that the boy was sick. He returned the next day and learned the particulars relative to the boy. He had crawled away and got upon some logs that lay up out of the water, where he was found the next day by a dog.

He lived about half an hour after he was found, but never spoke. Hundreds of those boys died during the season of the cholera, with no kind friend even to close their eyes. It is a true saying, that "one half the world don't know what the other half are doing."

I would just ask the parent who may have read these lines, what would be your feelings if you supposed your children would meet

with the same treatment in their intercourse with an unfriendly world ?

We know but very little of the trials our children will pass through. How very important, then, that we bring them up in such a way that when we are called to leave them, we may indulge the hope that they are the children of God, for with such the afflictions of this world are but short.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE ORPHAN CHILD OF A PRAYING MOTHER.

There is another incident, which I can never relate without bringing the scene fresh to my memory, although I have related it hundreds of times. I called at a horse station one morning very early. The station keeper had just got up, and stood in the door. I told him my business, and that I desired to see his boys a few moments. He said his boys were in bed, and as I was an old man, he did not wish to have me abused. "You had better go on and let my boys alone," said he, "they will most assuredly abuse you if they get up, for I have got a very wicked set of boys." I told him the very reasons that he assigned why I should not see his boys, were the reasons why I wished to see them, for if they were very wicked boys, there was the greater necessity for their reformation; and as to the abuse,

that was the least of my troubles, for my Master had been abused before me.

"Well, sir," said he, "don't blame me, if you are abused." He then awoke his boys, and as they came out, I talked to them. Instead of abusing, they listened attentively to me, and some of them were much affected. They took my tracts, and I presume read them.

On leaving them, I remarked, that I supposed the most of them were orphans, that I was the orphan's friend, and though I might never see them again, they might be assured they had my prayers daily, that they might be converted. There was one little fellow who, as I had observed, looked very sober, and who at the last remark cried right out. As I wished to take the same boat again, I stepped out of the station house, but found it had left, and I was walking along, looking for another boat, when I heard some one crying behind me, and turning round, saw that it was the little fellow who wept so much in the station house.

He said, "Sir, you told me you was the orphan's friend; will you stop? I want to ask you a question."

I asked him if it was because he had now discovered that he was a sinner, that he cried, and wished me to talk with him.

"No sir," said he, "I knew that three years ago."

I perceived, from his answer, he was an interesting boy, and said to him, "Sit down here, my son. How old are you?"

"Thirteen," he replied.

"Where did you come from?"

He said, three years ago his father moved from Massachusetts to Wayne county; he was a very poor man, and when they got to their journey's end they had nothing left. His father obtained the privilege of building a small log house to live in, on another man's land, but just as he got the house finished, he was taken sick and died. I asked him if his father was a Christian, but afterwards regretted that I asked him the question, for it was a long time before he could answer it.

At length he said, "No sir, if he had been a Christian, we could have given him up willingly. We had no hope for *him*; but my mother was a Christian. My mother, a sister seven years old, and myself, were all the

family after my father died. I had no hope that *I* was a Christian when my father died; but my mother used to come up the ladder every night, and kneel down, and put her hand upon my head, and pray that I might be converted. Often, when I was asleep, she would come, and her tears running into my face, would wake me. I knew that I was a sinner, but I hope God forgave my sins one night, while my dear mother was praying for me, and I still hope I was converted then.

"About a year after my father died, my sister was taken sick and died in about two months. My mother was naturally feeble, and her sorrow for the loss of my father and sister wore upon her until she was confined to her bed. She lay there seven months, and last fall she died."

By this time the little fellow was so choked with grief that he could hardly speak. "Then," said he, "*I* was taken sick, and lay all winter, not expecting to get well." I shall never forget the appearance of that boy, and the expression of his countenance, when he said, "I am a poor orphan, sir; I have nothing in this world except the clothes I have on."

All the clothes he had on would not have sold for twenty-five cents.

What an example is here to induce mothers to be faithful to their children. I wish to ask mothers if they have ever gone at the midnight hour and awoke their children by a mother's tears while pleading with God for the salvation of their souls? Where is the parent who could bear the thought of hearing God say to the Angel, "Take that child, bind it hand and foot, and cast it into outer darkness?" If one would think of the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched, and think (as we believe) that the souls of those who die without an interest in Christ must be their prey forever, we might then feel as did that dear orphan's mother when she awoke him with her tears. We should not only feel for our own children, but should feel for the wants and woes of this ruined world, as we should. The poor orphan on the canal would have a place in our prayers, and the hand of benevolence would be extended to him. It seems to me I can already hear the mother, as she reads these tales of misery, lifting her petition to God, that he may stimu-

late a Christian community to contribute to the relief of the wants of suffering humanity, and to pray without ceasing that the Bethel cause may be sustained—that when he who pens these lines shall be called from his labors on the canal to a still more glorious labor, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, there may be many others raised up who shall more than make his place good. Such thoughts as these stimulate me as I write, although I have been obliged to lay aside my paper for a moment to weep; for it is impossible for me to relate these incidents without weeping. Then comes the promise—“He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again bringing his sheaves with him.” Oh, what a precious promise to those who labor in God’s vineyard. Who would not spend his *whole* life in doing his duty, if by so doing he could be instrumental in the hands of God of winning one soul to Christ.

When I think seriously of God’s goodness to this wicked world, and then see the ingratitude, even of those who profess to be the followers of Christ, and how little sympathy

they manifest for the poor sinner, I ask myself, is it possible we shall be applauded for our well doing? We have apparently done nothing in proportion to what we ought to have done. When, too, we see the blessing of God attending the faithful laborer, what individual would not envy the happiness of that man who has been instrumental, under God, of gathering one hundred souls into the Redeemer's kingdom? Yet many of our faithful ministers may reasonably number their thousands. It is to be feared that many a Christian has lived years after he was converted, and been unable to name an instance where he has ever gathered one laurel for his Savior's crown.

I recollect conversing with a man, not long since, who inquired if I had known of any one who had been converted through my instrumentality. I told him that the judgment only could reveal that.

Said he, "I don't think I have ever been the means of the salvation of one soul, for if I thought I had been, I think I should be satisfied with that. I think I should be very

proud if I could have the satisfaction of presenting one soul to the Savior."

Still, that man might have been the means of saving many of which he had no knowledge. According to his own declaration, the knowledge of it would have puffed him up with pride.

He then insisted on my telling him, if I had not good reasons for believing that I had been the means of saving a good many souls?

I told him that after laboring as long as I had in God's cause, talking and praying with many sinners, I should be very much grieved if I thought my labors had been entirely useless.

Said he, "Can you mention any one instance?"

I told him I would not boast of what God had done through me, neither did I feel as he thought he should, for if there was any thing that made me feel humble, it was the thought that God should take such a sinner as I was and make use of him in the conversion of other sinners.

## CHAPTER VIII.

TRAVELING CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT LEAVE  
THEIR RELIGION AT HOME.

In commencing a new chapter, I would remark, that the steady progress of reform on the canal has been not only perceptible to me, but spoken of very often by travelers, who seemed much astonished that there was such an alteration among the canal men.

But to return to my diary. One very cloudy, dull morning, I was waiting at a lock for the coming of a boat. The lowering sky gave evident tokens of rain, till about 9 o'clock, when it began to rain. Just at this time a boat came into the lock, and I walked into the bow cabin, where I found twelve passengers. The captain soon coming, I inquired of him if he had any professors of religion aboard. He said he thought not, as they were all young people, and one young gentleman and his wife remarked that they were all very rude except

one old man and his wife, but that they might possibly be Christians. Two young men were playing checkers, and there were four young ladies who seemed very vain. After sitting a while, I felt my soul stirred within me, on seeing the manifest vanity of the young ladies. One of the gentlemen, seeming to have some regard for me, said, "If it is offensive to you, sir, we will stop our play, when we shall have played this game out." I told him I had not the command of the boat, that they had a right to do as they pleased without regard to me, but that I had some very good tracts which I would give them to read. I offered some to the ladies, and they all accepted of them but two. When I commenced talking on the subject of religion, those two left the gentlemen's, went into the ladies' cabin, and there talked and laughed very loudly. I knew that they were making sport of what I had said, but the gentlemen soon stopped playing and took some tracts. The rain poured down in torrents, so I was in no haste to leave the boat, but sat while they read the tracts which I had given them. One lady remarked that she was very glad I had

come on board and furnished them with something to read. I inquired whether she was a professor of religion.

In answer, said she, "Would you think that any one who appeared as vain as I was when you came into the boat, ever knew any thing about religion?"

I told her that it was evident she did not enjoy religion, even if she had ever known what it was. She began to weep and confess, said she was a member of the church, and thought she had known what it was to enjoy the spirit of Christ, but being in company with those strangers a few days, and not having told them she was a church member, she had by degrees joined them in their folly, until she could laugh as loud as any of them. She acknowledged that she ought to have set them an example, and turning to one of her associates, she said, "Madam, this is not the way which I have been taught by the Savior. I hope you will forgive me."

The other one began to also weep, and said, I have more reason to confess to you, than you have to me, for I too profess to be

a disciple of Christ, and think I have been a great deal more vain than you."

At length one of the young men, who was playing checkers, said, "I have not before suspected that there was one person on the boat who made any pretensions to religion, except my brother and myself. I too am a professor of religion, and feel that I have more to confess than any of you."

By this time the old gentleman began to think he had not done his duty, as one who expected to give an account, for he had professed to have a hope for forty years. We then turned our attention to the other persons in the cabin, and when I came to ask them severally whether they were professors of religion, I found every one *had* professed it publicly, except one of the ladies who had gone into the ladies' cabin.

On learning this fact, I felt a little as Paul describes himself to have felt when he stood on Mars' Hill. The Spirit of God came down while I talked to them, and I think there was not one who did not weep. I engaged in prayer, but during the exercise there was so much laughing by the two who were

in the ladies' cabin, that it disturbed us very much. After prayer, I went into the cabin, and asking pardon for the intrusion, remarked that I was unwilling to leave the boat without doing my duty to them, for I should probably never meet them again this side of the grave. The one who had before been so bold and rude, said I had better mind my own business, she had no concern about herself, for she had made up her mind long ago that God would never damn any one. She thought I had better talk to those whom I could frighten, but as for herself, she was not easily frightened.

"Then," said I, "you profess to be a Universalist, do you?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Well, madam," said I, "you are *not* a Universalist, notwithstanding your profession."

She said she was, and if I believed the Bible, I was one, too. She then went through the common course which Universalists take, in advocating their sentiments.

After hearing her for a while, I concluded to ask her a few questions, but she soon be-

came angry. I found no difficulty in destroying the arguments which she used to prove her positions, and while I kept perfectly cool, I had all the advantage. She soon became confused, and misquoted scripture, and having my Bible in my hand, when she made a mistake I would turn to the passage and read it aloud. This I continued until I took away her last weapon. She began to cry, and I thought she wept because she was angry, but as I could never stand the tears of a female, I asked her pardon, saying I was sorry I had offended her, but that I had no other object than the good of her soul ; that I thought her in an error, and my object was to show her the error. She replied that she did not weep because I had the best of the argument, but because she had abused me, and she felt that she had done very wrong in making such a disturbance. It occurred to me that she might once have been a professor of religion, and was then a backslider. I then asked her if she had ever indulged a hope that her sins had been pardoned.

“What makes you think so?” said she. When I gave her my reasons, she said that

about five years before, she had attended a school, the principal of which opened it by prayer, and this was the means of her awakening; that before the school closed, she had indulged a hope of her conversion, but being a stranger in the place, she had never united with any church. For one year she kept up secret prayer and enjoyed herself well; but at length a Universalist minister came into the place, she went to hear him, embraced that doctrine, and stopped her praying, for she saw no necessity for prayer.

For four years she had advocated the sentiment, and thought she was a Universalist. "But," said she, "I always had my doubts, and now I am determined by God's help to abandon the doctrine." She said she was going east to visit some friends, and that she would unite with some church, and try again to enjoy the religion of Christ.

The other lady acknowledged that she had been to blame in making disturbance, and asked my pardon. After another season of prayer, and commending the company to God, I left the boat and went upon another, praising God for bringing about such a revolution,

and for giving me reason to hope for the reclaiming of the backslider. How painful the thought, that many professing Christians, when traveling, leave their religion at home, or keep it locked up in their own bosoms; and although they may not commit any out-breaking sin, yet they keep silence when their Master is abused. It may not on *every* occasion be the best course to let it be known that we profess to be Christians; yet I believe there are but few exceptions, even when among strangers. If we do our duty as Christians under unpleasant circumstances here, we shall not regret having done so when we meet at the judgment.

On the contrary, how many at the judgment will accuse us of having neglected our duty! How many reasons there are why those who hope in a Savior's love and mercy, should speak to those with whom they come in contact, of the joy the religion of Jesus Christ affords to the soul. How often, when I have been talking to strangers, and felt the influence of the Spirit on my own soul, have I felt an approving conscience within, seen the tear course down the cheek, and received

from those strangers their warmest thanks for the interest I have taken in their welfare.

I am not now to know, but I earnestly hope, that at the judgment it may appear, that the interview which I have here described was the means of the salvation of an immortal soul. We are commanded to "sow in the morning, and in the evening withhold not our hands." I have never felt condemned for doing that which seemed to be duty; but as God works by means, and has told us that he will take the weak things of this world to confound the wisdom of the wise, I am still encouraged to persevere; and as I advance in life, I feel the importance of more activity in the cause.

## CHAPTER IX.

MORE OPPOSITION, ROMAN CATHOLICS, AND  
BLACKLEGS.

One reason for employing my leisure moments in giving this little volume to the world is, that I have done so little while I have lived, that I can not be satisfied, without leaving something behind me, which will remind those in whose welfare I have taken a deep interest, and for whose salvation I have labored, of their duty to God ; so that when my head sleeps in the grave, and the hand that pens these lines is cold in death, they may have an opportunity of reading the warnings contained in these pages.

I have always been of the opinion that Christians ought to set such examples while living, that when they are dead, they may still exert a good influence ; and when reading the lives and writings of Baxter, Edwards, Brainard, Harlan Page, Whitefield, and many

others, who have left on record the strongest evidence of their love for souls, and when thinking what those men are now doing for the conversion of the world, by their writings, and by the examples which they have left, I am satisfied that this life is too short to be the extent of our influence. What a powerful influence is the life of Christ exerting upon this wicked world, and we who profess to be his disciples ought to imitate his examples.

The reader will, I think, pardon this digression. When I began to write, I intended only to relate some of the many incidents which have transpired in my labors among the boatmen, but very often when I have been addressing large congregations, and pleading the cause of the boatmen, I have been overwhelmed with the thought of meeting at the judgment those I was then addressing, and before I was aware of it, have found myself deeply engaged in warning them to be prepared to meet God.

But to resume my narrative. Upon the next boat which I visited, after having gone several miles, I went to the captain and informed him that "I had a permit to ride on

his boat." "Who gave you the permit?" asked he. I told him Mr. John Allen, of Rochester. "Well," said he, "Mr. Allen's permit will not go this summer, for we have to give a strict account for every mile that we carry passengers." I told him it would not make much difference with me, for I should not probably go far on his boat, and I could pay the passage where I left it. Said the captain, "What is your business, that you are allowed to go free?" I informed him I was a missionary laboring in behalf of the American Bethel Society, for the good of boatmen. "Well, sir, let me tell you, I do'n't think much of your services. I think you had better be at home; and if you ride on my boat, I guess you will pay."

His manner was very abrupt, and he went away for a few moments, but soon returned, and sitting down beside me began, by saying he was a Universalist, believed God would save all men, and he did not think it worth while to make so much fuss about that which we could not alter. I asked him to give the reasons for his belief, and the grounds upon which he hoped to be saved, and I would

give him the reasons for my hope, and if he had a better way to go to heaven, and could satisfy me that it was a sure one, perhaps I would become a convert to Universalism.

Confident of success, he began to quote scripture, as he called it, but he was a real bungler, and did not give one whole passage correctly. I asked him where he found such scripture? He said in his Bible. I told him he must have a different Bible from mine, for it did not read so in mine, and I would then turn to the passages and correct him. At last he said, "I wish my father was here, he would hold you to it," and I then saw the reasons for his belief. Instead of taking his Bible for his guide, he had believed what his father had taught him.

I then told him it was dangerous to pin our faith upon any man's sleeve, unless we had a "Thus saith the Lord" first, and brought forward many passages to show him how futile were all his hopes of salvation without a change of heart. I tried to set before him the worth of the soul, and the sacrifice which God had made for its redemption, and to convince him that it was of the utmost impor-

tance that we should be free from error, for at the judgment it would be too late for us to correct the mistake. He seemed to be very much interested, and asked many questions, which I endeavored to answer in accordance with the Bible.

Dinner being ready, "Come, sir, said he, "go and eat some dinner;" and at the table he requested me to ask a blessing. After dinner we resumed the subject, and he then acknowledged that if he was wrong, he alone would be the loser, and said he wished to be an honest man, and to do that which would be approved by God. I saw that I had gained his confidence, and asked the privilege of praying before I left the boat. He consented, and when I closed my prayer I saw him wiping his eyes. I staid till after tea, and then told him I had remained much longer than I had intended, and that I would pay my bill.

"Your bill is already paid," said he.

"But," said I, "I thought Mr. Allen's permit would not go?"

"Well, sir," said he, "*your* permit will go, and I hope you will forgive my impertinence,

and stay over night. You shall always be welcome on my boat."

I shook hands with him, however, he bade me God speed, and we parted. I have never seen him since, and probably never shall, until we meet at the judgment seat.

There was a Roman Catholic passenger upon the next boat I visited; and when we were called to dinner, he commenced helping himself and eating before the food was served around. I remarked that I was in the habit of asking a blessing before eating, wherever I might be, and asked him if he would wait a moment for that purpose. He paid no attention to the request, but kept on eating. The others at the table waited until the blessing was asked, and he continued to eat. During dinner he looked at me occasionally, and I thought I could discover a very angry spirit in his eye. After we left the table, he remarked that I was a saucy fellow, and if I had been at the South, I would have been dirked.

I had some acquaintances at the table who took my part, and when he saw they were all against him, he made some acknowledge-

ments to the captain, in order that he might continue on the boat.

I have generally found the Catholics very much opposed to all denominations of Christians; but some few have treated religious subjects with candor. There are at present but very few objections made to religious exercises on boats, and not any by the boatmen.

Occasionally I come across a set of black-legs, who are traveling for no other purpose than to steal or gamble, and I will relate an instance of the kind. I spoke to a captain for a passage, one afternoon, near night, as his boat lay in Utica, and told him I should expect the privilege of praying on board. He appeared to be very accommodating, and told me I could have any privilege I wished on his boat. But just before we started, six new passengers came on board, whose appearance and actions I did not much like. I saw by their appearance, they were a set of vile fellows. I saw that the captain was acquainted with them, and I did not like his conduct after they came on board, and wished myself off the boat. Had it been in the day

time, I should have felt different : however, I thought I would make the best of it, and went into the bow cabin, where I found several professors of religion. When the hour for prayer came, I went over and found the captain at the helm. The weather being very warm, those ruffians were out on deck, and I heard them swearing loudly as I passed along. I told the captain I thought we had better attend prayer then, as they would soon want to make up the berths. He said he could not go over then, but I could go if I pleased. As I returned over the deck, I remarked to those ruffians that we were going to have prayer in the bow cabin, and I should be pleased to have them go in. One of them said, "Pray and be d—d, I sha'nt go in to hear you!" I made no reply, went in and commenced talking, but they made such a noise over head, that it was impossible to be heard. I then went over to the captain again, and told him that he had given me the privilege of praying on his boat, and he knew very well that those men made so much disturbance that when talking I could not be heard. "Go back," said he, "they will not disturb you any more."

I went back and engaged in prayer, when they began to stamp and halloo, and one of them coming down into the cabin, kneeled down and mocked me, by repeating my prayer after me, while the others above were shouting, "Amen ! Glory to God !"

I closed my prayer, took my trunk and attempted to get over to the captain, but they all came at me, called me many hard names, and tried hard to crowd me off into the canal, so that I had to turn and walk backwards to keep them from doing so. When I got to the captain, I asked him what my fare was. He charged me a very high price, but I paid it. I then told him I wanted him to lay up the boat so that I could get off. He wished to know what I meant by wanting to get off there in the swamp. I told him that it was my privilege to do so if I chose, and that among all the boats which I had visited, I had never been treated so before. He undertook to apologize, but I told him that I understood the whole matter, and that it was in his power to have stopped those men if he had chosen to do so. I afterwards learned that he was a whited sepulchre, and a blackleg, himself.

He said he could not lay up the boat then, and that I had better stay on board all night, but I told him I had been abused long enough by those ruffians, and that as he upheld them I presumed he was pleased with their conduct.

He finally laid up the boat, and I left him with those fellows cursing me at almost every breath. After I had left the boat, one of the fellows told the captain to "hold up, for the old rascal had stolen his trunk." I expected the captain would let him off, and that perhaps two or three of them would give me a bruising, and take what little money I had; but from some cause, not because the captain was too good to do it, they were not let off. It was about two o'clock at night when I left the boat, and I waited there for another one until half past twelve.

Thus, the reader will see that the Bethel missionary has difficulties and trials to encounter, which at times are very unpleasant; but I hope I shall not be disposed to find fault, when I remember that my Master suffered so much before me.

## CHAPTER X.

## CONVERSION OF A BOAT'S CREW.

The next boat I found, in the morning, was very different from the one I had left. I found an agreeable company of passengers, and the captain a very pleasant man. His wife, who was on the boat, had just recovered from a long illness, and was very sensitive upon the subject of religion. I tried to impress on her mind the importance of being prepared for death, that the sickness from which she had just recovered, was a warning for her, that God had brought her near the grave, and had restored her to health, in order that she might improve it to the salvation of her soul. We had a meeting in the bow cabin after breakfast, when all the passengers, and all the boat hands that could be spared, attended. The Spirit of God was evidently there; the captain, his wife, and one of the hands were very much affected, and many of

the passengers wept during the exercises. I had intended to leave the boat and go upon another, immediately after the meeting, but the captain and the passengers insisted on my remaining longer. I found the interest increasing, not only among the boatmen, but among the passengers, whose time was spent in talking, praying and singing, and it was evident that most of the company were deeply affected; and there were but two professors of religion on board the boat. And in view of the deep feeling existing, I dared not leave the boat. I continued on board during that day and the next till nine o'clock in the evening. I prayed with them just before I left, and when I shook hands with them, and reminded them that our next meeting would probably be at the judgment, there was not one of the boat's crew, or passengers on board, who did not weep.

Here let me remark, that I have never seen that boat's company, nor one of the passengers since, but about a year afterwards a friend told me that he had met a boatman who inquired of him if he knew Dea. Eaton, a missionary on the canal. He told him he

was well acquainted with me. "Well," said the boatman, "I am one of a boat's crew who were all converted in consequence of a meeting which he held on our boat." I hope the reader will not think I am inclined to boast of what I have done. I have but related this circumstance in connection with other facts, and I hope I shall always remember the Savior's declaration, "Without me ye can do nothing." It is all of the Savior, and I have nothing to boast of myself. But I have another object in relating these facts, which is this: When I am called upon to leave the field which I now occupy, perhaps some others may see what God has accomplished through such feeble instrumentalities, and thus be stimulated to action.

This field is a very important one, and ought to have been occupied long before it was. When I consider how many from the canals have gone down to their graves and are now beyond the reach of Christians' efforts; when I look at the multitudes who are daily dying, while others are stepping upon the stage of action, to fill their places, I hope and pray that the field may never again be unoc-

cupied, and that missionaries may be raised up to fill the vacancies made in the ranks. It is a very great consolation to me to think as I do that when my labors are done, some one better qualified will go from boat to boat, and kindly and affectionately plead with the dear boatmen to be reconciled to God.

Another instance of a passenger's opposition occurred on a packet boat. I had been on board sometime, and had become tolerably well acquainted with all the hands and many of the passengers. Of twenty-eight females, who composed a part of the passengers, twenty-six I had ascertained were professors of religion, together with a great share of the males. I had become acquainted with the captain before. We had a good deal of religious conversation and singing during the afternoon, and when the hour of prayer came, the captain handed me a Bible, and said it would be a convenient time to attend worship. I took the Bible and remarked, that I was in the habit of reading a portion of God's word, and of rendering thanks to the Great Giver of all our blessings, and I should be pleased to read and pray with the company, if there

were no objections. A man who sat reading a newspaper, spoke very sourly, and said, "*I have* objections." I told him I was very sorry any one had objections to that, which God our Maker demanded of us, and that as accountable beings, we were all under obligations to render praise and thanksgiving to Him. I then inquired what were his objections.

He said he "did not want a canal boat made a theological school."

"I do not understand you, sir," said I.

"Well," said he, "I do not believe in prayer."

I told him it would be very agreeable to have the consent of the passengers; that although we might differ in regard to duty, yet I meant to treat every person kindly, and should feel unpleasantly to pray there, if any one present objected to it.

The ladies present manifested by their looks much disgust at his remarks, and nearly all of them arose to hear our conversation. One of them requested me to read, and "not mind any thing about that Infidel, for he was not worth minding." A venerable gentleman,

likewise, who had been listening, said, "Read, sir"; and then addressing the man he said, "If you can't *listen*, you may go on deck and wait till we are done reading and praying, for it is our privilege to engage in worship on the boat to-night." I then remarked that it would be hard to send the man out on deck in the dark. He saw they were all against him, and turning to me said he, "O pray, pray sir, I see they all wish to have you." I accordingly read a portion of scripture, and engaged in prayer.

After prayer, he came and took hold of my hand and said, "I hope you will pardon me, I am very glad you prayed, and if I were to be on the boat to-morrow night with you, and no other one would ask you to pray, I certainly would do so myself." I believed, however, that he was not sincere in this, but that he saw they were all against him, and he wished to be thought a gentleman.

There are but very few at this period in the nineteenth century, who will oppose religious worship on the boats, even if they are infidels or skeptics, and this is the last instance of the kind I ever met with. The cook on

the boat above referred to, a colored man, although not a professor of religion, was so angry with the opposer, that it was difficult for him to let him alone. He told me the next morning that he had a great mind to throw him into the canal. I admonished him, however, and told him that although the man had done wrong and made himself disgusting to all on the boat, yet it would have been equally wrong in him to have done him any injury.

I am aware that there are many who, in their *hearts*, oppose the children of God, and yet have too much gentlemanly feeling to do so openly.

Once before the occurrence of the incident above related, I went upon a boat, and after it had left the city went to the captain, told him my business, and said I should ask the privilege of talking and praying with his hands. Said he, "You can't pray on my boat; I do all my praying myself." I informed him that it would be a pleasure to me to hear a captain pray. Said he, "You won't hear me pray, I am a Catholic, and belong to the first church that ever was formed. Do you

think heretics like you can rule me? No, sir, you shall never pray on my boat."

Said I, "Your refusal will make but little difference. Will you just read this?" handing him a permit from Mr. John Allen. I knew by the name of the line to which the boat belonged, that he was in Mr. Allen's employ. He took it, looked at it, and his countenance changed as he did so. He read it again, and then said, "Oh, sir, I was mistaken, I did not know you were a missionary; you can pray, sir, if you choose."

"Mr. Allen says in his permits, 'Let the bearer, Dea. M. Eaton, ride on your boat without charges except for his board; treat him kindly; let him have all the privileges he wants, for he is laboring for your good.' He requested me also to inform him when any of the captains who were running his boats would not let me have the privilege of praying on them, and said such could not run them any longer."

The captain replied, "Really, I did not understand you, sir. You can pray and do any thing you wish to on my boat."

This change in his conduct was very sudden. He evidently tried to appear like a gentleman, and seemed to have forgotten his great fear "that we heretics should rule him."

"Sir," said I, "this forcing business I don't much like, and I shall not pray on your boat."

"Oh, sir, said he, "I hope you will not be offended, for really, I did not understand you. I would much rather have you pray."

He tried to be very polite, but the passengers on board the boat had overheard our conversation, and were disgusted with him. They asked me how far I was going on that boat. I told them not very far, for at the first convenient place I should exchange boats. Accordingly, I soon left the boat, and with me all the passengers, for with all his pretended politeness, he could not keep them. So he was repaid in some measure for his hypocrisy.

I am now (1845) personally acquainted with a very large share of the boatmen, though I have not been on all their boats, and frequently on making known my name and business to them, they have answered, "Well,

we have often heard of you, but have never had the pleasure of meeting you before."

An instance of this kind occurred last fall, on the packet boat, while going up the Northern Canal. After I had talked to the company, a gentleman came to me and said, "I am very happy to meet you, sir, I have known you by reputation for three years, but have never had any desire to see you until recently. During this summer, however, I have had much anxiety to see you. I am the 'fighting captain,' or rather I used to go by that name, but last winter was a blessed one to me, for I have reason to hope that the Lord then converted my soul. I have been captain of a line boat for several years. I have had some hands who would rather fight than eat, and we used to do pretty much as we pleased, for we could whip any boat's crew on the canal. I can now see how contemptible we were, for now I have no disposition to fight, but I get along much better without. I started this spring with the same hands that I formerly had. Two of them had been subjects of a revival, and we pledged ourselves, together with a number of other boat's crews, who

like ourselves had found the Saviour to be precious, that we would pray on our boats night and morning, and ask a blessing at our meals. This pledge we have kept, taking turns : sometimes I, and sometimes my men have prayed. The first trip we went along very well, till we came to Little Falls, where we found a crowd of boats, for the canal had broken away, and there I had a chance to warn other boatmen, and to try to tell them how good the religion of Jesus Christ was. After the boats began to pass the locks, one of them came up and was going into the lock before me, when I remarked to the captain that it was my lockage. He paid no attention, however, but crowded by, and took my turn.

After he had passed through the lock, I drove my boat in, and the lock-tender, who knew me, said, ' You are the last man, captain, I should think, who would let any one force himself by and take your turn. Why did you not whip him ?'

I replied to him that I had done fighting, and instead of whipping men, I prayed for them.

‘What!’ said the lock-tender, ‘would you pray for that scoundrel who took your lockage away from you?’ I told him I would.

“I wonder,” said the captain, “what I have been about all my days. I have never known what happiness was, until I found it in the religion of Jesus Christ. I am surprised that all men do not pray, when I find there is so much happiness in praying, and in laying my head upon my pillow when the day is past, with the reflection that I have done something during the day to relieve the sufferings of my fellow creatures, and especially if I have been faithful to warn my fellow-men. How great the contrast between my former miserable life, and the happy days that I now enjoy! I wish that any one who is capable of explaining the difference between fighting and praying, would do it. How many times have I retired to rest with the poor reflection that I was *a little stronger* than the man whom I had whipped, for though I got hurt sometimes in the affrays, yet I would bear all my pain, with the reflection that my antagonist was badly beaten,—poor comfort, indeed, and such as I think I shall never again enjoy.”

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE SWEARER'S PLEDGE.

One day while passing along among some boats that were stopped at Schenectady, I heard an old man trying to make a bargain with a captain for his passage, and swearing most wickedly. I stepped up to him, and said, "I am astonished to hear such an old man as you are, one just going into the grave, make use of such language! He asked, "Why?" I replied that old men ought to be examples to the young; that the boatmen, who were considered a few years ago the most profane of any class of men, were now looking at him, and probably wondering what profit there could be in swearing as he did.

"Well," said the old man, "you are the first man that has ever checked me for swearing, though I have always been in the habit of it." I asked him where he had spent all the days of his life, without being reproved for

swearing. He said he had lived in Vermont. I tried to reason with him, and convince him of the folly of such a course, and then passed along to visit other boats.

When I returned, the old man stood like a statue, with his back against a post, in the same place where I had left him, and I was about passing him, for I had already talked plainly with him; but said he, "Stop! I have been thinking, since you checked me for swearing, what should induce you, an entire stranger, to take the interest in me which you seem to feel. I am ashamed that I needed such reproving, and since you have been gone have made up my mind that I shall not need it again, for I think I shall stop swearing. I thank you for your advice, and think it will do me good."

After giving him some more advice, I left him, with the expectation of never meeting him again this side of the grave.

About six months afterwards, as I was passing along among some boats, I saw an old man leading a young deer off from one of them to a place where was some grass for it to eat. I followed him along, and when I

came up to him he caught hold of my hand, and giving it a hearty shake, said, "How do you do, my dear friend, I am glad to see you again." I told him I did not recollect him. Said he, "I am that old sinner whom you had to reprove for swearing, in Schenectady," and then I recollected him. Said he, "You was the means of putting a final stop to my swearing, for I have not used an oath since that time, but am determined to serve God for the few days I have to live. I have been to visit my son, and there was a protracted meeting in the place, which I have attended. Such a meeting I never went to before. I think I have now very different feelings from what I ever had before, for I have made up my mind to try to live a Christian life ; and I feel under many obligations to you for your kindness to me."

This circumstance proves the truth of God's word where he says, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

I called at a horse-station one evening, and asked the station-keeper what kind of boys he then had. He replied that his boys were

much better than they were the last summer, and the reason he assigned was, that they had all become temperance boys. Says he, "I have but very little swearing, in comparison with what I have had formerly, and there is but one of my boys who drinks. That boy," pointing to a smart looking one, "is the only one I have who has not signed the pledge, and I can not get him to sign."

Said I to the little fellow, "Are you going to let all the rest of the boys become gentlemen and be respected, and you be a drunkard?"

"I shan't sign away my privileges," said he.

"Well," I replied, "if you drink, I suppose you swear likewise?"

"Yes," said he, "my tongue is my own, and I shall use it as I please."

I saw there was no use of talking to him then; but I was then as confident that he *would* confess to me, as I was after he had acknowledged to me (as he did) that he was sorry he had been saucy. I told the keeper of the station that I had come in for the purpose of praying with his boys; but as I saw

they were very busy changing horses, I would come again in the morning, if he had no objections. Said he, "Would you pray in this dirty place?" The station *was* a very dirty one. I replied that our Savior was born in a barn, and that any place was good enough to pray in. He said he had no objections to my praying, so I told him I would be in early in the morning. I went along, and laying my hand on the boy's shoulder, said, "Come out here, my son, I have a little business with you." He hesitated about going, and asked what I wanted of him; I told him to come along, and I would let him know what I wanted of him. He went with me, but kept asking what I wanted of him.

When we had gone around behind the building, I said, "You know that you abused me in the barn, and you must know too, by what I said to you, that I am your friend, and laboring for your good."

"I am sorry," said he, "that I was saucy to you."

I then asked how old he was, and he told me. "How long have you been driving on the canal?"

"Five years," said he. I asked him where he came from, and if he had parents living. He said he came from Vermont, that he had no parents, his father had been dead ten years, and his mother eight. I asked if they left him any property.

"Yes," said he, "two thousand dollars, which is in the hands of a guardian, and when I am twenty-one I shall have it, and then I shall be a rich man."

I said to him, "I am afraid that before you are twenty-one you will fill a drunkard's grave, for I see by your countenance that you drink too much already. Have you ever been drunk?" He hesitated about an answer, but finally said he had been drunk once. I asked him if that was all, and said I, "Be honest, and tell me truly all about it."

Said he, "I suppose I have been drunk three times, and perhaps have drank too much at other times."

Said I, "What good will your two thousand dollars do you? If you live to get it, you will be so far gone by that time, if you continue to drink, that your money will not last long."

I then asked him if his parents had been pious. "Oh, don't say anything about my mother," said he, bursting into tears. "I have more trouble about my mother than anything else. She used to pray for me, and talk to me about dying, and about heaven and hell. Do you think, sir, my mother knows how bad I am? Some tell me that she knows all I do; and when I have been drunk, or swear, I often think how bad my mother must feel if she knows it."

I told him I did not know how it was with the dead; *that it was the opinion of many, that departed spirits were ministering Angels*; but said I, "There is One that knows every thought, and to Him alone you are answerable."

"I will sign your pledge," said he, "and I'll stop swearing, for I know that I am a wicked boy, and can't go to heaven with my dear mother, if I don't repent. I hope you will forgive me, and pray for me, and I will never abuse another missionary."

I asked him if he was "going from that station that evening," but he said he should not go out before morning.

I arose early the next morning and went into the station; the keeper called in his boys, they were very glad to see me, and after talking with them a while I engaged in prayer. When I arose from my knees, this little lad and two others were weeping, and one of them asked me if I had any "pledge" not to swear. I told them I never carried such pledges, but they must promise that they would not swear, and God would help them to keep their promise, if they made it in His strength. They all said they would try to break off the habit.

About ten days after this, I was standing on a lock, waiting for a boat, when I saw a little driver coming into the lock with his boat. He smiled when he saw me, and when his boat was in the lock, he came up, and taking hold of my hand said, "How do you do, Dea. Eaton?" I told him I did not recollect him. "Why," said he, "you prayed with us, and don't you remember that three of us promised you we would not swear any more? I have kept my word, and have not sworn since. When will you call and pray with us again?" Said he, "You can not tell

what a change there is since you called and prayed there among the boys."

Frequently afterwards, I met some of those boys, and they were sure to know me, but I saw so many that I could not always recognize them.

## CHAPTER XII.

## CAPTAIN GIBBS.

I think these personal efforts are nearly the only means that will be successful in producing the moral change that we desire to bring about, though parents may learn from the foregoing circumstance that their prayers will not be lost. Those of that pious mother who was in heaven, had a powerful effect upon the son, even when she was gone,—so much so, that when he had done a wicked act, the thought "*that his mother knew it*" troubled him more than anything else.

I will relate one other circumstance to illustrate the truth that a mother's faithful prayers will never be vain. While addressing a congregation one evening, there was quite a number of sailors and boatmen present who had been invited in by the inhabitants, and who had been told that there was to be an address from a man who was laboring for the goop

of sailors and boatmen. While I told what God had done for the boatmen on the canal through the kindness of Christians and philanthropists ; by sustaining missionaries who had gone from boat to boat to talk and pray with the men and boys ; when I told them that I knew of two of those wicked boys, who had formerly driven on the canal, but who had been converted and by the aid of friends obtained an education, and were now preaching the gospel ; that *many* of those orphans had been reclaimed, and some were now captains of boats and were respected ; that however degraded they might be, if now they would take the right course they might become men and respectable citizens, I saw that these sailors and boatmen were much affected, and some even in tears. After I had done talking, I stepped out of the desk, and the sailors and boatmen came around me to shake hands. Some of them said they thanked God that there was one man who cared for the sailor, and asked me why I did not come on board their vessels ? They said I should be perfectly welcome to eat and drink with them. Among them was a little boy, who seemed

to wish to shake hands with me, as well as the others, and I said to him, "Come, my son, let me shake *your* hand." He came along and reached out his hand, but began to weep, so that at first I could with difficulty understand what he said. Soon, however, he became more composed and said, "I am an orphan, and a very wicked boy. I have had to look out for myself for five years, and I am poor. I have been in the habit of swearing, but have made up my mind since you have been talking, not to swear any more, for I should like to be a man, and as you have been telling us what we must do to be men, I think I shall take your advice."

One of the captains asked me if I would come down very early in the morning and take breakfast on his sloop. He said if I would come early, before the hands got to work, he would invite them on board his vessel, and I could talk and pray with them. He told me where his sloop lay, and I promised to be there.

Accordingly, very early in the morning I went down to the river, and just as I arrived at the vessel, I saw a little boy coming. It

was the one with whom I had shaken hands, and who had told me his story the preceding evening. He came up, took hold of my hand, and said he, "I have not sworn a word since last evening, and have come two miles this morning to hear you pray." He thought he had done remarkably well by not swearing any during the night. He said he never should swear any more, and seemed to be so much in earnest, that I thought God would enable him to keep his promise.

The captain had invited several sailors on board his sloop, and among others gave me an introduction to captain Gibbs, of an eastern coaster, a stout, athletic man. We were standing on the deck of the vessel, as they were coming on board from other vessels which lay alongside, when I remarked that I hoped they would not think me ostentatious, that if I differed from them in any way, it was entirely the grace of God that had made the difference, for that we were all sinners.

Captain Gibbs answered, "I don't know, sir, about that, I have never dealt in that article at all; and if you have, you know more about it than I do." He then began to

whistle and dance, and finally danced off out of the circle to the stern of the vessel, and there continued to dance while I was talking.

After I had talked awhile, the captain said we had better go into the cabin to attend prayer, and asked Gibbs if he would go down. "I don't want to hear the old man pray," said he, "and if I should, I guess he would not make me snivel as he has some of you this morning." I told him it was not my object to make men cry, unless it was for their sins; but I wished I *could* make *him* cry, for I never had seen a man with whom I thought there was a greater necessity of crying than with him. By that time he had stopped dancing, and coming to me, said, "You won't make *me* cry, I guess; but I'll go down and hear you pray." We walked into the cabin, the captain handed him a stool, he sat own, took off his hat, and behaved very well.

The captain then handed me the Bible, and I read the 14th chapter of Job, after which I made some comments. I remarked that I knew what was contained in that chapter to be true, viz: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble;" for I had

lived sixty-one years, it was apparently but a moment since I was a child, and my life had been one of turmoil, anxiety, losses, crosses, and disappointment ; that the cup of which I had drank had been a mingled one, but containing more of sorrow than of joy ; that I found myself in the eve of life, but had seen very little in the short time I had lived to make me wish to have it over again. I noticed that Job asks the question, in the 14th verse of the chapter, "If a man die, shall he live again?" and that it was satisfactorily answered in several places in the Bible, especially at the grave of Lazarus, and in the Savior's own resurrection. "If, then," said I, "it be true that he shall live again, how important that we inquire what that second life is, and whether God has made any provision for this immortal part, the existence of which is to be parallel with his own. Does this company believe the Bible? Do they believe there is a heaven and a hell? If so, are we all prepared for death?"

I saw that Gibbs was touched, for he pulled his handkerchief out of his pocket, and putting it up to his eyes, leaned his elbow on his

knees, and held his head down. After making such remarks from the chapter as I saw fit, I engaged in prayer, and if ever the Lord rolled on me a burthen for a soul, he did so then. I felt as though I never could rise from my knees till I was satisfied that God had melted Gibbs' heart, and I was not disappointed, for when I arose, he met me with streaming eyes, and said, "I am a liar, sir ; I told you that I did not deal in the article, but *I am* the greatest sinner on this vessel. Will you forgive my insults ? for I intended to insult you." He then exclaimed, "O, that dear mother of mine, how many times she has prayed for me. Her prayers never will be heard again, for she is in heaven, I believe, where I shall never, no, never be. I have no excuse to make, for I have been the means of the damnation of my own soul. No one is to blame but myself."

Again said he, "Will you pardon me, sir ?" I told him I had nothing against him. "O," repeated he, "can there be any mercy for such a wretch as I am ?" I told him I thought there was hope in his case, and after giving

him such instructions as I thought he needed, I bade him farewell, and I have never seen him since.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## SECOND THOUGHTS ARE BEST.

About eight months after the occurrences related in the last chapter, I was in the same place again, and after visiting some vessels that were in port, I happened to meet a captain who was on the vessel at the time above alluded to, and who seemed much rejoiced in meeting me again. I inquired if he knew anything about Capt. Gibbs. "O yes," said he, "I know all about him, and have some good news to tell you. Gibbs is converted, and the meeting of that morning was the means, in God's hands, of the salvation of his soul."

Thinks I to myself, "Who would not be a missionary?" I have never had occasion to regret that I engaged in the Bethel cause, but have often wondered why we have neglected the boatmen so long. And still it is a source of wonder to me that, after the Christian

world has become satisfied that there is a very great change among the sailors and boatmen, there should be so few missionaries engaged in their behalf. I know that one reason why there are so few laborers in the field is, that our means are so limited. I hope that Christians will in future feel that it is God's cause, and that they are in duty bound to sustain it. I have seen a great many wicked men reclaimed while I have been on the canal, but never, I think, a more striking instance than the following, which I will relate.

I have been in the habit, after I got through prayers on a boat, of going over and talking with the steersman, because he could not leave the helm to attend prayer. Accordingly, I went one day to the steersman of the boat upon which I was, and commenced conversation, when he began to swear most wickedly, and to use the most abusive language he was capable of; and the more I talked, the more angry he became. I plead with him, and wept, but all to no purpose, and I had almost concluded that he was given over by God, and that all my efforts to reclaim

him would be unavailing, when I left him, and walked across the deck, towards the bow cabin, for the purpose of retiring to bed. The passengers and men were all in bed, except the one whom I had been talking with and the bowsman ; and as I stepped off the deck the thought struck me that I had left that man no better than I had found him, that he had an undying soul, and that I would turn about and see him again. As I would always wish to obey the leadings of God's Spirit, I did not stop to inquire what kind of a reception I should meet with, but turned and walked back again.

The moon shone brightly, and when I came within about thirty feet of him, he said to me, "I am sorry I abused you, sir." I walked up to him, and he continued, "I thought you was a young man when you was talking to me before, but when you turned to go away, the moon shone on your hair, and I saw that you was an old man ; and I am ashamed to abuse an old man. All I have said to you, sir, is a lie ; and although the world thinks me an infidel, and I have almost at times believed there was no God, yet I have never

been fully convinced of it; and although I have read all the infidel books that I could get, yet I now believe there is a God, and that I shall be called to judgment. And I believe too that I shall be damned, and I know I ought to be, for I have committed the unpardonable sin, and there can be no mercy for such a wretch as I am."

By this time he began to weep, and said that his parents had been pious and had taken great pains with him, that when a child he had been a subject of many prayers, but that his parents were both dead. After the death of his parents, he said he had associated with bad company, and been induced to read Tom Paine, Hume, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke, and by degrees had strayed away from the path of virtue and become a very wicked man. He seemed to think there could be no mercy for him, appeared to be in great agony, and asked me if I could forgive him. I told him, as usual, that I had nothing to forgive, but it was God against whom he had sinned, and that I was ready on my part to make any sacrifice in my power for him, if I could only persuade him to be willing to be saved in the

way which God had appointed ; that if so, I should be amply rewarded for all the pains I could take on his account.

After giving him some advice, calculated, as I thought to lead him where he might find favor in the sight of an offended Savior, I shook his hand, and told him I hoped our interview would not be a lost one, but would be the means of the salvation of his soul. I left the boat in the morning without seeing him, and thought that perhaps I should never see him again this side of the bar of God.

It however pleased God to throw me in his way once more, about a year afterwards, when I remained through the night on a boat on which he was a hand. After we were through with the meeting in the cabin, I went as usual to talk with the steersman, and remarked to him that our meeting had been a very interesting one. "I know it," said he and should been glad if I could have been present, but I could not leave the helm." I then asked him if he was a professor of religion. He replied that he was not.

Said I, "Have you any hope that you are a Christian?"

"Sometimes," said he, "I think my sins have been pardoned; but at other times, when I think of what a wretch I have been, I think it can not be possible that they are forgiven, or that God could have mercy on such a sinner."

He then asked if I knew him. I said I had no recollection of ever having seen him before. "Do you not recollect that man," said he, "that wicked man at the helm of the William Kidd last fall?" I told him I should never forget the interview, but the man's countenance I should not recollect. "Well," said he, "I am that wicked man who abused you so much: I am spared yet, but it is a wonder that I am."

He then gave me a very interesting account of his experience. God had never seemed to leave him, after my interview with him, till he found peace in believing. He gave me as good evidence that he had passed from death unto life, as I ever had from any person. God had made him, too, the instrument of the salvation of the soul of another boatman, who was then asleep on the same boat, and he said he wished me to

see him. I took hold of the helm, while he went and awoke him; and when he came out, it was truly pleasing to see those men, "clothed and in their right minds," thanking God that he had ever put it into the hearts of Christians to send missionaries to labor among boatmen.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE COLORED MAN AND HIS BIBLE.

I once gave a colored man a Bible, as I have been in the habit of giving all colored men whom I met on boats either a Bible or Testament. This man was a very profane one, and when I gave him the Bible, I told him I hoped it would be the means of breaking him of that sin. He seemed very thankful for the Bible, and said he had none; that he had a wife and children, and intended to carry it home to them.

Several months afterwards, I happened upon the same boat again, when a colored man reached out his hand to me and exclaimed, "Master, some d—d villain has stolen the Bible you gave me, and I wish he was in h—l!" and he continued to curse and swear about it.

Said I to him, "Stop! do you know what you are saying? You are as bad as the man

who stole your Bible. I gave it to you for the purpose of doing you good, but I think you have not read it much, for if you had, instead of wishing the man who stole it in endless misery, you would wish it might be the salvation of his soul. Only think what a wish you have made! Had you not much rather he would reflect on the crime he has committed in stealing your good book, and while he reads it, see that he stole the denunciations of God against the thief? Would you not rather have the thought prove an arrow in his soul, and be the means of saving it from hell? Then he would return your Bible."

I then related to him a circumstance of a colored man who stole a very nice gilt Bible from a passenger while going up Lake Erie. The passenger had been reading in the Bible before he left it in the cabin, and while he was on deck the cook saw it, and the temptation was so great that he stole it. When the passenger inquired for his Bible, "no one had seen it."

The gentleman very mildly remarked, "Never mind the Bible, the man who has

taken it will have more trouble about it than I shall, for I intend to pray to God that he may not have one moment of peace or comfort until he repents, not only of the crime of stealing my Bible, but of all his sins. And," continued he, "I believe God will hear my prayer; and if the thief is only converted, my Bible is well disposed of." This was said in the presence of the man who had stolen the Bible, and while they were looking for it, sure enough, it troubled him almost insupportably, as he acknowledged afterwards.

After the gentleman had left the steamboat, the thief undertook to read the Bible which he had stolen, but every sentence condemned him not only for stealing, but for lying about it. His trouble increased, until he wished he had never seen that Bible, and he tried to find some hiding place, but the more he sought to hide himself, the more he was convinced that God saw him. At length he concluded that there was but one alternative, so he took the Bible, opened it, fell on his knees, and confessed to God that he was a poor, wretched sinner. His distress continued until he became willing to cast himself upon the

mercy of God, and then God had mercy on him. After his conversion, he wrote to the gentleman whose Bible he had stolen, confessing his guilt, and saying he would return it, and pay him whatever sum he would name. The gentleman wrote him in reply that he was welcome to keep the Bible or to give it away, as he pleased, for that he was well rewarded for the loss he had sustained.

The colored man to whom I was telling this story replied, "That was a good one, but I am afraid God would not hear my prayer, I am so wicked." I told him not to borrow any trouble about one Bible, for that I would give him another one, the first time I should see him. He seemed well pleased with the idea of having another Bible, and said he, "I hope God will serve the man that stole my Bible, as he did that other darkey, and then I guess he bring him back." "That is right," said I, "and you should pray for the man."

About one year afterwards, I was on the same boat again, and the colored man seemed glad to see me. I asked him if he had found his Bible yet? He said, "No, but God would convert the man who stole it."

"O, how wicked I was," said he, "to wish that man in hell. I thought about it a great many times, and have had great deal trouble about it. I kept trouble more and more, until I could not sleep, I have so much cry to make, to think of wish I made. I pray God forgive me: I hope he has. I can pray now, and not have any trouble. I don't wish no man any bad; all I wish, I hope all be converted, and then steal no more Bibles." He told me he had united with the church, and he seemed to be very much changed.

Thus we see the passage fulfilled, "The wrath of man shall praise Him." The simple story told by this colored man gave me much satisfaction, and from what I saw and learned of him from others, I have good reason to believe that his wish with regard to the man who stole his Bible, was the means of the salvation of his soul. He was so much troubled about it, that he was led to see his own sins, and to seek salvation in the blood of Christ. "God brings men by the way they know not of." It is often the case, that men are converted by means of their own wickedness, as in the case above referred to, and if profane

men would only reflect a moment, after they have been calling on God to damn their own souls, or the souls of others, it does seem that many more of them would be led to repentance. My prayer is, that when the sinner reads of these circumstances, and sees the mercy of God in the conversion of the man who stole the Bible, and of the one who wished the thief in hell for stealing his Bible, he may inquire of himself, "Am I a sinner, and will that God whom I have so often abused, grant me a pardon for my sins? If I seek, shall I find the pearl of great price?" Let me ask, what is more noble for a man, when he has done a wrong, than to confess it? God is ever ready to forgive the sinner, when he comes to the feet of Jesus; and if all men were as willing to confess as God is to forgive them, how many quarrels and disputes would be dispensed with! Where is the man who is so hardened that he would refuse to forgive his neighbor, when he came as an honest man and confessed his faults? If he should refuse to do it, he would be considered, in the sight of God, worse than the man who had done the wrong.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE TWO INFIDELS.

In this chapter I will give an account of two Infidels, with whom I came in contact, but both of whom are now in the eternal world, where their probation is ended; for "there is no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave." I give this account to show the fulfilment of that scripture which says, "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," and with the hope that those who may read it will see that it will not do to fight against God.

I stepped on board a packet boat one day, just as they were sitting down to dinner, and the captain invited me to eat. I sat down to the table, and some of the passengers commenced eating, but the captain being acquainted with me, requested the gentlemen to wait a moment, and invited me to ask a blessing.

I noticed that there was one man who appeared to be displeased.

After dinner, I found several ladies with whom I was acquainted, one of whom was a missionary, and as we were talking upon the subject, I asked several of them if they were professors of religion. Most of them replied that they were, and the man who appeared to be offended because I had asked a blessing, inquired abruptly if I believed any one would go to hell? He spoke so ungentlemanly, however, that I did not think fit to make any reply. After a while, as we continued talking, the man said, "I presume you think that Jesus Christ is God, but that idea has been exploded long ago, and nobody believes it now, except those who don't know much."

I told him I was just fool enough to believe that Jesus Christ was the true God, and eternal life. "You can't prove that out of your Bible," said he, holding up a Bible he had in his hand.

I replied, "Hand me a Bible, and see if I can not."

He refused to hand me his Bible, and seemed to be angry; but one of the ladies

handed me her Bible, and I turned to the fifth chapter of John's second Epistle, read it, and asked him what he thought of that testimony relative to the Divinity of Christ?

"That," said he, "is some of man's writings."

I replied that the Bible was my guide, and if he would not admit that in evidence, there was no use in my talking with him. I told him, likewise, that as he appeared very irritable, and I did not allow myself to get angry, I thought we had better drop the subject.

"That is the way with you all," said he, "you dare not hold an argument on sound principles, but will fly to your Bible for proof, which is nothing but man's invention, for the purpose of frightening people."

His wife, who sat by his side, smiled at some of his remarks, and I said to her, "I hope, my dear madam, that you do not entertain the same belief that your husband does?"

"Why do you hope so?" she asked, "do you want a hell, as you call it, here on earth?"

"Yes," says the man, "My wife believes as I do; and I knew, before I married her, that she did not believe in Jesus Christ."

I saw that he appeared to be very angry, and left him; but during the whole afternoon, whenever he had an opportunity, he would vent some of his spite upon me.

When we came to Syracuse, where we changed packets, I thought I should stop, and was bidding the passengers farewell. Among the rest, I shook hands with the Infidel's wife, and said to her, "I hope you will alter your belief, before I see you again."

He saw me talking to her, and coming along, struck off my hand with which I held her's, and said, "Let the woman alone. If you wish to attack any one, try me, but don't abuse the woman."

I asked his pardon, and told him I intended no abuse to any one. I finally concluded to go on in the packet, and as the boat started, many of the passengers went on deck, and among the rest the Infidel and his wife. I was in the cabin, when a man came down in great haste, and inquired for a bottle of camphor; he said a man had fainted on the deck. Without knowing who it was, it struck me immediately that it was the Infidel, and that God had destroyed him. I went on deck, and sure

enough the Infidel was dead. A gentleman with whom he was conversing said, that he was railing against me, and saying that I was spunging my living, when he fell in a moment, with a half uttered curse upon his lips. They were trying to bring him back to life, but I saw there were no hopes that he would ever breathe again. He was dead the moment he reached the deck, and then presented the most awful object I had ever looked upon. His eyes were open, and his countenance indicated woful despair. It was a solemn moment, as still as the house of death! and we were all admonished of the truth of the passage I repeated at the commencement of this chapter.

One of the boatmen said to me, "It will not do to fight against God," and I replied that the scene before us ought to be a warning to us all.

The other Infidel to whom I have referred, opposed preaching on a packet. My custom has been, as heretofore stated, when there was a clergyman on the boat, to get him to preach; but as I am a canal missionary, it has devolved upon me to prepare the way for

preaching. I used always to obtain the consent of the captain first, and then tell the passengers what was my custom, and ask their consent. In this case I remarked that we had two ministers on board, and it would be a pleasure to me to have one of them give us a short discourse, if there were no objections. But if there were any on the boat who thought it an intrusion, I had no wish to insist on their sitting to hear what might be irksome to them, especially as I wished always to treat every one kindly. This Infidel replied, "How do you know you can have preaching?" I told him I had the consent of the captain, and I now asked the privilege of the company.

"I shall object to it," said he; "now take a vote, and see if we shall be compelled to sit here and hear a sermon, when we think it an insult." To humor him, I put the question, when all voted in the affirmative except himself. He said "No," and then began to argue the case. I went to him, and speaking in a low voice, told him it would take longer to argue the case than to hear the sermon, and that he had better hold still, as they were

all against him. He consented, and the preacher gave us an excellent discourse.

After the meeting, the Infidel seemed very pleasant, called me "Brother Eaton," and talked of Br. Backus, who was the preacher. The next morning, also, he maintained his pleasant manner, and I felt, as I was going to stop at Rochester, that I could not leave him without trying to rid my skirts of the blood of his soul. I asked him to walk on deck with me, and we took a seat on a trunk. I then remarked to him that I hoped he considered me his friend; that although he was a "Tom Paine man," as he had called himself, yet as it was my wish to treat every one kindly, instead of despising him, I pitied him for his infidelity; and if in any manner I differed from him, it was the grace of God that had made me differ, and I would make any sacrifice in my power, if I could only be an instrument in God's hands of saving his soul.

Said he, "Deacon, if all Christians had treated me as you have done, I should not have been an Infidel; but they have driven me on until I doubt whether there is such a thing as a Christian."

I then asked him if after all, he might not be mistaken ; and if so, whether his mistake would not be fatal. He said he would examine the subject. I told him that was probably the last meeting we should have in this world, as he was going up on the lake, and as at this season of the year there were many gales ; the lake might be his grave, and entreated him not to postpone the subject. He thanked me very kindly, and we parted.

The next that I heard of him was, that he went on board the *Fulton*, and was on the lake during a heavy storm. Afterwards, a gentleman who was on the packet when the *Infidel* opposed the preaching, stated to me that "the *Infidel* was at the bottom of the lake," and his statement was confirmed by the following extract from a notice of the great storm in one of the newspapers of the day :

"During the late gale on Lake Erie, the steamer *Robert Fulton*, among many other vessels, was wrecked. On board that boat, as was related by a passenger, was an *Infidel* with two boxes of books to be distributed at the West. He was loud and clamorous in proclaiming his infidelity, till the gale came

on, but then, like the rest, he was silent, and waited with trembling the uncertain fate of the ship. At length they drew near the shore, and attempted to throw out their anchors, when the whole forward part of the boat broke off, and the waves rushed into the cabin, At once the Infidel was on his knees, crying for mercy. His voice could be heard above the raging elements, begging God to forgive his blasphemies, till a heavy sea swept over the deck, and carried him and his books to the bottom."

I leave this solemn event without comment; but I think I have never more clearly seen the work of the great Jehovah, or the fulfilment of that passage, "Because I have called and ye have refused, and because I have stretched out my hand all the day long and you have not regarded me, I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh." O sinner, it will be a solemn time when God laughs at your calamity, and I fear that poor Infidel has found it so.

In conclusion, I would say, that in the prosecution of this work I have visited New York, Boston, Albany, Hartford, New London, Nor-

wich, Hudson, Rochester, Buffalo, Utica, and many other of the most important cities and towns in several States, and have been received with the utmost kindness by all denominations of Christians to whom I have presented the claims of the boatmen. I have left in those places many warm friends and acquaintances, whom I may never meet again this side of the grave, but I rejoice in the thought that I shall meet them in a better world.

I have within the last five years addressed about six hundred congregations, comprising all denominations; have traveled by land and water about fifty thousand miles, and seen people of almost all nations. I thought I knew something of human nature when I commenced travelling, but have found I was not too old to learn; and I hope I have learned one important principle, with which I wish the world were better acquainted, and that is if we would do good to our fellow creatures, we must treat them kindly, secure their confidence, make them feel that we care for them, and then they will listen to us. How many fruitless attempts have been made to reclaim

men, and how much time has been lost by taking a wrong course with them. We should always carry out the principles laid down by the Savior. In this great world, men differ materially in their views of religion, and as to what constitutes a Christian. I find that argument with those who are fond of argument for the sake of being heard, is of but little use. I once happened in company with a gentleman on board a packet, who tried every means in his power to get me into an argument, but the company on the boat being very pleasant, I avoided as much as possible any reply to him, till at length he remarked, "I see that you are no warrior, and I am satisfied yours is the best course to promote peace. "Now," said he, "I see the reason why you can go through the world and gain friends wherever you go ;" and after that he made no effort to get me into an argument.

I pray that it may be my aim, the remnant of my days, to promote peace wherever I go, and that the blessing of the Peace-Maker may be mine when I stand before my Judge.



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