

# BRITISH WORKMAN



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## DISAPPOINTMENTS; OR, JOHN THE SOULLION.

"So, honest friend! you have been seeking work this week, and found none to suit you—keep a good heart, and try again. You must not fail to remember that God helps those who try to help themselves.

These words were uttered in the street in my hearing by an old man, who was endeavouring to comfort and encourage a stout youth who had been seeking employment, and seemingly seeking in vain; and while my heart sympathized with the young man in his struggle, the words the old man uttered put me on thinking how many people have had reason to be thankful for disappointments and hardships in the course of their career. A cloudy morning often ushers in a fine day, as the following true story will amply prove.

A long time ago there lived in a pleasant village in the west of England, a farmer and his wife, whose family was so large that young and old were obliged to labour very hard for their living. Seven sons and five daughters under twenty managed the dairy of the little farm. The only schooling the family had received was at the evening class kept by the parish clerk, for at that time there was neither village nor sabbath school. The fourth son, John, was more diligent than the rest in his simple studies, and became a favourite with his teacher. As he had a good voice, he used to help the old clerk at church with the responses, and the singing, until all the people liked to hear his full clear voice, and many said to the clerk, "As your breath is so bad, neighbour, it's a capital thing tuning the psalm." Thus, from his fourteenth till his seventeenth year, John continued labouring in the fields by day—writing and reading, and summing in the evenings, and singing in the church on Sundays and festivals. When at length the old clerk died, the man who had done the work for some time, naturally thought he might get the place, and he wished to mention to the vicar and the parishioners. Now, the good people had liked his services so long, as they had paid nothing for them, but when the youth wanted to improve his position and to benefit by employing his humble gifts, they question whether he would do. One faint was urged by most people, "John was so young!" and a middle aged man coming forward as a competitor for the post, it was agreed that the parishioners should choose, and that the stranger should tune the psalm in the morning, and John in the afternoon of the next Sunday, and then the decision should be made.

This was but fair—but no doubt John thought it hard to subject him after all his services to a competition, and whether this made him sing worse than usual, or whether, as is very probable, the congregation loved novelty, certainly it was decided in favour of the stranger, and poor John, who had set his heart on being the parish clerk, was rejected. He heard the decision with a calm look, but his heart was sore and heavy, and as he came out of the vestry into the church, he felt it was hard work to pass

by his companions and acquaintance, and try to keep his feelings to himself. Fortunately there was a side door out of which he walked, wide, I'm young and strong, willing and able to work; why should I stay here, where they have rejected me." That night, after the evening churchyard. The congregation were mostly round the front porch, and in the main avenue, all but one old woman who had nursed him and taught

him to read, the youth told his father, he wished to seek a livelihood for himself. Both parents felt that their son might be uncomfortable to stay where his feelings had been hurt, and though they grieved to part, they did not oppose his intention, but hoped he might be able to get work somewhere about Exeter. The next morning, before any neighbours in the village were stirring, John set out, carrying a change of linen in a bundle at the end of his stick. His poor mother slipped an old leather sash with a few coins, all her hoard, into his pocket, watched him through her tears until a turn in the road hid him from her sight, and then lifted up her throbbing heart to God in prayer for him, as mothers are wont to do.

He had met no success in Exeter, but as he saw the great cathedral, and noticed the shops, particularly the book shops, thoughts about the value of books and of learning came strongly into his mind. Oh that he had time and opportunity to become a scholar! was the involuntary wish, which the next moment he raked, for how was he to get bread, much less learning? Some deep desire to gratify himself by being in the vicinity of learning and learned men must have sprung up in his heart and directed him, for he set out from Exeter to Oxford, and walked the whole weary way resting at night sometimes in barns, sometimes on the sheltered side of a haystack; he lived on bread and water, a draught of milk now and then being added as a luxury.

Foot sore, for his boots were worn out, he at length reached the University. With what a feeling of awe he crossed Maudin Bridge, and walked up that stately street, whose matchless curve reveals at every step some noble building, or majestic dome, or solemn temple. As he was friendless and lonely, the sight roused him to admiration; but a moment after, as he looked down at his nearly naked feet and dusty garments, the thought of what he should do now he had reached this fine city, came into his mind. Among all the colleges he knew the name of but one, and that was "Exeter College"—there he would go and seek employment. Wild as his plan was, it tarried out successful. He found out the college kitchen—the cook, a Devonshire man, heard the youth's story, and took him into his employment as scullion.

There seems but little connexion between a scullion and a library, and no sort of similarity in the study of cookery and grammar, and yet somehow the youth contrived to employ his leisure time in poring over books until their meaning opened to his mind, and every book he read led the way to another, and another, until the studious habits of the scullion excited remarks, and he was questioned by some of the men in authority, who were surprised at what he had attained during the few intervals of his daily labour. They respected his diligence, and he was admitted as a star pupil, or on the foundation) of Exeter College, and then, all his difficulties being over as to the means of attaining knowledge, he studied hard, and soon



JOHN, THE BOOK-LOVING SOULLION OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

him his letters, who met John as he went out, and taking his hand in a friendly way, looked with a kind smile in his face and said, "don't be cast down at this disappointment, perhaps God reserves you for better things." The pressure of the hand, the look, the words, all went to the poor youth's heart, and kindled a fire of resolution there, that burned bright and clear







"Curiosity led me to step into one of the cabins; it was a small one, where nine females were spinning, and one reading." DR. ADAM CLARKE.

**REAL BENEVOLENCE.**

PERHAPS it is amongst the poor themselves that the greatest amount of disinterested benevolence is to be found; indeed, generally speaking, every species of assistance which they render to one another, must be regarded in this aspect, inasmuch as they cannot lessen the burthen of others without augmenting their own. The following circumstance which came under the observation of the late Dr. Adam Clarke, will however place this subject in a clearer point of view. "In our way from Hallycote to Coleraine (he says) we stopped at a village called Moss Side. As there was no stable in the place we fed the horses in the street. Curiosity led me to step into one of the cabins; it was a small one where nine females were spinning, and one reading the produce of their labour. There was a bed in the place, in which a young lad of about fourteen years of age lay, who had received a hurt in his ankle several weeks before, and was still confined to his bed. On asking them if they all belonged to one family, it was answered 'No.' One who spoke for the rest said 'We are only neighbours of this poor woman; her son got a hurt several weeks ago by which he has been rendered unable to work; our neighbour being distressed and getting behind hand, we have agreed to give her a day's work.' They were all spinning as hard as they could in order to make the most possible profit for the poor family by their day's work. There was not one of the nine who did not herself appear to be in the most abject poverty; and they now conjured their leisure to relieve one who was only more miserable than themselves. This was one of the finest specimens of philanthropy I had ever seen. I had admired the wonders of the Giant's Causeway, the impressive aspect of Flakken, and the sublime grandeur of Fair Head; but all these were lost in the scene now before me. The former were the wonders of the God of Nature, these the works of the God of humanity and mercy; and to witness the sight of the poor labouring for, and

in order to relieve the poor, and those to whose poverty was added affliction, read me a lesson of deep instruction." The benevolence of the working classes seldom however transpires, or is thus brought out before the public eye. In general it is buried as well as born in obscurity; but instances equally lovely as the above are of more frequent occurrence amongst them than many have any idea of; and though they are not here blessed abroad by the trumpet of fame, the day is coming when they will be both proclaimed and rewarded. Indeed it is probable that when the givings of the rich and the poor, together with the "abundance" of the one, and the "penury" of the other, are brought under the cognizance of the unerring arbiter of human actions, it will, in myriads of instances be made manifest, that the hard-earned "two mites" which the latter had "of their penny" contributed, were of more value in his sight, than the princely sums which the former had "of their abundance" cast in into the offerings of God.—J. N. B.

"If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.—2 Cor. vii. 12.

"We, then, that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.—Romans xv. 1.

**FAMILY PRAYER.**

SIR THOMAS ARSEY was, as is well known, the beloved friend of the celebrated Dr. Watts, who found in his house an asylum for more than thirty-six years. This knight was not more distinguished for his hospitality than his piety. Neither business nor pleasure interrupted his observance of public and domestic worship. Of this, a remarkable instance is recorded.—On the evening of the day on which he entered the important office of LORD MAYOR of LONDON, without any notice he withdrew from the grand banquet at the Guildhall after supper, went to his home, there conducted family worship, and then returned to the company.

THE REV. JOHN BAILY, an eminent divine of the seventeenth century, was so honoured of God as to be made the instrument, even when a child, of the conversion of his own father. His mother was a very pious woman, but his father was a wicked man. The good instructions and frequent prayers of the former were so blessed to the soul of little John, that he was brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ while very young, and having a remarkable gift

in prayer, his mother wished him to pray in the family. His father, overhearing him engaged in this hallowed exercise, was so struck with remorse and shame at finding his child, then not above twelve years of age, performing that duty in his house, he had neglected himself, that it brought on a deep conviction of his wretched state as a sinner before God, and it proved through the Divine blessing, the means of his conversion. "I cried unto God with my voice; and ever unto God with my notes; and He gave ear unto me." Psalm lxxvii.

JOHN HOWARD, the philanthropist, is said never to have neglected the duty of family prayer, even though there was but one, and declaring that where he had a tent God should have an altar. This was the case not only in England, but in every part of Europe which they visited together; it being his invariable practice, wherever and with whomsoever he might be, to call Tomessee to come to him at a certain hour; and well knowing "what the direction meant, the latter would be sure to find his master in his room, the doors of which he would order him to fasten. Let who would come, nobody was admitted till the devotional exercise was over.

A FATHER once received from his child, not four years old, one of the most severe reproofs he ever met with. Some pressing business matters were made the excuse for neglecting the duty of family prayer one morning, and the little child was, as it were, out of its element all the forenoon. At noon, when the father came home to dinner, the little reprobate climbed on his knee, and with a sigh, said, "Father, you did not pray with us today."

"No, my dear, I did not," replied the father.

"But father, you ought, ought you not to—why did you not?"

The father had not a word to reply, and the child rebuke happily proved a lasting blessing.

Reader! have you a family altar?

**TO OUR READERS.**

THE close of 1856 calls upon us to return our thanks to our numerous friends for their valuable co-operation. It will gratify them to learn that there has recently been a considerable increase in the circulation, and that the issue for last month has reached 25,000. We are still 25,000 below the required number. The loss upon the twenty-four numbers issued having exceeded £700, we feel justified in respectfully urging our readers to new subscribers, so that we may have the pleasure (D. V.) of commencing the N.W. Year with a self-sustaining circulation.

In closing our column for this "eventful" year, we would ask our readers to unite with us in *thanksgivings* to the God of all our mercies, that we are again blessed with Peace and Plenty. The appointed weeks of harvest have been roushanded to us, and the bounteous crops of corn have been safely gathered. Had we not been smitten with a bad harvest, the state of the country during the approaching winter, would have been fearful. With David we might exclaim, "Let the people praise Thee, O God! let all the people praise Thy Name."



"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." Psalm cxv. 6, 7.

VERSES BY DR. HUIE, ON THE FLIGHT OF TIME. WRITTEN AT THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

HARK! how the solemn midnight bell,  
 Ere yonder turns lone,  
 Proclaims, with loud and startling knell,  
 Another year is gone!  
 And shall we drain the wassail cup,  
 Or raise the song of glee,  
 As swiftly, surely, winding up  
 Our thread of life we see?

No! In youth's unthinking day,  
 Ere care had marked the brow,  
 We trifled months and years away,  
 Let us be wiser now:  
 Ah! consider, of the mighty debt,  
 We to our Maker owe,  
 No longer struggle to forget  
 We reap but what we sow!

No! Let us seek, with holy dread,  
 Through his exalted Son,  
 A pardon for the year that's fled,  
 And grace for that begun:  
 Ah! consider, of the little hour,  
 For peace and safety given;  
 Grace, to resist temptation's pow'r,  
 And tread the path to heaven.

O! think that, at an opening year  
 A lengthened period seen,  
 It will but as it close appear,  
 A short, a troubled year:  
 Approaching, 'Time ne'er travels fast,  
 To 'sye and all' it craves his wings,  
 And 'tis not till for ever past,  
 That we perceive his change.