

**BREAD CAST UPON THE  
WATERS.**

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## BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS.

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“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days,”—ECCLES. xi. 1.

“O madam,” said little Mary to her teacher, as she read this verse, “who would ever do that? Cast bread upon the waters! to be sure it must be wasted.”

The teacher explained the passage to her in the following manner ;--“This precept

of Scripture is not to be explained exactly as you may understand the words. 'The Bible never teaches us anything contrary to common reason and prudence, nor encourages us to expect the blessing of Providence to attend us if we pursue such a course. The passage speaks of something valuable; it cannot mean that we should throw it away without discretion.'

*Mary.* No, teacher, I should think not.

*Teacher.* But there are some things practised by very prudent persons, which exactly represent to us what is meant. You have heard of merchants, whose business it is to convey by sea the produce or manufactures of one country, and exchange them for those of others. Thus, in England there are mines of iron and other metals, which workmen prepare and make into knives, scissors, and many other articles, a great number more than are wanted to supply the people in our own country. These are purchased by merchants, who convey them to distant countries, and in exchange bring back tea, sugar, coffee, spice, fruits, and cotton. Now, in order to obtain these goods the merchant must have parted with a great deal of money, perhaps almost all the money he had, which would

have purchased bread for himself and his family ; but this he ventures on the waters, and if the voyage proves successful, “after many days,” the ship returns richly laden with the commodities of other climes, which are sold here, and the merchant receives his money with good interest. In this way the words you have read appear as an encouragement to pious and benevolent persons to abound in works of liberality ; and, in many instances, the bountiful have been prospered and repaid in a seasonable manner, either in themselves or their families. We are told in Scripture, “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord.”

But there is another way in which the precept has been explained, and which appears to me still more exactly to answer the expression of casting bread upon the waters. It is by the manner of sowing corn in the eastern parts of the world, where king Solomon lived, and where the Scriptures were written. The climate there is much hotter than ours ; and they have not, like us, frequent changes of weather, but two regular seasons of rain ; the one just after seed time, and the other just before harvest, called in the Bible “the early and latter rain.” In the mean time, the ground



often becomes very dry ; but is seasonably visited and enriched by the rivers overflowing their banks, and watering the low grounds through which they pass. Some rivers overflow regularly every year. When a large quantity of snow has fallen on the southern mountains, it is melted by the sun, and flows down in very great streams, watering the meadows, and causing the rivers to overflow. This takes place about the month of March, which is, in those countries, the time of barley harvest, and seed time of wheat. In our cold and damp climate, late floods generally prove hurtful to the lands ; but it is quite otherwise there, the ground is greatly enriched by them, and as the waters swell, the husbandman “casts his bread upon” them ; that is, bread corn, seed of rice or of wheat. The waters spread the seed over the whole surface of the field, soften the ground to receive it, and cause the grain to spring.

This is going on unseen while the flood continues ; yet the husbandman believes that it does go on, because he has seen it in past seasons. At length the flood retires ; the land soon appears covered with the tender blade ; and he sees with pleasure the lively green of the springing corn which,

“many days” back, he had “cast upon the waters,” mere grain, and which now delights him with the prospect of a plentiful crop.

*M.* How very wonderful!

*T.* Yes; it should lead us to admire the works of the God of nature and providence, who thus “visits the earth, and watereth and enricheth it, and blesseth the springing of the corn.”

*M.* And it just makes out what the verse says about casting the bread upon the water, and seeing it after many days.

*T.* Thus it is, my dear child, that we are encouraged in our labours of love to you; we see many dear children growing up around us, and we long to do them good. We give up much of our time, and deny ourselves many opportunities which we otherwise should have enjoyed for our own religious improvement, in order to instruct you. This is casting in the seed, and we do it hoping and praying that a Divine blessing may crown our endeavours. “After many days” we look round and expect to see the fruit of these instructions; and then, if one parent should say to us, “My child used to be obstinate and passionate; but now she is become mild and obedient:”

and another should say, " Mine used to tell lies, and cheat his playfellows, and quarrel with his brothers and sisters; but now he speaks the truth always, and is honest and kind to all. Oh, how much good he has gained at the Sunday-school! how thankful I am that ever the Sunday-school was set up!" And if persons in want of servants should ask us to recommend them out of the school, for that they have known scholars who have turned out steady and good; oh! this would gladden our hearts just like the springing of the blades of corn: but still we should look, and watch, and pray, that these good beginnings might go on to grow and thrive. Then if we should see you are steadily improving characters; very useful and respectable in the stations in which God has been pleased to place you in this world; humble believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, consistently following his holy example, and gradually ripening for the world of glory; how would such success delight our hearts! we should indeed "joy according to the joy in harvest."

Remember also, that the passage we have been speaking about instructs and encourages you to improve the good instruction



with which you are favoured. Good instructions are very valuable and precious, like the seed of bread corn. Now is the time ; store your memories well ; lay up a good treasure of chapters and hymns, and other valuable knowledge ; and if God give his blessing, you will see them “after many days,” to your comfort. Perhaps when you grow up in life, the recollection of these good things may serve to keep out evil thoughts from your minds ; and prove the means of preserving you from temptation.

When you come to be beset with the cares and vexations of life, and have not much time to learn or read, some good verse may come into your mind and refresh and sustain you. Or, when your sight and hearing fail, what a comfort you will find it to have a good stock in hand to go to, a treasure of Scripture, and other good sentences and hymns !\* And above all, if you are now enabled by prayer and faith to lay up for your own, all the “exceeding great and precious promises” of God, which are

\* It is related of Beza, one of the reformers, that when he was old, and could neither recollect the names of persons or things which he had heard a few minutes before, he could remember and repeat the Epistles of St. Paul, which he had learned by heart.

“yea and amen in Christ Jesus,” who died to save us, and who lives to plead for all who come to him, then you will be truly happy. Then with what confidence and delight may you thus plead, “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.”

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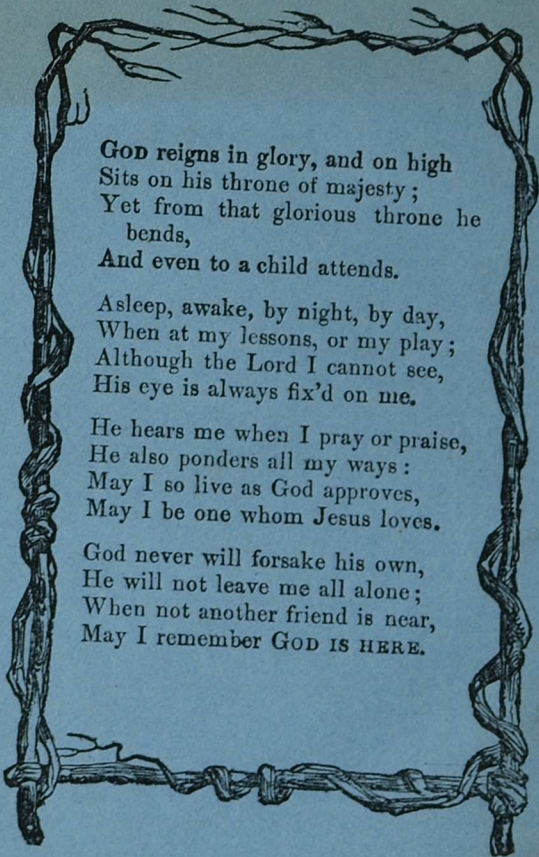
How shall the young secure their hearts,  
 And guard their lives from sin?  
 Thy word the choicest rules imparts  
 To keep the conscience clean.

'Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,  
 That guides us all the day;  
 And through the dangers of the night,  
 A lamp to lead our way.

Thy precepts make me truly wise:  
 I hate the sinner's road:  
 I hate my own vain thoughts that rise,  
 But love thy law, my God.

Thy word is everlasting truth;  
 How pure is every page!  
 That holy book shall guide our youth,  
 And well support our age.

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**G**OD reigns in glory, and on high  
Sits on his throne of majesty ;  
Yet from that glorious throne he  
bends,  
And even to a child attends.

Asleep, awake, by night, by day,  
When at my lessons, or my play ;  
Although the Lord I cannot see,  
His eye is always fix'd on me.

He hears me when I pray or praise,  
He also ponders all my ways :  
May I so live as God approves,  
May I be one whom Jesus loves.

God never will forsake his own,  
He will not leave me all alone ;  
When not another friend is near,  
May I remember **GOD IS HERE.**