

TWO
BUCKETS.





THE
TWO BUCKETS;

OR,

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. PHIL. iv. 6.

He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. PSA. cii. 17.

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TO THE READER.

IF, on reading this little narrative, any poor neighbour should learn the duty of industry and honesty, from the reference to the miracle wrought for one of the sons of the prophets, who lamented the loss of his axe, not only because he could not proceed with his work, but because it was the property of another, and he had not wherewith to replace it;—and if any distressed soul, *what-*

ever may be the distress, should be encouraged to call upon God, with whom nothing is small if it relate to the glory of His name, and the good of those who trust in Him:—or, if any Christian have his faith confirmed in a particular providence, and in the marvellous condescension of the Most High in listening to prayer; and so continue to trust in Him at all times, to pour out his heart before Him, to show Him of his trouble, and to make Him his Refuge;—or, if any visitor of the poor and needy, and ignorant, be led to speak a word in season to their neighbours,

and to direct them to the Holy Scriptures, that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, they may come to the knowledge of themselves and the knowledge of their Saviour, and then to a desire to honour His holy name :—if these effects, by the Divine blessing, be produced, the Christian Friend who visited this poor woman will not have committed the interesting fact to the public in vain.

There are some things in Christian experience, and in the interposition of Divine Providence, of which it may be said, “Hast thou faith?”

have it to thyself before God, and be thankful." But, though some minds may regard this as a case of that description, it is at the same time so encouraging to prayer, that it appears desirable to preserve it in print.³



THE TWO BUCKETS;

OR,

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

ANN T——, the subject of this short story, came under my notice about the year 1822, in consequence of my taking a missionary district, which had been previously visited by a lady who was obliged to resign her office, by reason, I believe, of ill health, or some domestic impediment. I found the subscribers for the most part punctual in their pay-

ments, but none more so than Ann T—, whose penny was always safely deposited in a tea-cup, on the shelf, ready for my calling: this surprised me the more, because I found her perfectly ignorant on the subject. I therefore inquired, how it was, that her penny was always ready; to which she replied, that her husband desired her, when the ladies called for the penny for the *commissioners*, to be sure always to have it ready. It was my general practice, on these occasions, to lend some tract or book, which I exchanged weekly; thus securing, in most instances, its perusal. On asking Ann T—, one morning, for the tract I had lent her, and observing that she

produced it from rather a secluded corner, I thought it possible that she might have been too much occupied to read it; and I said, "if you have not quite done with it, I can leave it another week;" to which she replied, "O yes, ma'am, read it! yes to be sure, I always read it the first thing; I like the books. I've got a very good heart." Indeed, said I, that is more than I can say; and I think if you were to look more into your heart, you would not find it so good. Do you know what God's word says about our hearts? If you will lend me your Bible, I will show you what it says. I then found out for her that verse in Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all

things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ? ” Also that text in Mark vii. 21—23, “ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness : all these evil things come from within, and they defile the man.” I then proceeded to show her how the heart became so defiled and polluted, and the absolute necessity of its being cleansed, and purified, and renewed, before it could enter heaven ; because God’s word also said, “ without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” The following Monday and Tuesday were

very wet, and some domestic engagement occurring the two following days, it was Friday afternoon before I visited my district. On shaking the latch of Ann T—'s humble dwelling, I heard not the approach of footsteps, nor even the usual welcome "come in." I lifted the latch gently, and looked in, and seeing no one, I advanced a few steps, thinking she might be in the little yard, at the back of the house; but still could see no one. At length I heard heavy footsteps, descending the creaking stairs, which I found to be those of a kind neighbour, who said, as she came into the room, "Well, I thought we should have lost her. I never thought she would have got

up again. I have just made her bed, but she was too weak to sit up at all." On inquiring into the nature of her illness, I found that a most rapid and alarming inflammation had taken place, which had brought her, apparently, so near the borders of the grave, that the medical man, who attended her, had expressed the utmost surprise at her surviving it. I told her neighbour I was very sorry she had been ill so many days, without our being acquainted with the circumstance; as we should have been glad to have sent her such things as would have been acceptable, and were indeed necessary for her; and having requested her to send down to us for some gruel,

&c., I left the house, not thinking it prudent to attempt an interview, as she had just experienced the fatigue of having her bed made; and therefore left, promising to call the next day. I was permitted to fulfil my promise, and found her in a most reduced state. I told her how sorry I was to hear how ill she had been: spoke of the uncertainty of life, and remarked how soon, in the midst of health, we might be laid on a sick bed, as had been the case with herself. "O," said she, "I have been ill indeed. I never suffered such pain before." And in a tone and manner peculiar to herself, added, "the pains of my body were *nothing!! nothing* to what I felt in my mind. All you

said about my sinful heart came into my head, and I thought I was going—deep into hell! O, I can't tell you what horror I was in. O, it was dreadful, it was dreadful!!”

“How different,” said I, “would have been your feelings, if, instead of fearing hell, you had been sure of heaven.” “O, but that would have been impossible,” was her reply; “no one can tell how it will be till it is all over.” “You are quite mistaken,” I said; “many of the Lord's people are so certain of future blessedness, and so full of joy at the thought of being for ever with the Lord, that they have scarcely felt their pain. I once had a brother, who died of the same disease as that by which

you have been suffering, after only five days' illness, and yet he could look round upon us, and exclaim with a smile, 'I'm going to glory through the blood of the Lamb. There I shall sing for ever, free grace and dying love. I'm on the rock, I'm on the rock.' I then proceeded to tell her as much as, in her weak state, she was able to hear, of the Lord's gracious dealings with this dear brother. I left her, promising to see her very soon again. I did so, and found, to my great joy, that the Lord had been most graciously pleased to bless to her what had previously passed between us. I heard no more of her *good heart*; her language now was, "What shall

I do to be saved?" "God be merciful to me a sinner." And oh what a sacred pleasure it was to me to point her to Him who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life,"—to Him who says, "This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he has sent—to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." It is hardly necessary to add, with these new views and new feelings, that she diligently attended the means of grace, as soon as returning strength would allow; at least such a measure of health and strength as would permit her to reach the house of God: for indeed she never recovered either, but gradually sunk into a declining state,

which, in about three years, terminated in her death. I will not attempt to describe the interest with which, from this time, I visited her. The rich and glorious promises of the gospel were to her like water to a thirsty soul; and it was delightful to see her drink them in, as it were, with the eagerness of one dying with thirst. Surely that scripture was applicable in her case, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." I have said thus much of Ann T—, in order to introduce the story which gives the title to this little book. The reader having heard how the Lord had graciously led and taught her hitherto, will

read with increased interest, how she was enabled, in time of peculiar need, to cast her burden on the Lord, and how he graciously fulfilled his own promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psa. l. 15. One fine spring morning, I think it was Easter Monday, I visited my missionary district as usual, and finding, when I reached the house of Ann T—, that she was sufficiently disengaged to be able to attend to a few verses from God's word, I offered to read a chapter. I wish my readers could have seen the joy which beamed on Ann's countenance, whenever I had time to make this offer; and on this oc-

casion, it was particularly striking. Having expressed a wish to hear the chapter from which the text had been taken the preceding sabbath, I proceeded to read the 2nd chapter of the 1st Epistle of Peter; and coming to that verse, "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," and endeavouring to explain to her the reason of its being compared to milk, its strengthening, nourishing properties, &c., she interrupted me by saying, "There now, if you had not told me that, I should never have known it; I be such a heathen, sure!" No, I replied, you must not say so; the heathen neither know nor love God, and I am sure you do. "Love him!" she

exclaimed, "love him!" she again repeated, with that peculiar tone and manner, to which I have before alluded, "I must love him! you don't know what a friend he has been to me just lately; I have been longing to tell you all about it." I closed my book, drew my chair nearer, and sat all attention, while she related to me the following interesting particulars, which I shall give the reader in her own simple language. "You know, last Christmas I lost my bucket down the well. I was in a deal of trouble about it at that time; my husband paid two men a shilling each to get it up again, but they could not, so they gave it up, and ever since I have,

every morning, borrowed a bucket of some one of my neighbours, and got me up water enough for the day, and then that satisfied me. Well! yesterday was a week, I was working with Hannah B.'s bucket, and down he went. O, I was in such a way, I felt as if I had dropped my child down! why it was *borrowed!! borrowed!!* Who would lend me one again? What could I do? I called in my next-door neighbour; you know she is a good strong woman, and she was very kind, and tried at it for a long time, and her husband came home for his dinner, and he came in, and tried, and Hannah B— heard of it, and she came over and tried; and my husband came home to his din-

ner, and he tried; they all pushed me back; they said, *you* poor weak woman, you had better stand out of the way. At last master W— could stay no longer, nor could he longer spare his wife, as he wanted her to get his dinner. Hannah B— must go home to hers, and my husband was impatient for his dinner, as it was time to return to his work. So they all left me, promising to return, and try again in the evening. When they were all gone, I sat me down, and I thought to myself, thinks I, there's one friend I have not been to yet, and I ought to have gone to him first; so I shuts to that door, and I kneels me down at that there chair, where you sits, and I prays

to the Lord to help me. It was an uncommon poor prayer I made; I could not think of many words; but I told him what trouble I was in, and that if it was pleasing to him, he could help me out of it. And then I got up, and sit me down in the chair, but I could not get on with my needle-work neither, so I goes out into the yard, and looks down into the well, and without hardly thinking what I was about, I begins to wind the gravels, (meaning the grappling irons,) whereon, presently it feels rather heavy, so I goes on winding, and what should come up but my own bucket, that had been down ever since Christmas." Well, I exclaimed with delight, you

do surprise me ; surely our God is a faithful God. I expect now to hear that you tried for the other. “ No, my dear ma’am,” she replied, “ no ! it was the Lord that helped me to get up that ! and he should help me to get up t’ other, if it was pleasing to him ; but I would not try without asking *He* first ; so I comes in again, and kneels down at the chair. I couldn’t make no better prayer than before ; it was a very poor prayer, but I told the Lord how thankful I was that he had helped me ; that if it was pleasing to him, I would try for t’ other ; if not, I could give my bucket to H. B. So then I went out, and lets down my *gravels* again, and, first turn, up he

comes. I called in my neighbour, and I says to her, there's my bucket, and there's H. B's." And I suppose, I said, you told her by what strength you had so wonderfully succeeded. "No, my dear friend," said she, putting her finger gently on my arm, "no! I did not, you know she does not love the Lord, nor H. B. neither, and I was afraid they would jeer Him! and I couldn't bear to hear that. I tell *you*," said she, again pressing my arm, "because you'll praise Him;" and indeed I could not but praise Him, and rejoice with her at the mercy she had found, in this her time of need, and then I said, you remind me of the borrowed axe in Elisha's time. But

this was quite new to her : she knew but little of the Old Testament history, as, since she had begun to read and value God's word, she had read mostly in the New Testament ; and could scarcely believe that any thing like the buckets could possibly be found in the Bible : and lest the reader should not be acquainted with this remarkable circumstance in the history of Elisha, I will copy the first seven verses of the 6th chapter of the 2nd book of the Kings.

1. " And the sons of the prophet said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

2. Let us go, we pray thee, unto

Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

3. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

4. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

5. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! *for it was borrowed?*

6. And the man of God said, Where fell it? and he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.

7. Therefore, said he, take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it."

I had but just begun to read these few interesting verses to Ann, when her husband came in, and was equally surprised with his wife to find any thing so like their bucket in the Bible. I then read to them, from the Olney Hymns, Newton's Hymn on the same subject, which so delighted them both, that I afterwards copied it out for them in large printing letters, on a half sheet of paper, which they stuck into their large Bible, as a memorial of the Lord's kindness to them. Perhaps the readers will like to read the hymn; I shall therefore copy it for them also.

THE BORROWED AXE.

THE prophets' sons in times of old,
Though to appearance poor,
Were rich, without possessing gold,
And honour'd, though obscure.

In peace their daily bread they eat,
By honest labour earn'd ;
While daily at Elisha's feet
They grace and wisdom learn'd.

The prophet's presence cheer'd their toil,
They watch'd the words he spoke ;
Whether they turn'd the furrow'd soil,
Or fell'd the spreading oak.

Once as they listen'd to his theme,
Their conference was stopp'd ;
For one beneath the yielding stream
A borrow'd axe had dropp'd.

“ Alas ! it was not mine,” he said,

“ How shall I make it good ? ”

Elisha heard, and when he pray'd

The iron swam like wood.

If God in such a small affair

A miracle performs,

It shows his condescending care

Of poor unworthy worms.

Though kings and nations in his view

Are but as motes and dust ;

His eyes and ears are fix'd on you,

Who in his mercy trust.*

Not one concern of ours is small,

If we belong to him ;

To teach us this, the Lord of all

Once made the iron to swim.

* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. Psa. xxxiv 15.

May this little narrative teach every reader, the compassion of God our Saviour—the success of fervent prayer—the duty of thankfulness—and the blessedness of having an Almighty Friend to whom we may come at all times, for all the mercy and all the grace we need, till all trouble and sorrow have passed away, and everlasting joy be our portion. “ Lord, increase our faith.”

FOR faith, thy gift, O Lord,
To thee I feebly cry !
Reveal the secrets of thy word,
And bring its glories nigh.

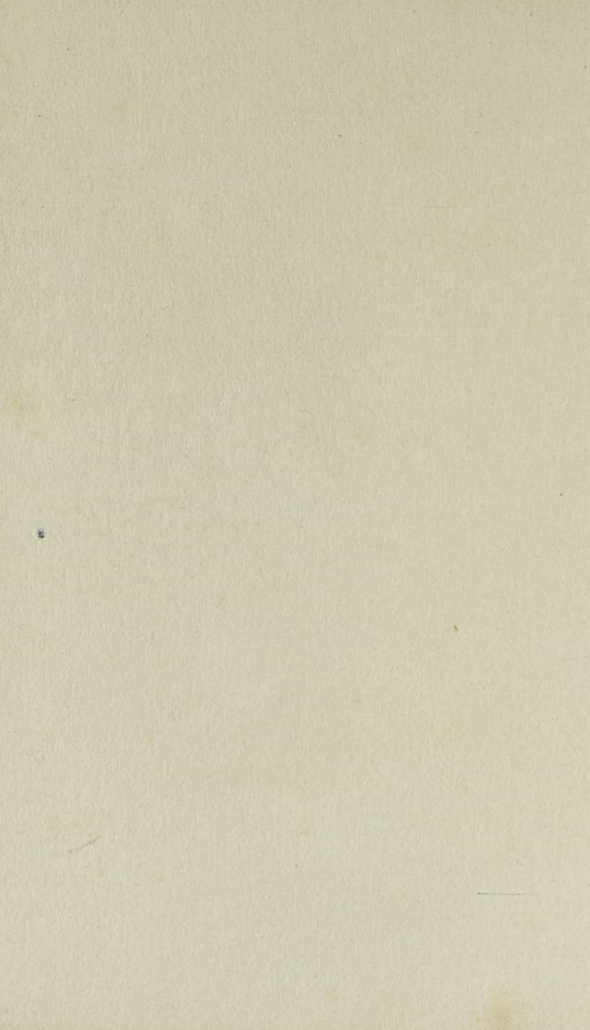
Thy wondrous works of old—
Faith makes them ever new :

Thy promises so manifold—
 Faith sets them full in view.

Redeem'd from sin and guilt,
 The soul by faith takes flight :
 Soars to the city thou hast built,
 And drinks the heavenly light.

“ There is my home,” she says,
 “ Far from this vale of tears :
 “ There I shall pass my happy days
 “ When Christ my life appears.”

O Lord ! I do believe ;
 Help thou my unbelief :
 That I may all thy love receive,
 And smile at earth-born grief.



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