

THE
INFIRMARY.



BY MRS. SHERWOOD,
Author of "Little Henry and his Bearer,"
"Lucy Clare," &c. &c.



Tenth Edition.



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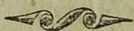


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FRONTISPIECE.



See Page 9.

Sarah H. S. Hobson,

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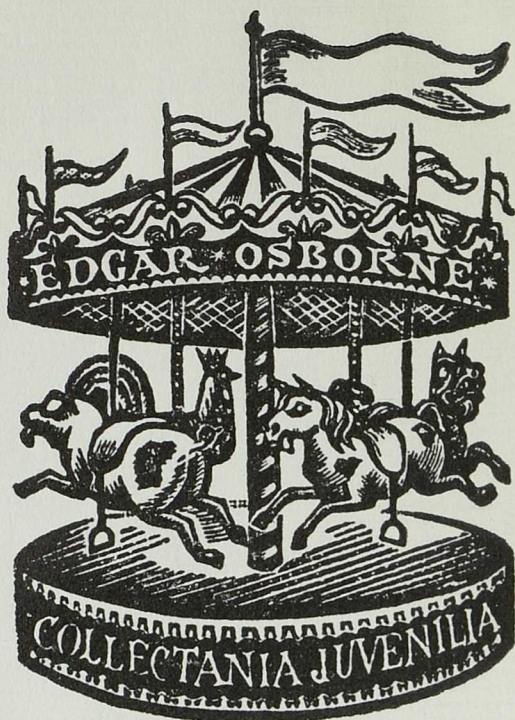
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**A**BOUT fifty years ago, one Mr. Pryce was minister of one of the parishes in the City of Worcester, but which I never could rightly learn.

Mr. Pryce was a very godly man: one who lived close to his Bible, and followed his master, Christ, through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report. (2 Cor.

vi. 8.) He was, also, a very pleasant man in discourse, having a free and cheerful manner, insomuch, that he made religion to appear very lovely and inviting to those with whom he conversed.

He was a man who kept little company after the ways and fashions of the world, but gave up all the time he could spare from his other duties in visiting, from house to house, among his parishioners; catechising the children, admonishing the young people, praying with the aged and sick, and counselling all. Neither was he sparing in dealing out

his money to the poor, but gave, as far as he was able, with a liberal hand, not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheerfully, as God would have us to do. (2 *Cor.* ix. 7.)

Now it happened, that among the many persons whom Mr. Pryce was accustomed to visit, was an old widow of the name of Cicely Green. It had pleased God to deprive this poor woman both of husband and children, and to leave her, in her old age, with little earthly comfort, and in a very infirm state of health.

The business of gloving was

at that time carried on in the City of Worcester as it is now, and Cicely worked at it; but because her eyes were beginning to fail, she could only do the coarsest kind, and, in consequence, her earnings were small. She, however, did pretty well, as she had a small house of her own, which, though but a poor place, spared her the expence of paying rent.

Cicely was drawing towards her seventieth year, and could not read: Mr. Pryce, therefore, was particularly anxious about her, and gave her all the time he could spare, so that he seldom passed her door without



dropping in to give her a word of exhortation, or to pray with her. He used often to say, "Dame Green, you have no time to lose. You are just like a candle burning down in the socket of the candlestick: the light of your life is just going to be put out. O may it not be in eternal darkness! Cicely, there is such a place as hell: it is the place to which all sinners must go. There is but one Saviour for sinners: seek him out, hold him fast, cling to his cross, and you are safe."

I am happy to say, that Mr. Pryce's words took hold of

Cicely's heart. Not that I can say that either his first, his second, or his third visit seemed to do her any good; nay, he had continued to call upon her, backwards and forwards, for the space, perhaps, of two years, or more, before she began to take his words to heart, or rather, before the Spirit of God began to work for her, together with the good minister. For Paul planteth, and Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase. (1 *Cor.* iii. 6.) Therefore, every true Christian teacher prays that the influences of the Holy Spirit of God may accompany his teaching; knowing, that, without these influences, his

labour is vain. But, to go on with my story.

The first sign which Cicely Green gave of her heart's being touched was, that she became sensible that she was really and truly a grievous sinner. She had, all her life, been used to say, when any one talked to her upon the subject, "To be sure, I know I am a sinner, and we are all sinners," &c. but now that God had given her a real and deep conviction of sin, she found that she could not so lightly speak on these subjects; and her mind was so filled with her own vileness, that she had no leisure to talk of her neigh-

hours' faults, as she had been used to do.

Mr. Pryce was much pleased to see the poor old woman in so humble and proper a frame, and he was careful how he administered unto her false comfort, or how he spake peace unto her before there was any peace. He led her to seek deep into her heart, to see if there were any secret or allowed sin therein. He tried and examined her by the holy commandments of God, and shewed her, that, by these commandments, or laws, she stood condemned before God.

This she freely confessed, and was ready to cry out, with Job, *Lord, behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.* (Job xl. 4.)

When Mr. Pryce believed, to the best of his judgment, that the poor sinner was in a state to receive the comfort provided in the Gospel, he opened unto her the salvation worked for sinners by Christ: and it is strange to say, that she now received the Saviour as if she had never heard of him before; the reason of which was, that she now felt her need of a Saviour. She felt that,

without him, she must be utterly undone and lost for ever; and now her mouth was opened to praise him, and her eyes became fountains of water pouring out tears of love for him. Her feelings, also, towards her neighbours were changed. She had been, as we all naturally are, a tattler and a busy-body; but now, what time used to be spent in idle gossiping was employed by her in prayer, and singing a few old psalms, and repeating such verses of Scripture as she could remember, while she sat at her work.

It was now nearly a year since Cicely Green had begun

to think of divine things; and I am happy to say that she had continued all that time to grow in grace, and in all Christian humility; though, as yet, you might say, she was but a babe in Christ. But, at length, Christmas drew near, and Mr. Pryce called upon her, to say, that he hoped to see her, on the next occasion, at the Lord's table: "Where," said he, "I never as yet have had the satisfaction of seeing you."

I will now repeat to you what Cicely's answer was, and what further Mr. Pryce said to her upon the subject.

And first, Mr. Pryce, shutting the house-door, sat down by the fire, and took out his Pocket-Bible, and, turning to the eleventh chapter of the First of Corinthians, he read the following passage:

*The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my*



*blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

When Mr. Pryce had read this passage, he closed the Bible, and said, "Cicely, you perceive by what I have read, that our Saviour left it as his last injunction to his disciples, that they should eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him. Here, then, is a plain duty, which all Christians ought to observe. Wherefore, then, do I not see you at the Lord's table?"

“Ah, Sir!” replied Cicely, “I do not come, because I am so unworthy,—so great a sinner. I fear to eat and drink my own damnation.”

“As to your being a great sinner, and unworthy of the smallest mercy, there can be no doubt of that, Cicely. You and I, had we our deserts, should be now in hell-fire,” answered Mr. Pryce. “But have you not heard that Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance? They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. There need, therefore, as our excellent Catechism has it, no

other preparation necessary for those who would partake of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, but ‘to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life, having a lively faith in God’s mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and to be in charity with all men.’ Have you forgotten your Catechism, Cicely?”

“Sir,” replied Cicely, “I had quite forgotten it till lately; but, for a few months back, I have been trying to bring the words and sense of it to my mind

again, and have got one of my neighbour's children to repeat it to me, to that intent."

"That's well," said Mr. Pryce; "you are, therefore, acquainted with the words I have just repeated?"

"Yes, surely, Sir," said Cicely.

"I know," continued Mr. Pryce, "that you have lately been in the habit, with God's help, of looking to your ways. You hate your sins, I trust, and wish and intend to do better?"

"I do, Sir," replied the old woman.

“ You know yourself to be a sinner?” continued Mr. Pryce.

“ Surely, Sir, I do, and a very grievous one.”

“ Do you wish to do better in future?”

“ I do, indeed,” replied Cicely; “ but I know that I never shall do better, without the help of God.”

“ In whom do you trust for salvation?”

“ In none but Christ; none but Christ;” answered the old woman, with tears in her eyes.

“I have reason to believe what you say to be true,” said Mr. Pryce; “and I have no hesitation to say, that you are in a proper state to partake of the Lord’s Supper: therefore I trust, Cicely, that you will not allow a sinful fear to keep you back, when your Saviour invites you to come. I hope, therefore,” added he, as he got up to take his leave, “that you will no longer absent yourself from the table of the Lord; and that I shall see you there on Christmas-day.”

So Mr. Pryce took leave of Cicely Green; and on Christmas-day he looked for her at

the Lord's table, but she was not present. After service, he enquired about her, of a pious neighbour, who had partaken of the holy ordinance.

“Where is your neighbour Cicely Green?” said Mr. Pryce: “is she ill? Wherefore does she not take this opportunity of partaking of these pledges of the Saviour's love?”

“Oh, Sir,” replied Cicely's neighbour, “you must not be displeased, Sir, with the poor body; for she told me herself, she would gladly have come, but that she knew herself to be unworthy.”

Mr. Pryce said no more, at that time, thinking to call on Cicely in a few days. But, before this worthy minister had an opportunity of so doing, he was taken ill with the rheumatism, and confined to his house for some months. In the mean time, Cicely herself was taken very ill; and, after having suffered very severely, and not being able to pay a doctor for attendance, she was advised to get into the Infirmary. Cicely had no other friend to apply to, for a ticket, but Mr. Pryce. But she trusted, that, if it lay in his power, he would surely supply her with one; for she had al-



ways found him a friend in need. Accordingly, with the help of her crutches, she made shift to hobble to Mr. Pryce's house, and, knocking at the door, was brought into a very neat kitchen, where Mr. Pryce was sitting by the fire-side, reading his Bible.

Mr. Pryce was sorry to see Cicely looking so ill. He got up himself, to set her a chair; and ordered a little mulled wine, and a slice of toast, to be given to her: which, when she had taken, and was refreshed, he said, "And now, Cicely, what is your business with me? What can I do for you?"

“O! Sir,” said Cicely, “I came to ask a favour: could you be so kind as to serve me with a ticket for the Infirmary?”

“The Infirmary!” said Mr. Pryce, stirring the fire, and looking grave; “what can you want with a ticket for the Infirmary? I have but one to dispose of, and I must be careful to give it to a proper person.”

“Sure, Sir,” replied Cicely, “there cannot be a more proper person than I am. I have several very sad and painful diseases about me; and a wound in my leg so large,

Sir, as you could almost put your hand in it. Indeed, Sir, I am a poor diseased creature; and cannot pay for any help, or for any doctor's stuff."

"I am sorry to hear all this," said Mr. Pryce, his eyes still being fixed on the fire; "I should advise you to go home, and try to get a little better, and then come to me, and you shall have my ticket."

"What did you say, Sir? I am getting thick of hearing," answered Cicely, bending her poor shaking head towards Mr. Pryce, who gravely repeated his words.

“ I would advise you, Dame Green, to go home, and try to get a little better, and then come to me, and you shall have my ticket for the Infirmary.”

“ O! Sir,” said the old woman, “ how can you talk so? How am I to get better, without doctor’s stuff, or help of any kind?”

“ But, surely, Mrs. Green,” said Mr. Pryce, still looking grave, and raising his voice higher, “ you would not have me to send such a poor creature as you are to the Infirmary—a creature filled with diseases, and covered with wounds, as you yourself con-

fess? What an affront to the gentlemen of the Infirmary! I tell you, good woman, that I cannot think of putting such an insult upon my friends, the doctors. I shall keep my ticket, I assure you, for a person in better health."

"Sir," said the old woman, looking hard at Mr. Pryce, and trying to find out what he meant, by the expression of his face, "I know, Sir, that you are a pleasant gentleman, and make yourself very cheerful with us poor people; but, dear Sir, I am a poor creature, utterly helpless, and though I am a loathsome object, yet, I

am sure, the gentlemen of the Infirmary, who have given their hearts and time to assisting the poor and miserable, will not take offence against you, for giving your ticket to such a poor wretch as I am."

Mr. Pryce turned to her with a look of pity: "Poor woman!" he said, "I have seemed unkind to you, but I had a reason for it, which I will now explain to you."

"When I came last Christmas, in the name of my master, Christ, who is the great Doctor of sinful souls, to invite you to draw near unto him, and be

washed from your sins, you refused to come, and gave this reason, that you were not worthy; although you knew that none but Christ could cleanse you from your sins.

“ You now come to me for a ticket for the Infirmary, and I refuse to give it you: for if it is reasonable, that you should not go to the Physician of souls, because of your sins; so it is equally reasonable, that you should not appear before the doctors of the Infirmary, covered with diseases and sores.

“ You say, that the doctors will excuse the loathsome ap-

pearance of your sores, and pity you for your infirmities: but, I tell you, kind and compassionate as these gentlemen are, they have not the love for you which your Saviour has.

“ They, indeed, give up their time and attention for the good of the poor; but he gave his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed for us. *He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep,*



*have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."* (Isaiah liii. 4—6.)

Here Mr. Pryce stopped speaking, for poor old Cicely, being convinced of the reasonableness of his arguments, had burst into tears, and fallen down upon her knees, praying to the Almighty to forgive her sinful backwardness; crying out, "I will come to thee, my Saviour, with all my sins, for I cannot come otherwise. I will fall at the foot of thy cross, and I will seek thy righteousness, and make mention of thine only."

Mr. Pryce was pleased: tears of joy came into his eyes. He took out his pocket-book, and gave Cicely the ticket for the Infirmary; telling her, at the same time, to fly, without loss of time, to the Physician of souls.

I am happy to tell you, that she was immediately received into the Infirmary, and every comfort was administered unto her till her dying day; for she died in the Infirmary. But, before her death, Mr. Pryce had the pleasure of administering the holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ several times to her. And her good

minister had the pleasure to find, that, before her death, she thoroughly understood how poor hell-deserving sinners are made heirs of everlasting glory by their being united with Christ, and how he that is not worthy to lick up the crumbs which fall from the Master's table, when washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clad in the garment of salvation, shall be admitted to sit down in the kingdom of heaven with the angels of God.

FINIS.

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