



CHAPTER II

The Wicket-gate



By this time, Christiana was got on her way, and Mercy went along with her. So as they went, her children being there also, Christiana began to discourse. And, Mercy, said Christiana, I take this as an unexpected favor, that thou shouldst set foot out of doors with me, to accompany me a little in my way.

1. **MERCY.** Then said young Mercy (for she was but young), If I thought it would be to purpose to go with you, I would never go near the town any more.

2. **CHRIST.** Well, Mercy, said Christiana, cast in thy lot with me; I well know what will be the end of our pilgrimage. My husband is where he would not but be for all the gold in the Spanish mines. Nor shalt thou be rejected, though thou goest but upon my invitation¹. The King who hath sent for

¹ The singular dispensations of Providence, and the strong impressions made by the Word of God upon some minds, seem to amount to a special invitation; while others are gradually and gently brought to embrace the Gospel, and these are sometimes discouraged lest they have never been truly awakened. They should recollect that the Lord delighteth in mercy; that Christ will in no wise cast out any that come to Him; and that they who trust in the mercy of God, solely through the redemption of His Son, shall assuredly be saved-(Scott).



me and my children is one that delighteth in Mercy. Besides, if thou wilt, I will hire thee, and thou shalt go along with me as my servant; yet we will have all things in common betwixt thee and me; only, go along with me².

3. **MERCY.** But how shall I be ascertained that I also shall be entertained? Had I this hope but from one that can tell, I would make no stick at all, but would go, being helped by him that can help, though the way was never so tedious.³

² Such is the true spirit of real pilgrims, that do not love to eat their precious morsel alone. They wish others to know Christ, and to become followers of Him with themselves-(Mason).

³ Though Christiana clearly knew her calling of God, yet Mercy did not; therefore she is in doubt about it. Just so it is with many at their first setting out. Hence they are ready to say-and I have met with many who have said-that they could even wish to have had the most violent convictions of sin, and to have been, as it were, shook over the mouth of hell, that they might

4. **CHRIST.** Well, loving Mercy, I will tell thee what thou shalt do. Go with me to the wicket-gate, and there I will further inquire for thee; and if there thou shalt not meet with encouragement, I will be content that thou shalt return to thy place. I also will pay thee for thy kindness which thou showest to me and my children, in thy accompanying us in our way, as thou dost.

5. **MERCY.** Then will I go thither, and will take what shall follow; and the Lord grant that my lot may there fall, even as the King of Heaven shall have His heart upon me.⁴

6. Christiana then was glad at her heart, not only that she had a companion, but also that she had prevailed with this poor maid to fall in love with her own salvation. So they went on together, and Mercy began to weep. Then said Christiana, Wherefore weepeth my Sister so?

7. **MERCY.** Alas! said she, who can but lament, that shall but rightly consider, what a state and condition my poor relations⁵ are

have a greater certainty of their being called of God. But this is speaking unadvisedly. Better to take the apostle's advice- "Give all diligence to make your calling sure."-(Mason).

⁴ Here is a precious discovery of a heart divinely instructed. Mind, here is no looking to anything Mercy was in herself, nor to anything she could do for herself, for hope. But all is resolved into this-even THE LOVE OF THE HEART OF THE KING OF HEAVEN. Reader, can you be content with this? Can you cast all, and rest all, upon the love of Christ? Then bless His loving name for giving you a pilgrim's heart-(Mason). Mercy clearly discovered a work of grace on her heart. She was anxious about her acceptance at last; she began to pray; she threw herself on the mere mercy of Christ's heart; and proved "the bowels of a pilgrim," by lamenting the sad condition of her carnal relations-(Burder).

⁵ This truth is exemplified in the Holy War-"Now Mr. Desires, when he saw that he must go on this errand, besought that Mr. Wet-eyes should go with him to petition the Prince. This Mr. Wet- eyes was a poor man, a man of a broken spirit, yet one that could speak well to a petition. Then Mr. Wet-eyes fell on his face to

in that yet remain in our sinful town? and that which makes my grief the more heavy is, because they have no instructor, nor any to tell them what is to come.

8. **CHRIST.** Bowels becometh pilgrims; and thou dost for thy friends as my good Christian did for me when he left me; he mourned for that I would not heed nor regard him; but his Lord and ours did gather up after his tears and put them into His bottle; and now both I and thou, and these my sweet babes, are reaping the fruit and benefit of them. I hope, Mercy, these tears of thine will not be lost; for the truth hath said, that "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" in singing. And "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa. 126:5, 6).

9. **MERCY** Then said Mercy- Let the Most Blessed be my guide, If't be His blessed will; Unto His gate, into His fold, Up to His holy hill. And let Him never suffer me To swerve or turn aside From His free grace, and holy ways, Whate'er shall me betide.

10. And let Him gather them of mine, That I have left behind; Lord, make them pray they may be Thine, With all their heart and mind⁶

the ground, and said, O my Lord, I see dirt in my own tears, and filthiness at the bottom of my prayers; but, I pray Thee, mercifully pass by the sin of Mansoul."-(ED).

⁶ Perhaps the most delightful portion of the Second Dream of Bunyan is its sweet representation of the female character. There never were two more attractive beings drawn than Christiana and Mercy; as different from each other as Christian and Hopeful, and yet equally pleasing in their natural traits of character, and under the influence of Divine grace, each of them reflecting the light of Heaven in an original and lovely variety. His own conception of what constitutes a bright example of beauty and consistency of character in a Christian woman, Bunyan has here given us, as well as in his First Dream, the model of steadfast excellence in a Christian man. The

11. Now my old friend proceeded, and said: But when Christiana came up to the Slough of Despond, she began to be at a stand; for, said she, this is the place in which my dear husband had like to have been smothered with mud. She perceived, also, that notwithstanding the command of the King to make this place for pilgrims good, yet it was rather worse than formerly. So I asked if that were true. Yes, said the old gentleman, too true; for that many there be that pretend to be the King's labourers, and that say they are for mending the King's highway, that bring dirt and dung instead of stones, and so mar instead of mending.⁷ Here Christiana,

therefore, with her boys, did make a stand; but, said Mercy, Come, let us venture, only let us be wary. Then they looked well to the steps, and made a shift to get staggeringly over.⁸ Yet, Christiana had like to have been in, and that not once nor twice.

12. Now they had no sooner got over, but they thought they heard words that said unto them, "Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45). Then they went on again; and said Mercy to Christiana, Had I as good ground to hope for a loving reception at the wicket-gate as you, I think no Slough of Despond would discourage me.

13. Well, said the other, you know your sore,⁹ and I know mine; and, good friend, we shall all have enough evil before we come at our journey's end. For can it be imagined, that the people that design to attain such excellent glories as we do, and that are so envied that happiness as we are; but that we shall meet with what fears and scares, with what troubles and afflictions they can possibly assault us with, that hate us?

delineation, in both Christiana and Mercy, is eminently beautiful. We have, in these characters, his own ideal of the domestic virtues, and his own conception of a well-ordered Christian family's domestic happiness. Wherever he may have formed his notions of female loveliness and excellence, he has, in the combination of them in the Second Part of the "Pilgrim's Progress," presented two characters of such winning modesty and grace, such confiding truth and frankness, such simplicity and artlessness, such cheerfulness and pleasantness, such native good sense and Christian discretion, such sincerity, gentleness, and tenderness, that nothing could be more delightful. The matronly virtues of Christiana, and the maidenly qualities of Mercy, are alike pleasing and appropriate. There is a mixture of timidity and frankness in Mercy, which is as sweet in itself as it is artlessly and unconsciously drawn; and in Christiana we discover the very characteristics that can make the most lovely feminine counterpart, suitable to the stern and lofty qualities of her husband-(Cheever).

dung, instead of stones, to make the way sound and safe for pilgrims-(Mason).

⁷ Instead of being what they profess, the King's labourers, Paul calls them soul-troublers (Gal. 5:10). For instead of preaching a free, full, and finished salvation, bestowed as a free gift, by rich grace, upon poor sinners who can do nothing to entitle themselves to it; behold, these wretched daubers set forth salvation to sale upon certain terms and conditions which sinners are to perform and fulfil. Thus they distress the upright and sincere, and deceive the self-righteous and unwary, into pride and delusion. Thus they mar, instead of mend, the way; and bring dirt and

⁸ "Looked well to the steps"; that is, "the promises," as Bunyan explains in the margin of Part First. "Struggling to be rid of our burden, it only sinks us deeper in the mire, if we do not rest by faith upon the promises, and so come indeed to **CHRIST**. Precious promises they are, and so free and full of forgiveness and eternal life, that certainly the moment a dying soul feels its guilt and misery, that soul may lay hold upon them, and find Christ in them; and were it not for unbelief, there need be no Slough of Despond for the soul to struggle, and plunge, in its mire of depravity."-(Cheever)-(ED).

⁹ All the varieties in the experience of those who are walking in the same path can never be enumerated; some of their sores are not only unreasonable but unaccountable, through the weakness of the human mind, the abiding effects of peculiar impressions, the remains of unbelief, and the artifices of Satan-(Scott).

14. And now Mr. Sagacity left me to dream out my dream by myself. Wherefore, methought I saw Christiana and Mercy, and the boys, go all of them up to the gate; to which, when they were come, they betook themselves to a short debate about how they must manage their calling at the gate, and what should be said to Him that did open to them. So it was concluded, since Christiana was the eldest, that she should knock for entrance, and that she should speak to Him that did open, for the rest. So Christiana began to knock; and, as her poor husband did, she knocked, and knocked again. But, instead of any that answered, they all thought that they heard as if a dog came barking upon them; a dog, and a great one too, and this made the women and children afraid: nor durst they, for a while, to knock any more, for fear the mastiff should fly upon them. Now, therefore, they were greatly tumbled up and down in their minds, and knew not what to do: knock they durst not, for fear of the dog; go back they durst not, for fear the Keeper of that gate should espy them as they so went, and should be offended with them; at last they thought of knocking again, and knocked more vehemently than they did at the first. Then said the Keeper of the gate, Who is there? So the dog left off to bark, and He opened unto them.¹⁰

15. Then Christiana made low obeisance, and said, Let not our Lord be offended with his handmaidens, for that we have knocked at His princely gate. Then said the Keeper, Whence come ye, and what is that you would have?

¹⁰ No sooner does a poor sinner open his lips in prayer to Jesus, but the devil will bark at him, and by all means try to terrify and discourage him. Do you find this? What is our remedy? "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:7, 8)-(Mason). When the fear of God possesses the heart, such disturbances cannot long prevent earnest cries for mercy, but will eventually render them more fervent and importunate than ever-(Scott).

16. Christiana answered, We are come from whence Christian did come, and upon the same errand as he; to wit, to be, if it shall please You, graciously admitted by this gate into the way that leads to the Celestial City. And I answer, my Lord, in the next place, that I am Christiana, once the wife of Christian, that now is gotten above.¹¹

17. With that the Keeper of the gate did marvel, saying, What! is she become now a pilgrim that, but a while ago, abhorred that life? Then she bowed her head, and said, Yes, and so are these my sweet babes also.

18. Then He took her by the hand, and let her in, and said also, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me"; and with that He shut up the gate. This done, He called to a trumpeter that was above, over the gate, to entertain Christiana with shouting and sound of trumpet for joy. So he obeyed, and sounded, and filled the air with his melodious notes (Luke 15:7).

19. Now all this while poor Mercy did stand without, trembling and crying, for fear that she was rejected. But when Christiana had gotten admittance for herself and her boys, then she began to make intercession for Mercy.

20. **CHRIST.** And she said, My Lord, I have a companion of mine that stands yet without, that is come hither upon the same account as myself; one that is much dejected

¹¹ Think much of them that have gone before; how safe they are in the bosom of Jesus. Would they be here again for a thousand worlds? Sometimes when my base heart hath been inclining to this world, and to loiter in my journey towards Heaven, the very consideration of the glorious saints and angels-what they enjoy, what low thoughts they have of the things of this world, how they would befool me if they did but know that my heart was drawing back-this hath made me rush forward, and disdain those beggarly things; and say to my soul, Come, soul, let us not be weary; let us see what Heaven is; let us venture all for it. Reader, what sayest thou to this? Art thou resolved to follow me? Nay, resolve to get before me if thou canst-(Heavenly Footman).

in her mind, for that she comes, as she thinks, without sending for; whereas I was sent to by my husband's King to come.

21. Now Mercy began to be very impatient, for each minute was as long to her as an hour; wherefore she prevented Christiana from a fuller interceding for her, by knocking at the gate herself. And she knocked then so loud, that she made Christiana to start. Then said the Keeper of the gate, Who is there? and said Christiana, It is my friend.

22. So He opened the gate and looked out, but Mercy was fallen down without, in a swoon, for she fainted, and was afraid that no gate would be opened to her.



23. Then He took her by the hand, and said, **DAMSEL.**, I bid thee arise.

24. O Sir, said she, I am faint; there is scarce life left in me. But He answered, That one once said, "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple" (Jonah 2:7). Fear not, but stand

upon thy feet, and tell Me wherefore thou art come.¹²

25. **MERCY.** I am come for that unto which I was never invited, as my friend Christiana was. Hers was from the King, and mine was but from her. Wherefore I fear I presume.¹³

26. **GOOD.** Did she desire thee to come with her to this place?

27. **MERCY.** Yes; and, as my Lord sees, I am come. And, if there is any grace or

¹² Think much of them that have gone before; how safe they are in the bosom of Jesus. Would they be here again for a thousand worlds? Sometimes when my base heart hath been inclining to this world, and to loiter in my journey towards Heaven, the very consideration of the glorious saints and angels-what they enjoy, what low thoughts they have of the things of this world, how they would befool me if they did but know that my heart was drawing back-this hath made me rush forward, and disdain those beggarly things; and say to my soul, Come, soul, let us not be weary; let us see what Heaven is; let us venture all for it. Reader, what sayest thou to this? Art thou resolved to follow me? Nay, resolve to get before me if thou canst-(Heavenly Footman).

¹³ Mercy's case is not singular. Many have set out just as she did, and have been discouraged by the same reason as she was. She, as many have been, was encouraged to set out in the ways of the Lord by her neighbour and friend. Hence she, as many others also have thought, there was no cause to conclude that she was effectually called by the Lord, but it was only the effect of moral persuasion, and therefore doubted and fainted, lest she should not meet with acceptance. But her very doubts, fears, and distress, proved the earnestness of her heart, and the desire of her soul, after the Saviour; and also that His attracting love and gracious power had a hand in the work. Well therefore might Bunyan call upon his readers to mark her gracious reception by Christiana. Mark this, ye poor, doubting, fearing, trembling souls, who are halting every step, and fearing you have not set out aright, hear what Christ's angel said, and be not discouraged: "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus!"-(**MATT.** 28:5)-(Mason).

forgiveness of sins to spare, I beseech that I, thy poor handmaid, may be partaker thereof.

28. Then He took her again by the hand, and led her gently in, and said, I pray for all them that believe on Me, by what means soever they come unto Me. Then said He to those that stood by, Fetch something, and give it Mercy to smell on, thereby to stay her fainting. So they fetched her a bundle of myrrh; and a while after, she was revived.¹⁴

29. And now was Christiana and her boys, and Mercy, received of the Lord at the head of the way, and spoke kindly unto by Him. Then said they yet further unto Him, We are sorry for our sins, and beg of our Lord His pardon, and further information what we must do.

30. I grant pardon, said He, by word and deed: by word, in the promise of forgiveness; by deed, in the way I obtained it. Take the first from My lips with a kiss, (Song. 1:2); and the other as it shall be revealed¹⁵ (John 20:20).

31. Now, I saw in my dream, that He spake many good words unto them, whereby they were greatly gladdened. He also had them up to the top of the gate, and showed them by

what deed they were saved; and told them withal, That that sight they would have again, as they went along in the way, to their comfort.

32. So He left them a while in a summer parlour below, where they entered into talk by themselves; and thus Christiana began: O Lord! how glad am I that we are got in hither.

33. *MERCY*. So you well may; but I of all have cause to leap for joy.

34. *CHRIST*. I thought one time, as I stood at the gate (because I had knocked, and none did answer), that all our labour had been lost, especially when that ugly cur made such a heavy barking against us.¹⁶

35. *MERCY*. But my worse fear was after I saw that you was taken into His favour, and that I was left behind. Now, thought I, it is fulfilled which is written, "Two women shall he grinding together, the one shall be taken and the other left"¹⁷ (*MATT.* 24:41). I had much ado to forbear crying out, Undone! undone!¹⁸ And afraid I was to knock any

¹⁴ The prisoners taken in the Holy War were affected like Mercy. "Why did you not cry to Me before, said the Prince, yet I will answer you so as will be for My glory. At this Mr. Wet-eyes gave a great sigh, and death seemed to sit on their eye-brows; they covered their faces, and threw themselves down before Him. Then the Prince bid them stand upon their feet, and said, I have power to forgive, and I do forgive. Moreover, He stripped the prisoners of their mourning-weeds, and gave them beauty for ashes."-(ED).

¹⁵ Pardon by word seems to denote the general discovery of free salvation by Jesus Christ to all that believe, which is sealed by transient comforts and lively affections. Pardon by deed may relate to the manner in which the blessing was purchased by the Saviour; and when this is clearly understood, the believer attains to stable peace and hope-(Scott).

¹⁶ Pardon by word seems to denote the general discovery of free salvation by Jesus Christ to all that believe, which is sealed by transient comforts and lively affections. Pardon by deed may relate to the manner in which the blessing was purchased by the Saviour; and when this is clearly understood, the believer attains to stable peace and hope-(Scott).

¹⁷ Many hellish darts are tipped by Apollyon's malignant ingenuity with sentences of Scripture, made to flame just like the fiery darts of the wicked one; so that the Scriptures appear to stand against the trembling Christian-(ED).

¹⁸ Here is genuine humility; no replying against God-no calling in question His sovereign right to receive or to reject. No; all that this poor humble heart thought was, now is fulfilled what is written, "One shall be taken and the other left." If so, what had she to say? No impeachment of the Lord's dealings, but only, I am undone. But yet, on seeing what was written over the gate, "Knock, and it shall be opened," from that, and not from any sight of worthiness in herself, but lost as she felt herself, she was encouraged to knock again, or to cry and pray more vehemently

more; but when I looked up to what was written over the gate, I took courage. ¹⁹ I also thought that I must either knock again, or die; so I knocked, but I cannot tell how, for my spirit now struggled betwixt life and death.

36. CHRIST. Can you not tell how you knocked? I am sure your knocks were so earnest that the very sound of them made me start; I thought I never heard such knocking in all my life; I thought you would have come in by violent hands, or have taken the kingdom by storm (*MATT.* 11:12).

37. MERCY. Alas! to be in my case, who that so was could but have done so? You saw that the door was shut upon me, and that there was a most cruel dog thereabout. Who, I say, that was so faint-hearted as I, that would not have knocked with all their might? But, pray, what said my Lord to my rudeness? Was He not angry with me?

38. CHRIST. When He heard your lumbering noise, He gave a wonderful innocent smile; I believe what you did pleased Him well enough, for He showed no sign to the contrary. But I marvel in my heart, why He keeps such a dog; had I known that before,²⁰ I fear I should not have

than ever. Here is a blessed example of deep humility, and of holy boldness, excited by the Divine Word. Go thou, ruined sinner, and do likewise-(Mason).

¹⁹ The express words of such invitations, exhortations, and promises, WRITTEN in the Bible, are more efficacious to encourage those who are ready to give up their hopes, than all the consolatory topics that can possibly be substituted in their place- (Scott).

²⁰ When a mariner enters upon a voyage, or a soldier on a campaign, they know not what hardships they may encounter, nor whether their lives may be sacrificed without attaining their object; but whatever hardships the Christian has to encounter, he will come off more than conqueror-he will reach the desired haven in safety-through Him that loved us. Fear not-"Though death and hell obstruct the way, The meanest saint shall win the day."-(ED).

had heart enough to have ventured myself in this manner. But now we are in, we are in; and I am glad with all my heart. ²¹

39. MERCY. I will ask, if you please, next time He comes down, why He keeps such a filthy cur in His yard; I hope He will not take it amiss.

40. Aye, do, said the children, and persuade Him to hang him; for we are afraid he will bite us when we go hence.

41. So at last He came down to them again, and Mercy fell to the ground on her face before Him, and worshipped, and said, Let my Lord accept of the sacrifice of praise which I now offer unto Him with the calves of my lips.

42. So He said unto her, "Peace be to thee, stand up." But she continued upon her face, and said, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee: yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments' (Jer. 12:1). Wherefore dost Thou keep so cruel a dog in Thy yard, at the sight of which, such women and children as we, are ready to fly from Thy gate for fear?

43. He answered and said, That dog has another owner, he also is kept close in another man's ground, only My pilgrims hear his barking; he belongs to the castle which you see there at a distance, but can come up to the walls of this place. He has frighted many an honest pilgrim from worse to better, by the great voice of his roaring. Indeed, he that owneth him doth not keep him of any goodwill to Me or Mine, but with intent to keep the pilgrims from coming to Me, and that they may be afraid to knock at this gate for entrance. Sometimes also he has broken out, and has worried some that I

²¹ Strive to enter in; a whole Heaven and eternal life is wrapped up in this little word IN. Strive; this calls for the mind and heart. Many professors make their striving to stand rather in an outcry of words, than in a hearty labour against the lusts and love of the world, and their own corruptions. But this kind of striving is but a beating the air, and will come to nothing at last-(Bunyan's Strait Gate, vol. 1, p. 869).

loved; but I take all at present patiently. I also give My pilgrims timely help, so they are not delivered up to his power, to do to them what his doggish nature would prompt him to. But what! my purchased one, I trow, hadst thou known never so much beforehand, thou wouldst not have been afraid of a dog. The beggars that go from door to door will, rather than they will lose a supposed alms, run the hazard of the bawling, barking, and biting, too, of a dog; and shall a dog-a dog in another man's yard, a dog whose barking I turn to the profit of pilgrims-keep any from coming to Me? I deliver them from the lions, their darling from the power of the dog.²²

44. MERCY. Then said Mercy, I confess my ignorance; I spake what I understood not; I acknowledge that Thou dost all things well.

45. CHRIST. Then Christiana began to talk of their journey, and to inquire after the way. So He fed them, and washed their feet, and set them in the way of His steps, according as He had dealt with her husband before.

46. So I saw in my dream, that they walked on in their way, and had the weather very comfortable to them.

47. Then Christiana began to sing, saying-Blessed be the day that I began A pilgrim for to be; And blessed also be that man That thereto moved me. 'Tis true, 'twas long ere I began To seek to live forever: But now I run fast as I can; 'Tis better late then never. Our tears to joy, our fears to faith, Are turned, as we see, That our beginning, as one saith, Shows what our end will be.

48. Now there was, on the other side of the wall that fenced in the way up which Christiana and her companions were to go, a garden, and that garden belonged to him whose was that barking dog of whom mention was made before. And some of the fruit-trees that grew in that garden shot their

branches over the wall; and being mellow, they that found them did gather them up, and oft eat of them to their hurt. So Christiana's boys, as boys are apt to do, being pleased with the trees, and with the fruit that did hang thereon, did plash²³ them, and began to eat. Their mother did also chide them for so doing, but still the boys went on.²⁴

49. Well, said she, my sons, you transgress, for that fruit is none of ours; but she did not know that they did belong to the enemy; I will warrant you, if she had, she would have been ready to die for fear. But that passed, and they went on their way. Now, by that they were gone about two bow-shots from the place that let them into the way, they espied two very ill-favoured ones coming

²³ "Plash" was, in later editions, altered to "Pluck." To plash, is to cut hedges or trees. The boys did plash, or had a cut at the trees, to knock the fruit off-(ED).

²⁴ What is this garden but the world? What is the fruit they here found? "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). Of this the boys ate. The mother chides them for taking that which did not belong to them, but she did not know that it grew in the devil's garden. Mark the consequence of their eating this fruit hereafter-(Mason). The terrifying suggestions of Satan [the dog's barking] give believers much present uneasiness, yet they often do them great good, and seldom eventually hurt them; but the allurements of those worldly objects which he throws in their way are far more dangerous and pernicious. Many of these are very attractive to young persons; but all parents who love the souls of their children should employ all their influence and authority to restrain them from those vain pleasures which "war against the soul," and are most dangerous when least suspected. This fruit may be found in the pilgrim's path, but it grows in Beelzebub's garden, and should be shunned as poison. Many diversions and pursuits, both in high and low life, are of this nature, though often pleaded for as innocent, by some persons who ought to know better-(Scott).

²² Thus the dog of hell may be of service, not only in keeping the sheep close together, but in making them keep close to their Shepherd-(J. B.).

down apace to meet them.²⁵ With that, Christiana and Mercy, her friend, covered themselves with their veils, and so kept on their journey; the children also went on before; so that at last they met together. Then they that came down to meet them, came just up to the women, as if they would embrace them; but Christiana said, Stand back, or go peaceably by, as you should. Yet these two, as men that are deaf, regarded not Christiana's words, but began to lay hands upon them. At that Christiana, waxing very wroth, spurned at them with her feet. Mercy also, as well as she could, did what she could to shift them. Christiana again said to them, Stand back, and begone; for we have no money to lose, being pilgrims, as you see, and such, too, as live upon the charity of our friends.

50. ILL-FAVOURED. Then said one of the two of the men, We make no assault upon you for money, but are come out to tell you, that if you will but grant one small request, which we shall ask, we will make women of you forever.

51. CHRIST. Now Christiana, imagining what they should mean, made answer again, We will neither bear, nor regard, nor yield to what you shall ask. We are in haste, cannot stay; our business is a business of life and death. So, again, she and her companions made a fresh essay to go past them; but they letted them in their way.

52. ILL-FAV. And they said, We intend no hurt to your lives; it is another thing we would have.

53. CHRIST. Ah, quoth Christiana, you would have us body and soul, for I know it is for that you are come; but we will die

²⁵ What are these ill-favoured ones? Such as you will be sure to meet with in your pilgrimage; some vile lusts, or cursed corruptions, which are suited to your carnal nature. These will attack you, and strive to prevail against you. Mind how these pilgrims acted, and follow their example. If one was to fix names to these ill-favoured ones, they might be called Unbelief and Licentiousness, which aim to rob Christ's virgins of their chastity to Him-(Mason).

rather upon the spot, than suffer ourselves to be brought into such snares as shall hazard our well-being hereafter. And with that they both shrieked out, and cried, Murder! murder! and so put themselves under those laws that are provided for the protection of women (Deut. 22:23-27). But the men still made their approach upon them, with design to prevail against them. They, therefore, cried out again.²⁶

54. Now, they being, as I said, not far from the gate in at which they came, their voice was heard from where they were, thither; wherefore some of the house came out, and knowing that it was Christiana's tongue, they made haste to her relief. But by that they were got within sight of them, the women were in a very great scuffle, the children also stood crying by. Then did he that came in for their relief call out to the ruffians, saying, What is that thing that you do? Would you make my Lord's people to transgress? He also attempted to take them, but they did make their escape over the wall, into the garden of the man to whom the great dog belonged; so the dog became their protector. This Reliever. then came up to the women, and asked them how they did. So they answered, We thank thy Prince, pretty well; only we have been somewhat affrighted; we thank thee also, for that thou camest in to our help, for otherwise we had been overcome.

55. RELIEVER. So after a few more words, this Reliever. said as followeth: I marveled much when you were entertained at the gate above, being, [as] ye knew, that

²⁶ Here we see that the most violent temptation to the greatest evil is not sin, if resisted and not complied with. Our Lord Himself was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, ye followers of Him, do not be dejected and cut down, though you should be exercised with temptations to the blackest crimes, and the most heinous sins. You cannot be assaulted with worse than your Lord was. He was tempted, but He resisted Satan, and overcame all, in our nature. Cry to Him; He is the Reliever. who will come in the hour of distress-(Mason).

ye were but weak women, that you petitioned not the Lord there for a conductor; then might you have avoided these troubles and dangers, for He would have granted you one.²⁷

56. CHRIST. Alas! said Christiana, we were so with our present blessing, that dangers to come were forgotten by us; besides, who could have thought, that so near the King's palace, there should have lurked such naughty ones? Indeed, it had been well for us, had we asked our Lord for one; but, since our Lord knew it would be for our profit, I wonder He sent not one along with us!²⁸

57. RELIEVER.. It is not always necessary to grant things not asked for, lest, by so doing, they become of little esteem; but when the want of a thing is felt, it then comes under, in the eyes of him that feels it, that estimate that properly is its due, and so, consequently, will be thereafter used. Had my Lord granted you a conductor, you would not neither so have bewailed that oversight of yours, in not asking for one, as now you have occasion to do. So all things work for good, and tend to make you more wary.

58. CHRIST.-- Shall we go back again to my Lord, and confess our folly, and ask one?

59. REL.-- Your confession of your folly I will present Him with. To go back again you need not; for in all places where you shall come, you will find no want at all; for in every of my Lord's lodgings, which He has prepared for the reception of His pilgrims, there is sufficient to furnish them against all

attempts whatsoever. But, as I said, "He will be inquired of by them, to do it for them" (Ezek. 36:37). And it is a poor thing that is not worth asking for. When he had thus said, he went back to his place, and the Pilgrims went on their way.

60. MERCY. Then said Mercy, What a sudden blank is here! I made account we had now been past all danger, and that we should never see sorrow more.²⁹

61. CHRIST. Thy innocency, my sister, said Christiana to Mercy, may excuse thee much; but as for me, my fault is so much the greater, for that I saw this danger before I came out of the doors, and yet did not provide for it where provision might have been had. I am therefore much to be blamed.³⁰

62. MERCY. Then said Mercy, How knew you this before you came from home? Pray open to me this riddle.

63. CHRIST.-- Why, I will tell you. Before I set foot out of doors, one night, as I lay in my bed, I had a dream about this; for, methought I saw two men, as like these as ever the world they could look, stand at my bed's feet, plotting how they might prevent my salvation. I will tell you their very words. They said (it was when I was in my troubles), What shall we do with this woman? for she cries out, waking and sleeping, for forgiveness. If she be suffered to go on as she begins, we shall lose her, as we have lost her husband. This, you know,

²⁷ "Ye have not, because ye ask not." (James 4:2).

²⁸ It is well to be taken with present blessings, to be joyful in them, and thankful for them; but it is wrong to forget our dangers, and grow secure-(Mason).

²⁹ When the soul is happy in the love of God, it is ready to conclude that dangers are past, that doubts and fears are entirely removed; but as long as we are in this world, we shall find the expediency of our Lord's exhortation- "Watch and pray."-(J. B.).

³⁰ Here is display of a truly Christian spirit, in that open and ingenuous confession of her fault, taking all the blame upon herself, and excusing Mercy. This is not natural to us, but the grace of Christ humbles the heart, and silences the tongue to self-justifying pleas. O for more of this precious grace!-(Mason).

Chapter 2: The Wicket Gate

might have made me take heed, and have provided when provision might have been had.

64. MERCY. Well, said Mercy, as by this neglect we have an occasion ministered unto us, to behold our own imperfections; so our Lord has taken occasion thereby, to make manifest the riches of His grace; for He, as we see, has followed us with unasked kindness, and has delivered us from their hands that were stronger than we, of His mere good pleasure.³¹

Note:

³¹ Mark those phrases- "the riches of His grace," and "His mere good pleasure." You cannot entertain too exalted ideas of these, nor speak too highly of them. Pilgrims should be known by their language as well as their walk. Those who talk highly of their own perfection, speak little, if at all, of the riches of God's grace, and the good pleasure of His will. Beware of the infection of pride and self-righteous leaven-(Mason).

