

Devotion.

BY S. D. BURCHARD.

'Tis not beneath the fretted dome
Alone, God listens to our prayer;
'Tis not when crowds behold us kneel,
To pour our spirit's incense there.

'Tis not when wealth, and joy, and love,
Leave life's gay path without a thorn:
Or pleasure with her honied cup
An early offering brings each morn.

'Tis when the spirit lowly bends,
Unseen by eye, unheard by ear;
'Tis in the hour of grief and pain
We feel His gracious presence near.

An humble heart and spirit meek
Are all He asks for all His care,
In any clime, in any tongue,
For God, our God, is everywhere.

He sits in majesty enthroned;
But not the slightest breath of prayer
Is lost, for angels hover round
To waft it up for record there.

SOWING AND REAPING.

Howard Simpson and Loraine Bliss, two young men of great intimacy and dissipated habits, were on their way to a gambling saloon, where the night previous they had won considerable, and on passing a church, the doors of which were opened, paused a moment by the steps, peering out of curiosity, just as the minister was giving out the text: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

"We are not farmers, so we do not sow anything to reap," said Howard, the elder and most profligate of the two; but Loraine looked thoughtful, and kept silent as they walked along toward the place of their night's debauch. And often during the jubilant gaiety of the revelers that passage, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap," flashed into his mind.

"It is as my good mother tells me," thought he: "we must suffer for evil deeds done in the body, and my deeds are constantly evil. But from this night I will do differently. I will not be caught in this place again."

"What ails you, Bliss? You are as dull as a November hoe," said Gaybright' one of the ringleaders of the company.

"Guess he's thinking about reaping what he sows," answered Simpson, and then about a dozen rude men burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"What did you mean by that remark?" one of them presently asked.

He then told them of the text given out by the minister as they were passing the church.

"The minister go to—and he surely will," said Roardon, one of the most blasphemous of the whole gang.

This profane remark, with others no better, grated harshly on the mind of Loraine, for he was really feeling more serious than he ever had felt before; but he made no reply, knowing if he did it would only serve to call forth still harsher language. He left as early as he could, which was not till 1 o'clock, and after he got home crept to his chamber and noiselessly as possible, lest he might awaken his father, who at times, was very harsh to him. Then, for the first time in his life, he offered a sincere prayer to God, beseeching him to give him strength to turn from the evil way into which he had been led.

Meantime, his father having heard him enter the house, was denouncing him in the severest terms.

"Do not be harsh with him," pleaded the mother. "I hope he will soon learn to do better; he is young and wild, though not vicious, I trust."

But the old gentleman could see naught but wrong in his boy.

"He shall leave the house! I will disinherit him if he does not stay at home nights; he is a disgrace to the family. Think of the money I have paid out for him—sent him to college, given him the privilege of studying law with me in my office. But no, he chooses to spend his time carousing with a set of loafers,"

"Perhaps if we are gentle with him—"

tremblingly whispered his mother.

But the old gentleman did not heed

this advice, for the next morning his first salutation to Loraine was:

"Where did you stay so late last night, you young scapgrace! Unless you mend your ways you'll leave these premises for good and all."

Loraine, who had been penitent through the night, resolving to do better in future, now felt his temper rising and his resolutions melting away, and he sat down to the table in a sullen mood. But he shortly after made up his mind to go to meeting that evening and return home at half-past 9 or 10 o'clock. Therefore at half-past 7 he stated for church, and on meeting three or four of his old associates, told them of his plan.

"Well, come with us first, just for a few minutes to the club rooms," said they.

"No, no, not to-night," he replied.

"I have to go home early and I cannot possibly go with you."

But they dragged him along and it was impossible to get away from them; and once there, there was on such thing as leaving, for in the excitement of the place he was induced to drink, and as the liquor was drugged he felt no inclination to move from the charmed spot.

So the hours moved on until late into the night before he went home. When he reached that place it was 3 o'clock. His mother was at the door; she had not slept a moment, she said, from watching for him, and his father had awakened three or four times, angrily inquiring of him. But he was now asleep, and she wanted Loraine to creep noiselessly to bed, so he might not awaken him. But alas! he did awake, and the scene that ensued was awful.

Meeting the stupefied boy on the stair landing, he ordered him to leave the house at once; he could stay only at the peril of his life. The poor mother begged that he might be allowed to remain until morning; but no, into the street he was driven, with the threat that if he ever entered the house again he should be expelled with still greater harshness. Loraine crept silently to the most convenient shelter, which was the carriage house, and there slept on the carriage cushions till morning. There his mother found him, as she arose before her husband.

"My dear boy" she said, winding her arms about his neck, "it will not answer for your father to find you here, so I will bring you out some breakfast, and some money with which to get out of this town, where you have so many vile associates; and I hope you will find something to do and become good and steady. After a few days write me where you are, and I will send you a trunk of clothes and another of books. In future shun all evil company, and when you next meet your father let him see one who has entirely reformed, and who will bring him no further dishonor."

"I will, dear mother, do just as you say. I did not mean to get into disgrace last night. I started for church and should have been at home at an early hour, only I was fairly dragged in another direction by my companions. I think if father had taken a different course with me I would not be where I am now. You know how stern and crabbed he has been, and never since I left college have I felt that I could enter his office and study under his tuition. Had he been kinder and gentle like you, dear mother," said Loraine, kissing her tearful cheek, "he might have induced me to do just what he wished; but after this I will endeavor to do right. That text, 'As ye sow, so shall ye reap,' is continually in my mind, and I am going to begin anew and try to do right."

Four years passed, and his name had never been mentioned in his father's household to his hearing. And just four years from the day he left his home a Mr. Bliss, from no one knew whither, had an appointment to preach at the Congregational church, which Loraine's par-

ents usually attended. On this occasion the old gentleman said to his wife:

"We must go, I suppose, to hear this Bliss; perhaps he may be some relation of ours; no telling, although I have never known a relative of mine to be a minister."

"Yes, we will go," Mrs. Bliss replied, "and if we learn that he is a relative, it would be very proper to ask him to come home with us and spend the night."

"I do not know that I would have any objections to that," her husband answered.

Somehow he appeared to be in more melting mood than common; probably he was reminded that it was the anniversary of the fourth year since his son left them; at all events, he this evening, on his way to church, spoke Loraine's name for the first time in his wife's hearing.

"It is four years to-day," he said, "since Loraine went away, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said, mournfully.

"Wonder where he is now? Sometimes wife, I think I was a little hasty with him."

"Then you would be glad to see him, perhaps?"

"If I could be sure he had reformed."

By this time they had reached the church, finding they were a little late, as the minister was giving out his text; "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." Quietly they entered the door, and there for a moment Mr. Bliss speechless stood, and then tremblingly moved along to his seat, where his wife was sitting with her head leaning on the seat ahead of her. Could it be possible, he asked himself, that the long lost one stood before him—that he really beheld him again—not as before but still the same? Yes, it was most assuredly his son, whom he drove as a vagabond from his door, clothed in the garb of holiness, a commissioner from God. And he, listening to him, stood like a guilty wretch, transfixed to the spot. His injustice toward the one now so superior to him rose before him and he felt condemned.

It was observed by the audience that the preacher was becoming deeply affected as he looked in the direction of the old remembered pew, and each moment waxed more and more eloquent as he enlarged upon the subject of his text: "As ye shall sow, so shall ye reap."

"Yes," thought the old gentleman, "as I sowed, so I have reaped. For the last four years I have lived in constant regret of my unjust treatment, my harsh language to thee, my son. Had I been kind and forbearing with him from the first he would not have been led away to the haunts of dissipation which came so near proving his ruin. But by his mother's gentle conduct and the grace of God his feet have been arrested in the slippery downward course he once pursued."

After the service was ended Mr. and Mrs. Bliss remained in their pew until a part of the congregation had left the aisles, and then moved forward to the pulpit to meet their son and pour their tears upon his neck. Then all was forgotten, and he went to their home, never to be turned from their door again.

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SAMUEL WOODFORD.
JOHN VANDORN.
Towanda, March 18, 1881.

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