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## WHERE IS THE BIBLE?

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BY M. GUY PEARSE.

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THE other day I had a visit from my good friend, G. P—, a colporteur at work away on the wild Cornish coast. I should like you to know him, good reader, as a specimen of a thorough Christian worker. From a sailor who went through the Crimean war on board a saucy gun-boat that was always up to some mischief, you will be sure of smartness and tact and courage. Add to this an unflagging zeal for the Master and a great belief and power in prayer and you have the leading features of his character. Over moors and through valleys, for miles along that wild sea-coast, by dark ‘Dundagil and deep sounding Boss,’ lie his way and his work.

“Well, George, and what have you been doing lately?” I asked as we met.

“Hunting up Bibles, sir. And you don’t know what queer places Bibles get into. I didn’t know until I began this work, and called from door to door with my books. Almost the first question I put to them is, ‘Now, ma’am, have you got a Bible?’ They all say, ‘Yes;’ and by way of getting into the house and having a talk with them, I ask to see the book; and then I come to find out what some people do with the Bible. The good wife and mistress calls across to a shed on the other side of the little farm-yard, ‘Martha!’

“Out comes the servant girl from tending the calves or the pigs, her dress turned up and a bonnet lying back loosely from her head.

“‘Where’s our old Bible to, Martha? Here’s somebody says that he wants to see it.’

“‘Don’t know, mum,’ says Martha; ‘I haven’t seen it for ever so long.’

“Turning indoors, the good mistress takes a chair, and, standing on it, looks on the top of the dresser. There amongst odds and ends—an old stirrup iron, a bit or two of leather,

half-a-dozen old account-books—there, covered with dust, is the old Bible.

“‘Dear me,’ says the good woman, looking uncomfortable; ‘I suppose that it was put up here when we were spring-cleaning, and the maid forgot to take it down again.’

“‘Come, then, by way of making up for lost time, I think you ought to call in Martha and I will read a chapter and we will have a bit of prayer.’ And so I get the chance of getting right at them and bringing the word into daylight again, for a little while at least.”

“But I hope that this is only an extreme case, George. You don’t often come across any thing so bad as that, I suppose.”

“No, not very often. The common answer is, ‘O yes; I am thankful to say that we have got a lovely Bible, sir!’ And, coming into the little room, there in the window you see first a flower-pot with a geranium or lily in it, then half-a-dozen books, and under them, down at the very bottom of all, there is a large family Bible. And when the other books are taken off they leave just four little

lines of dust, 'damnation lines' I tell them Whitefield would have called them. You see the books have been dusted without being moved. So I can get a text out of that—about cleaning the outside and neglecting the heart; then I read a chapter out of the forgotten Bible, and have a bit of prayer there too, to harrow in the seed.

“One place I went to I found something worse than that. When I asked the woman of the house if she had a Bible, she shook her head very solemnly, and said, ‘Yes; she was thankful to say she had, and a beautifuller book there wasn’t in the parish, except it was up to the parson’s.’ Of course I wanted to see this beautiful book. ‘Well, she didn’t know whether I could see it, but she would bring it down.’ So going up stairs, she brought down a large book that was altogether stitched up in green baize, sewn all round so that you couldn’t get in at it anyhow at all. ‘Tis such a lovely book,’ said the woman; ‘I do mean that the binding of it be so pretty, that I thought ’twas a pity for to have it lying

about for any body to use, so I stitched it right up. 'Twas the squire who gave it to my boy when his boy died—in memory of him, like.'

“I took up the green baize bundle. ‘Do you know what St. Paul told the people to pray for?’ I asked. ‘It was this:—“that the word of the Lord might have free course, and be glorified,” not that it might be bound and sewn up like this.’ So I took out my penknife and ripped it open, and then had a talk with her about the Holy Book. Before I left she promised me that she would read a chapter of it every day.”

When my talk with George had finished, I began to think of where we ought to find the Bibles, and how that one might measure the amount of religion that people have by what they do with their Bibles. Good reader, if my friend George had come to your house as he came to these others, what would he find there? Where do *you* keep the Bible, and what do *you* do with it?

Let me tell you

## THE STORY OF THE HID TREASURE.

One day, a summer's day, a traveler walked along the highway, parched, dusty, tired. He came to a way-side cottage, and knocked at the door to ask for a cup of water. The door was opened by a ragged, slatternly woman, at whose torn skirts a lot of dirty children clung, whilst by the open chimney sat the sullen husband smoking his pipe.

The woman brought the traveler the water, but the cup and the hands, and the water too, were so dirty that he hardly tasted it. He thanked them and turned to leave again, muttering to himself, yet in a tone just loud enough for the woman to hear, "Ah! these people have a great treasure here if they did but know it."

The woman shut the door, and turned to her husband: "Didst hear what yon man said, Dick? He said that there was a great treasure here if we could only find it."

"Why didst not ask him where 'twas, then, stupid?" growled Dick.

“He was gone afore I could. And he didn’t seem to mean me to hear it, I reckon. But if ’tis here, thou and I can find it, lad, without any of his telling.” As the woman spoke, she came to the chimney and looked at the stones, pushing one or two to see if they were loose. She had heard of people who had found old stockings full of guineas hidden in the chimney. The man’s eyes followed her keenly, ready to claim the treasure if she should light upon it.

“I’ve heerd tell o’ gould an’ silver hid away under the floor. Thee’d best dig that up,” grinned the man. “Thee’d find earth for certain, an’ that’s where the gould comed from first of all.”

But no banter could shake her belief that the treasure lay there, waiting only the lucky hour for her to light upon it. As she stayed to get the children their supper, her hand stopped for a moment with the knife half-way through the round of the loaf, and her eyes went wandering over the place looking for the projecting end of the stocking. And



when children and husband were in bed, she went carefully over every crack and corner, trying and prying into every hole. It grew so late that she must give up for to-night, and off she went to bed, but only to dream about gold pieces and piles of silver.

Early the next morning she was at it again, and the breakfast was more wretchedly bad than usual. The children were neglected, the wash-tub must wait. The wife herself looked more slatternly than ever as the husband came home to dinner, covered with dust as she was. He looked round at the little cottage all in disorder, he heard the noise and quarreling of the children, he saw too that there were no signs of dinner; and, with a fierce curse upon the man that had turned his wife's brain about this treasure, he hurried away to the public-house, and flung himself into the taproom, more sulky and savage even than was commonly the case with him.

"Lass has got her head crazed about a treasure that somebody said was in the house," Dick explained to the bustling landlady.

“And if she has got her mind on it, she’ll have the house down afore she gives in. That’s the way of her. She’ll die before she’ll give in.”

“Eh, bless thee!” said another pot-house loungee, dipping into a big mug of beer that he held in his hand; “they’re all aloike, she’s no but a woman, an’ they never did give in, an’ they never will.”

“Until they meet wi’ their betters,” laughed the stout old landlady, lifting her face out of the sauce-pan from which she had been fishing the dinner; “an’ that isn’t ever among you men.”

Day after day of such diligent searching went on, but without any sign of the lucky find. In vain Dick stormed and swore, and even threatened to proceed to further and more coercive measures. The treasure was there, and she *would* find it; that she would, or she would die for it. And she folded her arms and put her lips together and nodded her untidy head, and looked so fierce about it, that Dick felt that he might just as well whistle against the wind.

But slowly her hope began to fade. She had been all over the house half-a-dozen times and there was not so much as a threepenny bit. Vexed at the failure, vexed at the arrears of her work, vexed too, at the consequences of Dick's growing visits to the public-house, she thought herself the one most ill-used woman in the world. She was standing on a rickety chair, turning over the things on the shelf, when the chair gave way and she fell, bringing down the shelf and all that was on it. This was the climax of her misery. Much more hurt in mind than in body, she kicked aside the things, and lifted the shelf again to its uncertain rest; and then declared aloud, "that she wouldn't bother herself any more about it—that she wouldn't." And then she began leisurely to pick up the things that had fallen with the shelf.

She little thought how near she was to the treasure now. The upset shelf had brought it at her feet. There it lay, right before her, and as she stooped her eyes suddenly fell upon it.

It was a book, the cover of which lay open; and looking her full in the face there was written, in an old and trembling hand, her maiden name. It was her mother's writing. The book itself had been a gift from that mother, now in heaven. Underneath the name was written this text of Scripture: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold."

Sitting there on the floor in her dismal cottage, in the midst of the miserable children, her thoughts began to wander back to the old mother. She saw again the little cottage, neat and clean, where she lived. She saw, too, her own girlhood. She heard again that mother's cheery voice that never spoke unkindly; and the bright and happy face seemed to be looking down upon her. And here about her every thing was wretched—unkindness, dirt, misery; why was it that these crowded into her house? And why was it that they never came near her mother's cottage? All there was peace and sunshine and blessedness. Then in a moment it flashed

upon her that all these good things had come to her mother out of this book. And this, perhaps, was the treasure that the man had seen. Setting it carefully on the shelf again, quieted and subdued, ashamed of her own room as she kept recalling that other that had come so plainly before her, she began at once to tidy up a bit and to make the kitchen and the children and herself look a little more attractive.

Dick came home to find the supper waiting and his wife so quiet and thoughtful that he began to think she must have found the treasure. She was a deep one, but he would be up to her if she meant to have it all to herself. He would keep a sharp lookout, said Dick to himself, as he sat down to his pipe in the chimney-corner. And he looked about him, trying to see if the stones had been removed.

That night, when all was quiet, when the husband and children were safe in bed, the wife stayed to take down the treasure and to read again its old familiar pages. But it was another book now. The mother's face looked

at her from every page; and with strange distinctness the mother's voice seemed to be reading the words. And bowing down there in earnest prayer she besought the mercy of her mother's God, and confessed her wicked forgetfulness of him. In her troubled sleep that face haunted her still, and the voice called her. She woke, and again in the darkness lifted up her heart for mercy, and promised once more, by God's help, that she would live to him, and diligently seek the way to heaven.

Day after day passed, leaving Dick more and more astonished at the change that had come over his wife. Her very appearance and manner were altered. There was a cleanliness about her now that spread to the children and to the cottage. "There," said Dick to himself; "plain enough she has found the treasure, and she isn't so much as going halves!" His suspicions were confirmed by another circumstance. It was plain that his wife had something on her mind. She was wonderfully quiet, for one thing, and, when

she did speak, spoke sadly and gently, as if some trouble pressed upon her. She often went away up-stairs by herself, and very often sighed. And when Dick asked her what was amiss she only looked out of the window, and said that she would tell him some day. Dick fancied she brushed away a tear, and having no sympathy with any such weakness he only grunted a savage "Umph," and smoked his pipe. "I will find thee out, my lass; and if thee have spent it all, then thee'll smart," he muttered to himself, puffing away angrily.

The opportunity thus watched for soon arrived. Dick noticed that early each morning, before any body else was stirring, his wife was dressed and went down-stairs; noticed too, that she was very quiet down there, as if she were afraid to let any body know what she was doing. Now, putting it all together, Dick had no doubt that if he could but come upon her there "the murder would out," he said.

Giving her time to get well at the mystery, whatever it might be, he rose very quietly,

and then crept to the stairs, from which he could see at once into the kitchen below. There, with her back toward him, knelt the wife, and the open book before her.

"'Tis bank-notes, of course," said Dick, proud at the discovery. "And to think of hiding 'em in that old book! I've got her now." And wondering how much it might be, and with golden visions dancing before him, he completed his dressing. By the time he was down-stairs the good wife was attending to the children; so creeping stealthily to the Bible, he took it, and shook it with the leaves turned downward, so that the contents might fall out. But no notes came fluttering to the floor.

"Ah! pinned in, I s'pose," said Dick, slightly disappointed. He turned to the cover, and then looked at page after page. But there was nothing. "Too late; she has cleared 'em all. But I'll be up to her."

Dick spent the day revolving some other method of getting at the secret. As he came home at the end of the day's work, the bright-



ness of the cottage, the cheerfulness of the children, the pleasant greeting of his wife, impressed him more than ever, and raised an ugly fear that the money must be going rather freely. He would keep his eyes open, and if he didn't find out that evening he would "get it out of her somehow;" and surly Dick lit his pipe, and puffed fiercely.

But that night it came out. The children were in bed, and all was quiet, when the wife sat down by Dick's side with her work. For some time she sat in silence, Dick watching her curiously, and owing to himself that, after all, his lass could hold her own with any of them, when she made the best of herself.

Then she looked up suddenly.

"Dick, lad, I've got something to tell thee, and I'm very much mistaken if it isn't the treasure that I've found."

"Come, lass, I was thinking so much; and I thought thee would never be so mean as to keep it all to thyself," replied Dick, greatly relieved.

"I don't want to, Dick, I'm sure," said his wife tenderly.

"And thee may be just so sure that I sha'n't say thee nay in that matter, lass," laughed Dick. "Is it gold or silver? much or little?"

But while Dick was speaking she was standing at the shelf, and brought down the old book.

"Thee wert very warm, then, after all," he thought to himself. "The right place, but thine eyes weren't sharp enough. Eh, but the women are deep!"

"I believe that this is what the man meant, Dick." And she turned to the fly-leaf. 'Look at what it says here: 'More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold.' My mother gave me this Bible, and wrote that, Dick; and I know what a treasure she found it, for this life and for the next too."

Dick sank back disappointed. No bank-notes, no gold, not even a crock of shillings. After all, nothing but an old book. But his wife was a deep one, as Dick said, and went on quietly:

“Now, Dick, I’ll tell thee what I’ve been thinking; that if this book can make me so good a wife to thee, dear lad, and so good a mother to thy bairns, and thy home so pleasant as it made my mother and my home years ago, it really will be better than gold. Now look, Dick, I’m going to try it, and I think that thou couldst do much worse than take thy share o’ the treasure, and try it with me.”

As the wife spoke she had laid down the work and her hand rested on Dick’s. Now she looked at him with the earnest eyes and spoke with the tenderness of old times: “Thee hast had enough to put up with in me, lad, and I’m sorry for it; but, by God’s help, I’ll be to thee what I never have been yet. I’m beginning to see things different already.”

Dick didn’t quite know what to make of all this. A man of few words and slow thought, he felt bewildered, and sat looking at the fire, turning matters over for some time before he could quite take it all in. The wife was hurrying on with her work; as he turned he caught sight of her as she sat beside him, look-

ing just as she used to in those courting days ten years ago. He looked around, too, at the little place, already so much brighter and cheerier. The very cat that rubbed itself against his wife's chair had taken to purr more loudly than it ever had done before; and if all *that* was to come out of the treasure, Dick wasn't going to lose his share in it.

"There, lass, there's my hand for thee. I'll be halves in thy treasure."

That night Dick and his wife read their first chapter together from the mother's Bible, and then he kneeled beside his wife, joining in her simple, earnest prayer to her mother's God.

Now, good reader, where is your Bible, and what are you doing with it? It is not enough to have one in the house—or a score, for that matter. Have your own. Get used to handling it, and to know your way through it. Let no day pass without finding something in God's word to turn over in your thoughts during the day. Here search diligently, as the wise men did of old, and you shall find

the Lord Jesus. Here turn with prayer and earnest seeking, and you shall find a guide for every way, a comfort for every sorrow, a balm for every fear, a cure for all troubles, and a hope that shall shine always. It is the plain command of our heavenly Master, as much for us as for them of old time, "Search the Scriptures, for these are they which testify of me."

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