

The New Amplified Pilgrim's Progress

Adapted From John Bunyan's
Original Text

Preface

Although for the most part the language in this edition is quite modern, there are some patterns of speech borrowed from Bunyan which, hopefully, will lend a bit of an old English flavor to the story. All Biblical quotations are from the King James Version which was newly published in Bunyan's time. At times I have quoted from the writings of others who have expressed ideas more fluently than I could have done. In those instances I have enclosed these lines in quotation marks. Also, you will note that some of the characters along the way say, "thee, thine, thou," etc. but I trust the reader will quickly catch on to these simple usages from an earlier era.

This work is totally unabridged with nothing left out or shortened. However, where I felt that an amplification might aid in spiritual understanding or add a bit of adventure, I have taken that liberty.

I have undertaken this work with loving reverence and have tried to deal faithfully with the intent and content of the original. Should there be any mistakes in interpretation, I trust that in the resurrection Mr. Bunyan will forgive me.

Jim Pappas, Jr.

Introduction

THE immortal allegory that Bunyan crafted in his prison house was set in the framework of a dream. Although it is not the basis of this work, I too have a dream which is as follows.

In my dream I see myself newly arrived in the New Jerusalem. With my friends and family I am walking the streets of the Celestial city and pausing frequently to admire some new wonder of creation. As we round a corner and come into a spacious park I seem to hear someone laughing. Not just a chuckle or two here or there but large bellyfuls of genuine amusement. Coming near to its source I see a large bear of a man reading to his children. Then, as he reads on, he comes to a tender moment and, soft-hearted gentleman that he is, a tear etches a salty trail down his cheek.

Curiously I draw near and, looking over his shoulder, I perceive that the man is reading "The New Amplified Pilgrim's Progress." Then the man turns and I see that the reader is none other than John Bunyan himself! There is a pause, a mutual acquaintance introduces us, and for the first time John Bunyan, the genius tinker from Bedford, looks upon his admiring adaptor. He stands, I extend my hand which he grasps firmly only to pull me into a crushing Bunyan bear hug. Next in my dream he stands me back a pace, looks me squarely in the eye and says, "Well done, James, old chap. Thank you-What do you say we have a grand reunion of all the people who have been helped to this place by our little books?"

And so it is that on the appointed day they gather on a grassy knoll overlooking the Tree of Life-thousands by multiplied thousands coming to pay tribute to God's faithful servant, John Bunyan, the tinker. And from those thousands I hope that a few, here and there, from these modern times might stroll across to me and say, "Thank you, sir, for taking Mr. Bunyan's masterpiece and putting it into a tongue I could comprehend."

Should you, dear reader, wisely decide to join us on pilgrimage because of this version of John's little book, I shall be most pleased to meet you. I may not know you by sight but you may meet Mr. Bunyan and myself on the little knoll that sits on the west side of the Tree of Life. We will meet there at sunrise on the first Sabbath following the first new moon after the coronation of the Lord of The Hill. Until then, faithful friend, I shall bid thee a fond adieu and dearly hope to meet thee in the Kingdom.

Affectionately yours,
Jim Pappas, Jr.
Adaptor

Chapter One *The Dream*

IN my journey through the wilderness of this world there came a time when I found myself caged up in a very dreary dungeon. Now how I came to be in that place, and what befell me there, is not for me to relate in this little book. What is for me to tell is the story of my dream. For, you see, while I was shut up in that most loathsome place surrounded by profligates and felons, I seemed to breathe the very atmosphere of heaven. Yea, 'twas there that I laid me down to sleep; and, as I slept, I dreamed a most wonderful dream. In this amazing dream I saw before me the most miserable man I have ever seen. He stood before the front door of a very tumble-down and miserable excuse of a house. He was dressed in garments that would scarcely merit the title of clothing in the genteel place where you dwell. Rags is what they really were! More frayed and tattered than the clothing on any bag-man beggar you are ever like to see. His face was very sad and was, for the better part of the time, turned away from his house. In his right hand he held a little black book, and upon his back he bore a huge burden-a great big black bundle of a burden that looked as if it must shortly press him down to the ground. 'Twas a very mysterious burden that he carried, for, as large and heavy as it looked to me, I soon perceived that it was invisible to those about him. But you can be sure that it was quite real to him; aye, just as real to him as the burdens of your soul are real to you. Now, as I beheld in my dream, I saw him open the book and read; and, as he read, he

began to weep and tremble. He bowed lower and lower, as if his weighty burden was somehow growing even heavier. Finally, unable to endure any longer, he cried out with the most mournful voice I have ever heard, saying, "Oh, alas! Woe is me. Woe, woe, woe! Is there no one to help me?"

But to his despairing cry there came neither answer nor reply. He looked left, down the winding, twisting lanes of his tumble-down town and saw nothing but other people clothed in rags just as patched and worn as his own. He looked right, up the twisting, winding streets of his tumble-down town, and again saw nothing but more people in the same miserable state. In this dejected frame of mind he turned to enter his little tottering shack of a house. Once within that dreary little one-candle cottage, he tried his very best to act as normal as possible, lest he should alarm his wife and young children. But, try as he might, he could not contain the moans and groans that forced themselves from unwilling lips. Finally, noticing that his wife and children kept stealing quick, sideways glances at him, and seeing that keeping his silence only seemed to add to his sorrows, he decided to open his heart to his loved ones. And this is what he said:

"Oh, my dear wife, and you, my tender children! I, your poor father, am all lost and undone. And why all lost and undone, do you ask? 'Tis because of this huge burden strapped tightly to my back."

Then said his dubious wife, Christiana, "Uh, burden? What burden, my dear?"

"I don't see any burden, Papa," piped up Matthew, his eldest son. To this the man replied, "Can you truly not see it?"

"No," they chorused, all as one voice.

"Oh dear! What can I say?" he groaned. "For whether you can see it or no, this weight is about to crush out my life!"

"Dear, dear," said his wife, her brow deeply furrowed with grave concern, "An invisible burden so heavy as to crush out your life? What can it be?"

"Hear me! Hear me well, my dear ones. I have been reading words from this my little book."

At this his family exchanged one of those knowing glances that shouted silently, "Oh no! We were afraid something like this was going to happen."

At last Samuel, with strained politeness, ventured to ask, "And uh . . . ahem, what do the words in your little book say, dear father?"

"They tell me that this, our city, will soon be burned with fire from heaven!"

"What!" cried his ashen-faced wife, with a shocked expression. "Burned down!"

"Yes! Burned to ashes!"

"No!"

"Yes!" he insisted, even more earnestly. "And in that fearful overthrow, we shall all miserably come to our ruin!"

"Oh, my dear husband!" she exclaimed, dropping her head into her hands with a moan.

"And, as for a way of escape," he added despairingly, "I can see none."

"None!" she exploded.

"None?" cried Joseph, fearfully.

"Nun?" burred baby James.

"No, none! None at all," he answered sorrowfully. "We are doomed to perish with this miserable town of Destruction!"

Now at these words his family was put into a state of shock. Not that they believed that

what he had told them was true, mind you. Oh no! Certainly not! But rather because they conceived that he had gone stark raving mad! Therefore, since it was getting on toward evening, they served him a spot of hot tea with a touch of lemon and honey, wrapped his neck with a heavy, grey woolen rag, and bundled him off to bed. "There," said his wife as she latched the door quietly behind her, "A good night's sleep ought to settle his brains a bit."

But the night was just as troublesome to him as the day. Therefore, instead of sleeping peacefully, he tossed to his left and cried out: "Ah, woe is me! Lost and undone am I! All lost and undone!" Then there would be sighs and tears as he rolled onto his right moaning, "Ah, what shall become of me, wicked man that I am?" And so he spent the long lingering hours of darkness.

Now when morning was finally come, Matthew, his eldest, donned his sunniest smile and cheerfully addressed him saying, "Are you feeling happier now, dear father?"

"Yes, how goes it with you, dear husband?" sighed Christiana, trying her best to squeeze a touch of optimism into her fatigued voice.

"Worse!" he moaned.

"Worse!"

"Yes! Worse and yet more worse!" he continued.

"Oh, dear!" she cried with more impatience than concern. "What more can we do for you, poor man?"

To this he answered, desperately, "We must set ourselves to study and pray that we may know how to escape this city of Destruction."

"Escape!" she exploded. "My dear husband! There is nothing to escape from! Now come to your senses before the magistrates declare you to be a lunatic and cage you up forever!"

"No! No!" He cried. "I am in my right mind. There is danger-and we must escape forthwith. But how? Only how?"

"Husband!" snapped Christiana, her pot of anger beginning to boil over, "come to yourself this instant!"

Now, thoroughly convinced that their husband and father was indeed going quite mad, they sought to drive his affliction away by treating him with the utmost hardness and disrespect. Sometimes they would scold him, sometimes mock and mimic him. At other times they would totally ignore him. But, as you well know, this is no way to treat a soul in distress. Not only did it fail to help him, it actually added to his burden because now he began to fear all the more for his family's salvation.

This added burden of worry drove him more often than ever to his chamber where he would pray for their souls as well as his own. At other times he would walk all alone in the fields, sometimes reading from his book, and sometimes praying. And thus for many a day did he spend his time.

Now, as my dream unfolded, I saw him once again walking in the fields. He was, as before, reading in his little book, and still groaning under his heavy burden, which, by now, was even larger than before. At last he burst out as he had done earlier, crying: "Oh wretched man that I am! What shall I do to be saved?" And, as before, so now again, there was no reply.

Meeting Evangelist

I saw also that he cast hungry eyes this way to the left, and that way to the right, seeking some place to flee for his escape. Yet he continued to stand, trembling, out in the midst of the field, because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go. Then, from the right, I saw a man named Evangelist approaching, who addressed him thus, "Good day, Christian."

"Good day," moaned the man woefully. "But, pray tell, sir, why did you address me as Christian?"

"Because if you continue to read from that little book in your hand, a Christian is what you must surely become," said Evangelist with joyful assurance.

"Hmm. Even though my name is now 'Graceless'?" asked the man doubtfully.

"Aye," said Evangelist earnestly. "Though your name should be called death itself, yet would the reading of that Word give you life!"

At this, a look of great puzzlement came over Christian's face, and he asked sincerely, "How can these things be?"

Then answered Evangelist with much gravity, "'Tis because that within that book of yours abide the words of He who spoke the universe into existence."

"Ah, I think I see. And who are you?"

"My Employer has named me Evangelist."

"Ah, 'tis a wonderful name you have, sir. But as for me, there is only woe. Woe, woe, and yet more woe!"

"Good sir, why are you all the time crying out so sadly this way?"

"Because, sir, I perceive by this book in my hand that if I remain in this city of Destruction, I am doomed to die."

"Ahh . . ."

"And, I find that I am not willing to die, neither am I able to come to judgment."

"And why not willing to die, since your life here is obviously filled with such sorrow?"

"Because," answered Christian dolefully, "I fear that this burden upon my back will sink me into the grave; yea, and lower than the grave. In fact, I fear that I shall perish eternally."

"I see," nodded Evangelist sympathetically.

"And, good sir, I am not even fit to appear at the bar of judgment, much less attend my own execution."

"Ahhh. Now I understand," said Evangelist with a tear or two welling up in his eyes.

"So, you see, good sir, 'tis the fear of these things that makes me cry out."

"Ah. And your fears are well founded. Here, look into this roll."

I saw then that he gave him a parchment roll, and as the man unrolled it he saw written therein these words: "Flee from the wrath to come!"

"Oh no! Oh, more woe to me than ever!" groaned Christian. "'Tis true what I believed! I must indeed escape this place!"

"Aye," agreed Evangelist. "You should even now be fleeing as if for your very life!"

"Yes, I know."

"So why are you standing here, lingering at the edge of Destruction?"

"Sir, my little book informs me that I must flee; this parchment roll affirms that I must flee; you earnestly instruct me to flee. I can clearly see that a storm of destruction is about to sweep down upon our city as an overwhelming surprise. So, I know full well that I should be running, and I truly want to be running, but good sir, I . . .," and at this the man

began to weep and stammered, "I honestly don't know which way to go! Can you help me?"

"Look!" urged Evangelist, pointing across the plain, "Look over there across that wide, wide, field. Do you see yonder wicket gate?"

Christian strained his eyes to see through his tears, but was finally constrained to confess, "I . . . uh . . . no."

"Hmmm. Then, tell me, do you see yonder shining light?"

Wiping away his tears and stretching his eyes even more, he was finally able to say "I . . . I think I do."

"What color is it?" asked Evangelist, hoping with all his heart that the man told no lie.

"Uh, to be perfectly frank, sir, I can barely see it. But it seems to be white . . . I think."

"Good! Good, good, good! That's it! All you need to do is to keep your eye on that light!"

"But I can scarcely see it."

"No matter about that. As you follow what little light you have, you will find it grows ever more brilliant in your eyes. Soon the things of earth will grow strangely dim. Only remember! Always move toward the light. If you do, you will surely be led to the wicket gate."

"Indeed? Well, that's easy enough. And where will said gate take me?"

"That gate is the trail head into the path that leads to the Celestial City," answered Evangelist joyfully. "Go directly thereto and you shall learn how to inherit eternal life."

"I shall, good sir," he said, hitching up his britches and tightening up the frayed cord that served as his belt. "I shall!"

"See that you take not your eyes off of the light," warned Evangelist solemnly.

"Oh, I shan't," he answered joyfully. "Oh, I didn't dream that finding the way could be so easy! Simply follow the light! Thank you, sir! Thank you very, very much!"

"'Tis my greatest pleasure," answered Evangelist, whose eyes were now swimming in pools of tearful joy. "My greatest pleasure in all the world."

The Pilgrimage begins

So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not run very far from his own door when his wife and children, seeing him, grew alarmed and began to cry after him.

"Mama! Look!" cried Joseph. "Papa's running away from home!"

"T'um home, Daddy!" burred baby James.

Christiana called out sternly, "Husband! Where are you going?"

"To life! Life! Eternal life!"

"Oh no! He's gone and fallen clean off his wagon," blurted out Matthew. "Papa! Where are you going?"

"Never mind where he's going!" urged Samuel. "Just get him back into bed before he hurts himself! Father, come back!"

Christiana, seeing not the slightest slackening of his pace, screamed out after him,

"Graceless! You get back here this minute! Do you hear me? Come back this instant!"

"Life! Life! Eternal life!" shouted Christian as he galloped on with his clumsy burden swaying heavily from side to side.

"Graceless! You best obey me!" threatened his wife sternly.

"Mama!" shouted Matthew. "He's put his fingers in his ears! Now he can't even hear us!"
"Oh, the fool man!" cried his wife. "That book of his has so rattled his brains that he can't even listen to reason! Graceless!"

"Papa, you crazy fellow!" called Matthew. "Come back before you hurt yourself!"
To this, teary-faced little James pulled his thumb from his mouth and cried piteously,
"T'um home, Daddy!"

Now by this time all the commotion had aroused the entire neighborhood and begun to draw quite the crowd. Said one, "Come look! It's Graceless! Look at'm stumbling across yonder meadow."

"Aye," observed a second. "Ee's finally flipped 'is wig, 'e 'az." Another called after the fugitive, saying, "Hey! Fool man! Come back before you lose your way!" To which yet another answered, "Ah, let the fool go! Better off we are without the likes of him around here."

Then there came running up all huffing and puffing a stout, mulish looking man named Obstinate, who asked, "What's all the excitement, lads?"

"Oh," answered the first, nonchalantly chewing on a straw, "the fool has finally lost his mind and runs amuck!"

"Aye," cried the second, "straight into trouble 'e goes."

"Yup! Sure 'nuff. The egg has finally cracked, it 'as," declared the third.

Then said Obstinate, "So! He's finally made a break for it, eh?"

Now at this moment there came up a whimpy wisp of a man named Pliable, who gazed after the fleeing man with a worried look and whined, "Oh dear, oh me! Oh, neighbor Obstinate, I just knew this would happen, what with him reading that Book all the time!"

"Yes, brother Pliable," Obstinate answered gruffly. "We should have taken it away from him as soon as we saw the distemper begin to settle upon his soul."

"Oh dear! Oh me! Now what can we say to save the dear soul?"

"Say! Nay!" blurted out Obstinate. "'Tis not what we say that will do-but what we do that will do."

"Uh . . . your meaning flies clean over my head, dear Obstinate," said Pliable, his scrawny face mirroring his inner confusion. "Uh, please, do clarify."

"Foolish Pliable!" exploded Obstinate. "Can't you see, bumpkin? He has his ears all stopped up! He will understand no language but that of animal power!"

To this Pliable looked even more lost in the mist and said meekly, "Uh . . . clarify more, dear sir. A bit more, do clarify."

"Grrr," growled Obstinate impatiently. "Can't you see, silly head! We must needs go fetch him back by force!"

"Oh! Of course, by force. Heh, heh, heh. By force of course. A splendid idea!" exclaimed the enlightened Pliable with a smile and a bony clap of his skinny hands. "Simply splendid! Shall we be off?"

The Rescue

"Yes. Off with us!" ordered Obstinate bowing low to Christiana with an expansive sweep of his fine feathered hat. "Don't worry your pretty little head, Madam. We'll unscramble his brain yet. Graceless!" he bellowed after the fleeing figure of Christian. "Hold up a

bit!" Then he set off at a piggish waddle of a trot with Pliable loping easily behind shouting, "Sirrah! Wait up! Wait up!"

Now, even with his fingers in his ears, Christian could faintly hear their shoutings. But he dared not look back, no, nor even slow his pace because he had read in his Book that, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven."

But, because of the burden upon his back, it was not long before his pursuers drew alongside. Then the gasping Obstinate shouted between puffs, "Hey! (puff puff) Graceless! (puff puff) Hold up!" Christian, thinking they might have come to join him on pilgrimage, slowed his pace to a brisk walk and said, "Why, good neighbors! Have you come to join me on my journey?"

"Join you!" snorted the portly Obstinate. "No! (puff puff) We are here (puff) to persuade you (puff) to go back with us!"

"Oh, that can by no means be," declared Christian, "for you dwell in the city of Destruction; and sooner or later, you, with that city, will sink down into a place that burns with fire and brimstone! Therefore, good neighbors, come along with me and deliver your souls."

"What!" snapped Obstinate gruffly. (Puff puff) "And leave our friends and comforts behind us?"

"Yes, because all that you leave behind is not worth one-millionth part of that which I am seeking to enjoy."

"And what do you seek (puff) that is worth leaving all the world for?"

"I seek an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that will never fade away."

"Where?" wheezed Obstinate, struggling to keep pace.

"It is laid up for me in heaven," answered Christian, "and kept safe for me there."

Then Obstinate cast a knowing glance at Pliable before saying, "And when shall you receive this uh . . . 'inheritance'?"

"I shall receive it at the time appointed, as shall all of them that diligently seek it," said Christian, extending his little Book toward Obstinate. "Here, you may read about it in my Book if you will."

"Tush!" snapped Obstinate, brushing the book aside. "Away with your silly Book! Will you go back with us, or no?"

"No! I can't, because I have put my hand to the plow."

"Plow! I don't see no plow," sneered Obstinate, looking about to see if he had missed something.

"'Tis not a plow as you understand plows, neighbor Obstinate. What I mean is . . ."

"What!" interjected Obstinate. "Invisible plows now? Oh, come on, neighbor Pliable. Let us turn again and go home without him. His rooster brain is obviously so stuffed with his own ideas that he cannot bear sound reason."

"Now, now, don't revile the dear man, friend Obstinate. Actually, my heart inclines to go with him."

"What! Another fool born? Who knows where such a brain sick fellow will lead you! Best you come away with me and be wise," said Obstinate, snatching Pliable by the arm. "Nay, but come along with me, neighbor Pliable," answered Christian, grasping his other arm. "You can have all the wonders that I spoke of and many more glories besides."

"More glories besides?" exclaimed Pliable, his eyes growing wide with wonder.

"Aye. And if you don't believe me, read of it here in my Book."

"Grrr! Books begone!" groused Obstinate defiantly as he rattled Pliable's bones with a snapping jerk toward Destruction. "Who knows but what the whole business is a pack of lies!"

"No!" cried Christian earnestly as he tugged Pliable a step closer to the Celestial City.

"What is written here is all true! Behold, it is confirmed by the blood of the One who made it."

"Well, neighbor Obstinate," said Pliable, planting his feet firmly, and retracting both arms with all the dignity of a queen upon her throne. "I find myself coming to a point of decision."

"Being what?" scowled Obstinate suspiciously as he crossed his arms and leaned back on one leg.

"I think I intend to go along with this good fellow and to cast in my lot with him," said Pliable decisively.

"What!" snorted Obstinate incredulously. "And leave common sense and good reason bleeding all dead on the ground?"

Then Pliable raised his chest, crossed his arms and said in a firm and princely manner,

"M'thinks that friend Graceless here knows just as much of these things as you do."

"What!" squealed Obstinate, the convulsing of his portly frame sending a cascade of salty sweatlets down his face.

"Yes," said Pliable with calm assurance. "So am I persuaded."

"Tush! Lunatics! The both of you. Why, why . . . he doesn't even know the way."

"Eh?" queried Pliable, turning to the pilgrim. "Uh . . . tell me, my good companion, do you know the way to this desired place?"

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Christian confidently. "A man named Evangelist showed me the way to a little wicket gate that lies just before us."

"Where?"

"Over yonder meadow," said Christian, pointing straight ahead.

Pliable squinted his eyes tightly, stared fixedly in the indicated direction for a few moments, and then finally confessed, "I uh . . . I see no gate."

"There is no gate!" bellowed Obstinate triumphantly.

"Then, do you see yonder bright light?" urged Christian, eagerly pointing again. At this, Pliable peered intently through scrunched up, shaggy eyebrows and, at last, managed to answer, "Well, I . . . uh . . . Yes . . . I guess I sort of think maybe I might."

At this Obstinate roared with wide-eyed astonishment, "Sort of think! Good heavens, lad! Will you risk life and limb on the basis of a 'sort of think?'"

"Good! We need only keep our eyes fixed upon that light until we come to yonder wicket gate. Once we get there, we shall receive further instruction about the way."

"Well! That certainly seems easy enough," said Pliable eagerly. "Let us be going! Would you care to join us, Obstinate?"

"Absolutely not! I will be no companion of such misled fanatical blockheads as you two! Back to reason and common sense with me!" And with that, Obstinate spun on his heel and strutted back toward Destruction.

Pliable

Then said Christian, as they began their journey toward the light, "Ah, dear neighbor, Pliable. You cannot know how happy I am to have you join me on this fine celestial journey!"

"As am I," said Pliable with a crooked-toothed grin, "Indeed, as am I."

Then, as Christian cast a longing glance at the retreating figure of Obstinate, he said with a heavy heart, "Oh, if only Obstinate could understand the powers and terrors soon to come upon our doomed city. Then he would not count it such a light thing to turn his back on eternal life."

"Oh well," said Pliable nonchalantly, "Obstinate be his name and Obstinate be his brain. No use crying over spilt milk. Can't fetch back water gone under the bridge, I always say, I do. But come, neighbor Graceless . . ."

"Oh, please, call me no more by that name, sir," interrupted Christian, "for I am now named Christian."

"Indeed? And how did you come to be called by such a wonderful name?"

"'Twas given to me by a great man named Evangelist."

"Evangelist, you say? Hmmm, never heard of the chap. How did you chance to meet him?"

"He came with a message from heaven because he saw me reading in this Book."

"Hmmm," said Pliable, obviously impressed. "Well, 'tis a beautiful sounding name, to be sure. To be sure. But come, neighbor Gr . . . heh, heh, I mean, Christian. Tell me more about our rewards and how we shall get our hands on them."

"No need to take my word for it," said Christian, opening his Book. "Here, I will read to you from my Book."

"And do you truly think that the words of your Book are certainly true?" asked Pliable greedily.

"Oh yes, absolutely! For it was made by Him that cannot lie."

"Cannot lie! My, what a nice person he must be. Uh . . . tell me, what sorts of things are written in your Book?"

"Well," answered Christian joyfully, "it speaks of an endless kingdom to live in . . ."

"Eh? Endless, did you say?"

"Aye, indeed I did!" glowed Christian, warming to his subject. "And there we shall be given everlasting life so that we may dwell in that kingdom forever."

"My, my! Eternal life in an endless kingdom!" said Pliable, rubbing his hands together in eager anticipation. "And what else?"

"Well, there are crowns of glory to be given us, and garments that will make us to shine like the sun."

"Really!"

"Oh yes."

"And . . . and what else?"

Then answered Christian with a faraway look in his eye, "In that place there shall be no more sad farewells nor crying, for He that is owner of the place will wipe away all tears from our eyes."

"Wonderful!" gushed Pliable, rivers of sweet emotion surging through his breast. "Simply wonderful! And who shall we have for our company there?"

"Oh, dear Pliable," said Christian, his voice choked with emotion, "You cannot imagine!

There we shall keep company with angels and seraphims and cherubims. Creatures so beautiful that they shall dazzle your eyes to look on them."

"Dazzle my eyes, you say!" exclaimed the enthralled listener. "Oh my! Go on. Do go on!"

"There you shall meet with thousands, and tens of thousands of the resurrected saints that shall travel with us to that place; none of them hurtful, but every one loving and holy and . . ."

"How lovely."

"Every one of them walking in the sight of God and standing in His presence with acceptance forever."

"Oh! Marvelous! Simply marvelous!"

"Yea," said Christian, with growing enthusiasm. "And there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns, the holy virgins with their golden harps, men that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, and drowned in the seas-and all for the love they bear to the Lord of that place. There they shall all be well, and clothed with immortality as with a garment."

"Marvelous!" squealed Pliable, smacking his palm with his fist. "Absolutely marvelous!"

"But best and better than all these will be the company of the Lord of that place Himself. He who became as one of us, to bring us to His kingdom that we might enjoy His friendship forever!"

"This is absolutely breathtaking, dear Gra . . . er, Christian," said Pliable with an hungry gleam in his eye. "Why, just the hearing of it is enough to ravish one's heart! But, tell me, good fellow, how do we become partakers of these things?"

"The Lord, the Governor of that country, has told us how in this book," said Christian, again holding forth his treasure.

"And what does it say?"

"Well, in brief, if we be truly willing to inherit the kingdom, He will bestow it upon us freely. And . . ."

"Well! I certainly qualify for that! Come! Let us pick up the pace a bit."

"Oh, I cannot," said Christian a bit sadly, "because of this weighty burden lashed to my back."

"Hmmm," said Pliable, puzzling his head to understand what Christian could possibly be speaking of (for, you see, as he looked at Christian's back, he saw there nothing at all).

"Uh . . . strange," said he.

"What is?"

"That there is no burden upon my back."

"Hmmm?" said a somewhat puzzled Christian. "Yes?"

"Tell me," said Pliable curiously, "How did this . . . uh . . . weighty burden come upon you?"

"Well," said Christian, pausing to reflect, "as I recall, it seemed to come upon me gradually whilst I read here, in this, my Book."

"Aha! Then it seems to me that this little Book of yours is not a blessing unmixed with sorrows."

"Aye," confessed Christian ruefully. "It has indeed caused me much grief and has certainly laid a heavy burden upon me."

"Ummm, hmmm," replied Pliable, thanking his lucky stars to be walking in the path of

life without such a cumbersome load.

"But I trust that the same light which has shown me my need shall also point me to my deliverance."

"Well, I should hope so!"

Then Christian turned to Pliable and, holding forth his little Book, said, "Would you like to read it?"

"Oh, dear me, no!" exclaimed Pliable, drawing back as if being offered a serpent's egg. "I, uh . . . I rather prefer to pursue my journey without such a burden as this book imposes, thank you." Then, under his breath he added, "Although, to be frank, I don't see what this burden business is all about, for on his back there is nothing at all. Nothing at all."

The Slough of Despond

I saw next in my dream that, without realizing it, Christian had taken his eyes off the light. Therefore, they strolled past the stepping stones set there for the use of watchful pilgrims and came instead to the edge of a miry, mucky slough; a very miry, mucky slough that had been laid in that place by the enemy of souls. Now, as they proceeded, they heard the slurshy squishing of the marsh muck gurgling beneath their feet. They felt the ooze of the bog beginning to creep over the tops of their shoes. Alarmed, they sought firmer terra by taking a few steps to the left, only to have the muck deepen and go climbing up past their knees. They next turned hopeful steps off to the right only to feel the bog rising inexorably, all cold and clammy up their thighs and into their pockets. Then, deciding that going off to either side had been a serious error in judgment, they determined to forge straight on-assuming that surely things could only get better. But, it took only a few more steps to discern the depth of their mistake by finding themselves fallen chest-deep into the muushy, miiiry muck of the slough. Now the name of that slough was Despond. And here they wallowed for a time, until both were covered from head to toe with the black, smelly ooze of the place.

Here, for a time, they struggled on in grunting silence expecting soon to find solid ground for their searching feet. But, alas, this was not to be. Now, of the two, I saw that poor Christian, because of his burden, had much the worse time of it. Therefore he began to sink lower and lower into the mire. Then a frustrated and angry Pliable hissed, "Ah! Neighbor Christian! What muck have you gotten us into now?"

"Truly, I do not know," exclaimed Christian wearily.

"So!" snarled Pliable, all wet and bedraggled. "Is this part of the happiness you have been promising me all this time?"

"Blame me not, gentle neighbor. I know not what has come upon us."

"Well," spouted Pliable as he spat out some sort of slippery slime, "if we fall into such misfortune so close to home, what may we expect between here and our journey's end?"

"Whatever it may be," called out Christian with what little courage he could muster, "we shall find that country to be cheap enough."

"Bah!" shot back Pliable over his shoulder. "'Tis already too costly! Just let me escape this miry muck with my life, and you can keep your shiny dreams all to yourself!" And with that, he gave a desperate struggle or two and managed to slosh his way back out of the mire.

"Ah! Oh me!" he gasped, finally able to reach solid ground, where he lay gasping for breath. "Free at last!" Meanwhile Christian struggled on, all the time sinking ever deeper into the mire.

After a time Pliable groaned to his feet, slurshed off the outer layer of malodorous muck, and turned staggering steps towards home. As he wearily ambled off in the direction of Destruction, he cast a parting jab over his shoulder, saying, "Adieu, foolish Graceless! Farewell to you and all your misty dreams of golden glory!"

"Pliable, wait!" wailed Christian sorrowfully. "You've somehow gotten out on the wrong side of the slough!"

"Pah!" shot he over his shoulder. "Better out on the wrong side-like me, than in on the right-like you!"

"But, you have turned your back to the light!"

"Bah!" he snapped again, pausing to point an accusing finger. "To be the more honest with you, I never saw any such light as you speak of. And I frankly doubt that you do either. Fare you well, foolish dreamer!"

And thus did Pliable turn his back on eternity to tread his slurpy-shoed way back to Destruction.

Meanwhile, poor Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond all alone, moaning, "Ah! Oh, dear me!" But weary and half drowned as he was, he still struggled on toward that side of the slough farthest from Destruction and nearest to the wicket gate. Now, because of his weighty burden, he was sunk deep into Despond. Yea, so deep as to scarcely discern the faint glow of distant light. Neither could he tell how much farther it was to the other shore. Whether a few yards or yet many leagues, he had no way to tell. Therefore, being quite exhausted, he clutched a large clump of cattails that only seconds before had been the abode of a large bullfrog, and paused to rest. There between gasps, he paused to reason with himself thusly:

"Oh, dear me! Who can tell who is worse off. Is it Pliable in his return to yonder doomed city? Or is it me in this murky slime of death? Oh, if I can just somehow get out!"

With that, he resumed his desperate struggle toward the light until, at last, he reached what seemed to be the distant shore. But there he found, to his dismay, that he had not enough strength to climb the steep bank. After resting for a time he tried again, saying between clenched teeth, "Out! Oh, I've got to get out or I shall die!" But because of the water-logged burden upon his back and his weakened condition, he lost his grip on the weeds and slowly slid back down, deeper than ever, into the ooze. Then said he, in total despair, "Oh, weary. So weary. 'Tis certain that I shall never get out of this place alone. If only Pliable were here so we could help each other, for certainly help is what I need. And, if I cannot find it, I fear that the beginning of my journey shall be its end. I wonder if the Lord of the far country might be able hear me from so far off? Shall I try? Or shall I die?" Then Christian hung all his hope on the mercy of his King and cried out, "Oh, Lord of the far country! Send help, I pray!"

Help Arrives

Now scarce had the echo of his words died away when a powerfully built man appeared on the edge of the bank. He looked upon him with loving concern, and said, "Hello. Who goes there?"

"'Tis I, Christian," sputtered the bedraggled pilgrim, spitting out a piece of duckweed or two.

"Ah, I heard that you were coming," said the man, "but what are you doing over here, wallowing in the Slough of Despond?"

"'Twas certainly not my idea, sir. I was sent this way by a man named Evangelist."

"Uh huh."

"And as I was travelling the path into which he set me I fell in here."

"But why did you not come across on the steps?" asked Help earnestly.

At this, Christian felt a bit sheepish and asked, hesitantly, "Uh . . . steps?"

"Yes, steps! Over there."

"Are there really steps?" queried the embarrassed pilgrim, stretching his neck to see.

Upon hearing this, there came a sympathetic tear into Help's eye as he tenderly sighed,

"Tsk, ts, ts. Of course there are steps, dear Christian. 'Tis not our Lord's intention that His children should sink into Despond. Why did you not use them?"

"Well," said he, a bit chagrined, "I suppose I must have been so fearful about the destruction behind that I gave no thought to the dangers before."

"Hmmm," answered Help, sympathetically kneeling down with outstretched arm. "Here, give me your hand!" Then, taking Christian's hand in his own, he hoisted the poor

bedraggled pilgrim clean out of the bog, saying, "There you are! Out with you!"

"Oh, thank you, good Sir," said the grateful pilgrim as he stood dripping into his own puddle. "Thank you very much! You have surely saved my life!"

"You must thank Him who heard your cry and sent me."

"Yes, I shall," said the shivering Christian. "And, may I inquire after your name, sir?"

"My Master has named me Help."

"Help, do you say? Why, you are the very one I called for."

"Of course."

"Dear Help, sir?"

"Yes?"

"Do tell, since the only way from the city of Destruction to yonder wicket gate is over this slough, why is not the walkway better mended?"

"Because this miry slough is such a place as cannot be mended," responded Help, shaking his head sadly.

"Oh? And why not?"

"Because whenever there comes a conviction of sin, there will always be a scummy runoff of filth and guilt. This lowland is its natural drain field and therefore is it called the Slough of Despond."

"Aha! And well-named it is."

"Aye, more than you know. For, as the sinner is awakened to his lost condition, there arise in his soul many fears . . ."

"Oh, to be sure. I know all about fears!"

"And doubts?"

"Oh yes. Many doubts."

"And discouraged worries about your salvation?"

"Oh, more than you can know," answered Christian, "more than you can know."

"Well," concluded Help, "'tis all these doubts and fears, worries and guilt, that drain down here and create this place of despondency."

"I think I understand you quite well on these matters," answered Christian, "for certainly all of these things did thickly fill my mind. But, tell me, is there no way that the King might fill this place?"

"Ah, He has tried," said Help with a sigh. "He has tried."

"Indeed?"

"Aye. He has poured into this place encouragement and wholesome instruction by the millions of cartloads. But all to no avail."

"Then must every pilgrim suffer in the mire of Despond, as I have done?"

"No. Not if they keep their eyes fixed on yonder light. That light shows the way to some very clear and solid steps."

"Clear and solid, do you say?"

"Aye," nodded Help. "Most assuredly. And placed there by direction of the Lawgiver Himself. I am surprised Evangelist did not instruct you to keep your eye on the light."

"Well, actually he did, sir," confessed Christian. "Three times. I suppose I must have turned my attention upon my circumstances, for truly, I never saw any steps."

"Ah, a very common mistake," said Help sympathetically. "But be assured, the King has indeed placed steps in the very midst of this slough. And they can be found by all who simply keep their eye on the light."

"Ah. A lesson too late learned for this pilgrim," said Christian, with a rueful shake of his head.

"Ah, but take courage. He is faithful and just to forgive you and to cleanse you from all this mire upon you. And the ground is good once you get in at the gate. Godspeed!"

"Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. Farewell."

Pliable's Return

I saw next in my dream that Pliable had reached the back edge of Destruction and was trying his best to creep back into his house unnoticed. Now although he had made some feeble attempts at wiping himself off, they had been to small avail. Thus it was that when his wife saw this apparition, all miry and mucky, at her back gate, she screamed out in fright. When he was finally able to shush her up long enough to convince her that it was indeed he himself and no mucky vagabond, she handed him a bucket and brush.

"What are these for, my dearest?" he queried through chattering teeth.

Then she sternly informed him that he could by no means come into her home until he had cleaned up. He whined and begged a bit, but she seized her broom, planted her ample body in the only path, and refused to budge. To add to his miseries, one of his bat-eared neighbors had heard the sloshy approach of his footsteps. He dutifully alerted the entire neighborhood which quickly assembled in anticipation of some entertainment.

Said his neighbor to the left, "Uh . . . been for a swim, Pliable?"

Added his neighbor to the right sneeringly, "Hey! Look who's come a sloshing back!"

His neighbor across the street chimed in saying, "So ye've come back now, have ye!"

Then the neighbor across the back fence sniped, "A fool you were to go as far as you did with the likes of that crazy Graceless fellow."

"Been for a swim, Pliable?" asked the neighbor to the left again, with a gleeful grin.

To this another added, self-righteously, "Look at yourself-all slimed and bedaubed with dirt!"

At this his wife came to his defense and said, "Well, at least he was wise enough to come to his senses!"

"Bah! Wise nothin'!" quipped one of the local youth. "Seems pretty chicken-hearted to turn back the first time the road gets a little soggy."

Then the neighbor to the left leaned onto the sagging picket fence, smiled a toothless grin, and said again, "Uh . . . ya been for a swim, Pliable? Hee, hee, hee!"

Then they all rollicked and rolled with mirth, and a jolly good time was had by all-all but Pliable, that is. And, in spite of his best attempts at quiet anonymity, he soon became quite the celebrity in Destruction. Thus it was that for a good long time he went sneaking and ashamed among them. But, as time passed, he forgot that he had played the coward and, before long, was able to join all the others in mocking poor Christian behind his back. And this was all I saw concerning Pliable.

Worldly Wiseman

My view then turned to Christian who, by now, was well on his way toward the wicket gate. Now by and by he espied someone coming down across the field to meet him. This gentleman's name was Mr. Worldly-wiseman. He dwelt in the town of Carnal Policy, which is a very large town just up the road from the city of Destruction. It was his practice to keep a watch on the path that leads to the wicket gate and to intercept those just setting out on their journey. As he came near, he took silent notice of Christian's damp clothing and said with a jolly smile, "Ho there! How goes?"

"Greetings, jolly sir," replied Christian wearily.

"Pray tell, good fellow! Where off to looking so serious and burdened down?"

"To yonder wicket gate, for there I shall be shown a way to be rid of my heavy burden."

"Ahem," said the man, clearing his throat and cocking his ear the better to hear. "Uh . . . excuse me, lad, but did I hear you say, yonder wicket gate?"

"Yes."

At this the distinguished-looking fellow twirled his elegant, waxed moustache betwixt long, tapered fingers, raised one of his bushy eyebrows for effect, and said incredulously, "You're on your way to yonder wicket gate?"

"Yes."

"Tell me you're joking."

"No. I'm quite serious."

"Hmmm. Serious. Very serious. Tsk, tsk, tsk," said the man slowly with extreme gravity.

"Uh . . . ahem . . . tell me. Who set you out on this little overgrown path to find relief from your burden?"

Now, by this time, Christian was beginning to suspect that perhaps this pilgrimage business was not all so clear-cut as he had at first imagined. Thus a twinge of doubt quavered in his voice as he answered, "Uh . . . a man who appeared to me to be a very

great and honorable person. His name, as I recall, was Evangelist."

"Evangelist, you say!" sputtered the man with a cough, as he stepped back in shock.

"Yes," responded Christian with a puzzled look.

Then Worldly-wiseman raised himself to his full height, smote his palm with his fist and bawled out, "Bah! Shame on him for his evil counsel!"

"What? Evil counsel, do you say?"

"Oh, evil indeed!" continued the man, reaching out a sympathetic hand to pat Christian on the shoulder. "Why, don't you realize that the way into which he has set you is the most dangerous and troublesome in all the world?"

"Indeed?"

"Yea, verily," he said, leaning back and crossing his arms. "In fact, ahem, it rather appears that you may have met with a few difficulties already. Uh . . . is that, uh . . . perhaps the slime of Despond that I see upon your person?"

"Aye," admitted Christian. "You see, I took my eyes off the light and missed the steps."

"What light? What steps?" sneered the man. "Every man ever seen traversing this dangerous trail has been just as mucked up and slimy as you are!"

"Oh, but . . ."

"And let me tell you something else, lad. That slough is but the beginning of the sorrows you can expect to meet in this way."

"It is?"

"Oh yes!" continued the man confidently. "I have lived here all my life and have seen many a pilgrim come rushing back. From their sworn testimonies I can assure you that you shall meet with wearisomeness . . ."

"I am already weary," interjected Christian.

"Uh huh," nodded Worldly-wiseman knowingly before continuing his list. "And you can also expect painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, and, well, to cut my list short, death and what not all else on the way to it!"

"Oh, my!"

"Aye, oh my indeed!" agreed the man, waxing warm to his subject. "So what do you think about this way now?"

"Well, to tell the truth," put in Christian with a touch of returned boldness, "I don't think I care what I meet in the way."

"No?" replied his shocked auditor.

"No. Just so long as I can be delivered from this crushing burden."

"Ahh!" said the man, nodding his head wisely. "I see your point. And well taken it is. For certain it is that this guilty burden will crush any man who cannot get it off, as well I know. So then, let us analyze the situation logically. Tell me first, how did you come to carry this great burden?"

"By the reading of this Book in my hand."

"Ah! Just as I feared!" snapped the man with a great show of concern. "You have made the mistake of trying to understand mysteries that are beyond the reach of your feeble mind."

"Actually, I thought it all seemed rather simple."

"Don't interrupt please," returned the man with great show of authority. "And as you read in that little book, you began to feel guilt piling up on your back, didn't you?"

"Yes. You're right about that."

"Uh huh! And as you grew more and more convicted, your mind became unstable. You became distracted and could think of nothing else, right?"

"Yes."

"And then . . . and then, at the very first suggestion of some way of escape, you ran yourself off on this desperate venture to obtain you know not what!"

"But I do know what!"

"What?"

"It is ease from my heavy burden!" Christian declared.

"But of course! But why on earth would you ever seek for ease this way?"

"Well, do you know a better way?"

"Yea, verily! And the true solution is very close at hand."

"It is?"

"Of course it is! And in this way, instead of those great and many perils, you shall meet with much peace and safety."

"Why, sir, certainly I have no desire to play the martyr. Pray tell, what must I do?"

"'Tis simple," said Worldly-wiseman, placing one hand on Christian's shoulder and pointing with the other. "See yonder signpost off to the side there?"

"The one pointing toward Morality?"

"Yes, the same. That village has an old major whose name is Legality—a man of no small wisdom."

"Oh?"

"Oh, yes. A man with a wonderful reputation."

"For what?"

"Why! For being able to help men off with just such burdens as weigh upon your shoulders, of course!"

"Indeed?"

"Yea, and from what I can gather, he has done a great deal of good this way."

"Why," exclaimed Christian, greatly encouraged, "it sounds to be just the thing."

"It is!" affirmed the man boldly. "And, since his house is not quite a mile from this very spot, you may go to him and be helped right off!"

"Really?"

"Uh-huh. And if he should uh, perchance not be at home himself, he has a handsome, young son living next door, whose name is Civility. Civility can likely relieve you nearly as well as old Legality himself."

"Indeed! Then I do hope they are at home."

"Most likely they are," encouraged Worldly-wiseman. "Most likely. But, if perchance they should both be off on a hunt or at a party, the old man has a base-born son who, in spite of his doubtful parentage, can do you as much good as his father."

"Well, his base-birth be no fault of his own," said Christian. "If he has a ministry to relieve men of their burdens, why what matter his mother? What be his name?"

"Psychology," said the man. "His name is Psychology."

"Hmmm? What an odd name," mused Christian. "And you say he can remove my burden as well as Legality himself?"

"Aye. Or, at the least help you realize that it is not really there. In any case, relief of some sort lies just up this little trail."

"Why, such good fortune!"

"Yes," nodded the man with a gracious smile, "there you may be quickly eased of your heavy burden."

"Sir!" declared Christian, "if these things of which you speak be true, then my wisest course is to take your counsel."

"Yes, but of course!" gushed the man, with a sugary smile.

"Sir, show me the way to this honest man's house."

Then the man came close and, putting his arm round Christian's shoulder, pointed up a steeply ascending, switch-backed trail and whispered, "Do you see yonder high hill?"

"Yes, very well," answered Christian, in awe. "I have been walking in its smoky shadow since I first began my travels."

"'Tis called Mount Sinai," said the man, with a great show of reverence. "Up that hill you must go, and the first house at the top is his."

"Why, thank you, sir. Thank you very much!"

"Think nothing of it, friend. I have saved many a grateful pilgrim from a long and tedious journey. Ta ta."

"Farewell," said Christian as he hiked up his pants and set out with eager step.

"Oh, and uh, when you come back to your right mind, do come visit my shop on your way home," he called after him.

"Thank you. I shall," Christian replied over his shoulder.

Detour to Mt. Sinai

So Christian turned away from the light and began the arduous climb toward Mr. Legality's house. But as he came near the base of Mt. Sinai, he found it much higher, much steeper and much more treacherous than he had imagined. Moreover, when he was about half way up, he found that the main mass of the mountain hung right over the path. Aye, hung over in such a steep fashion that he feared it might break loose and fall on his head. Therefore did Pilgrim come to a halt and begin to wonder what to do.

"Oh, woe is me. My burden has grown heavier than ever, and I can no longer see the light. Worst of all, this dreadful mountain hangs over my head and threatens to crush out my life. Oh me!"

Now from the dark clouds hanging over the summit, lightning flashed down which put him into a fear to go on. To one side yawned a fearful chasm and on the other there arose a sheer and beetling cliff. From out of the hill behind him there shot flashes of fire and belched yellow clouds of sulphurous smoke. These before and those behind made Christian afraid to move lest he should be killed. Then there came a shaking under his feet that put him into a greater terror yet. Here, therefore, he began to sweat and quake for fear. He also began to deeply regret having met one Mr. Worldly-wiseman. Oh, how sorry he was that he had ever taken such evil counsel. Oh, how he wished he could somehow, somewhere, see the light again.

Just when he had begun to fear that he was lost forever, he saw a distant figure toiling up the hill toward him. As the man came closer, he discerned that it was Evangelist.

"Evangelist! Oh joy!" shouted Christian. "Evangelist is coming to meet me!" There was hope once again and now his heart was filled with cheer. But then, as he thought of where he was, and how he had come to be where he was, he began to blush for shame. So Evangelist came up to Christian and looked upon him with a severe and dreadful countenance. Then he began to reason with Christian thus:

"What are you doing here, Pilgrim?"

To this Christian had no proper answer and only managed to stammer out, "Uh . . . uh . . ."

Then said Evangelist sternly, "Are you not the man I found crying outside the walls of the City of Destruction?"

"Uh . . . yes, dear sir. I am the man."

"And did I not set you on the path to the little wicket gate?"

"Yes, sir," said Christian, head hung low with shame.

"How is it, then, that you have so quickly turned aside? Surely you must realize that you are now quite out of the way."

Then said Christian sadly, "Uh . . . that is, uh . . . well . . . right after I had gotten over the Slough of Despond, I met with a distinguished-looking gentleman who dwells in these parts. He spoke with me for some long time and persuaded me that I might get out of the shadow of this Mt. Sinai by climbing to its top. There I was supposed to find a village called Morality, whose mayor could relieve me of my burden."

"I see."

"And so I foolishly believed the man and turned me out of your way into his, hoping that I might be eased of my burden by an easier way. But when I got to this place and beheld things as they are, what with this beetling cliff, and the sulphurous fumes, and the thundering ground, I grew afraid and stopped. And I must honestly confess, sir, that I can no longer see the light and that I have no idea what to do."

"Bear with me for a moment that I might show you the words of God," commanded Evangelist.

"Uh . . . Yes, sir," said the trembling pilgrim.

Then Evangelist raised his right hand toward heaven and said in a deep and thunderous tone, "Now 'the just shall live by faith.' But you have begun to reject the counsel of the Most High. You have drawn your foot back from the way of peace and put yourself in danger of losing your soul!"

Then did Christian fall upon his face, crying, "Oh, woe is me, for I am undone!"

"Stand up on your feet," said Evangelist tenderly, stretching forth a kindly hand.

"Yes, sir," said Christian, gratefully, struggling to his feet beneath the increased weight of an already ponderous burden.

"Fear not, poor Christian," said Evangelist gently, "for all manner of sin and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men. Therefore, be not faithless but believing."

"Ah, is it even so? May I be forgiven?" asked Christian with a touch of hope in his voice.

"Aye, 'if thou canst believe. All things are possible to him that believeth.'"

"I . . . believe," stammered Christian. "'Only help thou mine unbelief.'"

Then Evangelist smiled to hear him quote from his little book and said firmly, "That man that met you in the way was one Worldly-wiseman. His counsel was like to have been the death of you."

"Yes, sir," answered Christian, his head yet hung low.

"The Lord says, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate' (the gate to which I sent you); 'for strait is the gate which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'"

"Yes, sir."

"He to whom you were sent to find relief, the man called Legality, is the son of the bondwoman which is yet in sin's bondage with all her children. That priestess and her ways are revealed to you in this Mount Sinai."

"Aye, so I see," answered Christian, glancing fearfully upon the many terrors thickly surrounding him. "There are fires and thunderings and this steeply leaning cliff, which I yet fear may fall on my head!"

"It has crushed many others and would likely have done the same to you had you not wisely stopped. But do tell, if Legality and his mother and his brethren are yet in bondage, how did you ever expect them to set you free?"

"I don't know what I thought," confessed Christian.

"This Legality could never set you free from your burden though you should climb this mountain a million times over! You can never be justified by the works of the law, for, 'by the deeds of the law no man living can be freed from his burden.'"

"Yes, I have read that in my book," said Christian, nodding in agreement.

"Then you should have quoted it to the adversary and cut his arguments down to the marrow!" instructed Evangelist.

"I forgot," confessed Christian.

"Which nearly led to your destruction."

"Yes."

"And by which your burden was made none the lighter."

"Nay! But rather more heavy," admitted Christian.

"Therefore, Mr. Worldly-wiseman is an alien," said Evangelist angrily. "Mr. Legality is a cheat, and his son Civility, notwithstanding his cultured style, is nothing but a hypocrite and cannot help you. And as for his base-born son Psychology, I . . . I forbear to comment further."

"Nay but do say more," pleaded Christian earnestly, "for I see that your heart is stirred within you, Dear Evangelist."

"Very well," responded Evangelist. "Had you not asked I would have kept my silence. But since you have asked I shall say more. Morality and Civility are base impostors of the gospel in verity. Yet, even so, their thin veneer of manners and false kindness will never bring peace to a man's soul. Therefore after a time he will once again realize his need and perhaps renew his search for truth. But, the teaching of this young upstart knave, Psychology, is worse by far!"

"How so, dear Evangelist?" inquired Christian.

"In that he will tell you flat-out that what you are today you will forever be," answered Evangelist indignantly. "He will teach you that your burden will never be lifted . . ."

"What!" exclaimed Christian, roused to fear by the very thought. "Never lifted, do you say?"

"Aye, verily, never lifted. At best all he can promise is to help you change your behavior and perhaps teach you to deal with your emotions. But as for a real change of heart or freedom from the burden of the past-never!"

"Never?"

"Never," said Evangelist firmly. "All you can hope for is to be able to accept yourself as

you are, and to learn to live with reality."

"Verily?" cried Christian. "Oh, how could I live with such a thought? To be free! To be free! That is the very heart-cry of my soul!"

"'Tis a cry that Psychology shall neither hear nor answer."

"Oh woe would be me," moaned Christian. "It would be just as well that I had never read in my little book, or never left Destruction, as to believe that."

"There is more to tell, if you would hear it," added Evangelist.

"Do go on, Dear Evangelist," pleaded Christian.

"Moreover, he would have you blame all of your painful baggage on those who have gone before: an evil mother, a drunken father, an encounter with an evil monster of some sort. And indeed, all of these things may leave their mark on the heart. But, through the gospel they may be overcome and put away!"

"Verily? Is it even so?"

"Yea," said Evangelist with divine assurance. "This is the power of the gospel. There is nothing in our lives that we may not overcome through the power of Christ. Yea, it is the chief delight of the Lord of the Hill to take our weakest points and to give us such a smashing victory that they become our strongest!"

"Oh, glorious thought!"

"Indeed. The Great King desires to make of our soul a mighty fortress—a veritable armed castle right here in the heartland of the enemy. He fully intends that no power but his own shall ever reign in our soul."

"Ah!" said Christian, his eyes bright with hope. "Blessed hope. Blessed, blessed hope!"

"So it is, dear Christian," said Evangelist softly. "And if you will but believe His promise of forgiveness, and act as though it were true, all these words of mine will surely come to pass."

"Oh, dear Evangelist," sobbed Christian in hopeful joy. "May it be so with me! May my soul become a stronghold for the king indeed. May I never give the enemy one small foothold from the past whereby he may afflict my soul!"

"Then bring your past to Jesus," commanded Evangelist. "Be forgiven and let the past die. Forgive all wrongs and let the future be pure. Go on from victory to renewed victory—in Him!"

"But how, dear Evangelist," pleaded Christian. "How?"

"Continue on as you have begun," advised Evangelist. "Keep your eye on the light. Stay on the path and soon your burden shall be taken from you in the appointed way."

"I shall, dear sir," said Christian. "I shall. Now I can see these knaves clearly for what they are. Oh, God forbid that I should ever be thus deceived again."

Then Evangelist raised his hand toward heaven and said in a commanding voice, "I call upon the heavens for confirmation that my words are not my own but those of Him who sent me!"

Suddenly, Mt. Sinai began to smoke and quake with great violence and there thundered forth the resounding voice of Moses saying, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse of the law; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'"

"Oh, I fear for my life!" cried Christian, dropping to his knees in terror. "Oh, curse the time that I stopped to parley with the enemy. Oh, curse my forgetfulness of the promises. Oh, I have played the part of a thousand fools times ten thousand fools!"

"But," said Evangelist, laying his hand upon Christian's shoulder, "praise be to God that your eyes have been opened."

"And shame to me that they ever should have been closed by arguments that flowed only from the flesh," moaned Christian. "Shame to me that worldly-wise logic should have prevailed against the words of Truth." Then Christian looked up into the eyes of his benefactor and asked pleadingly, "Sir, what think you? Be there any hope for me?"

"Aye," nodded Evangelist, with a tear in his eye. "There is hope."

"May I yet turn and get me up to the wicket gate?"

"You may turn."

"Might I not be abandoned for this sin and be sent back from thence ashamed?"

"You shall not be sent back. For the man at the gate has come to bring 'peace on earth, good will to men.' Come, stand up."

With these words he gently lifted Christian to his feet and said, "Go in peace."

"I shall, sir. I shall."

The Journey Resumes

Then did Christian turn himself to go back; and Evangelist, after he had kissed him, gave him one smile and bade him Godspeed; so he went on in haste. He did not speak to any man by the way. If any man saluted him or asked a question he would not slacken his pace nor pause to give him an answer. He went on like one that was all the while treading upon forbidden ground and could by no means feel himself safe till he was once again back on the path which he had abandoned. Once upon it he applied himself to his journey with all due diligence until, in process of time, Christian got up to the gate.

CHAPTER TWO

The Wicket Gate

NOW, over the gate there was written this promise: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Therefore he knocked boldly, and that more than just once or twice, saying:

"May I now enter here? Will he within
Open to sorry me, though I have been
An undeserving rebel? If so, then shall I
Not fail to sing his lasting praise on High."

While he awaited the keeper of the gate, he noticed that the door was curiously marred by many scars. He observed further that there were smoke stains on the stone arch over the door. He saw also the broken shafts and charred feathers from many arrows littering the ground. "Hmmm," said he with furrowed brow. "If I do not miss my guess, I would say that this gate has withstood more than just a simple siege or two."

Soon there came a grave person to the gate named Goodwill, who asked, "Who knocks there?"

"A poor, burdened sinner," replied Christian, "fleeing unto Mount Zion from the City of Destruction."

With that, the gate was thrown open and Christian was so quickly snatched within by two powerful hands that he nearly went sprawling headlong upon the ground. Before Christian could even regain his balance, the door had been speedily shut fast and securely barred behind him. Then Christian, a bit dazed by such hasty behavior, said, "Dear, sir, what was the reason for giving me such a violent jerk?"

Then answered Goodwill, wiping a bead of sweat from his brow, "Did you not notice the scars and burns on our little wicket gate?"

"Yea."

"And did you chance to hear all the zinging and thumping sounds as I was shutting the door?"

"Yes, I think I did. What were they?"

"Open the door a little and take a peek out to see what they were."

So Christian loosed the bars, cautiously opened the door just a tiny crack and there, stuck fast in the wood about the door, were several burning arrows!

"Oh my! Fiery darts!"

"Aye. Flaming arrows."

"Stabbed into the door!"

"Aye."

"And for whom were these messengers of death sent?"

"For you, dear traveler," said Goodwill gravely. "For you."

"Whence came they?"

Goodwill pointed through the crack at an imposing castle looming large in the shadows of the misty forest, saying, "Look! Across the way!"

So Christian cracked the door just a bit wider and peeked out. "I see a castle hidden in the trees. It has great iron gates, and it flies the black banner. And it seems, sir, that it is not very far off from the wicket gate you keep. Within a bowshot, I should guess."

While these words were still upon his lips a flaming arrow went zinging (ssffsst!) over his head and buried its smoking shaft in the flower bed behind him. Quickly slamming the door, Christian leaned his burden back against it and swallowing hard said, "I say! This pilgrimage business is dreadfully dangerous stuff, isn't it!"

"Aye," agreed the gatekeeper. "Life and death stuff."

"But who would want to kill a simple pilgrim like me?" he asked incredulously. Then Goodwill answered saying, "Open the door a wee crack and look out again. But, not so wide!"

And so Christian obeyed, and with the utmost caution peeked him out through a tiny sliver of light. Then said Goodwill, "Can you see the dark castle?"

"Aye," answered Christian. "To whom does it belong?"

"'Tis the castle of the enemy, of which Beelzebub himself is the captain."

"It is?"

"Aye. And from its walls he, and they that be with him, shoot arrows at those that come up to this gate, hoping to kill them ere they enter in."

"But I am new upon this journey," said Christian. "Why would he want to destroy me? Surely I am no threat to him!"

"Nay, but you are!" declared Goodwill. "The greatest of God's warriors began just as you have done. And since the evil one has no way of knowing what God's grace may make of you, he tries to nip you in the bud. Besides, it is a principle of the dark kingdom that none

shall leave its service without encountering trials, tribulations and death at every step."

"Then I have great cause to rejoice and tremble!" said Christian thankfully.

"Aye, indeed you have," said Goodwill as he bolted the door fast. "But tell me, how is it that you came all alone?"

Then Christian bowed his head in sadness and answered softly, "Because none of my family or neighbors saw their danger, as I saw mine."

"Did any of them know you were coming?"

"Oh yes! Almost the entire town saw me go."

"Then I am surprised that no one followed after to persuade you to go back."

"Oh, some did. Both Obstinate and Pliable came running after me. But when they saw that they could not change my mind, Obstinate went stomping back."

"As the name, so the man. And Pliable?"

"Well," explained Christian with a note of sadness to his voice, "Pliable was happy enough to come along with me, until we carelessly fell into the Slough of Despond."

"Ah. You must have taken your eyes off the light."

"Aye. So we did," admitted Christian.

"What then?"

"Well, for a short time we both tried to press forward. But as soon as the muck got past our waists, he became discouraged and refused to venture farther."

"Ah, alas, poor man! Was not the celestial glory precious enough to brave a few difficulties?"

"Truly, if the truth be known, I am no better than he."

"Why do you say that? Did not he run back? And did not you come straight on?"

"'Tis true," agreed Christian, with his head hung down. "He went on back to Destruction, but I also turned aside back into the way of death."

"Ah. Up to the town of Morality no doubt."

"Yes."

"Uh huh," said Goodwill angrily. "Directed thereto by the carnal arguments of one Mr. Worldly-wiseman, I suppose."

"Yes. But how did you know?"

"Because this wicked fellow attacks nearly everyone with his fleshly reasoning. And frankly, there are few that escape his snare."

"Ah, then I have more reason than ever to be thankful to my Lord," said Christian with a sigh of relief.

"More than you know. And I suppose he was going to have you seek for ease at the hands of Mr. Legality or one of his base-born sons?"

"Aye. Their names were Civility and Psychology."

"Pah! Nothing but cheats the lot of them!" said he with righteous indignation. "But go on. Did you truly take his vile counsel?"

"Yes," admitted Christian. "At least as far as I dared. For I was nearly crushed by the overhang of that fearful mountain."

"That mountain will be the death of all who try to enter in by the works of their own hands," affirmed Goodwill. "Frankly, I am amazed that you escaped being ground to powder!"

"Yea," agreed Christian gratefully. "It is amazing! Thanks be to God! But now, here I am, more deserving of death on the horns of Sinai than to be here talking with you, my lord."

Oh, what a blessed privilege! That one so faithless as I should still be allowed within these wondrous walls!"

"No need for surprise on that account, dear Christian. We have no restrictions against any who would enter this place."

"Against none?"

"Against none! No matter what they may have done before coming here, no one is shut out."

"Thank God!"

"Yes," smiled Goodwill. "For everything! But come now, good Christian. Walk with me a little way, and I will teach you about the way you must go."

So he took him to the edge of the compound and, pointing to a small, little-trod path said, Here, look . . . straight before you. Do you see that little path?"

"Aye."

"That is the way you must go."

Christian looked up along the way and then turned to Goodwill saying, "'Tis a bit narrow, don't you think?"

To this Goodwill only smiled and said, "This path through the wilderness of this world was carved out by the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and His apostles."

"But it is sooo narrow."

"You're only passing through, dear Christian. And besides, it was wide enough for Christ."

"Truly?"

"Aye."

"Then, I suppose it must be wide enough for me!" said Christian decidedly.

"It is!" answered Goodwill confidently. "Wide enough for anyone! And with room to spare!"

"Has it a name?"

"Aye. It is called by our Lord the 'Straight Way' and He laid it out using the surveying instruments of heaven itself. This is the way you must go."

"But is it easy to follow?" asked Christian, fearful of getting off the path again. "Are there any turnings or windings wherein a stranger may lose his way?"

"Nay, none. But, beware, for there are many ways that come down and intersect with this one."

"Then might I not become confused?"

"Nay, fear not," Goodwill continued calmly. "They are easy to detect, for they are all broad and easy of travel. Only the right way is straight and narrow. You may also detect them because only the right one ascends upwards."

"Ah," said Christian, breathing a sigh of relief. "Then 'the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein!'"

"None need err," smiled Goodwill. "All who are willing to do His will shall know the right way. Now, 'tis time to be off on your journey."

"Uh, one thing more, dear Goodwill."

"Being?"

"Can you cut this burden off my back?" begged Christian. "I cannot do it myself, and back home no one else could even see it. Can you see it?"

"Oh, aye. See it I can. Very well indeed. And a very dark and grievous one it is too!"

"Then, can you help me?"

"No, dear Christian. The place of beginnings is not the place of deliverance. You must be content to bear it until you come to a sacred hill, where it will fall from your back of its own accord."

"When shall this be?" sighed Christian longingly. "When?"

"Sooner than you think and longer than you wish," was the wise reply. "Only be content with your Lord's timing."

At this saying Christian stood tall, tightened his frayed cord belt and said, "Then let me gird up my loins and address myself to my journey. Are there any dangers yet ahead?"

"None but such as have overtaken all men," said he. "But rest assured that with every trial your Lord has made a way of escape."

"That is a comfort. Can you tell me what lies ahead next?"

"Yes. When you have gone some distance from this gate you will come to the House of the Interpreter."

"And what shall I do there?" queried Christian, his eyes now fast on the path to be trod.

"The same as here. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Seek His wisdom and ye shall find it. Ask for help and it shall be given you."

"I shall," promised Christian as he took the first step of his long journey. "Thank you for your help, dear Goodwill. God be with you."

"Fare you well, good Christian. Godspeed. Godspeed!"

The Interpreter's House

And so he traveled many a mile without further event till he came to the house of the Interpreter. There he knocked over and over until there came from within the voice of the Interpreter saying, "Who knocks, please?"

"Sir, I be a man coming from the City of Destruction and bound for Mount Zion."

"Oh?"

"Uh . . . I was told by the man that stands at the gate . . ."

"Gate?"

"Yes, the wicket gate that stands at the head of this way."

"Ah."

"He said that if I called here, you would show me excellent things that would be helpful to me on my journey."

"Ah, then welcome, welcome. Do come in," said the Interpreter cheerily as he swung open the door. Before Christian stood a dignified gentleman who bowed low before him and said, "Follow me and I will show thee things that will indeed profit thee."

"Most gladly," said Christian eagerly, as squeezed his cumbersome burden through the narrow door.

The Painting

The wise one led him first into a private room, where he bade his butler come light a candle and open a door into a softly lit and elegantly furnished gallery. Through the open

door Christian saw a greater than life-size painting of a very sober and distinguished-looking person hung upon the wall. When Christian first saw it he exclaimed, "Oh, my! Such a glorious piece of art!"

Now the person portrayed in this amazing portrait had his eyes lifted up to heaven; in his hand he held the Book of Books; written upon his lips was the law of truth; behind his back the world hung in space. He stood as if he were pleading with men for their salvation, and over his head hung a crown of gold.

Then said Christian, "What is the meaning of this fine work of art?"

"The man pictured in this parable is one of a thousand," began the Interpreter. "He can say, in the words of the apostle: 'Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel.'"

"Then, if this is a parable for the eyes," said Christian thoughtfully, "everything in the painting must have a secret meaning."

"Aye."

"Then do tell, dear Interpreter, what means his upward gaze?"

"It shows that his chief goal is to seek out and to understand the dark mysteries of the kingdom."

"Ah. And what about the book in his hand and the words written on his lips?"

"Ah, 'tis the best of books," he replied proudly, "and out of it come the words of truth written upon his lips."

"And what about his pleading look?"

"This is to show his love for the lost. His mission is to continually plead with the lost, that they might accept the Lord of the way."

"Ah!" noted Christian. "Then the world pictured so far behind him must show his disdain for mere earthly treasures!"

"Ah, good," said the Interpreter with a smile, "well thought out, dear Pilgrim. Well thought out indeed. And the crown?"

"Well," began Christian, as he paused to think a moment, "the crown hangs just over his head, and it be thickly covered with stars. Therefore, might not this crown show us the great glory of his reward?"

"Aye," agreed the Interpreter, with a smile and a slow nod of his head.

"He seems to be a great and noble person," added Christian as he looked admiringly at the painting.

"And so he is," responded the Interpreter proudly. "And he is the only one whom thy Lord has appointed to be your guide."

"Then most gladly will I follow his voice for I can see that he cares for me."

"If you so do, he will guide you safely through all the trying moments of this way, and at last lay thee down in green pastures," said the Interpreter, as he bade his servant close the door.

"Thanks be to God," said Christian gratefully.

"Indeed," replied the Interpreter, beckoning with the hand for Christian to follow.

"Come."

The Dusty Parlor

Then he took him by the hand, and led him into a very large parlor that was the dustiest, sootiest place you could ever imagine in your worst imaginings! It had dust everywhere! There was dust on the floor, dust on the table, dust on the chairs, dust on the shelves and books and beds. Now, this was not just a thin layer of dust such as you come home to after a long holiday at grandmother's house. Oh, no! This was years of dust piled upon decades of dust. So deep was this dust that it made little puffy clouds about Christian's feet as he walked. Now after giving Christian a few moments to consider, the Interpreter called for one of his servants, named Moses, and said, "Sir, I want you to begin sweeping this room clean." To this the servant answered cheerfully, "Yes sir!"

And begin to sweep he did! And that with a right good will too! And oh, my! You cannot imagine the cloud of dust he stirred up! Oh! Aye, such a cloud of dust that one could scarcely see from one side of the room to the other. Then did Christian begin to cough and spit and sputter as though he were a man about to drown. Said he, between his spasms of coughing (cough cough), "Dear Interpreter, (cough) help!" (cough, cough, cough)

Then the Interpreter called down the hallway for a young maid, named Gospel, to come help them.

"Gospel, (cough) Gospel! Come here, my dear."

There soon appeared a bright young maid in the doorway who curtsied and said with a smile, "Did you call, Master?" (cough, cough)

"Yes, (cough) my child. Come, quickly. (cough, cough) I want you to bring much water, (cough, cough) and sprinkle this room."

And so the maid quickly did as she was bidden. She sprinkled all about the floor and then wet the dust rags and the broom. Soon all the dust began to settle upon the wet floor, and before long all was swept as clean as clean could be.

Said Christian, "What does this mean? (cough) Is there another allegory here?"

"Aye," said the Interpreter with a smile. "Can you guess it?"

The pilgrim thought long, and the pilgrim thought hard, until the pilgrim had run clean out of thoughts to think and had to confess, "No, sir. I can by no means plumb its depths. Please explain."

Then the Interpreter taught him saying, "This parlor is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet grace of the Gospel. The dust is his desire to evil. It shows the inward corruptions that defile the whole man. Then here comes the law into his life, and, seeing a great need, he begins to sweep things clean! But the girl who brought the water and settled the dust is the Gospel."

"Ah," said Christian, beginning to see a trace of light.

"Now," continued the Interpreter, "did you notice that, as soon as the law began to sweep, the dust of evil desire was stirred up?"

"I should say it was!" coughed Christian. "And just as quickly as one corner was swept clean, all the dust seemed to fly through the air and settle even more thickly in another."

"This is to teach thee that the law alone cannot cleanse the heart of sin. Instead it seems to revive it, strengthen it, and increase it in the soul."

"Why is the law so helpless to do more?" asked Christian, a bit puzzled.

"Because the law is only a mirror for thy soul," said the Interpreter. "A mirror may show thee thy need of cleansing ever so clearly. Yet, it hath not power to cleanse thee of one

small spot!"

"Ah!" nodded Christian, beginning to understand more clearly.

"So it is with the law. It is very quick to shine thy sins into your face and show thee thy need. But," he said emphatically, "it does not give thee power to subdue one small sin!"

"'Tis true! 'Twas the law that first laid this burden upon my back. And 'twas the law that was near to crush me as I approached the town of Morality!"

"Aye. Aye. The law has more than enough power to point out thy need, but not near enough to relieve it. But! Did you notice the damsel that came to sprinkle the water?"

"Oh yes, verily! I think she has saved us all from a dusty death!"

"Aye," he agreed with one last cough. "In the same way shall sin be vanquished and subdued by the sprinkling of faith."

"Indeed?" marveled Christian.

"Aye. And in the same way shall thy soul be cleansed, and fashioned into a temple fit for habitation by the King of Glory!"

"Verily? Can it be so?"

"If thou canst believe. 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'"

"Lord, I believe!" Christian cried out longingly. "'Help thou my unbelief.'"

"Well said!" nodded the Interpreter as he took Christian by the hand and turned to go.

"Yea, well said indeed. Come along."

"You mean there is still more?"

"Oh, aye. Much more," he replied, neither turning back nor slackening his pace. "Come along."

Patience and Passion

I saw then in my dream that the Interpreter led him next into a small room where two young lads were sitting. The name of the eldest was Passion, who, in a very gruff voice was heard to say such things as: "Gimme that toy!" or, "Get outta' my way, you!" The other child was named Patience and from him came words such as: "Thank you," or, "Yes, sir, if you would please."

Then Christian heard Passion bark at a servant, saying, "Hurry up, would'ja!" Not long after that, he heard Patience say, "I would like that very much, thank you."

Then said Christian, somewhat in a puzzlement, "Do tell? Why is the one child so gruffly discontent?"

"Because his governor would have him wait for his inheritance until the beginning of next year. But, he thinks he must have it all now. Let us watch," said the Interpreter quietly guiding Christian into a remote corner where they could observe without being seen.

Then Passion snapped, angrily, "Right now, I said! Bring it here, right now!"

In answer was heard a nasal, high-pitched voice from the hallway, saying, "Coming, master Passion."

Soon I saw a brow-beaten wisp of a servant come staggering into Passion's presence with fear and trembling. Over his bent back hung a great bag of treasure, as called for by his young master. But I could see that he was quite loathe to pour it out for fear that the lad would squander it all and soon come to want. Then Passion, seeing his hesitation, cried

out, "What'cha wait'n for, slave man? Pour it out! Pour it all out! Now!"

And so the servant reluctantly obeyed and poured the glittering contents clinking about Passion's feet. At this the lad chuckled gleefully and ran his fingers through gold doubloons, rubies and diamonds. Then he glanced over his shoulder and said in derisive tones, "Haw de haw, haw, Patience! I gots mine while you gots none. So sit and cry while I have fun. Haw de haw, haw, haw."

Then whispered Christian to the Interpreter, "Such a rude fellow!"

To this the Interpreter only smiled grimly and replied softly, "The story is not yet over, dear Christian. Watch and listen yet a bit more."

Then Passion continued to taunt his brother, saying, "You think the governor's bringing your reward later, don't 'cha? Well, you're dead wrong, pal. Our Lord delays His coming-maybe forever! And if you don't get wise like me, you won't get nothin'!"

"'Tis unfair!" complained Christian.

To this the Interpreter said quietly, "Watch. Watch as the years pass before your eyes."

Then I beheld in amazement as the seasons swept swiftly over the boys and their fascinated observers. Spring, summer, fall, each in their turn, came and went as in a dream. Then I saw, that before winter had well set in, Passion had played away all of his fortune and begun to be in want. Then his scorn succumbed to sorrow and his teasing turned to tears. When he realized his folly and would have repented, there was no one to hear.

Then said Christian triumphantly, "'Tis just and fair! He got just what he asked for."

To this the Interpreter answered, "The story is not yet done, dear Christian. Watch on."

And so Christian watched as more seasons passed over them. Finally, when the appointed time came, the governor of the children came with his book of records to bestow gifts where they were deserved. Then said the Governor, "Greetings from the King, dear Patience. We are here to bestow upon you all of your Lord's rewards. In addition to your principal, you will receive interest from the King's own bank. Come, gentlemen."

Now at this there came in not one servant, nor two, or even three or four, but many! All of them bent low beneath bags of treasure beyond computation. These they joyfully poured out at Patience's feet to his great surprise and greater delight. But when Passion saw how great was his brother's portion, he was near to be choked with covetous envy.

Then said Christian in astonishment, "My my! So much more!"

"Aye, the King's bank yields the highest interest in the universe. Those who invest in His bank soon find that the interest is many times greater than the principal."

Then Christian saw Patience bow himself courteously and give thanks to the governor for his sound counsel, saying, "I do thank thee for thy wise guidance, dear governor."

Now Passion, finally beginning to comprehend the greatness of the delayed reward, began to rail and curse his misfortune saying, "This is unfair! Completely unfair! All we had was his promise to return, and then He came sneaking in like a thief in the night!

Unfair! Unfair! Unfair!"

To this the governor replied calmly but yet sternly, "You were told that your Lord was coming, the same as your brother. And when you were rich, you did not part with even one penny to relieve your brother's poverty. Therefore, although he is desirous and well able to relieve yours, he is forbidden so to do. Go!"

"Go!" snapped Passion. "Go where?"

In answer, the governor sadly lowered his head and pointed out into the darkened

courtyard, saying, "I gave you my promise, and you counted me a base liar. Therefore you must take your place in outer darkness with all who refuse to believe. Servants! Bind this knave and cast him out of my presence."

To this Passion had no answer to give but was sent spinning into outer darkness with wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then said Christian, trembling a bit, "I perceive that I have seen yet another allegory, dear Interpreter."

"Aye. These two lads are figures: Passion, of the men of this world; and Patience, of those of the world to come. The men of this world prefer to have all their good things now, rather than later."

"Ah! I know their type. Their chief proverb is that 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'"

"Aye," nodded the Interpreter sadly. "'Tis true. And that saying carries more weight with them than all the divine testimonies of the good world to come."

"But I'll wager that soon they will be like Passion, reduced to rags and sorrow and cast away."

"Aye."

"And no doubt at the very time that good men are just receiving title to their finest treasures."

"Thou hast wisely discerned, sir. Come."

The Person Behind The Wall of Life

Then I saw in my dream, that the Interpreter again took Christian by the hand and led him to where there was a fire burning brightly against a wall. Now Christian was about to enjoy its warmth when he was gruffly pushed aside by an angry looking man with two pails of water.

"Out of my way, fool!"

The man set one bucket down and then tossed the contents of the other on the fire, shouting angrily, "Out, cursed flame! (Tshhhh) Out, I say! (Psssss) And out again! Take that!" (Tshhhh)

Next he picked up his other bucket and tried again to douse the flames. But no matter how much water he cast upon the fire, he could do no more than make it choke and sputter for a moment. Then the flames would rise again, higher and hotter than before.

"Oh, what's wrong with this miserable worthless water!" grumbled the man. "Out, foul flame! (Tshhhh) Out! Ahh! Out, cursed light! (Pssss) Out! Out! Out! Hah!" (Tsssss)

"What means this?" queried the puzzled pilgrim.

"The fire you see is the work of grace burning in the heart of one who loves God. He who seeks to douse it is the devil."

"But it seems to me that in spite of his best efforts to put it out, the fire burns higher and hotter."

"Ah, yes. Heh, heh, heh," chuckled the Interpreter. "And the reason for that thou shalt soon see. Whilst he goes off to refill his buckets, come, around behind the wall with me." So he took him behind the wall where he saw a noble-looking gentleman standing with a vessel of oil in his hand. Christian soon perceived that He was often pouring oil into a

golden tube that passed through the wall and supplied the fire with fuel.

Then Christian asked, "And what does this mean?"

"This is Christ," whispered the Interpreter reverently. "He, by continually applying the oil of His grace, sustains the flame of love in our hearts!"

"Ah."

"Because of Christ's constant help, it matters not what trials the devil may pour in upon us. The oil of the Spirit floats above them all and the flame of love burns brighter still."

"Aha!" said Christian thankfully. "A good lesson for me!"

"And did you notice how our Lord stood behind the wall to maintain the fire?"

"Aye. I wondered about that. Why so?"

"To teach thee, dear pilgrim, that even when you cannot see Him, Christ is always near.

No matter what doubts may come or fears assail, your faith may burn brightly still."

"Then, when I be tempted most," exclaimed Christian, "I can rest assured that He who supplies the oil is still near at hand!"

"Aye. Aye, He is the One that 'sticketh closer than a brother.' And did you notice that His vessel is filled by golden tubes coming from two great olive trees?"

"Aye. I can see how the ever flowing stream renews His stores of oil, but of what are they symbols?"

"These are the Two Witnesses spoken of by John. They are the ones which shall be slain and lie dead in the streets of Sodom and Egypt for 3 days."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said Christian with a blank look on his face.

Then the Interpreter pointed to Christian's little book and said, "Thou hast a copy of them in thy hand."

"The Testaments, Old and New?"

"Aye. They will provide thee with fuel enough to keep thy light shining through all eternity! And rest assured, dear Christian, that He who pours the oil will never suffer the waters of affliction to overflow thee."

"To God be praises!"

"Aye. Come," he said reaching out to take him by the hand. And so they left the fire burning brightly by the wall. As they were going, they could hear still the old devil shouting, "Out, cursed flame! (Hsssss) Out, out! out!"(Tshhhh)

The Goodly Palace

The pilgrim was then led out to a beautifully landscaped estate surrounding a mighty and stately palace. It was built of precious stones most lovely to behold and atop its walls were turrets and parapets and mighty engines of war. Around it there was a moat with a drawbridge leading to a large, heavily-guarded gate of bronze. Walking upon its walls were certain youth all clothed in gold, and it seemed to Christian that they must be the happiest people he had ever seen. Looking in through the great bronze gate, Christian saw broad streets, market places, lovely hanging gardens, and children laughing with their families and pets. At the sight of these marvels he was greatly delighted and asked eagerly, "May we go in here?"

"Aye, someday, if thou art faithful unto death. Come."

Then the Interpreter took him and led him nearer to the gate of the palace; and behold, at

the drawbridge, there stood a great company of schoolmen and scholars, all greatly desirous of going in but daring not to take action. Drawing closer, Christian heard two of them conversing as they tried to muster up enough courage to make a move. Said the first, "Well, aren't you going in, dear professor?"

To this the second bowed low, swept his four-cornered cap gracefully toward the guarded gate and answered, "Not just now, lad. After you."

"Not at all. Age before beauty, you know, heh, heh."

"Ah! To the contrary, young man, 'Tis fools rush in!"

Near the side of the moat was a table with a book, a pen, and a writer's inkhorn. Sitting at it was a dignified person whom I assumed to be some sort of scribe or notary. Upon seeing him, Christian asked, "What is the purpose of this gentleman?"

"His work it is to take down the names of all those who have the courage to enter in."

"Ah."

After what seemed to be forever the notary drummed his fingers impatiently on the table and called out, "Come! Come! Come! Is there not one man among you with enough faith to take the kingdom of heaven by violence?"

In response to this challenge there was total silence and downcast eyes. After a few moments, Christian remarked, "No answer."

"Aye, none."

"Do they not desire the kingdom?"

"Aye, with all their hearts. Or at least so they tell us."

"Then why do they wait?"

Then the Interpreter pointed into the city and said, "Look! Look past the drawbridge." And so Christian looked therein and saw many knights in shining armor guarding the gate. These were armed to the teeth with lances, spears, swords, daggers, maces, clubs, and shields. Moreover, there were catapults, trebuchets, and other great machines of war upon the walls. There were also many battle chariots drawn by matched teams of mighty, black stallions. Christian noticed that the warriors were all on the alert. Yea, so much so that if one of the scholars so much as looked at the gates with longing eyes, the dark knights would bestir themselves and the anxious stallions would paw sparks off the cobblestones with a whinny of eager anticipation. Then was Christian confused and asked, "My! What are all these fierce warriors about?"

Answered the Interpreter, "Their work is to defend the castle from any who would enter in. They are commanded not to yield admittance at any low price."

Then was Christian near to tears, because so far as he could tell, there was no one with enough strength or courage to enter in. Then, he once again chanced to overhear the same two schoolmen conversing as before. The elder of the two, royally attired in his cap and gown, stood, hands on his hips, glaring with furrowed brow at the guarded gate. His younger companion, after waiting in vain for his professor to lead the way, finally turned contemptuously and sneered, "Well! Aren't you going in?"

To this his instructor answered dryly, "Oh no, lad. 'Twas you were here first. Courtesy dictates that I should follow after you."

"Not at all," snapped the youth. "Age before beauty, you know."

"To the contrary," countered the second dryly. "'Tis fools rush in!"

Replied the younger sarcastically, "You said that last time!"

To which the older quipped arrogantly, "So did you."

At last it became obvious that these men, along with multitudes of the same ilk, were hanging back for fear of the armed men at the gate. Just when Christian was beginning to despair, he saw a young man of no apparent distinction marching bravely to the fore. He had a very determined look and, coming directly to the notary's table, said boldly, "I choose to believe the words in my little book, sir. Therefore, set down my name, for I would enter in."

"And what be thy name?" asked the notary.

"Belief be the name, sir. Belief."

"And in what do you believe, good fellow?" challenged the writer.

"In the promises of He who has invited me to enter in."

"Which promises, good sir?"

"The one that saith, 'There shall no man be able to stand before thee,'" the man answered.

"Also another which saith that, 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.'"

"Ah, weapons well chosen. Your name be writ down, Mr. Belief. Therefore, have on. And God be with thee."

Now, when the armed men at the gate saw that someone was actually putting down his name, they began to bestir themselves and to boast loudly of what they would do to him.

And I must inform you that these were not idle threats for they that made them were no ordinary soldiers. Nay, but rather giants conscripted in mass from the town of Gath. The swarthy commander spoke first, saying to one of his heavily bemuscled companions,

"Heh, heh, heh. Looky see, mate."

"What?" asked the second, looking up from shining his armor to espy Mr. Belief signing his name with a flourish. "Aha! So! A fool has come to engage us in battle, has he?"

"Good," growled the first, gingerly testing the razor-sharp edge of his sword with his nail.

"My blade has been too long thirsting for blood."

"Aye," snarled the second, testing the sharp points on his mace, "and the nails on my club have grown rusty. Come, fool!"

Now Mr. Belief, completely ignoring the swaggering giants and their ferocious threatenings, went straight to the armory to dress for battle. Then Christian, fearing for his safety, asked, "Will he battle them all alone?"

"Only to the eye of appearance," said the Interpreter calmly.

"But look how many there are, and how huge! And see how deadly their weapons and fierce their faces!"

"Heh, heh, heh!" chuckled the Interpreter, merrily. "They are nothing but paper giants, lad. Paper giants who hope never to win a battle."

"What do you mean?"

"Watch. Just watch and see."

So Christian beheld as the man put on his head the helmet of salvation, fashioned about his loins the belt of truth, and strapped over his chest the breastplate of righteousness. On his feet he buckled the swift sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace which would enable him to dart among his enemies, quick as a ray of light. Then, taking up his faithful shield which was impervious to fiery darts, and the sharp two-edged sword which cuts quickly to the very bone and marrow, he stood full abreast at the drawbridge.

"Engarde!" he shouted. Then he was off in a rush against the armed men at the door.

"Stop him!" cried the captain.

"Get him!" shouted his lieutenant grimly.

"Off with his head!" cried one of the giants as he raised a huge headsman's axe.

"Organize, men!" shouted the captain, as they began to scatter in confusion.

"Bring forth reinforcements!" screamed the lieutenant as his weapon went skittering along atop the stone pavement.

"More troops! Stop him!" commanded the captain as he saw his men surrendering ground.

Watching as more warriors rushed to join the melee, Christian grew more fearful than ever and cried out, "He has no chance!"

Amused at his alarm, the Interpreter only smiled calmly and said, "The battle is not over. Watch on."

The men at the gate laid upon Belief with deadly force, but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely, crying out, "You shall not stop me with your paper swords and mache masks. Take that!"

"Auuugh!" groaned one wounded giant.

"Help!" cried another. "Send four legions!"

Then, Belief seized upon his advantage and pushed forward with all boldness saying,

"Nor shall I fall back though you call forth a multitude more vicious than you. Back, I say! Hah!"

"Auuugh! Stop!" begged one of the giants.

"Nay! But fall back more yet!" he commanded with a swish/hack of his two-edged sword.

Now by this time, the giants and their reinforcements had begun to retreat in complete disarray. Here and there and everywhere weapons of every sort lay scattered on the ground. One giant tripped over his own feet and became a stumbling block for three more who landed on their heads. Seeing the tide turn in his favor, Mr. Belief gathered up yet more courage and shouted, "Run, feeble cowards! Run for your lives! Take that, hah! And that!"

"No!" blubbered one of the giants piteously. "Have mercy!"

To this, Belief only attacked the more fiercely saying, "There be no mercy for such lying impostors as you. Hah!"

Then the captain himself cried out, saying, "Pity! We will be your slaves! Only have pity!"

At this, Belief staunched the unquenchable fury of his attack and commanded them to throw down their weapons. This they gladly did with a great clatter, all the while trembling with fear. Then he pointed the way to the dungeon to which they eagerly marched with hands raised high above their heads. Entering the gloomy dungeon with obvious relief, they locked the door behind themselves and gladly gave him the key. All the while they kept up a constant whimpering saying, "Mercy, gentle knight. We were only doing our job. Have mercy."

Then, amidst cheering from they that were within, Belief tossed the key into the moat and marched forward into the palace. As he drew near the prize of his high calling, he heard pleasant words from those that walked upon the top of the walls. One said joyfully, "Come in, come in. Eternal glory thou shalt win."

Another said, "Come in. Enter into the glory of thy Lord. Come in!"

Suddenly Christian clapped his hands with joy and exclaimed, "Say! I think I know the meaning of this one!"

"Oh?" said the Interpreter.

"Yes, for look! There are neither dead nor wounded. Nor is there any blood on the ground. But there are masks scattered hither and yon. Those fellows with such fierce faces and shining swords were only actors in a play!"

"Heh, heh, heh! Aye, aye, aye," chuckled the Interpreter merrily. "But they are only seen to be such by the eye of faith. To the faithless, 'tis a different tale. Listen to those two professors over there."

So Christian turned to hear two doctors of theology commenting on recent events. Said the first to his companion with a genteel bow and a gesture toward the drawbridge, "After you, good sir."

"Oh no," demured the second. "I have been teaching here only a few years. Common courtesy demands that I give way to seniority, dear doctor."

"Why do you quake and fear, lad? Yon brave man hacked his way through easily enough!"

"Aye, but did you see his armor? I have none such to protect my innards!"

"Well, does it look like I do?"

"Then do we stand here forever, dear colleague? Ever hoping and desiring to enter in, but never coming to the realization of it?"

"The time is not ripe, that's all," the wise one declared sagaciously. "We must wait for the promise of the latter rain, which will fit us up for the battle."

"Hmmm, yes. I believe so too," said his colleague, with a wistful glance toward the heavens, "but as yet, I see nary a cloud in the sky."

"Hmmm. Nor I," said the elder, scanning skillfully through a periodical. "And, looking here in the church paper, I see not so much as a forecast of clouds, let alone rain!"

"Hmmm," puzzled his colleague, "strange that this illiterate and gullible underling was able to hack his way through before us."

"Aye!" added his indignant companion. "And that without one class in the use of the sharp two-edged sword!"

"Whilst we are veritable experts in its use," grumbled the first.

"Indeed. In fact, I went to an outside university to obtain my degree in swordsmanship."

"Eh! Did you now?" said his companion feigning disinterest. "Well, heh, heh, so did I. In fact, I am licensed by the state to use my sword. How this blustering commoner hacked his way through is a complete mystery to me."

"Oh, beginner's luck, no doubt," surmised the second.

"Or perhaps brute strength," grouched the first. "I wonder if we should turn him in for using his sword without a license."

"Say now! That might not be a bad idea. Well, whilst we're waiting for the clouds to form, shall we have a duel?"

"Yes! A splendid idea!" agreed the first eagerly. "'Twill give us something to do and keep our swords sharp besides. Engarde!"

"Engarde!" said the second, drawing his foil.

So they earnestly began their oft-practiced and skillfully choreographed duel. Then Christian turned to the Interpreter and said, "They are afraid!"

"Aye."

"But the defenders are not real!"

"To those who will not take God at His word and move forward," said the Interpreter sadly, "the warriors are more real than you can imagine."

"Tis a mystery, this faith business," said Christian, shaking his head. To this the Interpreter nodded in agreement, saying only, "Aye."
"But now," said Christian, looking longingly at the pathway to the Celestial City, "I am ready to be on my way. May I go now?"
"Nay, nay, stay," said the Interpreter with upraised hand. "Stay until I have showed thee a few things more. After that, thou shalt go on thy way."

The Man In The Cage

So he took him by the hand again and led him into a very dark and dismal room, where there sat a man entombed in an iron cage. Looking sympathetically upon him, Christian saw that he seemed very, very sad. He sat with his eyes looking down to the ground, and, as he wrung his hands together, he sighed as if his heart would break.

"What means this?" asked Christian, with an aching heart. "Why is this man locked in this iron cage? And why does his heart break so?"

"Ask him. He will tell thee."

So Christian stepped over to the cage, knelt down and, pulling his face against the bars, asked gently, "Sir, why do you weep and mourn so sadly?"

At this the man sighed deeply and with downcast eyes said, "Because I am utterly changed from what I once was."

"And what were you once?"

"Oh, I was once, in my youth, the same as you. A fair and flourishing professor of religion," he answered sadly.

"And what are you now?"

"I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it, as verily as I am shut up in this iron cage. I cannot get out. Oh, now I cannot!" he cried bitterly.

"But how did you come into this sad condition?" Christian asked gently.

To this question the man shuddered and then moaned, "I stopped praying. I stopped off to watch and be sober. I laid the reins of reason upon the neck of my lusts. I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and He has gone from me. I dallied with the devil, and he has taken me!"

Christian stood with sympathetic tears in his eyes and, turning to the Interpreter asked, "Dear Interpreter! Is there no hope for such a man as this?"

To this question the Interpreter could only gaze sadly toward the prisoner and say, "Ask him."

Then Christian turned back to the cage and, kneeling before him again, said, "Is there no hope, sir? Must you forever be kept in this iron cage of despair?"

"No!" groaned he. "No hope. No hope at all."

But Christian, unwilling to let him surrender his soul, said, "Why not? The Son of the Blessed is very pitiful. He can yet forgive."

"Not me!" cried the man. "He cannot forgive me!"

Still pressing his case, Christian said again, "But He can!"

"No! He cannot!"

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot repent!" cried he, in deepest anguish. "I have crucified Him to myself

afresh. I . . . I have despised His person. I have despised His righteousness. I . . . I have counted His blood an unholy thing. I have done despite to the Spirit of grace. Therefore I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains to me nothing but threatenings, dreadful threatenings, fearful threatenings, of certain judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour me as an adversary."

"Good sir!" exclaimed Christian. "For what price did you sell yourself into this condition?"

"For the same price that buys many a young man," he moaned.

"And what price was that?"

Then the man began to tremble saying, "It was for the lusts, the pleasures, the profits of this world; in the enjoyment of which I promised myself much delight; but now they are gone! And the guilt of every one of those things comes back to haunt me, and to bite me, and to gnaw me, like a burning worm!"

Then was Christian amazed, and turning to the Interpreter, said, "He is the same as the child Passion!"

"Aye," answered the Interpreter, nodding sadly.

Then Christian turned back to the cage and implored the man, saying, "But, sir. Can you not now repent and turn?"

"No!" he groaned. "I told you that I cannot! God will not be trifled with. Time after time I told Him to leave me alone and He has finally obeyed me. He has left me! I have so long refused to listen that now He refuses to speak. I cannot find repentance. Yea, even in His word I find no encouragement to believe. I have shut myself up in this iron cage of disbelief, and now all the men in the world cannot let me out. O, eternity! Eternity! How can I bear the loss of eternity?"

Then the man turned away from his erstwhile helper and continued to moan softly to himself. The Interpreter gently raised trembling Christian to his feet saying soberly, "Let this man's misery be remembered by thee and be an everlasting caution to thee."

"It shall," said Christian, glancing back at the cage. "But pray tell, good sir, why has God shut him up in this iron cage?"

Then the Interpreter shook his head and said, "Nay. 'Tis not God who hath shut him up thus."

"Then who?"

"'Tis Satan who be the builder of cages!" answered the Interpreter, eyes flashing in anger.

"God hath revealed Himself as One who came to set the captives free."

"Then why may He not set this man free?"

"Because sin hath blinded his eyes to the mercy of God. He cannot believe that God can forgive him, and what man cannot believe, God cannot achieve."

"Then, if this man were somehow able to believe, could he yet be free?"

"Aye."

"Do tell, are there many that be in such a state as his?"

"Yea, verily. There be multitudes who believe their sins to be so great, that God cannot forgive them. They thus judge their sins to be greater than the power of God."

"Then what I have read is true! 'According to your belief, so shall it be unto you.'"

"Aye," agreed the interpreter. "Sin hath so badly withered the arm of this man's faith, that it cannot reach forth to grasp God's mercy."

"But, did he not know this would happen?"

"Nay!" explained the teacher. "He verily thought that he could lead a life of sinful pleasure and then turn to God at his good convenience. But when the pleasures of sin were past, and he tried to exercise his faith, he found it tightly encoiled by the steel chains of his habits and lusts."

"Then I pray God to help me watch and be sober that I may shun the cause of this man's misery. But, sir, is it not yet time to put me upon my way?"

"Nay," said the Interpreter. "Tarry yet a little longer until I show thee one thing more, and then shalt thou go on thy way."

The Dreamer

So he took Christian by the hand again, and led him into a chamber where there was one rising out of bed; and, as he put on his raiment, he shuddered and trembled, and cried out, "Aaaaugh!"

Then was Christian startled, and turning to his mentor asked, "Dear Teacher, what makes this man tremble and cry out so?"

Then said the Interpreter to the man, "Dreamer, tell this pilgrim why thou didst cry out so."

"All right," agreed the man, who drew up close to Christian's face to tell his tale. "This night, as I was in my sleep, I dreamed a dream; and behold, in my dream the heavens grew exceeding black. There was also thunder and lightning flashing about in a most fearful manner."

"Go on."

"So I looked up in my dream, and I saw the clouds rack by at a terribly great speed."

"Indeed?"

"Aye. And then I heard the great sound of a trumpet, and saw also a Man sitting on a cloud."

"A man on a cloud?"

"Yes!" cried the man, his eyes wide with terror. "His hair was white as snow, His eyes were as a flame of fire, His voice was as the sound of many waters and His . . . His face did shine bright as the sun!"

"Indeed!" marveled Christian.

"Yea, and on His vesture and on His thigh was a name written: 'KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS.'"

Then Christian's eyes lighted up with joy as he shouted, "'Twas our Lord Jesus!"

"Yes," said the man with a shudder. "Yes, I fear so. He was attended with the glittering billions of heaven all wrapped in flaming fire. Also the heavens were in a burning flame."

"'Twas the great day of God!" exclaimed Christian, clapping his hands gleefully.

"Yes!" nodded the man. "Yes. He came near the earth and called with a voice like a trumpet, 'Come forth! Come forth!' With that the rocks rent, the graves were opened, and the dead in Christ came forth prepared to meet their Lord in the air!"

"Glory be!"

"But, there came up as well Annas and Caiaphas and others of that ilk who had pierced Him."

"Yea," answered Christian, "for He promised them that they would 'see the Son of man

sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

"Aye. Those vile ones vainly sought to hide themselves, crying for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them."

"Go on! Go on!" cried Christian, by now thoroughly caught up in the tale.

"And then I heard it proclaimed to those who attended upon the King: 'Gather my wheat into the garner!'"

"Oh! The rapture of the righteous!"

"Yes! And with that, I saw many caught up and carried away into the clouds."

Then Christian smiled and clapped his hands again and said, "Oh! Glorious day!"

"No!" cried the man fearfully. "No! An evil day!"

"What? Why do you say that?"

"Because," sobbed the man. "I was left behind!"

"What?" cried Christian.

"Yes!" he moaned. "Left behind!"

"Oh no!" said Christian sympathetically. "Then what?"

Then the man's eyes grew wide with fear and he shook as he said, "Then I heard it proclaimed by the King: 'Gather together the tares, the chaff and the stubble, and cast them into the lake of fire.' And with that the bottomless pit opened!"

"You saw it?" cried Christian.

"Saw it!" blurted the man, with terror. "I felt it! It opened right beneath my feet! There was this great fiery chasm, and out of its bowels there belched forth sulphurous smoke, coals of fire, and hideous noises."

"So terrible a dream! Then what?"

"Upon this," said the man, calming himself a little, "I awakened from my sleep."

Then Christian, greatly concerned, asked, "But what would cause you to dream such an evil dream. Have you dreamed it before?"

"Oh, aye," answered he. "It comes to haunt me every night."

"Every night! Then can it be God is sending you a warning? Tell me, is there anywhere a brother in the faith who 'hath ought against thee?'"

"Nay," said the man. "None that come to mind."

"Then, by any chance, do you have secret and unforsaken sins?"

"Nay. Nay. None," he said, holding up both hands.

"Sleeper!" warned the Interpreter sternly. "Speak truth."

"Well, all right," he grumbled in protest. "But 'tis only a little sin. A tiny one."

Then was Christian alarmed for the man's soul and earnestly entreated him, saying, "Then you must forsake it, for Moses and the law stand at the gate, and if you have even one stain upon your garments, they will not let you pass through."

"I know. I know," agreed the man, nodding his head. "And that's just what I intend to do."

"When?" demanded Christian.

"Oh, soon," smiled the man assuringly.

"Do it now!" urged Christian.

"Nah!" he declared. "For such a small sin as mine, soon will do well enough."

"But you must!" urged Christian more strongly.

"Soon," nodded the man more agreeably. "Soon. Soon. Very soon."

At this, Christian grew alarmed and said, "But you are in danger of becoming like the man in the cage!"

"Not so!" protested the man vehemently.
"Why not so?" demanded Christian.
"Because," he said a bit proudly, "his sins were gross ones of the flesh, while mine are merely invisible detours of the mind. The tiniest of the tiny."
"But they will grow!" he cried.
"Nay, nay," he said confidently. "It has scarcely grown in years. Nor will I let it."
"But you must . . ." Christian began, until interrupted by the Interpreter who took him by the arm saying, "Come."
"But . . ." protested Christian.
"Come!" commanded the teacher.
"But I must needs convince him!" urged Christian, looking back over his shoulder as the man turned and began making his bed.
"You cannot."
"But he has a sincere intent to change soon," protested Christian again.
"Aye," said he. "And his words are true. But soon never comes. It moves on ahead of us like a receding mirage in the desert. He who thinks to change soon, waits for eternity."
"Oh, dear," sighed Christian sadly.
"Consider well these things," warned the Interpreter.
"I do," he answered soberly. "And they put me in hope, and in fear."
"Good," said he. "Keep all these lessons fresh in your mind. If you do, they will keep thee in the way thou must go."
"I shall, sir," he said thankfully. "The lessons have been good."
"I am glad," smiled the Interpreter. "And now you may be off."
As Christian began to squeeze his burden back through the narrow gate, he turned back and asked, "Sir? Do you think that soon I shall be loosed from my burden?"
"Aye," nodded the Interpreter with a knowing smile.
"When?" he inquired eagerly.
"Sooner than you think, longer than you wish."
"Oh," said Christian with a disappointed sigh.
"And now, dear Pilgrim, Godspeed."
"Ah. I am happy to be on my way, and yet sad to leave you. Farewell, good Interpreter. Thank you for your many good lessons."
As Christian set out on his journey, the Interpreter raised his right hand and called after him saying, "The Comforter be with thee always, good Christian, to keep thee in the way that leads to the City."

CHAPTER THREE

Free At Last

NOW, I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall called Salvation. Along this way, therefore, he struck out at his best pace, which was not all that impressive by reason of the great burden that hung heavy still, upon his back.

He hiked briskly on in this manner till he came to a place where the path began to ascend a gentle slope. At the top thereof was a skull-shaped hill where stood a cross. A little below the cross in the valley there lay an open sepulchre. So I saw in my dream that Christian, with great effort, struggled to the foot of said cross and gazed with wonder upon One suffering there. And it came to pass that, as soon as he came up even with the cross, the ropes which secured his burden turned to ashes and released the accursed burden from off his shoulders. Striking the ground behind him the hideous mass began to roll, slowly at first but with ever increasing speed. Soon it was tumbling end over end, bouncing and bounding higher and farther at each leap. I watched in amazement until I saw it smash into an outcropping of stone and tumble harmlessly into the mouth of a yawning sepulchre. I am not entirely certain, but I believe that I heard a great splash. Be that as it may, into that bottomless pit his burden fell and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and light of heart and said in a voice choked with joyful emotion, "He has given me rest by His sorrow and life by His death! The Innocent has suffered for the guilty and by His stripes I am healed! Oh, praise Him!"

Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder, for it was very amazing to him that the mere sight of the cross should so effectively release him from his great burden. He looked with love upon His suffering Lord until the springs of his head overflowed and sent rivulets of salty water coursing down his cheeks. Then said he, "Oh, my Lord! Is it truly for love of me that you suffer so? Is it truly my sins that have broken your heart? Oh, then shall I praise you as long as you give me breath."

Now as he stood gazing and weeping at the foot of the cross, behold, three Shining Ones appeared to him, and saluted him. Said the first, "Peace be unto you. Your sins have been forgiven you."

"Is it truly so?" asked Christian hopefully. "Can it truly be?"

"Did not your burden roll down into yon sepulcher?"

"Aye. But it's like . . . well, like when I take off my hat and yet feel it still upon my head. I indeed saw my burden tumble away, but it still seems to be there."

Then answered the Shining One, "'Tis the way of dumb, brute beasts to live life guided by their feelings. But if you wish to understand reality, you must not consult with yours."

"How then?"

"Truth can only be known by believing."

"Believing what?"

"The Words of He who has cast your sins into the depths of the sea!"

"Then, based upon His pledged Word, they are truly gone!" exclaimed Christian joyfully.

"Gone! Whether I feel like it or no!"

"Aye, now you understand. And no one can bring them back again, except you."

"How could I ever do that?"

"The same way as the man in the cage did. By ceasing to watch and pray, by turning again to the beggarly elements of this life. By indulging once again in your old ways of evil just as a dog returns to its vomit."

"Oh," cried Christian. "I pray that I might never so do!"

"The choice belongs to none but you."

"Then I will be true!" vowed Christian. "For there are those who trust me."

"Aye. Chiefly, He that suffers in your place. He shall lead you, as a good Shepherd, through all of your travels. When, at last, you come to the far side of your journey, He

shall be waiting to greet you. He shall look upon the travail of His soul and be satisfied, for you are precious in His sight. And be encouraged to know that you will look back upon the worst trials of your pilgrimage and shall say, it was cheap enough. Cheap enough!"

"Thus I am determined it shall be."

Then spoke the second Shining One, saying, "Christian?"

"Yes?"

"This be for you," he said, holding forth a change of fine garments.

Then was Christian much amazed and said, "Why! A new suit of clothes! Made of fine linen, pure and white!"

"Aye. Put them on."

"Oh, no, I can't. For I have neither gold nor silver to purchase such a fine outfitting as that."

"There is no need for money. These are yours, without money, and without price."

"Then, to whom do I owe my thanks for these goodly garments?" asked Christian as he reverently took the sacred habits from the Shining One.

"To Him whom you behold suffering for you."

"They are His?"

"Aye, His," smiled the Shining One proudly. "He has personally woven them in the loom of heaven. Try them on."

And so Christian exchanged his old tattered, slime-stained garments for new ones, all clean and shining white as snow. Then he looked at himself in astonishment and said, "Why, they fit perfectly!"

"Of course," said the Shining One proudly.

"And they have not even one spot nor tiny wrinkle," said Christian as he admired the quality of his garb.

"Nor will you find in them one thread of human devising," added the Angel.

"And look!" Christian said, as he prepared to don the last piece. "This wonderful coat has no seams!"

"This is your wedding garment," said the Shining One. "Wear it with pride! If you do, it will obtain for you a free and abundant welcome into the wedding supper of the Lamb. There you shall be seated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and be served by His own hand."

Then Christian noticed the pile of dirty clothes lying at his feet and asked, "And what happens to my filthy rags, lying here all in a heap?"

"They stay here at the foot of the cross forever. Unless you choose to draw back."

"Oh, no! That can never be! I have put my hand to the plow!"

Upon hearing this, all three of the Shining Ones smiled broadly and said loudly, "Amen!"

Then the third Shining One addressed him saying, "Christian?"

Branded

"Yes?" answered Christian, turning to face the third speaker who held in his hand an iron, whose business-end glowed red-hot and trailed wisps of acrid, white smoke. The sight of such an instrument of torture in the hand of one of God's messengers gave Christian quite

a start. He was even more startled when the third Shining One said, "This, also, is for you."

Then Christian shrank back a bit, saying, "Why 'tis a branding iron . . . an instrument of torture such as we use to mark evil convicts."

"Aye," said the angel gravely.

"And it glows red-hot," said Christian, eyeing the luminescent tip uneasily.

"Aye, because it comes fresh from off a live coal on the altar of sacrifice."

"Uh . . . what will you use it for?" asked Christian, glancing uneasily at the heat waves rising from its tip.

"To put a mark upon your forehead," said the angel, matter-of-factly.

"What?" exclaimed Christian, beads of sweat springing to his brow. "Must I truly be disfigured with such a scar?"

"'Tis the mark of ownership."

"Of whom?" asked Christian, hoping that there might yet be a loophole in this frightful affair.

"Of Him who upon the cross has bought your soul at the price of His own."

"My natural heart draws back from such an ugly scar," admitted Christian fearfully.

"Is not He upon the cross scarred because of you?" said the angel, casting an upwards glance toward the suffering victim.

"Well . . . uh . . . yes," admitted Christian, his eyes following the angel's.

"Is the servant better than his Lord?"

"Uh . . . no," answered Christian meekly. "I'm sorry. I be ashamed of my fear."

Then, standing brave and tall, with his eye fixed upon his suffering Lord, he faced the instrument of torture straight on and said, "You may proceed, sir. I shall be proud to bear about in my body the marks of my Lord."

"Stand still," commanded the marking angel, slowly but deliberately raising the glowing iron.

"Wait," said Christian, raising a hand in defense. "Uh . . . does it hurt very badly?"

"Does it matter?"

"Uh . . . no," said Christian, after a moment's reflection. "I guess not."

"Guess not!" exclaimed the angel. "Don't you comprehend 'that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which you shall inherit hereafter?'"

"Aye," confessed Christian. "I am sorry. Have thine own way, Lord."

Then the angel raised the glowing iron higher, saying, "Stand still. Stand very, very still."

Christian shut fast his eyes and braced himself for the violent stab of pain that he knew was to come. In a flash he seemed to relive all the painful burns he had suffered as a little boy playing with fire. As he felt the iron press into his forehead he gasped involuntarily in anticipation of the monstrous wave of searing pain he knew would follow.

"Finished!" said the Shining One.

"F . . . finished?" stammered the pilgrim, blinking in amazement. "Why, it hardly hurt at all!"

"Because He has borne the pain for you," said the angel.

"My! Had I known it to be so easy, I would not have hesitated."

"Had you known, it would have been no test," said the Shining One.

"Ah," answered Christian. "Another test?"

"Yes," nodded the angel. "Another test."

"Why are there so many tests along this pilgrim way?"

"Because the devil continually accuses you of being unworthy to walk in white," said the first Shining One.

"And so your Lord gives him permission to test you," said the second.

"But when you pass the tests He allows," concluded the third, "you empower your Lord to stand proud and tall and rebuke him by virtue of your faithfulness."

"Ah," said he. "Like Job! Then thanks be to God that the test was not too difficult for me."

"The test will never be too difficult for you, dear Christian," explained the first Angel.

"Everything that comes to you comes through Christ first. He weighs the strength of every temptation and absorbs in Himself all that you cannot bear. By standing close by your Lord, you avail yourself of His protection. You need never put Him to shame."

"Thanks be to God. Uh . . . ?"

"Yes?" asked the third Shining One.

"Forgive my curiosity, my lords, but may I look upon my wound?" he asked timidly.

"Certainly," answered the third Shining One, producing a mirror. "Here be a glass." Christian peered intently into the mirror, and though he looked ever so closely, he was finally forced to admit, "Why, I see no mark at all!"

"'Tis a seal that cannot be seen by mortal man. 'Tis only for those who put it there."

"For what purpose?"

"It tells us, at a glance, who are His."

"Ah," he said. "I understand."

Then the third Angel handed Christian a scroll, saying, "Here, take this."

"Why 'tis a parchment roll tied with a green cord."

"'Tis for you to read as you run your course," said the Angel.

"Thank you. Thank you very much."

"Be sure that you open it often, for it grows stiff and hard to manage if you leave it closed for any long time."

"I shall."

"Guard it well," warned the second Shining One, "for you must present this roll at the far gate as your certificate of admittance."

"Oh, I shall. With my life! Thank you. Thank you very much!"

"And now, farewell, good Christian," said the first Angel.

"Yes, God be with you," said the second.

"Go in peace," added the third. "Your God shall be your guide."

Then Christian said, "Farewell, my friends. Might we perchance meet again?"

To this, the third Angel answered, "You may not see us with eyes fettered by mortality, but know for a surety that you shall have our company all along your journey. Godspeed, dear Christian."

Then the three Shining Ones faded from view, and Christian was left alone. Yet he felt neither alone nor lonely, for he knew that, though unseen, there were friends still close by his side. He also felt very close to Him who had suffered in his place. Moreover, his burden was rolled away, his rags lay at his feet, and in their place he wore a finer suit than that worn by any king upon a throne. Therefore did Christian give three leaps for joy and shouted, "Hurrah! Free! I am free! At last free! Free! Free! Free!!"

I saw then in my dream that he resumed his journey. But oh, with what lightness of heart and swiftness of foot did he travel now! So he went on in his new-found freedom until he came to the bottom of the hill. There, just off to one side of the way, lay three men, fast asleep, with fetters of iron upon their heels. The name of one was Simple, of another Sloth, and of the third Presumption.

The Three Sleepers

Christian, seeing them sleeping in captivity this way, straightaway went over to them to see if perhaps he might awaken them and encourage them to resume their journey. So he jostled the man named Simple, saying, "Sirs! What is this foolish sleeping all about? You behave like soldiers asleep on their watch!"

At this, Simple rolled over and, blinking at him with bleary eyes, muttered, "Huh? Wha . . . ?" before falling back in renewed submission to sleep.

Christian then shook Sloth by the shoulder, saying loudly, "Brother, wake up! Wake up, I say! 'Tis not safe to sleep on the road to Zion! There is danger!"

At the word "danger" Sloth made a feeble attempt at pawing the sleep from his eyes but was only able to yawn and mutter, "Wha . . . ? Is there danger do you say?" before falling half-asleep again.

Christian next turned his attentions to Presumption, saying, "Yes, danger! Grave danger. Wake up and come away with me. Here, I will help you off with your chains!"

"Bah!" snorted Presumption, rudely brushing Christian away from his irons. "We be doing just fine! Take your hands off me!"

"What!" exclaimed Christian, unable to believe his ears.

Then, to remove any doubt as to his meaning, Presumption said, even more rudely, "I said, go away!"

Christian, attributing the man's rudeness to his sleepiness, continued forward in his mission of mercy, saying earnestly, "No! If he that prowls about like a roaring lion comes by, you will surely become prey to his teeth!"

At the mention of lions, Simple started from his sleep, looked about him drowsily, and said, "Lions! Where? I don't hear no roaring lions."

"He will come upon you when you least expect him," urged Christian. "Awake out of sleep!"

Simple looked around a little more but, seeing no immediate danger, replied gruffly, while fluffing up the dirty rag he used for a pillow, "I tol'ja I don't see no danger! Now lemme alone so I can get some sleep."

"But . . . but . . ." Christian began to protest, only to be interrupted by Simple's insistent words, "No, no, no. Just go 'way!"

Undaunted, Christian turned his attention toward Sloth. "You there! Wake up!" he said, shaking him by the shoulders.

"Yeah, sure, just lemme get a little more sleep, and I shall join you."

"No!" insisted Christian, still trying to awaken him. "You must arise now. For now is it high time to awake out of sleep!"

"Would'ja stop shaking me!" groused the man, pushing Christian away.

"You must hurry for the day is far spent, the night is at hand!"

"I know, I know," he agreed. "You are right. (yawn) And I shall join you in just a little while. But first I must get my rest (yawn)."

"No!" exclaimed Christian, "you can rest in heaven. Come!"

But the man, unconvinced by Christian's urgent pleadings, only whined on, saying, "But the way is hard, and He who has called us is a hard taskmaster. Therefore I've got to store up strength for my journey."

"You are burying your talent in the earth!"

"I am not! I am simply playing it safe. When my Master returns He will be happy enough just to see that there is not one ounce missing."

"Oh," lamented Christian under his breath, "it is true what I have read: 'A little sleep, a little folding of the hands and sudden destruction cometh upon a man.'"

By this time Mr. Sloth had turned over and was well on his way back to dreamland. "Uh huh," he mumbled through his beard as he began to snore.

Christian then turned his attention toward Presumption, who seemed less sleepy than the other two. "And what about you?" he entreated. "Will you strive for your freedom and join me on my pilgrimage?"

"Join you on pilgrimage?" Presumption blurted out, as one offended. "We are on pilgrimage."

"But how can you call yourself a pilgrim when you are fastened in chains like this?" he protested. "To be a pilgrim is to break every fetter and let the oppressed go free! Come!" he said, kneeling down to examine the lock on the man's chains.

"Soon," he answered, firmly pushing Christian's hands away from his irons.

"No! Not soon!" cried Christian. "The example of the dreamer teaches us that soon will never come!"

"Not so! For I have seen it come and go many times."

"You must act now," insisted the pilgrim, "for the end of all things is near at hand and the time is far spent!"

At this, Presumption sat up a little taller and with no lack of pride in his voice said, "We have been in this pilgrim way much longer than you are ever like to be. If there were such a need to be running off all in a huff, the Lord of the way would have certainly told us before you."

"How?" asked Christian.

"Oh, uh . . . we shall surely feel a burning in our breast or at the least an article in the church paper," he said.

At this, sleepy Sloth managed to turn over and, from behind closed eyes agreed, saying, "Aye! At least an article (yawn, snore)."

"No! That is not enough! He has commanded us not to sleep as do others. He expects us to be diligent and press forward! We must stretch every nerve and muscle toward the mark of the high calling that is set before us!"

At this, Presumption sat up abruptly, planted his hands firmly on his hips and snorted loudly, "We are not athletes training for some worldly games! We are pilgrims who are meekly to wait, in simple faith, for the latter rain to fit us up!"

To this, Simple opened one eye long enough to concur, saying, "Aye. 'Twould be foolish to run before the time appointed."

"But . . ."

"And now, off with you!" ordered Presumption. "We are in the way of life and, for now,

that be enough."

"Nay! 'Faith without works is dead!' You must show that you have been called to the way by moving forward in the way."

"Bah!" barked Presumption. "You speak of legalism. Don't you know that 'twas all finished at the cross? Now be off with you!"

"But . . ."

"Away, I say!" ordered Presumption, pointing imperiously down the path. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

"But I speak the truth!" urged Christian.

"As you understand it," returned Presumption, trying to stifle a yawn. "Now let us resume our sleep. Perhaps God will give one of us a dream to confirm your warnings of danger."

"A dream . . . yes, a dream," Sloth managed to murmur between snores. Then Presumption adjusted his chains for comfort, pulled his coat over his head, and joined Simple and Sloth in their loud snores.

So Christian, with great reluctance, turned away to resume his journey. But he carried a heavy heart to think that men in such great danger could be so ungrateful. He had awakened them from a fatal sleep, warned them of mortal danger, and even offered to help them file off their leg irons, all to no avail.

Meeting With Formalist And Hypocrisy

Now, as he traveled on pondering what would become of those miserable men, he saw two men come tumbling over the wall on the left hand of the narrow way. The name of the one was Formalist, who said to his companion, "Make it down all right?"

The name of the other was Hypocrisy, who answered, as he jumped from atop the wall, "Aye, down I am."

"Good," said Formalist, dusting himself off. "Let's be on our way."

Then Hypocrisy, chancing to glance back along the path, saw Christian. "Say, chap," he exclaimed to his companion. "Look see! Another saint on pilgrimage. Hello there!"

"Gentlemen," answered Christian. "Whence from? And whither bound?"

"We were born in the land of Vainglory," answered Formalist proudly.

"And praise to God!" continued Hypocrisy, "we both be bound to Mount Zion."

At this, Christian's brow furrowed with concern for their safety and he asked, "To Mount Zion, do you say? Then why did you not begin your journey back at the gate?"

At this, they both looked upon one another with puzzled amusement. Then Formalist turned to Christian and said, "Gate?"

"What gate?" chimed in Hypocrisy.

"The wicket gate that stands at the beginning of the way," explained Christian. "The one manned by a great one named Goodwill."

"At the beginning!" exclaimed Formalist, haughtily. "The beginning begins wherever you happen to begin. Besides, that old gate you speak of is way too far out of our way!"

"What?" exclaimed Christian in amazement. "Have not you read where it is written, 'He that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber?'"

"That does not apply to us!" sneered Hypocrisy.

"No. Not us!" agreed Formalist. "Everyone from the land of Vainglory is in total agreement that the way back to the wicket gate is much too far."

"Therefore," continued Hypocrisy, "we have followed the custom of our people in taking a short cut over the wall."

"But aren't you afraid the Lord of the Celestial City will count you as trespassers?" asked the pilgrim, more concerned than ever.

"Now why on earth would He do that?" demanded Formalist.

"Because you violated His direct command and came sneaking over the wall."

"Ha, ha, ha," chuckled Hypocrisy. "No need to trouble your head about that small detail."

"Why not?"

"Because what we do, we have custom for."

"Custom!"

"Yes, custom," confirmed Formalist.

"Custom long-standing," asserted Hypocrisy. "In fact, if you were to press the matter, we could produce testimony that our custom is nearly 2,000 years old."

"Indeed!"

"Indeed!" was Hypocrisy's confident reply.

"But will it stand a trial at law?"

"Oh, really now, good fellow," said Formalist with disdain. "Certainly there can be no doubt in any rational mind that a custom which has served us for sooooo long . . ."

". . . And which has served to admit sooooo many into the way . . ." continued Hypocrisy.

". . . Could certainly be counted as nothing but legal by any impartial judge," concluded Formalist smugly.

"And besides," said Hypocrisy, "if we get into the way, what does it matter how we get into the way?"

"But . . ." began Christian, only to be interrupted by Hypocrisy, who said,

"No 'buts' to it, chap. To be in, is to be in!"

"Oh, I don't know," said Christian with a worried look.

"Listen to logic, friend," said Formalist, taking up the strain. "You are in the way, correct?"

"Most certainly so. Aye."

"Now you came in at the gate, correct?" said Hypocrisy.

"Aye."

"And we came tumbling over the wall," said Formalist. "Correct?"

"Aye."

Then Formalist jabbed a manicured finger into Christian's chest and said, "You are in the way." Then, pointing a thumb to himself he added, "I am in the way." Resting a hand on Hypocrisy's shoulder he continued, "He is in the way," to which Hypocrisy grinned in reply. Then, reaching his arm 'round Christian's shoulder he concluded, "We are all in the way! Now what, pray tell, is the difference? How are you better than us?"

Not in the least impressed by Formalist's logic or proud stance, Christian stepped back and answered boldly, "Chiefly in this: I walk by the rules laid down by my Master while you walk by the vain laws of your own imagination."

"'Tis custom!" bellowed Hypocrisy. "Tradition!"

"No matter," continued Christian, warming to his subject. "If our Lord counts you as thieves at the beginning of the way, I doubt that He will regard you as honest men at the

end of the way."

"Did you hear?" sneered an indignant Hypocrisy. "Thieves he calls us!"

"What nerve!" scowled Formalist, squaring his shoulders and fixing Christian with an angry glare.

"'Tis true," affirmed Christian. "You came in by yourselves without His direction, and you shall go out by yourselves without His mercy."

"So sez you," snarled Formalist, with a curl to his lip.

"So says He!" answered Christian, unfazed.

Then Hypocrisy stepped up to Christian, chest to chest and nose to nose and growled through clenched teeth, "Best watch thee out where thou putteth thy nose, friend. 'Tis like to get bent."

"Aye," added Formalist, also stepping up in a threatening manner. "Best that you watch out for yourself . . ."

". . . And leave fellow travelers to their own peace and safety," concluded Hypocrisy, giving Christian a sharp shove as he spun on his heel.

Then I saw that they turned and began to travel on in a loose group, each lost in his own troubled thoughts. After a few miles Formalist finally broke the silence by saying, "And as to the laws and ordinances given to govern our behavior whilst in this way, we have no doubt but that we keep them just as well as you."

"Indeed," chimed in Hypocrisy. "In fact, I would venture to say that friend Formalist here keeps them better than you!"

"Indeed!" agreed Formalist.

To this, Christian replied, "You cannot expect to be saved by laws and ordinances, if you don't come in by the door."

"Bah!" snorted Hypocrisy. "We see no difference between you and us unless you count that, uh . . . fine suit you wear."

"These garments were given to me by the Lord of the way," Christian answered humbly.

"Probably to cover the shame of your nakedness. Heh, heh, heh," mocked Hypocrisy.

"'Tis true," answered Christian, meekly. "Before I met my Lord I had nothing but filthy rags. He Himself wove this fine suit in the loom of heaven and gave it to me as a token of His kindness."

"Well," said Formalist, proudly tucking his thumbs beneath his wide-spreading lapels, "take a gander at our garments."

"Aye!" put in Hypocrisy, with a bit of a swagger to his step. "I'll wager these are as fine as any you'll see in this way."

Christian looked at them briefly and answered, "But they have spots and wrinkles."

"Oh, come on!" protested Hypocrisy. "We be travelling men, good fellow! 'Tis impossible to travel this difficult way without picking up a spot or two here and there."

"Aye," added Formalist. "Surely the Lord at the gate has enough sense to realize that the way is hard, and that stumbles be many. Therefore, 'tis at the gate that He will give us a change of garments."

"Not at the head of the way!" said Hypocrisy emphatically. "For He knows good and well that if He did, they would surely become soiled and torn!"

"Not so!" protested Christian, strongly. "The great Weaver gives them to us at the beginning, and then gives us the power to keep them fully clean."

"And why should He do that?" demanded Formalist.

"Because," answered Christian, "the clothes are His, and by their beauty is He judged."

"Bosh!" snorted Formalist. "The kingdom of heaven is not food or drink . . ."

". . . Or shining white suits of clothes," sneered Hypocrisy. "Just so long as we are not filthy, or wretched, or poor, or blind, or naked, what does it matter?"

"Aye, what?" challenged Formalist.

"I only know that this lovely coat was given to me freely on the day that I surrendered all. And when I come to the gate, they will know that I am His because I wear His garments. And as I have worn His coat with pride, so will He confess me with pride before His Father."

"Bosh!" mocked Formalist. "Any coat will do!"

"Aye," agreed Hypocrisy. "Just so long as we are clothed."

"I also have a mark in my forehead," said Christian.

"Mark?" queried Formalist.

"Aye."

"Hmmm?" said Formalist, joining Hypocrisy in a careful scrutiny of Christian's forehead. Finally, after looking at each other with raised eyebrows and questioning eyes, Hypocrisy said, "We, uh . . . we see no mark."

"'Tis not for you to see," answered Christian, "'Tis for those who put it there."

"Hmmm," murmured Formalist. "And where did this 'mark' come from?"

Christian nearly came to tears as he recounted his wonderful experience at the cross, saying, "It came upon me as I stood beneath the cross over on yon, skull-shaped hill. I had just surrendered my all and watched my heavy burden tumble from off my shoulders."

"Well, then," said Formalist, failing to perceive Christian's tender emotions, "in that respect, we are better off than you."

"How so?" he asked, still a bit misty-eyed by reason of thinking upon the cross.

"In that we never had such a burden as you speak of," said Formalist arrogantly.

"Oh!" exclaimed Christian, coming back to the present. "So that's what let you come tumbling so nimbly over the wall! But let me tell you this, gentlemen. He who begins his journey by leaving his burden at the cross, ends it with none. They that behave as thieves and robbers and bypass the cross so they can travel lightly, shall be crushed beneath a stone at the end."

"Did you hear!" jeered Formalist. "The man waxes poetic."

"Is that what you call it?" snapped Hypocrisy impatiently. Then said he, turning to Christian with an arrogant air, "All right, sir! So you do wear those fine garments, and so maybe you do have some 'invisible mark,' and so you have left behind some imaginary burden on some skull-shaped hill! The fact remains, that we too are in the way!"

"I have also a sealed roll that I may read for my comfort as I travel on in the way," said Christian, showing them his scroll, bound about by its green satin ribbon.

"Bah!" poo-pooed Formalist. "Who needs a silly roll to read?"

"'Tis not only for reading."

"Oh? And what else?" inquired Hypocrisy, raising a curious eyebrow.

"I was also told that I must give it in at the celestial gate to certify that the price of my admission had been paid," said Christian solemnly.

"Paid?" queried Formalist, ears perking up at the mention of some new way to earn his admittance. "And what was the price?"

"The price is greater than all the universe could pay," said Christian, with gratitude swelling in his breast.

"That is an impossible price!"

"Yes," admitted Christian.

"But you said your admittance was paid. Who is it that can pay infinite prices?"

"Tis He who hangs upon the cross. All of these things: the garments, the mark, and the scroll, are lacking because you came not in at the gate. Please, go back to the beginning and start your walk with the Lord aright," he pleaded.

To these things they had no answer to give, and, for a moment being under deep conviction, they could only look upon one another with blank stares. Then Hypocrisy broke the spell with a sly wink. Formalist responded with a knowing smile, and they both began to laugh mockingly. Then said Hypocrisy, between chuckles, "We have no garment . . . heh, heh, heh . . . because we were not naked."

"And no burden," bubbled Formalist . . . "tee-hee . . . because of our good lives!"

"And no mark," chortled Hypocrisy, "because . . . heh, heh . . . if it cannot be seen, it serves no purpose, and therefore cannot be needed."

"And no scroll for comfort," mocked Formalist, "because we be in no need of said comfort."

"Being quite comfortable already, you see," concluded Hypocrisy.

"Except when keeping company with obstinate, bullheaded bigots like you!" snarled Formalist.

"Therefore, alone shalt thou be! Farewell, foolish Pilgrim!" laughed Hypocrisy as he crossed his arms, turned his back on Christian, and paused to let him pass on. Then Formalist did the same as he snapped off a "Goodbye!" that really meant "good riddance." So they dropped back and let Christian go on ahead with no visible company but his own. Sometimes, as he looked at circumstances, he would sigh in discouragement. But then he would read a promise or two from his roll and pass on much encouraged. As my dream continued, I saw Christian travel on until he came to the foot of a hill called Difficulty. Now, at the bottom of this hill, there was a spring bursting forth from beneath a great stone. At this place there was also a parting of the ways into three parts. One way meandered off to the left hand, and another wound off to the right. But that way which was straight and narrow, climbed right on up the hill (which I saw to be quite steep). When Christian came to the spring, he recalled Gideon's band of 300 and, without pausing on his way, deftly dipped his hand into the water to refresh himself. But not so Formalist and Hypocrisy. When they reached the spring, they fell to their knees, buried their faces in the refreshing coolness of the waters and slurped noisily. Thus it was that Christian got quite the lead on them as he began to ascend the steep Hill of Difficulty. Now, as he climbed he bethought himself of a poem, which, if I remember aright, he spoke thusly:

"This hill, though high, I covet to ascend;
The difficulty will not me offend,
For I perceive the way to life lies here.
Come, pluck up heart, let's neither faint nor fear.
Better, though difficult, the right way to go,
Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe."

Now when the other two arose from their leisurely guzzlings, they smiled to behold each other with dripping chins and muddy knees. Then one of them belched loudly, and they both enjoyed a hearty belly laugh. Then, as they looked up at the tiny figure of Christian toiling up the Hill Difficulty, Formalist said, "Hmmm. Don't look like much fun to me."

"Steep," noted Hypocrisy.

"High," added Formalist.

"Dangerous!" said Hypocrisy.

"Difficult!" chorused both of them.

"Especially with a belly full of water," chuckled Formalist, punctuating his comment with another belch.

"There must be another way," concluded Hypocrisy.

Then they noticed that there was not simply one other way, but two other ways: both of them flat, wide, and easy of travel. Now, since these two held fast to the doctrine that all paths lead to the same eternal destination, they reasoned that, by and by, on the back side of Difficulty, these two roads must certainly join the straight way again. No need for huffing and puffing all sweaty up some steep hill when a simple stroll round about would serve them just as well, they reasoned. So they began to debate about which way they should go. Now the sign pointing to one of those ways said "Danger," and the sign pointing off to the other said "Destruction." Since they disagreed on which way was safer, they temporarily (as they supposed) parted company. One of them took the way called "Danger," which meandered into a dense and overgrown forest where he was soon lost to my view. The other took the path called "Destruction," which led him into a wide field full of tar fields and gaping slime pits. There he was soon bogged down and ere long stumbled and fell. And, though I watched for quite some time, he never rose again.

I then turned my attention to Christian who, eager to please his Lord, had begun his climb at nearly a run. But, because of the increasing steepness of the way, this soon slowed to a vigorous stride, then to a struggling walk, then to a crawl, and finally to climbing the steepest places upon his hands and knees. By Jim Pappas Copyright 1999 Orion's Gate, Ltd Dobbins, California.

End of sample
(But The Best Is Yet To Come)