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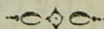
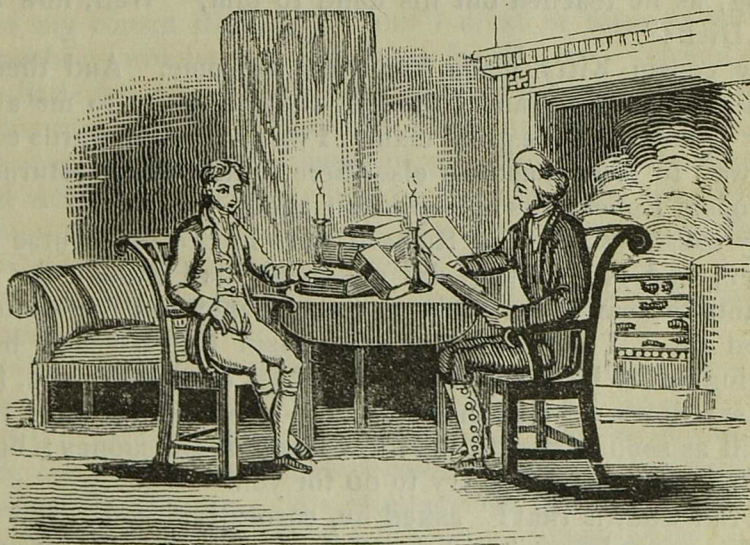
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MY BIBLE AND MY CALLING.

PART II.

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MY BIBLE

AND MY CALLING.

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### PART II.

I SHALL now proceed to give the account I promised of my cousin Richard's visit; and it must be remembered, that, though I had been four years in his brother's house, I had never yet seen him.

He came in one of those carriages which, in former days, was called a buggy. It was about six o'clock in the evening, at the fall of the leaf, and all our people were sitting down to their supper as he came into the kitchen. He was a singular figure. His hair was dressed in large curls below his ears, tied behind, and powdered; he wore ruffles, and gloves, and polished buckles, with a small cane in his hand. He made a low bow at coming in, and then walked up to his brother; who, on seeing him, rose slowly out of his chair, saying, as he reached out his hand to him, "Well, how are you, Dick?"

My cousin Kitty made him very welcome. And then I was led up to him; and I thought that he spoke to me as if I was the son of some great man. I was soon afterwards called away to some business elsewhere, and when I returned, my cousin Robert was asleep in his chair.

My cousins Kitty and Richard were in close discourse together; and though they did not speak loud enough for the servants to hear at the other fire-place, they did not seem to regard me. I suppose that my cousin Richard had been begging her to borrow some money of his brother for him, for, as I sat down, I heard her say, "You know, brother, that he will as soon part with his life's blood as his money: but I will tell you what I will try to do for you."

"And what is that?" asked he, earnestly.

"You must know," said she, "that my husband is set upon parting with this boy here. He calls him too much of a puritan for him," added she, laughing; "and yet he is a very tidy, industrious lad: and he is exactly the boy you want, for he would mind your shop and keep your books. He has a capital hand at accounts, I assure you. There has not been a person in our house that could cast up our maltster's bill for years, till this Frank came into it. I shall miss him when the bills come in. And then, when you have taken to Frank, I'll see if I can't get my master to have your little Dick here.



You know it will be the making of his fortune; but don't you say any thing about it yourself, but leave it to me."

When she had said these last words, I could see that my cousin Richard looked pleased; and he turned, and looked smilingly towards me; but the great dog barking, roused my cousin Robert, and the discourse was put an end to, and I heard no more of it till I came in to my luncheon the next morning. My three cousins were then sitting together over the fire.

On seeing me, my cousin Robert called me to him. "Young square-toes," said he, laughing, "brother Dick has a mind of thy long puritanical face behind his counter. But mind, Dick," continued he, turning to his brother, "thou must have his Bible with him, and give him plenty of time to read it. And thou art not fonder of Puritans and Presbyterians than I am."

"Sir," said I, looking up earnestly in my cousin Robert's face, "have I ever neglected my business to read my Bible?"

"I do not know that thou hast," answered my cousin; and he laid himself back quietly in his chair.

My cousin Kitty looked angrily at me, but said nothing.

"The mists of prejudice and error are fast clearing away," said my cousin Richard; "and I must be allowed to hope something promising of our young friend here. I think, from the little I have seen of him, that there is something superior in his turn of mind to the class of society with which he associates. He seeks for superior pleasures to those of eating and sleeping; and, probably, he has not many literary gratifications within his power. Allow me to ask you, Frank, how many books do you possess?"

"I have two books, Sir," I answered; "my Bible and my Prayer-Book."

"Ah, two too many," said my cousin Robert, in a loud voice, raising himself up.

"If," returned Richard, "instead of two, he had twenty-two, the evil you complain of would be removed. Divide and conquer, you know. His mind would be released from its present fetters; and you would have no longer cause to taunt him with the disgraceful name of Puritan or Presbyterian."

"I do not rightly understand your language, brother Dick," said Robert; "and I can't say that ever I did since you came out of those foreign parts: but if you mean to say, that if he had twenty more books given him, he would leave off reading his Bible, you are quite out; for our parson has got a room full of books, up to the ceiling, and reads them too, I know it for a truth; and yet the Bible is first and last with him."



“Your parson is an old man, and prejudiced,” returned Richard: “and then, you know, he has leisure; he has time for his poetry, and his ethics, and his mathematics, and his Bible too. But consider the difference between him and a boy like Frank, who has only such scraps of time as he can spare from his business; and he must work hard if he comes to me. If, at these times, he reads such books as I shall put into his hands, I am convinced that he will not have time for reading much else; and there will soon be, I doubt not, a great change in consequence in his views and habits with respect to what you term puritanism.”

Shortly after this discourse had passed, I understood that I must prepare to leave the house the next day with my cousin Richard. I was so very unkindly treated where I was, that I thought no alteration could be for the worse, though I by no means liked the change of employment: and it was a great trial to me to leave the fields, and woods, and the animals I had been accustomed to feed, for streets, and crowds, and bustle, which I had never loved. Besides, I was sorry to part with the boy who had been catechised with me, and in whom, certainly, there had been some visible improvement; but my greatest trial was to leave the old clergyman.

As soon as I had finished my few preparations, I got permission to call upon him and take my leave. He asked me a great many questions about my cousin Richard; and, after a long silence, he said to me, “It strikes me that I have, on some occasion, heard a good deal about this person; but as I cannot speak with any certainty, it is best to say nothing. But business sometimes takes me into the neighbourhood where you are going, and I will try to see you. I shall not forget you. Meanwhile, remember your father’s invaluable counsel—be industrious at your calling, study your Bible, pray diligently, and keep the Sabbath; and God’s blessing will be with you.” And thus we parted.

The next day I set off on my journey with my cousin Richard; and after travelling about twenty miles through very bad roads, we arrived at our journey’s end as the evening closed in.

When I got into my cousin’s house, I seemed as if I was in a dream, every thing was so different from what I had been accustomed to. Instead of a kitchen, I was taken into a small parlour, where Mrs. Harris, my cousin’s wife, was sitting. Instead of wearing a stuff gown, coarse apron, and mob cap, with a large bunch of keys fastened by a brass hook to her side, like my cousin Kitty, she wore a linen gown, flounced apron and ruffles, and a gauze cap with lappets. There were two or three young children with her. The shelves and tables



were scattered over with books, but the room was not neat and comfortable; and Mrs. Harris did not seem very glad to see her husband, and she looked earnestly at me.

Some tea and toasted muffins, things I had rarely seen, were set before us; and, soon after we had finished this meal, I became so extremely sleepy, it being my usual hour of going to bed, that I could not keep my eyes open. My cousin Richard laughed at me, and bid me go to bed; but before I left the room Mrs. Harris called for a pair of slippers, which she bid me put on, adding, that she hoped I should soon provide myself with some decent shoes, for if I was to clump about the house in those clodhopping shoes, she should certainly die of the head-ache.

I had here the comfort of a small bed-room to myself; and, as I was up before any of the family were stirring, I had time to read my Bible in peace. And when I opened my window, I found that, at a great distance beyond the town, I had a view of the sea, and many little ships. With this I was much pleased. As soon as breakfast was over, my cousin Richard desired his wife to take me into the shop and set me to work; but he himself did not come near us. He sat reading by the fire till towards eleven, when he finished dressing himself, which he never did, but by halves, before breakfast, and went, as I afterwards found was his daily custom, to the coffee-room.

I was very awkward and clumsy at first in serving the customers; and when Mrs. Harris was out of the way, I had only a little boy to direct me, who wanted much looking after himself. The book-keeping I did not find so difficult.

Thus passed the first three days. The next day was Sunday. Having no animals to attend to, nor any dirty work to do, I was up and ready dressed for church at an early hour; but it was a full hour after the usual time before any body was stirring in the house, and the bells of a church at the end of the street were chiming for service when Mrs. Harris began to pour out the tea. "When does the morning service begin?" said I to my cousin Richard.

"Are you thinking of going to church?" asked he in return.

"If you mean the morning service at our parish church," said Mrs. Harris, "you are quite too late for that; the bells are chiming now, and you have not begun your breakfast. If one could go at all in a morning, that service would be quite too early; however, if you have a wish to go to-day, I will try and accompany you this evening, and shew you our seat."

I thanked her, but did not yet feel satisfied. I swallowed a few mouthfuls of bread in haste, and drinking my dish of



tea, I rose, saying to my cousin, "Have you any thing for me to do, Sir?"

"Nothing in particular, Sir. But what are you in such a hurry about?"

"The bells have not done ringing," said I, "and I think I could be in time for church."

"Why," said he, "will not going once suffice you?"

"Not if I can go twice," I replied, smiling.

"Well," answered he, in rather an angry tone, "if you choose to go without your breakfast, that's your concern, not mine: but one might as well have the parish-clerk in the house as you."

As I did not take this as a refusal, I made my bow, and was out of the door in a moment, and in two minutes more was within the church. On my return, I found my cousins sitting where I had left them, neither of them dressed. My entrance seemed to interrupt some very earnest discourse; Mrs. Harris was crying, and her husband looked sullen. Soon afterwards, my cousin Richard dressed himself, and went out for the day, for I saw no more of him. Mrs. Harris and I dined in silence: she then told me she was not well enough to go out, and I might do as I pleased. She continued the remainder of the day in very low spirits.

The next day at dinner, my cousin Richard said to me, "I never interfered with you yesterday, cousin Frank; I allowed you to do exactly as you pleased; and now to-day I expect that, in your turn, you will try to make yourself agreeable to me."

I looked at my cousin, not knowing what he meant.

"This evening," continued he, "I expect some of my particular friends to eat some oysters, and I do desire that you will check that vulgar, low propensity of yours to go to sleep so very early."

"Sir," said I, "I have been accustomed from my childhood to be at my work very early in a morning, and this makes me sleepy at night; but I will try to keep myself awake this evening."

I did contrive to keep my eyes open on this evening, and, indeed, sometimes they were kept open by surprise; for I was now introduced to a set of persons I had never seen before, and, from what I now recollect of them, I am certain that they were neither gentlemen by birth nor education, nor were they really learned upon any one subject: yet they could talk about every thing, and had a very good opinion of their own acquirements, and a very mean one of those of other people.

My cousin Richard seemed much pleased to see that I tried to keep myself awake; and the next evening he put into my



hands a book of tales, which soon succeeded in fixing my attention: these tales, however, as I can remember, were of a very bad tendency, and taught that men were born good, and can continue so without the help of God.

My cousin having once broken through my habit of sleepiness, seemed every day to be trying some new way of interesting me in his pursuits, discourse, and friends. There was no one particular subject more than another in which he tried to engage me; but it was sometimes on one, and sometimes on another. My mind became in a short time full of curiosity, which was never satisfied. I was restless and uneasy, for I was studying I did not know what, and for reasons I could not tell why; and the variety of opinions I heard from my cousin and his friends, upon almost every subject, added to the perplexity and darkness of my mind.

Another evil effect arose also from these new habits—going to bed so much later than usual. I could but just get up in the morning time enough, and hardly that, for my business. I hurried over, indeed, a few verses of my Bible, and never omitted my prayers; but I wanted leisure and calmness of mind to perform these sacred duties in the way I ought to have done for my real profit: and as my Bible was neglected, so also was my calling, for my head was so full of these new ideas, that it was continually wandering from my business. I was now, indeed, surrounded by imminent dangers.

I had now been nearly a year in my cousin Richard's house; when, one evening, my cousins being gone out to tea, as was often their custom, I was sitting alone in the parlour, the table covered with books, which I was looking into, I will not say reading, when suddenly there was a gentle knock at the door, and in walked my good old friend the clergyman. I was very glad to see him, and yet I could hardly tell why I felt ashamed of being found with so many books about me. After he had made many kind and particular enquiries about me, he drew nearer the table, and began to look into my books. "Indeed," said he, "here is a great variety. May I ask you with what view you are reading on so many different subjects?"

I was silent; for this was a question I had never asked myself.

"I see neither your Bible nor your calling here," added he, smiling.

"Perhaps, Sir," I said, "you do not think it suitable to my calling to read at all?"

"That is by no means my opinion," he replied; "but the quantity and sort of it must depend upon a man's situation. A man of leisure, a physician, a clergyman, a lawyer, will read



more than many other persons; but they will have an eye to their calling in what they read. The farmer and the tradesman will find some reading useful to them, but it will be much more limited than the others I have named. Your father, I have heard you say, read upon gardening."

"Then, Sir, you think I am reading too many books?"

"Certainly," said he.

"What books then would you recommend to me?"

"If you mean as a tradesman, I really cannot answer you. I could direct you better as a farmer; for I have a brother a farmer, and he is a wise and excellent man."

"Have you, Sir," said I, earnestly.

"But," continued he, "if you find upon trial that you like trade, and wish to remain in it, consult some experienced and pious man in your own trade, and ask his advice as to what you may read with advantage. Such a man will advise you well; because, he will not only know what is useful in your calling, but he will remember that you have a soul to save, and that you must have time for reading your Bible."

My heart smote me as the clergyman said this, but I made no answer.

"Frank," continued he, looking earnestly at me, "you had great privileges, extraordinary blessings, in your early days; but Satan seems to have been making tools of your two cousins to draw you from your duty and your happiness. Your cousin Robert kept you from *all* books, that you never *might* read your Bible—your cousin Richard gives you so many, that you never *can* read it: and, if I am not greatly mistaken, Satan is carrying on this device on a much larger scale in the world. The Bible, he knows, is his great enemy, and where that is diligently read, his power is trodden under foot. For many hundred years he kept the world in utter darkness, without any Bibles, or any books at all to read; but since the art of printing has been discovered, and Bibles have come into the hands of every body, he is trying a new plan; he fills our minds with a desire to read so many books, and upon such a variety of subjects, that we really may not have time to read our Bibles."

A few tears fell now upon my burning cheeks; and, looking up, I said, "Oh, Sir, this is my case! My Bible, indeed, is neglected!"

The good man seemed much affected; he bid me take comfort, and remember, that He who was for me was much greater than he who was against me; and added, that as I had been thus made to see my error, he trusted I should be led to cry more earnestly to the strong for strength.

I felt cheered by his discourse, and much refreshed. "O,



Sir," I said, "advise me what to do, for I have no friends. I wish I was out of this house. I do not like my present employment. I wish I was among the green fields again; but I do not like to offend my cousins."

After a long silence, the old gentleman thus replied: "Frank, your path is straight before you. I believe I may say it to you in confidence, that it is pretty well known in this town that your difficulties in this house must soon come to an end. Meanwhile you may make yourself very useful to your cousins by attending to your shop, and getting their books, I mean their shop-books, in the best order you can. You must break through this habit of sitting up which you complain of. Tell your cousins that you cannot do your duty by them if you are to lose your evenings; they will thank you for it by and by. Rise early, read and pray, and follow your business diligently; and, trust me, your way will be made plain before you."

I listened to the advice of this good man as if it had been my father speaking to me; but the time soon arrived for him to go. He took a very kind leave of me, saying, as he parted from me, "If ever you stand in need of a friend or adviser, Frank, remember to apply to me."

As soon as I was left alone, I went to my own room, where, falling upon my knees, I heartily thanked God who had opened my eyes to see my great danger; and prayed for his forgiveness through my Saviour's merits, and for grace to preserve me in the midst of my temptations.

The next morning I was up early, as will be readily believed, with my Bible in my hand, and went cheerfully to my business, determined to do it with all my might.

In the course of the day, I found an opportunity, when alone with Mrs. Harris, of requesting her to speak to her husband for me, that I might be allowed to go to bed early. I told her, as was the case, that the business suffered for my not being in my place earlier in the morning; "And, besides," said I, "upon this plan, I cannot find time to read my Bible."

She very readily promised to speak for me to her husband; "and indeed," added she, with a sigh, "I wish he would follow your example."

And now the sad time for my poor cousin's family drew on, the time at which my friend the clergyman had hinted, and which, I afterwards found, many people in the town had expected. One evening there arrived by the post two letters, which seemed to occasion the utmost distress and agitation to my cousins; but as they did not appear inclined to explain the cause of it to me, I did not think it was proper for me to ask any questions. I shall never forget the manner in which



my poor cousin Richard bade me good-night when I went to bed.

The next morning, Mrs. Harris only came down to breakfast; but I thought nothing about it, as it was a common case for her husband to lie late in bed. In the course of the day, he was often enquired for, and Mrs. Harris bade me say he was not within, and that the persons who enquired for him must call again the next day.

The next day brought such a season of distress as I had never witnessed before. There was an execution in the house; and it was now discovered that my cousin Richard had gone off nobody knew where.

But I must not enter into particulars, for my time is short. My cousin Robert was sent for, and some compromise was made with the creditors. But it was sad, very sad, to hear the manner in which he swore and stormed at his brother, even before his wife. O, had these brothers loved their Bible, scenes like these could never have taken place.

Among other arrangements, it was agreed that I should remain where I was till the goods in the shop were sold off; and that Mrs. Harris should remove with her children into a lodging, and endeavour to gain her bread by her millinery business. When my cousin Robert was returning home, and was ready booted and spurred, with his whip in his hand, he called me to him, and, giving me five guineas, "Frank," said he, "here's something to buy thee shoe-leather when thou leavest this house; and that I reckon will be in a fortnight's time."

I was going to thank him, but he shook his whip as much as to bid me be silent.

"In spite of your Bible," continued he, "I would take you back with me, for I have no lad who minds his work like you; but your cousin Kitty won't hear of it. I verily believe she hates your very name; so you must see and get some place for yourself. And mind, when you come of age, I have two hundred pounds for you, that your father's effects were sold for." So saying, he shook me by the hand heartily, and walked away.

But I was not left desolate, though thus forsaken by all my relations. My heavenly Father had already raised me up a friend. I remember, with tears of gratitude to this heavenly Father, the last words of my good friend the clergyman when he had called upon me; and that very evening I wrote to inform him of my present circumstances. As soon as it was possible for my letter to be answered, I received the kindest reply, desiring me, when I was set at liberty, to repair immediately to his house; and adding, that he hoped he should be able to procure a desirable situation for me.



In the overflowing of my heart, I shewed my letter to Mrs. Harris. When she returned it to me, she said, "I believe, Frank, that you have chosen the right path, and God's blessing will be with you. When I am once again in a quiet place with my children, I too will have a Bible."

I shall just add here, that a few weeks afterwards I had an opportunity of sending Mrs. Harris a Bible; and I have had the great satisfaction of knowing that she diligently read it at home, and hearkened to it at church; and obtained those clear views of religion which made her a happy woman under very trying circumstances, and enabled her to train up her family in wise and pious habits.

And now, having taken leave of Mrs. Harris, I entered upon a happy period of my life. Ever since that time I have had a home, where, as in my early days when my dear parents were living, I could read my Bible in peace.

My good old friend had provided for me a situation in his brother's family. In this house the Bible was first and last; they did not sleep away their evenings, or spend them in the works of darkness, as was the case in my cousin Robert's family; nor was their time frittered away in useless discourse, and in unprofitable reading, vain jargon, and endless disputes, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Solid piety, cheerful industry, good sense, and kind-hearted manners, made the family peaceful, orderly, and pleasant. I remained in this house while my master lived, and I then took a small farm, which I stocked with my little fortune. I was prospered in my choice of a good wife, and we have trained up three children, who, I trust, are serving God in their generation.

Before I quite conclude this account of myself, I shall say a few words respecting some of the persons I have already spoken of, and give my reasons for troubling the world with my history.

My cousin Kitty's conduct became so openly disgraceful, that none of her relations would speak to her. Her husband only seemed blind to it. He was suffering from his habits of intemperance, and the effects of them shortly afterwards confined him to his bed. Here I visited him as often as I could, and was sorry to find him sadly neglected. He was always glad to see me, and would suffer me to read the Bible and talk to him; but whether he really understood me, or listened to me, I could never discover. I wished it had been possible to bring him some better spiritual guide than myself; but my valuable friend the clergyman had died some months before, bearing a joyful testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus; and my cousin would not see a stranger. Thus the faithful in-



struction of a pious minister, which he had once despised, was now withheld. I fear this is a common case. Such was the end of my cousin Robert.

My cousin Richard returned no more to England; and I could never gain any accurate account of the manner of his death.

As increasing infirmities have of late afforded me many opportunities for solitary reflection, I have frequently considered the characters of my two cousins, and the very different temptations to which I was exposed in their respective families; and it has occurred to me, that the early advice I received from my father, and the conversation which the good clergyman held with me, above fifty years ago, in my cousin Richard's parlour, might be of use to some of the young people of the present generation. And I can now add my testimony, from the experience of half a century, that the Bible, diligently read, and prayed over in the closet, and faithfully expounded in the house of God on the Lord's-day, is the great engine which defeats the power of Satan. How then can we wonder that he should try all his wiles and artifices to undermine the influence of the Bible! Remember, my young friends, he is going about continually seeking whom he may devour; and remember, that he *is*, and always *was*, a deceiver. He suits his snares and temptations to the circumstances of every generation of men. What the particular trials and snares of this latter age of the world are, we may learn from the Scriptures, and the sure word of prophecy. The age of darkness is passing away; the everlasting Gospel is now being preached to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increasing; and Satan has *his* emissaries at work. He is trying to turn away men from heavenly wisdom, and the study of the Bible, and is puffing *them* up with a desire of vain knowledge. But all that knowledge is vain which is unsuitable to our calling, which fills us with pride, and which draws away our time and attention from the Bible, and from the public and private duties of the Sabbath.

I desire now to take my leave of you, offering you the prayers and best wishes of an old man for your present and eternal welfare.

L.

FINIS.