

The Skipper's Keg of Brandy.

AMONGST the motley crowd of many nationalities that stood on Bridge Wharf, Glasgow, on the morning of 9th April 1888, awaiting the signal for the passengers to go on board the emigrant ship "Siberian," was a countryman, rather past the prime of life. His clear intelligent eye was now and then dimmed by a tear, as he gazed on a tall stalwart youth of twenty-six, his eldest son, by his side, and thought how soon he would have to part with him, perhaps never to meet again.

"Tom," he said, "Tom."

He meant to give fatherly counsel to his son, but the surcharged heart refused to admit of words being arti-

culated, and as they again lapsed into silence, his heart was lifted in fervent prayer to God to bless the lad. The loading of the ship completed, and the expected signal given, the passengers began to cross the gangway. After warmly shaking his father's hand, and receiving his parting blessing,—spoken with tremulous voice,—Tom stepped on deck. Theirs was but one of many similar partings, and sobs mingled plentifully with the waving of hats, caps, and handkerchiefs, as the great ship, loosed from her moorings, set out on her voyage.

Following our friend Tom a little further, we find him standing on deck intensely gazing on the fast receding hills of his native land. This was not the first time he was bidding adieu to its rugged shores. Five years before, in a spirit of youthful adventure, he had journeyed to the Far West. While there the memory of his boyhood's

home lingered fresh in his mind, and to satisfy his longing heart he re-crossed the Atlantic main, and paid a surprise visit to his father and mother. The joy of meeting them seemed now to be swallowed up in the pain of parting; but the parting, keenly though he felt it, was not the only thing that grieved him. With a deep-drawn sigh, he said to himself, "I thought I might be saved when at home."

The son of godly parents, a child of many prayers, he evinced in early manhood an antipathy to the gospel, and it was with no small joy his parents read in a letter from him a few months previous to the opening of our narrative, "We had a visit from Mr Moody this fall. Thousands attended his meetings, and many received salvation, but somehow or other, I don't know how, I cannot get the matter settled." They rejoiced that now

his conscience had been reached, and his eyes opened to see his deep need of a Saviour; and in their letters to him, showed, by many infallible proofs from Scripture, that the great question of sin had been for ever settled with God by the atoning death of Christ, and all he had to do was to own his lost guilty condition, and God could then, righteously, blot out his transgressions. His visit home increased their anticipations that speedily he would be delivered from the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God, but their hopes were blighted. He spoke eagerly on the subject, and was very desirous of having imparted to him the gift of eternal life, but no peace came to allay the turmoil of his distracted heart; and now the bitterest pang of parting was, that he was returning to the bustle of American life—unblest.

Evening found the "Siberian"

ploughing the rough waters of the North Channel, and, all trace of his native land shrouded in gloom, Tom repaired to his allotted cabin. Seated in it was a young man, Bible in hand.

“I guess we have seen the last of the old country for many a day,” said Tom, assuming a careless tone.

“I doubt it,” returned the other, scarcely looking up. There was a pause; presently Tom took his Bible from his pocket, and somewhat listlessly began turning over the leaves. At once the other's manner changed.

“Oh,” he said brightly, “are we members of the household of faith?”

“Can't say I am,” said Tom, in a downhearted tone; “but one's feelings get torn when saying farewell, and it seems natural to turn to this book for comfort.”

“I am glad you find comfort from God's Word,” replied the other calmly; “but I would have liked if you could

have said you had found salvation there, for it is the one grand truth which permeates the whole."

"No one longs for that more than myself," said Tom; "I have read the Word diligently, and prayed and done all I can, but I can't get peace."

"It is simply through believing in the finished work of Christ we get peace," said George, "and not by any doing or praying on our part. The Lord Jesus *finished* the work the Father gave Him to do,—the work of putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. None of our puny efforts are needed to give efficacy to so wondrous an oblation as the body of Jesus Christ offered once for all. That offering perfects for ever all who by faith accept it, and "through his name whosoever believeth shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43).

It was a deep joy to George to meet with a really anxious soul, and

he reiterated to him the sweet tale of the Saviour's love. Tom was glad to come in contact with one who so faithfully spoke to him, for he secretly feared that if he resisted much longer the strivings of the Spirit, his conscience might become seared, and he be left a careless unbeliever. Day by day the conversations were renewed; more earnest did George become in his desire that his newly made friend might be loosed from the fetters of Satan, but the deeper Tom seemed to get into the mire of indecision. When half-way across, a severe storm was encountered, but the ship was a steady sailer, and was manned by a skilful captain and gallant crew, and she weathered the tempest bravely. Next morning they came on a ship which had not been so fortunate. In answer to her signals of distress they bore down on her, and found her to be a Russian barque, in a sinking condition.

Fastening on their cork-jackets, a dozen sailors quickly got into a boat, rowed through the heavy swell, boarded the disabled ship, assisted the crew to lower such of their own boats as were required to hold them, and all pulled back again to the "Siberian." Coming alongside, the mate of the shipwrecked crew informed the captain of the rescuing vessel that their skipper was intoxicated, and refused to leave his ship, saying she was all right. The captain directed them to go back and bring him by force. Again they rowed through the boisterous waves, and with considerable difficulty executed his order. As the poor inebriate skipper was hoisted on board the vessel which was saving him from a watery grave, he was found to be hugging a keg of brandy. The worthy captain of the "Siberian" at once ordered it to be thrown overboard. The work of rescue had been eagerly

watched by the passengers on deck. Tom and George were standing together, and as the obnoxious keg floundered for a little in the surging tide, and then sank beneath the billows, George said aloud, half to himself, "Thou hast cast all my sins into the depths of the sea."

"And mine too!" cried Tom excitedly, as with lightning rapidity the words that had fallen on his ear lifted the scales from his eyes, and set his ransomed soul free to bask in the great sunshine of the love of God. There, on the crowded deck of a steamer, in mid-ocean, he was "born again," and grasping each other's hands, the two young men unitedly praised God. Then with irrepressible tears in his eyes, Tom said, "Oh! how glad my father and mother will be when they hear I am no longer outside the fold."

Parents, cease not to pray day and night for your children. Though the

Lord bear long, yet in His own time and manner He will grant you your petitions; and some day when they taste of the heavenly gift, and become partakers of the Holy Ghost, another drop will be added to their cup of happiness, to think of the joy their turning from darkness to light affords your hearts.

An interesting circumstance in connection with this we are loth to keep from our Christian readers, showing as it does the gracious ways the Lord of the vineyard has of encouraging His labourers.

Writing of his voyage to his friend Mr R——, an earnest evangelist, George made mention of the Lord's goodness in using him for blessing to an anxious soul on board, giving a few of the details we have just narrated. Mr R—— read his letter at a gospel meeting that evening, and the Christians present praised God to hear of

another sinner having passed from "death unto life."

Mr R—— had arranged, at the request of some recently converted youths who belonged to the district, to preach the gospel at a village some forty miles distant, a few nights later. Previous to the meeting he and another were having tea in a cottage close by. After the good woman of the house had got them comfortably seated to an ample repast, she, by way of entertaining them, began reading a letter she had recently received from her son. As the reading proceeded, Mr R——'s attention became riveted. The letter told of a storm on the sea, and a tempest-tossed sin-stricken heart,—of the brave rescue of a shipwrecked crew from an almost inevitable death, and of the redemption of a soul from everlasting destruction. There was no mistaking it. The account was the same as that his

emigrant brother had given him, and this time he heard it in a little mountain hamlet from the lips of the young man's mother. The meeting itself was not a very encouraging one, but the coincidence he had just met with awakened his interest in the place. A tent was shortly after pitched on the village green, and night after night, under its canopy, the life-giving gospel was faithfully proclaimed. The effect of it on the hearers was the same as in days of yore, "some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not,"—one of Tom's sisters being among the former.

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