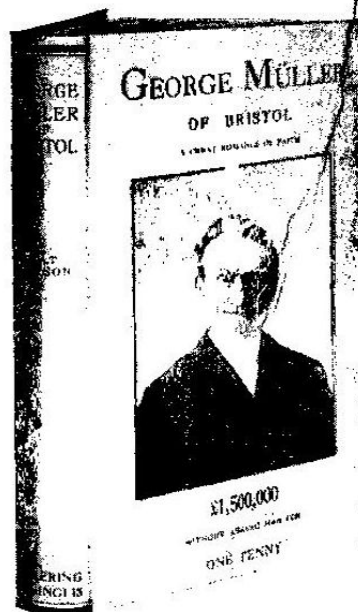


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CAN A YOUNG MAN TRUST HIS GOD?



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By
Arthur Gook

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CAN A YOUNG MAN TRUST HIS GOD?

I.

Introductory.

SOME years ago I published a booklet entitled: "Can a Young Man Trust his Bible?" and tried therein to give a few reasons for trusting implicitly in the Holy Scriptures as the revelation of the mind and will of God. I now propose asking and answering the same question with regard to the Divine Author of the Book—"Can a young man trust his *God*?"

I answer—Yes. By that I mean, that it is possible for a weak, failing mortal to trust literally and implicitly to God's direction and intervention in the affairs of his daily life, without being disappointed. He who created the mighty orbs in the firmament constructed also the delicate fibre of the smallest flower, and it is impossible to say which is the more wonderful. Microscope and telescope alike reveal the glories of the Creator, and it is a false conception of God that supposes that He has only to do with things that appear to us to be great or important.

"Thou countest up the ages that before Thy face have filed,
And numberest the heart-beats of a little sleeping child!"

I am deeply thankful to God that my circumstances have been such that I have often had the opportunity of putting Him to the proof in ways that defied explanation by any theory of "chance" and gave no

room for any kindly disposed friend to play the part of "amateur Providence."

My object in citing a few of these instances is to confirm the young Christian in his faith that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11. 6), and to show the gainsayer, if such should venture to read this book, that tangible proofs are to be found, even in the experience of a very ordinary young man, of as definite intervention of God in the daily affairs of men, as is taught in the Scriptures, and which some permit themselves to scoff at.

The simple life of trust in a prayer-answering God is not the exclusive privilege of an initiated few. It should be the everyday experience of ordinary persons of commonplace attainments in the spiritual realm, provided they are united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reader must not be surprised at the recital of a few seemingly trifling affairs in the following pages. "Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton," and spiritual Waterloos are only won by those who have proved God in the smaller things of life. It is the man who has been in the habit of reckoning on God in his everyday life, who, in a crisis, rises on the crest of the billow that others find themselves engulfed in.

While the writer of this booklet, as its title indicates, only aspires, primarily, to reach Christian young men, its message is bound by no limitation either of age or sex. And if it fall into the hands of an unbeliever, who, as such, feels that he has "neither part nor lot in this matter," let him nevertheless read these pages. They may, perhaps, make his mouth water, which may eventually prove to be a very healthy function.

II.

Trusting God for Guidance

AT no time in his experience does a young man so much need Divine guidance on his path as he does during the few critical years when he stands just within the threshold of adult life, and has to make choices and decisions which must necessarily affect the whole of his future career for good or irretrievable evil.

It is safe to say that none of the matters that then may engage his attention is of such vital import, or is fraught with such far-reaching consequences, as that of his betrothal and marriage.

In order to preserve a logical sequence in the incidents related in this book, it is necessary for me to ignore the feelings of reticence that would naturally lead me to hide this subject among the narratives of a later chapter or omit it altogether, and at the outset to relate my own experience of the definite guidance of our heavenly Father at this stage of my career. Few things will mar the testimony of a Christian young man so effectually as lightness or fickleness in such matters, so I offer no further apology for bringing them before the reader. If only one young man be helped thereby to commit his life at this critical stage more definitely to the guidance of God, it will be well worth while.

My fiancée and I had both heard the call of God to missionary service some time before we met, and there is no need to describe the remarkable way in which we were brought together. We realised that a mistake through rash or hasty judgment would be disastrous to the future life and service of us both. Besides, I had already heard the call of God to serve

Him in *Iceland*, and, of all places in the world, it seemed essential that I should be sure I was in the path of God's will, in inviting an English maiden to leave her home and friends and join me in service *there*.

Before entering, therefore, into a definite engagement, we waited on God in prayer for some time, that He would graciously give us the needed guidance, so that we might be perfectly clear that it was His will that we should engage to enter on a path of united service for Him.

It happened about that time that I was asked by a friend to address a Gospel meeting for schoolboys in the North of London, at a place I had never before visited. I was very inexperienced, never having addressed schoolboys, as such, and felt very doubtful as to the right angle from which to approach them. However, I was desirous of winning some of them for Christ, so I accepted the invitation.

It may seem strange to my readers, and perhaps rash to some of them, but in a way I cannot venture to explain, we were both deeply impressed with the inward conviction that we ought to make this schoolboys' meeting the test as to whether it were the will of God that we should become engaged. We asked the Lord to set His seal upon our engagement by leading at least one of these unknown lads definitely to put his trust in Christ at the coming meeting, and causing him to make his decision known.

During the past year or two I had preached at small meetings, at varied intervals, and hoped that my efforts had not been altogether fruitless. Nevertheless, I had at that time never known of definite "results" in either young or old turning to Christ and confessing Him as their Saviour. So that we felt that such an unprecedented and unlikely thing

as immediate and visible fruit from a Gospel address to schoolboys at this unknown place would indeed constitute a test, whereby we could plainly trace our Father's hand.

I shall never forget the exercise of spirit I went through while journeying alone to the place of meeting and in conducting the earlier part of the service. The boys proved so rough and unmanageable that several of them had to be forcibly expelled before there was anything like peace for the message to be delivered. Then it seemed as if the power of God came down over the meeting, and as it progressed the lads listened wistfully and in subdued silence. At the close an invitation was given for those who desired to come to Christ that evening to remain in their seats for personal conversation.

After a hymn and the departure of most of the lads, three of them were left sitting in their places, greatly moved. They were dealt with individually by two workers and myself. Two of them professed to accept Christ as their Saviour, and the third, to whom I spoke myself, said he had already turned to the Lord, but had got lukewarm and careless. He sought restoration and forgiveness.

Thus we realised that He who of old encouraged His servant Gideon by a definite, tangible sign, had graciously condescended to give us the needed guidance at a crucial point in our service for Him (Judges 6. 36-40; Isa. 7. 11).

It is far from my purpose to encourage young Christians to ask God for a sign lightly. Some have, I fear, a tendency to look for "signs and wonders" in order to receive light on their path, rather than give themselves to prayer and consideration of the Word of God.

Nevertheless, it is the experience of many Chris-

tians that in personal matters and in making important decisions, *after we have sought whatever light the Scriptures may throw on them*, our Heavenly Father will always secure that His children, who desire earnestly *to do His will* and who *wait on Him* for guidance, shall have some clear indication of His good pleasure (John 7. 17).

After four years, of which I had spent two in Iceland, we were married, and again asked the Lord to set His seal on our union by using us to lead souls to Himself. The first Sunday evening after our marriage I preached at a country mission hall. A young man remained behind when the meeting closed, and after conversation with one of the workers, decided definitely for Christ. He had attended the meeting with his fiancée, who waited for him outside the hall.

My bride went out before I did, and, while they were both waiting, she entered into conversation with her, and found that she too was anxious about her spiritual welfare. The result of their conversation was that she made the same decision as her fiancé was making in the hall. On inquiry, we found that the name of the young woman was the same as the maiden name my wife had just discarded.

Thus encouraged, we asked a continuance of this same blessing, as I was due to preach on several Sunday evenings in succession on a prolonged honeymoon tour to various parts of England. The Lord graciously heard, and at least one soul turned to Him on each occasion. At one meeting eight professed to receive Christ, and we have heard of some of them years since, as continuing in the ways of the Lord.

"PROVE ME now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3. 10).

III.

Unconscious Guidance.

It often happens that the matters on which our Heavenly Father gives definite guidance do not seem to be important in themselves, but the exquisite joy they give and the confidence in Him they inspire have a spiritual value beyond all comparison with their apparent intrinsic importance.

I was once packing up for a long journey by coasting-steamers in Iceland. With a prayer for guidance I was selecting a supply of tracts from a cupboard, when my eye fell on some French tracts, which were kept on hand in the unlikely event of my running across some Frenchmen. As my ship was to pass through the zone where French trawlers work, on the east coast of Iceland, I thought well to take a few of these tracts. After steaming round the coast for some days the shipwrecked crew of a French trawler was taken on board at an isolated station to be conveyed to a more convenient port. I got into touch with the captain of the trawler, and asked him, in the best French I could muster, how many the crew numbered. "Twenty-three," he replied. I told him I had something interesting for them to read, but was not sure whether I had enough for twenty-three. I went below to my packing-case, and hunted for the French tracts. On counting them, I found there were exactly twenty-three copies!

Did not God know about those twenty-three shipwrecked French sailors when He led me unconsciously to take from my stock one Gospel tract in French for each of them?

Possibly some may be tempted to put down such things as this to mere fortuitous "coincidence."

If such an incident stood alone, or were a rare occurrence, it would be quite reasonable to do so. But when similar instances occur time after time, especially synchronizing with seasons of spiritual blessing and renewed boldness in prayer, and are to be found as common occurrences in the lives of thousands of God's people, we have an argument for the intervention of God in the details of the Christian's life that is difficult to refute. Our lives are made up of little things, and it is inexpressibly sweet to enjoy fellowship, even in trifles, with One who loves us so dearly.

Can the theory of "coincidence" account for the following occurrence?

A man began attending the Gospel meetings at Akureyri, Iceland, and became very anxious about his spiritual state. He felt the need of personal help, but could not pluck up courage to make his difficulties known, until the last meeting he attended before leaving the town for a prolonged period. He had engaged to take part with other men in some special work many miles away. He realised on the Sunday evening that he must settle the question before he left on the Monday to go away with his ungodly workmates, for he feared he might otherwise lose the desire for higher things, or perhaps never have another opportunity of hearing the Gospel. I knew nothing whatever about this at the time.

On the Monday afternoon I decided to cross the ice on the fjord by which our town is situated, and visit a place on the other side, in order to arrange for a meeting there, a few days later, before the ice broke up. I was accompanied by my wife and two of our children. After nearly crossing the fjord, I found that the ice near the opposite side looked rather unsafe. I went on ahead by myself to investi-

gate, and suddenly plunged through, into the water beneath. Happily, it was at a place where the fjord was not very deep, and I managed to scramble out on to firmer ice. We decided that we should have to give up our plan of crossing the fjord a few days later for the proposed meeting, as the ice was getting weaker every day, so we turned back and retraced our steps. To avoid catching cold I ran most of the way home. As I reached the house from one direction, the man I have mentioned reached it from the other. He said he wished for an interview, and waited while I had a change of clothing. His difficulties were cleared up by reference to the Word of God, and he went away rejoicing in the knowledge of Christ as his Saviour and Friend.

Now I want to point out that if I had not fallen through the ice, I should not have returned until after he had left the town. Even if our friend had come five minutes earlier, he would have been informed that I was away and would not be back for some hours, and he would have gone without stating his errand. But the gracious God "who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," seeing in this man a sincere seeker after truth, turned His servant back just at the right moment, and in a most effectual manner, in order to point out to him the way of life.

The objection may at once occur to someone that it is a crude example of "guidance," when the "guided" one has to be turned back by a fall through the ice. To this I reply emphatically that this chapter is not written to show how quick we, as Christians, are, or the writer, as an individual, is, to observe and obey the guidance of God. Looking back over my past life I can see far too many failures in this regard. It is written to show that God does

guide His children, if they count on Him to do it, and often He does it *in spite of them*. The fact that we are often slow to discern the guiding hand of God only makes His guidance the more remarkable, and should call forth the more praise to His great Name. I willingly acknowledge that the facts prove that I was stupidly mistaken in planning that journey over the ice, when the Lord had other work for me to do at home. But does not this very thing emphasize the fact that God was watching over the movements of that seeking sinner and of His servant?

IV.

God's Appeal to a Murderer.

SOME years ago I was holding Gospel meetings at Husavik, on the north coast of Iceland. They were very well attended, and the small hall hired for the occasion, adjoining the local Temperance Hotel, was inconveniently crowded. One evening my subject was "The Resurrection of the Unjust," and whilst speaking, there came vividly to my mind a story I had heard or read years before, about a heathen who refused to accept the doctrine of a resurrection because, as he said, his hands were stained with the blood of many victims of his hate, and he dared not think of the possibility of meeting them again. I told this story, dwelling with solemn emphasis on the fact that a murderer, whether he believed it or not, would be again confronted with his fearful guilt before the bar of God, if he were not cleansed and forgiven through the blood of Christ.

I felt immediately afterwards that I had made a mistake, as my words might give the hearers an

opportunity of congratulating themselves that *they* had not gone this length in sin, and perhaps tend to confirm the self-righteous among them in their thought that the Gospel message was chiefly for moral outcasts and criminals. I determined to be careful not to make the same blunder again. At the last meeting, however, while speaking about the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from the guilt and defilement of sin, I remarked that a repentant soul could be cleansed even from the dark stain of *murder* by the atonement of Christ. Instead of simply mentioning this and passing on, as I had intended, I was impelled, quite against my own judgment, to dilate at length on the point, though I do not think I had ever done so before. I was inwardly annoyed with myself for perpetrating the same blunder as at the previous meeting. I was perplexed to think that I should have so lost control of my thoughts as to plunge into a subject I had definitely decided to avoid, and I was grieved at what I considered an unprofitable waste of words, calculated only to draw the minds of my hearers from their own need of the Saviour.

When the meeting was over, several people remained behind for medical help, and I was kept busy for some hours. The last man, a stalwart fellow, who had waited very patiently while others were attended to, consulted me about some trifling matter, and afterwards said he wanted to buy a New Testament. He chose one in an expensive binding and bade me "Good-night!"

My host, according to Icelandic custom, had waited to partake of supper with me. He opened the conversation by referring to the man who had just left, and remarking how surprised he was that he had attended the meetings and had bought a New

Testament, especially in such an expensive binding. He then went on to say how struck he and others had been at the bold way in which I had been directing my remarks at this man, who had been sitting right in front of me in the meeting. I did not grasp the drift of his remarks, and asked him to explain.

"Do you mean to tell me you don't know about J—— S——?" he exclaimed.

I replied that I had just made an entry in my notebook to send him some medicine, but that beyond that I knew nothing whatever about him.

My host stared at me in astonishment.

"Didn't you know that J—— S—— was a *murderer*?" he asked.

It was now my turn to be astonished.

"What?" I cried, when I could find words, "do you mean to tell me that a *murderer* was in the meeting to-night?"

"Yes, and in most of the other meetings, too, and you have been thundering away at him uncompromisingly. Surely you must have known about him!"

I assured him that I had not, and that I had no idea that a known murderer was allowed to go free amongst the public in Iceland. I asked how it came to pass that he was not kept behind iron bars.

My host then told me the whole story, and a horrible story it was. Several years ago the man had most brutally murdered his fiancée and her child, and had since exhibited the utmost coolness and carelessness with regard to his crime, never having been known to express the slightest regret or show any sign of repentance, though he confessed to his guilt and gave an account of his crime. He was condemned to death, but his sentence was afterwards changed to imprisonment for life. After spending fourteen years in prison, during which time he gave very little trouble,

he was released and allowed to live at Husavik, not far from the scene of his crime, under police supervision.

He had never been known to show the slightest interest in anything religious, and lived almost as a recluse. People were therefore very surprised to see him at the Gospel meetings.

As I heard this recital and recalled how that a few hours before I had been impelled, almost involuntarily, and without any knowledge whatever of his existence, to deliver a message for the second time which could only have been intended for this man, I was awed at the wondrous grace of God. Here was, to my mind, a concrete *proof* that God was not willing that this murderer should die in his sins, in that He compelled His unwitting servant to give him one solemn warning as to his future if he did not repent and believe the Gospel, and one definite offer of reconciliation and salvation through the blood of Christ.

Has anyone the hardihood to deny that it must have been by the direct guidance of God that I was impelled to deliver these two messages to this man who was sitting in front of me, only a few feet away, in that little hall at Husavik?

I have heard nothing more of J—— S—— since that evening. Some day I may meet him again at Husavik. He may have accepted God's offer of salvation; he may have rejected it. Whichever be his choice, the grace of God is exalted, in that He provided that this outcast and criminal should have eternal issues clearly placed before him.

Let us also be sure that if we seek to serve the Lord in any humble way, we may count on His divine guidance to direct our feeble efforts, so that the seed will fall in the right place.

V.

"The Lord Will Provide!"

It has been pointed out that our Lord, during His ministry on earth, warned His disciples against no sin so repeatedly and emphatically as the sin of covetousness, *i.e.*, the inordinate desire to acquire, combined with lack of willingness to impart. He taught them, both by precept and practice, to put the claims of the Kingdom of God in every case before the demands of this life, such as food and clothing, for the simple and sufficient reason that our Heavenly Father had definitely taken on Himself the responsibility of caring for the needs of those who do this. He taught that His people have no need even to take into consideration whether they will be the losers by taking a right course of action in any given case. If they *seek first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, "all these things" (*i.e.*, food, drink and raiment) shall be added unto them (Matt. 5. 31-33).

In no sphere is the love of money more reprehensible than in the service of God. Our Lord therefore said to His apostles: "Freely ye have received, freely give"; the Apostle Paul is again and again at great pains to make it clear that he is not seeking material gain in his service; and John speaks of missionaries going forth, "taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 7).

At the same time we find that Paul was spontaneously assisted in his service by various churches (cf. Phil. 4. 10-19), and John adds with regard to those who "go forth": "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth" (3 John 8).

This Scriptural order throws the preacher or missionary back on God, in whose hand are the hearts of

all men, to sustain him in his service and to meet his needs.

Being convinced, from the study of the New Testament, that those who give themselves to the service of the Lord should follow the example of the apostles and neither accept a salary for their services, nor collect money from the unsaved, nor make any direct or indirect appeal for funds for their personal needs, even to Christians, I had an opportunity of proving God's faithfulness in this regard soon after I was called to serve Him as a missionary.

I found, after seeking advice, that a knowledge of Danish would be very helpful in Iceland, especially at first, while I was acquiring Icelandic, which is a far more difficult language. I therefore decided to go to Denmark in order to learn Danish as quickly as possible. I had left business several months before and had spent the summer helping in evangelistic work in a Bible carriage, so that by the time I hoped to start for Denmark, I found that I had hardly any money left and my outfit badly needed replenishing.

I felt that I was now, at the outset of my career, to put to the test the convictions that my reading of the Word of God had given birth to. I took no one into my confidence except my fiancée, and together we waited on God that He would graciously send all that was necessary for the proposed journey, so that we might know that it was His will that we should pursue this course of dependence on Him alone, in our future path.

I was hoping to start on 20th October, 1904, but by the 17th I had only about eighteen shillings in my possession. We had no idea whence the needed help would come, but prayed earnestly to God. On the 17th, by the evening post, I received a letter

enclosing a considerable sum towards my expenses. The next day another came with a smaller sum, and the following day yet another. I had just time to get all I needed, so as to start on the 20th as intended.

That is eighteen years ago, and we have only had cause, again and again, to praise our God for permitting us to deal directly with Him about these matters, for we have never had occasion to revise, even for a moment, the conviction with which we began our service, namely, that this path, which He mapped out for His first disciples, is still the happiest path for those devoting their time to His service in these days.

After two years' service in Iceland I returned to England to get married. When the time came to return to Iceland, I found, after purchasing various household requirements, that we had not enough money even to pay our fares to Leith, where ships call on the way to Iceland, not to mention our passage across the ocean. Nevertheless we started, trusting our heavenly Father's faithfulness. No one on earth knew of our need. Doubtless our friends supposed that we had already booked our passages. We were invited to a meeting at Southport on the way north, and had just enough money to take us thither. While there, the Lord sent us help to take us on to Glasgow, our next stop. While there, He sent us enough to take us to Edinburgh. While there, He sent us, in good time, enough to pay for our passages and a supply of provisions to take with us to Iceland.

In Iceland we experienced our heavenly Father's care continually, so that we "lacked nothing."

On setting out for Britain again in 1909, I found, after finally settling up financial matters, prior to going on board, that we had not enough money left to pay our passages to Leith. Should we go, or wait?

We felt that the Lord would have us go, so we asked Him to send us the money that we lacked. It was just as easy for Him to send it to us while on the ocean as anywhere else, though it is unthinkable that our need should have been met in any other way than by Divine intervention. Just before the steamer left, a Christian Icelandic woman, who had been the very first convert, handed me a letter. On opening it, I found that she had been constrained to send a little thank-offering as we left, and not knowing what to buy, had enclosed some money. It was not very much, but was a token of our Lord's care for us. Still we had not enough to pay our fares. On these ships the fares are not collected until the journey is almost over, so there was plenty of time for the Lord to work on our behalf.

We had reached the last port of call in Iceland, a town on the east coast, after two or three days' journey, and the ship was about to cross the North Atlantic Ocean for Scotland. Still we saw no means by which help could arrive. Shortly before leaving, a telegram arrived for the captain from head-quarters. The company had news of a large quantity of dried fish awaiting shipment at the Westmann Islands, on the south coast, and decided to send our steamer a day's journey out of its way to take this freight. On arriving at the Westmann Islands I remembered there was a merchant there who had had quite a number of my publications for sale in the past, and had not settled his account for years. I paid him a visit. He so regretted his past neglect that he insisted on paying in full for all the books he had received, not taking any commission. This addition to my funds more than enabled me to pay our passages to Britain. As it was beautiful weather, the day we spent at these remarkable islands made an exceed-

ingly pleasant break in the monotony of the voyage, so that none of the passengers objected to this little excursion out of our route.

Those who know the Lord will at once recognise His hand in causing the ship to be sent out of its way in order that His servants' need might be met.

I would here emphasize the fact that the path of dependence on God is not by any means only to be trodden by those who devote all their time to the Lord's work, and follow no secular calling. Our Lord's assurance, "*Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things,*" certainly applies to all who know God as their Father. The promises of sustenance and care for our temporal needs are those of a *Father* to His children, not of a Master to His servants. *Every* child of God should commit his business and his daily affairs into the hands of his Father in heaven, and not only seek to conduct them solely to please Him, but also to trust Him implicitly for the supply of all needs.

VI.

Eirik and the Herrings.

(This true story of a "miraculous draught of fishes" has been told before in a booklet entitled "An Icelandic Fisherman." In this form it went literally round the world, and was reprinted in so many periodicals that I have lost count of them. Quite recently a special edition of it was printed in very simple English by a Missionary Press Bureau in the East, and sent to about ninety missionary editors, chiefly in Moslem lands, for translation into their various languages and insertion in their publications.

As it has now been out of print in English for some time, it has been thought well to incorporate the narrative in the present edition of "Can a Young Man Trust his God?")

EIRIK was an Icelandic fisherman who lived just outside the village of Hofsos, in the last of a row of

fishermen's huts on the rugged cliff overlooking the rough, swelling waters of the mighty Skagafjord—one of the broadest fjords on the north coast of Iceland.

Poverty had always been one of his nearest acquaintances. She had come to live with him soon after he was married, and he had never since been able to turn her out of the home. Once, faint and hungry through lack of food, Eirik attempted to put an end to his existence, as many other Icelanders have done. He took down his shot-gun, loaded it, kicked off his shoe and put the barrel of the gun into his mouth. While fumbling for the trigger with his toe, he swooned and fell. On coming to, he called on God, if there really was a merciful God in the heavens, to give him some food, and prayed that He would send a bird that way for him to shoot. He went down to the beach and looked around. A large bird, of an edible type, came flying past, and with an effort the emaciated man raised his gun and fired. The bird fell, and Eirik thus had his first intimation that God answered prayer.

Years passed, and Eirik's long struggle with poverty continued. Motor-boats were multiplying and getting the pick of the fishing harvest, and it became increasingly difficult for the owners of small rowing boats, such as Eirik was, to pay their way. The long, weary toil on the icy waters of the fjord took a heavy toll of Eirik's health and strength, badly clothed and fed as he was. One day, after great exertion, hæmorrhage from the lungs commenced. He grew worse and worse, until he had to go to the nearest doctor. It was not consumption, as Eirik feared, but the doctor could not cure him. He tried another doctor a long way off, with the same result. At last he borrowed money and journeyed to Akureyri, where there were, at the time, three

native doctors. He went from one to the other—his purse getting lighter and lighter and his heart heavier and heavier in the process—and finally was brought to the conclusion that he was incurable. Utter ruin stared him in the face. While in this state of mind, the suggestion was made to him: "Why don't you try the English missionary? At all events it won't cost you anything!"

So he came. I remember the day he walked into my dispensary and told me that his "back" *would* bleed. He located the trouble in his back, because that was where he felt the pain. I gave him some medicine, I confess with little hope of success, but with a prayer that it might be helpful to him. He left with some tracts in his pocket, promising to write and let me know how he progressed.

A month later I received a long and enthusiastic letter from him, giving good news of his health, and asking for a fresh supply of medicine. Thus our correspondence began, and before many months had passed, Eirik was able to row his boat with any man, without fearing the distressing recurrence of hæmorrhage. Best of all, he had found the Saviour of whom I had written to him.

His zeal was extraordinary for an Icclander, and he wrote me saying that he longed to use the health God had given him, to help to spread the Gospel that had blessed his soul, and he offered to travel round his county and sell Testaments and Gospel literature. It seemed fitting to him that the "back" that God had healed should bear a pack of books for God over the hills and valleys of Skagafjord county. He plodded on, week after week, sometimes in deep snow, until practically every house in the county had been visited with the printed message of the Gospel.

At first the neighbours could not understand Eirik.

"Swear-words" began to be excluded from his vocabulary—and when I add that the average Icclander can with difficulty conduct a simple conversation without continually calling on the Prince of Darkness, the significance of this will be understood. Other things showed that Eirik was not as they were, and this caused a sullen, disagreeable opposition to arise.

One day, after a long spell without any success in fishing, the welcome news flew round the village that the fjord was teeming with cod-fish. There was, however, one important drawback—they had no bait to catch them with. Small pieces of herring are generally used on the Skagafjord fisherman's many hooks, but they had caught no herrings for several weeks and therefore had no bait. The situation was most tantalising, especially as the need was great in some of the cottages. News came, however, by telephone that a trawler had put in at Siglufjord, the next large port along the coast, with a haul of herrings. Hastily the men clubbed together and hired a motor-boat to send to Siglufjord, and each gave his order for herrings according to the limitations of his purse. Eirik did not happen to put in an appearance, and the fishermen took the opportunity to play him a mean trick. "We won't let him know anything about the herrings until it is too late," said they, "and then we shall see how he fares." As the little harbour could not be seen from Eirik's cottage, it was an easy matter to keep him in the dark.

When the motor-boat came back, all the men got busy with their hooks and lines, except Eirik, and none would lend or sell him a single herring. Thinking of his wife and four children at home, and their dire need, he made his way up the steep cliff-path with a heart as heavy as lead; it seemed as if God had forgotten him. Before he arrived home, however, the

Lord reminded him of one of His promises, and his faith revived. He went into his little hut and "cast his burden on the Lord."

Now these hardy toilers of the deep can tell what kind of fish is under the surface of the sea, where a landsman can perceive no indication of any fish at all. I remember one of them pointing out to me a certain part of the fjord and assuring me that herrings were there, while in another part were cod; there might have been *whales* in both places for aught I distinguished! These men of Skagafjord had every reason to believe, according to their knowledge and experience, that herrings had not been in the fjord for weeks, and they did not even think it worth while to examine their herring nets. But it occurred to Eirik that possibly there might be a few stray herrings in his old patched-up net; in any case it was worth while looking, as he had nothing else to do. There were many first-class nets laid, and Eirik's was not in the best position by any means.

I suppose that the men who accompanied Eirik went to see fair play, as they themselves would have been quite equal to annexing the contents of a neighbour's net, and they judged Eirik by their own standard. It was good that they accompanied him. One net after another was drawn up empty, only to be thrown back in disgust, until they came to Eirik's. There seemed to be a hitch somewhere, but at last it came up, *full of herrings*! Hurriedly drawing up those remaining, they found that *there was not a single herring in any of the other nets*!

The men were speechless with astonishment, while Eirik praised his faithful God. He had got his herrings for nothing, while the others had paid the full price for theirs at Siglufjord, besides sharing the expense of hiring a motor-boat.

I know many of those men. I have sat in their homes and talked to them. Moreover, an account of this event was printed in the Icelandic monthly Gospel periodical, *Nordurljosid*, which, thanks to Eirik's efforts, circulates widely among these fishermen; but I have never heard a word from any of them indicating doubt or criticism of my account of the above event.

The only explanation I can offer is that God caused the herrings to go in and out around the other nets into Eirik's, to supply the need that he had made known to God, just as the Apostle Peter experienced, as recorded in Luke 5. 4-7.

The last part of this incident is, however, the best. Few would, I suppose, have judged Eirik harshly if he had sold some of his herrings for the same price as they cost at Siglufjord. But God gave him an opportunity of letting his light shine for Christ, and he made use of it. Going to those who, by reason of poverty, had not been able to order sufficient herrings from Siglufjord, he gave them freely of his store, in spite of their shabby treatment of him but a short time before.

Needless to say, a splendid catch of codfish gladdened the homes of Hofsos that day, but in none was there such joy as in Eirik's little hut.

Is it to be wondered at that Eirik was a successful salesman of Gospel literature? Is it to be wondered at that, when Eirik's friend, the missionary, came to Hofsos, the largest building would not hold the crowds that came to hear the Gospel preached?

Eirik is now with the Lord, who had done so much for him. On his deathbed he said to his wife: "Write and tell Mr. Gook that I died with the Name of Jesus on my lips." His life has not been in vain. I believe hundreds in various parts of the world have learnt

a lesson of fuller trust in God, through the experience of this obscure fisherman on the northernmost limit of European civilisation.

VII.

Always in Time!

As will be gathered from the incidents already recorded, we are often better able to trace the hand of God for us when our need is urgent, than when we are well supplied with all necessities. It seems to be part of our Heavenly Father's plan for our education in the path of faith, to allow us sometimes to spend almost all we have, and then *just in time* to send His gracious help. By these means one is enabled to lay one's hand on tangible evidences of the Lord's faithfulness.

Looking back over past years, one's heart is filled with gratitude for the many sweet experiences of our heavenly Father's care; how He has often waited until almost the last moment to see whether we would still continue faithful, or depart from the principles on which the life of faith is grounded. But in spite of much failure on our part, *He has never been behind His time*, NEVER!

I remember once, while in Iceland, I had need of 5 kronur.* We had sufficient provisions in the house, but I had just paid out a considerable sum and had only the equivalent of a few pence left in money. It happened to be a Wednesday, one of the days I received patients desiring medical help. It was an understood thing that the medicine was supplied free, but it sometimes happened that the patients expressed a desire to contribute a trifle towards the

*One krona = 100 aurar = 1/1½d. (normal exchange).

expense, and I allowed them to do so. (My books for one year showed that one patient in five paid a few "aura.")

Early on this particular day a patient came, I think for a tooth extraction, and insisted on paying 1 krona, in spite of my assurance that I made no charge. Soon after, another patient indignantly refused to accept treatment free, insisting on paying the same sum. Before the time came when I needed to pay the 5 kronur, three more patients had likewise insisted on paying one krona each. This was entirely unprecedented, and so opportune that, even apart from previous experience of the Lord's faithfulness, it would be logically impossible to avoid the conclusion that His hand had caused my need to be supplied in this way.

On another occasion I had two bills to pay, one amounting to 8 kronur, the other to 9 kronur. I have never had to postpone payment of an account when presented, and consider it consistent with Christian principle never to do so. The two orders had just been executed and the bills would be presented for payment in the course of the day. I had, however, just had to spend some money unexpectedly for another purpose, and had only a ten-kronur note left. I put the matter before our heavenly Father and asked Him to enable me to meet both demands, so that His Name might not be dishonoured by a departure from Christian principle.

Soon after, one of the bills was presented, and I offered the man my ten-kronur note.

"Have you no change?" he inquired.

I told him I had none.

"Well, neither have I. But it doesn't matter at all. I will come again some other time," he said, and forthwith departed.

He had only just gone when the other man came with his bill. I offered him the ten-kronur note. He had change, and the account was settled.

The first man did not come back until the next day. By that time I had received some money and was well able to pay him.

This may appear a trifling matter, but it is not. An important principle was involved. If, while in the path of dependence on God for our means, recognising His intervention on our behalf, we are unable to meet every proper demand when it is due, something is seriously wrong with our interpretation of God's will in this matter.

If the first man had been able to change my ten-kronur note, I should not have had enough to pay the second bill, and for the first time I should have had to say: "I cannot pay." But God was looking after this.

On another occasion, while staying at Southsea in 1915, God was pleased to test our faith by sending no help until we had spent our last shilling. We were not in need, for we believed that He would send us help in time, so we bought our necessary food in the usual way until we came to the point, one evening, when we had only twopence left. I had promised to give an address at a special Anniversary Service in Portsmouth that evening, but my twopence not being sufficient for the tram-fare, I had to cycle. On entering the hall I was greeted by a brother in the Lord, who handed me a letter which had been addressed to me at his house. It contained a Money Order for £10 from abroad. It had been a long time on the way, but our gracious Father saw to it that it did not come a day too late. How *could* it, when *He* had the matter in hand?

VIII.

Preservation in Danger.

THE difficulties of travelling in Iceland, and the rugged nature of its climate, have given me several opportunities of tracing the hand of God in preservation from danger.

I must, however, first tell of an experience of my younger days, in far more commonplace surroundings, where I learnt a valuable lesson in trusting God. I was studying at Greenwich, some months before I left for Denmark, and was asked to go for the week-end to New Brompton and preach on the Sunday afternoon and evening. Though my temporal needs were supplied, I happened to have only threepence in my possession at the time, so decided I should have to attempt the journey by road, although my cycle was old and the tyres were in an extremely poor condition. I had not expected to use the machine much more before going abroad, so had not renewed the tyres. I decided to start early, giving myself time to mend any punctures that might occur on the way. When I was about to start, however, I found to my dismay that my puncture repair outfit was missing. I made a careful search for it, but in vain. I hardly dared to venture without it, as I had a thirty-mile journey before me, so I fell on my knees and cried: "Lord, I can't find it! Shall I go without?" As clearly as it is possible for the human mind to receive an impression, I received the silent answer from the Lord: "Go!" So I went.

Every half hour I had to pump up one of the tyres, but made steady progress until I came to a fork in the road and took the wrong turning. I traversed a

zig-zag course in the endeavour to get in the right direction. The roads were old, and in some parts strewn with small, sharp flints for long stretches. I can truthfully say that I had never before ridden on roads so ruinous to pneumatic tyres. There were very few cyclists to be seen, but I passed two mending punctures by the roadside! Still my tyres held out. At last I got on the right road again, and soon had to light my lamp. Here was a new difficulty—my lamp had very little oil. I had not expected to use it.

I asked the Lord, on whose service I had set out, to bring me to my destination without further delay, as it was getting late. He did so. As I arrived at the address given me, my lamp went out, the last drop of oil being consumed.

As I was about to retire on the evening of the Lord's Day after a happy and fruitful season of service at this place, I was summoned downstairs again to see two friends who had called to see me, but who would not come in, as it was so late. With hardly a word, one of them thrust a large coin into my hand, said "Good-night!" and left. To my surprise I recognised two brethren with whom I had spent the greater part of the evening, and who had left only a short time before. The Lord had evidently constrained them to return and pass on this gift, which proved to be a five-shilling piece, which enabled me to return by train instead of cycle.

The sense of the Lord's preserving care throughout this journey made a great impression on me, and the remembrance of it has often encouraged me when in far more serious circumstances in my Icelandic travels.

A few years afterwards I was travelling through a very rough part of the south-east of Iceland, not

now on a cycle, but with two Icelandic horses, seeking to carry the Gospel to the remoter districts of that neglected land. I had spent the night at a farm where the message was not at all cordially received, the farmer being, I believe, an infidel.

I had to cross a deep river, running direct from a glacier, in order to enter the next valley. There was only one farm in this valley, but I determined to visit it with the message of salvation. It is quite a usual thing in Iceland, for someone to accompany a guest past any natural obstacles or dangers that may lie in his path in the immediate neighbourhood, but on setting out from this farm, I was merely told that, if I followed a certain path, I should arrive at the river at a place where it would be fordable.

In due time I came to the river, and, trusting the word of my host, urged my horses into the rushing, icy stream. I was further encouraged by seeing in the distance something that looked like a farm. I had not gone more than a few yards before the horse I was riding suddenly got out of his depth, plunged forward and began to swim. I realised then that I must have taken the wrong path. Some Icelandic horses swim "side stroke," which is distinctly disconcerting to the rider, but happily my horse did not have this peculiarity, and I remained in the saddle, though submerged up to my waist. My chief anxiety was for the contents of the pack-saddle on the other horse. The voyage across being accomplished satisfactorily, I found to my surprise that what I had taken to be the farm was only a group of disused sheep-houses!

Before proceeding further to search for the farm, I stopped to empty the icy glacier-water out of my riding boots. I did not dare to take them off, as it might have been very difficult to get them on again,

seeing they were very wet, so I had to hold my legs up and let the water run out.

Being absorbed in these interesting manoeuvres, I failed to notice that a thick fog was quickly enveloping the surrounding landscape. When at last I stood up and looked around, nothing was to be seen but fog.

I had now no idea of the location of the farm I intended to visit. I only knew that the valley was a large one, and that, humanly speaking, my chances of finding this one farm were exceedingly remote. Neither did I know my way to the next inhabited locality, as I had intended getting detailed information at the farm I was bound for.

There was no time to be lost, as I needed a change of clothing as quickly as possible. Any efforts of my own to find the way might have made my situation worse. The only one who could help was God. I looked up to Him and asked Him, for the Lord Jesus' sake, to lead me quickly to the farm I was seeking. I mounted my shivering horse, clapped my heels to his dripping flanks and let him gallop whither he would. Both horses were so cold that they were glad to go at a good pace, so we dashed ahead through the dense fog as quickly as the ground would permit. Neither of the horses had ever been in that valley before, so that there was no question of their natural sagacity coming to the rescue. Neither have Icelandic horses any instinct that would help them to find an unknown farm in a fog.

After riding rapidly for about half an hour, I saw something dark looming ahead of me. In a few seconds it became more distinct, and I saw I was heading *straight for the farm!* Did not my heavenly Father know where it was? And could He not guide my horse?

At the farm they happened to have an oven, and

moreover, it happened to be just hot, so my wet clothes were popped in and were soon dry.

On another occasion I went for a long winter journey on horseback, setting out with but little snow on the ground, and with every promise of settled weather.

On the return journey, about ten days later, I was joined by a brother in the Lord. We hoped to accomplish the journey in four days. On the third day we were overtaken by snow, which made travelling very difficult, and one of our horses gave out. We succeeded, however, in reaching the farm we had intended to stay at for the night. Next morning the horses had recovered, but a blizzard had commenced. As an Icelandic blizzard may last any length of time up to a fortnight, and there was practically no accommodation for us at the farm—we had had to sleep in a tiny room used as the local telephone call-office—we decided to cross the one remaining range of mountains that separated us from Akureyri, our destination.

An Iclander I knew, who was going the same way, had joined us, so we three set off up the mountain-side in the whirling blizzard, hoping that the storm would be less on the other side of the mountain.

We had to dismount and lead our horses most of the way, as the path was steep and there were already many snow-drifts. After crossing the top of the mountains, we found, contrary to our expectation, that the blizzard was even worse on the other side. The frost had greatly increased, and my fur hat, beard and coat-collar on the weather side of my face were covered by one thick sheet of ice, the snow first partially melting with the heat of my body and then freezing immediately. We could not see more than a few yards ahead, so thick was the driving snow,

and it became increasingly difficult to drag the horses through the snow-drifts, weary as we and they were. As matters grew rapidly worse, our native friend offered to remain with the horses, while we went on to seek help at the first farm we might reach on the fjord-side below.

Being heavily clothed for riding, with top boots and overcoats, and already exhausted with our efforts, my friend and I made very slow progress. We stumbled on painfully, plunging up to our thighs in snow, the whirling snow-flakes, like white bullets, stinging our faces. We could not see in which direction we were going, and found ourselves coming again and again to the brink of a precipice. We realised that when darkness came on, as it would shortly, this would be very dangerous. Once I sank suddenly up to my neck in the snow, but my companion helped me to scramble out.

It was not long before we both realised that our strength was giving out. Of course it is fatal in such circumstances to lie down in the snow and rest, though the temptation is very great. Sleep is sure to supervene, and the traveller quietly freezes to death.

Signalling to my companion to come nearer, I shouted to him, so that he could hear above the shrieking of the storm, that there was nothing more to be done but cast ourselves on the Lord. Joining hands, we cried aloud to God to deliver us and take us safely home, if it were His good will.

We did not spend many moments in prayer—in such circumstances prayers are characterised by depth rather than length. When we looked up, we saw a sight which I trust I shall never forget.

It was as if the storm-clouds were being drawn aside, like a curtain, by a mighty, unseen Hand. The howling of the tempest was subsiding, and to

our inexpressible joy we saw for the first time the waters of the fjord below us and, a moment later, the little town of Akureyri on the other side. We could even make out where our little home was.

In an almost incredibly short space of time the blizzard had ceased, and looking back we could see our Icelandic friend in the distance with the horses. It was now an easier matter to choose a path where they could walk without plunging up to their noses in snow every few feet. We waited for the horses and easily found the right way down the mountain-side. We soon reached a milder atmosphere, and threw ourselves down on the snow for a few moments to recover from our exhaustion.

Our difficulties were now at an end. We mounted and rode to a farm to inquire about the state of the frozen river at the end of the fjord. The obliging farmer immediately seized his ice-pole and led us across the ice by a safe route. With grateful hearts we clattered up the frozen streets of Akureyri and were soon enjoying the fellowship and comforts of "home."

It is most unusual for a blizzard to cease as suddenly as I have described. I have never heard of an instance in the habitable parts of Iceland, still less up in the wild mountain regions, where blizzards often rage for weeks. It is, alas! not uncommon for travellers to be overtaken and lost.

All praise be to our great Preserver, who has promised to hear the prayer of His people, when they cry to Him in their distress!

Why do we not trust Him more? He is the only One who is entirely trustworthy. Moreover, He who led His child through the fog and stopped the blizzard at his cry of distress, is able and willing to lead us through all the fogs of doubt and all the blizzards of opposition that may threaten us on our path.

Let us never neglect to put our case confidently and restfully in His loving hand, when we find our way thus hedged up.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10. 29-31).

IX.

Coals by Telephone!

PERHAPS the most remarkable proof, within the limits of my personal experience, of the watchful interest shown by our heavenly Father in the details of His children's lives, is furnished by an incident which took place in Iceland early in 1918.

The German submarine campaign had quite disorganised shipping between Britain and Iceland. Of the few ships which sailed regularly between the two countries, several had been either mined or sunk by submarines, and the prevailing scarcity of shipping made it quite impossible to fill the gaps.

On this account it became exceedingly difficult for Iceland to obtain sufficient supplies of coal for the winter 1917-18. The little that was available at Akureyri, in the north of Iceland, was quickly sold at £16 a ton.

We succeeded in obtaining a small quantity of dried turf of a peat-like nature, far inferior to the peat used in Scotland and Ireland. It produced abundance of ashes and little heat, involved continual stoking and was generally unsatisfactory. One of our greatest difficulties was in heating the

Gospel Hall for our meetings. My wife and her maid, who met with difficulties at every turn on account of the absence of coal in the household, made special prayer to God that He would be pleased to supply this pressing need. To me it seemed absolutely impossible that this request should be granted. No coal was obtainable in the town, nor was there any prospect of supplies coming at that time of the year from Britain. Still, I believed that the Lord would help us in some way or other over our difficulties, even though He did not actually send us coal.

But the Lord did "exceedingly abundantly above all that we asked or thought." "With God nothing is impossible."

One evening, early in January, 1918, when the heating problem was becoming acute, I received a telephone call from Reykjavik, the capital. It was the French Consul, who informed me that a French vessel had arrived there from Cardiff and had on board five tons of coal for me, and a parcel. He could give me no information as to the sender of the consignment, and wished to know what to do with the coal, as it had to be disposed of at once.

Taken completely by surprise, I was at a loss what instructions to give, but I promised to send him a telegram next morning.

It was a good thing to have five tons of coal, but it could do us little good in Reykjavik, 200 miles away, and there was no prospect of a ship leaving for our port, Akureyri, for some months.

I went to see a friendly coal merchant in the town, and he estimated the cost of shipping the coal from Reykjavik to Akureyri, at current freight charges, to be about £30 for the five tons!

Then he confided in me that there was really a

quantity of coal in the town, but it was the property of a man in Reykjavik, who owned several steam trawlers, and who was jealously hoarding it for the use of his trawlers the following summer, when coal might be even scarcer.

"If you could only get him to take your coal, and let you take five tons of his here!" he said, "but it is almost hopeless, for the Akureyri Town Council begged him to sell them the coal for the townspeople, and he refused. He won't let anyone touch his coal, and keeps it all under lock and key."

"Who is looking after the coal for him?" I asked. He mentioned a man I knew very well, who was the only other coal merchant in the town.

I went straight to his house and put the matter before him. "I want you to telephone to Mr. S—— and ask him to change five tons of coal with me, he taking my coals from the French ship at Reykjavik, and I taking five tons of his stock lying here."

"It's not a bit of good!" replied the merchant, "he has refused the urgent request of the Town Council, and he won't even let me have any of his coal, although I am his agent and a personal friend."

"Well, we'll try, anyway," I said; "if you don't mind telephoning, I will pay the expense."

He got a connection with the man in Reykjavik in a surprisingly short time, but on stating my request, met with an abrupt refusal. The man wanted coal in Akureyri, not in Reykjavik.

But while the merchant was telephoning to Reykjavik, I was telephoning to heaven. My friend changed the subject and spoke about other business for a short time. Then he reverted to his original request, and the man at the other end asked who it was that wanted to change the coal. After a few moments' hesitation, during which I was calling on

God to cause him to give way, he said: "Oh, very well, then, let him have them. Tell him to send me a wire to-morrow authorising me to take over his coal."

I went home that evening the possessor of five tons of coal, probably the only one so fortunate in the whole of the north of Iceland. On arriving home, I found a cable awaiting me from London, informing me of the despatch of the coal and a parcel, the sender's name being quite unknown to me.

Shortly after this reports came in that Greenland ice was invading the north coast of Iceland. It often happens that immense fields of ice are carried away by storm or current from the coasts of Greenland and borne towards the south. The action of the waves causes them to break up, and as they proceed further south they gradually melt. Sometimes these icebergs prove dangerous to steamers crossing the Atlantic, as in the case of the *Titanic*.

Almost every year there is a more or less pronounced "ice-scare" in the north of Iceland, and icebergs are often seen at a distance from the coast. At intervals averaging once in every twenty-five years the ice from Greenland floats into the Icelandic fjords and blocks up the whole or the greater part of the north coast, and sometimes parts of the east and west coasts also, for a considerable period. This causes great suffering, not only on account of the increased frost and the indefinite postponement of spring, but also through the lack of provisions, as no ships can get anywhere near the coast. There are no ports on the south coast.

I had been living thirteen years in Akureyri, and all that time I had never seen an iceberg. This time, however, I was going to see considerably more of them than I cared for.

A tremendous frost heralded the approach of the

hoary giants, and before long the whole of the north of Iceland lay in the grip of this awful invader.

Then it was that we traced the wondrous hand of God in leading the consignors of the coal to despatch it to Reykjavik instead of Akureyri. In ordinary circumstances this would have been a serious mistake, but the One—the only One—who knew that thousands of square miles of icebergs were on their way to the north of Iceland, and that a stock of coal in Akureyri could be exchanged, caused the senders to despatch the coal to Reykjavik. If they had waited for a ship going direct to Akureyri, which would have been, if they had known, by far the wiser thing to do in ordinary circumstances, the coal could not have reached us until some months later, for the ice blockaded us more effectually even than the German submarines.

What we should have done without this coal, I cannot tell. As it was, the frost, greater than we had ever before experienced, penetrated the walls of our wooden house and played all kinds of pranks with doors, cupboards and other wooden fittings. In the kitchen, with a good coal fire, the tap had to be kept running constantly to keep the water from freezing. Once it was turned off by mistake, and the water in the pipes promptly froze. In the morning we had to rise and dress the younger children with ten degrees of frost in the bedrooms. On the window-panes, inside, the frost stood about half an inch thick. All this was *in spite of* the coal fires. It will be understood how grateful we were that we did not need to face this frost without them.

Naturally we were glad to share some of the coal with the Lord's people in Akureyri, and the story soon spread in the town and aroused great interest. I wrote a short article about it in our Icelandic

Gospel Paper, which I believe made a great impression even on unbelievers, for they knew and appreciated the circumstances so well.

As we needed food as well as fuel, I thought well to sell some of the coal. The local doctor told me that he was very anxious to buy some coal for the hospital, as it was impossible to keep the wards warm with peat fires. The hospital is not a charitable institution, everything being charged for, so I did not hesitate to sell the coal at the usual price.

Although the doctor was an open unbeliever, he was always friendly, and I had had long conversations with him on eternal things. I therefore took the opportunity of telling him how God had sent His servants coal while no one else in the north of Iceland could get any for love or money. He listened with interest and said, when I had finished: "Oh! that is very easily explained on a scientific basis. It is an interesting instance of telepathy. Your prayers for coal caused thought-waves, like wireless telegraphy, and some sensitive person in Britain received an impression from them, and sent you the coal! It is very easily explained. It was no answer to prayer as you understand it."

A little later I said: "Let me see, doctor, will you not be in great need of coals for the hospital when these you are now buying are exhausted?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied, "I don't know what I shall do if the weather keeps on like this. I am doing all I can to get more coal, but it is quite impossible."

"Well," I said, "I will tell you how you can get five tons." He listened with intense interest. I continued: "All you have to do is to think about it as hard as you can and send out some powerful thought-waves. Some sensitive person or persons in Britain

or elsewhere will receive an impression from you and send the coals. This, according to your own showing, is the way my coals came, and you ought to be able to do as well. We are now in January. I will give you to the end of March to get your five tons of coal."

My friend collapsed. I then informed him in very direct language that he knew as well as I did that all the telepathy and "thought-waves" in the world would never have brought along five tons of coal in the existing circumstances, and that only the wisdom and power of Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, could possibly have answered our feeble cry and supplied our need. I hope he learnt his lesson.

I heard later that God had so burdened the hearts of some of His children in England with a sense of our need of fuel at this time, that they were impelled to take counsel together as to the best means of meeting the need. They were met by all kinds of difficulties, and it was only by dint of persistent effort and after personal representations had been made to the Admiralty, that they were able to obtain permission to send the coal. The ship decided on was the "Bisp," a Danish steamer that was to leave for Iceland about that time. For some unknown reason this was changed and the coals were ordered to be sent by the French vessel instead. *The "Bisp," soon after starting, ran aground and had to return to dock for inspection and repair. It did not start again for several weeks. Could human judgment have foreseen this and changed the ship?*

The date of sailing was kept secret, lest information should leak out and set the German submarines on the ship's track. Thus it was that no advice was sent me until after the ship had arrived.

Needless to say, this wonderful manifestation of God's care for us greatly strengthened our faith. Every shovelful of coal we used was a reminder of His faithfulness. Indeed, I may say that it was a blessed lesson to many who knew the circumstances.

As time went on and there were no signs of the ice leaving us, the outlook began to be very serious on account of food shortage. The ice has been known to stay for six or more months. After about six weeks it was laid on our hearts to pray very definitely that God would send the ice away. He who had manifested His power in sending us the coal, could surely send away the ice! So we felt encouraged to pray in faith that the Lord would do this great thing. One morning, at family prayers, I was impelled to pray: "O, Lord, blow the ice away with the breath of Thy mouth!" I little realised what a mighty answer the Lord was about to give.

In a few days a powerful south wind sprang up, the like of which we had only once seen, and then for a short time only. This time it continued with the fury of a gale for nearly a fortnight. Its power was terrible. Telegraph poles were torn up or snapped like matchwood, and communications were interrupted for several days. From the roof of our house six large sheets of corrugated iron, six feet by four each, were ripped off and scattered hither and thither, two of them being blown across a field, over a road and down a hill into the fjord. With the south wind came such a rise in the temperature that the snow melted with alarming rapidity and the water tore down in torrents from the mountain-sides. Our cellar, which is high up above the level of the road, was flooded, and two at least had to be constantly employed baling out the water for two nights and a day.

And what was the effect on the ice? The tremendous pressure of the mighty wind for nearly a fortnight, combined with the warmth that accompanied it, gradually began to take effect. The enormous masses of ice, millions upon millions of tons, slowly began to loosen and finally to move in a northerly direction. The news came through from the sea-end of the fjord, that the ice was moving! Soon after, a message came that the ice was going! And finally every heart was overjoyed as the news came that the ice had gone!

Away it went, hundreds upon hundreds of square miles of ice, whirling away into the Arctic Ocean, pursued by the mighty, rushing wind that the Lord had sent, and the north of Iceland was saved from famine.

The Lord had "blown away the ice with the breath of His mouth!"

Telegraphic communication had been restored by this time, and a message was sent to Reykjavik bringing a ship north in a few days, loaded with all needed provisions. The south end of the fjord was still covered with flat ice for about eight miles, but goods were easily transported on sledges.

I wonder what influence the doctor's "thought-waves" would have had on these icebergs?

Thank God, He has revealed Himself through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as a tender, loving, heavenly Father, who is always interested in the welfare of His children. This becomes gloriously manifest on the few occasions we, His children, permit Him to show His interest. Why do we not take more care to study His ways in His Word, so that we may rest in Him with a more intelligent confidence?

X.

Conclusion.

"LET us hear the conclusion of the whole matter," said the Wise Man of old, after striving to find the secret of true satisfaction and soul-rest under the Old Covenant. His conclusion was: "Fear God, and keep His commandments" (Eccles. 12. 13). Centuries later, another very wise man, writing in the brighter light of the dispensation of Grace, divulged the wonderful secrets of communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Among other things he wrote:

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: That we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3. 22, 23).

Here, in a nutshell, are the two essentials to the knowledge of God as the Hearer and Answerer of prayer: (1) We must be believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; (2) We must love one another. These are essentially "His commandments," "the things that are pleasing in His sight." True, other conditions are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, but these two stipulations cover them all. If we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall "believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11. 6). If love possess our hearts, we shall not "ask amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts" (James 4. 3). When these two conditions are fulfilled, we can truly ask "in the Name of Jesus" (John 14. 13-15; 16. 23, 24).

How simple is the life of childlike trust in God! Let us for ever banish from our minds the delusion that it is only for a certain class of Christians. It is the heritage of every soul redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Only let us "believe our beliefs and doubt our doubts" and unhesitatingly trust in our faithful God in every circumstance of our daily life.

As one has most truly written:

"Say not, my soul: 'From whence

Can God relieve my care?'

Remember that Omnipotence

Has servants everywhere.

His methods are sublime,

His love supremely kind;

God never is before His time,

And never is behind!"