

No. 53  
OF  
HOULSTON'S SERIES  
OF  
TRACTS.

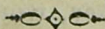
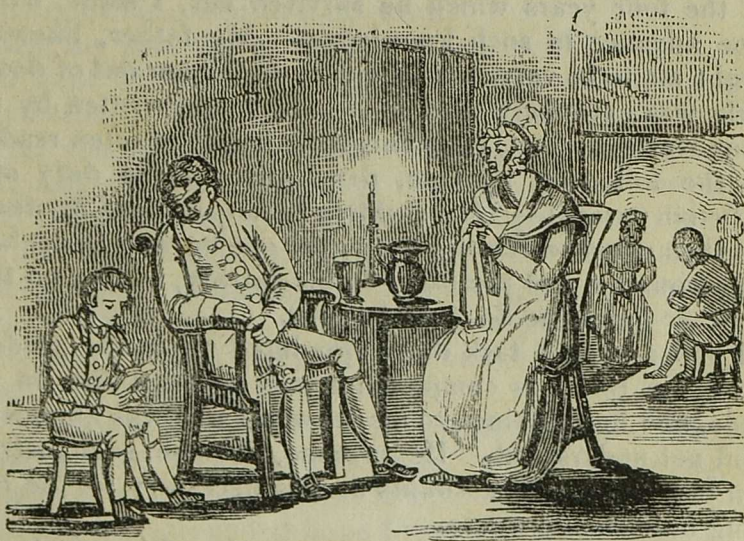
[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

MY BIBLE AND MY CALLING.

PART I.

BY MRS. CAMERON,

Author of "Margaret Whyte," "The Two Lambs," &c. &c.



LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR HOULSTON AND CO.  
65, Paternoster-Row.

Price 1*d.* or 7*s.* per 100.

[Tract Societies supplied with large quantities at a lower rate.]

# MY BIBLE

## AND MY CALLING.



### PART I.

I AM considerably advanced in life, for I was born, I believe, about the year fifty in the last century. My parents were pious and industrious. My father was a gardener; and, almost from my infancy, I was accustomed to assist him in his employment. I lost my mother when I was seven years old; but I have still a perfect recollection of the religious instruction she gave me. Before I was able to read, she had taught me many of Watts's hymns, and parts of chapters in the Bible; and, by her sweet and affectionate discourse, she had filled my infant mind with a great dread of sin, and a love of God and heavenly things, unusual at my age.

After I lost my mother, my father supplied her place in this most important duty of religious instruction; and, during the four years which he survived her, I made, daily, some advance in such knowledge. My father, likewise, taught me to be very industrious in my labour out of doors.

He was extremely fond of a little book, written by the pious Herbert; and, from this little book, he often read to me the following passage, descriptive of the duty of a Christian parent:—"His children he first makes Christians, and then commonwealth's-men; the one he owes to his heavenly country, and the other to his earthly, having no title to either unless he do good to both."

I had a certain task daily appointed me in the garden; and when this was completed I read to my father in the Bible, and he explained to me, as well as he was able, what I did not understand. He gave me, likewise, such instruction in writing and accounts as was necessary for the carrying on of his business.

Thus passed the first eleven years of my life, which, but for the death of my mother, would have been a period of unusual happiness; and, under the divine blessing, I owe all my preservation from the snares of after-life, my present comfort and future hopes, to the foundations which were then laid in my heart of the true knowledge of my own evil nature, and of the means of salvation through Jesus Christ.

I had just completed my eleventh year, when it pleased God to deprive me of my excellent father, almost by a sud-

den stroke. His illness, however, was long enough to enable him to make some arrangement respecting my future plans; and to repeat to me, in a most solemn and impressive manner, such advice as he considered of the utmost importance to my present and eternal welfare.

The day before his death he called me to his bedside, and taking my hand, and looking earnestly in my face, he said to me, "Frank, my poor boy, I shall soon leave you an orphan: and, were it not that you have a heavenly Father, who will never forsake you as long as you are faithful to him, you would, to all human appearance, be very desolate; for I must leave you in the hands of strangers. You know we have no near relations living. My nearest kinsfolk are two cousins, who are brothers, and reside in a very distant country. I have never seen them since we were boys; but I have understood that they are doing well, and bear a fair character in the world. The eldest of them is a farmer; and I have written to him to come over when he shall be apprized of my death: and he will see my body laid decently in the ground, and sell my effects for your benefit; and, if it suits him, he will take you back with him, and teach you the farming-business, for I have told him that you are an industrious lad, used to hard work."

Here my poor father stopped to recover his breath, and then went on,—“But, my lad, whether you return with your cousin, or whether he may see fit to dispose of you elsewhere, you will have no father and mother to watch over you; and who can tell whether there will be any one to remind you of your duty? But I beseech you to bear in mind the directions I have so often given you.—Keep the Sabbath-day holy; pray night and morning, at the very least; read your Bible daily; and be industrious at your calling. These four rules, if observed, will be the best preservation from temptation that I can give you.

“My beloved boy, death will soon come to the youngest of us: and O, what a comfort it is,” added he, raising his dying eyes, “what a comfort it is, at such an hour as this, to have a well-grounded hope that all our sins are washed away in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. Study the Bible, my lad, and it will teach you to know, and love, and trust this dear Redeemer. Study the Bible, my lad. It was the dying advice of your mother: it is the dying advice of your father.” He was unable to proceed any further.

In the course of the day, he gave me some directions respecting what I should do when he was dead; but afterwards, what little he was able to say to me, was all respect-

ing my spiritual concerns. His last moments were very calm, and expressive of a joyful hope of a blessed immortality, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As soon as the eyes of my dear father were closed, and the old woman who had taken care of our little household since my mother's death had led me, crying bitterly, from his bedside, I began to think of obeying his last directions; among which, I was ordered to write, immediately upon his death, to the kinsman I have before named.

Six days elapsed before my kinsman arrived; during which time, I was chiefly alone in the house with the old woman, reading the Bible to her, and sometimes crying by the corpse of my poor father. And I would often seek for comfort in praying to God, that he would be my father, and not forsake me now my parents were gone.

I never omitted, during this season, paying such attention to the garden as it regularly required, and would often forget my sorrow among my flower-beds, unmindful that even these objects of my regard must soon be forsaken.

Some necessary preparations had been made immediately, by my old companion, according to my father's desire, for his funeral; and as my relation was so long in coming, it was found necessary that it should take place before his arrival.

I pass over all account of that sad hour when I, as chief mourner, followed my last surviving parent to the grave. It was on the evening of that sad day, as I was sitting by the old woman, reading my Bible to her, that we heard a loud rap at the door, and, on opening it, my kinsman appeared. I did not know who he was, but I shall never forget his first appearance. He was a tall, robust man, seemingly about ten years older than my father. He was naturally of a ruddy complexion; but the habit of drinking ale, as I afterwards learned, had given it a much deeper cast. He was inclined to be corpulent. He wore a drab great-coat, and stockings, or rather gaiters, of blue ribbed worsted, such as country people in former days wore instead of boots. He had a whip in his hand. When the old woman opened the door for him, he asked her, in a very loud voice, if one Francis Seldon lived there?

"Yes, Sir," answered the woman.

"Is the funeral over?"

"Yes, Sir. We could not put it off any longer, though my poor master's kinsman was not come."

"I am glad it is over," said he; and then walking forwards into the house, he reached out his hand to me, saying, "I suppose you are young Frank. You and I shall be bet-

ter acquainted by and by. I am your cousin Bob Harris, and am come many long miles to take you back with me."

I bowed, and answered, as well as I could; but, before I had said many words, he fixed his eyes upon my book, and then upon the sunny window looking to the garden. "What! are you at this work?" said he. "I thought you had been a great man for a spade."

"And so he is," returned the old woman; "they tell me there is not a harder working lad in the place. But, Sir, you must allow for the season; or else, I can assure you, he always makes hay while the sun shines."

My cousin took my hand; and, turning it round several times, "Ah!" says he, "it looks as if it had stood wind and weather."

He then sat down in my father's arm-chair, which the old woman had placed near the fire. "Have you got any thing to eat in the house?" said he.

"We have good bacon and eggs," she answered; "and, by a sad chance, we have cold meat to-day."

"Fry me some eggs and bacon, quickly," said he.

While she was doing this, I perceived that my cousin's eyes were never taken off the fire; and I fancied that he was pondering over something, but I afterwards found that I was mistaken.

"What's your tap?" said he, as the old woman spread a clean cloth upon the little round table, upon which my father used to sup, and set it before him.

"We have got good fresh drink, such as my master used to like, but nothing better."

"Then step to the public-house over the way. I tasted the tap there as I put my horse up, (for it misgave me that you might not have any good ale in the house,) and fetch me a quart. Nay, I think I will have two quarts. And I bespoke a bed at the house, for fear the funeral should not be over."

My cousin made me drink a glass of ale with him to our better acquaintance; and before his jug was emptied, he had fallen back in his chair into a very sound sleep.

The next morning, he told me, that he should be employed two days in settling my father's affairs; and that he intended to set off on his journey at five o'clock on the third morning, and meant to take me back with him. He also directed me to pack up all my clothes in a strong box, to be sent by a waggon. "But mind," said he, "that you pack up no books, nor writing-paper: I will have all these sorts of matters put in the sale. I do not want a parson to drive my plough."

I never imagined that I had disobeyed my cousin when I packed up my Bible and Prayer-Book; I only supposed that he meant I should not take with me some books on gardening which he had found in the house. I do not often remember my father reading any other books than these, except his Bible.

I had no need to be called the day that I was to leave my beloved home. I was up, and dressed, before the clock struck four; and the old woman was up too, preparing my breakfast, for she was to stay in the house till the sale was over. I went, as usual, to water my flowers, but it was with a very heavy heart. As I took leave of my lavender beds, my favourite moss-roses, my pinks, and carnations, as well as of our choice and early vegetables, (for no garden was held in repute like my father's,) it seemed as if I was parting again with my beloved parents, and I wept like a young infant. I well remember, in an agony of grief, falling upon my knees, and praying God to be my guide and protector in this world, and to bring me, at last, to that celestial garden—that Eden above—where, through a Saviour's merits, I should be for ever united to my beloved father and mother. I was then called into the house, and took my last leave of the garden; and, since that day, I have never had it in my power to revisit my native place.

Having taken my leave of the old woman, I repaired, with a small satchel on my back, to the little inn where my cousin slept. It had not struck five; but he was standing at the door of the house, with his whip in his hand, quite ready to set out.

When I stood before him, my tears ran over, and I could not speak. After looking at me for some time, he laid his whip over my shoulders, but not in an ill-natured way, "What! whimpering?" said he; "but, I promise you, there is no occasion. Only be a good boy, and you shall never want for plenty to eat and drink while you are with me."

Before I could answer, his horse was brought out: he bid me get up behind him, and we were soon out of sight of my native village. I rode behind him to the next town, through which a stage-coach passed, by which I was conveyed within two miles of my new home, while he continued his journey on horseback.

After travelling two days northwards, the coach stopped at a little public-house, where I was met by a countryman, who conducted me over several ploughed fields, and through a miry lane, to my cousin's house. It was an old-fashioned place, surrounded by a large farm-yard, and many corn-ricks and hay-ricks.

My cousin Robert was not yet returned home; but I was welcomed with some kindness by his wife, who appeared to be of the same character with her husband, only much more talkative, and, as I afterwards found, very passionate, and very strong in her likes and dislikes. She was at first very free with me, and made me call her cousin Kitty; but as it was a long while before I could feel quite at ease in my new home, (if ever I did,) she seemed to become wearied of trying to make herself agreeable to me, and took a great dislike to me. Perhaps I might be in some degree to blame myself, with regard to my cousin Kitty's dislike of me; as, indeed, I know I was in some other respects. Yet, upon reviewing my conduct at this time, I do not see how I could, in general, have acted differently towards her than I did; for I was placed in very difficult circumstances. But, without entering into too many particulars, I shall describe our usual manner of life in my new home, and the trials which I had to endure.

We always rose by break of day, and were at our work out of doors. This I was accustomed to, and I soon became very fond of the farming-business, and was considered as an active, steady lad; and, when my mind was in a right state, I enjoyed myself much on many occasions—when I breathed the fresh morning air, or saw the sun rise, or heard the blackbirds, and other early songsters—and when our work took us near the wood side, where the flowers abounded: for my parents had used me to look to the Creator through the works of creation. Besides, I was very fond of all the animals under my care; so that, whenever I could be by myself, or among the old men, who spoke but little, I was very contented, for I was at all times a very quiet boy. Yet, even with the old men, and, I am sorry to say, with my cousin Robert in particular, I often heard very bad language.

With the young men and boys I was never happy; and, perhaps, I might be sulky with them, and not always take it in good part when they called me parson, or, Frank the puritan, or asked me, where would be the text of my next sermon; but, indeed, they did very often talk in a manner which was not fit for any boy to speak or hear.

My days, however, were much more comfortable than my evenings. There was a very large hall, or kitchen, in which the whole of the family sat; there were two fire-places in it, and in the winter my cousins sat by themselves at one fire, and the servants were at another. I was allowed to sit with my cousins. My cousin Robert had always a round table before his three-cornered chair, and on it he had a jug

of ale; and sometimes he smoked a pipe. He was a hard-working man; and, after he had sat a while with his ale, he never failed to fall asleep. My cousin Kitty would then often take her work and go to the other fire-side: at any rate, when her husband was asleep, she would generally join in the discourse of the servants, calling out in a loud voice to them, "What's that you are saying there?" scolding or laughing with them as she happened to be in the humour.

She would often call me to sit down among the boys; but there were many things said and done in this party which I should be very sorry to be obliged to repeat. And sometimes my cousin would stand among the maids laughing, and at other times she would scold them, and call them impudent hussies.

I never made one in this party, if I could help it, whatever names I might be called for refusing to do so; but I preferred sitting by my cousin Robert, as he lay snoring in his great chair. For several evenings I brought my Bible down stairs to read; but I was soon hooted and hissed out of this. Even on a Sunday evening I was not allowed this indulgence in any kind of peace. Nor do I remember, during the time that I spent in this house, ever seeing any of the family sit down to read any book, good or bad: though, sometimes, the boys would buy a ballad at a fair, and it would be handed round in an evening among such of the servants as could read; and it would seem to give a great deal of pleasure.

I slept in a room with several men and boys; and, as we had candle allowed us only just long enough to enable us to undress ourselves, I thought it was in vain to try to read at bed-time. On Sunday we might go to church once a day if we pleased, as we had half the day to ourselves; but my cousins set us no examples of attending the house of God, and I believe they were as well pleased to hear that we were playing at nine-pins or fives in the road, as that we were quietly attending divine service. My poor cousin Robert seemed to dread nothing so much as a book, and the Bible he dreaded more than any other book. Whether he knew it or not, I cannot consider that in those days he was any thing better than an infidel; and his wife was, of the two, certainly the worst in this respect.

I had never before met with any serious difficulty in my religious course; and I yielded to unbelief, and thought that my trials were greater than could be borne. By degrees I gave up almost every attempt to read my Bible, neglected church, and became cold and careless in my private prayers. I did not, however, run into excesses like some



of my companions, for my temper led me more to silence and melancholy; though, had not my heavenly Father raised me up a timely friend, it is uncertain what habits I might have formed.

In this sad way, for the most part, the time passed away till I was fourteen years of age; when the old rector of the place, who had for some time been absent on account of health, returned to take charge of his flock; and, soon afterwards, notice being given of a confirmation in a neighbouring town, he called at every house in the parish to ascertain the number of young persons who were of a suitable age for confirmation. There was another boy of my own age in the family, and we were both in the field, with my cousin Robert, when the venerable man came to him; and, addressing himself very courteously to him, he made the enquiries as to the number of young persons in his house.

My cousin replied, that he had two boys in his family who were turned fourteen; and that, for all he cared, they might go to church to be catechised, so that it was but once on a Sunday, for he could not spare them from the beasts oftener; but, for his part, he never saw that any man minded his business a bit the better for such over-much religion.

The old man looked up mildly at my cousin, as if about to answer him; but he, not choosing any further discourse, turned off whistling, and smacking a waggoner's whip which he held in his hand.

After a few moments' silence, the amiable man said to me and the other boy, "Should you like to come to church and be catechised? Should you like to learn to walk in the ways of wisdom? All her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

I do not know whether my companion made any answer; but I recollect, that as I listened to the old gentleman, such a train of sweet recollections were brought to my mind as I know not how to describe—the holy remembrances of days and feelings long passed away; and I suppose that there was something in my manner which attracted his attention: I conclude this from his conduct towards me afterwards. Even at this distance of time I could break out into singing, when I reflect upon the tender mercies of my heavenly Father in raising me up such a friend as this excellent man in this time of my need.

I was very impatient for the day to come when the catechising should begin. And, by the blessing of God, the instruction which I received by this means, was very profitable to me. I was brought to perceive my guilt in departing from the narrow way into which I had been early

led; and I began to see more clearly, that in myself there was neither righteousness nor strength, though, alas! I still learned the lesson but imperfectly.

Thus, by degrees, I gained once more the peace of mind I had lost, though still in the midst of outward trial.

The house of God was once more exceedingly dear and pleasant to me, and I was never absent from it when it was in my power to go there. I had sometimes the gratification of meeting my pastor in the course of the week, for he was always very active in visiting his flock; and sometimes I had opportunities of calling at his house. In the course of the communication we had together, I made him acquainted with all my early history, and some of my present difficulties, and I found his advice very valuable to me.

The daily reading of the Bible, with earnest prayer, he particularly pressed on me; and being positively forbidden to bring my Bible down stairs, at least on week-days, I determined to make use of the little season of candle-light which was allowed us in our bed-room for reading my Bible; and when the candle was taken away, I said my prayers, and undressed myself in the dark. I was at first persecuted by my companions for this new custom; but I thank God that I was enabled to persevere, and they soon left me to myself; and in a little time I succeeded in persuading the boy who was catechised with me to read the Bible also.

I had now regained my usual cheerfulness; and I am sure that I was much more good-humoured, and made myself much more useful in the family, than I had been for some time before. Yet I was not, on that occasion, at all better liked by my cousins; on the contrary, when it became known that I went to church, whenever I could, and that I read my Bible daily, the dislike of my cousins, especially my cousin Kitty, became more inveterate. Indeed, I have some reason to think that she stood in fear of my becoming a spy on her conduct, which made her avail herself of every opportunity of setting her husband against me, in order that she might get me removed out of her family.

I was now turned fifteen, and a tall boy of my age. I was become extremely fond of the farming business; and my cousin Robert would sometimes tell me, that if I would let the books alone, I should be a very tidy lad. Yet my outward situation was certainly extremely uncomfortable through my cousin Kitty's extreme unkindness.

While things were in this state, my cousin Robert received, one evening, by a neighbour, a message from his brother Richard, importing, that he intended to pay him a visit in the course of the next week.

As my father had spoken of this brother Richard on his death-bed, and as I shall have much to say respecting his visit, I think it will be best, before I proceed any further, to repeat such particulars respecting him, as I had gathered from the conversation of his relations.

In his very early days he had always shewn a great dislike to his father's employment, which was farming; and not being indulged with being sent to school, as was his desire, he took an opportunity of leaving his father's house when about sixteen years of age, and engaged himself as servant to a young gentleman in the neighbourhood who was going abroad for some time. Being a lively boy, with much to say for himself, he soon became a great favourite with his master, who took great pains to instruct him in such things as he knew himself. At Paris, he fell into that sort of company, then very common, which was ready to read and believe every thing but the Bible; and every new opinion that he received was very soon taught to Richard.

Richard had been eight years abroad, when he was sent for home to the dying-bed of his father. He did not see him alive; but it seemed that the old man had forgiven him, and left him equal with his brother.

Richard having now some money, determined to remain at home, and settled himself in a neighbouring town as genteelly as he could: and he soon became very much looked up to by some persons in the neighbourhood, as knowing a great deal more than most other people, and as having what were called very polite manners. It was not long, however, before he found that his money went too fast. He married a milliner in the town, who kept a small shop for mercery. He enlarged the shop, and thought he should make his fortune; but he liked company, and conversation, and reading, better than business. And the habits of his wife too much resembled his own, so that his affairs were going down fast; and at the very time when they ought to be most prosperous, as he had a family of young children.

Now as my cousin Robert had no children, and a great deal of money, he knew that his brother would be very glad of some of it; he, therefore, never invited him, or welcomed him heartily to his house; and most likely, when he received the message from him that he was coming to see him, he would have sent him word that he should not be at home, had not my cousin Kitty prevented his doing so, because she had some scheme to carry about me. What this scheme was I soon discovered.

The day before my cousin's arrival, I happened to be left alone with my cousin Kitty. She was busily employed in

preparing something for dinner; when, turning suddenly towards me, and wiping her hands with her apron, "So, Frank," said she, "your cousin Richard is coming here; and I hope he may chance to take a fancy to you; for your cousin Robert means to have no more to do with you."

"No more to do with me, cousin!" I repeated.

"Ay; no more to do with you," said she, in a louder voice. "You have sickened him with your puritanical hypocritical cant, your Bible reading, and your starched ways, as if you thought nobody was good for any thing but yourself: and it will be well if you can persuade your cousin Richard to take to you. But I can tell you what,—he is no greater a friend to godly doings, and precise ways, than his neighbours are. For my part, I wish you had been left to pick up stones in your father's garden, and had never set your foot within these doors."

I cannot call to mind what she said further; but she was in too great a passion to hear any answer I might attempt to make.

As soon as she had finished what she had to say, I went in search of my cousin Robert, that I might gain from him some explanation of what had passed; but he seemed, purposely, to keep out of my way, even till the very moment of his brother's arrival, and wilfully to shut his eyes to the uneasiness and perplexity which I could not conceal, and which, but for my confidence in my heavenly Father, would have quite overwhelmed me.

And now, on reviewing all this unkindness, which, to a boy in my desolate situation, was a great trial, I plainly see in it the hand of God: for the recollection of it, together with the remembrance of other things which I had heard and seen in my cousin Robert's house, was made the means, in after days, of impressing deeply on my mind this important truth—that the neglect of the Bible is ever the parent of vice and infidelity, and that a blind and stupid ignorance is often employed by Satan as a means of producing this fatal neglect.

With this reflection I conclude for the present, and reserve the account of my cousin Richard's visit to a future occasion.

L.

END OF PART I.