

THE BRIDGE OF LOVE.

BY GEORGE BREALEY.



ARROWS SHOT AT A VENTURE.

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The Bridge of Love.

“**F**IRE! fire! fire!” screamed a woman in an agony of terror, as she rushed from a narrow court into the street. The sound was quickly taken up, and those terrible words resounded on all sides. While some rushed off for the fire-engine, others poured into the court to render what assistance they could.

The house was old, the woodwork was dry as tinder, and before any help could

arrive, the staircase was in flames. The thick black smoke came pouring out in dense volumes, filling the air with its stifling odour, and hanging like a black canopy over the devoted house.

It was just about the hour when work ceases for the day, and the streets were filled with labourers and artizans on the way to their homes. As they drew near to the scene of the conflagration, and heard the dreaded yet fascinating cry of fire, they quickened their steps towards the spot, and joined the gathering crowd.

And now the flames began to burst through the roof; curling tongues of fire shot out from columns of black smoke, and threw a lurid light over a sea of up-

turned faces that anxiously watched the work of destruction.

But hark! was that a child's voice calling for help? Those who stand nearest the burning house, as near as any dare stand, bend forward and earnestly listen.

There are many fathers and mothers in that crowd, and many hearts are beating anxiously.

The roaring and crackling of the flames become louder and louder. There is that cry again. Those who are nearest can hear the words, and they are rapidly repeated from one to another:

"Father, make haste and save me! Father, make haste and save me!"

A puff of wind has blown the smoke

aside for an instant, and there at the window all the crowd can see two little children standing with extended arms appealing for help.

Women wept and prayed, and shouted words of encouragement to the children; strong men rushed to the door and attempted to enter the house to rescue them, but the fierce heat and the stifling smoke drove them back again. Others ran and stood under the window, calling to the children to jump out; but they could not hear or did not understand.

The window where the children stood looked out at the narrowest part of the court. Although the flames completely surrounded them and cut off their escape

from behind, the wind blowing in their face drove back the fiercest of the heat, and kept them from being suffocated.

A tall, powerful man stood up with his back against the wall under the window, while another climbed up and stood on his shoulders and tried to reach the children. The people cheered lustily when they saw the attempt, and a groan of despair burst from every lip when the utmost efforts of the men failed to reach the window.

There was a sudden commotion in the outskirts of the crowd, and loud voices were heard in remonstrance; then a lane was opened between the people, and the father of the children rushed forward in

breathless haste toward the burning house. In an instant he comprehended the danger. Entering the house opposite his own, he ascended to the first floor and threw open the window that faced the spot where his children were standing.

The court narrowed here, and the distance was not more than five feet from window to window. Leaning out, he swayed himself to and fro as only a carpenter knows how, until he could reach the window of his own room. Grasping the sash firmly by his hands, his body formed a bridge across which he intended that his children should pass to a place of safety.

"Now, Willie," cried he to his youngest boy, "you can trust me, can't you?"

"Yes, father," was the prompt reply.

"Then get across on my back as quickly as you can."

The boy obeyed, and cautiously creeping on his hands and knees, he passed as it were from certain death to life!

Eager hands were extended to receive him, and the people shouted loudly when they saw that he was safe.

The eldest boy followed him, and he too soon reached the other side.

But the father was now in great danger. The children were rescued only just in time, for the heat became unbearable. The burning embers fell around him, and the smoke almost suffocated him. It was a moment of intense agony to the on-

lookers as they beheld his efforts to quit his perilous position.

“He is safe!” shouted the crowd, as they saw him quit his hold. But whether the heat and smoke had rendered him partially insensible, we cannot tell; he fell to the ground, and was killed.

He was a truly Christian man, and when God in His unerring wisdom saw fit to take him to Himself, we have every reason to believe that he was ready.

A few months previously his wife had died; and when passing away, she said to her husband,

“William, I shall soon be with Jesus. Promise me that you will meet me in heaven with our two dear boys.”

“By God’s help, I will,” he replied.

From that hour he strove earnestly to fulfil the task that devolved upon him, and it was his delight to spend his evenings in instructing his children in the ways of God. As long as they live they will never forget their father’s love, and that he died to save their lives.

This is only a feeble, a human illustration of our lost condition, and of the love which Christ bore to us sinners. “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” In our lost state we were in greater peril than those children in the burning house. There was a great gulf betwixt us and the place of safety. Christ saw the danger we were

in; He saw that if left to ourselves we should be lost; that we were cut off from heaven. Having counted the cost, He came to our relief. He bridged over the gulf, and offered to all who will accept it the means of escape. "I am the way," says Christ; there is no possibility, then, of our making a mistake. "I am the truth;" we cannot, if we put our confidence in Him, be deceived. "I am the life;" and this life is just what we are seeking.

Let us consider the matter carefully. We are in danger of eternal death. The Bible proves this very clearly: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." There is a way of escape open. We know it is the true and only way, and we know that if

we escape by that way we shall gain eternal life. The whole affair may be put in a nutshell; we have set before us eternal life and eternal death.

Our companions and fellow workmen give us credit for common sense. They perhaps say of us, "Ah, such a one knows what he's about; he's no fool." If such be the case, if it may be said of you that you are no fool, then of course you will not hesitate a moment which to choose, eternal death or eternal life. One is the loss of everything, the other is to gain everything.

Think! think! The majority of the souls that miss salvation are lost because they never thought seriously about it.

You, if you are a sensible man, can you sit down and consider this subject for five minutes, and then rise up and say that the eternal life Christ offers is not worth troubling about?

Perhaps you say, "I can't spare the time just now; I'm busy to-day. I'll think about it to-morrow." If you are sure that to-morrow's sun will rise upon you; if you are sure that the Spirit of God will be ready to-morrow to influence your heart, and to counteract the bad advice and influence of the devil, then there is no very great objection to your putting it off. But are you sure of this? God has said, "My Spirit shall not *always* strive with man."

Suppose those children had said, "Wait a bit, father, till we have finished our play," what would you have called them? Fools! And what are you, who ask God to wait until you have leisure to consider whether or not His offer of salvation is worth accepting? Has Satan so blinded you that you cannot see how near you are to destruction?

Many people think that they can be saved whenever they choose to begin in earnest; but this is a great mistake. This is one of the devil's delusions. True, God is a God of mercy and love, and He will not cast out those who come to Him. But if time after time you have put off the Spirit of God with promises of a

more convenient season; if time after time you have put off Christ, it is just possible that when you come to your bed of sickness, or your death-bed, and begin to think of seeking for Christ, it is just possible that then you may not be able to find Him.

God forbid that a mortal man should judge in this matter. God is longsuffering; He is a God of love. But He sometimes lets men alone; He gives them their own way, and that way is destruction.

Remember:

IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO
THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD !

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