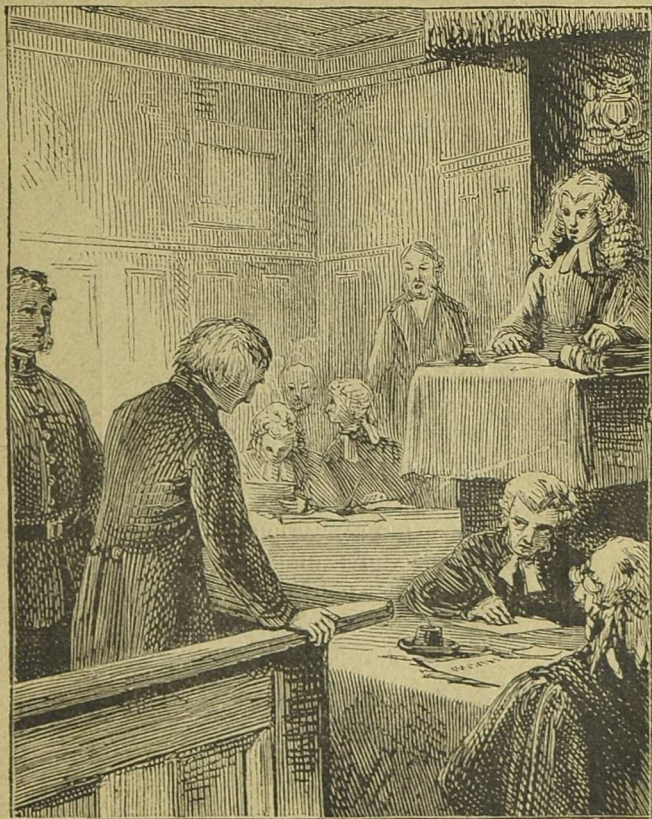


LAW AND MERCY.

BY GEORGE BREALEY.



[Page 8.]


ARROWS SHOT AT A VENTURE.

1. THE BRIDGE OF LOVE.
2. A LIFE-BELT FOR SINKING SOULS.
3. NANNY AND HER BURDEN.
4. "MIGHTY TO SAVE."
5. THE SHIPWRECK.
6. LAW AND MERCY.
7. TAKEN AT HIS WORD.
8. THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.
9. "THE DOOR IS OPEN, DONALD."
10. OLD MAGGIE'S THREE TEXTS.
11. REJECTING SALVATION.
12. GIVING AND TAKING.

Twelve in a Packet, 6d.



Law and Mercy.

TWO young men were at college together. Their parents had plenty of this world's goods, and their sons were receiving such an education as would fit them to hold high positions in society. Life's morning had dawned brightly for them ; everything looked fair and pleasant ; and their parents fondly hoped to see them not only doing their

duty in this life, but humbly and faithfully serving God, and preparing for the world to come.

They were fast friends. Their tastes and pursuits were alike, and for the first few years of their college life they were seldom separated.

But by-and-by a change began to steal over the eldest of the two. Oftentimes, when his companion called him to go to the house of God, he would find some excuse for staying at home. Gradually his studies became neglected for parties of pleasure, from which he would return highly excited by wine. Then he openly profaned the Sabbath, and the sound of

the church bells often smote his conscience while he was indulging in some profanity, and by his example leading others astray.

This conduct greatly grieved his companion. He expostulated with him, and earnestly besought him to forsake his evil ways. His father, his mother, his sisters added their entreaties, and with tears in his eyes he would promise amendment. But the chains of sin were riveted so tightly around him that he could not escape. He had not the power to resist temptation. In the morning he made the most solemn promises of reformation; but the evening found him in the company of

his gay and sinful companions, and at midnight he staggered to a drunkard's couch.

He was expelled from college. His companion left about the same time, and both returned home to their native place. Years passed on. The one sank lower and lower, adding sin to sin, and iniquity to iniquity, until he became a byword and a reproach. At first he was ashamed; but meeting only with hatred and contempt, his heart became hardened, and he fiercely returned hate for hate.

As the one sank, the other rose. God blessed him temporally and spiritually. He stood high in the estimation of his fellows, and became a magistrate. He did

not forget his former college companion and friend. He visited him in his distressing condition ; he relieved his necessities ; he sought to lead him back to the path from which he had strayed. But those visits were coldly received, the relief was accepted without gratitude, and the expressions of love were scoffed at. But the magistrate persevered, hoping against hope, daily bringing the state of his former companion before God in his prayers.

One day, when taking his seat on the bench, the magistrate found, to his great surprise, that the companion and friend of his youth was to be brought before him for some offence against the law,

the penalty of which would be either imprisonment or a heavy fine. After several cases had been disposed of, this was at last brought on. The former intimacy of the two men was well known to all in the court, and various were the speculations as to the course the magistrate would pursue. While some thought that he would leave his brother-magistrate to pass judgment on the offender, others believed that he would use his authority to acquit him altogether, or at least to let him off with the lightest penalty the law allowed. But he did neither. To the astonishment of all, of his brother-magistrate, of the people, and even of the hardened offender,

he inflicted the greatest punishment the law permitted, a heavy fine. The people looked at each other in amazement, and the magistrate was censured as being harsh, and even vindictive. The man was known to be poor, to be dependent on charity for his daily bread, and principally on the charity of the magistrate himself; he could not pay, and he must go to prison.

But this was not all. The gaolers were about to remove him to the cell, when the magistrate left the bench, and taking his place beside the prisoner, he opened his purse and paid the fine. It was accepted in silence and astonishment, and the man was told that he was free.

FREE! he could not comprehend it. But five minutes before his judge had condemned him, and the gaolers were waiting to remove him; and now they told him he was free to go where he would! That act of love broke his heart. Suddenly arrested in his downward career, he strove hard to break away from his sins, and retrace his steps. God graciously met him, and the blood of Christ shed upon Calvary washed away his sins, and he became a new creature!

My dear reader, how will you fare when you stand before the Judge of all the earth? Say, how do you fare *now*? for the sentence is already pronounced, and

condemnation is already passed. There is no appeal from this sentence. We have all been found guilty, and we must pay the penalty, or suffer the punishment. Our case is desperate indeed. The penalty we cannot pay, and our soul shrinks from the punishment.

But stop! "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." Who is it that speaks in such an authoritative voice? Is there then a chance of salvation? Yes; it is God, our Judge, who speaks. An opportunity is offered of escape from the penalty of our sin. A ransom has been found, One who has satisfied the demands of God's justice.

But there is a condition attached to this ransom. "If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right; . . . He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." We can be saved if we first plead guilty, and then accept the ransom that is offered.

Surely, you say, this is an easy thing to do. But it is not so easy as one would imagine. Our hearts are so proud that we will not acknowledge ourselves to be utterly unclean. We are accustomed to say in a general way that we are sinners; but we always add softly to ourselves, I'm not so bad as So-and-so. And we are never fit to accept the salvation of Christ unless

we can see ourselves utterly depraved, and without any good whatever. It is only when the Spirit of God opens our eyes that we can behold our dreadful condition. The Holy Spirit pleads with us. He suggests to us that we should seek salvation. He begins to unfold to our view our wicked and depraved hearts; and if we listen to Him, He will complete the work He has begun, and finally lead us to the foot of the cross.

But if we turn a deaf ear to these pleadings, if we drive away the Spirit of God, if we seek excitement or anything to get rid of such thoughts, then we are trifling with the Holy Ghost. Perhaps

He leaves us for a time, and returns again to see if we are more disposed to hear Him. But when He is rejected time after time, can we wonder if He leaves us altogether, and never comes back any more? This is the case with some. God has left them alone. It is the worst punishment God can inflict upon a man in this world, to leave him alone!

My dear reader, if you have never thought seriously before, think now. Cry unto God to send His Holy Spirit to show you your sinfulness, and your need of a Saviour, and to lead you to Christ. It is all you can do. You cannot save yourself. Many people think that salvation belongs

to them by right, and that if they are lost it will be because they have been cheated out of heaven. But this is a mistake. Salvation is a gift that is offered to all men, and all men have a right to accept it if they please; and if they are lost, it is because they have cheated themselves. God never forces a man into heaven, nor does He permit the devil to drag him into hell. Man was created with a free will. He can accept or he can reject the salvation which God offers! Man is alone responsible for the loss of his soul. If it is lost, God is blameless. In the great day when we shall all stand before God, no one will be able to charge Him with

injustice, although many wicked men loudly do so now ! Then the wicked will be silent ; their consciences will condemn them !

BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND
THOU SHALT BE SAVED.



LONDON :
MORGAN AND SCOTT, 12, PATERNOSTER
BUILDINGS, E.C.