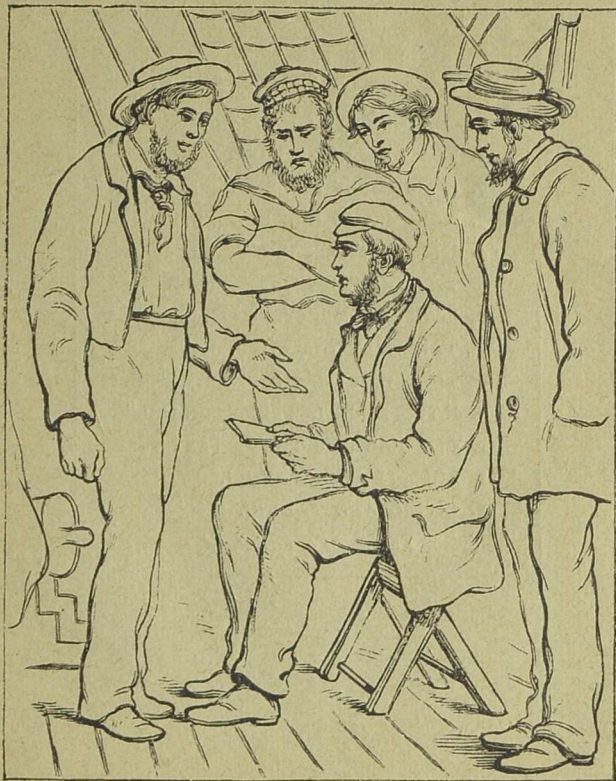


# TAKEN AT HIS WORD.

BY GEORGE BREALEY.



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VENTURE.

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## Taken at his Word.



“AY God strike me dead—!”  
The rest of the sentence was lost; but I shuddered at the awful words. The scene around me was one of exquisite beauty. The quiet and rest of the Sabbath seemed to be even there in the midst of the South Atlantic Ocean. The *Gazelle*, with every sail spread, was

speeding swiftly and steadily before the south-east trade-winds. It was the Sabbath-day, and the only sounds that broke the stillness were the occasional flap of a sail, or the creaking of a yard, and the musical plash of the waves as they broke against the vessel's prow. I was sitting in the foretop. The sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky, and the surface of the sea glistened like silver. Far in the distance were the white sails of a homeward-bound ship. A few hours before we had exchanged signals with her, and now she was bearing home many a message to anxious friends. As the *Gazelle*

swept onward, shoals of flying-fish rose before her, their silvery sides gleaming bright in the sunlight, and after a short flight, dropped again into the sea.

Below me, on the deck, five or six sailors were seated together, listening to one of the group, who was telling, to judge from the attitudes of his hearers, an interesting story. I slid down on deck, and joined them.

“Well, lads,” said the sailmaker, “I heard a shipmate of mine, Tom Pike, use those words once, and before they were well out of his mouth, God took him at his word! It was my third voyage in the old *Chepica*, and we were lying at Cuba,

waiting for cargo. The cap'n had a cousin there who owned a plantation, and nearly every day Pike and I either rowed the cap'n up there, or went to fetch his cousin. Of course we liked it very well; we got as much as we could eat, and plenty of rum to drink, and I used to think then that was all a man wanted.

“The cap'n's cousin came down one afternoon, and stayed the night, and next morning Pike and I rowed him home. Before we started back to the ship we had a good dinner and plenty of drink, and, I'm sorry to say, lads, I took too much. Pike was worse than me, and

before we got very far he became so bad, with the burning sun shining down on him, that I strapped him down in the boat, lest he should jump overboard, as he threatened to do.

“I knew the cap’n would be angry with us, so I managed to get myself pretty straight before we got alongside, and got Pike up, and threw some water over him, and sobered him a bit. I was hoping the cap’n would be down below at dinner, and we should get aboard without seeing him; but he was on the quarter-deck watching us as I pulled down the harbour.

“Pike was steering me all round the

compass, and the first words the cap'n said to him were,

“‘Pike, you're drunk!’ and then he began swearing at him awfully.

“‘I swear I'm not drunk, cap'n! Haven't had a drop to-day, have I, Harry?’ and he turned round to me. But I did not want to tell a downright lie, so I pretended not to hear him, and was making fast the boat.

“They began swearing at each other again. I was pretty well used to cursing, but some of the oaths they uttered made me feel queer.

“‘Come on board, and I'll put you in irons,’ said the cap'n.



“Pike stood up in the boat, and lifting up his hand, and looking towards the cap’n, he said,

“‘May God strike me dead, cap’n, if I’m drunk!’

“The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when, reeling forward to clutch the main chains, he missed his hold, and fell into the sea.

“Almost before he had touched the water I was after him ; but he was gone. He went down like lead. The water was clear, and I could see almost to the bottom. I dived after him. I could see him sinking down, down below me, but I could

not overtake him, and I was obliged to give it up.

“It was thirty-six hours before the body floated. I never hear a man make use of these words, but I think of the fate of poor Pike, and the awful way in which God took him at his word!”

“Eight bells!” Clang, clang, clang! and the group dispersed to dinner.

God does sometimes take men at their word. The rash utterance, the impious wish, find oftentimes a swift fulfilment, and furnish terrible instances of the danger of trifling with God.

But, praise be to His name! it is oftener

as a God of mercy and love that He displays His power to men. Were He quick to revenge the insults we offer Him, who would be able to stand in His presence?

But we are not to suppose, because God does not always punish at once those who blaspheme Him, that He overlooks or has forgotten their sin. The wicked are every day heaping up wrath against themselves. It is a fearful thought, but it is nevertheless true, that a day will come when many thousands of human beings, some of them perhaps friends and acquaintances whom we meet and talk with every day, will stand exposed to the wrath of God, with

no one to shield them from its fury. In that day, the Scripture tells us, they will call upon the rocks and the hills to hide them.

Dear reader, if you have not yet taken advantage of God's mercy, there is still time to escape. God will take you at your word, if you go to Him and ask Him to save you from the consequences of your sins. If you go to Him in the way He has commanded in the gospel, you will find Him ready to forgive you all your sins, to wash you, and make you clean.

When the publican cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," God took him

at his word. God met him there, and forgave him. When Zaccheus, earnestly desiring to see Christ, climbed up a tree, Christ took him at his word; yea, He did more, He called Zaccheus down, and went home, and supped with him. When the woman of Samaria asked Christ to give her the living water of which He spake, Christ took her at her word, and preached the gospel to her.

Reader, if you have not yet decided for Christ, there are two courses open to you. You must, in either one way or the other, take God at His word. He has said that if you receive Christ as your salvation,

and forsake your sins, He will save you, and reward you with eternal life. If you remain in sin, and serve the great enemy of God and man, the devil, you will be classed with those wicked men whom God will punish with eternal death. God will be taken at His word; and whichever way you decide, God will take you at your word.

Can you hesitate?

See, oh, see how the Saviour stands, calling you to come to Him! "Why will ye die?" He cries in accents that should touch the hardest heart. Did He not leave the glory of heaven and His Father's throne, and lead a hard life of poverty and suffer-

ing in this world, and finally die an ignominious and shameful death, that you, *you* might be saved? Are you so ungrateful as to pass heedlessly by, when the Man of sorrows stands with outstretched arms, offering pardon, peace, and salvation to all who will accept it? If thus you treat Him now, what mercy can you expect in that day when Christ will sit on the great white throne, when the dead small and great will stand before Him, to receive their final doom. Then you will regret, oh, how bitterly! that you did not take Christ at His word when mercy was offered, but rejected Him! Now Christ

will take you at your word, and reject you. This is the sentence: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

But it is not yet too late. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The result of taking Christ at His word will be the following invitation, addressed to you and all saved ones: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."