

# "THE DOOR IS OPEN, DONALD!"

BY GEORGE BREALEY.



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“THE DOOR IS OPEN, DONALD.”

**B**RITONS never will be slaves! so we hear Englishmen proudly say sometimes; and so we hear them sing often when the chains of slavery have so unmistakably fettered them, that they are partially deprived of the power of speech. And this enslavement of the soul by intemperance oftentimes leads to a temporary imprisonment of the body. An incident of this kind that I once heard

struck me as containing one uncommon feature: at the same time I saw how applicable it was to our state of bondage to sin. A Scotchman who was addicted to drink, whilst going home one night drunk, was met by a magistrate, who ordered a policeman to take him to the police-station, and lock him up. The policeman took charge of him, and marched him off. On the way they were met by a member of the town council, who, happening to know the drunken man, asked the officer what he was going to do with him.

"I'm going to lock him up, sir."

"Ah! it's a sad case," said the councillor pitifully. "He was a most respect-



able man once. Take him along; but when you put him in the cell leave the door open, so that when he gets sober he shall have a chance of escape. It may do him more good than the disgrace of appearing before the bench in the morning. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

During this conversation the drunken man had gradually sunk down on the pavement, and was fast asleep, snoring loudly.

With some difficulty the policeman raised him up, and with the help of a passer-by conveyed his almost helpless charge to the station-house, his stagger-

ing, uncertain footsteps rudely echoing through the deserted streets.

He did as the councillor suggested, and left the cell door open; but the poor fellow lay helplessly drunk all the night. The first faint streaks of dawning day were lighting up the eastern sky, when the chill morning air, blowing into the cell, awakened the drunkard from his heavy sleep. Before he had fully recovered consciousness he fancied he heard a voice—a voice, too, that seemed familiar to him—calling,

"Donald, why do you stop there? The door's open!"

He roused himself and sat up, and

endeavoured to recollect where he was, and how he had got there; but the effort was too much for his confused ideas. The place was unfamiliar, and he thought it was a dream, when again the voice was heard—

"Donald, why do you stop there? The door's open!"

A lad passing along the street, on his way to his work, seeing the cell door open, and a man lying asleep on the straw, stopped to look in. A movement of the sleeper gave him a full view of his face, and he recognized a fellow-workman of his father's.

It was the lad's voice that Donald heard

calling him. It was some time before he could collect his scattered senses sufficiently to comprehend his position, and to understand that he had a chance of escape. But the lad was in earnest. He would not venture into the cell, nor durst he raise his voice too high, lest he should attract attention; but he persisted in calling—

"Donald, the door is open! Come out quickly, man!"

Gradually Donald roused himself. He became aware of his situation, he saw his means of escape; but he could scarcely move—he was almost helpless. And now a new terror arose. He heard the heavy



tread of the gaoler echoing through the passage, and drawing every moment nearer to his cell. The jangling of the keys that he carried in his hand sent a pang through Donald's heart, and he felt that he must make a great effort if he wished to escape.

But the effect of the previous night's debauch was still heavy upon him; his head was racked with pain, and his limbs seemed to move independently of his will. The footsteps drew nearer and nearer! Would he be able to escape? was the absorbing thought. He managed to stagger to the door; the lad stretched out his hand, and pulled him out of the cell. The cool air revived him, and hand in hand

the rescuer and the rescued ran down the street. Before they had gone many steps they heard the cell door shut to with a great crash. The bolt grated harshly as it was shot into the socket; but the prisoner had escaped!

The lesson of that night and morning Donald never forgot; and he became an altered man.

Dear reader, if Christ has not delivered you from the power of sin, your case is very similar to that of Donald. Sin has stupefied your conscience, and you are not aware of the danger you are in. Satan, who ever goes about seeking for fresh victims, has got fast hold of you. You

were probably told the message of salvation which Christ brought to sinners, when you were a child; but as you got older Satan took care to efface all those impressions, and now they are blurred and indistinct. The devil, leading you on from sin to sin, has left you in a place where he is sure to find you, that is, in the world of the ungodly; and if you are found there when death comes, the door will be shut, and there is no further chance of escape. Death will remove you from this world, and you will appear before the bar of God with all your sins upon you. What then will be your doom?

Life passes swiftly away; but while

you live there is a chance of escape—the door is open for you. Hark! there is a friendly voice calling you to come out. A friendly hand is stretched out to help you. Will you not make *one* effort to be free? "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

The devil is tempting you even while you hear that voice, even while you read these words; he is tempting you to turn a deaf ear to all such entreaties. He says to you, "Yes, it is all very true, and you ought to make the attempt to escape from the sinner's doom; but there is no hurry yet. Put it off a little longer; a day, or



a week, or a month cannot make any difference." So you listen to him, and resolve that when you have a little more leisure, then you will think about your soul's eternal welfare, and probably you sincerely intend to do so. The devil dreads greatly to see a sinner begin to think about his sins. He will promise anything to persuade the sinner to drive away such thoughts even for a few hours. The apostle Paul had almost persuaded Felix to repent, and flee from the wrath to come; but Felix put it off to a more convenient opportunity, and we do not read that that opportunity ever came. The apostle reasoned of righteousness, temper-

ance, and judgment to come, and Felix trembled. Many a man has trembled when he has heard God's judgments denounced against sin; but when that terror has passed away, and, although convinced of the necessity, he has put off the day of repentance, his heart becomes hardened. The next time he hears God's wrath denounced against the ungodly he is less likely to become alarmed; he gradually becomes gospel-hardened. He is like a man who, being constantly imprisoned for offences, at last loses all sense of the shame and disgrace attaching to his condition, but rather glories in it.

Reader, are you in that state? Is your

heart so hard that the terrors of God's law do not affect you? Well, listen to the story of His love. He came into the world, and suffered and died for such as you. He paid the penalty due to sin, and made salvation a free gift. You have nothing to do but leave your sins, and accept that offered salvation.

A man said to me the other day, "I've been kicked about by the devil all my life. But I see I can be free to-night; and I'll not take another step with the devil, nor do another job for him." Now this is the resolve God wants you to make, and He will give you strength to keep it.

PLUNGED in a gulf of dark despair,  
We wretched sinners lay,  
Without one cheerful beam of hope,  
Or spark of glimmering day.

With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace  
Beheld our helpless grief ;  
He saw, and oh, amazing love !  
He flew to our relief !

Down from the shining seats above  
With joyful haste He fled,  
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,  
And dwelt among the dead.

Oh, for this love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Saviour's praises speak !

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