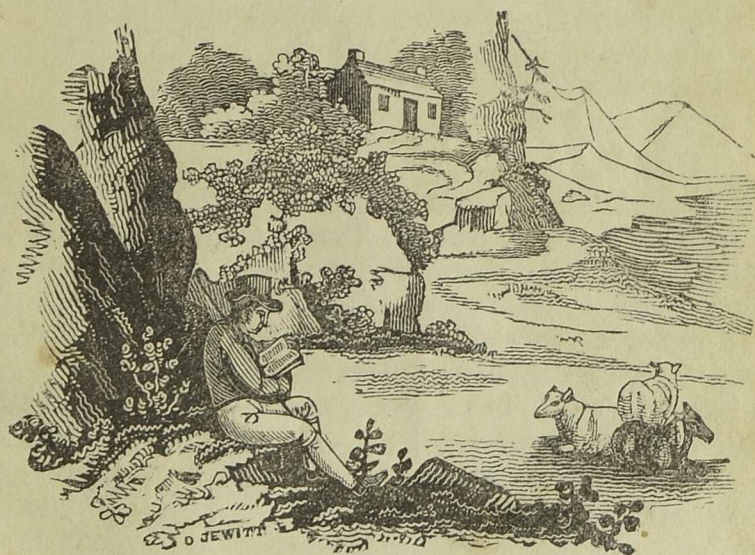


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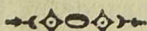
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THE
PIOUS MANKS PEASANT;

OR,

The History of William Curphey.



ON the side of a hill in the parish of Kirk Lonan, in the Isle of Man, there is a small thatched cottage with only two apartments. It is situated in a wild and rugged part of the country, but commands a beautiful prospect of the bay and town of Douglas. The scenery around it is highly romantic. From the door of this little cottage the eye is regaled with the view of many a hill and dale, clad with wild flowers of every hue, and gorse-bushes which in the summer season appear as so many tufts of gold.

In this cottage William Curphey, the Pious Manks Peasant, first drew the breath of life. He was born in the year 1791. He was of a weak and sickly frame of body, and of a quiet and gentle disposition. When about eight years of age, he began to feel symptoms of consumption, and from that period to the time of his death his life was little more than a lingering disease.

The years of his boyhood were spent in tending sheep and herding cattle. He received few instructions of any kind. The narrow circumstances of his parents, and his

own bodily infirmities, prevented him from attending "the noisy mansion," where—

"The village master taught his little school."

As no person in his father's house could read, he was left without that measure of learning which the Manks peasantry in general obtain. The Manks language was the only language which he understood. He attended the parish-church as often as the service there was in Manks, and when his health would permit. There he listened with devout attention to the prayers, the psalms, the lessons, and the sermon, and profited not a little by every visit to "the house of prayer."

Many a holy text which he heard within those hallowed walls was imprinted on his memory. His principal lessons were received in the school of affliction. His continual pains hourly reminded him he was *a stranger and pilgrim upon earth*, and constrained him to look for help from above. He was in the habit of praying frequently and fervently in private. He used for some years to retire daily to the barn, and there pour out his heart in broken accents and untaught prayer. He had long felt a deep concern about the state of his soul, and this concern was daily increased by the secret influences of that Divine Guide who, in a great measure, supplied the place of all outward means.

He was for a season strongly tempted to delay his repentance, from the consideration of his youth, and the hope of being spared to see many years. At length, by earnest prayer, praying so secretly, he said, that no person living knew that he was engaged in prayer, he was delivered from this temptation, and gave himself up wholly to God, relying altogether on the merits of his Saviour for pardon, grace, and salvation. After some time, he found his mind filled with unspeakable comfort. "Joy," he said, "came on me *myr thooilley*, (as a flood,) and I now earnestly desired to depart to that world where there *is fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore*: but I was still led to add, 'The will of the Lord be done.'"

Such was the artless account which this young man gave of his conversion. The starting tear, the animated look, and unaffected humility with which he delivered the account, testified its truth.

In the year 1812, when he was about twenty-one years

of age, his disorder increased to such a degree, that he was confined to his bed in a state of extreme pain and weakness, and appeared to be drawing fast to his end. The minister of the parish was sent for to visit him; and on his approaching the door of the cottage, sounds of joy and thanksgiving vibrated on his ear. He paused for a moment, and then entered the apartment where the sick man lay. The object which was there presented to his view was truly interesting: he beheld a youth, weak, pale, and apparently dying; but with joy beaming in his countenance, and the language of praise flowing from his lips. The strong and rapturous expressions of this young Christian gave him the appearance of being delirious. To ascertain whether he were really so, the minister entered into close conversation with him, and discovered that his mind was perfectly clear and distinct. His joys ran so high, that he could not contain himself, but was repeatedly exclaiming, in his native language,

*"Booise as gloyr, ta mish goll thie,
Booise as gloyr, ta mee lhient lesh graih!"*

That is,

*"Thanks and glory, I am going home!
Thanks and glory, I am filled with love!"*

The tone and manner in which he uttered these words were quite heavenly: they seemed to be sounds from the world of glory—strains from an angel's harp. The scene made such an impression on the mind of the minister, that, on his return home, he took minutes of what passed in this sick chamber. From these the following conversation, literally translated, is extracted.

Minister. How do you find yourself, my young friend?

William. Very weak, Sir; but very happy.

Minister. Are you in much pain?

William. O yes, Sir, in great pain: but the joy in my heart swallows up the pain.

Minister. Whence does that joy proceed?

William. From the love of my Saviour.

Minister. What is the foundation on which you build your hopes for eternity?

William. The mercies of God, and the blood of Jesus, which was shed for me on the cross.

Minister. Have you ever seen yourself to be a lost and ruined sinner?

William. Blessed be God, I have.

Minister. And how did you obtain pardon?

William. I sought earnestly to my Saviour, and he obtained pardon for me.

Minister. Are you quite resigned, either to live or die, as your heavenly Father shall see best for you?

William. Thanks be to God, I am: but I have a great desire to go home.

And then, with strong emotions of joy, he would again exclaim,

"Booise as gloyr," &c.

He appeared to have been *taught of God* the great truths of the Gospel, and to have the most scriptural views of the plan of redemption. He joined most heartily in the prayers which were offered up, and with ardent devotion partook of the memorials of a Saviour's dying love.

The minister called soon again to see him, and found him in the same happy frame of mind: he was still rejoicing in God his Saviour.

At this visit the minister was accompanied by one of his sons, a boy about twelve years of age, and a little friend of nearly the same age. These young visitors were introduced to the pious peasant, and permitted to shake hands with him. They were desired to mark his happy state, and observe the effects of *real religion* on the heart and mind in the hour of distress. They seemed wonderfully impressed with the interesting scene. Every look and every word of the patient sufferer pointed to heaven. The minister exhorted him to hold fast his confidence stedfast unto the end, and commended him in prayer to the continued care of the Father of mercies, who had done such great things for him.

On their return from this sick chamber the little visitors could talk of nothing but what they had seen and heard there. They were asked, whether they thought all the riches of the world could give such happiness as they had just witnessed? They readily answered, they were sure they could not: and probably the impressions of that hour will remain with them while they live.

The case of this young man was so remarkable, that it was adduced from the pulpit as a proof of the power of

REAL religion to communicate *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, under the severest bodily sufferings. The congregation appeared deeply affected with the account, and both old and young listened to it with extraordinary attention.

An all-wise Providence saw fit to prolong the life of this pious peasant. When the minister of the parish next visited him, he found him considerably recovered, and in the same happy frame of mind. "The Lord," said he, "keeps me in perfect peace; and whenever I wake in the night, I have the language of praise in my mouth."

The minister had much interesting conversation with him; and, after exhorting him to walk humbly and watchfully, offered up prayers and thanksgivings on his behalf, and left him happier than he was able to express. He continued gradually to recover. His high joys subsided into a settled calm. He no longer felt that flood of consolation which had been afforded him in the hour of trial, but he still maintained sweet *communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*.

The minister of the parish visited him from time to time, and occasionally read for him select portions of the Manks Testament, to which he would listen with singular pleasure. During one of these visits it was proposed that he should be taught to read: his eyes sparkled with joy; and when he was presented with a spelling-book and a Manks Testament, he appeared delighted beyond measure. The minister's son, who had accompanied his father to see William when confined to his bed, was selected as the teacher.

Never did any professor at the University feel more honoured by his appointment than our little Manks tutor when appointed to his new office. He was at that time in a very delicate state of health, and threatened with consumption. The use of asses' milk was prescribed, and a kind friend lent him an ass which furnished him both with medicine and exercise. On this little animal he rode, in eastern style, from day to day, to the cottage of the pious peasant. The spelling-book was taken down from the shelf, the alphabet was quickly committed to memory, and words of one syllable soon began to resound through the cottage. The learner was all attention to his little tutor, and was sure to be perfect in every task which was set him.

In about a quarter of a year he was able to read the Manks Testament fluently, and if he had discovered the lon-

gitude, it would not have given him greater pleasure. The day on which he read the first chapter in his Testament was a day long to be remembered by him.

He could now converse with his Saviour in his word, travel with him from place to place, accompany him to the Garden of Gethsemane, follow him to Mount Calvary, visit his sepulchre, and afterwards behold him risen from the dead, and mark the print of the nails in his hands, and of the spear in his side. He found the greatest delight in this employment, and spent hour after hour in reading the history of the Redeemer, and meditating on his precious sayings. He considered the power of reading the Sacred Volume as the richest blessing, and felt much gratitude to his little teacher.

His reading was highly valued by the whole family. As William was the only person in the house who could read, he became an instructor to them all. His mother was dead, and his father had married again. William was a particular favourite with his step-mother, who would listen to him with eagerness, while he read chapter after chapter in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

As a token of gratitude to William's tutor, she one day brought him two fat hens, and, the day after, a kishon of oats to feed them, with a promise of more when that was used. He was highly delighted with the present, and will probably remember these hens, and the occasion of his becoming possessed of so much property, as long as he lives. He is now about to enter into holy orders, after having finished his studies at Oxford. His knowledge of the Manks language is not likely to be of any further use to him; but he has no reason to regret the attainment of a language which qualified him, when a boy, to be the instructor of William Curphey. May his future life abound in such offices of love!

Soon after William had learned to read, he received a copy of Vivian's Dialogues, in Manks, which had just then come out; and this, with his Testament and Prayer-Book, formed the whole of his library. Let not the proud scholar, who possesses books in all languages, "hear with a disdainful smile" this short and simple catalogue. The pious peasant found in it treasures of more value than the whole circle of ancient or modern classics contains. He found in his Testament *things which the angels desire to look into*. He had now *a light unto his feet, and a lamp unto his*

paths. He delighted to sit at the feet of Jesus, and hear from his lips *the words of eternal life.*

Though he recovered his health so far as to walk about, and occasionally to work a little, yet he continued in an infirm state till his death. He was seldom able to get to church, but he spent the Sabbath at home in the most devout manner. He would read in his Testament from morning till night, and generally aloud. The cottage was converted into a little chapel by his Sabbath occupations, and each of its inhabitants profited by William's ability to read. The miracles and parables of our Lord furnished materials for holy meditation and much pious discourse, and every page of the precious volume taught both the reader and the hearers how they might become *wise unto salvation.*

During the week, William tended the sheep, or laboured in the field, as far as his strength would permit: but wherever he was, or whatever he was doing, he *set the Lord always before him*, and had his eye fixed on heaven as his rest and his home. He often retired to the barn for secret devotion, and spent many a delightful hour there in sweet converse with his God.

In this manner he passed the last seven years of his life, weak in body, but happy in mind; *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

Though he had been for such a length of time "dying and wasting away," yet his departure was sudden and unexpected. The very day on which his *spirit returned to God who gave it*, he was employed in the field with his father. At night he was called to his supper, but he could eat nothing. He soon after died quietly, and was happy to the last. His death happened in 1819.

For more than twenty years he suffered a variety of bodily pains and infirmities. He was *made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights were appointed unto him*: but the consolations of religion were afforded him in such rich abundance, that he rejoiced in tribulation, and was never more thankful than when most in pain.

From this remarkable example the reader may learn the benefit of sanctified affliction.

"Those we call wretched are a chosen band."

The pious Manks peasant found, by experience, that it was good for him to be afflicted. *The high and lofty One,*

who inhabiteth eternity, condescended to visit his cottage, and to shed rays of heavenly comfort around his bed. The inward joy which he felt in the midst of sharp bodily sufferings testified to all around, that God was with him. His case afforded a lively comment on that line in a beautiful Manks hymn—

“*Raad ta Jee, ta niau.*”

“Where God is present, there is heaven.”

Whoever would enjoy present or future happiness, must seek it in the favour of Him who can turn pain into pleasure, poverty into riches, and earth into heaven. Worldly prosperity is by no means necessary to true enjoyment. Paul and Silas, when *thrust into the inner prison* at Philippi, and when *their feet were made fast in the stocks*, sang praises unto the Lord at midnight, and rejoiced in the God of their salvation. And the subject of this tract, when stretched on the bed of pain and sickness, was *filled with joy and peace in believing*, and was continually giving glory to his heavenly Father. In the school of affliction he learned invaluable lessons. No seminary upon earth could have so effectually taught him the *things pertaining to salvation*. In the school of affliction he met with his Saviour and his God, and received foretastes of the glory which shall be revealed.

“Others may escape the rod,
Lost in sensual, vain delight;
But the heaven-born child of God
Must not, would not, if he might.”

The tutor of the Pious Peasant, after an absence of some years, visited the scenes of his boyhood, and enquired at the cottage for his former pupil: but he found that William was gone—that he had entered *into the joy of his Lord*. The time, the place, the circumstances, brought to his mind the hours which he had passed in that cottage, and his interesting employment there. The recollection was gratifying to him, and drew from him the following lines, with which this little tract shall conclude.

“Sweet is the thought of pleasures past,
As o’er the mind their shades they cast;

And none more sweet or bright than those
Which boyhood's jocund scenes disclose :
Whether of pastimes once so gay,
Or puny feats, or fancy's play.
But 'mid those hours there's none to me
So dear as those I spent with thee :
Poor peasant then, high angel now,
With radiant robe, and crown-deck'd brow !

Full oft my memory loves to trace
His earnest, blissful, beaming face,
As o'er the hallow'd page he hung,
Or watch'd his little tutor's tongue,
Intent to gain the living bread,
Eager to reach the fountain-head
Of Scripture's pure, refreshing stream :
Meanwhile his soul would sometimes gleam
In full expression, through his eye,
As if it panted for the sky ;
As though his body, worn with pain,
Could not its mighty joys contain.
And oft methinks I hear once more
His lips those raptur'd praises pour,
Which, death impending, could not cease,
But bade their extacy increase.
For why ?—that mortal strain below
Was soon in concert full to flow,
With that seraphic, ceaseless song,
Hymn'd by the whole celestial throng ;
Like the soft warblings of the lyre,
Or e'er it kindles into fire—
The prelude to the minstrel's sway,
The awakening of its loftiest lay."

Finis.

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