

No. 18  
OF  
HOULSTON'S SERIES  
OF  
TRACTS.

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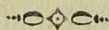
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THE  
*Pious Manks Schoolmistress.*  
A LIVING CHARACTER.

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By the Author of "Little Pat, the Irish Chimney-Sweeper," &c.

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LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR HOULSTON AND CO.  
65, Paternoster-Row.

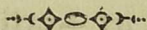
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THE PIOUS  
*MANKS SCHOOLMISTRESS.*

A Living Character.



THERE is no piety like early piety. J—— C——, the subject of this little tract, was, from earliest infancy, trained in the way she should go. She was born in the parish of K—— L——, in the Isle of Man, in the year 1778. Her father possessed a small farm, and was honest and industrious. Her mother was a pious and excellent woman, kind and charitable, and much beloved by all her neighbours. She had a large family of children, whom she endeavoured to educate religiously. Every one of them was what is called in the Manks language a *chreestee coare*, that is, a good-natured, obliging person; but J—— bore a still higher character: she had learned to *remember her Creator in the days of her youth*, and had imbibed much of the spirit of her Saviour even in childhood.—

——“The sweet work of prayer and praise  
Employ’d her youngest breath.”

When she was about the age of fourteen, she spent some time at the house of her aunt, in the parish of K—— M——, where she enjoyed religious advantages of no ordinary kind. Her aunt appears to have been an advanced Christian, and to have exhibited the power of religion in her whole conversation. She endeavoured, both by precept and example, to teach her young relative *to abhor that which is evil, and cleave unto that which is good*. She would often talk to her of that precious Saviour who has done and suffered so much for all the sons and daughters of men—

“Who bore our sins upon the cross,  
And our full ransom paid.”

J—— and her aunt attended church alternately, as the state of the family would not permit that they should be both absent together. Speaking of this period of her life, she said, “Whether I was at church or not, I had always

the blessed Gospel, and could talk with Jesus there. My aunt made me read my Bible on my knees every Sunday, and in reading the Prophet Isaiah I found my Saviour. Blessed be his holy name, he shewed himself to me at that time, and he has never forsaken me since."

The uniform piety of this excellent woman testifies that the Saviour has indeed never forsaken her. He early brought her into the school of affliction, and there taught her invaluable lessons. When about twenty-six years of age, she was struck with the palsy, and lost the use of one of her arms. Her whole frame received a severe shock: like Jacob, she ever after *halted upon her thigh*, and was obliged to use a stick when she walked. This was in itself a remarkably trying event, and it occurred at a time which rendered it still more trying. Her personal attractions and amiable manners had engaged the affections of one of the most respectable farmers in the parish. He had made proposals of marriage to her, which were accepted. Every arrangement was made for their approaching nuptials, and flattering prospects of temporal prosperity were opening to her view, when it pleased an all-wise Providence to visit her with an affliction which completely blasted those prospects, and tried her faith and patience to the uttermost. Though she acutely felt the disappointment, she never murmured. She seemed to hear the voice of him who sent this sharp trial, saying, "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" She had recourse to that blessed Saviour who never forsook her, and found in Him a Friend who was better to her than ten thousand earthly friends. Prayer was her great relief. As she earnestly sought, so she abundantly found, *grace to help her in this time of need.*

As soon as she had recovered a measure of health and strength, she began to think of some plan by which she might earn a subsistence, and pass her time profitably to herself and others. She immediately thought of opening a school, to teach children to read that precious Book which had proved such a blessing to herself. Her friends highly approved of the plan, and built a small school-house for her, about a quarter of a mile from the house where she lived, and about the same distance from the parish-church. It was built on the top of *Liargie-graue*, or the Rugged Brow, one of the most romantic spots in the Isle of Man. Laxey-glen, which is admired by every traveller for its interesting scenery, lies at the bottom of this brow, and on each side of it there are hills, and brooks, and cottages, in

vast variety. The country all round is wild and uncultivated, and well adapted to please the eye of him who delights to view nature in her rudest forms. This picturesque scenery so arrested the attention of a gentleman from England, who visited this island some years ago, that he could hardly be prevailed on to quit the interesting spot. He took much pains to pronounce the rugged name *Liargie-graue*, and afterwards often mentioned it in his correspondence with the friend who shewed it to him.

On this spot it was that the Pious Schoolmistress opened her little school. She was soon surrounded with a group of children of both sexes, who flocked to her from the foot of the mountains, and from the neighbouring glens. She entered on her task with alacrity, and rejoiced in bringing little ones to that kind Shepherd, who *gathereth the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom*. Her tender and affectionate manner of treating her scholars wrought upon their hearts, and made them love both their teacher and what she taught.

“THE MISTRESS” was now the name by which she was known throughout the parish, and her school was so highly esteemed, that children were sent to it from a distance of some miles. It was a pleasing spectacle to see the little ones, on a sharp frosty morning, tugging along the brow, with a Testament under one arm, and a turf for the school-fire under the other, “breasting the keen air, and carolling as they went.”

The school always opened with a hymn of praise to the great Preserver both of men and children. The Mistress, whose voice is remarkably melodious, raises the hymn with much animation, and the little choir join in singing with all their might, at one time—

“Awake, my soul, and with the sun  
Thy daily stage of duty run;  
Shake off dull sloth, and early rise  
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

“Redeem thy mispent time that’s past,  
Live this day as if ’twere thy last;  
To improve thy talents take due care,  
’Gainst the Great Day thyself prepare.

“Let all thy converse be sincere,  
Thy conscience as the noonday clear;  
Think how the all-seeing God thy ways  
And all thy secret thoughts surveys.

“Glory to God, who safe hath kept,  
And hath refresh’d me while I slept:  
Grant, Lord, when I from death shall wake,  
I may of endless life partake.

“Lord, I my vows to thee renew:  
Scatter my sins as morning dew;  
Guard my first spring of thought and will,  
And with thyself my spirit fill.

“Direct, control, suggest this day,  
All I design, or do, or say;  
That all my powers, with all their might,  
In thy sole glory may unite.”

And at another—

“Glory to thee, my God, this night,  
For all the blessings of the light:  
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,  
Under thine own almighty wings.

“Forgive me, Lord, for thy dear Son,  
The ills which I this day have done;  
That with the world, myself, and thee,  
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.

“Teach me to live, that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed;  
Teach me to die, that so I may  
Triumphant rise at the last day.

“O may my soul on thee repose,  
And may sweet sleep my eyelids close;  
Sleep, that shall me more vigorous make  
To serve my God when I awake.

“Let no vain dreams disturb my rest,  
No powers of darkness me molest;  
But holy angels, while I sleep,  
Close to my bed their vigils keep.

“Lord, let my soul for ever share  
The bliss of thy paternal care;  
’Tis heaven on earth, ’tis heaven above,  
To see thy face, and sing thy love.”

There was one hymn in which they all seemed to take peculiar delight. After every line there was a repetition of—"Sing glory, glory, glory." The words were simple beyond simplicity, and the tune seemed to have been borrowed from every bird of the air. It was a combination of the wildest notes which could any where be found. The writer of this tract, who was at that time the vicar of the parish, occasionally visited the little seminary, and used to listen to these wild notes with much pleasure. Though no poet, he ventured to compose the following hymn, as something more like poetry than what the children had been accustomed to sing to their favourite tune.—

My Saviour reigns above the sky,  
Sing glory, glory, glory,  
And cares for children young as I,  
Sing glory, &c.

What tongue can tell the wondrous love  
Which brought him from the realms above?

He came to suffer, bleed, and die,  
That we might live with him on high.

The lambs he gathers with his arm,  
And suffers none to do them harm:

He guards their steps, their wants supplies,  
And sends them blessings from the skies.

O may I know that Shepherd dear,  
And find that he is always near:

O may I watch, and read, and pray,  
And follow where he leads the way.

And when my golden harp I gain,  
I'll raise a louder, sweeter strain.

Then with a seraph's voice I'll sing  
To Him, my Prophet, Priest, and King.

To Him who died that I might live—  
To Him eternal praises give.

Let men and angels praise his name,  
The wonders of his love proclaim.

Let heaven and earth resound his praise,  
And endless hallelujahs raise.

The school affords the Mistress full employment during the day; and when she returns home, she instantly sits down to her wheel, and no fragment of time is lost. When cheerfully engaged with her wheel, and at the same time singing glory to Him

“Who built the lofty skies,”

she exhibits a picture of piety and industry which angels behold with delight. When the labours of the day are over, her Bible and her devotions afford her sweet relaxation.

The instructions which she gives her scholars are all scriptural. The Bible is the highest class-book known in her school; and when any scholar is able to read his Bible, he is considered as having taken his highest degree. Many a graduate of this order has our pious schoolmistress sent abroad into the world. Regular attendance at *the house of prayer* is strictly enjoined at the *Liargie-graue* seminary. No sooner is the church-bell heard to ring, than the Mistress orders all books to be put aside, and immediately sets out with her little flock to join the congregation in worshipping *the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity*. Her deportment in public worship is singularly devout. She never seems more delighted than when engaged in social prayer, or hearing *the glad tidings of salvation*. She often speaks of the sermons which she hears, and frequently repeats passages in them which she finds profitable to her. Some years ago, the Rev. Mr. H—l, of Liverpool, preached a very impressive sermon at the parish church of K—— L——. He took occasion, towards the conclusion of his discourse, to speak of the advantages of early piety, and entreated the younger part of his hearers to serve the Lord in the days of their youth, and not to offer him only the dregs of life. The Mistress often referred to this sermon, and many years after would say to her young friends, “Remember Mr. H—l’s advice, and don’t think of giving the dregs to Him from whom you have received all.”

The Mistress is much beloved in the parish. No sooner is the service of the church over, than she is seen shaking hands with one after another with the greatest cordiality, and addressing all around her with the sweetest affability. She never passes man, woman, or child, without a “*Good deen*” or a “*Good morrow*,” while her benevolent look and courteous manner convince all she meets that she wishes them well.

“Among the outward signs by which our inward devo-

tion should be indicated," says the Archbishop of Moscow, "may be reckoned joy of countenance, produced by a glad heart sensible of the infinite goodness of God." This mark of inward devotion the Mistress possesses most conspicuously. Her face seems to beam with joy, and praise to the Giver of all her mercies is continually flowing from her lips. "Thanks be to God!" is the general preface to her discourse.

It was gratifying to see her engaged with *William Kelly, the Happy Christian*. They sometimes met at the vicarage-house, and, after a hearty shaking of hands, they would begin to enumerate their mercies, and, in the language of the Psalmist, *praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men*. Their countenances would brighten, as they went on recounting the *mercy and goodness which had followed them all the days of their lives*. Whether they were regaled with a cup of tea or a bowl of *binjeau*,\* they would descant on the kindness of that Providence who giveth us all things richly to enjoy, and sweetens every blessing by conveying it to us through the hands of his beloved Son.

The Mistress was a particular favourite at the vicarage-house. Whenever she paid a visit there, she was sure to be hailed with more than ordinary welcome. As soon as the children saw her approach the house, they would cry out, as if some great personage was coming, "O! there is the Mistress! the Mistress!" The chair was speedily drawn for her, and each little one was ambitious to shew some mark of attention. At one time she was an inmate in the minister's house for more than a fortnight, teaching his daughters the art of spinning. In this art, which, though not one of the *fine arts*, must certainly be classed among the *useful arts*, the Mistress is a great proficient. With the use of only one hand she is able to draw the finest thread; and often does she express her thankfulness for this extraordinary mercy, as she regards it. Her little pupils were delighted with her company. She would talk to them with infantine simplicity, and while the wheel was merrily going round, would sing for them many a hymn of praise both in English and Manks. In their first attempts to spin, untoward accidents would sometimes occur. The thread would break, the band would slip from its place, the peg would

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\* A favourite repast in the Isle of Man, something like curds and whey.

fly away, and not unfrequently a loud *whurr* would ensue, which was quite electrifying. This would give rise to amusing conversations. The patience of the young learners would sometimes forsake them for a moment; and one would exclaim, and then another, "What can be the matter with this wheel? surely it is mad!" The Mistress would answer, "Come, Miss A——, be kind to the wheel—be kind to the wheel!" She had not often to repeat this advice, for her pupils soon learned to manage their wheels with much dexterity.

The genuine piety and simplicity of the Mistress render her a most interesting companion, and more than compensate for the want of polite accomplishments. Her charity leads her to think the most favourably of every body; and *if there be any virtue, if there be any praise*, in those around her, she seldom fails to find it out.

When she was staying at the vicarage-house, a clergyman from a distant part of the island called to see the vicar; but not finding him at home, he waited more than two hours for his return. After he was gone, the Mistress remarked, "*How good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" What love Mr. B—— must have in his heart to wait so long to see his friend!" She herself has much "love in her heart" towards all her fellow-creatures, and is constantly on the watch to do all the good in her power.

She is ever ready to vindicate the ways of Providence. In this respect she bears a near resemblance to *William Kelly, the Happy Christian*. That exemplary man could never bear any thing that looked like murmuring against the dispensations of Providence. As he was walking from the parish church with a neighbour of his, at a season of extreme drought, when the state of the weather was a subject of general lamentation, not one word had been said about the weather during the walk: but at the moment of parting, William said to his neighbour, "*Good-bye; and we shall get rain yet, man.*"

The Mistress speaks and acts in the same spirit. She often says, "The Lord will surely give us all that is good for us. Has He not given us his Son? and *shall he not with him freely give us all things?*" When she hears people complaining of hardships with which they meet, or ill treatment which they receive, her usual expression is, "*Suppose!—Well, suppose!*" The expression conveys an important meaning. It is as if she said, "*Well, suppose you*

have met with hardships, ought you not to be resigned to the will of God? and have you not many mercies to be thankful for?—Well, *suppose* you have received ill treatment, ought you not to bear and forbear? ought you not to forgive, even as you hope to be forgiven?" This, and much more, is included in the little word, "*suppose*," as uttered by the Mistress.

The Mistress one day asked a young lady how her grandfather was. She answered, "He is complaining." "O no," said the Mistress, "not complaining, my dear, we must never complain; perhaps he is not well." This lady, who is now the mother of many children, says, she shall never forget the answer of the Mistress. She has indeed good reason to remember this excellent answer, if she has learned from it never to complain.

While the crowd of nominal Christians travel the road of life murmuring and discontented, she goes on her way rejoicing, and continually adoring the goodness of God. To one who was complaining of the coldness of the weather she replied, "The weather is not half so cold to us as we are to one another. *Thanks be to God!* the weather is very good." When any person remarked to her that the harvest was plentiful, "Yes," she said, "the Lord is smiling upon us, though we are so ungrateful." She is delighted when she hears of any good impressions received under sermons, or any conversion taking place, and seems, on such occasions, to share in the *joy* which angels feel *over one sinner that repenteth*.

She is remarkable for a primitive simplicity which is highly attractive. She is always clean and neat in her dress and appearance, and is adorned with the highest of all ornaments, *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*. Her manners are mild and gentle, and *the beauty of holiness* shines forth in her whole conversation. These attractions render her a truly interesting object. One of the first enquiries which visitors at the vicarage were accustomed to make, was about the health and welfare of the Mistress; and generally a walk was proposed to the school-house, where they were received with much respect, but with ease and affability. On one of these occasions, some of the party remarked, "We have come to get a lesson from you."—"O no, ladies," she replied, "it becomes me to learn from you: but, thanks be to God! I am very happy, and He teaches me many good things."

No person who sees her can doubt of her being very

happy. Every feature speaks the peace which is lodged within. Her comforts, however, are not without interruption. She has sometimes had severe attacks of sickness, and her mind has been clouded for a season. On one of these occasions word was brought to the vicarage-house that the Mistress was taken extremely ill. A sensation of sorrow spread through the whole family, and many tears were shed. These trials, however, are seldom of long continuance, and the patient sufferer knows that they are sent for her good. Her language with regard to all of them is, "*Thanks be to God!*"

The windows of her school-room were once broken by some drunken man, and she was at a loss how to repair them, but said little on the occasion. This shameful outrage made a great deal of noise in the parish: every person who heard of the circumstance seemed to feel a degree of indignation, excepting the Mistress herself. She was not in the least discomposed. At that very time, some friends at the vicarage proposed to pay her a visit; and one of them said, "Let us make a collection among us to repair the windows of the school-room." This was accordingly done; and the kind friend\*who made the proposal presented the Mistress with a handsome donation. She received it as a gift from the Giver of all her mercies, and immediately uttered her usual expression of gratitude, "*Thanks be to God!*"

In a journal kept by the minister of the parish, in the year 1809, the following passage occurs with regard to the subject of this tract: "The Mistress drank tea with us this evening, and was congratulating me on having so many pious young relations. Providence, she said, had directed some of them to send her some of the most useful books she had ever read. This excellent woman sees the divine hand in every thing, and judges most favourably of every person. She possesses in a high degree that *charity which hopeth all things, and believeth all things*. She is a genuine Christian. Her religion is free from all offensive peculiarities: it consists in holy tempers and holy actions."

The books which the Mistress says she found so profitable were, *Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, and the publications of *The London Religious Tract Society*. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is one of her favourite books. She has read it again and again, and follows the pilgrim with pleasure through all his journeyings. In tracing his progress, she learns to regard herself as a

*stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and to set her affections on things above.*

She delights in the society of pious persons, wherever she meets with them, and seems scarcely to know any distinction between Christians of different denominations. So that they *be* Christians, she is not solicitous to enquire where they learned their religion, or whether they are called after *Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas*. If all Christians possessed the same spirit and temper, religious controversy would soon be at an end, love and peace would prevail throughout the Christian world, and *the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose.*

The Mistress was for many years the principal comfort and support of an aged and widowed mother. Her attentions to her parent were unremitted. She earnestly endeavoured to promote both her temporal and spiritual interests, and the blessing of God crowned these endeavours with success. When she lost her mother, she had no longer a home, but *the Lord*, as she says, *provided for her*. Her eldest brother took her under his roof, where she now lives in great comfort. Both her brother and sister-in-law treat her with peculiar kindness and affection, and they live together in perfect harmony. She was lately heard to declare, "*I have all that I can wish, thanks be to God!*" Her wishes are moderate, and her wants are few. She remembers Him who *had not where to lay his head*, and is thankful for the accommodations afforded her. In possessing the favour of God, she possesses what is better than life. With a very small portion of *this world's goods*, she is rich in faith, rich in hope, and rich in contentment. She knows her Bible true;—

"And in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,  
Her title to a treasure in the skies."

Such an example of *genuine piety* ought not to be concealed. Reader, seek for grace to imitate this example. Cultivate the same Christian temper and Christian spirit. Regard the Saviour with the same confidence and the same affection. Love and live your Bible; and then, like the Pious Manks Schoolmistress, you too shall have *all that you can wish*.

**Finis.**

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