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OR,

THE TWO QUESTIONS.

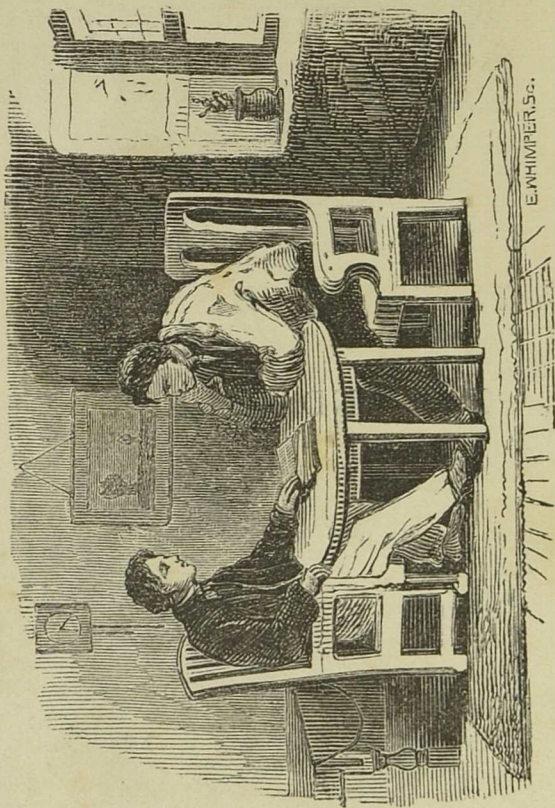


J. GROOM, BIRMINGHAM;

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BAZAAR, SOHO SQUARE, LONDON.

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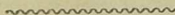
E. WHIMPER, SC.

No. 228.

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J. GROOM, BIRMINGHAM,
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THE TWO QUESTIONS,

AND

HOW THEY WERE ANSWERED.

IT was late in an autumnal evening, that, sauntering through a large provincial town in the north of England, might have been seen a wretched and forlorn figure. His countenance was haggard and wan, his eyes sunk and staring, his hair hung uncombed about his face. As to coat, he had none, and rags, both for his trowsers and waistcoat, threatened, as he moved along, to fall from off him. . . . Idly he walked the street;—true, he had a home, but wretchedness

and misery were there. His violent temper, and neglect of his family, made him dreaded rather than welcomed by them. He was in no hurry to reach it; his wife and children were in no hurry to have him. True, there was the drink and company of a public-house, but his pocket was empty,—till Saturday morning came he had not the money. Alas! hard fate: so he walked slowly on, stopping listlessly as anything in the few still open windows caught his attention, or any little commotion in the street excited curiosity. So, loitering, he passed through the principal streets, and, in order to reach the poorer parts of the city, turned down a narrow lane, which brought him opposite a large church, removed some little distance from the road, and within which, through the opened door, he saw collected

a mass of human beings. Curiosity aroused, he turned in, and mounted the front flight of steps ; and, standing at the entrance, saw a minister in the pulpit, talking earnestly, and listened to by the people with extreme attention. He crept closer and closer. The minister's voice was loud ; it reached without the door, to where Pat Cormack stood. His manner was lively and energetic ; it pleased this poor Irishman, and, mouth and eyes he stood listening, trying to catch the meaning of what the preacher said. A few words he heard of kind caution to the people, to take care their religion was true ; errors were always common, and a man should take care and think how he and God looked upon each other. " Religion," he said, " was something each man had to settle for himself with God." . . .
" Never thought much about God

at any time," said Pat to himself; and he tried to get a little closer. "To think that the Virgin Mary, or saints, or angels, can help a man to get rid of sin and hell, is a great mistake."—"Prove it," almost audibly rejoined Pat; for, though so wretched and poor, he was clever enough when he chose to think; and if only able to abstain from liquor, might have comfortably supported his family as a first-rate artisan. "Yes," said the preacher, "Christ Jesus is said to be able to do everything, and *as willing* to do everything;" and he read his text, Col. ii. 10:—"YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM." "Complete!" he exclaimed; "what want you more? Think you it is kind, it is proper, when a king desires you to come, and ask him for everything you want, to turn to a fellow-creature and say you are

afraid to come? Oh, no! it is not because you wish to come to Jesus Christ that you go to saints and angels, but you wish to stay away, and therefore you make a kind of excuse. A fellow-creature you think you can deceive, and therefore you go to them; but God, you know, sees you through and through, and so you are afraid to come. Oh! my poor Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, it is an awful thing to pray to saints and angels. Only ask yourselves, *why* you do it.” —“I don’t know, I’m sure,” said Pat to himself; “I always did so, because my parents did it before me, and the priests told me to do it; though, true, I never thought before WHY I did it.” A movement amongst the dense crowd beside him prevented him from hearing the remainder of the sentence, and when again all was quiet, the cler-

gyman was reading out of a large book, and Pat, getting tired of listening to what he could not understand, turned round, and left the church. He proceeded home with a brisker pace than before, for his mind was roused, and he was determined to answer for himself the minister's question, "WHY he prayed to the Virgin Mary and saints." Not that he felt anxious about his soul, or thought about Jesus Christ, or wished to come to Him indeed; but being naturally, as I have said, an intelligent man, the one question, "WHY," roused him to think and examine for himself. To say because my parents did so before me, seemed a childish answer. "They might be wrong as well as I," he thought; "that won't do. Well, but the priests of the Holy Catholic Church tell me to do so: true, but *why*,—that's the

point? *Why* do they tell me to do it? Clurer thinks they are wrong, because it is not in the Bible; I'll go and talk it over with him to-morrow." So determined, he arrived at his miserable hovel. The clock had just struck ten, and his wife, not expecting him till late, as he had not returned for tea, had flung herself upon a miserable straw mattress, to get a little sleep after a wearisome, wretched day. His knock aroused her; his usually violent conduct at night made her tremblingly open the door; a single glance told her, her husband was sober, and, rather surprised, she let him in. He entered, and asked for something to eat; she reached him the remainder of a small loaf. He seated himself, whilst she resumed some work which was to be finished by the morning, and had been previously dropped, only on

account of sheer exhaustion. An hour's sleep had refreshed her, and she resumed her task ; the money that was to be paid her for which, she wanted to supply food for herself and her three poor infants Poor woman ! wretched indeed had been her married life. Though a Roman Catholic, like her husband, she had, before her marriage, been a servant in a Christian family, where she had been obliged by her mistress to attend family worship ; but her heart remaining uninterested, she heard, day after day, the blessed truths of the Bible, and day after day she knelt when others knelt, and heard them pray to Jesus to forgive them all their sinful, ungrateful conduct to him, their little love to him, and ask him to put new hearts within them, and then they would love, and try to please him. But, careless and thought-

less, each Sunday or saint's-day found her at her own chapel, repeating carelessly her prayers, without thinking or caring about what she said. She married, and accompanied her husband to England, and settled, as above said, in a large provincial town, where constant employment had been promised him. For a while they prospered. Their family increased, but Pat worked hard, and regularly brought his wages home. Gradually, however, his time for returning of an evening became irregular, the money for his family diminished, and at length his poor wife found her three children entirely dependent on her exertions for support. Her husband was a drunkard. Her wasted form and sunken eyes bespoke the scanty fare she was only able to obtain. But oh, her children! often would she stand weep-

ing as she looked at them, when all by herself of a night, awaiting her husband's coming. Her eldest, a boy of five years of age, who had been seized in the summer with typhus fever, from eating some loathsome food in the gnawings of hunger, when recovering, from want of proper nourishment lost the use of his limbs, and now lay a helpless cripple. Her two other babes were wasted to skeletons; they seemed unlike children, poor infants! Pining and fretting, they took no pleasure in being out, but through the day would sit quietly or roll on the ground beside their mother as she worked. The sufferings of the latter had begun, through God's blessing, to exercise a blessed influence on her mind. The instructions which she had received, when in service, had left so far an impression upon her, that

she looked upon Jesus as a *Friend*; and often when anxiously awaiting her husband's return, would kneel down, and ask Him to take care of her, and her helpless babes, and also to change her husband's heart. She became thoughtful. The Bible she had heard so much of amongst Protestants, she began to wish to read and examine for herself; and about this time the above-mentioned incident occurred, which proved the commencement of new events to both husband and wife.

In the town where Pat resided, large neglected portions of ground may be seen lying, between rows of houses, remaining for future employment as building ground. In the middle of these waste spaces may be seen occasionally cottages, surrounded by small inclosed gardens. On one of these portions of

ground stood, at the time of which I am speaking, two humble dwellings, side by side. A single glance told the characters of their inmates, namely, Pat and Clurer. The former's cot, or rather hovel, was reached through a small neglected garden. No signs of life met the eye. The windows were patched and low; the inside dark, and bare of almost everything, save a straw mattress and a wooden chest, with a few old rotten chairs. Not so the neighbour's house; it was a good substantial English cottage, surrounded by an acre or two of a carefully kept garden. A pigsty, some chickens, and a cow, bespoke comfort and prosperity. Life and activity were manifest. The children seemed rosy and merry; the wife, cheerful and happy. Regularly after work did she greet her husband to his clean, comfortable hearth; and pleasant were the

evenings he spent with all his family around him, instructing them out of his much-loved Bible, or other useful book. The day after Pat had listened to the minister, Clurer was sitting after tea, preparing his children for their Sunday-lessons,—it was a Friday evening,—when a knock came to the door. His daughter opened it, and told her father that Pat wished to speak to him. Clurer kindly desired him to walk in, shook hands with him, and gave him a seat, offering him something to eat, which Pat refused, saying that he had supped at home; for, during the hour for dinner, whilst lounging the time away hungry and penniless, a stray errand had brought him a shilling, which not only satisfied his own immediate wants, but had enabled him to carry some little things home to his wife and children,

whose looks of gratitude pierced his not naturally unfeeling heart. Meanwhile he kept still his determination to consult with Clurer about the question which the minister had asked of him and his fellow Roman Catholics, viz., "Why they prayed to the Virgin and saints, and not *only* to God." Clurer had come over from Dublin the same time as Pat had,—a Roman Catholic, too, as he was; but some words of a Scripture Reader, and a tract left with him, had roused him to think, the result of which led him to the Scriptures. He read, he thought, he prayed, and finally became a real Christian, believing simply on Christ for everything. Three years he had led a consistent Christian life. Few words during that period had passed between him and Pat; but often would a kind present be sent to his starving wife

and family, or a few words of Christian comfort be given her in passing. And now Pat entered his dwelling, dressed, as before mentioned, in rags. He felt the contrast, and was ashamed and awkward. Clurer kindly met him ; and when his neighbour rather bluntly said, "I came to ask you a question," desired his wife to take his children away, and leave them quiet. Pat then continued: "I want to know why you do not pray to the Virgin and saints." The suddenness of the question startled Clurer. However, without hesitating a moment, he replied, "*Because it is not in the Bible*"—silently praying to God to tell him what to say to his poor, ignorant, but inquiring neighbour. *Pat.* "Do you believe nothing but what is in the Bible?" *Clurer.* "No ; nothing as necessary to save me." *Pat.* "Not what the

Church, the Holy Catholic Church, the fathers and councils—not what they teach?” *Clurer*. “Well, yes; if they teach me what is in the Bible—but not else.” *Pat*. “But the Bible is difficult; how can poor, ignorant men like me understand it?” “It is difficult, Pat,” said *Clurer*, “and no man on earth can understand it *all*. But what we want, to save our souls, is quite simple and easy. Surely Timothy when a *child* ‘knew the Holy Scriptures;’ his mother and grandmother taught him. You will not be putting yourself below a child: when a child can read and understand, you, a grown man, can surely do the same. Besides, God has promised to assist us to understand his blessed Word, as he did the Jews in former days. God put his Holy Spirit into their hearts; they read the Old Testament, much more difficult, by the way, than our

New Testament, and so they learnt everything necessary to save their souls ; and we have only to ask for the same Spirit, and pray as David did:—‘Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.’ Psal. cxix. 18. And it will make things seem so easy, and the Bible so plain,—you would be quite astonished. But think, too, not only *men* read the Scriptures in the apostles’ time, as those men at Berea, Acts xvii. 11, who, when Paul preached to them, ‘searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so ;’ but *women* also read for themselves. Did you never hear, that it was to a *female* and her *children* that the Apostle John wrote his 2nd Epistle ? Surely, any man of common good sense would see all this, and would determine to read it for himself, say what others may.” “But,” said Pat, “how can

you be sure that your Bible is right? How do you know it is rightly translated? the Apostles did not write it in English?" "No," said Clurer, "they did not; but learned men have taken every pains to get it as well translated as possible; and, to my mind, I have no doubt it is so. Did the Protestants wish to corrupt the Bible, and give a wrong translation of it, common sense would tell them to put away the old Greek Bible; but all of them that learn anything hardly, learn to read it for themselves. Why, when I began to think on such matters, as to whether I should read the Protestant Bible or no, I was working at Mr. C.'s new railing for his garden, when his little boy came crying out to an arbour close by, with a book in his hand. 'What's the matter now, young master,' said I. 'Papa says,' said

he, 'I must learn this lesson before dinner, and it is so very hard.' . . . 'A pity,' said I, just looking over the curious letters in his book; 'a pity to be setting children such hard stuff to learn, and no good does it do them.' 'No good!' said the young master, 'no good! oh yes; when I get older I am to read the Bible all in Greek for myself.' .

. . . This struck me very much; and I thought Protestants, who read and have the Bible so very much, are more likely to be right than Roman Catholics, who hardly know anything about it. Well, so I went straight, and got a Protestant Bible to read for myself; and, blessed be God, I did read it, and, neighbour, I advise you to do the same. I can give you one, or your own Roman Catholic version, the Douay. I don't believe it right altogether, but in many things it

is ; and if you would just look through, and try and answer your own question, ‘ Why we should not pray to the Virgin and saints,’ may be you’ll be a wiser man than before.” Pat had sat quietly, leaning his head on his hand, attentively listening to Clurer. He was silent for some time, when the other had finished ; but at last said, “ Well, I think it does seem to me a matter of common sense ; so give me a Protestant Bible,—I’ll just look it through.” Clurer handed it to him ; and Pat rose to go, with a “ Thank ye, neighbour,” when the former stopped him, and seriously looking at him, said, “ Pat, there is more in that Book than mere answers to questions—there is a way how to save your soul in it. I am afraid you are not thinking about *that* now ; God grant you may before you read far, and then

you will be indeed made 'wise unto salvation'" 2 Tim. iii. 15. They parted; and Clurer knelt in earnest prayer for his ignorant, but inquiring neighbour.

On the outskirts of the above-mentioned town stands a large parish church, around the pulpit and extending down the aisles of which may be seen, of a Sunday evening, numbers of the poorer classes, listening with unmoved attention to the simple truths of Christianity from their truly devoted minister. Clurer and his family were constant attendants there; and on the Sunday of which I am speaking, occupied a side form immediately beside the pulpit. The prayers concluded, the minister gave out the text:—"WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?" A second question, thought Clurer. "Oh! would that Pat would ask the same ques-

tion, or were here to hear it answered for him." His eye glanced to a dark corner of an opposite form, and there, to his mingled surprise and pleasure, he saw Pat himself, bending forward, with his eyes earnestly fixed on the preacher. "*God teach thee Himself,*" meanwhile prayed his friend, and they both sat, awaiting the minister's address. He, meanwhile, having twice read his text, repeated the question, "What think ye of Christ?" and, pausing, he looked at all around him. "It is a question," he continued, "of *immense* importance, one on the right answering of which hangs your eternal salvation. . . . What think ye of Christ?" he said a second time. "I'll tell you what some of you felt when I first asked you that question. Some of you felt confused; you could give me no answer at all." "Very true,"

thought Cormack. "You had no *clear* notions of Christ. Had I asked you any question about your *earthly* business, you would have given me a clear, clever answer; but when I ask you as to what you think of *Christ*—a question on the right answering of which your everlasting happiness depends—you are all confused; you could give me no answer; you had *no* thoughts at all about Christ. Oh, ye careless ones! when will you think? when will you be alarmed? . . . Others," continued the minister, "think Christ does something to save them, and they do the rest. Christ they make a *helper*, and not a *Saviour*. . . . But," added he, "what does the *Christian* think of Christ? In reply, I turn to our only standard of truth, the only way in which God speaks to man, and out of one chapter I will try

and show you what the Christian thinks of Christ. Phil. iii. He delights in thinking of Christ Jesus. 'He rejoices in Christ Jesus,' verse 3. All his hopes are in Christ; good works, so called, morality, &c.,—all, Paul 'counted loss,' worth nothing. Christ and Christ alone saved him, and not any merit of his own. Verses 4 to 9. The wish of the Christian is to know Christ, ver. 10. You know a person when you know his name, his character, his actions. All this a Christian desires to know of Christ; and the more he knows of his precious Saviour, the more he desires to know," &c. . . . Long and earnestly did the minister press home the question on each of his hearers, "What think ye of Christ?" . . . It seemed quite new to Pat; a bright light burst upon his hitherto darkened mind; he mentally breathed

a prayer, "*Lord, make me a Christian, too ;*" and henceforward he was an altered man. The first question he had heard had sent him to his Bible ; the second sent him again to his Bible, but at the same time to his knees. Returning home after church, he informed his wife of all he had heard and felt, and showed her his Bible. " Wife," he added in conclusion, " I wish you would read it with me, too, and forgive me all my sinful conduct to you and my poor children ; and I hope God will forgive me, for Jesus Christ's sake, and give me grace to be a different man for the future." His poor wife was quite overcome with the news, accompanied, as it was, with words of such unexpected kindness. Since Thursday she had seen a great difference in his conduct to her, but had not ventured to ask any

questions. Once or twice before, occasional fits of repentance had seemed to cross her husband's mind, and he would bring her sometimes, though rarely, his week's wages home, and pass a night or two at his own fireside ; but now he promised always to do so. Besides, as I said before, the little she remembered of what she had heard when in service, had in times of sorrow roused a wish within her to read the Bible for herself. Naturally timid, she hesitated long to get one. She dreaded the priest, and still more her husband ; but now the latter himself pressed her to do it, and joyfully henceforward husband and wife read together the words of the living God. " Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Need I add, that the Cormacks became new creatures. A week or two hardly

elapsed, ere the broken windows were mended, the garden weeded and tended. A year passed, and the hovel was gone: a good, substantial cottage had replaced it, around the door of which, of an evening, might be seen merrily playing the little ones, the eldest on his little chair reading or watching their gambols. Oh, mournfully would Pat gaze on him, crippled and helpless, and mourn the effects of a father's sin, an injury done for life to his own child; and tenderly would he often lift him up on his knee, and teach him to read the blessed Word, which had taught him to answer clearly and completely for himself the all-important question, "*What think ye of Christ?*" . . . No man ever yet became changed, and separated himself from his former associates, without suffering from their ill will

and scorn. But why mention the sufferings and trials attending such a change, when the happiness and comforts are so infinitely outnumbering. Does trouble and suffering surround and threaten the Christian,—a moment's thought, a mental prayer, a realising of the presence of an Almighty Friend, and he feels himself separate from earth, with the God of Heaven beside him, his Father, his Guardian, his Guide. . . . “In the world” he hears his Saviour say, “ye *shall* have tribulation;” . . . but . . . “be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

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