

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

SUNDAY READING.

LOOK AT HOME;

OR, THE

ACCUSERS ACCUSED.

Being an Account of the Manner in which our Savior put to Silence the Scribes and Pharisees, when they brought to Him the Woman taken in Adultery.



Sold by J. MARSHALL,
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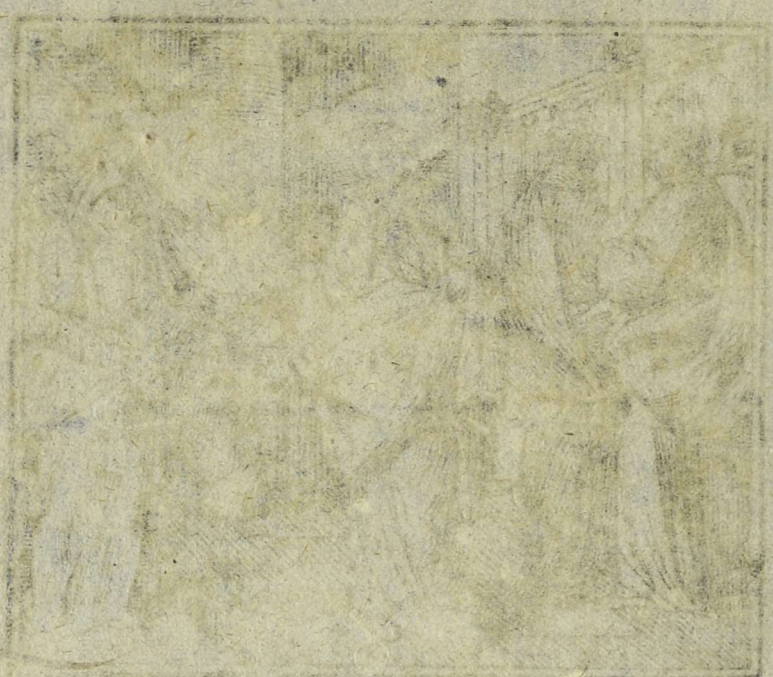
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CHURCH OF THE
SUNDAY
LOOK AT HOME

ACCOUNT OF THE



(Printed by the Rev. J. R. ...
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A great man used to say that he never saw a criminal dragged to execution without asking himself, "Who knows whether this poor fellow may not, on the whole, be guilty of less sin than I am?" This is a question which it would be well if we would all of us put to ourselves, when we see any of our fellow-creatures punished; for I am persuaded, that many of us have sins, which, all things considered, deserve the rod just as much as the sins of those people who endure chastisement for them. I am sorry to add, that in general, we are so far from putting to ourselves any such question as I have spoken of, that we do what is directly the contrary. We contrive to praise, instead of making occasion to blame ourselves, when we see another

other in fault. We immediately say, " Well, I
 " thank God, I never did any thing so bad as this.
 " I never in my life did what Mr. Such-a-one has
 " done. I am not so bad as he, however;" and then
 we fall foul on his whole character, and think to
 shew our goodness by the extreme severity which
 we use in speaking of him.

Never was this temper better exposed, or the evil
 of it reprov'd, than in the case of which I am now
 going to speak; I mean on the occasion of the Scribes
 and Pharisees bringing before our Saviour the woman
 taken in adultery.

We read, that " as Christ was teaching in the
 " temple, they brought to him this woman, and set
 " her in the midst, saying to him, Master, this wo-
 " man was taken in adultery." Now, since adultery
 is certainly a most dreadful sin, we might at first
 view be ready to praise these men, and also to say,
 " What holy and good people must these be! what
 " haters of sin! what friends to God and religion!
 " they, to be sure, must be quite pure and perfect!"
 Alas! how should we be mistaken if we were to
 judge thus of them! They were men, no doubt,
 who had taken some pains to wash the outside clean,
 and they were in good repute with their neighbours;
 nevertheless, as this story will shew, they were all
 the while very wicked in their hearts: they brought
 this woman before Christ, and placed her in the
 midst, from a very wrong motive: for they did it
 not for the sake of glorifying God, not for the sake
 of punishing sin in this instance, in order to pre-
 vent

vent it in others; and not therefore through any love to God, or charity to their neighbour; but, on the contrary, they acted from some of the basest dispositions, for they felt no compassion for the woman, and they wanted only to lay a trap for Christ, in order that they might have matter of accusation against him.

How common is it for people, now-a-days, in some respects, to imitate these Scribes and Pharisees! What curiosity have some men, in the first place, to discover, and then to publish, all the faults and infirmities of their neighbours! Some there are, who spend half their lives in listening to and repeating all the scandal that is passing. When they hear of a man that has been overtaken by a sin, or of a woman that has lost her reputation, one would think that they had heard of one of the best pieces of news that ever reached their ears; for how does conversation run on, and the spirits rise, and the wit abound, when the fall of a fellow-creature is the topic of the company! The Scribes and Pharisees brought this woman forth, and set her in the midst. Just so, methinks, would the persons I am blaming set every offender whom they accuse in the midst of the company, if they were able, for they shew by their language that they delight to expose everyone as much as possible. But why, I repeat it, is all this ill-nature? Are these accusers spotless in their own lives? Are they better even than those whom they accuse?—No; I believe it has often happened, that the very man who has been most forward in condemning another, has been him-
self

self guilty of the same fault, and liable to the very same condemnation. It is the most wicked part of the world that is commonly the most severe. Your harsh judges are often the very worst of men.

The words used by the Scribes and Pharisees, when they brought this woman to Christ, were the following. Said they, "Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned, but what sayest thou?" The design evidently was to put a difficulty in the way of Christ, and, if possible to set him and Moses at variance; for if, on the one hand, Christ should say that the woman ought to be released, this would be contradicting Moses, and Christ would then have been called a false Prophet: but if, on the other hand, Christ should order her to be stoned, this they might think would diminish something from the mercifulness of his character as a Savior, and would hurt his credit with the people; so that, in either case, the Scribes and Pharisees would be gratified. What a crafty question, therefore, was this! Let us now see how very prudently our Savior answered it.

At first, he appeared as if he took no notice of what was said to him (for when wicked men bring their accusations against others merely to indulge their own malice, it is often best not to lend an ear to them) but our Savior, stooping down, wrote with his finger on the ground. The Scribes and Pharisees now thought they had puzzled him, and they therefore pressed their question again with great earnestness. Ah! how little did they know of the true

true character of Christ, for he understood all their thoughts, through that divine power which belonged to him, and his silence, in fact, was only intended to draw these his enemies on into a difficulty, and to make his own answer the more remarkable. Our Savior, after some time, raised himself from the ground, and said to them, "*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*"

What a heart-searching answer was this—and, at the same time, what an unexpected one! They that had just now been accusers, were hereby accused in their turn. It was as if our Savior had said, "You have brought me a woman taken in adultery, and you seem to have been very eager in doing it, and you pretend that you merely want to know what ought to be done with her; I, however, see into your hearts, and because I know that your motives are corrupt, I shall not answer you in the manner in which you expect: Moses, as you observe, commanded the adulterer to be stoned: be it so: go then, if you please, and stone this woman: but take this hint with you, that it becomes those who are the most forward in blaming others to be particularly free from blame themselves. Let him therefore take the lead in punishing her, who, by being free from fault himself, has the best right to inflict the punishment: *Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone at her.*"—Having thus spoken, Christ returned to his employment of writing on the ground, leaving his reproof to work on the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees.

And now, behold the mighty force of a few words—"they which heard it being convicted by their own consciences, went out one by one, beginning with the eldest, even unto the least; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." What, are these godly persons gone? all gone? And is the business on which they came left unfinished? It is even so.—The criminal alone remains, and her accusers are fled; nor have they fled without reason, for they had now begun to perceive that there was one ready to accuse them in their turn, and that "all things were naked and open before him with whom they had to do."—Oh, if it had pleased our Savior to bring to light all the hidden circumstances of their lives, and to publish on the spot every secret sin they had committed, how would they have had to blush before all the people!—They thought it prudent, therefore, to make the best of their way out of the Temple, leaving our Savior either to condemn or acquit the woman as he might think proper.

Reader, whensoever you feel tempted to be severe on any crime or failing of your neighbor, call to mind what passed between our Lord and these Pharisees; they were so busy in bringing to light the sin of another, that they had forgot that they had any sins of their own—they reflected not that they were some of the most unfit men in the world to take up the office of accusers, nor do they seem to have ever considered what was likely to become of themselves hereafter, when God should call them to judgment.—And this is a common evil; God has
given

given to every man his work: each has an evil heart of his own, which he ought to look to: each, if not guilty of open crimes, has many a secret sin that he ought to repent of: instead of which every one is bestowing his attention on his neighbor's faults, without giving any heed to his own. We are all naturally apt to entertain a very good opinion of ourselves, but a strict examination of our ways might chance to spoil that good opinion, and we are therefore very backward in entering upon the task. On the contrary, we are very ready to blame our neighbor, for, in proportion as we blacken his character, we cause our own to appear in a favorable light.

But how very foolish, as well as vain, is all this self-deceit! We may hide our sins, for a while, both from ourselves and from others also; just as the Pharisees concealed their true character, till our Savior sent them this rebuke. Soon, however, a day will come, when all that has been kept secret shall be brought to light; and even now, let me remark, that the same Divine Person, who, by a few words, confounded these hypocrites, has his eye upon us; for "the Lord knoweth our down-sitting and our up-rising, and understandeth our thoughts long before; he is about our path, and about our bed, and espieth out all our ways;" "from him the darkness cannot hide us, for the darkness is no darkness to him, but the night is as clear as the day." Before him lies the history of our whole lives, in which is noted every thing that we have ever said, every thing that we have ever done, and every

every thing also that we have ever thought or imagined in our minds. And now, if the same Jesus should again appear in the Temple, and reprove us as he did the Pharisees, awakening in like manner our consciences, and setting them to condemn us, who is there among us that could abide it? If he should publish among the croud of our fellow creatures standing round us, all the secret sins of our lives, or should draw them up in the form of an accusation against us, and should require us to stand by and hear the long indictment read, who is there, I say, who could stay to hear it to the end!—Who is there, who would not be glad to escape from his presence, and leave him again alone in the Temple!

Nor let us forget that, although Christ walketh not on earth as he once did, and though he is not present to reprove us with an audible voice, as he did the Pharisees, yet he still speaks to us by our consciences, and also by the still voice of his Holy Spirit, which striveth with us: and great is the power of conscience, when once awakened, and set to work by the power of God's Holy Spirit; for then nothing can withstand it: from the moment when it is truly alarmed, it begins to discover a man to himself, and it will then find him so much employment at home, that he will have little leisure and less inclination to turn accuser of his brethren. Go now into the chamber of him whom sickness and sorrow have brought low, and have filled with a deep sense of sin; see with what readiness he confesses his iniquity, and with what earnestness he

he prays for pardon; see how entirely he is taken up by the affairs of his own soul, and how he is laboring to make his peace with God. Tell him that some neighbor hath fallen into a dreadful sin, and how, think you, will he be affected by it? Why, he will lament, pity, and pray for the person. But if you should try after the manner of some profane people to raise a joke at the expence of the unhappy sinner, hoping to divert the sick person with the subject, methinks he would turn from you, as from a man not fit for him to talk with, and he would probably beg you to go out of the room. To proceed one step farther. Suppose the last day to be now come. Imagine that you see the Judge upon the Throne, the generations of mankind assembled before him, and the books opened, out of which we are all to be judged. Who, in that situation, would have any disposition to revile, or laugh at the sins of his neighbor, or would have any heart to be severe upon him! Who is there whose thoughts would not be employed entirely upon his own case? Who would not be anxious to obtain his own pardon; who, in short, would not leave God to deal as he thought fit with others, hoping and praying that they also, if possible, might obtain mercy? To this temper, therefore, it is plain, that sickness may soon bring us, and to this temper, may God grant, that we may all be brought before it is, too late, since death and judgment will most assuredly bring us to it at last.

Our Savior, having thus dispatched the Pharisees, the woman alone remains: she was detained

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in the Temple by the same cause which made the others depart—I mean consciousness of guilt. This kept her fixed to the spot even after her accusers were gone, expecting now to hear her sentence pronounced by Christ; who, at length, raising himself from the ground, on which he had been writing, says to the woman, “Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee; *“Go, and sin no more.”*

Let us not be led by this last speech of Christ, to suppose that he meant either to make light of the sin, or to say any thing against the law of God. No, let us take occasion rather in this place to remark how very dreadful a crime adultery is considered by our Creator, since he ordered it in the Old Testament to be punished even with Death. This punishment, however, was not to be inflicted, except after regular proof; an accuser and sufficient witnesses must come forward in every such case: the proper Judge or Magistrate must also hear the cause, and must himself pronounce the sentence. If all these necessary rules had been complied with, Christ would not have thought of stopping the due course of Law, for he was not used to meddle with the Civil Power, nor is there any instance of his shewing forth his mercy by saving a criminal out of the hands of public justice. In the present instance no kind of trial had been had; on the contrary, the accusers and witnesses were all fled; this woman therefore not being accused by those whose office

it was to accuse her, was not accused by Christ neither, whose office it certainly was not. On another occasion, when Christ was appealed to by one who seems to have been wronged in his property, he made answer, "Man who made me a Judge and a Divider." Our Savior came into the world not to settle disputes about property, nor to meddle in cases of common Criminal Justice; he left all such things as these to be managed by the persons whom the state appointed for the purpose. He came to be a Savior, he came to pardon sins committed against God, for which he made atonement by his Death, and in his life-time he taught men how to obtain this salvation, namely, by repenting and believing in him, and resolving to "*Sin no more.*"

In full agreement with these ends of his coming into the world, he in the present case leaves the Law of Moses just as it was, neither condemning nor yet acquitting the woman; but as the Publisher of the Gospel of the Grace of God, and, as the Author of everlasting Salvation, he comforts, with the hope of pardon, the wretched Person whom the malicious Pharisees had brought before him, and he directs her how to escape, not the mere punishment of the Law, but the more bitter pains of Eternal Death. "*Go, said he, and sin no more.*" It is as if he had said, "Be not concerned about the accusation before the magistrate, which has been brought against you, for your accusers indeed are gone.---I have put them to flight by a single sentence spoken to their Consciences; and since the Pharisees do

not accuse you; neither shall I turn prosecutor. Be concerned however about the sin against God which you have committed, and if you would ever hope for mercy at his hands, be sure that you do not return to your iniquity. Go then in Peace. Go in hope of Pardon and Salvation, for I am come into the world to be your Savior; but *“go and sin no more.”*

Such things as these to be managed by the person whom the State appointed for the purpose. He came to be a Savior, he came to pardon the crimes named against God, for which he made atonement by his Death, and in his life time he taught men how to obtain this salvation, namely by repenting and believing in him, and resolving to *“sin no more.”*

In all agreement with these ends of his coming into the world, he in the present case leaves the Law of Moses just as it was, neither condemning nor yet relaxing it. As the Governor of God, and as the Author of Salvation, he comforts, with hope, the wretched Person whom the Law had brought before him, and he shows how to escape not the mere punishment of the Law, but the more bitter pains of Eternal Death. He said, *“and ye will live as I have said.”* He was concerned about the salvation of the magistrates, which has been from his coming for your sakes, and are good. I have to say, As might by a single sentence, look to their Conscience, and these the Pharisees



A H Y M N.

ALMIGHTY God, thy piercing eye
 Strikes thro' the shade of night;
 And our most secret actions lie
 All open to thy sight.

There's not a sin that we commit,
 Nor wicked word we say,
 But in thy dreadful book 'tis writ
 Against the judgment day.

And must the crimes that I have done
 Be read and publish'd there;
 Be all expos'd before the Sun,
 While men and angels hear?

Lord, at thy foot asham'd I lie;
 Upward I dare not look;
 Pardon my sins, before I die,
 And blot them from thy book.

And since, if e'er I see thy face,
 Thy mercy bids me live;
 O, let me learn from this thy grace,
 My neighbour to forgive.

Teach me, whene'er his wrath begins,
 To pity, not to chide;
 And all his multitude of sins
 With charity to hide.

Teach me, tho' wrong'd a thousand times,
 To make no anger known;
 And when I hear of others crimes,
 To think upon my own.

T H E E N D.

On the 1st of August, 1795, was published,
Hints to all Ranks of People.—The Happy Waterman.—
The Riot, a Ballad.—The 'lowboy's Dream, a Ballad.

On the 1st of September,
Tom White, Part II.—Noah's Flood.—Dame Andrews, a
Ballad.

On the 1st of October,
Harvest Home.—Two Farmers, Part I.—Honest Miller,
a Ballad.

On the 1st of November,
The Parable of the Vineyard.—The Two Farmers, Part II.
—The Sorrows of Yamba, a Ballad.

On the 1st of December,
The Troubles of Life.—Sorrowful Sam.—Merry Christ-
mas, a Carol.

On the 1st of January, 1796,
New Thoughts on the New Year.—The History of Mary
Wood, the Housemaid.—Robert and Richard, a Ballad.

On the 1st of February,
The Touchstone; or, the Way to know a good Christian.
—The Apprentice turned Master; or, the Two Shoemakers, Part II.—The Story of Sinful Sally. Told by
herself a Ballad.

On the 1st of March,
Onesimus; or, the Run-away Servant converted.—Idle Jack
Brown; or, the Two Shoemakers, Part III.—Shop-
keeper, Part I.

On the 1st of April,
Conversion of St. Paul.—Jack Brown in Prison; or, the
Two Shoemakers, Part IV.—Shopkeeper, Part II.

On the 1st of May,
The General Resurrection, Part I.—The History of Charles
Jones the Footman, written by Himself.—The Hackney
Coachman; or, the Way to get a good Fare, a Ballad.

On the 1st of June,
Carrying Religion into the Common Business of Life.—
The Cheapfide Apprentice.—The Election Song, a
Ballad.

And other Pieces in a similar Plan, on the 1st of every Month.