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## SELECT TALES.

### THE POCKET BIBLE,

OR,  
HIS LOVING KINDNESS CHANGES NOT.

BY CHARLES A. GOODRICH.

I was standing at the counter of a book-store, some years since, when a lady entered, and enquired for pocket Bibles. I knew her well. A few years before, she had married a respectable young merchant, who, although possessed of but little, if any, capital himself, had been started in business by a gentleman of wealth, with every prospect of success. He was active, honest, and enterprising; and, although he married early, and after commencing business for himself—perhaps too early—the lady whom he had selected as his companion was worthy of his choice. She had more ambition, some of her friends thought, than comforted with her circumstances; and she was ever desirous to press it, in consideration that her husband's income for the present was small, it was apparent that her spirit was aspiring, and that she was looking forward with some impatience to the time when she should be mistress of a fine house, with furniture corresponding. A friend of hers, who was married about the same time, had once entered upon the enjoyment of the objects of her ambition, and had even a carriage at her command. Quite possibly Matilda Grant cherished the secret hope that she might one day be able to visit that friend in a similar establishment of her own.

The dispensations of God, however, not so frequently intervene to thwart our plans and defeat our hopes of worldly success. He has higher views respecting us than we ourselves entertain—the elevation of our souls, and those of our friends, to a crown of glory in his own blessed mansions—and a preparation, therefore, is necessary, which requires sorrow here in order to joy hereafter. 'Thro' much tribulation must we enter the kingdom of God.

For a few years, Mr. Grant went on well in business, and his goods were made with judgment, and his goods were credited to those who, he thought, would be able to pay. But, unfortunately, and unforeseen, his principal creditors failed, and in a single day, Charles Grant was a bankrupt.

At the time of this sad reverse, he was ill of a fever. It was difficult to conceal it from him; but the news had a still more unhappy effect upon him than was anticipated, and from that hour continued to decline, and in a few weeks he was carried to his long home. It was a grievous blow to his wife, who, whom her friends most sincerely sympathized, and to whom they tendered for herself and two children—a son and a daughter—all the kind assistance which their circumstances allowed.

On an investigation of Mr. Grant's affairs, his failure proved even worse than was feared; and although the gentleman who had advanced the capital was quite liberal in his settlement of the concern, the widow and her children had but a few hundred dollars, and for most of that she was chiefly indebted, it was thought, to the generosity of her husband's friend.

This result, added to the loss of a fond and truly estimable man, made the shock still more terrible. She felt the calamity keenly, and the more so, as she had no near relatives at hand to console her, and, as she was ignorant of the divine consolations of religion. But there was mercy in her cup of sorrow. The spirit of God came in to heal that troubled spirit, and to sanctify those trials to her soul. And at length she was enabled to live in humble and quiet submission to the will of God, and betake herself to the support and education of her lovely children, now her sole and delight.

At the age of seventeen, Charles Grant was in pursuit of a pocket Bible for her son, named Charles, after his father. The price of the book was soon made. It was a beautiful edition—not expensive, but just such as a fond and religious mother would wish to present to a son whom she loved, and which she hoped would prove a lamp unto his feet. A further circumstance about this Bible, I knew in after years. On presenting it, she turned at a glance to the happy little fellow to a blank page, in the beginning of which, in a beautiful wreath, she had inscribed her own name, and under it the words, "To my son," followed by these appropriate and touching lines:

A parent's blessing on her son,  
Goes with this holy thing;  
Thou shalt have it, my dear son,  
Must to the other thing.  
Remember 'tis no idle toy,  
A mother's gift—Remember, boy.

And still a little below were printed, in small but beautiful capitals, words which a mother's faith might well appropriate: "HIS LOVING KINDNESS CHANGES NOT."

At the age of seventeen, Charles Grant was a stout, strong, active youth. He was more than ordinarily ambitious; but as his ambition had not full scope, he was restless, and sometimes I thought unhappy. Had his mother, at this critical era of his life, been able to find some employment suited to his active and ambitious genius, it would have been fortunate indeed; but she knew of none, and besides, she needed it—what was more than all, she was alone, and felt that she could not dispense with his company.

About this time, a young sailor by the name of Thornton, belonging to the neighborhood, arrived home from a voyage. Charles naturally felt in his way, and was delighted with the story of his wonderful adventures. He listened to him, and intently. His age and circumstances combined to excite in his ambitious bosom the desire of similar exciting scenes. Without designing any special wrong, young Thornton at length proposed to Charles to accompany him on his next voyage, which he should commence in a few weeks. For a time he hesitated, or rather declined—his mother and Alice would never consent, and to leave them thus, was more than he felt willing to do. Thornton did not urge him, as it afterward appeared, but Charles himself was strongly inclined to go, while the young sailor was quite willing to have a friend and companion so bright and enterprising as Charles Grant. In an evil hour the latter decided to go; and to go without the consent of his mother.

On the night appointed for their departure, Charles rose from his bed, when all was still, and softly feeling his way to the door he escaped. It was a beautiful night, and as he proceeded round the corner of the house to get a small bundle of clothes which he had concealed the day before, his heart beat with unusual violence, and for a few moments a brightness came over him at the thought of leaving a mother and sister, the only objects of earth whom he had ever truly loved. He stopped for a moment, as if meditating a better resolution, and then proceeded to the gate, which he opened, and went out. Here he again paused—turned—looked—lingered—hesitated—and even put his hand again on the latch, half resolved to creep once more to his little bed-room. But at that moment the low call of Thornton, at some distance, reached his ear—he had lingered longer than he was aware, and now the moment arrived when he must go, if at all. With a sort of desperation of feeling he hastened away, the tears trickling down his cheeks as he bade adieu to the humble cottage which contained all he loved on earth. His bundle was still under his arm, and in that bundle I am glad to say, was "a mother's gift"—the Pocket Bible. Charles felt he could not go without that, and perhaps he felt that the discovery that he had taken it might serve somewhat to assuage a mother's sorrow.

Before morning, the young sailors were a long way toward the seaport, whence they expected to sail, and a couple of days brought them quite there. The ship, it so happened, was ready, and Charles having been accepted on the recommendation of Thornton, took up his line of duty before the mast. Shortly after, the ship weighed anchor, and stretched forth on a far distant voyage.

I must leave my readers to imagine, if they are able, the surprise, and even consternation of Mrs. Grant and Alice, the morning following Charles' departure, at not finding him in the house, nor about the premises. What could it mean?—What errand could have called him away?—at what hour did he leave?—what accident could have befallen him? Search was made for him by the increasing anxiety and terrified mother and sister for an hour or more, before they ventured to make known their solicitude to their neighbors. My own residence was not far distant; and before I had finished my breakfast, a messenger, in haste, made known the truly distressing situation of Mrs. Grant and Alice. I hastened to the house—other friends at no distant hour were there—inquiries were instituted—messengers were despatched around the town, but not the slightest tidings could be obtained, and even conjecture was baffled. At length, however, Mrs. Grant made the discovery that his better suit was gone, and there was a transient gleam of joy on her face as she announced that his pocket Bible was not also in his chest. Some days passed—long days, and long nights, before any satisfactory intelligence was received, and then the amount of that intelligence was in a short, but affectionate letter, from Charles himself, just then on the eve of sailing for the Pacific Ocean. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR MOTHER: Can you, will you forgive me the step I have taken without your knowledge or consent? My heart has smote me ever since I left you. I am at— and on board the ship—which sails in an hour for the Pacific Ocean. Fondest—best of mothers, do not grieve; I will one day return to comfort and bless you and my dear Alice. I must do something for you and her. Kiss her for me. Mother, I can write no more; only I hope that I shall receive your prayers. I have got my pocket Bible, and shall keep it next to my heart. Farewell.

Your affectionate son,  
P. S. I have somewhere read, what I am sure will prove true in my own case:  
'Where'er I rove—where'er I roam,  
My heart, untir'd, fondly turns to thee.'

By some means, the letter did not reach the post office as soon as it should have done, and the uncertainty bore heavily on the heart of mother and sister. The post master, on its arrival, kindly sent it to me; and hoping that it contained tidings of the lost child, I ventured to break the seal. The truth—sorrowful as it was—was a great relief, and was felt to be so by Mrs. Grant and Alice. Yet, for a season—and who can marvel?—their hearts were filled with sadness which scarcely admitted of alleviation. It was a dark and mysterious providence, and when friends called in, as they often did, to mingle their tears with the weeping, and to administer consolation, the most they could do was to say, "His ways are in the sea, and his judgments past finding out."

But time does something—religion does more. By degrees these sorrowful moods were able to pray; and as the Christian post says, "Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw." So it did for them. They did not, indeed, recover their wonted cheerfulness, but they were calm and subdued. No murmur escaped the mother's lips, and even Alice seemed to have imbibed the spirit of a holy resignation. "Father, thy will be done."

But there were days of keen and bitter anguish, and in those nights when the storm swept its angry blast across their humble dwelling, and rocked their bed, it was impossible for a mother's heart not to tremble for her sailor boy, far off upon the stormy ocean, and perhaps suffering the perils of the billowy tempest. But even at such times, she was enabled to commit herself and her wandering child to the care of a covenant-keeping God—uttering the language of holy confidence—"His faithfulness is as a protecting shield." His faithfulness is as a protecting shield.

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Four years elapsed and nothing was heard of Charles Grant. Sometime during the second year of his absence, a rumor reached us that a ship, supposed to be the—, which sailed from—, and on board of which Charles was supposed to be, had been wrecked, and that but two or three were left alive, and among these was a young man named Grant. But the rumor, though not contradicted, was not confirmed; and another period of uncertainty and anxiety fell to the lot of the long-stricken and heart-saddened mother and sister of the absent boy.

At length, the friends of Mrs. Grant perceived a visible change in her health. The indications of that too fatal malady—consumption—were too apparent to be mistaken. Its approach, indeed, was slow and insidious, and for a time was kept at bay by assiduous attention of our village physicians; but medical prescription at length lost its power, and she became at first confined to the house—then to her room—and finally to her bed.

I often visited her, as did other friends. Her room was no longer the abode of gloom and sorrow. She had for some months been making rapid progress in resignation to the will of God; and though her feeble tabernacle was shaken, and was likely to be dissolved, through years of anxiety and affliction, yet her faith seemed to acquire more and more strength, and to fasten with a firmer hold upon the Divine promises.

One day, as I sat conversing with her, she alluded to the faithfulness of God, and expressed her unwavering confidence in him. She said it had been her desire to acquiesce in the Divine will, and she hoped that she should be able to do so, whatever it might be in relation to herself or her absent son. But, continued she, I have prayed long and fervently that I may once more see him—see him a true penitent, and I cannot relinquish the belief that God will hear and answer.

I was about to say something which might tend to soothe her, in case her hopes were not realized—as I must confess I saw little present reason to expect they would be—when she stopped me, and observed, "You may think me presumptuous, but my faith must enjoy its hold on the Divine promises. Has not God said, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' I have called—yes, I have called by day and by night, and God has seemed to help me. Has he excited such strong, such intense emotions for nothing? Has he enabled me to wrestle so with him only to be disappointed? I am aware that probabilities are all apparently against me. I must soon fail; this heart will soon cease beating, and the narrow way by my resting place; but I still have confidence in the faithfulness of my heavenly Father. What though I see no prospect of the immediate return of my boy? I believe I shall yet press that poor boy to my bosom. Years since, I wrote in a pocket Bible I gave him, 'His loving kindness changes not,' and do you think it will fail now?"

I confess I admired the steady faith of the woman, so strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; and yet it seemed scarcely possible that her hopes should be realized. At length my faith faltered; for it was apparent that her hour of departure was not far distant.

That night, two or three female friends, fearful of her failure before morning, offered to stay with the mother of Alice. This, the latter cheerfully assented to, though she had decided not to leave her mother. The necessary arrangements for the night were made, and at an early hour all was silent in and around the humble cottage.

It was a glorious night abroad—clear—soft—mild; just such a night as a saint might choose in which to take its departure and soar to the temple above. The poet must have had some such night in his vision when he penned those beautiful lines—  
'The moon awakes, and from her maiden face  
Smiles the soft light, looks meekly forth;  
And, with her virgin stars, walks in the heavens,  
Walks nightly there, conversing as she walks,  
Of purity, and holiness, and God.'

It was just such a night, and Alice had risen from her seat; and to hide her emotions, as her dear parent breathed more heavily, had gone to the window, the curtain of which she drew aside, and was standing resplendent on the sash. In the distance, just beyond the gate, she seemed to be approaching. For a moment she started back, but again looked, and his hand was upon the latch. The gate was opened with great caution, and the stranger approached slowly towards the house. Presently a gentle knock was heard at the kitchen door. It was impossible for Alice to summon courage to attend to the stranger herself; but she whispered to the nurse, who, upon unlocking the door, inquired the reason for so late and unseasonable an intrusion.

"Does Mrs. Grant still reside here?" inquired the stranger, in a kind, but earnest tone.

"She does," replied the nurse, "but she is dangerously ill, and we fear cannot live many hours; you cannot see her."

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed the stranger; and she audibly wore the words pronounced "that the sound fell on the ears of Alice, and her heart beat with strong and distressing emotions. "I must see her," continued the stranger; "do not deny me, madam; quick! quick!" and he gently pressed open the door, still held by the surprised, and even terrified nurse.

Alice listened to the sounds, without being able to decide their import; but at length, fearing that her mother might be disturbed, she came softly out of the room, for the purpose of ascertaining what the stranger wanted.

"Alice! Miss Alice!" said the nurse, as she approached.

Before she had finished what she was attempting to say, the stranger inquired, with a countenance wild with emotion, "Is this Alice Grant?" and the next moment he swooned and fell on the floor.

"Miss Alice!" exclaimed the agitated nurse, "what does all this mean! who can this be? what shall we do?"

Alice herself stood amazed; but as the light fell upon the features of the apparently lifeless stranger, a thought flashed across her mind, and the following moment she was nearly fallen beside him.

"Nurse," she said, softly, but quickly, "hand me some water!" This she applied liberally to the temples of the stranger, who slowly recovered his consciousness, and at length sat up. He looked around, and presently fastened his eyes intently and inquiringly on the pale and motionless Alice.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, "it is she! it is—my own beloved Alice."

"Charles! Charles! my brother!" uttered Alice, as she fell upon his bosom. "O mother! my brother! it is—it is—my brother! O mother! my brother!"

The sound of their voices reached the dying mother, and she inquired, "Alice, my child, what—what did I hear, Alice?"

Alice, scarcely able to stand, hastened to her bedside, and taking her mother's hand, already cold with death, spoke in accents of heaven, and with a voice that was tremulous, but kind.

"What did I hear, Alice?" the mother softly whispered. "I thought he had come! Did I dream Alice?"

"Mother—dear mother," said Alice, putting her lips close to the cold face of her dying parent, and scarcely able to draw a breath, "he is here, mother, he is here, he is here!"

"Why, Charles? it seemed as if he had come. But I dreamed, did I, Alice?"

"Mother," said Alice, "could you see him? could you sustain it, if you could see him?" "Surely, child; why, I long to see him! and I did think I should see him once more before I died."

At this moment the door softly opened, and Charles approached, cautiously, inquiringly. "Mother," said Alice, "he can you look up? do you know who this is?"

"Who is it, Alice? who is it?" inquired the half wild, but still conscious mother. "Mother," softly whispered Charles, as he knelt down and kissed her cold cheek; "mother, my dear mother! O will you, can you forgive your long-lost, but penitent, broken-hearted child?"

I was about to say something which might tend to soothe her, in case her hopes were not realized—as I must confess I saw little present reason to expect they would be—when she stopped me, and observed, "You may think me presumptuous, but my faith must enjoy its hold on the Divine promises. Has not God said, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' I have called—yes, I have called by day and by night, and God has seemed to help me. Has he excited such strong, such intense emotions for nothing? Has he enabled me to wrestle so with him only to be disappointed? I am aware that probabilities are all apparently against me. I must soon fail; this heart will soon cease beating, and the narrow way by my resting place; but I still have confidence in the faithfulness of my heavenly Father. What though I see no prospect of the immediate return of my boy? I believe I shall yet press that poor boy to my bosom. Years since, I wrote in a pocket Bible I gave him, 'His loving kindness changes not,' and do you think it will fail now?"

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most prevent the important function of respiration. This treatment soon renders the child restless, and he cries for relief, when the nurse resorts to pargoric, Godfrey's cordial, or some other narcotic, and the little sufferer is dosed after day, until the functions of his brain are morbidly excited, and the seeds of mental derangement fixed before the first annual celebration of its birthday. The clothing, too, is seldom of the proper kind. The arms, breasts, and shoulders, in many instances, are left uncovered, and the consequent exposure generally produces a cold, in connection with the lungs, or sudden colds, which terminate in the most fatal diseases. Indeed, many sound constitutions are permanently destroyed by a single acute inflammation. Some important organ is deeply involved in the lesion, and a change of structure is commenced, which continues to increase long after the acute stage of the disease is cured. This is especially the case with the lungs, brains, bowels, or other organs essential to the growth of the body. In this way a single acute inflammation may prove fatal to a child. The pneumonia which it induces may become chronic, new elements may be formed, tubercles developed, and consumption the termination; or, should he reach maturity, the alteration may prove fatal to the mother, and so on with the body. It is indeed a part of it, and may descend from the unfortunate sufferer to his still more unfortunate offspring. It is thus that hereditary diseases originate. Even where the constitution recovers its healthy tone, it frequently retains the seeds of disease, and the child is continued care to counteract the effects of a single injudicious exposure, especially if improperly treated at the commencement. There is, however, no permanent defect of constitution, but may be improved, if not rendered entirely healthy, by the persevering use of proper means—a well directed education, physical, mental, and moral, with the strict exposure to either air or solar light, present in the various relations he sustains to himself, his family, and the community in which he is placed. If any thing is omitted which has a tendency to the cure, the lungs will be diseased, and the sources of his enjoyment more or less abridged. In our age and country men stand in almost an infinite variety of relations to each other, and hence the number of mental accomplishments necessary to enable them to discharge their duties properly. But a system of general education which does not extend even farther than this—which does not contemplate man as a physical as well as a mental being, is still incomplete. Man, in order to fill the place for which he was created, must know himself—must understand the laws by which his physical organization is governed, and the means of attaining the most perfect development not only of the mind but also of the body. This he cannot do without a careful study of the laws of nature, the structure of the body, and the subdivisions of the globe, the laws which regulate the various kingdoms of nature, the structure of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms; but a good class-book on the peculiar structure of the human body, and the laws by which it is governed, the structure of the body, and the subdivisions of the globe, the laws which regulate the various kingdoms of nature, the structure of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms; but a good class-book on the peculiar structure of the human body, and the laws by which it is governed, the structure of the body, and the subdivisions of the globe, the laws which regulate the various kingdoms of nature, the structure of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms; but a good class-book on the peculiar structure of the human body, and the laws by which it is governed, the structure of the body, and the subdivisions of the globe, the laws which regulate the various kingdoms of nature, the structure of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms; 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