



CHAPTER XI

Enchanted Ground



By this time they were got to the Enchanted Ground,¹ where the air naturally tended to make one drowsy; and that place was all grown over with briars and thorns, excepting here and there, where was an Enchanted Arbour, upon which if a man sits, or in which, if a man sleeps, it is a question, say some, whether ever he shall rise or wake again in this world.² Over this forest, therefore, they went, both one and the other, and Mr. Great-heart went before, for that he was the guide; and Mr. Valiant-for-truth, he came behind, being there a guard, for

fear, lest peradventure some fiend, or dragon, or giant, or thief, should fall upon their rear, and so do mischief. They went on here, each man with his sword drawn in his hand, for they knew it was a dangerous place. Also they cheered up one another as well as they could; Feeble-mind, Mr. Great-heart commanded, should come up after him, and Mr. Despondency was under the eye of Mr. Valiant.³

2. Now they had not gone far, but a great mist and darkness fell upon them all, so that they could scarce, for a great while, see the one the other; wherefore they were forced, for some time, to feel for one another by words; for they walked not by sight. But anyone must think that here was but sorry going for the best of them all; but how much worse for the women and children, who both of feet and heart, were but tender. Yet so it was, that through the encouraging words of he that led in the front, and of him that

¹ Various are the enemies we meet with in our Christian warfare. The world, with its enchantments, has a tendency to stupefy, and bring on a fatal lethargy. How many professors receive principles, by which they harden themselves in carnal pursuits and sensual gratifications; and others, still preserving a religious name and character, are as dead in their souls, as devoted to the world as these, though contending for legal principles, and high in their religious pretensions!-(J.B.).

² It behooves all who love their souls to shun that hurry of business, and multiplicity of affairs and projects, into which many are betrayed by degrees, in order to supply increasing expenses, that might be avoided by strict frugality; for they load the soul with thick clay, are a heavy weight to the most upright, render a man's way doubtful and joyless, and drown many in perdition-(Scott).

³ Old pilgrims, ye who have set out well, and gone on well for a long season, consider ye are yet in the world, which is enchanted ground. Know your danger of seeking rest here, or of sleeping in any of its enchanting arbours. Though the flesh may be weary, the spirit faint, and the arbours inviting, yet beware. Press on. Look to the Strong for strength; and to the Beloved for rest in His way- (Mason).

brought them up behind, they made a pretty good shift to wag along.

3. The way also was here very wearisome, through dirt and slabbiness. Nor was there on all this ground so much as one inn, or victualling house, therein to refresh the feebler sort. Here, therefore, was grunting, and puffing, and sighing. While one tumbleth over a bush, another sticks fast in the dirt; and the children, some of them, lost their shoes in the mire. While one cries out, I am down; and another, Ho! where are you? and a third, The bushes have got such fast hold on me, I think I cannot get away from them.

4. Then they came at an arbour, warm, and promising much refreshing to the Pilgrims; for it was finely wrought above the head, beautified with greens, furnished with benches and settles.⁴ It also had in it a soft couch, whereon the weary might lean. This, you must think, all things considered, was tempting; for the Pilgrims already began to be foiled with the badness of the way; but there was not one of them that made so much as a motion to stop there. Yea, for aught I could perceive, they continually gave so good heed to the advice of their guide, and he did so faithfully tell them of dangers, and of the nature of dangers, when they were at them, that usually, when they were nearest to them, they did most pluck up their spirits, and hearten

⁴ *Mark how the ready hands of death prepare;
His bow is bent, and he hath notch'd his dart;
He aims, he levels at thy slumb'ring heart.
The wound is posting; O be wise, beware!
What, has the voice of danger lost the art
To raise the spirit of neglected care?
Well, sleep thy fill, and take thy soft repose;
But know, withal, sweet tastes have sour closes;
And he repents in thorns that sleeps in beds of
roses.* – (Quarles' Emblems, 1-7).

one another to deny the flesh. This arbour was called The Slothful's Friend, on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims there to take up their rest when weary.

5. I saw then in my dream, that they went on in this their solitary ground, till they came to a place at which a man is apt to lose his way.⁵ Now, though when it was light, their guide could well enough tell how to miss those ways that led wrong, yet in the dark he was put to a stand; but he had in his pocket a map of all ways leading to, or from the Celestial City; wherefore he struck a light, for he never goes also without his tinder-box, and takes a view of his book or map, which bids him be careful, in that place, to turn to the right-hand way. And had he not here been careful to look in his map, they had all, in probability, been smothered in the mud; for, just a little before them, and that at the end of the cleanest way too, was a pit, none knows how deep, full of nothing but mud, there made on purpose to destroy the Pilgrims in.⁶

6. Then thought I with myself, who that goeth on pilgrimage, but would have one of these maps about him, that he may

⁵ This inculcates the duty of constant attention to the precepts and counsels of Scripture, as well as reliance on its promises; and a habitual application to the Lord by prayer, to teach us the true meaning of His Word, that we may learn the way of peace and safety in the most difficult and doubtful cases-(Scott).

⁶ The Word of God is compared to a map and a lantern; to these we shall do well to take heed, as to light shining in a dark place. Let this be the pilgrim's guide, when the light of spiritual joy or sensible comfort is withdrawn-(Burder).

look when he is at a stand, which is the way he must take.⁷

7. They went on, then, in this Enchanted Ground, till they came to where there was another arbour, and it was built by the highway-side. And in that arbour there lay two men, whose names were Heedless and Too-bold.⁸ These two went thus far on pilgrimage; but here, being wearied with their journey, they sat down to rest themselves, and so fell fast asleep. When the Pilgrims saw them, they stood still, and shook their heads; for they knew that the sleepers were in a pitiful case. Then they consulted what to do, whether to go on and leave them in their sleep, or to step to them, and try to awake them. So they concluded to go to them, and awake them; that is, if they could; but with this caution, namely, to take heed that themselves did not sit down nor embrace the offered benefit of that arbour. So they went in, and spake to the men, and called each by his name,⁹ for the guide, it seems, did know them; but there was no voice nor answer. Then the guide did shake them, and do what he could to

⁷ *To follow Christ. HE is to them instead of eyes,
HE must before them go in any wise;
And He must lead them by the water side,
This is the work of Him our faithful guide.
Since snares, and traps, and gins are for us set,
Since here's a hole, and there is spread a net,
O let nobody at my muse deride,
No man can travel here without a guide.*
- (Bunyan's House of God, vol. 2, p. 582.)

⁸ Ignorance and pride may long maintain a form of godliness, though it be a weariness to them; but after a time they will be gradually drawn back into the world, retaining nothing of their religion except certain distorted doctrinal notions-(Scott).

⁹ It is the duty, and will be the practice of pilgrims, to strive to be instrumental to the good of others. But, at the same time, it behooves them to take heed to themselves, and watch, lest they catch harm from them and their conduct-(Mason).

disturb them. Then said one of them, I will pay you when I take my money. At which the guide shook his head. I will fight so long as I can hold my sword in my hand, said the other. At that one of the children laughed. Then said Christiana, What is the meaning of this? The guide said, They talk in their sleep. If you strike them, beat them, or whatever else you do to them, they will answer you after this fashion; or, as one of them said in old time, when the waves of the sea did beat upon him, and he slept as one upon the mast of a ship, "When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again" (Prov. 23:34, 35). You know, when men talk in their sleep, they say anything, but their words are not governed either by faith or reason. There is an incoherency in their words now, as there was before, betwixt their going on pilgrimage, and sitting down here.¹⁰ This, then, is the mischief of it, when heedless ones go on pilgrimage, it is twenty to one but they are served thus; for this Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has. Wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down, as when they are weary? and when so like to be weary, as when almost at their journey's end? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is placed so

¹⁰ What a sound sleep of infatuation hath this enchanting world cast many a professor into! They are proof against all warnings, and dead as to any means of arousing them. When this sleep of death seizes the soul, it destroys faith, infatuates reason, and causes men to talk incoherently. They have lost the language of pilgrims. Their state is awful; beware of it; pray against it. For "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15)-(Mason).

nigh to the Land Beulah, and so near the end of their race.¹¹ Wherefore, let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happen to them as it has done to these, that, as you see, are fallen asleep, and none can wake them.¹²

8. Then the Pilgrims desired, with trembling, to go forward; only they prayed their guide to strike a light, that they might go the rest of their way by the

¹¹ This view of the Enchanted Ground seems to vary from that which has been considered in the First Part. The circumstances of believers who are deeply engaged in business, and constrained to spend much of their time among worldly people, may here be particularly intended. This may sometimes be unavoidable; but it is enchanted ground. Many professors, fascinated by the advantages and connections thus presented to them, fall asleep, and wake no more; and others are entangled by those thorns and briers which "choke the Word, and render it unfruitful." The more soothing the scene the greater the danger, and the more urgent need is there for watchfulness and circumspection-(Scott).

¹² This is a solemn period in the Christian's pilgrimage. In the Heavenly Footman, Bunyan has given some admirable general directions-"Because I would have you think of them, take all in short in this little bit of paper-1. Get into the way. 2. Then study on it. 3. Then strip and lay aside everything that would hinder. 4. Beware of by-paths. 5. Do not gaze and stare much about thee; but be sure to ponder the path of thy feet. 6. Do not stop for any that call after thee, whether it be the world, the flesh, or the devil; for all these will hinder thy journey if possible. 7. Be not daunted with any discouragements thou meetest with as thou goest. 8. Take heed of stumbling at the Cross. And, 9. Cry hard to God for an enlightened heart and a willing mind, and God give thee a prosperous journey. Yet, before I do quite take my leave of thee, a few motives. It may be they will be as good as a pair of spurs, to prick on thy lumpish heart in this rich voyage. If thou winnest, then Heaven, God, Christ, glory eternal is thine. If thou lose, thou procurest eternal death."-(ED).

help of the light, of a lantern.¹³ So he struck a light, and they went by the help of that through the rest of this way, though the darkness was very great (2 Peter 1:19). But the children began to be sorely weary; and they cried out unto Him that loveth pilgrims, to make their way more comfortable. So by that they had gone a little further, a wind arose, that drove away the fog; so the air became more clear. Yet they were not off, by much, of the Enchanted Ground, only now they could see one another better, and the way wherein they should walk.



NOTES:

¹³ The Word of God is the only light to direct our steps. He who neglects this is a fool. He who sets up and looks for any other light to direct him is mad, and knows not what he does. As folly and madness beset him, danger and distress will come upon him. Trembling souls will attend closely to God's Word-(Mason).

