

## Household Words.

## ASSURANCE.

HERE are those who believe that it is possible to have the assurance of salvation, but hold that it only comes at the end of a long life of Christian experience; coming perhaps a little before death, or like a halo of glory to brighten the last moments of the dying Christian. I believe that this opinion arises from a mistaken view as to what is the ground of assurance, and that those who hold it consider a Christian experience to be the ground of assurance, whereas the promise of God to give unto them who believe upon His Son eternal life is the true ground of assurance. I do not say that assurance always comes at the beginning of a Christian's experience, for the hope at first awakened by the faith of the Gospel, through the weakness of their faith, may be so feeble as not to amount to assurance; but I do believe when the teaching upon the nature and ground of assurance is explicit, and the first act of faith in receiving Christ a decisive one, there will be such assurance of salvation from the very beginning of the Christian life. The central element of faith is trust, and trust is an exercise of which the soul is, or may become, conscious. If I trust a person I am conscious that I do so, or at least can by a little consideration discover that I do so; and when I trust Christ I ought to know that also. The final element of faith is appropriation, and appropriation is a conscious act of the soul, and when I have appropriated the offer of mercy through Christ, I ought to know that I have done so. But God says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," John iii. 36; and this statement places no interval of time between the believing and the having; it interposes no gap of experience between the acceptance of the Son and the possession of eternal life. Thus when I believe upon the Lord Jesus and the very moment I thus believe upon Him, I have the right to take God at His word that I have eternal life, and if I do so I have the assurance of salvation. The ground of this assurance is the promise and faithfulness of God, and even after I have been for years a Christian, I can have no firmer ground of assurance. Theologians have spoken of the assurance of faith which corresponds to what we have above set forth, and of the assurance of sense, or of experience, by which they mean that when a person finds in his own heart and life the marks of the people of God, he has reason to conclude that he is one of God's people, and thus attains unto the assurance of salvation. I do not think that there is any such thing as an assurance of sense or experience. I believe, however, that an individual's experience furnishes him with the means of testing his faith, and if his experience agrees with the experience of Christians as given in the New Testament, he has evi-

dence that his faith is a living, saving faith, and thus through his experience his assurance may be brightened. But experience can no more be a ground of assurance than it can be a ground of salvation, as Christ the Lord our Righteousness is the alone ground of salvation; so the promise of eternal life to all who believe upon Jesus and the faithfulness of God, are the alone ground of assurance. I must first make Christ, who is offered to all in the Gospel, mine, I must receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, and having thus received Christ I give God credit for speaking the truth; and have the assurance that I have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation—but am passed from death unto life.—*E. in N.Z. Presbyterian.*

## ASLEEP IN JESUS.

Pass on now, and I will show you one more picture, and that is Stephen asleep. With a pathos and simplicity peculiar to the Scriptures, the text says of Stephen, "He fell asleep." "Oh," you say, "what a place that was to sleep! A hard rock under him, stones falling down upon him, the blood streaming, the mob howling. What a place it was to sleep!" And yet my text takes that symbol of slumber to describe his departure, so sweet was it, so peaceful was it. Stephen had lived a very laborious life. His chief work had been to care for the poor. How many loaves of bread he distributed, how many bare feet he had sandalled, how many cots of sickness and distress he blessed with ministries of kindness and love, I do not know; but from the way he lived, and the way he preached, and the way he died, I know he was a laborious Christian. But that is all over now. He has pressed the cup to the last fainting lip. He has taken the last insult from his enemies. The last stone to whose crushing weight he is susceptible has been hurled. Stephen is dead! The disciples come. They take him up. They wash away the blood from the wounds. They straighten out the bruised limbs. They brush back the tangled hair from the brow, and then they pass around to look upon the calm countenance of him who had lived for the poor and died for the truth. Stephen asleep! I have seen the sea driven with the hurricane until the tangled foam caught in the rigging, and wave rising above wave seemed about to storm the heavens; and then I have seen the tempest drop, and the waves crouch, and everything becomes smooth and burnished as though a camping-place for the glories of Heaven. So I have seen a man, whose life has been tossed and driven, coming down at last to an infinite calm, in which there was the hush of Heaven's lullaby. Stephen asleep! I saw such an one. He fought all his days against poverty and against abuse. They "raduced" his name. They rattled at the door knob when he was dying, with duns for debts he could not pay;