

could transform a Gehazi into a monster of meanness, duplicity, and profaneness for "a talent of silver and two changes of garments." Let us watch and pray and strive against such a spirit as that. Let us listen to the words of the Great Teacher: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things of earth that he possesseth." Let us realise that there is something better than earth's "uncertain riches." There is something better than "vineyards and oliveyards, and sheep and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants." There is "a better and a more enduring substance" in heaven. On celestial treasures—satisfying and eternal, let our affections be ever set. For the enjoyment of them let us diligently prepare, and in view of them "let us run with patience the race set before us."

"The smiles of joy, the tears of woe
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow,
There's nothing true but Heaven."

IV. The narrative reminds us *that the commission of one sin commonly leads to the commission of another*. It is seldom that one deviation from the path of rectitude stands in its isolated individuality. It naturally and almost necessarily leads to another. Having lied to Naaman, Gehazi, for the purpose of concealment, must lie to Elisha. Thus one falsehood commonly begets another. One wrong act almost invariably propels to a succession of such acts. The course of sin is downhill. The first step in moral evil is an entrance on an inclined plane. Every subsequent step of a departure from moral prescription increases the velocity of the descent, and diminishes the power of moral resistance. The lesson to be learned is: *Avoid the beginning of evil*. It is the *first* glass that makes the drunkard: it is the *first* oath that makes the swearer: it is the *first* act of dishonesty that makes the swindler and the thief. The call of heavenly wisdom is: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, go not in the way of evil men: avoid it, pass not by it: turn from it and pass away."

V. We are reminded that *secrecy in the commission of crime is no security against subsequent discovery*. Everything in Gehazi's fraudulent enterprise gave promise of permanent secrecy. His heart is gladdened, and his eye brightened by his fancied success. Naaman is now far away on his journey home, and will probably never speak of the matter,—perhaps never think of it. The servants that carried the bags of silver have gone away to Syria also. He has laid the money carefully by in "the tower," as it is called, or as it might be rendered with equal propriety, the secret place. No human eye but his own will ever discover its whereabouts. With such thoughts and self congratulations, he goes in as formerly, and boldly stands before Elisha, as if all were right. But all is not right. There is an eye above that looks down upon the whole scene—an eye from which no darkness can conceal, and which no brazen-faced falsehood can deceive. The "God of the spirits of all flesh," who "knows our down-sitting and our up-rising," and who has direct access to every human mind, discloses the whole transaction to the view of Elisha, and drags the miserable culprit into the clear light of day, a naked victim trembling in the hands of his wronged master, and his insulted God.