

ELIJAH.

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

THE whirlwind had done its work: all the destruction was over, and it was meet that now there should be the whirlwind, which was not destruction, but *only* glory. The harmless lightnings should play over the scene to celebrate the battle which had been fought and won, and the rapture of the tempest should be only rapture; the exulting of the storm in the victory of God. There should be a glorious termination of this glorious career, and the wild gladness of the prophet's soul should find companionship in the wilder forces, which had been the element of his life, and the symbols of his power. Having learnt the lesson in the cave of Horeb, that the "still small voice" was the highest symbol alike of the glory of God and man, he could be trusted now to a chariot of fire to ascend to the infinite Stillness, which was his Home; and the whirlwind and the flame would be full of God; as they always are when they conduct us to God. It is the last of the prophet of the whirlwind: and the dropping of his rough and shaggy mantle shall be the sign that he is done with the whirlwind's office for evermore: the next time he appears, he shall not be the prophet of the whirlwind, but the prophet of the "still small voice"—talking of the decease which should be accomplished at Jerusalem; Elijah still—but another Elijah—full of the gentleness and tenderness of Christ; and learning from the meek and lowly Heart that there is something sublimer than translation, and that is death: something loftier than rapture, and that is endurance; something grander than to have horses of fire, and that is to have none, but to dare to die without them; something brighter than a flame chariot, or all the chariots of God, which are "twenty thousand," and that is the Cross, which is only One, because it cannot be more; for it is All.

Brethren, there is no translation for you or me. The chariot of fire comes never more. But there is something greater for us both, and that is *death*. The "still small voice" is mightier than the whirlwind; the calmness of faith than the rapture of translation. "God hath provided some better thing for us," the still heroic grandeur of dying. Translation *seems* grander, but this is grander. That has more *show* of consequence, but this more *real* consequence. For whether is greater, to be *carried* away in a whirlwind to heaven; or to go thither ourselves, calmly to face the mystery of death, and bravely to pass through its darkness into light? The one *may* be a hero or he may not; the other is a hero, and needs no chariot of fire to distinguish him. So that when we stand by the bed of any lone and suffering man who is battling with the terrors of death in the still might of a conquering faith, we may say of the scene, "This is grander than horses of fire, or chariot of fire, or whirlwind rapture, and, behold, a greater than Elijah is here!"

So may we die, still with the strong submissiveness of Christ, speechless with the unspeakable peace of God; and as we muse on the decease which was accomplished at Jerusalem; without which there had been neither whirlwind of rapture, nor stillness of strength, neither chariot for Elijah, nor conquest for us: may we realise that the Cross is near us, though chariot there is none; and that to sink beneath its shade is better than to soar upon the grandest flame, because the flame is but a minister, a creature like ourselves; but the shadow of the Cross is the shadow of God.—J. W. B.

GOLD.

THE doctrine of individual stewardship requires reiterated proclamation; and the reason is not easy to discover. Money is so apt to weave its subtle net about the heart, so prone to cling to its possessor, and make him think that he cannot safely part with it without a present and palpable equivalent, that it is necessary repeatedly to remind him that he can neither hoard it, nor squander it on vanity, without sin. Not less than anything else that a man may possess, is it a gift of God. "What hast thou, that thou hast not received?" is a question as plainly applicable to earthly treasures as to those that are spiritual in their nature and heavenly in

their tendency. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."

There are few men, if any, who will deliberately dispute this proposition; but, in practice, how few feel it as they should! It is one of many doctrines which are readily admitted, abstract declarations which no one sets himself to gainsay, but which have no living force to influence the heart—no motive power to regulate the conduct. Yet it is just this very fact which creates the necessity for friendly remonstrance with those holders of wealth who are not using it for the glory of its Divine Owner, and the welfare of their fellow-creatures.

It may appear to us, who have not been taken into the secret of the Divine Government, that wealth is most strangely apportioned among men. Let us call the principle of distribution "a mystery" if we will; it is undoubtedly the fact, that some men are very rich in gold and silver, without any apparent superiority in moral worth; whilst others are so distressingly poor that they know not from day to day how the bare necessities of life are to be procured.

Benevolence, for the Lord's sake, is a part of practical religion. The precepts of our beautiful and benign faith touch the purse as well as the understanding, the heart and the tongue. In fact, those precepts regard all that a man *has*, as well as all that he *is*; and it is by the use of what he has that we come to find out what he is.

"By their fruits ye shall know them," is no arbitrary test of character, having its root merely in the will of the Great Legislator; but a rule so obviously right in itself, that the ordinary understanding everywhere endorses it.

You see a man lavishing gold upon the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; whilst around him is a mass of miserable, suffering humanity, for whose relief and salvation he stretches out no helping hand. Clearly that man had *not* learned of Christ.

How many poor ones might be helped, how many ignorant children instructed, how many home-heathen have the Gospel sent to them by the tract, the Scriptural book, and the living voice of the faithful missionary, by the money that is worst than wasted upon the very superfluities of hurtful luxury! Oh! that men would consecrate their gain to the Lord!

It is a fact of profound significance, that He has given gold a most important place in the kingdom of His grace. The banker's cheque-book and the Bible, so far from refusing to be on friendly terms, may be brought into the most amicable relationship. The latter says to the former, "I have need of thee." And, most assuredly, the influence of the Bible on the cheque-book, when they are thus brought together, is of the most salutary kind.

Consecrated gold, wealth set apart for God, the image and superscription of the Lord Jesus casting a holy halo over the royal mark—think of all this!

The wealthy Christian, who conscientiously, and from love to his Redeemer, gives "as the Lord hath prospered him"—for say what you will, *that* is the inspired rule of giving—cannot but be blessed in his deed. The hundreds or thousands which he lays gratefully at his Master's feet, to promote the knowledge of salvation, reflect a blessing on the fund whence they came; and, shortly, the loving servant—the faithful steward,—who feels that he is bought with a price, compared with which the entire mineral wealth of the universe is nothing—will hear a greeting, the very possibility of which makes one wonder at the marvellous grace of the Saviour.

The words "well done!" from His lips, addressed to a man for a little service during his brief earthly pilgrimage, are a prize indeed.

We are deeply thankful that here and there a princely man steps out from the money-getting rut, in which the wheels of Mammoth's chariot roll; and, taking his stand by the Cross, gives nobly for the diffusion of truth in our benighted world; but, alas! we may still, without any breach of charity, ask the searching question—"Were there not ten cleansed; but where are the nine?"

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Let your charity be blindfold, and be suspicious of whatever is at all contrary to entire unity, mutual forbearance, and that reciprocal respect which you ought to feel for one another. Beware of earthly prudence, which our Lord counts as folly; work on peacefully, gently, trustingly, simply.—*De Salo*, 1640.