

sympathy. And yet in these cases the objects were entirely exceptional. They were not such as touched the vast majority of those who heard about them. They were not such as other men would go in crowds to seek for. But to-day we have to look at a quest in which all, in one way or another, are personally concerned and many personally engaged. The Book of Ecclesiastes is occupied with the history of this quest, and the passage before us to-day only gives us a small part of it—that part, however, which appeals most generally to the sympathies of the young.

First, we must notice the object sought for. It is stated in the third verse: "What was that good for the sons of man which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life." The search is after good—after something worth having and worth doing—after something that shall satisfy all the cravings of the heart, and make a man truly happy. Such a search was certainly worth prosecuting.

Secondly, notice the seeker. If a man is setting out on an important journey of discovery we should want to know three things about him: 1. Has he the requisite sense and intelligence to undertake such a search? 2. Is he furnished with all things necessary for the undertaking? 3. Is he in earnest, and ready to use every effort in the matter?

Now apply this to the subjects before us. We all know that when a thing is wanted one person is more likely to find it than another. One seems to have no notion of finding anything, another always lights upon the needed article. And so some people start to look for happiness, but nobody is surprised that they do not find it, they go about the matter so awkwardly, and seem to have no idea where and how to seek. It was not so with Solomon. Who should know how to conduct such a search if not the wisest of kings? Surely of all men he was the least likely to lose his way.

Again, there is such a thing as being insufficiently equipped for a search. Imagine a person looking for some lost article, and coming upon locked drawers, to which he possessed no key. The search after Livingstone was not undertaken without good preparation so as to avoid failure. In seeking for happiness some people appear to be utterly at a disadvantage. They have not the means that others possess, and they are weighed down with hinderances. Not so with Solomon. He was king, supreme over all Israel. He was wealthy. He was powerful. He could go which way he chose without hinderance.

And there is such a thing as seeking with half a heart. The men who sailed with Columbus to discover a new world were soon

disheartened, and would have turned back. But for the earnestness of the leader America might have remained unknown for many years more. And there are people who do not believe in finding any real good; they are always unfortunate, and always expect to be. But Solomon was in real earnest pursuit of his object, and spared no pains to attain it.

Thirdly, observe in what manner he conducted the search. He had sought after happiness by the acquisition of wisdom and knowledge, but had failed to find it. Chap. 1. 17, 18. Now he took another path. He tried mirth and pleasure, wealth, all sorts of enjoyment. This is just where young people would expect to succeed in the search. "If I had only a fine house to live in, and a nice garden, and plenty of servants to wait on me!" That is the feeling of many. Others wish for silver and gold, and all sorts of beautiful things for their own. The musical long to hear sweet sounds continually. Some delight in spending money and buying whatever takes their fancy. But the money, the music, the beautiful things, the house, the garden, the servants, are wanting; and they think this is why they cannot find happiness. But look at Solomon. He had all these, and much more. His beautiful palaces are described for us in 1 Kings 7. There was the "house where he dwelt" which took thirteen years to build, the "house of the forest of Lebanon," and a special house for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. His throne was such as no other monarch possessed. 1 Kings 10. 18-20. The imagery of the Canticles gives us some idea of the beauty of his gardens and orchards. "Solomon's pools" are famous. He had "men singers and women singers." He denied himself nothing. Whatever took his fancy that he acquired. Verse 10.

And what does he say about it all? "Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." He had utterly failed.

Is happiness, then, not to be found?

If we look all through the Book of Ecclesiastes we find that Solomon can tell us very little about it. He does, indeed, announce at the end that there is one thing worth doing, but of peace, contentment, happiness, he does not speak. We must look elsewhere for an answer to our question. David can give us one. Hear him speak of "God my exceeding joy." Psa. 43. 4. And look at Psa. 73. 25, 26: "There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. . . . God is. . . my portion forever." He has got the one thing he desired, and he has got it forever! "Thou hast made us for thyself," said Augustine, "and our heart is restless till it rests in thee." The blessing, the favour, the presence of God