

had never lived; and we may realize our own relation to him, by asking ourselves what should *we* have been like, if we had never been brought under his influence. From our infancy we have learned of him. His thoughts and expressions have helped to form our character, have become part of ourselves. I am thinking now of his simpler words; of how childish selfishness sinks rebuked before the thought that "even Christ pleased not himself;" of how nursery squabbles may be adjusted by the timely inculcation, "Be ye kind one to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another;" of how angry resentful temper is subdued, at the suggestion of a better combat "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." In the following stages of development, when young eyes look out on a wider prospect and temptations are subtler, how strong an incentive to goodness lies in, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God which is your reasonable service." Indeed, in every condition, and at every stage of life, the Apostle brings to bear upon us the pressure of the Christian ideal, ever strenuously setting forth the end of all effort,—“The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

There is no circumstance in history more striking than the preparation of the world for the revelation of God in the Incarnation—that condition described by St. Paul as "the fulness of the time." The three great nations that were to be the instruments of God in the spread of the Gospel, totally unlike each other and mutually unfriendly, were at this time by the force of circumstances, brought into intimate communication, being thoroughly intermingled throughout the countries which then constituted the Roman Empire. Israel as a people had fallen far short of their high calling, and the Jews chafed under Gentile rule, yet ~~there~~ had come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse—the Messiah had come, and the old race had furnished men fit to be His Apostles. The glory of Greece had faded, but not before she had imposed upon the whole civilized world her own tongue, and that language, moulded by the keenest intellect and the most exalted thought that the world has ever known, was ready to convey to all men the teaching of Jesus. The conquering power of Rome, directed towards the building up of Empire, was uniting in one body its component countries and provinces, thus open-