

Again, this call to faith, "Launch out into the deep," comes in regard to new activities, new lines and fields to work. God is calling some of His children in every generation to lay first lines of effort, to open up new fields of work and of reward; and every one who responds to this call seems to be venturing into unfathomed depths; yet these are the world's most heroic and most helpful souls. He laid that call on Moses when He sent him first to the wilderness that in its silent depths he should spend forty years preparing for his later work, and, afterwards, when he sent him to lead Israel out of Egypt. The work of the deliverance and of the exodus, and the long journey through the desert lay before him as an untried depth before the fishermen; but, at the word of the Lord he put forth, and he found that the depth was in God's control and was full of God's mercy. As at the dawn of creation, darkness might be on the face of the deep; the dark curtain of the future might hide it; but, day by day, it unfolded in the light of God, with new disclosures of God's love and power.

The Lord laid that call on young Saul of Tarsus when he entered Damascus blind and humbled instead of entering full of persecuting zeal; and as in his blindness he came to himself by coming first to the Lord, he heard the Divine voice bidding him cut all connection with his past life, like one leaving the shore to which he has clung too long, and to put forth with a new life. And often afterwards the Lord opened for him strange doors into unexpected scenes—called him to go forth into new and familiar ways. When he visited Antioch the word came for him to go to the gentiles. When he visited Troas the word came for him to cross from Asia into Europe, the first missionary to call the chief continent of the earth to Christ. To Paul, far oftener than to most men, came a call from the Lord to go forth to untried fields—each fresh move marking an epoch in the Church's history.

The same call came to Carey a century ago, as he thought of the vast heathen world that was without the knowledge of Christ. He must leave the familiar shores of England and the friends of his early labors and launch forth to India, to find new disclosures of the wealth of God's grace and of the greatness of God's power. Men thought it was a leap in the dark. So it would have been, had he gone by his own guidance; but no depth could be dark when God was with him. Carey cast in his net at the Lord's bidding, and his obedience of faith received a rich reward.

The same call came to Livingstone, the Scottish weaver lad, and he launched forth across the sea to Africa. Then, from the home where Dr. Moffatt had already begun his great work, Livingstone heard the call to go further, and yet again and again the call came to him to go further and still further into the depths of African forest, to open the path for the Christian missionary and for the Christian merchant, to strike blows prophetic of the destruction of the slave trade, to reap first fruits of the harvest that Africa shall yield for Christ.

Look over any period of the Church's history—nay, for that matter, look over the history of any country; note the men that have been of most service to their fellow-men, the statesmen that knew "when to take occasion by the hand and make the bounds of freedom wider yet," the reformers that flung themselves into the redress of long-standing wrongs, the men of business who open up new fields of employment and create new lines of commerce; these, no less than the missionary, put forth in faith into untrodden fields of effort, answering the call to launch out into the deep.

But, in a special sense, that call is laid upon the Church of Christ; for the Church is to live and work by faith, ever ready to catch and ever prompt to obey her Lord's command, ever finding new methods and opening new lines of labor by which to bring in the world to her Master, pushing further and further into the depths at home and among the heathen to gather more abundant spoils for Christ. Nor is it otherwise with even the humblest believer. None of us can reap our richest harvests or fill our nets with goodliest spoils if we content ourselves with the routine of custom laid down by others. Each life of faith should have something fresh, some new departure, some effort of its own, just because each separate believer should hear and obey this command of Christ. There are new forms of work waiting to be tried, "like truths of science waiting to be caught." There are sacrifices of our own that we are called to make, along lines opened for us that are not opened in the same way for others. There are new experiences of God's mercy and ready to be disclosed, like rooms filled with treasure whose doors open only at the touch of faith. We are too timid; we have not the hopeful courage of strong faith; we linger near the shore in the familiar shadows; but, if we are to be rich in work for the Master, rich in devoted self-sacrifice, rich in Christian experience, we must push forth from the familiar and commonplace shallows, and with faith of the power and obedience at the helm, launch out into the deep.

Once more, this call to faith comes in regard to new fields of knowledge. There are some men—indeed one might say there is a class of men—who seem to think that what is worth knowing is already known and can be found in books, that all we require to do is to make ourselves acquainted with the old familiar truths. To that view they look on Science as if it had nothing more to unfold on political economy as if the last chapter on trade questions and our government had already been written on theology as if we had mastered all the Bible and God had nothing to teach us by His Word and Spirit that was not known to the fathers three centuries ago. They make no room in their view of the broad domain of knowledge for anything new being unfolded; all they can aim at is to get acquainted with what is already written.

Now, that is not the view that faith takes. Faith holds that God has always better and fuller things in store for us, to be disclosed as we are able to bear and to use them, revealed when God sees that the time is ripe and faith pushes forth to lay hold of these.

James Watt, for instance, looks at the kitchen kettle and sees the escaping steam lifting the lid. His thoughts go wandering off into new, strange fields, for there dawns upon his mind a vision of

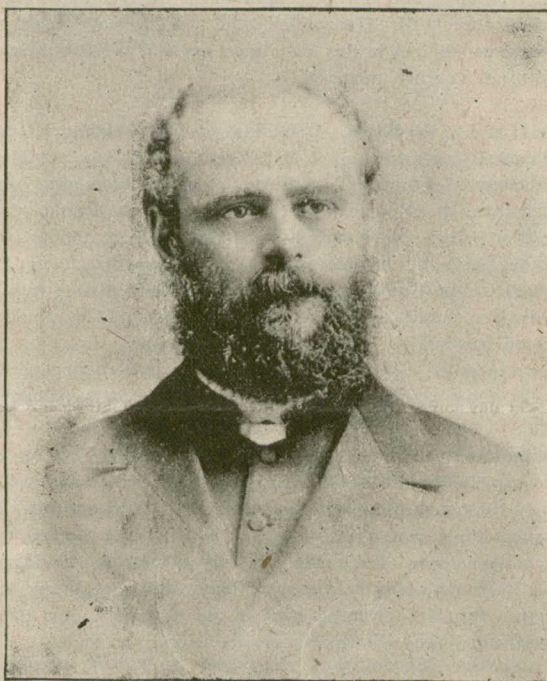
the power of steam. He has faith enough in the order of good government of God's universe to know that steam will obey the same laws elsewhere that it does in the kitchen kettle. He sees before him new realms of knowledge opening out, and new possibilities of human effort beckoning him on. He hears within him the call to examine, to try, to make experiment, to launch out into the deep; he obeys the call and reaps the reward in the creation of the steam engine.

Thomson, Edison and others learn what they can from books and teachers about electricity, but they feel convinced they are only in the shallows near the beach, only on the margin of the sea of scientific truth, as Newton said that he was but a child gathering pebbles on the shore of Truth's great ocean; and as Newton launched out into the starry depths to unfold the laws of the heavenly bodies, so these men launch out into the deep things of electrical science and bring back a rich harvest for the benefit of others.

So, in our knowledge of divine things, of our Bible, of the affairs of God's Kingdom, of the vast realm of spiritual truth, we must not suppose that we have reached the limit, or have attained the fullness of all that God will make known to us. If we earnestly study our Bible for ourselves we will find in it a fullness of light and of truth surpassing what we gain from other sources as the fullness of the deep surpasses the shallows near the shore. We must not be afraid to examine, to search, to question for ourselves, or to doubt the conclusions drawn by others.

For he who feareth, Lord, to doubt,
By that fear doubteth thee.

If we launch forth at Christ's word, we shall find that God has new stores of truth to unfold to us. Old creeds and teachers might be like those that would keep us close to the shore: we shall find new wealth of knowledge if at Christ's bidding, and led by His Spirit, we launch out into the deep. The Church and the world



Daniel M. Gordon

would be ill off to-day had it not been for those who, from time to time, have thus put forth to prove along the deep the riches of God's wisdom and mercy; that call to launch out came to Wycliffe and Tyndale to read the Bible for themselves and to let the people possess its light; it came to Luther when old teachers would try to keep him in the shallows, but Christ was calling him to push forth to new realms of truth, to trust God, not be afraid; it comes to the teachable, the faithful, the fearless in every age, and they who obey the call receive their reward from the God of Truth, and enrich others with the fruit of their search, and become the apostles, reformers and teachers of the world.

But while this call to launch out into the deep is thus a call to faith, whether it be to the deep of personal experience, of new activity, or of richer stores of knowledge, it comes also in some form to unbelief as well as to faith. There are times when the hand of the Lord seems to push our boat out into the deep whether we will or no; times when we might prefer to linger in the familiar shallows and close to the shore, as if we were safer there; but, with a voice and a touch that we cannot resist, He launches us out into the deep. He does so, for instance, in sorrow, in affliction, in bereavement. When sickness comes and the familiar things of business, of pleasure and society seem like objects on shore that are receding from our view as we drift out to sea; when bereavement comes and the hand we best loved to clasp lies cold, and a dreary loneliness creeps round the heart, and it seems as if other friends were further off, like persons on the beach that watch us as we sail away; when thus the Lord passes us through affliction and cuts the cables that bound us to our old moorings as if sending us adrift, He seems to say to us: "Launch out into the deep!" And yet that deep is in God's hand; we are not drifting away from His presence. As the old sailor said in the storm: "We're as near heaven on sea as we are on shore." Indeed, we may be nearer heaven when thus thrust forth upon the deep waters of affliction; nearer because feeling more keenly our need of God; nearer because

finding there, like the disciples in the depth of Guinesaret, new proofs of God's mercy and power.

And then, a little further on, there comes to each of us through the lips of God's last messenger, death, the call to launch out into the deep. None of us know what it is to cast off the last cords and cables that here bound us to the shores of this life; to weigh anchor when we have been floating here so long in the familiar shallows; to part company with friends and acquaintances; to see them waving their last farewells as we pass on in silence to the untried, unfathomed depths of what we call "the other world." None of us know it yet; we shall each know it some day. But that deep, too, no less than the depth of the Sea of Galilee, is in God's control, and for those who hear Christ bidding them launch forth it is full of God's love and mercy.

I know not where His islands lift
Their frouded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

Christ has the keys of death and of the unseen world. It is at His call that the believing soul goes forth, and He leads out His own into fuller and still fuller proofs of the Father's power and love. He has always better things in store; for them the best is yet to be; and, at their last launching forth into the deep, they shall find that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

Sunset and evening star,
And a clear call to me;
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea;
But such a tide as moving, seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam,
When that which drew from out the wondrous deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark;
And may there be no moaning of farewell
When I embark;
For though from out our bourne of time and place
The flood must bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

Rev. D. M. Gordon.

Halifax has several clergymen whose preaching is considerably above the average. Rev. D. M. Gordon, of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, is one of these. He is, in fact, one of the finest pulpit orators in Canada. Mr. Gordon was born in Pictou, Nova Scotia, in 1845, and educated at Pictou Academy and Glasgow University. His abilities in this direction were first prominently brought to the notice of the public during his pastorate of St. Andrew's, Ottawa, the church now presided over by the popular young divine, Mr. Herridge. At the capital Mr. Gordon was wont to preach to large congregations, his thoughtful sermons and splendid delivery attracting to his church very many outside his own congregation. Going from Ottawa to Winnipeg, Mr. Gordon there took charge of the big Knox Church. In 1879, while he was pastor of St. Andrew's, Ottawa, Mr. Gordon made a trip from the Pacific across northern British Columbia, through the Peace River pass, and over the prairies of the Northwest, a narrative of which was published under the title of "Mountain and Prairie." From this personal acquaintance with the western half of our country, he was led to cherish the largest confidence in its future, and to take a very warm interest in its development. It was his recognition of the claims of the Presbyterian Church in the great West that induced him in 1882 to resign his charge in Ottawa and accept the pastorate of Knox Church in the metropolis of Canada's Northwest. There was heavy work to be done in the new country, and Mr. Gordon did not spare himself. When the rebellion broke out in 1885, Mr. Gordon, as chaplain of the 90th battalion, was at "the front." He was with the troops during the four days' fighting at Batoche, being the only minister present with the fighting column at that time. He regarded it as one of the greatest privileges he ever enjoyed to minister to "the boys" amid the stirring scenes of the campaign. He took an active part in the educational work of the Church, being for several seasons lecturer in Manitoba College; and also in the work of Church extension and of church and manse erection throughout Manitoba and the N. W. Territories, for the rapidly increasing requirements of the Church in that country called forth all the energies of her ministers. The result in his case, as in that of some others, was that his strength was overtaxed. It became necessary for him, on this account, to change his sphere of labor. This was towards the close of the year 1887. St. Andrew's Church, Halifax, was then without a pastor, and the congregation, to a member, were for calling Rev. Mr. Gordon. It was generally believed he would not accept, but, much to the gratification of those concerned, such was not the case. Mr. Gordon wanted to get near the ocean; and, as the old Atlantic rolls right up against Halifax, he decided that there he would go. He was inducted on the first Sabbath of 1887, and since then has labored earnestly and faithfully, his ministrations having been attended with marked success. The congregation has grown, and the pastor is dearly loved by his flock. Mr. Gordon has the reputation of never preaching a "poor" sermon. His delivery is exceedingly quiet, but he never fails to keep the listener's attention throughout the entire discourse. Out of the pulpit Mr. Gordon is an exceedingly pleasant and congenial man. He is not particularly given to visiting, but in times of sickness or distress he is most unfailing; those who have experienced his kindness in these respects are the ones who can best bear testimony to the real goodness of the man. The congregation of St. Andrew's is one of the best in Halifax, and though not numerically large, it stands among the foremost of the congregations