

Had not on earth whereon to lay His head;
How his first followers and servants sped,
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land;
How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by heav'n's command.

"Then kneeling down to heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays;
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sligh or shed the bitter tear,
Together beginning their Creator's praise,
In such society yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere."

In the first of these verses Burns gives us an historical epitome of the Abrahamic period, realized in the second through the humiliation and death of Christ; and beautifully applied in the third, in an acknowledgment, at the family altar, of the kingship of the Saviour.

The Bible, unlike other books, never gets stale. It always has a marketable demand. It has a fund of information for the litterateur, the poet, the historian, and the young man of science. It brings comfort to the sorrowful: it tells of a remedy for the sin-stricken soul: it brings peace through believing, to the weary heart.

The Bible has to be read faithfully, prayerfully, earnestly, carefully, and continuously. To prove effectual, it must be to us a friend: we must assimilate the Word in our natures: it must regulate both our inner and outer life. And it is capable of doing all this, and more, because it is inspired of God; it is the Word of God; it breathes spiritual life, the very spirit of God.

We cannot, therefore, study the Bible too profoundly, it will give us better return for our research, than all other books combined. Preachers of the word are beginning to realise this fact, God's thoughts, gleaned by the way from the fields of truth contained in His word directly and not secondhand, or brought to the surface from its many precious mines of laborious, personal application, is more effectual and profitable upon the hearts of hearers than the borrowed thoughts and expressions of others, they come aglow with the heart's experience of the speaker.

There is but one legitimate source from which we derive natural light, heat, and life—that is, from the sun. There is but one legitimate source from whence we derive our spiritual light, heat, and life—that is, from Jesus. He says, "I am the light of the world." * * * "I am the light and the life of men."

"In Christ is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." All wisdom and knowledge must therefore be borrowed, and borrowed from Jesus Christ. And the Word of God, the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which alone reveal Christ, and therefore reveal God, because Christ is both the revelation and the revealer of the Father's love and will towards man, must be the mine from whence the world's wisdom and knowledge have been excavated. Mere force of will or intellectual power cannot know God; hence the greatest of minds often fall in searching after the infinite. Christ alone reveals the Father, and "He is no respecter of persons." Hence the humblest unlettered saint, entirely devoid either of scientific or philosophical knowledge, may attain a clear knowledge of truth through the exercise of simple faith in the Saviour. We read in Acts xiii., 27, that through the Old Testament had been read daily in the Synagogues of the Jews, the people remained in ignorance of its meaning; they knew not Christ as the Messiah; neither did they know the voices of the prophets—i.e., they were really in ignorance of the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah.

Head knowledge of the Word of God is very valuable; but let us never forget that we may know mentally the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, and yet

be ignorant of its profound truths. A living heart knowledge of the Word is what is wanted. Obedience to the dictates of the Word brings salvation: "Do this, and live." The Word is the bread of life, it is the armory from whence the Christian obtains his defensive weapons. "My brethren," Paul says (Eph. vi., 10), "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked and take the helmet of salvation."

But the Christian likewise needs offensive weapons; for he is required to fight manfully and to conquer. "Take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." And he must not forget the closing injunction of the Apostle: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication of the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Let not the Christian belittle the Word of God, let him not think that he has mastered all its precepts and commands, that he has tasted its joys to the full, and unearthed its most precious ores. Such a state of mind is ruinous to his spiritual nature. If he has experienced anything of the sweets of the Word, his experience is but small indeed when compared with the joys in store for all those who truly seek the Lord in His Word. To the true Christian Canaan is still ahead, "a land flowing with milk and honey."

May He who is the Light of the World so illuminate the sacred page to the darkened minds and hearts of His people, that they may more clearly see Christ as their Saviour, and guide, and everlasting reward, that in turn they may become more efficient lights in the world, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, beacons to warn sinners from off the rocks of carnal desire and worldly temptations, lights to lighten others to a knowledge of Christ, and towards that desired and blessed haven of eternal rest and peace with God.

"NEITHER NECESSARY NOR WISE."

Some three years ago I was permitted by the Foreign Mission Committee of our church to come to China as a single missionary in order to ascertain by experiment within our own Church the feasibility of single life in China on small salary. At that time, in all quarters, it was said that the possibility of such an experiment was within reach of the Committee on account of my consenting 1st, to dress, and 2nd, to eat Chinese fare, and otherwise rough it, as e. g. the China Inland Mission are said to do. Only a few days, however, in China resulted in the pleasant discovery that none of the popular beliefs before shared in by myself were at all necessary to my enterprise; it was not necessary to "live as a native," and rough it more than my fellows, and in many communications it was intimated that my mode of life was in all respects similar to, and accordant with, that mode of life which the experience of Societies and Missions in general has ever shown to be the truest economy. But it appears that these intimations were too obscure, or did not in their most explicit form find their way to the public eye, or if they did, make an impression sufficiently decided to eradicate the early beliefs as to the necessary conditions of my experiment. In fact a recent copyrighted article in an excellent journal leaves the old impression, and prompts me even at this distance to make these statements with a view, if possible, of giving a quietus forever to the romantic, but unreal fancies of bygone years. Let me,

therefore, earnestly assure your readers that the experiment permitted by the F. M. C. has proceeded from its very inception, without any of the heroic accessories which I fear sympathetic friends still believe to be the hourly portion of the undersigned. Suffice it now to say that to adopt these accessories was happily neither necessary nor wise. The experiment has been progressing under conditions which have imposed no hardships upon the missionary not equally borne by other missionaries, a fact which should be hailed with satisfaction when it is reflected that many such experiments, while increasing the knowledge of the Church, have ended, as might be anticipated, disastrously for the individual.

The experiment, however, is not yet ended, and no report has yet been given to the Foreign Missionary Committee. I would not be understood as in the least foreshadowing that report, which, in the first instance, is the unalienable property of the Foreign Missionary Committee. But I shall be greatly pained if, after the foregoing statements, my mode of life in China shall be still invested with an unreal glamour, as untrue to the facts of the case as injurious to sound views both of the labourer and of his hire.

The servants of God ought all to be heroes in the strife, but, in this hero-worshipping age, it is to be feared that the heroic ideals of many well-meaning and enthusiastic Christians would fail of approval by the standards of the wisdom of God. Let us gladly die to-morrow in the cause, if God clearly says: It is duty. But a solely self-appointed death is never duty. Let us, therefore, gladly live to-morrow, if it be the will of God, that we may glorify him a little longer on the earth. Yours in the Work,

DONALD MACGILLIVRAY.

Chu Wang, Honan.

This letter was unaccountably mislaid, and hence its late appearance in these columns.

Christian Endeavor.

TOPIC OF WEEK.

BY REV. W. S. M'TAVISH, B.D., ST. GEORGE.

JANUARY 15.—Strength for God's work. How to obtain it and how to use it.—Haggai ii. 4; Col. i. 9-11.

The people of God to-day are engaged in a mighty conflict. They must stem the tides of intemperance, worldliness, licentiousness and general irreligion, which are sweeping like a flood over the land. They have perhaps a sufficient number of societies, committees and organizations for the successful prosecution of the work which lies before them if the members of these societies were only endowed with the necessary strength. But no matter how happily adjusted the machinery of the Church may be, its work will prove a failure unless God adds His blessing to it.—Psalms cxxvii. 1. The ponderous Krupp gun and the powder and ball within it, may be prepared in such a way as to do frightful execution, but they are all useless unless they are touched by one thing—a lighted match.

I. A man is strong and can do his appointed work when God is with him. If Moses had undertaken to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage at the time when he first desired to do so, the attempt would have been a conspicuous failure. But when God promised, saying, "Certainly I will be with thee," the undertaking could not result otherwise than successfully. No man was able to stand before Joshua all the days of his life, but the reason was that before he undertook to lead the hosts of Israel across the Jordan, God gave him the promise, "As I was with Moses so I will be with thee." Though the Israelites were poor, scattered and discouraged, and though their oppressors were proud, arrogant and revengeful, yet Gideon was able to deliver his impoverished countrymen out of the hand of their haughty foes. But the reason of his success is not far to seek, for before he undertook the work of deliverance, God said to him: Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." How weak Peter and his fellow-disciples were when they trusted in themselves, but how strong they became when they were filled with the Holy Spirit! Paul could say, "When I am weak then am I strong." However sharp the trial before him he felt strong to meet it, because he knew that the Lord would stand by him. (2 Timothy iv

17). A man may be a giant physically, and he may labour hard in the cause of religion, but his work will produce no lasting or beneficial results unless the blessing of God rests upon it. On the other hand, a man may be so hampered by physical infirmity that he seems able to accomplish little or nothing, and yet, if God is with him, blessing his feeble efforts, neither time nor eternity can measure the results.

II. How is this strength to be obtained? Not from the study of human nature, not from a knowledge of books, though it is well to understand men and to master books. We are strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians iii. 16.) God strengthens us by giving us the Holy Spirit in answer to the prayer of faith. Ordinarily God gives His choicest blessings in answer to prayer, hence if we desire strength, we should pray for it. God designs to make us strong, but for this He will be enquired of by us to do it for us. (Ezekiel xxxvi. 36-37.) Though the disciples were assured again and again that the Holy Spirit would come and endow them with power, yet they continued in prayer day after day until the promised Comforter came. If we would be strong, then we must follow the advice which was once tendered a distinguished evangelist: "Honour the Spirit." It would not perhaps be true to say that Christians to-day would have to make the confession which was once made by the members of the Church at Ephesus, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," but still it is to be feared that the Spirit is not honoured as He ought to be. If we look into any hymnal we shall see that only a very small proportion of the hymns bear upon the Spirit's work. Do we pray as fervently as we should that the Spirit would guide us in all our services? Luther was wont to say that if he had but ten minutes in which to prepare for a meeting, he would spend seven of the ten in waiting upon God. If we would be strong, then we must be often at a throne of grace, pleading that God by His Holy Spirit would endow us for the duties which devolve upon us. Again, we should exercise the strength we have, in order that we may grow stronger. When we accomplish one task successfully we should feel braced up for another, and we should, moreover, be prepared to ask and expect greater things from God. David felt that because God had strengthened him to meet a lion and a bear he would qualify him for meeting the giant Goliath (1 Samuel xvii. 37.) "Each victory will help you some other to win."

III. How is this strength to be used? In subduing the evil within us; in overcoming our easily-besetting sins and in cultivating Christian gifts and graces. We are just as surely working for God when we are doing these things as we are when engaged in public duties. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." But we should also use our strength in helping others; in pulling down the strongholds of sin; in waging aggressive warfare with everything that interferes with the progress of the Gospel, and in lending assistance to anything that is calculated to advance the interests of our Lord's kingdom.

Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there.

There are said to be 15,000 Jews idle in the East End of London. The distress is so great that they had even offered their children for sale to the Jewish Unemployed Committee in order to buy bread.

Rev. Dr. Hamilton Ramsay, Haddington, for 40 years purse-bearer to the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly, has on retiring been presented with an old English "loving cup" and a purse of sovereigns.

Mr. T. W. Russell, M. P., believes that a very serious crisis indeed is approaching for the Irish agriculturist. Cattle are almost unsaleable, and the flax crop—the other great source of rent in Ulster—has turned out a disastrous failure.

Nine times out of ten, the best thing that can happen to a young man is to be tossed overboard and compelled to sink or swim for himself. In all my acquaintance I never knew a man to be drowned who was worth the saving.—James A. Garfield.