

Pastor and People.

PSALM CXXI.

BY REV. JOHN DUNBAR.

Up to the lofty hills I lift mine eyes
And longing cry,
Oh whence for me shall needed help arise
When troubles try?
From God the Lord whom heaven and earth hath made,
Doth come my sure, my all-sufficient aid.

Thy foot He will not suffer aught to move
To cause thy fall,
His sleepless eye shall o'er thee watch in love
Who keeps Israel.
Behold, His power and promise never fail
He'll keep thee safe whatever foes assail.

The Lord thy Keeper hath Himself revealed
As ever near;
A present help, He'll thee securely shield,
Then do not fear.
Thy shade on thy right hand both day and night,
He will not let the sun or moon thee smite.

The Lord shall keep thee safely from all ill,
He'll keep thy soul,
And all thy goings out and in He will
Guard and control.
From this time henceforth and forever more,
Then with both heart and soul His name adore.

LITTLE CHILDREN.

The little child! How it appeals to us in the ignorance and inability to help or guide itself! How tender we are with its weaknesses! How patient with its stumblings by the way! With what delight we watch its growing steadiness, its firmer hold of things, its fuller understanding of life and its demands! How quick we are to hear and heed its calls, to rescue it from danger, to comfort and soothe it in distress! How its suffering hurts us, and how hard it is to inflict the pain of needful discipline!

May we not read all this, and more, in the Master's Word, and in that of His apostles, when they address their fellow-men as "little children?"

It was directly after our Lord was freed from the disturbing presence of the betrayer, and when His soul was resting and strengthening itself in the knowledge of the glory which was straightway to come to Him that He seemed to turn with tenderest love and care to the little group about Him, who were to be so sorely tried. How the sweet words must have fallen on the ears of those rough, ignorant, perplexed men, as they in vague fear and anxiety gathered around Him on that sad evening.

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you," and then He tells them that they cannot now follow where He is going, but if they love Him—if they want the world to know they belong to Him—they must be loving and true to each other as well as to Him, and some day "afterwards" they shall follow Him and be with Him again.

It reminds us of a common, homely scene, where a gentle mother, leaving her little ones in their nursery for a time, while she goes on household business, bids them be peaceful and loving to each other during her absence, and promises them to come again before very long and take them to be with her where she is. What exquisite beauty and tenderness are in those few words of our Lord, when we unfold and dwell upon them even for a moment in the light of their true, full meaning!

Nor did the use of the sweet name given by Jesus to His followers in that touching interview end there. When the beloved disciple was writing in His Master's name, and under His guidance, to churches, he addresses them no less than nine times as "little children," or "my little children." Read the beautiful words which are spoken to those thus designated, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not;" "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake;" "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father;" "Little children, it is the last time;" "Little children, let no man deceive you;" "And now, little children, abide in Him;" "My little children, let us not love in words, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth;" "Ye are of God, little children;" "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

How completely is the Christian faith and life set forth in these brief sentences, and in just such simple, gentle fashion as a mother might use to the toddlers at her knee. The child is not to do wrong, but if it falls into sin, because of its sinful nature, it can find forgiveness in Christ's name. It can come into knowledge of and communion with the Father—although these are the later days and the time of spiritual, not audible, communication.

It must be careful to "prove all things," and not be led away by "enticing words of man's wisdom." Above all, it must abide in Christ, for its life is hid with Him in God. It must love with an active, hearty, Christlike spirit. And it must let no earthly love, or worldly interest, or selfish desire, come between the soul and the God to whom it owes absolute allegiance. Could the little children of the Master's care be more sweetly taught and strengthened than by such words as these?

It would seem as if our Lord intended that just such teaching should serve for the greatest and wisest of His followers when He told them—that unless they "became as little children" they should not enter the kingdom of heaven.

All the discussions and arguments and learned treatises which the centuries have brought concerning the great doctrines of our religion do not after all get much beyond these simple foundation truths, written by the beloved apostle to the early Christian Church, and kept for their successors to all time.

How those first leaders, walking closely in their Master's steps, Master's steps, must have loved their followers! St. Paul tells his "little children" of Galatia that he actually suffers in the longing that Christ should be formed in them, and in the desire to see them face and be sure of their steadfastness. And how St. John must have yearned over those to whom he wrote, when he so continually gathers them into his arms with the most loving address which parental tenderness can frame.

But the infinite love that is back of all this—that led the Father to stoop to earth and give Himself to save and bless His earthly children—that inspired all the love which shines through Gospel and Epistles—that will be the life and glory of his own through all eternity—what words can adequately speak of that? We can only gather as little children at His feet, look up into His face, and in our hearts say, first, "What are we that Thou art so mindful of us?" and then, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that we love Thee."

BELIEVING AND DOING.

There is no faith that is good for anything if it does not make us do something. It is of no use to believe unless you act according to your belief. This is so in everything—in common things as well as in the great things of religion.

Sometimes, you know, we have floods here. Our great river, sometimes, rises so high as to overflow its banks, and flood a good deal of the country near it. I remember a time when it rose so high as to cover the whole of the levee on the St. Louis side and to overflow all the low land on the Illinois side, so that the steamers could sail over the land a good many miles. It was known beforehand that the flood was coming; for we had telegraphic messages from far up the country, telling us that the snows on the distant mountains were melting so rapidly, and all the many streams that flow together into the Mississippi River so swollen with melting snow and rain, that the river below must soon more than fill its channel.

The merchants whose warehouses and stores are along the levee believed these accounts to be true, and that in a few days the river would rise over the levee, flow into their stores, and so in those few days all the goods were carted away from the levee, and carried up from the ground floor of that row of storehouses to higher floors, or higher grounds, and so were saved from being swept away, or soaked and spoiled by the water. If any merchant did not believe that the flood was coming, or if any one, believing it, was so foolish as not to act according to his belief, he lost his goods, and he deserved to lose them.

Just so it was with the millions who would not believe God's warning to Noah. If any of them did half believe it, but either from shame or idleness, neglected to make any provision for safety, they all perished alike, and most miserably.

But not so with Noah. His was a real faith, a faith that governed him, a faith that made him act according to it. He "prepared an ark." God had been so kind as to tell him how to prepare it, what wood to make it of, how long, and how wide, and of what shape to make it, and Noah set about making it at once. He and his three sons, and probably other men that he hired, cut timber from the forest; hauled it to the place where the huge vessel was to be built, thoroughly seasoned it in the sun, hewed and sawed, and framed, and all this work went on, day after day, and month after month for many years.

In that long time probably Noah's faith was greatly tried many times. He was surrounded by a world of unbelievers. He was labouring upon what must have seemed to them a very foolish undertaking; and probably they ridiculed him for it, as I have said before. But, you see, Noah had made up his mind. He had God's word to direct him, and he could not think any human opinions, much less any human success, equal to that.

I do not suppose it is certain that Noah never had any doubt. I presume that he did sometimes have doubt, and was sometimes tempted to give up an undertaking that everybody considered foolish, for there would not (it seems to me) be any so great virtue in persevering in that which one was never tempted to give up. But I presume that Noah thought doubts were very poor reasons for giving up what one had deliberately resolved upon. He probably very wisely considered doubts not half so fit to go on as his reasonable beliefs.

I suppose that the greatest difference there is between the men who accomplish most and those who accomplish nothing, is that the latter give way to their doubts, and the former act on their beliefs. When a man has a well-founded and important belief, and acts upon it resolutely and perseveringly, in spite of all the scoffs and all the opposition of others, and in spite of all the doubts and fears that spring up in his own mind, he is a hero; and the world has not had any such heroes as those whose beliefs have rested simply on God's word.—*Rev. H. A. Nelson, D.D., in Mid-Continent.*

A SON of Archbishop Benson, who has been successful as a provincial actor, is opening the Globe theatre, London, this week.

THE SUFFICIENT GRACE OF GOD.

Always there are these two kinds of men. The picture that was seen ages ago in the Valley of Elah, and which is written in the Second Book of Samuel, is always finding its repetition in the world. David and Goliath are perpetual; proud, self-reliant, self-sufficient strength, the big, hard muscles, the tremendous bulk, the gigantic armour, of the Philistine on one side; and on the other, the slight, weak Judæan youth, with nothing but a sling and stone, with his memories of struggles in which he had no strength but the strength of God, and has conquered; with no boast, with nothing but a prayer, on his lips.

These two figures, I say, are everywhere; they are confronting each other in the Valley of Elah, all over the world; the power of confident strength and the power of weakness reliant upon God. Goliath may thank his gods for his great muscles; it is a strength that has been handed over to him by them; but it is a strength that has been so completely banded over to him, that he now thinks of it, boasts of it, uses it, as his. David's strength lies back of him, in God, and only flows down from God through him as his hand needs it for the twisting of the sling that is to hurl the stone.

O, how the multitude stand waiting round every Valley of Elah where David and Goliath meet! How the Philistines shout for the battle as they see their champion set forth! How the Israelites tremble and their hearts sink when they see how weak their shepherd-boy looks! How the Philistines turn and flee when they see the giant fall! How the Israelites first gazed astonished, and then surround him with shoutings, as David comes back with the head of the Philistine in his hands! And yet how the same scene is repeated over and over again for ever; the arrogance of the Philistine and the timidity of the Israelites whenever a new power, confident in self, meets weakness reliant upon God.—*Rev. Phillips Brooks.*

TOWN OR COUNTRY.

It is a common belief that youths reared in the cities are at a great disadvantage, compared with those brought up in the country, especially in the matter of morals. The reasoning is that the city is so full of temptation and of so seductive a sort, and that children are so idle, that it is almost impossible for them to escape degradation. The good mother living in a quiet village or in the open country is thankful for nothing so much as that her boys are at a safe distance from the theatres and other places of questionable amusement, and a feeling of pity possesses her as she thinks of mothers, acquaintances, perhaps, of hers, whose boys are exposed to the metropolitan temptations. Her thought is not wholly incorrect, though she has an exaggerated notion of her sister's misfortune. The temptations, it is true, are many, and the victims of them form lists that make sad reading, but among people of average position it is doubtful if the evil is greater than among corresponding classes in other situations. A larger percentage of young men is likely to be found in the city church than in the village one. Part of this is due to the fact that many from the latter have gone to the city, but even without these the statement is a true one. As many noble youths, also, grow up to take the fathers' places in homes of the city as away from it, and they carry into their mature lives as keen a sense of honour and as devout a religious spirit as their brothers who have had a rural training. Environment is very important, but there are boys who will be bad anywhere, whether city or country, and others who, with reasonable home culture and the nurture of right influences, can hardly fail to be of good habits and character. The young man who is being reared in a well-ordered Christian home in the city is not an object of commiseration; he at least lives on a level of advantage with his brother of the country town and hillside.—*United Presbyterian.*

THIRSTING FOR GOD.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." From how many millions of hearts has the cry gone up! It is the expression of the most interior, the most spiritual desire the heart can experience. Though agonizingly intense, it is rich and blissful. It is a profoundly felt want of the soul, and recognition of God as the object of its yearning. And this itself thrills the soul with unutterable delight. It lifts it up out of all that is low, strengthening it to overcome its own evil tendencies and successfully to resist every opposing influence from without. It is the agonizing spirit that urges us through the strait gate and up the narrow way, and, when it reaches the fountain, when it enters into conscious communion with God, how rich, how sweet, how satisfying, how restful! Now the soul has found its one, its only true, satisfying portion. But here this conscious communion with God is subject to interruptions; and it is best it should be so. The earthly tabernacle could not bear this "weight of glory" uninterruptedly, and these interruptions are a wholesome discipline of the Spirit, teaching it to aspire and trust. But not so in heaven. There communion will be uninterrupted and our bliss complete. The soul will be at home with God, and in His presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore.

O blest communion here below
To us in mercy given,
O be it ours at last to know
The richer bliss of heaven!