

*The Jubilee restored to men their lost liberties.* "Ye shall proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof," was the commandment. The trumpet-peal which announced it broke the fetters of bondage. It was a signal which said to every Hebrew whom poverty, or misfortune, or misconduct had deprived of liberty, "Go free!" and he regained all the rights and privileges of a free man.

I. *Man's need of occasional rest from toil.*

The Hebrew system was remarkable for the number and variety of provisions for this. Besides the weekly sabbath, which it enforced with such sanctions, there were the three great annual feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Sabbatic Year, and the Jubilee,—in all of which labour was suspended and a rest enjoined, which was marked by some befitting religious observances. By the emphasis thus given to rest, God hallowed it as being both a duty and a privilege.

II. *All men are entitled to a share of God's bounty.*

Men were not allowed in the Jubilee year to store up aught of what grew in the fields. They could eat the increase thereof out of the fields, but they could not appropriate it by gathering into their barns. It was God's harvest. As they had not that year sown the land nor dressed the vine, they could not say that they had produced it. God was manifestly the sole author of it. It was to be distributed, therefore, like the other pure bounties of his hand, like the rain and the sunshine to all alike.

III. *The welfare of society is imperiled by the acquisition of great landed estates.*

The operation of the Jubilee was to prevent the accumulation of land in the hands of a few. If in the course of fifty years such an accumulation occurred, the Jubilee redistributed it. The public good demanded its general division among the people. Great Britain and Ireland may be said to be suffering now for some such institution.

IV. *The dignity of man viewed as a ransomed child of God, is another idea embodied in the Jubilee.*

In that old institution of the Jews are the germs of those doctrines which startled the world as a novelty in the Declaration of Independence. It proclaimed the equality of men in the sight of God, and forbade their tyrannizing over, or holding one another in slavery. The ground of the prohibition was the same as that which forbade the absolute sale of the land—God's ownership of them. "They are my servants, which I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bondmen."

# LESSON IX.] [Nov. 27, 1881. THE SERPENT IN THE WILDER- NESS.

Numbers 21. 1-9.

1. The Canaanitish king and people had added to their other mortal crimes, in which depravity had hopelessly ripened, the sin of opposing Israel in seeking a peaceful passage through their country. God might have swept them away by natural forces, as he did the Egyptians, but it was his choice to use Israel as instruments. Among other results, this would prepare them for like solemn duty when in the promised land, and give a lesson most impressive of the divine abhorrence of sins, to which those Moloch worshipers, burning their children, and revelling in all manner of bestiality, had long given themselves without restraint.

2. Discouragement is almost always preceded and accompanied by great forgetfulness of God's providence; present inconvenience shuts out the riches of past mercies. It closes its eyes to God's abundant love, wisdom, and strength, all pledged to the care of his children. It magnifies present ills and the possibilities of future loss. It freezes out the warmth of gratitude, and leads with terrible certainty to the next and related sin of Israel, namely, (v. 5.), bitter, censorious murmuring.

3. Sin is always and of necessity odious in God's sight. The more favoured in privilege the greater the sinner, and the more certain of punishment. There are no dispensations with heaven's signature permitting sin. The doctrine of indulgence is of the earth earthy. Punitive agents will be commissioned to bring de-