

sciously and confessedly incomplete — "Blessed are the poor in spirit!" "Blessed are they that hunger after righteousness!" "Blessed are they that mourn," over that which needs to be set right! It is the sense of need and longing which wins the blessing of the Lord.

There is nothing arbitrary about the insistence of the church that each man shall begin his Christian life with a confession of sin and of his need of a Saviour. The man in the far country using his strength in disobedience and living apart from fellowship with his Father, must say when he makes a fresh start, "I have sinned." It is the very sense of his need of forgiveness and of help in living a new life, which prompts him to add, "I will arise and go to my Father."

Nor is this an attitude which is appropriate only at the beginning of the Christian life—it is to be carried along. There is never a point on the road where it is not appropriate for each aspiring soul to say with Paul, "I count not myself to have attained." Every higher level of experience is to be used as a stepping stone to one still higher. Every noble trait of character developed and every bit of useful service rendered, is to become the prophecy and anticipation of something still better. Christian life is not gained once for all as a kind of eternal insurance of our most precious interests—it is indeed a life to be developed, matured, completed, as the years come and go, as the ages come and go. The man who stands with unveiled face before the purpose of the Lord will be constrained to say all along the way, "I count not myself to have attained."

You notice in the second place his aspiration—"This one thing I do, forgetting and reaching, I press toward the mark." He is conscious of his failures as well as his successes, for there are certain things he would willingly forget. . . . There are failures which help when they are incurred in the prosecution of some worthy purpose. Paul will not allow himself to be depressed by them—"Forgetting and reaching, I press toward the mark."

It was a high mark—"the mark of the high calling of God in Christ, Jesus." He was undertaking to live in the terms of his own life and according to the needs of the situation where he found himself, another such a life as was lived by Christ when He served the needs of Galilee and Judea. It was an ideal high enough, hard enough, vast enough, to provide for his utmost effort.

The weakness of many a life lies not in the fact that its ideals are wrong or unworthy, but that they are too meagre. Not many men, unless they are criminals or degenerates, deliberately set before themselves ideals which are actually wrong. But many a man is doomed because his ideals are too low, too easy, too meagre, to be worthy of his ultimate allegiance. He is happy because he has reached the mark, but it is not the mark of the high calling of God.

Strong men are made strong by proposing to themselves had tasks. Some doctrine is hard to understand and hard to believe upon a superficial survey of it, but they will think and strive until they have gained a rational faith. Some duty is so hard to perform that soft-shelled men are repelled by it, but the strong men become stronger by struggling their way up to moral victory. Some great spiritual experience summons the soul to a stiff climb, but they do not shrink from the endeavor—they are bent on gaining the heights!

It is that strain of splendid idealism, hindered but never surrendered, running all through the history of the Hebrews which has made their religion great. "Get thee out of my country into a land which I shall show thee," the Lord said to Abraham. "I will bless thee and make thy name great. I will make thee a blessing and in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." He went out, not knowing whether he went, not knowing how much was bound up in the issue. He had the messianic consciousness and it

was handed down from father to son, from generation to generation. The Hebrews were never numerically important—they had no army worth speaking of, no navy at all, no money worth computing. No matter! They held fast their messianic consciousness—in them all the nations of the earth would be blessed! They would know that God, his nature, His law, His purposes, His eternal helpfulness, and they would impart this blessing to the nations of the earth. It was a commanding ideal and it became the impelling force in the life of that race which has made the higher life of the whole world its debtor.

The same is true when we come to the religion of Jesus Christ. If He had been content to live a kindly, innocent life, giving to the people some plain precepts which they could easily obey and which would bring a degree of peace, He would have slowly faded out of the world's consciousness. He set His mark high and bade men come up to it. "Love one another as I have loved you," He said when He addressed the social life of men. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect," He said when He spoke to the moral life. "Know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent," He called to them, as he faced the spiritual life of mankind. "Pray that the divine kingdom may come and the divine will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven," He said to the organized life of men. He knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell Him, yet in the face of all our sin and weakness, He summoned us to press toward the mark of that high calling.

It is that very quality which has given Him power over the hearts of men. There is something in us all, even the worst of us, which responds to a great ideal as steel to a magnet. The impulse to "rise and go" is formed within the heart. It may be repressed, disobeyed, neglected until the soul is calloused to such appeals but so long as we remain in any degree normal it is there. And this ability to respond, this capacity for the attaining of ideals, this power of aspiration, is the most precious thing in human nature.

Be just, and fear not;
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy
country's,
Thy God's, and truth's; then if thou fall'st,
O Cromwell,
Thou fallest a blessed martyr.

—Shakespeare.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. Jas. Ross, D.D.

No Water.—The duty of hospitality in the East is proverbially imperative and very exacting. Of old, as soon as the guest entered, a servant was in readiness to wash his feet, and if the host had no servant, he himself or some member of his family, performed the duty. An honored guest was welcomed by a kiss, and the washing was followed by some kind of perfume on the head and over the garments. But as there are degrees of welcome among us, so there were among them. The ruler had half repented in inviting Jesus, because he knew he was watched, and so he gave Him a chilling reception to make Him feel His social inferiority. He had doubtless instructed his servants to make the omission of the special welcome look like an oversight, but Jesus saw through it all, and felt it, as any Eastern guest would feel it, and rightly interpreted it as an intentional slight.

Woman Brought—Feasts in a private house were often of a semi-public character, and strangers came into the courtyard and even into the dining hall. And it was quite customary for the students of a great teacher to crowd into the banquet-room to hear his table-talk.

Holiness is an infinite compassion for others; Greatness is to take the common things of life and walk truly among them; Happiness is a great love and much serving.—Life of Henry Drummond.

WHEAT, OR TARES?

Some Bible Hints.

The wheat is the rule, the tare the exception, in every field (v. 24.)

If the church keeps awake, its field will keep clear—of tares and all other evil (v. 25.)

The tares are more prominent than the wheat, because their heads are empty,—there is no grain to pull them over. So with men (v. 26.)

"Judge not" is a command for all times, and especially for the times when judgment is obvious and easy (v. 29.)

Suggestive Thoughts.

If you are sure you are the only wheat-stalk in the field, you are quite certainly a tare.

The kind of Christian Christ rejoices over has no time for hunting up the sins of others.

We are to make men better where they are.

This parable does not mean that unworthy members may not be expelled from the church; but it must be done only under the sure guidance of God.

A few Illustrations.

The best way to get rid of tares is to crowd the soil full of wheat-roots.

No farmer fears to enrich his farm, saying, "So much the more food for the weeds." He does not intend to have weeds.

It is the abandoned fields that grow up with worthless plants; they are the business of such fields, the accident of tilled fields.

The farmer knows that he may make a mistake in sowing his field, and sow some weeds; but he sows.

To Think About.

Am I wheat or tare?

Does every year see an improvement in the quality of my life?

Do I keep in view the eternal issues of life?

A Cluster of Quotations.

If the wheat does not seek to change the tares into wheat, the wheat will degenerate into tares.—F. N. Peloubet.

Where evil is clear and open, we may not hesitate to deal with it; but where it is questionable, we had better hold our hand till we have fuller guidance.—C. H. Spurgeon.

Few understand the sparing of profligate cities for the sake of ten righteous men.—Marcus Dods.

Our unwatchfulness is Satan's opportunity.—F. W. Bourdillon.

DAILY READINGS.

M., April 30. Sowing that prospered.

Phil. 1: 1-11.

T., May 1. God giveth the increase. 1

Cor. 3: 4-8.

W., May 2. Fruitfulness prayed for.

Col. 1: 9-17.

T., May 3. Tares among wheat. John

6: 66-71.

F., May 4. "Unfruitful works." Eph. 5:

8-13.

S., May 5. An unfruitful church. Rev.

3: 14-19.

S., May 6. Topic—Among the wheat or the tares: where am I? Matt. 13: 24-30. (Consecration meeting.)

Life without an eternity to follow it is like a half-written sentence, which has no meaning till the other half is added. All our deeds, our sufferings, our attempts at virtue, are without significance, unless there comes in the fullness of an eternal life to consummate them all in triumphant holiness.

If criticism could have corrected this world, it would never have needed Christ.