

destitution ; she had only a handful of meal in her barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, herself and her son to feed ; a dark famine-stricken future before her ; her neighbours' wants as pressing as her own. How cruel ; to ask her, "Make me a little cake first." "First?—First? Where is thy conscience," prophet? Where is thy humanity? Nay, let me first feed myself and my child ; then, if thou canst give me more meal, I will make thee a cake. No, prophet, "charity begins at home." I must satisfy the cravings of myself and my household ; then, thou man of God, if thou givest me the means, I will give to thee.' Had the widow so reasoned, she would have had nothing to give ; not a handful would have been given her, because she could not trust the Lord.

The history of this little cake, recorded in the narrative of Elijah, is the key to many a man's inability to give to the Lord. God claims the first fruits—to be served first—in the childlike confidence that He will follow such faith with a blessing. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty," &c.

The increase and the plenty come after God has been trusted with the first fruits. Till then, much is sown and little gathered ; men earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.

When charity begins at home and bestows the first fruits on self, there is nothing left for God. Instead of reaping a blessing, they inherit a curse. God blows on such grains, and they are shrivelled under the breath of the Almighty. The New Testament rule is not—When God shall have given thee, then give ; but "Give and it shall be given thee, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over."

Men invert God's order and say, Let God give first to us ; then, when we are rich, we will give. Give me plenty first, is man's cry. "Bring in all your tithes and prove me now, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

God will be honoured first by an act of faith on our part. God did not fill the widow's barrel and her cruse first. There was no prospect before her natural eye but an empty flour barrel and an empty oil bottle : the widow was to give her last morsel away in faith. "Fear not, make first a little cake for me, then for thee and thy son." How many there are who have little or nothing to give, because they make the cake first for themselves, on the selfish principle that charity begins at home, even when the cause of God is suffering.

Paris, December 14th, 1875.

W. H. A.

IMAGINARY WANTS.

"The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes."

In other words, it appeared to be desirable, and she looked and longed, and thought she could not do without it. She felt that it was necessary to her happiness, and justified her disobedience with the thought of the pleasure of eating it. Not that she needed food, for she had the wide range of Eden, laden with autumnal fruits—but she forgot her lawful comforts in looking after forbidden luxuries.

To this day the world follows the same course. Whatever is forbidden, we desire ; whatever it is imprudent to touch, we linger near ; and even feel that to be essential to our happiness which is of doubtful propriety.

The child who revels in boundless resources of joy all the year, feels that he is deprived of all pleasure when he is forbidden to venture on the first thin covering of ice that spreads itself over the pond.

So the youth of riper years loses sight of his comforts and joys, and longs for amusements which border on sin, or partake of that character. He cannot be happy without the excitement that attends dangerous and forbidden pursuits.