

standard of Heaven. He compares himself with his fellow-men, in place of trying himself by the law of Jehovah. Even granting that he was not "an extortioner," or "unjust,"—did he "love his enemies?" Did he "bless them that cursed him?" Did he "pray for them who despitefully used and persecuted him?" Did he do this with all his heart and soul? Did he do it constantly? "I trow not." And granting, also, that he was not "an adulterer," was there no impurity that lurked within him? Was he "a temple of God?" Did "the Spirit of God dwell in him?" Did he "glorify God with his body and his spirit, which were God's?" But not content with this flattering comparison of himself with the wicked, he now casts around his eye upon those who had come to the house of prayer, and adds with yet still greater complacency, "or even as this Publican." The very fact that he places the Publican in contrast with "extortioners, and unjust, and adulterers," clearly shews that he did not reckon the Publican guilty of such sins as others were chargeable with. He singles himself out from among the ungodly mass, that he may vauntingly compare himself even with him. Having used the character of gross offenders as the dark ground whereon to exhibit his own shining qualities, he now, for a still more exulting display of himself, fixes upon one who is not only free from the gross offences of others, but who ever pours out his heart in supplication before his God. How, then, is it that he surpasses the Publican? How is it that he can place himself in the light, and the poor tax-gatherer in shadow? "I fast," says he, "twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." The Mosaic law had enjoined only one fast during the year,—that which took place on the great day of atonement; but the Pharisee, through a voluntary self-righteousness, fasted twice every week. He fasted every Monday and every Thursday,—every third day, Sabbath excepted. These fasts he kept in commemoration of these three things in rotation,—the destruction of the temple, the burning of the law, and the profanation of the name of God,—things not altogether unworthy, indeed, of being kept in remembrance, as they might have reminded the Jews of their great sinfulness whereby those events had been brought about; but the mere self-denial practised in the voluntary celebration of which, could never constitute any true ground of dependence. But the Pharisee further "gave tithes of all that he possessed," or rather, "of all that he acquired." Though the law commanded to tithe only the fruits of the field, and of the trees, and the produce of the cattle, he tithed mint, and anise, and cummin, and every other little pelf whereby he made gain. Thus he reckoned himself not only *negatively* better than the ungodly, but also *positively* better than the upright Publican. He therefore sought to justify

himself before the Lord. Poor man! How difficult it is for us to know ourselves! Verily the Grecian sage was right, who said, that self-knowledge was the most difficult of all things. The Pharisee, with much labor, and at great expense,

"Built his soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell;"

but the fabric which he reared at so great cost, and of which he boasted so loudly, suddenly fell upon him, and crushed him in its ruins. Had he never read among the sayings of the wise man, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool; but he that trusteth in the Lord shall be made fat?" Had he never heard out of the book of the Prophets, that the Lord had spoken these words, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Woe is unto thee, thou poor, blind Pharisee! Thou knowest not "the blessedness of that man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered." When thou shouldst have confessed, thou didst boast; when thou shouldst have accused thyself, thou didst accuse thy brethren, and despise thy fellow-worshipper.

Verse 13.—"And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me, a sinner."—Oh! blessed Publican, thou didst pray indeed! Thou didst come with that offering which God will never despise,—“a broken and a contrite heart.” Though thou wast a tax-gatherer, thou didst come unto the Most High, knowing that those who are unable to pay, are freely forgiven. Though thou didst stand at a distance, thy heart was not far from God. Though thou didst not dare to lift up thine eyes, yet thou didst lift up thy spirit unto the Lord. Thou didst smite upon thy breast, but it was because thou knewest that the evil was there. Thou didst call for mercy, because thou knewest that no one shall ever stand without mercy. Thou didst confess thyself a sinner, knowing that “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Thy petition was short, but full of meaning,—“God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Thou didst not seek to justify thyself, but to acknowledge thy transgressions. When thou appearedst in the presence-cham-