

THE LARGER HOPE.

We hear in certain quarters of a "larger hope," by which is meant the possibility of a restoration after death. This "larger hope," is not in the book. We find that all the torturing of eager scholars cannot twist "forever and ever." And there is the "great gulf fixed;" fixed and bridgeless forever. There too is the crystallization of character at the final line: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is holy let him be holy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still."

The eternal punishment of the incorrigibly wicked results from their inevitable fixity of character. The twelve gates of heaven shall never be shut: but those who dwell in the outer darkness, having wasted their lives and stereotyped their characters in habitual sin, must be forever indisposed to enter in; since, in truth, heaven would to them be more painful than hell. Thus neither in Scripture nor in reason is there room for the "larger hope." Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. In the place where the tree falleth, there shall it lie.—B.

The King of Persia called his grand vizier and courtiers, and asked of them, "What condition of life is most to be deplored? One answered him, "A friendless old age;" another, "Poverty;" still another, "To be bedridden in hopeless pain." But the grand vizier said, "It is to pass through life unmindful of eternity, and suddenly to be called unprepared to meet God."

PRUNING.

A Christian was once visiting a large botanical garden. He walked along the paths, looking carefully at one plant after another. Presently he came to a fine large pomegranate bush or tree. On examining it more closely, he found that some of the branches had been taken off, and the principal stem of the tree had been cut almost through. As the gardener was standing near, he said to him: "Pray, sir, tell me why you have made this deep cut in the stem of this pomegranate?"

"Sir," said the gardener, "this tree used to be very strong and vigorous, but it bore nothing but leaves. I was therefore obliged to prune off some of the branches, and cut the stem in this manner, and when it was almost cut through it began to bear plenty of fruit."

Now, if this tree had been able to think and speak, as you and I can, no doubt it would have thought it very hard in the gardener to cut it so. It would have said that he was cruel, and was doing it a great deal of harm.

Yet, when it came to find that the effect of all that cutting was not to injure it, but to do it good, and make it fruitful, it would have seen that instead of being a trouble to it, it was a real blessing when the gardener pruned and cut it so.

What a future looms up before the Christian believer! Blessed, thrice blessed, are they—be they rich or poor, learned or illiterate, honored or obscure among men—all, of every nation, and clime, and tongue, and age of the world, of whom it can be truly said, "Christ in you the Hope of Glory."