

scope and object of the whole story, and not lay too much stress on lesser points. In the case before us the main thing taught is the close resemblance between some familiar operations in the culture of corn, and the work of grace in the heart. To this let us rigidly confine our attention.

We are taught, firstly, that, as in the growth of corn, so in the work of grace, *there must be a sower.*

The earth, as we all know, never brings forth corn of itself. It is a mother of weeds, but not of wheat. The hand of man must plough it and scatter the seed, or else there would never be a harvest.

The heart of man, in like manner, will never of itself turn to God, repent, believe, and obey. It is utterly barren of grace. It is entirely dead towards God, and unable to give itself spiritual life. The Son of Man must break it up by His Spirit, and give it a new nature. He must scatter over it by the hand of His labouring ministers, the good seed of the word.

Let us mark this truth well. Grace in the heart of man is an exotic. It is a new principle from without, sent down from heaven and implanted in his soul. Left to himself no man living would ever seek God. And yet in communicating grace, God ordinarily works by means. To despise the instrumentality of teachers and preachers, is to expect corn where no seed has been sown.

We are taught, secondly, that, as in the growth of corn, so in the work of grace, *there is much that is beyond man's comprehension and control.*

The wisest farmer on earth can never explain all that takes place in a grain of wheat, when he has sown it. He knows the broad fact, that unless he puts it into the land, and covers it up, there will not be an ear of corn in time of harvest. But he cannot command the prosperity of each grain. He cannot explain why some grains come up and others die. He cannot specify the hour or the minute when life shall begin to shew itself. He cannot define what that life is. These are matters he must leave alone. He sows his seed, and leaves the growth to God. "God giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii. 7.)

The workings of grace in the heart, in like manner, are utterly mysterious and unsearchable. We cannot explain why the word produces effects on one person in a congregation, and not upon another. We cannot explain why, in some cases,—with every possible advantage, and in spite of