

In cities, it is the business of policemen to guard the homes of citizens while they sleep. On ships at sea, the lookout must be at his post all night, the sentinel must protect the camp against a midnight surprise. Since the enemy of our souls is so skilful and vigilant, how much we need some one to guard us against him! We have such a guardian. The psalmist wrote of God: "Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper." (Ps. 121: 4, 5.) The little ones in many a Christian home pray:

"Now I lay me down to sleep;

I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

We never outgrow the need of this child's prayer.

*Will thou then that we go and gather them up?* v. 28. This is what foolish people in the Church from the earliest times have been attempting to do. They have imagined that it would be possible to have in this world a Church with only true Christians and no hypocrites on its roll of membership. To the vain attempt to find a perfectly pure Church many of the divisions of the Church have been due. Dr. Taylor tells of a minister of one of the smaller denominations in Scotland who said that his Church seemed to have been born to illustrate the infinite divisibility of matter, for there were forty-five members and seven congregations. It is said of another little body that it went on excommunicating and excommunicating its members for every petty thing, until there were left in it only a man and his wife. "Well," said one to her, "you must have a pure Church at last." "'Deed," she replied, "and I am not so sure of John."

*Another parable, v. 31. . . Another parable, v. 33.* If our Lord had spoken to His disciples only the parables of the Sower, and the Wheat and the Tares, they might have concluded that only one-fourth of the good seed would yield a harvest while the other three-fourths would be wasted; and that the growth even of that portion of the good seed which took root, would be fearfully hindered by the presence of the tares; in other words, that a great part of their work

for the Kingdom of Christ would be a complete failure and that the success of the remainder would, at best, be partial. To remove their discouragement, Jesus goes on to teach that His Kingdom would survive all losses and overcome all difficulties, until, though small in its beginning, like a mustard seed, it would become a great tree, filling the world with its branches and, that, as the leaven pervades the meal, the influence of His Kingdom would make itself felt throughout the whole world.

*A grain of mustard seed, v. 31.* We should never be discouraged by small beginnings. Behold to what dimensions the Kingdom of Christ has grown from its apparent insignificant dimensions! One day two of the disciples of John went with Jesus to His home, and after spending the night with Him, were convinced that He was the Christ and decided to take Him as their Master. One of these brought his brother. A third was called, and he brought his fellow-townsmen. (John 1: 45.) And so, one by one, the number of the disciples grew. But how few they were and how insignificant, when Jesus was crucified! It was small wonder that Caiaphas and Pilate imagined that the plans of Jesus had been stamped out. But eighty years passed by, and the followers of Christ were to be found all over the Roman Empire. In some quarters they were so numerous that a well-known Roman governor wrote the Emperor asking how he should deal with them. The fierce fires of persecution kindled by heathen Rome could not destroy the new faith. It came out of the flames with new life and vigor. Three hundred years after the crucifixion, Christianity was the official religion of the Empire. Another hundred years passed away, and Rome tottered to its fall, while the Kingdom of Christ went on in its triumphant progress. At the end of this nineteenth century, the seed of the Kingdom has multiplied twelve million fold. The growth of the Church of Christ is a repetition of Daniel's vision of the stone and the image. (Dan. 2: 34, 35.) Concerning the commencement of that growth we may say with Zechariah "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zech. 4: 10.)