

degradation. Dives, everywhere, among dainties, with Lazarus at his gate, among the dogs; the one fattening on luxuries, the other starving for necessities. But what is worse, there is deliberate adoption of the policy of self-indulgence. The good gifts which God meant we should weave on love's magic loom into a garment to cover human nakedness, we calmly braid into a hammock of ease, in which we lie, pillowed on down, swung between the Church and the world, fanned with refinement and sprinkled with rosewater. A recent article in a leading secular magazine, on "How to Live on Seven Hundred Pounds a year," makes provision for house rent, food, clothes, education, travel, æsthetic culture, and even worldly amusement, but not a penny allowance for charity! The theatre and opera are necessities, but to compassionate poverty and misery is optional, and may be left out of life's scheme entirely. Meanwhile, a woman advertises for a lost poodle, worth two hundred and fifty pounds sterling, whose diamond collar and silver chain are worth thirty-seven pounds more. A poodle that represents nearly three hundred pounds is a necessity, but to give anything to suffering is not needful! A professing Christian in America spends in one year on a new house for himself more than the four leading missionary boards of the world spend that year to evangelize a thousand millions of heathen.

Absorption means the sucking-up process, and suggests the sponge which drinks up what it is dipped in, and swells larger and larger, till it can hold no more, but never gives out anything except under pressure. Hundreds and thousands are mere sanctified sponges that soak up all God's gifts, and have to be squeezed hard to give out even a reluctant drop. What is a dead sea but a basin into which rivers pour their sweet waters only to stagnate, become bitter, heavy, acrid, because they have no outlet; and around such dead sea no plants grow, over it no birds fly, in it no fish swim. Life comes into it, but turns to death! There are many dead seas in Christian congregations. God pours His gifts upon and into them, but there is no outpour in blessing to man! In the light of Christ's words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," it never seems to occur to some to ask whether a disciple has a right to hoard riches?

II. Again, such absorption is *idolatry*, for idolatry is the intervention of any object between the soul and God, to hide or displace Him. One needs not to bow before stocks and stones or brute beasts, to worship idols. Whatever God sees to stand in the way of the supreme love and obedience due to Him constitutes an idol. No idol is so common and universal as SELF.

The law of all idolatry is *assimilation of the worshipper to the object worshipped*. If it be a brute beast, he becomes brutal, beastly; if a stock or stone, he grows dumb and senseless, helpless, irrational, like the wood or stone. And so, whatever be the idol, the worshipper comes to resemble it. "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Ps. 115 : 8). This law is universal. He who practi-