

erupt into creation, does God efface the little speck which obtrudes itself upon His view. Yes, a thing becomes of consequence by going wrong. You know that if a man or a woman who never was heard of becomes suddenly a great criminal, then that crime-stained name is for a while in every mouth. And even so, this world, so to speak, pushed itself into notice when it fell. Ah, the little planet might have circled round the sun, happy and holy, and never been singled out from among the bright millions of which it is the least. But, as it is, perhaps this fallen world's name may be on the lips of angels, and in the thoughts of races that never sinned. *That* may be doubtful; but we *know* that this world, by falling, gained a yet grander distinction than *that*! For three-and-thirty years it became the dwelling-place of the great Redeemer. And we, when lost, as it might seem, in hopeless loss, were singled out thereby for the grandest, most precious, most glorious blessing that, so far as we know, was ever given by the Almighty. The Son of God left the glories of heaven, to die for us. The Son of Man came "to seek and to save that which was lost!"

It is indeed a mysterious thing, a thing not to be wholly explained by human wit, that the Son of God stood by till man had lost himself, and then came, at cost of painful quests, to seek and save him,—when we might think He could so easily have kept man from wandering at all. Why let man fall, you would say, and then do and suffer so much to save him; why not rather prevent than cure? The question, we grant at once, is one which we cannot entirely answer. We rest, indeed, in the firm belief, that great ends must be served, and shall yet be seen to have been served, by man's permitted fall, by man's permitted loss, else sin and sorrow had never entered this creation. But there is one fact in the constitution of our minds which casts some little light upon this mysterious permission,—upon the fact that man was suffered to lose himself, before the Redeemer did so much to find him. Is it not the fact that there is a peculiar satisfaction in having a thing, great or small, which was wrong put right? You have greater pleasure in such a thing, when it has been fairly set to rights, than if it never had been wrong. You have greater pleasure in finding a thing which has been lost, than if it never had been missing at all. Every one knows this who has lived in the country, and taken an interest in the hundred little matters which do so much there to keep up the interest of life. Now we know that our minds, in points which involve no sin, are made after the image of God. So we are justified, before getting any express information, in concluding that our feeling is a faint reflection of one which may have place in the mind of God; and, besides, we have express information upon that matter;—do we not read, have we not got it upon the very high-

est authority, that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance?" May we not think, that, apart from those grand, inscrutable reasons which the Almighty has for permitting the entrance of evil into His universe,—those reasons which no man knows,—this fact of the peculiar interest and pleasure which are felt in an evil remedied, a spoiled thing mended, a lost thing found, a wrong thing righted, may cast some light upon the nature of the Divine feeling towards our world and our race? They are fallen, indeed, and evil; but they will be set right. They are lost, indeed; but they will be found. And when all evil that can be remedied is done away with, and when that evil which was remediless is turned by the Divine wisdom to conduce to the Divine glory, may not this world seem better to its Almighty Maker's eye, may it not afford Him greater joy when He looks upon it, than even when He beheld it, all very good, upon the evening of the Sixth Day? Ah, it was fair and beautiful then; it was right then! but it never had been tried; it had gone through nothing. Far more fair will it be to see, right once more, after being so sadly wrong,—sought and found, after having wandered away so far!

And now, my brethren, as we look once more at the Redeemer's gracious words, we think, Were there ever words so fitted to carry hope to the most despairing! What worse can you be than *lost*? Is not *that* just the word which the world applies to those who have strayed the farthest and sunk the lowest? You never can be worse than *lost*! All sin, all misery, are comprehended in that word. And yet, for you Jesus died. He did not undertake to save you in ignorance of the extremity of your case. He knew quite well how sick you were when He undertook your cure—how far away, when He undertook to bring you back. You may have read that beautiful and touching story, which tells us how one who in the pride of intellect had reached within a few paces of the grave, without ever betaking himself to Jesus, was arrested at last, and brought to intense concern. But now he was filled with despair; and you may remember how this text came like a gleam of light upon his darkened spirit. "It is too late for me," he said; "too late, and I am lost." *Lost*, was the reply; then you are just the man who Christ came to save; "for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*!" And on his gravestone, besides his name and the number of his years, the same words stand to tell all his story. May they not tell the story of every soul in heaven? *Lost*, yet sought and found: *Lost*, yet sought and saved!

What more would *you* wish, my Christian friend, to be recorded of *you*? Do not these words tell where He found you, and whither He brought you, and what He made you,