

happiness to belong. No age of the Church, not even in Apostolic times, was wholly, free from them. . . . Who is there among us who for the sake of getting rid of our differences and even our dissensions, would wish to see our free and happy England, with all its faults and all its shortcomings, reduced to the spiritual or unspiritual condition of Italy or of Spain, and would be content to dwell among a people with rosaries in their hands and scepticism in their hearts? However much, then, we may regret the controversies of the present day, and still more the spirit in which, through the weakness of our human nature, they are carried on, there is no place for fear or perplexity, although there is great need of prayer."

#### A VISION OF THE UNSEEN.

(A Sermon Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral by the Rev. Canon W. C. E. Newbolt.)

"And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes, that he may see. . . . And he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."—*2 Kings vi. 17.*

This is not the first time, dear brethren, that Holy Scripture has taken us to Dothan. Holy Scripture has taken us before to watch the steps of another lad who, surprised to find hatred where he looked for love, to find himself carried away by the strong currents running beneath the smooth surface of a pastoral life, thought himself forsaken. At Dothan we have watched Joseph swept out and swept away into the great sea of Egyptian life, forsaken apparently, an outcast, an item, a lone boy who had fallen in the whirlpool of chance. Again, to-day we are at Dothan. We are following the steps of another lad who, as Joseph did before him, finds himself suddenly confronted with a pitiless ring of adverse circumstances, and he goes out in the morning to find himself surrounded on all sides by horses and chariots which had come from Syria to seize the person of his master Elisha, whose existence was a perpetual menace to Syrian stratagem and intrigue. Two frightened boys at Dothan, the place of the two wells: but with this difference. Joseph is carried off in the irresistible clutches of an unseen destiny which now seems to smile on him and now to frown, while on the other hand, the young man before us in to-day's Lesson has at his hand the prophet his master, whose range of sight reached beyond the mere passing phenomena of the moment. If Elijah, his great master, had fallen back in great crises on the eternal God and the everlasting arms leaped down to accredit his message in the consuming fire, sending him the birds of the air to feed him, or an angel from Heaven to sustain him in the stormy depths of his agitated and depressed life, Elisha, on the other hand, in the rich enjoyment of a double portion of the Divine Spirit which came to him from his master, seemed to be blessed with a more continuous gaze, as it were, into the unseen, a consciousness of the invisible world which runs side by side with the ordinary experience of every-day life. If an axe fall into the water, if the contents of a pot of broth are poisonous, if the people are hungry, or if disaster or bereavement overshadow life, almost without effort, he has passed the border of the unseen, he is in the region and in the presence of Him Who is the Author and giver of life. He is able to set in motion other courses and other springs of work. So here he is able to show the young man the hidden mechanism, so to speak, of the world, that which it was not at hand to show Joseph. He shows to his troubled servant that there is no such thing as chance, there is no such thing as luck, there is no such

thing as surprise. The soldiers of Syria, when they got home eventually, would have a wonderful tale to tell of their chances, and their mistakes, and their hair-breadth escapes, but Elisha had been able to show to his servant the mechanism of life, that what we call an escape is really a rescue, that what we call good luck is the armed interference and intervention of the celestial host, that which we call miracle is the knowledge of another force which swallows up, as it were, the forces of which hitherto alone he had been cognisant. What a difference it makes to one who knows! It is the inextricable confusion of some manœuvre. The commander gives the word, and those who carry out his word of command in confidence in his skill go on because they are confident that it will work out all right. It is the skill of the doctor, unflinching at the symptoms, which disturb the patient; he knows exactly what they all mean. They are the signs of the crisis through which will come to his suffering patient the cure. It is the engineer amidst the crash and whirl of the machinery with its interlacing wheels, and springs, and complicated mechanism. He knows its secrets, he knows its power, while the spectator sees only an aimless display of bewildering force.

"LORD, I pray Thee open his eyes that he may see." This has been the aim and object of what we know, dear brethren, as revelation. There was one great object of the Incarnation, "For judgment I am come into the world that they that see not might see, and that they that see might be made blind." It is one great object of the Church now in our midst to open up the supernatural, to give us glimpses of the great world all around us, and to lay before us its mechanism, that it may no longer scare us by its din, or terrify us by its force, or catch us up in our ignorance of its working. My brethren, would it not be something if we were able to eliminate in any degree the element of surprise out of our life? Joseph goes out to seek his brethren and finds himself in the pit and on the high road to slavery. The prophet's servant goes out of the city and falls into an iron ring of armed forces. A man goes for a holiday in Switzerland: he starts off in the morning up some glorious mountain in the Alps full of hope and vigour; in the evening he is lying crushed at the bottom of a precipice, or smothered in the embrace of an avalanche; or frozen by the icy wind. A man comes down to breakfast in the morning in the midst of ease and plenty, and even luxury; he opens a letter and finds himself a beggar. A recklessly-driven cab, a railway collision, a defect in the system of drainage, and the whole aspect of life is altered. People shrink within themselves, they mutter and complain, they feel terrified at the ups and downs of life and its uncertainties, and at the best they try to forget it, or else they are caught, lacerated by the cruel scourge of anxiety. Every loaf they receive from their Heavenly Father they imagine to be a stone, every fish He gives them they believe to be a serpent. They live a life of suffering, overwhelmed by those evils which the proverb tells us are the greatest of all evils, those evils which never come. Look at the pitiful effort which mankind makes from time to time to tear down the veil which separates him from the unseen. Look at the stern monitor of the ancient oracle saying just enough to disturb, but never enough to satisfy. Look at that sad awful picture of King Saul, who, forsaken of God, and with a stifled conscience and utterly silenced religion, asked a witch to call up the dead, to lift at least one corner of that dread pall which hung over to-morrow. See him hearing just enough to whet his despair, not enough to brighten the future. See the straits people are driven to. They scout religion, and they are caught in the net of superstition. A voice from the dead which can only scratch irrelevancies on a slate, or blur an indistinct im-

pression on a photograph, or mutter, or speak with a mysterious voice—what single inch, or fragment of an inch of that dark veil has Spiritualism lifted up which hides us from the future, or the unseen mechanism which shapes the future? Underneath the dome which covers the mosque of Omar at Jerusalem we are told there is a cave and a well now closed, wherein it used to be believed by the Mahometans that the living could hold converse with the souls of the departed about any disputed matter which lay in the power of the dead to solve. That well has now been closed, for some years ago a mother, going to speak to what she believed was her dead son, was so much agitated at the sound of the voice that she threw herself in to join him and disappeared. It is but a type of what necromancy under all forms accomplishes. It only increases the gloom and rivets the bonds of despair. But, nevertheless, it is through glimpses into the unseen that we shall rid ourselves of the paralyzing fear of the uncertain and unexpected, the chances and mischances which sadden the footsteps of many a vigorous life. Have you ever thought, dear brethren, that this anxiety is one of those ills for which Holy Scripture suggests no remedy, and has nothing to say except this. "Be ye not therefore anxious." It must not be—not merely surely that we are to go stumbling and blundering on through life, hoping we shall encounter no obstacle, hoping we shall emerge at last and meet with no catastrophes; but surely that in the sense of God's guidance and supernatural power and provident oversight, we must rest contented and put our whole strength and trust and confidence there. "Give us this day our daily bread" is the prayer which He puts on our lips, not "Give us bread for the morrow." "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." It is His own inspired message to the world through the mouth of His Apostle. Surely if we lived more in the other world, surely if we kept closer to God; if we kept nearer to the Unchangeable, we should be less tossed about by the billows of life. The presence of God, prayer, the glorious Gospel, the inner life—it is from out of these that we see the inner mechanism of the world, are close to its unchanging principles. "Thy Word is a lantern unto my feet and a light unto my path." Here where all seems so hopeless, where friends have disappeared, steep precipices and the gulf yawn at our feet, there it is still the little circle of light beneath our feet, light enough to enable us to take one step, light enough to let us do the next thing, light enough to help us to take the next step, and now it has brought us round the corner. There, through the driving rain and drenching mist which sweeps down the rocks, there is the path and the summit which reaches up over our heads to be reached by a path still there round the corner. The glimpse of the unseen has shown me this—I am in the hands of God; there is no uncertainty, no chance, no luck, no fate. Take the next step, do the next thing. With God onwards, Lo! beyond the hosts of menacing Syrians you will find the army of the living God.

"LORD, I pray Thee open his eyes that he may see." This lonely boy waiting on a lonely prophet, what was he to do against such a display of power? Wait a moment? It will be made clear to him. He was defending a post, a position of importance, which was sufficient to command the support of the armies of Heaven. We are ready enough to believe in our own importance in the world, in our necessity, in our value, but we do not always realise, as we might, that everyone who is sent into the world is also of importance to God and commands the support of Heaven, if his work be only to wait on a prophet and be a nameless personality in the pages of history. Thou art as much His care as if beside nor man nor angel lived. Surely it is this sense of the Heavenly support which is such an immense strength to