

affection. It is the Father who, when the prodigal returns, runs forth with swelling heart to meet him, who falls on his neck and kisses him.

I have thus reminded you of a past, it may be of an old, but even by an unforgotten incident in your spiritual life, when you too were recalled from your servitude under sin, and adopted into the family of heaven. The transition is a prodigious, and with some of you may have been a terrible,—one. Through sorrow and remorse, through darkness and the death-shade, must sinners travel to light, for they have interposed these between themselves and its sacred sources. But you have surmounted the perils and horrors of the middle passage, and now are ye the sons of God, the sons of His adoption as well as of His pro-creation, of his complacency, no less than of His invaluable love,—sons of God, and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.—sons, and because ye are sons, therefore God hath sent forth the spirit of adoption, a filial spirit, into your hearts, whereby you cry, Abba, Father. To speak the Scriptures; and what, let me ask you, is all this. None of you can tell me, for nothing less than the actual experience of heaven shall reveal, what it is to be a son of God. Still, as we muse, marvelling always, over those simple, but most significant phrases, by which the eloquent apostle strove to speak unutterable things, bright visions will fleet upon our mind, and play most alluringly before our hopes. In God to have a Father, with all a Father's affections, no more pursuing us as wanderers, but resting on us and rejoicing over us, as the recovered and adopted child of His own household; this is more than to have angels for our ministers, and all worlds at our command. For if you will think of it, there is nothing that, so absolutely as love, subjects one being to another, and paternal love, as one of the strongest forms of the affections, has this effect in a pre-eminent degree. The Father's place is that of authority, but the Father's love is higher than his place, and it makes him the willing subject of His child. Arbitration, there must be, so as to yield nothing that would be wrong or hurtful; but within the limit prescribed by love, itself, what is there that an affectionate Father can withhold from a beloved and well-conditioned child, † Shall he have any real and reasonable want, that he can supply, unprovided for? any foreseen danger undefended? any sorrow unsympathised with? any ruffling that admits of removal or abatement unremedied? Assuredly not. On the contrary, He lives rather for His child than for Himself, watching continually, and using every exertion to secure its welfare and happiness. His knowledge, His experience, His property, His labor, all are for His children, His son, though an unconscious and a helpless infant, possesses them all more really than He does Himself. In one word, the Father's af-

fection makes Him the Servant, no less than the Guardian of his family, and pledges, in their behalf, the whole of His resources, bodily, mental and patrimonial. And is it to be thought that the style of Father, as assumed by God in relation to you his redeemed people, is no more than a barren title? Sons of God, have you a Father, who loves you not, nor watches over your welfare, nor delights in your prosperity and happiness? Supreme, also, as an arbiter, He will not countenance or humour you in your waywardness, His righteous authority will still be exercised. But in your adoption, He has secured your affection and obedience, so that although you will yet be required to be admonished and chastened by a wholesome discipline, His love can rest upon you without check or restraint. And shall we say that it is less in itself, or less liberal than that of an earthly parent. Nay, the mother may forget, but God will not.—His mercy is great in the heavens. He so loved the world in its alienation, as to give His own son, in order that you might be restored, as His sons, and shall He love you less, now that ye are brought back, at the incalculable cost? He loves you with an everlasting as well as an infinite love, and even, as in the case of a human father, this boundless affection of His secures for you the practical benefit of His resources, subjects omnipotence itself, if I may say it with befitting reverence, to your reasonable will. Look well to your condition then, as the sons of God. Outwardly, perhaps, it was gloomy and troubled enough. But it is your Father, who has so appointed, because for you, that was the most advantageous. And it is not the outward man at all, but the spiritual only, that can solve this question; for, what avails it how this sensible structure, this perishing husk of humanity be disposed of or accommodated, provided only that deathless spirit be secure? To the last it is that God has regard. It is the object of His adopting and paternal love, and for securing its eternal well-being nothing the highest God can do, will be left undone. I have said that to the reasonable will and to the necessities of the sons of God, love has subjected omnipotence itself. Will you deem such language extravagant when you reflect that it has already given you a suffering and dying Christ, an admonishing and beseeching spirit; these to be enjoyed and relied on now, and in prospect, amaranthine crowns of victory above. Nay, how can we speak too strongly, since it is God's love to you that engages Him in your interests, so deeply as that he can refuse you nothing. As your Father, all His is yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. What, then, shall distress, or alarm, or discourage you, since Christ is your Father? You are in the midst of dangers which you see not nor suspect—true; but why trouble, since your