

Our Contributors.

For Dominion Presbyterian.

"Nevertheless."

John xi. 15.

BY REV. JAMES MIDDLEMISS, D. D.

(Concluded from last week's issues.)

Returning to the case of those who have, for the last half century—from the time of John Angel James of Birmingham—been referred to and counselled as "anxious inquirers," and who under, what is called and in experience well known by many, "*conviction of sin*," are prone to yield to discouragement in relation to their spiritual condition and prospects, we now say to them confidently that Christ's "nevertheless," "mixed with faith," Heb. iv. 2, will surely suffice to rid them of their discouragement. "It is true," we say to them, "that your case is entirely hopeless in respect of anything you can do for yourselves, or anything that any other creature can do for you." "Thou hast destroyed thyself," Hosea xiii. 9. And that is all, be assured dear friend, that you can do for yourself. "But," which is the equivalent of "nevertheless," it is immediately added, "in me is thine help." He who thus speaks can make the blind to see and the deaf to hear. He can make the dead to live. He can make all things new. What, indeed, is there that he cannot do? He has only to speak the word, and it is done. Oh! therefore, anxious, troubled soul, only "have faith in God," and in Him who doeth all things that the Father doth. Have the faith of the centurion, pious Roman soldier, who believed that the word of Him who created all things, though he did not know that, as you profess to do, was enough to heal his servant. Have the faith of the woman who would not be denied her quest for her bedevilled daughter; and of the other woman who believed that the touch of the hem of His garment would bring healing and health to her. Every difficulty however great, every emergency however extreme, confront it with Christ's "nevertheless." Bring it, that is, to Christ—to His grace and power. Let faith, and not unbelief, have the *last* word; and you will surely find that Christ will not deny the prayer of the faith that refuses to be denied, but will say, as He said to the Syrophenician woman, "Be it unto thee, according to thy faith."

Long experience and observation warrant our saying that the discouragement and despair of unbelief are far more ruinous to the souls of men, than even the presumption that is the ruin of so many heedless souls. There are many—some of whom we could name—who would surely become new men, and close their days as happy and useful christians, were it not that a kind of despondency or despair has possessed them and gotten the mastery of them." They are looking back with regret or remorse upon a mispent life—not, it may be, a grossly bad life, but a wholly worldly life, in which they have done no christian good. With all their worldly success, they have come to see the emptiness of all they have spent their energies for. Their very success, perhaps they find, has been hurtful, if not ruinous to their children, whom they have trained for the world alone, neglecting wholly their christian interests. They think, if they could but blot out the past and begin life anew, they would surely pursue a different course; they would live for other and higher ends—the life of sincere and earnest christians. *But* (the deadly and damning *but* of unbelief, Mark xvi. 16,) they fear it is now *too late*.

This Satanic delusion that it is *too late* to "cease to do evil and learn to do well," Isaiah i. 16, 17, is not improbably fortified by the dread of the ungenerous notice which a great christian change almost always occasions, and a shrinking from the humiliation of the practical acknowledgement that is implied in such a change. And thus it is, that a combination of pride and shame and unbelief is a "three-fold cord," Ecc. iv. 12, not easily broken, binding fast to the world and sin, and entralling many who might otherwise have happy experiences of God's plenteous mercy and abounding grace—an experience bringing life to a useful as well as happy close; for who can tell how much christian good might be the result of such a changed life, little of it as may remain?

Is any of our readers disposed to reflect thus despondingly and despairingly? We say, with all possible emphasis, Let it be so that your case is really ever so bad—bad even beyond what you have yourself any conception of—however much and however long you have been "hewing out to yourself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," and however natural and reasonable it may seem to you that God should deny you His grace, and reject your application for His all-sufficient help, "Nevertheless" He *will not*; and we entreat you to allow yourself to believe that He will not. He has laid it upon His ministers to proclaim, and woe unto them, if they do not constantly proclaim, "grace abounding," to the chief of sinners—if this "Nevertheless" is not the golden thread running conspicuously through all their ministrations, whether public or private and personal. And therefore we say, "Be not faithless but believing." For, be your case ever so bad, beyond that of others, "*nevertheless*" there is grace in the heart of God sufficient for your present, immediate, free, full forgiveness. "The blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth from all sin" and it is your own fault, if it does not cleanse you this very day, yea, this very hour. When we speak to you of God's plenteous mercy, you object that you have always abused it, presuming on it to live in sin; When we seek to commend the blood and righteousness of Christ, you object the dead indifference, perhaps the contempt of years; when we commend the grace of the Almighty Spirit of the Father and the Son, you object that you have resisted and grieved Him. You say you have misused all your privileges and abused all your blessings, and that for great and constant kindness you have returned only ingratitude, wilfulness and disobedience. You say also that you have been afflicted for your good and no permanent good has resulted, all promises of gratitude and obedience has come to nothing,—you never turned your face to God, but to turn your back again to Him. And so you have come to think that your case is a hopeless one, and that all endeavor to be and to do what you ought to be and to do, will be labor in vain. God forbid that you should entertain any such thought, when you have in your hand a Bible whose "Nevertheless" assures you that if you will but turn now and come to God, trusting in Christ, you will find that He is still on the mercy seat, that He is now speaking to you from it, and that His grace abounds "beyond what you can ask or think." He Himself invites you, assuring you of welcome. "Him that cometh to me," he says, "I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever will, let Him take the water of life freely."

One thing we cannot overlook before we close. There are, no doubt, among those who read these lines, some in whose experi-

ence the allotments of Providence are peculiarly heavy, trying, and even perplexing. They have had unusual experience of affliction in their own persons, or in their families. Besides the anxieties of which such experience is the more direct occasion, it may involve them in heavy expenditures which their scanty earnings cannot meet. Or their home has been desolated by successive bereavements. Their hopes have been buried in the grave, to which their best-beloved have been consigned, and they are disposed to say, "My wound is incurable, mine eye shall no more see good." To you, dear reader, who are thinking perhaps that your last comfort is gone, and that only darkness and sorrow are left to you, we say, Be entreated not to allow yourself in the indulgence of the regrets and fears of unbelief. Comfort them all with Christ's "Nevertheless," the "nevertheless" of faith, the "nevertheless" which assures you that, as in the death of Lazarus, nothing has befallen, as nothing can befall, without His permission and except for your good—nothing but what He can and will overrule for your good. Let there be no indulgence in thinking of what *might have been*—no *ifs*, as those of Martha and Mary, John xi. 21, 32, insinuating absence of kind regard, a charge of unkind neglect against the most loving and compassionate of friends—but accept *what is*, and be concerned to learn its lessons. For lessons it has—hard and humbling lessons, it may be, but very salutary—lessons easily missed, and that you are sure to miss, if you allow yourself in the indulgence of unbelieving and vain regrets and fears. It may be that you have been putting the creature in the place of the Creator, or you may have been laying up treasures on earth. But no matter what, be concerned to learn the lessons that God would have you to learn; and, instead of indulging in regrets or thinking that your lot has been peculiarly hard, "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him," in the assurance that your greatest good is wrapped up in your heaviest trials and your greatest sorrows. Remember that it is through suffering that the highest advancement is made in the school of Christ, even as Himself was made perfect, as the Captain of our Salvation, only through His sufferings, and the author of salvation unto all them that obey Him, Heb. ii. 10: v. 9. If one thing is sure beyond all others, it is that the highest class in the school of Christ consists of those who glorify God and serve their generation, not so much by zeal in work for Christ, though they are zealous beyond others, as by suffering as *Christians*, or in the Spirit of Christ, manifesting to all the patience of faith in great tribulations.

Children and Drink.

The Archbishop of Centerbury has contributed a preface to a pamphlet entitled "The Children and the Drink," which is the work of a committee who have been energetically investigating the subject under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Hereford. The preface is as follows—"The Archbishop of Centerbury warmly commends this pamphlet to the serious consideration of all Christians in this country. The danger of allowing children to grow up demoralised from early years, utterly unfit to withstand the temptations of life, utterly uneducated, is not lightly to be disregarded by those who love their country and care for its future welfare. This pamphlet puts the matter clearly before all readers without exaggeration of statement or vehemence of denunciation. Lambeth Palace, March 11th."