

and reveal secrets. Spiritualists, clairvoyants, palmists and fortune-tellers are modern remnants of pre-Christian magic. And the

use of the forked witch-hazel bough to discover the right place to dig a well is a modern survival of the divining rod.

APPLICATION

Did. evil, v. 2. The example of a godly father and the stern lessons of history were lost on Manasseh. And how many are like him in sinning against light and The Reckoning in defying the threat of to-morrow against the evil-doer of to-day! Such persons are like the man who went into a tavern and ordered according to his wildest wishes; but when the host came with the bill, he told him that he had no money and had quite forgotten the reckoning, thinking it quite enough to attend to the eating and drinking while these were the order of the day, without perplexing himself about the unknown future. It is well to remember that the act and life of to-day are busy weaving the character and experiences of the near and far future.

He built altars in the house of the Lord, v. 4. One of the little daughters of Nathaniel Hawthorne was fond of inventing and repeating stories. One day she told her brother of a very naughty child, who gradually became naughtier and naughtier, until at last, as a culmination of her wickedness, she struck God. The erecting of this altar by Manasseh, and the later setting up of the graven image of the idol in the house of the Lord, were dealing a vicious blow in the face of God. And to-day we have a repetition of the same sin by all those who allow God to be displaced from their thoughts and affections by those pleasures and prizes and pursuits which become like so many idols set up in the invisible shrine of the heart.

Manasseh made Judah. to err, v. 9. No one can do so much harm as the one in a high place. A bad king is the curse of a nation.

A corrupt court, like that of Charles II., is the devil's headquarters, from which streams of defilement flow into every part of the body politic. A godless father is apt to mean an epidemic of unrighteousness in the home. "Doctor", said a man to his pastor, "how should I train my boy in the way he should

go?" "By going that way yourself", was the reply. On the other hand, if the head of the nation or the head of the family sets an example of low or irreverent living, the hurt thereof will extend itself far out into the lives of others. The principle is of wide application. Wickedness, linked with power and responsibility, creates a following like unto itself.

The captains took Manasseh in chains (Rev. Ver.). *bound. carried him to Babylon*, v. 11. Manasseh's chain was more profitable to him than his crown. Sweet and saving are the uses of adversity. "Ah!" said Luther, "affliction is the best book in my library." It is one of God's best agencies for rescuing the perishing. In factories where choice porcelain is made, the vessel to be gilded is treated with what seems to be a kind of black paint, ugly in the extreme, which almost seems as if it were spoiling the original beauty of the vessel. The black paint is gold in disguise. It is put on in black form and is burned in; when the fire has done its work, that which was dark and unlovely makes the vessel beautiful and worthy and costly. It is even so with us. God casts men into the furnace of suffering to burn away the dross, and gild with holiness.

God heard his supplication, vs. 12, 13. The vilest sinner may return and find acceptance with God. Manasseh was unique in his extreme wickedness, his sincere penitence and his thorough reformation. So John Newton, the reckless, slave-hunting sinner and profane scoffer, became the man of prayer and the immortal messenger of soul-saving truth in prose and poetry. Truly God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn and live and glorify Himself. As a certain culprit, to whom God had granted repentance, said, "He is a great Forgiver." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." This promise will never fail.

A Great Forgiver

Power and Responsibility