

HEAVEN AT LAST.

Angol voices sweetly singing, Echoes through the blue dome ringing, News of wondrous glories bringing; Ah, 'tis heaven at last!

-Bonar.

Select Sermon.

THE PARTING OF ELIJAH AND ELISHA.

(From short-hand notes of Sermon by the Rev. R. C. Moffat.)

The last grip of the death-cold hand! He was your father, son, can you forget it?—No.

That last look of intense love; thy wife's. Dare you doubt the heart's affection?—No, never.

That last whisper! Mother, it was thy child as she nestled in thy bosom for the last time ere God took her. Can you ever forget it? I know you cannot.

To-day we look on the last journey of Elijah and Elisha. One glance and the scene lies before us—Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho. What memories of devotion and heroism, of omnipotence and mercy, linger among their ruins. But the visit of Elijah concerns not sacred ruins, but living men and national destiny.

Somehow they have learned that Jehovah is about to remove their great teacher, and with wropt gaze and hushed solemnity they listen to his parting counsels. The nation's God and the nation's need; and the few living words about blessing, duty and aspiration are burned into their memories for ever.

FIRST—THE TWISTED MANTLE.

These last words will cheer these young men in the darkest hours in their after-battle of life, when, amid worldliness and idolatry, they contend for the God of Israel.

But the speaker passeth on; he is eastward and homeward bound. You have heard of the lordly eagle painfully reaching its rocky eyrie only to die. Then why should not the prophet long to reach Gilead? Life's great work is in its last hour, but that hour can only come in his native Gilead.

SECOND—THE DISCIPLES FAR-REACHING PRAYER.

How like Elijah that parting counsel, ask what I shall do for thee. It was a strange suggestion to make; but his great soul yearned for the welfare of the

man who had been so true and loyal. 'Twas a strange answer that of Elisha too, and it has often been as strangely understood. Not lordly wealth, not twice the power to work miracles, not doubly to excel Elijah in speech or power or deed. The worldly heart is over judging by its own standard, by its own stereotyped prayers.

Young men, are you conscious of your weakness to face temptation and sin? Then pray as Elisha did for a double portion of God's grace. Trust in God and do the right. Elisha must now stand in the front rank. Truly it was a perilous place, but his was the noblest choice, the wisest prayer, the true man can make.

THIRD—THE CHARIOT OF FIRE FOR THE PROPHET OF FIRE.

They have left the Jordan far below. As heart is unbosomed to heart they ascend through many a dark and rugged gorge. They reach at length yon noble height; for life and living it must have been a marvel of ever changing beauty; and for death, with every battle-ground and every victory full in view, how fit the spot. But suddenly they are separated. Not by some foul sin, not by some bitter estrangement, not by yawning chasm, but by a heaven-sent chariot of fire.

But behold Elisha! Yonder he stands, spell-bound; only reverence can only adore; my Father, my Father. But when the glory is past and the calm blue heaven above is seen, then a living faith takes absolute possession. Elijah may be gone, but the chariot of fire may be gone, but Jehovah the Lord of Israel liveth.

Prayer is answered, and that doubly. There is not only the one wondrous glimpse, but lo, there falls the very mantle of the prophet itself. To the one, the mantle is exchanged for the robe and the palm and the crown. To the other, prayer is answered beyond the fondest hope; and thus accredited, back he journey's, God's ambassador to fallen Israel.

Finally, two lessons may be hastily gleaned from the prophet's life. First—What a comfort to the much afraid. Did Elijah never flee from duty? Never tremble upon the verge of despair? Yet he was saved, so as by fire. Second—What hope to the traveller near the journey's end. One may pass into heaven God knows how, another by the cloud, another in angel's bosom, another by the whirlwind; but no matter where, no matter how, if only saved at last. Safe at home by Jesus Christ, the only one able to save the uttermost.—Walker-ton Telescope.

AN INFIDEL AGREEING WITH PAUL.

An admirable reply was once made by a careful reader of the Bible to an infidel, who attacked him with such expressions as these: "That the blood of Christ can wash away sin is foolishness; I don't understand or believe it."

The Bible student remarked, "You and Paul agree exactly."

The infidel replied with surprise, "How is this, that Paul and I agree exactly?"

Said the student, "Turn to the first chapter of Corinthians and read the eighteenth verse."

The infidel read, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."

The infidel hung his head, and ever after studied the Bible, and soon believed it to be God's power of salvation.

Men who see into their neighbors are very apt to be contemptuous; but men who see through them find something lying behind every human soul which it is not for them to sit in judgment on or attempt to sneer out of the order of God's manifold universe.—Holmes.

THE GREEK CHURCH.

The annals of man offer few more varied, more magnificent, or more touching records than that of the Eastern Church; and from its dim yet hallowed origin, through its long career of worldly triumph and of spiritual joy, of bitter overthrows and of swift decline, of fresh revivals and unprecedented strength, until to-day it rules over half Europe, and threatens the subjugation of Asia from the Indus to the China seas, a surpassing interest has ever followed the only Christian body that can claim a visible descent from the companions of its founder.

Scholar as well as theologian will find much in the annals of the Greek Church to touch his sympathy and startle his curiosity. The genius of Attic civilization seems often revived in its teachings; the humane and liberal spirit of philosophers and poets the gentler impulses of Plato or Socrates, are renewed, together with their names, through all those barbarous races that were educated from the brilliant schools of Constantinople. While the Latin Church, under its illiterate popes, inculcated persecution, and grew into a fierce and aggressive political despotism, the Greeks, looking ever to the teachings of Nice and of Constantine, have preserved a humane toleration.

Along that hot but luxuriant shore reaching from the falls of the Nile to the lower borders of the Euxine, still fertile at that momentous period in the richest productions of nature and art, the land of Homer and Herodotus, Scopas and Parrhasius, of stately architecture and perpetual song, the Eastern Church, at the opening of the Council of Nice and the triumph of Constantine, had fixed its immutable foundations. Its mighty bishoprics—seats of learning as well as of abundant faith—seemed the corner-stones of Christianity. Alexandria, Antioch, and the seven churches were flourishing with such outward vigor as to overshadow the feeble Church of Rome and the missionary stations of the barbarous West. Rome, in fact, had long remained a Greek congregation. Its bishops employed the Greek language in their writings or exhortations; its presbyter, Anicetus, admitted the superior authority of Polycarp; its members were obscure, uncultivated, and humbled by frequent persecutions.

At length (825), with cries of victory and peace, the Council of Nice assembled. Martyrs and confessors, maimed bishops and eyeless hermits, cultivated scholars from the learned seminaries of Egypt and Alexandria, monks from the Thebaid, and anchorites from the desert, gathered at the call of Constantine to decide the doctrines and the usages of the triumphant Church. Amidst its eager and clamorous throng wandered the inspired dwarf Athanasius, deformed, with glittering eyes; or the tall, emaciated Arius, wasted with penance and conscious of defeat, summoning his followers to that intellectual combat whose decision was to fix the opinions of half mankind.

HEATHEN EARNESTNESS.

The Rev. S. H. Kellogg, of the American Presbyterian Mission in Northern India, relates the following incident, as occurring on a missionary tour. It shows that the Spirit, when it works on the heart, giving a man a knowledge of himself as a sinner, defiled with sins, leads him to put away at once all side issues, and to seek earnestly an answer to the question of questions, "What must I do to be saved?"

"On the evening, going out into the mela to preach, I was accosted by two men, a Mohammedan and a Hindoo, who asked me to show them the way of salvation. As I began, the Mussulman interrupted me,—

"First of all, explain how we come to be sinners."

"No, no! impatiently demanded the Hindoo; 'not that! I know I am a sinner; that is enough; I only want to know how to be saved from sin.'"

"And as I preached Christ's cross to them, it was a most pleasant thing that whenever any one might interrupt me by any irrelevant question, not this Hindoo only, but many in the crowd who had gathered would silence him, nor willing allow anything but that I should answer this one question:—

"How may we be saved from sin? The Hindoo drank in my words like water, as I told him of Christ dying in the sinner's stead.

"Yes," he broke in at last, 'so we are saved from hell; but how shall we be saved from the power of sin.'"

"Such a degree of individual interest in a promiscuous audience, I had never seen. It was the old Pentecostal question, 'What must we do?'"

CHRISTIAN CHEERFULNESS.

The language of the religion of Christ truly in the heart is that of rejoicing. "I will joy in the God of my salvation," said Harbukkuk. Joy and peace are the fruit of believing. "Believing," said Peter, "ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Paul, too, closes one of the best of his epistles with the charge to all saints' saying, "Rejoice evermore." All these, and the multiplied similar expressions in the Holy Scriptures, show in the clearest terms that cheerfulness and joy are divinely intended to be among the most marked characteristics, and should be regarded as among the most constant of the privileges and duties of every true Christian.

Yet how far is all this practically from many that bear the Christian name? Their countenance looks as if it were seldom or never lighted up with the comfort and bliss of a joyful heart within. Their very coming into the social circle is not unfrequently the signal for every sign of cheerfulness and joy to flee away as dangerous or forbidden things.

But why should such things be? If a man has truly had his sins forgiven, been reconciled to God, and made to have a good hope of its being certainly, and in the best of all senses, well with him, both in this life and in that which is to come, has he not of all persons some ground upon which he may have joy, and if he has it, and has it as the fruit of his faith in Christ and through his religion, ought he not to show it to others.

What can we say more for ourselves in our prayers than He has said for us in His promises?—Henry.

ANTIOCH AND THE ORONTES.

Whatever may be said of the diminutive size of Syrian streams, the Orontes, at least, is entitled to respect. From its principal source, Am-el-Aasy (latitude 34° 22'), a copious and beautiful fountain 2118 feet above the sea, it is vigorous and self-reliant. While not disclaiming the contributions of tributaries, such as the Lebweh and the Kara-Su, it is not dependent upon them. Like Minerva from the front of Jove, it leaps forth from the mountain fully armed for the struggle—as struggle the Orontes must, in its tortuous course of about 200 miles through various geological formations, in its effort to reach the sea.

This river is no mere poetic fiction, but is a brave reality. It can not boast, like the waters of Damascus, of fertilizing that "Pearl of the East"; or, like the Jordan, of birth at the base of Hermon, and a career through the waters of Merom, the Sea of Galilee, and the Holy Land; yet the river of Northern Syria has merits of its own. The Abana and Pharpar exhaust themselves in the oasis of Damascus, and are lost in the desert in a vain attempt to reach the Euphrates or the Persian Gulf. The Litany (Leontes), springing from a small lake six miles southwest of Baalbec, reaches the sea through a ravine of the Lebanon about five miles north of Tyre, without doing any thing to boast of beyond a little irrigation of the narrow plain of Cæle Syria, and the still narrower strip of coast. The Jordan boasts of no city or town from its source at Dan to Tiberias on the lake, or from the lake to the Dead Sea, except poor, wretched Jericho, once a city, but now a mere mud hamlet. But the Orontes, while fertilizing great plains, is also the life of towns like Riblah and Shogre, and of cities like Homs, Hamath, and Antioch. "The Queen of the East," whose inhabitants are numbered by thousands, and whose wealth is estimated at millions. Except the Euphrates, which barely touches the northeast boundary, the Orontes is the only river of Syria susceptible of navigation. And Antioch was no mean city. Favorably situated for commerce, being 800 miles north of Jerusalem, and about 25 miles from the sea, it was of easy access from Damascus, the valley of the Euphrates, and the Cilician Plain. Founded and occupied by the successors of Alexander the Great, 800 B.C., "the beautiful Antioch" once contained a population of half a million. Its walls inclosed a space of nearly seven miles in circumference, and sustained four hundred lofty square towers, each containing a staircase and two or three rooms. This "Eye of the East," although called God's City, was rather the city of the gods. Bacchus ruled the city, and the adjacent grove of Daphne was the seat of pleasure.—Lucius Verrus, the dissolute noble, once lavished \$190,000 upon a single supper at Antioch when it was the third city of the Roman empire.

But pagan and Christian Antioch has been equally famous for its misfortunes. It was captured in turn by the Persians, Romans, Saracens, Crusaders, and Turks, and was frequently pillaged; but its greatest foe has ever been the volcanic character of the country. Rocked and shaken for centuries, shattered, overthrown, and sometimes engulfed, poor Antioch is now but the shadow of its former self; and now again its population of 6000 has been more than decimated by the earthquake of 1872, which has also proved very destructive to the neighbouring villages, causing the death of 2000 people. The name Christian, first used at Antioch 1800 years ago, now applies to a very small number of its people; but the spirit of apostolical Christianity is being revived by the noble little band of American missionaries, whose church and schools are gaining favor with the inhabitants.

One of the many earthquakes which have devastated this once noble city, the sixth recorded by the historian, occurred in A.D. 526, and destroyed 250,000 persons who were gathered here in celebration of one of their great festivals; in 1822 one-quarter of its population were killed. Safed and Tiberias, in Galilee, were overthrown in 1887, and it seems probable that these convulsions, traces of which may be seen in the depression of the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, will continue to afflict these Bible lands until there shall be a new heaven and a new earth.—From "On the Orontes," by J. Augustus Johnson, in Harper's Magazine for August.

Opportunities are running to waste everywhere, like the golden fruit of the overburdened orchard. They are not confined to parallels of latitude. In running after them, we are perpetually running away from them.

Do not think of one falsity as harmless, and another as slight, and another as unintended. Cast them all aside; they may be light or accidental, but they are ugly soot from the smoke of the pit, for all that, and it is better that our hearts should be swept clean of them, without one care as to which is the largest or blackest.—Ruskin.