

singer. He had just been singing, with wonderful power, this very hymn.

"I well remember," he said, turning to us who were standing near him, "the first time I heard that hymn. It was in a miserable little hotel in Tennessee, where I had been squandering my substance—a real prodigal son. There came one afternoon into the building a little company of people who had been delayed in that forlorn place by a railway accident, and one or two of them began singing around the piano. The lady's voice I shall never forget. She sang one of my mother's old hymns, and then this one, 'Come Home!' Wherever I went, the next few days, I seemed to hear that voice, saying, 'Come home!' And the end of it was, I came."

"Not the end, sir," I said, reaching out my hand. "How often we drop our little pebbles of service into the stream, and know not where the widening circles reach!"

Then I told him of the singers of that afternoon, and the only earthly one whom he had to thank—that dear old lady with the crown of snowy hair! I hardly think we often find two such links in the mixed chain of our experiences. God be thanked that sometimes we may see the "working together for good" of the plans of the only wise One.—*Raymond M. Alden, in Congregationalist.*

THE ONE CHERISHED SIN.

OFTEN, from my window on the seashore, I have observed a little boat at anchor. Day after day, month after month, it is seen at the same spot. The tides ebb and flow, yet it scarcely moves. While many a gallant vessel spreads its sails, and, catching the favoring breeze, has reached the haven, this little barque moves not from its accustomed spot. True it is that when the tide rises, it rises; and when it ebbs again, it sinks; but advances not. Why is this? It is fastened to the earth by one slender rope. There is the secret. A cord, scarcely visible, enchants it, and will not let it go. Now, stationary Christians, see here your state—the state of thousands. Sabbaths come and go, but leave them as before. Ordinances come and go; ministers come and go; means, privileges, sermons move them not—yes, they move them; a slight elevation by a Sabbath tide, and again they sink; but no onward, heavenward movement. They are as remote as ever from the haven of rest; this Sabbath as the last, this year as the past. Some one sin enslaves, enchants

the soul, and will not let it go. If it be so, make one desperate effort in the strength of God. Take the Bible as your chart, and Christ as your pilot, to steer you safely amid the dangerous rocks, and pray for the Spirit of all grace to fill your every sail, and waft you onward over the ocean of life to the haven of everlasting life.—*Episcopal Recorder.*

FOR PARISH AND HOME.

FROM MALACHI TO JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(Continued from May.)

Alexander the Great died in the year 324 B.C. His vast dominions were divided into four kingdoms, two of which alone are of interest to us—the Asiatic kingdom of the family of Seleucus, with its capital at Antioch, and the Egyptian kingdom under the Ptolemies. Palestine became a part of the former, and was governed from Antioch. But the same mild and judicious policy of religious toleration as had prevailed under Alexander was continued for a time, and the relations between the Jews and their heathen masters were more friendly, perhaps, than ever before. In the reign of Antiochus the Great Palestine was transferred to the rule of the Ptolemies of Egypt, but whether governed from Antioch or Egypt the ruler was Grecian, and whatever foreign influence was brought to bear upon the Jews was Greek. The Greek became a more and more widely diffused language, so that in the time of Christ it was almost as well known in Palestine as the native Aramaic speech of the people, besides being used throughout the rest of the eastern world. Thus it came about in a wonderful way that when the apostles were ready to preach the Gospel throughout the world, there was one language almost universally spoken or understood which they might use. By it they could reach the greater part of the Roman Empire, and the epistles they wrote could be circulated and read almost everywhere. If Christ had come five hundred years earlier, before Palestine had come under the influence of western civilization, and when each little country spoke its own language or dialect, the apostles in their native Hebrew would have made comparatively little progress. In every sense, it will be found that Jesus came *in the fullness of time.*

But before following further the history of Palestine, it will be advisable to take a thorough survey of Jewish life as it appeared about the year 200 B.C. Once

we are familiar with this, and the influences then at work upon it, we have the key to New Testament times. The national life changed very little, if at all, in the interval.

To the modern mind the Jews are essentially traders and commercial people. But nothing is more striking than the contrast presented between modern Israel and the Israel of early times. The Jews of Scripture were agriculturists and herdsmen, and so they continued up to the time of Christ, at least. The words of the great Jewish historian, Josephus, representing the national life in the Herodian age, are: "As for ourselves, therefore, we neither inhabit a maritime country, nor do we delight in merchandise, nor in such a mixture with other men as arises from it; but the cities we dwell in are remote from the sea, and, having a fruitful country for our habitation, we take pains to cultivate that only." It was among the Jews of the dispersion, that is, those who did not return from Babylon, or who afterwards settled in the Greek city of Alexandria, that the commercial spirit first arose. At the time of which we are treating the great occupation of the Jew was the cultivation of the soil and tending of herds, and his social system was as simple as in the days of Samuel. The people were divided into two classes—the educated and the ignorant. There was no middle class. The upper class consisted of those families that could trace their descent back to the time of the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and it included the twenty-four courses of priests, and the professional men of the nation. The lower class were regarded with contempt by the educated as the "untaught" and the "beasts of the people." They were entirely distinct in religion, language, occupation, and social position, though forming with the upper class one distinct nation.

About this lower or untaught class there is little to be said. They tilled the soil and led a life of toil and misery, very much like the Egyptian fellahin of to-day. They knew nothing of Hebrew, but spoke the Aramaic or Chaldean dialect—the language of Babylon. Unable to read or write, they knew little of the law of Moses or of the prophets. Their religion was crude and superstitious. The old worship of the "high places" still existed. Generation after generation their history was the same. They were born, they married, they toiled, and they died. Their children were set to tend the flocks and herds at the earliest possible age, and even the rudiments of education were out of the