

he fell on his father's neck. You are not easy where you are. The darkness is now dreary; but the light, with all your sins upon you, is more dreadful still. Satan's chain is heavy; but you would rather bear it than go right into the hands of the living God. Blessed are those prodigals who are brought the length of the grand decisive turning, "I will arise and go to my father!"

To the filthy in his filthiness the prospect of being exposed in the light is dreadful; to the rebellious, who has broken his father's heart, the prospect of meeting his father is more formidable than all the miseries of his condition. But when he turns all is changed; when he is clothed in the fairest robe, he needs not shrink from the light of his father's dwelling, or the glance of a brother's eye. When he lies on the father's bosom, deep in the father's fathomless love, he can no longer think it dreadful to come to his father.

#### UNCONSECRATED ART.

"Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab and every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding, to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded."—Ex. xxxvi. 1.

Interesting notices of the mechanic arts occur in the Exodus. It is certain that they were cultivated with great success in Egypt both before and after the time of Moses. It is probable that the Hebrews, although kept in a servile condition, were equal to their masters in mechanical skill. We are too apt to form our conception of slaves in eastern countries and ancient times on the model of the examples which have occurred in our own experience. In at least one decisive feature the cases are totally different; the slaves whom the Egyptians oppressed were, as a race, in all respects equal to their oppressors. Instances were not rare in which they rose to the highest offices in the state. Joseph was bought from a gang of travelling chapmen; and yet he became virtually the ruler of Egypt. How different is the relation between master and slave in the States of America! Not long ago a member of the servile race, although personally a freeman, and a doctor of divinity to boot, was by the decision of a legal tribunal in New York denied the right of riding in an omnibus beside men who owned a whiter skin. Doubtless some Hebrew patriots followed the standard of Moses, who had by their skill ornamented the palace of the Pharaohs. The talent which they had acquired in the house of bondage was afterwards employed in the interests of liberty. The Egyptians by the Exodus were spoiled of the jewellers as well as the jewels,—of the goldsmiths as well as the gold.

It is sadly instructive to notice that the first application of mechanical skill among the liberated Hebrews was the construction of an idol. The golden calf is the earliest specimen of their art after they obtained their independence. The readiness with which they fell into idolatry reads a humiliating lesson to human kind in every age. Aaron in his lame apology says, (xxxiii. 24), "I cast it into the

fire; and there came out this calf." Thus a mighty child, caught in the act, ventures half a lie to hide his transgression. No doubt he or the workman at his bidding, cast the gold into the furnace and the calf came out; but this is not the whole truth in the case. They planned and executed the image.

Yet it was true in a deeper sense than the equivocaters intended, that they poured in the metal and the calf came out. This was the form of art into which both their hands and their hearts readily glided. Apis, the chief deity of ancient Egypt, was an ox. The figure of an ox accordingly was most familiar to the Hebrew artisans, and into this figure their effort naturally fell, as soon as they began to make images on their own account. They did for themselves, when free, what they had done for their masters in bondage.

The history here is transparent, and the moral shines clearly through. It is not necessary to fetch the lesson from afar; the lesson offers itself unsought. Wisdom crops out on the surface here. Mark the terrible pervasive power of early habit and education on the moral and religious sentiments of a community. Moses, by Divine inspiration, was raising the people up to worthy conceptions of God's being and character; but, when his hand was removed for a day, the dead-weight gravitated into idolatry. From childhood that generation of Hebrews had seen and heard the pomp of heathen worship. Their memory was charged with it; and the lessons taught them of Abraham's faith were not able to overcome the tide of daily universal habit. How hard it is for even true converts in a heathen land to shake off entirely the bondage of idolatry; and how precious to us is our birthright in this land! Let us learn to pity and bear with the weakness of those who have been steeped in heathen habits in their youth; and let us learn also not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. I tremble to think what I might have been and done in matters of religion, if I had not enjoyed the goodly heritage of gospel light and liberty won by the struggles of faithful forefathers.

From the history of the Exodus we learn that, while the application of art in the service of idolatry came easy and natural to the artists, the application of art to the worship of God was the result of Divine qualification and call. The workers were chosen, and their work prescribed; "I have called by name Bezaleel and Aholiab." Farther, at the very time when the men of Israel were applying their skill to the construction of an idol, God was intimating to Moses in the mount his choice of that skill for the purposes of His own worship. Whether the same two men, Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were selected as the architects of the tent-temple for the worship of God, were employed by Aaron to make an idol in imitation of the Egyptian Apis, we do not certainly know. The artificer of the golden calf is not named in the Scriptures. But it is in every way probable that the same men who constructed the idol were afterwards employed in the service of true religion. The skill of those men would be well known throughout the community. A talent such as this cannot be hid. It is the