

3. We have to add to this that the truths of the Bible are receiving fresh illustrations, which at once increase their vitality and assure their permanent influence.

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Our own experience, and the combined experiences which make history, are giving original illustrations of the Biblical facts of a divine Providence.

* * * Read the story of Christian missions to find the Bible incidents repeated in the signal working of God's providence in the line of his own plan.

So have we accumulated evidences of his love, and mercy, and forbearance. We read these and believe. The former instances make them clear; but our own lives make them clearer. We believe that which was by reason of that which is, and this grows while we sleep. The love and kindness of the Bible make their own witness to its worth. "Truly," said a girl-wife in India, "truly your Bible must have been written by a woman, it contains so many kind things about us." This entrance of its mercy into stricken lives, giving them comfort and hope, makes the mercy more. We comprehend the pity and gentleness of the word when we find the living illustration of its compassion. Prayer never had so much confirmation as now glorifies it. The interceding prophet, the importunate widow, the suppliant mother, the beseeching publican, have been a thousand times repeated since they passed on. The Bible is rich in its witnesses when it would teach us to pray. But it is growing richer in those whom the centuries bring forward, in the multitudes who to-day throng about its mercy-seat, and come boldly to its throne of grace.

Thus it is that the truths of the Bible are more and more strongly asserted and confirmed and illustrated as year succeeds to year. * * *

Thus more and more is the Bible making illustrations of itself. Men are raised up steadily who confirm the power of its teachings. They stand with us and share our life. Every year produces them, and in the act gives us more for which to rejoice in the word of our God. * * *

To the obedient truth will come. The willing man shall know the will of God. Every child, every child-like spirit, shall be taught. As the Bible has become greater in itself, so can we become greater to hold it and be blessed by it. Thus shall we be greater to give it to the world. We may not see its immediate influence as did the fathers. The times have changed. It was a dull and blind world into which the English Bible entered. All the prose literature of England, save the forgotten tracts of Wycliffe, has grown up since the translation of the Bible by Tyndall and Coverdale. So far as the nation at large was concerned, no history, no romance, hardly any poetry, save the little known verse of Chaucer, existed in the English tongue when the Bible was ordered to be set up in the churches. . . . For the moment, however, its literary effect was less than its social. . . . But far greater than its effect on literature or social phrase was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people at large. The Bible was as yet the one book which was familiar to every Englishman.

Its influence has continued. It is not less real because less striking. It has done a deep work which will not pass away. The Bible is needed to preserve and enlarge this. New generations need the old truth, which is ever new. The strangers entering our gates must be met by the man with the Book. The ships which traverse the seas must bear its comfort, and strength, and companionship on their lonely and perilous way. The isles wait for it. The countless millions whom we are just touching must have its wisdom and grace. The Book will bless man. As in the watered fields in its own prophetic page, everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever it shall come, shall live. Let Tyndall speak to us as we go hence, "For we have not received the gifts of God for ourselves only, or for to hide them; but for to bestow them."

We have received, and are receiving. We will give, and let the light shine brighter and yet brighter unto the perfect day.