

PERSEVERANCE.

ing which makes the early spring so full of interest. At no time of the year are there so many changes: "every day," as it has been well said, "and almost every hour shows some old favourite coming to cheer and delight us with the same beauties as before, and yet not the same; and as I go round my garden I try to puzzle out some of the mysteries of the long sleep, and the awakening of plants, and always with the same result, that it is all a mystery which has hitherto utterly defied our research."

And these mysteries are not in garden life only: they are all around us. Yet even so, as we look at these things, mysteries as they are, they bring God very close to us; they show—to speak with all reverence—something of the mind of God. Take a flower, examine it, notice its peculiarities—what are they for? You cannot tell. But wait a little, and presently the visit of a little insect to it will speak whole pages as it were of God's bounty and love and power. Or why does that beautiful convolvulus from South America open its great white blossoms, with their pale, delicate scent only at sundown, to wither and die as the sun rises once more? We are puzzled why so much beauty and sweetness should be lost, as it seems, in the darkness of the night. But if we look at it in that darkness we shall see the little moth flitting round it which finds its food there. Truly—and the deep spiritual truth of the Apostle's words is not lessened, but made wider by the thought—"all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will."*

But to return to our Canticle. If we have at all entered into its spirit, or at all dived into the deep thankfulness animating the souls of those three youths, then the more we learn of God's works the more fervently shall we join with them in singing, "O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever." Again and again shall we see the wondrous truth of our Lord's teaching—"Who-soever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance;" † and again and again shall we be convinced that the Psalmist's words are true, and always will be true—"The Lord sitteth above the water flood: the Lord remaineth a king for ever." ‡

* Cor. xii. 11, R. V.

† St. Matt. xiii. 12.

‡ Ps. xxiv. 10.

FORM WITHOUT FAITH.

"The man who frets impatiently under the little crosses and disasters of our passing day—who abandons himself to despair when his visions of prosperity on this side of time are scattered by the hand of misfortune into nothing—who feels that all is lost, because the earthly portion upon which he set his heart is lost—who, differently reckoning from Paul, reckons himself an outcast from hope and happiness because of the clouds that sit on this temporary scene—he may try himself by those marks, and learn how little indeed it is that he lives by the power of a coming world—learn how, after all, when his faith is brought to a really practical test, it is found most woefully to fail him, and especially learn how possible it is to have quite the form of sound words, and to have all the notions and phrases of the Evangelical system, without being impregnated with that faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'"—*Chalmers on the Romans*

Many "for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." St. Luke viii. 13. Pray God to "stablish, strengthen, settle you."

1. "Cast not away your confidence" in God. Heb. x. 35. *Believe that God is your Father, and that He loves you. If you fall away do not despair. You ask, What can I do? The answer is, Do what the prodigal did, "He arose and came to his father." St. Luke xv. 20. But is God your Father? Yes; not only by creation, but by regeneration. You were baptized: that was your new birth. You got life then. As you live in the world from day to day, you do many things; you work and take food: and all these things you do and are able to simply because you are alive, and because God gave you life at first. Just in the same way you live in the Church as one of its living members. You believe, repent, work, and receive Sacraments; and all this you can do because God gave you new life in Holy Baptism. So, if you fall from God, and if by God's grace you come back to God, and are converted—your conversion means simply that God is giving you back what you received at your Baptism. You got life then; you have been losing your life by sin; now the Holy Spirit renews your life. You do not get another new life, but the baptismal gift of life is renewed. So all your life remember this. Do not trust to what you do when you turn to God, but plead what God did for you at the Font. Everything good that comes to you must be traced back to the new life that was given to you there. All that I have said shows with what good hope you can return to God. For it is returning, coming back. You are not come to a stranger whom you have never met, but to a Father who long ago made you His child and now bids you return to His arms. And besides, this thought will prevent your straying; for think,—when you sin, you rebel against your Father's love and care. "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen; and repent and do the first works." Rev. ii. 5. Begin to do the good things that you "have left undone." Beware of delays. Come back, come home before you get worse. The longer you wait, the harder it will be to repent.*

2. *Never give up your Church for any one. Go to Church and nowhere else. Keep this rule; do not wander even once for the sake of friend or companion. It is dangerous to trifle with your soul. Thank God that he has given you a place in His Church—not in any sect founded by man, but in the old Church, which has lived for many centuries, and has really been God's appointed witness for the truth in our land. You partake of the Sacraments that are necessary for Salvation. St. John iii. 5; vi. 53. The Church teaches you in the "Preface" to our Ordination Service that according to the Bible, there have been three Orders of Ministers,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." And in "the Collect" for the Ordination of Priests, she says: "Almighty God, Giver of all good things, who by thy Holy Spirit hast appointed divers Orders of Ministers in the Church." You have the blessings of union with the Church, the Body of Christ; you have the Sacraments which He has ordained; and you have ministers who receive their authority from the Holy Ghost. And these Ministers give you both the Bread which is the Body of Christ and the Wine which is the Blood of Christ, as the Lord and His Apostles gave that Holy Sacrament. St. Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 26. You must not, even in thought, give up your birthright. On the contrary, you should give information to those who are prepared to receive it, and offer them a share of your privileges. But do not argue about religion. And always remember that those whom you think most wrong may be nearer to God*

than you are, spite of their disadvantages. But for yourself, you must not falter. "Continue in the things which thou has learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." 2 St. Tim. iii. 14.

3. *Read and Study the Bible.* A few verses read thoughtfully before your prayers will prepare you for seeking the presence of God. Attend Bible Classes and Instructions, and ask help, if you need explanation or advice. For private reading, take one of the Gospels, or find the daily Lessons in the Calendar at the beginning of the Prayer Book. The Epistles and Gospels give you a large number of short readings: those for Saints' Days, which you will find next before the Communion Service, are used only on one day in the year at Church. Remember, the Bible is God's book: and it is all true, of course, as it was written by God's inspiration. Some parts of it are above our knowledge. But we must believe now, and hope to know more hereafter.

4. *Try to understand your Prayer Book, and all it teaches you.* See how it leads you to God, and keeps you near Him by all its holy services. Note how it exalts the Bible: a great part of it is out of God's Word. It gives you prayers for use, and in your own language.

5. *Never neglect your Private Prayers.*

6. *Wherever you are, however often you move from place to place, always claim your place in Church, and make yourself known to one of the Priests.* Do not get disheartened if you are alone in a strange parish. Look at once for a church where you can receive the Holy Communion in the early morning and in the cool of the day. Get a letter from the Priest of your old parish; go to one of the Priests after service, or at some other time, and tell him who you are and where you live. He will call on you, or you will know some of the people at Church. One thing you will do, of course: and when you do it, you will not feel alone. As a communicant of the Church of England, you have a right to receive Holy Communion from any of her Altars, and thus keep up your union with the Lord Jesus Christ and all His members. Let no trouble, business, distance, family care, opposition of ungodly friends, or anything else, keep you back from Communion. If your difficulty is in yourself, and if you need advice for your soul, do not be afraid to speak to one of the Priests. True, he is a stranger. But you can soon mend that. Make yourself known to him and perhaps you soon may know him as a friend.

7. *One thing more. Nothing keeps our souls right with God so well as doing Work for God.* Work saves us from brooding over our troubles and repeating our sins. We must not simply seek salvation for our own souls; let us save ourselves in the best way by seeking and saving others too. But even if you do not teach in a Sunday School or visit any one as a regular duty, you may do much—perhaps quite as much or more—in a quiet way, as you have opportunity. You may have neighbours who do not know the need of public worship, or have not been taught the special blessing which they might obtain in the service of the Church: talk to them, and try to correct the mistakes that do so much harm. Take your part in this Divine ministry—to "bring into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived;" to "comfort and help the weak-hearted; to "raise up them that fall;" and to "strengthen such as do stand." All this takes time, and it takes patience too. But it is worth while. Think what the love of God has done for you. And think what that love may enable you to do for Him. —*From Plain Words.*

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