

## I.

## The need.

1. The need of the true riches of the manifold grace of God.
2. The need of forgiveness.
3. The need of true Spiritual Insight.

## II.

The gifts which our Saviour offers to supply the need.

1. The gold tried in the fire.
2. The white Raiment.
3. The eye-salve.

It has always appeared to my mind to be unnecessary to suppose any exceptional wickedness in these seven churches of Asia in order to account for the severe expressions which we find now and then addressed to them. These sharp rebukes can be accounted for on two hypotheses : one is that the men to whom these letters are addressed must have been unusually bad, to be rebuked so sharply ; and the other is that there must have been an unusually close and intimate relationship existing between them and the Apostle. S. John and S. Paul were accustomed to look upon these men as upon their own spiritual children ; and they used to speak to them plainly as a father does to his son. There is a certain gentleness and courtesy in the world, born of prudence and ordinary caution, which we use instinctively towards men who are strangers to us, or even towards our enemies. And on the other hand there is a certain sternness, born of deep affection, which men use sometimes towards those who are very dear to them for the sake of their fundamental well-being. Possibly had these men been actually worse, the Apostle would have been less direct in his rebukes. At any rate it would appear to say something in favour of their real moral earnestness at bottom, and desire to be true, that there is no trace of their having so to speak, flung the letter back in the apostle's face, as Diotrephes did. So far as we know there is no record of a protest on their part against having these letters read in the services of the Church, or of any steps whatever taken to prevent them from being incorporated in the Bible. I mention this because it seems to me to suggest a line of thought which is capable of being worked out with very fruitful results in regard to the Old Testament. People are fond of talking about the stiffneckedness of the people of Israel, as if these Israelites were the only stiffnecked people who ever existed on the face of the earth ; but there is one thing to be said at any rate in favour of these Jews, and that is that they have not hidden the story of their stiff-

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