

of Thee." The presence and the mastery of conscience have often been felt. As a Judge refusing to be bribed, it utters sentences of condemnation. It goes with the culprit to the market, to the counting house, to the field; its startling words—"thou art the man"—come stealing through the silence of the night, force the bars of the deepest cell, and break in thunder tones over the head of the sinner when 'treading the valley of the shadow of death. Imaginary voices cry to the murderer, you are a bloody man. The lash of conscience drew from Judas, the confession, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Guilt loads the conscience. With prodigious energy it heaps on the soul accumulated woes. "Conscience," it has been said, "once awakened by a ray of spiritual light, is an awful thing; and what tremendous power it may acquire, when it is quickened by the Spirit, may be inferred from the energy which it puts forth when it is called into action by the reproofs of mere human faithfulness. Let a man commit a secret sin, and so long as no human eye is supposed to be privy to his guilt, he may contrive to lull his conscience to sleep; but let a friend charge him with the fact, or even hint a suspicion of it, and the mantling check, the agitated look, the trembling frame, will at once evince how one's conscience may be quickened into tremendous action by a ray of light passing to it from another mind; and, successful as he may have been in quelling his own remorseful thoughts, by devising palliations of his guilt, he will no longer attempt to deny the sinfulness of the fact, but try to disprove the fact itself, as the only possible way of escaping from the sure decision of another man's conscience on his own case. This instructive and familiar example shows that all along conscience is alive in the sinner's breast—not dead, but asleep, and how easily it may be awakened into vigorous conviction by a single ray of heaven's light piercing through the veil of nature's darkness, by the power of the Spirit of God."

The conscience is at times defiled with vicious habits, so that it does not discharge its functions aright. Drinking greedily and long at intoxicating fountains, burns out the conscience. Seared as with a hot iron, all sense and feeling may depart, and holy things become a mockery. Gagged often, it loses its power of speech. Held down so long its strength is paralyzed. Yet after the utmost abuse, it may re-assert its dominion. The scales of the searing process may fall off. Instances have occurred of terrors rushing in on the soul like a mighty flood. The neglect of the great salvation is a terrible account to settle. Infidelity may, like the boy in the church yard by night whistling aloud to keep his courage up, try to pass heedlessly through the portal of death, but conscience often proves more than a match for its beguilement. The gnawings of the worm that never dies, begin after temporary torpor to be more acutely felt. The burning of the fire that cannot be quenched, though smothered for a time, will rage more fiercely.

A good conscience has two elements—purity and tranquillity. The one is connected with the other; both flow from Christ. The blood shed on Calvary purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. The heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience that looks up to the Lamb of God. The conscience of the comer to Jesus is made perfect; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The storm that raged in the soul while under a sense of guilt and condemnation, is hushed. At his command it subsides. He says peace, be still—fear not, it is I. Of him, as of the Eternal Spirit, it may be said—