

its loss, more than one which you never lost? It is absurd to think it. Joy is a manifestation of turbulent delight; it is more noisy, but not so deep, not so lasting as happiness, and has not necessarily any connection with love. The joy in the case of the two parables, is because of the unexpectedness of the gratification. The excessive, as the elder son thought, manifestation of welcome to the returning prodigal, was no proof of excessive love. It was but the natural mark of the happiness which this unexpected recovery of him, as it were from the dead, could not but call forth. And so the father explains it: "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." I believe that incalculable mischief has arisen from the misunderstanding this point. You can all bear me witness, who heard my last sermon on the subject, that I am in no wise disposed to diminish the largeness of God's forgiving love as here set forth: I then said, and I again repeat, that there are no limits to His pardon, no bounds to His grace, but such as a man himself sets, by neglecting to believe in His offers of mercy, by forgetting that He is our Father, by not pleading the merits of His dear Son. But, as I told you then, there is a blessedness higher still; and that is theirs who have never strayed from God, who have never disobeyed Him: for to such God says, as in the words of the text, "All that I have is thine."

But let me endeavour to explain the difficulty which I know so many feel, and which, till I learned better, I felt too; the seeming jealousy of the elder brother. Does it not arise from misunderstanding the mode of teaching by parable? There are Divine truths to be taught, and in Christ's mercy and wisdom He couches them in a tale of this earth. It is sufficient if the great lessons are therein contained, and we must not suppose that every little incidental trait which makes the picture more life-like and at-