

profession. All the way along, then, the Lord kept close to the fitnesses of things. There is with Him no playing fast and loose with fact and with nature. Even in the instant of a miracle He manages to eulogize methods that are ordinary. He showed His approval of the fisherman's art, and quietly applauded skill in that art. While with one hand He performed a miracle, with the other He steadied Himself by keeping hold of the chain of ordinary sequence. So once, when He gave sight to the blind, He first in a way anointed the blind man's eyes. He wished it to be understood that there was a miracle, and yet He wanted to keep in, if I may use the expression—He wanted to keep in, as far as the case would permit, with the ordinary modes of treatment. With Him the methods of the miraculous were determined by the methods of the non-miraculous. You know, also, that restoration, by ordinary medical practice, is gradual. So in this particular instance of the blind man, He let his sight come back to him by easy stages: He subserved His purpose, and yet eased as far as He could the break with the methods that are medical. He anointed the man's eyes once, and he saw a little; and anointed them again and he saw a good deal. His miracle was a reminiscence of nature, and so honored nature. It was a quotation from the medical profession, and so honored the medical profession. He tethered His miracle to a natural datum, and let even His miraculous energy flow in a channel that was calculated from methods that are regular and usual.

Elisha asked the woman: "What hast thou in the house?" We wondered why he did not give her the *money* she wanted first off, without stopping to drag into the matter the single basin of oil she happened to be possessed of. I hope that our illustrations have at any rate given us a clue, and that they have trained our thought into at least a slightly juster appreciation of this whole matter of Bible miracle. And if we

have for a few minutes been looking up into the *air*, we will now take this same question of Elisha's and for a few minutes try to hold it at such an angle that it will flash God's light down onto the *ground* where we are walking and working.

"What hast thou in the house?" God's *miraculous* energy chooses to commence work on the basis of the little that a man has already. His *ordinary* energy chooses to conform itself to the same method. So that in any work or enterprise wherein we want or expect any help from on high the practical threshold question is still the old question, What have you got now? "What hast thou in the house?" Observe how closely that comes to our daily life, and what use we make of it in the commonest matters. When it comes spring, and the frost is loosened from the ground, and God's rains have settled the furrows thereof, our farmer bethinks himself of his husbandry and of the generous harvest with which he hopes to crowd his storehouses and barns in the autumn. If he believes in God and God's agency and providence, he knows that the autumn ingathering will be to all intents a divine conferment. And yet he has learned from past years that God has a very peculiar way of making His conferments. That there are certain banks between which the current even of God's beneficence and almightiness confines itself. "Nothing comes from nothing," that is one of the *banks*. If we want a blessing in corn, sense, or grace, we have got to get at God's methods and train in the ranks of His providence. "Nothing comes from nothing." It is well to pray for a profitable harvest, but not till you get your seed in. In a sense God has the power to fill your barn with fruits without any trouble on your part; but He has chosen not to do so, and in that sense has not the power to do so. God's blessings come in the shape of an addition to possessions that we already have: the woman's oil, the disciples' seven loaves; to him that hath shall be given.

So the question comes back on, What