

genuine earnestness is clothed, that it is an omnipotence which dwells, not in the inherent force of the quality itself, great as that undoubtedly is, but which flows to it from the sympathy and co-operation of the great Ruler of the universe, who was and is himself emphatically in earnest. O, if we would secure the sympathy of Jesus, and the co-operation of his power, if we would accomplish anything good and great, or good and little, if such a thing can be, if we would win salvation for ourselves or others, let us be earnest. Let us be earnest or leave the matter alone. For in proportion to his sympathy with earnestness, is his detestation of the opposite. "I would," says he to the men of Laodicea, "I would ye were either cold or hot. So, then, because ye are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth."

The characteristics of earnestness are here beautifully pictured. It needs little to encourage it, and yet lays vigorous hold of every encouragement. It meets with much to discourage, but is not easily hindered. It never seeks to accomplish, by the help of others, what itself can do. It does what it can, when it cannot do all it would. It goes direct to the best means, and uses instinctively the best pleas. And usually it manifests itself in a way which the easy and indifferent think neither decorous nor becoming, neither reasonable nor right. How does the conduct of Bartimeus in these respects compare with that of those, alas! too many, who profess to be seeking salvation without furnishing us with the smallest symptom on which we might hang a proof, either of reality in their profession, or earnestness in their hearts. He had neither promises nor pledges, but based his hopes on the mere report of Jesus' character and past doings; they have promises and pledges and undertakings manifold; and yet he presses forward amid repeated discouragements, still hoping, still believing: they draw back discouraged and de-

sponding. He knew not that Christ would listen to him, and, if the opinion which has been based on a comparison of the various narratives be correct, had failed the previous evening to attract his notice, yet he redoubles his cry. They have assurances that his ear is ever open, yet their mouth is dumb. When we see this poor man, who could not go and cast himself at the feet of Jesus, wasting no time in vain entreaties for the help of others, but raising his own voice in earnest outcry, how it rebukes the inertness of those who go about with whining complaints of their spirit's deadness and their soul's barrenness, or leaning helplessly on the prayers of the pious, while their Bibles are unstudied and their closets neglected. Or what are we to think of men who know that they have souls to be saved, and that Jesus is set forth as a propitiation for our sins, and yet complain that they cannot and know not how to pray, when we see this poor man guided by the instincts of a soul on fire concentrating the essence of all Old Testament prophecies into one pithy and powerful petition, "Jesus of Nazareth, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And how does the conduct of him who, when rebuked and charged to hold his peace, cried the more a great deal, and succeeded in his purpose, rebuke the folly of those who stifle deep convictions, as if ashamed or afraid to let them be known, and to their soul's ruin.

Farther on in the narrative we have another illustration of the same spirit, also with its own peculiar lessons, and it is to be feared, its own peculiar rebukes. When, chained by his infirmity, Bartimeus could do nothing else but cry, he cried loud and earnestly, and refused to be silenced; but no sooner does he receive the encouragement of Christ's invitation, and the helping hand of Christ's messengers, than he promptly takes advantages of both. His cries are silenced, and the earnest spirit within him turned to action; he dashes