

chance of repentance after death: and if we are not willing to do that ourselves, God forbid we should teach others to do what we will not do!" Is there any of us who will refuse to say Amen to the words of this Christian philosopher? And yet, all this will not prevent many clinging to the hope of there being, for those who are so perverse and rebellious as to die in their sins, "sunrise beyond the gloom" of outer darkness. Every generation has had its advocates of this hope. It will be well for us not to build, but there will always be found those who will dwell, upon its fulfilment. Is such a pity-begotten thought to be only denounced? My amazement is that it is not the largest number who entertain and embrace it. The late Norman McLeod, who was one of those who could not endorse it, once said, "Who can with his human heart silence a timid voice which asks in whispers many questions suggestive of what would appear to be the brighter hope? Who can limit (in some such form might those questionings be put) the resources of God's infinite love and wisdom?" And Canon Farrar remarks, "it is really painful to think that, in this matter, the Roman Catholic Church, so rigidly tenacious of what she conceives to be purity of doctrine, so intensely opposed to anything remotely resembling the spirit of scepticism, so inflexibly resolute in opposition to heresies, so rich in her motherhood of saintly souls, has held a doctrine more merciful, less void of pity, than the current belief of modern Protestants." Who are right—whether they who cannot but believe, or they whose judgment forbids their believing, the possibility of the restoration of those whom we call the lost? Oh! how blessed that it belongs not to man, not even to the Churches, to decide this all-important question—that the salvation of poor man, either now or hereafter, is not left to the tender mercies of a majority or any of its own kind! I knew not how others have felt, but to me it has often been most excruciating to observe the manner in which some bodies of religious people have approached, and deliberated upon, the awful subject of the future punishment of the wicked. Who cannot recall the remembrance of bitter and repeated discussions in ecclesiastical assem-

blies which, for weeks continuously, fiercely surged around an expression, most unwise but without honest, of doubt as to the eternity of that punishment—discussions which were remarkable, not only for the glibness with which the most terrible truths were spoken of, but also for the strangely incongruous jocularities with which they were interlarded, and by which their tediousness was relieved? As little can we forget the spectacle of audiences of hundreds or thousands met to listen to uncompromising condemnation of all such doubt, and applauding to the echo opinions, the divine sanction and ratification of which, while they were conscientiously held by the speaker, must be, to a large proportion of his hearers, the most fatal of calamities. God be praised that He himself keeps the eternal issues in His own hand? We can afford to smile at the impotence of man to destroy, any more than to save, the impenitent—our weakness and inconsistencies do not interfere with the play and power of His grace. We are not told, in so many words, if there is, or is to be, a Gospel message proclaimed in the pit and prison-house of Satan. But we are confident that whatever the Heavenly Father ordains to be the sinner's final destiny will be the prompting alike of His justice and love. He will perfect that which concerns all His creatures in the time and way which to Him seem best. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and is not willing that any should perish. Each of us should say (in the language of one of the Psalms of David) "My expectation is from Him." The more perplexed any soul is, the more nearly should it go to Him.

"I falter where I firmly trod;
And, falling with my weight of cares,
Upon the great world's altar stairs,
That slope through darkness up to God,
I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

If not from Him, I know not from whom there is any chance of that "larger hope" being realized. Catechisms, confessions of faith, standards generally, of churches and sects, and the strict interpretation of scripture have all pronounced against it. But, if He wills it, Who is "merciful