

## THE SPIRIT OF THE BLESSED.

(By The Rev. J. E. Crane.)

When thinking of our dear ones gone over the river, questions are apt to pass through our minds such as: Where are they? what is the manner of their life? Do they know each other there? Do they remember their earthly existence and friends? Do they ever come back to us? In the writer's mind there is not much doubt about the heavenly recognition, or the remembrance of the earthly existence or life or their being perfectly happy, but whether they ever come back to earth again to see us and perhaps minister to us is quite another question.

We have little or no light from the Scriptures upon it. The angels minister, we know, to the heirs of salvation, but that gives us no information as to whether our dear ones do. Moses and Elijah appeared to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. This act of these holy men, who once lived on earth, but had long since gone to glory, affords us a little light on this theme. But in this case, and of the ministering angels, there was always an appearance, a bodily form seen by the living. Doubtless this was necessary when communication was the object. But may not such things happen when no form is seen or voice heard?

The Scriptures certainly do not forbid such a thought, and there is nothing anti-scriptural about it. While the Scriptures do not say, yet it is logical to infer, that our loved ones may pay visits to this earth, since they continue to be the same in identity in the next world. They certainly remember us, or they would not continue to be the same in person as they were here. For surely if they forget us and their life with us, they would not be the same in identity, and heavenly recognition also would be impossible. They would be as though they had never lived on earth, and it would be a new and separate beginning of life or existence to them. The Bible certainly does not teach that. We continue our identity hence our earthly life is remembered in the other world. If now it be remembered, would not the dear ones desire to come back at times and see us and perhaps help us?

The saints surely do not know less in the other life. The loved ones it is true, know more about the heavenly life than they did here on earth, but do they know any the less about their friends left behind? Therefore, is it not a reasonable conclusion to reach that our dear ones do or may come back to us in spirit and help us?

## WHAT MAKES A BOY POPULAR?

What makes a boy popular? Surely it is manliness. During the war how many schools and colleges followed popular boys? These young leaders were the manly boys whose hearts could be trusted. The boy who respects his mother has leadership in him. The boy who is careful of his sister is a knight. The boy who will never violate his word, and who will pledge his honor to his own hurt and change not, will have the confidence of his fellows. The boy who will never hurt the feelings of any one will one day find himself possessing all sympathy.

If you want to be a popular boy, be too manly and generous and unselfish to seek to be popular; be the soul of honor; love others better than yourself, and people will give you their hearts, and try to make you happy. This is what makes a boy popular.—Apples of Gold.

You can buy your neighbor's horse or his house or his business; but no dishonest man has money enough to buy a good man's respect.

## CONSIDER THE LILIES.

We do not need to be familiar with nature, in her grand rare moods, in order to read her lessons. For Jesus takes each one of us by the hand, and directs our attention, not to distant, obscure or unusual displays of divine workmanship, but to the most common and simple. In the savage heart of Africa, Mungo Park learned from a single sprig of heath that battled for life against adverse conditions the same lesson of trust in God which Jesus drew from the lilies of Palestine. In the heart of London the city clerk or artisan, pent in one narrow chamber, may cherish in a flower-pot so much of the wondrous work of God—the life and beauty of vegetation—as to read in it a daily sermon; for the tiniest morsel of God's workmanship carries His signature and speaks His messages. Nay, it is sometimes by the simplest objects that that message is most clearly spoken. It is not every one who can take in, without an interpreter, the majestic voices of the ocean, or of the Alp, or of the cataract. In most of us, I think, if we would but consider it, "the meanest flower that blows" might awaken the "thoughts that lie too deep for tears."

What practical lesson, then, have the wild flowers to tell? Question them of Him who fashioned them, what manner of maker and worker He may be, and you shall hear. See them in their spring regions, sown broadcast over meadow and forest, mountain and field, how they grow, noiseless and unobtrusive, but plentiful as the stars of heaven, breaking simultaneously from the dark ground, as with one consent, to cover the broad earth with a garment of loveliness. Is not our Father a giver of life? Is not His breath strong to quicken? Think how prodigal in working, how universal, secret, persuasive, must be that undiscoverable power which loosens nature from its bands of death, and moves at once in every place, and thrusts forth green leaves on every bush, and scatters golden cups and purple bells on every field. Is this God, then, a distant God—a God far off? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Will His breath quicken us no more? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save? O, by the power that beats through every living thing, that turns dead matter into joyous, glorious life, let us not despair of frozen hearts or souls, of men dead in their sins, but let us prophesy with hope to the slain of our people, and pray with confidence to the four winds of heaven.

There is one lesson for Christian workers. Here is a second. Our God takes delight in His least creatures. Wearied with gazing over the wide fields, where the eye finds no end to the breathing life that worketh everywhere, I stoop to pick a tiny weed growing at my feet. I did not see it before; but I see that God saw it. For it God cares; for it He made His sun to shine, His rain to fall; on it surely His eyes delight to rest. How wonderful a lesson of patient, painstaking care—of individual love and providence! The mighty worker is the minute provider. Widely as God lavishes life, yet He forgets nothing.

Be ashamed, my soul, of thy faithless fears! Thy God is a rich God, and as willing and considerate as He is rich. The wayside weed is not beneath His care—how much less so am I.—F. Oswald Dykes.

Think not lightly of the head that is gray. The richest gold lies under the mountain snows.

When the chambers of imagery are in the temple the glory of the Lord has fled the house.

Life is like a bulb; we cannot tell its possibilities until the season of bloom has ended.

## HOW GOD LEADS MEN.\*

## Some Bible Hints.

The pastures where God leads us may seem arid, but they are sure before long to be crowded with the flowers and fruits of character (v. 2).

"For his name's sake" (v. 3) is equivalent to "for our sake," since "his name" is equivalent to "his character," and his character is love.

We fear no evil; but evil is there, only, He is there also (v. 4.)

Goodness and mercy follow us, pursuing us with joy, ready for us if we fall out fainting in the way (v. 6).

## Suggestive Thoughts.

The surest evidence that we are being led is our ability to lead others.

God leads us through our conscience—by knowing things (scio) with (con) us.

It is not necessary to be conscious that we are led, but to fulfil the conditions of being led, and trust that we shall be led.

God leads men by leading the leaders of men, and often we disobey Him by disobeying them.

## A Few Illustrations.

The eastern shepherd leads his flock, going ahead of them, and not driving them. So God leads us.

Sheep are gregarious; if one is led, others are likely to be led. So do you be led for the sake of others, as well as for your own sake.

The sheep are safer with a shepherd outside the fold, than inside the fold but without a shepherd. Trust in God rather than in circumstances.

The shepherd has blows for the sheep as well as for the wolves, if the sheep wander. When you receive sorrows from God, it may be as a sheep, or as a wolf.

## To Think About.

Am I trying to lead myself?

Am I trying to lead others?

What evidence have I that I am led by God?

## A Cluster of Quotations.

There is no use in a cup running over; and yet it is the part of friendship and it is the part of God to have the cup running over.—Alexander McKenzie.

God would not be God, any more than a fountain would be a fountain, if He were not perpetually pouring out His fullness upon all the universe.—H. W. Webb-People.

We may not always like the way by which we are being led, but let us silence objection and complaint by the deliberate choice of the will to be led by Him, come what may.—F. B. Meyer.

Stranger nor exile can I be. In new worlds where He leadeth me.—Lucy Larcom.

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

- M., Feb. 24.—God our Guide. Gen. 31: 3-13.
- T., Feb. 25.—By a pillar of fire. Ex. 13: 17-22.
- W., Feb. 26.—Teaches us His Way. Ps. 35: 6-12.
- Th., Feb. 27.—We shall not stumble. Prov. 3: 6-23.
- F., Feb. 28.—Into the promised land. Jer. 2: 4-6.
- S., Feb. 29.—Answering prayer. Jas. 1: 5-8.
- \*Sun., Mar. 1.—Topic: Songs of the Heart. III. How God leads men. Ps. 23. (Consecration meeting.)

Don't turn away from a human plea for forgiveness.

To treat all alike is good, provided you treat them the best you know how. You can not find full truth until you obey the truth you have to the full.

\* Y. P. Topic, March 1. Songs of the Heart, Psalm 23.