

opposed. Claudius was afraid that he would have been pulled in pieces, for some laid hold of him to protect him, others, in a rage, to molest him. Hence (ver. 10) the soldiers were commanded to come from the circle and take him by force. In the night the Lord appeared to Paul, and told him that he must also be a witness for Him in Rome (ver. 11), but these factious Jews formed a conspiracy, and imprecated themselves in a curse that they would eat nothing until they had slain him. How were they released from such a vow? The Jewish Talmud says that if they could not perform it their masters could set them free. Paul's nephew, of whom we know nothing more, heard of his danger, and through his instrumentality Claudius was informed of it, and adopted means to thwart the intentions of these Jews (ver. 16-21). But God's hand was in the whole matter (see the memory text, Luke xxi. 15).

COME UP HITHER.

BY THE LATE REV.
DAVID THOMAS, D.D.

WE are weighed down, it may be, with a burden of disappointment, and sorrows, and cares, and fears. Things in our domestic or in our social relationship, or in our personal activities, go awry, or seem to be altogether against us, and there is nothing in the present, and no prospect before us, but what is dark; there is nothing to comfort and cheer us as we look back, and there is nothing before us that makes anticipation much worth while, and so we are sad, and perplexed, and ready to be impatient, and to complain that things should be ordered so. "Come up hither," we hear the voice from heaven saying; and if we obey that voice we find ourselves in the midst of a sphere where there is no pain, or sorrow, or fear; and as we look down in the light of that world upon our pains, and cares, and sorrows down here on earth, we cease to be perplexed; we are no longer impatient, we are not permitted to complain. For, looking on earth amid the light of heaven, and from the midst of it we see that the suffering of this present life is all part of the discipline necessary to prepare us for that world which is as free from sorrow as it is free from sin. Amid the turmoil and suffering of life it is good to be there for a while in thought, and good to be hoping to be there for ever.

We are mourning the departed. Nothing can ever make up for their loss; we have lost them, and we mourn with bitter sorrow. Perhaps the time for tears has passed, and the sorrow is to be lifelong. They are lost—quite lost to us in this life. "Come up hither," "come up hither," says the voice; and we go, and we find them there, and would not have them back again.

Or, we are troubled as we look forward to the inevitable end of our own life. We shrink from death, from the grave. We

listen to the voice of death, and the grave seems to speak to us. But there we are wrong; we should not be looking forward, but looking upward. We should not be listening to that voice that comes from death, from the grave below, but to that voice which comes from heaven, and says, "Come up hither."

Thus, we shall become strong and comforted under the discipline of life, in all its varied conditions and experiences; and then, by-and-by, there will come a voice from heaven to us in quite another form from that which we have been considering, and with quite another meaning attached to it—a voice from God will come to us. When the fatal disease has taken hold upon us, when the decay of nature has advanced so that it is hastening to dissolution, then the voice may be heard saying, "Come up hither." It will be the voice of God in His providence. That is the meaning of that mortal disease; that is the meaning of that slow but rare decay; that is the meaning as He touches you. He is really saying, "Come up hither." And we shall be ready to go—or at least not find it very

difficult to go—go actually, personally, in the entireness of our spiritual personality, if we are accustomed now to go often in thought. That is the great preparation for death—to be so living now in heaven, that when the summons comes we shall be going to a place that is become, to a large extent, a familiar place to us. Become acquainted with God; become familiar with Christ; make it your habit to be in heaven; accustom yourself to be with Him in fellowship with those spirits; be oftener there with the spirits; live much there, and then when the voice says, "Come up," through the disease or the decay, it is not likely you will be very loath to go. It has long been the home of your thoughts; you will not dread to go home. I have heard persons whom I believed not unprepared for the departure to that heavenly world saying—when it was spoken of to them—saying, "Oh, but this world, and

all the people in it, are so real, and all that world is so shadowy." The invisible God, the invisible Christ, the angels, the spirits that were once clothed with flesh, they are shadowy, unsubstantial; they cannot realise it; it is so strange, unsubstantial. And I have thought sometimes that they found it so difficult then, because they had not been accustomed to go there in their thoughts and affections. Had their conversation been in heaven, had they had much fellowship with Christ, been with the angels and their friends in heaven, instead of with these so much poorer friends on earth, then when the summons came to go there it would not have all been so shadowy and unsubstantial as they said it was. And the way to get ready to go is to be heavenly-minded. Live much in thought in that heavenly sphere, and then it will not seem a long way, or a very shadowy, strange way to go, when the last word of God to us on earth is spoken—"Come up hither."—From the recent *Memoir*, published by Hodder and Stoughton.