

WONDROUS THINGS.

BY REV. THOMAS GUTHRIE, D.D.

"Open Thine mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."—Psalm cxix 15.

GOD only can open our eyes. We need sight as well as light. Unless our eyes are opened, the Bible is of no more use to us than a lantern to a blind man in the dark night, and on a dangerous road—of no more use to us than a guide-book in Russian, Chinese, Arabic, or any other to us incomprehensible tongue of no more use to us than the way post, with painted finger pointing out the path to that blind beggar, who, with head erect and careful steps, comes on in the leading of a dog. To show the pass, we raise cairns of weathered stones on our Highland hills, and when the way was lost, and hope with strength was sinking, as they caught sight of the rude pile looming through the mist, or rising black above the levelled snows, many have blessed the hands that raised the cairn; they owe their life to it. Abroad, among the Alps, Christianity there, modifying a custom older than itself, they substitute crosses for cairns; and where the road, leaving the gay and smiling valley, climbs into the realms of eternal winter, or is cut out of the face of precipices, down which one false step hurls the traveller into a gorge where the foaming torrent seems but a silver thread, tall crosses stand. And so, when the path is buried in the drif that spreads a treacherous crust over yawning crevice and deadly crag, he, by keeping the line of crosses, braves the tempest, and walks safely where otherwise it were death to venture. But set a blind man on such a road, and he never reaches home; the earth his bed and the snow his shroud, he sleeps the sleep that knows no waking. Now, there is a cross that points out man's way to heaven. But unless the eyes that sin sealed are open—have been opened by God to see it, and all the way-marks that mercy has set up to that happy home—our feet shall "stumble upon the dark mountains," and we shall perish for ever.

God only can do this. Hence to him David directs the prayer of my text; and also this—Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Men use instruments to restore sight, and nowhere does surgery achieve a nobler triumph, or bestow greater blessings on mankind, than in yonder theatre, where skill and a steady hand, cut into the sightless balls; and man, opening a way for the light of heaven, imitates Christ in His Divine works of might and mercy—pouring light into the blind man's eyes, and joy into the blind man's heart. God also uses instruments—His instruments the Word, His agent the Holy Spirit. By these, working faith in men, and renewing them in the spirit of their minds, He has often answered, and is now ready to answer the prayer, Open thou mine eyes.

Let me illustrate the effect of this by three examples.

First, look at Balaam. He is urging forward a restive and unwilling steed, as unconscious of danger as many who, in the pursuit of money or pleasure, are driving headlong on ruin. Wincing under its rider's blows, why will the beast not go forward? Why does she back and plunge? Balaam sees no danger ahead, nothing on the dusty path, but the flickering sunbeams, or the shadows of the vines that trail along the walls. What makes the obstinate, unruly brute run his limb against the wall, and bring down on its own head a shower of angry blows? Nothing that Balaam sees, till the Lord, as the Bible says, opened his eyes; and then and there, right in front of him, bestriding the narrow path, stands an angel, a sword glittering in his hand. And let God open a sinner's eyes, and how he would stare and tremble to see a sight more terrible—Justice, armed with the terrors of the law, barring his way to heaven. Learning, then, that by the deeds of the law no man living shall be justified, the poor soul gladly welcomes a despised, rejected Saviour, and falls at His feet, to cry, Lord, save me, I perish.

Secondly, take a second case of Divine illumination. A poor outcast, a wanderer in the thirsty desert, Hagar, whose sins have brought this misery on her head, has laid Ishmael down behind a bush to die. She can submit to her own death, but not see his; nor hear the cry, Water, mother, water! that comes faintly from his blackened lips. With nothing over her but a burning sun, nothing around her but glowing sands, and with the wind of that desert on her cheek like the breath of a fiery furnace, she retires out of earshot of Ishmael's moans, and sits down to die. In that hour of

her extremity, of dark and deep despair, there comes a voice. She lifts her head, and, listening, hears it say, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad!"—and at the same moment there falls on her ear the blessed sound of bubbling water. God opens her eyes; and there a spring, inviting her to drink, is welling up from the burning sands. And let God open the eyes of anyone who, amid terrors of conscience, feels ready to perish, and in the Gospel, which before seemed so barren of pleasures, at the foot of the cross, and within his own soul, he will find "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Take another example. Alas, my master! how shall we do? is the cry of Elisha's servant, as he rushes into the house with pale terror in his face. The Syrian host, by a forced night-march, has reached their city, encompassing it like a wall; and he had seen the morning sun glitter on swords and spears, and the terrible array of war. Calm and self-possessed, his masters answers, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. With us! the servant might ask; who are with us? Where are they? The prophet prays, and in answer to his prayer, the Lord opens his servant's eyes. Now, as if they had started from the bowels of the earth, or every bush and every tree had suddenly changed into a flaming, celestial form, Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha; And when memory has called up a believer's sins, and a sense of guilt has been darkening into despair, and Satan and his hosts, issuing from the pit, and drawn out in battle array, seem to have cut him off from escape, and he has been ready to cry, with Elisha's servant, Alas, my Master, how shall I do? how has the Spirit of God shewn to his help; and with eyes opened on the fulness, grace, mercy, pardon, and power we have in Jesus, how has he felt that, with God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit on his side, They that are with him are greater than all that can be against him.—*Abbreviated from a volume, entitled, "Speaking to the Heart."*

SABBATH.

THE keepers of the Sabbath have always been, as a rule, a happy people. There has been indeed a narrow spirit of asceticism exhibited by some, but these have been rare exceptions, and not to be regarded as legitimate expiants of the right observance of the Sabbath. No class of people were ever happier than the early Christians, and the Sabbath was their most joyful day. Asceticism was of pagan origin, and gained ground among the Christians only as their doctrines and institutions became corrupt. The Reformers were not gloomy men, nor were the Puritans as a body, although they have been so maligned. Yenn, the author of "The Complete Duty of Man," was accustomed to say, "My Sabbaths are sweet to my soul." Philip Henry would often say at the close of the Sabbath, especially after a season spent in instructing his household, "Well, if this be not the way to heaven I do not know what it is." How dull and wearisome by contrast is the round of the restless seeker after pleasure. It was the confession of Colonel Gardner that when he appeared to his companions to be the most joyous of men, he was in reality so miserable that he wished he were the dog under the table. Byron held the mirror up to nature in "Childe Harold":

"It is that weariness that springs
From all I meet or hear or see.
To me no pleasure beauty brings;
Thine eyes have scarce a charm for me.
It is that settled, caseless gloom
The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore,
That will not look beyond the tomb,
But cannot hope for rest before."

ONE SIN.—If one note in the organ be out of key or harsh of tone, it mars the whole tune. All the other reeds may be in harmony, but the one defective reed destroys the sweetness of all the rest. In every tune this reed makes discord somewhere. Its noise jars out into every other note. And so one sin destroys the harmony of a whole life. A boy or girl may be obedient, filial, industrious, and honest; but ill-temper is a jarring reed that touches every grace with chill and discord. Let every affection, and every thought, and every word, and every action, be right; then there is music in the life.