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## Struggling and Seeking

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"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—Psalm 34:10.

IF we may trust the superscription of this Psalm, it was written by David at one of the very darkest days of his wanderings, probably in the Cave of Adullam, where he had gathered around him a band of outlaws, and was living, to all appearance, a life uncommonly like that of a brigand chief in the hills. One might have pardoned him if, at such a moment, some cloud of doubt or despondency had crept over his soul; but instead of that his words are running over with gladness, and the Psalm begins: "I will bless the Lord at all times, and his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Similarly here he avers, even at a moment when he wanted a great deal of what the world calls "good," that "they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." There were lions in Palestine in David's time. He had had a fight with one of them, as you may remember, and his lurking place was probably not far off the scene of Samson's exploits. Very likely they were prowling about the rocky mouth of the cave, and he weaves their howls into his psalm: "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good."

So, then, here are the two thoughts—the struggle that always fails, and the seeking that always finds.

### 1. THE STRUGGLE THAT ALWAYS FAILS

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger." They are taken as the type of violent effort and struggle, as well as of supreme strength, but for all their teeth and claws, and lithe spring, "they lack, and suffer hunger." The suggestion is, that the men whose lives are one long fight to appropriate to themselves more and more of outward good, are living a kind of life that is fitter for beasts than for men. A fierce struggle for material good is the true description of the sort of life that hosts of us live. What is the meaning of all this cry that we hear about the murderous competitions going on around us? What is the true character of the lives of, I am afraid, the majority of people in a city like Manchester, but a fight and a struggle, a desire to have, and a failure to obtain? Let us remember that that sort of existence is for the brutes, and that there is a better way of getting what is good; the only fit way for men. Beasts of prey, naturalists tell us, are always lean. It is the graminivorous order that meekly and peacefully crop the pastures that are well fed and in good condition—"what things are an allegory."

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger;" and that, being interpreted, just states the fact to which every man's experience, and the observation of every man that has an eye in his head, distinctly says: "Amen, it is so." For there is no satisfaction or success ever to be won by this way of fighting and struggling and scheming and springing at the prey. For if we do not utterly fail, which is the lot of so many of us, still partial success has little power of bringing perfect satisfaction to a human spirit. One loss counterbalances any number of gains. No matter how soft is the mattress, if there is one tiny thorn sticking up through it all the softness goes for nothing. There is always a Mordecai sitting at the gate when Haman goes prancing through it on his white horse; and the presence of the unsympathetic and stiff-backed Jew, sitting stolid at the gate, takes the gilt off the gingerbread, and embitters the enjoyment. So men count up their disappointments, and forget all their fulfilled hopes, count up their losses and forget their gains. They think less of the thousands that they have gained than of the half-crown that they were cheated of.

In every way it is true that the little annoyances, like a grain of dust in the sensitive eye, take all the sweetness out of mere material good.

And I suppose that there are no more bitterly disappointed men in this world than the perfectly "successful men," as the world counts them. They have been disillusioned in the process of acquirement. When they were young and lusted after earthly good things, these seemed to be all that they needed. When they were old, and have them, they find that they are feeding on ashes, and the grit breaks their teeth, and irritates their tongues. The "young lions do lack" even when their roar and their spring "have secured the prey," and "they suffer hunger" even when they have fed full. Ay! for if the utmost possible measure of success were granted us, in any department in which the way of getting the thing is this fighting and effort, we should be as far away from being at rest as ever we were.

There is always something lacking, for our desires grow far faster than their satisfactions, and the more we have the wider our longing reaches out, so that, as the wise old Book has it, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase." You cannot fill a soul with the whole unification of modern times, as I take it, ends, or all but ends, with a sentence something like this, "Ah! who of us has what he wanted, or, having it, is satisfied?" "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger,"—and the struggle always fails.—"but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

### 2. THE SEEKING WHICH ALWAYS FINDS.

Now, how do we "seek the Lord?" It is a metaphorical expression, of course, which needs to be carefully interpreted in order not to lead us into a great mistake. We do not seek Him as if He had not sought us, or was hiding from us. But our search of Him is search after one who is near every one of us, and who delights in nothing so much as in pouring Himself into every heart and mind, and will and life, if only heart, mind, will, life, are willing to accept Him. It is a short search that the child by her mother's skirts, or her father's side, has to make for mother or father. It is a shorter search that we have to make for God.

We seek Him by desire. Do you want Him? A great many of us do not. We seek Him by communion, by turning our thoughts to Him, amidst all the rush of daily life, and such a turning of thought to Him, which is quite possible, will prevent our most earnest working upon things material from descending to the likeness of the lions' fighting for it. We seek Him by desire, by communion, by obedience. And they who thus seek Him find Him in the act of seeking Him, just as certainly as if I open my eyes I see the sun, as if I dilate my lungs the atmosphere rushes into them. For He is always seeking us. That is a beautiful word of our Lord's to which we do not always attach all its value, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." Why put the emphasis upon the "such," as if it was a definition of the only kind of acceptable worship? It is that. But we might put more emphasis upon the "seeketh" without spoiling the logic of the sentence; and hereby we should come nearer the truth of what God's heart to us is.

So that, if we do seek Him, we shall surely find. In this region, and in this region only, there is no search that is vain, there is no effort that is foiled, there is no desire unaccomplished, there is no failure possible. We each of us have, accurately and precisely, as much of God as we desire to have. If there is only a very little of the Water of life in our vessels, it is because we did not care to possess any more. "Seek, and ye shall find."

We shall be sure to find everything in God. Look at the grand confidence, and the utterance of a life's experience in these great words: "Shall not want any good." For God is everything to us, and everything else is nothing; and it is the presence of God in anything that makes it truly able to satisfy our desires. Human love, sweet and precious, dearest and best of all earthly possessions as it is, fails to fill a heart unless the love grasps God as well as the beloved dying

creature. And so with regard to all other things. They are good when God is in them, and they are ours in God. They are nought when wrenched away from Him. We are sure to find everything in Him, for this is the very property of that infinite divine nature that is waiting to impart itself to us, that, like water poured into a vessel, it will take the shape of the vessel into which it is poured. Whatever is my need, the one God will supply it all.

You remember the old Rabbinical tradition which speaks a deep truth, dressed in a fanciful shape. It says that the manna in the wilderness tasted to every man just what he desired, of whatever dainty or nutriment he was most wishful; that the manna became like the magic cup in the old fairy legends, out of which could be poured any precious liquor at the pleasure of the man who was to drink it. The one God is everything to us all, anything that we desire, and the thing that we need; Protean in His manifestations, one in His sufficiency. With Him, as well as in Him, we are sure to have all that we require. "Seek ye first the kingdom... and all these things shall be added unto you."

Let us begin, dear brethren, with seeking, and then the struggling will not be violent, nor self-willed, nor will it fail. If we begin with seeking, and have God, be sure that all that we need we shall get, and that what we do not get we do not need. It is hard to believe it when our vehement wishes go out to something that His serene wisdom does not send. It is hard to believe it when our bleeding hearts are being wrenched away from something around which they have clung. But it is true for all that. And he that can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee," will find that the things which he enjoys in subordination to his one supreme good are a thousand times more precious when they are regarded as second than they ever could be when our folly tried to make them first. "Seek first the kingdom," and be contented that the "other things" shall be appendices, additions, over and above the one thing that is needful.

### God's Protection of Our Missionaries.

ALBERT ARNOLD BENNETT.

Mr and Mrs. Salquist, now on the steamship "Doric," on their way to America, reported, on reaching Yokohama yesterday, that the Baptist missionaries of the West China mission had all safely escaped to Shanghai. The Salquists had a quick passage down the Yang-tse—only thirteen days. It takes about three months to ascend this river in the ordinary way to their station at Sway-fu or Su chow-fu as it is sometimes written. Evidences of God's great mercy to escaping missionaries are continually reported. To-day I learned of a number of such instances to members of the China Inland Mission who had escaped from Homan. Mr. and Mrs. Gracie report that they came through great perils and had wonderful deliverances. They also speak of the kindnesses experienced at the hands of many Chinese. For one instance, they were obliged to leave behind them the baby's wetnurse, and the little thing would have suffered seriously had not over twenty Chinese mothers at different times nursed it as if it had been their own infant. It arrived at its destination well and in good condition. Mr. MacFarlan, the local secretary of the China Inland Mission at Hobart, Tasmania, was visiting China, and was robbed of everything even to his shoes, but he escaped. Miss Anderson and Miss Egstrom had a terrible time, and had "their heads actually laid upon the block" (a figurative expression, for "the block" is not used in Chinese cruelty) and were delivered when death seemed imminent. Mr. Argento, an Italian by birth, and at one time a Roman Catholic but now an earnest Protestant, was so beaten as to be insensible for about two days. When he awoke to consciousness, he found himself on a pile of wood prepared for burning. He escaped to a friendly house, and when the Boxers came,