

sense a spiritual gift. And they go, for instance, into the picture gallery, and admire the artist's skill depicted on the canvas—such glorious productions as those which, for instance, Doré painted, and they speak of the painter's natural genius, and the man gets the credit for such, and the man gets the glory for his gifts.

Or we listen to the works of some great musician (and music is the queen of arts) to the strains of Handel, or Beethoven, or Mendelssohn, or Gounod, and we speak of the composer's "natural gifts," and we glorify Handel and Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, and Gounod. We do not glorify God for those compositions, as we do when we see a man evidencing those other gifts of the Holy Ghost—such as extraordinary love, and faith, and holiness. Or we take up the works of such poets as Shakespeare, or Longfellow, or Tennyson; and we glorify Shakespeare, and Longfellow, and Tennyson; and we speak in enthusiastic terms of them as men of extraordinary natural talent; but we don't read Shakespeare, or Longfellow, or Tennyson, thanking God the Holy Ghost for giving us such poems. Or we speak of great men in the world of science, like Galileo, or like Newton, or like Watt (who invented the steam-engine), or like him who invented the electric telegraph, and we speak of them as men endowed with rare natural genius and natural talent, and we glorify Galileo and Newton, and Watt; but we don't turn to Heaven, and thank Him Who "filled Bezaleel with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship."

What follows as a consequence? Why, the consequence is that art and science are separated in our minds from religion. The man who evidences, as I have said, the gift of faith, and of love, and of holiness we at once attribute to God the Holy Ghost; but we don't say that the same blessed Spirit enabled Handel to compose the *Messiah*, or Doré to paint his picture of "Christ leaving the Pretorium," or Shakespeare to write his plays, or Watt to discover the steam engine, or Morse to invent the electric telegraph. And so with religion in their minds, such speak of the "oppositions of science," which the Bible distinctly tells us are not "oppositions," for St. Paul says "oppositions of science falsely so called"—that is, that it is false to say that science is in opposition to religion. And another consequence is that to such minds, and painting, and literature, and the drama are looked upon as such *worldly* things that they are considered as not to be indulged in by those who are trying to lead very good and very holy lives, and God gets little or no praise for the gifts which make the musician, and the painter, and the poet, and the scientist. And we hear such people saying of some great musician, or painter, or poet, or scientist—"Ah! But what after all do these *earthly* things matter? They will soon come to an end; what we have to do is to think of the things that belong to eternity." Now I question that assertion altogether. If "natural gifts" are of Divine origin, then the source of "natural gifts" is in Heaven; they are but gifts lent us on earth. And so I believe there are musicians, and poets, and painters, and scientists is Heaven, and I don't believe that the things which belong to art are bounded by the area of earth, and of "three score years and ten." Do I believe that

God, for instance, created Handel the musician, born in 1685, to die in 1759, and that his gift as musician was to last only seventy-four years? No, I don't believe that! I believe Handel is Handel the musician to-day, only perfected, and in a better land beyond the bounds of time. Do I believe that death made Shakespeare to cease being a poet, or Charles Dickens cease to be the master writer we knew him to be? No; there is music, and poetry, and painting, and science, in Heaven, only more beautiful, more perfect in kind, than that which we know on earth.

Then, again, some people speak slightly or lightly of "natural gifts," just as they speak slightly of everything that is not in their estimation spiritual. There are those who condemn the world all round. They despise it; they think it altogether wicked; and their creed is, that the less they have to do with it the more holy and sublime they become. I cannot go with them in this belief. I go with them to the fullest extent in condemning *the sin* that is to be found in the world, but the sin in the world is not the world. When God had created the world (as we heard in our first lesson to-night) and all that it contained, He looked upon everything He had made, and said, "It was very good." But those I have just referred to look upon the world, and upon the things God has made, and say, "It is very bad." Now I cannot go with these. If God says a thing is "very good," who am I that I should set up my puny judgment against His, and say, "It is very bad"? And therefore I cannot sympathise with those who look with a frowning gaze upon the arts, such as music, and painting, and the drama, or upon science in its various forms, with a cold, condemnatory frown. Of course these good things can be abused, but the abuse of a thing is not the thing itself. God never calls the abuse of a good thing good, only the good thing itself is good. And what God calls good, we ought to call good; and what God calls bad, like sin, we ought to call bad. But sin in the world, and the world in which the sin is found, are two totally different things. And thus "natural gifts," as they are called, are the gifts of God, just as God filled Bezaleel with His Spirit, "in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." Now if this is our belief, it is a belief that will help us to see God, not in our little pet theories only, but in *everything*—of course I mean everything that is good, and lofty, and ennobling. It will help us to act out the Creed which Keble taught us in those beautiful lines in his "Christian Year":—

Thou, Who hast given me eyes to see
And love this sight so fair,
Give me a heart to find out Thee,
And read Thee everywhere.

Not only in faith, not only in hope, not only in love, shall I note the fingers of my God, but also in the beautiful in art, in the harmony of music, in the skill of the painter's brush, in the wonderland of science, I shall discover the footprints of Him who gives us His Blessed Spirit as the author and source of all natural as well as spiritual gifts. And to Him be the praise and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

"I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU COMFORTLESS."

THE disciples were in great distress. They had given up everything in becoming the followers of their Lord and Master. And now the sad and most depressing truth revealed to them that their great Leader and Friend was about to leave them—what could they do? Their hearts were sorely perplexed and distressed. They did not know which way to turn, or to whom to look in their great anxiety. The Lord knew it all.

He understood perfectly their situation and fully appreciated their feelings. In a few words He assured their faith and calmed their fears. And what words they were! "Let not your heart be troubled." "Believe in Me." "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." "Where I am, there ye shall be also."

Let every aching, troubled heart, among all our thousands of readers hear these words and consider them as addressed by the dear Lord to them individually, and let them be comforted.—*Parish Visitor N. V.*

BURIAL REFORM.

The Burial, Funeral and Mourning Reform Association of the Church of England in the Mother Country seems to be making progress. It strongly advocates burial in wooden or perishable coffins and opposes the use of metal caskets. It also seeks to reduce the excessive and oftentimes offensive display connected with funerals and advocates plain and inexpensive mourning, considering that affection and respect for the dead, can best be shown by consideration for those whom the deceased loved and cared for in his lifetime; rather than by useless and elaborate ceremonial. It protests against excessive floral decorations as being an unnecessary expenditure of money, and an undue interference with the reverent conduct of the Service. The Council call attention to the increasing use in announcements of deaths and burials of words "no wreaths," and in one case of the following "Rather than cards or flowers in token of respect a true deed of alms-giving desired." There would seem to be a movement also in favor of burial *without coffin*; so that the dead body itself may be in actual contact with the earth. It is claimed that such a method would more thoroughly comply with the meaning of the words used in the *Committal* "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and with the rubrics of the burial service "while the *body* is being made ready to be laid *in the earth*" and "while the *earth* is being cast upon the *body* by some standing by."

The Council are also pressing for legislation to limit the period of retention of the body after death and also to forbid the use of strong coffins, brick graves and of everything tending to retard dissolution.

Dr. Ainley, medical officer of Health for Halifax, has written to the Secretary of the Funeral Reform Association detailing his experience, while removing bodies from an old burying ground at Halifax, of the difference between burial in the plain earth and burial in vaults. The bodies buried simply, in perishable coffins in the earth, had completely disappeared, with the exception of the bones and in some cases the hair; whereas the condition of the bodies within the vaults was indescribably shocking. In the process of digging up the *earthen* graves there was an entire absence of odour except such as is experienced in turning up fresh soil, so thoroughly had nature done her work; whereas, when the vaults were opened the odour was insufferably sickening. In one instance of vault burial in which the lid of the coffin was accidentally knocked off, the excavators had to run twenty or thirty yards away, and a large quantity of disinfectants had to be used before operations could be resumed. The coffin in this case was found to be nearly filled with fluid, the product of putrefaction, on the surface of which the shroud floated.