

the break in the clouds is but for a moment, and that the gray black overhead is the heavens. Once more then all that can be said, is "Hope thou in God," and perhaps this is the chosen message which most surely brings them health and reviving. They must go on, but they do not go on in solitude. Christ is with them, and in due season not only they, but their circumstances, will change. The desert over which they travel will not be trackless if Christ is by their side, and perhaps there may come a gleam of brightness even in this life. With what pathetic insistence the psalmist prayed for this! We may pray for it, too; we may hope for it; we may comfort ourselves with the records of lives that have emerged triumphant from sorrow into peace. All these things are lawful, but in the loving will of God it may be that our circumstances will not alter until we pass from this life to the other. On to the very end of Jordan the path may be stony and sore for our feet, even though we drink of the spiritual rock that follows us, even Jesus Christ. In any case, we know that communion with Christ must persist and be perfected, and that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father, though no glory comes to them beneath these skies. Earth may grow gray and dim, its glories may pass away, but there remains for us a rest, "a region afar from the sphere of our sorrow," where every joy that was and is not shall come again, and come with no threatening of change—the land where the amaranthine flowers are unwithering and all their sweetness unaltered as the great eternity passes. And so even in default of hopes fulfilled here we may be able to say: "I will hope continually, and hope maketh not ashamed."

We must try to gain from our sorrows, not only to emerge just alive and just able to take some poor part in the fight. We must be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. It is not well to interpret our sufferings as judgments, as punishments for sin. They may often be these, but Christ on the cross taught the meaning and the blessedness of sorrow, and there is a deep and awful word which tells us that God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If there is no chastisement the nature remains at a level of strength and insight. It is the man of conquered sorrows who is everywhere the man of power; and when the waves are running high in our souls none can calm them as those can who have passed through the same tumult. There is no sympathy like the sympathy of a sufferer, nor sympathy like His who suffered most of all.

So it is needless to expect that we shall emerge from our sorrows the same. None can pass under the hammer and remain as they were. But even if we are left without chastisement, something is passing from us, daily passing, that something which comes with youth and hope and love. After a great baptism of sorrow none is the same; but what we should pray and strive for is that we may emerge better, richer, more faithful, more helpful, more filled with a heartfelt delight in God's will, more able to make a true answer to God's great wonders of love. The skies above us are at best April skies; our path will not be always smooth, even though we seem to have suffered more than our share; but we poor men and God's wealth are stored together in God's pavilion, and the place where they are both safe is God Himself. We cannot be poor when close beside us are the infinite riches given so freely to all who need.

And let this be our last word. There are periods in life, years and years, when no great trouble visits us. Then the storms of sorrow fall, then we are apt to say, I have passed through the fire and I may hope for an immunity for the future. It is not so. The troubles may come back again, they may come back again worse. As has been said, our Pharaohs are seldom drowned in the Red Sea, and we do not often behold their corpses stretched upon the sand. The bitterness of death may come again. What then? At the very worst the memory of the past will help us. We shall retrace the slow, difficult way to peace; our trust in God will be deepened, and we shall realize that, after all, the range of sins and sorrows is limited, though the sea of troubles may roll its white-crested billows shoreward as far as the horizon. What are truly numberless are God's mercies. What is truly infinite is God's love.—W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, in *New York Observer*.

## THE FOOT-FALL OF SPRING.

REV. HENRY CROMBIE.

In the days when the year brings round the majestic transformation of Nature, one indulges the fancy, that there seems to be, far and wide over the well-sown earth and amongst the gaunt trees which Autumn left so bare and pitiful and dead, a hush of strained expectancy. It is easy to imagine that whispers are circling all around of the coming spring-tide and the potency of life. Seed breathes to seed that in its tiny heart a wild hope is growing quick, and the old trees feel young again as the fairy streamlets of the sap begin to flow. Everywhere the echoed cry is "It's coming! It's coming! Listen to the foot-falls of the Spring!"

Ah! no, not everywhere. Many a seed replies, "I hear nothing, I feel no thrill; these songs of coming life are vain and mocking." Poor little seeds with withered hearts, it is even as they say; no life will come to them, but death cruel and pitiless; they will be like the foolish virgins wearily crying over a lost hope. Never will the sunlight kiss them into flowerets, nor the warm rains woo them to greenness and strength. Never for them will the morning dew fall with sweetness; never on their simple beauty will any child look with happy surprise. They do not believe in the advent of the Spring, and being unready they are passed by.

It was when Jesus had come very near to His Cross that He used this beautiful parable of the spring to illustrate His redeeming Passion. To the disciples, who had so little intuition, His death would seem the last tragedy of an infinitely pathetic life. To the Master it was the first voice of Spring, for which He had waited three and thirty years. One grows not sated pondering the heroism of Jesus towards the Cross. It is not so much the mere daring and bravery that charm those who pause to consider, though these also have a lonely splendor. Rather it is the heroic faith, undimmed by any lapse of confidence, in the great fruitfulness of His death. The crowning agony of a strenuous life is the uprising of a fear that it may prove futile. Echoes of such agony rise from the life of to-day with moving pathos; but it found no place in the Lord's heart, so full assured was He of the blessed richness of His sacrifice. In the noisy Passion Week His ears were filled with the whisperings of a spring-tide life, and in a glow of exultation He exclaimed, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." This was the transfiguration of the Cross.

The mystic pulse of life throbbing through Nature in the Spring recalls to the heart the energy of the blessed Spirit. As individuals, as congregations, as a Church, we have heard whisperings of a revival within our borders. Far over the land in which our Church is planted the sighs for a fuller life in the Spirit have gone up to God; but the sighs have left in our hearts a springing hope. This penitence, this bracing of the soul, this laying hold of the sure promises of our Lord—what mean they? Surely that it is spring-time, that the foot-fall of the Spirit is already to be heard. Is it true that no longer we are to "abide alone", that even now, in the crucifixion and death of self, we are to "bear much fruit"? Then for us also is the Cross transfigured!

God grant in His mercy that there be no bare spots in the virile greenness we believe to be coming! Nature man have its barren seeds—untouched, unawakened, but the Spirit of the Lord is mighty. If we be straitened, at least it is not in Him. Perhaps the surest indication that the Spirit is moving within us is the confidence that we are in the season of blessing. Unbelief means dry rot in the garden of God.

## THE FANG OF WEST AFRICA.

BY GEORGE L. BATES.

This is the tribe of Bantu Africans to whom belongs the future of equatorial West Africa. Forty years ago Du Chaillu found them and recorded his estimate of them in these words:

"The Fangs [Fang] have left the impression on me of being the most promising people in all Western Africa. . . They seem to have more of that kind of stamina which enables a rude people to receive a strange civilization than any other tribe I know of in Africa."

The correctness of this first impression is being proved by the vigor with which they are supplanting the tribes at the coast, which are their superiors in wealth and knowledge gained from long contact with white men. Du Chaillu reached the Fang only by penetrating the interior from Corisco Bay. Now they are on the coast at Corisco Bay and