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REST FROM FEAR.

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"The Lord shall give thee rest from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve."—Isaiah xiv. 3.

THIS section of the Book of Isaiah, the Burden of Babylon, is a prophecy of the Exile, coming with comfort and good cheer to the heart of the broken nation. The doom shifts from Jerusalem to Babylon. And for Israel, their redemption draws nigh—and, meanwhile, they are saved by hope. God's great purpose for them will again appear. It speaks of deliverance, first of all from the outward lot of oppression, and also from the inward grief and despair. This spiritual part of the deliverance is meant to begin at once. It is an anodyne from present pain. The dawning of the hope brings instant relief. They need not wait till God fulfils His promise. The very faith in that fulfilment lifts the cloud from their hearts. To believe that God will give them rest from their hard bondage, at once lightens the bondage. If the Prophet can make them against hope believe in hope, the pressure on their souls will slacken immediately. What the exiles needed supremely was deliverance from despair, rest from the fears that oppressed them; and faith

in God's loving purpose would give them that at once, even in the midst of their hard bondage wherein they were made to serve. Faith is the ground of hope. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This is the application we may bring near to our modern life from this sweet promise in the Burden of Babylon.

Life is never without its hard bondage wherein men are made to serve, the bondage of an untoward lot as in the case of exiles, or the bondage of soul in one of its many forms—sorrow, fear, doubt, habit, sin. All progress is emancipation. All advance is towards freedom. Reform is nothing if it does not mean liberty. God's work means always and everywhere the loosing of bonds and setting the captives free. This is true physically and politically, as well as spiritually. It is the former because it is the latter. Christ will yet set all prisoners free, will yet break all oppression and injustice and cruelty; but He can set them free even in their prison. He emancipates from the terrorism of the material, from the slavery of sin, and sets the soul in the glorious liberty of sons of God. The man whom Christ sets free can