

BLAMELESS, NOT FAULTLESS

WE are to be blameless *now*. We shall be faultless *hereafter*—"preserved blameless, and presented faultless. Such is the blessed and glorious ideal which is set before the Christian, and which both the ability and faithfulness of God are pledged to make real. It is to be asked what practical difference there is in such a distinction. We may take as an example a little child, whose heart is bent upon pleasing her mother. Her first little task of needle work is put into her hands. But the little fingers are all unskilled, nor has she any thought of the nicety required; still with intense pleasure she sets stitch after stitch, until at last she brings it to her mother. She has done her best and does not dream of failure. And her mother, taking it, sees two things; one is a work as faulty as it can well be, with stitches long and crooked, and the other is that smiling, upturned face, with its sweet consciousness of love. Not for anything would she coldly criticize that work. She thinks of the effort to please, and how little she could expect in a first attempt. It is the child's best for the time being. So she commends her, and even praises the poor imperfect work, and then gently and most lovingly shows her how she may do better. The believing, loving child of God may possess this blessing of blamelessness, not as one to be finally reached, but as one to enjoy along the way. Only in this case there will be not a life more and more holy, but a heart growing purer and purer in its love.—*Southern Churchman*.

DIFFICULT TEXTS.

5. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."—*St. James v. 14, 15.*

This passage is used by the Romanist as the authority for the practice of "extreme unction," one of the Seven Sacraments so-called, and administered only to those *in extremis*. The earliest witness for this interpretation is Pope Innocent I. in the *fifth century*. "In a letter to Decentius, he replies to the question whether the sick might be anointed with oil, and whether the Bishop might anoint? He replies that this might be done, arguing from the language of St. James. But as Bishop Harold Browne well observes in his Commentary on the 39 Articles: 'If extreme unction were then in the 5th century a Sacrament in the Church, it is impossible that one Bishop should have asked the question of another, or, if he did, the other should have at once reminded him that it was a well-known Sacrament of immemorial usage.'"

1. The "elders of the Church," or presbyters, were persons ordained by the Apostles or other chief ministers. Paul and Barnabas appointed "elders" or "presbyters" in every Church. (Acts xiv. 23.)

2. These were summoned to the "sick." The word does not necessarily imply the "dying." In St. Luke iv. 40 it is used of "divers diseases." It is also used of a person at the point of death, as in the case of the centurion's servant, afterwards restored. In the passage before us, one suffering from serious