

to God; the more precious the gift we render, the deeper is our devotion proved. God, who gave His Son, has thereby sealed His readiness to bestow the lesser gifts to His ere-while prodigal children (Rom. viii 32); and Jesus, who lays down His life for His friends (John xv. 13), could manifest no greater love. For Abraham to yield to what he deemed a Divine impulse his son—the beloved boy of his old age, and the hope of the promise of blessing—was for to yield his all at the Divine bidding; for the son to yield to the father's will, was to share the father's faith with the noblest filial devotion: and thus father and son were bound together as one in that act, than which, in its intent, no greater manifestation of trust and devotion could be found or set forth. In heathen as in Christian days there have been men found ready to sacrifice everything *not their own* for (as they suppose) salvation. Men whose wealth has been gathered in defiance of the love of God and man, have given largely to the Church, always retaining a lion's share, however, to themselves. But that is not sacrifice; that is but a cowardly rendering of a part lest the whole be taken away. Abraham's sacrifice was made to reveal the other truth which heathen strivings and baptized heathenism among ourselves entirely misses or subverts. "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." The propitiation God requires from us is that our attitude towards Him shall be changed, and that we should, yielding to His will, accept and use the provision He hath made: therefore, in that ram caught in the thicket, Abraham received the truth on which the Gospel hinges, "God provides the Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world." If we may trust Jewish tradition, Isaac was twenty-five years old when this event took place. Be that true or otherwise, it was evidently in early life, and thus early were developed those characteristics which rendered Isaac's life one of continued trustfulness and submission.

Very little lies upon the surface regarding Isaac's special character, yet some indications are given sufficient to guide in an outline. He was Sarah's *only* child, and the child of her old age; the energetic, fearless Ishmael had been sent from home before any influence by him could have been exerted upon the brother's mind. Other sons that were born in

the family (Gen. xxv. 6) were also sent away, and provided for during the father's lifetime. Isaac was *the* son, heir of the promise and of the father's wealth; no rival was permitted around the paternal hearth. This, however, was amicably arranged, for there does not appear to have been any feud, as in the case of Esau and Jacob, and the elder brothers met peacefully, Isaac with a domestic retinue of servants, Ishmael in the wild splendour of an Arab chieftain with his wild companions, before the cave where was to be laid the dust of a mutually revered father.

The favoured child of his father, the only darling of his mother, the son on whose life cherished hopes seemed to depend, we can well conceive to have been tenderly nurtured, sheltered from every seemingly adverse influence—a spoilt child. That testing scene of Abraham's life, already dwelt upon, must have impressed that darling boy with the truth that, however much his father may have doted upon him, there was One supreme, to whom, beyond all earthly consideration, trust and obedience were due. Where that trust and obedience are rooted, "spoiling" is out of the question; and though we have no instance in Isaac's life of the nerve and vigour seen in Abraham's (Gen. xiv. 14), we do find the placid gentleness which looked to other possessions than the mere joy of earthly navings. In those wild days Isaac was evidently powerful enough not to be attacked (Gen. xxvi. 14)—"the Philistines envied him;" and yet he strove for those things that make for peace, though mightier than they (verse 16). Verses 17-22 remind of Abraham's peaceful faith and contentment, when Lot and he parted asunder; verses 24, 25 reveal the true innerness of that peaceful conversation. He exercised faith in things to come, and rested through a long life in confidence on the promises of God. Isaac's life would appear to have been one of contented ease. Left with great possessions, he peacefully added thereunto, and having enjoyed life here, departed in the full assurance of an entrance into the city which hath the foundations, with that father whose faith and promises he had inherited, and which hopes had been left to his sons as he gave them his paternal blessing. His position has thus been summed up: "He never knew anything but wealthy ease; a his dependents were numerous enough to