

avyn! Money uselessly expended! Preaching without effect! The good seed in such danger of being choked! Heretics and hypocrites, and inconsistent members in the Church are so common! If this were separation day in what bundles would we be placed?

THE MUSTARD SEED.

The parable of the Mustard Seed is encouraging. It sets before us the increase of the Church of Christ, which will grow like the mustard seed. Where the seed has taken root it will develop into a goodly tree. The seed is small, but the tree is great. We may be encouraged to take the seed of God's truth and put it into the field of our hearts and of the world, that it may develop its greatness. The work will be successful; we may, and should expect great results.

Let us look at the picture of increase which is presented to us under the emblem of the growth of the mustard seed:—

LIFE.

1. This increase is one of life. It is a growth, not a mere aggregation. It is the result of vital power from within, not of mere mechanical force from without. It is not merely the accumulation of existing materials, but the transformation of these materials into living organisms. It is not merely the collection of sandy particles until they become a mountain, nor the cementing of stones till they become a cathedral, nor the setting together of pieces of mechanism till they become a great machine, but it is the increase of growth that vitalizes all the materials of which it lays hold.

The life-germ in the tiny seed develops itself. It transforms the earth and air, and light into organic substances. It builds up, not by mechanical aggregation, but by vital assimilation. It takes the pulverized earth and spins into the ropes of strong woody fibre. It distils the mire in its laboratory, and changes the most fetid odours, into the sweetest fragrance. It catches the colourless sunbeams and changes them into the fairest tints on its leaves and blossoms. It builds up the solid walls of its stem from the limpid liquid of its sap. It separates the clean from the unclean, the nutriment

from the poison, and changes hard rock into luscious fruit for the food of man. But that process so wonderful in its effects, so mysterious in its operations, ceases to excite our surprise just because it is so common. It is such a change—such an increase that the seed of life growing in the heart or in the world will produce. The Church is not the mere accumulation of numbers. That would give a great crowd without organized cohesion, like a hill of sand or a pile of chaff. It is not merely the building up of grand ecclesiastical systems, that would give symmetry, and it may be solidity to the accumulation without vitality like a temple or a palace. It is not merely the arranging and working of organizations; that may give power to the individuals who compose and work them like a steam engine or a hydraulic press, but it will not supply the inherent energy of self development. This increase of the mustard seed is the building up of life. It is the changing of dead matter into living substances, selecting assimilating and transforming. The seed of truth lays hold on the heart. It brings the spiritual being into sympathy with Christ. It purifies the affections by its sanctifying power. It is God that gives the seed its vitality, and it is only those who are brought under its transforming power that grow in the Church or in grace. The seed of truth, under the quickening power of the spirit will develop in the heart and in the world the roots of faith, which laying hold on the corrupt though fertile soil of man's spiritual nature, will send upward the stem of hope, the foliage of profession and the fruits of love, to be displayed in the light of heaven. Through this process of spiritual growth the naturally dead are changed into the spiritually living. The crumbling sand of doubt and unbelief becomes the strong fibres of positive faith. The hard soil of the heart is changed into the substances of spiritual growth. The works of the flesh are destroyed, and on their ruins are produced the fruits of the Spirit. It is only life that produces the true increase.

LAWS.

2. It is an increase produced according