

The Christian.

ST JOHN, N. B. MARCH, 1889.

EDITORIAL.

DAVID'S CONFIDENT HOPE.

'Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory.—Ps. lxxii. 24.

We are permitted to know something of the past and can speak somewhat confidently of the present, but what can we know of the future? Although much the largest portion of our skill, care and anxiety refers to the future of this life the greatest uncertainty hangs over all our purposes, and we know not what a day may bring forth. Our life itself is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.—Is. iv. 14.

But here is a man confidently describing all his course through life, a course unchanged through all the changes and temptations of time, with its terminus in everlasting glory. What peace can compare with this well grounded hope for both worlds!

Although David was a man after God's own heart he was in a world of temptation and sin, and like other good men had his imperfections. He sometimes went astray. On the present occasion he had gone so far as even to degrade his manhood and imitate the beast. He was ignorant, envious and foolish. He looked at the things seen, and not at the things not seen. He saw the godly in sorrow and poverty and disappointment and concluded that these afflictions were peculiar to them, while the wicked had full cups of happiness. They were proud and defiant, yet they escaped the sorrows and poverty of the righteous. They even defied the Almighty and were happy—had more than heart could wish. From these reflections he concluded that all his care and self-sacrifice were worse than useless, that the wicked man was better off than he was who had labored to serve God and do the right. He might well compare his ignorance to the beast. How could he tell what real trouble or happiness the wicked had? He mistook the present seed time for the future harvest and made man's enjoyment and not his duty the rule of life. He was fast approaching the precipice of destruction and his feet had well nigh slipped. He had not our privileges. He had none of the New Testament to consult and very little of the old, and in that little scarce a ray of light on the future life. Since then light has been increasing until He came who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. How many under the whole blaze of gospel life feel and act as David did in his ignorance when he "was almost gone and his feet had well nigh slipped," they will not think of God's claims upon them; they will not look to the harvest.

But David went into the sanctuary of God and there he saw the latter end of the wicked. They had happiness, but it was sinful and short. They were stewards who had embezzled their Lord's money, and he saw them coming to their final doom. They laughed, but it was the laugh of the mariac on the sinking ship, the higher they rose in the honor of the world the deeper would be their plunge into hopeless ruin. "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awaketh Thou shalt despise their image; but it is good for me to draw near to God, I have put my trust in the Lord God." How sweet he felt his Creator's regard for him, how blessed to have communion with Him; "Thou art ever with me." Earth's pleasures which I deemed so great are not to be compared with Thee. Even Heaven's highest enjoyments are to be with Thee. For without Thy presence and Thy smile living is tribulation and eternity is undying dissatisfaction. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee," etc.

1. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel.

2. And afterwards receive me to glory.

1. *Thou shalt guide me, etc.* David felt his need of an infallible guide. He could not safely guide himself. His late mistake was a strong proof of this. He had nearly gone and the grace and mercy of God in taking him by the hand ere he had made the final slide filled his heart with the love of God. He saw from that hour how much he needed a guide. We are all so ready to go astray that it would be madness to trust to our own understanding. Others also are ready to go astray and it is equally dangerous to trust them to guide us. David felt like Peter: Lord to whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life, etc., etc., and he could trust neither to himself nor to any man to guide him. How many there are who are ready to let go their confidence in Christ and follow the world for happiness. Oh, that they would stop and ask Peter's question, "Lord to whom shall we go," and return to the Lord with their whole heart with David's resolution, *Thou shalt guide me.*

We have a strong propensity when we feel our need of a better guide to seek human guides. It is quite natural to have a high opinion of our parents and forefathers, and we feel like following them in the journey to heaven. If I do as well as my father has done who is now in heaven it will be all right, is the language of many, for we are apt to think that our fathers knew more than we do as they were not only better, but greater men than we are. But admitting they were superior to us both mentally and morally it will not follow that they should be our guide, for our advantages are so far above theirs. Would we consent to be guided by them in temporal matters? Would the farmer take his father or grandfather as an example and insist on cutting his grain with the sickle because they did so, and on the ground of their superior strength and wisdom? Certainly not, for he feels well assured that if his forefathers had the modern reapers they would have gladly used them. Notwithstanding all this there is an impression that we should not deviate from the example that our forefathers have set us in religion, because we consider them good, and if we do as well as they did it is all that will be required of us. Let us see how this rule will work. If it is wrong for us to deviate from the religion of our immediate parents it was equally wrong for them to deviate from the religion of their immediate parents and so on to the remotest generations in the past. There was a time when our forefathers were Papists and by this reasoning their children and grand children to the remotest generations should be the same, and we should all be Papists. But we go still farther back and find that our forefathers were Pagans, and it would follow from the above reasoning that we too should be Pagans. How blessed it is to have God for our guide. Our ancestors were under obligations to Him for everything and were in duty bound to be guided by Him, and we are under the same obligations and responsibility which they were. They could not think for us and cannot give an account for us, but every one of us must give an account of himself to God. Others again think that their ministers should be their guides, and ask what is the good of having ministers if we can't trust them to guide us? Every faithful minister of the gospel of Christ will urge the people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to trust to Him for everything. He would not dare put himself forward as a guide or ask the people to follow him any farther than they are convinced he follows Christ. God is pleased to guide His people, and by Him they can rely with safety. *Thou shalt guide me, etc.* led David graciously waits to guide us and permits us to determine whether or not we will be guided by him. But we may ask *how* will he guide us? Important question. God guides all His creatures by their respective natures. He guides inanimate creation by physical force. He does not reason with inferior animals, but guides them by instinct,

"the ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib." He does not guide a man either by physical force or by instinct. He created him to be a companion, set him over the work of His hands, and as a companion He guides him by his understanding and His affections. The man who refuses to be guided in this way is not under divine government, but must be treated as a rebel and broken in pieces as a potter's vessel. He guided David by His counsel, told him what was right and what was wrong; He spoke to him in a way which he could understand, and thus reasoned with him and guided him so as to shun the evil and pursue the right way. But God guides by the heart as well as the understanding. When He shed light on David's pathway He filled that light with such astonishing goodness that it dried up all his sorrows and put a new song in his mouth, even praise to our God; He drew him with what the prophet calls "the cords of a man." *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, Thou shalt speak to me in a way which I can understand, admire and love all the journey through.*

God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son whom He appointed heir of all things by whom also He made the worlds. He is called the Word because He reveals the Father's character and will in words so plain that a child may understand Him. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Men saw Him, talked with Him and He with them. He mingled with men so as to heal the sick and raise the dead. He groaned for other's sorrows and freely wept with those that wept. He always called himself the Son of Man, and everyone who approached Him found a loving brother as well as a merciful Saviour. He led a life of such infinite loveliness that He declared that he who had seen Him had seen the Father. God has given Him to be a leader and commander to the people. He waits to be gracious and to guide us to His Father's house. He has marked out the whole course for us by His own example and kindly calls us to follow Him. He commands us to forsake sin and do what He himself has done before us. A lost sinner can learn from Jesus' last commission how He will save him, for no counsel can be plainer than the message He sent by His apostles to all the world, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." To read this testimony of the Son of God along with the way the apostles preached and the people were saved makes the matter as plain as it could be made, so that the true believer can be certain how to come to Jesus. In the gospel God tells us to look at His dear Son dying for our sins and rising again for our justification. He thus displays His wisdom and love, and the gospel is His power in saving every one who believes him. He guides men lovingly by His beloved Son. Jesus tells us that the path to heaven is so narrow as to be found only by few; let each one of us be anxious and careful to be among the few. We have this encouragement, that Jesus has left His footprints all along the path and that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. To be near Him and like Him is safety. His company will make every hardship sweet. To work and suffer for Him are the seeds of everlasting enjoyments and the harvest is as sure as His promise. Blessed privilege to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before endured the cross despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. "Where I am there shall also My servant be."

2. *And afterwards receive me to glory.*

It is remarkable how little account we have of the death of the saints. The deaths of many of the most eminent are not recorded at all. We are called to gaze upon the life of Christ, but more especially upon His death; but while we have the record of the lives and labors of the saints to warn, encour-