

that if we would sail safely over the troubled sea of life, avoiding the rocks and sands, we must cherish a firm and constant conviction of our ignorance and weakness and an unshaken faith in the guiding presence of God. We, if we are wise, will distrust our own powers and shrink from temptation. Pride goeth before a fall, but humility is the secret and strength and the condition of spiritual success. There is such a thing as a manly self-reliance which is quite in harmony with trust in God. There is also such a thing as a cringing sanctimoniousness which apes humility. This is hateful to God and disgusting to men. Because counterfeit humility is such a cold, sickly thing, and makes shallow observers discontented with religion, we must not despise the genuine spirit of humility which knows the sad possibilities of human weakness, and so shrinks from all needless temptation.

The spirit in which the purest, bravest men have lived has been this, "Lead us not into temptation"; that is, such men when displaying great power in the face of the foe and great calm in hours of danger and excitement, have trembled secretly in the presence of God and cried to Him for grace that they might not be overcome. In the early history of the Christian Church there are numberless instances of the fact that men who rashly or with some slight touch of vanity sought the martyr's crown, often broke down when the trying ordeal came, while others who modestly shrunk from prominence and could not face danger until they were convinced that the call of God clearly urged them in that direction, were patterns of gentle courage. Self-confidence has often proved ruinous to a man's spiritual life. This prayer calls us from a shallow trust in self to a deep restful trust in God. Peter learned this lesson through much bitterness of soul. He ventured boldly into the midst of enemies and came out with a black stain upon his soul. His bitter tears were not soon dried, the pangs of conscience were not easily assuaged. I knew a man once in mon form of temptation. He had placed himself in a perilous position so that another fall would not only do harm to his soul but would bring immediate punishment in this world. I urged him to bind himself by the help of God not to tamper with his worst enemy. He would not bind himself, he was strong, he could conquer it. Soon after he fell once more and his position was taken from him and the fruits of many years' toil utterly and irrevocably lost. Would that in the depth of his soul he had learned to cry, "Lead me not into temptation." The man who sincerely offers that prayer to Heaven will not recklessly play upon the edge of a precipice. This matter is very little affected by difference of creed. Men as different as Calvin and Wesley agree in this, that we need a constant realization of the guiding presence of God and a constant dependence upon his grace. The great prophets and heroes, the saints, ancient and modern, have bowed as children in God's presence. We sometimes wonder at the rare courage and consistency of a man like Daniel. We must not forget that he prayed three times a day to the Lord his God. Another important fact is that if God leads us into dangerous circumstances we may have confidence that he will bring us out. He will bring us out purer and stronger than we went in. He will with the temptation make a way of escape. If we go into temptation we may expect to be left in the lurch; if we are not utterly abandoned we must pay dearly for our experience, our knowledge of good and evil.

This thought of depending upon the grace of God has been like many of the deepest truths caricatured and ridiculed. This grace has been represented as a magical, mysterious, uncertain influence that knows no law, so that you "can never be certain for twenty-four hours whether a man may be angelically good or diabolically

bad." We are, however, coming to know that among the wildest winds there is law, though not a law that you can make or that any parliament of man can make. So there is law in the realm of grace, the law of God's deepest wisdom and love. There is uncertainty in human life because of our ignorance of men's inward lives. There is no uncertainty about God's love. He will keep those who trust him. Our belief in grace need not hinder us seeing the continuity and progress in the moral life of men. We have no difficulty in accepting the old saying, "No man suddenly became very bad." We may even take the other side and say that no man suddenly attains to pure life and perfect character though he may suddenly so trust in God that he receives within himself a new power of life. When there is a terrible breakdown or a scandalous exposure in a man's life we conclude that there has been an inward deterioration. To talk of a man turning from angelically good to diabolically bad in a few hours is to ignore the difference between character and conduct. Conduct helps to make character. A good man may in an unguarded moment do an evil thing, but if his goodness has any depth, if the love of God has been a real power with him, the whole current of his past life will rise up against him. Instead of being cunning or brazen he will be penitent and conscience-stricken, and the very fall may be used of God to make him more humble and trustful, so that henceforth he may be more fully in the spirit of this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

III. Let us learn from this simple prayer the true nature of salvation. There are many things which we count evil, which are not evils. The text does not refer to these. Poverty, pain, lingering sorrow, or sudden calamity—we must avoid these so far as is consistent with duty. But the prayer does not deal directly with these. They are only counted evils when they lead us into sin. Thoughtful, devout souls have been able to say to God in the deepest spirit of reality:

I thank thee more than all our joy
Is touched with pain,
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain,
So that earth's bliss may be our guide
And not our chain;
For thou, who knowest, Lord, how soon
Our weak heart clings,
Hast given us joys tender and true,
Yet all with wings,
So that we see gleaming on high
Diviner things."

No, it is not against the sorrows of life that the prayer is directed, but against its sins. Salvation is not deliverance from hell, though that comes out of it. Our Lord teaches us not simply to shrink from the thought of torment but from the thought of wickedness. We may still carry in our bodies and souls memory of wrongdoing though the bitter sting is taken out of it. Salvation is the deliverance from wickedness. The cry of the awakened soul is, O God, deliver me from the wickedness which degrades and defiles. Deliver me from the wicked one who would lead me astray, from the wickedness which would separate me still more from God and cut me off from the fellowship of pure, good men. You know what it is that causes misery here. A very great proportion of pain, of discord, which makes a hell upon this earth comes through wickedness, through greed, through lying, through dishonesty, through false pride, through impurity—this is what we pray to be delivered from and to be delivered from it not simply in its coarse, vulgar forms but in all the subtle ways which ensnare the soul. In our Lord's day there were many who wished to be delivered from outside oppressions; from the inconvenience of poverty, from the trouble of the tax-gatherer, who were careless about the deliverance

from evil. When they were offered freedom through the truth they said in a boastful spirit "We were never slaves to any man," and were met by the reply "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin." What we cry for is deliverance from slavery, entrance into the liberty of God's dear children. If the Son shall make us free we shall be free indeed. That Son has taught us to pray, and in his name we cry to the Father to deliver us from evil.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN.

The Inverness Courier has entered on the 90th year of its existence. Switzerland's revenue from tourists last summer was \$25,000,000.

The Prince and Princess of Wales are to be asked to lay the foundation stone of the new Edinburgh Art School.

Glasgow ladies and gentlemen have started a company having for its object counter attractions to the public house. The 28th ult. was the anniversary of the fall of the Tay Bridge, that memorable disaster occurring on the 28th December, 1879.

Rev. Murdo Mackenzie, Inverness, has accepted the Moderatorship of the Free Church.

At Christmas a severe snow storm prevailed in the north of Scotland. In Orkney and other places roads were blocked.

There were 72 lynchings in the United States last year, and one of the victims was a woman, while two of the men were white.

The Free Church congregation in Elgin have acquired the small church in South street which was used by the United Presbyterians.

The death is announced of Rev. Wm. Young, who has been for the last 32 years minister of Parkhead United Free church, Glasgow.

Queen Victoria Eugenie of Spain has ordered that at her expense 1,000 rations are daily to be given to the poor during the winter season.

The opposition to the ritualistic innovations in Parish church of St. Columba, Elgin, has found expression in a petition to the Kirk session.

Dublin public houses were closed on Christmas Day, and this resulted in a great decrease in the number of crimes dealt with at the police courts.

For the suppressing of the recent native disturbances it is estimated that the Natal government will have to pay the piper to the tune of \$3,500,000.

Efforts made by reform societies to get a law abolishing barmaids have disclosed the fact that 27,000 girls are employed in barrooms in the United Kingdom.

Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod, on retiring from Inverness High Church, has been presented with a silver centrepiece, and his wife with a ruby and diamond bracelet.

The most mixed population in the world is probably that of British Guiana. There is an admixture of French, Dutch, Spanish, British, coolie and Indian blood.

"Gramy Craske," the oldest living Salvationist, who has never entered a train, has just celebrated her hundredth birthday. She has lived all her life in Norfolk.

The Japanese are fond of bathing. In Tokio there are 800 public bath-houses, in many of which a person can obtain a bath, hot or cold, for a sum equal to one half-penny.

At present there is one liquor shop for every 83 persons in France. In Paris, where there are 615 miles of street, there are over 3,000 liquor-selling places—nearly 54 to a mile.

Rev. Dr. Mackenzie, Kingussie, has on his jubilee and retirement been presented with \$5,000, his wife with a gold pendant set with pearls, and his daughter with a gold watch-bracelet.

Three memoirs of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts were published in her lifetime. A London correspondent states that the authorized biography of this remarkable Englishwoman will probably be written by her husband.

The Royal Humane Society's certificate has been presented to a boy aged twelve, son of a lieutenant, for plunging into the Thames and rescuing a three-year-old child which had fallen into deep water and was being carried away on a strong tide.