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MISQUOTED TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE : NO. V.

*"Freely ye have received, freely give."*—Matt. x. 8.

BY THE EDITOR.

We dislike very much to spoil so good a text for a charity sermon, or a sermon on the duty of liberality to the cause of Christian missions, for which it has many a time been used ; but while there are so many others that are quite as good, and it is evident that this one was never spoken by the Great Teacher for any such purpose, it is far better to spoil a text than to lose the force and beauty of a passage so full of divine compassion.

A glance at the context will convince any one at once that the command had no reference to *money*. Of *that*, the twelve to whom it was addressed had "received" none, were told to take none with them : "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses." Of *that*, Jesus, who "for our sakes had become poor," had none Himself, and had even to resort to a miracle to meet the small demand of the tax-gatherer when he came to Him. (Matt. xvii. 27.) The workmen were worthy of their meat, and the people among whom they were to go preaching the Kingdom of God, were to provide for their necessities.

What, then, did it mean? Of what had these disciples so "freely received"? The first verse answers the question,—“When he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.” And accordingly he commands them freely to employ the power and grace he had conferred upon them, in benefactions among the people : “As ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils : freely ye have received, freely give !”

Ah, there are some things vastly more precious than gold. Even bodily healing far outweighs the heaviest purse in value. What price could have bought back again the life restored to that widow's son at Nain? Or the sight given to him that was born blind? Or the health and cleansing bestowed on the ten lepers of Galilee?

But every disciple of Jesus is the conservator, and is designed to be the dispenser, of a healing infinitely more precious still. “It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof,” yet is it to be freely offered to the most needy and the most unworthy,—

“A sovereign balm for every wound,  
A cordial for our fears.”