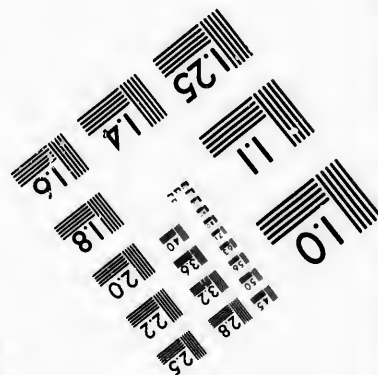
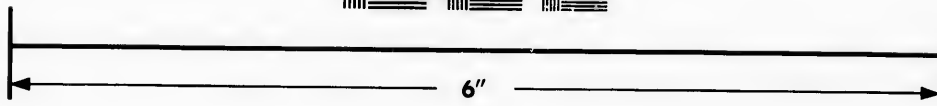
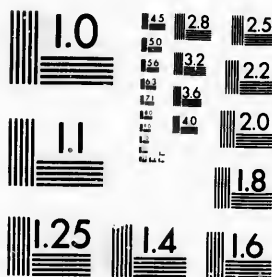


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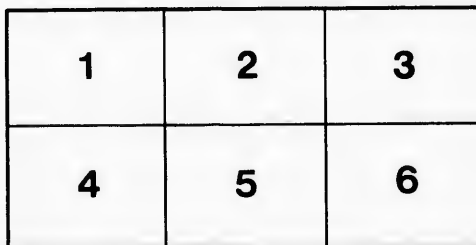
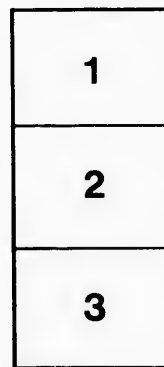
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Yours &c.
A. J. Nowatt

WORDS OF LIFE.

SERMONS

BY THE

Rev. A. J. Howatt,

PREACHED IN

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Fredericton, N. B.

Fredericton, N. B.;

"REPORTER" STEAM PRINTING OFFICE, YORK STREET,

1890.

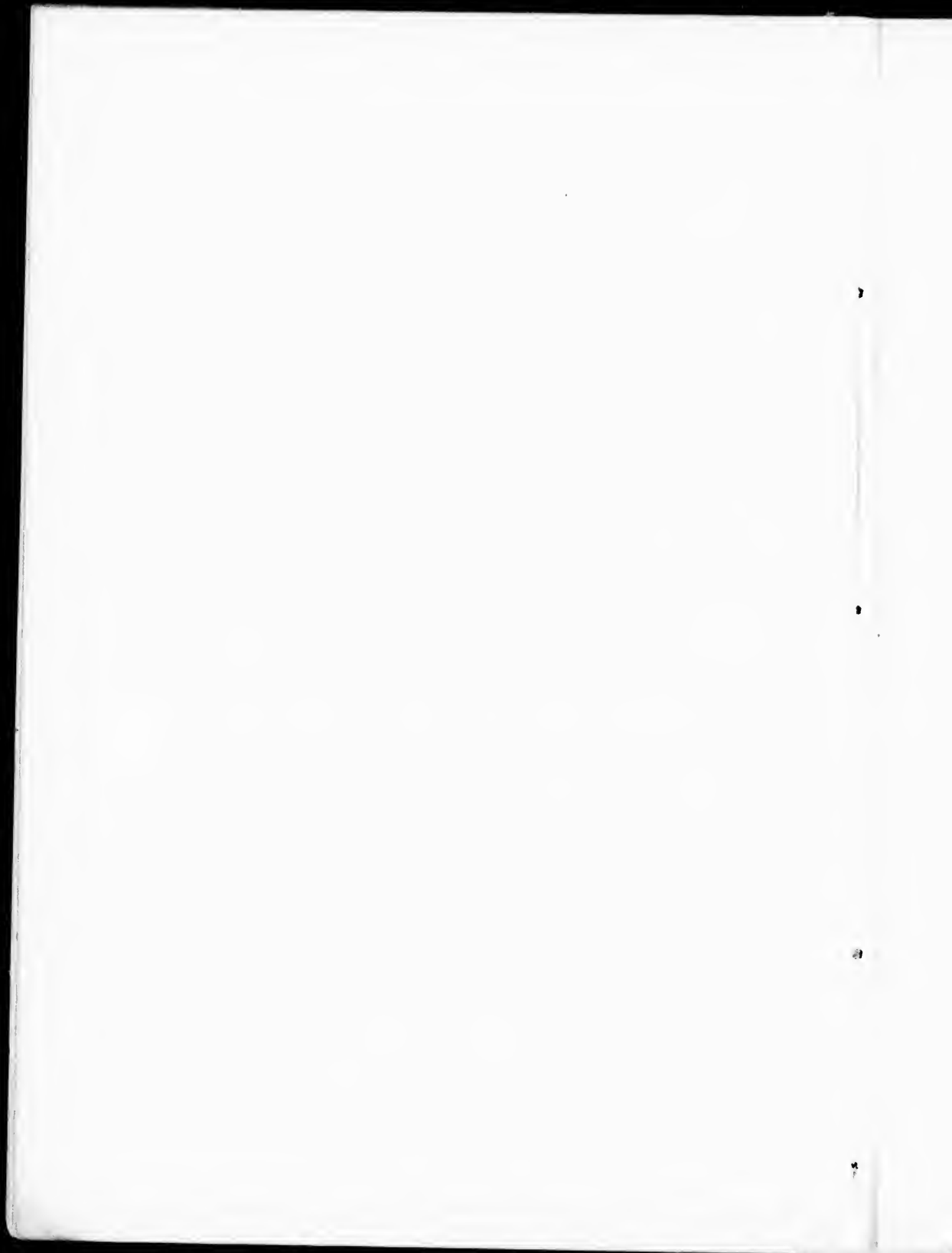
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PREFACE.

TO send forth this book of sermons has cost me no little anxiety and heart-searching thought, and it is not without a measure of shrinking that I do so, not knowing what awaits me ; but I feel I have been led to take this new step by HIM who has led me in all the important steps in life I have hitherto taken, and I have this confidence that He will still be with me. For years my sermons have been published from week to week in the local press, and this is but an extension of that work. The sermons make no claims to literary merit. I send them forth as I have been giving them to my people from Sabbath to Sabbath. I have no time to elaborate—no time for fine writing, finished literary work. They have been words of life to some souls. They have helped, cheered, comforted others. They have been a message from Heaven to many. I lay the book therefore at the feet of the Blessed Master, with the prayer that he may use it for His glory.

ST. PAUL'S MANSE, July 1st, 1890.



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Words of Life.

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."—JOHN VI. 63.

WE want to know who speaks before we listen to what he has to say. We want to know what authority he has to thrust his words upon our ears and before our eyes. The power of speech gives the man the right to speak, and so he speaks, insists upon his privilege perhaps. But men do not listen to every one who has the power of speech. He must have skill in the use of words, and he must have thoughts as well as words. He must have something to say, a message to deliver, words to speak that men need to hear and want to hear, words that have music and meaning in them for human souls.

One speaks because he is our friend. His love for us gives him the right to tell us he loves us. Another speaks because he is our teacher. He knows what we do not know, and he wants us to know it, and so he speaks. Socrates speaks because he is a philosopher, and the wisdom of words drops like honey from his lips. Elijah breaks forth from his seclusion, and as if at the mercy of the message that possesses him for the time being, he gives it utterance and himself ease, and then withdraws again into the awful silences to wait and listen for a new message. Paul speaks because he has the Gospel to preach, and he speaks as one who feels he cannot but speak, dare not

but speak. Necessity is laid upon him, yea woe is unto him, unless with tongue and pen he preach Christ crucified, and his soul is all on fire with holy zeal and blessed enthusiasm as he goes forth and does it. And others speak as they can, and men wait at their feet to hear what they have to say, and call it good, and think themselves all the stronger and wiser and better for their words.

Now, here is One who claims the right to speak and be heard above all others. He individualizes Himself, as it were, stands apart from and high above all who speak, and speaks with an authority and power that strangely thrill and awe those who hear, and lead them to wonder who and what He can be that thus speaks. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

First, the Speaker who speaks here, and his special fitness and claims to speak.

And it was said of him as a speaker by those who heard him speak, that "never man so spake." The admirers of an orator or preacher will sometimes say after a splendid effort: "Never man so spake! Never speaker carried his audience along with him like that! Never preacher thrilled and awed men with his words to equal that!" But it was not his followers and friends who said that of Jesus, but his enemies rather, those who did not believe in him, men who could not be said to be his admirers.

As a speaker he was quite unique. He had an individuality both as to the matter and manner of discourse that was alike simple and grand, and he drew men to him with a strange sort of influence that held them. He talked rather than preached, discoursed rather than sermonized, taught rather than harangued. He did not stand up, and gesticulate, and shout, and work himself up into a frenzy. No. He usually sat cross-legged after eastern fashion and quietly talked in a conversational style, told his touching and telling illustrative stories, startled men with his home-thrusts and pungent appeals, and give them

to feel that he had a way of his own of getting at their thoughts and feelings that were both a surprise and mystery to them. They wondered how it was he knew just what to say to fit in with the thought that was passing through their mind at the time, and to meet the objection and answer the question that were shaping themselves into being deep down within them.

He thus speaks to men as no other speaks, for he knows them as no other knows them. Knowledge gives him who has it both the right and might to speak, a right and might that men are not slow to perceive and acknowledge. And Jesus knew. It was said of him as one of the things that specially marked him out from among others, that "He knew what was in men." The woman at the well was struck with that about him. He seemed to know all about her. That convinced her of his Messiahship, and so she went to her fellow-villagers with the argument that had had weight with herself, and she said to them: "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

He knew men, knew what was in men, because he was himself a man. He knew what to say to interest and influence men, for he knew how they looked at things and felt about things. He knew how to help them with the very help they needed, for he was so human himself, and so beset all around with the trials and temptations that tried and tempted other men. And then back of the human in him, and closely linked to it, stretched the awful Divine with its omniscience, and so when he spoke to men he seemed to say so much, and he knew just what to say to get at all there was within them, all the mystery of their life. They soon saw how utterly useless it was to keep anything from him, for he knew them better than they knew themselves. His words searched them through and through, turned them inside out. And yet he was so tender and true towards them that they let him do it, for they felt that he knew them only for their good, knew them as a physician knows his patient, knew them as a mother knows her child, knew them with a view to help them, save them.

But better even than to know men, he loved them. He knew them so well, because he loved them so much. He knew them to love them. And what a right, what an authority, love, and especially such a love as his, gives him to speak to men. Love, his love for us, can speak out all its mind to us. It can say what only love can say, what indeed only love has the right to say. It can tell us our faults, call us to our duty, expect so much from us and demand so much from us, and yet be so tender and patient, forbearing and forgiving, because it is love, and such a love as his is.

Your mother, my hearer, has the right, and she is not slow to assert it sometimes, because of all the love she has for you, to speak to you as no one else presumes to speak to you. What liberties of speech she ventures to take with you sometimes. How she lets out upon you with her tongue perhaps, not sparing your feelings, searching and even scorching you with her words, and you take it so meekly. You do not answer back, for a mother's love has great authority, a large license, and you let her say all that is in her heart, for you know there is nothing in her heart but love for you, and you listen and learn.

And others, too, because of their interest in you and love for you, have a right to speak, a right you do not question nor deny. Those who are over you in the Lord, those whose interests are bound up with yours, those to whom you belong more than to yourself, those who would do all they could to serve and save you;—they have a right to speak to you, and if you only knew what a right and responsibility theirs are with regard to you, I think you would want to have them speak so faithful and earnestly, you would not want them to keep back one word of truth that they felt it be their duty to say.

Now, he who speaks here loves you. It is because he loves you he speaks, and he speaks as he loves. And how he loves, and how he speaks! He loves you as no one else loves

you, and he speaks to you as no one else speaks to you. His is love beyond a mother's, and what words of tender solicitude drop from his lips, words sweeter than honey, words to win and warn. To say he loves may not be saying much; but when we look at what his love for us cost him, when we look at the glory he turned his back on for us, when we look at all he suffered for us—the cross he died on, the grave he was buried in, the strange awful darkness that gathered round his soul, then we see what a love his is. The cross is love's greatest sacrifice, her best effort, her perfect work. Beyond that she cannot go, more than that she cannot do, a greater better gift than the blood of God's eternal Son she cannot give. Do you wonder, then, that love such as his speaks as it speaks, speaks with so much of right and authority, with so much of tenderness and earnestness, with so much of pathos and power? He speaks down to us from the cross, and as he speaks, it is still felt, and more and more felt as the centuries go by, that no one speaks as he speaks. "Never man spake like this man."

Secondly, His words, their character and purpose: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

The words of a speaker partake of himself, his life and character. Wise words come from wise lips, foolish words from foolish lips. The fool says every time he opens his mouth: "Behold, I am a fool!" He punctuates his sentences with oaths perhaps, emphasizes his speech with loud bluster, and pours forth from his lips a stream of words that like deadly waters kill whatever they come near. The wise man, again, may not have much to say. His words may be few, and they may be said so quietly. But the little he does say will not be wanting of truth and sense, worth and wisdom. What he says he says with a view to help men—to teach, cheer, bless, strengthen, confirm. "The words of the wise," says one who was himself so wise, "are as goads and nails"—goads to prick up to their duty careless worldly souls, nails to hold fast those who are

ready to drift, who are lacking of stability. How blessed are the lips that speak wise words!

Now, the words of Jesus are like himself. They are pure like the lips that utter them. They are true like the truth He is. They are so human and at the same time so divine, for he is both Son of Man and Son of God. They are spirit and life, for, in a very important sense, his spirit breathes, and his life lives, in the words he speaks, the sermons he preaches, the lessons he teaches, the parables he tells. He seems to have the power of projecting himself, so to speak, in some mysterious way, into whatever he says, and even into what others say for him, so that when we have his words we have himself, somewhat of himself. They are spirit, they are life. They pulsate, breathe, throb with thought and energy, and are mighty for good.

Some speak, speak well, speak eloquently, but there is so little of themselves in what they say, so little of anything indeed. Their words are the creation of tongue and lip. They open their mouth, and without any effort on their part, there flows forth an uninterrupted stream of words—words too that are fitting, pleasing, making sense of a sort in human ears. Others dig and dig, slowly, wearily dig, as if for ore. Then they fuse what they have thus dug into thought, mould it into golden speech, shape it into words that breathe and live. And then, there comes a day, a great occasion perhaps, when, with lip or pen, and every energy wakened up for the supreme effort, they give forth what they have to say. And their words live. The lips that spoke them and the brain that thought them turn to ashes, but the words spoken live on and speak on. They live in many a noble life, live in many a scheme of world-good, live in many a spiritual enterprise, live in all the push and progress of these modern times, live forever.

Now, such were Christ's words, and to an extent and fulness that cannot be said of the words of others. Other men's words like themselves are so wanting in spirit and life. Even the

truth they would speak is more or less adulterated with error, their wisdom more or less marred with folly. Their iron is iron and clay; their gold, gold and dross; their wheat, wheat and chaff, and more chaff than wheat, yea tares. But it is otherwise with his words. They are the truth without any admixture of error; "gold, and that perfect gold"; not spirit alone, and not life alone, either of which is so good, but spirit and life. Oh what words are his! What words for human ears to hear, what words for human lips to speak! Our ears hear them, our lips speak them.

But the spirit and life of the words of Jesus are seen to best advantage in their blessed effects upon dead souls, dead churches, dead nations, the corpse of society, the morally dead masses that wallow in the slums of the great cities, the dead world. What can words do?—that is what men are asking to-day. It is not the sound of words but their sense they want to hear, not their eloquence but their practical wisdom, their everyday usefulness. And it is just here where the words of Jesus commend themselves so much, where they are found to have a spirit and life, a way of getting to men and helping them, that no other words have. Speak the words of men to men, the wise words of the world's sages, the great speeches of the orators, and how little they do to make me wiser and better. They keep on sinning dying, notwithstanding all that is said. But speak the words of Jesus, stammer them out in broken barbarous tongues to degraded savages, tell the simple gospel-story to the lost and lapsed of our cities, and there is life where there was death, there is a strange turning away from their evil-doings and sin-service to be earnest and pure-lived.

The prophet of old word-paints for us a scene that illustrates so strikingly and with such telling effect what words of spirit and life can do for the dead masses of the people. He is carried away and set down in a valley full of dead men's bones—sun-dried, weather-bleached bones. It is a strange sad

shuddering sight that meets his view, a most discouraging field to labor in, a hard audience to face and preach to. But he is there with his words of life, and there is hope for those dry bones. In the name of the Lord he is to say, and he says it: "O ye dry bones, live"! It does not seem much use to say that there, indeed anything. But scarcely are the words of life out of his lips, when before his wondering eyes, the bones all over the valley are in a strange state of commotion, bone coming to its bone, skeletons shaping themselves. The prophet is encouraged, and goes on speaking his words of spirit and life, and very soon the skeletons are covered with flesh and skin. And soon from Heaven comes the mighty Breath, and their bosoms heave with a new life, and they live, and stand upon their feet, a consecrated host of living, earnest, spirit-filled men.

Now, that is an Old Testament word-picture, a vision, a prophetic parable; but before our eyes to-day, if we look, we may see it realized. O the dry bones, the wrecks sin and death have made! Those dry bones are in our homes, our churches, all around everywhere. And how many they are, and how very dry! We see no hope for them, they are so very dry. They are far beyond the reach of any help we can do for them. They are dead with a death that there seems to be no life for. They are ruined with a ruin that is forever and ever.

But Jesus does not think so. What a sad state he finds things in when he comes—the world a valley full of dry bones, moral and spiritual death everywhere, a universal death! Judaism dead! Polytheism dead! The old faiths dead! Yea even patriotism dead! Liberty dead! Independence, national energy, push, progress, as well as spiritual life, dead! A wide-spread awful death! But to this universal death he comes, the mighty Christ; and, taking his stand in the very midst of it, bringing his life into touch with the world's death and sin and woe, he speaks, speaks in his own simple earnest way; and while he speaks, his words of spirit and life begin to tell, produce a marvellous effect. They thrill human hearts, and

make their influence felt in men's lives. There is a waking up, a shaking among the dry bones. At first it is only a little shaking, a spirit of wonder, enquiry, discussion. Then it grows more general, emphatic, earnest, until at last it develops into a strange wild commotion among the people. Throughout the land it spreads; from village to village, from town to town, and city to city, it rushes. Up and down the streets of Jerusalem it surges and bellows, and it looks indeed as if the shaking is to be disastrous in its effects, revolutionary, bloody, overturning temple and palace, growing to such proportions and to such a cruel rage, that it will be fatal to himself.

And it comes to that. The Christ dies. Overborne by the wild tumultuous shaking among the dry bones produced by his words of life and spirit he goes down. Oh the shaking around his cross and tomb, the shaking that shakes down Jerusalem! What a shaking that was! But it could not be helped. It was the necessary outcome of the gospel, the words of spirit and life that fell from his lips.

And the shaking is not over yet. It is going on and spreading out. It is not wanted perhaps. The nations do not want the gospel, the words of spirit and life Jesus speaks, and his servants speak. They are saying: "Let not those living words come here to set on foot discussion among the people, stir up enquiry, make men restless under their oppressions, teach them the truth, wake up a spirit of independence, and kindle the fire of revolution. We are satisfied just as we are. Let well enough alone. We want no prophet with his message of life to shake up our dry bones, to show us the evil of our methods of government, to let in the light of these modern times upon our darkness. Leave us as we are. No gospel for us! No words of spirit and life to disturb us! No open Bible for us. No Jesus for us! No truth and light for us!"

And they enact laws to prevent such a calamity, to shut the mouth of discussion and enquiry, to quench the spirit of truth. But how vain! The words of life are coming, O nations, with

their shaking among the dry bones, and in their wake revolution is coming, and modern progress. Be ready for their coming. Be wise, ye rulers, ye statesmen, and hail the light and life. Kiss the feet of the mighty Christ, for it is not to hurt but help he comes; it is to save and bless.

And are there not modern churches as well as states that are afraid of the words that are spirit and life? They are afraid of discussion, afraid of enquiry, afraid of a true revival of religion. They stifle opinion, choke discussion, drug conscience, and keep on hushing the souls of men with a peace that is no peace.

But it will not do. A new light is breaking upon the world's darkness. A new life is already surging in human veins. The words that are spirit and life are being spoken everywhere, on every shore, in every tongue, and wherever they are being spoken, there will be a shaking among the dry bones that cannot be stopped and silenced. There will be, must be, revolution, new ideas, new methods, old things flung aside as out of date, and new things introduced.

So many to-day are protesting in their way of it, and saying: "We do not want to have these questions that create discussion, unsettle religious opinion, disturb men's peace, set them at variance, foment revolution, coming up?" But they are coming up, and there is no help for it. It is the inevitable. And let us not fear for the results. What a shaking there may be in this Canada of ours, a shaking that may shake down much that we reverence. Go through Scotland to-day, and you see the ruins of cathedrals and palaces and castles, grand piles of architecture, and the tourist says: "What a pity! What a pity! What fanatics those old reformers were to wreak their vengeance in such sort upon sacred edifices! What a rude shaking that need not have been!" But the shaking that has left in ruins to this day Scotland's cathedrals and palaces was the outcome of the new life that found its way to the hearts of her people, and all that wild ruin had to be, if Scotland was to be

what Scotland is to-day. And if the words of spirit and life come to us, the people of this land, there will be a shaking here too that will shake the churches, and work a sort of havoc that we may deplore but cannot help.

What beautiful cemeteries we have! We take pride in having them as beautiful as we can make them. We set up polished marble and granite monuments. We inscribe them with words and emblems of affection. We lay out walks. We plant trees and flowers. We would say: "What vandalism to overturn and disfigure those monuments, uproot those trees and flowers, dig up those mounds, burst open those caskets! There is no name to express our abhorrence for such want of reverence and utter lack of taste. And yet, when the Lord of glory comes yonder with his words of spirit and life, what an overturning there will be of stately marble, what a ploughing up of graves, what a wrecking of your beautiful cemeteries! But when you have your loved ones in your arms again, and see their glad resurrection-life, what will you care what becomes of the shapely marble, and the beautiful walks and flowers and trees?

And so with our fine churches, our grand cathedrals, our piles of sacred architecture, our ritualism, our creeds, and much else. Oh we are proud of them! We want them to stand forever. But they cannot. The breath of the Lord will wither their beauty. The progress of truth will march over their ruins. A new life will come that will tear down all this that we are building up. And better living souls than polished stones!

O my soul, art thou putting from thee the words of spirit and life? Art thou satisfied with this peace of thine, this beautiful death? Art thou saying to-day? "I am well enough as I am. Let me alone in this comfort, this sweet indulgence, this world-good." Ah! thou must not be let alone in thy sin and death. Jesus in mercy to thee comes with his words of spirit and life, and there is shaking, quaking. There are tears and groans, the birth-throes of a new life. It is not pleasant perhaps to be thus torn and troubled, to be driven to think and

ask, to pray and weep. But out of all this will come a real peace, the joy of salvation, the eternal rest of Heaven. And better even shaking and quaking than this peace that is no peace. Blessed words of life—let them be mine to hear, and mine to speak!

II.

Built into the Lord's House.

"In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."—Eph. II., 22.

TWO great antagonistic moral forces have been at work in the world from the beginning—grace and sin. The one is from Heaven, the other from Hell. The one is as good as the other is bad. The one does all the good it can, the other does all the evil it can. The one builds up, the other pulls down. And so the good grace does, and wants to do, is more or less interfered with, hindered, marred, by what sin does. We have not grace's best efforts, and we cannot have them as matters are. Grace cannot do as well as it would like to do for men because of sin's opposition. And, on the other hand, sin is not as bad as it wants to be because of grace. The one works against the other, and modifies what the other does, and so we have a strange state of affairs in the world, a most mixed up state of affairs, a kind of moral chaos.

You say sometimes: "Show me a real christian, a man I can believe in. I want to see such a christian. I want to get acquainted with him. I would like to see just what God's grace can really do for a man. I have heard of what it can do, its triumphs over sin, and I am so eager to see a real live specimen of a christian such as it is capable of producing when it is at its very best."

But, my hearer, there is not such a christian anywhere on earth. The best specimens are the productions of grace and sin working antagonistically, and they are rather disappointing. Sometimes grace has the mastery, and then it is more hopeful with the christian; then again sin has the advantage, and so soon things go to pieces with him. But out of all this moral and spiritual chaos the christian at last comes, and he is seen to be a gem worthy of a place among the King's jewels, the perfection of grace's work, the triumph of its patience and skill. Do not despise the christian then, even though he come far short of your ideal of what a christian should be. He is yet in process of being made something of, and we should not be too fast in passing judgment on half-finished work. Some of these weak blundering christians around us that we think so little of, may yet be high up in Heaven.

But what I want to speak of to-day specially is grace's building operations. It has undertaken to put up a habitation for God to dwell in, one in every way worthy of Him, and the material it makes use of for its purpose is the commonplace material lying all around—you and I, poor sinners, the wreck and debris that sin has pulled down. "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

And first, the building that grace is putting up. The text calls it "a habitation of God."

The figure is one we are familiar with. It is that of an immense palace or temple in process of building. To-day there are some fine temp'les and palaces, noble structures that rise sublimely towards heaven, and impress us with their solemn grandeur and hoary antiquity. St. Paul's of London and St. Peter's of Rome are indeed piles of sacred architecture that strike with wonder, fill the soul with a strange awe. You whisper as you enter. You go softly. You want to kneel down and worship. You feel as if God must be in such a

hallowed place. You expect to hear His voice, and see His glory flash. But it is not in temples made with hands, however high and grand, where the living God dwells, where He reveals his presence and power, but in the temple of consecrated human hearts and living human lives.

Now, there is, and has been, going up, through the ages, a wondrous unseen temple, a habitation of God. It is close beside where we are living our life, and doing our work, and worshipping, this building of God is going up. But we see it not. Nor do we hear the click of mallet and chisel as the stones and pillars are being hewn into shape and wrought into beauty, nor the creak of crane as they are being hoisted into position. Still the work is going on, silently, wondrously growing, the walls rising higher and higher, and the various parts of the building taking shape. It is to be a great temple, greater than Solomon's, one alongside of which St. Paul's Cathedral of London and St. Peter's of Rome sink into insignificance and are nowhere. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone of this temple. The twelve apostles of the Lamb are the foundation stones. The fathers and martyrs and distinguished saints are the pillars of this sacred edifice. The humblest christian has a place in it. All that is true and good, lovely and precious, in the lives of the Lord's people, goes to beautify and beatify this habitation of God. Every stone has a beauty all its own, and is a study by itself. It has its own story as to how it comes to be there to tell, and it is always an interesting, and often a thrilling story. Here faith brings whatever she has to contribute to the adornment, to help the general effect. Here love gleams and glows, and adds so much towards the fitting up of the great House of God as a habitation, as a home, for a home is ill-furnished indeed where love is wanting. Here are treasured the trophies and triumphs of the great good, the brilliant achievements of the heroes of faith, the grand doings of the champions of the truth. Here too are the odors of prayers, the aroma of good deeds, the fragrance of

Mary's alabaster box of ointment, the memory of all that was done and borne for the truth's sake—such for instance as the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, a visit to the widow and her fatherless children, the tear dropped at the stranger's grave, the smile that brought back hope to the sinking heart, the good that is always doing good without knowing it. Oh what a glorious Home this is that God is building for Himself, so that He may dwell among His people, and that He may be their God, and delight Himself in them!

Again: The Material out of which grace is building God's Habitation. And it is very commonplace material. The stones of the Lord's temple are dug out of the debris of our natural state. It is out of such rubbish as sin has made of us that God's glorious temple is being built. "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

As we stand before some famous temple towering up heavenwards, so grand in its proportions, so all but perfect in beauty, we are curious to know perhaps where the material was obtained out of which so wondrous a sacred pile of architecture was built, and where the skilled labor came from that built it. And we are taken to a quarry hard by, and we are told that it was out of such unpretentious material as we see everywhere lying there that the great temple was built, and the workmen employed in its construction were for the most part the ordinary people we meet along the street. But the secret was this: There was one great Master-mind, and such was his genius, that he was able to create this wondrous pile of architecture out of the material lying around, and he was able to sublime the ordinary efforts of very ordinary workmen so that they could produce so grand a result.

You remember the story of Nehemiah. He was cupbearer to the King of Persia, a man of great soul, a patriot and hero. Jerusalem and its temple were in ruins, a heap of rubbish. The Babylonian wars had swept over the once grand city, and

there its fallen greatness lay buried, and a good many had no faith in its resurrection. Not so with Nehemiah. He asked and obtained permission to go to Jerusalem. As soon as he got there he went to work to restore the city, to rebuild its fallen greatness. It was a herculean task. But he was a man that no discouragement could discourage, no difficulty daunt. Others took hold with him, inspired by his enthusiasm, set on fire by his zeal, and out of the ashes and ruins there slowly arose a new Jerusalem. He used the material he dug out of the heaps of rubbish, so far as he could use it, the material at hand. He opened quarries close to the walls, and wood was brought from the neighboring forests. And so, out of such material as he could get—not always the best perhaps—he was able to rebuild a city not unworthy in any respect of the one that had preceded it. Men ridiculed his efforts. They criticized his work. They said of the wall he was building that if a fox ran over it, it would tumble down. Still the heroic Nehemiah kept right on, and he put his critics and enemies to shame with what he was able to do. Much that he built was built of the rubbish that lay all around everywhere, but he took care that it was not rubbish when he came to build with it. He knew how to convert the rubbish, that so many would have despised and flung away, into beautiful polished stones fit for a habitation of God.

And a greater than Nehemiah is at work here among the rubbish of our sins. Grace is at work. Jesus is at work. Had you and I been consulted about the building of the christian church, we would have said: "It is the last place in the world to go yonder to the Lake of Galilee to seek foundation stones. What a blunder to select such a rough boulder as Peter! And those others—they are not what is wanted."

But the wise Master-Builder passes by the polished marble pillars in and around the temple at Jerusalem, the scribes and scholars, and He goes to the quarries of Galilee, the rough fisher-folk, and He finds there what He wants. He finds in

Peter a rock. He finds in James and John substantial foundation stones. He finds others, unsightly blocks as He finds them. These He selects, and the Spirit of grace goes to work upon them to fit them for the important place in the temple they are to occupy. And at first Peter was not so very promising. It took time and patience to shape him into anything spiritually, and the results were somewhat disappointing. But he came to be something. He turned out to be a grand foundation stone. Not that he was perfect. Very far from it. He was not without flaws. But, taking him all in all, he was a grand man in his day; one who had few, if any, equals; just the man for the times he lived in, and the work it was his to do; a massive christian, a strong character.

I suppose if he had lived to-day and here among us, or if we had lived in his day, we would not have thought much of him. His failings would have bulked so largely before our eyes that we would not have been able to see his excellences for them. And then somehow it is the misfortune of a great man's cotemporaries not to appreciate him. The Lord Himself was not appreciated. Men rubbed shoulders with Him day by day on the streets of Capernaum and Jerusalem, and they counted it no privilege. And so with Peter and Paul. There were of course those who had something like a true appreciation of them, but the people generally saw nothing in them to wonder at, and, I suppose, they deplored the fact that there were no such men as there used to be, no such preachers, no such leaders of the people, none who were wise to tell men what to do.

And that is still the case. The work that is being done to-day among and around us, and by ourselves and others, we and others, as a rule, underrate. We say hard and uncharitable things about it. And thus we weaken the hands of those who are doing the work. But, the truth is, commonplace as all this work is that is being done to-day, commonplace as the

material is, commonplace too as the workers at work are, a century, or two centuries after this, our work will be appreciated as it is not to-day, and men will bless God that we kept at it and did our work. Here there are Peters perhaps, but we do not know them ; we live too close to them to appreciate their goodness and earnestness. We see their weaknesses, not what is worthy and true in them. Here are Phœbes, and earnest and good Marys, and real Marthas, and we see not to-day what they are to the church. But it will be seen, for their names are written in Heaven, and the odor of their good deeds will yet fill with fragrance the House of God, and there will be in some shape a memorial of their modest service.

But the point I want to make here is this, that the great temple of the christian church, the habitation of God, is being built out of such material as we are, and by such ordinary workmen as we are. Here are the builders, these humble christian workers, and here lying all around everywhere is the very material wanted. We feel often like going away sometimes to seek suitable building material, of importing it from some other place. We say in our way of it that nothing good can be made of these stones, these sinners. They are too hard to work up into anything. We have been at some of them for years, and they are still about what they were. We think if we were elsewhere we could do better, succeed better, find it easier work. But let us not grow impatient. Here is the material out of which the Lord wants us to build His House, His habitation among us. Let us not despise it. Let us keep on working away, and the work will tell, if we are only faithful and earnest. The spirit of grace is silently at work, and more of good is being done than we know, and men are nearer the kingdom of Heaven than we know.

Again : The Building up of the material that has been prepared. "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the spirit."

In Temple-building there are two distinct operations going on. There is the getting ready of the material, the quarrying and hewing of the stone, and the preparation of the lumber; and then there is the process of building up the material into the building. The two operations go on together, but sometimes the preparation of the material is considerably in advance of the building operations proper. It is not always wisest and best to use some sort of building-material as soon as it is got ready. It may shrink, and so prudent builders let the material season before they put it up.

So also in church-building. As a people we are accustomed to have two building seasons in the year, the March and September communion seasons. They are precious seasons to us, and we look forward to them with no little interest and concern. They are the seasons, and especially the March communion, when we look for accessions. Then is seen, in a way, what the year's results have been, and sometimes there is great joy because a goodly number are led to come forward and offer themselves as candidates for church-membership, and for any service in connection with the church they may be fitted and wanted for. So often however there is disappointment because so many are slow to come. They hold back through the years, and hope deferred makes the heart sick.

Now, friends, we are approaching another building-up season, and we are hopeful that more will be added to us than usual. But so often we have hoped to no purpose that we are almost afraid to hope. I feel sure however that the gracious Spirit has been at work upon you shaping you for a place in the habitation of God. And you know He has been at work. You are so urgently called, so persuaded, so dealt with, so troubled sometimes, that it is hard for you to keep back. You say to yourself, "I will try and come this time." And then you are afraid. Something says, "Do not go; you will make a mistake if you go. Wait till the next season. You are not ready yet." And so you hardly know what to do.

Ah! it is just here where so many serious mistakes are made. We may come too soon perhaps. We may want to be built into the church's walls before we are ready, before we are hewn into shape. We may come as a rough unhewn block. We may come as hay and stubble, the world's trash. But then, on the other hand, we may also be too slow in coming. We may let the years of grace pass, and we may sit here or lie yonder, and we are of no use, rotting in sin and worldliness, letting the moss of idleness and age disfigure us.

Now, I may be mistaken, of course, but it seems to me, that quite a number of you, my people, are ready to be built, ready to be built before this, and that what you want, and all you want, to make you what you need to be, wake up your earnestness, call out your energy, develop your usefulness, crown you and bless you, is to be built.

A stone, you know, may be quarried. It may be hewn into shape. It may be slowly chiselled into beauty. But all that is not enough. It must be built, if with others it is to be for a habitation of God. And it may not be built. It may be left out, overlooked, lost sight of in some way. And what then? Ah! the building goes on without it. Its place is filled by some other stone not so worthy perhaps, not so beautiful and shapely, and at last there is no place for it. It is not wanted. Still it lies there hoping that its turn will come to be hoisted up and placed. It cannot give up. But it has to give up. The temple is finished, and finished without it. The cope-stone is placed. The scaffolding is torn down. The workmen go away. Others come to take away the rubbish and clear up the grounds; and with the rubbish is carted off and dumped into some neglected spot the unused stone, the stone that might have served some useful purpose, and filled some prominent position. But alas! it is lost. Yonder it lies where nothing good is.

And so with you, my hearer, sitting there to-day. A great temple is being built close beside where you are, a habitation

for God. Its unseen walls are slowly growing towards completion. The spirit of grace is at work shaping men for this and that place in the sacred edifice. One is being made a wall-stone, another a piece of coping, a third a pillar, and so on. And you are shaped into something as well as others around you. The good spirit has not passed you by. The Lord has need of you. But you sit there. The word is again and again: "Come and be built. You are needed. Here is the place for you." But you let the opportunities go, the blessed communion-seasons, the times of putting-up, and you are not built. You might shine in some high place. You might be so useful, so happy, so good. But instead of that you are nowhere in the temple. You are only close by where the Temple is being built. You are as near as you can be without being in; you are just outside. But oh! what will that do for you? There will come a day, a day you will not like, when you will find yourself taken away from all these opportunities, these blessed communion-seasons, and cast out with the world's refuse.

Oh! my hearer, let it not come to that with you. Come and be builded as one along with others into God's habitation. He would dwell among us, and be our God and Redeemer. He would be at home with us. Oh then, will you not help to make Him a House? Will you not be a stone in the temple? You think you are unworthy. But His spirit will fit you for the place He wants you to occupy. Let Him do all for you, and you will not be found wanting when the cope-stone comes to be put in position with shoutings of, "Grace! grace, unto it."

Lo! God is here! let us adore,
 And own how dreadful is this place!
 Let all within us feel His power,
 And silent bow before His face;
 Who know His power, His grace who prove,
 Serve Him with awe, with reverence, love.

III.

Words of Cheer.

"Be of good cheer; it is I."—MAT. XIV. 27.

THE disciples are in trying circumstances. They have been out all night in one of those sudden squalls that now and again break down from the neighbouring hills and gorges upon the usually quiet lake of Galilee and toss its placid waters into foam, and they see nothing but death before them. But when things are at their worst with them, they are startled at the sight of something in the darkness, they know not what, moving slowly towards them on the tops of the waves. They are in great fear. They are sure it is some weird spectre of the nether world come for them. Their blood freezes in their veins. They shriek out. But it proves to be the Master Himself coming to them in this strange way to help them. Over the wild waters they hear His familiar voice, and His sweet words thrill with great joy: "Be of good cheer; it is I."

Now, my hearers, I find something here for us. These old life-incidents in the history of our Lord and His disciples were not written for them but for us, and we may find in them many a wholesome lesson and many a comforting truth. There is an infinite variety in men's lives and circumstances, so much so that no one life is just like another; and yet there is so much of unity and sameness in them, that from one all

may learn. We are not caught in a squall with the disciples yonder, and the Christ comes not to our help walking on the white-capped waves; still, we have our own trying circumstances just as they had theirs, and so, in our need, we come here and listen to His words to them, and we are cheered and helped. We feel that He is near us in our darkness and distress, as near us as He was them, and we look up, and still hear Him say in His old familiar voice: "Be of good cheer; it is I." And we are not mistaken.

I. OUR TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES.

And they are such, so many and varied, that I hardly know where to begin to speak of them. There are placid lives, placid as yonder lake embosomed among the Galilean hills; lives that seem ever to reflect the calm blue of Heaven; lives full of God's sunshine and peace, so unbroken in their evenness, so sweetly serene and lovely. We wonder at them; we admire them; we envy them. But even to the placid life, full of God's sunshine and Heaven's peace, comes sometimes the wild weird darkness, the sudden tempest, tossing all the blessed calm into white foam.

And it is not always easy to say how or why. We are often too fast with our reasons for things. It would be better for us if we would reason less, and trust more. We think we see it as clear as clear can be, when it is not clear at all, and so we miscalculate, misjudge, approve or condemn, where, if we were as wise as we think we are, we would look up, and await His will.

Did the disciples think? Did they try to reason things out for themselves as they agonized through that long dark wild night? Sometimes men are so put to it that they have no time to ask questions, no time to think and reason, no time to speculate and doubt. They must do or die. And well for them perhaps that they cannot think, for what an agony it is to think when every thought draws blood.

One said to me, one who had been in the darkness, tossed

and tried and torn among the waves of a bitter sea, "If I had allowed myself to think in those wild dark days that came to me, I should have gone mad." And so the brave trusting one, because she did not think, and would not think, came through it all walking on the waves with her Lord.

But not every one can thus shut down on thought. We are sometimes where we have nothing else to do but think. And so we think and think, and the more we think the darker it seems to grow, until there howls around us the wild night of doubt and despair.

The disciples would have their thoughts. They would think how many times they had crossed the same lake when it was calm to them. And they cared not then perhaps how it was with themselves or with others. They thought not, nor feared, nor prayed. But now when they are wiser and better; when they are trying to follow Him who has called them to live the life of faith; when they want to live for some high and holy purpose, they are in trouble.

And their troubles seem to grow the more they try to do good and be good. They were never in all their experience in such trouble as they are now, and they never wanted more than they do now to do their duty and follow the Christ. What does it mean? And He constrained them to it—constrained them to do what they did not want to do, and would not have done, had He not been so urgent. Did He know that the storm was coming on? They had their own fears. They could see it in the lowering evening sky. They could hear it in the fitful moan of the wind. They marked the sheep huddling close together in sheltered nooks. And their experience warned them of the risk of crossing the lake in the face of such premonitions. And they spoke to Him of it. Still, He pressed them to go. And so they went—went to please Him. And this is what has come of it. This is what has come of trying to do the right. This is what has come of doing what the Christ commands.

And, my hearers, just here come to us so many perplexing thoughts. We are in the way of our duty, or we want to be. The Christ has come to us, and called us to be for Him, and the cause that is best; and we have heard His call, and we are following Him as we can. We have turned away from the old world-life we once lived, and we are reaching after the higher things of His kingdom. We are striving to do better, to live differently, to be strong and true, calm and brave, humble and holy. And we think we are succeeding. We flatter ourselves perhaps that we are making real and satisfactory progress in the good and right way. But the trials come. So sudden, so unlooked for are they too. We do not know what to make of them, or how to regard them. They meet us right in the way of our duty. They come to us when and where we thought we would not meet them. And they are of a kind too that we can least bear up against. If it was something else than a cyclone, something else than the taking away from us of our child, something else than the wreck of our home, something else than the cruel betrayal of our friend, something else than the hate of men, something else than this darkness that has fallen upon us, then we might be able to stand it. Thus we think, and reason, and talk.

And yet, so often is it in the experience of Christ's people, that their trials are heaviest, when they seem to need them the least. If the darkness had come, and the storm had burst, and the wild waves rolled high against us, when we were wayward and wicked, we would have said, and others would have said, it is just as we deserved. Men would have called it a judgment from Heaven, and they would have moralized upon it in their way. But it is not thus, not often thus. It is the upright Job that is afflicted the most. It is the three pious Hebrew children that are put into the fiery furnace. It is the good praying Daniel that is thrust into the den of lions, and thrust there for his praying. It is Christ's disciples that are in the storm. It is the Christ Himself who is led into the

wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And to-day still, it is the faithful few, the children of the kingdom, that are in the trying circumstances, not always the men of the world.

And let us not be too fast in trying to find out the reasons why it is so. We cannot find them out. Clouds and darkness are round about the bright eternal Throne, and there are reasons for things that are not known to us, and never can be known by us. God's footsteps are in the sea. His thoughts are too high for us, and His ways are past finding out. It is ours to love, and trust, and hope. There is a wise and right purpose in these bitter things that befall us, and if we are His we shall see it, for we shall see Him.

II. OUR COMFORT AND SALVATION.

Looking through the darkness and storm, the Christ seemed to the disciples a spectre of the night, some dreadful monster coming to finish up what the winds and waves had begun. They did not expect their Master to come to them that way. I have no doubt they had been praying to the Lord all the long night for His comfort and help. But when He heard their prayers, and came walking on the waves to save them, they could hardly believe it to be true. They had often read, and heard read, and sung, that His way was in the sea, and His path in the deep waters, but not thus literally did they presume to interpret His word.

Ah! is it not to be feared that we lose many a rich promise, and come short of many a blessed privilege, because we hesitate to accept them just as they are put down here? God walking on the sea! His arm stretched out for His people's salvation! His feeding the hungry with bread! His healing His people's diseases!— all this, and so much more, we think, must be understood and interpreted parabolically, and so we go on crying up to Heaven for we do not know what, nor care much to know, while it is some great physical evil, some material woe, that is destroying us. I grant we may be too material. We may only pray when we are sick, or hungry, or

in distress. The question of questions with us may be, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?" and to rebuke our grossness and greed, our earthliness and selfishness, our brutishness and baseness, we may be sent empty away from His footstool. But, on the other hand, we may ask in vain, for we are not asking what we feel we need. We are not direct enough in our prayers. We ask God to come and help us, but we do not look out over the waves of our troubles for His coming, and He does not always come. And when He does come, we are afraid of Him; we do not know that it is Jesus.

We pray that He might come to our help. Sometimes we cry aloud in our agony to God. We are in earnest. We want to be good. We feel that the evil influences of the world are taking hold of us, and dragging down our souls, overwhelming us in deep woe. And so in our great and utter need we agonize at His footstool, beseeching Him to come to us. And He comes. But not always in the way we expect Him to come. He comes as He came to the disciples, in the darkness and storm, His way in the sea, in the furnace of affliction, and we shudder at His approach. We would flee from Him if we could. We cry out, "O God, not that way! not that way!"

We are prosperous and happy. Our business is spreading out on all sides and bringing us in large returns. Our ships sail every sea, and gather us treasure from every land. We feel as if disaster cannot come to us. But God's way is in the sea, and He comes to us in shipwrecks and wide-sweeping disasters, and our prosperity is gone from us. We are afraid, amazed, startled. We say, as we look out over the wrathful waters: "That cannot be Jesus. That is some cruel monster of the deep. It cannot be God's Son,—His love, His mercy,—that is thus coming to us." And we turn away from His face. We hide ourselves from His dreadful approach. But over the waste of waters comes a voice, not the shriek of the gale, the roar of the storm, the crash of the billow as it flings itself

high on the rocks, but the still small voice of God's love, to comfort and save us: "Be of good cheer; it is I."

Or, perhaps we have a darling child, an only son, a daughter blooming out into womanhood. Our child is all the world to us, the light of our home, the one thing we live for. It is not too much to say that a child is to many a heart and life a kind of idolatry. It is so sweet to love, so satisfying to our deepest wants; and it seems so good to love, so refining, so up-lifting, so altogether worthy of us. And yet, there is degradation to the soul in the creature-love that thrusts itself in where only love to God should glow and flame. But suddenly the weird awful darkness falls upon us, and in the darkness we lose our child. We grope for our idol. With cries and tears we make the night hideous around us. But our idol is broken. Where beauty bloomed, and joy laughed, and the light shone, there is a grave perhaps, withered flowers, blighted hopes, death and despair. We stand aghast, gazing at the horror of darkness that stalks across our life-wastes, and we recoil from its hideous aspect. But when we come to know what it is, we hear a sweeter voice than our child's coming to us, a voice with a better music in it, and we are happy again—happier than we ever were. We lost a child, but we found the Christ, and we are cheered, comforted, saved. "Be of good cheer: it is I."

Or, we are patriots. Our country and her interests are so much to us. When she has battles to fight we draw the sword for her, and if need be, give our heart's best blood for her. We are interested in her politics. We want to see her built up in all that constitutes a nation's real strength. And so when the votes of the people come to be given, we can hardly contain ourselves, for we feel that so much depends upon the man, or men, who are to rule the nation's destiny, who are to guide and control her affairs. But sometimes when we have done our best to have things go right, they go wrong, or what seems to us as wrong. The men come to power who should not. A policy is adopted that is not politic. We are alarmed,

distressed. We feel as if it is not worth living any longer, as if everything is going to the bad, as if our country's grave had been dug and her hopes buried. But amid the jargon of opposing political parties, the clash of interests, the wild surging of mob-rule, the birth-throe of new national ideas, you still hear the gentle voice of the Son of God telling us that all is well, for He walks along majestically through the ages, stepping from wave-crest to wave-crest. "Be of good cheer; it is I."

Or, we are christians. The church, the cross, the Christ, is all to us. For them we live; for them too we are willing to die. How interested we are in everything of interest to the church. On our knees we cry up to Heaven for her--her growth and extension, her power, her purity, her liberty, her safety. We pray as if it all depended on our prayers, and we do as if we had it all to do. We overwhelm ourselves sometimes with responsibilities. We assume the care of all the churches and men's neglected souls. We plead with men. We protest and appeal against the decisions of synods and assemblies. We go out to where the concourse is, and we cry aloud to men. We pronounce anathemas loud and deep in the name of Heaven. Still, it is not always as we think it ought to be with the church. Not truth, but error, prevails, in spite of all we can do. Infidelity lifts up its hydra-head. Atheism spreads. Romanism flourishes. Indifference, worldliness, formalism, and all the ten-thousand evils that prey upon the church abound. And the church's very existence seems to us imperilled; and the truth, and the cross. We look out over the waste around us, and we think everything is going to the bad. But over the heaving, surging, seething waters comes a voice, the voice of Jesus, and there is comfort in it, and hope and help, in these trying anxious times: "Be of good cheer; it is I."

III. OUR DUTY.

It is ours to hope and trust. We are not to give up. We are to toil on, pray on. Our place may be a hard one; our

circumstances may be trying; our difficulties may be great. The task, too, may seem an utterly hopeless one. What is the use, we sometimes say, of keeping up, dragging out, prolonging, the agony. It is a vain struggle. Let go, and die.

I doubt not the disciples may have felt like giving it up as the long dark weird night wore through. They felt like letting go their oars and helm and sails, and flinging themselves into the sea. The waves would get them anyhow, and they might as well get them first as last. But they did not give up. They toiled on, and prayed on, and hoped on. And the Master came with His help.

So with you, tried one, afflicted one, toiling one. It is yours to struggle along doing the best you can. God's eye is upon you in your darkness. You seem to be forsaken, but you are not forsaken. The waves of sorrow are wild, but they are bearing help and comfort to you. Job's foolish wicked wife said to him in his night, "Curse God and die." But he did not die. He lived, and it came out all right with him. The Lord came to him, and his last days were his best days.

And I know not how nor when, but somehow and sometime the Lord will come to you who are now toiling and rowing through the wild night of your woe. When you think it is about all over with you, there will come a voice to your ears with comfort and salvation in it: "Be of good cheer; it is I."

And not only should we struggle on, bear on; we should be hopeful, cheerful, happy. We should expect the Lord to come. We should keep looking out for His coming. We should listen to catch His words. But that is not the way we do. We murmur. We are impatient, fretful, bitter, sad. We bear, but we do not bear cheerfully. We toil on, but we have not always faith in the success of what we are trying to do. There is a sort of grim despair in our doing, a stubborn doggedness that will hold on; but then there is no light in the face, no joy in the heart, no rapture of soul.

Ah! so many of us need to cultivate hopefulness, the joy of

expectancy. Hear what He says : "Be of good cheer." He wants us to cheer up. He said this to the disciples when the waves around them were at their highest, and the night was at its darkest. And He is saying it to us in our darkness. It is not easy being cheerful and hopeful when the foundations of things around us seem to be shaking, and all seems to be going to pieces. But it is just then that we need to be hopeful, cheerful ; so He comes to us saying, "Be of good cheer ; it is I."

Let me close with Cowper's beautiful words, words that have cheered and helped many a toiling troubled soul in the dark hours of life. It is said they were composed after one of the darkest experiences in the poet's own history. He had resolved to drown himself to end his life-woes, and for this purpose he had hired a cab and asked the driver to put him down at a certain place. The cab-man drove and drove and drove, and after a while he stopped, and came to the poet and said, "I do not know how it is, but I cannot find the place ; and I know it so well." The poet told him to drive home, and after he was home he penned this Hymn. So it is said.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform ;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace ;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

WORDS OF CHEER.

39

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour ;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain ;
God is His own interpreter
And He will make it plain.

IV.

Hearts and Hands for the King's Service.

"Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand."—II KINGS x. 15.

YOU see the dust rising yonder on the high way after a flying chariot. That is Captain Jehu, the new-made King, the mad zealot, the furious driver, with a whirlwind of fire and fury in his soul, rushing to sweep from the earth the last vestige of the accursed Ahab race. You had better get off to the roadside when you see Jehu coming, for he would just as soon as not drive right over you. See at what a reckless rate of speed he rushes along!

In the opposite direction again comes another man on foot, a very quiet retiring sort of man, and he stops, and gets off to the side of the road, when he sees Jehu's chariot coming. His name is Jehonadab, or Jonadab, the Rechabite, a great temperance advocate, and a man of strong sterling character. He was somewhat peculiar in his ideas, but he was a thoroughly good man, and was much respected. Years after he was dead and gone we find his memory still fragrant among his descendants, and his views and opinions perpetuated in a sect.

This man the reckless captain meets, and orders his charioteer at once to halt. He salutes him respectfully, and reaching out his hand to him he abruptly asks him the question I am making my text to-night: "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" Jonadab answered that it was, and they shook hands, and he took him into the chariot along with him, and drove away to finish up his wild work.

Now, are we not almost surprised to hear such tender words from the lips of the wild mad Jehu? We did not know that he had a heart at all. He seemed to be iron, adamant, through and through. But the rock divides, stricken with some unseen rod of God, and the water of life spills out on the roadside.

And bad indeed must that man be who has not somewhere in him streaks of goodness. Let us expect to find them. Sometimes in the arid desert you will find a spring of crystal water bubbling up and babbling away on its blessed mission. Sometimes you will find honey in a lion's carcass. Sometimes you will find the most beautiful and fragrant flowers blooming over where corruption lies buried. And here in Jehu's words to Jonadab we may find the perfume of paradise, the water of life; something to do us good forever.

I see another King riding forth in meekness and majesty—not Jehu, but Jesus. Blood is bespattered over him, but it is his own, shed to redeem the perishing. Along our streets he comes, mighty to save. Oh, why is it that men crowd not to the feet of this Great King to do him honor and serve him? He is not a Jehu with a sword for vengeance, but a Jesus with the word of life. He meets men, and he wants them to be his. I feel that I am not making a mere accommodation of words when I put this into his lips as his word to us to-night: "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

The thought of the text is, Hearts and Hands for the King's service. Jesus is building a kingdom that is to last forever, and he wants hearts and hands for this great work. And he is looking to us for them; and we may find here, I think, some

hints as to the kind of men he wants, the kind of men any king wants whose kingdom is to be strongly and wisely built and its affairs to be rightly managed.

And first here, he wants temperance men. And the want of every kingdom and country is thoroughly temperate men;—men who touch not, taste not, handle not, that which intoxicates, debases, degrades, destroys.

Captain Jehu was not much of a man himself, nor did he make a good and wise king, although he had a work of his own to do for the Lord; but he was shrewd enough to know, that he needed men to help him, to counsel and do, whose brains were not muddled half the time with strong drink. And so he took into his service the greatest temperance advocate of his age, and gave him a high place in the kingdom.

And the want of our day is men of strong and earnest temperance principles. We want them wherever there is responsibility. You cannot trust any man, no matter how capable he is in other respects, who is given to drink. At the very time when his head should be clearest and his arm strongest, he may be found helpless, incapable, good-for-nothing. And yet, is it not a fact to be deeply deplored that the land is full of drunkards?—drunkards high up in authority; drunkards making and executing our laws; drunkards on the bench, in some cases, dispensing justice; drunkards ministering at the altar; drunkards educating the hope of the nation, editing our papers, driving our trains, navigating our ships, healing our sick; in a word, doing whatever is needing to be done to build up a nation in that which makes a nation great. Oh, there is a bitter curse hanging over the land because of the woe of drink, and men think they are doing God service and helping the nation's good by drinking themselves and ministering to the drink-passion of others! Think of some eighteen or twenty million gallons of spirits being consumed year by year in the Dominion, about four gallons for every man, woman, and child; enough to deluge the land with crime and woe. Talk about our heavy taxes, and

the hardness of the times! The heaviest tax we pay is the \$43,000,000 and more our liquor costs us. It is our drink that is keeping us nationally poor and bad. O God, when wilt Thou come and deliver us from this terrible curse that is destroying us! Stretch forth Thine Almighty arm, O Jehovah, and bring deliverance to those who are bound in the chains of drink!

Now, Jesus wants men in his kingdom to serve him there, and they must be temperance men. I do not say they must belong to this or that temperance organization. That is not necessary. But they must be temperate in their habits, free from the degradation of drink. He gives us here in his word a short list of some of those who are disqualified for holding any place in his kingdom, and drunkards are among them. Here it is! You will find it in first Corinthians, sixth chapter and ninth and tenth verses: "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God." Thus, drunkards are not wanted, and cannot be admitted, into the service of the King of kings. They may be men of ability, men of great influence, men of large experience, men high in authority, men of boundless wealth—they may have so much to commend them; but they are drunkards, and there is no place for them where Jesus reigns and his pure Spirit dwells. Away with your drink forever, O drinking man, if you would serve Christ, for he cannot accept such a drink-polluted service as yours!

Again: He wants men of good character, men of honest report, men that the people of the world respect for their uprightness, to serve him in his Kingdom.

Nothing is said as to whether Jonadab was a rich man or a poor man, but we are led to infer that at least he was a good man, a man noted for his high character and sterling worth as a citizen, a man you could trust anywhere and to any extent. Captain Jehu felt that if he could secure the services of the

honest temperate Jonadab, that itself would go a long way towards establishing his throne. One thoroughly good man in a government, a man that everybody respects, is a power. He is worth ten-thousand of those weaklings that squirm about so that you cannot tell what they are, nor when you have them. Honest Jonadab may be plain and blunt, outspoken and rough, but he is honest, and when you have him you have him. You know just where he is, and he is always where he ought to be in the grand essentials that make for righteousness.

Now, Jesus wants in His kingdom honest men, men of character, men of good report, men you can trust. Those especially who are to fill the prominent places in His kingdom—the pulpit, the prayer-meeting desk, the professorial chair, the elder's position, the deacon's work;—wherever there are responsibility, trust, service, he insists upon this as a first qualification, that they have a good report of them that are without. A man who has no character, that nobody respects, that no one will trust, can be of no service anywhere. In the church he is only in the way of good being done.

Oh what a drawback it is to a church's prosperity that her members have not the respect nor the confidence of the general public! In business matters perhaps they are not honest. They are slow to fulfil their engagements. They do not pay their debts. They do not keep their word. Ah! what a dishonor that is to the name of religion, and how it hurts the truth, and makes the wounds of Christ bleed afresh.

But, on the other hand, how it commends the cause of Christ, and advances the interests of religion and the church, that those who belong to the church and profess religion, are honest men, thoroughly reliable and trustworthy. Men will say—men who do not know anything about religion excepting what they see of it in those who profess it, that a religion which makes a man thoroughly honest amid the general corruption, must be a good thing to have, and just the thing that everybody should have. Now, that is what Christ's religion does

for those who have it; and if it is not doing it, there must be something wrong somewhere. We may well question whether we know anything about it. One thing is clear, we do not know much about it—we do not know enough about it to be of any service to the cause of Christ in the world.

Again: The King wants men for service in the Kingdom whose heart is right with His heart. "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

There is not much heart, much less heart-rightness, around the throne. Kings find plenty obsequiousness, cringing fear, seeming devotedness, eye-service; but real sincerity, genuine heart-service, that heart-with-heart rightness that a man feels so sure of—ah! there is not much of that. Captain Jehu felt that. He had crowds around him who would shout huzzas all day and run to do his bidding. But there was no heart in it. He could not trust them. He knew they said one thing, and felt in their heart of hearts something else, and he was sick of such hollow-heartedness and insincerity.

But there is one man, honest-hearted Jonadab, that he thinks he can trust. So he stops on the road to ask the honest man whether he can or not. I see the king leaning well over the side of his chariot, and with an intense heart-hunger asking the plain tent-dweller this emphatic heart-question, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" Jonadab looks back his earnest look, and with a frankness equal to his own tells him, "It is." And from that moment they are fast friends, heart-with-heart friends.

Now, King Jesus asks us to-night a similar question. He wants heart-service, not lip-service. He is tired of this weary formality, this outside religion, this seeming devoutness. Oh it makes His truth-loving soul sick within Him to find so little real heart-rightness among us. I see Him leaning down over the edge of the glory that divides Him from us, and asking with soul in look and voice, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" His heart is right. Oh how he

loves! Look at the cross, and you will see how he loves. His hands, His feet, His side, His head, His heart, all tell how He loves. But do we love as He loves? That is what He wants to know. He said to Peter over and over again once, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "lovest thou me?" Oh, how he hungers for our poor love!

He does not want your money, O rich man, your golden pile; He wants your love, your heart. Give him your love, and you give him what is more to him, and more to any true soul, than great riches. And you, O poor man, you have not money, you have not lands, you have not honors; you cannot give what you have not. And it is not these small things he asks from you. He asks your love. He wants to know if you love him as he loves you. "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" You can love, and if you can love, that is indeed royal service to him. He asks nothing more, nothing better. Oh let there be here, whatever else there is, a real heart-service rendered to the King, a right royal leal-hearted worship, and he will be pleased, satisfied.

Still further, the King wants hands for service in the kingdom as well as hearts. And if the heart be there, the hand will be there too. "Give me thine hand."

How beautiful it is to see Jehu and Jonadab giving one another their hand in pledge of their heart-with-heart rightness! And how soon, too, the compact is made! They meet unexpectedly on the road. It strikes the impulsive captain that here is the very man he wants. So he stops and tells him so in the abruptest, directest fashion. That was the captain's way- No ceremony, no palaver, no policy. "Is thine heart right," he asks, "as my heart is with thy heart?" It is a hard question to answer. But Jonadab is equal to the grand occasion. He answers, yes! And they shake hands, and Jonadab gets up into the chariot, and goes with Jehu the King to the duties and difficulties, the responsibilities and rewards, and the retribution too, of reigning. It is all done

in five minutes. Thus suddenly sometimes the great life-questions are settled.

And here we are to-night to meet the King. See, He comes! He wants to know how it is with our hearts, whether we love him as he loves us. It is a hard question he asks, a solemn question, a question with far-reaching results. We hesitate perhaps. Oh how unworthy! Jonadab did not hesitate.—“We do not know whether we love him or not.”—Is that the answer we give the King? Do we try to evade his searching glance, and his hard words? Ah! we cannot. He sees clear down to the bottom of our hearts, and still he asks pleadingly, “Lovest thou me?” “Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?” Oh! perhaps we want to say with Peter: “Lord, Thou knowest all things—thou knowest that I love Thee.” But we are afraid to say it, lest we may not love him as he wants us to love him. And it means so much to confess our love. We would like to be left alone, left in our state of indecision, left where we are neither for nor against. But we cannot be left there. Here is his hand, pierced for us, and he wants us here and now to seal our love for him by putting our hand in his. “Give me thine hand,” he says, and there is such earnestness in his look as he awaits our answer. O soul, it is thy King's hand, and why should there be a moment's hesitation? Thy destiny hangs on thine answer, thy weal or woe. Draw back, and thy King can have no pleasure in thee. Thou art unworthy of him and his love. But yield, and to-night thou shalt ride away in triumph and joy, saved, honored, happy.

I have been asking you, O my hearers, in the King's name to come and be his, to come and confess his name, to give your hand to this blessed heart-with-heart compact he wants to enter into with you. And some are coming to be for the King's service. I rejoice with him that some are coming, a little band. But still, I am asking myself, and I think I hear him asking too: “Are there no more out of all there are here who love the King, no more who have the courage to come out

before the world and own themselves his, no more who are ready to put their hand into his and be his, accept his happy service?"

Oh, my hearers, these are surely solemn personal considerations that we ought not lightly to fling aside, and I leave them with you to ponder over. I have no hesitation in saying to you, that if you do not love the King, nor care for Him, then you had better not come. Your coming will do no good to yourself nor anybody else. If you cannot trust him, and if you are not prepared to follow and serve him; then stay where you are, for if you do not want him, he does not want you. But oh what you have lost! You have lost the favor of the King, and all that that means. You have lost a royal position, and such a position is not to be had every day. It will take you all eternity to find out what you have lost by rejecting the King of Glory. But I do hope that not a few of you love the King, and you want to be his; but you are not sure that you love him well enough. Oh! if you love him at all, come, and he will teach you to love more and more. Put your hands to his service, and you will find it a glad service. If you honor him, he will honor you. If you confess him before men, he will confess you before his Father in Heaven. Hear, then, his word, sinner, as he reaches down that pierced hand of his to you to-night: "If it be, if it be that you love me, if it be that your heart is right as my heart is with thy heart;—if it be, give me thine hand."

And it need not take you long to decide the matter. Decide at once. To-night go with the king. Take hold with him upon the duties and difficulties, the honors and rewards, of the King's service. It is not always an easy service. There may be both tears and blood in it for you, but there will be a glory to come to crown all. Come, then, and be the King's now and forever, and take hold with him in the happy holy service of saving others.

The Voice Heard and not Heard.

"And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. ^And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."—ACTS XXII. 7—9.

IT is mid-day. A blazing Syrian sun is pouring his effulgence on the heads of Saul and his band. They are now come to the village of Kaḱab, or the Star. There one of the loveliest and most picturesque views to be seen on earth bursts upon them—lovely even to-day, but lovelier far that day. All the morning they have been journeying through a most uninteresting waste, bare and bleak. But now a very paradise, such as we may suppose the paradise of God to have been, lies blooming in beauty before them.

The Orientals call Damascus "a terrestrial reflection of paradise, a handful of pearls in its goblet of emerald, the Eye of the Desert." The Damascenes themselves believe the Garden of God to have been there, and that Adam was made of clay taken from the banks of the Abana. "The white city looks," says

one, "like a diamond set in the dark green of fruitful gardens. These gardens and orchards extend several miles around the city, and are a marvel of fertility. The fields of wheat and barley and beans are shaded by fruit and forest trees—the poplar, the cypress, the palm, the walnut, the citron, the pomegranate, the orange, the apricot, the fig-tree, arrayed in a rich variety of colors, laden with golden fruit, and filling the air with sweet fragrance. The soil is refreshed by perennial streams of abounding water from the mountain."

Such is the beautiful paradise Saul and his men are about to enter, not with the gospel of peace and grace, Heaven's message of joy to the wretched, the light and gladness of the people's homes, the comfort and strength of declining years, men's hope and triumph in the hour of death; but, on the contrary, with the sword of the cruel persecutor, and the hot hate of the mad bigot. And good men are on their knees praying that the waster may not come, that some judgment of Heaven may strike him down.

And Heaven strikes. Suddenly a light flashes, outshining far the noonday sunlight, a dazzling blinding glory. Instantly they are all unhorsed and prostrate. Then a voice speaks. It is the voice of the Son of God calling to a better life. All hear a sound, and are more or less affected by what they hear, but only Saul hears and lives.

I. THE VOICE HEARD.

In all the ages a voice has been heard, the voice of God's love. That voice was heard amid Eden's pristine loveliness. Adam heard it, and Eve, uttering the protevangel. Abel heard it as he stood reverent and worshipful beside his altar. Enoch heard it coming to him over the waste of waters. Abraham heard it far away in Ur of the Chaldees, and he followed where it led. And Moses heard, and Israel, and they shook off the tyrant's yoke, and followed through the Sea, and over the deathful wilderness. David, too, heard, and rapt Isaiah, and the weeping prophet, and all the wise and good of the old-

en time, and the voice they heard fired their souls to noble words and noble deeds.

Let us study the voice as Saul heard it yonder at Damascus, for there are indeed both music and meaning in it for us.

And this learn, the voice was Christ's. As he lay prostrate Saul enquired whose the voice was he heard, for he did not know, and this answer came to him, leaving never after any doubt in his mind that it was Jesus who was speaking to him: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

There are voices and voices, so many voices. What a tumult of voices, a Babel of tongues, all along the street. Business utters his voice, and has so much to say to men as to what he can do for them. And pleasure sings and shouts to the idle throngs, and has many willing ears. Vice, too, and lust and crime—they have all something to say, and men hear, and are lost.

And there are voices within, voices deep in the soul—desires, dreams, passionate longings, hungerings to be great, visionary yearnings after it is not known what. These voices of the soul keep on calling, calling, and men listen to them, and wonder what they are, and whence they come. Ah! they do not all speak the language of Canaan. They are not all the voice of the Son of God.

Now, it is wise in us as well as Saul to ask who it is that speaks to us. The voice of truth and love has nothing to conceal, and hastens to satisfy every earnest enquiry. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." How simple, straight-forward, satisfactory! Ah! that voice every true soul wants to hear. Only Jesus has the truth to tell—the truth that saves, blesses, crowns. Only to the voice that comes down from the most excellent Glory—only to that voice should men give ready ear, for only that voice among all the voices has the glad news of grace to tell;—news of salvation, news of peace to the earth and goodwill to men, news of hope and Heaven.

Thus to Saul the voice was a real living voice;—not a fancy, an uncertain sound, an indistinct and unintelligible noise. There were words, clearly expressed ideas, utterances distinct and definite, instructions given, truths taught. Men to-day talk learnedly about God as the Great First Cause, the Almighty Somewhat or Some One, the Infinite and Absolute. Ah! is that all you know of God, ye wise of the schools? The stricken Saul can tell you that He utters His voice, speaks, teaches, commands. You hear the babbling of brooks, the crash of waves breaking along the shore, the weird shriek of the gale, the groan of the earthquake, and, startled, you say, "That is God's voice! that is God's voice!" But that is not God's voice. God is not in the wind, the earthquake, the fire. His voice is words, the still small voice that teaches, tells men's hearts of His love for them, leads them in the way of duty and life, convinces of sin and points to the Cross. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

Next, learn here, the voice Saul hears leaves him in no uncertainty as to how it is with him, and as to what he should do. It tells him that he is a sinner. It charges him with the greatest of crimes, persecuting Jesus, fighting against God. It opens his eyes to views of himself that he had never seen before, and never could have seen without the voice from Heaven to him. It unveils his true character in all its hideous moral deformity, and lets him and all the world see what he is, and what we all are without the grace of God to renew us. Saul, up to this moment, thought he was doing God service, and fulfilling his true mission, so little did he know of God. But the voice taught him something very different.

And just here we may stop to remark, that we had better look well to ourselves. We think we are so right and good, and we may be neither. Many are strong for their church, zealous for the faith as they hold it, earnest workers for God as they think, and, like Saul, they are as wrong as they can well be. We cry out against the faith of others, and their

creed and church, but there comes a voice from Heaven to us, and it says to our stricken heart, "Why persecutest thou me?"

The voice not only convinces Saul of sin; it shews him what to do. It would be little use to be told how wrong we are, and how bad, if we were not also told how to be right and good. But God's voice to men, as we would expect, unless He were only Force, Law, the awful Absolute, the Great Unsearchable, makes it plain to them what to do. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" asked the trembling sinner yonder, and he was told just what to do.

If any of us is in ignorance as to how it is with us, and as to what we should do to be right with God, and to be right too with ourselves, it is not the voice's fault, for its teachings are full and clear, and the way it points out is easy to find and not so very hard for stumbling feet to walk on. To the earnest truth-seeking soul the light that shines is above the brightness of the sun shining in his strength, and the way of salvation is such that no one need err in it. The God of wisdom and love has not left His straying children to the dubiety of Sibylline leaves, the mazes of a perplexing labyrinth, the mysteries and mutterings of signs and voices. No; He has sent His Son to speak to men, and in words simple and loving—words that we learned to lisp at our mother's knee, He tells us what to do.

Again, Saul hears the voice—hears and does. Blind and weak he gives his hand to those with him, and they lead him where there is one who knows how to instruct him in the truth. One Ananias, a devout christian, is the Lord's instrument to open his eyes and show him the way to take. And that way he takes, and keeps it.

Thus, the voice is life from the dead to him. It gives him new ideas of duty and destiny. It is his to follow Christ now, his to preach the gospel, his to save—not destroy, his to speak for Christ with a soul on fire, and with what an unquenchable zeal he ever after lives and labors for the cross. How trans-

figuring the voice is to Saul! What it makes of him, and does for him, and inspires him to do and dare for others! Ah! the secret is, he hears the voice—hears and does. It takes hold of him, lives in him, breathes in his great soul.

And the voice must ever be heard, understood, obeyed, lived out in earnest life, if it is to be to us a voice from Heaven, a call.

II. SAUL'S BAND, OR THE VOICE NOT HEARD.

“And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.”

Those with him were struck with the light as well as himself. They were unhorsed, and felled to the earth. But it did not affect them as much as it did their leader. The light blinded him, but not them. And as to the voice, they heard indeed a noise, but they could not tell what it was. So far as they knew, the voice might have been thunder, or the groan of an earthquake, or the moan of the wind. The voice had no meaning to them, said nothing, taught nothing—it was only a noise. That is what we are to understand Saul to mean when he tells us that “they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.”

Now, one reason why they heard not the voice was because it was not for them—it was for their leader. They were there beside him, and still they heard not. To him the voice was so loud, so clear, so full of meaning—every word distinct, emphatic, eloquent; but to them it was only sound—no sense.

There are voices that ears cannot hear. They are heard only in the deep heart. It is not so much what is said as what is heard that does the good. You hear a voice, and to you there is very little in it—so little that you give no attention to it, and straightway forget it; but some one beside you is thrilled, moved to tears, inspired, God-called. Like Saul, your fellow-hearer rises up from beside you, and goes forth to live a new life, the inspiration of the Blessed Spirit in him and upon him, and all his soul kindled to a blaze. You wonder at

it. You say, "I heard nothing; it was exceedingly common place and uninteresting." Ah! it was the hearing, not the speaking, that did it.

We often mangle God's blessed truth in trying to preach it. We speak too loud or too low. We pitch our voices to a key not natural to us. We hesitate, stammer, tear into tatters all the dictionaries and grammars that were ever made, say what we did not intend to say and leave unsaid the very thing we wanted to say, and we slink away home so heart-sick, lamenting that we have made such a sad mess of it. But sometimes a poor trembling soul comes weeping to thank us for the words of Jesus. We wonder. But no great wonder. It was the hearing, not the speaking, that God blessed. Good hearing is just as important as good preaching. Let us thank God for the ears in the deep soul that can hear more than the most eloquent words can tell.

I grant there are messages from Heaven for one and not for another. It was Saul that was called yonder at Damascus by the voice, not those with him, and, having no interest in it, they heard not. And so still. The voice of God still speaks specially to men, and they hear and believe. But may we not be too fast in saying, "It is not for me?" We may say that of everything.

Life is full of opportunities to us all if we would bestir ourselves and avail ourselves of them. Here is work for strong and willing hands, remunerative work. Here are high offices for those who are able to fill them. Here are thrones for the kings of men to sit on. But we may stand by, and see them all go past us, and there may be only for us a back seat.

So too in God's Kingdom. The words of God come to us as we sit here. We hear sin denounced, shams exposed, wrongs condemned. We hear promises given, invitations held out, glorious things spoken. We hear of Jesus and His love, hope and Heaven, grace and peace, mercy for sinners and joy for saints. But to all we keep saying, "That is not for me! That

is not for me!" And sure enough, we wake up at last to find there is nothing for us—not^hing good, only lost opportunities, wasted privileges, rights forfeited forever.

Again, Saul's attendants heard not the voice, because there was no earnestness in their soul to care to hear or know anything beyond the mere routine of their work. They would be Levites, most likely, whose business it was to wait upon the priests in whatever service they were required, and they went on the mission to Damascus, not because they liked it, or had the least interest in it, but because they were sent, or hired to go. Perhaps they were men that could be hired to go anywhere or do anything. There are such men, weak-principled soulless creatures, whose idea of responsibility is to do what they are told and what they are hired to do. It was nothing to them what the voice had to say, and so it had nothing to say to them.

And to so many the preaching is nothing, a meaningless sound. It is all the same to them who preaches and what is said. Ask them what was said—the text, the subject, the purpose of the preacher in his discourse, and they do not know. They heard something, and yet they heard not. They are like Tennyson's northern farmer who hears only a humming over his head as he sits in his pew half-asleep, his poor wits sadly muddled with strong ale.

Ah! if we want to hear the voice of God and conscience, the call of Christ, there must be in us a hungering to hear, a longing to know. Saul was all wrong, terribly wrong, but he was in earnest. He wanted to be right, and he wanted to do as far as he knew. And the Lord had mercy on him and taught him to know better and do better. But those with him neither wanted to know nor do, and there was no word for them.

Oh let us hear what there is to be heard! The Lord still speaks. His voice rings from ten-thousand pulpits loud and clear. And men are hearing His voice. They know they are

not mistaken. The deep living hold it takes of their hearts and lives, and the good it is doing them, make them feel they are hearing, not men's poor meaningless words, but God's truth. Across the waste of their years it comes, and soon there blooms for them a paradise, like the paradise of God, a Damascus embosomed amid fragrant groves and gardens, and crystal waters. Thus it was with Saul, and thus it will be with us.

And yet again, they heard not, for they did not. It is not hearing at all that results in no doing. They saw the light and felt its effects, and they heard a noise, but no deep lasting impression was made. They seem never to have asked a question about it. Certainly they did not go to Ananias to enquire what they should do. What became of them we know not. All we know is this we have here from the lips of their leader: "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."

And how many, still, see a light, and hear a voice. They are afraid like those with Saul. Like Felix they tremble. They feel the influences of the world-to-come taking hold upon them, and they are uncomfortable, troubled, anxious. Perhaps they even resolve to live a better life. But the vision is soon passed, and straightway they forget about it. The impression made is obliterated, and they are just what they always were—worldly, worthless, Godless, Christless. They hear but they do not.

Ah! my brethren, it is the hearing without the doing that we have to deplore here. The light is here, the Great Light. And the voice is here. The gospel is preached. And there are sometimes deep and anxious thoughts. But men go away, and that is the end of it. They hear, but do not. They are not born again. They believe not in Jesus, nor rise up in the strength of the new life and do for Him—follow Him, preach His word, do His wil', glorify His name, devote themselves to His cause; and so, nothing comes of all they see and hear.

It is the hearing with the doing that makes Saul Paul, that converts the persecutor into the mighty apostle ; but the hearing without the doing leaves those with him just where they were. Oh they were so near the Kingdom that moment! The glory of the exalted Lord was around them and upon them. His voice was in their ears. But they were satisfied to remain outside, and see and hear there, and the blessed opportunity was lost to them. It is very doubtful indeed, if they were any time afterwards, so near the Kingdom of light and peace and bliss, as they were there at Damascus, when their master was called.

And am I saying more than I am warranted in saying when I say, that some of us have seen about all of the Kingdom of God we will ever see, or perhaps that we care to see? We look at it from the church pew, and we are glad, or perhaps we are afraid, and we stay where we are ; we enter not and enjoy. Ah ! little will that do for us. There are no Pauls there, nor Johns ; no earnest consecrated lives, no renewed hearts, no saved souls. We must come in ; we must hear and do.

In closing, then, let me press upon you to make the best of the opportunities you have. You may say, "The voice is not for me!" And there are voices not for you. But there is a voice for us all, a call for every one of us as well as Saul. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." It is the soul that has the courage to say, "There is something for me, even me!"—it is that soul that finds the good. Jesus speaks to you to-day, and He says, "Come ! Why go on sinning? Why go on persecuting me?—me, the only true Friend you have? Why fling your life recklessly to ruin? Why fight against God? There is no good in that for you, nor for me. Come, then, to me, and be mine. Your poor life I will subline with good here and glory hereafter. Come ! come !"

Oh ! are you coming? Cast away the weapons you are fighting the wild battle of wrong with, and let the love of Jesus

lead you into the Kingdom of peace and bliss. He will receive you, save you, bless you.

He who hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound, or doubt Him, or defy ;
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side—for on this am I!

VI.

The Parable of the Wheat-Grain.

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”—JOHN XII. 24.

WE are glad spring has come with her song-birds and flowers, chasing white-footed winter far away over the hills. She comes with health for the sick, joy and hope for the sad, courage and help for the poor, and rich lessons of truth for us all. Soon again we shall see the sower going forth to sow his seed, not without tears perhaps as he thinks of the risks he runs, and yet not without hopes.

And it is spring yonder, the sowing-time of the year, the sowing-time indeed of the centuries, and our Lord, with the shadow of the cross on his soul, that lovely April morning of the long ago, tells his wondering hearers so sadly the parable of the wheat-grain. And there are thoughts and life-lessons here for us this solemn anniversary season, precious thought-seed for the ages. “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

1. THE WHEAT-GRAIN.

Our Lord Himself is the wheat-grain. He is telling us here his own sad glad life-story, illustrating the mystery of his own destiny.

But you ask, "Why take a single grain? Take a bushel, ten of them, a hundred, a thousand, many thousands."

Ah! we live far down the broad and ever broadening stream of time and progress, and our ideas of things are large. But there was, and has to be, a beginning to things, and it is not too much to say—is it?—that the vast wheat-fields of the world to-day began away back somewhere and sometime with a single wheat-grain. At all events, it is no violence to human thought to think so.

But however that may be, we know this, that our Lord is one, the only-begotten of the Father. Go far back to the beginning of things, and you come at last to the one wheat-grain, the one spiritual life-germ, whence must spring, if at all, all the life and joy that are yet to quicken and gladden the eons.

"One!" you say, "one wheat-grain, one life-germ, one Lord, one Christ! Oh what if that one should somehow fail! Think of the world's bread, the bread of millions of homes, the bread of countless ages, dependent on a single grain of wheat! And think, too, of the world's redemption dependent on one life, the strength of one right arm, the faithfulness of one soul! How great the risk! too great a risk! a cruel risk!"

And then the wheat-grain is so little. It is a small seed, small compared with some others of less importance. And our Lord, in some respects, is little. Look at him yonder in the manger, and how little he is! He does not look to you as if he would ever do much for the world. What can such human helplessness as that is, such utter need, such born poverty and meanness, ever do! Thus, when you are told that the hope and happiness of the ages, the world's good and men's salvation, depend on the Babe of Bethlehem, you shudder, for so little would quench that spark, so little would put out forever that feeble flickering light. But, as we shall see, there is a wondrous energy, a mighty vitality, mysteriously bound up in the little wheat-grain, the humble Nazarene. The tyrant's sword did

what it could to hew out of existence the one Life, the world's one hope and help. But it failed. The Life that was to be the life of the world lived and grew. Nothing could extinguish it.

II. THE WHEAT-GRAIN ALONE.

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.”

I have supposed, that far back somewhere, sometime, there would be a single wheat-grain;—no doubt a beautiful one, perfect in its kind, so plump and full, so richly golden-amber; but alone, just one, no brother. And I can imagine the happy possessor of that one wheat-grain saying to himself: “I will keep it. This is the only one of its kind in all the universe, and I will preserve it as a great natural curiosity. I will have a box of most curious workmanship made for it, and I will lock it up there, and hand it down to the wondering ages as the first and only wheat-grain. It will not do to risk the one only wheat-grain in the earth, where it might grow to be many, or cease to be even one. But better one than none. So I will hoard my one treasure. I will bury my one talent, and thus keep it in its entirety, its aloneness.”

Now, our Lord is one, the only-begotten of the Father, dwelling alone and apart in the bosom of eternal Love.

And the one son, you know, the one child, the only-begotten, is such a home-treasure. The one child is so loved, so made of, so cared for, so petted, too much so for his own good or anybody's good. He must not be exposed in any way, he must run no risks. If anything should happen that one precious life, the hope of the family would be gone. Their coal would be quenched. And so, as far as possible, he must be kept alone and apart. And yet, over-much care is about as bad as too little. The risk is as great. Something must be ventured, if anything is to be won. Save your one life, and you lose it. Lose it, and you save it.

And God the Father's one Son is such a treasure to him,

such a joy. Will he therefore keep him yonder in his bosom, keep him in the aloneness and apartness he enjoys there?

O mother, you want to keep your one son in your own arms; you want to hold him there through all the hard testing years of his inexperience. You think he is safer there than anywhere else.

And what if the Father in Heaven keep to himself his one Son; and what if the One Son should be only too happy to abide there, enjoying the rapture of his Father's love, and dwelling apart in the awful loneliness of Godhead? Ah! the loss, the loss of being alone, the loss of being alone with God even! It is not Christ-like, God-like; and so the Son of God cannot abide alone in the glory eternal. The one wheat-grain must not be boxed up, for then it must ever abide alone; and to be ever alone is to lose itself, to lose the grandeur of its blessing-bringing being! No. Let the one wheat-grain be sown; let it fall into the rich loam prepared for it. And let the one Son of God, the Only-Begotten of the Father, come forth from the abiding alone in his glory, to share his life with others, to give it for others. And God gave his one Son. He kept him not to himself. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

III. THE WHEAT-GRAIN SOWN.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."

There is something touching, almost painful, reckless, in the sowing process. You see the farmer yonder, or you will see him in a few days, going to the bin where the precious wheat is stored. How fondly, tenderly, proudly, he takes the rich amber grains into his hands, and looks at them. He thinks there is no wheat like his, and there is a soreness at his heart when he comes to part with it. He wishes he could keep it where it is. But he knows the proverb:—nothing venture, nothing win; so, with a tear stealing down his cheek, he fills

his bosom with it, and strong in faith, he strides across his acres, recklessly sowing his wheat.

You can fancy how hard it must have been, away back at the beginning, for the man who had the one first grain of wheat, to sow it. He wonders whether he will box it up, and thus keep it, or take it out to his little field and risk it there. Birds may prey upon it. Spring frosts may blight it. Inclement skies may ruin its promise. Ten-thousand evils may happen to it. Still, the hungry ages must have bread, and their bread is stored up in that one wheat-grain, and, to get it out, it must be sown. So, weeping, he goes forth bearing his precious seed, and with a tender solicitude he drops it carefully into the receptive earth.

Now, the sower who went forth to sow is our Lord, and the one wheat-grain is himself, his precious word, his precious blood. I see him weeping as he sows. The rains drench him. The cold chills him. The sun scorches him. The weary way blisters his feet. The hungry wilderness preys upon him. The devil tempts him. The cruelty of men hurts him. The unfaithfulness of friends betrays him. The forsaking of his Father gives the last fatal blow to his worn-out young life. Ah! the sowing the Christ had to do, that the ages might have the bread of life, was sore sowing.

And were there no risks in this sowing as well as in other sowings? You do not like the word perhaps. You say there was never any doubt as to whether the Christ would succeed. He never had any doubt himself as to his ultimate success. And yet, so human was the Christ, so conditioned by the world's circumstances, so influenced and affected and environed was he by all that influences and affects and environs dust and ashes, that it is not so out of place perhaps to talk here of risks with regard even to him. I ask, were there no anxieties around his cradle such as there are around other cradles? Were there no fears lest Nazareth's wicked streets might somehow corrupt his boyhood and youth, and blight the promise of early years!

Ah! doubtless there were, and more perhaps than there was any need for. I think I see the angels hovering anxiously over that weird struggle in the wilderness, and doubtful as to what the issue is to be. Is it not, I ask, with blanched cheek, and bated breath, he himself enters the lists with the grim foe? What mean those tears of his, the unutterable groanings of his human soul, his prayers in the garden, his wailing on the cross, if there were no risks, or something of the kind, in his sowing? And even yet there are risks of a kind. We know not oftentimes how it is to be with the Lord and his cause, in so far as concerns us, and we are not without our anxieties as to the issue of the struggle that is still being fought out in the world. On our knees we gather close around the sown wheat-grain, and, with our tears and prayers, we watch and water it, and wonder whether it will die or grow.

Oh this sowing of the wheat-grain! We have something to do with it, and it is not without toil and trouble, tears and risks, it is still done. With much weeping the preacher still bears forth the precious seed in his bosom, and sows it on rock-land and wayside, amid choking weeds and spiny thorns, and his faith and faithfulness, his risk and recklessness, are not always for much of seeming good.

And you too, my hearer, in your home yonder, sow the precious wheat-grain; and around it, on your knees, you wait, and watch, and weep, and work, night and day, for its growing.

And you sometimes fear it is not going to grow at all. Then there are other sowers of the precious wheat-grain, earnest christian workers, men and women of faith and prayer, who go far forth to sow the world's waste-lands, who find their way to the haunts of the wretched and wicked, and there they risk it. There must be more or less of risk, if any good is to be done, if the world is to be won for Christ. The grain of wheat must be sown.

Sowing the seed with an aching heart,
Sowing the seed while the tear-drops start,

Sowing in hope till the reapers come
Gladly to gather the harvest-home.
Oh what shall the harvest be?

IV. THE DYING OF THE WHEAT-GRAIN.

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die.”

The moisture and warmth of the soil cause the wheat-grain sown in it to grow, and growth means decay. The life-germ derives its nourishment from the body of the wheat-grain, until it has sent forth a little rootlet into the surrounding soil, and by that time the grain itself is gone. You look for it, but it cannot be found. The life and growth from itself have used up all its substance. It is dead, gone. And only by this self-dying, strange to say, can it live. The wheat-grain must itself die, perish utterly, if there is to be from it another better life.

And that is true of all life and growth. It is out of the graves of last year's beauty, out of the death of last year's life, that this year's is to come. Last year's flowers had to fade if we are to have flowers this year; and, so unselfish, so self-sacrificing, were last year's flowers, that they bowed their justly admired heads, and hid themselves in the earth, died, that other flowers might rise in their stead this season, and be admired in their turn.

There is something sad in all this. Here is a beautiful flower. It looks as if it came out of the garden of God, so lovely is it. You say, I must keep this beautiful flower. Why may it not bloom on and on through the years? But you cannot keep your flower. In a few days it fades, and is gone. It falls into the ground and dies, and there is a tear of disappointment standing in your eye, and I hear you say bitterly: “What is the use of flower-raising; just as soon as I get them to bloom well, they begin to fade and die.”

In your home blooms out a beautiful flower, an only flower perhaps. How sweet that flower to you! With what care and tenderness you have grown it to the perfection it has

come. Its beauty and fragrance gladden all your home and heart, and you say in your way, "I will keep this lovely flower, and let it bloom to please me." But your neighbor over the way has seen, and admired, and loved your one flower. And there comes a day when he asks you to give him your one flower to bloom for him. It is hard. You turn away your head to hide a tear. You knew it would come, must come, to this, in some shape or other, and there is an unutterableness of grief in your heart. Still, you bring yourself to feel that it is the way of flowers to be plucked, and with a noble unselfishness you give up your one flower, and there is in your home and heart as if a kind of grave had been opened, as if a coffin had been brought in, and as if there had been said this: "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust!"

God had one Son. And what a Son, so good, so glorious! In his bosom dwelt that one Son, and the joy, the rapture, of His dwelling there, were such as no human tongue can tell. But there came a time when He must be given up. And He was given up, and the Eternal Father's bosom was empty; no Son there. Far down amid clouds and darkness, sin and sorrow and woe, the Son of God lived and toiled, wept and worked, suffered and sacrificed. At last an awful pall was spread wide over the heavens. God's One Son was dead; the Only-Begotten of the Father still in the sombre silence of the tomb.

And His death was necessary. Just as the wheat-grain's dying is necessary; so the Christ's dying is necessary. You say; "Hold there, O murderers! Stay that spiking, that piercing, that mocking, that scourging, that crucifying of yours! Let the Christ live! Let Him weep, and work, and love, and live!"

But God said: "Let the spiking and piercing go on; let the Christ die! There is no other way for the world's good and men's salvation to be wrought out. Let the cruel crucifixion go on."

And He did die. See! they bear Him pale, helpless, still,

dead, to His burial; and, wrapped in the snowy linen grave-clothes that loving hands have provided, with tears in their eyes, and sore sad hearts, they lay Him gently to sleep the sleep of death, in the sombre silent tomb, till the morning of the resurrection.

5. THE MUCH FRUIT

“But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

The one wheat-grain dies. It ceases to be. You look for it, but you cannot find it. You find perhaps an empty husk, a cast-off skin. But in its stead, and out of its grave, out of its death, comes forth the much fruit—the thirty-fold, the sixty-fold, the hundred-fold. And is it not better to have the thirty-fold, the sixty wheat-grains, the hundred, than but the one? Is it not better to-day to have the world's vast wheat-fields, the millions fed, than the one wheat-grain all alone away back in the remote past? Yes; let the one wheat-grain die, since it is to have so grand a resurrection.

And the Christ dies on the cross, and goes down into the grave, that there may be the much fruit of the gospel, the millions saved, the world redeemed. How dreadful, how shuddering, the dying; but how grand, how blessed the rising! The wheat-grain is not lost. The Christ lives, lives evermore, lives in millions of resurrected lives.

The grandeur of Christ's resurrection is not, that on the third morning after His death He burst asunder the bands of death, unsealed the tomb, and came forth in power to live and love. It is this rather, that in Him, and with Him, and because of Him, there arises so much—the ages, the nations, a dead world, an innumerable multitude of living earnest souls. Everywhere we see a glad resurrection going on, a putting off of the death of sin, and a putting on of a new glad life. The reason is, the dead Christ lives, lives in all this wide world-life, this vast church-work and spiritual energy, this waking up to power that throbs and pulsates in all lands.

Thus, out from yonder sepulchre, where lay the dead Son

of God, burst forth the glad harvests of the world's salvation, and the glory to come, and how much the fruit.

Now, in conclusion, we may find here, I think, two or three practical thoughts. And one is, let us not spare ourselves. God did not spare His one Son. Our Lord did not spare His one life, His blood, Himself. We think we have the wheat. No such wheat as ours. We have more of truth than others have. We have ability, genius, skill, talent. Yes, we have the wheat that no one else has, and we are proud of it, and we want to keep it. We put it in a box of curious design, and only now and again we bring it out, not to sow it, but to let it be seen, to make a display of it, to let the gem of our genius sparkle, to let our talent dazzle the eyes of the wondering gaping world.

Ah! wheat is not to be kept; it is to be sown. Gold is not to be hoarded. Talents are not to be buried; they are to be used. If you have ability in any way, let the world have the benefit of it. If you have something to say that others need to hear, it is laid upon you to say it. If you have an eloquence in your soul, voice it in some way. If you have thoughts that are throbbing within you for utterance, tell them or write them, and let the world have the benefit of them. You cannot do a worse thing for yourself, nor for the world, than to bury your talent, hoard your gold, cover up your light, box up your wheat, spare yourself, save your life. You are standing in your own light, quenching the fire of your own genius, losing all the grandeur of life. Our Lord wisely says: Save your life, and you lose it; lose it, for His sake, and you save it. And you can understand that: Keep your wheat, and after a while you lose it; but sow it, and then you find it. And so with genius, ability, worth, truth. If you want your gold to shine, keep it in circulation. And if you want to shine yourself, do all the good you can, spare not yourself. Better to wear out than rust out.

“It abideth alone.” If the first wheat-grain had been con-

tent to abide alone, what a loss to the world, what a curse to
to itself! If the Christ had been satisfied to abide alone; if
he had kept himself to himself, and not tried to do any good,
to save any one, to help any one, what a loss to the world, and
what a loss to himself! See him yonder with adoring myriads
of redeemed souls around him! Oh the joy!

And are you, my hearer, content to abide alone, to live for
your poor little wretched self? You are not trying in any way
to do good, to sweeten any bitterness, to help any one to a
better life, to befriend any cause. No one ever takes you by
the hand, and says: "Thank you for that kindness; you cannot
understand how it helped me in my need. Thank you for
those earnest words; they saved my soul; I owe all I am or
ever will be to them. When I stand at God's right hand, I
will tell the Lord that next to himself, you are my saviour."

Think of going alone to Heaven. People will ask who he is
as they see you on the streets of the new Jerusalem, for people
are known there for the good they did, and no one will know
you. You relieved no want. You cheered no sad life, no
comfortless home. You visited no sick one. Your money
found its way to no charity, no mission scheme. You did no
good, and you are alone. Oh let not such a curse be mine;
let it not be yours! Let us sow ourselves. Thus may the
story of the wheat-grain teach us, inspire us: "Verily, verily,
I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground
and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much
fruit."

VII.

Christmas Morning Thoughts.

*“What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?”—MAT.
XXII. 42.*

THESE questions our Lord put to the Pharisees at some gathering of theirs. They were the questions of the day, live questions, questions that, in some shape and in some connection, were everywhere coming up, and being discussed and wrangled over, and by all sorts of people, and of course widely different conclusions were being reached with regard to them.

And these same questions come up in every age, and must come up. They are being asked over again this season as all eyes turn towards Bethlehem, and as the old story of the angels and the shepherds and the wondrous birth in the cattle-shed yonder is told and re-told, and we have to think them out for ourselves, and find an answer to them for ourselves, the same as if they had never been asked and answered before. Here and now, as yonder and then, the Lord asks, and He waits for and wants an answer, our answer: “What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is He?”

Now, let us see what is implied in the first question we have here: “What think ye of the Christ?”

Were I to ask you, my hearer, what you think of Stanley,

the eminent African explorer, about whom the world has so much to say to-day, you might say to me: "Well, the truth is, I have not troubled myself about him. I have been so busy discovering how to make ends meet, how to make six dollars a week feed and clothe six of a family, that I have not kept myself very well posted in regard to matters transpiring on the other side of the globe. Stanley? Stanley? the name sounds familiar. But who is he, pray?"

Or, I might ask you what you think of Browning the poet who died the other day, and your questions and answers about him might make it clear that you had never even heard of such a man, nor of his no less brilliant wife.

And who would blame you for not knowing about such people? After all one cannot know everything. Even the most learned of men, the walking Encyclopedias, who astonish you with the vastness of their information, and the thoroughness of their knowledge, have to confess, that there are some things they do not know, some important matters of knowledge they have not even heard of, some questions and subjects they have not studied up and so have no opinions to advance with regard to them. Ignorance of some things, yea of many things, is rather a virtue. It is bliss. At all events, it is no sin. But ignorance of some other things, the things we ought to know, the people with whom we have to do, those who love us and are devoted to our interests, the friends to whom we owe all we are and ever shall be, is culpable ignorance, base ingratitude, a want of knowledge that is fatal.

Now, my hearer, here is One you ought to know. Here is One whom not to know is culpable ignorance, base ingratitude, a want of knowledge that is fatal. Here is One whom not to know, is not to know your best friend. Not to know Jesus is not to know, not only the One whose name is above every name, who has done more for the world than all the scholars and sages and statesmen together, but in whom your interests and success and happiness are bound up. Here is One who

has explored the dark continent of your fallen humanity, One who has taught the world the song of the angels, One who has given His life to save yours, One who is, and ought to be, because of the interest He has taken in you, and the love He has for you, more to you than you are to yourself, the Blessed Christ of God, and He asks here what you think of Him. He is not putting to you a hard question. He is not taking advantage of your ignorance, nor exposing it. He is seeking rather to awaken your interest in Him, to draw you out and help you. He takes for granted that you know Him, that you have heard and read about Him, and that you have your mind made up with regard to Him, that you have, and ought to have, your own thoughts and ideas of Him. Something like that is implied in the question we have here : "What think ye of the Christ?"

Again : What you think of the Christ, the idea and opinion you have of Him, depends to some extent, very much indeed, upon the knowledge you have of Him.

If you do not know Him at all, if you have never read the story of His love and life as we have it told here; then, of course, it is no use to ask you what you think of Him, for He is to you as though He were not.

And there are those who have not as yet heard of Him, in whose hands there is as yet no Bible, to whose ears there has as yet come no note of the angel's song, no gospel music, no thrilling story of redeeming love; and they do not know Him, and so have no thoughts of him. His love over-arches them; all around them is his care; speaking to them with ten-thousand tongues, if they had ears to hear and hearts to understand, is his voice; and all their good is out of his full hand; and yet they do not know him. They have never so much as heard that there is any Christ. Thus it is with millions of benighted heathen, and we are to blame for their sad ignorance. They do not know, but we know, and it is ours who know to tell to those who do not know; and if we do not, we will be held re-

sponsible for their ignorance, and the consequences of their ignorance.

But indeed there are people living in this christian country, brought up in this gospel-favored land, who are as ignorant of Christ as the heathen. I have heard of a poor woman in Nova Scotia, and women are not usually as ignorant of Christ as men are, who said, when spoken to by a home missionary about Jesus, in words to this effect: "Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ? I have heard the name somewhere. And you say he is dead. Why, how very sad! What did He die of?" The missionary soon found that he had to begin away back at the very beginning of the gospel-story with that poor woman, to teach her the A B C of salvation, if he was to do anything for her.

And New Brunswick is not far, if any at all, behind such simplicity and ignorance. A minister of our own Presbytery had an experience like this: He was preaching the gospel to a little gathering of people out in the backwoods, and when he had concluded the service, he was taken aback, and felt as if he had been suddenly transported to the dark continent, when one of the audience got up, and deliberately moved a vote of thanks to the speaker for his entertaining address.

Now, ask such people what they think of Christ, and they do not know what to think, for they do not know anything about him. I suppose, if I were to take the audience that stately gather here, and one by one put this question to them, their answers, in more cases than we have any idea of, would reveal a grossness of ignorance, a want of thought and a want of knowledge, worthy of people living in the heart of Africa, and this audience, for intelligence, will compare favorably with any in the land. Oh if we do not know Christ, how can we have the thought and idea and opinion of him we ought to have, and that is alike worthy of him and of us!

Again: The more you know of Christ, the more you will think of him, the better opinion you will have of him. If men

have a poor opinion of Christ, if they despise and dishonor him, if they curse and crucify him, it is, in part, at least, because they do not know him. That is the way he himself accounts for their cruel conduct towards him, as is clear from his prayer on the cross for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The more you know of some men the more you think of them, and the more you know of some other men the less you think of them. There are men you have come to know from what you have heard and read about them. Their praises have been sung in your ears by their friends and admirers. Their virtues have been extolled, their brilliance and power portrayed in the most glorious coloring, their gifts and graces set before you in word-pictures so striking and graphic and vivid that they seemed to live and move before you, and you felt as if you knew them so well and loved and admired them so much. But sometimes it has fallen to your lot to see those great and good men with your own eyes, to hear their eloquence with your own ears, and to bask in the sunshine of their brilliance, for a season, and you have been almost sorry, for you thought more of them, you had a better opinion of their ability and worth, before you saw and heard them, than after you saw and heard them.

And then, on the other hand, has it not sometimes happened, that you have conceived a sort of prejudice against a public man, a dislike that was hard to get over, because of what you have heard others say about him? You have been accustomed to hear him described as utterly devoid of principle, as wanting of every virtue. You have grown up with the idea that he was about as bad as he could be, as ugly in looks as he was in life, an infamous character. But perhaps when you came to know him for yourself, to be thrown into his society, to have to do with him as a public man, you found you had to modify your opinion of him; you found him a gentleman; you found him upright, straight-forward; in fact, a very superior sort of man.

Thus what others say is not always found to be perfectly reliable. They may be prejudiced in favor or against. They may over-state or under-state. They may not know as much as they think they knew, or they may have some interest in coloring their statements. Or, perhaps it may be your knowledge that is at fault. You may be judging hastily. When you come to know more, you may find that their opinion and yours are, in the main, at one.

Let us not forget that no two can see alike. We see through eyes that are green or grey, blue or red, and those we see are to us, not as they are, but as we see them. You say, I flatter, falsify, in the descriptions I give; and I think, you minimize, disfigure, in your descriptions; but the truth is we cannot see with one another's eyes, and so the difference of opinion is as much in the seeing as in the object seen.

And then we see and judge very much as we happen to feel. You say to me, as you meet me down the street, and in your face is enough of sunshine for two faces: "A lovely morning! Oh a glorious day!" But to me perhaps who feel rather Mondayish after preaching two poor sermons the day before, the day is wretched, chilly; the sky leaden; no sunshine, no brightness. Ah! it is very much as we see things, and feel for the time about things and people, that they are to us as they are.

Now, in much the same way, we know and think of the Christ. The knowledge and impression we have of him we have derived from others. Some of us know him and think of him in connection with a dear christian mother. We know and think of him as our mother's Friend and Saviour, and so we have the highest reverence for him. She dwelt at his footstool, drank in of his Spirit, fed her soul upon his Word, and seemed to live in daily communion with the unseen Jesus, and we felt how good and pure and lovely and wonderful he must be, since she was so good and pure and lovely. As far back as our memory can carry us, she talked to us about Jesus, told us the sweet story of his birth, till we seemed to see him

lying on his straw pallet, and till we seemed to hear the angels sing, and we loved him. She told us, with tears in her eyes, and with tremulous tones of voice, the sad story of the denial and the betrayal, the cross and the tomb; how he lived and died to save us from our sins, and how much he sacrificed and suffered for us. And then she taught us to kneel down by her knee, and say after her a little prayer to him, and to repeat some of his own precious sayings, the sweet words of promise and invitation and love that fell from his sacred lips. And so we grew up, and to us there is none like Jesus, and as through the years we come to know him for ourselves, know him as we find him revealed to us in his Word, know him as we learn of him in our own spiritual experience, we find that our dear sainted mother was not mistaken about him, but that rather the half was not told us of the glory of his excellences, the loveliness of his life, and the might of his name.

With others, however, it has been so different. The first words they can remember were words spoken in derision of Christ, curses, blasphemies. They knew of him only from hearing their parents and others curse him, swear by his name, scoff at his servants, sneer at his church and people. He was the song of the drunkard, the butt of the vile-tongued scoffer, the taunt of the loose-living libertine. Do you wonder, then, that young people grown up in an atmosphere of blasphemy, taught to regard Christ as a wicked imposter, and His people as fanatics and hypocrites, and his Word even as a book not fit to be put into the hands of youth because of the immorality with which it is saturated from Genesis to Revelation;—do you wonder, I ask, that such people have not much of an opinion of Christ?

I have listened with shuddering at the free way some young people have spoken to me of the Bible and its inspired writers. They spoke of it as a book that had seen its best days, as away behind the times, as out of harmony with the spirit of the age, as condoning crime, as countenancing immorality, and, upon

the whole, as a very human and doubtful sort of book. And the Christ of the gospels to them was an impossible sort of story-hero, a man that never was and never could be, that never said what it is said he said, that never did what he is said to have done.

And so they go on. But it is because of a stupid prejudice, or what is even worse, a wicked ignorance, that they speak as they do. They think they know, but they do not know. They think they have read the Bible, but they have only skimmed over its mystery-pages, its truth-filled leaves. They think they know Christ, but they do not know Him, and it is because they do not know Him, that they have such a low and erroneous opinion about Him.

They look at Christ through eyes of distorted vision. They think Him bad, because they see Him badly. He is to them, not as He is, but as they see Him, and they have grown to see Him as they see Him, and every day they see Him worse and worse. But the trouble is in them, in their seeing, in their training, in their knowledge of Him, in their bad heart, not in Him. If they could see Him as He is, if the scales would fall from their eyes as from Saul's, they would have a very different opinion respecting Him from the one they have.

And let us not forget, my hearer, that we cannot as yet see the Christ as He is. We see through a glass darkly. We know only in part. We look at Him as we have been trained to look at Him. It has been our misfortune and loss, that those of His people we have known and come in contact with, were people of no character, hypocrites, worldlings under the guise of christians, loud professors but sadly deficient of principle, and it was natural for us to judge of Christ by His people. We had no other way of judging of Him.

And then we look at Him through the more or less colored eye-glasses of our church, our creed, our system of doctrine. With us Christ was a Presbyterian, and all His followers Presbyterians, except Judas. With others He was a Baptist ;

with others, a Methodist, and so on. And so Christ is a little different to us from what He is to others. But the difference is in our seeing, not in Him.

We thus think of Him, my hearer, as we see and know Him. And we do not as yet see Him face to face in the clear light of Heaven. We do not as yet know Him as He knows us. We know but in part. We cannot now therefore think of Him as He is worthy to be thought of, and as we will come to think of Him when we come to know Him better.

Again: The opportunities we have of knowing the Christ, and so of forming a sound opinion of Him. And we are indeed favorably circumstanced in this respect. We are in a position that is specially good to say what we think of Him, to give a good and intelligent answer to the questions asked here.

You think perhaps, my hearer, that if you had lived some two thousand years ago, lived when He was born, lived when He lived, lived when He did His work, you would have been in a much better position than you are in now to take up these questions, and discuss them, and decide about them; settle for yourself the problems that come up in connection with his birth and life and death, his character and work and worth. But that is a mistake. A mountain is not seen to best advantage at its foot, under its overhanging and towering cliffs. You must go away off, if you would see and take in its massive cloud-piercing grandeur. And so it is with great men as with great mountains. Their cotemporaries did not appreciate such men as Abraham and Moses, the grandeur of their character, the sublimity of their lives, and the importance of their work. And so too, with the Christ. We see him now as those who lived with him could not see him. They saw himself, looked into his eyes, heard his words as they fell from his lips, and came into contact with his personality. And there was something in that, but not as much perhaps as we think. There was nothing so very striking about him as men saw him day by day on the street. But what we lose in that, is more

than made up to us in the advantage we enjoy of having a wider view of the working out of his life and doctrines.

It is well to find out, if we can, what his cotemporaries said of the Christ, what his friends thought of him, what his enemies thought of him. And we are not in the dark here. We have authentic records about him that claim to have been written by his friends and cotemporaries, by men who heard with their own ears what he said, and saw with their own eyes what he did. We have four lives of the Christ, the four gospels. We have twenty-three other books that more or less refer to his life and work. These books were written by nine different authors, and in the main they agree. They exhibit peculiarities of style; they go into details; they relate incidents; they report speeches and sermons and talks, and so on.

I know infidels will tell us they are forgeries, that no such man as the Christ ever lived, that he never said what he is said to have said, that he never did what he is said to have done. But somebody must have told those wonderful parables, preached those wonderful sermons. And the man who did so must have been no ordinary man, a genius indeed. If they are forgeries, we would like to know their author, so that we might kiss his feet, for he must have been a man of extraordinary brilliance. But the truth is, it is a good deal easier to believe the truth, as Matthew and Mark and Luke and John give it to us, than the lie the infidels would make us believe.

And then we have the extant writings of many who lived from the apostolic age till some two or three hundred years afterwards, and those writings are full of Christ, full of extracts from the gospels, full of references to the words and works of Christ. Are all these writings forgeries? Some of these writers lived near enough the time of Christ to know some who had seen him, and learned the truth at his feet. Ah! those infidel writers who today would throw discredit on the gospel narratives, and who would undertake to prove

the historic Christ a myth, find they have more on their hands than they can get through with, a hard hopeless task, and the most respectable of them have felt themselves compelled to shift their ground. They now admit that Christ lived, but they labor to prove that both he himself and his friends were mistaken as to what he was. He was a good and great man, but he mistook his mission, made claims that he had no right to make. In other words, he was a fool. But it is a good deal easier to accept, that they are fools who say he is fool, than that he was a fool.

But then, apart from all those questions and disputations with regard to the credibility and authenticity of the gospel narratives and the sacred writers, and the apostolic fathers and their prodigious tomes, we have to-day within our reach, all around us everywhere, the effects and results of the life the Christ lived, the words he spoke, the doctrines he taught, the works he did. There was the Christ of many centuries ago; but there is the Christ of today. We see him in the lives of his people. We see him in their hopes and joys. We see him in their devotion and earnestness. We see him in all they are doing to help others, to lift up the fallen, to save the world. We see him in the churches that are built to his honor, the congregations that gather for his worship, the missions that are carried on in his name. We see him in all the glorious push and progress of the age.

I do not believe in Christ, and you do not believe in Christ, because Matthew and Mark and Luke and John have written his life. We have a knowledge of our own with regard to him, an experience of our own, and we know him for ourselves, and think of him for ourselves; and we know from our own knowledge of Christ, that Matthew and Mark and Luke and John and Paul and Peter and James and Jude have written nothing but the truth about him.

O my hearer, believe in the Christ for yourself; go to him with your burdens, your sins, your sorrows, your difficulties;—

go to him thus, and you will find from the help he brings you in your need, the love he has to you, the way he reveals himself to your soul, and the miracles of grace and mercy and power and love he works for you that he is, and not only is, but is all that you are told he is here in these sacred pages. You do not wonder that he raised the dead after what he has done in raising up your own death, and the awful death of sin all around about you in society. You do not wonder that he walked on the waves, for he comes to you perhaps to day across wide stretches of ocean with his help, and you are sure he comes. Every christian has thus in his own spiritual experience the witness, the evidence and proof, of the truth he finds in the gospel. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Put his word to the test, and you will find how true it is, how true its promises, how true too its threats. Put him to the test, trust him, pray to him, and then you will be able to tell for yourself what you think of Christ.

Now, in conclusion, we are ready for the application; we are ready to answer what we think of Christ, and whose Son he is.

It was to the old Pharisees, the church formalists of his day, he put these questions: "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" And they thought they knew all about it. They had the Bible at the tip of their tongue, and they answered so pat: "David's son." But they did not know as much as they thought they knew, and when he pointed out a difficulty, when he asked how David's son could be both David's son and Lord, they were non-plussed, they were shut up. He could be David's Son centuries after David was in his grave; but then, how could he, in such a case, be his Lord?

And we have our answer pat as the Pharisees had theirs. We find no difficulty here. Our orthodoxy, our creed, puts the right answer into our lips, and we answer right off: "The Christ is both God and man; as God, he is David's Lord, as man, David's son."

But then, my hearer, and here is where the pinch comes in, if he is God as well as man, if that is what you think of him, why is it you do not believe in him? Why is it you do not fall at his feet and say: "My Lord and my God!" and then go and live your life in the light of that confession, in the light of that blessed truth? But you do not. I go to your life, your works, your character and conduct, your home, your business, your social life, your public life, and I find no Christ there. So far as you are concerned, that story of Bethlehem, so beautiful and touching and sweet, is a fable. You do not believe it. The way you live, gives the lie to what you say with your lips and think with your thoughts.

Oh! it is important, my hearer, what you think of Christ, and whose Son he is to you, David's or God's; for, as you think, you will do; as you think, you will try and live. But what can *he* think of the Christ who blasphemous his name? What can *he* think of the Christ who never bows the knee before him? What can *he* think of Christ who never confesses him before men, who is absent when we sit down to eat and drink according to his commandment at his table? What can *he* think of the Christ who drinks with the drunken, who lives in sin, who breaks the Sabbath, who uses his day for his own pleasure or profit; who, in a word, crucifies him afresh? Oh! my hearer, you had better think the matter over again, and ask yourself this solemn question on your knees and in the light of the life you are living: "What think ye of the Christ? Whose Son is he?"

Soon, perhaps so soon, we may see him on his throne the glorious Son of God, our Judge, and then it will be everything to us that we were right about Christ, that we had right thoughts, and lived the right life. Let us, then, think these questions over for ourselves, and answer them for ourselves. The Lord, in patience and pity, waits your answer, and what is it to be?—"*What think ye of the Christ? Whose Son is He?*"

VIII.

Under the Figtree.

"Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."—JOHN I. 48.

NATHANAEL'S introduction to Jesus is to me one of the beautiful incidents in the life of the Lord, and one that is full of instruction. Everything about it is so simple and natural, so utterly informal, and there is so much of the human about it, that I never tire of it. No pretence here; no affectation; none of the wretched dignity of position on the one side, nor the fawning sycophancy of pretended humility on the other; but the guilelessness of true hearts, and the manliness of men who are simply themselves.

Philip of Bethsaida, a warm friend of his, has been led to follow Jesus, and like a true friend he wants his friend to share with him the joy he feels and the good he is sure he has found. So he seeks out Nathanael, and tells him that the Christ has at last appeared, and he wants him to know it.

The coming of the Christ was the great politico-religious question of the day. It was the talk of the street. It was the theme of discussion wherever men came together. The people were in such a state of excitement and expectancy with regard to the matter, that they were ready, too ready, to give

themselves away to any and every pretender who came along. Again and again had they been fooled, suffering terribly for their credulity, but still they hoped on. This led the more conservative and sober-minded of the people to be cautious, perhaps over-cautious, as to the Christ. And Nathanael was one of the cautious ones.

A test question with regard to the Christ was the place of His birth, and as Philip had spoken of Him as of Nazareth, a mean Galilean village, Nathanael at once asked: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip saw the drift of the question, and knew what a tangle of discussion there was about it, and so he adroitly said to him: "Come and see." Thus, what discussion never could have done, a simple practical "Come and see" did so quietly and quickly. And so often still may heated discussion and unprofitable controversy be avoided in the same simple way. Men have only to come and see in so many things to be won over. Do not argue with them on points of doctrine, but invite them along with you to come and see for themselves, and what your arguments could never do, their own seeing will do.

I think Philip felt sure of Nathanael when he had persuaded him to come and see, and it was with a sort of quiet triumph he led him to where Jesus was. You see them coming—the two friends. How simple it is, and yet what grand issues hang on these simple things! The few steps Nathanael took that morning with Philip led him to so much—led him to Jesus, and to all that Jesus leads to. As they approach, Jesus remarks loud enough for Nathanael to hear, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!" Nathanael hears and knows at once that the remark is made for him. Perhaps it fits so neatly into his own thought that he is surprised at what men would call the coincidence, the happy coincidence. But it seems to him something more than a coincidence; so he asks with no little curiosity how it is that He knows so well of him: "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus tells him, and tells him

in a way that leaves no doubt in Nathanael's mind, that He is indeed the Christ: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Nathanael's answer is a noble confession: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel."

Now, I have chosen for my text this morning the words of Jesus to Nathanael which revealed Him to the enquirer: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."

And, you will observe here, in the first place, that Jesus saw Nathanael in some very special sense when he was under the figtree.

The figtree is one of the commonest trees in Palestine. It grows everywhere. Both as a shade-tree and a fruit-tree it has ever been much esteemed. "Under the figtree" is emblematic of rest, comfort, meditation, peace, home. If a man in Palestine yonder wanted to be alone; if he wanted to rest and read; if he wanted to pry and meditate; he would retire within the umbrageous foliage of his figtree, and there he would find all the seclusion he wanted. Nowhere could he find a better place for such a purpose.

Now, we are not told what Nathanael was doing when he was under the figtree that morning. But we can guess. He was at his morning devotions. He was alone with God, meditating on his word, and calling upon his name in prayer. I think it not unlikely that the theme of his meditations was Jacob's dream. The deceit of the patriarch that led to his flight he felt was wicked, and he prayed that he himself might never yield to such wicked methods to gain his ends. He wanted to be Jacob without his guile, his duplicity, and so Jesus said of him, not as a compliment, but because it was true: "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." And then he thought of Jacob's ladder, reaching from the earth to Heaven, with the angels coming and going upon its shining rounds, and of all the good there was for Jacob, and he would

wonder, if there was for him, under the figtree, any unseen ladder, and any of the good there was for the patriarch. And so his thoughts shaped themselves into a prayer, a sort of waking dream, a beautiful reverie, that held him spell-bound, and he lingered under the figtree, as Jacob lingered where he saw the dream-ladder and piled up a sort of monument so that he might never afterwards forget the happy hallowed place.

But as Nathanael thus thought and prayed and dreamed, he was suddenly and rudely called by Philip. His meditations were so sweet that he was almost sorry, cross, that he was called, but there was no help for it. And so with reluctant steps he withdrew from his favorite retreat to join his friend, and learn what he wanted. And he was wanted, as we have seen, to see Jesus, the real ladder; and so his dream became a blessed experience, his prayer fully, grandly answered. He came to know, like Jacob, that he was not so unseen under the figtree as he thought he was. He came to know that the Son of God was near, that he was looking on as he thought and dreamed, as he prayed and wept, and he did not know it at the time. That was how he felt as he had never felt before, so strangely happy, so filled with desire and peace, so uplifted in thought and feeling. Many a time he had been under the figtree, trying to think and pray, when it was a weariness to him, and when he wanted to hurry through his devotions and get away back to the world — get away to business or pleasure. Many a time he had to mourn the coldness and deadness of his feelings, and the earthliness of his desires, and was led sometimes to conclude that it was no use for him to pray, that it was better for him not to pray at all than to pray as he did pray. Still he kept on praying, and the light has broken in upon him at last, and Jesus has made all so plain to him in these words: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the figtree, I saw thee."

What a revelation to him was this that Jesus said: "I saw thee." You say, and I say, to a friend, and there is often so

little in it: "I saw you." But there may be sometimes so much in it. We thought perhaps we were hidden. We did not know that any one saw us, and we were earnest. We were trying in our poor way to do some good, to serve some useful purpose, to be brave and true, to fling from us temptation, to withstand wrong, and we had a struggle. But some one comes to us, and with a look of commendation, almost admiration, says to us: "I saw you." We blush perhaps; we wonder how and where he saw us; but we feel he did see us, and so now we know where to look for one who knows us, and can feel for us, and has a high idea of us. So with Nathanael. He felt he had been doing under the figtree nothing to be ashamed of. He had been in earnest there, his soul in an agony of holy desire. He had been weeping and praying. And now when there stood before him One who saw him as he wanted to be seen of God, he felt he could trust that One, he could look to him as to a friend, he could believe in him as the great Coming One, the Christ.

And, my hearers, Jesus sees us. We have no figtree in our garden, but we may have a favorite tree of some kind, or a some place, where we like to go to be alone sometimes. When the work and the worry of the day are over, we go there for an hour or two, to think perhaps, to plan new projects, to dream our dreams of wealth and fame, to weep over our losses, to curse our luck or bless our stars. We go there to sleep off our indulgence perhaps, to whiff a cigar or smoke a pipe, to read a silly book, to waste the quiet of an utterly worldly life.

We go there for something else than to pray and meditate. And Jesus sees us, but not as he saw the good Nathanael. He sees us, but not approvingly. He sees us, but it makes him sad to see us, and it makes us sad to know He sees us. Nothing would pain some of us more than to have some one interested in us to come and say to us, when we had been doing something unworthy of us, yielding to temptation, trifling with duty and responsibility, falling into sin: "I saw you." And

yet the dearest friend we have, the blessed Son of God, sees us when we are doing wrong as well as when we are doing right, and the day will come when we will have to stand before him, and hear him say to us with his own terrible words: "I saw thee." Excuses will not do. A flat denial will not do. Prevarication will not do. This will settle it forever and forever: "I saw thee."

You will observe again here, that Jesus saw Nathanael, and had to do with him, before Philip called him, and before Nathanael was introduced to Him, and believed in Him. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the figtree, I saw thee."

We admire Philip's diligence and earnestness in seeking out new converts. We give him the credit of Nathanael's becoming a christian. And I have no doubt at all that Philip would take to himself the whole credit of it. He set out of his own accord to seek for Nathanael. He put himself to some trouble to find him. He called him out of his retreat. He persuaded him to come and see. And he held on to him till he had him face to face with Jesus. Thus he was disposed to be proud of his success.

And then Nathanael himself would want to share with Philip somewhat in whatever glory there was in it. He was not hard to bring, nor hard to win. He was easily made a christian. Some are hard to get hold of. You have to go after them a great many times, and after you have them, as you think, they break away, and it is a most discouraging undertaking to win them. But not so with Nathanael, and he would feel as if that was a good deal to his credit.

But the Master shews them both here, and shews us all, how little they had to do in it, and how much he had to do in it. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the figtree, I saw thee." He saw Nathanael before Philip called him, and before Nathanael saw him; in other words, had it not been for him, neither Philip nor Nathanael would have done

match. It was because Jesus had seen Nathanael, seen him in his own loving special way, that Philip had brought him so easily, and it was for the same reason that he had come so easily.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," Jesus said to the twelve towards the close of his ministry among them. You see them down by the seashore, toiling out for themselves the bare necessities of life from day to day, and without ambition to be other than what they are, Galilean fishermen. But there comes along One, and he talks to those rough fishermen of repentance and faith, the kingdom to come and the expected Messiah. They are interested. At last you see them turning their backs on their old life, and following him, and you wonder how it is. You try to account for it in your poor human way. And there is a human side to all this good work. You find they have been listening to the prophet of the wilderness as with an eloquence that thrilled the people he preached repentance, and you find that some of them had become his disciples. You find them, too, seeking out one another, Andrew seeking out his brother Simon, Philip seeking out Nathanael, and leading them to Jesus, and you think you have the secret of how it was they embraced the new religion so readily. But there is a background to all this grand human effort, and the background is, the election of God, the choosing of Jesus. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."

And let us understand here that it is not so much our calling, as his seeing, his choosing, if men come, and believe, and are saved. We give credit, and we get credit, for so much that we never do. We call, and we call so loud, with a voice so filled with earnestness, a voice choked with tears, a voice so musical and attractive, that men come, and they tell us, and tell the world, that it was just because we called them that they have come. And we are proud of our success, proud of our calling,

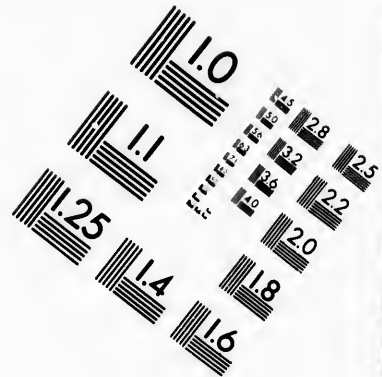
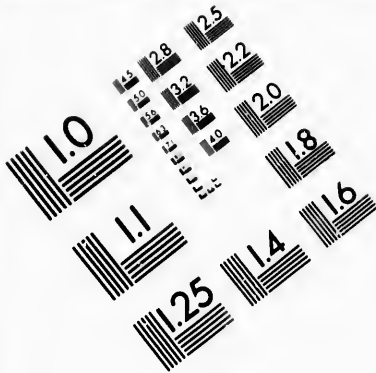
and we denounce others for their unsuccessful calling. And, indeed, there is a human side to all this good that is being done. But let us not think too much of what we are doing, or trying to do. Before we began, others may have been doing, faithful preachers sowing the good seed of the kingdom, the prayers and counsels and instructions and tears of christian mothers, and back of all, the love of God, and the tender interest of Jesus. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee." The truth is, we had but an insignificant part in the good work that is done, and that is being done, when it comes to be looked into. Philip's calling is important, most important. It could not have been dispensed with, so important is it. But it is insignificant after all alongside of Christ's seeing still earlier. If the Christ had not seen, Philip's call would have been unheeded.

Observe here, again, what encouragement there is for us to do our part, to call as Philip called, to preach, to pray, to counsel, to warn, to instruct, and to do so much else, since we are sure that Christ himself is there before us with his Divine doing.

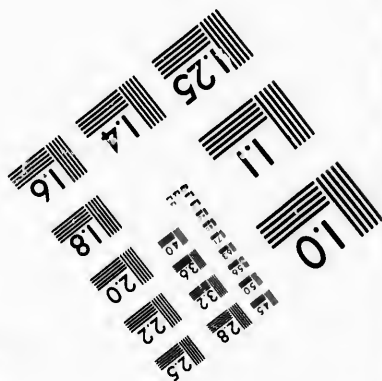
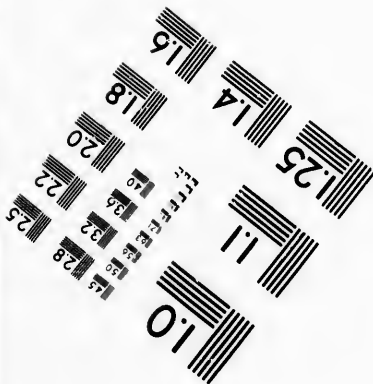
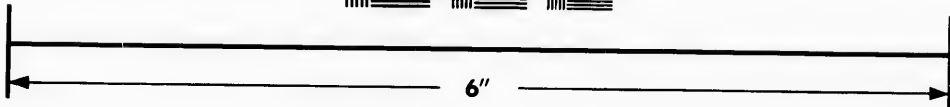
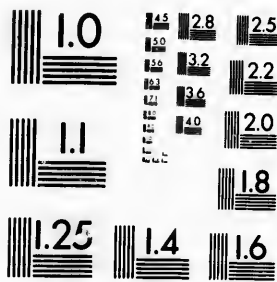
Why do we plough and sow? Why are we up so early, and at it so late, all the spring season? Simply because we are sure, that the God in whose hands are the year's results, has been before us doing his all-important part in the crowning of the year with goodness for us. It would be no use for us to plough, no use to sow the seed, no use to do anything at all, if God sent no spring, and no sunshine, and no showers. But we find that he is always there before us when we go to do our part.

And so everywhere else. You want coal. You want gold. You want so much else that is necessary to your comfort and success. And sometimes you are perplexed as to what is to be done. You say the trees are being all cut down, and what are we going to do for fuel? But God has thought out that problem long before you were born, and he has stored away





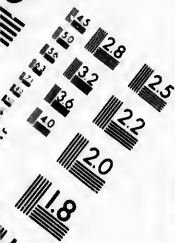
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enough coal in the bowels of the earth to do us after the woods have failed us. And before the coal is exhausted, there will be something else to keep us warm. Thus, in that direction, and in every other direction, we find that the Great Father is far ahead of us, foreseeing and providing, and so making our poor blundering doing a success.

And thus it is, too, in this work of saving men. We sometimes say: "I am not sure about trying to do any good to that poor fallen fellow-mortal. I am afraid it is no use calling him to come and see Jesus. It will be utterly fruitless work to try and do any good here." But sometimes when we try, we find that God has been there before us, long years before us, and our part is easy. At the first call almost he comes. We wonder at our success. But why wonder? Jesus has been there before us. That explains all.

A Scottish parish minister set out to visit everybody in the parish, some 6,000 people, and he visited them all excepting one poor wretch who lived alone up three flights of stairs. This man, he was told, was lost to every virtue, and he might receive rough treatment at his hands. At last the minister made up his mind he would call and see him. He knocked at his door, and hearing a rustling within he gently opened it. The man was crouching at the grate, and glared upon him like a wild beast. He fiercely asked him what he wanted, and was told that as the parish minister he was making his calls. The man told him he would kick him down stairs, if he did not leave. The minister told him that he had a call to make up the other flight, and he must not kick him down till he came back, as it would put him to a good deal of trouble to climb up again. "I will come in as I come down," said the minister, "and if you think it worth while to kick me down stairs simply because I called to see you for your good, you can do it." So he went up and paid his visit. Then he came down again, and the man asked him if he really came to see him. The minister told him that that was what he came for. At

this the poor wretch broke down, calling himself the most God-forsaken man on the earth. And so he was won, and so easily won. Ah! Jesus had been there before the minister called.

Oh what encouragement the text gives me to call to you to-day as I stand before you! I want to realize it just now. I am not calling into vacancy. I am not beating thin air. I am not here on a mere venture. I am speaking to men whom Jesus has seen in his own loving way. He is dealing with you. His Spirit is at you sooner than I can get at you. That is why I am emboldened, encouraged, to preach. You will hear me, because Jesus was to see you. That is how it is you are here. You have more anxious thoughts about these great questions than I think you have, and than you yourself would care to acknowledge. You are often so deeply exercised about your salvation. Your heart is so troubled, so filled with longings, so swept with a strange unrest. Your conscience is ill at ease. You wonder what is the matter with you, for you were not always thus. You could be careless, sinful, worldly, and sleep at nights, and sleep here, for that matter. Ah! the Spirit of God is dealing with you. You are wanted at the feet of Jesus. And so I come to you today, like another Philip, and I ask you to come with me and see Jesus, and that will put so many things right for you. In a few days we are to receive again another band of followers into the fellowship of the church; come, then, and see about that, and from one thing to another you will be led on, till you see the Son of God in His glory and power.

And there is one thing more here, ere I close what I have had to say to you. It is this, how good it is for us, like Nathanael, to get away alone with God sometimes. We live to-day in a whirl of excitement. It is the day of fast trains, fast boats, fast walking, fast running, fast everything. It is rush with the crowd. And even religion, is of that character as well as other things. It is going to

church, going to prayer-meeting, going to something every night in the week. Now, that is not spiritually healthful to us. We need to be alone, much alone, if we want to see Jesus as Nathanael saw him, and if we want to be thoughtful and earnest. It is a shallow religion that is grown up in the noise and excitement of public religious gatherings, a thing of words rather than principle. It is not strong, deep, lasting. Let us be much, like Nathanael, under the figtree, studying our Bible, thinking and meditating, praying in secret. Jesus will see us there as he will not see us here. He likes to see us here too, and we need to be here and ought to be here, but we need also to be there. We should come from there here, and we would receive more good than we often do.

But let us grasp this truth, that Jesus is interested in us, as interested in us individually interested in you and me, as in Nathanael yonder under the figtree. He sees us. He knows all about our troubles to be better than we are. When we go away alone to weep that we are so weak and wicked ; when we retire to pray and think ; when we bravely fling from us the evil that comes to us, and try to do the good we find to do, he sees us, and he helps us more than we know. Let us come to him then, that we may know him better.

IX.

The Story of the New Birth.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—JOHN III. 3.

THE story of a soul's spiritual birth ought to be of thrilling interest to us. If our natural birth is so important to us, a never-to-be-forgotten event; our spiritual birth is, in some respects, a still more important event. To be born is but to die perhaps; to be born again is to live forever. To be born is so often to add one more burden to the world's over-burden of guilt and woe, one more note to its dirge of sorrow, one more rill to its river of tears; to be born again is to help the world's joy, lessen its sorrows, contribute something to the working out of the blessed To-Be. All the harps of Heaven strike up and make music, when a soul is born again. Oh may that be to-day as we tell and hear this sweet gospel-story!

First, a word or two about Nicodemus. And he was a member of the Sanhedrim, the great judicial court of the Jews in the old days, one of the seventy or seventy-one who were supreme over the people in judicial matters. He was also a teacher, and well versed in Jewish law and lore. Some make out, or try to, that he was eminent as a teacher, second only to

the great Gamaliel, with whom, they claim, he was on the most intimate terms. He belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, the leading sect among the Jews, but unlike the sect he belonged to he was a man of broad and liberal ideas. He loved truth, and he was willing to go beyond his sect to find it. Though a teacher himself, and more or less eminent as a teacher, he was willing to learn the truth from whoever was able to teach him. And then, he seems to have been a man of considerable influence and wealth, one of the foremost men of his day. Such was Nicodemus.

He lived and taught in Jerusalem, and when Jesus came to the city to introduce his new doctrines there, he was among the first to come under his instruction. I suppose he had sometimes seen the prophet of Nazareth on the streets, and may have sometimes listened to him as he talked to the people in the temple courts, and he came to the conclusion that he was no ordinary man, that he had something to say that was good to say and good to know. So he was curious to know more of him and to learn more of his doctrine. Accordingly he found out where Jesus put up when he was in the city, and he sought a private interview with him. Some think he went by night because he was ashamed to be seen going by day.

And there may have been something in that. It was not easy for a public man like Nicodemus to break with the party he belonged to, and with so much, all at once, and come out boldly and openly in favor of the despised Nazarene. He had to be very sure of his ground before he could do it, and indeed before he could be expected to do it. And it is very evident that he was not sure of his ground, that he was only feeling his way. It did not do in the time of Nicodemus, and it does not do to-day, to go after every new thing that comes along and calls itself good. The man who does so will soon not know where he is or what he believes. Hence, I am disposed to regard his coming to Jesus by night in a much more favorable light than some do. I think it shewed him to be a

prudent man, and one anxious to discover the truth for himself. And the Lord found no fault with him for coming to see him under cover of darkness.

And just here, learn this, that the Lord wants us to come to him, and we must, if we would be taught the doctrine of the new birth. He alone can teach us that. The drawing of his love persuades us, the might of his grace enables, and the spirit he breathes upon us quickens us into life and energy, and so we are born again. Oh then, let us with Nicodemus yonder come to the feet of the mighty, loving, wise Christ, and there learn to-day for ourselves the same blessed lesson he learned in the long ago !

We have here, in the next place, his coming to Jesus and his interview with him.

Nothing can be more interesting, and more important, than a soul's setting out to know Jesus and the truth. And so simple is it very often, so interwoven perhaps with the ordinary every-day matters of this poor earthly life of ours.

You see Nicodemus coming home after his public duties perhaps, and telling his wife to hurry up supper as he is going out for the evening. His wife thinks nothing of that ; she is used to it. She imagines he is going to attend a special meeting of the great council, or some committee-meeting. He has little to say, for his thoughts are busy. Taking his staff, he remarks that he may be late, and out into the night he walks. We cannot follow him. Possibly he goes over to Bethany where Jesus usually stops. Or, it may be only along the street a little way. But whether long or short, there is much to come out of that walk. It is fraught with interest, results. I suppose that is the greatest walk he ever took in his life. So much depends on it. What are his thoughts ? No doubt he has thoughts, deep, anxious, brow-knitting, as alone he walks along the dark streets.

By and by he reaches the place, and his heart beats strangely as he lifts his hand to knock. Perhaps he hesitates, feels

almost like going back without going in. Is he doing right? Who is this Jesus of Nazareth? Is it not dangerous, wrong, for such as he to talk with him? And it is not always wise, nor right, nor safe, to talk with some men. But his mind is made up, and Nicodemus knocks, and is ushered in where Jesus is. After the usual salaams, he is seated. There is a pause. Jesus waits for the ruler to tell his errand, and he begins in a far-off, non-committal sort of way. He wants to feel his way. He is keen-witted, sharp as a lawyer, as hard to corner as a full-fledged politician. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

He wants to be complimentary, and yet he does not want to commit himself to anything more than what almost everybody will admit. "We know"—"*we*"; he does not say, *I*. But perhaps it is only fair to Nicodemus to say, that he came as near the point he wanted to get at as he knew how, for it is not likely he knew just what he wanted to get at.

And just here we may learn something that may help us. You think I am leading you a round-about way to the doctrine of the new birth. And so I am, and I am doing so on purpose. It is only by a round-about way we get at such doctrines. We do not go straight to them. We feel our way. We are led along, led often we know not how nor why. We stumble in a dark path to the feet of him who is the Light and Life of men.

I think preachers sometimes make a mistake in the way they preach these great doctrines of our faith. They preach them usually as they find them in systems of theology, and as they learned them at college. They formulate them, and then they give them to their people to swallow whole. And they do not. They take them indeed, or seem to, but when they get out to the door they spit them out. They do with them as some patients do with doctors' drugs. They do not like the nauseous stuff, and so they measure it out drop by drop, or teaspoonful

by teaspoonful, as directed, and then throw it out of the window, and if they get well they get well, and if they die they die.

Now to-day I want to tell you the story of a soul's birth, and a most interesting story it is. It is not dry doctrine I am telling, and it ought to come home to you, because it is true.

This Sabbath morning perhaps, as the church-bells rang out in the wintry air, calling the worshippers to the House of God, something said to you that you had better go. You did not care about it. You seldom do. You feel tired after the week's work, and the services are so dull and stupid. Still, something or other kept at you, till you made up your mind you would go. And so you are here at the feet of Jesus. Or, Wednesday night comes, and your wife says, "John, come to the prayer-meeting with me." You do not know what to think about it. You were never at prayer-meeting in your life, and it does not seem to be just the place for a man of the world, such as you are, to be at. Still, after a while, with a little more urging, you make up your mind to go. And you go. You feel very nervous about it. You are afraid of the people's remarks. Somebody may smile, or sneer. But step by step you are led on almost against your will, and you are at the prayer-meeting, and face to face with Jesus and so much.

Now, my hearer, it is in just such commonplace ways as these that men have found, and do find, their way to the feet of Jesus and to the truth. They do not intend anything. But he intends so much. It is to while away a useless hour you are here, to meet a friend; perhaps you cannot tell why you are here. But Jesus is here, and he has something to say to you, something of awful interest to your soul.

Thus it is we are all led, and so simply too, so naturally, just as we are led in other things; and yet, out of such simple leading, out of such stumbling and blundering on our part, comes to us God's grand eternal good.

But this leads me to take up, still further, Christ's words to Nicodemus and to us. And here opens up to us so much; here open up to us all the hard questions of the new birth.

And notice this, notice how abruptly He comes to close quarters with him. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee." Nicodemus had said in his distant way, "we know"; but Jesus at once narrows it down to themselves two. "*I say unto thee.*" Ah! we like to lose ourselves in the crowd when there is a duty to do, a responsibility pressing itself home upon us, a question that is uncomfortably personal. But we cannot thus lose ourselves. Face to face with Jesus here, we are not allowed to shoulder any responsibilities upon others. He singles us out, and with a directness that there is no eluding he brings the truth straight home to us: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee."

This is a matter for you, my hearer, a personal matter, just as much so as for Nicodemus. You think perhaps you are good enough, as good as others. You pay your debts. You have no bad habits. You are straight with the world. You fear God, and walk in the way of his commandments. What more, then, is wanted? Ah! Nicodemus was as good as you are, better perhaps. He did not go to Jesus because he had fallen into bad habits that had gained the mastery over him, and were dragging him down in spite of himself. He did not go to him as a sinner crying for mercy. No. He went to Jesus as one teacher goes to another to compare notes. He wants to find out what Jesus knows that he does not know. But Jesus soon shews him, and he shews you, that neither he nor you perhaps, had yet begun to be good—that the first lesson of true knowledge about being good and doing good had yet to be learned. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

We know what it is to be born. There was a time when we were not, and then there comes a time when we are. We begin to be, very small at first, but we grow and grow, grow physically, grow intellectually, until we come to be what we are. But to be born again, born anew, born of God, born when we are old—what is that? Nicodemus asked in wonder what this sort of birth was. And after nineteen centuries of blessed

gospel sunlight men still wonder what it is. It is something our ordinary intelligence cannot instruct us about. The schools cannot teach it to us. Science is puzzled here. Do not be surprised, then, if I cannot make it very clear to you what it is. It is something you must experience to know. You must be born, and born some time too, before you can know what it is to be born. And you must be born again, and born again for some time, before you can know what it is to be born again.

About all that the christian can say with regard to it is this : "Once I was blind, now I see. Once I was dead, now I live, live evermore. Once I cared only for the world, its follies, pleasures, wealth, honors, and I followed after them with all the might I had ; but now I seek the things above, I desire God, I hunger and thirst after righteousness, I delight in holiness "

Nicodemus was born again. That interview led to it. Paul was born again, born on the road to Damascus, born at the feet of the Lord. I trust that men are being born again here to-day. As they listen to this that I am trying to tell them, the Spirit of Jesus comes upon them, and they are born again.

From this moment there is in them a life, a mysterious divine life, that will slowly, but surely, grow up to the fulness of stature that is in Christ Jesus. The Spirit is the producing cause. The Word of God, the truth of the gospel, brought home to the conscience, is the chief instrument. James says : "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth."

The new birth is God's act, a sort of new creation, and is instantaneous. It is done for us, not by us. And yet there are means to be used. Nicodemus used means when he went to see Jesus. We are using means when we are here to-day, and at the prayer service on Wednesday evening. We are using means when our ears and hearts are attentive to the word preached.

Means are so weak, and can accomplish so little, and yet, without means, without our poor instrumentality, God accom-

plishes nothing of good for us and the world. There is gold for us, but we must dig it, and it cannot be ours till we dig it. What harvests in our fields for us! But if they are to be ours, we must plough and sow and wait. What possibilities of good and greatness there are in these heads and hearts of ours! But there is nothing till we laboriously work them out. So with this thing, the new birth. I cannot tell you how or why, but this I know, that if we will make use of such means as we have, we will be born again; but if we neglect such means as we have, we will never be born again.

Here is a grain of wheat, a bushel of such grains. I look at it, so rich in color, so plump and fully ripe, just such wheat as a farmer would like to sow. Now, I cannot tell whether the vital principle is in that wheat. I have no doubt it is, but I cannot see it, I cannot feel it. But I have a field, and late and early I have toiled in it to prepare it for the wheat I have, and some beautiful morning in May I go and sow my wheat. And it grows, and in the autumn I reap twenty where I sowed one. But suppose I keep my wheat instead of sow it. I keep it dry and nice. How long do you think it would be in yielding me twenty-fold there? Never, never.

Now, here I am such as I am. I cannot tell what the Lord has done for me. I know not whether my name is in the book of life. I know not whether I am one of the elect. I know not whether the regenerating principle is in me. And moreover, it is none of my business. My business is to go to work to use such means as I have, to sow myself, to work out my salvation, to seek Jesus. And I do so, and find.

But suppose some one far wiser than I am, some one skilled in dialectics, comes to me here, and demonstrates to me the utter uselessness of means. He tells me to go home and wait for the vivifying breath of God to wake me up. And so I go home, and wait yonder in a careless world-state for the power of God to do something for me and with me. Ah! when thus would I come to know the truth or be any good here or hereafter? Never! never!

It is in regeneration as it is in other things. I did not know whether there was anything in me when I set out to work out what I wanted to be at. I did not know whether I had brains enough to puzzle out the lessons that lay between me and my life-work. And for a long while it seemed a question. But I tried, and I am trying still, and I am going to try to the end.

And so with you too in what you are trying to work out. In the same way, then, let us work out our salvation. Right here at the feet of Jesus is where to begin, and right now is when to begin, and on and on through the days and the years keep at it, and when the results of life come to be made up, you will find that there is something for you, a crown for your head, a ring for your finger, a place at God's right hand.

Now, you think, some of you, that I am making just a little too much of means, more than a Calvinist ought to make. You say to me: "That is works, works." Ah! I do not think we can make too much of means, for God makes so much of them. Tell me of anything he does for us, and he does all for us that is done;—but tell me of anything he does, without means. You know how it is with regard to every day matters. It does not do to neglect means there. The sun shines, and the showers fall, but if the sunshine and the showers are going to fill your barns, you must be up and at it with all the might you have. Your means cannot do much, but they do so much that there can be no harvest for you without them.

And so in the higher matters of life and destiny as well. You want to be born again. You want to be saved. You want to be yonder at God's right hand. Well, my hearer, you must use the means. But perhaps you do not believe in means. You waste your Sabbaths. You would not go to a prayer-meeting for a good deal. You do not read your Bible. You do not pray. You keep Heaven and all that is good out of your thoughts. Ah! you are using means, let me warn you; yes, you are using means—the means to blast your hope, to wreck your life, to damn your soul, and such means alas! will be terribly effectual.

O my hearer, rise up to-day in the strength of a holy purpose, and, with the help of God, set out for Heaven. On your knees, ask, with such words as you have, and with such ideas of truth as you have, the Almighty Son of God to teach you the first lesson of the Divine life, namely this: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And he will, and you will be born again.

We are close to salvation now, close to Jesus, so close. And perhaps we are feeling as if we would like to be saved. Our heart is tender. We are troubled, anxious. We know we have not been doing right, walking in the fear and favor of God, and here to-day we see the folly of such a course, and how it must end. But still we hesitate. We are slow to yield to the holy persuasion that is taking hold of us. Jesus says: "Yield now." The Spirit says: "Yield now." The word of God says: "Yield now." The people of God say: "Yield now." But other things, business, pleasures, companionship, society's influence, and so on, say: "Do not yield; it is weak; take more time; next Sabbath will do as well as this; next year will do better than this." And there we are, pulled different ways, and we know not what to do. Thus it was with Nicodemus, and thus it is with every man. But he let the truth lead him, and he was saved. And let us do as he did, and we will come to know the blessedness of being born again.

My hearer, I have been setting before you in a simple practical way the way of life; and now I say to you, Come! Come as you are! Come now. Let this be your spiritual birthday, the beginning of days to you. With your heart bowed, say to Jesus: O Jesus, teach me how to be saved; teach me what it is to be born again!

The Soul · its Worth, its Loss.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”—MATT. XVI. 26.

OUR Lord had been setting before his disciples what it is to be his followers. There was danger of them building themselves up with the idea that he was going to do much for them in the shape of mere worldly good. There was danger of their taking him to be a king like the kings of men, regarding his kingdom like the kingdoms of the nations, cherishing utterly mistaken conceptions as to what he was to do for them and the world, and so losing the good of the mission he came to work out. He wants therefore to disabuse their minds of any false notions they might be entertaining with regard to what following him was, and what it was going to do for them, and to tell them just what it was. It was self-renunciation. It meant the cross. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.”

But then, it is objected here, that such a life is not much of an improvement on life as it is. It is death rather than life. It is losing one's life to save it, and you do not save what you

lose. If following Christ leads to the cross, that is about the worst sort of life-losing one can meet with. The conclusion is therefore inevitable: If you want to save yourself, if you want to live; then keep clear of Christ, do not be a christian.

And there is some truth in that. If you want to have it easy, no hard work to do, never to be tired or sick, no cross to bear, no temptations to withstand, why then following Christ is not much of a way for you. Where he leads is the way of the cross, and a hard way it was for him, and a hard way it is for his, but not so hard for his as him.

Now, he answers the supposed objection by a reference to an old proverbial saying, a sort of wise maxim, to the effect, that losing one's life is the way to save it, and saving one's life is the way to lose it. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." In other words, the best way to take care of one's self is not to take the best care of one's self, and the best way to save one's life is not to save it. We all understand how that is. We may save our life in some respects only to sacrifice it in some other respects. We may sacrifice the higher for the sake of the lower. We may sacrifice the soul for the sake of the body. We may sacrifice the Forever for the sake of the Now. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Now, in further illustrating the text, observe first here, that there is about each of us what we call our self, our soul. We stand up, erect, strong, our feet on the earth, and our head pointing heavenwards, and we say, *I*. Perhaps indeed that is where we get the *I*, a letter in the alphabet that is more to some of us than all the rest.

What, then, is that *I* of ours? And perhaps it is the *what I have* as well as the *what I am*. At least some of us would like to think so, and we act so. With us *I* is not only our little self, but the ground we stand on, and the much or little of

space we fill with our importance and self-consequence. It is what we own as well as what we are—our house, our shop, our farm, our wide estate, our kingdom.

I may put my feet close together, and thus standing on the smallest possible portion of this earth, and therefore all the more erect, and all the higher up toward Heaven, I may say, I! Or, on the other hand, I may spread out my feet just as far as I dare spread them, and thus uncomfortably sprawled out, and standing with difficulty, and of course not very high up towards Heaven, I may say, I!!

And indeed it is easy for us to fall into the habit of identifying men by what they have rather than by what they are. We think and speak of them as possessed of this and that, as thus and thus titled and honored, as related to So-and-So. We think of a man's business or profession rather than himself—the acres he cultivates, the house he lives in, the position he occupies, the dress he wears, the crown on his head, the sword that dangles by his side, the money he counts and clinks, and much else of that sort.

And, it must be granted, that in a world such as ours, a world where appearances go for so much, the things a man has, or seems to have, go a long way towards making him what he is, and it is not always easy for us to discriminate between what is his and himself. What would many a man of great prominence be without the money he happens to have, the accidents of birth and station, the age he belongs to, the place he lives and does his work in, the position he occupies, those around him and with whom he has so much to do, the congregation he ministers to, the people he represents and reigns over, yea even the clothes he wears—the gold lace or lawn? These and such like things make him. We cannot see and know what a man is apart from what he has, and so we look at what he has to see what he is, and thus we form our estimate of him.

But it is evident there is a wide difference between what a man has and is. Across a rich man's life may sweep the tornado

of disaster as in the case of the Patriarch of Uz, and all he has is gone, only what he is left. And how changed he is to his acquaintances! They regard him with askance looks, and speak to him with harsh words. Ah! it was what he had they took off their hats to and respected—his vast wealth, his fine clothes, his dignity and importance, not himself. And every day we make the same mistake that Job's friends made, and it is a serious mistake.

Let us get nearer a man than the front door of his fine house, the shop he does business in, his official public life. We do not know him looking at him so far off. Seeing him only thus, we have no proper estimate of his real worth. And sometimes God helps us to see what a man is apart from what he has. It is a sore process, but it is sometimes necessary both for himself and his friends. He did that with Job; sometimes he does it with others.

A man is a king perhaps; so God stirs up rebellion around him, and with rude traitorous hands tears off his crown, strips off his royal purple, lets us see him a simple unofficial plain man. If he has wealth, sometimes He lets disaster come, wave after wave tumbling high over one another, until he is stripped so bare that there is only his poor naked self left. And then it is seen what a grand manhood was back of what he had.

But you can come nearer still. And so, as in Job's case, the Lord lets disease pick his bones, the worms feed upon his flesh, until there is almost nothing left of him but a bare soul. And now, at this last analysis, we get at the very self of a man, his best if there is any best about him—his glory and power, that about him which neither the chances nor changes of the years can give or take away, his I, his soul. Job could rise up from amid the ruins of all he had been in the days of his prosperity, and with only enough left to him to hold his soul, he could say, I! And now he can say it as he could not when there was so much piled around him that was his, not himself. Thus the soul of a man is the I AM of every man.

Again: The worth of the soul. That the soul is of great worth, that it has a value beyond human arithmetic to calculate, is clear from what the Lord Himself says. His argument implies that. It is based on that idea. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

You often hear men talking about what a man is worth. They rate him according to what he has rather than what he is. He has so much property, so much money invested, and he is worth so many thousand dollars.

And men get into the way of rating themselves according to what may be called their commercial value, and so they rate themselves too high or too low. One thinks he is such a great man, worth so much, because he has houses and lands and wealth, whereas in real soul value he may not count for much. Another may say of himself sadly: "I am a poor man, a very poor man. I do not own one foot of land. The house I live in is not my own. I have no money in the bank. I have nothing."

But, poor man, you have a soul. You have a life within you that can never die, and that may be an eternal rapture. You have thoughts perhaps that can range the universe over, and a capacity to enjoy whatever is worth having there. At your feet rises a mystic ladder reaching up to God, and up that ladder you can climb to where God is, and Christ shines, and the seraphs sing. With a soul, then, of such possibilities, such wide-ranging and high-reaching capabilities, a man is not poor, need not be poor. The universe is his. Heaven and earth are his. They are his to cull satisfaction from, to reap harvests of good from, to possess and enjoy. The millionaire is poor compared with the man whose soul is what a soul is capable of possessing and enjoying of good and glory, power and progress.

The soul's worth is seen, too, in this, that it is the soul that gives to material things whatever of value and usefulness they have. Before there was a living human soul there was a

world, and in its mountains were mines of gold and glittering gems, its valleys were capable of yielding abundant harvests, out of its timber and rocks might be hewn fleets and built up cities, and out of its natural forces might be developed so much; but all was waste and useless till God breathed into the clay He shaped into the human form, and man became a living soul. If gold has any preciousness, it is the soul that gives it its preciousness. It is the soul's ingenuity that extracts it from its darkness, purifies it of its dross, shapes it into a crown, weaves it into lace, and makes it all it has come to be in this age when the dollar is all but omnipotent for good or ill. But it is not the dollar, but the soul unseen behind it that is the power. The lightning wreathed the cloud with its fiery links from the days of Noah, but not until these modern times was it found out how to utilize its flashing fleetness, and make it the useful, yea the indispensable thing it has come to be. And so with everything else of usefulness and worth in the world. Thus how great the worth of the soul, when all that is, owes whatever it is, and whatever of worth it has, to the soul.

But it is when we come to the cross we see as we cannot see anywhere else the soul's priceless worth. We find blood and agony here. We find here the dying soul of God's own Son. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Ah! not gold nor gems avail here. Not crowns nor thrones can ransom the soul. And so from Heaven comes down the Son of God, and He gives Himself, His blood, His life, for the soul.

Now, there is much here to contemplate, much to think about, but this must strike us, how much the soul is worth in God's eyes, when he would give his Son to die on the cross for it. Only he who made the soul, gifted it with all its powers, endowed it with all its graces, made it capable of so much gladness and glory, gave it something of Himself, knows its true value. If the soul were what some would have us believe it is, a material something, a thing of dust and to return to dust, a life like the insect life that buzzes itself out in a sum-

mer day and is no more, would there have been any cross and any Christ? No. The soul would not have been worth any such expenditure. Thus the cross means to me that my soul is worth much; it is worth the Son of God's dying for.

Again: The Loss of the Soul. If the soul is worth so much, what a loss to lose it. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

There are things you lose, and you say: "Let them go; they are not of much account any way!" And you put yourself to no trouble and expense to seek and find them. But there are other things you would not lose for a great deal. You put yourself to no end of trouble, and you spare yourself no expense, to recover them. What you would not do to vindicate your honor, maintain your good name, regain your health, save your life! I think you would part with every dollar you had. You would sell your houses and lands. To save your life, to regain your lost health, to re-establish your character, what would you not do that could be done?

Sometimes it comes to be with a man in a very rude sort of way: "Your money or your life!" And his money is much to him perhaps. Through busy weary years he toiled for it and gathered it. He saved and scraped dollar after dollar till he had come to be rich. And he does not like to lose his money; it is hard to lose it. But it is still harder to lose his life. Life is more to him than his thousands, more to him than millions. So, because life is more to him than his money, he parts with his money. He tries to compromise. He hands over \$500, then \$1000, then \$10,000, and then at last all, and he thanks the Lord that he gets away with his life.

But the soul is more to a man than even his life. His life is only for a brief time, a few years at the most, but his soul is to live forever. If, then, a man will part with all he has for his life, what will he not part with for his soul? That is the way you and I would reason about it, and in some such way our Lord reasons about it. He asks in strong words:

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

And yet, somehow, our reasoning is lame; it does not hold. Most men alas! think but little of their soul. They value money, and they value life, but they do not value the soul. For the sake of money and life they will lose their soul.

Once a rich young man came to our Lord with the question how he could have eternal life; in other words, how he might save his soul. Just then, it would appear, something had led him to concern about his soul. Our Lord told him that to save his soul he must part with all he had. It was with him: "Your money or your soul!" He looked at the hard alternative, and then he went away. His wealth was more to him than his soul. That young man would have sold all to save his life; but he did not sell all nor anything to save his soul.

And that young man was no exception. To save their life men will suffer almost everything, if it is necessary. They will cross continents to do so. They will go out of business, resign lucrative positions, part with all they have in the world, to live perhaps ten years. But these same men, were you to ask them, as the Lord asked the rich young man, to make a sacrifice for their soul's sake, would think it a cruel sort of exaction, a thing too hard for them to do. Men who are earning day by day fair wages, making money, growing in wealth, set so little value on their soul, and all that is being done for their soul, that perhaps they give less than ten cents a Sabbath to religious purposes. You think that is not a fair way to put it, and you object to it. But that is one way of putting it, and it reveals to us an aspect of the question that is not pleasant to contemplate. Cheap souls! the cheaper the better with some of us! But the Creator of souls and the Redeemer of souls do not think them cheap. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Now, the soul is in danger of being lost—my soul, your soul. And to lose the soul is more than to lose life. It is to lose the greatest treasure we have ; it is to lose all.

We lose our soul, in a way, when we forget we have a soul, or do not know that we have a soul. A man may have what he does not know he has. Somebody rummaging among his old books and papers may discover a gem of a book, a book that in its faded pages contains what the whole literary world has been in search of for centuries. Or, in his garret, buried up among dust and lumber, is an old picture, the chef d'œuvre of one of the old masters, and that lost work of art is worth more in money value than all his wealth.

Now, in you and me, buried perhaps amid worthless rubbish, the dirt and dust of wasted years, lost to all that is grand and good, is a soul, a gem alongside of which the famous Koh-i-noor is of no account, a work of art of infinite value. We are so busy with life, so absorbed in everything else but the right thing, so taken up with pleasure and the world and the things of time and sense, that we hardly know we have a soul at all. At all events, we do not know the worth of the soul we have, and so its worth is lost to us. What it might be to us and the world, were it where and such that it could shine, and make its light and power felt ! What a gladness and glory it might be ! Instead of grovelling where we are amid mean earthly gratifications and sensualities, herding with hogs, companionating with fools, we might be stars shining in the night, the light and guide of others. But our soul is as though it were not, and so is lost to us and others. It is hidden, neglected, undeveloped, and therefore worthless.

But there comes One, a shining One, who loves souls and knows their worth, and who wants us to know their worth, and he searches among what we call our trumpery and trash, our neglected garret ; and out from dust and darkness, after much searching, he brings forth the lost soul, still bearing, though sadly defaced, marks of its divine origin. He is sure

he has found something better than gold or diamonds. So he patiently cleanses it of its dust. By a skill all his own he restores its faded beauty, develops slowly, slowly its wondrous powers of love and light, and reveals to the world the glory of his discovery. He has found what was lost, and there is great joy.

Men lose their souls in their efforts to gain the world. They barter away their souls for gold. They say: "Soul, I want to make money, and I care not much how I make it so long as I make it, and you must keep out of the way while I am doing it. It is inconvenient to have you around just now, questioning, and fault-finding, and meddling."

And they make their money, make it in ways that it does not do to enquire too particularly into, and they make lots of it. They gain the world. But what about their soul? What about love, conscience, faith, hope, reverence, and all that goes to make a soul? Lost! lost! And what is a man profited by gaining the world and losing his soul?

There comes a day in his history when he can make no more money, when he is old and must die; when judgment and eternity are upon him, and now he begins to think about his soul. It was inconvenient once to have a soul, but now he needs it. Oh how he seeks! You hear him crying in the night. But his soul is lost. He has only money, and money wrongly gotten, stolen, squeezed out of the hard earnings of the honest poor, and it cannot help him. It is a torment to him. Now he knows what this means: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The soul lost! Origen thinks *psyche*, the Greek word here for soul is derived from another Greek word which signifies to grow cold, and his idea is that the soul is called so, "because it has waxed cold from the fervor of just things." But it is not so cold but that it may be kindled up again to its original holy glow.

There is a beautiful Greek romance about Psyche, generally believed to be a tale of the human soul. A king had three daughters, the youngest of whom was Psyche, who was very beautiful. This beautiful princess was hated by Venus because of her beauty, and she did all she could to effect her ruin. She tried to get her married to a monster. But in this she failed. At last Psyche, who was too much given to listen to silly stories, got into trouble, and she wanted to put an end to herself. But nothing in nature could destroy her. She could live, but not die. At last poor Psyche fell under the influence of a sleep from the infernal world, and she slept and slept on in the dangerous sleep. But hope came to her, and purified through suffering, she awoke to a new and happy life.

Thus runs the old Greek tale, and how true that the soul is ready to be lost. How true that a dangerous sleep has fallen upon the soul, and it sleeps on through the awful earnest years. But the Redeemer of souls comes, and he loves the soul, and awakes it to a new life of love with him. He marries it to himself, and wins its love and devotion, and takes it to Heaven with him.

But alas! that is not true of every soul. There is a loss beyond even his finding, a loss that is so forever. And a lost soul, a soul in Hell, who can picture the horror of it?

Sad world indeed, ah! who can bear
Forever there to dwell,
Forever sinking in despair,
In all the pains of hell?

Conscience, the never-dying worm,
With torture gnaws the heart;
And woe and wrath in every form,
Is now the sinner's part.

XI.

The Soul's Divine Suitor.

*"I sleep, but my heart waketh:
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying:
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:
For my head is filled with dew,
My locks with the drops of the night.
I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"*

—SONG OF SOL. v. 2, 3.

WE have here the tender and thrilling love-story of the Lord's dealings with careless half-awakened souls, and the unkind and heartless way their carelessness leads them to act towards him. If then, my hearer, I can interpret the passage to you, shewing that the picture so faithfully sketched here is that of yourself, and so true to what you are, it may help to awaken you to a new earnestness, and lead you to be his as you have not yet been his. That is what I want to do, if the Lord will help me, his spirit inspire me.

I am not sure that even the genius of Solomon, gifted and

wise and brilliant as he was, grasped the full import of what he wrote when he wrote this Song of songs. But indeed so often men find that the Lord makes so much more of their poor weak words than they intended when they spoke or wrote them. Solomon sings away of his loves, voicing the music of his great soul in rhythmic words, but little does he know perhaps that the Spirit of God touches his lyre, and so we have here the honey and the frankincense and spice and myrrh of the gospel, the thrilling story of how souls are won to God, and men are saved. We do not interpret the book aright, we do not get at its beauty and sweetness, if we do not spiritualize its themes. A greater than Solomon is here, and it is yours and mine to catch the inspiration of his Divine presence.

Now, in further illustrating the text, you will observe, we have here, in the first place, an expressive and suggestive description of the spiritual state, in which, it seems to me, so many among us are just now. It is described as that sort of sleep where the sleeper is more or less conscious of what is going on around, and yet not sufficiently awake to take hold and do. "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

There are different sorts of sleep. There is the sleep that hears nothing, sees nothing, fears nothing, is utterly unconscious of all that is going on, and cares not what happens. There is the sleep that all night long dreams happy dreams, and wakes only, if it wakes at all, to tell them, and when it has told them, shuts its eyes and dreams again. And then there is the sleep that we have here, the sleep that protests it is awake, and yet it is not awake enough to get up and go to work. "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

My young hearer, you know all about this sort of sleep. You have had experience here. You are called in the morning in good time, but perhaps you have been up late, and you find yourself so overcome with sleep. You hear the call, the loud call of duty. It rings in your ears, and finds an echo in your heart. It is a call you know you should heed, and you

mean to do it. And so with your eyes still shut, and from under the bed-clothes somewhere, you answer: "All right! I am awake; I will be up presently." But perhaps the one who calls you is not so sure, and the calling continues louder and louder. You are annoyed, vexed, angry. You protest with harsh words that you are awake, that you hear, and that there is no need of so much calling. But you do not get up; you sleep on.

This is the sort of sleep that sleeps in church, and sees nothing out of place in doing so. You will see the sleepy christian, as the sermon drags its slow length along, put his head on the book-board, as if to pray; or stretch himself out, lying well back in his pew, as if to take it all in, hear all the better. But soon his eyes are seen to close, and his mouth to open; he is asleep. When however you come to rally him on his being asleep in church, and on the undignified appearance he presented, he will stoutly protest perhaps, that he was not asleep at all, that he heard every word the preacher said, that he only shut his eyes so that he might hear all the better, and that it is a virtue rather than otherwise to sleep as he slept. It was only his eyes that were asleep, asleep so far that they were closed to the things that were going on around him, and that would have, had he seen, distracted his thoughts and interfered with his worship; but his mind, his soul, his heart, his conscience, all that is best about him, were not asleep; they were wide awake and deeply interested. "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

But it is the spiritual state described here that we have to do with specially. And this is not the sort of soul-sleep that hears nothing, sees nothing, feels nothing, fears nothing; the soul-sleep that no preaching can disturb, no warning words can wake up to concern. Nor is it the soul-sleep that dreams of Heaven, makes itself believe that all is well when all is not well, rejoices in a wretched self-security, and has so much to tell of how it feels, the peace it enjoys, the happiness it has

that others have not. These are dangerous spiritual sleep-states to be in, and there is not much to hope for those who fall into them, yield themselves to their fatal influence. The spiritual sleep we have here, bad as it is, is far more hopeful than either the dead-asleep state or the dream-sleep state. It is half-awake, and half-awake may soon be wide-awake, if we only keep at it. If, however, we let it alone, it may soon settle down to the dead asleep state, or, what is quite as bad, it may fall to dreaming and trifling.

The spiritual sleeper described here is more or less conscious that he is not what he ought to be, and that is a hopeful sign. He is awake enough to know and feel he ought to be wide awake, and not only wide-awake, but also up and doing. He hears the call of duty, and it makes him so uncomfortable to hear it. He turns over, rubs his sleepy eyes, makes as though he would get up, means to some time, but he does not always. Before he knows where he is he is back to sleep again, and sometimes the grand opportunity is lost to him.

O my hearer, you are that sleeper. Let me tell you what makes me think so. You hear, and you are more or less interested, and sometimes no little troubled. You are rather sensitive to what is said. The call of the gospel ringing in your ear day by day is disturbing, annoying. It vexes you sometimes. You feel like getting out of the reach of it. Ah! thank God that your conscience is not yet seared, that your heart is not yet dead to the nobler and better impulses of what is good and right.

But then, you want to believe yourself, and you want others to believe, that you are not so bad after all, not so careless and unconcerned, not so asleep as you seem to be. You have your own serious thoughts, your own anxious times, your own hours of earnest wakefulness, your own misgivings and perplexities, your own tears and troubles. You admit you are not what you ought to be, not as earnest and anxious as you ought to be, not as awake as you ought to be. You admit you are asleep,

more or less asleep, too much asleep; but then you want us to know that you are not so asleep as some think you are, not so asleep that you care not how it is with you nor what becomes of you, not so asleep that your heart has ceased to beat. Your eyes sleep, but your heart keeps awake, and so there are life and hope for you. "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

Again: Christ at the door, knocking, calling, urgent. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."

The picture here is that of a lover who comes to visit his intended bride somewhat later than he is wont, and he finds her retired and asleep. He knocks, and calls gently, addressing her in the most endearing terms, and trying to tell her how uncomfortable he is out in the chilly dewy night-air. He wants her to get up and receive him, even though it is somewhat late. But while she is not so asleep as not to hear at all, she is too much asleep to appreciate the warmth and devotion of his love, and so she lets him knock and call and urge in vain. He even tries the door, so urgent is he. But at last the knocking and calling cease. He goes away. And then she wakes up in great concern, and attires herself, and even ventures out into the dark streets to seek him.

But the love of Christ for our souls is more wonderful still. It is that story, my hearer, so thrilling and romantic, that we have told us here in these tender human words. Oh I think when the whole story comes to be told of how the Beloved Son of God won us to be his; how he found us living our careless, sinful, worldly life, sleeping the sleep that is hard to wake up to anything that is good, indulging in an ease that is slow to put itself to any trouble for any purpose that is in the direction of our own salvation or that of others; and how with infinite patience and devotion he kept at us, knocking at the door of our heart, calling us with the sweet love-voices of the gospel, and at last persuading us to yield ourselves to be his, it will be

found to be a romance of love the like and equal of which has never been put into human words! What beloved is like thy beloved, O my soul! None can be compared to him. He is the chief among ten-thousand. He cannot be equalled nor surpassed for the glory of his perfections, the splendor of his virtues, the excellences of his character, the riches of His grace, the wealth of his love. He has no equal. He stands alone, unrivalled, unsurpassed. He is perfect in loveliness. He is so lovely that he is altogether lovely.

But, to keep the picture we have here of him, you see, my hearer, a loving one, a prince of most noble bearing, standing knocking at a humble door, and not only knocking, but calling, urging, pleading. It is night, and the cold night-dews chill and wet him. Still he knocks on, and in words that ought to win for his love a warm reception, he pleads, and calls, and urges his suit: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."

O my soul, thou art that half-asleep, half-awake one the Prince of Glory has come to woo and win with his love. It is in very humble circumstances he finds thee, and thou art not worthy of him. Still he loves thee, for there is no accounting for love, and because he loves thee, he seeks thee where thou art, and calls thee by so many sweet love-names, and counts thee so precious. For love of thee, O soul, he has turned his back upon Heaven's glory, uncrowned his radiant brow, exiled himself; and, so poor, so emptied of all he was, he wanders far forth into this waste-land world, exposing himself to hardships and dangers, the misunderstandings of friends and the bitter cruelties of enemies, the crushing burdens of the poor and the despair and death of the cross, and he comes as a suitor, a suppliant, to thy door, seeking to enjoy thy confidence and love.

And how is he received? Ah! he finds thy door locked against him, and the one he loves with so much of love, and for whom he has given up so much to seek and find, to woo

and win, retired, and asleep, and indifferent. He is worthy of a very different reception. Why is it, O soul, that thou art not waiting, watching, with open door, and open arms, to receive thy beloved? That is the reception due him from thee. That is the reception he has a right to expect. He had sent thee word that he was coming, and to wait for him. But instead of waiting his coming, thou puttest out thy light, and lockest thy door, and retirest to sleep, and when he comes, weary and wet, he finds he is not wanted, and nothing goes to the heart of love like that. Not wanted! not wanted!

But he does not at once turn away from thee. He pities thee, pities thy indifference. He wants thee to know his love, the good he can do thee, the help he can bring thee. He is sure it is because thou knowest not who he is, and what he can do for thee, and the love he has for thee, that thou art so cold and indifferent towards him. So he comes to thy door, and he stands there and knocks. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

He is surprised at himself, surprised that he should be where he is, surprised that he should ever have to suffer such indignities for love's sake. "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock!*" But love can do what nothing else can do, and bear what nothing else can bear, and so he stands at the door that should be open to receive him, and where he should be welcome, and he knocks, and knocks.

And not satisfied with knocking, he calls, urges, pleads. He makes use of the most endearing terms. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." He tries to awaken the soul from its lethargy and heartless indifference. He would interest it in him, stir up its sympathies, touch its pity, tap the fountain of its tears, if it has any tears to weep for him, any heart to feel for him. "My head is filled with dew; my locks with the drops of the night."

O my soul, is this the way thou conductest thyself towards thy Redeemer? Is it thus thou rewardest his love and self-

sacrifice and devotion? O awake to the true sense of thy cruel ingratitude, and make haste to cast thyself at his feet, for he is infinitely worthier of thee than thou art of him.

Again: Empty Excuses. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"

We saw, my hearer, the soul, yours and mine, in a sort of half-asleep, half-awake state, a common enough state alas! for souls to be in. We saw the fair one—she thought she was fair—shut and bolt her door when she knew her Divine Saitor was coming to visit her, and how he had to stand out in the chill night-air, and knock, and call, and plead. We saw how she had retired to be out of the way, and was more or less asleep, or perhaps she feigned sleep. We saw how she heard the knocking, and the calling, and the urgent pleading, but she did not want to wake up. She lay still, and seemed as though she heard not. And yet she was not uninterested in what she heard. She had some compunctions of conscience. She began to feel she was acting an unworthy part; she was trifling with and ill-using a love that she could ill afford to trifle with and ill-use. And so she began to relent somewhat, and to muse thus: "I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh."

But then she had her excuses, such as they were, for not getting up, and any sort of excuse is better than none. She was undressed, and it was such a trouble to dress again: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" And then she had washed her feet before retiring, and to get up, and go down stairs, and open the door, would undo all that had been done. "I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" You and I would say, they were rather lame excuses, not much in them, altogether too thin.

But that is just the point. The best excuses are no excuses at all. Ask men why they are not christians, and they will urge a variety of reasons. Perhaps they will rail against the

people of God, and blame them for it all. The short-comings and inconsistencies of christians have indeed a great deal to answer for. Or, perhaps they will excuse themselves on the ground that they are too busy to give attention to so weighty a matter. Or, perhaps there are questions of grave importance, doctrinal questions, points of nice distinction, and they want to have them all settled. But, one and all, they are empty excuses, wretched subterfuges, that are of no weight whatever when the salvation of the soul is at stake, when it comes to the reception or rejection of Christ.

O men, do you let such reasons as you urge for your not being up to your duty here, your not being christians, your not being members of the church, and so on, stand in your way in other things? Because, for instance, somebody you know, some fellow-citizen of yours, some one who lives on the same street and goes to the same church, makes a terrible failure of it in business, cheats his creditors, turns out to be an arrant scoundrel, and gives the whole city a bad business-name :—does that, I ask, deter any energetic business-man from going into business? You know it does not. You say : “I will go into business right over the ruins of his failure, and I will guard against the mistakes he made, and so succeed where he failed.” And you do it.

Why, then, are you not doing it here? The truth is, my hearer, you are not awake to your duty, your soul is still asleep. If you were wide awake, if you were really concerned, if you were in earnest and realized how matters were, you would not sit still and die in your sins there. You would say : “Here is life ; I must have it ! Here is salvation for my poor soul ; I must get it. Here is my duty, the door of opportunity for me ; oh to be saved ! oh to be Christ's ! Is he near ? Is Jesus at my door standing knocking ? Oh let me to his arms ! Not a moment will I keep him out in the cold of the night waiting on me. Jesus, blessed Jesus, welcome, welcome !”

Oh this cruel ease of ours, this wicked indulgence, that talks

like this: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? The best friend I have is out at my door knocking. He has come miles and miles through the night to see me. He loves me, and wants to help me. I know his rap so well. How urgent he is! But really I do not feel like seeing him to-night. He can come again some other time, and perhaps I will feel more like seeing him. If I let him in to-night, it may not be pleasant for Him nor me. And then, I am not prepared to receive visitors. Hark! that is his word: Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove! Open to me, and let me in out of this dreary night; my head is wet with the dew, my locks with the drops of the night!"

But your ease prevails. You let Jesus stand and knock. You let him plead in vain. He has to go away, wet and weary. He has to go away from your door with his dripping locks and moist garments. He has had to die on the cross to do what he has done for you, come to your door with words of invitation and grace and love, still he has to go away, and the great opportunity is lost to you.

Am I speaking to you in parables? O my hearer, so often you have said in your own way: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" You look out Sabbath morning, and it is cold, disagreeable, and so you say to yourself: "I will not go to church to-day. I know Jesus is to be there. He is to be there to meet with me, to wash away my sins, to renew my heart, to lead me in the way of life, to open for me the door into Heaven. Still, another day will do as well as this." And then you think you can have a word with him in your own chamber. You can read a chapter, and that will do as well; or a sermon perhaps, or some good book. And so Jesus comes and goes, and he is not yours, and you are not his.

Why is it, my hearer, you are still without an interest in Christ, still unsaved, still a stranger to all that is good? I will tell you why it is. It is because you have been trifling and fooling with your opportunities straight along; and if this is to go on with you, you are lost.

Does a physician say, when some one comes after him in the night, and rings and shouts him up out of bed: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" No. Perhaps half a dozen times he is waked up, and waked up very unnecessarily sometimes; still, he puts on his coat, and stumbles out into the darkness to do what he can.

Does a business-man stay at home from his shop, because the weather is somewhat unpleasant? No; that is not the way to make money, that is not the way to success.

Oh if we would attend to religion as men attend to business, if we would be as earnest and eager to embrace opportunities, it would be very much better with our souls to-day than it is! But how can we be saved, trifling and fooling with our opportunities as we are? Is it much of a wonder that we find ourselves making a failure of life? The wonder is, that we have not made more of a failure than we have. Oh away with these utterly empty excuses! They are the bane of souls, the things that wreck lives, lose Heaven to us. No longer trifle. No longer delay. No longer neglect. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. To-day Jesus calls. To-day he knocks at your door. To-day he is saying to you, O my hearer, "Open to me! open to me!" Oh then, let not your ease keep the door shut against him! It is that, and nothing else, that is in the way of your salvation.

And opportunities do not wait. Jesus knocks at your door to-day, and his word is: "Open to me!" But to-morrow he may have gone. No more of his knocking for you! No more calling! Ah! then how anxious and earnest you will be. But it will be too late. Then you will seek him, but you will not find him. You will call, but he will not answer. Too late! too late! Oh let it not come to that with any of us! And yet, it is so easy to let it come to that.

XII.

The City-Sinner Saved.

"And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."—LUKE
VII. 48.

A PHARISEE had invited our Lord to dine with him. His name was Simon. He was evidently the most narrow-minded and bigoted of his sect—hard, unsympathetic, self-righteous, prejudiced. There seems to have been quite a company present, men of his own stripe. I suppose it was simply for the sake of discussion that Simon had invited the Lord to his house, for he neglected to extend to him the commonest courtesies that every eastern guest has a right to expect. Simon wanted to hear Jesus talk. He hoped perhaps to have the opportunity of breaking a lance with him himself in argument, and thus shew his skill in dialectics; and he took good care to have at his table those who were in sympathy with his views, and who would not be slow when the occasion offered to put in a word for him. Now, it was while the entertainment was going on that the incident occurred which I am making the basis of what I have to say to-night.

I. THE SINNER. "And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner."

How few and simple the words, but what a story of sin and woe they tell. A fallen woman! Beauty wrecked! The lily trailed in the mire of the street! Ah! there is no picture of sin more hideous than that. I see her yonder, her hair dishevelled, her eyes swollen and blood-shot, her young face bloated, her dress untidy, everything about her betokening the hard life she has been living. She is well-known in the city, too well-known, and everything good and pure keeps out of her way. Once it was far otherwise, Once perhaps she was loved, admired, courted, honored, the belle of society, the light and life of every gay circle. None dressed so gaudily, danced so sprightly, sang so sweetly, laughed so merrily, talked so charmingly, and was in every way so entertaining. But the dark hour of temptation came, and now the belle of society is a woman of the city who is a sinner.

It has been asked whether this woman was Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Bethany. And much has been written, and long stories have been concocted, to identify her with one or the other, according to the fancy of the writer. But there is not a particle of evidence to show that she was either. She was one of the many that the Christ found deep in sin, ruined, lost, fallen, and lifted up to live the new life of faith in him and love for Him. Excepting from what we can glean here, we know nothing of her, either what she was before, or what became of her after. But what is written is enough to teach us how willing and able the Christ is to save sinners, and that is what we want to know. If he can save a fallen woman, there is no one he cannot save.

The poor lost one had somehow come to know about the Christ. Perhaps she had heard Him preach out on the hills, or she may have listened raptly to his talks with the publicans and sinners in the back streets. And his words had gone to her heart, thrilled her soul, awoke in her sweet memories of better days, brought the blush back to her cheek, made her feel so wretched, and yet gave her hope and help. Again and

again she had stolen back to hear more, and she had thought and wept and prayed, until she had come to feel that she must cast herself at his feet and pour out her heart to him there. How long she may have been seeking for an opportunity to do so, we have no means of knowing. The story of a sinner's return to God is often a long story—resolutions made and broken, struggles to rise and deeper falls, tears wept and prayers prayed, anguish unutterable, woe like unto the gnawings of the worm that never dies and the burnings of the fire unquenchable. But now at last she is at his feet. She had watched her opportunity, and unbidden she had come to the feast.

O my hearer, do you know anything of sin? Has it dragged you down from some high social position, and left you so wrecked and lost that cold cruel Pharisees of the church brush past you and with high looks disdainfully say: "He is a man of the city who is a sinner!" Perhaps you are feeling so crushed and heart-broken to-night as you sit over there, and all you might have been, but are not, comes rushing in upon you. And church-members are so stiff and cold, and ministers so unlike him they preach about. They do not understand you and cannot feel for you, and so they drive you farther into sin instead of drawing you from it. But here at the feet of Jesus you need not perish, for he is so willing and able to save sinners.

II. THE SINNER'S PENITENCE: "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

The woman at the feet of Jesus said nothing. She was a silent worshipper. She may have intended to say so much—to tell him what a sinner she had been, what a wicked, wretched life she had lived, how sorry she was and all that. But when

she was at his feet she could not find words to say anything. Her grief made her speechless. But her tears were eloquent. They dropped like rain on the naked dusty feet of the Lord, and she wiped them off with her long hair. And then her hand found its way to the folds of her dress, and she drew forth a box of the costly spikenard, perhaps, and with the rich ointment she anointed his feet, and tenderly kissed them. It was a touching, melting scene, the woman's bitterness of soul expressing itself in great silent tear-drops, the sinner's penitence coming out in deeds of love and tenderness at the feet of the Lord.

But hard cold looks and cruel thoughts were there towards the weeping penitent. The guests felt themselves insulted by her rude intrusion. Simon himself saw, as he thought, an unanswerable argument against the Christ's being the prophet he claimed to be: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner."

Ah! what sinners have to put up with from an unpitiful world when they would come back to the right. Men have no faith in their tears. As they come up with painful struggling effort on hands and knees out of the deep pit where they have been mired, men stand coldly by and give them no helping-hand. Rather indeed do they push them back to their perdition. Oh the cruelty to penitents that society and the church have to answer to God for! How many would have come back from their sins but for those cold Pharisaic looks, cruel words, withering rebukes!

And yet we are all sinners, all in the same condemnation, all under the curse, all in need of repentance—you and I, Simon as well as the city-sinner; and God, looking down upon us from his high throne, sees very little difference, no difference at all to speak of, no essential difference. "There is no difference," says the Apostle Paul, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And our Lord, by means of

one of his inimitable parables shews Simon that he has less than he thinks he has to boast of ; that he and the woman he frowns at across the table are not so far apart morally and spiritually ; that, in fact, she has rather the advantage, for she is at his feet, penitent, humbled, loving much, and he is not.

“Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee There was a certain creditor which had two debtors ; the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. But when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore which of them will love him most.”

“Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.”

“And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet ; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much ; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

Now, here we are, all debtors. Some of us owe more, others less ; but we are alike in this that neither of us can pay what we owe. We are hopelessly in debt to God. And yet, we stand on our dignity—dignity indeed ! dignity with the bottom out ! because we owe, or think we owe, a few cents or a few dollars less than our neighbor over the way. He drinks, drinks hard, poor fellow. He starves his children, abuses his wife, reels on the public streets, does not know how to take care of himself, and is an eye-sore to society. He pays five cents a glass for drugged liquor in the dens, and figures before the police court as a city-sinner. He is poor, and cannot afford to drink respectably, drink like a christian, buy his

liquor wholesale, and go to bed with it for a week at a time. But God up yonder, looking down from his high throne upon us all, sees no difference in us. The poor city-sinners owe more perhaps, but they weep more, pray more. Oh the tears they shed at Christ's feet, on Christ's feet; while we, with our little sins, our respectabilities, our false ideas of religion, our great church importance, sit here, and growl and growl, if bad men and worse women come to worship and weep near where we are!

But the sinner yonder is penitent. See her tears flow! Behold her humility! She is at the Christ's feet, washing them with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing them with her praying, penitential lips, anointing them with the fragrant ointment. That ointment was worth three hundred pence perhaps \$40 or \$50 of our money. Oh! are we penitent? Where are our tears? When did ever we pour fifty dollars on or at the feet of the Lord? We blow away our money, his money, in nauseating smoke. We spend dollars and dollars for liquors and cigars and useless luxuries. We anoint our heads with aromatic ointments and highly perfumed oils. We are good to ourselves, spare no amount of money to gratify our own mean pampered selfishness. But when we come here to worship and weep at the feet of Jesus, we have no tears for him, no ointment of nard for his head much less his feet, no dollars for his suffering cause.

But then we think he does not care. What cares he for the penitent's tear-washing and hair-wiping and kissing and costly anointing? But does he not care? Did he not mind that Simon put himself out so little on his account, received him so coldly, treated him so disrespectfully? Ah! He does care. He is grieved, hurt, because we come here to his feet to worship and weep, and we bring no tears, no ointment. Like Simon, on the contrary, we are here to argue, to find fault, to have a fling at the preacher or the people, to air our importance. Oh! is it to be wondered, that we go home sour,

cross, worse than we came? We may owe less indeed, but we love less, we weep fewer tears and we give less. Ah! we may well have doubts, serious doubts, of our penitence and faith, with eyes so dry as ours, and hearts so cold, and self-sacrifices so small.

III. THE SINNER FORGIVEN. "And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven."

It reads as though it was because she wept much, gave much, loved much, that her sins were forgiven: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." That reads very much like salvation by works--does it not?--tears and prayers and gifts buying absolution. But when we look deeper into the whole passage, we find that such a view is not consistent. Christ clearly teaches that we are debtors--Simon, the city-sinner, you and I--and that we are debtors, so deeply in debt that we cannot pay our debts. "And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both."

What Jesus wants to illustrate and explain here is, how it comes that Simon loves so little and the city-sinner so much. And it is because Simon feels he has nothing to be grateful for, he has no sins of any account to be troubled about, and he does not trouble himself much about them. He needs no Saviour to save him! Why should he weep? Why should he give to the Christ? He has no debt of gratitude to pay. The Christ has done nothing for him and needs to do nothing. How small a thing it is for God to forgive him, for he has so little to be forgiven. But it is otherwise with the woman. She is such a great sinner, so deeply in debt, so utterly ruined. She needs to have so much done for her, so much forgiven. She needs a whole Saviour all to herself.

And that is just where the trouble with so many of us is. We are so good that there is no special need of any Saviour coming down from Heaven and dying on the cross for us, no need of all this church-expenditure for us. We are about as

good now as we can be, as there is any need for. All we want is a little something or other to give us a help.

What could Christ do for such a self-satisfied man as Simon? And what can he do for so many church-goers to-day? They are too good for him to do anything for. But the truth is, we are not good, we are hopeless, helpless debtors in the hands of law, and unless Christ stand good for us, we are undone. Oh that our eyes were opened to see ourselves as that woman at the feet of Jesus saw herself! How soon there would be tears in our eyes, and I think we would try to get round to where that woman stood penitent, and perhaps we would feel that we owed more than we have been giving and doing! All over this church, men and women would be saying—respectable people: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" If there is to be any hope for us, we must come to this:—"Me a sinner!" And when we do come to that, how soon this follows: "Thy sins are forgiven." "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Forgiven! What a word from lips divine for a sinner to hear! The black past like a waste stretching away back over her life! Not a flower to cheer! Not even a tuft of moss to keep hope alive in the bosom! All ashes, scoriæ, lava, and so hot, blistering, for naked feet to walk on! But now how changed! Across her life-path, and away back over it ever so far, shining, gleaming, glorifying, forgiveness flashes like a light from Heaven, and the sinner is a saint.

I do not know whether she understood, realized, felt, what Christ said to her when he said, "Thy sins are forgiven." She stood there as if she heard not, the tears still in her eyes, the anguish of woe written in her face. It is not always at the moment of forgiveness that the soul leaps into the light, and there is the rapture of the new life. In general, it comes slowly, gradually, like the dawning of the morning breaking in glory over the eastern hills, like the first feeble pulsations of

life restored after one has been down to the very bottom of disease.

O my hearer, have you heard these blessed words of the Son of God, "Thy sins are forgiven?" They are for the penitent; not for the Pharisee. They are for the soul now at Christ's feet; not for the proud and good, the self-sufficient and self-righteous. To the one here to-night, bowed and broken-hearted, humbled and penitent, crying for mercy and trusting in his grace, Jesus says, "Thy sins are forgiven."

IV. PEACE. "Go in peace." Such were Christ's parting words to the penitent at his feet. He gave her his benediction and dismissed her. He saw that a stormy discussion was about to arise with regard to forgiveness;—a discussion that would be most unprofitable to the new convert, that would do her no good but much harm. So he sent her away to enjoy her new-found peace. He did not want to have her weak faith hurt, and her spiritual comfort disturbed by a noisy talk about words, a doctrinal controversy, a war of diverse opinions on matters of faith.

Oh these discussions on questions of faith and points of doctrine that men raise—I suppose they are necessary. We cannot do without them in the church in her present state. But precious little good are they in general. They unsettle men's minds, shake their faith in God and the truth, give a handle to the enemy to prey upon weak souls, and sow the seed of discord and dissension far and wide throughout society. How many have almost made spiritual shipwreck because of discussions on justification by faith, and the doctrines of election and God's decrees! But the kind, wise Master dismisses the young in years and experience with his benediction of peace; and, if there must be discussion, let it be among the mature in age, the well-grounded in the truth, those fed on the strong meat of the word, and among the men of the Simon-stamp who have no faith to shake and no religion to hurt, nothing to risk or lose.

"Go in peace," He said. She had come to his feet so troubled, her soul dying with sin and woe, her life a waste, a sahara of wretchedness; but, staying there weeping and woe-begone, He had given her to feel that there was hope for her, help in Him to save and bless; and now as she goes away to do better, His last word is—peace! And it was no lie He told her, no false hope He inspired her soul with, no counterfeit coin He put into her lean hand. As she walked away, she felt so unspeakably happy, so comforted, so cheered and helped. The people meeting her on the street could see in her face a light they had never seen there before, and they would say to one another: "What has happened to the woman in the city which was a sinner?" And some one would say, "Did you not hear? She had a talk with the Christ at the house of Simon, and He sent her away with his peace." And the people would say, "Did you ever? wonders will never cease!"

Oh! has Christ a word of peace to say to us to-night as we rise to go away from His blessed feet? Perhaps we came up here troubled, sad, sinful, a woe deep within our hearts that only God knows of, a lust preying upon us that we feel is dragging us down to perdition. O thanks to the great mercy of God in Christ Jesus, there is help for us, salvation, forgiveness, peace. To the penitent at His feet to-night He says, "Thy sins be forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

Peace, God's peace, Christ's peace, we may have. But not with sin unforgiven; not living far from Christ's feet; not yonder in the world, sinning, sorrowing. No. It is here, weeping, humbled, penitent—here side by side with the woman which was a sinner. Oh let us all go away with Christ's benediction of peace abiding in our hearts! "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Go in peace!"

XIII.

Repentance.

"Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." — MAT.
IV. 17.

I AM taking you back to-day to first principles. I know that one of the sacred writers has told us to get away from them, to go on. This is what he says: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God."

And it is to be deplored that so many never get beyond the A B C of anything. They are all their days in the primer. And especially is this the case with regard to the best of all knowledge, the knowledge of the truth. They are ever learning, ever listening and learning, but they never seem to be able to get hold of the gospel's simplest teachings. They only half learn what they learn, and hardly that. And so it is stammering, stumbling, spelling all the way through the solemn lessons of life with them.

You have heard grown-up people trying to read who had only half-learned their first lessons in reading. They stumble and stammer at a word of four letters, and have to stop and

spell it before they can read it, and they do not always get it right even then. Thus they go on spelling their slow way to the end of the chapter. But what good is there in it? If we would make progress in reading, or in anything else in fact, it is very clear, we must learn well, thoroughly, the first lessons.

And so it is wise every now and again to go back and review from the very beginning. We will be surprised how much we have forgotten, or never learned. I have known men, men who have been through college, men who wear proud academic titles, hard pressed in Reduction. And some of us who think we can teach others the sublime doctrines of the cross need ourselves to be taught the simplest elementary truths. I am glad therefore to go back with you to the very beginning, and learn over again the simple first-lessons of the gospel. If we want to get on with our spiritual learning, and make real and rapid progress in the acquisition of the knowledge that makes wise unto salvation, then it is of the utmost importance that we be thoroughly grounded in the great fundamental principles. And so we are to take up to-day, and try and master, the first lesson of the gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

And we have two things here, a command, and a reason for it.

First, we are to *repent*. Both the Received and Revised versions have "Repent." And the word repent is not a hard word for us to understand. We think we know all about it;—know it as well as we know our A B C, and so we should, for it is the A B C of the gospel;—know it somewhat too well, for we have to repent pretty often. We do not need to go and turn up our Worcester or Webster to find out what it means, for its meaning has been beaten into us so often that there is not much danger of our ever forgetting it.

And yet we may not know its meaning as well as we think we do. Sometimes the very frequency with which we use a word and hear it used, weakens its force, spills out all its

wealth of meaning. And that is about how it is with the word *repent*.

I suppose the word comes to us from a Roman Catholic source. That church lays great stress upon penance. She insists upon her members, when they do wrong, bearing certain punishments or penalties for the wrong they have done. This is sometimes repeated many times. Hence, they are said to *repent*, or bear over and over again the penalty.

The sorrow after sin is a sort of *re-penalty*. When we do wrong, our conscience is quick to disapprove of it, and so there is trouble within, wretchedness, a sense of guilt. Now, that sense of guilt, that wretchedness within, is a sort of punishment for the sin. And we are in danger of thinking, that because we are punished for our sin, because we are made unhappy by it, we are therefore relieved of it; in other words, it is atoned for. And so *re-penalty* is repentance with us.

And that is too often all it is, sorrow for sin, the bearing of penalty until it is supposed to have been borne long enough to atone for itself. But such a repentance is a poor sort of repentance. That sort of repentance goes on and on, sin and then sorrow, sin and then sorrow, more sin and more sorrow, ever and ever deeper into sin and sorrow, until there dawns down around the soul an eternal night of woe.

When we go back to the original Greek, however, we obtain, I think, a very much clearer idea as to what it is that the Christ enjoins. The original word is literally a change of mind or purpose. You have been following out, let us suppose, a certain course of conduct or life, not the wisest perhaps, not the best. By and by you come to find out, or perhaps you knew it all along, that it was not such a course as any right-thinking and wise-doing man should follow out. It became impressed upon you that you should change your mind. And so you changed your mind. Your mind or purpose was at one time to live for the world—its follies, its honors. You looked only at the present; you cared not for the great issues of life

and destiny. But now you begin to see how unwise it must ultimately be to follow out such a purpose, and so you give it up for a better. You purpose to live now and ever after in the Lord's fear and favor. Now, it is such a change of mind or purpose that we have here commanded and commended.

We have it well illustrated in the case of the Prodigal. You see him going off with his father's money and his father's happiness to the far country. His mind is away to the world, his purpose to live the gay world-life. So he goes on living out his purpose. He knows it is not a noble life-purpose. I doubt not he has his qualms of conscience, and drops some tears, and is sorry. You would call that a kind of repentance. But there is no change of purpose as yet. On down he goes recklessly till he fetches up beside the hog-trough. There he wakes up to see what a fool he has been. He is sorry now that he ever left home. He sees now too what a sinner he is, how cruelly he has treated the best of fathers, and grieved the forbearance and patience of Heaven. So he changes his purpose. A complete revolution of mind and purpose comes to him, and now he goes home to be a true son to his father.

We see the same thing, or much the same, in Saul, who afterwards was called Paul. His mad purpose was to uproot Christianity. His whole heart and soul were given over to this vicious purpose. But his purpose was changed, turned right round about—so changed that the persecutor of the gospel became the preacher of the gospel, so changed that the chief of sinners became so suddenly and so completely the chief of saints.

Now, the special thing I want you to take a note of here is this, that the change called for is one of the mind. It is not a surface something, a sort of skin-deep experience, a lopping off here and there from our life of certain deformities and unsightly excrescences. No, it is more. It is a thing of the mind. The understanding sees the need of it; the judgment approves of it; the heart is in full sympathy with it; all the faculties of

the soul have to do with it. It is such a change as goes clear down to the very foundations of a man's being, and affects all he is and does in every relation of life. Of course there is no little feeling awakened often. You cannot undergo such a change as the one here contemplated without more or less feeling. But it is not a thing of mere feeling. It does not begin and end there. It is deeper than the feelings. It abides when the feelings have subsided. It is a radical change, a real revolution within. It is very much like the change that Jesus told Nicodemus he must experience: "Ye must be born again." It is such a change as the prophet urges when he says: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit."

Repentance and regeneration differ in this, that the latter, regeneration, is the underground, the foundation, of the former. Regeneration is the seed sown in the heart by the Spirit; repentance is one of the blessed effects of the growing seed. Regeneration is a creative act and instantaneously done; repentance is a slow process usually, a life-long turning away from evil. God regenerates; the sinner repents. But the sinner repents because God regenerates. Regeneration is a change of heart; repentance a change of mind or purpose.

Repentance differs more or less according as individuals differ. With some, it is sudden and violent, tearful and tempestuous; with others, it is slow and gradual and gentle in the way it acts. The jailer is waked up with an earthquake at midnight, and is anguish-riven. His change of mind is so sudden, so abrupt. So also with many others. They are going in one direction, and when they find they are wrong, they wheel right round and go in the opposite direction; with others, however, it is a long curve—their repentance—a wide arc that reaches across long years. They get round in the right direction after a while, but the greater portion of their life is gone before they get round. We are glad when they do come to make up their minds to be good, but we would have been gladder if they

had been able to make up their minds somewhat sooner. While they are thinking about turning, the prodigal is home, and Paul is preaching, and the thief is in Heaven.

And just here I would say to some of you, that you are too long in getting round to where you ought to be. We have been waiting on your coming round for years, and you are not round yet. When you do change your mind, I suppose you mean to stay changed; not like some we wot of who change with the moon or the wind. But then your opportunities may be gone, life gone, all gone, before you get round. Surely you ought to be able to make up your mind very much sooner, and tell us where you are. Oh let us be in earnest in this matter! It is all-important that we be right here, for so much depends on it. Our soul's salvation depends on it. Our happiness forever depends on it. Down from Heaven to all of us peals a trumpet-voice, the voice of the Son of God. Let us give earnest heed to it. The voice says: "Repent!"

We come now to the next point, the reason urged for repentance. The reason is, the near approach of the Kingdom of Heaven. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

In order to enjoy the good of any great measure or movement, whether of a political, educational, scientific, commercial, or religious character, it is necessary for the people to be converted, so to speak, to the idea of such a measure or movement. Responsible government is a fine thing. But give responsible government to a people just emerging out of a state of semi-barbarism, a people who have grown up under the heel of despotism, a people who do not know anything about responsibility, and it will not be what it is with us. It may mean lawlessness, anarchy, and a whole horde of national evils, and so become a curse instead of a blessing.

Our Free Schools again is a grand institution. If however the people were not prepared for such a measure—and it is not always easy to get them to know what it means in so many directions for them, it would not be the good it is. To

many it means increased taxation, for what care they for education. They know not one letter from another, and do not care to know, and education to them is a modern way of extorting their money from them, a sort of brigandage, and they do not like it. They say, "Give us back the good old days when there were no free schools, no railroads, no telegraphs, no newspapers; the good old days when ghosts and witches wandered forth abroad and played such pranks; the good old days when superstition was religion, ignorance the mother of devotion, might was right, and man disputed with the beast the freedom of the wilderness."

Oh it requires no little converting to bring some people round to believe in anything different from what they have been brought up to and have been used to! The old way of doing everything is the way for them! Anything else is wrong, unnecessary, unscriptural. The old log-hut, the old saw-mill astride the stream, the old coach crawling up the hill, the old neglected school-house and church and graveyard for them! No new ideas, no improvements, no advance on what has been, no progress!

Jesus was a great innovator in his day. He came full of new ideas for the world. The old way of getting along and doing things was not the way to get along; so he came to make known a better. He came to found the Kingdom of Heaven amid the wrecks and rubbish of the old despotisms, the effete and worn-out systems of government that had been hugely grappling with the subtle questions of the world's good and doing so little with them. It was a mighty undertaking he was attempting, an enterprise hard to do. The old theocracy had failed; at all events, it had to be abandoned. But he came to re-establish it on a broader and better basis. And so, to prepare the people for the new theocracy, the Kingdom of Heaven, he preached to them repentance, a change of mind or purpose, new ideas.

He found men's ideas all for this world. It was how to

make money, how to do business so that it would pay, how to get on in the world, how to be honored and happy. He found men with low and unworthy ideas of what was right, little or no regard for the truth, utterly false notions of religion, and with none of the fear of God in their hearts. He found them away behind in everything that concerned their highest happiness and ultimate blessedness. So he set about to do what he could to give them higher ideas of life and duty, to educate them up to something purer and nobler. He talked to them of the Kingdom he wanted to see founded in the earth. He explained to them what it was. He called upon them to follow himself, accept his ideas, believe what he taught, do as he did, love instead of hate, be self-sacrificing rather than self-seeking, live for others rather than for themselves ;—in a word, bring down Heaven to earth, or rather perhaps, bring up earth to be a sort of Heaven.

Thus, what a complete revolution in men's ideas there was necessary to bring about what he proposed. The wise of that age said: "It was madness to attempt such a thing. It could not be done, never done. None but a fool, a fanatic, would attempt it."

But he was earnest about it. He knew it could be done. So, regardless as to what men thought or said, he kept the object he had in view before him, and went on straight and steadily toward it. And there were those who came to believe in him and his ideas. They gave up their own and adopted his. They identified themselves with his cause. They called themselves by his name. They followed him—followed him as weak sin-laden men can follow the Son of God. And indeed it is wonderful what men can do, even such as we are, when they are inspired by so great an example as he set before them, and when they are upheld in their doing and bearing by so mighty an arm as his. And so the good goes on. He has himself entered the unseen glory, but his presence is ever felt, and the new and better theocracy is slowly but surely spreading far

and wide in the hearts of men. It is not such a kingdom as the kingdoms of the world. It is a kingdom of hearts, and so it is a change of mind and heart that is necessary to its being set up. "The Kingdom of God is within you." "Repent"—change your mind, get a set of new ideas, new principles, a new heart; "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It is not yonder in the blue ethereal somewhere, yonder in the glory eternal, yonder in other lands and fairer climes than ours. No; it is near; it is here; it is where there are hearts to receive it, faith to believe it, lives to live it. The Kingdom of God is at hand—it is within you. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

If you want to belong to some other kingdom than the kingdom of Great Britain, you have to change your location. You must cross over to the United States, or go to France or Germany. But if you want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the new theocracy of grace and mercy, it is not necessary that you change your location, but it is necessary that you change your ideas. And so it is a change of heart that you need; it is repentance, a change of mind or purpose, a change of ideas. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Now, in conclusion, I want to ask you how you stand with regard to this Kingdom that the Christ is setting up in the earth. Have you repented? You tell me you do not need to repent. You are not a sinner; you are not a drunkard; you are not a lawless, Godless wrongdoer. Go and preach that doctrine elsewhere than here, to others rather than to us. But Nicodemus was a good man, a very respectable man, a man who knew how to behave himself, and yet he needed to be born again, he needed repentance. I do not say you are so bad; but this I do say, and it ought to be clear, that you need new ideas about the Kingdom of God. You are not in it, and if you had right ideas about it you would be in it. It is a change of ideas, some of us need so much. And so Jesus comes to us

and calls upon us to change our minds, our ideas, and with such a change would come so much of a change, a real revolution. Oh ! let us not go on forever making ourselves believe that because we are not as bad as this one and that one, we are all right, or not far from being all right. That is not it at all. Here is a King, and here is a Kingdom, and the point is, are we the King's? are we in the Kingdom? No; and moreover you do not care to be in the Kingdom. Now there must be a change there for you, a change of mind—of heart, a change of ideas;—in a word, repentance, regeneration.

And this blessed heart-kingdom is so near you. It is close at hand. Perhaps your heart is all but ready to receive it now. You can see it or all but. Oh take hold, then, and you will find it, and you will say how good it is when you have found it. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Blessedness of Forgiveness.

*"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile."*

—PSALMS XXXII. 1, 2.

AS early as the days of Origen there have been what are known as the Seven Penitential Psalms, and the text is the opening lines of the second of these so-called Penitential Psalms. They are Psalms vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxx, cxxx, cxliii. They were early selected as appropriate to the ceremony of sprinkling the leper seven times in order to his cleansing.

This Psalm has always been a general favorite. It takes rank in this respect along with perhaps the twenty-third. Every Bible-reader knows and loves it, and so many have been able to repeat it almost as far back as they can remember. And this is not a new thing. The old saints thought as much of it as we do. Augustine, an eminent father of the church, was specially fond of this Psalm. It is said he often read it in his later years with weeping eyes and a broken

heart. And when the good old saint came to die, he had it written out on his chamber wall, where his eyes, when they were open, could rest upon it, and of course we have here some of his last words. He used to say in his own Latin: "The first knowledge is to know thyself to be a sinner."

David, the author of this gospel Psalm, had fallen into gross sin, and he puts on record here some of his bitter experiences while he continued in the state of unpardoned guilt. Oh how wretched he was—wretched beyond what words can express! He had no rest for his soul day nor night. No small tempest lay upon him; he was tossed and troubled. But at last he bowed down on his knees before the Lord, and confessed his sin, acknowledged his guilt, and so soon after he found pardon and peace. And now he breaks forth into a song extolling the blessedness of forgiveness. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

Now, this is a theme of great interest to us all, and, with God's help, I want to present it to you, and so interest you in it, that you too may join with David in singing of the blessedness of forgiveness.

But, as old Augustine used to say, the first thing is to know that we are a sinner. If we are not sinners, or if we do not know we are sinners, even though we are; if we have never done any wrong, never transgressed, never come short, never failed in a duty; then, of course, forgiveness and its blessedness can be of no interest to us. There is joy in Heaven among unfallen angels over penitent sinners. They are interested in the blessedness of forgiveness, because whatever is of interest to God whose servants they are is of interest to them. On their viewless wings they come here to see if there are any tears in our eyes, any brokenness of heart, any interest in God's forgiving mercy; and, if there is, what a joy it is to be the first to report the tidings of it in Heaven. But why should we

be interested in what is of no interest to us? Away with matters and questions that belong to the other side of the world or other worlds, for what have we to do with them!

And yet, if any question is of interest to us because of the interest we have in it and its importance to us, then forgiveness ought to be of very great interest to us, for we need it, we are sinners. I do not say that sin has broken out with any of us as with David, and led us into the violent commission of odious crimes; and because it has not, we think we are not sinners, and need neither repentance nor forgiveness. But if sin has not broken out in our lives as with others, it is not because we have no sin, but because we have not been exposed to the temptations of others. We have enjoyed a better home-training. We have been surrounded all our lives with influences and restraints that have held in check the evil within us. No thanks to us, then, if we are not worse than we are. The root of corruption, out of which grew so much of guilt and crime, violence and bloodshed, lust and revenge, in the case of David, and so many others in every age, is in your heart and mine, and all it wants to develop it, is an occasion, and sooner than we think, and where we do not expect, the occasion may occur, and we may turn out to be so bad.

Oh my hearer, I know you think it impossible for you ever to do anything so bad and black as you condemn in others. "Impossible," you say, "for me ever to become a thief, a bloody assassin, a libertine!" And yet it is not so impossible as you think. Let restraint be taken away. Let evil influences gather around you. Let the devil at you with all his malice and cunning. And with the smouldering hell within you that is in every one of us, there is no sort of evil you may not do, no crime you may not be guilty of, no foulness and badness you may not stoop to. Thus, the question of forgiveness is one we have a very great personal interest in, for we are all sinners, and our only hope is in our being forgiven.

Again : The forgiveness of sin—what it is, and how ours.

Sin is here spoken of by words of different shades of meaning, and it is both interesting and instructive to note the shades of difference. It is called transgression, sin, iniquity, guile.

Transgression is open sin. It means departure from God, a breaking of his covenant, a malicious forcible opposition to him. It is rebellion, disloyalty, disobedience.

The word sin, again, means a coming short of the mark. You are supposed to be aiming at a mark. The word in the original is used in reference to the seven hundred left-handed Benjamites, who could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss. A mark is set up, a mark so small that from where the slinger stands he can just see it, and to miss it even by a hair-breadth is to miss it. Now, to miss the mark of rectitude that God has set up as an aim of life even a hair-breadth, is to sin. You think you are a good shot if you strike the bull's eye forty-nine times out of fifty, and still better, if ninety-nine times out of a hundred. And yet, to miss at all, to miss by a hair-breadth, is to miss; it is to come short of the mark, to sin. A good many would say: "To sling within a hair's breadth is good enough slinging. No need for any better. I would think myself perfect if I could do that." And yet, yonder are no fewer than seven hundred sons of Benjamin who can sling better than that with their left hands. They can sling at a mark no thicker than a hair as seen at a hundred paces, and never miss. O my soul, what is to become of thee, since thou comest short of the mark of rectitude, not only by a hair-breadth, but so wide of it!

And then again iniquity and guile bring out the idea of the guilt and wickedness of sin. We talk about little sins and great sins, and it is scriptural to do so; and yet, the least sin means death and condemnation, darkness and death. "Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come." Thus, how sad the condition of the sinner, how wretched and hopeless his state! Over his head

hangs the wrath of God ; at his feet yawns the bottomless-pit of eternal woe. Do you wonder that David was wretched ? The wonder is that we are not as he was. Poor sinner ! how is it that thou art so indifferent, so callous, so tearless ?

But it is not of sin I want to speak here, but of the forgiveness of sin. Sin is indeed a terrible fact in the world. It faces us on every hand. It comes up in every question that concerns the world's progress and men's good. Every now and again society is shocked, and there is a groan of anguish all around the world, because of some horrible outbreak of sin in the shape of murder, revenge, outrage, tyranny, black-hearted villany. But then over against the world's sin stands this other fact, the forgiveness of sin, and it is no less a fact than the other, and it is as wonderful for what is good as the other for what is evil. Let this go wherever sin has gone with its blighting blasting effects ; let it ring on every shore and throughout every land, that there is forgiveness of sin, and a forgiveness as complete in its way as sin in its way. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

Now, forgiveness is described here in different ways to let us see what it is, how good it is, how complete and real it is, and how it may be ours. It is called here the forgiving of transgression, or as in some versions, the taking away of transgression. It is also called the covering up of sin. Then it is called the not-imputing of iniquity, the non-reckoning of guilt where guilt is.

We all know what forgiveness is. We have forgiven others, and been forgiven ourselves often and often. We have sometimes done wrong. We have been disobedient, wilful, bad. Our mother told us to do something for her, and we forgot all about it, we neglected it, we put it off till it was too late, or we never intended to do it. By and by it was found out, and we were asked about it, and dealt with for it. The thing was a

sore trouble to us. It cost us tears. It meant suffering. It meant the alienation of a mother's favor, the light of her face. But we came to see how wrong we had done in neglecting to do as she had told us, and how wilful and disobedient and wicked we had been; and so we came to her and we said: "Mother, I did very wrong, I see it all now, and I am sorry for it, and hope I may never do the like again. Will you forgive me?" And the mother forgives, and that puts the matter right between them.

Now, our Father in Heaven tells us what to do, and what not to do. But so often we neglect, we disobey. We go and do what we ought not to do, and we neglect to do what we ought to do. And there is trouble. An evil course, broken laws, transgression, sin, crime, lead to great trouble. We find ourselves in jail perhaps. We find the evil effects of our dissipation and wrong-doing breaking out upon us in different ways;—in the shape of loss of health, loss of character, loss of position, and so on. We find it too in the want of peace, in an evil conscience, in wretchedness of soul, in restlessness and fear, in the consciousness that Heaven is frowning upon us, that God is angry with us. Thus it was with David: "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was changed into the drought of summer."

But David was led, and we may be led, to see our folly and wickedness, and to confess our evil-doing at the footstool of the Divine mercy. We bow down on our knees, and with tears in our eyes and a broken heart, we say: "O God, forgive us our transgressions." And he forgives us. We rise up from our knees perhaps, and we know that we are forgiven, that the load of guilt crushing us has been lifted, and that God is at peace with us. A mother's forgiveness is a very real thing to a child. And God's forgiveness is no less real. It is felt that there is light where there was darkness, peace where there was alienation. Now you want to walk differently. Now you

want to keep God's laws, to obey his word, to do his will, to dwell in his favor. Oh what it is to be forgiven!

But you want to know more about it. It is not quite clear to you. And so we have here another view of it: "Whose sin is covered."

Whenever a man sins he wants to cover it. What efforts the murderer makes to cover up his tracks, to wash the blood-stains from his hands, to hide his guilt, so that it cannot be traced and found out.

And this idea of covering up sin is no new thing. It is as old as sin. No sooner had Adam and Eve sinned, than feeling the sense of their exposure they began to invent some means to cover themselves, and so they made themselves fig-leaved garments. But so insufficient was this method of covering to themselves, that the next we hear of them, they were trying to hide, to cover themselves, from the Lord, amid the shrubbery of the garden. Poor naked souls! how ill it was with them!

But then, as now, the Lord comes to their help, and he himself covers them in his own way. He makes them skin garments. He teaches them the A B C of the cross, the great atoning sacrifice for sin. He reveals to them how that the blood of his Lamb, his Son, so covers up sin, that it cannot be found.

There are thus two ways of covering up sin—man's way and God's way. Man hides his sin. He conceals it, belittles it, excuses it, denies it, tries to get out of it, seeks to make some sort of compromise, and so on, and so on. But all such covering up of sin only exposes it all the more. When he thinks it is nicely covered up, it re-appears perhaps worse than ever. And so it goes on. Every now and again we hear of the Indian tribes burying the hatchet, and thus settling their difficulties and disputes. But so soon the buried hatchet is resurrected, and hostilities resumed. Ah! it is not the hatchet that should be buried, but the hate, the sin, that wields the hatchet.

But here in the text, and all through the Word of God, the Lord teaches us, that sin can be successfully covered. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. That is the only way sin can be covered, and so successfully covered is it in this way, that it cannot be found. It is buried as in the depths of the sea—buried where no one can drag it up and thrust its grim horror before the affrighted soul.

David tells us in the fifty-first Psalm, which refers to the same sad incident, the sin of his life, and which was probably written first, that his sin is ever before him. "My sin is ever before me." He cannot get away from it, nor dismiss it from his mind, banish it from his thoughts. It haunts him, dogs his footsteps everywhere, shadows his soul, robs him of his peace and comfort, hunts his life. When he sits down to eat, it is there with him, and its bloody fingers touch his food, and he cannot eat. When he lies down to sleep, it seems to take its place on his pillow, and all night long it scares him with dreams. Oh he is in a wretched plight, a most pitiable state! But now he has been led to the feet of God's mercy and grace, and he has found that even his sin can be covered, covered with the blood of atonement, so covered that he can sleep again and not dream about it all night, so covered that the thought and memory of it do not torment him. Oh what the cross can do for sinners, criminals, evil-doers of all sorts! O wretched transgressors, if your sins are a woe to you, come to the mercy of God in Christ, and he will cover them for you, cover them with the blood of atonement, the precious blood of his Son, and give you to feel that there is hope for you, that life can have its interest for you again, and its comfort and joy and usefulness, yea its blessedness! "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

But there is still a third way here of looking at forgiveness. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

We can understand how important it is, when a crime has been committed, that it be laid to the charge of the proper

party, and how dreadful it must be, if some wholly innocent person is accused, and made suffer for it. And yet, it sometimes happens, that a crime is so committed, that it is hard to trace it home to the guilty one. In order to cover up his crime, he so commits it, that it looks as if somebody else did it.

He knows perhaps that you do not like so and so. He has heard your threats, your ifs and buts. So he takes advantage of that and other things, and he murders the man you hate, and everybody at once says, You did it. And you are charged with the crime, and perhaps you are convicted, and the death-penalty carried out, whereas you may be innocent.

It is so natural for us all somehow to pass over our delinquencies and neglects and shortcomings to the broad shoulders of some one else. If a leading man comes to be blamed, then all the wrong that has been done is laid to his charge. Everybody that has any fault to find, or whether or not, comes and lays it to his account. Thus he becomes the scape-goat of all evil-doers of the township, or city, or country. We know how that works.

Let the minister get into trouble, and all that is wrong in the church is at once attributed to him. Everybody that comes short in his duty, neglects his salvation, is living an evil life, excuses himself on the ground that his minister was no good. And so it comes to pass that the guilt of the really guilty one is imputed to, laid to the account of, some one that is innocent; and then, on the other hand, his innocence, his righteousness, is reckoned to the guilty party.

Sometimes, too, there are found those who would willingly suffer for the sake of others, save them, if they could, by taking their law-place, bear the odium of their guilt, and all the punishment, even to the death-penalty. There are mothers who would be only too glad to give their gray hairs and old worn-out life to save the neck of their guilty child. There are those who get themselves into trouble to help others out. They endorse notes, go security, involve themselves, for the sake of a neighbor, a

friend, and then find themselves betrayed, left in the lurch, and ruined.

Now, God takes advantage of such a principle to work out the salvation of the sinner. He finds a substitute for him in the person of his own Son, and he imputes the sinner's guilt to his innocent substitute, and the substitute's righteousness to the guilty sinner. In other words, he reckons with the substitute.

Men in business know all about that. Here is a note signed by somebody who is worth nothing, but it is endorsed by somebody who is worth much. So you reckon with the man who is good for the amount, not with the poor sinner who really owes. Ah! well for the poor wretch that you have not to reckon with him, for you would skin him alive, your law would take him by the throat and you would not spare him. And so the psalmist says here: Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. In other words, Happy is the sinner the Lord does not have to reckon with for his sins!

And there is no crookedness, no guil in God's method of forgiveness. It is such as will bear all the light that will yet blaze around it. For you, my hearer, to pay another man's debts for him, does not always improve his honesty, nor help his circumstances. But when God forgives sin, he does it in a way so that the sinner hates the sins he once loved, and the evil life he once lived.

Thus, forgiveness, when we look at it all round about, is indeed a master-piece of Divine wisdom, a marvel of grace. It glorifies alike the justice of God and his mercy, his Son and the sinner.

But let me hasten to speak a few closing words on the blessedness of forgiveness.

And forgiveness is blessed because in itself it is straight. No crookedness here. No excusing guilt. No tampering with justice. Every interest is sacred, every right respected; neither Creator nor creature wronged, neither God nor man dishonored.

Forgiveness is blessed again, because there is such a thing. There might have been no such thing. There might have been any amount of sin and the woe of sin, but no forgiveness, and none of the blessedness of forgiveness. But it is otherwise. Oh tell it to every sinner, tell it to every fallen one, tell it to the guilty and doomed, that there is forgiveness for sin, deliverance for their souls! Sin has been and still is the world's woe. There is not a land where it has not found its way to, not a shore where it has not come to stay, not a home it has not entered, not a creature it has not cursed. It fills our jails and work-houses with poor wretches. It darkens the land with crime. It blights and blasts happy lives. It dooms and damns souls. But across all this wretchedness gleams the light of the cross with the Son of God lifted up on it; high over all this deluge of ruin arches the promise of God; and from land to land, and shore to shore, ring out the glad tidings of salvation, telling of hope and Heaven. Oh what a blessed thing it is that there is forgiveness!

And then forgiveness is blessed, because the fruit of it is blessedness. It takes the groan of woe out of the sinner's heart and out of his mouth, and it puts in its place a great joy, a psalm of thanksgiving. It turns his night into day, his darkness into light. It makes life a gladness, a gleaming glory. It brings back to the world its lost Eden. Oh then we do not wonder, that the forgiven psalmist takes his pen and writes, and takes down his harp, and sings in a key that is too seraphic for us: "O the blessednesses of him whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! O the blessednesses of the man unto whom the Lord will not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile!"

But, my hearer, all this may be nothing to you, no good tidings to you, no blessedness to you. Your sins are no grief of heart to you. They cost you no tears, no sleepless nights. They are not yet repented of, not yet forgiven. It is still with you darkness and guilt, and you know it not, nor care. It is still sin, sin, soon to be woe, woe. Oh poor sinner! may God have mercy upon thee, and let thee see thy sin and guilt, and his blessed forgiveness!

Redeemer and Redeemed.

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”—GAL. IV. 4, 5.

MY text to-day is full to overflowing; my theme a large one. I want to speak of the Redeemer and the redeemed, and it is just the theme for the precious occasion that has brought us together. Oh for a tongue to tell, and a heart to feel, all we have here! Oh to realize in some adequate measure what the Blessed Jesus has done and suffered for us, so that we might be what we are and where we are to-day! If we have any tears to-day, let us weep them. If we have a tongue to-day to speak and sing of what he is and has done, let us freely use it, for he is worthy of the tribute of praise we bring. If we have a mouth to-day to taste his sweetness, to eat and drink at his table, to feast at the banquet his love has spread for us, let us open it wide, and He will fill it. But, O Redeemer of sinners, how is it that thou art so little to us when we are so much to thee?

I. THE REDEEMER.

And every word here that tells us of Him is full of meaning, rich with the truth we need to know, the wonders of his wisdom and grace. We have here when he came—“*When the*

fulness of the time was come." We have here who he was and who sent him—"God sent forth His Son." We have here how he came;—"made of a woman, made under the law." We have here why he came;—"to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

When the Redeemer came: And he came when the world was ready for his coming—not a moment too soon, not a moment too late. There is a ripeness of things, and Jesus came when things were ripe for him. God makes no mistakes with regard to anything. He does what he does at the right time, and in the right way, and so he sent the redeemer "when the fulness of the time was come"

It seemed a long wait, four thousand years, for those who were waiting in the old days for his coming, and many a weary waiting heart was ready to faint, and cried so often up to Heaven this cry: "Lord, how long? how long?" And yet, the long wait through those weary milleniums was somehow necessary. Judaism and the old idolatries had a work to do for the world, and they must have ample time to do their work in. It must be seen what they can do—the best they can do. And full time was given them, and they did what they could. They had reached their zenith before the Christ came, and were sloping to their setting as lights in the spiritual heavens. The shekinah of Judaism had vanished. Great Pan was dead. The Delphic oracles were dumb. They had served out their day; they had done their best and passed away. Or, if they still lived, it was only as old worn-out systems, relics of bygone times, things that had seen other and better days.

At the time Christ came, the world was ripe for change. It had lost faith in the old religions, and was looking up and listening for the angels to sing; or, it had grown utterly sceptical, and lived only for the hour. And then, too, in other things, the world was ripe for the Great Coming One and his sweet evangel. It was a time of peace; at all events, there

was a lull between the storms. Rome was triumphant. Her iron-shod foot was on the neck of the prostrate nations. The sword was reposing in its scabbard. The temple of Janus, long closed, was opened for a brief space. The fulness of the time was come, and a new era dawned upon the world. Then it was when the Redeemer came.

Again: *Who the Redeemer was and who sent Him.* "God sent forth his Son."

We speak sometimes, in our blundering way of speaking, as if God the Father was the Just One, and the Son of God the Merciful One. But the truth is, the Father loves us, as well as, and as much as, the Son. If the Son is the Sent One, the Father is the Sender. If it was hard for the Son to be given up, it was hard for the Father to give up. We speak of the Son's sacrifice; but, had the Father no sacrifice to make? Read this and it seems to bring out the truth that the Father's sacrifice was as great as the Son's: "For God so loved the world that he gave His Only Begotten Son."

You know the touching story of Abraham's offering up his son Isaac. You see the father with a heart inwardly bleeding with unutterable sorrow journeying to the fatal mount. You see him with his own hands building the altar on which his own flesh and blood is to be the victim. You see him laying the wood in order. You see him binding the boy as he would a lamb. You see him raising the glittering knife to slay Sarah's darling, his son and heir. Ah! the father's sacrifice was as great as the son's. And that strange scene that comes down to us from the patriarchal age, is just the old way of illustrating the gospel, telling men the thrilling story of how God gave up his Son for their sins.

Do not, I ask, that age-stricken father and mother make a sacrifice as great as their only son does, when they say to him with breaking hearts and tear-streaming eyes?—"Son, your country calls you to take up arms in her defence, and fight, and if need be, die for her. We need you in our old age. We

love you. We tremble for your precious life. It is a sore sacrifice for us to make to part with you, but we make it. We lay you upon our country's altar as our sacrifice for her. She needs your services even more than we need them. She needs your blood more than we need your life. Go then, son of our old age, go! We give thee, we send thee." But how great a sacrifice is theirs, almost greater than his. They remain at home, lonely, desolate, weeping, while he fights, bleeds, dies, on the battle-field.

And the great eternal Father makes more of a sacrifice than we know in sending his Son. The sending is as hard to the Father as the being sent is to the Son. This at all events is evident, that the great redemption-scheme, not only in its origin, but also in the carrying out, is as much the Father's as the Son's. The Father sends, the Son is sent. Oh the great *Sender* and the great *Sent!*

God did not send an angel, a bright seraph. He has myriads of them, and they are so ready and swift and strong to do all his will. But he did not send an angel or an embassy of angels charged with this mission. No. He sent his one Son, his co-equal and co-eternal. Out of his bosom he comes forth to tell us and show us what a love is God's love, how interested he is in our interests.

He sends the Son because our redemption is so important. It is too important to be put into any other hands. To some of us it is a small affair. We think so little of it. We do not put ourselves out much for it. We will hardly go as far as the church-pew perhaps to hear about it. We trifle with it. We hesitate about accepting it, so little account is it to us. You have almost to compel men to it, so slow and careless are they with regard to it, and so small is their interest in it. But it is otherwise with God. He sends his Son to work out our redemption, for only he is worthy. Oh do you know, that this gospel I am preaching with so little fervor, and that you are so slack about hearing; this salvation that it is so hard to get

you to accept at all, and that you turn up your nose at and despise, cost God his Son, and the Son his life?

I suppose an angel might have come in the human form, might have concealed his brightness with earth's dull robes. I suppose he might have maintained his angelic purity while here, walked untarnished through the wilderness of temptation, fought with devils and associated with sinners of mankind and breathed the world's polluted atmosphere without defilement. I suppose an angel might have been of some service too. He might have wrought miracles, healed the sick, fed the hungry, calmed the waves, and ministered help and comfort to the wretched. But there was one thing the mightiest angel could not do—he could not die to save sinners. Only God's Son could do that, and so God did not send an angel; he sent his Son.

Again, *The mystery of the Incarnation*—"made of a woman." He was the woman's seed that was promised far away back at the fall. His was a supernatural birth, and on that account he was exempted from the imputed guilt of Adam's first sin, and all the hereditary taints and corruption which flow down in human veins through the generations. His being woman-born secured to him all that was essential as man, and without sin. The Redeemer of sinners could not be a sinner himself. And so "he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Though his virgin-mother was not without sin, yet he was. No original sin was deep-rooted in his soul. No hereditary taint poisoned the fountain of his life. And all through his eventful career, he kept himself spotless from the world's pollutions.

What a mystery: God's Son made of a woman! I know not of course, but I cannot help thinking sometimes, that we are the lowest down in the scale of intelligence of all the creatures God has endowed with intelligence and a moral nature, throughout the universe. If we are not at the very bottom, we are not far from it. All the orders of angels are above us. And

yet, what do we find? We find the Son of God, who is high at the head of all intelligences stooping to our low level; we find God's Son made of a woman. What an infinite contrast we have here—God, woman-born! In him the extremes of intelligent moral being meet. And not only the widely separated extremes meet in him, but also all the orders of intelligence intervening between the extremes find in him the center and type and perfection of their being. Oh there are depths here we cannot fathom, heights we cannot scale! "Without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

Yes, my hearer, our Redeemer is man, with man's body and soul, with a human heart beating in his breast that can feel all our feelings and enter into all our sympathies. We can go to him, and take him by the hand as a brother, a friend. We can look into his face, see the tears of grief in his eyes, the workings of sorrow and sympathy in his heaving bosom and quivering lip. We can hear his soft sweet words and feel the pressure of his hand. And yet within and beyond the man we see and hear and touch, there is the awfulness of God. Thus how wonderful a Redeemer is ours. He has the littleness of man and the mightiness of God. His hand is soft and gentle as a mother's, but his arm is an arm of Divine power, and therefore his people can safely trust in him.

Again: There is still a lower depth of humiliation than being woman-born for the Redeemer of men—"Made under the law." What does that mean? Does it mean that he was placed in circumstances where he had to obey the law? Ah! it means more than that. It was easy for Jesus to obey the law.

It means to be amenable as one who is guilty. A sinner is under the law. When the law has its heavy foot on our neck, then we are under the law. The whole human race is under law—so under it that they cannot of themselves get out from under it. What a state to be in, to be under the law! No peace for the soul there. No good of any kind there. Wrath, woe, darkness, despair, death, are under law.

But then the pure Son of God had no original sin about him, no imputed guilt, no actual transgressions, to put him under law. The mystery of the incarnation secured him from all that. How then does he come to be under law? In this way. To redeem sinners, to atone for their sins, he voluntarily takes their law-place. For their sakes he lets himself be made under law, he becomes their substitute.

See here! Jesus is in trouble. He is apprehended and dragged before the courts. He stands at the bar of outraged law to answer to grave charges. You do not like to see any one where he is. It has a bad look. People shake their heads. They whisper that they always had their suspicions. The witnesses come in, and with lots of words they tell what they know, and they do not always know much. Everybody is against him. The charge is not sustained, but the judge finding himself confronted by a howling mob lets justice—lets something else than justice—have its course against the innocent Christ. Guilty!—that is the word ten-thousand throats hoarsely bellow forth around the doomed Nazarene, and it is not easy to keep back the populace from rushing upon him and tearing him to pieces. Oh it is a terrible thing to be under law! The Christ found it so.

Let us see the end. And we have not long to wait. The executioners come. A cross heavy with the guilt of a world is laid upon him, and amid jeers and scoffs he staggers under his load towards Calvary. See, he faints! He sinks to the earth under its weight. Will no one bear it for him? Where are his disciples? Peter! Peter! thou who wert so brave when there was nothing to fear, so outspoken, so willing to do or to die;—where art thou now, O great fisherman, and thy loud devotion, when thy Master needs thy help? And John, the beloved disciple—where is he, and all his love, this dark hour? We know indeed he is not far off—he is round somewhere, but he is not on hand when his loving services are so much in demand. And where too are all those the Christ healed, the lepers he

ceased, the hungry he fed, the multitudes he preached to, the sinners he saved;—where are they now when by a touch of their hand they may serve him? Why are they not by his side, bearing with him the reproach of the cross, standing by him and cheering him with their presence? Ah! not one is there, not a hand is stretched out on his behalf, and a stranger has to be pressed into the service of bearing his cross after him.

But the place of skull is reached. The tragedy of the cross is perpetrated in the face of Heaven. His precious blood is shed - spilled around as if it were of no account. He is lifted up to die, and men mock. But Heaven cannot look on unmoved when her King dies. A great darkness falls, a horror of darkness, and veils the shuddering sight. Oh what it was for the Redeemer to be made under the law! What an agony his was, an agony like the dying of a soul. Hark to the wail that bursts from his lips and moans away up to the ears of his Father: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

But soon it is all over. It is finished. FINISHED—what a word! It tells us what a success the cross is, what a blessed triumph. He was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, and he has done it. He has gone down to the bottom of man's sin and guilt, made atonement, satisfied the claims of justice, and opened up a way of life through his own blood for the sinner. Thus what a Redeemer we have, so rich in mercy, so mighty to save. We are here to-day to do him honor, to express in some weak way our gratitude, to testify our love and devotion, for all he has done and suffered for us. Glory to God for this precious Redeemer! Glory! glory forever and forever!

II. THE REDEEMED.

And the first thought that comes to us here with regard to the redeemed is this, where the Redeemer finds them. He finds them under the law.

Now, it is a blessed thing to be where there is law. We

could not do without law. The law protects. It throws its mighty aegis over our heads, our homes, our property, our interests, and we are, and we feel, so safe and happy. The law is a teacher to teach men the right, and is a friend to every one who wants to do the right. The law is thus so good, so beneficent, so necessary.

But while it is a blessed thing to have law, it is a dreadful thing to be under law. For instance, the law of gravitation is so beneficent and useful when you are where you ought to be, at your work, with your feet on the earth. But climb to some dizzy height, where you have no business to be, and slip and fall, and what a cruel thing the law of gravitation is. How it seems to enjoy dashing you on the hard ground.

So with all law. Law is all right till we break it, but the moment we break it, it turns against us, and it breaks us. To be in prison is to be under law. To be falling down headlong is to be under law. To be in the grave is to be under law, and with what a strange sort of cruel delight death holds the dead man down, and wastes him with its devouring jaws. To be a drunkard is to be under law, the law of lust, the tyranny of appetite, and what a fool the law makes of him. How it knocks him down, and rolls him in the mire of the street, and in wild devilish glee cries out: "O drunkard, I have you now! I have you now!" To be a sinner is to be under law, and we are all sinners, and so we are under law. When we want to do good, we cannot. Something holds us back. A chain is around us, and that chain is growing longer and longer, and heavier and heavier. O poor sinner, how dreadful is thy state, for thou art under law! Thou art falling headlong into a bottomless-pit. Thou art being led away to prison and death. Thou art slowly, surely going down to ruin, and thou knowest it not. Every sin thou committest is a new link added to thy chain, one more step to thy doom, one less chance of hope and help to thee. Thus how dreadful it is to be where thou art—under law.

But the precious Redeemer comes to thee there, and he puts out his hands to keep thee from falling, he thrusts himself in thy way to hinder thee from rushing to thy doom, he gives his blood to redeem thee. He found thee, O redeemed one, in a very real sort of prison-house, in the bondage of corruption, in the captivity of sin and lust, and he redeemed thee. And to-day he has led thee into his banqueting-house, and his banner over thee is love, and he is giving thee to realize in some measure what a blessedness it is to be redeemed.

And that is not all. He redeems the sinner so that he might put him among the children of God, and give him to be an heir of glory.

It is a great thing to be redeemed from under the law, to have the chain of the tyrant broken from off us, to be pardoned when our feet are on the fatal platform. But the blessedness of redemption is only one drop in the full-to-overflowing cup of the redeemed soul's blessedness, one note in its anthem of praise—its doxology, one ray of glory streaming from the full-orbed sun of righteousness.

When God redeemed his people from their house of bondage in Egypt, he led them away to be his own people in their own happy country. It was a great thing for them to be out of Egypt, to be across the Red Sea, to be at the foot of Sinai, to be under the cloud of his mercy and faithfulness, to be across the wilderness, to be at the borders of Canaan, to be fed on the manna and to drink of the water from the stricken rock. But God kept on leading them, and doing for them, and giving to them, till he had given them rest in Canaan, sonship and heirship and national glory.

And redeemed one, thy Lord wants to do more for thee than redeem thee. Thou art satisfied perhaps when thou art out of thy Egypt, when the yoke of thy bondage is broken from off thy neck. Thou art satisfied perhaps because the drink-chain that once held thee down is broken, because the violence of passion and lust in thee is tamed, because the world has lost its power over thee and can no longer do its will with thee.

and because thou has tasted somewhat of the blessedness of liberty in Christ. Thou sittest back to-day and rejoicest that thou art one of the redeemed. But, redeemed soul, thy Lord is not satisfied to see thee where thou art. He invites thee to His House. He welcomes thee to his table. He puts the ring of adoption upon thy finger, and calls thee his son and heir. Thou art saying to-day: "A servant's place is good enough for me." And thou art sitting back among the servants, or remaining away with the world. But however satisfactory it may be to thee with thy low worldly ideas of christian privilege and duty, it is not satisfactory to thy Redeemer. He redeems thee to adopt thee. He adopts thee to make thee his heir. Thy place is here among the children. He is pleading with thee to come up higher.

Sons and heirs! how much of good and glory there is in that. It is only as we come forward, and enter in, and rise to the grandeur of all this good, that we know it. Why stay without then, when we may be within? Not thus men act in other things. If an heirship is to be had, how quick we are to make out some relationship. We leave no stone unturned to push our special claim, or what we regard as our claim. If position wants an occupant, if an office is vacant, if place and power are to be filled, what a throng of applicants. But here is an heirship that goes begging. And it is an heirship to a glorious inheritance, a high throne. Oh! I think, if we knew what it is to be an heir in a spiritual sense, we would want to make good our claim. And the redeemed are sons and heirs.

My hearer, art thou redeemed? Then what good and glory open up before thee—all the joy of salvation, all the glory of sonship, all the splendors of heirship. Lift up thy head, and see what it is to be where and what thou art. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Man and the Sabbath.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; so that the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath."—
(Revised Version) MARK II. 27, 28.

SABBATH desecration, bad as it is, and much as it is to be deplored, is not without its uses. It is doing this, at least;—it is awakening public attention to the matter; stirring up discussion; provoking and evoking concentrated action on the part of christians of every name to secure, where possible, better legislation; and thus arousing them from their fatal indifference and giving them to see the necessity of standing shoulder to shoulder in the battle being waged between the friends and foes of the Sabbath. All this is doing good. Discussion in pulpit and press, in the halls of legislation and on the public plat-form, is having its effect. Healthier views on the subject are being inculcated. I say, let discussion go on. Let the Sabbath-question be looked at, canvassed, criticized—if you will—in all its phases. The friends of the Sabbath are not afraid of the issue. Anything is better than dead indifference. While the church sleeps the Sabbath-institution is being undermined. A dangerous and seductive secularism is creeping in upon us that would rob us of the Sabbath. The pleasurerist wants to have it

turned into a day for pleasure;—boating, yachting, fishing, gunning, horse-racing, base-ball and cricket matches, concerts, lectures, theatrical performances, and what-not. The business-man again wants it for trade and travel. He wants to keep his shops open, his mills and factories going. In a word, he wants the whole round week for mammon's service. Thus, what with pleasure and business the Lord's day is in no little danger of being utterly secularized.

Now, in the first place, we are led to ask here by what authority we should keep the Sabbath at all. Is there any good warrant for its observance in any way different from the rest of the days? Unless it can be shewn that there are good and sufficient reasons for its being kept apart from the ordinary days of the week, the Sabbath will have to go. If it has been foisted upon the world, as so many things have been, no one knows how, in the times of ignorance and superstition; and if it has been tolerated ever since out of respect to its antiquity and sanctity, and, so to speak, as one of the heirlooms of the old, old past; then it will have to be given up before the better light that is breaking upon the world. It is no use trying to hold on to it, for you cannot hold on to a thing that is a lie from the beginning, a wretched sham, even though it has the hoariness of antiquity to commend it. But, on the other hand, if it is, as we claim, of Divine authority, and if there is a reason for it in the very nature of things; then the Sabbath will remain as one of the institutions that the changes and chances of coming ages and growing light make only more and more secure to us and more and more of service.

Now, the Sabbath, according to Moses, had its origin with the origin of all things. It was instituted when the world was created. "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made."

The Sabbath, you see, has a place in the very foundation of things. It is one of the world's corner-stones, and you can no more displace it or dispense with it, than you can displace or dispense with the nature of things. The Sabbath law, as I look upon it, is not merely a moral obligation, or a sort of after-thought that was found useful and necessary after the experience of some hundreds of years; but it has a place and purpose in the world's original economy, a place and purpose as important as gravitation or any other natural law. It is a natural law as well as a moral law. Break the Sabbath, and you break in upon nature's wise provisions, and disturb her harmony. Day and night are natural divisions of time. So too the month, the seasons, the year. So also the week with its sacred Sabbath. The week is not any artificial arbitrary arrangement of the days, a clever and useful invention of men; it is a creation of God. You have noticed so often how week after week in certain seasons storms repeat themselves with almost unvarying regularity. Sometimes it will storm on Sabbath in the autumn or winter season, and then for five or six weeks there will be stormy Sabbaths in succession. I know that such a weather phenomenon is accounted for by almanac-makers and weather-prophets because of the quartering, and halving, and three-quartering, and changing of the moon; but is it not far more likely to be because of the natural seven-day arrangement according to which the world and the weather were created? Then it has been found that both working-animals and working-men require the seventh-day rest, if they would do their best, and no other arrangement serves the purpose so well. And it is said that furnaces and machinery are the better for a rest and a cool-off every week. They work better and they wear better. A Mr. Bagnall stated to a Committee of the House of Lords, that when he gave up his former practice of keeping his furnaces going every day of the week, and kept Sabbath, he found after a seven year's trial that both his furnaces and men did better work. I quote his own words: "We have made a

larger quantity of iron than ever, and gone on in all our six iron-works much more free from accidents and interruptions than during any preceding seven years of our lives." And I can understand it, if this fact will be taken into consideration, that the world and all things have been created with a view to a Sabbath rest.

And another thing, from the beginning, the Sabbath was made for the double purpose of rest and worship. God rested on the Sabbath from his work of creation, and he blessed and hallowed it, thus setting it apart, so long as the world is a world, as a day of sacred rest. Thus, the Sabbath has a foundation that cannot be shaken, and it will abide, for you cannot get at the world's best, its gold and its honey, without keeping the Sabbath right.

Then as we follow the Sabbath-question down the world's history, we find the Divine authority for it growing in strength and clearness. The Sabbath was promulgated amid the awful displays of the Divine presence and power from the summit of Sinai as one of the ten commandments. And the first word shows the Sabbath to have been no new enactment. Remember—"remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," and so on. Many look upon the Sabbath as an old Jewish law, but it was law before the Jewish people were. It was, as we have seen, from the beginning, a blessed day for all nations and all ages. Of course it was adapted in some respects to the needs and conditions of the Jewish people, but in this grand essential it is ever the same, the day of sacred rest.

But we hasten on to see what ground of authority there is for the christian Sabbath, or Sunday, or the Lord's Day. The seventh-day Sabbath continued from the creation of the world till the day of our Lord's resurrection, which event was a new creation to the world, the inauguration of a new era. From the creation of the world till the Lord's resurrection it was the evening and the morning one day, and the seventh-day Sabbath; from the resurrection on till the end of time it is the morning and evening one day, and the first-day Sabbath. The

Lord rose from the dead very early on the first day of the week. That evening the disciples, and a few other christian friends, met in the upper-room to talk over the situation and plan for the future. While they were meeting with closed doors the Lord appeared in their midst, and cleared up for them the question of his identity as the risen Lord. It was the morning when he rose, and it was the evening when he appeared to them, and so the morning and the evening made the first day, and their Sabbath, the Lord's Day. Just a week afterwards, they met again in the same room. Some were present who were absent the week before. All the week they had not seen the Lord. But as they were meeting, he again appeared in their midst, and blessed them, breathing on them his Spirit. From that on the Lord's Day was the Christian Sabbath.

Let me cite a few proofs. Paul and his friends were seven days at Troas, and on the first day of the week he preached, and preached long into the night of that sacred day. Again the Apostle tells the Corinthian christians to lay by in store on the first day of the week, as the Lord had prospered them, their givings, for religious and benevolent objects. There in Revelation we find the Lord's Day mentioned: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

I will cite but one passage from the writings of Justin Martyr. He was born about A. D. 114, and died in 165 a martyr to the christian faith. In his first Apology, I find this passage: "Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration."

This passage from Justin shews that in his day christians

kept the first day of the week as their day of worship. We must remember that he is writing to heathens, and so he speaks of the first day as Sunday, because that was the name they gave it. We do not like Sunday because of its heathen origin, but we find the day called so by christians early in the second century.

I have thus glanced briefly at the history of the Sabbath, shewing what authority we have for the Sabbath, an authority that cannot be questioned or shaken.

I come to speak, in the next place, on the way the Sabbath is to be kept. To the question, "How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?" it is answered in our excellent shorter catechism: "The Sabbath is to be sanctified, by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."

The Sabbath has a twofold purpose; it is for both rest and worship. And the two are not, or need not be, inconsistent. Rest from secular labor is not inconsistent with worship. It may be said, walking to church, sitting doubled up in a hard pew, hearing sermons and preaching them, singing and praying and so on, is as much work as ploughing and sowing. I have heard working men say, that they would about as soon plough all day as worship all day. And there is more or less of truth in the statement; indeed I grant, a great deal of truth in it. But still, it is rest. Change of work is rest, a kind of rest that is good for any one, healthful, inspiring, invigorating. Mere rest, an all-day stupid half-asleep and half-awake doze, is not the best sort of rest for an active intelligent man. It is not the way to keep Sabbath. I do not think it wrong to sleep more that morning than on other mornings. For those who have been hard at it early and late for six days, I think God gives a generous portion of his blessed day for sleep, rest. It is for real rest the Sabbath is given, and in that respect it is a boon from Heaven to the hard-working poor man. And I

think it possible to over-do the day of sacred rest with religious services. We may turn the day into a sort of spiritual dissipation. From early morning till late into the night we may be at religious services of one kind and another, until soul and body are crushed under a yoke that is hard to bear, a sort of spiritual bondage foreign to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But then, on the other hand, it is easy to err by being too indulgent to ourselves. So many misspend their Saturday nights. They work unnecessarily late; they keep at it till it is close upon twelve o'clock; and they do so, because the next day is the Sabbath, and they can sleep as long as they like. They thus cheat God by taking out of his day for sleep the hours they should have taken out of Saturday-night. And then others give the last hours of the week to pleasure, to drinking, to folly and evil, because they have the Sabbath to sleep off their debauch. Ah! how we may abuse for a wicked rest the Lord's own hallowed day. He gives us six days for our work, and he keeps but one for his worship, and we cheat him all we can. Oh! is it any wonder that our Sabbaths are not as blessing-bringing to us as they should be?

In the text chosen our Lord gives us his views on Sabbath keeping, and it is his to say how the Sabbath is to be kept: "for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath," and he lays down this principle, and emphasizes it in his teaching, that the Sabbath is made for man—made in his interests, made for his good. "And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; so that the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

Now, there is a profound truth here that we may overlook. We have come to understand by the phrase "Son of Man" only the Lord Jesus Himself. And he is pre-eminently the Son of Man. He stands at the top of manhood, the great Divine Man. But every man is a son of man, and as such is lord of the Sabbath as well as Jesus, for the Sabbath was made for man. That is the teaching of the

Master here, and although it may sound strange to our ears, and may seem to be dangerous ground, a slippery place, to venture on; yet we need not fear to follow, so long as we follow where he leads. The Pharisees held, and many yet hold, that man is not lord of the Sabbath, but that the Sabbath is lord of him; he is bound by it, and can only do as the Sabbath-law allows. But Jesus holds and teaches, that any man and every man, is lord of the Sabbath, so that it is for him to say, within certain limits, how he should keep the Sabbath, so that his true interests may be subserved by it.

Our Lord and his disciples, and some others, among whom were certain Pharisees, were going through a field of ripened grain Sabbath morning, on their way probably to the synagogue service. The disciples were hungry, and as they walked along, they plucked the ears of grain, and rubbing them in their hands, and blowing away the chaff, they ate the grain to appease their hunger. The Pharisees, who held very strict views of the Sabbath, called that sabbath-breaking. The rubbing of the ears was work—it was hand-thrashing, and the blowing away of the chaff was a species of grain-winnowing. They therefore called the Master's attention to the sabbath-breaking of his followers.

Now, you will observe, he did not argue the point with them whether it was sabbath-breaking or not. According to their strict ideas of the Sabbath, of course it was sabbath-breaking. We would have taken issue with them on the point under debate, and we would have denied that it was sabbath-breaking. But Jesus let them have their own opinion on that point, absurd and ridiculous as many of their opinions were on just such points, and he took the ground that what they were doing was a work of necessity, for they were hungry, and under such circumstances, they might do still more than they were doing and not break the Sabbath. And then he reminded them of what David and his band of men did when they were hungry, how they ate the hallowed shew-bread. The priests, too, every Sabbath slay the

sacrifice, and still are guiltless, for the work was necessary to the worship of the day, and therefore necessary to the right keeping of the day.

And just here comes in man's lordship of the sacred day. It is for a man to decide what is for him a work of necessity. Driving is work, work for yourself and your horse; but if you would keep the Sabbath right, it is necessary for you to drive perhaps. Thus driving to church is not sabbath-breaking but sabbath-keeping. And so with regard to many other things. The two disciples and the Master walked to Emmaus the first Lord's Day, and that was some sixty furlongs, or between seven and eight miles, and they returned the same evening in order to be present at the meeting in the upper-room. As lords of the Sabbath, it is our privilege to say, within certain limits, what we ought to do and not do. The Jew must not kindle a fire in his dwelling on the Sabbath, but it is necessary for us to have a fire both in our churches and in our homes. The sexton of the church and our servants will tell us of the work they have to do, and not all of it may be necessary, but some of it is necessary.

The old Pharisees went so far as to say that dressing for church must be done the day before as well as the cooking. A lamp must not be lit nor put out on the Sabbath; if a lamp is necessary, let it be lit on Friday and kept burning till the Sabbath was past. Burden-bearing on the Sabbath was wrong, and so the Pharisees in their ultra-strictness went so far as to say it was wrong to carry a handkerchief in the pocket, or a bunch of keys, or anything else. Thus, with their ultra-strictness they caricatured the Sabbath prohibitions. Now, the Master would leave it with a man's self, as the lord of the Sabbath, to decide what to do and not do.

And then works of mercy as well as works of necessity were permitted on the Sabbath, such works for instance as relieving distress, visiting the sick, healing their diseases, and so on. But the Pharisees with their nonsensical and whimsical traditional teachings and regulations had made mercy a very different thing

from what it is, a cruel sort of mercy, a gall and wormwood mercy. It was forbidden by them to give an emetic, to set a broken bone, to put back a dislocated joint. If one had the tooth-ache, he might take vinegar in his mouth to relieve it, providing he would swallow it. In case of a sore-throat, there must be no gargling. That would be work. Something however may be slowly swallowed. Such were the Sabbath ideas our Lord had to combat.

In the synagogue there happened to be a man with a withered hand, and the Pharisees watched to see what he would do. They wanted to trap him into the doing of something they could bring up against him, and so they asked him if it was right to heal on the Sabbath. He instanced the case of a sheep falling into a pit, and asked them if they would not lift it out on the Sabbath. He knew they would get over their ultra-strictness to save their property. And then with an emphasis that must have gone home to his critics, he put it to them, "How much then is a man better than a sheep?" But their false notions of sabbath-keeping had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they had no bowels of compassion for the poor man with his helpless arm. Oh how cruel and criminal is a mistaken faith, a false religion! Jesus was vexed with them. Mark tells us, he looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their heart. And then he healed the man. And that was not the only instance he healed on the Sabbath. He healed a woman bowed together for eighteen years. He healed the man that lay at the pool of Bethesda. He healed a man of blindness. Thus, he shewed that it was right to do works of mercy on the Sabbath.

And here again, it is left very much to a man's self as to how far this ought to be carried. I have often felt that an abuse was made of this Sabbath privilege, and more was done under the plea of a work of mercy than should be done. A physician once told me—not a Fredericton physician—that the people would sometimes put off coming to see him, or to send for him,

till the Sabbath, because it saved themselves a day for work to take the Lord's day for the purpose. But it cost him his Sabbath privileges. And I myself have found people visiting the sick, crowding up the sick chamber, when it would have been more a mercy to the sick, if they had stayed at home, and attended to their Sabbath duties. Still, as a lord of the Sabbath, a man must judge for himself what a work of mercy for him is, and you can easily understand how much more latitude one man will allow himself than another.

The Lord's Day, then, is for rest and worship, excepting in so far as works of necessity and mercy arise to interfere with the sacred purpose, and every man is left very much to himself, according to the teaching of our Lord, as to how far it is for his good he should keep the Sabbath. But this lordship of the Sabbath, this personal liberty of his, you can easily understand, is liable to great abuse. One man is conscientious, and his works of necessity and mercy are as few as possible, and interfere but little with his sacred duties. Another man is free and easy, and his works of necessity and mercy so-called make his Sabbath all but a week-day. He sleeps late Sabbath morning, so late he cannot go to church. Then he must have an extra dinner on that day, and that means a busy morning for somebody. Then mercy to himself requires a long constitutional in the afternoon, or if he has a horse, mercy to himself and horse requires a drive. Perhaps he can get to church in the evening. Thus, the day of sacred rest is littered away, and not the day it should be, and personal liberty becomes licentiousness.

We can see, then, the necessity there is, and always has been, for a Sabbath law to restrain the liberties of those who carry their liberties too far, and to protect those who want the Sabbath for the purpose for which it has been given. One man insists it is in his interests to make the day one of pleasure. Another insists it is in his interests to go on with his business. But high over all such low worldly interests comes pead-

ing the old Sabbath-law: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Only this sabbath-keeping is for the real interests of all. If the Sabbath is to be a day of pleasure, that pleasure means work for the men who run the street-cars, and the trains, and the boats. Or if again the Sabbath is to be for business, then pleasure must retire. No rest for clerks, and shop-boys, and sewing-girls. Thus, the secularism of the Lord's day would mean for the poor man work, work, work, on, on, to the bitter black end of his lost life.

But are we going to let the day of sacred rest go from us, the Lord's day with all its hallowed happy memories, the day that tells us of the rest to come? No. Let us more and more hold to it, and more and more use it for the purpose for which it has been given. Let us work harder during the six days of work, that we may have less to do in the shape of works of necessity, and more time for worship and works of mercy, on the Lord's day. We need the Sabbath to keep us from growing worldly-minded, and the more we devote it to meditation and prayer the more of a good it will be to us. I plead therefore for better-kept Sabbaths. I plead for less work for us all on the Lord's Day, and more time for communion with God. Only thus can we grow in meetness for Heaven. And a well-kept Sabbath is no loss to a man. A man can do more work and better work, working six days and resting and worshipping the seventh, than working right along. It has been proved. The better we keep the Lord's day, other things being equal, the better it will be for us in every way. A world without a Sabbath would be like a man without a smile, a summer without flowers, and a home without a garden. Remember, then, the Sabbath to keep it holy.

Woman's Church Work.

"I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae: that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you; for she herself also hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self."—ROM. xvi. 1, 2.

HERE is an oldtime certificate of church-membership, and it is a model certificate. As a pastor I am called upon to write a good many certificates of one kind and another in the course of a year;—certificates of church-membership for those who are moving away to reside elsewhere, certificates of moral character, business certificates sometimes, and so on. Indeed, I often wish I had not so many certificates to write, for it is a grief of heart to see the young people, just when they have come to be of some use in the church and society, go off to swell the membership of churches already overcrowded, and to add to the populations of cities already congested with a foreign population. But somehow our young people—so many of them—have got it into their heads that

N. B.=This sermon led to the organization of St. Paul's Church Ladies' Working Band.

their only hope of success is in going to the States or the far West; and so, every autumn and spring there is an exodus of the very cream of our homes, and churches, and country. And their bright hopes of success are not always realized. In not a few cases, they would have done very much better for themselves to have remained at home; and even where they have succeeded, if they had worked as hard, and been as saving and self-denying, at home, as they have had to do and had to be away, they would have succeeded quite as well, and better perhaps.

Put this aside from the point I am at. I wanted to say that when our young people go from home, they like to carry with them a certificate from their pastor. They find when he has endorsed them, it is a help to them; it is as good as cash to them. But it is not easy for him to give any sort of certificate to some who apply. How can he recommend laziness? How can he certify incapacity, utter uselessness? How can he endorse people who have no place in the church? He wants to do the kindest he can, but he simply cannot give a certificate to those who have done nothing, and have tried to do nothing, worthy of commendation. But sometimes a real modern Phœbe comes along, and then he can write a certificate like this of Paul. "I commend unto you Phœbe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreæ; that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you; for she herself hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self."

Now, first of all, consider Phœbe's relations to the Church at Cenchreæ.

Cenchreæ was the harbor of Corinth, or rather one of its harbors, for Corinth had two harbors, Cenchreæ being the eastern one, on the Saronic Gulf. It was distant some nine miles from the city, and was quite an important place in Paul's time. A christian church was early planted here by the Apostle, and Phœbe was one of the leading female members,

the only member we know anything of in fact. She was a maiden lady in well-to-do circumstances. Her name indicates that she was of heathen origin. She would be among the first who embraced the christian faith under Paul's preaching, and being a woman of vigorous mind she soon became prominent in every good work. He speaks of her tenderly as "our sister." She was a sister in the faith, and not only that, she was one eminent for her sisterly affection and sympathy for all who bore the christian name. She had shown her sisterliness in many acts of charity and kindness towards himself and his co-laborers. She was a sister indeed, one of those large-hearted women, a few of whom are raised up by God in every considerable community almost, whose hands are full of good deeds, and who are never weary in ministering to the comfort and necessities of all who come within the reach of their gentle loving hallowed influence. Thank God for the Phæbes! They are indeed light-bearers to many a sorrow-shadowed home and to many a gloom-filled life. How ill off the church and the world would be were it not for the Phæbes!

Then she is called a servant of the church: "Who is a servant of the church at Cenchrea." In the margin the reading is deaconess, and many hold that that reading should be in the text as the true reading. Very early in the history of the christian church, it cannot now with certainty be said how early, a female order of church officials was appointed called deaconesses. Many maintain that the order had its origin in apostolic times, and cite this passage, and some others, as proofs. But that is by no means clear, else the translators of the revised version would have called Phæbe a deaconess. I find great names and high authorities making her out to have been a deaconess, but I am slow to accept their opinion. The original Greek styles her a deaconess. And she was a deaconess in fact, for we find her ministering to the necessities of saints. All that is so far clear. But that she belonged to a church order of such, or that she was the matron of such an

order, or that there was any such order so early in the christian church, is by no means established. She was a deaconess, as I think, not because she was set apart by the apostle to such an office, but because of her own great-heartedness, her own willing-mindedness. She saw all around her work that she could do, suffering ones that she could comfort, necessitous ones that she could relieve, strangers that she could befriend, orphans and widows that she could help, and she was in a position to help them, to be a real deaconess to them, and she took upon herself the sweet christian office.

I am aware that there is a growing opinion in the various branches of the christian church to-day, that the order of deaconesses once existed in the church, existed in the days of the apostles, and if so, that it should be revived, and some modern churches are reviving it. But the history of such orders shows how liable they are to be abused, and therefore we should be slow in creating orders that may bring trouble. I grant there is need of female help in the church, urgent and growing need of such help. There is need of a band of Phœbes in every church, noble disinterested self-sacrificing christian ladies at work. But we can have them without ordaining them to be deaconesses. We may ordain, and then not have much. The Phœbes are born, not made—ecclesiastically made.

Now, it is in my mind, and has been there for some time, to have a band of christian women in connection with this church, who would visit the aged and the poor as occasion might offer, read the Word of God or some good book to those who cannot read for themselves, minister to their necessities, stir up the careless to come to church, gather into the Sabbath School straying waifs, seek out strangers and people who have no church home, and do whatever of good their hand can find to do.

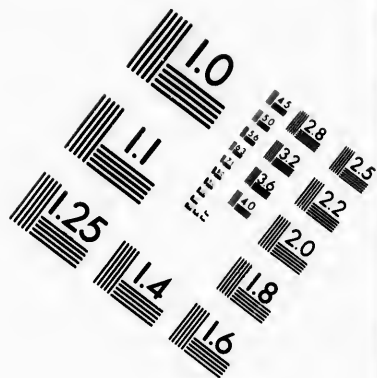
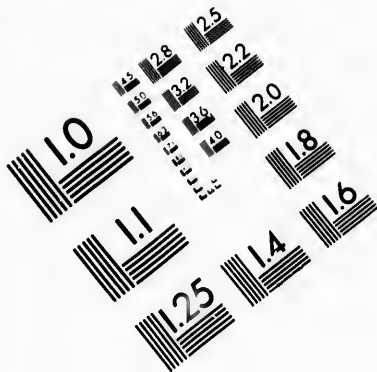
I think it likely that was the kind of work Phœbe did. I suppose she began to do in a simple way, running into a

neighbor's, when she had an opportunity, with a word of comfort, or to give a little help to a mother whose child was sick, or to tell an aged disciple all she could remember of Paul's last sermon, or to tidy up the room of one who was sick abed. And the work grew upon her, until she found that she was doing a great good work.

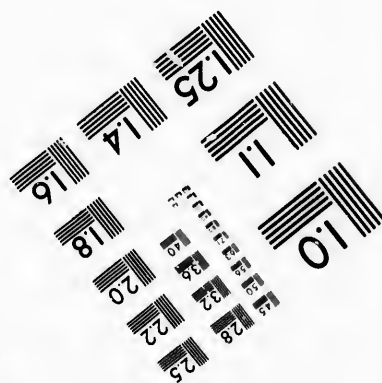
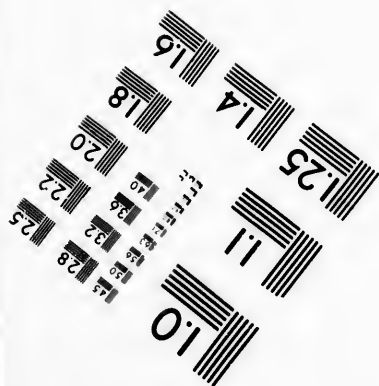
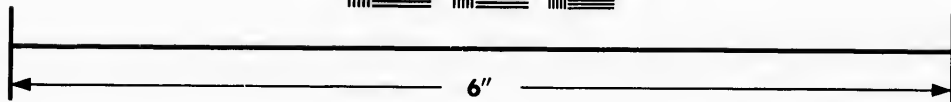
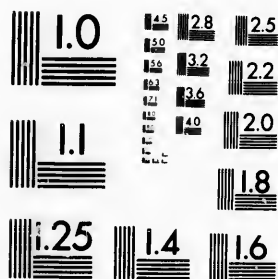
And so here. If you want to be a Phœbe here, you can be one as soon as you like. There are aged people who would be so glad to have some one come in with a sunny face in a simple off-handed way, and read to them out of the good book, or sing them a hymn, or tell them some of the sermon that did themselves good. And there are poor people, mothers with sick children, strangers, careless ones, that love can reach and help in so many ways. And there are children not in the Sabbath School that should be there, and would be there, if there was some one of tact to go after them. But, let me tell you, it is no use for fussy and over-nice ladies, young or old to do this work. If you go to lecture and hector and preach, you had better not go. If you cannot bear what is disagreeable, you had better stay far away. If you are afraid of taking some disease, or soiling your clothes, or fouling your delicate fingers, or hurting your social standing, you are no Phœbe, and you are not wanted. If you cannot bear a scolding for the Master's blessed sake, the rough edge of a tongue that is not over-particular in the choice of words, and the cruel misunderstanding of those you want to minister to, it is no use for you to be a deaconess of the old Phœbe-type. But if you can be a Phœbe, come along, and we will see what can be done. I would like a dozen or a score of real willing-hearted and willing-handed Phœbes to volunteer for a season's work. I think such sanctified work for an hour or two a week would tell immensely for good among us.

Secondly, Phœbe commended to the christian church at Rome, and the reception and assistance asked for her. "I commend unto you Phœbe our sister, who is a servant of the





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church that is at Cenchræ ; that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you ; for she herself also hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self."

Whether Phœbe was going to Rome on a business trip simply, or whether she was going there to reside permanently, we are left in doubt. I incline to the opinion that she was removing from Cenchræ to Rome to reside, and to carry on her business, whatever it was, in that wider sphere of business usefulness. And then the business referred to—what was it ? Was it church-business of some kind, or was it some secular business of her own ? Here again, you see, there is ample room for much diversity of opinion. Those who believe her to have been the matron of the Corinthian sisterhood of deaconesses regard her visit to Rome as in the interests of her order, and the text is the apostle's endorsement of herself and her scheme. Perhaps she was on a collecting tour, or to found a new sisterhood. And then the reception and assistance asked to be accorded her would correspond to the high position she occupied as mother superioress at Corinth. Thus, if you care to, you can put in all you want into these words of the apostle. You can make her out to be a great lady in the church of those early times, one high up in authority and sanctity, and you can see her entering Rome with great eclat.

But I have no such opinion about her. I look upon her as an elderly female who has been engaged in business in Cenchræ, and who finds it to be for her business interests to move to Rome. She is going there to open a shop, to set up a millinery establishment, or something of that sort. She is a good woman, an earnest member of the christian church at Cenchræ, one who has given both her time and money, her energy and large-hearted benevolence, to the furtherance of the gospel. So the apostle very cordially certifies her to the little christian church at Rome, and commends her to them. He asks them to receive her in the Lord, that is, as a christian,

and in a manner worthy of themselves as saints, christians. And then he wants them to help her all they can, to give her their business patronage, to use whatever little influence they may have in the great city to befriend and favor her. I am not sure that that is just what he means when he says : "and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you ;" but I feel, that to put such a meaning upon the words, and to draw such an inference from them, is quite within the range of probability.

And here we may learn several practical lessons. We may learn that we should take with us our certificate of church-membership when we go away. Phœbe took hers, and we should take ours. But so many slip away, and not until years afterwards perhaps do they send for it. Take your certificate with you, and present it where you have gone just as soon as you can. Attach yourself to some christian church, and take hold with them in the work that is to be done there. It is better for them, and it is better for you. The Lord requires it. It is both your duty and privilege.

Then we see here what sort of reception we should give those who come to us certified, commended. We should give them a hearty reception. We should make them feel at home among us. We should open our doors and our hearts, and let them in to all that is sweet and blessed, the very best we have. We are not to receive as the world receives—coldly, suspiciously, but we are to receive as we ourselves would like to be received ; with the utmost confidence, as becomes saints. "That ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints."

And then we are to help one another in the broadest sense—help one another spiritually, but also help one another in a business way. It is not uncommon, I am told, on the west side of the continent, in San Francisco, and other western towns, for the ministers in reading notices from the pulpit, to inform the people of the congregation that Mr. So and So has come from the East with a letter of recommendation, and has

opened a shop on such and such a street, and wants a share of the congregation's patronage; or that Miss Thus and Thus has set up a millinery establishment, and would be highly delighted if the ladies would call on her and leave their orders. And is it so very wrong? This letter of Paul's was read in the church at Rome, and Phœbe's certificate was read from the pulpit, in the ears of the congregation, recommending her to the help of the people in her enterprise. I have been criticized and found fault with for reading from the pulpit certain notices that looked like mere business notices. And perhaps there was good ground for criticism. I do not care to read every notice that is handed me to read, and I sometimes take upon myself to suppress some of them. But where there is somebody to help who seems to be worthy of help, deserving of our patronage, with Paul to back me here, I do not hesitate to read it.

Some time ago a Mr. Campbell wrote me to the effect that he was to visit Fredericton on a lecturing tour with a camera to illustrate his lectures, and he wanted my patronage. I wrote back to him somewhat curtly. He answered, feeling hurt over what I had said, and giving me some account of himself. He studied in one of our colleges with a view to the ministry, and his health gave way so that he had to give up the idea of his life. After a while he so far recovered that he found he could work out his idea on another line. So he travelled in eastern countries, in Egypt, Arabia, Sinai, and so on, and then he got views of the places, and told the children and people about them all over the church, and in this way preached and worked. He told me his ambition was to visit the church's mission fields, and then come home and tell the Sabbath schools of the church, and show them, as far as pictures could show them, the good work that was being done. When I read his letter, I was sorry for my curt words, and wrote to him to come along, and stop at the manse when he was in the city, and I would do what I could for him. And he came, and I found him a worthy man, and I

asked the people to go and see and hear what he had for them. And those who went were pleased. But I was criticized for it, and yet I felt satisfied, if my critics knew what I knew, they would have been as glad as I was to help a young man whose heart was in the Lord's work.

It is our duty to stand by one another and help one another. Young christians starting out in business, if they are worthy of our help, should receive it. We should countenance and befriend them; we should patronize and help them all we can. I think that is the teaching of the apostle, and if so, we cannot follow a better guide. "And that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she hath need of you."

Then, thirdly, the reason or ground the apostle urges why Phœbe should be received and helped by the christians of Rome. "For she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

The word translated here succourer means patroness or protectress. The idea is something like this. In those old times it was attended with no little risk to be a christian. Paul and those like him, when they went to Corinth and other cities, to do mission work, preach the gospel, plant christian churches, had often to run the gauntlet of the streets, and were mauled and abused often shamefully. And sometimes there was no one to take their part, or show them any kindness. They were afraid to do it, or had not enough of interest in the cause to do it. But this was not the case at Cenchreæ. Phœbe early took an interest in the christian cause, and she became the patroness of the cause and the protectress of those who preached the gospel. Her house became a sort of an asylum for the hunted and persecuted christian preachers. She had enough of influence in the place, and was in a position because of her standing among the people, to do as she thought she ought to do, and nobody meddled with her. She seems to have been a sort of leading spirit in Cenchreæ, and so she saved the apostle and his friends from much popular abuse and priestly interference and

intrigue. Thus, far and wide she came to be known as the patroness and protectress of the christians, and her home came to be the resort of the missionaries.

If Paul was sending a christian preacher to do work at Corinth or Cenchræ, or by the way of Cenchræ to some other place, he would tell them to go to Phœbe's, and they would be made welcome. Thus, I think it likely, her home came to be a sort of minister's home, and she would have lots of entertaining to do. And she was glad to do it. If there was a warm room in her house, any comfort that she prided herself in, the minister or missionary was treated to it. I have little doubt she boarded them for weeks together free of charge. Then Paul himself was subject to severe attacks of illness, and he may have been ill at Phœbe's sometimes, one of the best places to be ill at, if one is to be ill anywhere, and he knew what her tender nursing was and could do, and so he put into the certificate he wrote for her this: "For she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

And there are still Phœbes. There are still homes all over the land where the preachers are made so welcome just because they are preachers. All over the church we find such homes, and it would not do not to stop there. And they know so well how to cheer and gladden the weary minister. Their couch is so soft. Their table so large and loaded. Their hospitality so free and generous. And you never seem to find them otherwise than glad to welcome you. Of course the times are changing. The modes of travel are changing. Ministers are better supported than they used to be, and some of them are a little uppish in their way, and do not care for the oldtime ministers' homes. They prefer going to hotels where they can do as they like. But let the times change as they may and must, it is one of the best things that can be said of many a christian home: "Given to hospitality," and of many a large-hearted woman: "She hath been a succourer of many."

Thus without being a deaconess in the ecclesiastical sense, a

sense I must say I cannot be easily reconciled to, Phœbe could be, and was, so useful to the church and the Lord's cause and people. We want no laying on of hands, no ordination vows, no consecration of men, to make some women deaconesses. They find their way through their own large-hearted christian benevolence and loving-kindness to the good work, and they do it so gently, so like the Blessed Master Himself, that it is twice the good it would be were it done officially or professionally. To be officially appointed to wait on the sick, to help the poor, to minister to the necessities of saints, and all that sort of work:—well, in my judgment, it would simply spoil the good of it, spill out of it the grace and grandeur of the good work. If I thought Phœbe was a deaconess, a mother superioress, a nun, or something of that sort, I would not think half as much of her as I do now. I would say, "No thanks to her for doing good! No thanks to her for being a patroness and protectress of christians! That was her work, her business, and she was not true to herself nor her vows, if she were not." But when I think of her doing what she did voluntarily, out of her own goodness of heart, then I commend her with Paul, and cannot praise her enough.

I believe in woman's work in the church. There is so much she can do in line with herself as a woman. She need not go out of her sphere to do good. There are a few women specially raised up by God to do a work that is more public and prominent. I am willing to grant that. There was a Deborah in the olden time who led the hosts of God into a sacred battle; and there are still women, masculine sort of women, heroines, whose place is on the platform and at the head of the people. But woman's work, as a rule, is of a quieter nature, more of a home work. Let her dry tears. Let her nurse the sick. Let her visit the homes of the aged and the poor. Let her be an angel of love and light sweetly, tenderly, soothing the broken-hearted. A woman's voice is not for the pulpit or platform, the great congregation. There are exceptions perhaps; but that is the rule.

Thus, let us learn from Phœbe to do good wherever we are—
at Cenchreæ or Rome, in the humble village or the great City.
And let us seek to do the good that comes to our hand, the good
we can do, not the good we cannot do. We sometimes try to do
a good that is too high for us, and so we do nothing. Many a
woman can do her own home work in a way that is to her credit
and to the glory of Christ, but let her go to the prayer-meeting
and try to preach, and at once it is felt she is out of her sphere
and not helping the cause she has at heart. May the Lord raise
up among us many christian women to share in the good work!

XVIII.

Rizpah on the Rock.

“Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of Heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.”—II SAM. XXI. 10.

KING Saul in his day had broken faith with the Gibeonites, a sort of slave-people among Israel, and had attempted their utter extermination. This was one of many impolitic, over-zealous, fanatical acts; and because of it the Lord was displeased with the whole nation, and a good while afterwards, away on towards the closing years of David's reign, he sent a three-year's famine upon the land.

The Lord takes his own time, and has his own way, of dealing with nations and families and individuals for their wrongdoing; but sooner or later he does deal with them, and when he comes to do so he makes them feel his heavy hand. The famine continued year after year, until David and his people saw very clearly that the Lord had some controversy with the land. David then went to the Lord about it, and learned that the

N. B.—This sermon was preached the Sunday evening before the Scott Act contest, November 28th, 1889.

calamity was because of Saul's cruel conduct towards the Gibeonites. This people, when consulted as to what would satisfy them for the wrong they had suffered, demanded seven of Saul's sons to be given up to them to be hanged. This demand the king acceded to. Saul had a concubine, Rizpah by name, by whom he had two sons, and his daughter Michal, sometimes called Merab, had five sons;—these seven, two sons and five grandsons, David ordered to be given up to the Gibeonites, and they hanged them all together in Gibeah. It was a sad act of justice, but it had to be done. Out of it, however, shines forth, like the pure light of heaven, one of the noblest instances on record of woman's devotion. Rizpah watching beside her dead sons is one of those touching scenes that the world can never forget;—one so full of pathos, tenderness, romance, and the sublime of love, that painter and poet and preacher have delighted in portraying it, and there is nothing perhaps in all history that better illustrates a mother's love and woman's devotion.

First: *Some Account of Rizpah.* She was the daughter of Aiah, but who this Aiah was we do not know. To be the father of Rizpah, however, is enough to lift him out of obscurity, and give him a name that will never rot so long as the beautiful and grand and good will last.

Little is known of Rizpah, and the little that is known is so mixed up, so contradictory, so both good and bad, that we hardly know what to think of her. In her early life she was probably a giddy thoughtless girl, a wild flower, who captivated with her smiles and the glances of her dark flashing eye, and liked to outrival the queens of beauty and fashion in their own domain. She won the heart of the king, and he married her, but she was never more than a concubine, an inferior wife. She may have been too ignobly born to be the queen. Some think she was of foreign extraction. After the king's death, she was the means of bringing his son and successor Ishbosheth into trouble with Abner, the general-in-chief of his army, a circum-

stance alike most discreditable to herself and disastrous to all parties.

After this we lose sight of her until she re-appears in the thrilling incident of the text. The probability is, that finding herself thwarted and disappointed in her ambitious designs, and humbled and disgraced by her delinquency, she retired into private life, and gave herself up with all the intense energy and passionateness of her nature to the training of her two sons, Armoni and Mephibosheth. She could not be great herself, but if she could make them great and good and noble, if she could fit them for positions of trust and dignity and influence in the nation, then she would have the satisfaction of knowing that her checkered life had not been lived altogether in vain. And it was as a mother living and laboring for and loving her sons that the splendor of her character shone forth. It was when she withdrew from the false glare that blazed and dazzled around the throne, that her womanhood developed so wonderfully, and she attained such perfection.

Again: *Rizpah on the Rock*. She saw with a mother's solicitude her sons grow up to manhood, and I doubt not they were worthy of the wealth of love and devotion she lavished upon them, and perhaps her hopes with regard to them may have seemed to her as about to be fulfilled. But the wild wicked past still haunted her life, and darkened all her future, and at last desolated her home and her heart. The curse of Saul followed her, and when she seems to have least expected it, it burst, and her sons fell victims to it. They were torn from her arms, and hung up in the wilds of Gibeah, and left there for the vultures to eat, the jackals to devour. Not for any wrongdoing of their own were they hung, but simply because their mother had been Saul's concubine and they were his sons. Oh it would seem hard! Poor Rizpah! how bitterly she would bewail her wild and wayward girlhood! But it was too late to be helped now.

I see her, wild with grief and despair, and wrapped in sack-

cloth, following, at some distance, the executioners, as they lead her sons away to the place of execution. She covers her eyes, as they are swung up, so that she might not see their death-struggle. It is soon all over, and the people go away, and Rizpah is left all alone in the wilderness with the ghastly dead. She is riveted to the spot. How can she go away and leave her children's bodies to be food for the vultures and the beasts of the wilderness? She cannot give them honorable burial, but she will stay and watch and weep. So she spreads the sackcloth she has around her on the top of a bare rock close beside the dead, and she begins her weary lonely watch.

Day and night she weeps and watches on that sackcloth-covered rock, only leaving it long enough to gather some wild-fruit to sustain life. The vultures screech around the dead, and swoop down upon them with beak and talon, but with wild gestures and shrieks she drives them away. The jackals and hyenas come yelping and growling around in the dark lonely night, but the brave Rizpah fights and frightens them off. The hot summer-sun beats down upon her unsheltered head day after day, and the chill damps of night drench her, but she cannot be driven from her watch. Perhaps her friends come to comfort her, and try to break the spell of grief that is upon her and binds her to the spot. But they cannot comfort her. Nor can they induce her to return with them to her desolate home. All she has on earth, or cares to have, are the bodies of her poor unfortunate children, and she will stay by them and see the end. The bodies blacken and blister and rot, and blow away in dust with the summer-breezes before her eyes, until nothing is left but dry skeletons swinging and rattling in the wind, and she herself but a living skeleton beside them. Still she watches on. From somewhere about the end of April till the middle of October, five months and a half, Rizpah's mother-love and devotion keep watch over her dead. At last David learns of it, and he grants burial to the bones of her sons, and her weary watch is

done. While however suns burn, and the world lasts, and the ages roll, and the good and glorious live, Rizpah's watch beside her dead sons will be heard of as something worthy of everlasting remembrance.

Again: *The Lessons to be learned here.* And we may learn that there is such a thing as woman's devotion, and perhaps it is not so uncommon, even where we would not think of looking for it, as we are apt to think. There was at least one Rizpah, and since there was one, there may be others.

The truth is the world is full of, society is rich and radiant with, woman's devotion, and it is so modest, so unassuming and unpretentious, so long-suffering and gentle and retiring, that we seldom hear of it. Our wives and mothers and sisters seem to us rather common-place as they move about in our homes quietly doing their work, none of the heroine about them. But to do that, sweetly, beautifully, willingly, well, demands a degree of devotion, and has more of the real heroine in it, than we are aware of.

Men go out into the world, and do bravely, and the world applauds. But women have to sew and suffer, weep and work, at home, in the dulness of a third flat perhaps, and there is no one to say: "Well done!"

The Light Brigade plunged into the Valley of Death, and did a deed of daring that all the world has been wondering at ever since, and will go on wondering at forever. But where will you find the hero, who would go out into the wilderness, and sit down on a rock, and sit there for five months and a half, and watch beside the dead? None but woman's devotion could do that.

Sometimes night after night you will see a light in a window, and if you will watch, you will see the shadow on the window-blind of some weary watcher slowly walking backward and forward? What does it mean? It means there is sickness up in that upper-chamber;—a sick child perhaps, a dying son, a daughter wasting away with the wasting consumption, a husband

perhaps who has not been as good and true as he should have been sick and suffering for his own wicked indulgences; and it is woman's devotion, some Rizpah, who is weeping and waiting and watching through the long lonely wilderness night.

Go to Scutari yonder on the Bosphorus in the days of the Crimean War, and who is it that bravely turns her back on wealth, a life of ease and comfort, the joys of home, the love of friends, in order to minister, in the hospital wards, with her own gentle hands, to wounded soldiers? And it is woman's devotion in the person of Florence Nightingale.

Go to Memphis yonder in the Mississippi valley in the days of the plague—that was in 1878—when thousands were sick and dying, and all were fleeing who could, and this was recorded at the time in the papers: "Parents have deserted children and children parents, husbands have deserted their wives, but not one wife a husband.

There are men who make marriage a mere convenience, and trifle with woman's affections, and make light of her devotion; but when the great test comes she alone is true. The wives of that Southern town, in those days, were like the wives you will find everywhere, some bad and others good, some black and others white, some ignorant and others educated, some rough and rude and others elegant and refined, but let it not be forgotten, let it be spoken in praise of woman's devotion, that not a wife deserted her husband.

Go to Johnstown yonder when the flood came sweeping wildly down through the mountain-gorge, and who is it that sits in the telegraph-office, and clicks off message after message of warning, and sacrifices her own life to save others? Ah! she is another Rizpah, a noble specimen of woman's devotion.

Learn here also how much woman's devotion can do and dare. Look at the girl Rizpah, with her bewitching ways and captivating glances, trifling with men's hearts, and at last throwing herself away where she could never be happy! You would say, she was only a wild-flower, to be plucked, and admired for a little

while, and then thrown away. And something like that was the way men used the wild beauty of Rizpah. But when she came to be a wife and a mother, when the trials and responsibilities of life took hold of her, when the disappointments and difficulties she met with brought and wrought out the noble womanhood in her, what would she not do and dare for those she loved? What a devotion must hers have been that could sit down on yon lone rock in the wilderness, with the grim ghastly dead beside her, and the savage throats of the wilderness growling around her!

There are young women among us giddy and thoughtless enough. They laugh at everything, and talk nonsense all the day long, and seem to us incapable of a sober, sensible, sincere, serious thought or purpose. They get married perhaps. Life is all a joke to them, and getting married is a part of it. They hand themselves over to some Cheap-Jack to be the whim of his caprice, the toy of his pleasure, the convenience of his life.

But as with Rizpah, so with them. They soon find that life is not all nor always a joke. It is a serious business. There is a grim reality in it that cannot be laughed away. The troubles come. The clouds gather and thicken and darken. The storms of life burst. Poor giddy-hearted Rizpah! She is a king's concubine perhaps, a rich man's wife, and yet I see her weeping her eyes out sad and sorrowful. But if there is any true womanhood in her, anything that trouble can work on and with, any heart and soul in her, she will develop into something good and pure and Christ-like.

There are Rizpahs among us in the character of drunkards' wives, and they are suffering want, abuse, wretchedness, disgrace. They have the curse of the drunkard haunting all their life, and shadowing all their future. But their devotion keeps them up and cheers them on. How they have been able to come through all they have come through, to bear all they have borne and have to bear, to drudge and work, to

suffer and sacrifice, to be cuffed and kicked and abused and degraded perhaps, they cannot tell! It is only, indeed, what a woman's devotion, a wife's truth, a mother's love, can go through. There are women in the world to-day, women in this city, who are sitting on the rock of sorrow and home-desolation, day after day, and night after night, not for five months, but for five years, I was going to say, for fifty years, and they are weeping and watching their weary lives away. Brave true souls! they are the Rizpahs of to-day.

Learn here again that the world needs woman's devotion. You may look at Rizpah sitting weeping her eyes out and breaking her heart on yonder lonely rock, and you may say: "What an utter waste of tears! what a foolish expenditure of grief! She cannot do any good there. Better for her to dry up her tears, and go home, and make what may still be left of it as bright and beautiful as it can be made. Her weeping and watching cannot bring back her sons to life. She may keep off the birds and beasts of prey from tearing and mangling with beak and tooth, but she cannot keep putrification from doing it."

And there is something in all that. We may grieve too much. We may make an abuse of our grief. It does seem almost wrong for Rizpah to do what she did. And yet we would never have known what a mother's love and a woman's devotion can do, were it not for such as Rizpah. I think the Lord put it into her heart to sit there, and weep and watch, and he gave her the strength and courage to do it, just to show the ages what is in woman, what he can put in woman, when he has a work for her to do, and a grief for her to bear.

Let us not say that tears are a waste, and grief is wrong, and sitting in sackcloth useless and desolate for months and months is a sin. It may be and it may not be. If the grief-stricken heart feels like it, why let it cherish its grief and lengthen out its sorrow. Such grief is needed. The world needs the ministry of woman's tears. It is out of sorrow and

trouble and grief and woe that woman's devotion is made, and I am very sure the world would not be as good and happy as it is, were it not for woman's devotion.

We may call Rizpah's weeping and watching a waste, but we will never know till God opens his bottle of tears how much of good she has done, and how much her wonderful mother-love has done to comfort the world's mother-hearts. We do not know what became of her after that, but it may be she lived long enough to show that her days of grief were well spent. How she could talk to bereaved mothers! How she could enter into their sympathies and weep with their grief? Rizpah has been ever since the wonder of the world, and no sermon that was ever preached could have the comfort in it that she had. Look at Rizpah on the rock, and take heart, ye stricken ones; be comforted.

We sometimes wonder that good christian women are made sit on the rock of tears so long. How is it that the Rizpahs of our homes, whose sensibilities are so keen, whose hearts feel so much, have so much to suffer? More than half, perhaps two-thirds, of the world's sorrow and suffering is woman's. Now, why? Just because the world needs her devotion and love and patience and gentleness and sympathy, and it is only in and through suffering that these things can be learned.

Why is it, I ask, that woman to-day is at the head of the temperance-reform, and so interested in it? Just because she has suffered so much from the curse of drink. I am told that upwards of 1000 women, wives and mothers, sisters and daughters, in the present struggle that is going on in our city, have signed a petition, calling upon their husbands and fathers, brothers and sons and friends, to vote down the liquor-business on Thursday next. The question that is up is one that women have an interest in. It concerns them, for it concerns the home, and were it in their hands as it is in ours to decide it, it would not be doubtful. By an overwhelming vote they would say: "Down with the saloon!" The day of deci-

sion is to be to them a day of prayer. While men vote, women pray, and men ought to be slow to vote contrary to women's tears and prayers.

And everything else that is for the world's good to-day owes so much to women. What would the church be to-day without her. Two-thirds of the church's membership are women. Women keep up our Sunday schools. Women carry on the mission schemes of the church. Christian women are the hope of the world, and what woman has had to suffer, and what she still suffers, have done so much for her. Thank God for Rizpah on the rock! Thank God for woman's tears and trials! They have made her, and she is making the church, society, the nations, the world.

I am once more here what a loving heart God must have, since he has put such a love and devotion into woman's heart. Rizpah's mother-love is but a drop from the ocean of God's love. If there is any good on earth, any love, any devotion, in woman's heart, any truth that cannot lie, any faithfulness that cannot be bribed, any affection that can do and dare anything, it has its source in the heart of God, and the grandest love there has been is but a feeble trickling rill alongside of the river of Divine love.

You admire Rizpah on the rock yonder—her love, her devotion. But what is her love to that of Jesus who died on the cross for sinners. It was hard to sit and weep in yon wilderness where Rizpah sat and wept alone, and the cup of sorrow she drank was as bitter as gall; but Gethsemane was a darker, drearier, lonelier wilderness, and his cup was bitter with the bitterness of God's wrath. And then the hiding of his Father's face on the cross, the awful forsaking of God, who can tell us what it is? Oh what a love is that of Jesus!

Now, that love loves you and me, O sinner. It wants to come and put its arm around us, and win us from our evil life. It sees us in danger, and it would save us. We are dead in sin, as dead in some respects as Rizpah's sons, and the love of Jesus comes and watches beside us, not for months, but through the

weary years perhaps, and by and by we wake up to live and love. We are dead, but we are not so dead but that Christ's patient mighty love can make us live. Our hearts are cold and loveless, worldly and selfish, but he can put his love into them, and then how we can love! We can love like Rizpah. We can love like Jesus. Oh for this love! Sinner, let it love you till you love.

XIX.

Child Influence.

"A little child shall lead them."—Is. XI., 6.

THE text is a part of a most remarkable prophecy respecting the future glory of Christ's kingdom. It points down to our day, and to a state of things still later than our day.

The prophet's picture here, or parable, is a bold one, and one that is about as unlikely as it can well be. It is something like this: A child has harnessed up a six-in-hand team made up of a wolf and lamb for leaders; then a leopard and kid; and then on the pole a lion and calf; and, mounted on his boy-chariot, he is driving them. Now, we all know what fantastic teams boys will sometimes get up. We have seen them perhaps in their child play with a dog and a pet lamb, and a cat and a kid, yoked together; but the boy of the future, so the prophet tells us here, is to beat that.

Now, men of learning have been long asking what the prophetic parable means. Is it a parable, they have asked, or is it to be taken literally? And they have been more or less divided in their opinions as to how it should be taken. Some think that wolves and leopards and lions may yet come to be so tame and gentle that the prophecy will be literally fulfilled. And this much may be said in favor of such an idea that the gospel has a

subduing effect upon both man and beast; and it is impossible to predict, what it may yet do, not only for man, but for the rude beasts of the wilderness. The gospel commission, it seems to me, embraces them: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And the Apostle Paul seems to enlarge on the same general idea in these remarkable words of his: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

It is an indisputable and most hopeful fact, that the gospel is blessing and saving even the lower animals. The society for the prevention of cruelty to animals is one of the many ways in which the gospel is being made to tell for good upon the dumb and involuntary sharers with man in his sin and suffering. As they were mixed up with him in his sin, and helped in his ruin, and suffered with him in all his woe; so it is nothing but right that they should be sharers with him in his salvation. Thus, there may be a good deal more in the literal idea than some may be disposed to grant.

But the usual view that has been taken of the passage is that it is highly figurative. The wolves and leopards and lions represent man in his natural state—the rude beast-like state of savagism and heathenism, the state of semi-barbarism in which the great portion of our race is to be found, and the world-state in general. And then the little child that leads them, is the child Jesus, the gospel, the ministry of the Word, and all the mighty gentleness of God's love. Such may be regarded as the orthodox view.

I am disposed, however, to take a somewhat intermediate view, and to speak specially from the text on child influence.

And I would first remark here, that child influence is a characteristic feature of the gospel age. "A little child shall lead them."

It is well-known that under the old state of things the child was not much--not much even in the home, and still less in society and the state. Rather than have the trouble of bringing them up, it was no uncommon thing to strangle or drown them. Judaism inculcated sound ideas on the training and right up-bringing of children; but, corrupted as it was by the gross heathenism crowding in upon it on all sides, it failed here as it did in so many other things, and child influence under the old Judaic system was of small account. Every now and again, however, it would make itself felt, as some God-gifted child, some Samuel, or Josiah, or Jeremias, would speak out against the sins of the age. Still, it must be said, that all the way down the history of Judaism, the child never had much of an influence. It was the strong man the nation looked to as its hope, the man of massive physique and iron will, the man able to wield well the broad sword and battle-axe and bend the bow. The child was in the way in those old warlike ages, and he must stand aside.

Towards the transition-state between the old and the new, however, we find the idea of child influence coming more and more into prominence. But it is rather as a prophecy of what is going to be than of what is. We have the prophecy of the text: "A little child shall lead them." Then still later, Zechariah speaking of the Jerusalem that is to be, describes it as a city full of children: "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." And the prophet Malachi later still, predicting the great work that John the Baptist was to inaugurate so successfully, speaks of it as a movement in the direction of doing better for the children. "And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."

But perhaps it was not until there was heard the wondrous

child-cry in the stable at Bethlehem, that the great modern movement of child-influence that is to-day so marked a feature of Christendom really began. The holy child Jesus showed the world, in a new light, what children are. He has consecrated in a new and grander sense every child that has been born since. Men are beginning to know better now than once that their children are not only their sons but God's sons, and as they take them into their arms with loving tenderness and a reverence akin to awe, they ask devoutly and earnestly, looking up to heaven, "How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" And there comes to them this answer from divine lips: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

And then see to-day for a moment whereunto all this has grown, and is growing. Look at the Free School system, and all it will yet do and must do for the world's future. Look at the Sabbath school, and how much of good to the world there is yet to come from that blessed institution. Look what the press is doing in our day—not always wisely I grant—to provide a child literature. Look what modern art is doing to meet and educate our children's taste for the beautiful. Look what science is doing to break down its great truths and facts so that they may be taken hold of and appreciated by the child mind. Look anywhere you like almost, and one thing must strike you, namely this, what an important element in all that goes to constitute modern civilization and progress is child-influence. Thus, it seems to me, there is more of the literal, and less of the figurative, in the text, than the old writers knew or dreamed of. How grandly true even in our day is the text, and we feel that there is more here than we have been able to get at as yet, we cannot know how much more: "A little child shall lead them."

But again, to come down to particulars, and to be more practical, let us look for a little at a child's home influence. And it is here where a child's influence is first felt and best

seen. Before it can look, or speak, or walk, it has an influence. Its very helplessness is helpful. Its cry is eloquent. Its uninteresting and unintelligent face is full of interest to you, and awakens thoughts and feelings you never had before. As you gaze upon it, there begins to grow upon you a sense of what a responsibility it is to undertake to mould this undeveloped shapeless human life into a thing of beauty and a joy forever. And you cannot thus think and feel and do, without being so much the better for it. How gentle sometimes and tender it helps to make the rough strong man of the world. Let a child's influence take hold of a man, and his voice comes to be more musical, his temper sweeter, his sternness less stern, and all the rugged and harsh about him becomes subdued. Such an influence has the best effect. It makes a young man old, and an old man young. It teaches thrift and industry, love for home, and life-lessons that we cannot otherwise learn. If anything, I think, will make a man of a man; if any thing will develop, strengthen, purify, ennoble a man's manhood; if anything will crown a man with true manliness, lift him out of himself and above himself, and give him a realizing sense of what he is and ought to be, it is this—he has a child at home, and that child is leading him, influencing him for good, and perhaps he knows it not.

And a child's home-influence grows with it. Every day it comes to be more and more interesting. Its first look, its first smile, its first tooth, its first word, its first step, are events of no little interest in the home, epochs in the child-history and home-life, rills of joy and bliss making a heaven on earth. And every additional child that comes to the home adds a new string to the home-harp, a new life to the bundle of life, a new influence to the web of influences being woven around the happy home-circle so silently and strongly. Thus, in the home, the child leads; it has an influence that is felt and goes so far towards making the home what it is and ought to be.

Again, the child has a social influence. We are made for

one another. To live alone, and only for one's self, if it were possible, is to lose the best half of one's self, for the best half and the largest half of a man is that which is made to act and interact upon others. We are made for others as much as for ourselves, and more; and selfishness is therefore a double wrong, for it is a self-wrong and a wrong against society.

Now, children teach us to be unselfish and social almost whether we will or not. They tap our selfishness on a thousand sides, and cause it to flow out of us in so many different directions, and we are all the better for it. Without the children, society would be something like the rude remains of the old Druid temple that is still to be found at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain. There is a wide circle of massive weather-worn stones, each one standing up by itself, separate and distinct, cold and unsympathetic, a dumb stolid witness of the cruelties once performed within. But the children, like the little stones, fill up the vacant places between the great stones of the temple of society, and make its vast walls one firmly compacted and grand united whole.

Where children are, social exclusiveness is all but impossible. And it is a miserable thing that ought itself to be excluded, banned, ostracized. Children compel neighbors to be neighborly, for in spite of all you can do, they will be in and out, back and forward. He must be strangely constituted indeed who can resist the winning ways of a recklessly intrusive two-year-old, and slam the door of his house and heart in its face. He may do it a score of times or so, but its persistence and simplicity must win the day, and at last obtain the freedom of his house and heart. And it is not a bit of use for neighbors to quarrel and stand upon their dignity with regard to one another where there are children, for they will be together, and you will soon find that there is nothing for it but to get over your difficulty as soon as possible.

Children, too, are great social levellers. There are the rich and poor, the high and low, the learned and unlearned, and

they want to stand aloof from one another. But it is not easy doing so where there are children. The children of the upper classes come down, and the children of the poorer classes come up, and they play together so happily, and none of your arbitrary class distinctions are anything to them. You have got to wait till your child grows up before you can teach it to understand the vast difference between tweed and homespun, broadcloth and blouse, culottism and sans-culottism. Thus socially a little child leads men, and leads them right too.

Again, a little child wields often a reforming influence. It is not uncommon for fathers who have been drifting away into bad habits, who have been learning intemperance, and who have been casting away their manhood and all that is noble about them, to be led back to the right and reclaimed by their child's influence upon them. Nellie's father a drunkard! Johnnie's father a bad man! The thought of such a thing has startled their slumbering consciences, and they have lifted up their hand to Heaven, and solemnly sworn, that, with God's help, they will never drink another drop of the accursed poison. And they have held firmly to their resolve.

Now, it was their child that did it. Its senseless prattle to them, its simple trust in them, its unaffected love for them, saved them. It preached no sermon. It gave no temperance lecture. It brought no total-abstinence pledge. But it did this: When they came home from their toil in shop or field, it would be on the look out for them, and it would run to meet them, and beg to be carried home. And they began to feel that it would not do for them to go on drinking as they had been doing. They began to realize that they were too good to throw away on the drink, too much loved and respected at home to go to the bad. So they prayed to God for help to be a true father to their child, and for grace to be pure and good and noble in their home and everywhere. And God helped them. Their old boon companions wondered what had become of them, and they cracked their stale rough jokes as to how

they were kept at home to nurse the baby. But any way, there began to be seen in them a marked change for the better. They were at their work early and late, and did their work well. No half-holidays every now and again as once! No mysterious absences from duty! No sick-spells that only the initiated knew the meaning of! On the contrary, sobriety, industry, thrift, purity, piety; and true enough, the baby did it. And, I ask, is there anything unmanly; anything dishonorable base, bad, in that? No. It is but fulfilling a grand old prophecy, "A little child shall lead them."

And just here I would like to make as strong an appeal as I can in the direction of a child's reform influence. I suppose, there are men here, heads of families, husbands and fathers, and they drink sometimes, drink to drunkenness. You can see it in their walk. You can hear it in their talk. It is not hard to see it. Now, I want to ask these men with all the kindness I have, whether they want to have their beautiful happy innocent child, that God has sent down to them from Heaven to be a great joy to them, wake up to know, that its father, whom it all but worships, who is the ideal to it of all that is grandest and best in the universe, is a drunkard? You love your child, and you want its love. You are never so happy as when its little arms are clasped around your neck, and when it is trying to testify its admiration for you. You would not forego its love for a kingdom. And yet, some day it will see a gleam in your eye, and a something about you that does not belong to you and ought not to belong to you, and it will run away from you as from a monster, a demon, and from that moment you can never be to it what you once were. So, fathers, I beseech you by all that is sweet in your homes, and by all that is tender and loving and good, to turn away forever from the sin of drunkenness.

But still further, a child has also a religious influence. Now, I do not believe in the theory of child innocence. I am a firm believer in the orthodox doctrine that David teaches and Paul

preaches, the somewhat harsh and hard doctrine of original sin and moral depravity. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "There is none righteous; no, not one." Our children come into this world inheriting a long pedigree of evil which they cannot disown nor help. And alas! it soon makes itself seen and felt in them in a way in which there is no mistaking it. We call them angels, but they are not angels; or if they are, they are fallen ones. We dress them in white, and speak of them as pure, innocent; but they are our children, and our vices are rooted deep in their tender hearts, so rooted that nothing but the grace of God can uproot them.

But, while granting all that, a child's whole influence is for religion. And our Lord in his teachings shews us that. He takes a child in his loving arms, and he simply and profoundly says: "Of such is the Kingdom of God." He tells us we must come to be like little children if we would have a place in his Kingdom. We must rid ourselves of our big manhood ideas, our importance and consequence, our self-assertion and world-worth; and we must learn to be little with a child's littleness—we must have a child's faith, simplicity, obedience, teachableness, love, earnestness. It is not so much our greatness Christ wants, our might to do, our energy to carry through, our ability to perform, our determination to hold out; as it is the child virtues—faith, obedience, simple-mindedness, truth. "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

And then a child has a religious influence in this way; it gives a thoughtful man a deeper sense of his responsibility. Here is a child put in his care, a young immortal, one that may yet play a most important part in the world's destiny, the Bismarck of the future, or the Gladstone, the writer of books that may help or hinder the world's good, the eloquent preacher who may guide souls to glory, the father or mother who may curse or bless some home to be. I grant we may expect too much from our child, and entertain too high ideas as to what he is to be

and do. But there is a danger also of not having higher ideas respecting our children. Byron's splendid genius was ruined forever perhaps at home. And how many others that might be named. Oh if we could realize as we ought to realize what it is to train up the generations to be, we would be better ourselves. We would feel how much we needed faith, and the love of Christ. There is no prayer in our homes, no earnest study of God's word, no hallowed religious influence pervading the family circle, no dedication of the children to God by baptism; and, is it to be wondered at, that out of such homes come men and women who will prove a curse to society? Oh, brethren, let us more than ever feel how important it is for us to be religious. It becomes those who have charge of the upbringing and training of the world to lay themselves at Christ's feet, and cry mightily for his mercy, for what if they should fail here.

A few closing words on a child's dying influence. There are few homes where some of the little ones are not, because God took them. The poet says :

“There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there.
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.”

Some of you have had to experience recently the bitter sundering from your heart of precious little ones. And you felt it keenly. It was like tearing away a part of your hearts to let them go. But you could not keep them. A voice came down from Heaven, a tenderer voice than yours, a sweet love-call, “Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me;” and your child heard, and you heard, and now the dear little one is not, for the Master has taken it to be with Him. Short, brief, was its little ministry, but it was sweet, blessed. And it is still doing good. Its influence reaches down to you from the Heaven where it has gone, and it is drawing you gently to the skies. It is easier for you to think

of Heaven since your child has gone there. We get to be so earthly-minded, so full of earth's thoughts and cares; and to lift up our thoughts out of the dust, the Master sends down for the child we love, and takes it to Himself, and now we think more of Him and Heaven than we used to do. We have a new interest in the home above, for our darling is there.

And shall we mourn for it? Oh how can we? Surely we would not have it back here to the sins and sorrows of life. Dr. Wadsworth beautifully says, "The rose does its work as grandly in blossom as the vine with its fruit. And having helped to sanctify and lift heaven-ward the very hearts that broke at its farewell, it has gone from this troublesome sphere—ere the winds chilled or the rains stained it, leaving the world it blessed, and the skies through which it passed still sweet with its lingering fragrance—to its glory as an ever-unfolding flower in the blessed garden of God. Surely prolonged life on earth hath no boon like this! For such mortal loveliness to put on immortality—to rise from the carnal with so little memory of earth that the mother's cradle seemed to have been rocked in the house of many mansions—to have no experience of a wearied mind and chilled affections, but from a child's joyous heart growing up in the power of an archangelic intellect—to be raptured as a blessed babe through the gates of Paradise—ah! this is better than to watch as an old prophet for the car of fire in the valley of Jordan."

Jesus Gathering Lilies.

“My beloved is gone down into His garden.....to gather lilies.”—SONG OF SOLOMON VI. 2.

LOVE sings this song of songs—the love that comes down from Heaven— and it is the sweetest love-song that was ever sung. It is a beautiful allegory, and if we will read it right, we will find it is full of Jesus, and his love for his church and people and their love for him. Jesus is pictured out as a royal bridegroom and the church as his beautiful bride. Now you find them in the chambers clasped in each other's arms and fondly doting on each other's loveliness. Now there is a lover's quarrel or something of the sort and a withdrawing from each other, and then the penitent bride, with many sighs and tears, is found going up and down the streets of the city bewailing her loss and seeking her beloved. Now they are reconciled, and walking arm in arm in the garden, rejoicing in the singing of birds and the blooming of flowers, admiring the putting forth of the figtree's green figs and the vine's tender grapes. Now they are out in the wilderness, where the lions growl around them, and the storm beats upon them, and the weary frightened bride clings close to the side of her husband, as he gently leads her out of it, and brings her to their own bright

and happy palace-home. Now there is a banquet. the table loaded with luxuries, the friends of bridegroom and bride welcomed, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. Now again the dark night comes on, and the sleep of careless indifference takes the bride, and her beloved is gone from her side, and she is left so broken-hearted and desolate.

Thus, if you will follow it out, you will find beautifully pictured out in the richest of oriental imagery, the joys and sorrows, the sunshine and shade, the ups and downs, the sweets and bitters, the loves and hates, of the checkered christian experience.

Now to-night I want to introduce you to one of the somewhat sad scenes of this beautiful allegorical song, Jesus in his garden gathering lilies.

And first, let us take a turn round his garden, and have a look at it. His garden is in the midst of a wilderness. In fact, it was all wilderness once, but he has reclaimed this beautiful spot, and built a high strong wall around it to keep out the wild beasts that infest the wilderness. If you climb up and look over the wall, you will see that there is nothing but the wildest waste far as the eye can carry. The lions have their den in that dark gulch down there. Yonder are the mountains of the leopards. Anacondas are coiled up asleep in that jungle. The foxes come out of this thick brake, and spoil the vines that run over the wall. Ruthless robber-bands rendezvous in yonder fearful mountain-pass, and they sometimes attack and kill the King's servants, and plunder his beautiful garden. But the time will come, sooner or later, when the whole of that vast wilderness will be reclaimed, when the lions and tigers and serpents will be destroyed, and when the dangerous freebooters will be won over to the King's service. How blessed when that wilderness is all like this garden!

The King is proud of his garden. He has planted it with the choicest fruit-trees and the loveliest flowers. Here are

orchards of pomegranates, with their splendid blossoms and pleasant fruits, and birds of every hue, darting about, and building their nests, and carolling their happy lays among the branches. Here are shrubberies of the camphor-plant, with its clusters of delicate lilac-colored flowers, and its odors of paradise, scenting all the air. Here are beds of spikenard and saffron all abloom, the dark flowers of the spikenard contrasting with the bright of the saffron, and perfuming all the garden with their delightful fragrance. Here are groves of the cinnamon-tree and the calamus, the lign-aloe and the myrrh, and all the trees of frankincense, and all the spices. Here are great orchards of figtrees, and every tree loaded with fruitfulness. Here are forests of palms, their feathery tops lifted heavenwards, and rich bunches of dates ready to be gathered hanging temptingly within reach of the hungry passer-by. Here are miles of shady-walks beneath trellised vines, and they are richly ornamented with splendid clusters of the finest grapes. Here are beds of lilies, lilies of all kinds, lilies of the valley, lilies outrivalling Solomon's glory with the ruby splendors of their blossoms, and speaking to men of a glory that is heavenly and eternal. In a word, everything that is beautiful to the eye, and sweet to the taste, and aromatic to the sense of smell, is to be found in the garden of the King.

The church is Christ's garden. He has planted the church in the world's wilderness, and has fenced it all around with the strong high wall of his commandments and ordinances, and has stocked it with the choicest fruit-trees and the rarest flowers.

To so many the church is without any beauty whatever. Her ordinances are uninteresting and uninteresting. Her services have none of the fragrance of Heaven about them. You never hear them singing with David: "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" The vines of the Lord's vineyard are no better to them than the the vines of the wilderness. The Lord's figtrees are no more fruitful, and the figs no better figs. The palms are no loftier and no straighter. The Lebanon

cedars are no grander. The lilies are no fairer. They would as soon the grapes and figs, the lilies and roses, of the wilderness, as those of the King's own garden.

But to the King himself there is no place in the world so sweet as his own garden ; no trees so fine as the trees of his own planting ; and no flowers so fair as his own lilies. He loves to walk up and down the flowery walks, feasting his eyes on the beauties of flower and fruit, or stand in the spice-groves listening with rapture to the birds of song as they sing among the branches, or sit in the arbor of trellised vines, eating with pleasure the great clusters of ripe grapes that hang temptingly before him. If you want to find Jesus, go to his garden, and you will find him there.

The bride tells us that she lost her Beloved, lost the sweet sense of his presence and love, and she set out to seek for him. She went into the city to seek for him, and she walked up and down the crowded streets looking for him. She asked the watchmen who go about the city if they had seen him, but they only mocked her anxiety and abused her confidence. He was not in the great, noisy, wicked city. Where, then, could he be ? Ah ! he was in his garden. He had "gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." When she went there she found him.

O seeking, anxious soul, if you want to find Jesus ; if you want to find that which will bring your soul comfort, peace, light, joy, hope, salvation, go not to the cities of the world, the noise of the streets, to seek for it ; go not to the marts of business to seek for it ; go not to the broadways of pleasure to seek for it ; go not to the men of the world to seek for it. They will disappoint and deceive. They will tell you they can make you happy, minister to your relief, heal your soul's troubles, do you good. But give no heed to them, for they cannot. Jesus is not in the city, and it is Jesus you want. You must go into the retirement of the garden if you would find him. You must seek him in his word, in the

ordinances of his church ; you must shut yourself up in the privacy of your chamber, and on your knees seek him there, and you will not seek him in vain.

But this leads me to speak, in the next place, of Jesus in his garden gathering lilies.

The garden is his garden. Those splendid grapes are his grapes. Those figtrees with their wealth of figs are his. Those beautiful lilies are his lilies. He planted them. His rain watered them. His sunshine warmed them. His glory beautified them. He has a right to come into his garden. He has a right to pluck those ripe clusters of grapes. He has a right to shake down a shower of juicy figs from his own figtrees. He has a right to gather the lilies.

I see the King coming down into his garden. He is gloriously attired. His robes are white as the light. A crown of the finest gold is on his head, and a jewelled ring is on his finger. There is a smile of ineffable sweetness lighting up his face as he contemplates the beauties around him. He walks slowly and softly along the garden-walks, and in and out among the lovely flower-beds, now stopping to admire the regal splendors of some rare species, now stooping to prop up some fallen spray whose beauty is trailing in the dust, now gently parting the flowery profusion to get a better look at some lowly bloomer, and now bending low down to scent the sweetness of some fragrant blossom.

But it is to gather lilies he has come down into his garden to-day, and he bends his steps towards the lily-beds. How sweetly and modestly they bow their heads at his approach, and look their loveliest ! Some of them are white and pure like the Heaven they are destined for ; others of them are golden and glorious like the crown on the King's head. Some are tall and stately ; others lowly and lovely. All around about the air is fragrant with their delicate perfume. He stands and admires their beauties, and wonders what flowers he will gather for a garland for himself to-day. Here perhaps

is a very delicate flower, too delicate to bloom in so wintry a clime; so he puts forth his jewelled hand and gently plucks that one. Over on the other side of the bed he sees a group of lilies all blooming together so sweetly; so he goes away over and plucks the fairest and sweetest. Sometimes you find him looking for lilies where you would not expect him to look for them, in out-of-the-way and secluded corners of the garden, and finding them too, and coming back with the choice flowers he has gathered.

But his chaplet of flowers is not yet complete. He wants a blossom and bud. But where will he find just what he wants? He goes from lily-bed to lily-bed as if looking for what he wants, and as if hard to satisfy. By and by he comes to a group where he had been before, and so pleased was he then that he comes again. He has found what he wants. His eye rests upon it, and he says softly to himself: "I must have that lovely lily." What a struggle the chosen lily had to be what it has come to be, but the struggle it has had, helped its loveliness, perfected its beauty! Often had he looked at it before, and it was felt that the lily was not to be left blooming long here. Again and again had he stretched out his hand as if to pluck it, but again and again had he withdrawn it, and it was left to bloom on until it had come to be so lovely. At last came the day, not looked for, when the lily that was was not, for the King had taken it.

Then it was said: "Now will the King be satisfied with gathering lilies from that lily-bed." But he comes again, and his coming was not at first observed. But a choice bud just opening into beauty and fragrance is there, and that bud the King seeks for himself. By and by when his purpose comes to be better understood, it was said: "No; we cannot spare the bud just yet; let it stay with us, and grow and bloom out more fully. The lily-bed will be so bare without the bud." But the King lingered on; he did not go away. And at last it was said, though not without tears, "The King shall have

the bud as well as the blossom." For it was remembered that the blossom and bud were strangely, lovingly linked to one another. So, blossom and bud are gathered, and with the King, where their beauty can never fade, and their sweetness can never be other than sweetness.

Some christians are like the vine, and full of clusters of grapes like the grapes of Eshcol. Some are like the figtree laden to the ground with ripe and juicy figs. Some are like the lofty palms, and some are like the Lebanon cedars. Some are fragrant like the spikenard, and some are fair like the lily. They are all different, and they are all beautiful. In the Lord's garden there are an Abraham and a Moses, a Joseph and a Daniel, a Samson and a Samuel, a Peter and a Paul, a Mary and a Phœbe, a Dorcas and a Lydia, a gray-haired Methuselah with the weight of centuries bowing down his back, and a young Timothy with his lithe form and laughing face.

We do not want a garden that is all flower, nor all fruit. A garden that was all vines and yielded nothing but the grapes of Eshcol, or that was all beautiful lilies of the valley, would be very commonplace after a while.

I would not like a congregation to preach to that was made up of great-faithed Abrahams, or mighty-principled Pauls, or sweet-faced Marys of Bethany. I would want to sit down in the pew and let them preach. We want to have in our churches the fruitful vines, the stately palms, the wide-spreading cedars, the fragrant lign-aloes, and the beautiful lilies, all fruit-bearing, and fragrance-making, and flowering together.

Jesus looks for grapes from the vines in his garden. He expects stateliness in his palms and strength in his cedars. He wants oil from the olive, figs from the figtree, and fragrance from the cinnamon. But when he goes into his garden to gather lilies, it is not the fruitfulness of the vine, nor the grandeur of the Lebanon cedar, nor the sublimity of the palm-tree, he looks for, but the beauty and sweetness of the lily.

Do not let the vine with its great clusters of grapes say : " I am more use to the King than the lily that does nothing but bloom and die." Do not let the Lebanon cedar boast over the sweet-scented thyme-wood. The King wants to have them all in his garden, and he has a use for them all, and loves them all. Sometimes he goes down into his garden, and he passes by the grapes of Eshcol with their tempting clusters, and goes away past the orchards of pomegranates with their pleasant fruits, and hastens through the groves of cinnamon and calamus as if he did not want to smell their sweetness, and he stops at the bed of lilies to gather them. He is as proud of the lilies in his garden, as he is of his grapes and his cedars. He has a place in Heaven for the flowers as well as the fruits, and a bright place it is too, the brightest place there.

And are we reluctant to have the lilies taken ? Shall Jesus have nothing that is young and sweet and beautiful ? nothing but what has served out its day, and ripened into decay ? Is it only the sere and yellow leaf of age that we want Jesus to have ? Is it only the fruit that the world's wintry blasts have shaken down into the grave that the King of glory shall gather ? Will we place ourselves at the garden-gate, and protest with all our little might against his coming to gather the lilies ? No. Jesus shall have the brightest and best. The lilies are his as well as the grapes, and he shall have them.

The poet Longfellow beautifully paraphrases this thought thus :

There is a reaper, whose name is death,
And with a sickle keen,
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

" Shall I have nought that is fair ?" saith he ;
" Have nought but the bearded grain ?
Though the breath of the flowers is sweet to me
I will give them all back again."

He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,
 He kissed their drooping leaves ;
 It was for the Lord of Paradise
 He bound them in his sheaves.

"My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,"
 The Reaper said, and smiled ;
 "Dear tokens of the earth are they,
 Where he was once a child."

"They shall all bloom in fields of light,
 Transplanted by my care ;
 And Saints, upon their garments white
 These sacred blossoms wear."

And the mother gave, in tears and pain,
 The flowers she most did love ;
 She knew she would find them all again
 In the fields of light above.

Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,
 The Reaper came that day ;
 'Twas an angel visited the green earth
 And took the flowers away.

There is a sweet comforting thought in the text. It is this. The christian's Beloved gathers the lilies. He is no enemy who has broken over the garden-wall and despoiled the beautiful flowerbeds. We look with blinding tears in our eyes at the vacant spot where some dear flower once bloomed so sweetly, and we say : "It was the cruel north-wind that did it. It was the terrible death-worm that devoured it. It was some cruel, cruel hand that plucked it." But no, it was a beloved that did it. It was a dear, dear friend that plucked the lily. It was one who loved the lily and loved you that gathered it, and it was because he loved and was loved that he did it.

And moreover, it seems to me, he is all the more a beloved because he has gathered the lilies. We do not know how dear Jesus is till he has brought us some great sorrow, and we do

not know how near he is to us till he has come and asserted his right to the lilies we thought were ours. They are ours, and they are his too; but they are more his than ours. When he comes to gather them, we stand by with weeping eyes and breaking hearts, and we ask: "Will you go with Jesus, or stay with us?" and they say, "We will go with Jesus."

Here is a beautiful lily that the Lord gave you to grow for him. He said, "Keep it till I come for it." You loved the lily; everybody loves lilies. You watched its growth. You saw with joy its opening beauties. But when it had bloomed out, or hardly, the King came for his lily. You met him at the garden-gate, and with a trembling at the heart you said, "O King Jesus, come in." But when he said to you, "I have come for that lily of mine," your heart sank within you, and your tears dropped like rain, and you almost wished that the King had not come at all. You went to the lily, and said, "Here is the King; will you go with him?" And the lily looked its loveliest, and said with a sweet smile: "Yes, I will go with the King." Now, is not the King the dearer to you, and the Heaven where He dwells the nearer to you, because of that gathered lily? You will want to see that lily again. If it was so fair here, it will be fairer there. Oh to be where the lilies are gathered! Oh to dwell in the palace of the King!

Thus, when the King comes down into his garden to gather lilies, while it is a time of tears with us, it is often a time of much sweet intercourse with the King himself. We get to know him better than we ever did before, and we can trust him. The more we know him, the better we love him. We do not feel hard towards him now, because he has come and gathered our lilies. We love him all the more.

But I must close. And my closing word shall be to the young. O young people, Jesus comes oftenest perhaps to reap the bearded grain, to pluck the ripened grapes, to shake down the full-ripe figs; but sometimes he comes to gather lilies, to take to himself the young, the beautiful, the sweet, the lovely,

those we want to keep for years and years. This is a call to us to be ready. Are we lilies in his garden, or are we the world's vile weeds? If we are weeds he will come to mow us down, and cast us out of the garden, and burn us up. If we are lilies he will gather us, and make a garland of us with which to crown himself.

Do we want to bloom in Heaven or burn in Hell? Which would we rather be—lilies or weeds? You have to burn weeds. Oh let us be lilies in the garden of the King! Let us bud and bloom for the Lord. Let us be so pure and sweet and lovely, that men will be cheered with our fragrance, and gladdened with our beauty; let us be such that they will bless us while we live, and weep for us when we die.

There's a beautiful face in the silent air
Which follows me ever and near,
With its smiling eyes and amber hair,
With voiceless lips, yet with breath of prayer
That I feel, but I cannot hear.

There's a sinless brow with a radiant crown,
And a cross laid down in the dust;
There's a smile where never a shade comes now,
And tears no more from those dear eyes flow,
So sweet in their innocent trust.

There's a beautiful region above the skies,
And I long to reach its shore,
For I know I shall find my treasure there,
The laughing eyes and the amber hair
Of the loved one gone before.

Finding the Book.

*“And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe,
I have found the book of the law in the house of the
Lord.”—II KINGS XXII. 8.*

JOSIAH the Child-king is called to the throne of his fathers, and at a time when the nation's affairs are desperate. The royal preacher had said in his own expressive way years before: “Woe to thee, O Land, when thy king is a child!” But this child-king is the nation's hope. Prophets had foretold his coming as one who would do so much to restore the nation's waning glory, and rekindle into a blaze of holy zeal the oldtime patriotism and piety. And he is indeed a remarkable child. In him is fulfilled in a striking way the psalmist's words: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength”—perfected praise. Called to reign at the early age of eight years, he begins his reign by seeking the Lord, seeking the Lord both for himself and his people. He is good and wise beyond his years and generation, and he needs to be, for the work it is his to do requires a level head and a strong hand. But the divinely gifted boy-king is equal to it. At the age of twelve, when other boys think only of their play, he is into the work of reforming his kingdom.

He finds idolatry strong in the land, and he uproots it in the rudest fashion. He goes throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom, and he personally superintends the demolition of the idolatrous altars and temples, and their desecration. For six years this stern work goes on, until the land is wholly purged of idolatry. At the same time also that he is putting down the bad, he is promoting the good, building up the Lord's cause; and among the good things he does, he cleanses and repairs the temple at Jerusalem. Thus, some idea of the extent and difficulty of the reformation the boy-king undertook and carried out, as well as the thorough character of it, may be had from the fact that it took him years to do it—some six years, we might say indeed, some ten years.

Now, it was while this great reform-work was being done in the kingdom, and more especially that of repairing and cleansing the temple under the superintendence of Hilkiah the high priest, that the incident occurred that I am making the theme of my discourse this morning, namely, the finding of the book of the law. "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord."

And first, *the Book*. There has been no little discussion among biblical scholars and critics as to the book that Hilkiah found. It is held that the youthful king was well posted previous to the finding of this book in the law of the Lord. He knew his duty and did it. If then he knew his duty, it is contended, he must have known it from some source, and that source must have been either the oral teachings of the priests, or books that he had read for himself or had read to him. It is therefore claimed, that this book that Hilkiah found must have been a different book from the one the king had been instructed out of, for evidently there was much that was new to him in it, much that he had never heard of before. We are told that he rent his clothes when he heard it read, and was in much trouble over its contents, and so sent to the prophetess

Huldah to learn what he and his people should do to escape the judgments that were threatened in the book.

Some have therefore concluded that the book must have been the book of Deuteronomy, which indeed contains the denunciations that alarmed the king so much. And if the book of Deuteronomy, then that book must not have been in the copy of the Pentateuch that the king had been taught out of and was familiar with, and so they have come to the conclusion that Deuteronomy was not by Moses at all, but that it is a production of a later date. And so we have had, and still have, the Deuteronomic controversy, one of the bitterest controversies in Biblical criticism that has ever been.

Others again make out that the book found was the true temple copy of the Pentateuch, the copy that Moses had written with his own hand, or had authorized, and was therefore genuine and authoritative. But I must say that this attempt at explanation seems to me exceedingly weak. I regard it as little else but a makeshift, and not much of a makeshift, not even clever. I admit indeed that it would be a great thing to find a copy of the Pentateuch that was by Moses himself, or authorized by him; it would be a great thing today, and I can understand how it might have been quite an event in Josiah's day. Such a copy would be prized, revered. But it was clearly the contents of the book, the new and startling things he found in the book, that made such a strong impression upon the mind of the king; not anything about the book, its form, its age, its authenticity, and so on.

Now, I have no intention whatever of leading you into the labyrinth of the Deuteronomic controversy this morning. But it may not be out of place to state in a few simple words my own ideas about the book. I have not the least doubt that the book found was the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. And I think it had been lost for some time. We must remember that when Josiah came to the throne, the kingdom was in a sad state. Once there had been schools all over the

land and books, but years of idolatry had put down these things. It is doubtful if the young king could read, although he may have been able to read, for it is said that he read to the people. He had been taught in the law orally by the old priests and scribes, but they may not have had any complete copy of the scriptures, only fragmentary portions. We can easily understand that. Hence, the king's knowledge of the book of the law may have been, and it is clear it was, imperfect, incomplete. He knew enough to undertake great reforms, but he did not know all there was to be known. His knowledge was traditional, the information he gathered from his seniors, the truth as he had picked it up from a variety of sources, a leaf here and a leaf there that professed to be a copy of select portions of the Mosaic record, and very satisfactory so far as they went, but not the whole truth. He may have heard of such a book, but no one could tell him where it was, or whether indeed it was, or what its contents were. But it was found, found accidentally, found where and when men were not seeking for it. They found it buried up among the rubbish of the temple. They did not know what it was when they found it, but they soon learned, and what a revelation it was to them all, but especially to the king. It humbled and alarmed him. It shewed him the true state of matters with the kingdom, given over as it had been to the grossest idolatry, and he was concerned lest it might be too late for him, or indeed for any one, to do anything to avert the coming doom.

Thus, the book was God's book, not the book as we have it to-day in its completed form, not the whole sixty-six sacred books bound up together into one volume which we call the Bible; but the book as it was then, the Pentateuch or five books of Moses, the book of the law.

Again: *The Book lost, and how it came to be lost.* If it was found, why then it must have been lost. When you speak of finding a thing, however, you do not necessarily mean the same thing. When you say, "I found it," you may mean you had

mis-laid it, and after seeking for it you found it. Or, you may mean, that while you were at work doing something else, or seeking something else, you accidentally stumbled upon an important find that you had indeed heard of, but was not aware of its being where you were working or seeking. Or, you may mean, your find is a discovery, something never before heard of by yourself or any one else. Now, the finding of the lost book was the accidental finding of what had been heard of and was known of, but no one seemed to know just where to look for it, or whether indeed it was in existence. The finding of the book was not a new discovery; it was the finding of what had been lost.

Now, there are books lost, and they are no great loss. The world can get along without them and never miss them. Not a branch of knowledge, neither science nor religion, neither the church nor world, would suffer. I suppose if seventy-five per cent of the books that fill up the shelves of our bookstores and libraries were destroyed or lost, not an interest would be the worse; rather the better indeed, for they are not worth the paper they are written or printed on. Literary men never cease bewailing the burning of the Alexandrian library by the stupid caliph, who gave as his reason this: "If these Grecian books agree with the Koran, they are useless, and if not, they should be destroyed." But the probability is, the world did not lose so much after all in the burning of the o'd Alexandrian library. If it had copies, as some tell us, but we cannot believe all they tell us, of all the writings then extant, the most of them must have been of no great account, taking our cue from the generality of books to-day.

There are books lost, however, whose loss is a real loss to the world, an irreparable loss. And especially is this so with the book we read of here, for it was God's book. It contained what God had to say to the men of those early times. It revealed his will with regard to them, what he was and what they were, what he wanted them to be and how they could be

what he wanted them to be. There was no book like it, no book so full of wisdom and comfort, so crammed with the kind of knowledge that all men needed to know, and must know if they would come up to their high destiny, and so admirably fitted in every way both to interest and instruct men. What thrilling stories—stories of the world's creation and man's fall, the ark and the flood, the tower of Babel and Sodom's burning; what biography and history—the lives of the ancient worthies and the heroes of faith, the founding of nations and the exodus of the Jews! Thus, what a book! And yet that most precious book came to be lost, the one book the world could not afford to lose.

A good many in our day would have been glad if it had continued lost. They hate it. It clashes with their wise theories, their learned notions as to the beginnings of things, and they cannot bear the book. And so they are doing all they can to run down the book and its stories. But when their books and learning and theories will have ceased to interest, the old Pentateuch will be ever fresh, like Aaron's rod, ever blooming out anew in the recurring ages with a beauty that can never fade. If it were possible to lose the book of God, it would be a loss that would be fatal to the world's good, and a loss that human genius could never repair. And the book of God was lost once.

It was lost, too, in the temple. You would say that was one of the last places to lose the Bible, for the Book of God is at home there. But it was really lost, and lost in the temple. And it must have been a bulky volume, a great roll, not a small bound book such as we have. You may understand therefore what a state for dust and rubbish the temple must have been in, when the pentateuch volume was lost among it. The reason why the temple was in such a delapidated, filthy state was in this way: The people had been going elsewhere, and a good many of them, I suppose, would be going nowhere. A new religion had come, and the great peo-

ple of the nation favored it, and so everybody went to the new temple, and the old one was neglected. The old people and the poor had continued going on to the old temple, and the stiff ones, the men and women not given to change. But the old people had died off, and one left and another left, and so for years the temple at Jerusalem had not been used at all, excepting perhaps by birds to build their nests in, and by the sheep to go in out of the sun. And when the people began going to the idol temples, they did not need any more their old Hebrew Bible. They had another bible there, or perhaps they did not need any. They used hymn-books and prayer-books, and so it came to pass the book of the law, the book of truth, the book of God, was lost. Only here and there it lived in some old saint's heart, and was a great joy to him. Its light cheered him: its promises helped him. But the book out of which these promises had been culled, and these lessons of truth had been learned, was lost.

And, my hearer, there is still some danger of God's book coming to be lost. Let me tell you how.

To some it is all but lost, because they do not know how to read. Our English Bible is in the plainest of Saxon, short simple words, and yet so many people cannot read it to make any sense out of it. They have to spell their way through verse after verse, and the labor is so great they cannot make much out of it when they come to read it. They cannot get hold of what it says, and so they give up trying to read, and the best of all books is to them a sort of lost book.

To others again it is lost, because although they read well enough, they do not know enough about the Bible to know how to read it. Ask them to look up the book of Ruth, and they will turn over to Revelation, and so on, and as for finding choice chapters and passages they simply cannot. Now, put a sheep into even a wide pastureland, and it will soon know where to look for the choice feeding-places, and where to find sweet water to quench its thirst, and the shady nooks to

sleep in, and all the good there is for it. But there are Bible-readers who have been handling their Bibles for years, and they do not know where to go to feed on the promises, or quench the thirst of their soul, or find comfort in the day of trouble, or refuge in the hour of danger. They are lost among the leaves of their bible, and so it is lost to them. And I am afraid a good many of these clever young people who know so much, can be clean lost in their English Bibles, and perhaps some of the old as well.

The Bible again is in danger of being lost to-day among the multitude of books that come to us to be read. With not a few, it is only one of the many books, and an old-fashioned and commonplace book at that ; and so they read all the new books, but not the old one, not their mother's Bible. Ask young ladies and gentlemen, if they have read "Ben Hur," or "Jess," or "She," or some other of the popular works of our day, and you will find they have : but ask them if they have read through their Bible, and all its brilliant pages, and you will find they have not. And yet the Bible is the one book we should read every day of our life, for it is God's book. You cannot be a scholar, and you cannot be a christian, without being up in the Bible. Shakespeare drank at this fountain. Milton inspired his poetic genius here. Ruskin's pages are enriched with scripture quotations, and all the best writers have ever been going to the Word of God for some of their finest illustrations, and choicest paragraphs. Thus, what a loss to literature and learning, if the Bible should be lost ; and yet, not a few who would fain be thought something of as both readers and writers have clearly lost their Bible, and so they are clouds without rain, wells without water, books without truth.

And the Bible may still be lost in the temple as of yore. We have our hymn-books perhaps, but no Bible. In the Union Meetings I have sometimes gone from pew to pew looking for a Bible, and have found all sorts of hymn-books, but no Bible. Now, if the hymn-book is going to displace the Bible, better

have no hymn-book, for this is what man says, but that is what God says, and better the words of God than the words of men, however rhythmical. And then in the Sabbath School, what with hymn-books, and Sabbath School books, and lesson sheets, and lesson helps, there is no room for the Bible smothered up even as it is in our pocket editions. Thus, the Bible is being lost, at all events, lost sight of, in our churches.

Then again the Bible may be lost amid the world's accumulating rubbish. So many people who call themselves Christian people, are too busy morning by morning, and evening by evening, to read the well-thumbed Bible and have family prayers. They have to hurry up and rush down to the shop, or the store, or the office, in the morning, and so the Bible lies yonder on the shelf unread, unused, gathering dust. And this goes on through the years until the old Bible is verily lost. I have gone into families sometimes, and I have said to them, "I will read and pray before I go," and sometimes I have been handed a book that was not the Bible at all, and sometimes they have looked all over the house for it and could not find it. It had got lost, or had strayed, or was stolen. "Ah!" you say, my hearer, "my Bible is not lost. It lies in gilt and glory on my parlor-table, and no one must touch it." But it may be lost to you for all that. You may never read it, nor know the glad truths for your soul it is full of, and so it is lost to you, as much lost as if it was lying buried up among dust and rubbish in some neglected corner.

Thus, the Bible may be, with us as well as in Josiah's reign, a lost book, and, lost then, or now, it is a serious loss.

But again, *The Book found*. "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord."

It was the blessed revival that the good Josiah was the means of setting on foot in the kingdom that found the Book. The cleansing and repairing of the temple followed, and so the book was resurrected from amid the dust and debris where it

had lain for a good long while. And the good book was not only found; it was read, and its words were heeded, and as a result, the reformation was deepened and extended. Along with the resurrection of the book, came the resurrection of the nation in every respect. Prosperity returned. Wealth flowed in upon the people. Heaven smiled, and there were rich and abundant harvests. When the people did their duty, God remembered His promises, and there was great joy. Thus, the finding of the book in Josiah's reign meant so much that was good to the nation.

And so it ever has done. You have heard, or read, of the thrilling story of the finding of the book in Luther's day. He was a student at College. One day he was rummaging through the College library, when his hand got hold of an old book. He pulled it down, and found it was a Latin copy of the Sacred Scriptures. He blew the dust off it, and sat down to look through it. He happened to open it at the story of Samuel and he was interested in the simple narrative. He read, and his wonder grew as he read. And so day by day he came back to read, and the sacred lessons were taken into his deep earnest soul. That was the beginning of the great reformation-work he was the means of setting on foot in Germany and the world. Here again, the finding of the book was the waking up of the nations of the world into all the modern life we see. It began yonder, in an important sense, when the German student, quite accidentally to him, succeeded in rescuing from the dust and utter waste of years God's precious book.

And there are lessons for us here, blessed practical lessons. We need a revival of Bible reading, Bible study, among us. Get down the old book from its shelf, where perhaps it has lain long unread, and read it as Luther read it. There is still no book like it. There are still fire and fervor enough to set on foot a glorious nineteenth century reformation. If we would all read the Bible, read it day by day, read it on our knees seeking to understand it, read it when we go out to work

and when we come home again, read it as God's message from Heaven to us, it would do to-day for us what it did for Israel in Josiah's day, and what it did for Germany in Luther's day.

I am not talking in parables when I talk about finding the book. To all intents and purposes it has been lost to us, too much lost to us. It has not had the influence upon us that such a book should have had. It has not disturbed our ease, alarmed our fears, woke up our slumbering energies, quickened us into life. It is very evident, if the book of God was really found—found in our homes and home-life, found here in our church-life, there would be an improvement in every direction. We would pray more, and our prayers would have more power than they have. We would do more, and we would do it to better effect. We would give more to the Lord's cause, and we would enjoy it more than we do. A new life, in a word, would surge among us.

How, are we to find the book? Are we to find it in the sense of knowing it better, studying it with increased interest, believing and living its blessed teachings as we have not yet done? It is only in so far as we live as the Bible tells us how to live, that it is to us what it is. We can know it only in so far as we do it. We find it when we mind it.

How precious is the Book Divine,
By inspiration given!
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,
To guide our souls to Heaven.

Donors for Workingmen.

*'Seest thou a man diligent in business?
He shall stand before kings;
He shall not stand before mean men.'*

—PROV. XXII. 29.

VAST industries at a stand still, business paralyzed, excited bands of idle working-men parading the streets of the great cities agitating for shorter hours and larger wages, two continents in the throes of a kind of revolution! That is the spectacle our eyes behold to-day everywhere we look, and statesmen and philanthropists, patriots and preachers, are earnestly asking, as they look at it from their own standpoint, whereunto all this is yet to grow.

I respect the working-man. He is my friend and I am his. I like to be regarded as such myself. But I very much doubt, if he had it all his own way, that it would be better with him than now. Badly as the nations are ruled, badly as state-affairs and the world's interests are managed; it would be still worse for the world and the people's interests, were some mighty demagogue in the shape of a reckless labor-agitator to come to power. I grant a revolution is wanted here somewhere, else things would not be as they are, but certainly not such a revolution as will reverse the natural order of things. The Hebrew

ploughman was called from his humble farm-labor to be king in the land; and, filled with the Spirit of the Lord, he did grandly for the nation in a critical moment in its history. But the experiment turned out to be a blunder for the nation then, and it would be a blunder now. High and low are not arbitrary but real distinctions. They have their significance and importance in the nature of things, and, as a rule, you cannot reverse low and high, putting high low and low high, without doing violence to nature's wise arrangements and methods, any more than you can plant a tree upsidedown, putting its branches where its roots should be and its roots where its branches should be. It would be a mistake to humble a born prince to the plough; but it would be a still greater mistake, to let some clod-hopper, simply because he has so much to say on public questions, and thinks he knows so much, be a ruler in the land. We have too many of such would-be rulers in our Provincial Assemblies, and they are only tools for others to use. Gladstone can chop trees like a lumberman, but not every chopper of trees is fitted to guide and control the affairs of state like Gladstone, although not a few perhaps have the idea that they can, and when they have a chance, they are very willing to try, only to let it be seen what fools they are.

Now, wise Solomon shows us here, how the working-man, working away in his own sphere, may attain for himself distinction, a position of honor and power among men. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

I. HIS BUSINESS: Every man should have what he is able to call his business, his trade, his profession, his calling, his work.

The Jews insisted upon their boys and young men learning a trade. David was a shepherd. Paul was a tent-maker. Peter and John were fishermen. Matthew was a tax-gatherer. Nicodemus and Gamaliel were public teachers, and both rose

to great distinction in their profession, especially the latter. Joseph and Jesus were carpenters. Barnabas was a farmer.

The Germans, from the Kaiser down to the humblest citizen, must have a trade ; but then, as it is made a matter of course, it is too often only a playing at trade-learning. That a German prince is a printer, another a bookbinder, a third a watch-maker and so on, does not usually mean anything. It is only the name of the thing, and the world wants less of the nominal and more of the real. It is the name of a thing, men playing at a profession, toying with earnest work, amateur this and that, that are working havoc in the trades and professions and businesses. What is wanted are tradesmen, artizans, professional men, business-men, teachers and preachers, who feel they are so into their work, so dependent upon it and bound up with it, that they must either sink or swim, do or die. Then they will be likely to do something, make a success of what they are at, crown it, almost glorify it—yes, glorify it.

The phrase, "his business," implies, I think, not simply what a man may happen to be at in the shape of work, for a man may have no business to be at the business he is at ; but it implies the special work rather he has chosen as his work, the work to which his tastes and habits tend, and for which he is fitted.

Some men have no business. They do such work as comes to hand, working at one thing one day and something else the next. But that is not as a rule the way to do much. It may do well enough in the meantime. It may do as a make-shift, do till one finds out and gets at his own proper work ; but it is not the way to do a life-work, and make it a success. Let me counsel every boy and young man to find out a business, a trade, a work, a calling, a profession, a something or other that he can call his work, and let him believe in it and stick to it.

Men make mistakes sometimes in the choice of their life-

work. One man goes to farming perhaps, and he ploughs and sows through the weary years. But he makes no progress. He does not try to improve. He has no faith in the success of farming. He is all the time running it down, giving it the worst name, and praising up every other sort of work. Do you wonder, I ask, that he does not succeed? It would be a wonder if he did.

Over the fence, however, lives his neighbor, a born farmer. You do not find him growling and grumbling at things, flying in the face of the weather, running down the country and its backward springs, bewailing the hardness of the times, cursing his luck that he ever settled in New Brunswick, and looking upon his lot as the hardest of all lots. Very far otherwise. His face is full of sunshine, his life full of hope, his fields full of promise. You cannot be with him ten minutes till he has to tell you what he knows about farming—and there is not much that he does not know about it—and you must go and see his fields and crops, his hogs and fowls, his horses and cattle, his sheep and lambs. He is a plain man, his face sun-browned, his hands hard with toil. He is not the man to send to parliament to legislate for the country, discuss legal questions, darken counsel by words without knowledge, find his way amid the intricacies of finance, understand the effect of this and that piece of legislation, and so on. It is not in his line. To send him there is to take him out of his sphere, to make a fool of him. But leave him where he is to work out in his own sphere his success, and he will do it, with the blessing of God, grandly do it. His farm is his kingdom, and there, with his flocks and herds and fields and family around him, he is a man, a man crowned in a way, honored, respected, a king of men.

So also with other working-men. Here are carpenters who have faith in their trade. They chose it in preference to every other, chose it in preference to preaching, and they have no thought of going back on the choice they made when they

were boys in their *teens*. They know how to keep their tools sharp, and how to marshall them for service. They are at home in their shop or up on the side of a building, and they are strong men there. You go to them with your book-learning, your science and literature, and you think how little they know and how much you know. But they know more about lumber than you do. They know, as you do not, how to make the most and the best out of a shapeless log, how to erect a house, how to sharpen and set a saw, how to put an edge on a tool. You have to take off your hat to them the moment you enter the domain of their special work, their little kingdom, and acknowledge their superiority. You have to pay your respect to their better judgment, defer to their opinion. Here they know, and you do not; here they can do, and you cannot. They are not first-class workmen, if they cannot. "Seest thou," said a king who himself was eminent for his wisdom and greatness, "a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

Very much the same might be said with regard to every other trade and line of work. Are you a blacksmith? Let your anvil be your throne. Are you a shoemaker? Let your bench be a throne. Are you a tailor? Let your table be your throne. Never be ashamed of your work. Let it be a business you have respect for, one that you believe in, one that you prefer to every other, and make it your aim to command the respect of others by the way you do your work.

II. DILIGENCE: Diligence is a word full of meaning. It is from a word that means—to love, to have delight in a thing. To be diligent in one's business implies therefore that one likes it, prefers it above all others.

Many a boy, when he begins to learn his trade, does not at first like it. It is drudgery, hard work, and he does not take to it. He finds himself awkward, clumsy, and is slow to pick it up. But he keeps at it, and after a while he gets into

the way of it, and now it gets to be a pleasure to him. The harsh saw, the ringing anvil, the clipping shears, sing to him as he works, and he sings with them, and the work goes merrily on.

No matter what your business is, like it. Grow fond of it. Fall in love with it. Get to be so taken with it that you can hardly leave it long enough to eat or sleep. Let it be your meat and drink to do your work. That is the way the Blessed Son of God did his work, and that is the only way a man is going to succeed in his work. If you cannot like your work, get out of it as soon as you can, for you will never do anything, if you have to drive or drag yourself to it. Diligence implies that you like your work, that it suits you, is wholly to your taste.

Diligence has come to mean specifically assiduity, close attention to business. It means keeping at it with a patience and perseverance that cannot be easily discouraged nor wearied out. The diligent business-man may not be brilliant. He may not have genius, power, that which attracts and astonishes. But he plods on, and so does by means of his plodding industry and faithfulness, an amount of work, and a quality of work, that not even genius can do. The man who depends upon his genius, his brilliance, may shine for a while; but it is the slow patient plodding man who keeps at it through the weary years, that at last succeeds.

Dr. James Hamilton, who was once pastor of Regent Square Presbyterian Church, London, the same church where now the brilliant John McNeill holds forth, relates the incident I here quote: "Long ago a little boy was entered at Harrow School. He was put into a class beyond his years, and where all the scholars had the advantage of previous instruction denied to him. His master chid him for his dulness, and all his efforts then could not raise him from the lowest place in the class. But, nothing daunted, he procured the grammars and other elementary books which his class-fellows had gone through in

previous terms. He devoted the hours of play, and not a few of the hours of sleep, to the mastering of these; till, in a few weeks, he gradually began to rise, and it was not long before he shot ahead of all his companions, and became not only leader of the division, but the pride of Harrow. You may see the statue of that boy, whose career began with this fit of energetic application, in St. Paul's Cathedral; for he lived to be the greatest oriental scholar in modern Europe—it was Sir William Jones."

The incident tells us that diligence may win the race—win it over the head of brilliance and advantage. Let the p'odder, who has to dig and dig day after day for all he has, and then finds he has so little, not be discouraged. Let him keep at it, and he will yet succeed, perhaps not as Sir William Jones and others who rose to distinction and eminence succeeded, but in a way that will be an ample reward to him for all his effort and diligence.

Diligence accomplishes what nothing else does. You ask sometimes in wonder how it is men have attained to so great a height in all that is grand and good. You look up at them from where you are to where they are, and it is a mystery to you how they made out to get up to where they are. But there is no mystery about it, except the mystery of hard work, sheer effort, plodding patient industry, diligence.

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

One *Furius Cresinus*, a Roman farmer of the old days—so runs the story—was accused to the judges of practising witchcraft, on the ground, that while his neighbors' fields were yielding little or nothing, his were productive, and nothing but witchcraft, as they thought, could account for it. The simple farmer brought before the judges his tools of husbandry—heavy mattocks, weighty ploughshares, full-fed oxen, and his

daughter who helped him in the farm-work, and addressed them thus: "O Quirites, this daughter, these oxen, these tools—these are the instruments of the only witchcraft I use. It is my diligence that succeeds, and it is their idleness why my neighbors do not succeed."

The way to have good crops of grain, the way to success in anything, the way to have grace as well as grain, is simply to be diligent in the use of such means as are close to hand. Diligence wins in the end; labor conquers all things.

Diligence implies, too, steadiness, sobriety, *stickativeness*. You never hear of diligence getting drunk, going on a spree. Too many clever workmen, first-class mechanics, are given to tipping and treating. They spend their evenings, and especially their Saturday-nights, in the public-houses and other questionable resorts.

Now, that is bad—bad whichever way you look at it. No working man, nor indeed any man, who drinks, can be depended on. So often when he is wanted, his skill and genius needed, he is not at his post—he is incapacitated for work through drink. You go into a shop where hundreds of men are at it, and you want to see a piece of skilled labor done, but you are told perhaps, in an apologetic sort of way, that the genius of the shop is not himself to-day. Of course he is often excused, but the end is, he is dismissed—is not wanted. Diligence is the way up for the working-man; drink the way down—down the street, down to careless and loose habits, down to idleness and incapacity, down to crime and infamy, down to the jail, the poor-house, the mad-house, hell.

Working-men are clamoring to-day for shorter hours and more pay. And perhaps they are in the right of it. But I do not think much of strikes. They may be necessary, but they are necessary evils. I am very sure diligence does not want to strike. It does not complain much as to long hours, for it likes to be at it. And diligence will get its pay. It may be wronged, imposed upon, trampled down, cheated out

of its just dues; but the day will come when it will be appreciated, and it will not go without its reward, and it will be well rewarded. But with regard to the clamor that is just now filling the streets of the great cities, I want to say this, that shorter hours and larger pay to many a workman are only adding to his facilities for self-ruin. Too much leisure, as I look at it, may be worse for men than too little. It is not their work, but their leisure that is playing havoc with the boys and girls of our cities. The harder at it, and the longer at it, the better it is with them. That is God's way of converting the old curse into a new blessing for the world.

But a new era is dawning. This is a transition period, and labor is feeling the effects of the influence as well as other things. Christ's yoke is an easy yoke, his burden a light burden. Working-men do not understand it as yet, but the gospel is telling here, and there is to be more leisure for the working-man than there has been;—more leisure, not that he might have more time to drink and smoke and waste in sinful ease and indulgence, but more time for self-improvement. And already we see, I think, whither the movement is tending. Last winter night-schools were opened in Montreal and other large cities, and in some cases, so many were the applications that it was found difficult to meet them. This I regard as a most hopeful sign of the times, and if the short-hour movement result in organized effort to turn the hours of leisure into self-improvement, no matter in what direction, it will be a world-blessing the magnitude of which can neither be predicted nor estimated.

III. THE CROWN OF DILIGENCE: The diligent man is to stand before kings. He is to have his place among the honorable and eminent of the world. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

The diligent man by his own diligence usually attains wealth and position, distinction and honor. We see men

rising from the ranks, and by force of character pushing their way up to the highest places. Let me instance a few of such.

We see to-day Stanley, the African explorer, within sight of the highest honors the world can bestow upon him. Starting life as a poor boy, away down at the very foot of the social scale, he has, by his own diligence, his pluck and push, worked his way up to the proudest position a man can occupy. Cities lionize him. Potentates do him honor. It is said he is to be knighted. Two continents sing his praises. And he is good as well as great. I pity him, if in this day of triumph and honor, he has not around him to keep him the Everlasting Arms.

You know, too, the story of George Stephenson, who, from being a humble collier, worked his way up to the top of the ladder. The railroads of the world are his monument. To such as he the short hour movement will be an unspeakable boon, giving opportunities for study, thought, self-improvement, experimenting with a view to inventions, and much also that is good.

And you know, too, the story of Watt, and Fulton, and Franklin, and Cyrus Field, and Edison, and so many others that might be named—men who have crowned themselves with a crown brighter than any monarch's—men who, by their genius, but specially by their hard work and unwearied diligence, have risen to the high places of the world.

What they have done, then, working-men, you can do, if you will lay hold and be diligent. Do not be satisfied with working so many hours. That is not the way up to any true throne. Ask the men who are on the throne to-day, who have succeeded, whose words have weight and whose works have worth, and they will tell you the story of how they were at it early and late. You cannot play yourself up to position and power, worth and wealth. It is only by grim effort you can do it. The whole secret is here: "Seest thou a man diligent

in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

And then, O working-man, let your diligence look up higher than mere worldly success, money-making, position and influence. Look up to Jesus. He was a working-man once, a humble mechanic; but now he is crowned, throned. And he is interested in your efforts, knows how to feel for you, loves you. Learn from him how to bear the yoke, how to do your work, how to work up. Let the inspiration of his life thrill you. He will do better for you than give you success; he will save you, glorify you, exalt you to be with himself where he is. With such a patron, there is hope for every working-man.

XXIII.

The Raising of Lazarus.

"He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go.—JOHN XI. 43, 44.

I INTRODUCE you to a thrilling scene this morning, the raising of Lazarus. The scene is an oldtime one, almost two thousand years old, but so long as sickness and sorrow ravage homes and hearts, and so long as death and the grave swallow up our loved ones, it can never cease to interest.

One of the sweetest of christian homes has been broken in upon by death, and the choice one of the family, if there can be any choice where a'l are so good, has been taken. The home at Bethany yonder was perhaps as near the ideal of a christian home as has ever been realized—every member a christian, and the home where Jesus made his home. And yet, sickness, sorrow, death, come there. Jesus is miles away, but they send for him in all haste. Strange to say, however, he is in no hurry to come, and when at last he does come, it is all over with the sick one; he is dead and buried four days, and grief and doubt have had their will with the sister.

But the Lord has come, and asks the way to the grave where Lazarus sleeps. It is apart from the village a little distance. The sisters are there with their tears and sad questionings, and their weeping friends from the city. The grave is not such as ours; it is a vault hewn out of the limestone cliff, a tomb. When Jesus comes to the grave, he is deeply, strangely affected. He groans and weeps. But after a little he calms himself, and directs the bystanders to remove the heavy stone shutting the vault. The sisters object, but he over-rules all objections, and the stone is with difficulty removed. God never does what men can do as well. Then stepping forward to the black mouth of the vault, and addressing the dead by name, he says: "Lazarus, come forth!"

Instantly noisy grief is stilled, and there falls upon the mourning group an awful hush, a hush like the hush of death. In staring wonder and listening awe every eye looks and every ear listens. Who is he, and what, who thus dares speak into a grave? Is he a fool, or is he God? He must be one or the other. Were I to go yonder where white gravestones stand around so silent and cold, and loved forms lie buried—as loved as Lazarus, and as young and good; were I to tell the grave-digger to dig out of a grave the earth he had filled in four days before; and then, were I, when he had reluctantly and with difficulty done it, and the coffin-lid was unscrewed and removed, to open my mouth, and in his name who is the resurrection and life, say with a voice full of all the lung-power I could put into it, "O dead one, so loved and so wept for, come forth!" you would say, I think, and you would be justified in saying it, that I was a fool, yea worse, a blasphemer. But Jesus is not a fool; he is the resurrection and life, he is God. Hark! down in the darkness of the tomb in answer to his word of power a rustling is heard, as of one new-awakened out of sleep, and slowly and with difficulty making his way up and out to the light. Presently Lazarus emerges wound around with grave-clothes, and so tangled up with them that he is all but

helpless, and consternation seizes upon the bystanders. Some shriek out with affright ; others are dumb with astonishment. Some start to run away as from an apparition of the underworld ; others are paralyzed, their blood frozen in their veins. For a moment all is confusion, consternation, amazement, horror. But Jesus reassures them when he pleasantly directs them to loose him and let him go.

Here however the scene closes just where we would like it to be most minute. Only one remark is made, indicating that unbelief went away from that resurrection-scene as hardened and unbelieving as ever, but others were won. The poet shapes the thought for us thus :—

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
And home to Mary's house returned,
Was this demanded—if he yearned
To hear her weeping by his grave ?

“ Where wert thou, brother, those four days ?”
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbors met,
The streets were filled with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crowned
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ !
The rest remaineth unrevealed ;
He told it not ; or something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist.

Now, the raising up of Lazarus may teach us of another raising up that we have still more interest in and still more to do with, namely, the raising up of the spiritually dead. Let the dead in their graves yonder sleep on till the resurrection ; they are beyond our reach ; we cannot disturb their repose, nor wake them up. But the other dead, the dead in sin, we

are not to let sleep ; we have what will raise them up, and it is our sacred duty and blessed privilege to raise them up.

First, then, I remark, that Lazarus in his grave is an apt type of the state in which men are naturally. Men are as dead spiritually in their natural state, as Lazarus was dead physically when he lay in his grave four days. Dead in sin or through sin is a scriptural description of men in their natural and unregenerated state. The Apostle Paul writing to the Ephesian christians tells them how he found them spiritually when he came to them with the gospel ; they were in a state of spiritual death. That splendid Asiatic city, as he found it, was a real necropolis, a city of the dead ;—dead merchants doing her business, dead mechanics building her houses, dead farmers ploughing her fields, dead priests ministering at her altars, dead worshippers thronging her temples, the dead everywhere, all dead.

And we are not to understand, I think, by the apostle's use of the word dead, that he intended to convey the idea that Ephesus was a specially wicked city, a city abandoned to idolatry of the grossest kind, a city where society was steeped in every vice and immorality. It was a wicked city, and Paul found it so to his cost, but he does not necessarily mean by the expressive phrase, dead in sin, that as a city it had attained a notoriety beyond all others in wickedness. That was not the case. As a city it had its virtuous people so-called, and its vicious ones, its respectable classes and its criminal masses, and perhaps it had more than its share of the criminal classes, for, as the temple of Diana was there, all sorts of criminals fled to Ephesus to escape the justice that was after them.

Every one not in Christ is spiritually dead. A man may be living in every other respect, but in relation to Christ and the higher duties of Christian living he is as dead as a dead man is dead to the affairs and business of ordinary everyday life. Angels are singing sweetly of peace on earth and Heaven's

goodwill to men, but the spiritually dead men hear none of it. A blessed light above the brightness of the sun is shining all around, but the man dead in sin sees it not. A new world is close to him with all its glorious spiritual advantages and privileges, and it may be his as it is others', but he is in a state where he can neither profit by it nor enjoy it, for he is dead. There was a time when man was not dead. Once he lived in Eden, and talked with God, and heard the angels sing. But sin came, and death, and now he is dead—oh so dead!

And spiritual death like the death yonder at Bethany turns from bad to worse, from death to corruption. Dead four days means more than dead. Dead one day is to be dead enough; dead two days is to be still more so, for there are degrees in death; but to be dead four days—dead! dead! *dead!* DEAD!—how dead that is! And yet all around about us are men dead in sin, not for days, but for years and years—twenty, thirty, fifty, three-score-and-ten; and in not a few such cases corruption is far advanced. We cannot stand still in sin and death; we cannot hold our ground, and become neither better nor worse. No; we die, and die, day by day, and year by year, and corruption sets in, and grows as corruption grows, and we sometimes reach a stage so bad that there is but little of good to hope for us.

Lazarus, so young, so full of promise, so gifted, is dead. And not the old only, the good-for-nothing, but the hope and promise of our homes and churches and country are dead. We expect so much of them, but they disappoint us. We say to ourselves: "wait till they are older and they will be wiser and better." But the older the worse. We look to them to do so much for us, to be true to us in the dark days of life, to be a staff to lean on in our old age, to carry forward to still greater results the life-work we have been trying to do; but alas! they are a grief of heart, a broken reed, a cruel disappointment. And the reason is not far to seek—they are dead. What can the dead do for us, for our country, for the church, for any cause

whatever? Nothing that is good. The dead can only rot. Oh sad indeed, if the young men in our homes and schools are dead to all that is good, for as such they can do nothing for us! We love them, but they do not love us back. We trust them, and they fail us. We hope, but our hope makes us ashamed. Ah! we have to bury the dead—bury them out of our sight, forget them.

Again, I remark, that the raising up of Lazarus from the grave lets us see what can be done for the spiritually dead—what we can do and cannot do. We can do this—we can conduct the Christ to where the dead are, and we can roll away the stone from the grave's mouth; but the power that wakes up the dead in sin to the life that is in God is Divine power.

Ignorance is one of the great stones in the way of men's spiritual rising, and in the way too of God's word of power reaching them, very much in their way, and we can roll that stone away. It may take quite an effort on our part, and may require no little patience, but it can be done, and much is done when that is done.

Then evil habits are in men's way, and we can do something towards their removal. How intemperance bars the way to all hope and help for men, and we may not be doing what we might to roll away that great stone from the door of our brother-man's sepulchre! Ah! our boasted moderation, our wicked influence and example, our cruel teaching, may be rather holding it there. We may be sitting with all the weight of our position upon it, and not putting our breast to it and helping to roll it away. You say, "I can drink or let it alone;" but you do not let it alone, you drink, and so weak men do what you do, and are lost. You sit securely on the edge of the hell where men are going down by the ten-thousand, and you drink in moderation, and you smack your lips and enjoy the good of it without enduring the woe of it; but you had better take care, for some day you may trifle a little too far and fall in. I want to keep away myself as far from danger

as I can, and my counsel to others is to do the same, and I think that that is the teaching of the Word of God. The best sort of self-control, I humbly aver, is not to see just how far I can safely imbibe from the poisoned wine-cup, but to go the whole length, and be out and out abstinent. According to some, self-control is to drink so far and then stop with moderation, but is it not also self-control not to drink at all? I read here that I am to abstain from every appearance of evil, and drinking from the cup of drunkenness is admitted on all hands to be, in these times of ours, an awful evil, a curse under which the whole land is groaning; and therefore, as I reason it out for myself, I am to abstain from that form of evil, not merely control myself in it, but so control myself with regard to it as to abstain from it altogether. I am not to look upon the red wine in the drinking-cup. I am to loathe it. I am not to touch it, as that which is dangerous to health, and a deadly poison to the soul. Oh this great stone at the door of the sepulchre where lie dead and buried men's souls, their hope and happiness, their good and usefulness—this stone that stands in the way of the church's work in the world, and all true progress, let us do what we can to roll it away!

Then our indifference may be another stone barring the door of sepulchres. What we can do in other things when we want to reach men and rouse them! We go to them where they are. We climb fences, and wade through new-ploughed fields, and get to them, when we want their votes. We talk hours to them, and make them almost whether they will or not, buy what we have to sell, vote for our side in politics, insure their life, subscribe for a book they have no use for, and so on. But when it is their raising up to a new life of faith and love, we care not. What cruel indifference everywhere! And so men are not raised up. Why is it those streets are full of dead men? Is it because there is no power in the Word, no might in the gospel of God's Son? No; but the stones are not rolled away, and the word of Divine power cannot get at them. No

preacher can help men who are not where he can reach them with his messages. It is ours to do what can be done to bring Christ, the resurrection and life, face to face with our dead. And we are not doing that, and the dead are still dead, and corruption still goes on.

Now, I do not know how the dead are raised up. I know indeed that removing the stone from the grave's mouth is a small part of it, but, you will notice, that, small a part as it is, there is no raising up of the dead without it. The mighty Christ waits till our poor weak human part is done before he does his great part. You are asking perhaps, with no little concern, why it is the dead in your home, the dead on your side of the street and in your end of the city, the dead you have to do with and are interested in, are not being raised up. But have you done your part? Perhaps your indifference is in the way, your careless living, your worldliness, you yourself, and these stones must be rolled away before Christ can do anything for the dead you have to do with. One thing is clear, if the dead are not raised up the fault is ours, not his.

You see yonder at Bethany what an effort it is for the bystanders, perhaps half a dozen of them, to roll away the stone. They lift and pull, and have a great deal to say, and perhaps some little wrangling as to how best to do it, before they make out to do it, and Christ lets them pull and lift and wrangle away till they do it, and after a while they succeed. And then when their part is done, ill or well, soon or late, pleasantly or unpleasantly, he steps forward, and with a word, and without the least effort, he does his part, and the dead is raised up.

And so it is in the raising up of the spiritually dead. We have our part to do, and what a time there is about it. What pulling and hauling at the stones in the way. What a wrangle and tangle we get into with one another about the doing of our part. We pull against one another, and struggle and scramble, and shout and find fault, and make such a fuss. And sometimes there is a great ecclesiastical row over the rolling away

of the stones, and the work is much hindered. But when our part has been done, even though so imperfectly, Christ come, and easily raises up our dead. He simply speaks and it is done. Men wake up that we had ceased to hope for, men that we thought had gone too far ever to be saved, and they live anew. By scores and hundreds sometimes they wake up, and come forth from the graves of their sins.

Again, I remark, that the raising up of Lazarus lets us see that all is not done for men they need to have done for them when they are raised up.

You see how it is with Lazarus. The power that mysteriously and mightily turns his death into life for him, and his corruption into healthful vitality, does not rend off from him the cerements of the tomb. Something is left for loving human hands to do to complete his resurrection. "Loose him," the Master says, "and let him go."

And as with Lazarus, so with the dead in sin. All is not done for them when they are raised up. They are still entangled more or less with their old world-life, the habits they had formed, and they need our help to get rid of them. The putting off of the old and the putting on of the new, is not at once done. It is often a slow tedious process. A man does not at once leap up out of the grave of sin where he has been companionating with the worms of corruption for years, and serve God with all the glory and power of his resurrection-life. No; he comes up, crawls up, little by little, and others have to help him, and bear with him, till he can do for himself.

You expect a man, when he professes to have passed from death to life, to be so good, so free from all the entanglements of the world. But when you see him weakly doing things not very consistent with his profession, and yielding to indulgences like others, you denounce him as a hypocrite, and you would expel him from the church and all that is good, if you had your will. But not so with the Master. He would say, "Loose him and let him go. Loose him and help him. Pity and pray for him. Give him a chance for life."

What a trouble we all were to those who had to do with us when we woke up to this natural life of ours. How our patient mothers worked with us and worried over us, how our teachers almost despaired of being able to teach us anything, and how all who had anything to do with us were worn out of all patience with us, and yet we have come to be of some account perhaps. I do not know that we are worth all the trouble we took to bring us up, but we like to think we are. If, then, our natural manhood cost so much to make it what it is, let us be patient with the spiritual development of the born again. The spiritual resurrection is a growth. It is a slow patient struggle upward, many a fall back, perhaps, many a seemingly fruitless effort; but at last the christian comes to where he can do without the help of others. You see him giving help, not asking it. And he comes to be the joy of many, the glory of the church. Oh the wonders of grace, the might of Christ's life-giving word!

Thus, in conclusion, we see what hope there is for the dead in sin, the very worst of men. Christ's word is still mighty—mighty to raise the dead. Even in my cold lips it is mighty. Let me go on preaching and teaching and praying it as I can, for it must tell, and dead men will be raised up. And you have the word of God too; speak it then, as you can, to those around you, the children at your knee, your neighbor across the street, the poor and tempted you would help, the reckless and profane who sneer and scoff. Let Christ speak to men by you. Your lips for his words, your tongues for his truth! And speak as he would speak—not flippantly and lightly, but gravely and wisely—not putting on airs and making an ado, but with a tender burning love in your heart, and there will be good done.

And we all need waking and raising up. We have a little life perhaps, but it is not the abundant life that God wants us to have, the life that is full of work for Jesus. We are like Lazarus yonder with his grave-clothes on, and only half out of his tomb. Let us shake off from us the bands of death, the bondage of corruption, and be alive indeed. Hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us with words that send a thrill of holy life and rapture throughout our whole being: "Lazarus, come forth!"

Faithful unto Death.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."—REV. II. 10.

AMONG famous paintings in foreign galleries is said to be one called "Faithful unto Death." The scene is laid in Pompeii the dreadful night of its destruction by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The city is being overwhelmed in a deluge of fire. Down the street rages and foams a river of red-hot lava, and poor wretches are seen plunging into it in their vain efforts to escape, and are borne down by the rushing fiery flood. Multitudes are seen in the distance throwing up their arms and crowding one another down in a wild panic of fear and rage. The atmosphere is filled with smoke, falling stones and cinders, bursting explosives, the debris of the city's ruin. It is an awful scene the artist portrays, a chaos of agony and horror.

In the foreground of the picture stands on guard at the gate of the city an old-time Roman soldier. He is fully armed. On his left arm is his shield ; in his right hand he holds a spear ; on his thigh his sword is girded ; upon his head his helmet. He is a man of splendid physique, every inch a soldier. Before and around him the citizens are fleeing, or trying to, in the wildest disorder. They are leaving everything—their city,

homes, property, friends, pleasures, and they have but one thought, how to escape. But the brave Roman, who is a foreigner perhaps, and who could so easily escape, if he chose to, being at the gate of the city, remains, as if rooted to the spot where he stands, holding duty to be more sacred than life. Already the waves of lava are splashing their fiery foam around his feet, and a tempest is raining down upon him ; but there he stands, erect, alert, heroic, true, self-forgetful, looking out, not without interest and anxiety, over the judgment-wasted city. He has indeed his own thoughts of things, his own feelings with regard to things. He is not stone, a statue of cold chiselled marble. He breathes, feels, thinks, reasons, remembers, hopes, fears, despairs. Perhaps he thinks of a mother, or a wife and child, far away, and he wonders what they will do without him. Life too has its interests to him, and the future its awful mysteries. And it is hard to stand there and burn—burn for those who would not burn a hair of their head for him. It is hard to stand there holding a spear, and let the tides of red-hot lava surge up around him. But duty is sacred, and like a hero he will die at his post ; he will yield himself to be a martyr to what he believes to be his duty, a martyr to faithfulness—“*faithful unto death!*” Brave old Roman! What a lesson thou teachest us as to what we should be as christians !

Now, we are exhorted here to be faithful with the Roman soldier's heroic faithfulness ; we are to be faithful unto death. Discredit has been cast on the historic allusion of the painting. It has been questioned whether any such incident ever occurred. It is held to be only the clever thought of the artist, the creation of his wondrous brush. But at all events the thought is a worthy one, and it is felt to be true to all that is best within us, and no one can look upon the work of art without being the braver and better for it. There is a faithfulness that would sooner die than betray, and it is yours and mine to be thus faithful: “Be thou faithful unto death.”

I. CHRISTIAN FAITHFULNESS: Faithfulness stands near the head, if not at the very head, of the virtues. It may be said

to be made up of all the virtues blended into one. You cannot have faithfulness without faith, and love and hope are not wanting here. Faithfulness implies unswerving uncompromising principle. It plants its feet on the rock of truth, and it stands there four-square to every wind that blows. It has a creed; it believes something, and what it believes it believes with a faith that cannot be easily shaken. Faithfulness too implies courage, determination, strength of purpose. Difficulties cannot deter it. Dangers cannot affright it. Not even death itself can turn it from its sacred purpose. It can burn, but not turn; it can die, but not fly.

Faithfulness is so strong and brave, that, single-handed, it can face a host, defeat an army. It is often, usually indeed, in the minority, the staunch supporter of a cause that the people are not with, the world dead against. But the popularity or unpopularity of a cause is nothing to faithfulness. It may be wrong, but it wants to be right, and when it finds itself wrong, it is swift to put itself right, and it is loud in denunciation of the wrong it finds itself guilty of. How the wind blows, whither the tide sets, is neither here nor there to faithfulness. It asks not what the people say, where public opinion veers. It takes its own course, turning to neither left nor right, but pressing straight on. Nothing is more criticized than faithfulness, and yet to nothing is the world more indebted than to it for whatever of good it has. How faithfulness loves when it loves; but when it hates, with what an unquenchable fire its hate burns. But it is slow to hate, and swift to love. It wants to love rather than hate, so unselfish is it. Such is faithfulness, and though we may not always agree with it, nor like the way it does things, yet we cannot but respect it for its devotion, its heroic unselfishness, its brave truth-telling and right-doing.

Now, christian faithfulness is the highest type of this noble virtue, just as the Christ is the highest type of man. To be faithful as he was is to have christian faithfulness. In him we have the ideal of every virtue, every grace, every excellence.

His faithfulness shrinks from no duty, shirks no responsibility, stops at no difficulty, fears no foe, yields to no temptation, betrays no trust, does no wrong. He loves so disinterestedly, sacrifices so cheerfully, does all that can be done so willingly, and, to crown all, seals his faithfulness with his own blood. Thus Christ's is a faithfulness unto death.

And we are to be thus faithful. We are to do our duty where we are, as he did his where he was. We are not to be satisfied with low attainments in grace, any sort of faithfulness ; we are to be like him. It is not always easy to be faithful. He did not find it so, and we are not going to find it so any more than he did, if we want to be what he was. It cost him his life to be faithful, and in other days and other lands it cost many of his true people their life. They had to be true to him, and true to the truth they held, true to the religion they professed, true to their own convictions of what was right, in the face of death, and they died rather than be untrue. And even to-day, we may know, to our cost and sorrow, what it is to be faithful. But let it cost what it will, we are to be faithful, so faithful. "Be thou faithful unto death."

II. HOW WE ARE TO BE FAITHFUL: I have been trying to tell you in my poor words what faithfulness is, what a noble thing it is ; now I want to tell you, if the Spirit of the Lord will be with me, how to work it out into actual life results. It is one thing, you know, to talk about faithfulness, to preach it, to extol in eloquent words from pulpit or platform its heroic devotion to duty and all that ; but it is another thing, and quite a different thing, to be, where you and I are, faithful, with the faithfulness that we like to talk about and praise, faithful with the faithfulness that would sooner die as the faithful Christ died and as the faithful martyr dies than be unfaithful. Now, it is to be faithful, not talk about faithfulness, our Lord lays upon you and me here. He wants us to realize the thing. He comes to me where I stand to-day, and to you, my hearer, where you are, and he says: "Be *thou*—

thou, O preacher, with my words in thy mouth, the interests of the church and of all that concerns the spiritual and eternal well-being of my people so much in thy hands—*thou*, O christian, with the vows of the Lord upon thy soul, my character in thy keeping—*thou*, O business-man, with the business interests of the city and of the land weighed and measured by thy scales and yard-stick—*thou*, O public-man, with the country's prosperity and character as a sacred trust committed to thee—be *thou* faithful unto death."

And here opens up to me, as you will readily perceive, a wider field than I can go over in the limited time at my disposal. All I can hope to do is to indicate in a general sort of way what it is for us, in our widely different positions and relations, to be faithful. The theme is one that has the very widest application, and it is as searching, minute, individual, particular, as it is wide, far-reaching, general. It concerns the Queen high up on the throne; if possible, it concerns her almost more than any one else in the empire, for she is so great and high. It has to do with the mighty statesmen who are at the helm of national affairs, and into whose hands are put such vast interests. It tells our governors, our judges, our legislators, our civic authorities, our municipal officers, our magistrates, our professional people, our business men, the laboring-classes, the errand-boys that carry our messages, the humble domestics that kindle our fires and tidy up our rooms and cook our meals;—it tells them all, in a word of two syllables, what they are to be, how they are to do their work and fill their position, and that one word is—*faithful*. "Be thou faithful—"*faithful unto death*."

What a word for me where I am! I want to get at the fulness of its meaning. I want to realize it in my ministry. It is something else than to be popular, something else than to be successful. To be faithful may be to be unpopular, to be unsuccessful. Faithful preaching has driven men out of the pulpit, set the people against them, roused up popular fury so

that it was too hot for them to stay. Thus it was with the Christ, and with many another. Oh it may be want of outspoken faithfulness on our part that we are not more denounced and criticized and abused than we are!

You ask perhaps: "Why does the preacher speak out as he does sometimes, slashing the evils right and left with rash words, his ill-timed remarks, when it would be so much easier for him, and more to his own personal advantage and the church's interest, to hold his peace? Let him preach the gospel; let him mind his own business. What has he to do with questions of civic interest and political importance—temperance, commercial dishonesty, bribery, a legislation that means perhaps the most bare-faced attempt to cover up corruption and legalize rascality? He is barking a dog by the ears, and he will suffer for it."

But here I am, as yonder Roman at the gate of the judgment-wasted city, a watchman set up here on this tower to watch, and as a watchman I am here to be faithful. If I see danger threatening, wickedness at work, intemperance like a fiery flood surging through the streets, then I am to lift up my voice like a trumpet, and tell the people their sin and danger. I am not to spare—spare neither myself nor the people. To sleep when I should be awake, to be silent when I should cry aloud, is to be a traitor. Woe to Israel when her watchmen are dumb dogs! Oh to be faithful with a faithfulness that would sooner die at the stake for the truth's sake than betray! I hear the Master saying to me as I stand here Sabbath after Sabbath with his words in my mouth, and so much at stake whether I speak or hold my peace, "Be thou faithful unto death."

And, my hearer, this word of the Master is for you as well as for me. The other Sabbath you sat there before the Lord, and with the symbols of his faithfulness to you in your hand, you said with an eloquent silence: "O Great Master, I will be faithful to Thee as Thou hast been to me. I will be true

to all that is true. I will give this right hand to no wrongdoing, this tongue to no evil-speaking, this life that Thou hast redeemed by Thy blood to no unworthy purpose, to no base service. So help me God."

You are a parent perhaps, and as such what it is to you and yours to be faithful. Your child's future, its forever, depends so much on it. In your hands its wondrous undeveloped being is like a piece of helpless plastic clay to be shaped, wrought, developed, almost as you will, and what your faithful training can do for it, or the want of it, the neglect of it, can undo. O parent, be thou faithful in this great trust entrusted to thee!

Not a few of you are in the employ of others in various ways. You are servants, apprentices, shop boys and shop girls, clerks, and so on. Now, the Master's word is, "Be faithful." And what is it to be faithful? It is to tell no lies—to tell no lies even though your master or mistress want you to tell lies for them. It is to do no wrong—to do no wrong even though your employer wants you to do wrong in the interests of his business. It is to be honest as the day, straight in every transaction. It is to do the best you can, shirking no duty, not sparing yourself, not doing as little as you can for the wages you get, but always doing the best you can. It is to take your stand on the right, and stand there.

To be faithful may get you into trouble with unprincipled masters. They may want you to do what they would not do themselves—some dirty mean business. They may want you to do what your conscience tells you is wrong, and the word of God condemns. They may want you to break the Sabbath, to do what neither necessity nor mercy requires you to do. But let them know, gently indeed, but firmly, that your idea of being faithful to them is to do right, and they will respect you all the more for it.

A member of this church told me, perhaps a month ago, that she had had a letter from her son far away on the Pacific Coast, and among other things he told his mother how his

christian faithfulness had been put to a test. His employer said to the hands when Saturday night came, "I shall expect you all back to-morrow as I have a large order to fill." The young man said nothing at the moment, but as he was going away he took occasion to say to his employer that he would not be back next day as he did not believe in working on Sunday unless there was a necessity for it. And he kept his word. On Monday morning he expected to be dismissed. But he was not dismissed, and the rest of the hands told him that his faithfulness to principle had won for him the employer's respect as their yielding to his will had not done for them.

Now, it does not always turn out thus happily with the faithful. But in the end christian faithfulness pays, and in the name of your Master and mine I would say to you: "Be faithful even though you may be sacrificed for your faithfulness; even though in trying to do right you may lose your situation, your life."

Jean Inglew tells a story to this effect. In one of the islands off the north of Scotland stands a house in whose window a light is seen every night. Years ago one dark night a fisherman making his way to the boat-landing near his home, missed the channel, and was cast away on the reef. His body was borne to his sad home next morning. It was the want of a light that had lost him. His daughter, a girl of fifteen or so, vowed over the dead body of her father, that no one would ever again be wrecked on that reef for want of a light. So that night she lit a lamp, and put it in the window, and from that date till now, some forty or fifty years, it has not failed to shine. She is an old woman now, but she sits and spins and sings, and all night long through the weary years she keeps her light shining out over the dark waters. She does this without fee or reward. Thus what a beautiful faithfulness is hers.

Now, some of us occupy prominent places in the church, in society. We are placed high up in positions of trust and responsibility. We have great interests committed to us. It

is ours perhaps to train the young. It is ours to teach the people. It is ours by pen and tongue to shine far out over land and sea. Men look to us for guidance, counsel, help. They want light, and we have light. Oh! do we sleep, and let the light in our window burn low, while men around us, and because of our neglect, are drifting to their death? Unfaithfulness on our part—how cruel it is!

The lack of faithfulness in public men is an alarming feature of the day. Reckless charges are sometimes made for mere party purposes, cruelly made indeed, against government officials, men high in power in the state; but the very fact that grave charges are made indicates surely a suspicion, a distrust, that ought not to be. I tremble for the future of our country. As I look at it, it seems to me, that both Dominion and Local politics are fast coming to be an Augean stable, and I fear there is no Hercules near who has the courage and might to turn in upon the wide corruption a river of real reform. O ye public men, ye rulers of the people, ye who have power and into whose hands are put the destinies of our fair country, be faithful men, though you should be sacrificed, and have to die politically for your faithfulness. The day will come when a grateful country will build a monument to your memory, Rise above personal and party interests, and do your duty let come what will. Oh for faithfulness in high places!

III. THE REWARD OF FAITHFULNESS: It was the custom to crown a victor in the old-time games with a laurel-leaved wreath or crown, and such a crown was regarded as a great honor, a reward worth all the effort and skill put forth to win it. But then so soon the athlete's crown faded, and all it symbolized as well—the might, the prowess, the skill, the fleet-footedness on the race-course, and whatever else he was noted for.

Now, there is an allusion to that old custom here. The faithful christian is a sort of athlete. He is a wrestler, for he has to wrestle with devils. He is a runner, for he has to run

the christian race. He is a fighter, having to fight the good fight of faith. And he must agonize, if he is to overcome. No place for ease and indulgence in Christ's service. It is faithfulness to the end, to the last gasp, to the death, if the crown of life is to be his. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

In the old games the successful competitor was called to the front, and the judge, with words in praise of his success, put the laurel-leaved crown upon his head, and it was a proud moment for him. It was worth years of self-sacrifice and mighty effort to be thus crowned. It might cost him—and it not unfrequently did so—such an effort, that he might never run again, never wrestle more, that he might have to die still, all it had cost him—his agony and self-sacrifice, his life even—all was swallowed up in the joy of the grand victory.

But how much greater the reward of christian faithfulness. It is not always easy to be faithful, to stand up for Christ in a godless careless world, to walk with unspotted garments amid the pollutions of society, to speak the truth when a lie is wanted, to do the right when the wrong is so popular, to be brave and good. But a great reward is to be his who is faithful. At the judgment-seat of Christ he will be honored. In the presence of the assembled universe, the Judge of all, with his own hands, will crown him with the crown of life. Other crowns fade, but the christian's crown will be an amaranthine crown, an unfading glory, eternal life. Oh that moment's joy will make him forget forever all he had to suffer and sacrifice in the way of his duty! Men will see then, as they do not seem to see now, how blind they were to their own best interests, what a cruel mistake they made for themselves, when for the sake of ease, or gain, or some wretched world-interest or other, they were unfaithful, and so lost their crown.

O my hearer, be thou faithful. How wearing it is to do and do through the years where you are, to bear and bear, to weep and work and be so ill-rewarded for all you are trying to be

and do! You feel sometimes like giving it up, and not trying to be good and faithful any more. You see how it prospers with others perhaps who are not faithful, how full their purse, how loaded their table with every luxury, how gay and grand, and then you look at your own hard lot, and your heart faints. But look across the years to the great Day of Account, and see what it is yours to be. You see Jesus on his glittering Throne, and in his hand a crown. That crown is for you, faithful one. Let his word cheer thee, nerve thee to better braver doing and bearing for him : *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

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Blunt Tools.

"If the iron be blunt, and one do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength."—ECCLES. X. 10.

SERMONS have been found in stones and trees; this one came to me out in the hay-field one day. My father and brothers were hand-mowing a rough piece of ground, and I was there to help, or perhaps hinder. I took my father's scythe to spell him and amuse myself, and followed my brothers across the field as well as I could. I could mow once, and I have conceit enough left in me to think I can mow still. After mowing a certain distance across the field keeping stroke with one another, we returned to the starting-place carrying our scythes, where there was a concert of whetting for another effort. It was not long however before I mowed into a stone lying concealed in the grass. It was my unskilfulness, or inattention, that did it, and I found that much whetting and increased strength on my part were necessary to do the same amount of work I had been doing. This brought the text to my mind and I went on turning it over in my thoughts and so shaped out the sermon I am going to preach to-night. With God's blessing it may be a help to us in the higher matters of the kingdom. It may teach us the truth, preach to us the

gospel, give us higher ideas of duty-doing and christian living. It is a blessed spiritual use I want to turn it to, and it is for such a use it is here.

And first, you and I, my hearers, as individual christian workers, and this church, are tools of some sort for the Master's use—a scythe perhaps, a reaping-hook, an axe, a hoe, a spade, a plough, a sword, a tool of some sort.

We are not all made alike, nor for the same purpose. I think it would be a mistake, a terrible blunder, and the world and church's loss, if we were all scythes or swords, all spades or ploughs, all axes and adzes, all chisels and gouges. We want all sorts of tools in a world such as ours, for there are all sorts of work to be done. Do not despise me because I am a plough ploughing up the fallow-ground, and let me not despise you because you are an axe to hew down the tangled wild-woods. There are tools in use I neither know the names of nor the purposes they are for. And there are people in the church, and I am puzzled to know what they are made for, what use they are serving, and because I do not know, I am disposed to think they are of no use whatever, and the church, and the world too, would be better without them than with them. But the God who made them knows, and some day it will be known why they are, and it will be found they are grandly useful.

One tool is dull iron, another bright brass, a third glittering steel, a fourth shining silver or brilliant gold. It is not always the commonplace tool that is the least useful, nor is the brightest the best. We all want the silver or the gold knife. It takes the eye, looks well. But for real use and every-day purposes, and for standing the wear and tear of use, give me a plain steel knife.

And the silver-tongued orator, the golden-mouthed preacher, everybody runs after, and wants to hear, and praises; but when it comes to real good-doing, the hard and long pull that lifts up the world and saves souls, it is the iron and steel that men despise that do it. Let us not bury ourselves because we cannot

shine. We can do, and that is better than to shine. We despise not the shining ones in prominent places, but the shining that we admire most is the shining that comes of much use. Let me shine because I plough so much, because I reap so many golden sheaves, because I am kept so busy.

But, secondly, it is of the blunt tool I am to speak specially. You know what it is to mow with a blunt scythe, to cut with a blunt axe, to saw with a blunt saw, to do your work with a blunt tool. You cannot do your work nearly as easily nor as satisfactorily for yourself. And indeed he would be a very foolish workman who would do his work with a blunt tool when he might have a sharp one as well as not.

Use dulls a tool. Keep your scythe going through the rank grass, and do not stop to whet it, and very soon it will lose its keen edge, and come to be so blunt that it requires twice the effort to get it to cut at all, not to say well. Keep your axe swinging into tough-grained knotty trees, and after a while it gets to be so dull that it will not cut; and you know better than I can tell you, indeed there is no necessity to tell a New Brunswick audience at all, that it is dull hard work to chop with a dull axe. And moreover, no genuine New Brunswicker will do so. Now, use—I speak not here of abuse—square honest use, has the effect of dulling any and every sort of edged tool.

And, another thing, the keener-edged a tool is, the sooner and more easily dulled it is. A razor is more easily dulled than a reaping-hook, an axe than a hoe, a sword than a plough. You grub away with a hoe half a lifetime without sharpening it, but even a hoe or a plough would be the better of an occasional edge-up. Keep your tools sharp is common-place advice, but it is worth giving and worth taking. It looks to be an utter waste of time that might be put to a better purpose to be whetting so much, but the whetting is as necessary to good work as the actual work. It is a saving of both time and strength to whet.

And, my hearers, it is none the less true in the higher matters of the Kingdom that constant use dulls the tools the blessed Spirit employs for the doing of his work, and they need every now and again whetting of a sort. The preacher of the gospel, the elder, the Sunday School teacher, the christian worker, and so on, are the Spirit's tools, and like other sorts of tools they sometimes get dull. They lose their keen edge. They find perhaps that they cannot do their work with the ease and heart and energy with which they once did it. Their zeal cools off and sometimes goes altogether out. Their enthusiasm wanes. In a word, they find, that to be hard at it, and always at it, has a dulling effect upon them which is discouraging, and they begin to conclude that they are no good, and have no business to be where they are. And they get out of it. The preacher resigns perhaps, and tries farming, or store-keeping, or editing a newspaper, or something else he thinks he can do. The Sunday School teacher absents himself or herself until their place is filled by some one else. So with all sorts of christian workers.

Now, we do not fling away a scythe, because, after we mow a swath or two, it becomes somewhat less keen-edged. No; we get out our whetstone, and we whet it up, and we whistle to the tune our whetstone plays while we do it, and we find, that the scythe is as keen-edged and as ready for work as it was when first tried. It is no evidence that a tool is poor because constant use dulls its keen edge. That is the way with the very best of tools.

And, christian workers, let us not lose heart and run away from our work, because we seem not to be able to do it as well as we would like to do it, or as we used to do it, because perhaps a strange dulness has crept in upon us that is interfering with our usefulness. The Lord's own reaping-hooks, his scythes, his axes, his swords, get dull somehow. It is with his tools as with ours. And no marvel, for they are of the earth as ours are. We whet ours. We whet them often. The

more we work, the more we whet. And it is necessary that there be constant whetting, if the living tools in his hands would be efficient, and do the good work and the great work he wants them to do, and there is to do.

I want to wield the axe of truth with a strong hand to-night. I want to swing the scythe right around these pews from one side of the church to the other. I want to miss no one. I want to reap golden sheaves this blessed hour. Oh what a work this is to do it well! You wonder why I do not visit oftener, and where I go to and what I am doing all the other six days. Ah! I have to go and whet up for my public efforts. If I am sharp sometimes, a little too sharp you think, it is often after days of earnest grinding in my study.

And so with every other church worker as well as the preacher. They need to be constantly whetting, praying, studying, reading, if they would be sharp tools for the Spirit's use, and do their work efficiently. Some preachers, some Sunday School teachers, some who take part in prayer meetings and so on, think it is great folly, idling away precious time, to study so much, and learn so much. As for them they can preach and teach without any study, and go right on without stopping to sharpen up their minds and hearts. But every one who knows anything about tools will tell you, it is only hoes and grubbers and such like, the meaner class of tools, that do their work without whetting. People soon find out the preacher who does not study, and children soon find out the Sunday School teacher who does not come to them with a keen edge, all bright and sharp.

But again, while use dulls keen-edged tools, and wears them out after a while, it is not use so much as abuse that dulls them worst and wears them out fastest. If you bring your scythe with its keen edge across a rock every other swing, you will very soon unfit it for service. And some mowers seem to have the knack of hunting up all the stones in the field, and colliding with them. Some choppers again are always getting

upon nails with the face of their axe, or into gravel, or where they should not get, and so the tool they work with is never otherwise than dull-edged. They are reckless, careless, unskillful. They slash away, and never look what they are slashing into.

My hearers, how is it that so many of us are such inefficient church workers, such good-for-nothing tools, such dull-edged christians? Ah! the trouble is, our face is too much worldwards. If we keep our heart and life out amid the dulling influences of the world, the blunting temptations of society as it is all around about us, and if we care not much what we are or do, then we cannot be otherwise than dull souls, without spiritual power, useless, good-for-nothing.

It is all right for the people of God to be up to their eyes in business, to have both hands full of work, to do with their might what is theirs to do. Business need not necessarily dull their edge for right doing, and christian living, and church work. But there are temptations here, snags that they are in danger of running foul of, that may utterly unfit them for true spiritual usefulness in the Master's service. If they over-reach, lie, look solely to their own interests, and are grasping and greedy all through the busy week; then, of course, there will not be much of an edge left on them for spiritual service on the Sabbath, not much heart left in them for the worship of the Lord's House. They will be dull hearers to preach to, dull teachers in the Sunday School, dull heartless church workers, dull christians, dull souls.

The pleasures of the world, too, dull the soul for spiritual activity. Now, I am not going to slash right and left here. Pleasure has its place. Laughter has its sanctified uses. If we feel like running instead of walking, jumping instead of sitting or standing, flying instead of creeping, singing instead of sighing, why then let us do so. There is nothing wrong in it. There are right pleasures, and there are wrong pleasures. There are safe pleasures, and there are dangerous pleasures.

There are pleasures healthful to both body and soul, and there are pleasures that are harmful. I admit, too, that you may go into pleasures that it would not do for me to go into. The child, because he is a child, can do what it would be very silly, perhaps even sinful, for his grown-up father and mother to do. We can all understand that. And let us not forget that there are child christians, young souls, and their patient loving Lord wants them to enjoy themselves in a right way. Picnics used to be more to me than they are now. Dancing always seems to me a very stupid sort of pleasure. And there are lots of so-called pleasures that I can see no pleasure in, and that I could not go in for and enjoy without being hurt by them. But I am not going to condemn you where I would condemn myself. Still, let us not overlook the fact, that here stretches an enchanted land where many a young promising soul is lost utterly. If we find that our pleasures are hurting our christian usefulness, marring our joy, giving us a distaste for the pleasures of the Kingdom, dulling our zeal for Christ's happy holy service, unfitting us for the real work of the christian life; then it is ours to call a halt, and sternly give up what we find is not good for us.

Neglect again, not in use, is about the worst kind of abuse for the tools of the Kingdom. You cannot use your scythe worse than hang it on the fence, and let it hang there and rust itself away. That will ruin it as fast as slashing its edge against stones, and faster. It is a good deal better for a tool, a great deal more honorable for it, to wear out than rust out.

Now, so many among us are suffering spiritually because they are not at work. They hear, but they do not. They have hands, but they handle not. They take hold of no church work, no christian enterprise, and help it along. They have the ability to do so much if they would, but there they are, idling away their years, missing the great opportunities of good-doing, letting go from them the glory of service and the blessedness of its reward. What they might be and do, were

they up and doing, but sitting there or lounging yonder, they will never be nor do anything.

What made Peter? What lifted him out of the obscurity he was in, and throned him among the princes of the kingdom? Christian service. If, humanly speaking, he had let his splendid abilities, his enthusiasm, his rugged natural eloquence, waste themselves yonder by the Galilean lake as he might have done; if they had remained undeveloped, like undug ore, what a calamity for himself, and the church, and the ages. And there are here those who are fitted to be so useful, men and women capable of immense energy and enthusiasm, if we only knew how to harness them to the church's work, and enlist them in the Lord's service. At a gathering for pleasure, at the working out of some purely world-scheme, in a political campaign, they are a whole team. They are worth ten ordinary men perhaps; they are heroes. But when it comes to work for the church, zeal in the Lord's service, they are nowhere, they take a back seat, and all they might be is lost. They are undug ore, undeveloped wealth, immense possibilities for good lying idle. Oh! why rust there, ye wise heads and great hearts, when you are needed in the Lord's service? Come and help us with your push and pluck, your tact and energy. We are suffering for want of you, and you are suffering for want of us. It will make us to have you with us in the work, and it will make you to be with us.

Thirdly, how to whet blunt tools, how to utilize the church's latent force.

Have you ever tried, my hearer, to mow with a blunt scythe, to cut with a dull axe, to saw with a saw that was not sharp? Mowing is hard work anyway, but a blunt scythe makes it still harder. So with chopping and sawing. How true as the old preacher puts it: "If the iron be blunt, and one do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength."

Now, I think you will agree with me, that too much of the church's work is done with blunt tools, and that therefore the

work is very much harder to do than there is any need for. What pushing and pulling everywhere in the church to raise the necessary funds to run the missions of the church, and to support her. What efforts to keep the people up to the mark of giving as they ought to give? How hard it is to keep the prayer meeting and the Sunday School going efficiently? Now, it ought not to be hard, if the church, and her office-bearers, and the christian workers, and the membership generally, were what they should be. But they are not what they should be, and so it is hard. As a church and christian workers we have not the edge on us we need to have to do the work it is ours to do to the best advantage. We are the blunt iron, and so we have to put to the more strength, and the work is harder than it need be to the worker, and the work is neither well done, nor indeed done at all.

What we need is whetting, and the whetting we need most is the outpouring of the Divine Spirit. Our Lord told his followers, as he ascended from them, to tarry at Jerusalem, not idly indeed, not indifferently and carelessly, but on their knees, in an earnest expectant prayerful attitude, for the Father's promise. And that is the way for us to seek to be fitted for our work. If the Spirit would be poured out upon us as on the day of Pentecost, how easy it would be for us as a people to give sufficiently to support the church, and to pay off our debt as well. And how easy then to preach, and hear, and work, for Jesus, and what glad and grand results.

The ten days of whetting, prayerful waiting, were not in vain. Then they could work, preach, pray, give, as they never could have done without the whetting. How sharp now Peter's words. They cut like a two-edged sword right into the quick of men's souls. Men were convicted of sin, led to earnest enquiry, bowed down at the footstool of the Divine Mercy, and saved.

And the latent energies of the church were developed. New men, with great souls in them, and these great souls Spirit-

filled, came to the front, and the gospel grew apace. It broke out and spread abroad on every side, and where there used to be one wearily and all alone toiling, so soon there were scores, hundreds, of willing earnest energetic workers mightily doing.

Ah! my people, we want something like that here. We want to have the promise the Lord gave his disciples fulfilled to us, the Spirit poured out upon us as a people. And we can have it. Let us do as they did. Let the praying ones, the workers, come together, and consult about things, talk matters over with one another, and pray and wait together around the mercy-seat, and we will not need to tarry long, I feel sure, till we see what the Lord can do for us, how he can bless us, waken up the latent energies of this church, and glorify himself in us. And we are going to begin to-night.

Revive Thy work, O Lord !
Give power unto Thy Word ;
Grant that Thy blessed gospel may
In living faith be heard.

Revive Thy work, O Lord !
Give Pentecostal showers :
The glory shall be all Thy own,
The blessing, Lord, be ours.

Preaching Christ Crucified.

‘ We preach Christ crucified.’—I Cor. i. 23.

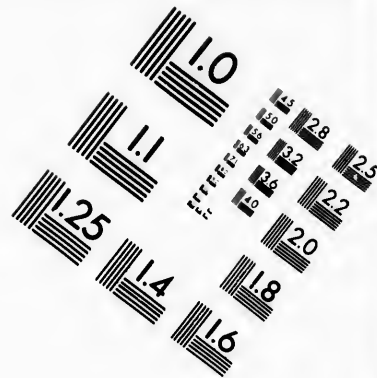
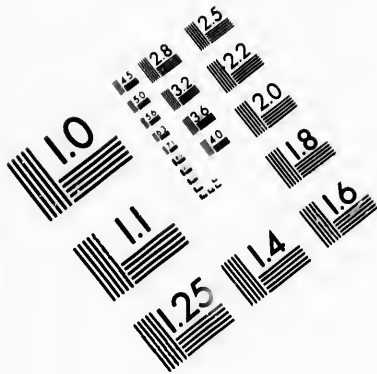
A MIGHTY conqueror of other days, narrating to his friend how he subdued Asia Minor, laconically said: “I came, I saw, I conquered.” It was of course an idle boast. Had it not been for Rome’s legions at his back, the mighty Caesar’s coming and look would not have been so formidable.

A century later or so, another conquering hero comes into Asia Minor. He too is a Roman, but he has none of Rome’s legions at his back. He has neither the Caesar name nor the Caesar look, either of which conquers ere a blow is struck. And yet, wherever he comes he conquers. Asia Minor yields to him. He crosses over into Europe, and city after city—Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, yea Rome itself even, submit to him. That mighty conqueror is Paul. Ask him how he has achieved such victories, and he will meekly say, “We preach Christ crucified.”

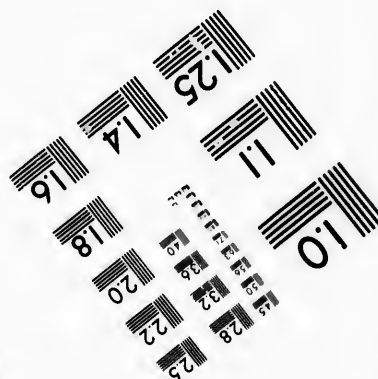
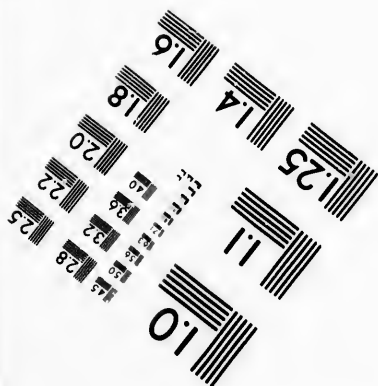
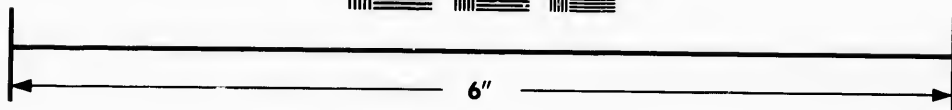
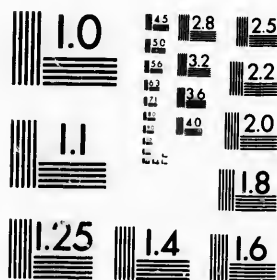
Now, learn here the kind of preacher and preaching needed to-day to win the world for Jesus. We want, in our pulpits, men like Paul, who will preach Christ crucified.

First, preachers must themselves know, in their own spiritual experience, the preciousness and power of this great central





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truth, Christ crucified, for unless they know the truth they preach, how can they preach it?

Paul was this kind of preacher, eminently so. He had crucified Christ, and the crucified Christ had crucified him, crucified his world-principles and carnal nature, and therefore he could preach Christ crucified as one who knew what he was preaching.

There are two ways of knowing a thing. You may know a thing theoretically, speculatively. You may have read about it; you may have heard of it; you may have been taught it as one of the branches of knowledge and you may have grasped it intellectually, and thus have a pretty full and clear and accurate understanding of what it is, and its relations to other subjects and bearing on practical questions.

It is thus we know the facts of history. We cannot go back to the beginning of things, and bask with Adam in the unclouded sunshine of Eden, nor can we share with him the accursed apple. We cannot embark with Noah in his great ark-ship, nor can we drown with the antedeluvians. We cannot act a part with Æneas in the fall of old Troy, nor fight with Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans at the pass of Thermopylæ. We cannot take sides with Luther in his struggles with the papacy, nor help the liberators of Italy to free her from the despotism of a pope-king. All we can know about the past and its great events is from the records of history, and such a knowledge is necessarily shadowy, uncertain, unreal. It is like a dream of the night, or the fire-light shadows that dance weirdly on the parlor-walls ere the lights are lit in the evening. I do not despise such knowledge. It has its place and uses, and of necessity the most of our knowledge is of this character.

But there is a better knowledge, the practical, the knowledge we have by doing, suffering, sacrificing, experiencing. To know a battle from a brief telegram, or a brilliant newspaper article, is one thing; and to know it as the soldier knows it who has

been in and through it, who has marched and charged and fought and fallen, is another and very different thing.

Now, it seems to me that there is too little of that knowledge in the pulpits of to-day. Too many of us preachers are mere theorists. Our knowledge of the great truth, Christ crucified, is speculative, not practical, or if practical, we do not know how to preach it practically. We have been through college, and have studied elocution and theology. We know how to get up a sermon, and speak it off to good advantage. We know the history of the doctrines, and their relations to one another. We are supposed to be able to tell you all about regeneration, justification by faith, sanctification, and so on, and we can preach earnestly and eloquently about the cross.

And that is all right in its way. I believe in a college training. Such training is all but essential to the modern preacher. It is an immense advantage to have studied theology and to be up in the philosophy of religious thought and life. But when a man goes into the pulpit to speak to men and women who have the battles of life to fight, the temptations of the devil to withstand, the reproach of the world to bear, and the eternal wants of their souls to look after, he needs to be intensely practical, if he would do them good.

When I go aboard the cars, I may be told that a master of civil engineering is the driver, one who has gone through college and graduated with all the honors, and I may be expected to feel all the safer on that account. But perhaps I would not. I would be likely to ask with some concern whether he had ever driven a locomotive before, and if I was told he had not, I would not care to trust myself aboard that train. I would not trust my bones to the whole faculty of an engineering college. We want men of practical experience to drive our locomotives for us.

And if we want practical and experienced men anywhere, we want them in our pulpits. We want men to guide us in the way of salvation who have been over that way themselves,

and who know therefore all the dangers and difficulties in the way. We want men to preach to us Christ crucified who have been to the cross, who have seen the tears and blood and woe of the dying Jesus, who have caught some of the noble Spirit that animated him in thus laying down his life, and who have had their hearts filled to overflowing with his great deep divine love. Oh that every pulpit in the land had a living christian worker in it, one who goes down into the world's dusty arena, and, sword in hand, grapples with men's foes, and shows them and helps them, as well as tells them, how to overcome! With what a strange thrilling eloquence a man can preach, who has been bearing men's burdens, fighting their battles, and living out in hard earnest life-experiences the great doctrines he preaches. Such was Paul as a preacher, and that was one element in his power. And such should be the preachers of to-day. The world needs them.

Again: The world needs preachers who are heart and soul into the work of preaching Christ crucified.

Paul was a man of one idea, and that one idea was to live and preach Christ crucified. He was an enthusiast, so much so that men said he was mad. That great light from Heaven that flashed upon him on the road to Damascus, they said, must have turned his head. And indeed it did turn his head, and his heart too. Up to that time he had been a mad persecutor, and with many that was all right. From that time, however, he was a mad preacher, a preacher whose soul was on fire, a preacher so given up to the preaching of Christ crucified that many thought he ought to be put under some sort of restraint.

Oh the inconsistency of public opinion! What the people say, what the people say—how little there is in it! You can be a mad politician, and let all the little commonsense you ever had get away from you at election times, and people generally will think it about as it should be. You may be given up to the making of money, so given up to it that you are near-hand beside yourself about it, and you will be thought a wise business-

man. You may have some pet scheme of your own that may be of no more practical utility to the world than the man in the moon, and you may be forever parading it before the public, and it will scarcely elicit a single remark. But get somewhat excited about the salvation of your own soul and that of others, and talk to men about Jesus and his love and claims, and they will gravely shake their wise heads and doubt your sanity. They will call you a fanatic, a wild enthusiast, a mad-man. Oh that the world was full of such madness ! It would be better for it. And if men realized as they ought to how much was at stake ; if they could see that destinies were made or marred by the way they are acting just now ; if they knew what the soul was worth and what a tremendous loss to a man's self and to the whole universe of God is the loss of a single soul ; and if they could understand what an awful struggle is going on in the world of spirits with respect to us, Michael and his angels contending with the devil and his angels ;—oh, I tell you, there would be such excitement, enthusiasm, madness, fanaticism, and there would be nothing out of the way in it either !

If your house was on fire, your property being destroyed, your dear little children in danger, would you not rush round like a madman, and make yourself heard ? Yes, there would be some weeping done, some loud shouting, some shoving people round. Your cool calculating heads would be on fire as well as your house, and none but the veriest fools would blame you for your excitement.

Well now, men's souls are on fire. A devil-incendiary has kindled up an unquenchable fire in them, and as you sit there in careless ease they are being burned up. By and by the smoke of men's torments will be seen ascending up forever and forever. That is an awful truth. I know you do not believe it. You would not be sitting there so calm and composed, if you believed it. But it is true, and there are those who do believe it, and are greatly excited about it. Paul was one of them. He could not hold his tongue and take things easy.

How could he stand by with closed lips and folded arms and see poor souls going down to destruction, without doing all in his power to save them! Others may do it, but he could not do it. He rushed about from place to place, and with a face lit up with heavenly earnestness, and a soul on fire with holy enthusiasm, he told men their danger, and shewed them how to make good their escape, and they believed him and fled to Jesus. Oh, how is it, that our pulpits, and our pews too, are not ablaze with an earnestness hot enough to set the world on fire?

Now, what we want in every pulpit is a man imbued with the spirit of Paul, a man wholly given up to the earnest preaching of Christ crucified. Paul would not, could not, do anything else but preach. He durst not do anything else. He told the christians of Corinth that it would be all that his soul was worth to stop preaching. I quote his own words, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" There are ministers who feel they can preach or let it alone. They can turn to farming, or teaching, or store-keeping, or politics, or anything else that pays better.

Well, all I have to say, it would be better for the church, if they would let it alone. Better be anything else than a preacher whose heart is not in the work, whose soul is not burdened with the world's vast necessities. Such a preacher is a great stumbling-block in the way of any good being done, and better for a man to be at the bottom of the sea with a millstone around his neck, than be a stumbling-block. There is nothing in the world more despicable than the preacher, to whom the whole work of the ministry is a mere bread and butter question. What good can his preaching do? What power can he have over the masses? Away with him! But oh the grandeur, the dignity, the power, the world-good, of a man who is called of God, and preaches Christ crucified with his soul on fire, and who lives for that one object!

Earnest one-ideaed men are always men of might. They

make their influence felt, and leave their impress on the ages. Put them anywhere, and they will do something. But in the pulpit, with Christ crucified as the one idea, and with all that is glorious in Heaven and good on earth to back them up in their noble endeavors, they can do wonders. They can make the powers of darkness tremble, and bring people and nations into sweet subjection to King Jesus, and bless the world. Paul did that in his day. Others are doing it to-day. But why not many? Why not all? Let all wake up; let the pulpit wake up, and let the pew wake up, and realizing what it is to preach Christ crucified and hear Christ crucified, let us be in earnest, and how soon the world would be on its knees at the feet of Jesus. I have no hesitation in saying here, that it is our want of earnestness—yours and mine—that the church to-day has so little power in the world. With this grand one idea, Christ crucified, possessing our souls, burning in our hearts, we ought to be a power. Every pulpit should be a power. Every church should be a power. Nothing should be able to stand before us.

Again: We want men in our pulpits and people in our pews who have faith in the preaching of Christ crucified as that alone which is needed to bring the world back to God.

Paul preached nothing else. He preached Christ crucified in gay dissolute Corinth. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." When he went to the wilds of Asia Minor, that is what he preached, and when he went to the culture of Greece and the might of Rome, it was still Christ crucified. He preached it out by the river-side, in the jail of Philippi, and in the splendid synagogues of the great cities. He preached it to the barbarians of Melita, and he preached it to the philosophers of Athens. He preached it to the lowly poor, and to the world's great and mighty, to sinners and saints. And his preaching was the grandest success. He could point to triumphs more glorious than Cæsar's, bloodless triumphs.

They

And Christ crucified—that is what the world wants to-day. Tell us the story of God's love. Tell us that Christ died for sinners—died to redeem them. Tell us that the blood of Jesus can wash away our sins, and bring us back to God, and lift up our fallen state. Tell us the old story so simply, so tenderly, so earnestly, for our souls want to hear it. Tell us the same old story over and over again; for we can never tire of hearing it, so sweet is it, so helping, so comforting. It suits every mood ; it fits in everywhere ; it is just what we want.

After all there is nothing so popular, so powerful, as the simple earnest truth, the preaching of Christ crucified. It is stirring men's hearts to-day, and winning their ears, as nothing else can. It goes down to the depths of men's sins and sorrows, and putting its arms around them, tells them of hope and help for them. Oh as a church, as preacher and people, let it always be Christ crucified here ! That is what has done so much for us in the past, and that is what is to do for us all that is to be done and needs to be done.

Christ crucified—that is the great attraction above, the wonder and glory of Heaven. It is more of an attraction there than here, for there they have an appreciation of what the Christ has done and suffered as we have not here. The Apocalyptic John saw clear up into Heaven, and he tells us what he saw. He saw a lamb on the throne, a lamb too as if it had been slain. That lamb was the once crucified Christ, and in his glorious person were the marks of the crucifixion—not disfigurements, not blemishes, but honor-scars. To him it was a glorious sight, one of great interest. And as he continued looking, he saw the glorious ones who dwell in that bright world taking off their crowns and casting them down at his feet as one worthy to reign. If, then, Christ crucified is so great an attraction there, what an attraction he should be to us here.

O men and women, I know your souls are burdened with sin and sorrow. Your eyes are often filled with tears, your hearts

often sore with sadness and woe. You are trying to live right perhaps. You are trying to do your part well in the great battle that is being fought out through the years, and you want to be crowned with the glory to come. You do not want to be a failure at last. You want to stand in your place in the latter day, if not with David and Daniel, Peter and Paul, Luther and John Knox, at least among the lesser lights. In your better moods, when the great deeps within are stirred, your whole being cries out for something—you hardly know what perhaps, to give you peace, to lift up the fallen in you, to satisfy your heart-hungerings, and to help you up to what you feel you ought to be. It is true indeed, when you get away back again to the world and plunge into its excesses, you feel as if you do not care what you are, or what becomes of you. But that is mere bravado. You do not mean it. You put it on, and make yourself and others think how happy you are, when you are not happy at all, when deep down in your soul you are as wretched as you can be. Oh the anguish gnawing with its cruel fangs at your heart, and making you groan out in unutterable bitterness: "Oh my God, what shall I do? what shall I do?"

Well now, I will tell you what to do. Come to Jesus. Christ crucified is what you want. He will pardon, cleanse. He will fill your heart with the peace of God. He will turn your sorrow into joy, and make your sighing singing. Oh then, come to him! When the way of life is hard, when troubles and temptations muster against you, and when all is dark dark, and growing darker darker, then will flash up for you the Great Light, and send forward across the waste its cheering beams to meet you, and then you will be able to press on and on. Oh, if there is anything in the world that we can put faith in, it is the cross, Christ crucified.

The Cross! it takes our guilt away;
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,
And sweetens every bitter cup.

Vessels of Honor and Dishonor.

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use and prepared unto every good work.”—II TIM. II. 20, 21.

PAUL’S Second Epistle to Timothy is of special interest, because it is the last he wrote. He was at the time a prisoner at Rome, and Timothy was pastor of the christian church at Ephesus. He writes to him with regard to his work as a pastor, telling him what sort of a pastor he ought to be. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

He cautions him as a young man, putting him on his guard against dangerous teachers, men not sound in the faith, men who are given to babbling strange doctrines and novel and mischievous theories and opinions, and so deceiving and destroying both themselves and those who let themselves be influenced by them. He instances two men of the day, Hymenæus and Philetus, who had got astray on the doctrine of the

resurrection, holding and teaching that it was past already. Their influence was most harmful, and it looked as if the church was going to be wrecked. But Paul shewed that there was no danger of that. It was on a sure foundation. The Lord knew His own people, and would take care of them ; but they must watch against the inroads of evil, and depart from iniquity.

And then he is led to make use of the beautiful and suggestive illustration of the text, we might call it the parable of the vessels, showing how we are all different sorts of vessels, and how, according to the use we let ourselves be put to, we may be vessels of honor or dishonor. "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth ; and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work."

First: The great House and its Different vessels. "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth."

The great house referred to here may have been the temple at Jerusalem with its furniture, its vessels of gold and silver, and of wood and earth. The Apostle was well acquainted with the temple and all its vessels of many different kinds, and purposes, and qualities. Or, as he was at Rome at the time, he may have had before his mind's eye, the palace of the Cæsars, or Nero's Golden House.

And we may understand him as referring to the church, or perhaps to the great Roman Empire, or indeed to both church and state. I like to think of the world, with its states and churches, its cities and temples and palaces, its kings and priests and peoples, as the great house with its many different kinds of vessels. Those high in authority in church and state, kings with crowns of gold on their heads, bishops with their loud assumptions, golden-mouthed orators and silver-tongued

preachers, and so on, may be regarded as the vessels of gold and silver. Then ordinary people, in their many different positions of service and usefulness, are the vessels of wood and of earth.

Gold and silver cups have a place and purpose. They are made and kept to be brought out only on great occasions and exhibited and used, and every one admires and praises them for what they are, and the showy appearance they present. They are handled with very special care, and watched with a jealous eye, lest they may be stolen or injured, and soon they are put away, not to be seen again until another very special occasion.

And it is well to be, and have, men in authority. They cannot be dispensed with. They have their purpose. We admire them as they sit high up on their seats of honor and power and wealth, a gold crown on their head, a regal sceptre in their hand, and everything so fine and grand about them. They are very precious in their way, and it is only now and again, on splendid state occasions, they let themselves be seen, and then they withdraw within their strong palace walls.

Beautiful and costly as gold and silver vessels are, however, ordinary delf, plain wooden and earthen ware, are by far the most useful; and, although usefulness is wanting in attractiveness, it is more to the world than beauty and brilliance. Who would not rather be a tin-cup, or an earthen mug, with its unpretentious commonplaceness, out of which the hard-working poor man drinks a healthful draught from the bubbling spring, and his happy child sups its breakfast of bread and milk, than be a gold or silver goblet glittering uselessly, or very nearly so, in the rich man's cabinet of jewels? Some of you might say, I grant: "If I had my choice, I would be the gold cup. But then alas! I have not much of a choice in the matter, and so I am but a little bit of a tea-cup, that, for some purpose or other, find myself at use about every hour in the day, now ministering healing and comfort to fevered lips, now refresh-

ing the weary and hungry, now gossiping with simple garrulous neighbors, now cheering and solacing the aged and infirm ; or, I happen to be only a plain every-day kettle, sitting patiently in heat and smoke, and singing my simple roundelay at the poor man's fireside ; or, I am only an uninteresting wash-tub perhaps, where, with bare arms, and earnest effort and purpose, the humble washer-woman toils for bread for her fatherless children." And yet, if there is any truth in the homely adage, that, " Handsome is that handsome does," and if usefulness is more to the world than glitter ; then, let not the vessels of wood and earth and iron despise themselves, for they are more to the Lord, because more to the world, than the vessels of gold and silver. But indeed, there is no room for jealousy. The gold and silver vessels are needed, and the wooden and earthen are still more needed ; and so, what the former lack in general world-usefulness, is made up to them in some measure in brilliance, and what the latter lack in brilliance, is made up to them, and more than made up to them, in general usefulness, and therefore both stand on about an equal footing, and neither can boast over the other.

Let us, my hearer, be glad, that at least we can be a vessel of some sort in the palace of the King. We may not presume to be a gold goblet to be carried to his lips, or even a silver cup to be on his table. But we may be a plain earthen cup for his servants and people to sup out of and serve with, and so, in being of use to them, we are of use to him, and he will not forget us when the rewards come to be distributed. Even the wash-tub and scrubbing-brush, the broom and dust-pan, out in the scullery, unpretentious as they are in appearance and purpose, may do as much, in their own simple way, for the palace, and the King's comfort and glory—may indeed make themselves quite as necessary and useful, as the vessels of gold and silver near his sacred person. We can all understand that, and so the wooden and earthen vessels have a place in the King's service ; and, in so far as they serve him, they are worthy of honor, and will receive honor at his hands.

Again: Vessels of Dishonor. "And some to dishonor."

It has been too much the idea in the world, that to be a gold or silver vessel is to be a vessel of honor, and, on the other hand, to be a wooden and earthen vessel is to be a vessel of dishonor. In other words, natural endowments, talents, circumstances, positions, birthrights and the like, make us apart from the life we live, and the use we put ourselves to.

But that is not the case. There is something, I grant, in the stuff we are made of, in our birthright, and so forth. Clay can never be equal to gold, nor can wood be ever put alongside of silver in value. You and I may have high ideas of ourselves, our worth, the superiority of the material out of which we have been created, our genius and ability and so on. We may lift our heads above others, and ape the great of the earth. But it is not for common clay to assume to be gold, nor is it for the wood we are to aspire to be silver. We would make but indifferent kings, the most of us, and cut a sorry figure indeed on a throne and in a palace. Where we are, and as we are, we can be something, yea we can come to be much, if not vessels of gold and silver, at least as good as gold, as bright as silver. We may be wanting in brilliance, but we may not be wanting in usefulness, and our usefulness may be as much to the King as another's brilliance and glory.

Let us not say then, that because we are not a king on a throne, or a minister in a pulpit, or an orator on a public platform, we are not a vessel of gold and glory; let us not say, that because we are only plain, unimportant, uninteresting, uninfluential sort of people, vessels of wood and earth, it is no use for us to try to be anything, and we cannot but be vessels of dishonor. A lowly position is not necessarily a position of dishonor, any more than a high position is one of honor. To serve well anywhere is honorable; to serve ill anywhere is dishonorable, especially on a throne, or behind the sacred desk, or in the place of influence and power.

What I want to teach here is this, that you and I, my hear-

er, are a wondrous vessel for the King of Heaven's service, and yet we may be a vessel of dishonor to him, a vessel that he can only use, or let be used, for an unworthy world-purpose. This body and soul of ours, is a curious piece of Divine handiwork, and of most marvellous design. Look at yourself, study yourself, and that your Maker intends you for a high and holy purpose must be clear to you. It is only by a cruel distortion of our being that we can turn out to be so bad ; but it is done, and so easily done too.

The chalk-artist, the other night, in the City Hall, showed us how that, by a few simple and seemingly careless chalk-touches on canvas, so much of promise could be quickly blighted, demoralized, demonized. And so with real life. Let me tell you how.

And an empty vessel, a vessel not in use, is one of dishonor. You know, my hearer, as well as I can tell you, how soon even a pure gold and silver vessel grows dim, loses all its brilliance, and fills up with dust, when it is allowed to stand empty, unused, idle.

Now so with this wondrous manhood and womanhood of ours. Let them be idle, unused ; let your brilliant talents, your splendid natural endowments, your noble powers, lie dormant ; let your manhood hang about the street-corners, and your womanhood dawdle up and down the gay promenades, and you will go to the bad fast enough and far enough. The Lord wants to have nothing to do with the idle vessel, even though it is made of gold. Such a vessel is one of dishonor.

Then we may be vessels of dishonor by letting ourselves get into bad company. Put even a gold and silver vessel among worthless crockery and the riff-raff of a lumber-room, and its worth is lost sight of, unknown, and it may come to be put to a use in rude hands utterly foreign to its purpose. A gold sovereign carried in a man's pocket among cents, and scraps of tobacco, and such other things as gather there, after awhile may lose its identity, and go for a cent, and rather a doubtful one at that.

My father has for many years kept the cent collections of the Harvey Church, not a very responsible position, and he finds it necessary to be very careful when he comes to count them, for the most disreputable coins find their way into the collection plates. One day he found what looked like a cent, but he was not sure of it, so begrimed and disgraced did it look. So he examined it with more than ordinary care, rubbing and cleaning it to find out its real character, and to his surprise and the church's advantage, it proved to be a five-dollar gold piece. The simple truth was, that gold coin had got into bad company; it had fraternized so long with cents and cheap rubbish, that it had lost its character and worth, and so had been going about for years perhaps as only a very hard-looking cent.

Now, so with men and women, the vessels of the Lord's own making. Once perhaps they were in the best society, high in church and state, educated and refined and noble; but they got down, step by step, and now they are the rubbish of the streets. I am told, that in Boston and New York and San Francisco, you will find doing the most menial work—street-scavengers, stable-men, and so on—some who were once professors, judges, members of parliament, doctors of divinity, men of genius and power. Drunk and lust dragged them down, and now they herd and root with the hogs and dogs of society.

You open your mouth, my hearer, and you let go down your throat the poison of asps, and so let yourself become venomous. You cannot walk upright; you creep, you wriggle along, you are filthy. You think your mouth is your own, and you see nothing wrong in letting into it the wine of inebriation. But I want to ask you, if you would like to see the vessels of the sanctuary, the beautiful silver communion-service, used for unhallowed drinking purposes.

You have often read and heard the thrilling story of how a wicked king of Babylon, the dissolute Belshazzar, at a drunken banquet, dared send for the sacred vessels of the temple at

Jerusalem, and attempted to use them for vile drinking purposes. It was a daring thing to do, awful sacrilege on his part, and we do not wonder that his madness was rebuked, and that he died.

But here is a vessel, this wondrous manhood of yours, a vessel more curious in design, and more sacred in its purpose, than the cup that holds the wine of the sanctuary, and you carry it down the street to some disreputable drinking-den, or to some great public banquet, and you fill it with beastly intoxication. Now I ask, Is there no sacrilege in that? Are you not making the vessel of the Lord's House a vessel of dishonor?

You may say, "I am not a vessel of the sanctuary; I am not a member of the church; the Lord has nothing to say to me."

Ah! who made you what you are? Who gave you your mouth? Who has done all that has been done for you? I tell you solemnly, my hearer, it is an awful distortion of your manhood to pervert it into a sort of demijohn; it is a sacrilege of the worst sort, and the wonder is that Heaven does not write and strike. And Heaven does write and strike. After a while appears the handwriting on the wall in the shape of degradation, the tyranny of drink, the serpent-bite of inebriation. "And some to dishonor."

But the special way the apostle speaks here of how we may come to be vessels of dishonor, is not so much by what we eat and drink, as by what we hear and believe. We let teachers of unsound doctrine, men who have theories of their own on this or that vital point, who deny perhaps that there is to be any resurrection, who question the divinity of our Lord, who do not see any necessity for the atonement, who are unsound on justification and sanctification, who hold infidel views on everything almost that the Bible teaches, poison our minds, and by specious arguments turn us away from the truth and right-living.

“What matter,” it is sometimes said, “what men hold to in the shape of a belief, so long as they live right?” But that is just it. Error in doctrine leads to loose-living and evil-doing. When, for instance, the serpent got Eve to believe that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was as good as it looked, and that she would not die if she touched and ate it, so soon we find her eating it herself, and persuading her husband to eat it with her. Deny the inspiration of the Bible, and then who cares what it says? Noah was afraid of the coming deluge, and so built the ark; let a man get to believe there is no Hell, and so soon his interest in church-building, and the preaching of the gospel, and missionary effort, cools off. If the heathen are to be saved anyhow, if drunkards and libertines and the creatures who wallow in the slums of the great cities are at last to come to glory, why worry about them, and do so much for them? And if there is to be no Hell, it does not matter much if we are not quite straight in a bargain, if we take the advantage when we have the chance, if we do not live the spotless life, if we make ourselves easy with regard to our duties and responsibilities. Oh it does matter very much what sort of doctrine we hold! Just as a gold cup may hold healing medicine for the sick, food for the hungry, cool clear water for the thirsty, the oil and wine of consecration for sacred uses, and so be a vessel of honor; or it may hold poison, the wine of inebriation, and thus be a vessel of dishonor; so you and I, according to the views of truth we hold, the doctrines we believe, are vessels of honor or dishonor, and are for good or evil service in the church and world.

Take heed, then, what sort of doctrines you hear, what sort of views and opinions you let yourselves embrace. As you believe, so will you live; as you think, so will you do. So soon the man who lets himself imbibe error is in the devil's service, tempting others, poisoning virtue, persecuting piety, scoffing at religion. The sheep of Christ's fold need dogs to bark and bite them up to their duty; and I suppose we ought to be

thankful for carping critics, and slanderous tongues, and the sharp teeth of those who would destroy the Bible, and the church, and the old faith. But I, for one, do not want to be the devil's dog; I, for one, do not want to be his slop-dish; I, for one, do not want to be the street-scavenger even of the New Jerusalem. "And some to dishonor."

Again: Vessels of honor: "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

The gold and silver out of which the vessels of the Lord's House are made, are found, not in a pure state, but embedded in rock, mixed up perhaps with deleterious earths and foreign substances; and it is quite a work to quarry them, and purify them, and then convert them into vessels of honor.

Now, so with the christian. The Lord finds him, as men find gold and silver, in a comparatively worthless state, mixed up with the world, the slave of sin, believing a lie, tossed about with winds of doctrine and waves of opinion, ready to be lost, and he saves and honors him.

You see Peter yonder, unquarried, a gem in the rough, gold in its native state, throwing away his splendid abilities, and the grand possibilities of his life, catching a few fish. You see Paul again, when he was Saul, a wolf ravaging the Lord's fold, tearing and devouring without mercy. You see Mary Magdalene, devil-possessed, foul and fallen, abandoned to every evil. And to-day you see men and women, who are clever in their way, strong, earnest, and so much else, but it is in the way of evil, in the world's service.

But there is hope for them. The Lord's glory flashes as of old; his presence and power are still felt; his word speaks and his spirit works; and the Peters, and Pauls, and Mary Magdalenes, are won over to be vessels of honor. What marvellous transformations, glorious transmutations! The golden cups that once held only the wine of inebriation, and so often entrapped the weak and inexperienced and unwary as

they were pressed to their lips, are turned over to be for the Lord's sacred use, and are now filled with the water of life, the wine of the gospel, the comforts and joys of salvation.

Many centuries ago a lad was stolen away from his home and sold as a captive in another land. How he bewailed his sad fate! But at last the truth of the gospel came to the humble herd-boy, and he became a christian. Then came the day when he was called to preach the cross to the people among whom he had been a slave. He was but a rude earthen vessel, utterly wanting of the polish of scholarship, but he was filled with the spirit, and men heard his message, and yielded themselves to the truth, and many churches were planted, and many thousands were saved. That captive lad became the great St. Patrick, the patron Saint of Ireland.

The purging process by which a man comes to be a vessel for the Lord's service, is often a long and tedious and sore one, costing many tears, and hard experiences, and perhaps bitter and repeated failures. Still, the harder the process, the more the success and the grander the honor.

The Lord does not take every sort of vessel. We have here what a vessel in his service, and especially one of honor, is to be.

And the very first thing that is required in such a vessel, is that it be clean, purged. It is not asked if it is gold, silver, wood, earth; but it is made an essential prerequisite, that the vessel, whether gold or silver, wood or earth, be clean, be well washed out. "If a man therefore purge himself from these."

The vessels of the sanctuary, the preacher, the christian worker, who would be useful, who would be a success, must be washed from sin in the blood of Christ. He must have a clean heart. He must be clean in his habits. He must be clean in his beliefs and opinions. He must live the clean life. No smut about him. No stain upon his character. You do not want to drink out of a cup that is not clean. Nor do you want the gospel from a man of unclean lips, and habits, and life.

Then the vessel of honor must be sanctified, set apart for a sacred use, consecrated, Spirit-filled. Peter was not only washed from his sins ; he was set apart for the service of God, called to it, consecrated, Spirit-filled. So with Paul. So with every one who would be a power, a vessel of honor. The reason why the truth, as we preach it, the gospel, as we proclaim it, does not bring men to their knees more than it does, is because we are not consecrated from on high, endowed with spiritual power, baptized with spiritual out-pouring and unction.

Then the vessel of honor is one that is meet for the Master's use. The Master despises not the clay at his feet when he has blind eyes to open. But then he works it over in his hands, and mixes it with his spittle while he does so, ere he applies it. Let us not think that we are all ready for the work. We need meetness for the use he would put us to. Let us be willing to be taught, to be put through the fire perhaps, to be hammered into obedience, to be slowly polished into beauty, to be wrought over and over, till we are just right for the service it is ours to serve, and prepared for every good work—mixed with something of himself.

Thus you see, my hearer, that if we would be vessels of honor, we must not be satisfied with an easy-going superficial spiritual life. We must aim high. We must set before ourselves an ideal worthy of us, no less an ideal indeed than the perfect Master himself. "Be perfect."

Much Rubbish.

"And there is much rubbish."—NEHEM. IV. 10.

I HAVE a high admiration for Nehemiah. I like him for his simple ways, his ingenuousness, truthfulness, patriotism. He makes no pretensions, affects neither greatness nor goodness. Everywhere and always he is himself, brave, true, earnest; open as the day, honest as the light, straight to the point. And then he has a mind of his own, keeps his own secrets, takes his own advice, forms his own opinions, sees things for himself, acts on his own responsibility. You find nothing weak and small about him, and never anything unworthy. He is above trifling, never forgets that he has a great mission on hand, and shrinks from neither duty nor difficulty. Such is Nehemiah as he appears to me, and taking him for all he is worth he is indeed a splendid man, one of ten-thousand.

His history is involved in obscurity. We cannot be sure even of the tribe he belongs to. We find him holding the honorable and responsible office of cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the then monarch of the mighty Persian Empire. As cupbearer it was his duty to taste the wine, and then hand it to the monarch to drink. The office was one of trust and responsibility, and it speaks well for Nehemiah, that though a foreigner, he was honored with a place so near the king's august person. But

even amid the luxury and honor of the Persian palace the good Nehemiah sighed for the land of his fathers, and he was grieved to learn of the sad state matters were in at Jerusalem. The news so preyed upon his mind that his health was impaired, and he could not hide his trouble from the king. One day the king startled him by asking how it was he was so sad. Nehemiah then told the king all about it, and so was given leave of absence with a view to visit Jerusalem and put matters to rights there.

Arriving at Jerusalem in due time he rested for three days. Then one night, when all the city was asleep, he mounted his ass, and attended only by a servant or two, he visited the ruins, examined for himself the breaches in the walls, formed his own opinions as to the state of matters, and returned to his lodgings. Then he set to work, but the work was great, for there was much rubbish. Still, he kept at it with a brave heart, triumphing over every difficulty, thwarting the malice and machinations of his unscrupulous enemies, and he succeeded.

Now, my hearers, it seems to me we may learn some useful lessons, in living our lives, in doing our work, from the much rubbish that Nehemiah found in connection with his work of repairing the walls of Jerusalem.

And first, I remark, that much rubbish may imply that much good work is going on and being done, and if so, much rubbish is not such a bad thing; it is rather a good sign.

For instance, go into a busy shop, say a carpenter-shop, and you will find it full to the doors of rubbish in the shape of chips, shavings, chisellings, saw-dust, deal-ends, lumber, and work in all stages of progress. You can hardly get through the rubbish, there is so much of it. There seems to be more rubbish than anything else. And then what a confusion of noises—the saw sawing, the chisel chiselling, the augur boring, the axe hewing, the hammer nailing, and the multitudinous din of machinery, all clamoring and clattering together with their harsh tongues: "Rubbish! rubbish!" It may indeed

smut your good clothes to go into such a shop, shock your ideas of order and neatness, and perchance you may get an ugly blow with a flying deal-end ; but much rubbish is for all that a good sign, for it means much work, and much work is the hope of the country.

Suppose it were far otherwise. Suppose you went into a carpenter-shop, and it was swept clean from end to end, not a shaving on the floor, nor a grain of saw-dust, the bright keen-edged tools arranged in their places, no confusion, no unfinished work lying around, no din and dust, but all in first-class order as if the shop was keeping Sabbath. And I believe in a shop keeping Sabbath on the Sabbath, but not every day in the week. Ah! you say, as you enter, "I like the good order here. I like to be in a shop where I can hear myself speak, and not get my clothes smutted, and my head broken. No rubbish here!" Yes ; but no rubbish means no work, and no work means workmen's hungry homes, and want and woe in the land.

There are cities you go into, and the streets and sidewalks are all lumbered up with this and that, so that you can hardly make your way along through them. Goods are piled up. Buildings are in process of demolition or erection. Sewers are being dug, and new pavements are being laid. Narrow streets are being widened and improved, and new ones are being opened. Here premises are being extended to meet the growing wants of the firm ; there piles of architecture of the most elegant and substantial character are being put up. And this is going on all over the city. As you walk or drive through the streets, you remark that it is a city fuller of rubbish than almost any city you were ever in, and you do not like it on that account. But the rubbish means life, energy, business, growth, plenty of work and plenty of money, good times, happy homes, a great and prosperous future.

And then, on the other hand, there are cities, their streets clean and unencumbered, their houses all built twenty years

ago, no improvements needed or wanted, nothing going on to upset and disarrange things, no railroads being built right through their gardens, no modern improvements and innovations making havoc of oldtime ideas, their people all dressed as if it was one long holiday with them, and everything about them—their stores, residences, back-yards and out-houses, hotels, churches, jails, and such like, just so, about perfect in every way. You go along the streets of those cities, and you are in no danger of stumbling over a pile of building material, or of falling into a sewer or cellar that is being dug, or of being run down by somebody in a hurry, or of having your equanimity disturbed by a street-row or a Salvation-army parade. You will hear good old christian people speaking of the quiet village or town where they were born and brought up, to the effect, that until the railroad and telegraph and telephone, and the free Public School and printing-press came along, it was like Sunday all the week in their streets—no drunkenness, no fighting, no Sabbath-breaking, no burglary, no divorces, no evil of any kind to speak of, and they never cease bewailing the introduction of the new order of things, and lamenting the decadence of the good old times.

And yet, good as the old times were, the golden age of other days, the quiet meditative Sabbaths, and sober sedateness and easy-goingness of life in the past, and notwithstanding the rush and rubbish that come with modern progress, who would care to go back to those good old days? I grant, and I suppose we are all ready enough to grant, that something has been lost, and had to be lost, in breaking with the past and its quaint old-fashioned ways of living and doing, and it is not for us to run it down and despise it, and compare it unfavorably with what is to-day, as if we have all that is good and our grandfathers had none. It served its purpose and did its work quite as well as these days of ours. If the past was slow, it was sure. To-day we are quick, we rush; but we are slipshod, and there is much that is rubbish. Still, there is progress all along the line, and

better the rubbish of to-day than the rust of yesterday. We do not like the rubbish, but after all there may be worse than rubbish. Thus even rubbish has its place and use, for you cannot have work and progress without rubbish, and the more work and progress the more rubbish.

And this is so in the region of the spiritual as well as that of the secular, in a live and progressive church as well as in a live and progressive city. You cannot have a go-ahead church without rubbish. You do not like to see old sacred edifices with their dust and cobwebs, their quaint pulpit and angular and uncomfortable pews, their old-time worship and so on, pulled down, or moved out of the way, and their places filled with modern temples and new methods of worship and work. But the rising generation demands it, and so there is rubbish. And what makes it so hard is this, that what is sacred to you is rubbish to them, just as what is sacred to them is rubbish to you. You say of organs, choirs, hymn-books, reading-desks, collection-plates, written and read sermons, socials, and so on, "Rubbish! Rubbish!" and if you had it your way, you would make short work with them, for with your broom you would sweep them all out of the church as both an innovation and desecration.

And, of course, much of all this that we deem necessary to carry on the church's work to-day is rubbish. You remember when this church was being built, the builders erected scaffolding, and often had recourse to all sorts of things, some of them very insufficient things indeed, to aid them in reaching and carrying forward their work; and in those days so necessary was the scaffolding, and there was so much of it, that it seemed almost more and more important than the building itself. My little children would sometimes ask me when the scaffolding was being put up, if that was the church. But when the church came to be built, the scaffolding was all taken down and thrown into a great heap of rubbish to be carried away.

And so with all the arrangements we have for carrying on the church's work and building her up in the world—the

preaching, the singing, the Sabbath-day services, the sacred communion seasons, the missionary meetings, the working-bands, the sessions, the presbyteries, the synods and assemblies, the confessions and creeds, the raising of money, and so much else. They are so necessary and bulk so much before our eyes that we are in danger of regarding them as more than they are, as the church itself, and not the scaffolding. But they are only the scaffolding, and as such will be pulled down by-and-by and cast away as rubbish. Let us not despise, however, the cumbersome pile of scaffolding around some churches, and the amount of ecclesiastical machinery in motion, for usually where there is much rubbish there is much work.

But, in the second place, much rubbish may be, and often is, a sore evil, a serious drawback to work. I have spoken at some length on what may be called the good side of rubbish, but let us not overlook the fact that rubbish has an evil side, a very evil side. I suppose rubbish is a necessary evil in the world as we find it. We cannot make things, nor have them, without rubbish; still, it is so easy for the rubbish to get the mastery and become a nuisance, a real evil, a plague.

Nehemiah found it so in his work of repairing the walls of Jerusalem. Jerusalem's sins of other days, the godlessness of her kings and priests and people, had brought upon her the judgments of Heaven. War had come to her, and broken down her walls, burnt her temple and homes, and carried off her people to captivity. For some seventy years she had lain in ruins, an eye-sore to the nations, a plague-spot in the heart of the then world, a heap of rubbish. But days of hope and help were coming back to her, and the captives were returning, and were slowly and feebly re-building their ruined country. The work, however, was heavy, and there was much opposition, and so every now and again the work would come to a stand still. Then it was when Nehemiah arrived upon the scene with his pluck and push, and in his hands, and under his management and skill, the re-building took a fresh start.

But he found much rubbish. The debris of the old walls had to be removed, and there were such quantities of it, and so many difficulties in the way of removing it, that it was all but a hopeless task. The building up afterwards did not seem to be much compared to the pulling down of the old ruins and the removing of the rubbish. It was work men did not like. Scarcely for either love or money would they do it, and Nehemiah found he had about all he could do to keep his own servants from relinquishing the work in disgust. But he kept them at it, for he worked like a hero himself with his own hands, and the rubbish was at last got out of the way.

And then there was rubbish of another sort that was even harder to remove, the indifference of the people, and in some cases, their active opposition. The authorities did not like to see Nehemiah coming with a commission from the king to interfere with them and their way of doing things; and so, some of them, in an underhanded sort of way, did all they could to weaken his hands and drive him from the work. But this rubbish of indifference on the part of the people, and opposition on the part of the authorities in the city, and open hostility on the part of outsiders, only tended to make the good Nehemiah more determined, and so this heap of rubbish was also removed. He had it hard. Only a patriot and a christian could have stood what he had to stand, but he held to it with unyielding determination to succeed, and he succeeded. In his hands Jerusalem arose from her ruins, and put on some of her old-time beauty and strength, and it was a very different city when he came to leave it from what it was as he found it.

Now, my hearers, I think it can be shewn, if you will bear with me, that every truly earnest man, every christian, every man who has a right understanding of his own spiritual needs, every man who himself wants to be what he ought to be, every man who wants to build up the church and promote the interests of Christ's Kingdom in the world, every man who wants

to benefit and bless society, every man who is a true citizen and patriot, must, like Nehemiah, know and deplore the evil of much rubbish. "And there is much rubbish."

He has much rubbish in and about himself. There are those who tell us they have got nicely rid of all their rubbish—their sins forgiven, their old habits given up, their old scores settled, the old man with his evil deeds and lusts dead and buried and the new man put on, their virtues and graces all built up, the fulness in Christ attained to; but the most of us find that we are in a chaos of rubbish, so much so indeed, that it is often a question with us whether there is anything else. We have the rubbish that arises from the neglect of years, a wasted youth, lost opportunities, unimproved privileges, to clear away. Then we have the rubbish perhaps of bad habits, idleness, carelessness, drunkenness, lust, uncontrolled passions and appetites, evil speaking and profane swearing, boastfulness, deceit, dishonesty, revengefulness, a sour and disagreeable disposition, and so much else, to struggle with and overcome. Then we have a multitude of infirmities that we have inherited from an evil parentage and that we have incurred by the prodigalities of a reckless youth—uncleanesses, ailments and diseases, pains and aches, and so on, some of which we will never be able to get clear of while a bit of the old tenement sticks together;—this heap of rubbish we may have to stumble over and fret with the rest of our days, for it is not likely we will get clear of the whole of it. Men tell us about perfection and what they have done and are, through the mighty power of God's grace working in them; but there are thorns in the flesh, rubbish and dirt so in us, that they have to stay there, and the only thing we can do with them is to bear them, and in that way triumph over them. This was Paul's experience, and it is the experience of many eminently good men. What is the man with one leg to do, or with one hand, or with one lung, or with a body twisted up into deformity, or with a soul anything but well-balanced, or with the best part of his life

haunting him the rest of his days with memories of evil he can never get away from ;—I ask, what is such a man to do with all this rubbish? Ah! he has to bear with it, and do the best he can with it. And some of these very *imperfect* men are doing better for society, better for the church, better for the world, better for the Master, than the so-called perfect ones, much of whose time is taken up with self-admiration.

Then society is full of rubbish, and it is every true man's place and privilege to help away with the heaps of rubbish that disfigure and encumber and curse our modern social life. There, for instance, are the drinking usages of society, the pride and folly and fashion, the indolence and indulgence, the utter uselessness of a life lived for society, the evils of caste and class, and so much else. It is one endless round of parties—dinner-parties, five-o'clock tea-parties, quadrille-parties, garden-parties, euchre-parties, champagne supper-parties, and parties the less said about the better, and so it comes to pass, that this solemn earnest life of ours is utterly frittered away, and nothing worthy of it done, or attempted. Now, I want to be understood, that I have no quarrel with many of these things in themselves, and kept in their proper place, but it is the endless round of them that makes them rubbish. There are young people who are at some sort of amusement every night in the week, and that too for weeks together, and it goes without saying, that those young men and women, unless they give up such an empty frivolous life, will never be good for this world or the next. Oh, as earnest men and women, as those who have the welfare of the city at heart and the future of our country, as those who love the young and want to see them do well and live usefully and nobly, let us set ourselves to cast away from us this mountain of rubbish, that has been gathering and heaping up until it will bury us, if we do not burn it.

Then the church, our own beloved Zion, our Jerusalem, is cumbered with much rubbish. I spoke a little ago of the

necessity of a certain amount of rubbish. Where a church is alive an aggressive and progressive church, there will be, and must be, rubbish. Some of you call rubbish what others are trying to do to advance the interests of the cause, and build up the church. And I agree with you. But it may be necessary rubbish, the scaffolding necessary to carry on the work. We cannot do at all without more or less rubbish. There is rubbish, however, that is not necessary, and is in the way of every good work. Our opposition—a good deal of it—is rubbish. Our criticism and fault-finding, our standing in the way with folded arms when others with sleeves rolled up are earnestly at work, our stupid prejudice, and so on, I call rubbish.

And then so often a church drifts away from the right, and lets gather in upon her so much that is not of her—the world's policy, doubtful expedients, dangerous influences, rags of heathenism or Judaism or some other ism equally corrupting. Then churches get into careless ways of managing their business. They let debt pile up. They get out of repair. The members quarrel. Troubles gather and gather, and soon there is much rubbish, little in fact but rubbish.

I notice in the spring of the year how much of the city's rubbish finds its way to the river. The ice is unsightly with heaps and heaps of rubbish. But the spring-floods come, and the ice is broken up, and the rubbish is all swept away and seen no more. And what we want in our spiritual experience and church-life is a blessed flood-time of grace every now and again to sweep away our rubbish. A true revival is a great good, and to be earnestly sought for. Let us pray for times of refreshing to visit us, so that we may be swept clean of the world's unsightly rubbish, and that we may be awakened to a new and holy energy as a church and people. Oh the rubbish of sin! But Jesus' blood cleanses away from us all this vile rubbish, and fits us for his service on earth and his glory in Heaven.

Praying Without Ceasing.

“Pray without ceasing.”—I THESS. v. 17.

GROUPED together here are some thirteen simple, terse, epigrammatic exhortations bearing on living questions, enunciating practical every-day christian duties and privileges, and the text, as is fitting perhaps, occupies the middle place of the group. We like them because they are so short and sententious; they say so much in such few words, *multum in parvo*. We like them because they are easy to remember and repeat, and they are so forceful and expressive. We like them because of the clear ring of truth and commonsense about them; they jingle like rhyme, read like proverbs, are straight to the point. We like them because they fit in almost anywhere, suit every mood and tense of our varied spiritual experience, are always appropriate, always acceptable, never out of place, never obtrusive, never stale. After you have filled a letter full of loving messages and good counsels to a son or daughter far away, there is always room in some corner or other to stick in one of these brief apostolic epigrams, and often with the happiest and most telling effect.

Now, we are to study to-day the exhortation that occupies the central position in this interesting group of apostolic exhortations, and it is on how to pray. “Pray without ceasing.”

I. PRAYER—WHAT IT IS: Here is something we are to do without ceasing, and we want to know about it. It must be a very important something, a very essential something, since we are enjoined to do it without ceasing. Not many things can we do without ceasing. Work is very important in its own place, very essential to the most of us, but we cannot work without ceasing. We have to stop, no matter how busy we are, to rest, eat, sleep. Nor can we play even without ceasing. Much as play is to some of us, we cannot keep at it all the time. We want to do something else sometimes. And we cannot eat and drink, we cannot sleep and dream, without ceasing. And so with most things we do. We cannot keep at them continuously, unceasingly. But there are some other things, a very few things, we can do, and must do, all the time, if we are to be and do at all.

For instance, we have to breathe without ceasing. To cease to breathe is to cease to live. When we were born we began to breathe, and we have been at it ever since. Night and day, sleeping and waking, resting and working, at home or abroad, we keep on breathing. And so with some other things about us, such as the circulation of the blood, the process of nutrition, and so on. These things are so essential to us that we cannot do without them, we cannot stop using them.

Now, my hearer, just as breathing without ceasing is necessary to the body, to our physical life, so praying without ceasing is necessary to the soul, to the spiritual life. As the poet puts it:

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,

The Christian's native air.

You say of a man who had been so nearly dead that you thought he was dead, who had been all but drowned or suffocated perhaps, and with whom you had been working hard to restore animation;—you say of him as you see some feeble signs of returning life: "Behold he begins to live, for he breathes, he breathes!" And when a poor sinner, in whose

sad spiritual case you had been deeply interested, and for whom you had been doing all you could to reclaim and save, begins to show some signs of spiritual concern, no matter how insufficient, you are so excited, so anxious, and when he falls on his knees, and in an agony of earnestness cries up to Heaven for help and mercy, you can hardly contain yourself as you voice your joy in words of this import: "Behold there is hope for his soul; he prayeth, he prayeth!"

Prayer is thus to the spiritual life something like what breath is to the natural life. We breathe to live the natural life; we pray to live the spiritual life. Every time we breathe we take in something of the unseen above and around us; we feed on heaven, as it were, and so we live and are strong to do. So with prayer. Every true prayer we send up draws down into our souls something of the unseen holy above and around us, something of Heaven, something of God, and so we live and grow upward, God-ward, and we are all the stronger to do the right, all the braver to resist the wrong.

Prayer is so simple; it is as simple and easy as breathing. You breathe, and you do not know you are breathing. You breathe unconsciously, without any effort. You can sleep and breathe. You can breathe and not be heard, only a gentle heaving of the bosom. If breathing costs an effort, if it is attended with more or less of a struggle, if it makes itself heard, then it is not healthful breathing. Loud and labored breathing is not usually a good sign, although there may be occasions when it may simply indicate that a very special effort has been put forth for a good and grand purpose.

Now, praying like breathing is best perhaps, most natural and healthful, when it is without effort. And sometimes the christian finds it so easy to pray, just as easy as to breathe. The soul lies prostrate at the feet of God, happy and trustful, looking up, and without almost any effort whatever, waiting on him. It resigns itself to his will, tells its wants into a Heavenly Father's ear, and is sure that all is well with it how-

ever it is with it. It keeps within touch of God all the time, and quick as thought, and just as easy as breathing, it can avail itself of his power, flee to his arms for protection, comfort and strengthen itself with his promises, and know the joy of his presence.

But prayer is not always thus easy. Sometimes men of earnest purpose pray with strong crying and tears, agonizing at the footstool, wrestling like Jacob all night and refusing to let the Prayer-Hearer go till he has granted their request. Thus Christ himself prayed in the garden in the dark hour of agony that came to him there. Thus prayed Elijah for the rain, and the windows of Heaven were opened in answer. Thus prayed Daniel for his captive countrymen. Thus prayed Knox for Scotland. Thus prayed Luther in the dark days of the Reformation when it looked as if the gates of Hell were going to prevail. And thus prayed in awful earnestness many a strong faithful soul, crying aloud to God, laboring as if in the birth-throes of a great purpose that meant a glad new life or the horror of despair, and taking Heaven by a kind of violence. But then such are evidently exceptional and special cases, and not always healthful. As a rule prayer is the breathing of the soul, as gentle as breathing, as easy as breathing, as natural and necessary.

Prayer usually shapes itself into words. It tells its wants when it knows them, voices its sins and sorrows, urges reasons and arguments for what it would have. "Take with you words," says the prophet of old, "and return unto the Lord." The Heavenly Father likes to hear his children prattle their little wants and plead their case for themselves at his knee. It is good to put our prayers into words. But we can pray without words, and sometimes we pray best when we have no words to tell how we feel—only tears and groans. We may be able only to lie at the feet of the Divine mercy, so unspeakably sad and sore-hearted, and look up, and wait, and hope. We may pray when we do not know we are praying.

It is well to have seasons of prayer and places for prayer, but the christian can pray anywhere, any time. As he walks along the street, toils at his work, sits or stands, alone or in company, he can pray. The good Nehemiah prayed, when he stood before the king of Persia with the wine-cup in his hand. I can pray as I preach. I can pray between the sentences and paragraphs as they go forth from my lips on their Divine mission. And you can pray as you hear, pray as the words of truth come ringing to your ears.

How hard to pray! how easy to pray! Some one may say: "I cannot pray. Ask me to do anything else but pray. It puts me into anguish of spirit to pray. I cannot pray." And hear some men pray, and what an ado they make of it. How much of an effort! They shout so loud; they seem to take Heaven by violence. They think they will be heard for their loud and much speaking. But, on the other hand, to one who has learned how to pray, learned it perhaps in the school of hard spiritual experience, learned it in the hot furnace of affliction, learned it out among the wildly tossing waves of doubt and temptation, nothing is easier. It is a look up to Heaven. It is the breathing of a true soul. It is talking to the Lord who is felt to be close by, and it is listening to him as he talks back in gracious loving answers. O the preciousness of prayer! what a privilege! what a power! He who can pray well can move the hand that moves the universe.

II. PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING: "Pray without ceasing!"—who can pray without ceasing? it is asked. And so men have questioned and cavilled here, and have piled up their objections and difficulties. Praying is not much to their mind anyhow. They are only too glad when they can find an excuse, however lame, to cover up their neg'ects, and be a reason of some sort for their delinquencies. But it will not do. There stands before us here in all its exacting strictness, almost formidableness, the apostolic injunction—"pray without ceasing;" and every true earnest soul will want to know, not how to evade

the demand as far as possible, but rather how near up to all that is enjoined and required it can come.

Now, note here this sound scriptural principle, that doctrines and duties, the things to be believed and done, the responsibilities laid upon us and the lessons of life assigned us to learn, are not made for us as easy as possible, but rather as hard as possible.

For instance, you do not find it written anywhere here in God's Book: "Take it easy. No need for so much rush. To-morrow will do as well as to-day. Our God will not be hard on us. He is love, therefore if we indulge the flesh a little, if we sleep, if we are not all we ought to be, not quite up to the mark, it will be all right."

It is getting to be fashionable to-day in some pulpits to preach how easy it is to be a christian, how little is essential to salvation and true religion. In other words, the tendency is to lower the standard to-day. It is the gospel made easy, *the gospel made easy!* While the standards of education and morality are rising, the standards of truth and religion are being lowered, which is anything but a good sign.

But, my hearer, that is not the way here. Open your bible, and what fervency, what urgency! It is here: "Flee for your life! escape! escape! look not behind thee! To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart. Strive to enter the strait gate."

And then as to duty-doing and christian living, not any sort of doing and life-living will pass. You are not to be good as others are good, live as others live, love as others love, satisfy yourself with low attainments. No. Far otherwise. You are to be good as God is good. You are to love as He loves, love your enemies as he love his, bless your persecutors, do good to those who work you all the harm they can. It is not much of a goodness that does good to those only who are good, nor a very high style of love that loves only its friends. Everybody does that. Publicans and sinners do that. The

worst of men do that. But you are to aim higher. You are to aim at nothing short of perfection in goodness and grace. "Be perfect."

The same great Bible principle, then, is to guide you in praying as in other things. It is to be perfection here also, the very best, the praying indeed that seems to be clear away out of sight of what you can possibly attain to. But the impossible is something the christian is not to know anything about. What can he not do, God helping him! What can he not attain to in the direction of spiritual attainments!

My hearer, you are not simply to pray. You think you do well when you pray at all, perhaps. But it is not much to do that. Almost everybody prays more or less. The heathen pray, pray hard. The greatest scoundrel, I suppose, prays sometimes. There are times that come to every human experience, times so full of pain, so dark with sorrow, so terrible with woe, that men are driven to their knees, even bad men, and they pray. When we want to succeed, when we want to be crowned with the world's empty greatness, when we want our plans to be carried out—plans perhaps that have no higher end in view than our own personal aggrandizement, we pray. The rumseller prays that he may succeed in his business. The thief prays that he may not be caught. The assassin prays that he may shoot straight. The politician prays that he may come to power, and all the time perhaps he is doing the most crooked things to gain his ends. No, my hearer, to pray is not always a sign of great piety. Praying sometimes pays, and for the sake of the pay men pray.

Others again pray as a matter of duty and habit, pray at stated times and places. I like men who make prayer a matter of duty. They may not have any special object in view in praying. They may not expect any special blessing. It is not because it pays they pray, but because they feel it to be their duty. And they are very conscientious about it. Every Lord's Day they are in their place in the sanctuary with bow-

ed heads and hearts waiting upon God. Twice every day through the years they are on their knees. Some thrice—morning, noon, night. Others still oftener. "Seven times a day," said the Psalmist, "do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments." And yet, making prayer a matter of duty, and being thoroughly conscientious about it, and most punctilious in its performance, may not be all it seems to be. It may be cold, formal, heartless, commonplace praying, praying that is a long long way short of the mark. And so the Apostle would wake us up, give us higher ideas of our duty at the footstool than a once-a-week service, or a twice or thrice or even seven times a day prostration before God. There is a beyond to all that devotion, heights towering high above duty and formality, and he wants us to get on to the glad beyond of prayer; he wants us to climb to the very tip-top of the blessed privilege, and therefore he exhorts: "Pray without ceasing."

I do not think, however, we are under any necessity to interpret the words of the Apostle literally. To do that would be to make nonsense, yes the most arrant nonsense, of what he says. No writer is to be taken in a cold literal sense, and especially such a writer as the Apostle whose soul is on fire with enthusiasm. When he enjoins us to pray without ceasing it is his strong way of telling us never to neglect the duty and privilege of prayer, a thing by the way we are very apt to do.

So many, it is to be regretted, set out to pray very well, but then they do not hold out. They are regularly and conscientiously here for a while, seldom absent indeed. At the week-day prayer-service, too, they are most attentive. And twice a day they are on their knees perhaps, or oftener. But that does not continue. They grow careless. The world comes in and interrupts their attentiveness at the footstool. Their place is empty in the sanctuary and at the prayer-meeting. They are so busy family worship is dropped, and secret prayer is neglected. Ah! spiritual declension has commenced and

made fearful headway with them, and soon there will be a grievous fall. The Apostle knows how easy it is to grow careless at the footstool and neglect prayer, and he knows too how fatal it is to grow careless and neglectful there, and so in his own strong and terse way of putting things he says here : "Pray without ceasing. Never stop praying. Let no opportunity for worship be neglected. Be instant in season and out of season at the footstool. Keep the fire burning brightly on the altar ; never let it go out."

Thus, praying without ceasing means neither more nor less than this, that men are to be faithful and diligent at the footstool, not like some who give up praying after a while, and are seldom or never on their knees. Still, while something like that is all that is meant here, and that is much, it is right for us, I think, to get at all the fulness of the blessed privilege, and the more nearly we can do just as we are told to do here the better. So often we interpret scripture to suit ourselves, to comport with our own low ideas of duty and truth, and so we miss the grandeur of its spiritual meaning.

Now, is there not a sense in which we can pray without ceasing? I think there is, and I have already indicated, in speaking of the nature of prayer, the direction in which almost unlimited attainments are within our reach. Prayer is not so much a physical as a spiritual attitude, not so much a lifting up of the hands as a lifting up of the heart, not a mode but a mood, and we are to cultivate the spirit of prayer, keep in the mood, live in the atmosphere of devotion, so that we can pray anywhere and always. There is such a close living to God, such a dwelling in his presence, such a felt nearness, so much of communion with the unseen Jesus, that it is almost unceasing praying. And it is not as hard to attain as it looks. I have to confess that I do not know very much about it, not as much indeed as one in my position should ; but I can easily understand from what I know, that it is not hard at all for some of the Lord's people to pray all the time. It is as easy

for them to pray as it is to breathe, so close to the Lord and so much in communion with him do they live. It is keeping in touch with the unseen Jesus, living as in his presence; and many times a day, unceasingly almost, they find themselves looking to him for something or other, asking his help and guidance, feeling after him to know if he is near, and rejoicing in the light of his countenance, the blessed sweetness of his love.

III. THE BENEFITS OF UNCEASING PRAYING:—And unceasing praying implies a high-toned spiritual life. You cannot pray without ceasing, if you are slack in your duty, if you are careless, if you are worldly, if you are living in any sin. It implies earnestness, faithfulness, conscientiousness, duty-doing, being right up to the mark in christian living. Pray well and you do everything else well; you cannot come far short in any grace, nor in any christian service.

How vigorous and healthy the spiritual life where there is unceasing praying. "Prayer," says one, "is the spiritual pulse of the renewed soul; its beat indicates the healthy or unhealthy state of the believer. Just as the physician would decide upon the health of the body from the action of the pulse, so would we decide upon the spiritual health of the soul before God, by the estimation in which prayer is held by the believer."

One in vigorous health can walk and work unharmed amid the diseases and pestilence that mow down others in broad swaths of death, because such is his vitality that he can throw off the malaria that would destroy him. And so with the christian whose soul is in vigorous spiritual health, who keeps up unbroken fellowship with the living Lord by prayer. Such a christian fears not temptation. He can walk and work unspotted and unhurt amid the world's evils, the allurements of pleasure, the inducements of business, the dangerous and seductive influences of society. He keeps close to God, and he is safe, strong, brave. Again and again the great enemy

assails only to be foiled. The harder put to it he is, the more he draws upon the Lord's infinite resources, and so he is able to stand—he neither flees nor yields. Thus, how good it is to be able to pray without ceasing, for such a christian cannot be taken by surprise, nor caught napping.

Suppose, however, a christian could only pray on Sabbath and at church, cared only to pray when it was the season for prayer, how ill it would be with him. Between-times the Destroyer might come upon him with his deadly assaults, and his poor soul would be in a sad case. Before the hour of prayer could come round, before he could run to the sanctuary, it might be all over with him, the enemy might have his will with him. Ah! my hearer, it is praying without ceasing we need. Keep the Prayer-Hearer within reach all the time, if you would be safe and strong. There is power in prayer. It links itself to Omnipotence, and nothing is too great for it to do, nothing too good for it to have. Hear the message of the Apostle: "Pray without ceasing."

Steps to Jesus.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?—ACTS II. 37.

WE are naturally far off from Jesus, some farther off than others, but all very far off from him. He once said of one, it is true, that he was near the Kingdom of Heaven, but near as he was, and he was near only in so far as God's grace had brought him near, he was not near enough to be saved. Jesus has come near us all with the kingdom of grace. But nearness will not do. It is not enough. We must have something better. Thousands have been almost christians whose torment-smoke is ascending to Heaven to-day, and thousands to-day are almost christians who will never be christians. We must not only get near the Kingdom of Heaven, but into it, if we would be safe.

Now, I want to point out, in a simple practical way, some of the leading steps from our far off natural state to Jesus.

I. PREACHING AND HEARING THE GOSPEL: God himself makes the first advances towards the sinner, never the sinner towards God. We are not only far off from God, but we are content to be far off from him, and the general tendency of

our heart and life in a state of nature is to get as far off from him as possible. No one would even think of turning his face heavenwards, and seeking to come to God, if God did not first seek him. The sinner wants to live and die in sin, and far off from the love of God. But God will not let him. He sends for him to come back home.

Something like this is the way he deals with sinners. He sends his servants to them with messages. Sometimes the burden of their message is: "Repent! repent!" Sometimes it is, "Come to Jesus!" Sometimes it is earnest entreaty; sometimes, fervent expostulation; sometimes, bitter denunciation.

Peter's address to the Jews on the day of Pentecost was an explanation of the wonders of the morning—the rushing mighty wind, the cloven tongues of fire, the moving eloquence of unlettered Galileans, followed up with an earnest and affectionate home-bringing to their consciences of their guilt in crucifying the Lord of glory. It was a stirring address, full of power, and the people heard it with more or less attention, I suppose, with breathless attention. Every word told. They were held as if spell-bound; they heard, felt, believed.

Now, we hear the word with more or less attention, listlessly enough sometimes, with dull ears and hearts; but sometimes with more interest. It is by the way we hear, however, God would come to us to awaken our sleepy consciences, and arouse us from the torpor of spiritual indifference. He has other ways of reaching sinners. He reaches them by means of losses and crosses, the calamities of life, sore afflictions, and so on. But the simple preaching of the gospel is his great means. More are saved that way than in any other. Affliction after affliction, calamity after calamity, war and famine and pestilence, and all the woes and miseries that befall our race, have been from time immemorial sweeping over and over again the benighted heathen, but they have not made them better, nor brought them nearer God. Not until gospel missionaries carry

them the sweet story of God's love in Christ are they helped and saved.

Since therefore the gospel is the great means of salvation, one important step is to get men within reach of it. Unless men can be persuaded to come and hear for themselves, little can be done for them. That of itself is insufficient, but then it is God's means, and as such it cannot be surpassed.

II. CONVICTION:—In hearing the gospel the most of hearers are more or less affected. When the Lord's servants, in his name, charge them with gross sins, as Peter did the Jews on the day of Pentecost; when they shew them the neglect of important duties; when they accuse them of hypocrisy, unbelief, heart-hardness, rebellion; when they charge them with the crucifixion of God's Son; their consciences are troubled, they are stricken with remorse. That was the case with Peter's audience. They were pricked in their heart. The Spirit convicts of sin, brings home guilt.

Now, there is a mistake here many fall into. They go about seeking conviction. They read about Manasseh's remorse in the lonely prison-house of Babylon. They look at the Publican standing afar off yonder, and beating his breast, and groaning and praying: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" They read and re-read the thrilling narrative of the grief and penitence of the Prodigal-son. They watch the fast-flowing tears of the poor city-sinner at the feet of Jesus. They want to get a taste of the soul-wretchedness of the Philippian jailer as he hung over the brink of Hell, Saul of Tarsus, John Bunyan, and others. They think they must have to pass through some such experience. Hence they come to God's House to be convicted. They like to hear sermons that make their hair stand on end, their flesh creep, their souls quake with fear. Oh if they could weep floods of tears; if their hearts were only torn to pieces with anguish; if they could be felled to the ground with a stroke of Almighty power; then, they think, there would be hope for them! But they do not *feel* enough—that is their

difficulty. They cannot get themselves convicted enough—not as much as they would like to be, and as much as they think they ought to be. And they get discouraged. They think their hearts must be so awfully hard, else they would weep more, and feel more.

Now, my hearer, that is a great mistake. I have no doubt some are going about in their way seeking a conviction they will never find. They do not know that even now they are convicted as much as there is any need for. When we see ourselves to be sinners and feel it, and come to know somewhat of our need, we are convicted enough. After all, it is not the amount or pungency of conviction that is of so much importance. Men do not feel alike, cannot feel alike. Some do not seem to feel at all, to look at them, deep within whose souls is a smouldering fire burning them up. Some seldom or never weep, not that they are too hardened to weep, and ashamed to weep, but because it is not their way. They are constitutionally tearless. They are not made of the stuff that dissolves in tears. Others again are never done weeping. They bubble over at anything.

We need not expect to pass through the fiery ordeal of conviction that Paul passed through, and Manasseh, and Bunyan and his Christian. God adapts his dealings to different men differently. One man's experience differs widely from that of another man. You cannot say to another: "You must pass through this and that spiritual experience before you can be a christian—I had to. You must have such and such feelings, such and such convictions, such and such views of things—I had them. You must tumble into the Slough of Despond like Christian, and wallow there. You must get into trouble, like Faithful in Vanity Fair, and get locked up in Giant Despair's Castle—I had to."

No. Some are born and brought up in the land of Egypt, and before they reach the Good Land, they must wade through the Red Sea, and traverse the burning desert. They must hear

the thunderings, and see the lightnings, and feel the darkness of Sinai. But others again are born in Canaan, and are reared up amid gospel blessings and gospel privileges, and know nothing of Red Sea experiences, and the howling wilderness, and the terrors of the Mount, and the fiery flying serpents, excepting from what they have been told.

How foolish, then, for these last to say: "We are not Israelites, and we cannot be in Canaan, because we were not born and brought up in Egypt and experienced the terrible bondage of that land as our fathers did; and because we have not crossed the Red Sea, and traversed the deathful wilderness, and heard the thunderings and seen the lightnings of Sinai!" And how foolish for us to say: "We cannot have passed from death to life, cannot be God's children, because we have not experienced the sorrow of bloody Manasseh, nor the terror of the Philippian jailer, nor the stroke that unhorsed Saul of Tarsus.

I believe there are many true christians who have little or no experience of conviction, so-called. What could young Timothy know of conviction? He was not startled into the Kingdom by a flash of glory, and yet Paul was sure he was as truly a christian as himself. Many are attracted to Jesus by a sight of his loveliness, and know nothing of what it is to be driven out of Sodom and sin by the terrors of the law and the judgments of God.

Then, before leaving this step, let me point out another mistake we are in danger of falling into. It is this, to regard conviction as far more than it is. Some think when they can weep many tears, and when they are pricked in their heart, they are all right, and they stop there. They are satisfied with mere convictions, and the more pungent they are, the more satisfied they are with them.

Now, my hearer, conviction is not necessarily a work of grace, excepting perhaps in a very superficial way. It may be nothing more than the force of the truth brought home to the

reason and conscience. Thousands are convicted who are never converted. The heathen who have nothing to teach them but their own dark understanding and deadened conscience, are often troubled, alarmed, convicted. They feel they are not what they ought to be. They are often sorry, sad, sick at heart, troubled about their souls, anxious about their future, afraid to die, concerned over their sins.

When the law comes to us, and shews us what its demands are, and denounces against us its threatenings and judgments, we see how far short we are coming of its requirements, and sometimes we tremble for the consequences. That is conviction. But we must not say, "We are all right now! We are saved!"

Is it enough, I ask, to shed a few tears over the wicked past, and groan out a few sad regrets for the wrong we have done; and then, after the conviction has spent itself, to regard the lull which follows as peace with God, christian experience? No. That peace is not peace with God. It may be false security. And may God keep us from that? Was it enough for the multitudes whom Peter was addressing to be pricked in their heart? Would they have been saved had they stopped there? No. They were not half way to Christ when they were that far, not necessarily started. Ah! we must not be satisfied with shedding a few tears as we sit in our pews listening to the story of the cross. We must not think a little feeling on the matter is enough. No. No amount of conviction is enough. Oceans of tears are not enough. If there is to be nothing more, that is not much. Unless it lead to another step, it will fail, and it often does fail.

III. ANXIOUS ENQUIRY: When the multitudes were pricked in their heart, they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Having got as far as conviction, they did not go away as some do with the idea that now they had religion enough. No. They felt they were but beginning. Their convictions led them to enquire.

They felt themselves to be sinners, and they did not know where to look, nor what to do to obtain deliverance from the burden of their guilt. So they asked what they were to do.

The awakened sinner does not know what to do nor where to go. He is like a man awakened from a deep sleep by the cry of fire in his ears, the roaring of flames and the suffocating smoke. He sees the flames, hears the crackling of burning wood, and feels the heat, but for a moment he cannot realize his situation; and when the realization of his danger does come, it comes so overwhelmingly that he scarcely knows how to act. He is stupified with fear, almost crazed. That was the way conviction came to the Philippian jailer. He was near-hand putting his sword through his own heart, so crazily he acted in his anxiety.

Now, my hearer, although our convictions may not be attended with the bitter pungency of the jailer's, nor the remorse of Peter's audience; yet, if we are convicted at all, we should ask: "What must I do?" We should say to ourselves: "Ah! that message from the Lord to-day tells me there is something wrong with me. It tells me the sort of life I am living will not do. It tells me I am not a christian. What then am I to do?"

Thus our weakest convictions may lead to enquiry, and should do so. It may be that some before me are asking, not in these words perhaps, not in words at all perhaps, but in thoughts and feelings: "What shall I do?" They do not ask their pastor, or their elders, or their fellow christians. They do not ask a creature. And there is nothing wrong in that. But it may be they do not consult their Bible, nor the Spirit of God. They put the question to themselves, and they leave it there unanswered.

That great question a sinner cannot answer for himself. Were he to do so, he would be sure to give the wrong answer, an answer that might satisfy his conscience for the time being, but not such as would put him right with God. Such answers

as these the sinner will propose to himself as the right answers: "I will try and do better than heretofore. I will turn over a new leaf. I will attend the House of God better. I will leave off drinking and this and that other bad habit. I will take hold of my duty, and do it better." Thus he soothes his awakened conscience with resolutions he never carries out, and cannot carry out without taking the next great step.

The three thousand put that question to the apostles: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The convicted Saul put it to the Lord Himself: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The awakened jailer asked Paul and Silas what he was to do. Some go to their Bible, and some cry up to Heaven. We should not be afraid nor ashamed to go to our pastor, or to the elders of the church, or to our fellow-christians for advice. When Paul asked the Lord what he was to do, the Lord sent him to Ananias. Many a poor soul has groped in the dark a long while just for want of a little help from some intelligent christian.

Here again, let me caution anxious enquirers. Many have come that far who have perished. The young ruler was an enquirer, but we have no grounds to believe that he was saved. We are facing the right way when we have been led to ask that question. But we have not started, and we must not think of stopping yet. We must never anywhere think of that. But there is danger of it, and we must take care. To stop with conviction and enquiry is to stop where there is no salvation. One might as well not be convicted at all; one might as well sleep on the sleep of self-security, dreading no danger, fearing no fear, in blissful ignorance of the ruin at hand, as wake up with a great start, and see our danger; and then, having seen it, shut up our eyes, and go off to sleep again sounder than ever, and perish eternally. That is the way so many do. The most of persons are some time or other anxious about their souls. But they do not get beyond that. The world's influences creep in upon them again, and they are soon

as dead asleep as before. Unless conviction and enquiry lead to repentance and faith, and a holy life in Jesus, they come short.

IV. FAITH:—This is the most important step of all. This is the great step. The others are important; this is indispensable.

You have been convicted of sin, my hearer, and have been led to ask what you must do to be saved. You go to your pastor for advice, or to your Bible, and what answer will they give you? They may seem to give you different answers, but if they are right answers they will all amount to this: "Believe in Jesus." That is what Paul told the jailer. That is what Peter told the conscience-stricken thousands.

Now, I want to say to any anxious enquirer here to-day, that believing is the way to come to Jesus now as then. Without moving out of your pew there, you may come to Jesus, you may believe. My advice is this:—

First, be sure to come just as you are. You feel you are a sinner. So did the publican. So did Paul. So did Manasseh. Do not stay away nor delay because you are a great sinner. Do not try to make some improvement before you come. No use in that. You cannot do it. Come as you are. The greater sinner you are, the greater your need to come. Come with your hard heart. Come with your wicked life. Let this be your word:—

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee;
O Lamb of God I come, I come.

But some will say: "The trouble with me is this, I do not feel myself sinner enough. I am too little concerned about my state. I cannot weep over my sins. I cannot cry out as the publican cried. If I could, I think it would be all right."

Now, to you too I would say: Come as you are. Do not wait for deeper convictions. Delays are dangerous. You

may lose what you have. Your convictions will deepen. Jesus will open your eyes, and let you see yourself as you are, and then you will have tears and fears and groans. But come, and just as you are, just as you feel.

Secondly, come now. If you feel yourself a sinner in the pew there, and in need of Jesus, do not wait till you get home. Come where you are. Let your heart look up to him. He is near you ; he sees you. No need for delay. Come here and now.

Thirdly, you ask, "How am I to come?" Come to him by prayer. Cry to him in your heart for grace and mercy. Tell him your need, how you feel, and tell him in such words as you have. "Well, what then?" Why then, my hearer, you have done what the publican did, and you have a blessed promise, the same promise he had. You have this promise: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Your sins are forgiven, the burden of guilt taken away, you are saved.

But you say: "Surely salvation is not so easily had as that? Calling upon the name of the Lord, asking for grace and mercy, looking up to Jesus for help—is that all?"

Yes, my hearer, that is all. So says the Word of God: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Ask, and ye shall receive." The publican did that, and he went home pardoned, saved. The leper came and fell down with his leprosy at Jesus' feet, and he simply said: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And Jesus was willing; He is always willing.

Now, anxious sinner, he is as willing and able to wash away your sins, as he was to cleanse away the leper's leprosy. You have asked him to do it for you, as the leper asked him to do it for him. Well then, he will do it. I believe it; do you believe it? You have here all his promises; take them and make them yours. That is what faith did yonder; that is what faith does here.

It is wrong to perplex yourself at this stage with doubts and questions about faith. Take Jesus at his word. You have done what you could when you have done that—when, with your poor words, you have asked his help. The leper did that. He knew nothing more about faith than you do, not as much perhaps. But he was in trouble, he had the dreadful leprosy, and Jesus could help him. So he asked him with simple earnest words to save him. What folly it would have been for him to talk like this: "I cannot ask; I do not feel enough; I am not sure that I have the right faith; I am not sure that I have faith at all!"

But he was not such a fool. He asked as he could, and it was all right. And if you do as he did, it will be all right with you as it was with him, for it is just as easy for Jesus to save sinners now as cleanse lepers then.

Fourthly, Go and sin no more. Repent! repent! If you have been a drunkard, drink no more with God's help, for Jesus' sake. If you have been dishonest, you cannot be so any more; you have come to Jesus. Go and make straight, as far as you can, what has been crooked. Let your repentance be a reality, a turning away from all evil forever.

And then go and do right. Let duty be sacred. Fear God. Follow Jesus. Something like that is what it is to come to Jesus, and coming to Jesus is salvation.

Now, do you come, do you believe? That is the great thing. Here is Jesus, and he says, "Come!" He asks: "Can you trust me? Can you believe?" Oh! do I hear you say?—"Yes, Lord, I believe; I come. I do not know much about it. I grope in the darkness. But I hear thy voice, and I come; I believe. Help my unbelief!"

That is all. That is salvation. You have found your way to Jesus, and he will see you through. Glory to God, you are saved! The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Blessed be his name forever!

The Blessed Dead.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.”—REV. XIV. 13.

JOHN was in the lonely isle of Patmos an exile for the gospel he preached, the faith he believed and loved. It was hard for him to be there, but it is good for us that he was there. We have in this curious book, the Apocalypse, the record of what he saw and heard; and while the book as a whole is still a puzzle to the learned, there are all through it precious passages that every one can understand and appreciate. The text is one of them.

You see yonder the apostle of love, full of years and honors, his long white hair falling loosely around his shoulders, sitting solitarily and perhaps moodily in a cave, with writing materials before him, waiting for the thoughts to come, and they are slow to come. He wants to write something—for he cannot now speak—that will live when he is dead, something that will be a comfort and help to men in the years to come; and so he does not write anything and everything that may suggest themselves to his mind, the first thing that comes into his

head. No, he waits for the best thoughts; he lingers and listens for the voice from Heaven to tell him what to write. And after a while the voice comes ringing clear. He knows he is not mistaken about it. The voice is God's, and it tells him to write. And you see him dipping his pen in ink, and drawing the sacred scroll over to him so that he might write down the words as the divine voice utters them. "And I heard a voice from Heaven, saying, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

Now, first here, a word or two as to the voice from Heaven. Men of old—the humble, earnest, wise—heard a voice speaking to them, a voice divine, telling them what they would not otherwise have thought or known of truth and duty; and they listened and were taught, and so were able to teach others, to teach the ages. Perhaps John had to go to lone Patmos, had to be exiled far from the noise of Asiatic cities and churches, in order to hear that voice for himself and us. You pity the cruelty—do you?—that shut him away from the companionship of kindred souls, but indeed it may have been rather Heaven's mercy to him and us. He may have been taken away from the senseless babbling of men to hear the voice of God.

Ah! if we would hear God speak to us, as he spoke to the good men of the olden time—and he still speaks to men—we must withdraw from the noisy streets and the babble of society; we must flee far from the loud chaffering of trade and the hubbub of politics; we must get away alone with God, and there we will hear words and have thoughts we cannot hear nor have elsewhere. The still small voice cannot now, any more than then, be heard where the crowd surges and the people shout. And so still, those whom God wants to speak to especially, into whose eloquent lips he wants to put his messages for the people, and within whose hearts he wants to lay up

his word of truth, he shuts up perhaps in lonely sick-chambers for a time, or exiles by means of painful circumstances from the hurtful favoritism of the multitude; and there he grants them revelations of his wisdom and love, and speaks to them in a way that leaves them without any doubt that he has spoken to them. The Apocalyptic John says here: "I heard a voice from Heaven." You may have your doubts about it. You may try in your way of it to belittle inspiration. But John himself was sure that what he heard was a voice from Heaven. And there are men to-day who cannot doubt that they have been spoken to as well as John with a voice from Heaven, and when they speak, men hear and are helped.

But not every voice that men hear is a voice from Heaven. There are voices and voices. Men hear sometimes the voice of their own passions, their own thoughts and desires, their own imaginings, and they give heed to those voices as if they were voices from Heaven, and they are led astray, and wander far into the night of error. Let us not be too sure that it is a voice from Heaven we hear, for we may be mistaken even when we are most sure. But the voice John heard was from Heaven. Can we doubt it when we read the message he was told to write? It is not such a message as human sympathy would write. There is a divineness in the message that satisfies, apart from the Apostle's own testimony about the voice.

And here, just a word about the Bible. I do not accept the Bible as inspired because I have been taught all my days that it is so, because the theologians have piled up argument upon argument to prove its inspiration, because of the miracles and wonders it tells me of, and so on. No; I believe it inspired, I hold it to be the truth of God, because I find it so in my own life experiences. It comforts me. It helps me. It inspires me. It shews me myself—my sins, my weaknesses, my dangers, and I find it ever the truth to me; and I know, and feel as sure as I can be sure of anything, that John was not

mistaken when he tells me here that he heard a voice from Heaven. No voice but a voice from Heaven would utter this, for it is not the way men speak of death, even the death of those they have most hope in: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth."

But this leads, next, to what the voice from Heaven said. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!"

Blessed! Perhaps there is some one here who does not believe the Bible to be the utterance of God, the Divine Word. But let me ask this;—Is it human speech, the parlance of the street, to use that word—blessed—and this word—dead—with one another? The other day there came flashing to us from beyond the seas a message about the death of one so dear to us all. I opened the brief missive, but I knew what it was before I opened it. I was to break the news to interested parties. I went and did so, and I kept my mouth shut till I did it. I read the brief words to them, or let them read them for themselves, and at once their countenances fell, and their words were few and sad. They did not say, "Blessed the dead!" After a little I had occasion to go down the street, and it seemed to me that all the city knew what I knew, and not one said: "Blessed the dead!" They said when they said anything, "How sad! what a calamity! how great a loss! the city has lost a good citizen, the church a worthy elder!" Men not used to tears wept when they spoke of him. But when I came to open the Bible, I found written here this: "Blessed are the dead!" and I said to myself: "This that the voice from Heaven said is not what John would himself say, nor what the people of this city would say." And yet, as I thought upon the words, and weighed their meaning, I felt, and I think we must all feel, that though they are not the words I would use, nor the words you would use, on a like occasion, they are fitting words to be used. They are not the words of earth but of Heaven, not the words of men but of God, and I believe John when he says here: "And I heard

a voice from Heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead !”

With us it is, “Blessed the living !” If a man is sick and ready to die, but after a long while struggles back to life and health, we congratulate him, we rejoice with him, we thank God for his recovery. But if he die, we mourn and weep. We say, “Alas ! he is dead.” We put on crape, wrap ourselves up in weeds of woe, and go softly and sadly many days perhaps. That is the way we do in this nineteenth century of the christian era with all the light of science beaming around us. Science has done, and is doing, and is going to do, much for the world, much to help its grief, to gladden the broken in heart ; but, science never can come to the mourner sitting disconsolate on the grave of the beloved dead, and with words that are profoundly true, say, “Blessed are the dead !” But you look up, and through the black thunder-cloud obscuring all your sad sky, and belching forth thunderbolts and sheets of flame, you see perhaps a break in the blackness ; and down through the rift there comes to you a voice from Heaven, and it tells you of blessedness for your dead, and you rise up with a new light in your face, and now you can live and hope.

O infidel, tell me not, these words are a forgery, a terrible lie. I tell you, these words are not the words a forger of the truth would use. Is it with words such as these, O infidel, you find yourself going to the broken hearts of the world to delude them into a comfort that you know is a lie ? No ; such words are foreign to your lips. But, you comfort ! when do you comfort ? Ah ! when it is said in the streets you are dead, who will weep for you, or feel that the world has suffered a loss ?

But let us take care, my hearers, how we apply these words that come down to us from Heaven. They are not a lie as we have them here, but we make them a lie, and that is where infidelity gets an advantage against us. It will not do to go and write these words in black or gold on every tomb. Indeed

they are now on many a tomb where they are a lie, for the white gravestones alas! are reckless liars. I have been told, or have read somewhere, that on the tombstone of one of the noted infidels of last century, Hume the historian and philosopher, is written this lie: "Here lies a christian man!" "*Hic jacet christianissimus vir!*" And, where we would shudder, if we knew what rascality and treachery lie buried with the bones beneath, we read: "Blessed are the dead!"

But it is not, "Blessed are the dead!" To die is not necessarily a blessing, but a curse. Death should not have been, and would not have been, had it not been for sin. Men have sinned and they die;—die with their life only half lived out, their life's work not half done;—die when they should live, and would live, but for their abuses and sins;—die under the curse of law, and it is sad thus to die, not blessed. But we need not now thus die. Down to us from heaven comes a voice that tells us how even death, at any time of life, and in any shape, may be a blessed death. "Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

John lived and wrote in times of dire persecution, the days of Domitian—as some think—or of Nero—as others think. To be a Christian, to profess faith in Jesus, was to expose one's self to death, His death, the death of the cross. Nero used to illuminate his parks and gardens, during the long autumn evenings, with burning Christians, and day by day twenty thousand people would assemble in the amphitheatre to witness the wild beasts, maddened with hunger, tear and devour the hated followers of Jesus. You shudder to think of it, and you do not want me to speak of it. But think what it must have been to be a faithful earnest Christian in those trialsome times. What a temptation it would be to put off making a profession till it could be done with less risk of life! And doubtless many a weak one would yield to the temptation. And others would try to be secret Christians. They would try to follow Jesus without the world's knowing any-

thing of it. But that must not be. So John was instructed by the voice from heaven to write this, that it was specially blessed to die in the Lord's service, to confess His name in that hard way. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth."

And the effect was, that brave Christian men and women hesitated not to give their life to the Lord. They courted the stake. They went to it singing. They felt it to be an honor to suffer for him who had suffered the cross for them. Delicate women would face the lions even, and would feel it something like a privilege to be permitted to do it. Something like that was dying in the Lord. It thus seems to me clear that the text was a special promise for those persecuting times and the persecutions that were still to come, and the phrase, "from henceforth," confirms me in that opinion. It was a dark dire desolation-period, the Neronian persecution, and God's people needed more than ordinary comfort and help to stand it and overcome in it, and hence the voice from Heaven. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth."

But while I have not the least doubt that the primary reference of the text is to those who died for Christ in the cruel bitter persecutions of the early days of Christianity; still, it is written also for those who die in the Lord's service now, die in harness, as it were, die in the midst of work and usefulness for him, die perhaps through over-work for him, over-zeal in his cause, over-enthusiasm. And there are such deaths. Men and women are found, and not a few of them, who work themselves to death in a very real sense in serving the Master. The work seems to them so urgent, and the workers so few, that they do more than they are able to do, and so they do and die—die prematurely. You will say, "That is wrong!" And yet, in the face of the awful easy-going and self-seeking so widely

prevalent, it is rather a virtue than otherwise to work one's self to death in so grand a cause.

Men are doing it for dollars every day, and they are commended. I go into factories, and I find men at work where they breathe poison every breath they draw, and where they average only about ten years of work, and I ask them why they do it? And they tell me, somebody has to do it, and the pay is extra. Ah! shall the men of the world outstrip the followers of Jesus in self-sacrifice in the interests of gain? Perhaps it is not at all to our credit as workers, that the life-average of ministers is higher than any other profession. It may be our dishonor rather than otherwise. Looking at it in the light of the text, I am not so sure that we ought to live so long. I read: "And I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth!"

One thing is clear, at all events, and it is this, that no word of commendation is here for the christian who is having what we call an easy time of it—no enemies to hate him, no persecutions to hurt him, no evils of any kind to wage war against his life, and so he lives on and on long after every one but himself wishes he was dead. We may be altogether too sparing of ourselves, too anxious to live, and not half wasteful enough of our energies. When we find locomotive-drivers facing death with their hand on the lever; when we find men in the humblest and homeliest walks of life day by day working for bread for their children with death shadowing them, and well aware of it; when we find students in their devotion to study burning out with a reckless hand the lamp of their life as well as the midnight oil; it ill becomes us who are in the Lord's service, and himself one of the zeal-consumed;—I say, it ill becomes us to be so careful with regard to this poor life of ours. I say, let the secular press go on writing down that preacher as unworthy the name who turned his back on his duty because there was a little bit of life-risk connected with

it. His Master died young, zeal-consumed, work-wrecked—died before he was thirty-five; and why should the servant not die young, if it is in the way of his duty? I know there are two sides to this that I am trying to say, for we all want to live as long as we can, and we all ought to live as long as we can; but we may live too long for our good; we may live at the sacrifice of our duty; we may live when it would have been more to our credit, and more to the working out of our life-work if we had died.

Then we have a twofold reason given why it is blessed to die in the Lord: "They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

Death is thus rest, the sweetest sort of rest—rest from grinding toil and suffering. There are so many of the Lord's people, the choice ones of the earth, who have not only to work, but whose work is labor, toil, oppression. They are in deep poverty, and it is all they can do often to live. Thank God, there is very little of that, if any at all, in our city, and throughout our land, but the great cities are full of it, and it is a dreadful evil.

We talk about hard work, but we do not know much about it. If we had to work harder, it would be a good deal better for us; and if we were more pinched than we are for the necessities of life, we would be healthier and holier perhaps. How some have to work—work till every bone aches with tiredness. And yet they cannot make enough to provide themselves with even necessities. Thus the struggle goes on from day to day, through the years, until exhausted they sink into the grave. And some of them are as good as they can be, pious and prayerful, Christlike. What a deliverance for such, then, is death. It is rest—rest from their labors. They hail it as a boon from Heaven.

In John's times, as we have seen, it was hard to be a christian. Exposed to Nero's fury, languishing in exile, buried in dungeons, hiding in caves, mobbed on the streets, hunted like

wild beasts, hung up on crosses or thrown to the lions in the Coliseum, what a rest to those christians was death! "They rest from their labors," their friends said, and they were glad.

But we have none of that. To be a christian to-day is a recommendation rather than otherwise to a man. It does not stand in the way of his usefulness nor on-getting. On the contrary, it is to his advantage. Still, the christian to-day even has his own trials. And he needs them. The faithful earnest servant of Jesus is often wearied with his labors. Not a few to-day are over-worked, crushed with life's burdens, bowed down with griefs and sorrows and woes. Go into yonder sick chamber, and you find age and disease and poverty preying upon the wasted one. Oh how earnestly some are even now praying for death! And nothing can be done for them. All their friends can do is to stand by and see them wearily struggle on, wishing they were at rest. And the rest comes, the rest of the grave, the rest of Heaven. "They rest from their labors."

Then the other reason why it is blessed to die, is that their works do follow them, or as the Revised Version puts it, "their works follow with them."

The Christian cannot take his gold when he dies any more than the grasping worldling. He has to leave behind him, perhaps for others to abuse and ruin, all he has tried to do. He has been faithful, diligent, earnest. He has built up with his consecrated effort a good cause, but he has to leave it for others to carry on to still grander things. And sometimes it is better carried on by others than he could do it himself, very often indeed, but not always. Still, what he tried to do is not lost. No true life is lived in vain. It is a link in the great chain of events that is working out the world's future, and that future is to be better than the past has been. A good man's work thus goes on. Abraham's work goes on still, and Paul's, and John's. Abel still speaks. Moses still leads and legislates. Paul still preaches. Ten thousand mission-

aries are pushing His work farther and farther into the world's heathenism. In that sense, therefore, men's works follow on and thus perpetuate themselves. And that is a blessed thought where a man has tried so hard to do a good work. He can die and leave it, for he knows his work will live, and he himself will live on in it.

But it is rather this other thought that is uttered here, namely, that a Christian man carries with him into the unseen glory the reward of his work. He carries it with him in the shape of character, being, bliss. Your work is either making or marring you. Every man's work is doing that. Some men are being hardened, deadened, cursed. They are growing downward. They are building their own ruin, kindling the fires of their own hell, laying up for themselves wrath, ten-thousand scorpion stings that will lash them in the years and eons to come. We know how that is in this life. The fast youth, with his wild indulgence, is heaping up for himself an old age of disease and woe, that will make him groan a hundred groans for every laugh he has now. It does not pay, young man, to be bad, to be a drunkard and a debauchee. These sins of yours will seek you out in other days, and you will suffer for them.

On the other hand, the good man, in his efforts to be good and do good, is unconsciously laying up for himself, in the shape of a spiritual experience, character, growth, goodness, and so on, a joy to come, a blessedness yet to be revealed, a real Heaven. You think you are doing so little, and it is such a hard struggle to do even the little you are doing, but your reward will not be what you did so much as what you tried to do; it will be according to the amount of effort and energy you put into it. Oh the blessedness to feel and know through all the eternal eons, that we honestly tried to do the right and good; that when we were tempted, we yielded not, but flung it from us; that when we might have sought our own comfort and ease, we chose rather affliction with the people of God; and that when we might have had the world in our grasp, we reached after the world to come, the better life, the treasure in Heaven! "Yea saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow with them."

The End.

"But the end of all things is at hand."—I PETER IV. 7.

THE pilgrim to the Holy City sometimes comes to a hill-top, whence he has an extended view both of the way he has come and the way he has still to go; and, resting there for a little, and looking back over the weary past of his journey, he is able to retrace its windings, and recall the incidents that befell him on the way; and then turning his eyes forward so wistfully, he tries to make out the way he has to go, and wonders how many hill-tops still lie between him and his destination.

So with the pilgrim to the Celestial City, the New Jerusalem. To-night we have come to another of the hill-tops of life, and we feel like halting for a little in our mystic journey; in order that, on the one hand, we may look back over the way we have come, the years we have lived, the experiences we have experienced, and thus try to make out what the past has been to us and done for us, and out of its fast-fading memories keep something that will go with us down through the ages and be a joy to us; and in order that, on the other hand, we may

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look forward over the way still before us, and try to make out how it is going to be with us, what the way we have still to go is to be, and how many hill-tops may yet intervene, before the Shining City with its jasper walls bursts gloriously upon our astonished view.

Thus it seems to have been with the apostle when he penned the text. I see him standing high up on the hill of life, the dark background of the past still around him and upon him, his earnest face illuminated with the reflection of the coming glory. His weary pilgrimage is nearing its close. A few more hills to climb, a few more dark ravines to cross, a few more dangers to pass, the awful hour the Master told him of to endure, and then the Glory Eternal to enjoy. He knows that the closing scene is near. He feels it taking hold upon his soul. "Knowing," he says, "that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me."

And then, like so many other old men, he is about the last of a race that is fast passing away, and he knows and feels it. Jerusalem is still standing, and the smoke of her altars is still ascending heavenwards; but already the knell of her doom is being tolled, and the effete worn-out system of religion she represents is about to give place to the grander christian system. Already the birth-throes of a new order of things are upon the world, and a new era is struggling into being and taking shape. Hence, the aged Peter, standing yonder in the shadows of the old, with the light of the new breaking upon him, his holy soul lit up with inspiration, and beholding the old-world system of faith and ideas of things toppling to their fall, utters these profound words, "But the end of all things is at hand."

Now, there are here most seasonable and profitable reflections for all of us. Let me invite attention to some that strike me.

And first, reflect on the nature of this end that comes to all things. "But the end of all things is at hand."

Now, it strikes me that there is much confusion of thought and incorrectness of idea as to what the end of a thing is. And there need not be. We talk so much about the end of things, and we ought to know, and we think we do know, what we are talking about. But we may not have as clear ideas as we think we have.

The days end. The weeks end. The years end. The year 1881 is at an end. We undertake a work—the erection of a house perhaps, the construction of a railroad, the clearing up of a field, the putting in of a crop, the manufacture of a steam-engine, and by and by the work comes to an end. We go on a journey, and after travelling say twenty miles, or twenty thousand miles, we reach our destination, and our journey ends. We live our life, and in a few short years we die, and we call that the end.

But what do we mean by the end? Do we mean cessation, annihilation, extinction, utter destruction, a full stop that never starts again? Is it such an end that there is never again another beginning? No. The days and weeks and years end but to begin anew, and this goes on and on in an unending succession. We build a house, and when we have got it built we congratulate ourselves upon the successful end of our work. But a family moves into it, and what we called the end is but the beginning of a grander use for our work. We end one journey, but it may be we soon start out on another. We live our life and die, but there is something within us that tells us, and we believe it with all the faith we have, that death does not end all, that the grave is not the final goal of our good or ill. We know we shall not, we feel we cannot, cease to be, nor cease to think, remember, know, love, enjoy.

Science and scripture alike teach the doctrine of the conservation of energy. You take a piece of wood, and you cut it up. You know you have in the chips all you had in the block. Were you to weigh them, you would find them the

same weight. Now, burn the chips. You see smoke and flame going up, and after the fire goes out you have a handful of ashes. Your wood is gone. That is the end of it. But science says, No ; that is not the end of it. It has only changed its state. It still exists—every particle of it, and must exist on and on in some form and relation. If we could follow the history of the ashes and gases that the fire changed the wood into, we would find it all again, and perhaps serving a higher and grander purpose than it did when it was simply wood. So with everything. There is no end. The end of one state is the beginning of a new state.

Such is the teaching of modern science. And the Apostle teaches the same great doctrine here, if we understand him aright. It is not annihilation, this end of his ; not utter destruction ; not cessation, extinction. No. It is simply a change of state and a change of scene. This is abundantly clear from the fact that he urges men, in view of the end of all things, to prepare for the new state they are soon to enter upon. "But the end of all things is at hand ; be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves." And then in his next epistle, speaking on the same subject, he says : "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Thus it is clear, that

the end he speaks of is but the beginning of a new state of things. Out of the ashes of the old world are to arise, phoenix-like, new heavens and a new earth wherein, not sin shall riot, but righteousness and peace and love shall reign forever. Oh glorious end this for the sin-wrecked world!

Again, reflect further here on the character, the effect and extent, of this end that is to come to all things. From what I have said, you may infer that there is nothing that is worth calling an end, that it might with equal appropriateness be called a beginning, that in fact it is a blunder to talk about an end at all. It is only a sort of endless succession. The days and weeks and seasons and years and centuries and ages follow each other regularly and successively on and on forever. The sun has been rising and setting, rising and setting, since the days of Adam, and long before, until this day, and all this will go on and on throughout the eons to come.

And there are some who believe in the eternity of matter, and the eternal succession-theory, or rather the modern form of it, the doctrine of evolution. According to this theory, the matter, out of which everything that is has mysteriously evolved, was always in the universe, and by some wonder-working law or inherent potency, it has come to be what it is; and if it has come to be what it is by a potency all its own, what may it not come to be? And one of the boldest of modern materialists, Professor Tyndall, has the highest hopes of mere matter. He says, "I discern in matter the promise and potency of all terrestrial life."

But you and I, with our Bible-lamp in our hand to light the way for us, a safer and better light to guide than any that science can furnish the earnest truth-seeker with, can go back to a time when time was not, when matter existed not excepting in the potency of the Divine Wisdom and Will, when the sun-fires burned not, and when the worlds wheeled not in their mighty orbits. We can find our way clear back to the beginning of things, and we find nothing there but God.

And if there was a beginning to all this that we see, may there not come a time, near or far, when there shall be an end? It seems to me, that these ends we are ever coming to—these day-ends, and week-ends, and year-ends, and life-ends, are—or ought to be—prophecies to us of an end that is the end. But we need not reason. We need not grope or guess. Our wondrous Bible-lamp shines forward to the end of things, as well as backward to the beginning of things, and it tells us that the end of all things is coming, yea, is at hand. It shews us in its awful pages the worlds on fire, the heavens and earth a melting boiling chaotic mass, the stars falling and the vast sun-fires extinguished, and all this state of things forever ended. Of course, its light streams beyond all that, and lets us see new heavens and a new earth glorious with God's glory where the old used to be. But between this and that there stretches a terrible chasm, a gulf wide and deep, right across the continuity of things, the pleasing dreamy succession-theory. That terrible chasm, that awful gulf, constituting the boundary between time and eternity, is the END.

And it is the end of all things—all things. Nothing escapes its destructive effects. It opens right across men's wishes and hopes, their pleasures and treasures, their boasted names and hoarded gains, their farms and firms, their workshops and warehouses, their cottages and palaces, their temples and tombs, and all that is of the earth, earthy, goes down engulfed in the world's fiery burial never to have a resurrection. Oh happy happy those whose life-woes are among the things that are burned up—that the end shall end!

Then again, reflect here that the end is at hand. "But the end of all things is at hand."

"At hand"—that has perplexed, and still perplexes many. Two thousand years have all but run out since Peter spoke of the end at hand, and the end is not yet, and moreover it seems as remote as ever. And so men have begun to theorize as to the end referred to. They have sought for it in the winding

up of the old dispensation and the destruction of Jerusalem. And undoubtedly that was an end; an end to old-world ideas and opinions; an end so wide-sweeping and thorough in its effects upon the world that then was, that it might not be inaptly called the end of all things. And possibly Peter does refer to that event here. I would not like to say he does not. We know that the Lord continually associated together the two events, the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. When He spoke of the one event He usually spoke of the other, and sometimes it is not easy to say what belongs to the one event and what belongs to the other. And Peter heard those thrilling discourses of the Lord, as they came warm from his heart, emphasized with tears, and punctuated with sighs, and they must have made a deep impression on his mind. Hence, it is not impossible to suppose that he does refer to the destruction of Jerusalem here, which was only a few years off at the time the words were written.

And then there are some others who get round the difficulty here in this way. They suggest that as far as the Apostle was concerned, and as far as you and I are concerned, the end of all things is at hand. But to my mind that is only a smart and easy way of avoiding a confessedly perplexing question. Such a suggestion is no satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

For my part, I feel that there is nothing for us but to accept the idea of the end here. I cannot think that the Apostle refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in what he says. At all events, that idea does not explain all. It may be an element in it; it may even bulk largely before the mind of one who was the apostle of the Jews, and whose sympathies and prejudices were intensely Jewish. But the end here is not the end of Judaism only. It is the end of all things;—the end of all the isms as well as Judaism;—the end of the politics, philosophies, religions, businesses, and follies, that have figured so largely in the history of the world;—in a word, the final winding up of all mundane affairs. There was a time far back

when the world as a world was not, and it seems to me that there is going to come a time again when the world as a world will be no more. That will be the end, and it is of that, whatever it may be, that the Apostle speaks here.

But then in what sense can it be said to be at hand? Eighteen hundred and eighty one years of the christian era have gone by, and the end is not yet, and we can hardly say even now that it is at hand.

Now, there are some considerations that must be taken into account in understanding and explaining such indefinite expressions as this one here and elsewhere in scripture.

First, we must remember that Peter was speaking prophetically, and not only for his time, but for our times, and for times still later than ours—for all time.

Secondly, he himself gives us a rule in his next epistle for the calculation of the times of the end, and from that rule we learn that much latitude must be allowed for such prophetic expressions as a day, a year, at hand, and so on. He says, with a view to put believers on their guard when assaults would be made on the chronology of the Bible with regard to the end: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Then thirdly, men's ideas of time differ in different ages, and with different individuals. We use time-terms relatively too. Sometimes we say at hand, when we mean not more than an hour off; and sometimes we might say at hand, speaking of something that would not occur till Anno Domini 4000. Thus, such modifying considerations as those I have mentioned, must be taken into account in rightly understanding this phrase—at hand.

This is clear, however, the end of all things is rapidly approaching, and it may be nearer than we think it is. We are living far down in the history of the world. The fulness of the time is a long way past now. The last times are upon us,

and we are being rushed onward at a tremendous rate of speed to that fearful gulf, that lies right across our track, and the track of all things, THE END. It seems too that the world is going far faster than it used to go. We cannot take time to-day to travel by coach as our forefathers did; we must shoot along on the fastest train. We can hardly wait on the daily mail; we have to telegraph and telephone. We do business fast. We make money fast, and we spend it fast. We grow up fast. We learn fast. We live fast and die fast. We want to rush everything to-day, and we are impatient that we cannot get along still faster. Now, this rush must mean that the end is at hand. Already its sweep is around us, and its influence is taking hold upon us. The train of time is on the down-grade now, and on we must rush, till there is the final crash, and the world goes up in a vast universal conflagration, and affrighted millions shriek wildly, "The end of all things is come at last! The End! The End!" And then, where once labor clanged, and the babel of tongues clamored, and joy laughed aloud, and sorrow sobbed and sighed, and anguish groaned, and woe wailed, and a world worked out with herculean effort its vast destiny, there is the hush of death forever.

Now for some practical life-lessons in view of the end at hand.

And first, "Be sober," says the aged Peter. He exhorts the generations living away on towards the end—and we are living there—to be grave, thoughtful, wise, earnest, God-fearing, devout, pious; not giddy, gay, frivolous, foolish, reckless, thoughtless, silly. And yet, the frivolousness and foolishness of these times of ours, the levity and laxity of the age, the giddiness and gaudiness of to-day, the general want of that gravity and earnestness which should characterize those who live so near the end, and the reckless impiety that alarmingly prevails now, are marked features. The faster the world wheels onward to the end, the faster seemingly the feet of the

giddy dancers trip, and the faster down the throat of fools flows the maddening drink. O men, be sober!

But you will say, "Should we be always grim, and dark-browed, and heavy-hearted?" No. The Master wants us to be joyous, hopeful, blissful. The Apostle stands yonder on the verge of a dark future, world-quaking events looming up and lowering before him, an awful death reaching out its ghastly ghostly arms to take hold of him; and, from his lofty prophetic outlook as the world's watchman, he can see the awful funeral pyre of the earth's doom, and, lifting up his earnest voice he cries to men down through the ages, "The end of all things is at hand!" But he fears not. His words are not the wail of despair. They have the ring of joy and hope in them. See! his face gleams with glory, and peace and hope dwell in his calm soul. He is safe in Jesus, and no hurt can come to him. And then, far across the end-gulf he can see a new earth and new heavens, and the King in His beauty; and he knows that there he shall reign.

O men of the world, weep and howl, for the world is your all, and it shall be burned up. Across the ages a voice comes to you to-night. Listen! "But the end of all things is at hand."

Ye people of God, rejoice! rejoice! Your salvation is near. The days of sorrow and sighing are all but over. Soon shall break upon your soul the glad light of eternity. Wake up, and take hold of life's duties anew. These are earnest times we are living in, and we must not sleep. Be sober, watch and pray unto the end. You are weary, disheartened, crushed. But the Apostle would cheer you, and stimulate your flagging energies, and so he rings out this joyous peal: "The end of all things is at hand!"

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