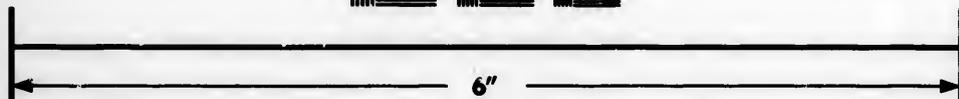
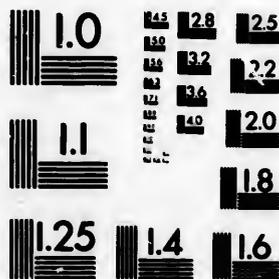


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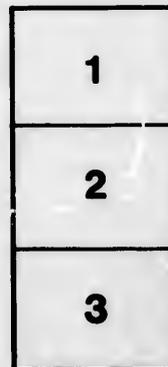
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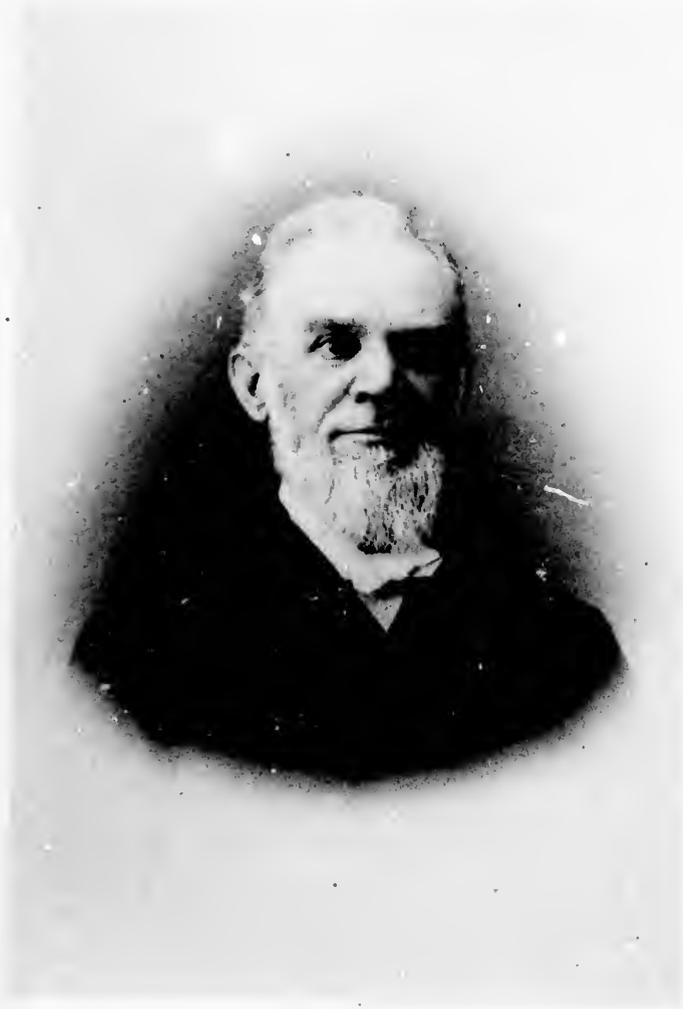
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THE
WEAVING OF CHARACTER,
AND
OTHER SERMONS AND ADDRESSES.

BY

G. M. MEACHAM,

Pastor of Union Church, Yokohama, Japan.

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN:
THE YOKOHAMA BUNSHA.

1897.

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ANNEX
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*To my dear people in Yokohama, from whom
till now in the tenth year of my pastorate I
have received many tokens of confidence and
love, and to many valued friends of former
years in Canada, this volume is affectionately
dedicated.*

15,242

8/10/1902

PREFACE.

THIS volume appears for the reason that the author has been occasionally solicited to publish single sermons, and lately has been urged to give to the Church a collection of them. It is owing to the persuasions of several friends that his portrait finds here a place.

This is a sincere attempt to help sinful, suffering men to Christ and heaven. These sermons have been composed at different times during a ministry, which has already lasted more than two-score years. Some were written long ago, some very recently. They have all been preached except the one entitled, "God's Ancient People," the substance of which appeared in the columns of one of the daily papers in this city.

It will be observed that in none of these sermons, with perhaps one exception, is there an attempt to prove the truths of revelation. It is the conviction of the author that the Gospel needs simply to be preached. There are always some who are feeling after Christ, if haply they may find Him. And it would delight the writer, more than gold or silver, if he knew his book was instrumental in leading some to Christ, and in building up others in their most holy

faith. How high the honour and distinguished the privilege of being used by the Holy Spirit to make unseen realities tangible to men, and to assist those who have an occasional taste of transcendent good into its perpetual enjoyment! Would that we, Christian people, more and more discerned the Lord's body, not only at the Table of the Lord, but also in the breaking of bread at the daily meal, heard the sound of His stately step-pings not only in the Sanctuary, but also in the movements of the events of every-day life, and felt His presence not merely in an occasional visit, but in His perpetual abiding in our hearts!

Errors have crept in or escaped scrutiny. *Inter alia* are the following: of punctuation, notably in the title of the sermon on page 63; of spelling, "gainsayed" for "gainsaid" on page 98; and of words, as in "nature" for "nations" on page 140, and of "Hezekiah" for "Uzziah" on page 268.

Thanks are hereby heartily rendered to the Rev. H. H. Coates, M.A., B.D., of the Central Tabernacle, Tokyo, for much assistance in selecting with painstaking care from among many sermons those that appear here, and to Geo. Braithwaite Esq., of the British and Foreign Bible Society, for the correction of proof.

This volume goes forth with the earnest prayer that God will use it for His own glory and the salvation of men. May He, without whom nothing is good or wise or strong, vouchsafe His selectest blessing!

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CHARACTER-WEAVING.

"I have cut off like a weaver my life."—Isaiah xxxviii: 12.

Unquestionably our Lord established His Church in the world with the object of saving men from sin and its consequences; but He has had in view ulteriorly the ennoblement and perfection of the character of those who have been saved from the guilt of sin. Pardon is a great blessing, and salvation in heaven is a glorious destiny. But he who is content with the knowledge that he is forgiven, and with a hope of entering heaven at last, is, I believe, mistaken in his conception of the nature of religion, and has failed to appreciate the claims of God upon him.

To purify, to build up, to strengthen, to perfect character is a great end of the Christian scheme. For this Christ gave Himself "that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." For this, too, the Scriptures were given "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." For this He has instituted the ministry: "the perfecting of the saints, the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

How the Apostle labours in these passages to express the lofty conception he has of the Christian privilege!

Now, how is this lofty character attained? Not without intelligent, well-directed effort. By no random strokes, by no careless, indifferent courses, much less by sinful ways, shall men reach perfection. Sometimes we are represented as *growing* like branches of a vine; sometimes as being *built* upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; but here life is described under the figure of *weaving*. Browning makes his poor organist ask Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha,

"Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?"

as if he thought the figure inadequate. And so doubtless it is; yet may we find in it some lessons helpful to the formation of Christian character.

The loom can lay claim to a venerable antiquity, and in past times was regarded as a very important part of household furniture, as we see in the word *heir-loom*, applied to what was handed down. We find the weaver assisting in constructing the tabernacle in the wilderness. Of course the loom of early times was very simple in its construction; but the most elaborate looms of this age do not differ in their fundamental principle from the most ancient. The warp is fastened in the loom, and into the warp the web is woven. Now that which is woven is our character; the warp is the nature, physical, mental, and moral, with which we are originally endowed; and the loom is the system of

things into which we are born, and our social environment. Spinning goes before weaving to produce a strong, clear, distinct thread. This is the first requirement of weaving. The materials are the everyday happenings as we regard them, the opportunities of self-improvement, of doing good to others, and of divine worship. Circumstances are the material of which the thread is composed, given of God to weave into our character. He supplies it, as in a large factory the proprietor supplies the cotton or wool. According as we deal with it, it is weak or strong, light or dark. The spirit with which we regard it gives it its dye.

God has fixed the loom, and arranged firmly the strings of the warp. The work of filling in the web is assigned to each of us. Whether it shall be full of "slazy spoils," rotten threads, and unsightly tangles, or present a surface of solid workmanship without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, remains, humanly speaking, with us. Each thought, each feeling, each word, each action, is our dealing with the material God has furnished us, and is a thread woven into character. We are ever weaving, weaving, weaving the unfinished robe we wear and must ever wear. Though a million should have nearly the same materials, the work of each will be his own individual product. And this product will be different from that of every one else, because in an important sense it is woven out of his own substance, as the spider weaves its web or the snail its shell. Thus are we the weavers of our own character, and of our own everlasting destiny, because character decides destiny. Thus Dr. Morley Punshon :

“ Each spirit weaves the robe it wears
From out life's busy loom,
And common tasks and daily cares
Make up the threads of doom.”

It is evident, then, that our character and destiny are in our own hands. By the use we make of circumstances, by the motives, passions, energies, influences, which we bring to bear upon them, we shall either carry out the plan of God concerning us, or, frustrating that plan, carry out the purposes of our great adversary. If we work out what God's Spirit works within us, we shall have a *habit of living*, in the double sense, which to the spiritually-minded will appear beautiful. The loveliest dress that a human being can wear is the robe of righteousness. No one fails to see its beauty when it is worn; while an abstract Christianity is neither beautiful nor useful, for it is like a garment, which, however elegant and becoming, loses its beauty and symmetry when hung up in the wardrobe.

The pattern, by which we are to work, is found in the Holy Scriptures. There we find the examples of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, and especially that of our Lord who has set us an example that we should follow His steps. There we shall find rules for the conduct of life and promises of the gracious aid of the Spirit; by careful regard to which we may become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Don't find fault with your materials. Don't quarrel with the allotments of Providence. Accept the universe and all that concerns you. God has done for you

what is best. Use these materials, whatever be their colour or kind, bearing in mind that they are of no value to you till you turn them into holy and manly and Christian character. Every act is a thread which helps "to make dispositions; while dispositions make habits, and habits make character." Be careful and painstaking. Count nothing small which honours or dishonours your Lord.

Three things especially are required in character-weaving. (1) *Work in the spirit of prayer.* This is well illustrated in the story of a little girl, who was a weaver in the King's palace. She was patient and cheerful in her humble toil, so that her fellow-workers, wondering at the smoothness of her work and the brightness of her spirits, questioned her as to how she managed to do so well. Her reply was that she took her troubles always to the King. "So do we take them to him every week," said they. "But I," said she, "go to get the knot untied at the first little tangle." Oh, how much trouble and how many tears we should be spared, did we carry to the Lord, our King, all our troubles and cares as soon as we begin to suffer from them! (2) *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* The character of Christ is supremely beautiful. Faith in Him is at the foundation of Christian character. The believer finds in Him the law of his life, the law of love. Faith is a living principle; it works, and works by love. Through faith the perfect law enters in and becomes the law of the mind and heart. Work has an object, great and glorious; it becomes frictionless, prevents the waste of energy, and becomes pervaded with the spirit of wor-

ship; and character is thus transfigured into beauty and joy. Not however, without, (3) *Meditation and self-examination*. We must take time for reflection upon the great doctrines of God's Word, walk abroad in the fields of divine and sanctifying truth, and climb the hills of holy promise. And we must know ourselves. Well says pious Herbert :

“ Sum up by night what thou hast done by day,
And in the morning what thou hast to do ;
Dress and undress thy soul ; mark the decay
And growth of it : if with thy watch, that too
Be down, then wind up both ; since we shall be
Most surely judged, make thy accounts agree.”

These counsels faithfully followed will make life serious, but at the same time fill it with holy joy.

Much of the value of our work is impaired by *reverie*, which we mistake for thought. We forget our pattern, scarcely consider our work, stain the woof with idle tears, weave the tissue wrongly, break our threads and tangle them, and a web of fear and doubt and gloom gives proof of wandering thought and careless endeavour. But all the while, whether we are careless or careful, the shuttle is ceaselessly plying, and the textile fabric is reaching to its close. Aside from that of our blessed Lord, who only could say, “ I have finished (accomplished) the work Thou gavest me to do,” no human being's work has been perfect. One of the French lords in “ All's well that ends well ” puts it thus, speaking for multitudes : “ The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together : our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not, and our crimes

would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues."

We are plainly guilty of *worse than reverie*. Our mother tongue testifies against us. Trench observes in his "Study of Words:" "What dark and sombre threads man must have woven into the very tissue of his life, before we can trace such dark ones running through the tissue of his language." Take the word "*hypocrite*." Before the word was made, the hypocritical character existed. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish; his trust shall be a spider's web" (Job viii. 13, 14). The spider is his emblem. Arachne, a Lydian maiden, challenges Minerva to compete with her in needle tapestry. This so offends Minerva that when Arachne kills herself she turns her into a spider. Arachne means "a spider," but the spider's web is broken by a touch, and his labour comes to naught. The righteousness of the hypocrite is only a gossamer of outward forms. Whittier nobly sings of

" The cunning trickster and knave of courts,
Who the holy features of truth distorts,
O leave the wretch to his bribes and sins,
Let him rot in *the web of lies he spins!*"

The web of falsehood and fraud that the hypocrite spins may suffice to entangle him therein, so that, clever rogue though he may be, all his wit will not extricate him; certainly it will not avail as a wedding-garment on that day when the King comes in to see His guests.

Then there is *inconsistency*. How often the inconsistent man, Christian or otherwise, weaves well and faithfully for a while, and then undoes all that he has

done by an act glaringly incongruous with the past. Penelope, whose husband had been away for a long time and was reported dead, would not believe him dead; and when many suitors sought her hand, she begged them to wait until she had finished the web she was then weaving. To give time for her husband's return she undid each night what she had woven in the day, and so beguiled her suitors till he had safely returned. I do not say that she was inexcusable. But what shall we say of those who neutralize by their conduct the good effect of the better portion of their life? A man endeavours to lead a sinner to Christ, but ever and anon displays a disposition of irritability, or censoriousness, or covetousness, or pride, thwarting by one course of action what he has endeavoured to accomplish by another. A father seeks to train his child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by occasional teaching, by the influence of the family altar and the Sabbath School, but by capriciousness of temper, indulging and permitting to-day what to-morrow he punishes, undoes, without designing it, the effects of his sincere effort. In a sense he unweaves what he has woven.

Finally, there is *backsliding*. Tennyson sings of "The Lady of Shalott:"

" There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott."

A mirror is before her, in which are imaged pictures of the world without, pictures which she weaves into her web. Thus she passed her life weaving at her magic loom, under a curse which she did not understand, when on a sudden came her doom. The bold Sir Lancelot came riding past. She saw him in all his glory reflected in her mirror, and then

“ She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide,
The mirror cracked from side to side;
‘ The curse is come upon me,’ cried
The Lady of Shalott.”

I take this beautiful poem, which carries with it much larger significance, and use it simply as an illustration of many, who having wrought well at their life-work, under the impulse of passion look down to towered Camelot, towards which their eyes were forbidden to turn, and on them comes the curse of which they had been forewarned. Many have not done thus whose names the world will never forget. But alas! how many more, weaving faithfully at the loom where God has placed them, in an evil hour have left their providential work and brought a strange blight upon their lives. How some day they will weep and wail when the web with its tangles and “slazy spots” is brought into the account of eternity!

But as for the faithful Christian, who labours to perfect in himself the noblest manhood, and aspires to be like

Christ, how often is he cast down with a sense of utter failure! How unfinished and full of tangles seems the web of his character and life! Let him have for his encouragement that it is like a piece of tapestry which in the process of weaving has the wrong side turned toward the weaver; and only God sees the right side. I visited a silk factory in Kyoto where they manufacture elegant silk brocades. On the side of the operative were the rude loom, spools of thread and the fabric with its wrong side of irregular lines and ends of threads and knots and hanging skeins; and there he sat glancing at his pattern and weaving with his shuttles. To be sure it did not seem possible with such means to work out a charming picture. Yet I soon discovered my mistake, for I was permitted to look on the other side, and oh, what marvels of delicacy and grace—a stork standing among reeds, sprays of feathery bamboo, and a butterfly on a spray of cherry-blossom! The weaver had only to follow obediently the pattern placed before him, and patiently hope unto the end. You and I are weavers, my brother. We weave in the shadow. We see only the loose threads, the tangles and knots, the rough and irregular outlines. But if we are faithful, we are weaving better than we know. And by and by God will shew us what we have done, and fill us with wonder as we find that our poor, unequal and often unfaithful labour has been transformed into pictures of exquisite and immortal beauty. Weave on, my brother, my sister, weave on, weave on!

The end will come. The shuttle flies fast (Job vii. 6). The web will soon be complete. The thread is

always passing, and the pattern we are weaving goes on through all our conscious hours. In the context we read, "He will cut me off with pining sickness," or in the margin "from the thrum," as the weaver cuts off the ends of the warp from the ties when the web is finished. The Greeks imagined the mystic Parcae—Clotho holding the distaff, Lachesis using the spindle, and Atropos applying the fatal scissors to spin and cut the thread of this mystic web.

"But listen, listen day by day to hear their tread
Who bear the finished web away and cut the thread,
And bring God's message in the sun,
Thou poor lone weaver 'Work is done.'"

Soon all will be over, and nothing remain save our work. The web will then be inspected; the microscope will be applied. All other results of the loom wear out, but character *never*. In that day reputation will be nothing; character everything. In the brightness of a light surpassing the most resplendent noon-tide, it will be examined, and that examination will decide eternal destiny, whether it will be heaven or hell.

To apply

1. *Choose your pattern wisely.* Shall it be the Lord Jesus, or some one else? Read carefully, slowly, prayerfully, and self-applyingly the story of His life, and you will long to resemble Him, and reflect His mind and spirit in all your bearing. Else the web shall be ill-woven, of poor texture, full of unsightlinesses. Make Him your pattern and keep Him before you; and no matter how moods may vary, how you may tire of

monotonous neutral tints and long for more vivid colouring, or how you may weary of rough textures and wish they were finer and rarer, "gaze and gaze till on your spirit grows the gracious imprint, till the face of love transferred upon your canvas brightly glows." Rather than tire of the darkest colours, rejoice because they are needful for the gayest effects, and the best results are often accomplished while we weep. And in that day of days, for which all other days are made, when every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is, and the web shall be exposed to the gaze of the universe, what delight shall be ministered to the love of mystery and unity inherent in human nature, as men behold the apparent maze, and see running through all the seeming confusion the guiding clue, the unifying principle, of the lofty aim to be like Him, who hath set us an example that we should follow His steps.

2. *This work of character-weaving on right principles should begin early.* Care and plan and principle, early established, will be of infinite value in the formation of character. For though difficult at first, the formation of good habits afterwards will be as easy as of bad ones. Early good weaving is almost certain to insure it all the way through. A lesson here for parents. Your example rather than your words, your children will follow. Your spirit flows into them through eye and ear and every spiritual sense. Your irritations will irritate them, and your dissimulations will make them deceitful. As you are, so are they likely to be. If you are rough, malicious, or covetous, so they. As you

weave and what you weave, they will too. It will largely depend upon you whether they walk in white, here and above, or not.

3. *Woman has much to do with character-weaving in the home.* In the old time the spinning was usually done by the younger girls of the family, hence called spinners. But weaving was the work of matrons, and it is perpetuated in the dear word "wife," which has a common root with "weaver" and "woof." And "wife" means "weaver." The rise of the great factories has done away with the family loom, but the word "wife" remains to remind us of her duty of faithful toil for the family, and of weaving such a character as will be a fine example for her children, while by her tact and love she labours to weave together into closest unity the hearts of all her household.

4. One concluding thought. It is sometimes a matter of pain to us that our lives are broken and fragmentary. We are now engaged at this, now at that; now here, now there. It may help to reconcile us if we remember that the principle of fidelity to Christ unifies the most broken and apparently disordered life. The life of faith and holy obedience is like a piece of arras of the olden time, made up of a thousand shreds, each of which is without significance, but all of them put together in their true relations represent a beautiful historical picture.

But we have been considering a single loom without regard to the untold number of other looms, which are ceaselessly at work. Joseph Cook quotes Goethe as saying that the sound of the spindles in Manchester was

the most poetic sound of the century. And Carlyle asks, "Have you ever listened to the awakening of Manchester in Old England at half past five o'clock? Ten thousand times ten thousand looms and spindles all set moving like the broom of an Atlantic tide. It is, if you think of it, sublime as Niagara, or more so." But there are 1,500,000,000 human looms going all the time, and God watching all of them. What if we could hear them all at work? Humboldt thought that the ripple of the rising sap in trees would be music to lower animals. What if we had a microphone to hear all the looms, which are working in human beings! Should we not hear some high, calm, spheric anthem, not without discords, which delights the ears of angels and of God? We are in the presence of a great thought. Perhaps in the view of it we shall be fully reconciled to the fragmentariness of our lives. God has a large scheme which embraces all human history, and that scheme would be incomplete without my life and yours. Helen Hunt Jackson makes her "Blind Spinner" say

"I know not why, but I am sure that tint and place,
In some great fabric to endure past time and race,
My threads shall have."

"In some great fabric to endure." I have read of an Indian shawl made up of hundreds of pieces, some so small as to be only an eighth of an inch square, others of various sizes, none larger than a square half-yard. Each bit, even the smallest, formed a part of the pattern, and all were so beautifully joined together that it was impossible to find the joining. High up above us all

sits One at an invisible loom, weaving together with infinite skill the product of our several lives. The Mystic Weaver knows both what each separate contribution will be, and what share it will have in the great result. How cheering to remember that He, in whose hands are the loom and warp and woof of each and all, is the infinite and gracious Father, who loves us with a boundless and everlasting love. A sable background there is of nature's afflictive elements; there are also tempters and temptations, the horrors of primeval savagery, the dark and revolting features of civilization, the serf and the tyrant, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, the pitiless Pharisee devouring widows' houses, the lust and pride and cruelty of man. But dark as the background is, it is flowered all over with pictures of exquisite loveliness, of grandeur and majesty, of righteousness and holiness: the good deed shining in a naughty world; the actions of the just, which smell sweet and blossom in the dust; virtue stainless amid sorest temptations; the mother dying for her child; the son living for his parents, and for their sake renouncing all other love; time redeemed from sloth for the sake of humanity and God; love that cleaves to an unworthy object when all goodness seems to have died out of him; the high heroic devotion of the patriot; the faith that staggers not at the promises of God through unbelief, though nature and reason seem to throw the lie in the face of God; the victories of an indomitable will over all but insurmountable obstacles. It is with deeds and graces and virtues like these that the web of human history is glorified.

" When shall this wonderful web be done ?
In a thousand years, perhaps, or one ;
Or to-morrow who knoweth ? Not thou nor I ;
But the wheels turn on, and the shuttles fly."

Blessed be God ! we are workers together with Him.

SOWING AND REAPING.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Galatians vi. 7, 8.

Poets and philosophers have traced so many correspondences between the world of matter and the world of spirit as to warrant the conclusion that the Author of Revelation is the Author of Creation. Hence it is that the apostle makes use of nature for the illustration of spiritual truth. Kepler finely says: "While the tongue of the Almighty is speaking to us in His Word, His finger is writing to us in His works." The two volumes of nature and revelation are studied with advantage together, for the laws which govern the one are found to rule in the other. The image of the harvest is found in all the Holy Writings from the promise to Noah that seedtime and harvest should never fail, down to the apocalyptic vision of One like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown and in His hand a sharp sickle, thrusting His sickle into the earth and reaping, for "the harvest of the earth is ripe."

There is one great law which holds in nature that *as one sows so one reaps*. Does this obtain also in the

world of spirit? Yes; as when a man would reap wheat he must sow wheat and not some other grain, so if a man would reap a fine social, intellectual, moral or spiritual harvest, he must sow the right kind of seed. We don't live in a chance-world. Both in the world of nature and in the world of spirit this principle invariably holds. It is as true of time as of eternity, and of eternity as of time. What spring is to autumn, youth is to advanced years, and life-time to eternity—the seedtime for the harvest. We are all sowing, reaping first-fruits in after years, but gathering in the harvest in eternity. Let us see how the general principle works. The great law is that of cause and effect. The study of mathematics will not make a poet, nor will the earnest pursuit of the physical sciences conduce to the development of a good shoemaker. If a young man gives himself to the study of arithmetic and book-keeping he is preparing for the counting-house, not for the profession of the architect. Our character each moment is the resultant of all the past, just as a river at any given stage in its progress is the product of the various kinds of soil through which it has come, and of the streams which have swollen its volume. Thus our character, like the river, never continues for one moment in one stay. What we think, feel, say, or do affects it somewhat, swells its sum total, and sends it on with mightier momentum into the future. To recur to the figure of our text, we are ever sowing for the future and reaping from the past.

Note this, also, that sin, which may have its pleasure at first, is always attended subsequently with suffering and pain. Suffering always sounds a note of warning :

“Don't sin ; if you sin you must suffer.” Conscience foreshadows the day of doom. Memory retains indestructibly every event of the past, graven as in eternal adamant. Cain may go out from the presence of the Lord to the land of Nod, he may betake himself to the building of a city and of lofty structures, and may mount to the highest storey, but he cannot escape the haunting vision of murdered Abel. Herod may adopt what creed he pleases ; he may believe with the Sadducees that there is no resurrection, no spirit, no future ; but when the fame of Jesus reaches him his scepticism vanishes, and he cries “ This is John the Baptist ; he is risen from the dead.” The conscience and memory of the sinner constitute a great torment. It is a merciful provision of the government of God to prevent earth from becoming a very pandemonium.

Man is a unit, but he is made up of intellect, sensibilities—natural and moral—and will. From his many-sided nature flow as many streams. As there are many different kinds of good and evil behaviour, so there are many different kinds of pleasure and pain, each kind of behaviour having its own appropriate pleasure or pain. Nature is very careful to observe strictly the law of sowing and reaping, of cause and effect, in her distribution of rewards and punishments. Murder is not punished with loss of health, nor avarice and self-seeking with physical pain. Indolence and low-thoughtedness may not know the pleasures they forfeit ; but receive they must the precise penalty which is their due. Virtue will not have for its benison an ecstatic thrill of the nerves, nor is holiness recompensed

with vigorous health. Every virtue has its own sort and measure of reward, and every vice receives its exact share and kind of penalty. "Every seed yields fruit after his kind." Rewards and punishments are simply the effects of certain lines of conduct, which are their active causes. Virtues and vices in the same man do not cancel one another, as equal factors in the divisor and dividend of a problem in arithmetic. They are all actively working out their appropriate results. The head of a family may have the sincere attachment of every member of his household, and at the same time the cordial dislike of many in the community, for the reason that he may have every endearing quality as a family man, while his business habits are highly reprehensible. Prosperity is not the measure of a man's worth, nor adversity a proof that he lacks in moral qualities. Character, which is really the sum total of the man,—and corresponds to the estimate put upon him in the exchange of heaven,—is enriched by every act of virtue, or tarnished and enfeebled by every immoral act, or thought, or feeling, or word.

It is obvious, then, that within certain limitations man becomes what he sets his heart on being. Only sow the seed that will produce the kind of harvest you wish to reap, and your success is sure. What is the harvest you would reap? Is it wealth, honour, literary distinction, high moral character, supreme devotion to Christ? Sow the appropriate seed and the result may be depended upon. It may require a vast amount of painstaking application, but the end will in due time be reached. Let no one, therefore, who has spent his time

foolishly in youth, complain if he is now reaping the result in poverty, mental degradation and the contempt of his fellows. He has staked his all upon the pleasures of youth without a serious thought of the solemnity of life, and has lost—who shall say how much? Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. It is true you may find, even if you are honest and truthful and pure, that you will not attain high positions in life, and it may seem to you that your interpretation of the passages, "Godliness is profitable unto all things," and "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," has been incorrect, and that your case is an exception to the rule of the text. It is only in *seeming*. The texts are true. You reap what you sow. What you *are*, not what you *have*, is the harvest you reap. "It is not true that the wicked as such prosper, and the righteous as such are afflicted. It may happen so, but it is not the rule." "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things"—proper, right, necessary,—"*shall* be added." "Godliness *is* profitable unto" both worlds. Your life is in the hands of God, who here and hereafter renders to all according to their works. If there appears to be an arbitrariness on the part of God's government, it is only apparent, not real. He deals with men according to their predominant desires, granting them what most they long for, and withholding from them what they will not be at the pains of seeking.

Yet many imagine that in the sowing time of youth they can do what they please, provided they turn over

a new leaf when they are older. They call this life of shameful riot "sowing wild oats," forgetting that what they sow they must reap. And many vainly dream that they can give their hearts to the world while they are young, and with the same facility give them to God when they come to be old. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked." If I see a young man spending his seed-time in indolence, lounging about saloons, consorting with the low and mean, I know that he is deceiving himself or being deceived, and that there is more hope of a fool than of him. Lord Shaftesbury stated in a public meeting in London that from personal observation he had ascertained that of adult male criminals of that city nearly all had fallen into a course of crime between the ages of eight and sixteen years; and that if a young man lived an honest and pure life up to twenty years of age, there were forty-nine chances in his favour, and only one against him as to an honourable life thereafter. Certainly a parent should exercise absolute control over the child under sixteen. Hence the real source of ninety-eight *per cent.* of the crime in a country is the unfaithfulness of parents. Make your homes, ye parents, more attractive than the street, the saloon, the circus, the theatre, the dance-house. Or else expect to reap the consequences of neglecting to keep the vineyard of your boy's heart, which God has entrusted to your care.

Understand, then, how irresistibly this law works, giving back to us just what we sow, only a great deal more, thirty-fold, sixty-fold, a hundred-fold. The wind sown, the whirlwind reaped. From small plantings, large results. A man may become rich by wrong doing.

He is respected by many. He has all that money can purchase, and some may think it strange that God should allow him thus to prosper. But money is what he has toiled for, and being skilful in his methods it was natural that he should prosper. Alas! the price he paid down was a seared conscience, and the harvest reaped is a ruined soul. He reaps what he sows. Another, a man of high integrity, will aim at success in his business, but not at the price of dishonesty; if he cannot have it without resorting to unscrupulous methods he will not have it at all; but as he has forecast and looks above for guidance he has success and a good conscience. He too reaps what he has sowed. A third is a Christian man, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Though conscious of pardon and assured by the witness of the Spirit that he is a child of God, he finds in his heart tendencies to evil, inclinations to wrong dispositions, inordinate affections, and sometimes impatience of the holy restraints of religion and disinclination to religious duties, which often lead to wandering of heart, inconsistency of life, and actual sin against God. Convicted by the Holy Spirit of his need of full salvation, instructed in the way of holiness, he presents himself a living sacrifice to God, engages solemnly in the strength of grace to have done with sin forever, and trusts in his Almighty Saviour to cleanse him from sin and to fill him, like Barnabas, with faith and the Holy Ghost. His heart is thrown open for the Divine entrance and inworking, and according to his faith it is done. He has peace passing understanding, joy unspeakable and full of glory. He has now fulness of life,

of light, of faith, of love, exceedingly abundantly above what he had asked or thought, because he has received the fulness of the Holy Spirit. Henceforth he dwells in love, for he dwells in God, who is love, and God dwells in him. He too reaps what he sows. His temporal circumstances occupy a very subordinate place in his regards. "First things first"—God's kingdom and righteousness are of paramount importance; he takes care of God's affairs and God takes care of his.

There are blessed compensations in the good man's life, though that life has been one of apparent failure. He has been above all dishonourable tricks and politician's arts, above all scheming and intriguing; he has stood by truth and equity, and he reaps what he sows, a conscience void of offence, a consciousness of rectitude, which is infinitely better than the glitter and blaze of earthly success. The true philosophy of life is to do your noblest and best as unto the Lord, and then be willing to accept of elevation from Him, should it come. But if not, never mind. "Seekest thou great things"—of a worldly kind—"for thyself? Seek them not."

Let us trace the operations of this great principle in the great future. We are probationers for eternity. The harvest is in small part here, but O the hereafter! The seed we sow is our thoughts, feelings, purposes, plans, words, actions. Thus we are always sowing except when asleep. What millions of seeds we have already sown, all having an effect upon our character and destiny! In small matters as well as in great, moral character is involved, and often as much in a transaction of a dollar as in another of millions of dollars. The

most common action of life is invested with solemn grandeur in view of its far-reaching issues. Our hands are sowing seed for an eternal harvest. The careless gardener passes the thistle growing in his fields and allows it to blossom and spread, and finds much difficulty in following years in rooting out the noxious plant. Ages ago a squirrel buried an acorn, from which has grown a mighty forest covering a vast area. Thus too in the world of mind, in which there is nothing so small that may not produce great results. All we have said, felt, thought, or done, is going on to a harvest of endless happiness or misery.

Thus are we brought to the two particulars in our text.

1. *He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.*

The word "flesh" means our unrenewed nature transmitted from Adam. Sowing to the flesh means sowing to no higher principles than those which are found in our unregenerate nature. Any life, therefore, which has no aspiration after God and holiness, which is bounded by the present world, is sowing to the flesh. Who are they who sow to the flesh? The profligate, the dissolute. They live to gratify ungoverned appetites. Now appetite is given for excellent purposes, and these purposes are served when they are kept in subordination to conscience, which is to us the oracle of God, and when He is loved supremely. But in the profligate they rule, and this is sowing to the flesh. His insatiable thirst for pleasure shall have its gratification. He shall reap an unhallowed joy. There is, however, more to follow. I

have seen those who having had a primary satisfaction in the indulgence of passion come to reap a second crop—corruption. Let the victims and slaves of lust and drunkenness bear testimony in their disfigured features, shattered health, remorse and despair, to the awful truth that they who sow to the flesh reap corruption. Alas, how many have already experienced the premonitory gnawing of the worm that never dies, and the preliminary scorching of the flame that shall never be quenched! They are being made to feel the wrath of God against sin, the wrath of Him who loved the world so much as to send His Son to die for it. And if they are so resolutely bent upon a life of unholy passion that they will not consent to be saved, what remains but that they shall reap what they have sown, a soul set on fire of raging, tyrannous, tormenting passions, which shall burn to the lowest hell?

There are other classes of men who sow to the flesh. They are a good way above the sensualist, yet they live a life of selfishness and are prompted solely by unspiritual desires. They live by laws of reason and health. They are moral and estimable persons, but being without repentance towards God, faith in Christ or love to Him, they live only for this world: they are sowing to the flesh. They who devote themselves to a life of fashion rank a good way above gluttons and sensualists, yet are they sowing to the flesh. They who have set their hearts on making money sow to the flesh. Not less is it true that they are sowing to the flesh who aim at the growth of their intellectual powers and the winning of intellectual triumphs. This world's wisdom,

unless sanctified to God and His service, is mere living for this world, mere sowing to the flesh, and so of course the harvest is corruption. Thus it comes to pass that the ungodly intellectualist, though immeasurably outranking the voluptuary, is, like him, a sower for earth and shall reap the same harvest in the end. These worldings will all reap what is involved in what some one calls that "dark, ominous, mysterious word, corruption." The love of fame, the love of power, the love of money, the love of learning, will not bind us to the throne of God any more than the love of strong drink.

You may be cherishing a vague hope that after all you will have a harvest in heaven. But I pray you do not forget the law, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Have you sown for the heavenly harvest? When? How? If, on the other hand, you have spent your time, strength and talents in sowing for the worldly harvest, how can you expect to reap a spiritual one? Be not deceived. Self-deception is more common than we think. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Expect as soon to reap a harvest of wheat, after having sown thistles, as to get to heaven after having lived a worldly life. And if not heaven, what then? Let our Lord put before us the end of a worldling against whose moral character, against whose benevolence and kindness, he does not breathe a word: "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in

this flame." Why doubt these words or try to explain them away? Even in this life many, like Milton's Satan, say: "Which way I fly is hell—myself am hell." The harvest is no more truly the natural result of the seed sown than is the destiny of the sinner or the saint in the future the legitimate result of the life he has lived here. Sin is a seed, and the nature of a seed is that it shall have endless growth. Heaven or hell springs out of one's heart and life. Let the husbandry of wickedness go forward; let the sinner reap what he has sown; and there is a harvest of anguish forever to be gathered. Forever he will be possessed of fresh cravings, demanding fresh gratifications,—cravings that cannot be satisfied. It will be torment to hear a voice crying, "Son, remember," and be thrown back upon a guilty past, to see, with wonderful sharpness of vision, every sin in all its relations; and this will constitute one of the terrible ingredients in the cup of the lost. He will also carry with him his foreboding disposition. And to what must he look forward? To what but the torment of the worm that never dies, and of the fire that never shall be quenched! Can you conceive a more terrific image of a lost man than by supposing him everlastingly preyed upon by a master-passion? Have I read somewhere a sentence like this? "Behold him hunted as by a never-wearied fiend, that propensity or passion, which it was the concern of a life-time to indulge, but which it must now be the employment of an eternity to deny."

In our text are two great principles placed before us: flesh and Spirit, corruption and life everlasting. We

must choose for ourselves, each of us, what kind of seed we shall sow. The choice of the seed determines what shall follow. My unsaved friend, cease sowing to the flesh to-day. Why live any life lower than the highest? Why cherish any aim inferior to the noblest? Hard it may be to change your course. But it will never again be so easy as now. Through infinite grace you may be saved this hour. Why then delay? Have you not sown enough for corruption? Oh, be entreated to trifle no longer lest you lose your soul! Soon the harvest will take place, and the angel will "thrust his sickle into the earth and gather the vine of the earth and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God" (Rev. xiv. 19). Is that to be your doom? What on that terrible day can be left to him who has sown to the flesh, but the despairing reflection and unavailing lamentation: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved"? Blessed be God! The end is not yet. To-day is the day of salvation. The Lord waits to reverse every law of sin and disorder within you. And though even He cannot annihilate the harvest you have already reaped, He will, if you commit yourself fully to Him, pardon your sins, make of you a new creature, give you grace to sow to the Spirit, and some day gladden and bless you with a rich spiritual harvest.

2. "He who soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." He who sows to the flesh sows in one soil; he who sows to the Spirit sows in another very different. What is sowing to the Spirit? It is that course of interior living and outgrowing conduct which, beginning in regeneration by the Spirit of God

and advancing to full and eternal salvation, has supreme regard to the good pleasure of God. It does not mean that we shall cease to gratify sense, to make money, to enjoy social pleasure, to cultivate mental power. It does mean subordinating all lower desires to the higher life of the Spirit. It means that diligence in business is to be combined with fervour of spirit, that making money is to be redeemed from selfishness, that delight in society and ambition to make the most of our intellectual powers must be kept under control of the supreme motive of the Christian to glorify God. Bishop Lightfoot has well said that lying between flesh and Spirit, "and occupying neutral ground are whole regions which may be annexed to the one or the other as either becomes more powerful." The true Christian may embark upon any pursuit to which he is drawn, and be earnest in it, may mingle with any class of society, may intermeddle with all knowledge; but he must be very sure that he is sowing to the Spirit, that his motives will stand the strictest scrutiny of our future Judge.

It may seem strange to say that the words of our text were suggested to Paul by his exhortation to be generous in giving. It was always his way to go down to the great principles which underlay his theme. Here he is saying that right giving is a spiritual act, that in giving when collections are taken we may give to God, that it is an expression of worship, the language of which to God is, "I belong to Thee and all I have is Thine." Thus giving we place upon the altar not merely our money, but our very selves. If we give grudgingly we sow selfishness and covetousness; if we

give cheerfully, the harvest will be beauty and richness of soul. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

The harvest is everlasting life, which means not simply endless duration of being, but everlasting enjoyment of the life of God in the souls of men, the life of love, rectitude and purity. Self has been annihilated, and nothing remains but perfect holiness and perfect love. This glorious promise of life everlasting transcends the highest conceptions of the human mind: It is eternal existence in ever-increasing happiness and excellence, in the power of holy habit, and with every accompaniment to render existence most blessed. Resting upon this exceeding great and precious promise, we who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us have strong consolation. "*Shall* reap life everlasting."

Fellow Christians, as a matter of course we are sowing to the Spirit; but are we sowing with sufficient diligence? Are we mortifying the deeds of the body? crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts? keeping ourselves under strictest discipline? and looking to our all-gracious and almighty Saviour for the destruction of the body of sin? Are we improving the opportunities we enjoy of doing good, of instructing the ignorant, of comforting the sorrowful, of relieving the distressed, of converting the erring, and of saving the lost? If a farmer knew that for every seed he sowed on a given day he should receive a definite and very large amount of money, would he not sow industriously and most liberally from early morning till late at night? Do we not sow too much to the flesh,

and too little to the Spirit? O, break up the fallow ground of a stubborn and rebellious heart! With gentle words and loving smiles, deeds of humbleness, cups of cold water, testimony for Christ, reproofs and rebukes in tender love, with looks and words of sympathy, go forth sowing the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. Sow it with tears and you shall reap in joy; sow it bountifully and you shall reap bountifully. "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." The day hastens on when all who have sowed to the Spirit and they who have reaped, the saints of the older dispensations, and those of the New Testament, the apostles and martyrs and confessors, and all in high places or in the most obscure, shall be gathered to celebrate the great festival of the "Harvest Home." "Now He that ministereth seed to the sower," in the work of agriculture, "both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness, that ye may be enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

"They are sowing the seed of word and deed,
Which the cold know not nor the careless heed,
Of the gentle word or the kindly deed
That have blessed the world in its sorest need.
Sweet shall the harvest be.

"They are sowing the seed of noble deed,
With a sleepless watch and an earnest heed;
With a ceaseless hand o'er the earth they sow,
And the fields are whitening where'er they go.
Rich will the harvest be.

"Sown in darkness or sown in light
Sown in weakness or sown in might,
Sown in meekness or sown in wrath;
In the broad world's field or the shadowy path.
Sure will the harvest be."

BUYING UP THE OPPORTUNITY.

“Redeeming the time” (“Ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν”).

Eph. v. 16.

An Italian philosopher called his time his estate, but it is an estate which is too often little prized till it has been nearly run through by prodigal wastefulness. It has been well said and may well be repeated: “Lost wealth may be restored by industry; the wreck of health regained by temperance; forgotten knowledge restored by study; alienated friendship smoothed into forgetfulness; even forfeited reputation won by penitence and virtue; but who ever looked upon his vanished hours, recalled his slighted years, stamped them with wisdom, or effaced from heaven’s record the fearful blot of wasted time?”

Mr. Carlyle expounds the thesis that Time and Space are but creatures of God, with whom as it is a universal *Here*, so it is an everlasting *Now*. Mortals, however, know time only by succession. Yesterday, as some one says, was the port which we left behind us as we sailed on our earth-ship through an ocean of ether. To-morrow we may never reach. It is beyond a dark and dangerous sail of many hours’ duration—beyond the glittering midnight sky. When night comes we shall weigh anchor and sound our dim and perilous way

across its dark waters. But to-day, we have it, a harbour where we may stay for a little, into which the nations of by-gone times have brought their honor and glory. It is the heir of all the ages, the bright consummate flower of history, the loftiest summit of time, the focus where all life, civilization and opportunity, all learning, culture and religion, converge. It is all, moreover, of which we are sure.

And now this to-day—a little section cut out of eternity and given us to do our work in, and so far as we know the *only* time in which we may work before we go to the results of probation—how shall we deal with it?

Charlotte Corday after she had assassinated the infamous Marat, and only a day or two before she died by the guillotine, said what was worth remembering; "I have never esteemed life save for its utility." If life may be likened to a stream, shall we let it flow on un-arrested, unused, as Robertson well puts it, like "those marble statues in some public square, which art has so fashioned into a perennial fountain, that through the lips or through the hands the clear water flows in a perpetual stream on and on forever, and the marble stands there—passive, cold, making no effort to arrest the gliding water?" Shall it be so with us?

Let us look at our text. Critics are generally agreed that the translation, "redeeming the time" is inaccurate. The English term "time" is of indefinite extent, a general term signifying the succession of moments, but the term here employed in the original is time sharply defined as a crisis or epoch, joint or articulation in that

indefinite succession. Both terms are found in Christ's words to His disciples.—“It is not for you to know the times or seasons,” etc. The latter is the word here used, which along with the article shows that the meaning is more than to gain time; it implies the critical nick of time, which may be unfavorable, but more likely is not. Here, as it depends on the context whether it shall be a time to help or hinder, to make or mar, the meaning is: “Amid evil days and unhappy surroundings, as out of a wilderness where little good is to be found, cull your seasons of good, your opportunities of usefulness.” The word rendered ‘redeeming’ is a passive participle used with a middle signification, here in an appropriative sense, though the reflexive pronoun is not added, as it sometimes is, for sake of emphasis and perspicuity. Its meaning therefore is: “Buying up for yourselves.” And the figure is that of a prudent merchant carefully looking at the market in hard times and considering how he may turn any good opportunity that may occur to his own advantage or that of others. I may add that the participle is compounded with a preposition which directs our thoughts to the undefined time or circumstances *out of* which the opportunity is to be bought up.

Thus we have complete possession of the thought of our text. The Christian is not to allow the suitable moment to pass by unheeded, but to make it his own. Though it may involve self-denial, he must like a skilful merchant buy it up out of the possession of sin, slothfulness and pleasure, and use it for Christ's sake. He sees that every moment because of its relation to eternity is

of inexpressible value, hastens the more on account of the swiftness of its flight to use it as an opportunity of good, and makes traffic of time that he and his fellows may be the richer in eternity. This is true redemption of time.

I have said that opportunity is the *crisis*; it may be passed by, and time still be left us. It is the *flower* of time, which, unplucked because unnoticed, may fade and wither, but time still remain. There are moments, which, compared with other moments, are as gold among the baser metals. They convey untold enjoyment, or they carry with them such a world of influence that they cannot be forgotten. They stand alone by themselves in rarity, in interest, and worth. Sometimes, however, men's eyes are holden so that they do not see how inestimably precious they are till long afterwards, and then they discover that at that moment they stood at the intersection of two roads, one of which led to honor and success and the other to shame and failure, and they having heedlessly taken the wrong road have suffered the bitter consequences ever since. Thus are we taught that success in life often depends on one decisive act, one resolute breaking through one's hindrances. Failing that, the progress is downward, until the man of infirm purpose, as he glances back over the journey of life, strewn with the wreck of all his earthly hopes, wails out in the extremity of his anguish: Oh how different my life might have been! And

"Of all sad words of tongue of pen,
The saddest are these—it might have been."

But opportunity consists not merely in some critical moment, fraught with richest blessings if turned to right account, but each section of human life is the opportunity which bought up, or neglected, will enrich or impoverish all that follows afterward. If you have failed to improve it in its time and place, it is gone forever. It is the forelock on the brow of Time, which cannot be laid hold of when once he has turned his back. The habits and lessons of childhood, if unacquired in their time, are never acquired, and youth and all that follows inevitably suffer. If the habits and studies proper to youth are neglected in their time, all future life must of necessity be diminished in volume, power, beauty, sweetness and light. If the true habits and principles of manhood are not formed in their season, old age is in so far left cold, hard, empty, selfish. Not that eternal ruin is unavoidable, but who can deny that the character of the undying future must be wonderfully dimmed, enfeebled, and circumscribed, even in the case of those who are saved? And oh, how powerful are the temptations which abound on every hand to beguile us in every period of life from sternly and rigorously buying up every opportunity with which we are blessed!

What then is the lesson for us all in youth, vigorous manhood, and advanced years, but that *now* is a time of infinite value. O ye youth! how by and by you will prize the treasures of time, wealth of opportunity, copulence of advantages, which you are wasting with such prodigal extravagance. Learn from the bitter regrets of your elders, and up and seize the passing moments as they fly!

That sad saying of Horace Mann: "Lost somewhere between sunrise and sunset two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes; no reward is offered, for they are gone forever," I doubt not may be truthfully taken up at the close of every day by many a man. For few men have ever deserved the title won by Henry Martyn—"The man that never wasted an hour." Think of its significance. Two hours a day for a year are equal to 730 hours, which at the end of ten years will be equal to two working years of ten hours per day. And who could not, by close watching and contriving, manage to save two hours more for study in the twenty-four? "Every day a little knowledge; one fact in a day. Ten years pass by. 3650 facts are not a small thing."—Again, to illustrate the value of economy of time in earlier life, suppose one were to read nothing but what would feed the mind, strengthen the understanding, elevate the man, purify the taste, and accomplish fifty pages a week. That would be equivalent to 2,600 pages per year, and in ten years to 26,000 pages. What a treasury of knowledge in that time one would have amassed! With what confidence in one's knowledge would one stand up among one's fellows! How different from the guilty, shame-faced feeling of him who, having spent his life in reading trash, is ever afraid of having his ignorance detected, shrinks, therefore, from the society of well-informed men, and loses all the pleasure of association with gifted minds.

To save these two hours for such purposes would not be difficult. Through the day there are many spare

moments. "As after you have filled a box with croquet balls, you may pour in a great quantity of sand before the box is completely full, and even then pour in a considerable quantity of water before it overflows, so in a day crowded with larger cares and duties, there are stray moments and snatches which may be turned to wise account." You have heard of the bootblack who saved odd minutes for study till he was prepared for matriculation at a college in America, and went on till he became a distinguished professor in another institution. His was the principle of Dionysius the Silician who employed his time so well that when asked by one who wanted to speak with him if he were at leisure, he replied: "Heaven forbid that I should ever have any leisure." It is thus that the greatest men have achieved the greatest things, not so much by occasional prodigious efforts as by steady incessant toil in the economy of spare moments. So Mr. Darwin composed his books as he drove about visiting his patients. So Elihu Burritt mastered eighteen languages and twenty-two dialects in fragments of time, when not engaged at his forge.

The sayings are trite but how true:—"Time and tide wait for no man;" "Time wasted is existence, used is life;" "Wisdom walks before time, opportunity with it, and repentance behind it."

All that has been said will have ten-fold emphasis when applied to what follows. What infancy and youth are to following years, time is to eternity, the seed-time of the harvests of the everlasting future. Probation is the opportunity which, bought up or

neglected, will make or mar the eternal destiny, It terminates with life and cannot be adequately prized. This is the day of salvation. The clear light of truth shines abroad. Spiritual influences accompany the faithful ministrations of the gospel. The most ample opportunity is afforded for acquiring knowledge of and faith in Christ. But there are times when the Spirit is poured out in showers of blessing. What a golden opportunity for the people of Capernaum that night "when the sun did set, and they brought unto our Lord all that were diseased and them that were possessed with devils! And all the city was gathered together unto the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases and cast out many devils." Thus it is when the Spirit is poured out. A tide in the affairs of men then sets in, which taken at the flood sweeps many humble penitent believers into the Kingdom of Heaven. We all have known such precious seasons. And in the remembrance of them perhaps some are saying now:

"O that I had sought His favour,
When I felt His Spirit move—
Golden moments!
When I felt His Spirit move!"

But alas! how many opportunities have been neglected, and sins committed, and there they are in the light of the Divine countenance. How vast their number! How fearful their condemnation! Is there no science to roll back the wheels of time, and place us as we were before we failed of the grace of God? Nay, all we can do is to buy up the present opportunity. It is with the gospel as with the offer of the sibyl. She makes

her offer and states her price. If it be refused, she consumes in part what has been offered, but holds her price as high as ever. The cost of religion is always the same, but its sweetness and light and untold preciousness, when enjoyed from youth to age, are vastly greater than when secured only in advanced years. Still it is not impossible for the aged to taste and see that the Lord is gracious. When Napoleon reached one of his battle-fields it was late in the afternoon and he saw that the battle was really lost, but glancing towards the sun he cried: "Only time enough to recover the day," and giving out his orders with his characteristic energy he turned defeat into victory.

" This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream :
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain ;
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.
A craven hung along the battle's edge,
And thought, ' Had I a sword of keener steel—
That blue blade that the king's son bears—but this
Blunt thing—!' he snapt and flung it from his hand,
And lowering crept away and left the field.
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,
And saved a great cause that heroic day."

My friend, you have time enough if you act vigorously to recover the day. But neglect to buy up the opportunity that is left, and your defeat will be for ever

and ever. We are still, thank God! at the foot of a tree, some of the fruit of which has withered and decayed, but some remains for us to gather. Let us not lie down and starve.

It is objected that we urge men to act *inconsiderately* in pleading with them to submit to Christ now. I grant that Bacon is right, when he tells us that if we had one hundred powerful and skilful hands like Briareus, and one hundred vigilant eyes like Argus, it would not be wise to set one of those hands to work till with all those watchful eyes the entire situation had been carefully considered. But take Whateley's figure: Suppose one waked to find himself surrounded by water, shall he at once dash into the water and swim to the main land? No; let him take time enough to ascertain:—Is the water rising, falling, or stationary? If stationary, though there is no danger in delay, yet, as the intervening waters must be crossed sooner or later, it may be as well done now as at any time. If falling, he may after waiting a little escape dry-shod to the shore. But if rising then the sooner he escapes from his present position the better, for it may soon be too late forever. To apply: You are unconverted. Time is short and uncertain. It may terminate to-night. "No man has learned anything rightly," says Emerson, "until he knows that every day is Doomsday." There is a hell beyond. If you are not saved before death you are lost forever. You have had many opportunities of securing salvation. You have thrown them away. You have grieved God's Spirit. There is danger of quenching it. He that being

often reproved hardeneth his heart shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. When such tremendous interests are at stake, delay is dangerous. Hence it is wise to place yourself at once in the hands of Christ, and secure eternal life. Having counted the cost, proceed rapidly to the execution of the counsels of wisdom. You are a Christian. The motto of Pittacus engraved on the walls of the temple of Delos—*Γνωθι καιρόν*—‘know thine opportunity,’ you will lay to heart. That you may not live at random, consider the great ends of life and the means by which you accomplish them. There are many things which it is too soon to do, and there are many other things which it is too late to attempt. But in every given moment of time there is work for you to do, Our great Exemplar has said: “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.” And Paul has said “As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men.” He does not urge us to do what he did not do himself. How he grasped each opportunity as it arose! Now preaching before Felix on righteousness, temperance and judgment; now proclaiming on Mars’ Hill the God whom they ignorantly worshipped; now confronting the sorcerer with fitting words of terrible and scorching rebuke; now casting the spirit of divination out of the damsel; then in the prison making midnight melodious with songs of praise; and anon teaching the jailor the way of salvation. So by teaching the rising generation in the Sunday School, by going out among the homes of the poor, lifting up the disconsolate, administering

comfort to the forlorn, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and warning our fellowmen, we may buy up precious opportunities of usefulness. There is not one of us who may not by tenderness, sympathy, love and instruction be a fountain of perpetual strength and blessedness to those around us, many of whom groan bitter groans, and sweat bloody sweat of woe and anguish—nay, be the means of leading them to Christ and holiness and heaven. This is to run back and fetch the age of gold.

But if we would do so, we can only keep our faculties keyed up for faithful service by referring every matter to God, and acting in it so as to please Him. This high motive will serve at once to eliminate from us everything trifling, sordid and selfish, and to bind us more closely to Him with whom we have to do.

"Twill be as easy then for the soul to be true,
As the grass to be green or the skies to be blue,
It's the natural way of living."

Paul mentions as a reason for redeeming the time that *the days are evil*. This epistle was written by him during his imprisonment at Rome. His course was nearly run. He was in the hands of his enemies, who would soon have his life. Though he could rejoice that the word of God was not bound, he was bound who would gladly have spent himself in labours abundant in the world without. The days with him were evil. So with the churches to which this epistle was sent as a circular letter. They were planted in the midst of heathen idolatry. Intellect was

prostrate before idols. Necromantic arts were practised. The devil himself was worshipped. And the native hostility of the human heart to the truth and light of the gospel-broke forth in persecution. The days were evil. With us too they are evil. Men are generally forgetful of God. The Sabbath is desecrated. His law is dishonoured. His love is slighted. His salvation is neglected. And vices of the most aggravated character pollute society. But as the darkness deepens in any place, the more is it the duty of Christians to hold up the true light.

Another reason is that *time is short*. What is our life? A dream, a tale, a vapour. What is it in comparison with eternity? There is some comparison between a moment and a million of ages, between a drop and an ocean, but there is none between the period of our probation and the cycles of eternity. Yet in this short life what a work we have to do! To secure personal salvation, to instruct the ignorant, to turn no deaf ear to the multitudinous cries for help which come from every quarter. And of our brief life how many years have been spent in infancy, in education, in sleep, in taking food and labouring for it. Thus the days pass by, and our barks, that glided sweetly along the shores of life, quickly get out into the rapids, below which are the roar and the foam of the Niagara of death. If ever anything is done for God and humanity you must trample upon the love of self-indulgence and ease. That brief space of life between this moment and the grave, labour to crowd with deeds which will cast a blessed influence over the future life-time of the soul.

“ I would the precious time redeem,
And longer live for this alone,
To spend, and to be spent, for them
Who have not yet my Saviour known ;
Fully on them my mission prove,
And only breathe to breathe His love.”

O my friends, if into this room were to come one of those radiant beings who have gone from earth, sparkling and flashing with the splendours of the skies, making the brightness of the day dark by comparison, and we were to ask him how he, once polluted like ourselves, became so glorious would he not reply that it was by redeeming his time? And if from the regions of eternal despair, thunder-scarred with the marks of the wrath of God, one of our race were to stand in your presence and tell us how it came to pass that he, a creature of God, became destroyed, would he not say that it was all through his failure to buy up his opportunity?

The vast sweep of the current of time is bearing us on with irresistible force, and far more rapidly than we dream, to the ocean of eternity. The day is coming when with a sensation of terror and dread, which can be felt but once, they who have failed to buy up the opportunity of time shall awake to realize that the end has come, that probation is closing. The awful hour, for which no preparation has been made, has at last come, come suddenly, come when least thought of ; and now a still small voice, which often before spoke of Christ, duty, judgment and eternity, but was disregarded, speaks with a tone of authority, not as before “awake to righteousness and sin not,” but “awake and

come to judgment ; ” and the sinner starts up to feel “ the die is cast, time has fled, and my soul is lost, ”

They tell us that on the top of a hill in a Western state is a house, the raindrops, falling on one side of the roof of which, descend into one of the lakes whose waters pass by the way of the St. Lawrence into the Atlantic. The raindrops on the other side fall into a streamlet, which bears them on until, by way of the Ohio and Mississippi, they pass into the Gulf of Mexico. A slight motion in the air determines on which side of the house each raindrop shall fall and consequently its entire future course. So to-day we stand on this watershed between two eternities, swayed by two opposing currents of influence, divine and diabolical ; but holding in our own hands the power of moral choice, we make a decision, whose results must be coextensive with the duration of the soul. Take care how you use this priceless power. Remember the foolish virgins. Take heed to the admonition of the Scriptures : “ To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your heart. ”

THE WITHERED HAND.

“ There was a man whose right hand was withered.” Luke vii. 6.

Very wonderful is the structure of the human hand. The most perfect hand of the lower orders is only an approximation toward the perfection we find here. *Quadrumana*—four-handed—is a misnomer, for the order of mammalia, to which it is applied, is not possessed in a single case of a genuine hand. The human hand contains twenty-eight bones, including those of the wrist, and makes up an instrument admirably adapted for all the necessary work of life. It is the remark of Diderot that if the arm of man had terminated in a hoof instead of a hand he would still have been wandering in the forest ; that is, I may add, if he had not been destroyed from off the face of the earth by those more powerful creatures, which are furnished by nature with more formidable weapons of offence and defence. But by the aid of this wonderful instrument he has been enabled in the struggle for existence to procure for himself suitable dress, build himself a home, turn to willing servitors the forces of nature, and realize the dignity of his humanity. By it he has subdued the forests, made the marshes bloom, turned wildernesses into gardens, constructed roads, spanned rivers, built

fleets, traversed the ocean, and reared palaces, temples, pyramids, and cities. By it he has constructed the harp, the organ, and the violin, and elicited from them the best music of earth. The hand of man, then, is the symbol of power and practical wisdom, the type of true efficiency.

There are left-handed men, like men of Benjamin, wonderfully skilful with the sling. There are ambidextrous men, who can use indifferently the right or the left hand. But the right hand is for the most part the one best endowed.

The withered hand, especially if it be the right hand, will, then, be the type of weakness and uselessness. It is the case of a man with his right hand withered that we find recorded in our text. For some time hostility to our Lord has been increasing rapidly. He has grown altogether too independent. He interprets Scripture without the assistance of the Rabbis. He has no respect for their traditions, and tramples under feet their doctrine of the Sabbath. It is His apparent contempt for the ordinance of the Sabbath, which led to an open rupture between Him and the Pharisees. The Scripture does not assert that the Pharisees contrived to have this man in the synagogue that Sabbath morning. But there he was, and they watched Him to see what He would do: "that," says the evangelist, "they might find an accusation against Him." What prejudice and malignity are here! At a glance He sees the secret spy-system organized against Him, and seems to take pleasure in healing the unhappy sufferer in the most open manner possible. He bids him rise and come forward. Then

turning round upon the spies He questions them. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil? to save life or to kill? Our Lord here teaches that to neglect to do good is to do evil, and that He counts Himself responsible for the sufferings which He might heal and does not. Profound silence is the only answer He receives. In the net which they had hid is their own foot taken. Christ steadfastly fastens His eyes upon them, and under His solemn and protracted gaze of grief and indignation, in which there was not one particle of selfishness, only grief and indignation that their hatred of Him would thwart His benevolence, they must have felt themselves searched through and through. Thereupon He commands the man to stretch forth his hand, that all might see first its shrunken and shrivelled condition, and then its restoration to soundness. And he stretched it forth, for the arm was not impotent, and the hand was restored whole as the other, and as "the tide of returning health rushed expandingly through the shrivelled member, the presence and operation of some supernatural power could not be gainsaid. And so far as history informs us there was no attempt to gainsay the intromission of such a power, all through the period of our Saviour's career. Some said indeed that the power was from beneath, but none denied that a might higher than human was in operation." And they went out filled with rage and took counsel how to destroy Him.

Miracles, as we call them, are in the Scriptures variously described as wonders, signs, powers, works. They are called *wonders*, because of the effect which they produce upon the mind of the beholder—sheer amaze-

ment. But they are never called wonders alone, for they are intended to produce more than mere astonishment: they are intended to rouse man to consider the claims upon him of the higher world. They are also called *signs*, signs and tokens of the presence of the Creator. They are credentials of the person who works them, and show that he comes with authority from heaven. They are also *powers* of God—*i. e.* they are wrought by the power of God. They are sometimes called *works*, the natural working of Christ, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. I said they are signs and tokens of the presence of the Creator; they are also in many cases symbolic exhibitions of His great remedial work. As bodily diseases are signs and symbols of the corrupted condition of the human mind and heart—palsy, a fitting representation of the utter impotency for good of one enslaved to passion and led captive by the devil at his will; leprosy, of the total corruption of heart which shows itself in eruptions of scandalous vices and enormous crimes; blindness, of our benighted understanding, so that though seeing we see not—so Christ's healing of these diseases teaches us the kind of service which He has come to render to our diseased spiritual nature: to open eyes blinded by passion and prejudice, to cleanse hearts defiled and corrupted by leprous sins, and to remove all disability and impotency, which would disincline and unfit us for the service of God.

The Church of Christ is designed to be a working Church. She has been organized and equipped for this very end. The world is "paradise lost." It is her mission to make it "paradise regained." It is an im-

mense work. It is the conversion of the world to Christ. Not the work of a century even. It is the *greatest* possible task, but it *is* a possible task, and therefore a duty. To open blind eyes to see, to lead corrupt hearts to be enamoured of the beauties of holiness, to rescue the outcast and abandoned and bring them to God, to leaven the world with righteousness—here is work well worthy of our warmest sympathies and most energetic service long as God gives us life. The world is wide. Human needs are great. But Jean Ingelow wisely sings:

"I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the world go right,
But only to discover and to do,
With cheerful heart the work which God appoints."

The law of labour, which is impressed upon the smallest atoms of dust and the largest orbs that roll in space, is impressed no less deeply upon all orders of life from the animalcula to the elephant, from man to archangel. Our Lord exhorts to labour: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Work while it is called to-day. Occupy till I come." After Paul's conversion his first word was, What wilt thou have me to do? And the passion for work possessed him till he died. Devoted servants of God have never lacked a sphere of beneficent activity. As large a field as ever is before the servants of God to-day. It is our duty and privilege to make our homes happy, to break the personal habit which may lead others astray, to remove stumbling blocks from the paths of the little ones, to guide the feet of the young into the paths of duty and usefulness, to relieve

the needy, to protect the virtue of the defenceless, to seize the opportunity of helping a human being as a privilege given us in the behalf of Christ—forms of service these within the reach of all, and calling for the heart of love and the hand of power. The withered hand is unprepared for any good work, much less for every good work.

We find, alas! a tendency on the part of many to throw responsibility from the individual upon the Church. This is an age marked by powerful corporations. Small traders are remorselessly crushed. Industries have become monarchic, controlled by the industrial "king." There is a remarkable tendency toward centralization of population, of political power, of capital, and of production. Small states coalesce and become the Empire of Italy, the Empire of Germany. The interests of men are passing from the individual to society. I do not quarrel with this tendency. Doubtless that highest of all generalizations, expressed in the word *universe*, which declares that all creation is a whole, contains a world of instruction. But, as the author of "The New Era" says, "unity in diversity seems to be the fundamental law of the universe." There must be the development of the individual as well as the better organization of society. The individual man, as well as the composite race, "was born to grow, not to stop." There has always been a tendency to sacrifice the individual to society, or society to the individual. Both principles—the principle of individualism and that of organization—are necessary for the highest development of man, and of the Christian Church.

I press the point that the most highly developed Church organization is conditioned upon the most highly developed individuality. If the Church is to be God's instrument for saving the world, the world will not be converted without individual effort or individual faithfulness. The Church is to show forth the praises of Him who hath called her members out of darkness into His marvellous light, but it can do so only by each individual doing his duty as he finds it. The humblest person in the Church has his part in the great work, and all that is needed to hasten the grand consummation of the world's history is that each believer do his work day by day, hour by hour, as it arises.

But the bulk of professing Christians, so far as Christian work is concerned, are idle, or their work is done carelessly, or only now and then. How many leave their children to grow up without Christian instruction and proper training! How many have no care for the Sunday School! How few visit the widows and orphans, the sick, or the inmates of hospitals or jails! Why stand ye all the day idle? You cannot say, No man hath hired us. You have been bought with blood, and created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Do not wait for anybody. Move forward at once. Our Master has appointed to you your work, and commanded you to be faithful.

But you urge, "I can't do anything." Ah! your hand is withered. Alas for this ineffectiveness in the Church. In the atmosphere there has recently been discovered a new element which has been called *argon*, which means *ineffectiveness*. Oxygen is lively, nitrogen

much less so, but argon which is found only in very small proportion is wholly inert. So in the Church we have some who are very active, some who only now and again are ready for Christ's service, and some who do nothing. A man took passage in a stage coach. There were first, second, and third-class passengers. But there was no distinction in their seats. At last they came to a hill, the coach stopped, and the driver called out: "First-class passengers will keep their seats; the second-class passengers will get out and walk; and the third-class passengers will get out and push." There is no room in the Church coach for first and second-class passengers. All must get out and push together. Each is called to be a worker with God. The Church is a corporative union. Let each maintain his individuality, working in his own sphere in his own way, and all obedient to the law of labour, and the Church will accomplish its great object in the world. There is much sound sense and true philosophy in the story of two negroes who were loading a cart. One was disposed to shirk his work. The other stopped and looking sharply at him said, "Sam, do you expect to go to heaven?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then take hold and lift," said the other. Many are hoping to get to heaven, but unless they help to bear the burdens which others are bearing alone, unless they stir up their gifts by continual exercise, those gifts are likely to deteriorate, and eventually disappear. Said our Lord of the unprofitable servant: "Take the talent from him and cast him into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

My ineffective brethren, once you loved your Saviour, and rejoiced to serve Him. How came this change to pass that the hand that once was ready for service is powerless now? Had your right hand, when you were a child, been bound fast to a board in such a way that it could not be used, long before you reached manhood your hand and arm would have gradually shrivelled and perished. The hand that is not trained and educated to skill, grace, and power will always be awkward, constrained, and feeble. So in the spiritual realm. Love to the Saviour prompts us to serve Him. When we cease to love Him we cease also to serve Him. Feeling was given to lead us to action. It prompts to far more action than does "the resolution of the will." Emotion is the steam that drives the great engine of the world's activity. All emotion of a right sort should be turned into action. If not, the fountains of emotion will dry up, and the power of action pass away. Thus it is that the talent that is not used is withdrawn from us. Well says Dr. Cuyler: "How can a Christian be healthy, who never toils for souls, and never faces a head-wind? How can a man's faith be strong who never wrestles at the mercy-seat? How can a man grow in spiritual knowledge, who never studies anything but his ledger and the daily newspaper? How can a Christian's lungs be strong when he is breathing the poisonous air of the house of mirth? How can he rejoice to meet his Saviour at the Communion Table, when he has been denying or betraying that Saviour everywhere beside? Weak hands and feeble knees are not merely the *misfortunes* of backsliders; they are their own *sin* and

shame. It is not a visitation of *Providence* that has laid them on their backs, and made them well-nigh useless in the Church, but a visitation of the *great Tempter*."

If we trace this ineffectiveness back to its source we shall find it to be a remembrance of past sins, a present besetment, an evil habit, a secret lust, a concealed fraud, a cowardly spirit, and in the last analysis a preference of self-gratification to self-denial. The ineffective man is always ready with his excuses when he is asked to do something for Christ—to-day one excuse, to-morrow another, till you are reminded of the Arabian saying: "They said to the camel-bird (the ostrich), 'Carry; ' it replied, 'I cannot, for I am a bird,' They said, 'Then fly; ' it answered, 'I cannot, for I am a camel.'"

What a glorious Gospel do I announce when I tell you we have a Saviour who is able and willing to save us from all our disabilities. He sees our needs, our dangers, our hindrances to healthful activity, feels for every sufferer and every sinner the intensest solicitude, singles out the humble publican, the blind beggar, the impotent man, the outcast leper, and the palsied cripple, and gives to each the strength and healing that he needs. He is ever present to heal, looking on every one of us who, having been injured or palsied by sin, feel ourselves wholly unable to do what we are called on by our Lord to do. He calls on us all to stand forth and receive His blessing, without which we shall always be weak and useless, with which we shall be successful workers. O my ineffective brother, who complain that you can do nothing, come to him and you shall receive power, and henceforth answer to Carlyle's description

of a king, "a can-ning man, a man who can do it, a king" and a priest unto God and the Father.

But not without something to be done on your part. At Christ's command the man with the withered hand stood forth and stretched out his hand. In this obedience there was a more or less conscious consecration of himself to the will of Christ. The hand was given up to Christ for Him to do what He would with it. And in the instant he felt the power of God throbbing in the shrivelled hand; the life-blood began to pulsate in the shrunken member, its form to dilate, and lo! the supernatural work was wrought. When Aaron and his sons had the blood of sacrifice applied to the right thumb, which represented the right hand, it implied a solemn oath of consecration of this and all their other members as instruments of righteousness unto God. The hand and every organ and member were devoted to all the functions to which the service of God would call them. "Stretch forth thy withered hand," my brother. Say to your Lord: "Take my hand, and let it move at the impulse of Thy love." That hand, with its four fingers and thumb, reached out in consecration will be accepted, hallowed, vitalized, and invigorated for holy service. But you can never do anything effectively till you have caught the spirit of your work, till your hand move at the impulse of Christ's love. When you love Him with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself, you will not stop short with good desires, but will pass on to actual service. For the question is not what we can *feel* for Christ and our fellows, but what we can do for them, not how much

we can enjoy in the means of grace, but how much of the mind and heart we can exhibit in our dealings with our fellowmen. Along with your hand give to the Lord your whole being :

“ Take myself and I will be,
Ever, only, all for Thee.”

And as you give yourself up, expect confidently that He will accept you, and pour into you divine energy and saving power; and according to your faith it shall be done.

Then set to work for Him in humble dependence upon His coöperating grace, love, and power, and you shall be able to do all things to which He calls you. Only you must resolutely determine that you will not go about like men with withered hands, without power to serve God and man. We cannot be Christians and live for ourselves. We lose power if we do not use it. We must carry to others who need them the blessings God gives to us. “ By love serve one another.” Of serving there are multitudinous forms—sickness to soothe, misery to relieve, sins to rebuke, ignorance to instruct. There is work in your own heart, in your own home, in your own neighbourhood, in your own town. Be instant in season and out of season, always abounding in the work of the Lord, so shall you at last win His applause, “ Well done.”

It is a striking fact that Christ laid His hands on many to help and to heal them. He touched the leper and healed him. He touched the hand of Peter's mother-in-law, and the fever left her. He laid His hands on the eyes of the blind. He touched the eyes

of another and gave him sight. He lifted Peter sinking in the sea, and the little daughter of Jairus. He laid his hands on the woman, bent beneath the burden of her infirmity, and she was made straight. We have not His healing power, but it is wonderful what blessings the magic touch of a loving hand may communicate. My Christian brother, your hand touched with the blood of Christ is now a priestly hand. Use it for God. Let it never hold bribes or touch any unclean thing. It is to handle gifts and sacrifices. It is to grasp our fellows and to lift them up. A reformed London criminal ascribed his reformation to the late Earl of Shaftesbury. When asked what the Earl said to him, he replied, "It was not so much anything he said; but he took my hand in his and said, 'Jack, we'll make a man of you yet.' It was his *touch* did it." This fashion of grasping by the hand is very ancient. Said Jehu to Jehonadab: "Is thy heart right with my heart? If it be, give me thine hand." How admirably the hand is fashioned for this very thing! Shake hands with the timid to encourage them; with the troubled and cheer them with your warm-hearted sympathy; with the stranger within these gates that he may be assured of welcome; with your friends that you may grip them more closely to you; and with enemies and defamers that you may by so doing heap coals of fire upon their heads. Let the ushers and officers of the Church and private members shake hands one with another, and with everybody else. Give a friendly grasp to everybody in the name of Christ.

The consecration of the hand implies the consecration of the tools and implements of one's vocation.

What is in your hand, Moses? A rod. See that you wield it only in the service of the Lord, and you shall work many miracles, cleave in twain the waters of the Red Sea, and bring victory to Israel in the fierce conflict of arms with Amalek. But if you use it otherwise than as He would have you use it, you dishonour Him, and bring upon yourself His great displeasure. What is in your hand, David? A sling and stone. Whirl it round your head in the name of the Lord, and the whizzing stone shall sink in the forehead of Israel's giant foe. What is in your hand, Dorcas? A needle. Use it for God and humanity, and many shall arise and call you blessed.

“A servant with this clause makes drudgery divine,
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws, makes that and th' action fine.”

What is in your hand, writer? A pen. The pen of the accountant, of the poet, of the patriot, how it has served our race, and glorified our God! “The pen became a clarion,” says Longfellow. Take care to use it only for God. What is in your hand? Money. “Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.” There is but one absolute proprietor: we are only stewards. “What hast thou that thou hast not received?” It is a trust committed to your hand by Him who will exact a strict account. Use what you have for the benefit of the poor, of the struggling, of the tempted and tried. Use it for the cause of God. Consecrate everything to Him. “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits

of all thine increase ; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine."

Arise, O Church, in the name of the living God, whose you are, and give Him all your strength and enthusiasm and life. Use everything for Him, the fervour of the pulpit, the splendour of music, the sweetness of the children, the charms of youth, the wisdom of age, and God will honour you and bless you. Let the spirit of consecration never flag, let it be kept perfect. Then the river which flows from you will never become a pool, never dry up, but carry life and health and gladness to all around you. Keep close to the very heart of Christ, and you shall be able to work. And as long as the day lasts, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for soon the busiest hands shall be folded in the repose of death.

JESUS CHRIST COME TO CHURCH, OR THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

“Two men went up to the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee and the other a publican”—Luke xviii. 10.

This parable was spoken to “certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.” Our Lord had noticed in some of His disciples indications of spiritual pride. They trusted in themselves, and not in the grace of God for righteousness, and lifted up in pride they looked down in contempt upon others. How strange that those who called themselves the children of Abraham, of whom it is recorded that he trusted in God for righteousness, could ever come to trust in themselves! Yet so it was in the days of our Lord; and so it is to-day, wherever the worship of God becomes a mere matter of form. Let us pray to be saved from the desolating influence of religious formality. It will be worth our while to notice, as we proceed in the discussion of the parable, how faithfully and fearlessly our Lord spoke out the truth that was in Him, though He knew He would arouse against Himself hatred and opposition, and how admirably, now as always,

having a distinct aim, He hits the very centre of the target.

In a few graphic words our Lord paints the portraits of two men: the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. They were alike in several respects—their nationality was the same; they worshipped the One God in the same place, and assumed the same attitude in worship. So many are the points of similarity that it seems to be no easy thing to distinguish the one from the other. Yet it is evidently the intention of our Lord to present them in striking contrast. For after all, the points of resemblance are only superficial, which shows us we are not to judge by appearances. Here is a man who appears decorous, devout, reverential, standing as near as he can to where the priests alone may worship, and though he utters words that sound very like true praise yet has no aspiration after God, no holiness of heart. Here is another: not with uplifted hands as the Pharisee, not with eyes turned heavenward but fixed on the ground, the hot tears streaming from them, beating his breast, and with groans and sighs uttering only, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" But it is enough. He goes down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Let us consider, then, the points of contrast between these two men, that we may know how to draw near to God, and how not to draw near to Him.

The points of contrast between the two men are their spirit, their prayers, and the treatment they meet with at the hands of God.

I. *The spirit of the two men.* Like the sect to which he belonged, the Pharisee loved to be seen of men. He *gave alms*, but it was to the sound of a trumpet that he might have glory of men. He *fasted* and *prayed*, but not for acceptance with God, and the blessings of His love, but for the commendation of his fellows, and perhaps that he might the more successfully carry out his schemes of villainy (Matt. vi. 1-18 ; xxiii. 14). All he did was apparently to be seen of men ; pride and vanity lay at the root of his religion. He went to the temple that men would say to one another, "How devout he is!" Had the Temple not been much resorted to, he would have contented himself with worship at the corners of the streets, where he would be sure to be observed by many. His piety was like the brawling mountain brook, which tears its way through the ravine of the mountain, noisily making itself heard and seen of men, but carrying no blessing to the banks of rock and sand between which it passes. See them now in the temple. The Pharisee has often been there ; the publican very rarely. How different they are in their bearing ! The same Greek verb is used to express the attitude of the Pharisee and of the publican. And yet there is a difference : in the former case the participle has a middle force and expresses great assurance, not that he struck an attitude, but that he "took his position ;" while the publican simply stood "in no studied place or posture." The Pharisee assumes his proper position with "upper life state." He draws as closely as he can to the court of the priests. But the publican stands afar off, as if he would hide himself

from the eye and ear of man behind some pillar of the Temple. Not with uplifted hands as the Pharisee, not with eyes directed to heaven, but cast down to the ground in the natural expression of shame and humiliation, while he smites his breast in self-accusation. It is not that he feels himself degraded as a publican in the eyes of the Pharisee. It is that he has been met by the Spirit of the Lord, and has been made to think of his crooked ways, how he has often oppressed the poor by severe exactions, and robbed the widow and the fatherless. For some time he has had no rest day nor night under the burden of his sin. But holy memories of his father's home visit him, and he bethinks himself of the Temple and the daily sacrifice. And here he stands a guilty wretch, filled with shame and remorse, not daring to lift his eyes to heaven.

Before us are these two men, photographed for the race to look at to the end of time. Not merely do we see them as they outwardly appeared to the eyes of men. The Röntgen rays have pierced to their very hearts and disclosed to us the inner man. Are we in danger of being like the Pharisee? Is our worship only pompous display and ostentation? Are we here that we may be seen of men? Oh may He, with whom we have to do, tear away the veil from our hearts, and let us see ourselves as we are seen by the pure eyes of heaven! Then shall we quickly hasten from the side of the Pharisee and range ourselves by the side of the publican, albeit we shall be covered with shame and confusion of face.

Notice, further, that *self-satisfaction* characterizes the one; *self-abasement* the other. The Pharisee sees

nothing in himself to blame. He acknowledges no sin. He has no reason to beat his breast or cast down his eyes. His mouth is filled with great swelling words of pride, coming from the abundance of a heart inflated with pride. The Lord does not call in question the truthfulness of his statement; nor should we. He prays thus with himself. He says "God;" he means himself. It is a case of Narcissus admiring his own perfections. Much that passes as prayer to God is only talking to one's self. Even if we do not render the passage, he "stood by himself and prayed thus," but he "stood and prayed thus with himself," we must remember that he is a Pharisee, which means "one who separates himself" from what is ceremonially unclean. And in his address he says, "I am not as other men are." He divides the human family into two classes: in the one class he stands alone; in the other all the rest of the race. In the Jewish Talmud there are three benedictions which the Jews were expected to repeat every day. "Blessed be thou, O God, who hast not made me one of the ignorant. Blessed be thou, O God, who hast not made me a Gentile. Blessed be thou, O God, who hast not made me a woman." Women replaced the last benediction with "Blessed be thou, O God, who hast made me according to Thy will." But this Pharisee separates himself not only from the ignorant, the Gentile, and the woman, but from all his fellows. Society is made up of extortioners, unjust, adulterers, but he is *sui generis*, a class by himself; he is not even like this contemptible publican, on whom his eyes happen to fall, whom as one well remarks "he drags into his prayer, making him

supply the dark back-ground on which the bright colours of his own virtues shall more gloriously appear."

As regards the duties which he owes to his fellow men he is without a spot. To be sure it never occurs to him that he ought to have been eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, that he should have been a father to the fatherless and a friend to the widow. Alas, with the Holy Scripture in his hands and texts of Scripture sewn on his dress, he seems to have but little idea of his duty to his neighbour. And as to the duties he owes to God, how faithful he has been! He tells the Lord that he fasts twice in the week. According to the Mosaic law but one day in the year was appointed for fasting, that is to say he is one hundred times more strict in this respect than the law required. But the fasts which afflicted his body serve merely to inflate his soul with pride. He gives tithes, too, of all that he acquires. The law required only the tithe of the fruit of the field and the produce of the cattle; but he, righteous man, tithes mint and cummin and whatever else, even the smallest thing that comes into his possession. He owes no man a cent, not even love, and as to God he is acting in such a manner as to make Him his debtor. Poor fool, not knowing that fasting was meant to afflict the soul, and to bring it into a condition of contrition before God, and that tithes were required by God in order to produce in men the sense that they are tenants on God's estate, and pensioners on His bounty, he makes what should have humbled him into the dust foster arrogance and pride. Why should he dread, he thinks, the judgment day, who had so

borne himself towards God as to have when the balance-sheet is struck a balance in his favour? Alas, how little he knows himself! To him and to the many who are thus deceived we may apply the words of our Lord: "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." How unseemly the sneer of such a man at the poor publican, who is just in the act of passing through the strait gate into the narrow way that leadeth unto life! While the angels are singing songs of gladness over his repentance, who is now rich in faith and an heir of the Kingdom, this sanctimonious hypocrite is pouring upon him his unmeasured scorn.

It is a relief to turn to the Publican. The Pharisee who introduces him into his prayer as a foil to set off to greater advantage his own virtues, himself becomes the dark back-ground, on which the profound humility of the publican shines with brighter lustre. He stands afar off, yet not afar from God, as Augustine says, for the Lord is *nigh* unto all that call upon Him in truth. He feels himself unworthy to enter the house of God, for he fears that his presence will pollute the place of the holy. He seems to say, "I am not worthy to be called Thy son." Blessed are the poor in spirit! He "would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven," though his thoughts and prayers are directed thither. With the Psalmist he says, "My sins have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." For he has come to feel the Divine purity. With Job he says, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the

ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." He had deeply offended God. He had injured himself and his fellows. And in a sense of utter sinfulness and dejection, he "smites upon his breast." Thus does he express his profound sorrow for sin. The heart that he smites is full of it; it is a den of vipers and a nest of unclean birds. His life has been vile, but the heart that he smites is the fountain from which the pollution has flowed. Were justice dealt out to him, heavier blows by far would fall not upon his body, but upon his guilty soul. His iniquities, which have taken hold upon him, are more in number than the hairs of his head. His case is desperate. And the blows that he inflicts upon himself are so many prayers to God for pardon and heart-renewal.

How wonderful the contrast between these two men! Is there such a contrast between any two men here to-day? Our Lord Jesus has come to church this morning, and He is searching us as keenly as He did these two. What does He find in us? Is our spirit that of the Pharisee or of the publican? Pride repels and scorns those who occupy lower places, builds her nest in some cold and lofty summit, and isolates herself alike from the love of God and man; while humility finds the one and only gate that leads to peace of mind, the love of God and man, and the joys and honours of heaven. How does the Lord regard us this morning? It is well worth our while to enquire.

2. *The devotions of the two men.* In the one, there is a pretence of gratitude; in the other, the spirit of deep

reverence and true prayer. The Pharisee offers no prayer ; he neither confesses sin nor asks for pardon. He prays with himself, says our Lord. He says, " God, I thank Thee," We ought indeed to thank God. It is of His mercies that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not. He might have said, " I thank Thee that I am not in hell, that Thou hast kept me from outrageous and outbreking sin." It is, moreover, our duty and privilege to thank God we are not as some other men are, crippled, ignorant, idiotic, or criminals. Right for you, sister, to thank God that you are not among the lost women that curse our cities. But to thank God that we are not as others, and to draw contemptuous comparisons between ourselves and them is to glorify ourselves while professing to worship God. He concludes that he is very good by judging all others to be very bad. To thank God we are not as the unfortunate or the wicked in the spirit of pity is good. The worst are members of the same great family to which we all belong. All are corrupt before God and equally helpless and hopeless. No one has anything which he has not received. Daily must the holiest say, " Oh to grace how great a debtor!" Only for grace the saintliest would be among the most abandoned. All need to be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. But the Pharisee has no sense of his need of grace. And his prayer is no prayer to God ; it is a bit of self-communing. The Positivist worships collective humanity, but the Pharisee worships himself. His language is that of self-glorification, self-worship. And he has no doubt but that he will have the approval of

C. But how are we able to pronounce so positively on this point? Confessedly we cannot read hearts. Professional mind-readers have not our implicit confidence, when they attempt to read motives. We know, because the Lord was in His holy temple, searching the hearts and trying the reins of the children of men. He is here to-day, searching and trying us, and seeing if there be any evil way in us. Does he see in you the self-deception and hypocrisy of the Pharisee?

In contrast with all this is the prayer of the publican. I have already said that he stands afar off, that he cannot draw near to God, that he cannot thank God for virtues, for he has none, that he cannot lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, and that he can only smite upon his breast. Here are awe, reverence, and penitence. Now let us look at his prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is a cry *de profundis*. It is the major part of the 130th Psalm epitomized. "Out of the depths do I cry unto Thee, O Lord." What a prayer, how brief and simple! Thus men cry in time of extremity. So Peter when sinking in the waves: "Lord, save, I perish." So the Syro-Phoenician: "Lord, help me." The Pharisee thought of other men, and of this publican, not to pray for them, but to contrast himself with them, to his own great advantage. The publican thinks only of himself and God—himself and his sin, God and His mercy, The definite article before the word "sinner"—which however does not appear in our version—shows not only that he acknowledges himself to be a sinner, but seems to point to what the Pharisee had just said: "I am not as other men are, or even as

this publican." It would seem as if the publican has heard these words and accepts the Pharisee's disparaging estimate. It is as if he says: "Yes; he is right. He may indeed be thankful that he is not like me. Can it be that God will have mercy on such a sinner as I am?" Our Lord does not intimate that he was not a great sinner. He probably was. The Pharisee regarded himself as the holiest. The publican looked at himself as the worst of men. So when fully convinced of sin, we feel that no others' sins can equal ours in heinousness. An illustration in point comes from a land, to which our attention has been recently drawn.

A Hottentot in Southern Africa lived with a pious Dutchman, in whose house prayer was engaged in daily. One day the master read (Luke xviii), "Two men went up into the temple to pray." The poor black man, whose heart was already awakened, looked earnestly at the reader, and whispered: "Now I'll learn how to pray." The Dutchman read on: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." "No, I am not, but I am worse," whispered the Hottentot. Again the Dutchman read: "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." "No; I don't do that. I don't pray in that manner. What shall I do?" said he. The good man read on until he came to the publican, who "would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven." "That's me!" cried the hearer. The farmer went on with his reading: "Stood afar off." "That's where I am," said the Hottentot. "But smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." "That's me! that's my prayer!" cried the poor creature. And, smiting on

his breast, he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner," until, like the poor publican, he went down to his house a saved and happy man.

Moreover, the prayer was probably offered at the time of the daily sacrifice. Hence the expression—*ἐλίσθητί μοι*—be propitious to me through sacrifice. For this word implies not reconciliation merely, but reconciliation through sacrifice—a distinct reference to the doctrine of atonement. Like righteous Abel, the publican knew that without shedding of blood there is no remission. The appeal is to mercy, not to justice. There is no hope for a sinner apart from the cross of Christ. When you pray for mercy, let it be for the sake of Christ: Christ in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood; Christ on the cross, bleeding, dying, our great accepted sacrifice.

A very appropriate prayer, you will say, for the publican, for a murderer or any great sinner, but scarcely for me, who am moral and correct and reverent. Nay, my friend, whatever your position may be, however highly esteemed among men, however free from gross sin you may be, you father or mother, you man of business, you child in a pious home, it is a prayer for you all. Archbishop Ussher often said he hoped to die with this prayer on his lips. His last words were, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "There is no difference," says Paul, between the most moral and most immoral, between the greatest saint and the greatest sinner; all alike must be saved by the same boundless grace, washed in the same precious blood of Christ. We have only to know ourselves to know that this is true. Oh, let us pray

this prayer, you and I, over and over again till we feel our sins, pleading with sobs and cries and groans, our eyes melting with tears, our cries rending the heavens. It may be a comfort to know that the more your prayers are weighed down with sorrow for sin, the more acceptable your person and your prayers will be to God, who desires truth in the inward parts. Oh pray, ye children, that you may never lose a tender conscience, a power of instant recoil from temptation, or, if you have fallen into sin, that you may promptly return, wounded and penitent, to the feet of God.

3. *The treatment the two men received at the hands of God.* The one was *justified*; the other was *rejected*.

It is a good thing to go to the House of God, if you go to worship. It is like a river of water in a dry place, or the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Many derive no benefit from it, but it is because they are not seeking God. One may have the rarest privileges, and yet lose his soul. Archbishop Trench relates a Persian parable. In the *Bustan* of the famous Persian poet Saadi, is the following story which seems an echo of the evangelical history. Jesus, while on earth, was once entertained in the cell of a monk of eminent reputation for sanctity. In the same city dwelt a youth sunk in every sin, "whose heart was so black that Satan himself shrank back from it in horror." This youth presently appeared before the cell of the monk, and, as if smitten by the very presence of the divine prophet, began to lament with tears the sins of his past life, and to implore pardon and grace. The monk indignantly interrupted him, demanding how he dared to appear in his presence

and in that of God's holy prophet, assured him that for him it was vain to seek forgiveness, and in proof how inexorably he considered his lot was fixed for hell, exclaimed, "My God, grant me but one thing, that I may stand far from this man on the judgment day." On this Jesus spoke, "It shall be even so: the prayer of both is granted. This sinner has sought mercy and grace, and has not sought them in vain—his sins are forgiven—his place shall be in Paradise at the last day. But this monk has prayed that he may never stand near this sinner—this prayer too is granted: hell shall be his place; for there this sinner shall never come."

The prayer of the Pharisee, an abomination to Deity, and an outrage upon humanity, "is blown back like smoke into his own eyes," or, if answered, is answered like the prayer of the monk in that he goes down to his home as self-satisfied, cold and hard as ever. But the prayer of the publican, attended as it is with confession of sin, an appeal to God's mercy, and a trust in the appointed sacrifice, rises like a cloud of incense toward the sky, a sacrifice of sweet savour unto God. He goes down to his home justified rather than the other. The Greek word here used is the one that Paul takes to express the great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. His relation to God, in the instant of the offering of the prayer in humiliation and faith, is changed. I do not say that he is instantly acquainted with the fact. He may return home still brooding over his own sin, the storm passed indeed but the great ground-swell still rolling heavily; while the Pharisee, who counts himself a just man, may leave the temple with not the

slightest suspicion that he has been pronounced in the secret counsels of heaven an unrighteous man. The man who beats his breast, and casts down his eyes, and confesses himself *the* sinner, the *chief* of sinners, is evidently passing through an agonizing spiritual struggle, which will perhaps for a while darken the heavens with clouds and turn sweetest music into discord. But when he comes to know his acceptance, who shall describe his joy? Who can describe the joy of the captive who, from the darkness and filth of a noisome dungeon, goes forth to liberty and home? Sun never shone with such a lustre, birds never sang so blithely, flowers never bloomed so sweetly, as when he walks forth acquitted and justified by the law of the land. How much deeper the joy of the publican who knows he is justified!

“Tongue cannot express the sweet rapture and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love.”

But whether he knows it instantly or not, the record is made in heaven: “This my son was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, but is found.”

And may this great change pass upon us, who are aliens, and strangers, and enemies? Yes; and to-day. In the long history of souls from the time of Abel till to-day, such a prayer as that of the publican, offered in a like spirit, has never been unanswered. You may have come to this house all stained with leprous sins, and go home saved and healed. Only honestly and heartily confess your sin, implore grace to forsake it, believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and you shall be absolved and saved. Come then at once to

Christ. Offer this prayer. Do it with all your heart, and

“ Though your sins as mountains rise,
And swell and reach to heaven ;
Yet mercy is above the skies,
And you shall be forgiven.”

You may deem yourself the worst of sinners ; you may think your case is hopeless ; but if you will breathe this prayer to Him who loves you, and longs to save you, you will find it is not in vain. He will save you from the uttermost, and in good time to the uttermost.

Briefly let me little more than mention three lessons.

1. *Self-righteousness is unrighteousness.* What if the Pharisee were socially free from sin and crime, and punctilious in his religious life, as he declared in his prayer he was, and Christ does not hint that he was not, he has nothing whereof to glory and nothing wherein to trust. Alas, he does boast of these things, and trusts in them for justification before God. At the best his virtues were negative. Abstinence from wrong is not rectitude. And his ceremonial observances apart from the true spirit were sins. To do right in a wrong spirit is unrighteousness, as the Searcher of hearts adjudges. Let us pray, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.” And leaving the Pharisee to offer up his unseemly prayer, and sink into the destruction which pride prepares for him, let us take our stand with the publican, join with him in his earnest prayer, and with him find our way

“ To the mount above
Through the low vale of humble love.”

2. *To judge of ourselves by others is unsafe.* Paul tells us that they who measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves among themselves are not wise. Thus the Pharisee did, and how he erred! He saw in himself what he deemed excellencies that others had not. His standard was low. No man is a suitable standard for another. God's requirement is not, "Be as good as the best man you know." But it is, "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If we want to know ourselves as we are, let us measure ourselves by our great Exemplar, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. The thing we most need is pardon and purity. Not till we have measured ourselves by Him shall we be filled with self-despair, and be driven to betake ourselves to the mercy of God.

3. *The all-seeing Eye regards closely every worshipper.* None can escape His scrutiny. He sees not as men see. He looks past our dress, our professions, our prayers; He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men. Later he told the Pharisees that they were whited sepulchres, fair without but full within of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. There is no error in His judgment, no appeal from His decision. It is not well to tell God you are better than other men, mentioning any—even the most disreputable man. He may see that the poor fellow whom you scorn has fought more bravely for righteousness than you have ever done, but because of an inheritance of evil passions, and an organization so ill-balanced that he had no strength to resist enticements to sin, has fallen a prey to

his enemies ; but in God's sight he may be a better man than you. Let us rather take part with the publican, like Grotius, who when dying was reminded by a clergyman of the prayer of the publican by which he obtained justification before God. The great theologian made answer, "I am that publican," and died. Be of the same mind and go home justified. For while the Lord uttered this parable, as the evangelist tells us, to rebuke the spirit of self-righteousness, without doubt He had in view also the gracious purpose of encouraging the sinner, in all lands and ages, to cast himself in penitence on the mercy of God, who will not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. Here in this touching parable is a gospel for trembling, dejected, broken-hearted ones, who are in danger of despairing of the grace of God. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise--no matter how sinful and polluted, no matter how long given over to sin—I will in no wise cast out."

THE DANGERS OF YOUNG MEN.

“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Prov. i. 10.

Youth is the time of special danger. Then it is that passions are strongest and call most loudly for indulgence. It is the time, too, of fewest cares and anxieties, and hence most open to temptation. In considering the dangers of young men we must take into account the causes of these dangers as well as the persons in peril. The magnetic rocks would have been no peril to the vessel, but for the iron in her hull, which responded so promptly and so powerfully to their attractive influence. We have to do with a great adversary, who with infinite cunning and tact adapts the outward temptation to our inward aptitudes, limited experience and infirm principles. We have, therefore, far more to fear from the one inward traitor than from the serried ranks and marshalled hosts of the most powerful enemy that can approach us from without. Gibraltar, perhaps, could hold in check all the Powers of Europe, but it would be powerless to resist a contemptible force, if the garrison were tampered with and should prove disloyal. Let me shew you a few of the dangers of young men and the ruin they work, that you may be deterred from following to the doom of the lost.

1. *Pride and Vanity.* There is a distinction between them. Vanity is an inferior vice to pride. Vanity is a suppliant for the praise of others; but pride disdains the praise of others, and rests back on its complacent consciousness of its own excellency. In either case impious self is sitting on God's throne and claiming the honour and glory due to Him alone; in either case they are to themselves the centres of creation. Full of self-confidence like Rehoboam, the young man often sees no need for human counsel, divine guidance, or heavenly help, chooses companions from among the light and frivolous, disregards prayer, neglects the oracles of truth, and follows whither his instincts may lead him. When young men are just passing to self-government from subordination to parental rule, before they have received many checks from the rebukes of adversity or from the demonstrations of their own folly, they are apt to set aside experience and laugh to scorn the wise counsels and kind remonstrances of those who would fain see them well started in life. They are impatient of restraint. They know far more than their parents, or rather, they think they do. They have caught the vision and the spirit of a brighter time. So it has been with most of us seniors, I dare say. At that stage of transition we most likely behaved very foolishly, much to the discomfort of friends and the disgust of the wise. And if, after a little eccentricity of folly, we passed that experience safely and addressed ourselves to our life-work with some sense of our own insignificance and of the value of experience, it has been an unspeakable mercy.

But alas ! it is often only an introduction to a dark and melancholy career, utterly regardless of all authority, human or divine—a career which gathers ever-increasing gloom until it terminates in the blackness of darkness, the doom of the finally impenitent. As a self-confident driver approaches near a passing railway train, and his horse is taken with a sudden fright, and he is dashed into the very arms of death, so with reprehensible temerity young men often approach to the verge of temptation, lose self-control, and fall into the sin with which they have been amusing themselves. In the school of experience very salutary lessons are taught, but many a man is ruined before he has learned them. "God resisteth the proud." "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." As with Haman and Nebuchadnezzar, so always: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

2. *Evil Companions.* To illustrate the fact that impressions are made upon the nervous system by most trifling circumstances, Professor Draper tells us that if a wafer be laid upon a cold, polished metallic surface, and the metal then breathed upon; and, after the moisture of the breath has disappeared, the wafer be removed, and the metal again breathed upon, the image of the wafer will come plainly into view. If then the metal be carefully laid aside, and kept for months, and brought out and breathed upon once more, the shadow of the image of the wafer will again come forth. He declares that a shadow never falls upon a wall without leaving there a permanent trace, which under certain processes might

be made visible. Now, every man is casting a shadow for weal or for woe upon all around him, and the ghost of Banquo will no more quickly "down at the bidding" of Macbeth when he cries :

Hence, horrible shadow !
Unreal mockery, hence !

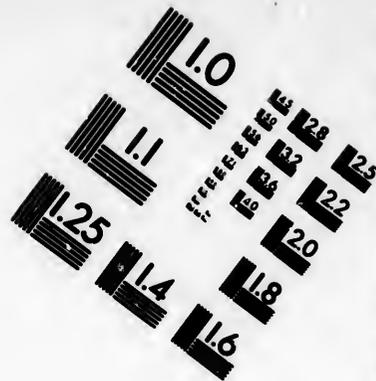
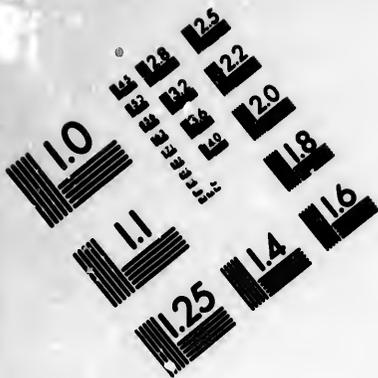
than will the shadow vanish which we are ever casting wherever we go. "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." The influence men exert may be most helpful, or most baneful, but they cannot divest themselves of that influence, any more than they can stand in the light and not throw a shadow. Sooner or later the influence they exert is felt by their companions. You cannot breathe an atmosphere, either pure or impure, without being affected by it. The influence of some men is a perpetual inspiration to what is noble and good. In their presence the evil in a man seems cowed and abashed, and he is stimulated to be his best. Tyndall said of Faraday, "His work excites admiration, but contact with him warms and elevates the heart." Other men there are who are low-minded, indulge in sneers against whatever is elevating, and when they hear of noble deeds attribute them to the meanest motives. Contact with such people lowers and degrades a man ; and it may be that one interview with a bad man may ruin a youth. Says Dr. J. R. Miller : "Guides sometimes warn tourists among the Swiss mountain not to speak as they pass certain points. Even the reverberation of a whisper in the air may start a poised avalanche from its place in the crags. There are times in many human lives when they are

so delicately poised that it depends on how the first person they meet greets them whether they sink into the darkness of despair, or lift up their heads to find hope. We never know when a passing mood of ours may decide a soul's destiny."

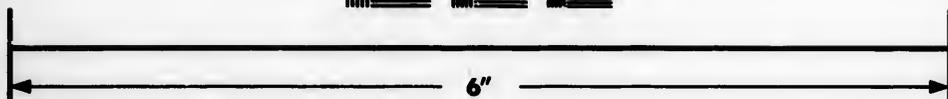
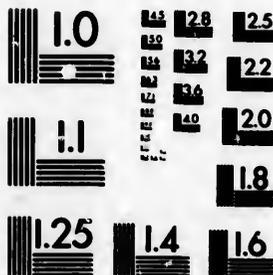
Man's influence lives on when he dies. How vain was the request of a dying man, "Gather up my influence and bury it with me!" It will work on building up or tearing down character long after its author has passed away. It is a force that only God could annihilate, and He will not consent to do it. It will go careering on till the end of time, and probably forever and forever.

Childhood and youth should be, therefore, protected from evil companions, and surrounded by those who will bring to them high thoughts, noble ideals, and worthy deeds. For one man drawn aside by innate love of vice, thousands are led astray by the seductions of others. The pleasure of entertaining conversation, the fear of being laughed at, the dangerous arguments by which the wicked try to shake the religious principle: of whose whom they wish to ruin, and bad example—these are the snares which are often fatal to inexperienced youth. Before sentence of death was passed on a criminal, permission was given him to speak. "May it please the court," said he, "bad company was my ruin. When I left home, I received the blessing of my parents, and promised them to avoid all evil associations. Had I kept my promise, I should have been spared this shame, and the guilt of crimes unrevealed. I, who once moved in the first circles of society, and have been





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the guest of distinguished public men, am lost, and all through bad company."

Against such company you have been warned. Because of their disregard of such warnings, thousands have perished. It is, of course, one thing to be with bad men by chance, or for business purposes, and quite another to choose them as friends. It is a bad sign when the young man prefers for his friends the immoral and the profane, the Sabbath-breaker, the impure, and the scoffer, to the virtuous and the Christian. It is a proof that he is partaking of their spirit. His spirit determines his choice of company, and the company he chooses will confirm and establish his character in evil. And oh, the mischief that must ensue from an unhappy selection of friends! It is sometimes, however, a mistake rather than a proof of deliberate wickedness. The youth feels the force of ripening passions. He is full of trust in the honour of others. He has not, perhaps, the kindly influence of judicious friends, who would draw him to virtue by the cords of love. He is to be pitied because for the sake of gratifying his lusts he betakes himself to unworthy companionship. He is to be blamed because, knowing full well that he cannot touch pitch without defilement, he yet believes that he is a match for Satan's cunning emissaries. He has been led to the doors of the drinking saloon, of the strange woman, of the gambling hell, and has been shown the multitudes, now wretched, despairing, lost, who went in, all unsuspecting of evil, and have been swallowed up and destroyed, and yet he has ventured in. How long does it take to switch off to a wrong

track the locomotive, which, once started on the down grade will run more and more swiftly to destruction!

“What is the harm,” says one, “of an innocent game of cards?” “What is the harm of an occasional glass?” “Why should we not see a little of life while we are young?” Multitudes have thus asked, and they have taken the first glass and many more besides. and the habit is fixed, a dreadful tyrant, lording it over them with despotic sway. They have played the first game of cards, and have ventured into places of which they have heard that they who go in go in to be stripped and ruined, and it fares with them as with those who ventured before. Oh, the thousands that have been warned by their parents, by their consciences, by lurid anticipations of retribution, and yet go on and on, and are destroyed! How many has the devil got upon his inclined plane, down which with cunning art he contrives to draw them—bad companions, disobedience to parents, late hours, drinking, gambling, bad women, lost character, lost reputation, shamelessness, crime; and before half their days are ended the terrible tragedy is enacted and the curtain falls! And of those who are not utterly ruined, how many are terribly injured: scarred, scathed, blighted, broken down by disease,—saved, perhaps, from hell, but saved only as by fire.

A muddy stream and a clear sparkling one, flowing together in the same channel, keep separate for a little, each on its own side, but a little farther down they mingle and are alike impure. So it is with an innocent youth associating with the vile—for awhile he is chaste

and pure ; presently he becomes defiled. In the selection of a place for a home, remember the history of Lot, and have an eye to morality and religion first of all, making pecuniary consideration of secondary importance ; for money will afford no compensation for the evil of being brought constantly under a polluting influence. Be careful as to your boarding place. There are Christian women who keep boarding-houses, and who will with motherly solicitude be concerned for you as for their own sons. There are others who are anxious only to make money. Having secured a good home, live in it as if the million-eyed world were ever regarding you. Then as to your friends, I implore you, choose them with the greatest care. As one has well said, " God keeps the lightnings of heaven in his own scabbard, which He only can wield. But He gives to every innocent and ingenuous youth the lightning of an honest eye." If one tempt you to evil, give him a look which will make the wretch crouch and grovel at your feet. Surround yourself with Christian influences. Find your way into the Church. Above all, accept the proffered friendship of Christ. He is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. You will find Him " a friend in need, a friend indeed." Companionship with Him will refine and elevate your character above the power of words to tell, and impart to you a sweetness in the esteem of higher worlds.

" A Persian fable says · One day
A wanderer found a lump of clay,
So redolent of sweet perfume,
Its odours scented all the room.
' What are thou ? ' was his quick demand,
' Art thou some gum from Samarcand ?

Or spikenard in a rude disguise ?
Or other costly merchandise ?'
' Nay, I am but a lump of clay.'
' Then whence this wondrous sweetness, say ?'
' Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose.'
Meet parable ! for will not those
Who love to dwell with Sharon's rose
Distil sweet scent on all around,
Though poor and mean themselves be found ?
Good Lord ! abide with us that we
May catch these these odours fresh from Thee."

3. *Bad Books.* This is one of the very wide gates that lead to hell. A prosperous family in New York fell into ruin through the misdeeds of one of its members. The amazed mother said to the officer of the law: "Why, I never supposed there was anything wrong. I never dreamed there could be anything;" but after she had gone, he said, "I found a bad book. That's what slew her!"

There are books more or less avowedly *infidel*, from the sophistries of Hume down to the ribaldry of Paine; from the scepticism of certain scientists down to the low, ignorant abuse of religion to be found in the tracts which flood the West with their pestilential showers. They aim to produce doubt and disbelief. No man enters eternity an infidel. Beware of them.

There are some books of mere fiction and fancy, which are of great moral value; but there are many others the effects of which are to produce false views of human nature, disappointment in actual life, and a disrelish for simple truth; to make reading of the Bible and other books requiring thought irksome; to

belittle the intellect ; to degrade the soul ; to impair the influence of the pulpit ; and to grieve and quench the Spirit of God. Beware of them.

There are foul and exciting romances. Their tone is low, their taste coarse, their colouring voluptuous, their morality unsound. Licentious scenes and obscene imagery are unblushingly introduced, and suggestions made which are revolting to the refined and pure. But often this kind of sensational literature, embellished with engravings worthy of the greatest masters, and purified of excessive grossness, is still insidious and fascinating, and none the less demoralizing. And on this pestilential and deadly literature thousands feed with voracious appetite. "Every person," says Lord Macaulay, "knows that whatever is constantly presented to the imagination in connection with what is attractive, will itself become attractive." What then must be the influence of such works of fiction? Of all such works beware.

There is a depth lower still, to which you would scarcely believe that any *man* could descend. But this is, *par excellence*, *Satanic* literature, and the object of such writing and illustration is three-fold : to resolve the sacred relation of husband and wife into a question of convenience and merchandise ; to stimulate a diseased and morbid curiosity by depicting any incident of daily life which can be made the vehicle of prurient thought or immoral suggestion ; and to represent every act of crime, even the darkest and vilest deeds, as dramatic, chivalrous, and heroic, and as lifting the man who perpetrated them above the ordinary level of his

fellow men. There is a "gallows literature" which depicts in glowing language the lives of murderers, banditti, and other malefactors of every type and shade. Do not touch the polluting stuff. Why should you forsake the living waters for such corrupting streams? Why wallow in mire in the hope that you may afterward be cleansed? Tell me, what sin is equal to that of sinning because of the abundance of grace? Cultivate a love for good books. Read only what will at once instruct, elevate and inspire. A certain great man attributes his success to three things: love of good books, early marriage with a virtuous woman, and early conversion to God. Beware of all bad books, for by reading them you will gain nothing helpful to your intellect or purifying to your heart. Beware of them, because your example is influential, and because such books are terribly destructive for time and eternity.

4. *Sensual Indulgence.* The Lord Jesus is not a hard master. He asks us to give up only those pleasures which injure us, which war against the soul. They are the pleasures of sin, incomparably lower than those of virtue and religion. Fenelon in his *Adventures of Telemach*, the son of Ulysses, makes the mentor say: "Shipwreck and death are less dangerous than the vices which assail virtue."

When lofty aims are lowered, the enjoyments of the soul become sensual. Under one pretence or another, men betake themselves to intoxicating liquors. They are in trouble; drink will make them forget their trouble. They are lonely; drink will make them forget their loneliness. And fascinated and blinded, they

cannot believe that *they* shall ever become drunkards. The sentiments of the very men they see perishing they will repeat as to the innocence of an occasional glass, and follow right on in their steps to destruction.

Or, perhaps they fall into a class of society where they find it a strong temptation to be ashamed of too rigid temperance principles, and they give way little by little till all power of resistance is gone. And then comes dependence upon stimulants for ability to do extra work, and after a while even to do ordinary work. When men reach this stage, they are never likely to be reclaimed. A few will be saved, but more will go on to the bitter end. And when once the habit becomes fixed, and the poor slave has caught a glimpse of his prospective ruin, remorse, that cruel bird of prey, with her fearful talons and bloody beak seizes upon his soul. And now what shall he do to obtain relief? Shall he reform? Alas! he has no strength to keep his vow. There is a Saviour mighty to save; but he will not go to Him. There is, as one has said, another relief to be found; it is in the insensibility of deeper potations. And when from these he recovers, remorse takes hold of him again with a firmer and deadlier grip than ever, from which he obtains only a temporary respite in renewed indulgence. And thus is he perpetually driven from remorse to drunkenness, and from drunkenness to remorse; but as, with each debauch his manhood is more thoroughly degraded, his ruin more complete, and his prospects more hopeless, his remorse becomes ever darker and more despairing and his drunkenness more dishonouring and disgusting. And the last stage of

that man is a living death, for with a felt conviction of the truthfulness of the awful utterance of Scripture, "no drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven," he goes on in life looking forward to a fearful judgment, till the grave receives his loathsome body, and hell his ruined soul.

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching," hundreds of thousands strong each year to drunkards' graves. And as they fall, their ranks are recruited from the lads and men who have been drilling for it. Young man, turn away from the intoxicating cup. The habit grows. Where one glass satisfied you, now perhaps you require two or three. Is it well to run further risk? I do not say that every man who drinks will be a drunkard. He stands a fair chance of not becoming one if he is selfish, ungenial, cold, and miserly. But I do say the danger is great for every man who tipples. And as for those who have hereditary predisposition to drink, the risk is so imminent and tremendous that the taste of intoxicating liquors should never be known.

There is another form of self-indulgence, fraught with infinite peril to the young man. The pride which will not brook control, and the self-conceit which vainly dreams of security, send many a young man into the house of death. "The lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil, but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell." Her house is the spider's web; she, the active little spider, and he, the self-confident fly, who has incontinently dropped in. See

him presently struggling to get away ; but actively and quickly she throws over him fresh filaments until he is hopelessly entangled, and finds it is for him the house of death. Thus many perish. Have you not seen them? Come, young man, beautiful in your chastity and ruddy health, and look on yon cadaverous spectres with lacklustre eyes and rottenness in their bones. Once they were bright and rosy as you, but alas ! they gave their honour unto others and their years unto the cruel. This is the reason why so many young men leave home strong and vigorous, and come back in a few short years to die, debauched and ruined by intemperance and profligacy. Thus many thousands perish every year. And the slums of the cities, whose reeking and sweltering populations die off, a generation of them every few years, are recruited from where? From the rural districts. These young men and women, now degraded, came from homes, many of them, happy as yours. Is it not time to check the flood of human iniquity which is destroying many among you, and threatens to destroy many more? For it is not merely energy and life that are wasted ; *souls* are lost. If all the literature and all the treasures of art in the world were destroyed, this would be a dreadful calamity. But the books might be re-written, and the treasures of art replaced by man. But not all the churches or other organizations can save a lost soul. Nay, it is impossible even to the Almighty. The lost Pleiad, God may restore ; the ships that have foundered at sea, God can find : the lost arts, God has not lost ; but the lost soul (with reverence be it said), God cannot save. Once lost, it is lost forever.

Be not wise in your own conceit. Take advice from one who has seen much of the ruin wrought by this vice, and beware of the very beginning. This is the sin that takes away the heart, that leaves deep scars in the soul, that slays its multitudes, that has overthrown many a saint, that the God of holiness greatly abhors. Don't let this thin edge of the wedge find entrance, because it is the beginning of the end. Keep yourself in absolute chastity for the pure maiden whom God will give you in holy wedlock. As Miss Willard says, "A white life for two." Flee the occasions of this sin. Never talk of it; never allow your mind to think upon it. Show that you have that which separates men from worms—backbone. Be resolute here. When tempted to the first sin, let your answer be a thundering, decisive "*No.*"

But if you find yourself borne away by the power of temptation, what then? Is there no hope? See yon feeble young man in his chariot, with a strong man as charioteer, and powerful horses driving swiftly down a pleasing slope towards a fearful precipice. At last he wakes up to his danger, commands the driver to turn about, and attempts to seize the reins, but all to no purpose. The charioteer lashes the steeds to fury, and down they rush with the speed of a hurricane to awful ruin. This is a picture of yourself, my friend. The horses are your passions; the charioteer is Satan; the young man, feeble and protesting, is your soul. What should you do? Cry aloud to Christ, and swift as lightning on wings of love He will fly to your relief. He will smite down the charioteer; He will seize the

reins ; by His grace He will control the flying coursers, and guide them into the path of the Divine commandments and up to the gates of heaven.

Satan wants to destroy you ; Christ longs to save you. Which shall have his way ? Dante in his vision of hell sees one whom he does not name, but who, he says, made "the great refusal." Oh, be persuaded not to reject Christ's overtures of love !

THE DETECTION OF SIN.

"Be sure your sin will find you out." Numbers xxxii. 23.

These words were spoken by Moses to the two tribes of Reuben and Gad to deter them from violating an engagement into which they had voluntarily entered. They embody an important principle of the government of God. There are state reasons for the exposure of sin—reasons which have to do with God, and reasons which have to do with man. For the vindication of the divine government and glory, for the sake of human safety and the conservation of human government, it is needful that sin should not lie long concealed.

By the exposure of sin and its punishment God strives to educe from evil as much good as possible for the rest of the race. It is not for his sake alone that the thief and the murderer are detected and punished. Out of the wreck of every wicked man, upon the very reefs where he was ruined, God builds a lighthouse to warn others from following to the same destruction. It may be relied on as the ordination of heaven that the offender's sin will surely find him out. But as all sins are not fully brought to light in this life, God has postponed the judgment of each individual to the day of doom, when all mankind shall stand before the inexorable throne.

The detection of sin is our theme.

i. *The contrivances of Providence for bringing to light the hidden things of darkness are manifold.*

Many of the inventions of this century have increased the machinery for bringing criminals to justice. They are a part of the plan of Providence for this end. The electric telegraph has done admirable service in this regard, and the submarine cables have enabled justice to lay her strong hand upon the runaway rascal, bank-defaulter, railway-embezzler, or other criminal, who had hoped to escape on the swift ocean steamer before tidings of his crime could overtake him. The *megascopc*, an instrument which produces enlarged copies of hand-writing more reliably than the most skilful expert, will reveal to the jury evidence that cannot be gainsayed of counterfeit bank notes, or of forgery, or of any alteration in a document. Edison is able to throw an electric current fully 50ft. through the air from one conductor to another, and thus transmit messages from and to a railway train when moving, say, at the rate of forty miles an hour. "Should a criminal be supposed to have started by such and such a train, not only is it possible to transmit a full description of his person to the conductor of the moving train, but also, if he is caught, notice can be transmitted to the next station to have the necessary officers ready to seize him, when the train enters the station." The photographic instrument is of use in the detection of crime in various ways—of which this is one: the picture of the rogue greatly assists the detective in his arrest. Notice what a detective the microscope is. A man is murdered. An axe

is found stained with blood. It is contended by the defence that the blood is that of a sheep, but the microscope shows that the corpuscles in that blood are those of a human being. Years ago a railway company in Germany found that a barrel of silver coin had somewhere between two distant stations been emptied of silver and filled with sand. For some time no clue to the robber could be discovered. At last a learned professor was called in, who sent for samples of sand from each of the intermediate stations; and then placing them under a microscope, was able by comparing them with the sand found in the barrel to identify the station at which the barrel had been filled. Little difficulty remained, for the servants at that station were so few that the culprit was readily detected. These admirable inventions of genius may not perhaps elevate the moral tone of society. They may not produce a love of morality, but they will unquestionably assist in the detection of crime, and restrain many from immorality. But we are not shut up to these methods of detection. It seems as if a fatality follows in the footsteps of the thief, the murderer, and such like criminals. So that though a man be able by a vast pair of whiskers and an ample moustache to hide such signs of guilt as the countenance may express, though he mask himself behind a decent and plausible exterior, though he be ever so careful to guard against detection, it is very seldom that he succeeds long in concealing his crime from the keen eyes of the curious and suspicious. Sometimes he is discovered in the act, or blood is found upon him, or certain properties of the deceased are seen

in his possession, or his shoe answers to the print in the soil, or false keys are found in his possession, or his victim is not quite dead, or an accomplice turns informer, or his own subsequent conduct, when deserted by his usual prudence, turns Queen's evidence against him. Very cunningly planned was the scheme to sell Joseph into Egypt. Well kept was the secret for many a year. But at last it suddenly came out and Jacob knew what his sons had done. "Murder will out," and so will other crimes. Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites and all their sheep and oxen; but he spared the best of the sheep and the oxen. And when God sent Samuel to him, he told Samuel a lie (1 Sam. xv. 13), when lo! the sheep began to bleat and the oxen to bellow. Iniquity cannot be concealed. Sometimes as in the case of Jonah and Achan the community is visited for the sin of one, and when inquiry is made of the Lord as to the cause of His displeasure, it is made known, and Achan is stoned to death and Jonah pitched over the ship's side into the raging deep. Sometimes strange suspicions get into people's minds; they become inquisitive; and institute post-mortem examinations which tell the tale of guilt; they join together circumstances, each of which though apparently insignificant in itself is a link in a chain of circumstantial evidence, which binds fast the criminal to his crime. The merchant watches his till more carefully, and studies his books more closely; the deficit is observed and the culprit brought to justice. Sometimes his sin will haunt a man day and night like a ghost till, well nigh driven to despair, he is

compelled to make some kind of confession. It is related of an old pirate who had spent his manhood upon the ocean and had retired before the gallows had its due, that to relieve his troubled conscience without criminating himself he used to tell the horrid events of his own life, when his brows would knit, his eyes flash and his old spirit seem to return, his listeners in the meanwhile covering with dread, breathless with terror, their lips white and trembling. But never quite forgetting himself as he lived over again the bloody scenes of earlier days, and not altogether carried away by his impetuous feelings, he always attributed them to some daring freebooter who even then was scouring the seas in a low rakish craft under the terrible flag of the death's-head and cross-bones.

But sometimes conscience drives to a further confession. Two Germans were seen to go together into a wood. A good while afterward the body of one was found under a certain tree. The other had in the meanwhile escaped beyond the seas. But his conscience pursued him over the world, and one morning his body was found hanging from a limb of the tree at the foot of which, a long while before, they had found his victim. In a great trial for a dark and mysterious murder, in vindication of Providence and of the authority of conscience, Daniel Webster thus spoke: "The guilty soul cannot keep its own secret. It is false to itself. It labours under its guilty possession and knows not what to do with it. The human heart was not made for the residence of such an inhabitant. It finds itself preyed upon by a torment which it dares not acknowledge to

God or man. A vulture is devouring it, and it can ask no assistance either from heaven or earth. The secret which the murderer possesses soon comes to possess him, and like the evil spirit of which we read, it overcomes him and leads him whithersoever it will. He feels it beating in his breast, rising to his throat, and demanding disclosure. He thinks the whole world sees it in his face and almost hears it working in the silence of his thought. It betrays his discretion ; it breaks down his courage ; it conquers his prudence. When suspicion from without begins to embarrass him, and the web of circumstances to entangle him, the fatal secret struggles with still greater violence to burst forth. It must be confessed ; there is no refuge from confession ; but suicide is confession."

Thus are we led to consider that

ii. *God will oblige us to confess our sins willingly or unwillingly.* If our tongues refuse to tell, our countenances shall proclaim our sins. God brands them upon our faces.

Just as under long continued trials, if the spirit is kept patient, the countenance will wear the impress of this grace ; so on the other hand, if the spirit is under those trials agitated by the passion of anger, there will be a legible inscription in the lineaments of the countenance that will bespeak the man of ire. God will have it that the varied passions and lusts shall write imperishable records upon the face. The drunkard may hope to destroy the effects of last night's potations by the use of soda and plantagenet waters and the liberal use of cloves ; but the bleared eye, the unsteady step and the

rubicund nose, all tell of drunken carousals. Every form of uncleanness, unchastity, and intemperance writes its history upon the face as much as to say, 'Behold my vile nature.' He who runs may read our characters in our countenances. We are living epistles known and read of all men. Just as the striæ, or worn surfaces on the bare rocks of our country, tell of the forceful passage across our continent of mountain icebergs in some distant period of the physical history of the globe; so, to say nothing of the loss of beauty of person, grace of carriage and elasticity of step, there are lines in many a face which tell of the passage across the heart of some master passion, some monster lust. And well it is that it is so, for who would wish to live in a world where there are so many assassins, thieves, and hypocrites, without some established means of ascertaining character?

iii. *The system of nature, though it seems to be impercipient, is so constituted as to receive impressions from every movement we make, every word we utter, every action we perform.*

At first sight it would seem as if nature preserved an awful apathy with regard to human history, and were shockingly indifferent to the crimes which take place under her very eyes. She smiles alike on the evil and on the good. Her lightning flash kills indiscriminately the saint and the sinner. She lends her forces to the furtherance of missionary enterprise and to the promotion of the slave trade. Do you complain of this? She heeds not your complaints. Stolidly she proceeds on her way. The assassin's knife gleams for an instant in

the sunbeams, and then red with blood is drawn from his victim's breast ; but no arm of power smites him down. The sun smiles as serenely ; the birds warble as sweetly ; the flowers hide not their faces from the sight. The earth drinks in the blood. Not even over red battle-fields does nature weep. It required the mysterious and awful sufferings of the Son of God upon the cross, to elicit from her any expression of sympathy. Yet the Scriptures seem to regard her as a witness of man in his relation to God (Is. i. 2 ; Micah vi. 1 ; Ps. 1). Isaiah at the beginning of his prophecy by a bold apostrophe summons the heavens and the earth to consider and mark the ingratitude of Israel, and God's long continued patience and mercy. Science shows that a profound truth underlies this highly poetic form of address. It was nothing, therefore, but the truth that Joshua uttered when he took a great stone and set it up under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord, and said to the people : " Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us. For it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us. It shall therefore be a witness unto you lest ye deny your God." ' Indeed there is not a movement of body or mind which does not affect the universe. The theory that our words, our actions, our very thoughts, make an indelible impression on the universe, was first of all enunciated by Prof. Babbage in the ninth Bridgewater Treatise ; then Prof. Proctor in " The Stars and the Earth," Prof. Hitchcock in " The Telegraphic System of the Universe," and President Hill in " Geometry and Faith," besides I know not how many others, brought

corroborative and collateral evidence to prove a sublime theory which seems scientifically demonstrable. In the words of Prof. Babbage: "The air is one vast library on whose pages are forever written all that man has ever said or woman whispered." The word which is now passing out of my lips will cause undulations in the air, which will expand in every direction till they pass around the world, and affect the entire volume of the atmosphere for all time. Beyond the atmosphere there is a subtle fluid sensitive to the slightest disturbance, and so contrived as to carry on its bosom the undulations in the air to the utmost verge of creation. By the odyllic force which streams from us evermore we make impression of our feelings, thoughts, volitions, on all living things and on inanimate objects as well. By the action of gravitation all the movements of man are recorded on the star-gemmed vesture of the night—"in the seemingly fixed order of those blazing sapphires is a living dance, in whose mazy track is written the record" of every deed of kindness, of every deed of guilt, and even of the flutter of every insect's wing. Prof. Proctor has demonstrated that in our atmosphere and the more distant ether are inclosed pictures of the past which propagate themselves upon the wings of the rays of light,—all secret deeds thus glancing further and further into the spacious heavens. If then we are ever writing or printing indelible impressions upon, not merely the minds with which we come in contact, but the physical universe about us, so that these impressions become woven into its texture, and constitute a part of its web and woof forever,

it is evident that man will hereafter meet his own record, and that the consequences of his conduct will confront him far away in eternity. Professor Hitchcock says that "analogy makes it a scientific probability that every action of man, however deep the darkness in which it is performed, imprints its image upon nature, and that there may be tests which will bring it into daylight and make it apparent as long as materialism endures." Thus do physics show that the universe is one vast book of remembrance. It will doubtless require higher mathematics than we in this world make use of to trace through all its devious courses—courses disturbed by conflicting forces—any determinate wave of sound or beam of light or other force exerted by us here. Still they are determinable, being fixed by mathematical laws. And if we can not at present with our limited analytical powers trace them, there are beings with powers vastly transcending our own that can; and we, based as our natures are on the law of eternal progression, expect to be able to accomplish what is now beyond our reach. Is it therefore too much for us to conceive, as some one has said, the silent air on the last day becoming vocal, and uttering all the words the sinner has ever uttered, the heavens meanwhile presenting the image of every scene of wickedness in which he took part, and that cold apathetic nature which seemed so unconscious of all that was passing, from rock and stream and rugged mountain and distant star confronting the unhappy man with confounding and overwhelming accusations and proofs of his sin?

Two young men one day hired a horse and buggy to ride to a town ten miles away. Instead of simply going and returning as they had engaged to do, they rode five miles further on, making in all 30 miles. On their return the owner of the livery stable asked, "How far have you been?" and they answered, "Twenty miles only as we engaged." He touched a spring of a machine, which was fastened to the carriage and in some way connected with the motion of the wheels, and had a dial like a clock recording the distance passed over, and there to the discomfiture of the young men was recorded the true distance of 30 miles. How vastly greater will be the sinner's horror and confusion on the day of doom, when a perfect record will appear in the universe about him of his inner and outer life from the cradle to the grave! If one thinks himself so obscure as to be able to escape notice and detection, the new instrument called the *tasimeter* may give him a hint that for him even there is no possibility of escape. By this instrument it is possible not only to measure the heat of the remotest visible star, but to detect by their radiations stars that are unseen and unseeable; for when attached to a large telescope it may, by a sudden accession of temperature detect, in parts of the heavens which appear blank when examined with the highest powers of the instrument, the presence of a body non-luminous, or so distant as to be beyond the reach of telescopic vision, a burnt-out sun, or feebly reflecting planet, till then unknown because not luminous. As with the burnt-out sun, or feebly reflecting planet, so with the man. An influence has gone out from him which must be accounted

for, and he must be made responsible for that influence. Each of us has made a record, involuntarily and unconsciously, but that record implies the man, however obscure he may be, and the man must appear to face the record and accept his doom. Nature being so constructed as to apprehend and convict every sinner at a lesser or greater distance from his sin, we may suppose her also saying with solemn impressiveness: "Be sure your sin will find you out."

iv. *The sinner has further witnesses of his sins.*

One Sabbath morning a godless father took his little boy to a neighbour's field to steal. Before he began his unhallowed work he looked all round to see that none observed him. After he had completed his observation, his little boy cried out, "Father," and the father turned hastily round, "you did not look up there." There were three witnesses of his sin, the Omniscient One, his own consciousness, and his little boy. Under whatever circumstances a man may sin—at midnight or noonday—there are at least two witnesses, God and himself. Each of these writes with an iron pen on imperishable tablets, a record of every thought, word, and deed. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond; it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars."

1. The first witness is one's own consciousness. Consciousness inscribes all your experience on the pages of memory. The human memory, says one, is a palimpsest. The palimpsest is a membrane of very great age, on which have been written several manuscripts, each of which was removed by chemical process before the next

was put on. A roll of vellum was employed to receive, say, some ancient epic song, which at the time possessed a great interest in the estimation of the people; but when that interest was lost, it was erased and in its place some knightly romance or troubadour's song, or other composition which at the time it was desirable to preserve. Now, the several writings though obliterated and now invisible, may again be restored. The human memory is a wonderful palimpsest. The iron pen is ever inscribing your every utterance, thought, action, feeling. It never ceases to write while you are conscious. You may often strive to recollect some passage in your life, or something you have heard, and think, because you cannot recall it, that it has been erased, and that the countless inscriptions made since have covered it up forever. Not so. No impression ever made is buried in eternal forgetfulness. There is for them all a resurrection. There will come a time in the history of every sinner when the pages of memory will be read, and there will be brought to light the hidden things of darkness before an assembled universe. The oaths sworn, the vows broken, the Sabbaths desecrated, the scenes of lewdness, the ribald jest, the obscene song, the solitary theft, the vile slander, the malicious inuendo, the base advantage taken of your neighbour, the shameless act of dishonesty, the barefaced lie, the coloured and varnished statement, the unkind word, the cruel look—all, all shall be laid bare, brought to the view of best friend, worst enemy, angels, devils, and men. Memory cannot, will not lie. She will bring out each separate sin, in all its dark significance. Think of

the number of your sins; how many in one day; how many in your whole life! Alas, they are numberless as the stars, or as the multitudinous leaves of Vallombrosa! They will all be brought to light in their origin, relations, bearings, and issues. When your heart is thus revealed, it will be like uncovering hell, full of fiends and fire. You cannot now bear the sight of even one sin, for you cover it up with excuses and sophistries. But oh, when all are revealed, how overwhelming the terror! In that dread future, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and the Judge shall reward every man according to his works, "be sure your sins shall find you out."

2. Another witness is the Omniscient One. A prisoner in a dungeon was guarded by a man whose duty it was to watch him every instant through a small hole in his iron door. The guard was often changed, but there forever was that vigilant eye. Whether he slept or woke, it was always there. It was the most intolerable element of his imprisonment, for it was an unfriendly eye. Oh how he longed to be relieved for one half hour from that cold, unslumbering eye! But months were lengthened into years, and still the eye was there.

Had he but known it, another eye, as sleepless and infinitely more intelligent and strict to mark iniquity, was always fixed upon him. The guard saw the outer man; the Omniscient One alone saw his heart. The Greeks called God *θεος* from *θεομαι* I see, because they believed Him to be an essentially all-seeing God. And how can

He be otherwise, seeing He bathes the round world with His presence and fills all space. "If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from Thee ; but the night shineth as the day : the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."

God sees us *always*,—when we rise up and when we lie down, asleep or awake, doing good or evil, in the blaze of noonday or the thick shades of midnight. God sees us *completely*,—our outward forms and our inward selves.

The unwearied pen of omniscience is ever employed. A rich man once treated unjustly a poor widow, his tenant. Her little boy was a witness of the act, and he nourished the memory of the transaction till he became a painter of skill and eminence, and then painted the scene exactly as it occurred. He placed it where his mother's oppressor could see it, and waited near by to observe the effect. When the old man looked upon himself and his deed of villainy so well represented upon canvass, he grew pale and asked to buy the picture at any price. If our life were thus represented in a series of paintings, depicting our sins and follies, we should be rendered miserable. Such a series of paintings will be found in the memory of the Omniscient One, in our own recollection, in the memory of our fellows, and in full view of them must the sinner eternally dwell exposed to the eye of the universe.

In some cities they have in connection with their police stations a portraitgallery of criminals. In the halls of omniscience there are photographs of your life, your inner self, taken at every successive instant. How can your sins do other than find you out? How can you hope to escape the great Detective?

It is thus established that our sins shall find us out. No help for it. No way to prevent it. Adulterers, swearers, unclean, drunkards, Sabbath breakers, liars, thieves, be sure of it. God, the Bible, our constitution,—all say, Be sure of it. Sinners in society, the wreck of themselves, in penitentiaries, prisons, lunatic asylums, in death, say, Be sure of it. And hell takes up the affirmation and with an emphasis, louder than the sound of mighty thundering and the roar of mighty waters, our text is preached to us from the abodes of despair—"Be sure your sin will find you out."

A certain bishop—I think Latimer—was arraigned before court to answer certain charges. At first he answered carelessly until he heard behind a curtain the sound of a pen writing his several answers. Then finding it was a more serious matter than he had supposed, he became more deliberate and careful. If in your levity you have not realized the solemnity of your existence, during which you are on trial for your soul's life, and have now felt some conviction of your dreadful and well nigh fatal error, and have awakened to the knowledge that all nature has conspired to detect the sinner, and that behind the screen the pen unweariedly writes, now learn life's awful import—if you would not have your sins find you out, find them out.

Put up the prayer from your inmost heart, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be in me any evil way, and lead me in the way everlasting." And when you have found out the sin, grapple with it. A true conviction of its malignant and destructive nature is worth worlds. A man in an Indian jungle comes unexpectedly upon the lair of some wild animal. The startled beast springs upon him, but is caught and held with the energy of despair. Trembling at length with weariness, he knows not what to do. Till now he has avoided the fangs of his ferocious assailant. He struggles but fails to destroy the brute, and dares not let it go. So having found out your sin, lay hold of it and struggle mightily, and when your strength fails, you know on whom to call for help. It is the Lord Jesus. Cry aloud and earnestly. Do not let go of your sin, but cry till Christ comes who is mighty to save. Believe upon Him with your whole heart and you shall be saved. Hear Him say, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

THREE GREAT WORDS.

“ By grace are ye saved through faith ” (*Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως*). Eph. ii. 8.

“ Words are things,” said Mirabeau, and after him Byron ; and on the lips and pens of some men they are living things. It was Carlyle, I think, who said of Luther’s words, that they leap, that they behave like living creatures, that they are half-battles. And what Christ said of His own words, that “ they are spirit and they are life,” is true in a degree of His servant Paul’s. The words of this epistle seem not, like the kings and knights and pawns on a chess board, merely to betray an intelligence behind them, but they appear to be endowed with the sprightliness and activity and energy and wisdom of the highest human life inspired from above.

In reading our text you are perhaps ready to exclaim with one of old, “ How forcible are right words ! ” For here are words chosen and sanctified to most eminent uses, even to become vehicles of the very mind of God. How needful to know their exact worth that we may lose no fine intention of the Apostle !

It would be an agreeable pastime to watch the progressive ennobling of certain words, which, found originally in the heathen classics, passed into the

Septuagint, where they were elevated and prepared somewhat for the lofty significance with which they were afterward to be charged, when subsequently received into the Christian Church, and there baptized into higher meanings, the depth and riches of which they were in the plan of Divine Providence fitted to contain. In classical Greek "FAITH" was used to express *reliance* upon a human being, sometimes faith in the gods, and the recognition of what could not be based upon practical or theoretical knowledge; which was a fitting qualification for its future dignity. "SAVED" is one of those words which in the classics had reference simply to earthly deliverance, but which in the New Testament rose to a loftier sphere, being used with few exceptions to express a salvation wrought by God. The word rendered "GRACE" is another. "It is hardly too much to say," says Archbishop Trench, "that the Greek mind has in no word uttered itself and all that was at its heart more distinctly than in this." First of all it meant that quality of a thing which communicates pleasure to eye or ear witnesses; and then it implied beauty or grace. Aristotle declared of it that it is conferred freely, and finds its only motive in the bounty and free-heartedness of the giver. Here where it spoke of earthly benefits, the New Testament found it, and transformed and glorified it with the lofty mission henceforth to proclaim the bounty and love and favour of the holy God to His sinful creature, wherein no mention can be made of obligation.

There have been words rescued from degradation and consecrated to high and holy service. Not so

with these three words, which, as you see by this hasty glance at their pedigree, were always great. But when they became Christian, like men inspired with the Holy Spirit, they became transformed from the image of the earthy into that of the heavenly.

i. *Salvation.*

Where is salvation to be found? The depth saith, "It is not in me." Can we trace it to man? Shall we seek for it among the ancient Egyptians, who made such elaborate preparation for the future great assize; or among the Greeks, with their Jupiter *Σωτηρ* (Sōtēr), or their Plato, whose philosophy led him beyond the seen and the sensuous to the eternal prototypes of the true, the beautiful, and the good; or among the Romans, whose mission it was to impress upon the human mind lofty ideas of law and government and order. Nay, as if to pour contempt upon human pride, we have it on Divine authority: "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." "Salvation is of the Jews." Take then the lamp of the old philosopher, and run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and seek to find a man who may be a Saviour—one in whom are the moral excellencies, righteous activities, and omnific power, which could save the race. You seek in vain till you find in Bethlehem an Infant of days, named by the angel "Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," of whom it is later said: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Well therefore may He in the most emphatic manner claim salvation as His own

prerogative: "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." If then this Saviour is the Creator and Lord of the universe, nay, very God of very God; and if, being in the form of God and equal with God, He took upon Him the form of a servant and died in our nature, tell me why this vast expenditure of means in order to save the race? When we remember the exact proportion observed in nature between means and ends, we see force in the question, What call and demand of circumstance was there for the coming of this August Being to our world?

Salvation is for the *lost*. Social life has its proper distinctions. Society yields to the chaste, the sober, and the moral, a respect which it justly withholds from the profligate, the drunkard, and the unprincipled. But as soon as we come into the presence of the grace of God all these distinctions are swept away, and all stand together as lost. The blameless moralist and the vilest outcast are alike *lost*; they both alike need salvation. This word "*lost*" implies a death in trespasses and sin, and a ruin unspeakably awful. Look at men in all lands and ages and circumstances, and you will find they are guilty, unfaithful to the voice of duty, and for this reason, that they are corrupt in principle. While between the highest moral excellence, aside from grace, and the extreme of human degradation, the steps are innumerable, and the shadings off from one into another past counting; yet in all is to be found that carnal mind which is enmity against God, that utter absence of all those motives which originate in supreme love to their Maker. Man is corrupt, and his philosophy

cannot save him. "The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." In answer to the assertion that if a man acts according to his light he contracts no guilt, the Apostle, who was ritually blameless, and had lived in all good conscience, declares, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.....The whole world is guilty before God." Hence they are involved in great danger. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Do not shift to other hearts this solemn charge which Scripture makes against each of us. This guilt and this peril, my brother, are yours. If you do not find the mercy and grace of God in salvation, no matter how you stand in the esteem of your fellows, however elevated your tastes and amiable your dispositions, you must perish. All have sinned; all must be saved or perish. I trust you are asking, what must I do to be saved? And what Christ cannot do as a Judge, for a judge can only condemn or acquit, and you are condemned already, He can do as a Saviour. Through Him is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. This, however, is not all.

Man has received from those before him the taint of a corrupted nature, biasses and tendencies toward sin, so that when he would do good, he does it not, but the evil which he would not, that he does. Well said a writer on Heredity: "In the conflict between inherited instincts and personally acquired convictions, it is as if

a man were attempting to fight all his ancestry at once, and he is usually worsted in the fray." Very true, but the Gospel of Christ offers salvation and victory. We have a Saviour who is able to reverse every law of sin and disorder within us, to suspend and abolish all our corrupt tendencies, to change in the twinkling of an eye the direction within us of the forces of ages, so that with full choice of will and energy of right affections we may run in the path of the Divine commandments. When this great change takes place in a man, conscience long dispossessed of her rightful place is enthroned. The peace of God keeps his mind and heart. And he who had been unhappy because of his disordered nature and his false relations to his fellow men and his God, is brought to love God, and to know that He is his Father. The spirit of selfishness having been exorcised, he loves his neighbour as himself, and his heart breaks out in the utterance, "O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation."

But the work of regeneration does not exhaust the meaning of the word "salvation." Man after conversion has within him the remains of the carnal mind. What is to be done? The provisions of grace are illimitable. "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from *all* iniquity, and *purify* unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "And the very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*." But can we retain this blessing? Can we mingle with the world and remain pure? Hear what Paul says, "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body *be preserved blameless* unto the coming

of our Lord Jesus Christ." But will God do this great work in such sinful hearts as ours? "Faithful is He who calleth us *who also will do it.*" These promises cannot consist with, do not consist with, and are not represented in Scripture as consisting with, the doctrine that we cannot in this world get rid of our carnal nature. Let the exegesis and the theology be revised that run counter to Scriptures so explicit and clear as these.

But I need not go beyond our immediate context to find a lofty description of salvation. Here, as Dr. Steele has pointed out, is a term used nowhere else in Scripture, and employed five times in this epistle—"the heavenly places." Where is this region? It would seem that heaven overlaps the earth, and they who are so happy as to reach this state are fully saved. This is what Bunyan calls the land of Beulah, clear out of sight of Doubting Castle, in the very suburbs of heaven, where the shining ones walk, and the celestial city is in full view, and the sun shines day and night all the year. This is where the Comforter comes, and the Father and the Son make their permanent dwelling-place in the heart of the believer. Dean Alford says: "Materially we are yet in the body: but in the spirit we are in heaven, only waiting for the redemption of the body to be entirely and literally there." And Faber sings:

"Though heaven's above, and earth's below
Yet they are but one state,
And each the other with sweet skill
Doth interpenetrate.
Yes, many a tie and office blest
In earthly lots uneven,
Hath an immortal place to fill,
And is the root of heaven."

To this the Ephesian Church had come. But finally : man is in danger of hell ; the salvation of the gospel extends to heaven. " That in the ages to come—untold millions of years hence—He might show the exceeding riches of His grace " (ver. 7). All past and present blessings of salvation are earnest of this. " Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Instead of death, life ; instead of banishment from God's presence, admission into His presence where are fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. In view of this said Paul, " Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

How great this salvation is, who can tell ? I must be a reckless sinner all my days, suffer the agony and remorse of a sinner's death, be compelled to appear at the bar of Deity, receive my dread sentence, go down to scenes of eternal despair ; I must spend eternity a lost spirit, lashed by my conscience with her whip of scorpions, and know for myself what is the worm that never dies and the fire that never shall be quenched, before I can come back to tell you of the depth of misery and woe from which the Saviour of mankind died to deliver you and me. I must likewise live a holy life, die a triumphant death, be escorted home by an angelic band to the everlasting gates, which shall open to let me in, pass through ranks of shining ones, whose eyes will shine the brighter when I come, to the feet of my Saviour, experience the rapture of a victor, the overflowing joy of a wearied soul at rest, receive the plaudit, be clothed in white, be crowned with a crown thick-set with stars which shall burn with undimmed lustre through the ages,

enter upon and enjoy the full possession of the inheritance of God's perfections and riches; I must spend eternity in heaven ere my stammering tongue can utter half of that felicity and glory to which Christ designs to raise you and me. Well may the Apostle ask, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

ii. *Grace.*

The emphasis of the text rests on this word. The article usually omitted with abstract nouns is found here, and gives this force to the sentence, "for by this grace of which I have just spoken—exceeding riches of His grace—ye are saved through faith." So munificent is the store that though it has been lavished by God upon our race for ages, it is still an unexhausted mine of wealth. The question which this word answers is, What is the proximate cause or ground of salvation? Do not err, my beloved brethren; it is grace. Here is the impulse by which God was prompted in salvation. A great kindness to an undeserving person is a grace. Grace implies ill-desert, but the ill-desert is forgotten, and the person treated as though on terms of friendship. A man is saved, not because he has earned it by good works, not because of any equivalent he renders, but because of the everlasting nature of God, which in the fulness of its love and generosity goes out yearningly towards man—a nature which seeks for new channels by which to convey to the wide universe the munificence of His love. Because it was their eternal nature to forgive sin, to save man, and diffuse the happiness and brightness of eternity everywhere, the Father gave the Son, and the Son gave Himself to humiliation and to death.

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” One with the Father in the honours of supreme and eternal divinity, He assumed the nature which had sinned, died as an atoning sacrifice, and thus rendered it possible for God, consistently with the claims of His law, to be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. Surely God is love. Here behold the riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. The capacity of men for joy and sorrow varies greatly. Against the theory that men are endowed by nature on the whole equally, one who is quoted as high authority asserts that between the most richly and the least endowed of men the ratio is as 200 to one. How little, then, are we, ordinary people, able to sympathize with the most highly gifted, “the myriad-minded.” And who shall be able to measure the dimensions of the sufferings of the God-man, “the man of sorrows,” who was ever consciously marching forward to the cross, that great coming event, which threw its ever darkening shadow over His public life till at last in Gethsemane, His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and on Calvary, while the arrows of Divine wrath against sin drank His life-blood, there burst from His pallid, trembling lips that awful cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” They were vast, voluminous, immeasurable. All this is love’s commendation, interpreting to us the divine love, which longs to lift us up and save us, with the

same fond solicitude with which a mother longs for her prodigal boy, for whose salvation she would willingly lay down her life—simply because she cannot help it, for she loves him. Of the same kind is the love which glows in the heart of the universal Father, but as much greater and more intense as the fires of yon blazing sun transcend the spark struck by the hoof of the flying steed from the rock-bound soil, or the tiny but more enduring flame of the midnight taper. This it is which melts the ice, and disarms the enmity, and subdues the rebelliousness of the sons of men—infinite love, boundless grace.

We are justified, therefore, in affirming that all the good that we enjoy, whether it be natural or spiritual, comes to us through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. Especially is this true of those blessings which are conditioned upon repentance, faith, and obedience—blessings which constitute what in Scripture is called the *salvation* of man. “We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The renewal of our hearts is an act of grace, for “sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” It is of grace that we are adopted into the family of God, and made “heirs of the grace of eternal life;” of grace that the Spirit in our hearts cries, “Abba, Father;” of grace that we conquer sin (Titus ii. 11, 12); of grace that we are saved from the corruption of our nature. When Haldane was studying this epistle, the expression “exceeding abundantly” (iii. 20) fell on him like a new revelation. He knelt in prayer. “When I arose,” said he, “I felt as if my

strength were renewed like the eagle's, and I were mounting up as on wings. From that time I comprehended that my syllogisms and arguments were of no avail, and that Christ was able to do all, by the power that worketh in us." And a nobler than he has said: "By the grace of God I am what I am." It is all of grace, too, that we shall be saved in heaven. "Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

If this be the channel by which salvation comes, then there is no room for boasting; and education, however careful and complete; culture, however elevated and refined; effort and painstaking, however extended and minute, can have no part in meriting salvation. "If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise, grace is no more grace." Said a princess to a poor woman who had been trying, but all to no purpose, to persuade the king's gardener to sell her a bunch of grapes for her sick child: "My dear woman, you are mistaken. My father is not a merchant, but a king; his business is not to sell, but to give." And then she plucked a bunch from the vine, and dropped it into the woman's apron. God is not a merchant, but a King. Christ is exalted a prince and a Saviour to *give* repentance and remission of sins. But were He a merchant, we could not speak of purchasing salvation, for we are not rich, but poor, and have nothing to pay. We are utter bankrupts and beggars. But thanks be to God! grace originates our salvation, and brings it so near that the guilty may be

pardoned, and the lost saved, if he will not with rankest folly dash to the ground the cup of salvation reached down from the skies, and pressed with loving compulsion to his very lips.

Is there one here who despairs because his case is so desperate? Have it for your joy that grace is boundless. Over against the vileness and blackness of your sin, grace shines all the more resplendently. The promises are blank cheques signed by the Lord Himself empowering you to call upon the bank of heaven for what you need. What would you think of a man whose friend had deposited millions to his credit, if he was unwilling to draw anything even for the bare necessities of life? Come, poor, guilty, despairing one, to His feet who sits upon a throne of grace, and He will lavish upon you the riches of His grace, and the glory of His grace. Come, poor starving one, hungering after righteousness, come to the banquet which He has spread; taste and see that the Lord is gracious. "My grace," He says, "is sufficient for thee,"—sufficient as the ocean is for the needs of the smallest minnow, or as illimitable space affords ample scope for the free movements of our little world! Come, poor soul, and listen to your Lord. He loves you with an infinite love. He woos you to-day; He says: "I love you; you are a sinner; you are in peril; you are corrupt; but I love you." Alas, you turn away your face and heart. He continues to plead: "My love for you is boundless; I died for you; were it necessary I would die again to save you; I offer you my heart; I give you myself, only give me your heart." He knocks at the door and pleads: "Open

the door, and I will come in and sup with you, and the feast shall be everlasting love." O, that now you would relent, open the door, invite Him in and say, "I love Thee, blessed Lord, for Thou didst first love me."

Unto every one of us, dear brethren, is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. No one is overlooked; each receives according to a plan and purpose. And as we improve what we receive, He grants us more, "grace for grace." As an overseer in the Church, it is my duty to look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. As His ambassador, I beseech you that ye be reconciled to God. The smallest amount of grace, if used and improved will lift one up to "the rank of a celestial force." Be inwardly strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, for God is able to make all grace abound toward us, that we, having always all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work and be filled with all the fulness of God. Said one: "Cicero complains of Homer that he taught the gods to live like men: but grace teaches men to live like gods."

iii. *Faith.*

Between grace and faith there is in matters of salvation the closest intimacy. Faith is impotent to save the sinner in a horrible pit and miry clay, unless grace reaches down a friendly rope on which faith lays hold and by which he is extricated. But the rope is offered in vain unless faith lays hold of it.

Not only so, but faith itself is of grace; else how could it be said that God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith? We must jealously guard the glory of God

in this great matter of salvation. All good in us is divine. But how is it of grace? In the same sense is it a grace, vouchsafed by the Author and Finisher of our faith, as the gift of sight, or of hearing, or of reason, is a gift of the Creator—a grace which may be abused by us as any other gift of infinite goodness. He gives us the power to perform these acts ; the act is entirely our own.

The importance of faith will be seen in this, that to believe is in substance the whole demand of God. Stress is sometimes laid upon repentance and obedience as conditions of salvation, but faith is regarded as of first importance, for true faith includes both repentance and obedience. The latter serve to correct a mistaken estimate of our faith. If we are deceived in thinking we believe, we may find our mistake by asking ourselves—Have I truly repented? Have I put away all sin? Do I obey the commands of my Lord? Faith is basal, elemental, among our primary intuitions, at the very core of our being where God has contact with us and pours into us continuous succours of life. It is radical, deeper than all our faculties and powers, deep down in our essential being, before, so to speak, it ramifies into intellect, sensibilities, and will. It is the realization there that God is our Father, Saviour, and Comforter : that we belong to Him and live in Him.

This faith is an indispensable pre-requisite to salvation. As Augustine quaintly said : “He who created thee without thee, will not save thee without thee.” No man is saved against his will. We take physical things by physical organs ; intellectual things are apprehended by the intellect ; and the things of the spiritual world

are realized by the awakened spirit of man. And though the blessings of salvation belong to every human being in an important sense—to which Jude refers when he speaks of “the common salvation”—for they are freely offered to all, yet they never avail for us unless we appropriate them to ourselves. This is what is meant by receiving salvation by faith.

It is reasonable to suppose that implicit faith in a divine revelation of things unseen will admit one into a far nobler experience than the unbeliever enjoys. Take man at his lowest stage and tell us how much of the universe belongs to him. Ascend the scale till you reach man civilized and elevated by the higher education of our day. How faith in the teachings of science enlarges the mind, strengthens the intellectual grasp, and beautifies the conceptions of the imagination! How either an ignorance of such themes, or a disbelief of them, leaves one enfeebled and degraded! Now you can see how, as you go up the scale, and you reach manhood enlightened and elevated by the wisdom of God, you have come to the ennobling results of faith: the rectification of a disordered nature, the enkindling of a divine charity, a range of vision broad as from some lofty mountain, the establishment within of the Kingdom of God, with its pacific rule, its silken cords of restraint, its unbroken connexion with the fountain of immortal life and joy, and its powerful inward principles of righteousness, truth, purity and love. Are we justified? It is by faith. Have we moral purity? “Putting no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” Have we love to God and

man? It is "faith that works by love." If we tread the powers of darkness down, "this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." If our heads are covered in the day of battle, so that the fiery darts of the adversary fall innocuous and pointless at our feet, it is because we have put on the shield of faith; and if at last we reach the skies, it is because we receive "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." How blessed the man of faith! He feels at home everywhere. The universe belongs to his Father, and "all things" are his own.

It is equally evident that through their lack of faith in God and Christ, men, however gifted and cultured, are by the very necessity of the case rigorously excluded from these spiritual possessions. If a man boards up all the windows of his house which look sunwards, he must be content to live in darkness. There is sunlight for him, an abundant supply. It floods the whole world through all the radiant hours, gilding with refined gold the homeliest things on which it is permitted to fall. It is his own fault if he does not bask in its glory. So if men close up all those avenues of their being which look heavenward, how can you wonder if they are unvisited by the cheering beams of the Sun of Righteousness? Oh, my brother, down with the boards and blinds of sin and prejudice, which exclude the light of the skies, and when it pours in it will prove its heavenly character by an effulgence truly divine.

Nor is it unreasonable that faith should be required even when there is much that the mind cannot understand. It is not necessary for you to understand the

science of photography in order to obtain a good portrait. You have but to place yourself in the hands of the photographer, and the thing is done. Medicine may be for you an absolute mystery, but if you trust yourself to the skill of a competent physician your health may be restored. The mystery of godliness who can understand? You need only understand that God's heart is all on fire with love for you, that He desires with an infinite longing the salvation of every man, and has provided a common salvation, of which you are welcome to partake. How shall I convey any idea of the inspiring truth that God is *love*, essential love, that He is labouring in a thousand ways to bring you to a recognition of His love, and that if you will but trust in Him as a drowning man trusts to a life-boat, or a dying man to a kind and skilful physician, you shall find in Him all your salvation and all your desire.

While faith without understanding suffices to procure salvation, it may be observed, in further illustration of this subject, that if a man lack faith, nothing else that he may have will be of any avail. You may loathe self and sin, you may be diligent in prayer and other means of grace, you may even approach the table of the Lord, yet without the faith of the heart it is impossible to please God. It was Abraham's *faith*, not his reverence for God, nor his worship of Him, nor his love or obedience to Him, but his faith which was accounted to him for righteousness. It was not the Canaanitish woman's affliction, nor her patience, nor her humility, which were indeed wonderful, but her faith which won the Saviour's commendation: "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Yet the condition on which salvation is offered is not hard. It does not require leisure, nor great mental gifts, nor length of time. A young man, burdened with sin, went to his minister with the question "What must I do to be saved?" As a physician prescribing for a sick patient, the learned divine wrote a list of duties which he must perform. The young man glanced at them, and asked, "How long must I do so before I am saved?" The minister stroking his beard for a moment, replied, "About a twelve month." My brethren, he knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Well was it for the Philippian jailor in a similar condition of mind that he applied to competent instructors, men infallible in their teaching, because inspired of God. The question which he asked was, What must I do to be instantaneously saved? for the tense that he used is unlike anything we have in English. It denotes a momentary occurrence, singleness of act. He wished immediate deliverance from his guilt and was directed to a sharply defined act of reliance on Christ. He desired immediate relief and was told of an immediate cure. They said, Believe instantly on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He did believe and was saved. "According to your faith it shall be done." "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

"To you is the word of this salvation sent." "And now is the day of salvation." Now, this moment, a golden sand trickling from the sand-glass of Time; now, while the clock is ticking; now, by an instantaneous act of faith on the Son of God, you may be brought from death to life, from sin to holiness, from being a

child of the devil to being a child of God. "For the word is nigh thee; even in thy mouth and in thine heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." "Be not afraid, only believe." Faith is the grip of the soul on Christ and His promises. That grip may not be like the death-grip, as it were, of the drowning sailor who seized a rope, thrown to him, with such eagerness that it took hours before his hold relaxed and his hand could be separated from it, the strands of the rope having become embedded in the very flesh of his hands. It may be comparatively feeble; but if it truly grips Christ, He will not let you perish. "Lay hold on eternal life." Be the turpitude and enormity of your sins, and the blackness and vileness of your heart a thousand-fold worse and blacker than you can conceive, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God, *the Almighty*, should save you to the uttermost? Come to Him as you are, not attempting to make yourself one whit better, nor asking to buy when you have nothing to pay, but receiving, as a beggar does your alms, the salvation which is offered without money and without price, and it is yours—a salvation from the curse of the law, from the envenomed fury of the adversary, from the power of sin, from the force of temptation, from a burdened conscience and a weary heart, from the doom of the lost into the glory of heaven; this great salvation is yours.

PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH.

“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” Acts viii. 26.

This episode of idyllic beauty occurs in the early history of Christian missions, and is full of interest and instruction to us of to-day. I propose to open up this passage with a series of running comments. “An angel of the Lord spake.” It would seem that angels could make themselves visible, and that this angel appeared to Philip. This was no new thing under the sun. Angels appeared to Lot, Abraham, Gideon, and many more in ancient days. So especially did they appear with increased distinctness and frequency upon the occasion of the full revelation of God in Christ. “He gives his angels charge concerning us.” “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” How often they minister to us when we little think of it! Many an Elijah lifted up from despondency—many a saint rescued from persecution and prison—many a Lot snatched as a brand from the burning—many a Philip led to some gallant enterprise for his Lord—many a humble believer saved from dashing his foot against a stone! Though we may not

hear their voice yet they do truly speak. That evil spirits inject evil thoughts into our hearts we know for a fact. Certainly the good have a similar power. Often the thought of some new duty comes, and persists in coming when we would stifle it if we could, for it is an irksome task, but we have no rest till it is discharged, and then we find it was a duty which was required to be done, and we see whence came the suggestion. Oh! that we were always obedient unto the heavenly vision!

“An angel spake saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” Philip was a faithful follower of Christ, and probably was now next in influence to the Apostles. A single man, probably, but about twenty-five years later he resided in Caesarea with four daughters, “virgins, which did prophesy.” He was an evangelist and wrought miracles. He had been preaching in Samaria with eminent success. There was great joy in that city. What he began, Peter and John carried on till the converts received the Holy Ghost.—“Arise and go.” Some people’s work floats to them, as the little ark to Pharaoh’s daughter. God fills one’s hand, just where one is, with work, as the spinner’s hand with wool, or the weaver’s with yarn. Some are sent to their work, as Joseph to Egypt, Paul to the Gentiles, Philip to the desert. His call was something like that of Abraham, who went out not knowing whither he went. Here is a trial—to go from being a popular city preacher to a desert place. But what rich results have accrued to the Church from work done in silence and secrecy! From Bedford gaol “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” and the

Apocalypse from the Isle of Patmos.—The angel bids Philip go, but fails to say *why*. Room is left for prayer and faith. He can see how useful he may be in the city, but what can there be in the wilderness for him to do? Perplexed, he can only fall back upon the divine command. Enough for Philip that God has spoken, though he cannot understand why God directs. He arose and went. "The King's business requireth haste." "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." But a practical question arises, How shall we know that it is not Satan appearing to us as an angel of faith? In this way: take the communication to the Lord and say, "Lord, deepen this impression, if it is from Thee; if not, efface it." This is trying the spirits. Once assured it is the will of God, unhesitatingly and unquestioningly obey. Davy Crockett's motto is a safe one, "Be sure you're right, then go ahead." So did Philip. He arose and went.

"And behold, a man of Ethiopia," etc. The picture is presented vividly. Behold! a chariot approaches. In it with suitable retinue rides a great man, a dusky son of Ham, Chancellor of the Exchequer under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, the greatest grandee in her kingdom. He was rich and much esteemed, probably trusted as much at home as Daniel was in Babylon, and was now riding home in his chariot with unmistakable evidence of the civilization of his time. We are told that the kingdom of Meröe in Central Africa was ruled over for centuries by a line of female sovereigns, whose common title was Candace, as Pharaoh was that of the Egyptian monarchs. This great man's name, tradition tells us,

was Indich. He was a eunuch, and as such could never be received into full membership in the Jewish Church; at the best he could only be a proselyte. Whether Jew or Gentile, all his wealth and honour availed him nothing, for he had been awakened to feel a great hunger for God. And thus it came to pass that he went up to Jerusalem to worship.

And is this all for which Philip has left a populous city, where eager crowds listened joyfully to his ministry—to preach to a dark-skinned traveller on his way to his southern home? A question that will repay study. Several considerations enter into it. In his great regard for his own people, God does not forget the outside world. In His concern for the crowded city, He does not forget the lone traveller in the desert. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine and goes in quest of the lost sheep. And over one soul recovered from sin there is joy in heaven. Each soul is more precious than a world. In a sense all souls are equally precious. In another sense some are more precious than others, as they have position, influence, mental power, spiritual excellence. Here is a man of high rank and prodigious influence in his own country, and evidently a man of charity and piety. A small light can kindle a great fire, but a great light can shine very far. This man's soul was in the eyes of the Lord very precious, but much more than the salvation of one soul was involved in his salvation. The time had arrived when in the purpose of God the Gospel was to be carried into Africa. When twenty years later, God meant through St. Paul to introduce the Gospel into Europe, and found His Church there, He

saw fit by the vision of a Macedonian to lead the apostle of the Gentiles to leave Asia and venture into the region beyond. So now by a vision of the angel He calls upon Philip to leave an important charge in Samaria, and go down on the way to Gaza, which is desert. A Church was to be established in Abyssinia, which would outlive the Church in Samaria and the Churches of Asia Minor, and which was destined, not without superstitions and corruptions, to hold up Christ through many ages. "If we include," says Dr. McMillan, "in the territory of ancient Ethiopia the region now known as Abyssinia, it is possible that this single conversion may have prepared the way for the wonderful work which took place among the Ethiopians at a later period, when the whole nation renounced their heathen idolatries and became Christian, and the ancient prophecies of Scripture, that Ethiopia would yet lift up her hands to God, were fulfilled." There was therefore ample reason why Philip should leave the Church in Samaria, and go down into the desert to preach to one lone man. Do you think that Philip to-day regrets that he left his city charge at the command of the angel and went down toward the desert?

It is to be observed that when the Lord has a great work to be done, He has a man for the work. It seems that the angel could not do it. Nor could that angel, who told Cornelius to send for Peter who would say words whereby he should be saved. God might have anointed angels to bear the lofty commission. But He has chosen to work through human instrumentality. Even in Paul's conversion there was a human instrument. He has given the church the high honour of being associ-

ated with Him in His work of saving men. How kind of Him thus to bind us to the performance of that to which our sanctified affections prompt, and to which He has attached the highest rewards!

Notice, too, that wherever salvation is to be brought within reach of a soul that earnestly seeks for it, God has a way of bringing together the man who can help and the man who needs help. Here was the eunuch returning from Jerusalem, to which were attracted the best minds of Paganism, because there they found a religion which commended itself to their intellect for its consistent monotheism, and to their conscience for its lofty morality. He had gone to the temple and had worshipped in the court of the Gentiles. He had mingled with the crowds of worshippers. He had heard much of Jesus Christ, of His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, of the wonderful things wrought by His disciples, of the feast of Pentecost, and of the gift of tongues and the thousands converted. But he had come away without the pearl of great price. As the wise men did not find the King of the Jews in Jerusalem, so Indich did not obtain in the Holy City any new insight into the faith which he professed. Indeed his mind was distracted with doubts and difficulties. But now returning from having gone up to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple, is it all in vain? No, for he is alone with the God of nature in the solitude of the desert with the great blue sky overhead, the great silent wilderness roundabout, and the Book of God open before him, and he is reading God's "Manual for Travellers to Zion."

“Sitting in his chariot he read Isaiah the prophet.” Why? To while away his time? How much better to read Isaiah than the trash travellers usually read! To improve his mind? No book so helpful to mental development as the Bible. As the odours of spices escape however well wrapped up, so the purity, sweetness, and wisdom of the Book impress us, however unspiritual we may be. Or was it to prepare himself as a statesman better to fulfil his lofty office? Certainly here are principles, by which if statesmen and rulers conduct the affairs of their country they will elevate it in the scale of nature and secure for it the favour of God. Or was it to find out from the Scriptures whether Jesus the crucified was the Messiah or not? Certainly he was on the right road to find Him in the study of the Word, meditation, and prayer.

And does not this subject show how profitable it is, on returning from worship, or going to social means of grace, to study the Scriptures? To study them when we journey that our minds and hearts may be more and more centred in God. To study them frequently and much, that we may be more and more men and women of one book. The book had its important part to play in the eunuch's conversion; the living teacher had his.

But we learn further that he was reading aloud, for Philip heard him. This was a habit of Jews and other Eastern people. The great Jewish teachers insisted upon their pupils reading aloud to infix what they were reading more firmly in the memory. The ear as well as the eye is thus brought into service. But the eunuch

probably read aloud as much "for the benefit of the charioteer" as for his own.

The Spirit said unto Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." The angel had done all he could, and then disappears. More than angelic help is required in the conversion of a human soul, and the Holy Spirit comes to the help of the man of God. The suggestion was necessary to encourage the poor pedestrian to accost the nobleman. There goes with it the assurance, "Certainly I will be with thee." What a combination of agencies working together to effect the conversion of the eunuch! Not to speak of his past training and discipline, and his recent visit to Jerusalem, the angel which addressed Philip, Philip himself, the word of God to Isaiah, and the Spirit of God. Heaven and earth in labour together for the new birth of a single soul. Notice, too, how exquisitely harmonized are all the circumstances for the accomplishment of the end. The eunuch chooses a solitary way, perhaps that he may better meditate and pray. The angel tells Philip, who would have doubtless chosen a more frequented road, to take the same course. They meet at a certain place. The evangelist is led to the very chariot where the seeker is sitting. The seeker is reading a difficult passage in the prophet Isaiah. He is reading aloud. Philip hears him. The way is open to conversation. Nothing here is fortuitous or accidental. The hand of God is in it all.

"And Philip ran thither to him." Here is prompt and implicit obedience. True obedience knows no delays. Obedience is the evidence of faith and the demonstra-

tion of love, and in the eyes of God there is nothing more precious. Let us pray that we may be as an eolian harp for the Spirit to breathe upon, as instruments, ready for every good word and work, to be used by Him. "And heard him read," for a moment unobserved. If he had paused to think, the difficulties might have appalled him. The eunuch was a stranger, a man of high rank, of large reading, probably indisposed to converse with him, a poor pedestrian. But the man who is reading that chapter is the man he is sent to, and he will not falter now and lose the object of his strange journey. Follow the first suggestions of the Spirit, yield to clear indications of duty, and perform it at once.

"Understandest thou what thou readest?" A proper question, for if he did not understand, Satan would come immediately and snatch away that which was read. Reading is good. Give attendance to reading, said Paul to Timothy. But it is mere *opus operatum*, when done as many do it. The object of reading is salvation and service. In order to this the will must be yielded to God; before this can be done, the heart must be profoundly stirred; but the truth that is fitted properly to impress the heart must first be clear to the mind. Philip insists as earnestly on *clear ideas*, as Joseph Cooke. What is not understood is like meat undigested and therefore innutritious. It should be felt to be the duty of the preacher, the teacher, the parent, to make the meaning of Scripture plain.

Well, if the eunuch did not understand, by his candour and humility he was smoothing the way for an understanding. "How can I, except some man should

guide me?" One has written: "A consciousness of ignorance is the alphabet of knowledge." Men, who are determined to walk by their own light and are unwilling to receive help from any quarter, are not in the school of Christ. Indich had only the Old Testament. The New Testament is needed to supplement the old. Each sheds light on the other. With both should go the teacher with the living voice. The nobleman invites Philip to sit beside him in the chariot, and puts himself at once on the bench of the learner. The subject he was intent upon was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, to which he had no doubt been pointed by the finger of God. By this chapter many Jews and infidels have been converted. In it Christ's death is so distinctly foretold that the great body of Jews before His time regarded it as descriptive of Messiah's character and sufferings. Reading the seventh and eighth verses over again, the eunuch said, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" A question which is hotly debated at this very time. And "Philip opened his mouth,"—a phrase which is used of our Lord, importing an important and solemn occasion—"and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." The New Testament begins where the old leaves off. As the Epistle to the Hebrews is the key to Leviticus, so in general is the New Testament the key to the Old, which else were to us an inexplicable mystery. To the eunuch, bewildered and lost like a traveller in a labyrinth without a clew, Philip preached Jesus. His sermon is not reported. We have only the text and the theme. But we know that he

would shew that the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy. He would tell of the events of His life, His teachings, His miracles, His death. Here he would dwell at length, and show its relation to man and God. He would show how He was denied justice by the Sanhedrim and at the bar of Pilate, how the custom of making proclamation by the crier as the prisoner was led to execution, 'Whoever knows anything about his innocence, let him come and declare it' was not observed at the trial of Christ, and that His crucifixion as the highest messenger of heaven was the consummation of earthly wickedness. He would explain that Jesus was the Son of God, and the unspeakable gift of God to our race, for "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" to sufferings and death for our sins. He would insist that this was God's highest commendation of His love to us, a race of sinners. He would tell him that Jesus was the lamb, dumb before his shearers, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, of which Isaiah had spoken, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He would show how since Jesus became a sacrifice for the race, God can be the justifier of the believer and yet maintain the principles of His righteous government. He would bring out what Luther called "a world of theology in the personal pronouns:" as he explained the text "*He* hath borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows; *He* was wounded for *our* transgressions, *He* was bruised for *our* iniquities; the Lord hath laid on *Him* the iniquity of *us* all; for the transgression of *my* people was *He* stricken." The eunuch wanted a Saviour from his sins

and woes, and Philip preached to him Jesus, "because He shall save His people from their sins." He would preach Jesus risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, seated at the right hand of God, bestowing the gift of the Spirit upon the Church, and ever living to make intercession for us. He would explain the way of repentance and faith, and press upon him the claims of our Lord till his heart was melted and yielded to Christ, his problems solved and his longings satisfied.

Here was what Bacon calls "the germinant accomplishment" of the ancient prophecy, that Ethiopia should stretch out her hands to God. Here too was seen the glorious fact that the physical disabilities, which excluded from the Old Testament Church, could not avail to shut one out from the Church of Christ.

One advantage, my unconverted friend, the eunuch had which you do not possess. To him the story of the cross had all the freshness and force of novelty. But as an offset to this, you have the advantage of beholding the multiplied, and ever-multiplying, proofs of the divinity of the Christian religion. Think of the triumphs it won in ancient Greece, where many were cleansed from their leprous vices and their moral pollution and renewed and sanctified, and the haughty scholar and philosopher reduced in temper to the little child; and in ancient Rome, where multitudes of slaves were lifted up from their brutality and degradation to the gentleness and dignity and grace of the sons of God, worthy to stand on a common platform with the best of their patrician masters. Look at the nations which it has lifted up from insignificance to rank among the

foremost of the great Powers of the world. Bear in mind the rod of oppression which it has shivered in many a land, and the many forms of slavery which it has abolished in various parts of the world. Consider how it has promoted science and art, extended commerce, given living momentum to literature and lifted the race all over the world to a much higher plane. How Christianity has purified, sweetened and ennobled our homes; lifted woman from humiliation to honour, from degradation to dignity; awakened a profounder interest in children, causing them to be loved with a fonder love and bound to their parents by tenderer ties; visited the widow and fatherless in their affliction, looked after the sick, comforted the sorrowing, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, ministered to those that are in prison; and planted asylums, hospitals, schools and reformatories in all lands! How it inspires the hearts of believers to-day with peace and love and joy and hope, and sends them in a crusade of charity over the world. You yourselves have seen the mighty triumphs of grace in the salvation of the degraded and lost. Christ is a real Saviour. But if He is a real Saviour, then are you a real sinner. If He died for you and purchased a salvation for you which you may have by going to Him for it, what will it avail you if you do not seek it? The eunuch will arise in the day of judgment to condemn you, and it had been better for you if you had never been born. Turn at once. Commence to seek Him. Study the Holy Word. Expect some one to guide you, some Philip, certainly the Holy Spirit, and you will be led to Christ.

Every one who has been brought to Jesus receives of His Spirit, and should at once begin to work for the conversion of others. Every hour a chariot is passing, and some fellow immortal is saying, "How can I understand, except some one should guide me?" Oh for hearts like Philip's, ready at the bidding of the angel to drop everything, and go anywhere if only we may "save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins." Oh that Christ would cause the refining fire to go through our hearts, and kindle such a love within us for Himself and for the souls He has redeemed, that no chariot shall ever pass by that we shall not run to and join, and no opportunity of preaching Jesus the Lord slip unimproved through our fingers!

Oh, my brethren, preach Jesus. It is said of the Rev. S. R. Brown, one of the founders of this Church, that he could not mention the name of "Jesus" without tears. Get surcharged with this love. "It is the greatest thing in the world." Said an Indian chief in a Methodist love-feast: "I have eaten honey in the wild bees' nest, and eaten sugar in the white man's home, but I have never in all my life tasted anything half so sweet as the love of Jesus." Preach Jesus. Preach Him in His essential divinity, very God of very God; in His humanity, bone of our bone, Son of man. Preach Him in all His offices, in the breadth of His atonement, in His boundless sympathy and grace. Plant this seed in the soil of the human heart, and the harvest shall be great in after days.

"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water;

what doth hinder me to be baptized?" He has given himself to Christ, and can see no reason why he should not be received at once into His Church. Philip makes no objection, and the man becomes a member of the Church. When the jailor was awakened at midnight and converted, he was baptized and all his immediately. They were not kept waiting weeks and months to see if they could stand alone before they were baptized. This was the practice of the early Church under apostolic guidance: baptism upon profession of faith. There should be no hesitation either on the part of the penitent believer himself, or on the part of the Church. Even if the thirty-seventh verse, which contains the condition which Philip makes and the confession of the eunuch, did not constitute a portion of the original text, but somehow became incorporated into the text from the margin, an adaptation probably to some ancient ritual of baptism, there is no doubt that he did make his confession before he was baptized. Penitent believers may not accept all our teachings, but belief in the teachings of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, must ever be an indispensable condition of entrance into the Christian Church.

"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." A mighty impulse of the Spirit led Philip to leave his interesting acquaintance. Perhaps he had been a good deal dejected by the unhappy defection of Simon Magus. But the Lord gives him a wonderful com-

pensation in the conversion of the eunuch, and in this service of inestimable importance to the Church he regains all his old joy in God.

The eunuch too went on his way rejoicing. He had borne the burden of a guilty conscience. But now his mind is enlightened, he has learned the way of salvation, has been received into the Christian Church ; his burden is taken away ; he feels the joy of the Saviour's love ; and he is returning home with a message of gladness for his countrymen. The mountains and hills break forth into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands. It is said that after his royal mistress was converted, he went to India. What was the result of his labours none can tell, but his record is on high and the day will reveal it. The Abyssinians trace their conversion to his work, but Ecclesiastical History says that Frumentius and Ædisius effected it in the fourth century.

What a mistake to think religion is a thing of gloom and melancholy ! If you want to be happy, go to Christ, give Him your heart, take up the cross you have long refused, erect the family altar, lead others to Christ, and the sun will shine on you day and night.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb. xi. 8.

About three centuries and a half after the deluge, according to the popular chronology, Abram was born. In that short period of time men had greatly multiplied and sunk deep in sin. So much so, that not only had they come short of the standard of piety set up by the father of the post-diluvian world, but they had even lost those noble conceptions of the Deity which had formed a large part of the legacy he had bequeathed them—so much so that God said in reference to Abram that He had taken him from a land in which his fathers worshipped other gods (Joshua xxiv. 2; Gen. xxxi. 30). There is reason for supposing that the world had not yet fallen into such degrading vices and low forms of idolatry as those which were afterwards adopted. Probably like the Parsees they were fire-worshippers, and offered sacrifices to the luminaries of heaven, and were addicted to hero-worship. At all events idolatry was rife: idolatry which dethroned the Creator of the universe, lifted up to the government of the world one or other of His creatures, or some creature of the

human imagination, and became a fruitful source of all kinds of sin.

On such a background and amid such surroundings of darkness, unbelief, and crime, Abram, the Father of the Faithful, stands out with a striking prominence and grandeur. Nor is he remarkable merely because of the circumstances in which he was placed. He would have commanded universal respect in the ages that produced a Bacon, a Galileo, a Luther, or a Washington. In the history of the race he has been singularly distinguished. Many nations, with widely different creeds, delight to do him honour. The Arab and the Jew, the Christian and the Mohammedan, vie with one another in the homage they accord him. All antiquity celebrated the achievements of his cultivated intellect, martial prowess, and princely demeanour. Many a tradition had him for its hero. Many an ancient profane author, such as Nicolaus Damascenes, Josephus, and Berosus, repeated his praises. They spoke of his piety, endowments and learning, of his wisdom, eloquence, and bravery.

But turning from profane history and coming to the Word of God we find him there described as a man of princely bearing, and a true servant of the Most High. Place him and his life by the side of the most renowned names of classic story, and you find in him the stateliest figure of them all. What mental or moral elevation did Nimrod, Sesostris, or Cyrus display to be placed in comparison with the magnanimous spirit of the Friend of God?

In this chapter the writer to the Hebrews is illustrating the nature, power, and results of faith by the lives

of the illustrious dead, whose shoe-latchets we are not worthy to unloose. The father of the faithful must not be overlooked—the spiritual progenitor of all who should afterward believe, whose faith is the pattern of theirs, so that all who believe tread in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham. Four instances in his life are given, in which faith was put to great trial, each being the occasion of greatly strengthening the principle, and all combining to illustrate the nobleness and majesty of the grace. Our subject is the first of these trials.

i. *His call.*

In Genesis xi. 31, we read of a movement on the part of Terah and Alram for which no motive is assigned. But Canaan is their destination, though for a while they rest at Haran. For in Acts (vii. 2-4) we are told that God first appeared to Abram in Chaldea and called him to *leave his country and his kindred*. He succeeded in persuading his father and family to go with him. In Haran he resided till his father's death, when having received from above a second intimation (Genesis xii. 1), and one more precise and definite in its requirements, he departed leaving all but Lot, and taking his goods and his family journeyed forth to Canaan. His first call was indefinite, as it was to a merely temporary resting place; the second specified a land which God should show him. The first required him to leave his country and his kindred; the second, *his father's house*.

Observe *the reason God has for calling Abram*. It seems to have been a settled principle in the Divine economy from the time of Abram down not to leave

the world without men in whom were lodged the knowledge and the fear of God, who should be exponents of the truth, lights in benighted ages. It was so during the existence of the Jewish nation. It has been so during the darkest periods since the Christian era. There have always been some to bear witness to the truth. In the time of Abram things were proceeding to such a pass that if remedial measures had not been adopted, piety would have become extinct. Truth had to be republished. Never more than at that time has man's tendency to corrupt religion been exhibited. It became necessary to free the polished mirror of divine truth from the impurities with which the vile breath of man had dimmed and tarnished it. It was the purpose of God to find a suitable man to be the progenitor of a mighty nation, to enter into special and intimate relations with him, to separate him and his posterity unto Himself, to make them the depository of divine truth, to train them as a people, that ultimately through them true religion might be communicated to the whole world. Abram was the favoured man and his descendants the chosen people. And the timeliness, which marks the ways of God to man, is seen in the fact that the call of Abram was just at that time when idolatry was securing itself in the habits, customs, affections, and passions of the world, when it was fortifying itself in its entrenchments for its long conflict with the truth. God called him away from where idolatry would seem to have prevailed. The very fact that his kindred were idolaters and he a servant of the one true God implied a gulf of separation between them and him. The

physical distance between Haran and Canaan, or between Ur and Canaan, was as nothing to the moral distance between them and him. But now God will have him by himself that He may work in him all the mighty work of faith. So says God in Isaiah (li. 2), "I called him *alone*." When God wishes to talk with a man He often calls him into a solitary place apart. Hence He says to Abram: "Get thee out." The reason of the call is clear.

Nor is Abram alone called of God. This call of God symbolizes God's call and command to every one, to come out from the world and be separate in spirit, in maxim, in motive, and in aim, and touch not the unclean thing. Appended is the glorious promise: "And I will receive you and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "If children, then heirs," reasons Paul. Lo, then, our glorious inheritance—a holy nature, God's perfections, the heavenly Canaan! To realize this is to realize God's plan for us and our "high calling's glorious hope." Beside this call addressed to the innermost experience and which is for all, there is another call to occupy a certain sphere and do a specific work. This call has to do with the external life. It has, of course, its reactive influence on the inner life—not otherwise. All are called to be good and holy—to be servants of God and saints. But our spheres in life are vastly different. Joseph had his specific call to a specific work, for which he was being prepared in his father's home, in Potiphar's household, and in prison. Moses had a high calling, and after due

training in the Egyptian court, and suitable discipline in the solitudes of Midian, he was sent forth to fulfil his great commission. And Paul was called to be a chosen vessel, seized in the very camp of Christ's enemies and bound to His chariot wheels forever. Nor alone these mighty men, these master spirits. All men, however small their parts and obscure their position, have a call from God and may have a conscious sense of this calling. Of course it is easier to think of the great being called of God, than to conceive that we of lowly rank and small measures of talent have been thus honoured. But in God's sight nothing is common or unclean. His love regards all that He has made. His vast solitudes embrace all the race. Like His generous sunlight, which in its glorious abundance falls on stick and stone and pebble, making no distinction between the Queen and the humblest servant, shining through all the radiant hours on palace and on hut, plating each alike with burnished gold, God's love falls alike on all the race. Indeed, in the economy of nature what is there that has not its office to fill, its part to play? The crawling worm, Darwin instructs us, is as important in its place as the mettlesome steed in his sphere. And what of man? Is he alone without some important end to serve? High up above all the rest of the world, has he no orbit in which to revolve, no round of special duties to perform, no plan of life to realize? Now, if the Scriptures in some of the lowliest conditions exhibit important offices fulfilled—as Ruth in the barley field, Joseph in prison, Jacob wrestling with the angel, Mordecai in Shushan, Eunice and Lois training young

Timothy—are we not to suppose that God has a particular plan in reference to each individual, however undistinguished he may be by any mark of social or intellectual greatness? Moreover, what do the Scriptures mean when they assert that God is anxious to guide man if it is not to some place or condition of life in which he can best subserve the interests of his being? We cannot, then, avoid the conclusion that every man has a distinct and specific calling, one suited to him, in which he can best glorify God and promote his own truest interests—a calling in which he shall have quiet and sustained influences from heaven to enlighten, to assist in labour and in suffering, to purify and to invigorate him, if only he is sincerely desirous of finding it.

But distinguish, I pray you, between the reason for calling Abraham which was in the divine mind and the motive which was used to excite the spirit of obedience. God called him to witness a good profession, to become a preacher of righteousness, a pattern of faith, and the father of many nations. But the motive was that he was to become great and the land to which he was called was to be his inheritance. He was not as yet prepared to feel the force of higher motives. So it is in life. See the traveller upon a long and tedious journey. The course he takes is not an interminable plain. It is diversified with a variety of scenery. Now beds of flowers in the green vale, now a charming lake embosomed among the hills, now the distant roar of the cataract, and then a flashing cascade, now the trees climbing high up the mountain's side; and

now from the brow of some lofty hill a commanding view of wood and clearing, of city and hamlet, and of a river like a silver serpent meandering over the plain. Thus his spirit is ever and anon refreshed, and with unexhausted strength he reaches his destination. Or to vary the illustration. You have a son whom you design to study law, because you believe his talents are of a sort to make him distinguished at the bar. You say nothing to him of your intention or your hope. But you set yourself to the work of his education. You cultivate his physical powers; you endeavour to give him comprehensiveness of view and acuteness in distinguishing things that differ. You hold forth a new inducement when you set a new task. You strive to lay broad and deep the foundations of his moral character, in the cultivation of his conscience. You endeavour to show him and make him feel the majesty of law, the grandeur of truth and rectitude. You excite within him a laudable ambition. You give him as thorough an education as possible. And when your work is done, or as soon as you think advisable, you tell him of all your hopes and aims, by which time he is prepared to enter into them and follow them out to the best advantage.

Thus God allures us on in the pathway of life, only revealing to us our way in sections—a small portion at a time. Thus it was with Abram. He was called first to Haran. Then after fourteen years, as Dr. Hales calculates, he was again called to strike his tent and journey further, the divine plan not having undergone any modification in all that time.

But hitherto Abram had not been prepared to enter deeply into the divine counsels. Just as the best of men in the Southern States of America, who had kept themselves free from the pollutions of that sum of villanies, slavery, were more or less defiled in sentiment thereby, so doubtless Abram in the presence of that astounding vice and crime of idolatry had unconsciously been tintured by its influence. Therefore he must remain for fourteen years in Haran, separated from the debasing associations of idolatry till God has an opportunity of exploring and cleansing the defiled passages of his heart and imagination, and filling his mind with knowledge and correct sentiment and exalted faith and truth and purity and delicacy of feeling, when he shall be prepared to receive the higher communication then to be made. And well it is that heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate. Some of you have had dark and mournful experiences of injury, trial, disappointment, and self-accusation. Had you seen it all at the outset—had this cup of sorrow been mingled in your presence at the beginning, and had you known all its ingredients, how would you have recoiled from the fearful prospect, from the bitter draught! Or if your experience has been and is to be for the most part joyous and bright, was it not better, and will it not be better, to let the life gradually unfold itself like a slowly opening flower till you reach its final and glorious consummation? Surely this is better than to be a mere actor in a drama, knowing all beforehand and proceeding with feigned interest from act to act and from scene to scene. The glory of Abram's life and of

every good man's life is that it is a constant study of moral and evangelical causes, and of God's character as involved in that calling and in the beautiful results of that call.

How animating is the thought that we have a calling, a high and holy calling. Yes, says the world tauntingly, to mend boots and sweep streets, to sell tape, to wash dishes, to mind babies. The world is welcome to its own small sneer. What it affirms is even so. And in spheres like these it is that the most beautiful lives have been evolved, as David among the sheep, Peter and John with their nets and fishes, and the great Master in the carpenter's workshop. We *have* a high calling. And God, in order as it seems to show the more clearly His superlative wisdom and love, has oftentimes brought it about that the most illustrious characters have been produced amid the most ignoble surroundings. And under the greatest weights of trial and suffering, men have not only not been crushed to the earth, but have even grown and flourished till their foreheads smote the stars.

There is for each of us, then, a path of life, in which if we walk we shall find God leading us, and giving it such a force and meaning, that as the vista opens up and the end approaches, our hearts will be filled with an unspeakable joy and felicity. Fears and doubts shall then forever pass away, and faith and hope reign in undisturbed dominion.

But there is one condition necessary to such a life which all do not attain to. There must be humble unquestioning obedience. Consider now

ii. *Abram's obedience.*

i. The beauty and charm of the grace of obedience are enhanced by the difficulties which stand in the way. In the way of Abram's obedience these difficulties were manifold. He was called to leave his home—a scene fraught with many precious memories and about which clustered his fondest associations. There dwelt the friends of his youth, his manhood, his old age. There reposed the dust of his fathers. There he had spent the days of his early childhood, the enthusiasm of his youth and the ripened energies of his manhood. It was for those people he had given freely and rejoicingly his best counsels and efforts. It was among these hills, and by these streams, and amid these forests that he had meditated, prayed, and laboured. He could look about him and see the impress of his mind on many a feature of their material improvements, civil polity and educational institutions. Nor was this all. This was his native land. "Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, This is my own, my native land?" Ah! the spell of his country was on his heart. It would be like rending heart-strings to tear himself away. Not only so. The effervescence of youth had long ago subsided, the vigour and glow of early manhood had passed away, and seventy-five winters had shed their snows upon his head. Whatever he might have felt like doing when an adventurous youth or an enterprising man, now to him in his advanced years there would be no place in all the world so dear as home, sweet home. These were real difficulties. There were

others no less real because imaginary, for they too must be resolutely grappled with and overcome. He knew the direction he was to take, but of the distance he had to travel, the name of the country whither he journeyed, the character of the people among whom he was to settle—of all this he probably knew little or nothing. He was to journey across a perilous desert which turned out to be hundreds of miles long. He had to appear a stranger among a people, who might turn out to be inhospitable and hostile. He had apparently no right to the country which was promised to him, nor any means of obtaining possession. Extreme sufferings or a violent death might await him. Contingencies such as these were probably suggested to his mind, none of which were calculated to tranquilize, but on the contrary to excite fearful apprehensions.

How mighty the difficulties by which his soul was beleaguered! Some arising from the circumstances in which he found himself, and some from the ignorance and darkness in which God left him.

But whatever the difficulties, the forebodings, and the fears, whatever the ridicule and the entreaties, Abram went on and on, over long spaces, till the end came. It was easy to begin the journey; it was not so easy to continue it, or to resume it again after stopping for a while in one place. In chap. xii. 5, it is said: "They (Abram and Lot) went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." In chap. xi. 31, we have almost the same words used of Terah's journeying, but it was to Haran they came. Terah was satisfied with something less good than

Canaan. For when he reached Haran he found pasturage for his cattle, and there he rested and lived and died. But Abram, the man of God, pressed over the mighty Euphrates, and on and on till he reached the promised land.

And now we are led to the consideration of the question whence he obtained the strength to persevere in his obedience to the end.

2. Faith was the principle, the animating principle of his life and obedience. It was faith in God and His promise—reliance on God Himself and trust in His word; and that trust showed itself in obedience. God's word is sometimes promise, sometimes command. Faith is taking God at His word, and he who takes God at His word, must take all His words—whether of promise, of threatening, or of command. Faith and obedience are inseparable. Abram knew the full import of the command and felt it his duty to obey: he knew who was sending him forth—One who was filled with love for him, and therefore yearning over him with infinite longings that His plan of life would be accepted and fulfilled; who was possessed of all wisdom and able to foresee every contingency and anticipate every danger; One who was possessed of all power and capable therefore of doing anything that He promised; One who was all faithful and therefore never untrue to His word, and who never failed to execute His well-laid and beneficent plans. On the promise of such a God he could with confidence rely. For He would do for him better than his fears or even his hopes, yea, exceedingly abundantly above all that he could ask or think. To be

sure God gave him no hostages or pledges beyond His bare promise. But had He not promised? That was enough. "Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to that alone, laughs at impossibilities, and cries it shall be done." He ought to trust, he can trust, he will trust; and under the influence of this principle he arose with promptitude, resolving to do God's will whatever hindrances or difficulties may be in the way, and went out not knowing whither he went, the pioneer of all the faithful.

This ignorance, then, in which God leaves His people is not wholly evil, perhaps not evil at all, giving opportunity, as it does, not only for the joy of surprises, but also for the exercise and triumphs of faith, and for the perfection of obedience.

In Abram we have one endowed with extraordinary powers of mind, moving in an exalted sphere in society and possessed of great wealth, placing himself in the hands of God, subordinating everything to his religious interests, fully devoting himself to the will of God and placing character, comfort, substance, and even his life at the divine disposal. How glorious henceforth was his life, a continual discovery of grace and glory, a sweet realization of infinite complacency and wisdom, evolving light, beauty, rest, patience, purity, honour, and glory! On the dark background of that age he stands sublimated, purified, ennobled, like a being of another age or another world, suddenly thrust into the darkness of that period with the light of his native clime shining mildly upon him.

In conclusion three remarks :—

1. I have endeavoured to distinguish between the inner call and the outer call—the call to holiness of heart and the call to some specific course in life. The latter call, when obeyed implicitly, secures to us and others great good. But we do not reach it in all its lengths and breadths, unless we obey the former. The former in its wider scope embraces the latter. It dignifies the latter, gives a meaning to it which otherwise we should not perceive. So that he who refuses to obey the call of God to be holy injures himself and others beyond the power of language to express. To do so is to stay in Ur, or at the most not to go beyond Haran. In leaving Ur, Abram left idolatry and idolaters behind him. He persuaded Terah, his father, to accompany him; but Terah would go no further than Haran, because to go further was to cross the mighty Euphrates, and cut himself irrevocably from the past. Many professing Christians having come up from Ur, the world without, to Haran, the regenerate life, are unwilling to go any further, because to go further is to separate themselves utterly from all that they have known and prized. But Abram went on at God's command to Canaan. Have you come with Abram from Ur to Haran, the land of justifying grace? In the name of God, who with a second summons calls you to be saints, go on to Canaan, "the land of rest from inbred sin, the land of perfect holiness."

Perhaps, young people, you are called to go from your father's house to school, to duty elsewhere, to marriage. Though home is the best place to be in while it is your duty to remain there, yet oftentimes

God summons the young away. Be prompt then in your obedience, even though you know not whither you are going. The same God who led Abraham is anxious to have the control and obedience of your life. With His smile you have nothing to fear. Only surrender yourself entirely to His claims, and He will keep you both in poverty and riches, in prosperity and adversity; He will keep you, too, from the painful reflection which those have who know that they have rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and feel that they are suffering the consequences of their own disobedience. With the faith of the venerable patriarch, you will consult not your own ease or pleasure, your own profit or honour, but God's will. You will ask, What is my duty? and this ascertained there remains no alternative. You will do your duty, though you may not know whither it will lead you. You will accept the universe, and all things about you. You will get rid of all affectation and straining after effect. You will have difficulty, but if you follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, you will trust for guidance to an unseen Arm; you will look to an invisible Hand for food, raiment, and all necessary good; you will rejoice evermore, welcome trial and sorrow, pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks. And if the journey looks long before you, you will remember that if you continue long enough to take but one step at a time, you will reach the end, and all the way along the road you will "lean upon your Helper, God."

2. But if you refuse to accept God's plan of your life, for you that highest good is no longer possible.

The next best possible thing is offered you. If you reject this call also, there is for you something lower, until, if you continue by a blind insanity to reject and reject, all good, so far as it concerns you, will be exhausted. Then you will be used for the good of others—an illustration of the wretchedness and abjectness of the man who turns his back upon all God's overtures of good. Perchance, in the language of Dr. Bushnell: "He will henceforth use you, wholly against your will, to be the demonstration of His justice and avenging power before the eyes of mankind; saying over you as He did over Pharaoh in the day of His judgment, 'Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up that I might show My power in thee and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth.' Doubtless He had other and more genial plans to serve in this bad man if only he had accepted such; but knowing his certain rejection of these God turned His mighty counsel in him wholly to the use to be made of him as a reprobate. How many Pharaohs in common life refuse every other use God will make of them, choosing only to figure in this small way as reprobates, and descending in that manner to a fate that painfully mimics his." God is calling you yet. He calls you out of sin into holiness, out of the old world into the new, out of yourselves into Him. "Get out"—and "get into." If in unquestioning faith and prompt obedience you obey that call, He will bring you to "the land of rest, the saints' delight, the heaven prepared for you."

3. Ere long we must all leave our country, our kindred and our father's house and "take a final journey" we know not whither—"into a world unknown, a land of deepest shade unpierced by human thought," a land of awful mystery, whence no traveller returns. Of this mysterious country we know, I say, but very little. We know this much, however, that they who tread in the footsteps of Abram will find it a land of pure delight and perfect blessedness. But are you possessed of such a faith that when your call comes, you will be able without fear or reluctance to leave your tabernacle of clay and go out into eternity?

Project yourself forward to the inevitable hour of death. You are on a ridge between two worlds. In a few moments you will have passed over. You are about to bid farewell to life in this world, with all that is familiar and dear—your business, your friends, your family. In a few moments you will enter the dark, mysterious unknown land, over which rests so deep a shadow. Can you bear without dread the severance of the ties which bind you to this world? Can you face the other world without foreboding? Are you ready to go? Or are you getting ready? You may now refuse to obey God's command to come out from the world and be separate. But the call to depart this life cannot be declined. It will not avail to say—"I cannot die; I will not die." Go you must, when the summons comes. If now you listen to the divine call and leave your Ur and your Haran, and resolutely set your face to go to Canaan,

you will be ready then with perfect composure of spirit to say, with our great Example: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

of
nto

GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE.

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Rom. ix. 4, 5.

Nations, like individuals, have their birth and growth; they reach the acme of their prosperity; they decline, they die and disappear, and are only known to have existed by the crumbling monuments and fragmentary records that they have left behind. Not so with the Hebrew race, which does not decay and refuses to die. It has passed through an ordeal of suffering, perhaps greater than that endured by any other race, but still it survives, the same strong, unbroken race that it was thousands of years ago. Unless we except China, Judaism is the one vestige of the remote past that has entirely defied decay or dissolution. Mightier peoples than Israel have appeared on the great stage of humanity, but they have vanished like the shadowy figures of a phantasmagoria. On their ruins other peoples have arisen, or conquest and admixture have so modified them that beyond a few centuries no man can trace his ancestry. There is a solemn grandeur in the tremendous sweep of vision that the Hebrew takes of the course of

time. He has seen all the ancient world-wide monarchies rise, flourish, and fall. Old ages, empires and systems have perished and left him behind, and new civilizations, empires and systems have sprung up to find him here before them, and likely to remain when they too have gone. He dwells under all stars, drinks of all streams, speaks all languages, enlists under every flag. Ancient as history, he possesses an indestructible youth. Threatened in all lands and times with destruction, like the Burning Bush he flourishes unconsumed in fire, a burning lamp shining on amid convulsions and tempests, an ethnological miracle, an undying witness of the truth of revelation, and a perpetual reminder of the future glories of our race.

The Hebrew is descended, in the line of Isaac, from Abraham, who must not be pictured as a solitary traveller with his wallet and scrip, but as a mighty nomad sheik, at the head of a vast encampment, the father of nations. Lord Beaconsfield, stung by insinuations aimed at his pedigree, told the noble lord that "the sons of the Crusaders are by the side of the sons of Levi muddy-blooded barbarians." The Englishman, though he might trace his ancestry back to the Roman period or to a Saxon thane, is but of yesterday in comparison with the Hebrew.

It has been supposed that the ten tribes, which were carried away into captivity before Judah, are concealed in some unknown region of the earth, but history finds no trace of them as now existing in any part of the world, and there is nothing in the Bible to make us believe that they anywhere have a distinct separate ex-

istence. A large proportion never went into exile, for only 27,280 captives were carried away by Sargon, this second deportation being apparently much larger than the first under Pul and Tiglath-pileser; and if only ten times as many were destroyed in the siege and previous wars, what became of the rest of Israel, whose warriors in the time of David numbered 1,100,000, which implies a population of several millions? The captives themselves were not allowed to settle in one district, and therefore could not keep up an organized community. Besides, we know that many Israelites—from Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun—came back with Judah, and a reunion of the divided Kingdoms took place in the celebration of the Passover (2 Chronicles xxx., xxxi., and xxxiv. 8,9). Moreover, the prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Hosea and Micah, declared that Judah and Israel would return together. And in the offerings made by the returned exiles at the Feast of Dedication, twelve he-goats were offered for a sin-offering for all Israel according to the number of the tribes. Many of the two kingdoms chose not to return. These are spoken of as dispersed among the people in all the provinces (Esther iii. 8). And from the descendants of these it doubtless was that devout men out of every nation under heaven came to the Passover, and were present at the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. After the Return, because of the numerical superiority of the tribe of Judah, Jews became the common name for all Israelites. From all which we infer that after the restoration the old distinction between Judah and Israel was lost, and that the ten tribes, as a distinct nation

having ceased to exist, all Israelites once more became one people, recognizing themselves as the descendants of the twelve ancient tribes.

Dr. Pressel divides the modern Jews into three great classes according to the countries over which they are dispersed, of which I need not speak particularly.

Both in America and Europe are three parties: one, consisting of those that are conservative of old forms and habits in synagogue, education, and worship; another, of those that in education, synagogue, and worship conform to the highest ideas prevalent in their respective countries; and a third, of those that propose to drop all the externals of Judaism and retain only a pure Deism. A writer in *Blackwood* shows that rationalism is threatening, nay, now working, a revolution among the Jews. No people have hitherto been more steadfast to their traditions than the Hebrews. But they evidently are giving way to modern thought and sloughing off the petrified, crystallized opinions of ages. The Talmud up to this century has been the supreme authority, the oracle of the Hebrew world. But the Jewish reformers have cast down this hitherto supreme standard. With it have gone down all its minute and almost infinitesimal prescriptions of forms for all matters of worship, morals, and manners. They educate their children in the common schools, mingle freely with Gentiles in the legislature and in politics generally, and advocate the change of their Sabbath to the Christian Sunday as a matter of expediency. It is an interesting question how far this change may favour the final Christianization of Judaism.

The distinction has been claimed for the Hebrew that, unlike all other races, his blood is untainted. But Dr. Neubauer, himself a Hebrew, speaking before the Anthropological section of the British Association a few years ago, contended that the Hebrews, unlike the Gypsies, are not perfectly pure; that the Israelites of old were descendants of a mixed race that had crossed the breed in Egypt; that from the time of the Second Temple intermixture took place with converts; that Jews intermarried with non-Semitic tribes, and that under the Roman empire conversions became so frequent that laws had to be passed against those who would be circumcised. A Jew, he said, was not particular as to the nation his wife belonged to, if only she professed his religion. We may, therefore, safely conclude that the Hebrews, like other races, are not of pure and unmixed blood.

Strangely hated has been the Hebrew. From the time of the Pharaoh of the Oppression till now, he has been scattered, spoiled, a byword, a hissing, and an execration, in the earth. When the Hebrews were restored from Babylon, foreign nations often controlled their destinies. Their worst calamities commenced with the Roman war A.D. 66. In this war town after town was taken and sacked, and multitudes slain. Jerusalem was invested and captured, 1,100,000 perished, and an immense multitude was led into slavery; and 60 years later another revolt took place and 580,000 were slain. While Christianity was under the ban the Jews, who sympathized with the Roman rulers in their oppression of Christians, flourished. But at the conversion of Constantine

they began again to suffer. The code of Justinian debarred them from civil rights. After the rise of the papal power, their afflictions were augmented. The era of the Crusades was a time of still deeper gloom. The Crusader seizing a Jew by the beard would plunge his sword into his breast crying, "Hierosolyma est perdita" —Jerusalem is destroyed. This became a toast at their banquets, and was contracted into H. E. P., and thus pronounced as one word, from which sprang, perhaps, the cry, "Hep, hep, hep, hurrah!" They have been expelled from most of the countries of Europe, and have suffered many forms of oppression, depredation, pillage, torture, outlawry, starvation, and massacre. The streets of many cities were deluged with their blood; they were burnt alive by thousands; their sufferings, in short, beggar description. Why this cruelty and hatred? Why the false charges trumped up against them from time to time? Was it because of their religion? Or their usury and extortion? Or that they might be despoiled of their possessions? Whatever the cause, extortion, and massacre, and banishment, continued until 200 years ago, when toleration began to be extended to them, and during this century their just rights have been largely yielded to them. Surely we may hope that out of affliction, so protracted and severe, much good will come:—

Wine oozes from the trodden grape,
Iron's blistered into steel.

In an unjustifiable attack upon the persecuted Jews in Russia, a great critic has called them "a parasitic race." If what he says of them is true in that particular

country, it would be equally true of them everywhere. What is there in the character of the Jew to excuse this onslaught upon him? He is ambitious of getting on in the world, it is true; but is not the Anglo-Saxon or the Anglo-American tarred with the same brush? We are told that his love of ducats is excessive; but do not the descendants of Covenanters and Puritans race hard and in as crooked a way after the dollar as any Hebrew? And "if he succeeds better than most is it not because he is temperate, industrious, and frugal in an unusual degree? Has he not learned to exercise that self-respect and self-control which constitute the first condition of success in any form of human enterprise?" If he is sharp and hard, what else could be expected of him after the cruel oppression of centuries? Good has come of this oppression, but not unmixed good. But how seldom do we find him justly arraigned before Courts of Law!

So far from being a parasite, he is "the very embodiment of self-help." He is not fond of hard manual labour, but you find him occupying all positions, from the princely merchant or banker, to the muleteer or itinerant clothes-monger. He is neither a drunkard nor a beggar. Thrifty and keen-witted in prosperity or adversity, he is under obligations to nobody. He provides for his family, his sick and his poor. The critic says that he is found "inserting" himself into this or that nationality for purposes of gain. We wonder if this is true of no other nation! For what purposes do merchants of England, America, France, Germany and Italy come to Japan?

The Hebrew is certainly an interesting study for many reasons. He is not as prolific as some other races, but as to longevity the results are largely in his favour. The average duration of the life of well-to-do Hebrews is 10 years longer than that of Gentiles; and this is due to their superior hygienic habits, and to the sturdy constitution transmitted by ancestors, who also observed strict sanitary precautions. Immunity from disease is a characteristic of the race. Dr. Mapother, of Dublin, in his lectures on Public Health, says:—"The striking immunity of the White-chapel Jews in the last, as well as all former epidemics (cholera), was due to their timely distribution of animal food, and to their excellent hygienic observances, which have made the longevity of this race one-third greater than that of most European peoples." The Jews commit suicide much less frequently than other religionists. Than others they have fewer illegitimate children. James Parton says of them that "they are probably at the present hour the chastest seven millions of people under the sun." The family feeling among them is very strong, which assures to aged and infirm parents, to infants, to children, the utmost solicitude. Their charity is unsurpassed. They do not forget that their sacred scriptures hold up as the consummation of iniquity the conduct of those who "slay the widow and stranger, and murder the fatherless;" and that the Old Testament declares that "cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow," and requires all the people to say Amen. They have orphanages, asylums, refuges, and mutual

help societies, and all this is done in no parsimonious way, but on the most liberal scale. Baron Hirsch's devotion of three millions sterling of his fortune to the relief of his persecuted brethren in Russia is a magnificent illustration of what is done every day by Hebrews in very humble circumstances. Educationally, too, they rank very high. "In almost every country they have equal advantages with Christians, and are found in more than equal proportion among the most educated and educating classes of to-day.....In Berlin, where the Jews are but five per cent. of the population, they are 30 per cent. of the students ; this is true also of Austria. In the whole of the German Empire, where the proportion of Jews is only one in seventy-five, in all the higher institutions of learning the proportion of Jews is one in ten. In Germany they already hold seventy professorial chairs in the universities ; and all agree that the tide of Jewish influence in education and learning is still rising." It is only a little while, say 30 years, since the Jew was first admitted to practice at the bar of England, yet he has already reached the front ranks. Sir George Jessel held a seat in the foremost files of English judges as Master of the Rolls. The control of the world's finances is largely in their hands, and in addition to the money-power they control to a large extent the Press of Europe. They are the leaders of progressive and democratic journalism in the Teutonic States. Out of 23 liberal and progressive papers of the Berlin daily press, there are only two that are not in one way or another under Jewish control. In Dresden at a representative gathering of the press, 29 out of 43 were

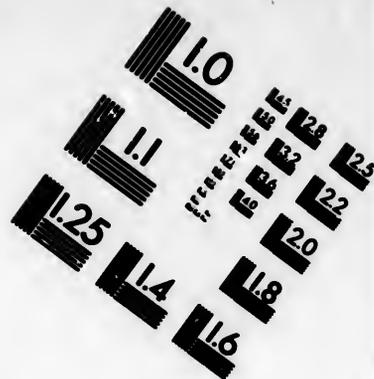
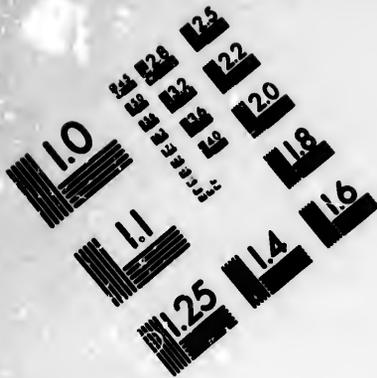
Jews. In Austria the same thing appears, for out of 370 authors 225 are Jews. We should not therefore wonder when we are told that Jewish pens lead public opinion through a good part of Europe. Wealthy families of Hebrews are intermarried with the aristocracies of Europe, their richly dowered daughters being given in marriage to the haughtiest members of the nobility. Hebrews take high office in Europe and America. They are acceptable candidates for the legislative assemblies of Italy, Austria, Germany, France, and England. In the English House of Commons they have representation out of all proportion to their share of the population, for while they are only one in 800 of the population, recently they held 9 out of its 658 seats. Lord Beaconsfield blew the Hebrew horn thus:—"There is no race that has so delighted, fascinated, elevated, and ennobled Europe as the Jewish." "Who," he asks, "are the great composers who hereafter will take rank with Homer, with Sophocles, with Praxiteles or with Phidias? They are the descendants of those Arabian tribes who conquered Canaan, and who by the favour of the Most High have done more with less means than even the Athenians. When the Russian, the Frenchman, and the Anglo-Saxon, amid applause of theaters, yield themselves to the full spell of a Mozart, a Meyerbeer, or a Mendelssohn, it seems difficult to comprehend how those races can reconcile it to their hearts to persecute a Jew."

Here then is a people without a country and without a king, scattered among all the nations but distinct as any, by their observance of the Mosaic institutes a true

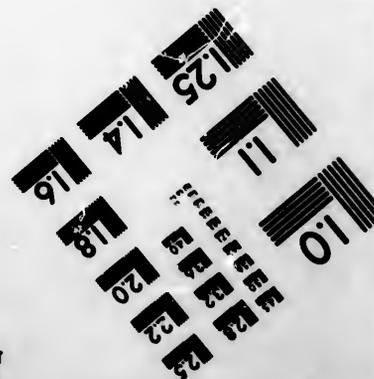
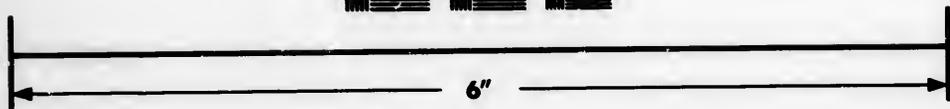
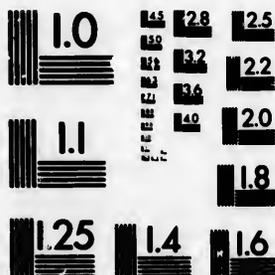
nation, animated by a common national hope and inspiration that tropical suns cannot consume, nor the frosts of the North chill; with national characteristics that nothing can obliterate: for neither spoliation, nor exile, nor massacre can break their proud spirit, or bend the iron sinew in their neck. Far mightier, far greater nations have existed, measured themselves against this mysterious race, and passed away. For Israel, though tenacious and patient in the highest degree, has been as an anvil on which they have been broken (Jeremiah l. 23; li. 19-25), and still survives—a race with capacity to rise to the highest place and to do the greatest things.

To this race, Paul tell us, “pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.” This race has as its crowning distinction that it was God’s chosen people, into which in due time should come the Son of God. If they were guilty in His crucifixion of the most stupendous crime that can be laid to the charge of the human race, it may be said in extenuation that “they did it ignorantly in unbelief.” To this remarkable people we are debtors. “We are debtors” indeed “both to the Jew and the Greek.” We owe somewhat to all the ancient nations that aimed at the empire of the world, but chiefly to the Greeks, the Romans, and the Israelites. Those three most highly gifted races of antiquity have supplied us with the loftiest ideals of thought and conduct. To the Romans we owe much as regards forms of government





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and systems of law. To the Greeks we are indebted for a teaching and an inspiration powerful still in philosophy, science, and art. But we owe far more to the Jew than to the Greek or Roman, because what he has given to us has a far more powerful bearing upon the world of thought, feeling and conduct, than science and art and all the arrangements of State. The most powerful factor and agency in the destinies of men and nations is the religious feeling. From this race we have received the Sacred Scriptures, of which they had been the custodians for long ages, for unto them had been committed the oracles of God. Our Saviour was a Jew, born of a Jewish maiden, reared in a Jewish home. The Jew bore witness to the one true God, to the Divinity of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, to the existence of the unseen eternal world, to the doctrine of sacrifice as a principle of the Divine government, and to the truth of the final judgment. There is a fable of a Roman who, swimming to save his life, saved his MSS. from destruction by carrying them in his teeth. But the Jew, swimming through seas of blood, carried with him his sacred writings and the religious sentiment, for which the world is to-day his debtor. "Salvation is of the Jews." Matthew Arnold in his "Culture and Anarchy," is fond of quoting God's word to Zechariah (ix. 13): "I have raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece!" And Israel raised up by God for this end is more epoch-making and powerful in the sphere of religion, than Greece in philosophy and art. For the Semitic spirit stands for all that is spiritual in our nature, which as over against the

æstheticism of Greece—Israel against Hellas—is of incomparably greater value in the education and up-lifting of the world. It ill becomes us, therefore, while we behold the Church of Christ standing before us in all the grandeur of her proportions, to forget that her foundations were laid by Jewish hands.

Time is left for only a glance at the question. For what is the Hebrew race reserved? If these few millions—variously estimated from 6 to 10—a mere drop in the ocean of humanity, with culture, education, wealth, energy and practical ability out of all proportion to their numbers, have been able to impress themselves upon every department of life, and that too at so small a remove in time from a period of disability and bondage, what may we expect of them in the years to come? By pure tests of intellect they will take the first place the world over in law and medicine, in science and education, in music, on the stage, and in finance. A recent writer has put his judgment on record thus:—"The rapid rise of the Jewish element is a fact which may be observed all over Europe, and if this rapid upward movement continues, the Israelites a century hence will be the masters of Europe." Heine has well said that the Jews, who decline to practise any form of idolatry, and have followed after a Law during more than 3,000 years, are "the people of the spirit," and not even their worship of wealth can destroy the passion or the hope with which their teachers are still inspired. It seems clear that as Almighty God works up His mighty forces of light, heat, magnetism, electricity, in His secret laboratories, so the

God of all grace is pleased to prepare the mighty potencies of his Kingdom of redemption, that He is thus qualifying Israel to take its rightful place among the nations of the world, and that He will restore to them the Holy Land. One would think that a secret exultation must spring up in the heart of every Hebrew when reminded of Beaconsfield's boast that one-half of Europe worships a Jew and the other half a Jewess; how much more when he comes to know that a Prince of David's line has wrought out the redemption of the human race, and that the process of reducing the whole world to His sway is now rapidly going on. One wonders that he does not hasten to claim Him for his Messiah, who has established a new order of things, dimly prophesied by Hebrew seers of ancient time, an order of things that required for its inauguration and establishment energy, wisdom, and resources, nothing short of divine. But the veil is on the Hebrew's heart. When that veil drops, as drop we are sure it will, he will "kiss the Son," David's son and David's Lord. Jew and Gentile shall be gathered into one fold under one Shepherd, and the effect of this wonderful conversion will be, to both Jew and Gentile, as Paul tells us, "life from the dead."

1. In conclusion, "to the Jew first" let me make direct appeal. In view of what history tells us, would it not be wise for him to reconsider the great question whether the contemporaries of Jesus of Nazareth did right in rejecting and crucifying Him. Two or three things are very clear. At that time the Hebrew people had lost their national independence, for hundreds of years had failed to produce either prophets or psalmists,

and were hated and despised by other nations. But the death and resurrection of Jesus, who was called the Christ, resulted in the establishment of a religion which grew out of Judaism as a tree out of its roots, but which, so far from being exclusive and sectarian, is a universal religion welcoming every human being to partake of its benefits. After their rejection of Jesus, the Jewish people were soon stripped of their commonwealth and scattered over the world, and now for eighteen centuries they have been without a country or a temple. Two anecdotes are in point. About thirty years ago a rabbi of high rank from Jerusalem visited the rabbi of Quebec, Canada, who proposed to him the following: The prophet Amos has said: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants the prophets." Now, the most notable fact of the last millenium at least is Christianity, overtopping in significance all others, the spring and fountain of the best civilization the world has ever known. According to the *dictum* of Amos the prophets knew of it. Tell me where the prophecy, which is fulfilled in Christianity, is to be found. The rabbi confounded could make no reply, but promised he would take the matter back with him to Jerusalem, and write his answer. He never wrote. The rabbi at Quebec waited long and finding no solution of his difficulty, sought help from Christian sources, and became a Christian minister of power and eloquence. Again, an intelligent and thoughtful Jewess, mourning over the fate of her countrymen, asked herself, Why is it thus? One day as she brood-

ed over the problem, it flashed upon her in this form : We were exiled from Palestine for seventy years for the sin of idolatry. But we have been exiled from our holy land for 1800 years. Is it because of a sin of vastly greater enormity than that of idolatry? What more enormous sin is there unless it be the sin with which the Christians charge us, the sin of rejecting and crucifying the Son of God? A terrible blow was struck at her national pride, but her desire to know the truth was so great that she faced the problem, studied the question thoroughly, reached the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, and became a Christian.

Oh ye Hebrews ! scions of a noble race, believe me, God is great on Sinai, amid thunders and lightnings and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, but He is greater far on Calvary, nailed to a cross, wounded, frail, dying, and praying for His murderers, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The religion of illimitable power, and of untempered justice and holiness is great, but indescribably greater is the religion of forbearance and love ; and this is the religion of Christ, not to be interpreted by the lives of professing Christians, for with shame we confess it, they often fail even in a small degree to approximate to their Example, but by the life and death of Him whom we rejoice to call our Lord and Saviour. Listen to your own Warszawiack of Breslau now in New York preaching with great eloquence and convincing many that Jesus is the Christ. Study the Rabinowich movement in Southern Russia from its beginning, and ingenuously hold your minds open to the truth. Rabinowich, a lawyer, was sent

from Russia to Palestine to select a resting-place for a Russian colony. Like Nehemiah he viewed the ruins, the city, the temple, the walls. He found the city trodden down of the Gentiles. He asked himself, Why is this? The answer at last came to him that the Messiah must have come and been rejected. He says, "I found Jesus on the Mount of Olives, and on His heart the sweetest resting-place. There you can, there you will rest—my people, my Israel!" Many have gathered about him, whom he has led to Christ, and organized into a church, but they remain truly and really Jews. As the late Dr. Delitzsch said, "Rabinowich is a star in the firmament of his people's history." Rabinowich in a sermon said: "Yes, brethren, the letter of the law is the foundation on which the Talmudists built thousands of their dead interpretation, but the letter of the law has appeared in Jesus Christ, as in the living and eternal Word, the Word of the power of God the Father, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Yes, Christ is all! He is the Israel, Israel's firstborn and only Son! He is the Thora, He is God!

"Rise, brethren; step out of darkness and enter on the path of peace! Listen to the voice of the God-man, Jesus Christ; the arch-Shepherd, who is seeking to gather you fainting sheep of the house of Israel, for whom He offered Himself as a sacrifice! Open your hearts to the divine words of the Redeemer, and frame all your actions according to the teaching of His holy Gospel. 'Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.'"

2. To Christians a word or two. We are their debtors, and the record of history is that we have repaid them with hate, scorn, and persecution. We are verily guilty concerning our brother. In the mind of our Elder Brother, to whom we owed ten thousand talents but had nothing to pay, and who frankly forgave us all because we desired Him, there is no difference between Jew and Greek. He loved all alike, died for all alike, hath made both one, of the twain one new man, so making peace. I cannot see why, upon any fair interpretation of the Scriptures, it should be denied that Israel is to be restored to the Holy Land. Prophecies in immediate juxtaposition, some of which describe Israel as Israel is to-day, separated, scattered, and peeled, and others which relate to their restoration to their own land, should not be interpreted, the former literally and the latter figuratively. They are already gathering in Palestine. Many tens of thousands of Jews are already there. Public improvements are being pushed forward. The "latter rains," which have been withheld since the exile are once more vouchsafed. When restored, the prophecy goes to show that Israel will be the most glorious of the nations of the earth. It has been shown in the body of this discourse that the Hebrew race is gifted and endowed above most. They have flowing in their veins the blood of Abraham, and Moses, and Joshua, and Isaiah, and David, and the Maccabees. They are predestined to greatness. But theirs will not be, I think, the greatness of military or naval glory, or of legislating for the world. I think their glory will be chiefly the glory of righteousness, of peace, of supreme

devotion to God in Christ. They may not return to the Holy Land believers in Christ, but the time approaches when they will look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn. "They shall all know Him from the least to the greatest." "And all Israel shall be saved," for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The Gates will open to admit a righteous nation. Swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruninghooks ; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. They will teach the nations, who will say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths : for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. "And in the great day when the nations go up for the coronation of their Saviour, there shall be the Jew among the rest, eldest born of the world's aristocracy, foremost to bend the knee, foremost to lift the song, foremost to 'bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.'" The Lord Jesus Christ would have us repay the debt of gratitude we owe to Him by bringing His brother and ours to His feet and favour. When He charged His disciples to preach the Gospel among all nations He said, Begin at Jerusalem. Let us pray for God's ancient people. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me," He said who is to be our Judge. Anything we can do to help one of this honoured race let us do "in His name."

THE PLUMBLINE.

“And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And i said, a plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel.” Amos vii. 8.

Very pleasant must it be for the ecclesiastics connected with some ancient European cathedral to walk about Zion, to go round about her, and tell the towers thereof, to mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces. For rich and “exceeding magnificent” as was Solomon’s temple, there are many Christian temples that far excel it in grandeur, sumptuousness, and beauty, as they do in the gracious endowments peculiar to our dispensation. “He built His sanctuary like high palaces;” but now it is more befitting to compare old-world palaces with cathedrals, than cathedrals with palaces. And where is it possible to find among the works of men a better emblem not only of the beauty, and the grandeur and the sanctity of religion, but also of its stability, not to say its eternity, than the ancient Christian Cathedral? How slowly was it constructed! One generation laid the foundation; and another began to build thereon; in one age a chancel was built, and after intervals of centuries, a nave, a chapel, a shrine, a spire, a tower, were erected. And so after the lapse of ages the vast pile of masonry stands forth, a wonder for

all succeeding times. Its sublimity and augustness, its grace and exuberance, would have been of short continuance, only for its solidity; and the solidity comes from the unwasting character of the materials of which the walls are constructed, and the painstaking skill with which they were erected—a skill which resided not in the unaided eye and hand, but in the help which they had from one of the simplest, but most important implements,—a cord at the end of which was attached a weight. By the plumbline the mason knows whether his wall is perpendicular or not. Neglect the plumbline, and a deviation, at first perhaps very slight, from the exact perpendicular would take place, and this would inevitably become greater and greater, until the wall would topple down—a disgraceful ruin.

Amos, the prophet, sees the Lord standing on a wall that had been built by the plumbline, but is now dangerous and ready to fall, and in His hand is the plumbline, which is used not only in building but in destroying; the Lord explains that He will set the plumbline in the midst of Israel, striking not at the outwork but at the very centre. The plumbline indicates that the coming judgment was to be measured out by the exactest rules of justice. Long had the Lord borne with His people Israel, and twice had He turned away the fierceness of His wrath in answer to the entreaties of His servant Amos, but now worn out by Israel's perversity, He will no more be entreated, and proceeds to pronounce the doom, which was fulfilled when Shalmaneser after a three years' siege of Samaria captured it, and carried Israel away captive to Assyria.

Everywhere a tendency to choose some other standard than the divine is evident. But what is the standard which the Lord will apply? I answer—the standard erected in these Holy Scriptures. It is righteousness: righteousness, as seen in the patriarchal dispensation, when Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness; in the Mosaic, when a man walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; and in the Christian dispensation, when one who has given his heart to Christ serves Him in the spirit and not in the letter, takes up his cross daily, and runs with joyful alacrity in the path of the Divine commandments.

But let no man dream that the righteousness of the Christian is inconsistent with the righteousness of the law. It is the latter raised to a higher power. It is the latter with a flavour that it never knew before. It is righteousness, or virtue, crowned with love. It is the highest ornament of the individual, and the most conserving principle of government; and nothing can take its place as the most powerful cement of human society.

But lately attempts have been made from many quarters to disjoin morals from Christianity. Such attempts must prove abortive. Mr. Leslie Stephen in the *Nineteenth Century* said: "Of all the illusions patronized by philosophers, there is none more baseless, as it seems to me, than the notion that morality is dependent upon speculative opinions." But the great verities of religion are not speculative opinions, and it is no illusion to suppose that they should powerfully

influence human conduct. Mr. Stephen caricatures Christian obedience by telling us that Christians avoid doing certain things for fear of going to hell, and do other things in the hope of securing a title to heaven. He seems to overlook the fact that by so writing he acknowledges that Christianity promotes good behaviour. But he misrepresents Christianity, for it is her delightful function to kindle love for God in the heart of men, when "joy is duty and love is law."—Prof. Felix Adler of New York in describing "the Ethical Movement" said that though it is distinctly a religious movement it is not to be classed with any of the existing religions. It is a fellowship of men and women banded together to realize a higher code of morality than existed around them, who placed morality before religion, and believed that the rules of morality were not fixed ages ago, and that the present religions taught a low grade of morals. Among their principles were profound solicitude for the honour of women, strict truthfulness and honesty in business, the devotion of a certain share of their income for the poor, etc. That this is simply the morality of the New Testament, without its spring and motive, is the only criticism I need offer upon it.—The author of "Supernatural Religion" speaks of Christ's ethics with the highest admiration, but teaches that this morality will never take its proper place in our thoughts, till we dissociate it entirely from the supernatural in Christianity. Mrs. Humphrey Ward, following her uncle, Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his loose religious views, attempts in "Robert Elsmere" to show that the morality of Christianity

should be retained, while its theological element should be discarded. Mr. Gladstone's Criticism shows the impossibility and absurdity of such a separation. These are his apt and trenchant words: "It is a huge, larcenous appropriation by modern schemes, of goods which do not belong to them. For the Christian type of character is the product and property of the Christian scheme. Christianity both produced a type of character wholly new to the Roman world, and it fundamentally altered the laws and institutions, the tone, temper, and traditions of that world. It changed the relation of that world. It changed the relation of classes, abolished human sacrifices, gladiatorial shows, and a multitude of horrors, and it enlarged and transfigured morality. What right have we, then, to detach, or to suppose that we can detach, this type of personal character from the causes out of which as a matter of history it has grown, and to assume that without its roots it will thrive as well as with them? It would be the substitution of a spectre for a living form."

It is contended that religion has nothing to do with morality? Without doubt there are religions that do not prompt morality, that are in fact demoralizing. Gibbon tells us that the philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature of man rather than from that of God. Not that they did not meditate on the Divine nature; they did, but only as a curious speculation. Their religion was sensual, as among others, the temple and groves of Daphne attested. But many of the ancients felt the necessity of a religion to preserve morals, and Thales taught that the eyes of the avenging

gods searched even the thoughts of evil men, while Socrates founded all his morality on belief in a God who delighted in virtue, and whose justice would reward the good and punish the wicked in an after state. But Christian morality is essentially different from that of the ancients, and from that of these sceptical *literati*. It differs from the latter, in that it cannot exist apart from the notion of a Divine Being and a future life. It has sanctions unknown to the ethics of utility, and deals with immortal hopes and eternal interests. It differs from the former in that it is measured by the character and example of Christ. Christian morals are bound up with the doctrines of Christianity in a living, organic unity. A system of religion which reveals the Creator, as our Father, loving us with an infinite love, albeit righteous and hating sin with an infinite abhorrence, and as our Saviour who has provided for us a salvation from sin on terms within the reach of us all—a system of religion which calls on men to repent of sin, and live pure and unselfish lives, which exalts righteousness, truth, and benevolence above all outward distinctions, and enforces all these by the authority of God and the sanctions of eternity, is calculated to promote the highest morality. In the New Testament, morality is strongly enforced. To the lawyer, who summed up the requirements of the law as “supreme love to God, and love to one’s neighbour as to oneself,” our Lord said: “Thou hast answered right; this do and thou shalt live.” Said Paul: “The works of the flesh are manifest.....; they who do such things cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.” And in the doctrine of

the new birth, or regeneration by the Holy Spirit, we are taught whence comes the power to live a radically right life. Christianity is a life, begotten in him who heartily and believingly accepts certain revealed truths, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. The renewed man is of necessity a conspicuously moral man. When he ceases to be moral, he forfeits the sustaining grace of God. The life which he has received prompts him to the obedience of faith. His aim is to be Christ-like in all his tempers and dispositions. Christ's precepts are his rules of living. So that though all he does that is lovely and consistent may not be the direct conscious result of his religious belief; it will be mainly the outcome of the dispositions that have been inspired, and the habits that have been formed by the influence of his belief concerning God, Christ, sin, responsibility, and immortality.

We know, then, the standard which the Lord will apply. He tells us in Isaiah (xxviii. 17): "*Judgment* also will I lay to the line, and *righteousness* to the plummet." It is the law as found in the decalogue and expounded by Christ and the Apostles.

The plummet is applied by Him, who rules the world in the interests of true religion, to the life and character of the nation, of the Church, of the family, and of the individual; and woe to them that cannot abide the test.

i. *It is applied to national life.*

Long ago the Lord came down to see how the world was getting on, how it was building, and of what materials. He applied the plummet, and lo! it had to be taken down and begun anew. And so the flood

came and swept it all away.—Through the ages it has been necessary again and again to overturn and reconstruct the nations, for when the plumbline was applied all was seen to be wrong. Where are Assyria, and Chaldea, and Egypt, and cultivated Greece, and all-conquering Rome? For awhile they built with regard to the plumbline, but as they prospered and grew rich they paid no further heed to it; so they perished not by tempest, nor by assassination, nor by earthquake, but by immorality, and “immorality is suicide.” God is testing the nations to-day. We have only to look abroad to see a condition that will make our hearts ache. Grave evils like canker-sores are eating out the life of society. Among most nations the rights and liberties of men are imperfectly recognized. Might is right, and the strong oppress the weak. In some countries constitutional rights and safe-guards are quite unknown. Among the working-classes of all lands there is disquiet and bitterness. Even in nominally Christian lands, multitudes are the slaves of prevailing forms of wickedness. The whole system of national wars is barbarous and disgraceful. Depend upon it the plumbline will be applied, and the avenging rod of the Almighty will fall with heavy strokes upon the offending nation.

ii. *It is applied to Church life.*

The Church is a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. They are to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light, to be His witnesses, to spread scriptural holiness, to save the race. The

ideal Church is one with Christ ; it is the Body of which He is the Head, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. If the Church is one with Him, the members of it are one with one another ; the unifying principle is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The edifice built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone, is a structure of granitic principle :—in Christ all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom we also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Now against this temple as a whole the gates of hell shall not be suffered to prevail. But it is a historical fact that individual churches have become corrupt and have perished. The candlestick was removed from them to others. Giance for a moment at the seven churches of Asia, to each of which the Lord from His throne in glory indited a letter by His servant John. These churches exhibit every conceivable form of Church life, and are symbolic of the universal Church. Each epistle contains a message, a promise, and an exhortation. All are commended save two ; all are rebuked save two ; two are praised without one word of rebuke. Three are both praised and blamed. All are called to instant repentance from all evil, and to earnest pursuit of all good, by Him who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. They were all planted in heathen cities, and though some of them were for a time eminently faithful, their candlesticks have been removed. Is not the possibility forced upon us here in Yokohama of our lamp being taken away and our shrine

laid waste? Where Christ was once preached by apostolic lips the minaret of the mosque raises its head proudly, and the muezzin lifts up his Christless call to prayer—"No God but Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet." Let us take heed. The plumbline is applied to see if the Church is fulfilling her vocation, or living a life of mere pretence. Each church is bound to be loyal to Christ; carefully to preserve the glow of its early love for Him; to resist false doctrine; to keep its conscience quick and alert; to come out from the world; to suffer no sin in its membership; to make spiritual things of highest consequence; to abound in every good work; and like the good Samaritan to go down to the struggling ones below, and pour the oil and wine of Christian love into the wounded and sorrowing hearts that distrust Christianity itself, because its leaders have helped so little to bear their burdens or alleviate their sufferings. How is it with us? Where do we stand? Is any one of these a picture of our condition? Here is a large mill in which there is not a moving spindle. Everything is perfect about it; nothing is wanting. The only trouble is that all the fires are out. This describes one church.—There is another church full of invalids, requiring all the labour and time of those in health to nurse and feed the sick.—Still another church, wasting and pining away with a high fever of quarrels and disputations about little crotchets, employing in its own destruction the strength that should be devoted to the service of Christ.—One more church. Let Spurgeon describe it. "Have you ever read 'The Ancient

Mariner?' I dare say you thought it one of the strangest imaginations ever put together, especially that part where the old mariner represents the corpses of all the dead men rising up to man the ship,—dead men pulling the rope, dead men steering, dead men spreading the sails. I have lived to see that time. I have seen it done. I have gone into churches and I have seen a dead man in the pulpit, a dead man as deacon, a dead man handling the plate, and dead men sitting to hear." Tested by the standard which overthrew the seven churches of Asia, where are we? "Search us, O God, and try us, and see if there be any evil way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."

iii. *It is applied to the family life.*

The institution of the family preserves mankind from being scattered and dissipated by the repulsive forces of selfishness. Here are the beginnings of the tenderness and affection which afterward expand till they embrace the community, the nation, and the race. Anything which threatens the well-being of the family is a menace to the race, for the dissolution of the domestic tie involves the dissolution of domestic society. We are not made to live alone. The man is not complete without the woman, nor the woman without the man. Both together make one. The world is not made up of a multitude of isolated men. The family is the unit. All the relations and laws of society are found in the family, the laws of dependence and trust, of authority and obedience, of obligation and happiness. The great lesson of living for others is taught and enforced there with an authority that never is doubted, though it may be diso-

beyed. Well says the Bishop of Durham : " The popular estimate of the family is an infallible criterion of the state of society. Heroes can never save a country when the idea of the family is degraded, and strong battalions are of no avail against homes guarded by faith and reverence and love." In a perfect family there are the three primary relations of husband and wife, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters ; but only upon the first of these have I time now to dwell.

Marriage is the basis of the family, and the relation of husband and wife, in which the incompleteness of the individual attains a certain completeness, is the closest and most intimate, the most endearing and enduring, the highest and holiest, relation on earth. Very close is that of parent and child. But in the economy of God it is ordained : " For this cause shall a man *leave* his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh."

" There are two hearts, whose movements thrill
 In unison so calmly sweet,
 That pulse to pulse responsive still
 They both must heave or cease to beat.

" There are two souls, whose equal flow
 In gentle streams so calmly run
 That when they part—they part I ah, no,
 They cannot part—those souls are one."

" This is a great mystery," says Paul, adding " but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." But you will observe that Paul has been platonizing. In his view, all the duties of this life rest upon eternal laws, and the institution of marriage is the shadow and symbol of heavenly things, even of the eternal relations

of Christ and His Church. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the Saviour of the body. This transfigures marriage, and exalts it and beautifies it to the Christian heart. So when Paul says: "Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the women be to their own husbands in everything," what seems degrading in the subjection disappears, for it is idealized and hallowed as being a subjection to Christ. Does this seem hard and intolerable to any who are wives? Still heavier is the obligation which Paul lays upon the husband: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it."

In the light of this exposition of marriage by Paul, no wife has a right to complain that she is defrauded of personal rights, when she is commanded to be in subjection to her husband as unto the Lord, for if her husband loves her as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, she will find no hardship in the Divine injunction.

If the plumbline is applied to your home and mine, my brother, my sister, how will it fare with us? Yet this is the standard with which we are required to bring our married life into agreement.

iv. *It is applied to business life.*

Trace sins of business life to their root, and that root is seen to be the greed of gain. When this greed becomes strong, it imperiously demands satisfaction. Sometimes it turns freebooter. As it grows stronger it becomes coarse and cruel, and often stops not short of human

life. But for the most part it adapts itself to the times. Long ago Solomon sketched a scene which may be witnessed any day in our country: A man beating down the price of an article he wants to get, striking a bargain only after much lying, then going out to relate how he succeeded in outwitting the merchant. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way he boasteth."

The plumbline is applied even now, and woe to him who cannot stand the test of righteousness. Well would it be for society to-day if everybody at once began to act on this principle, for He, who will judge alike merchant prince and merchant huckster, requires truth and honesty in the inward parts. If the pulpits of the Christian Church throughout the world were to-day to ring out no uncertain sound on this crying evil of our times, what numbers of false weights and measures would be corrected to-morrow! What dishonesties in the making out of invoices, and the affixing of false labels, and the making and breaking of contracts, would cease! What restitution there would be for cheating not only in the quality, but also in the quantity, of articles sold! If the law, "Thou shalt not steal," were applied universally, it would perfectly restore confidence, now greatly shaken. Were this law applied, our carpentry, and tailoring, would be vastly better; the fabrics woven in the looms, the milk that comes to our doors, the articles of food spoiled by adulterations, all would be improved. Slovenly, dishonest work would cease to be done. Bankruptcy and failure would come to an end. The

Ten Commandments, well kept, would make honest traders, decent citizens, and a very comfortable and safe society to live in.

I have been speaking of common scoundrels; but surely, you say, this test can be borne by the professing Christian. Not so fast. Says Bishop Mant: "As a man can never be truly honest unless he be truly religious, whatever show of religion a man may make he cannot be truly religious in God's judgment unless he is honest in his conversation toward his neighbour." By conversation, I understand the good Bishop to mean *conduct*. The professor of religion, who boasts of his orthodoxy and personal experience, but does not pay one hundred cents in the dollar when able to do so, is one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the cause of God. Can he be a good man who is addicted to tricks of trade, who uses false weights and measures, or who is untruthful in his representations to his customers? No; he only can attain to such a standard, who has been renewed by the Word and Spirit of God, so that sinful and selfish affections have been driven from his soul, and who lives according to the principles of the Bible which relate to truthfulness, honesty, chastity, and self-sacrifice. The common mistake is made of counting the ways of trade and commerce unholy. But we must not separate our religion from our morality. Every true Christian should endeavour to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man.

I know it is not always easy to do right under the tremendous pressure of temptation, and to test business habits and every department of daily work by the plumb-

line of strictest rectitude, but it will be wise to do so. It is hard to see men making fortunes by frauds which society condones on account of their success, and not follow their example but go plodding on year after year with no prospect of making more than a decent living. But could you see the evil wrought by those frauds, the woe, the agony, the grinding poverty, and starvation, which must come to hundreds of homes, and the withering of the spirit of the successful swindler, you would go back content with the frugal fare, and the plain clothes, and the scanty salary—that have for their consolation a white conscience, a pure heart, a growing faith in God, and a growing love for one's fellow-men. Mr. Ruskin has said that if he were a mason building a wall, he should feel that he had a manhood as well as a masonry, and put into the wall his very best work; so that when he passed that wall in future he should take pleasure in the reflection: "There I put my conscience as well as my bricks, my noblest efforts of intellect as well as my handiwork." Infinitely better is poverty and a heart right with God, than vast riches if, in the light of God's law, one must take rank with thieves. Let me entreat you to cultivate old-fashioned honesty. "Johnnie," said a man to a clerk, "you must give me good measure, your master is not in." Johnnie looked solemnly into the man's face and replied: "My Master is always in." His Master was the all-seeing God. Do not tamper with sin. Remember your mother's prayers and your father's warnings. Come back, if you have begun to sin. Hear Him say: "Let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as

snow ; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." But be sure you make the amplest restitution, for Christ's words bearing on this point are awfully solemn and impressive, and point us forward to another reckoning : " Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him ; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing " (Matt. v. 25, 26).

v. *It is applied to private life.*

Neglect to obey the voice of conscience, and it will gradually lose its tenderness till it shall be seared as with a hot iron, and you will be able to do monstrous sins and crimes without compunction. Apply the Decalogue to your conduct and tell me in the light of the New Testament exposition of it, whether your wall is going up perpendicularly? You remember the old story of Prince Hal, whose companions were Falstaff and men of like habits, who when he became king reformed at once and cast off his old companions. Well, there was another prince, heir to England's throne, who emulated Prince Hal of happy memory, and intended to reform like him when he mounted the throne, but alas! when as George IV. he was crowned, his habits were too strong for mastery, and he remained the libertine and sot he had prepared himself for becoming. Don't run the risk of a ruined manhood and a degraded old age, by any departures from the strictest virtue now. The wall of character can only be built *safely* by frequent applications of the plumbline from the beginning.

Else the superstructure will be something worse than the leaning tower of Pisa, which by a series of mechanical adjustments and counter-balances has been prevented from tumbling into ruin—adjustments and balances possible enough in mechanics, but not in the world of morals. Illustrations are to be had by the score of men who very early in life formed a habit of drink, were weaned from it for many years, but long after first abstinence took one glass which ignited the combustible materials of early habit, that had been dormant for many years, and they were destroyed. Is the wall going up without regard to the plumbline here?

It is the remark of a critic that "Society's discernment of evil when it takes the form of crime is sufficiently acute; concerning vice it has convictions more or less emphatic; but of *sin*, as *sin*, its notions are feeble and confused." Society is very severe upon the vice that is found in low haunts. But as the vicious become wealthy and in the degree of their wealth, their vices become peccadilloes, and it is a wonder if they do not become virtues. The sin of uncleanness in rich and poor, in high or low, is equally criminal. The power of sin lies in its pleasure. If stolen waters were not sweet, none would steal them. This is the fearful feature of the case. Man's moral appetite is diseased. If sin had no sweetness in it, it would be easier to keep from sinning. But the sweetness lasts only for a little; afterwards it is very bitter. The youth's danger is his ignorance. When invited to the place of pleasure, he knows not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell. Against "the strange

woman" be warned. Licentiousness like a canker eats into the body of society. God's anger will track lust through all its secret doublings. Vengeance against that evil thing circulates through the veins and dries up the marrow in the bones. The libertine is dead while he lives, for his sin soon withers the greenness of spring in the soul of the youth. And hear the Word of God: "No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God."

It is to me a pleasure that I address children and youth. Let me exhort you with all fidelity and affection to build with constant reference to the plumbline. There is a story told by Bishop Huntingdon of an ancient German prince who in early life was bidden by an oracle to search out on a ruined wall an inscription, which should prefigure his mortal fate. He found the Latin words, signifying *after six*. Thinking that was the number of days he had to live, he gave himself for those six days to a preparation of his soul for death. But as he continued to live longer, he thought the length of his life was to be six weeks, and continued to search for the favour of God. In short he continued for six months, and after that for six years, to live a holy life acceptable to God and man; and on the first day of the seventh year, so fully had he gained the confidence of the people that he was chosen Emperor of Germany. Be faithfully and cheerfully obedient to duty in your childhood, seek and enjoy the favour of the Lord every day of your youth, and your manhood will find you in the enjoyment of an established charac-

ter, of a daily life of victory over self, and of the freedom of a child of God. For only as one is faithful to the better impulses of childhood and early youth, and obedient to the convictions of duty in growing years, shall one reach an unselfish and noble manhood.

But if you have neglected to be faithful in earlier years and you feel discouraged as if you were lost, don't despair, but pluck up heart. If the plumbline were applied to the lives of us all, it would be found that in no case has the wall been always built perpendicularly. What then? We rejoice to preach the Gospel to the lost. Christ has come to undo the consequences of sin, to reverse the laws of sin and disorder. Come to Him, and He will forgive your past, cleanse your heart, give you new opinions, convictions, principles, affections, and purposes. He will make your inner nature holy and your outer life pure. He will dispel your gloom and sadness, and give you joy and peace. In trouble He will support you, and turn your trials into triumphs. He will sweeten all the bitter cups you have to drink, and on the death bed and on the judgment day you will find that, from the day you began your life of faith in Him, all things have helped to build up a character that will stand the test of the plumbline of righteousness. O come to Him as you are, sick, diseased, despairing, dying. Come to Him this moment. Trust Him. Look to Him. Ask Him. And He will save you to the uttermost, and that forever.

THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

“Therefore let us also, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews xii. 1, 2.

The writer of this remarkable treatise has been in the preceding chapter describing the spiritual achievements of the fathers; and as his imagination warms with the thought of the faithful in glory waiting for the coming of the new Gospel church, and desirous of seeing our heroic deeds under the superior privileges we enjoy, he breaks out into the beautiful language of our text, having caught the idea of a Grecian race as an illustration of the Christian life. His vigorous faith beholds the patriarchs and prophets, the elders and fathers, surveying from the galleries of the skies those who run in the path of God's commandments, in earnest endeavour for the Christian prize.

In the ancient games running and wrestling had a chief place. To accomodate vast numbers of spectators immense buildings were erected. The arena, where the gladiators fought and the racers ran, was surrounded by seats which rose one above another in tiers. In those

great national gatherings, animated by the presence of vast assemblies, the candidates for immortality struggled for preeminence with all the power of which they were possessed. The crown was only a chaplet of leaves of oak or laurel, but it conferred a renown above wealth and civic dignity.

I. *Let us consider the race.*

1. It is "*set before us.*" When the athlete ran in the Olympic race, he ran the race set before him, never for one moment disputing the right of the umpires to fix the direction, to decide the distance, and to plant the goal, where and as they pleased. We see a fitness in this submission of the racer to the will of the umpires. If a man's great object in life is the acquisition of wealth or the attainment of honour, he is placed at once under certain limitations. He who purposes going to some distant country informs himself as to the climate and the character of the people; and the knowledge of these things will materially modify the character of his preparations. So he who runs to heaven, inasmuch as he knows nothing of it save as he learns from revelation, must be content to accept that revelation and the duties which it imposes. He must run in the path of the Divine commandments, the highway of holiness cast up for the redeemed of the Lord to walk in. He may have in the order of God's providence to run through storms, and to climb hills of difficulty; but let him not repine, for the end is eternal life.

2. There is implied the idea of *earnestness*. The arena in Olympia was 600 feet long, surrounded by rising tiers of benches to accommodate 10,000 spec-

tators. At the one extremity of the course were the athletes, at the other the judges. Before them the sacred tripod, and upon it the coveted prize. Among the onlookers were princes and consuls and ambassadors, fellowcitizens anxious for the credit of their town, poets who would celebrate the victor, and Olympic victors who had won a similar prize. Is it any wonder that at the signal they dashed forward and with the utmost energy pressed to the goal?

We enter upon the Christian course only after the exercise of much earnestness. We have to agonize to enter into the narrow path. The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and it is the violent who take it by force. A listless, inert professor of religion is not running. Nor shall he obtain the prize. Some walk, some creep, some sit. But the true Christian runs, labours, struggles, wrestles, strives, fights. His life is earnest. Christianity requires it. He who has clear views of his own danger, the world's ruin, his neighbour's peril, cannot but be earnest. A careless, non-working Christian is a contradiction in terms.

But not every kind of earnestness, even of a religious sort, is right. There is the earnestness of the bigot, who is absorbed in propagating his own narrow creed, or in multiplying the adherents of his own sect. There is the earnestness of the man who goes about seeking to establish his own righteousness. There is a zeal which is not according to knowledge. But the earnestness of the Christian racer is that of one who can say "My soul followeth hard after God." "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling."

3. This race implies *progression*. Each night the Christian racer pitches his tent a day's march nearer home. Forgetting the things that are behind he presses forward to those which are before. He grows in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. But after all the daily increment in grace is very small. And some who observe the haste and expedition of this century wonder why there is not apparently the same advancement in religious character as in science, commerce, education. So that after the first glad gush of joy is over, and they begin to apply the new principles of living to every-day life, and find in themselves what they did not expect, an opposition still to the good, they sometimes become discouraged, cease to run, and go back to the world. How happily the author corrects this fatal error: "run it with patience!" Be not discouraged if you do not at once accomplish large results. As Robertson beautifully says, borrowing his figure from Macaulay: "Look at the sea, when the flood is coming in. Go and stand by the sea beach and you will think that the constant flux and reflux is but retrogression equal to the advance. But look again in an hour's time, and the whole ocean has advanced. This is progress to be estimated at the end of hours, not minutes." The true Christian does make progress. Let us therefore expect the certain development, though it may not be rapid, of the Christlike nature within us.

But if it is to be run in patience the sick man in the solitude of his chamber may run it as well as those who stand foremost as Christian labourers and

philanthropists. The Christian may and must always be running. In health, he should be faithful and diligent in the duties of active life. In sickness, he should exhibit all the passive graces, meekness, resignation, and acquiescence with the will of God. And on the sick bed he may run more rapidly, reach higher attainments of piety and do more good than in time of abounding health. "I am sorry," said one to Dr. Payson, "to see you here lying on your back." "Do you know what God puts us on our backs for?" said the doctor. "No." "In order that we may look upward." On the sick bed we may so wait on the Lord as to walk, to run, to soar as on eagle's wings.

4. This race *has its own conditions*. The athlete stripped himself of every article of clothing that might impede him in the race. In like manner the Christian starting for heaven is pictured as encumbered with easily-tripping garments of sin, and handicapped with weights which will embarrass him in his future career. These must be laid aside. How sufficient an answer to the cavil of certain who affirm that the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ is antinomian! Having given a description of faith, set forth the value of faith, and exhibited the cloud of witnesses who had already found salvation through faith, the writer does not say, Seek to win the prize by faith; but, Cast aside your weights and besetting sins, and press forward as competitors in a race. He shews us that if we would triumph, we must strain every nerve, and this to the very end. Faith, then, does not encourage indifference to morals; it is a mighty principle which

prompts the soul to put away all sin, and aim at universal holiness.

(1). We must "*lay aside every weight.*" To run well we must run *light*. Weights are not necessarily sins, but they may become sins. Whatever is in danger of becoming a snare, part with it at the peril of your soul. In some instances it is a *mistaken view of religion*, as a trust in forms, or in a faithful attendance upon the means of grace. Trust in these is a weight—lay it aside. There are *the cars of the world*, which often crush to the very earth. Put them away by casting them upon Him who careth for you. There is the *fear of man* which bringeth a snare, to be cast out by the expulsive power of that higher fear, the fear of Him who, after He hath killed the body, hath power to cast into hell. Lay them all aside.

(2). "*And the sin which doth so easily beset.*" What is the meaning of the phrase? The epithet *ἐπιπεριστατός* (applied to *ἁμαρτία*) is found nowhere else in Greek literature. Various significations have been proposed, of which the one adopted in our translation is probably the best—well-around-standing—that which cleaves to us, besetting us on all sides, which clings to us as the ivy to the trees that ultimately it strangles. Besetting sins trip us, paralyze us, render us weak like others, take from us our nimbleness and agility, and make it impossible for us to run so as to obtain. Each man has his own besetment. There will be some one passion or temptation which will chiefly beset us. It is the tap-root of the tree of sin. That which is one man's besetting sin may not be another's. We hate other people's

sins; we love our own. But whatever it may be, or however dear, it must be laid aside. Is it *anger*? Lay it aside. Is it *covetousness*? This is the sin of the age, by which millions are destroyed. Lay it aside. Is it *envy*? Does this spirit rise in you like a demon at the thought that you are unappreciated, and that another less worthy is lifted above your head? Put it away. Is it *falsehood*? A tendency to misrepresent truth, or to use the language of truth to convey a false impression? To carry your points by intrigue, rather than by fair, honest dealing? Lay it aside. Is it *slander*? "whose rage is sharper than the sword, whose tongue out-venoms all the worms of Nile, whose breath rides on the posting winds, and doth belie all quarters of the world." Lay it aside. Is it *intemperance*? The sword has slain its thousands, but strong drink its tens of thousands. Lay it aside. Is it *pride*? Of which besetment, we have no more striking illustration than the question in Micah: "What doth the Lord require of thee, butto walk humbly with thy God?" Or as in the margin: "Humble thyself to walk with God." What a diabolical spirit, which will not humble itself to walk with God! But if you would run this race successfully, it must be run *with* God. Lay it aside. Is it *unbelief*? This was the besetting sin of the Jews, called by many a little sin, in reality the prolific mother of all sins. Lay it aside with earnest prayer for faith, more faith, perfect faith. Is it *sensuality* which weighs the soul downward, swineward, hellward? Lay it aside. Some low habit, some smothered lust, some concealed fraud, may lie at the root of the

inconsistent and careless life of a professing Christian.
Says pious George Herbert :—

“ Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round !
Parents first season us ; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws ; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,
Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of glory ringing in our ears ;
Without, our shame ; within, our consciences ;
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears,—
Yet all these fences and their whole array
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.”

So much for the sins which we must renounce at the very outset in order to successful entrance into the narrow way—sins which must not only be renounced, but *kept* renounced, or we shall enter into by-paths which do not conduct to glory. We, then, who see the value of the immortal soul committed to our charge, the blessedness of the prize for which we contend, and the greatness of the loss if we fail of the grace of God, will surely not hesitate to cast aside every weight and every besetting sin.

(3). There is another condition of success, of such importance that time fails me to give it due proportion in the treatment of this theme. The preceding chapter is, so to speak, a picture-gallery of those in heaven who distinguished themselves by their exalted faith. It is well for us to emulate these worthies who through faith and patience inherit the promises ; but here is One,

who is by far our best example of faith. The sacred writer bids us turn *away* our attention (*ἀφ-ορῶντες*) from all the rest and concentrate it upon Jesus, the Captain and Perfecter of our faith, in whom faith finds its supreme illustration. He waits, too, at the end of the race to receive us, and to dispense the rewards. From the very outset of our career we must look unto Him, and turning neither to the right hand nor to the left press on till mortality is swallowed up of life. The Olympic games were under the sanction of Jupiter. Our great contest is under the eye and with the sanction of the Lord Jesus, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and having reached the goal triumphant is set down at the right hand of God. We must look to Him :

(a). *In His work.* He is the Author and Finisher of our faith *objectively*; i.e. to say, He began, carried on, and completed the great redemptive work on which our faith reposes. The work which He undertook in accordance with the Divine counsels was to magnify the law of God, to satisfy the claims of justice upon a sinful world, to secure our redemption from the ruins of the fall, to rescue us from the power of sin and elevate us to the noblest blessings of which our rational, spiritual, and immortal natures are capable. Look unto Him, until you can rest satisfied with the work of Christ, with which the infinite Father is well pleased. But again: He is the Author and Finisher of our faith *subjectively*; i.e. to say, He begins, carries forward, and completes the work of faith within us by His Spirit. It is as you look to Him that you believe and

live. He gives power to believe; He increases and perfects the power. Look unto Him. Study intently His person, work, character, and office. Realize Him. Trust in Him.

“Look unto Him, ye nations, own your God, ye fallen race;
Look and be saved by faith alone, be justified by grace.”

(b). *In His humiliation.* “Who for the joy,” etc. Observe *what He did.* “He endured the cross.” Through all His ministry the cross was always before Him. Towards it He steadily marched. From His course He was never diverted a hair’s breadth. “How am I straitened till it be accomplished.” He who was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” This event stands forth unparalleled in time, and will call forth the adoring gratitude and unceasing wonder of the saints through all eternity.—Notice *the spirit in which He endured the cross*—“despising the shame.” There was shame in the plucking off the hair, in the spitting and scourging, in the reed and scarlet robe and the crown of thorns. There was shame in the cross. There was shame greater far in being forsaken of the Father, in being treated as an outcast and accursed, in being loaded with the guilt of our race. To a mind of spotless purity like His, it must have brought anguish inexpressible and inconceivable. While, in view of the sacrifice He was to make, He is represented as declaring before the Incarnation, “I delight to do Thy will, oh my God,” we can well believe He despised the

shame. And before He died He took measures, not to wipe out from the minds of men the memory of this disgraceful termination of His life, but to commemorate it by a mystic rite unto the end to time. "He took bread and blessed it, and brake it, saying, Take, eat ; this is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me." Look unto Him till you, too, for His dear sake, can hold pain in defiance and shame in contempt. —Observe, moreover, *the motive which prompted Him.* —"the joy that was set before Him." There was set before Him the joy of achieving a glorious exaltation. There was the joy of pleasing the Father in the vindication of His Government before the universe by the removal of the difficulties which stood in the way of the lavish display of His saving mercy and love to the family of man, and in the exhibition of His moral excellencies before the world. And who shall tell the joy that thrilled His heart, when from the excellent glory once and again He heard Him say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ;" and when He was able Himself to say at the last, "I have glorified Thee on the earth ; I have finished the work Thou didst give Me to do ?" There was finally the joy of leading many souls unto glory. To His disciples He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He foresaw the purchase and outpouring of the Spirit, multitudes hastening to be saved, the glory of the Lord covering the earth, and all who had been redeemed by His blood seated at His own right hand in His eternal glory. Who can describe the joy of the Christian, who is instrumental in saving

a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins? But his is the joy of the instrument; Christ's that of the Saviour. The work which the churches are doing is His work, and He looked forward to this work which will only be complete when in heaven He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and found there a joy so great as to animate and sustain Him in enduring the cross and despising the shame.

(c). *In His exaltation*—"and is set down at the right hand of God." You will need good eyes to see so far. But if the eyes of your understanding have been enlightened, you will be able to see the King in His beauty and behold the land that is very far off. He is there at God's right hand. He is *at rest*. He has finished His work. In yon stormless world He enjoys unbroken peace. Look unto Him. There remaineth there a rest for the people of God. Be not weary in well doing. Life and toil will soon be past. We shall soon have done with the world.

He is *honoured*. Because He was obedient unto death, God hath highly exalted Him above every name. He enjoys the highest dignity. Cherubic legions guard His throne, and seraphs fly at His command. The eye of faith beholds Him holding out to the faithful Christian racer, not the crown of fading laurel, but the incorruptible crown of life. Hear Him say, "Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne." Never take your eyes from Him. John Bunyan in his great allegory describes the glorious reception that Christian and Hopeful had when they reached the City, how they were transfigured and

clothed with raiment that shone like gold, how they sang for joy, ascribing all praise to God and the Lamb, and how he himself when he caught a glimpse of the glory of the city wished himself among them. What a reward for faithfully running the path of God's commandments! My unsaved friend, you see the way that leads to heaven. It is repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the practice of self-denial, and the service of God and humanity. Oh turn to God with full purpose of heart. My Christian brother, keep looking to Jesus. As you look, help will come. As you look, you will come to know, trust, and love Him more. As you look, you will meet His approving smile, and He will rain upon you showers of blessings. In the degree you look, you shall be holy, happy, useful. Look instantly, with your soul in your eyes. Look and be saved. Look and live. Look and by-and-by you shall see Him as He is, become like Him, and share in His glory and felicity.

II. *A motive is presented by the sacred writer to encourage us to run the race with earnestness. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.*

The strong sonorous conjunction, translated "therefore," throws us back upon the preceding chapter, and we see there a portrait-gallery of the illustrious dead, of whom the world was not worthy, illustrious for their faith, their trials, their perseverance, and their rewards. They are called a cloud of witnesses. A cloud is exhaled from the earth by the power of the sun; in like manner the lovers of Christ are drawn to heaven by the attractions of His grace and glory. Here they are represented

as a vast mass of vapour, which has ascended through the power of the sun, but descending toward the earth has flung upon it the rich and glowing hues of the rainbow.

The word "witnesses" carries with it two meanings: eye-witnesses, and those who having seen testify as to what they have seen. There are critics who insist that the latter is the only meaning which we can attach to the word in this place. But the word translated "witnesses" occurs thirty-four times in the New Testament. Sometimes it means simply an eye-witness; sometimes an eye-witness who may testify; sometimes one who testifies; sometimes a witness in court; and sometimes a martyr for his testimony's sake. As an eye-witness simply, it occurs five times. Of course this does not fix the meaning of the word in this text. I do not dispute the application of the meaning, *one who gives testimony*, to the word here. But I take it that both meanings are intended by the sacred writer, just as the word "witness" in English carries both meanings: one who knows from observation, and one who testifies. For the phrase (*περικείμενον ἡμῖν*) "compassing us about," which qualifies the cloud of witnesses, pictures to us the heavenly hosts ranged about and above the Christian racers, like the multitude in the Olympic games seated in the amphitheatre, eagerly watching the contest. They are there doubtless to testify, but they are there also to observe, and by their presence to stimulate those who contend to the utmost effort. So St. Paul says, "We are a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men."

There in the highest range is Abel, who, smitten down for his faith by the red right hand of a fratricide, soared aloft to a solitary place near the throne of God. And Enoch, too, the seventh from Adam, is there, who for his fidelity among the faithless was honoured by a signal deliverance from the fury of men, and the fell power of death and the grave, and was received up into the bosom of the descending cloud. And Noah, the link between two worlds, saved with his family when the whole world was drowned, is sitting in the cloud. And Abraham, who, at God's command, went out not knowing whither he went, and found that obedience to the heavenly vision brings its rich reward—Abraham, who at God's command gave Him his son and received him back again, is there. Moses, the great lawgiver, who forsook all for God and His cause, is there. The martyrs, too, who for the testimony they bore were chased by infuriate men out of time into eternity, are a part of the great cloud. These all are spectators of our doings. We lay our plans, we toil, we speak, we pray, we loiter, we run, amid the breathless gaze of the multitudes of the heavenly host. But they are witnesses also in the forensic sense. They give in their testimony to the great doctrines of God's word. Not that the word needs to be confirmed by human testimony, but to our feeble faith any assurance, that a man gives to us that he has personally tested a promise and found it true, is of value in forming and strengthening a conviction that it is a promise of the Almighty and Faithful Promiser. Abel "being dead yet speaketh," affirming in the most solemn manner the truthfulness of the

doctrine of Justification by Faith in the great Sacrifice against the teachings of morality, and the competency of human nature to work out its own salvation. And Enoch declares that men may by faith please God, win His smile, walk in the light of His countenance, and dwell glorified in soul and body at last in heaven. Noah testifies that to the man of faith there is always a deliverance in the darkest hour, so that God hides him in His pavilion from the strife of tongues and the calamities of life. And Abraham from the cloud is saying to parents, who shrink from consecrating their children to the work of foreign missions, or who cannot give them up at the summons of death, "Be not afraid; only believe. At His command I gave Him my Isaac, all my laughter and all my joy, and He gave him back to me." Like parents who take beautiful toys from children, incapable as yet of appreciating them, and put them on a higher shelf until they are older and wiser, so God takes away your joy and hope, "till," as Mrs. Browning says in her "Only a Curl," "till the room shall be stiller from noise, and you are more fit for such joys." And the martyrs testify that death for Christ may be sharp and full of agony, but it is over in a little, and then comes the recompense of reward. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

Yes, these men who lived in long-forgotten ages come crowding forward to tell you of the wonders that faith enabled them to work, and men of later times endorse the glorious testimony. Did I not say well that that cloud is rainbow-hued?

It will be observed that these witnesses were spectators, once victors, now looking with profound interest upon the contest we wage. Paul shouts, "More than conquerors through Him that loved us." David cries, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved." Even Abel, farthest from us all, cannot keep still, but breaking the silence in the heat of the race, rises and cheers on the runners for the prize. "Being dead he yet speaks." We are encompassed by a cloud of witnesses, watching to see the result. Shall we gain the prize or fail?

And are these all? Oh no!—"so great a cloud." Count the innumerable particles of vapour that go to make up a great cloud that you see covering the sky, and then you will know the number of individuals in the long line of patriarchs and prophets and Old Testament saints, the glorious company of the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, and confessors, and the untold millions that have since died in the faith, and so many of them for the faith. How then runs the lesson of our text? Seeing that multitudes compass us about on every side, who, having won the prize, now cheer and animate us by the assurance that if we only run the race with patience, and cast away sins and weights, we shall likewise triumph, let us look steadily away from every distraction to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and exert ourselves to the utmost to gain the goal of eternal life.

But if those who passed away so long ago, feel such interest in us how much more those who but recently were snatched from our embrace! They are out of our

sight, but they are in the cloud. You cannot see them, but they see you : your father, who led you through the slippery paths of childhood and youth, and whose manly tones you remember still ; your mother, whose loving caresses you feel even now on lip, and cheek, and brow, and whose dying charge is graven on your heart ; your wife, the light of your home ; your husband, on whose strong arm you leaned ; your children, whom you would have shielded under your brooding wings. They are in the cloud looking down. Oh, do not say that heaven is far away. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," and about us yet. We have often asked "Can those who have loved forget?" Having loved us to the end, can they do other than love us still? Out of the heart, my brother, are the issues of life. And the deep persuasion which spontaneously arises within us, which no logic can refute, appears to be sealed with the testimony of God. Death cannot reverse the laws of our spiritual being. It will only enable us the more perfectly to love, and the more tenderly to watch over those who are left behind. How sweetly has Whittier sung :

"From the eternal shadow rounding All unseen and starlight there.
Voices of our lost ones sounding Bid us be of heart and cheer,
Through the silence, down the spaces, falling on the inward ear.
Know ye not our dead are looking Downward as in sad surprise,
All our strife of words rebuking With their mild and earnest eyes?
Shall we grieve the holy angels : shall we cloud their blessed skies?
Let us draw their mantles o'er us, Which have fallen in our way :
Let us do the work before us Calmly, bravely, while we may,
Ere the long night silence cometh, and with us it is not day."

Oh my tempted friend, don't forget that with fondest solicitude your mother is looking down to see what will be the issue of the struggle. Tired spirit, your loved companions through happy years gone by are wistful for your deliverance. The little angel child, that was snatched from your detaining arms, cries: "Father, do not fret; mother, do not worry." Procrastinator, the dear one to whom you promised to seek Christ is waiting for you to fulfil your promise. Backslider, one with whom you started the race, looks to see you start again.

They are hovering around us. But our eyes are holden that we see them not. No longer, however, is the spiritual world a world of shadows, but a great reality. We know some who are there, familiar voices are speaking, well-known feet tread the golden streets. Our friends are there—above all our *blessed Lord*. And He is our witness, the Faithful and True witness, our closest Observer. He who has on His head many crowns sits watching us. His eye rests on us lovingly. His heart is with us. His hand will help us, and when we almost faint, He leaps over the gallery into the arena and comes to our relief shouting: "Fear not, I will help thee; I will strengthen thee by the right hand of my righteousness."

Are you running this race? If not, you are in the broad path, and only for one thing to prevent I can cast your horoscope with absolute certainty. For the broad road leads to eternal death. And the one thing to prevent is your speedy return to God. You too have witnesses. Ask them, Is it safe to trifle even for

one hour with your soul. Their unanimous reply would be 'Now is the accepted time.'

Are you running the race? Disappoint not the witnesses. Let the race be a spectacle worth seeing. It will require your utmost effort. You must strip off everything wrong. Forsake all sin, however little or however much it may fall in with your inclinations. Better that than perish. A single sin unforsaken will debar from heaven. For the surrender we make, how glorious the prize! Think of the old athletes. What indulgences they had to forego! How rigorous the training to which they had to submit. "They did it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." The argument is that if they spent life in training for a race in which, if successful, they won but a chaplet of leaves, which would soon fade, shall we not cast aside every weight and besetment to obtain an incorruptible crown, of which in that event we are sure, and which would be well worth the struggle of a thousand lives. If the Olympian racer, when he felt the eyes of Greece's noblest sons and fairest daughters upon him, strained every nerve and put forth his most vigorous effort to reach the goal; if Napoleon's appeal to his soldiery at the battle of the pyramids, "Soldiers, the eyes of thirty centuries look down upon you," roused their warlike enthusiasm to such a pitch that they scattered their enemies like chaff; shall not we, whose witnesses encompass us, ranged seat above seat, tier above tier, gallery above gallery, from earth away to highest heaven; shall not we, who have upon us the eyes of three worlds—hell, earth, and heaven—feel within us

the stirrings of sanctified ambition, and be raised to a noble emulation of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises? Yes, ye bending throng of radiant spirits, though there be lions in the way, and the course be rough and thorny, we give you pledge that with the help of grace we will "run the full length of the celestial road" and rejoin you in heaven.

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THE ALABASTRON AND THE OINTMENT.

“There came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.” Matthew xxvi. 6-13.

The Benefactor and Friend of more than one family in quiet little Bethany comes there on His way to the cross. The place is moved at His coming, for Simon called the leper, a leper no longer through His grace and power, lives here, and Lazarus whom lately He had raised from the dead. And when the Sabbath is now past, they make him a feast in Simon's house, where a scene of thrilling interest takes place. Martha, the busy housekeeper, serves according to her taste. Lazarus, silent and self-involved, sits near Him, at the command of whose voice his departed spirit, wandering in the unseen depths, returned to its forsaken tenement and dear old home. The disciples share the hospitality. Mary sits charmed and happy at her Master's feet, glancing from her brother well-beloved to her Lord! dearer still, whom she has a sad presentiment she shall soon behold no more.—In the midst of a conversation in which she takes no part, she rises unobserved and slips away for a little from the room. Presently

she returns with a cruise of beautiful calcareous spar from the mountain quarries of Alabastron in Egypt, filled with ointment of Indian nard, a precious aromatic, very costly, and in an ecstasy of love, sorrow, and adoration, breaks the phial, and pours the ointment first upon His head and then upon His feet which she wipes with her hair, while the odours fill the whole house. The twelve, unaccustomed to such extravagance of affection, are astonished at the ardent love and costly sacrifice. But even while our Lord's head is anointed with oil and His cup runs over, the joy that fills his heart is not unmingled with other elements; for at the table sits one who has a devil. To the eleven, before they can recover from their astonishment, Judas, who has no sympathy with her devotion and is unable to realize that the odours which fill the house are a sweet-smelling savour unto God, artfully suggests that this is wanton waste, when so many poor are wanting food; and he infects them with the contagion of his greedy and censorious spirit till they too begin to murmur. But the Lord who knows the cost of the sacrifice far better than Judas, the ready reckoner, quietly condemns them and throws the shield of His protection over her who loved so much, by affirming the excellency of the deed which they had so ignorantly criticized.

Notice:—

I. *The woman's lavish devotion.*

She loved with her whole heart. Her deed, therefore, was *perfectly spontaneous*. She did not think of what others might say or think. The spring of love

within her, growing too strong for repression, burst its way out, making for itself a new channel. It was an act flowing from her deepest nature, as naturally as the aroma of the unguent filled the house when the cruise was broken. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?' was the language of her fervid affection, and she simply did what her fond and true heart prompted, which because renewed in the Spirit of Christ guided her unerringly. "Whatever," says George Eliot in *Daniel Deronda*, "one does with a strong spontaneous outflow of will has a store of motive, that it would be hard to put into words. Some deeds seem little more than interjections which give vent to the long passion of a life."

But because she loved so much her deed was *essentially generous*. How often words fail to express profound feeling, and then how eloquent a glance of the eye or a deed of the hand becomes! She felt that she owed herself and all that was dear to her to the Lord. She could not express her devotion to Him in words, but she did what she could. Her richest treasure, saved by her prophetic soul for some great occasion, she brings feeling that it was infinitely less than she would give and He was worthy to receive, and leaving it to express as well as it could her yearning to pour out her very being as a libation at His feet, she breaks the alabastron of genuine nard, pours it upon His sacred head, and anoints His weary feet. Thus always. True love to Christ is essentially generous, self-immolating, it does all it can and not as little as possible, too much rather than just enough. Sacrifice is its nature and its nourish-

ment. How Mary reproaches us! In comparison with hers how mean and niggard are our offerings to the Lord. He asks for the opening bud and we offer Him the fading flower. If there is one thing better than another on which Christ lays claim, that we lavish on ourselves, or the objects of our blind idolatry, and what we can spare after we have satisfied every desire and every other claim, we are perhaps not unwilling to present to Him. And yet we profess to be Christians and to regard His name above every other name!

Oh my hearers, you owe Him more than you owe to wife, sweetheart, husband, parents, country—you owe Him all you have and are. For you He became poor, suffered, died. He raised you from a bed of sickness, succoured you in trial, heard your prayer when your heart was wrung with anguish, saved your name from being cast out as evil, spared your darling to you, pardoned your every offence, and gave you a title clear to mansions in the skies. He loves you with an everlasting love. Can you do too much for Jesus? Can you give enough? To Him all within us bows. And ought we not to give Him all we have and are, give Him every moment of our lives that He may show us how to use them to the best advantage in His most blessed service? Have you money, houses, lands? Present them to Him. Have you children? Lay them on His altar. Have you wit, genius, eloquence, learning, poesy, song? Use these splendid endowments of God's great goodness for His glory alone. Woman, be sure that with your wealth of affection you can never be happy till you pour upon His head and feet

the precious ointment and hear Him say: "She hath wrought a good work; she hath done what she could." Bring Him what is better than gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, that best gift of a broken heart, the perfume of whose penitence and faith is pleasant to the Lord. Cast yourself with an utter self-abandonment upon His love and grace, and live not for yourself, but for Him who died for you and rose again. So shall God's Anointed be your Anointed.

II. *The Disciples' unjust condemnation.*

While Lake Hakone rests peacefully among the mountain-barriers which hem her in on every side, her sedate behaviour provokes no prejudice and excites no hostility on the part of man, but let her burst her appointed bounds, asking no permission and accepting no dictation as to the course by which she will force her way to the sea, and at once she will be regarded as an enemy to be thwarted, controlled, and subdued. So while men love Christ but with moderation, none are affronted; but love, self-forgetting, and other-forgetting, sure to be original and striking in its displays, is equally sure to offend.

In the midst of this display of warm-hearted zeal and open-hearted devotion to Christ came the shocking intrusion of a spirit inspired by the devil. Quick in computation, Judas could readily cast up the value of the ointment—300 pence, about forty or fifty dollars—and having charge of the funds of the company, he felt himself in a position to speak upon any question of finance. Straightway he empanels a jury of twelve, himself the self-constituted foreman, and forthwith

proceeds to try the poor woman. Shall a serpent, wriggling in the mire, judge a lark soaring and singing in the sky? Shall a worldling, a devil, judge a saint? Nay, "he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." But Judas in his own conceit is competent for anything. The eleven are simple, guileless souls, unable on the one hand to appreciate the intensity of her love, and on the other full of sympathy for the poor. See now his art. He professes a concern for the poor, not that he cared for them; but it serves his purpose well, and it is so easy to express concern with the tongue. "A whole box of ointment wasted, and so many poor." And they came to see, as he designed they should, a resultless expenditure of what might have been used for valuable practical purposes. How much better to have converted the ointment into denarii, and furnished to the poor the wherewithal to eat, drink, and be clothed! "They had indignation within themselves," and instead of smothering their feelings they gave vent to them. "They murmured against her." "To what purpose is this waste?" Sure enough. The case is clear. No need for witnesses. The woman is verily guilty.

Mary and Judas are in the Church to-day—the ripened saint and the perfected spirit of the devil. And the fear is lest, getting high office, the latter shall win over true and holy men to decry as a piece of wild extravagance the deed of the spirit which Jesus loves. Observe two things:

1. *On the part of the eleven the displacement of a higher motive by a lower.* Motives range from the

basest and the most selfish to the most pure and disinterested. There can be no higher motive in earth or heaven than to please God in everything. It would seem that Mary's supreme love to Christ swayed her in all matters and moved her to this deed. But Judas would suggest something better. "Almsgiving is better than devotion," said Judas that day, and so also say utilitarians to-day.

Tried by the criterion of mere *utility*, how much *time* is wasted in hours of devotion, in the labours of the Sunday School, in visiting the widows and fatherless in their affliction! How much *money* is squandered, devoted by the Christian to the purposes of religion, which, if applied to the extension of his business, or other judicious uses, would enable him to climb to positions of affluence and independence! How often too at the call of duty men have freely sacrificed their all, and have willingly laid down their prospects of wealth, honour, ease, comfort, friends, long life, and have, tested by this standard, sustained an early and disastrous defeat! A lady relates that in one of the darkest hours of the great American Rebellion she was in a railway train, when it was delayed for a few hours by an accident. The gentlemen eagerly discussed the news of the morning papers. Most felt gloomy and discouraged as they thought of the cost of the war in blood and treasure, and of the uncertainty of the issue. One well-dressed man got up and excitedly poured out a violent denunciation against the government, declaring that the nation was worse off than before the war. A pale woman, dressed in shabby

black, asked in a trembling voice: "Did you lose much by the war, sir?" "Lose," replied he, turning fiercely to her, "yes, \$100,000, and no thanks to the government that it was not as much more." "It cost me a great deal first and last," said she. "My husband was killed at Shiloh, and one of my boys at Lookout Mountain. The other came home to die, and that was some comfort. We had a little home in Indiana, but I soon lost heart to farm it all alone, and things got behind, and I had to sell out. I am going home to Vermont to take care of my old father and mother. I put all I had in this world into the war, and I lost it all, but that is what makes me feel sure it is coming out all right. The Lord does not let such things go to waste." Is that time or money wasted which is devoted to Christ and to His cause, or that life which is jeopardized for the truth, which stands up for righteousness, and in the contest sacrifices itself? Nay,

"A noble aim

Faithfully kept is as a noble deed;

In Christ's pure sight all virtue doth succeed."

Champions of utilitarianism and thrift! Be it known unto you that nothing is wasted that lifts man above the beasts, that what you mock at and call mere sentiment constitutes the crowning wealth of our race. Look at the prodigal profusion of flowers in nature's garden! Behold the affluent and ever-varying glory of the sky! Who would say to God, Wherefore this waste? And shall we permit that low-browed utilitarianism, which would abolish the fine arts and all the elegancies of life, to enter our homes and cast out of

them everything that cannot vindicate for itself a plea of the barest and most absolute necessity? No. We tell it to its beard that whatever helps to develop aright the higher sentiments of our nature is cheap at any price. And shall we allow it to invade the Christian Church and to demand that our money be spent on business, on the poor, on public improvements, but not on Christ?

Let us look at this case. Suppose you were Mary and it was your dear one whom the Lord had restored from the grave. What is there in your house so precious that you would not gladly give Him? A box of ointment to fill the house with its sweet perfume, ten thousand boxes to fill the region round about, to fill the whole heaven with the rich aroma of gratitude and adoration, would these convey fully your sense of devotion to Him? Oh when a soul has been brought from darkness to light, be not surprised if in the excess of its joy and in the tumult of its gratitude some extraordinary and almost fantastic demonstration of love should take place.

However, the danger of too much fire and extravagance in the demonstration of love for Christ is not the danger of to-day. Indeed there are but few who feel that nothing is wasted which is spent upon Christ, and that it is miserable parsimony to deny Him anything. In Exodus we read that the people brought more than enough for what God had commanded. What Church has such an experience to-day? Yet if the Church of to-day should wake up to a vivid sense of supernatural things, which belong to a vastly higher

order of utilities than worldlings dream of, the value of which nor man nor angel can compute, and were true to the conscience within her and to the destiny of which she is the heir, her coffers would be always full, and a power would be set in motion that would speedily regenerate the world.

2. *On the part of Judas a hypocritical profession of benevolence.* "It might have been sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor: this he said not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the bag and bare what was put therein." Iniquity gilds itself over with specious pretence. Avarice, cloaking itself in charity, speaks the language of love. The eleven disciples were led away by his sophistry, but he was a hypocrite. What cared he for the poor, who sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver! Her generosity made him angry. He felt personally wronged, and when she brought her alabastron and poured out a perfume fit for royal palaces on Christ's head, whose whole life of sinless purity was to him an intolerable rebuke, there was raised within him a feeling of bitterness and hate. That money should have come into the purse of which he was the dishonest keeper. Three hundred pence—what a loss! To the eleven Judas seemed to be the friend of the poor; to Christ who saw him clearly he was a hypocrite and a devil.

Now it is not true that Christianity does not care for the poor. Celsus long ago said that our religion could not be divine, because it cared so insanely for them. Where are philanthropists and asylums, but in Christian lands? Or if found in heathen lands, is it not the

outcome of the Christian spirit imported thither? "Pure religion and undefiled before God even the Father is this, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction." But when care for the poor is pleaded as an excuse for not doing what will honour Christ, and enable the soul to indulge itself in sentiments of loving and adoring worship, it is a plea urged in arrant ignorance or rank hypocrisy. Let Japan be mentioned in the West as a good field for mission work, and men of repute are heard to grumble about the neglected poor at home. The very argument which Judas employed is used to-day to discredit missions. It might not be amiss for the gentlemen who wield this weapon to remember that the man who forged it 1800 years ago was possessed by a devil.

While the fragrance of love's gifts fills the world, avarice would sacrifice Christ, His honour, and His cause. Judas, cunning dissembler! fair without, foul within, we have found thee out. Thou art a wolf in sheep's clothing. Thus, sooner or later, shall all masks fall off, and the hidden corruption be brought to light. In that day may we be seen to *be*, what we now desire to *appear*!

Hypocrisy and false utilitarianism condemn Mary. But we have

III. *Our Lord's Defence.*

I. *He rebukes their intermeddling.* "Let her alone; why trouble ye her?" An emphatic command. To grieve a noble soul in the performance of a good deed is a serious offence, and Christ is deeply wounded in the outrage done to her. No man, however high his

ecclesiastical office, has any right to interpose between the soul and the Saviour. When President Alexander lay dying, some one whispered in his ear, "I know *in* whom I have believed." The dying saint in closest fellowship with his Lord, with expiring effort roused himself to say: "No preposition between me and my Saviour! I know *whom* I have believed." Let us brook, brother, no intervening preposition, no meddling Judas, and no interfering priest, between us and our Lord. And as each respects his own conscience, let him respect the conscience of all others. "Trouble them not."

2. *He asserts that her conduct was praiseworthy.*

(1). For its quality. "She hath wrought a good work upon me." Some assert that the doctrine of good works is a heresy. Certainly good works can never save a man. Besides, the heart unsaved is evil, and from it can come no good. Scripture shows that not by works of righteousness, but by grace are we saved. The only works condemned in Scripture are evil works, unfruitful works of darkness, and works done in order to merit salvation. Good works are commanded and enforced. We are "created unto good works." We are to be "fruitful in good works," to be "rich in good works," to be "zealous of good works," to "maintain good works for necessary uses." And the axe is at the root of every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit. The theology that cannot stand this is unsound and unscriptural.

Christ calls her deed *καλον ἔργον*, a good deed, a beautiful deed. There are two Greek words translated

good—καλος and αγαθος. The latter denotes what is simply good, useful, and in the sphere of morals what is *just*. The former means *beautiful*; it is used to describe objects that at heart are beautiful and take an outward shape of loveliness. The word which our Lord here uses has respect to both the world of goodness, and that of beauty. The disciples had blamed Mary and condemned her deed as bad. Christ takes her part and says: No, it is good; more than that, it is beautiful. Dorcas was full of good works, but Mary's act was good, and it was beautiful too. Christ admired Mary's deed. To Him it was rainbow-hued. It touched His imagination and His heart. It harmonized with His conceptions of the beautiful, who, Maker of all the most beautiful things, and Doer of all the most beautiful deeds, crowned all by laying down His life for the race.

Would you do good and beautiful deeds? To Christian people Paul says: "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, *think* on these things." Why? "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And thinking on such things he will become capable of *good* deeds. But Paul has an eye to the production of *beautiful* deeds; and he adds: "Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." Think on Mary's deed, and especially on Christ's great sacrifice, till your whole soul is filled with chaste delight.

It was praiseworthy again,

(2). For the measure of her devotion—"she hath done what she could." It was all that Christ could

ask, or she could do. Here is Christian perfection. Goodness could no further go. Good to remember His poor disciples, best to love Himself. We cannot now repeat Mary's act in the letter, but we may in the spirit. We can fall before Him and pour out our heart's affection ; and there receive the spirit of finished holiness, the spirit of perfect love.

“ When such a man, familiar with the skies,
Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingled with us, meaner things,
’Tis e’en as if an angel shook his wings :
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
And tells us whence those treasures are supplied.”

Anointed from on high, the air would be full of the odours of spicery, like the breezes from Ceylon. Secure this spirit, and we shall do the work for which we have been called, and to which we have been sent. Without it, we shall never have it said of us, They have done what they could.

One replies : “ I am only a woman.” So was Mary, who did what she could. “ But my talent is very small.” So was Mary’s, but she did not wrap it in a napkin and bury it in the earth. Well then, what if you have but one talent ? It will supply as good a test of faithfulness as many would. For it is a question of principle and not of gifts, and the Master’s eye is upon the aim and the effort rather than upon the results.

“ O that each from the Lord may receive the glad word,
Well and faithfully done,
Enter into my joy and sit down on my throne ! ”

It was praiseworthy further,

(3). For its timeliness. Whatever may be the development of social and political science, the progress of the race in civilization and well-being, despite all the romantic dreams of enthusiasts, our Lord declares that we are to have the poor with us always. For wise and gracious ends, some of which are evident enough on a little reflection, it has pleased Almighty God to ordain that human society shall be made up of a variety of conditions, each of which is intended to have close relations with the rest. And the duty of regarding the poor will devolve on man, and the blessedness of him who considereth the poor will be within reach of the well-to-do, till the consummation of all things. "Whosoever ye will, ye may do them good." But the Church at this time was in the enjoyment of a privilege unspeakably great, which prophets and kings had waited for and sought but never found. Christ had come and was still resident upon earth with the Church. Soon he was to undergo the agonies of Gethsemane, the shame and pain of Calvary, and the humiliation of the grave, prior to His resurrection and ascension. And so saying: "For ye have the poor with you always; and whosoever ye will, ye may do them good," He adds: "But *Me* ye have not always." Ah no, now the widowed Church, albeit blessed with the assurance of His spiritual presence, looks forward with wistful glances to the time when He shall come to be admired in all them that believe, and cries, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly." But at that time He was still with the Church on earth, and Mary, who had heard Him

speak of His approaching sufferings and death in words which others had not understood, her ears quickened with the instincts of deeper love, felt her bosom thrill with dread, and under the impulse of love did her deed of duty, and applied a chrism for His passion—a deed which could be done only once in the history of the world, and which He said had in it a kind of prophetic power: "For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." The broken alabaster box with its precious unguent and fragrance represented Christ's broken body and shed blood and the inestimable blessings which hence accrue to us. Nay, the very spirit with which Mary broke the box and poured its contents on the head and feet of her Lord is the spirit in which the Son of God consecrated Himself to this cruel death of the cross. And did she know how beautiful was her deed? how it served to cheer and animate His soul before His passion? how it was in His eyes cherished, interpreted, and glorified into a prophetic act? Perhaps not. But how few would dream of doing as she did. She did not wait to show *post-mortem* kindness. She brought her box, when His sore and weary feet would be refreshed by the delicious unguent, and His heart, now saddened by the defection of one disciple and the knowledge of the frailty of all, could be cheered by the fragrance of the loyalty of one true heart. Grace had been given her to know one of the grand opportunities of her life, nor was she disobedient to the heavenly intimation.

And the lesson for us is to defer the good that we can do any time in order to the doing of what can be

done *only now*. Prevent death that death may not prevent us by cutting off our opportunity.

The praiseworthiness of Mary's deed is seen finally,

(4). In the honour Christ puts upon it. His defence of her attains its climax in the gracious promise that immortal honours await her. Behold the majesty of this announcement! No monarch can make any deed immortal. But Christ calmly promises that in the bright galaxy of names renowned for great works, this lowly villager's name shall be inscribed. Thus has Mary had raised to her a monument lasting as God's word. In the history of that life, which is the Light of men, is her name bound up. It is honoured to-day in every quarter of the globe. "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her."

What a vindicator is He! And He is ours as well as Mary's. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 33, 34).

Of the many things which our text suggests, let us take three:—

1. *We are instructed as to the true method of winning endless fame.* A desire to have one's name go down to the future in honour is one of the most powerful instincts of human nature. "Though fame is smoke, its fumes are frankincense to human thought." Words

of applause are sweet as music. In all ages men have sought for this, sacrificing comfort, ease, wealth, and life itself in order to win it, and of all the unnumbered dead how few survive to-day in the world's remembrance. But here is one whose name, it is promised, shall be embalmed in the affectionate remembrance of the race forever. Our text reveals the secret. It is to give over all aspirations for glory, to live for Christ and His cause, to visit the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to instruct the ignorant, to lift up the fallen, to save the lost. This is the way to write our names on loving hearts, and to prolong existence for years, perhaps for ages. Him, whose heart is fired with the love of Christ, and whose will is keyed up to this sublime purpose to live only for God and humanity, neither God nor man will consent to forget.

2. *We learn how far we may imitate Mary.* We cannot now reach up to anoint Christ's feet, much less His exalted Head. There is no question now between giving to the poor and giving to Christ, if only we give to them in His name and as unto Him. He remained long enough in the world to set flowing toward Himself a stream of love, and then withdrew leaving the poor behind Him. The whole human race is one vast brotherhood; but especially are believers in Christ one, for they are one in Him, and He is with us in the persons of His destitute brethren, so that the current of love may flow forth in deeds of self-sacrifice, towards those whom He has made His heirs, without any misgiving on the part of the believer. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye

have done it unto me," will be His language to us by-and-by when we have fallen asleep, if we have served our generation by the will of God. That generation is largely an arid waste. It needs what the Church of God can abundantly supply. As the warm sunshine lifts up from the ocean an immense supply of moisture, which, stopping short of the sun, is condensed into rain and discharged in fructifying showers upon the burning plains, so Christ's love draws forth the entire volume of the affections of His people towards Himself, which then returns in copious showers upon the homes and hearts of the poor. "My goodness extendeth not unto thee, but unto the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight."

Finally, *we are taught that cases of conscience are best settled by simply doing the duty nearest to hand under the promptings of an intense personal love to Christ.* By her love Mary had fallen into the movements of that renewed universe, which He who sits upon the throne set in motion when He said: "Behold, I make all things new." It is in this way that contentions of doubt as to duty cease, the computation of peradventures *pro* and *con* comes to an end, questions of casuistry expire, and love verifying reason takes the place of law, and by her own divine impulses moulds the life, adjusts it in all its relations to God, angels, and men, to time present and time to come, and beautifies it with the grace of heaven. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

CHRIST, THE CONQUEROR.

“ Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel ? I have trodden the winepress alone ; and of the people there was none with me ; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury.” Isaiah lxiii. 1-4.

The insect fluttering in the sunbeam, the feathered songster of the grove, and the beast that roams over the plain, dwell in the present. Man's home too is in the present, but Memory often takes him by the hand and leads him back to halcyon days of the past, and History transports him to ages long gone by. Sometimes we make excursions into the future and build us homes, embower them amid trees and foliage and flowers, and surround them with all that is charming and lovely ; but ere we reach the point proposed an unexpected blast razes to the ground the fabric of our hopes. The poet is enabled with his eye in fine frenzy rolling to catch such a glimpse of the future as the past is prophetic of. But poets are visionaries. Long ago the High and Holy one that inhabiteth eternity, dwelling equally in present, past, and future, for purposes of His own, sometimes removed the scales from a man's eye, and permitted him to gaze far down into the vista of the future. A mortal priv-

ileged thus was called a prophet or seer. And oh, the range of the prophet's vision! Behold him under the influence of the spirit of prophecy, his eye keenly piercing the invisible! Now shadows darken his brow, now brightness irradiates his face! You look where he looks, but you see nothing. He sees visions of what is yet to be. Sometimes he gazes down the track of distant ages in the future. Sometimes nations, yet in embryo, flit full-grown before him. He beholds cycles revolving, dynasties falling, thrones tottering. The war of opinion is fought before him, the strife of good with evil; the final triumph of righteousness in millennial glory and in heaven is foreseen. Perhaps of all the Hebrew prophets, who foresaw the relation of what was then with what was to be, Isaiah's ken was clearest.

In chapters lx, lxi, and lxii, the prophet has been filled with exultation at the vision of the future glory of the church, which is to become a praise in the earth. Suddenly as he glances down towards the valley of the Jordan, he descries coming from the red mountains of the Edomites, the enemies of Judah, a magnificent warrior, all flushed with victory, his garments smeared with blood, vivid as the red rocks of Petra or the cliffs of Bozrah. His stature is lofty. His head is lifted up. He comes swinging on in the greatness of his strength. The prophet confronts him with the challenge: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel?" And the answer comes across the intervening space: "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." As He comes nearer, the prophet sees that

His garment is not the scarlet dress of Arab warriors, but rather like the raiment of them who tread grapes in the winepress till it is splashed, and smeared, with red. "Why," the prophet asks again, "art thou red in thine apparel?" And the great chieftain makes reply: "I have trodden the winepress alone," etc.

"This is but a dream," you will say; "pray show us the interpretation." The Edomites, the descendants of Esau, Israel's great forefather's brother, were their most inveterate enemies. The variance began when Israel in the wilderness asked permission to pass through Edom, with the promise to do no injury, to keep to the highway, and to pay for all they should consume, and were refused. Israel cherished the memory of the grudge, Saul made war upon them, and David overthrew them and put garrisons in their cities. But from the time of Amaziah Edom became independent, and gradually encroached upon Israel. In the 60th and 108th Psalms occurs the passionate cry, "Who will lead me into the strong city? Who will bring me into Edom? Wilt not Thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?" The dates of the Psalms are unknown, but the quotation shows the spirit of Israel when unable to cope with his foe. As when a quarrel takes place in a family, the basest passions are aroused, so it is when nations of the same extraction and speech become embittered toward one another. But surely when Israel is in his extremity, and the walls are thrown down, and the temple reduced to a heap of ruins, and the people are driven away into captivity, there will be relentings in the descendants of Esau and old enmities will be

buried. Alas, Edom felt an ungenerous delight in the fall of his brother Israel, for so long a time his troublesome neighbour, powerful rival, and puissant lord. It was this that awoke the bitterest hatred against the Edomites, and called forth the cry for vengeance from the exiles on the banks of the Euphrates: "Remember the children of Edom, O Lord, in the day of Jerusalem: how they said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundations thereof" (Ps. cxxxvii. 7). In perfect sympathy with this is the cry of Obadiah for vengeance upon Edom, because of his malignant exultation over Judah in the day of calamity. Ezekiel and Jeremiah agree in denouncing the judgments of God upon the heartless kinsman and foe. And the prophet in our text celebrates the Avenger of the wrongs of his people, who cries, "I will tread them in my anger and trample them in my fury . . . for the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

The meaning, then, of our text is obvious. The cry for vengeance was not unheard. God's eye was on the Edomites, and a just and terrible retribution awaits their crime. No crime is ever committed that does not return with a dreadful rebound upon the author, but that of Edom in heinousness surpasses all, and the doom which it provokes is correspondingly conspicuous and severe. The God of Israel will appear for Israel's help, and in the hour of his extremity vindicate him before the nations. What comfort here for the pious Hebrew heart! For He who has pledged Himself for Israel's deliverance is One whose power is unlimited, whose wisdom is unerring, and whose fidelity to His word can never fail.

But we must not confine the significance of this Scripture to Israel. The race of Esau has long since passed away, though nature had done so much to make Edom impregnable against his foes. But the prophecy was not exhausted with the vengeance which swept the doomed race away. We have in our text one of those theophanies or appearances of the Divine Author of His people's salvation, which illuminate Old Testament history and antedate the Advent of the New. He is here clothed upon with human passion, agony, and travail, for the prophet does not hesitate to ascribe to God the passions of men. Here is one of the mysteries of our religion that the Messiah is at once very God and very man, God and man in ineffable union. It is His triumph that the prophet celebrates, who has wrought out for us a glorious deliverance from all our enemies, so that we might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness all our days. Since the Fall, evil and good have been arrayed against each other all over the world. The history of mankind is the history of the struggle. Had man been unaided in the struggle with his foes, he would certainly always have been worsted. But God has undertaken for us and descended into the arena, and fought for us and within us. And wherever anywhere in Christian or heathen lands, you see a man sorry for his evil ways and persistently turning to God, wherever you see men acquiring power over temptation, wherever men are making effort to lead others to better and happier lives,—this is the result of the Divinity working within. This conclusion it is to which true science, not

satisfied with proximate and subordinate causes, and ever seeking ultimate facts and primary causes, would conduct us, for all forces tend to unity. And if God Himself be the Great First Cause, as He is the last and sublimest generalization of scientific truth, then all yearnings after purity and righteousness, all efforts to get rid of sin, all victories over the lower nature, all sharing of the burdens of the oppressed, are the fruits of the mighty power of Immanuel, God with us.

It is asked, "If all this is the result of *Divine* energy, why is not the enemy conquered at a stroke, and evil done away with forever? The answer is ready. Milton has sung :

" Who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe."

By slower but surer methods does our Lord work. He appeals to the best instincts of every man. He respects the free-agency of every man. He will win him with his full consent, if he win him at all. And conquer He will. Ages may roll away before the consummation of the prophecy, whose germinant accomplishment was the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of Edom; but as the prophet beheld the Conqueror coming up from Edom, swinging on in the greatness of his strength, glorious in His blood-red robes, all flushed with victory, so do we look forward with unwavering confidence to

" that one far-off, divine event,
To which the whole creation moves,"

when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord, "on whose vesture and on whose

thigh is a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

Consider we now in the light of our text the evil that has to be conquered. Edom, with its red rocky fastnesses frowning down on the Hebrew, in the eye of the prophet is a symbol of sin, the common foe of our race. Up to the time the Edomites were conquered, and after their successful revolt, Israel was in perpetual dread of the raids and guerrilla-like warfare which Edom was in the habit of carrying on. The cost of deliverance from this wide-awake enemy was ceaseless vigilance. Thus over against all goodness, truth, and righteousness in the great world all around us, and in all history, is sin, a sleepless, inveterate, undying foe. The struggle goes on in the home, the school, the shop, the forum, the mart of commerce, the temple of religion, the community, the nation, till to the discerning eye the world presents the aspect of one vast battlefield, where it is not safe for one moment to be off one's guard, or intermit the struggle. Always that which is best and noblest in the national character and life, and in the life and character of the human race, is under assault from the great adversary of God and man. How consolatory to know that the Son of God is with us in the strife, so that our heads are covered in the day of battle, and the arms of our hands made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob! The struggle goes on in the Church, where divisions become widened and "embittered by stupid prejudice and personal malignity." But here, too, is the Christ, coming from Edom, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of

His strength, mighty to save. He will bring out of all apparent evil His own glory in the establishment of the church in knowledge, righteousness, purity, and love.

The strife, too, is in our own hearts. There is good within us, but who does not know that there is evil also? In childhood, youth, or matured years, how often have you been constrained to say, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." How often vanquished in the struggle for righteousness or purity! How often if not beaten, at all events carrying such marks of the battle as bleeding wounds, broken helmet, and deeply dented shield! Have you not felt sometimes almost in darkness and despair, because you were not able to crush your enemy once for all? Is this to go on forever? Is there no Deliverer? Have it for your encouragement,

"Hell is nigh, but God is nigher,
Circling us with hosts of fire."

Sin may be very near, but the "Strong Son of God, immortal Love," is nearer still.

"Nearer to us than breathing, closer than hands or feet."

Nearer and stronger than the adversary is He who, in the time of our utter distress and self-despair, when all our hopes in ourselves have given up the ghost, appears in our behalf, travelling in the greatness of His strength. Blessed be His name! We need no other deliverer, for He "speaks in righteousness, mighty to save." Righteousness is the great fundamental principle of the Government of God. "The Kingdom of God consists" not of things external, but "of righteousness, peace,

and joy in the Holy Ghost." Righteousness admits no compromise between right and wrong, good and evil. Sin must be utterly parted with : offending right eyes plucked out, offending right hands cut off. He will not save us *in* our sins. He will gladly save us *from* our sins, for only as we consent thereto will He destroy our enemy. He has said so, and He speaks in righteousness. He taught righteousness, He purchased righteousness, He fought for righteousness. "In righteousness He doth judge and make war" (Rev. xix. 11). He is not only the prophet of righteousness, He has turned His words into deeds. And when He announces a righteousness by grace through faith, He is able to carry out His promise in the heart of the penitent believer, for He has died for righteousness. This it is which makes Him "mighty to save."

This leads us to consider His answer to the question : "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" "I have trodden the winepress alone ; and of the people there was none with me : for I will tread them in my anger and trample them in my fury ; and their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." No holiday tournament, this ; no bloodless battle. His struggle with our adversaries, sin and Satan, was not without pain and anguish. His garments were red with the blood of our enemy, but also with His own. His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. His body was scourged, pierced, and crucified. Excellent people object to the doctrine of atonement by blood. But we have illustrations of vi-

carious suffering every day. We owe to it our life, our liberties, all our blessings. "It is," said the Rev. H. W. Beecher, "a solemn, inexplicable fact that it was necessary for reasons known to the Divine being—whether in His own person, in His creatures, or in His government, I know not—that one should suffer for all. Again, I hold that the suffering of Christ manifested the mind of God in such a way as to make it sweet and attractive and blessed forevermore. Christ did make a proper satisfaction for the sins of the world. I do not know how He did it. He knows and God knows. All I know is that He did do it and in such a way that God could be just and yet the Justifier of him that believeth." And what saith the Word? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." And our Lord Himself said: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" "The Son of Man came . . . to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." The blood of the sacrifices foreshadowed the blood of Christ, who, with infinite ardour for righteousness and boundless love and pity for us, engaged in the mighty struggle on our behalf. In all our affliction He was afflicted. In His willingness to sacrifice Himself for us He agonized and died. What a mighty appeal is here to what is best in us! When we see Him dying that we might live, shall we not give Him our supreme affection, and learn to loathe what cost Him so dear?

The more especially as He was *alone* in treading the winepress, and of all His coadjutors there was none to help Him. The multitudes that had followed Him

with admiration turned against Him, and cried, "To the cross with Him." Of the innermost circle of His friends one betrayed Him, another denied Him, and all forsook Him. Upon the cross in the agony of death the Father hid His face and the Son of God cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He achieved a victory in death, but He was alone, and He won it in the faith of Him who hid His face.

And so it is still to-day. His servants have something to do, but it is only subsidiary to the work of salvation, which is His alone. The bread which He has multiplied we may carry to the hungry. We may lead to His feet those in whom by His Spirit He has begun to work repentance. We may roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, we may remove the grave clothes from him who is raised from the dead; but He only can say with power, "Lazarus, come forth." Let us place our trust in Him alone, first and last and always.

The great work of human redemption was accomplished *once for all* eighteen hundred years ago. That is a work never to be repeated. Ever since, the actual redemption of the race, individual by individual, has been going on. All power is in the hands of Christ, both in heaven and in earth. Sin and death under whose crushing iron thrones the whole creation groans had reigned in all generations. But Christ in His own striking words is "mighty to save." Oh, my unsaved friends, these are not idle words. They are words of truth and soberness. If one thinks he cannot be saved from sin because he is so sunken and

depraved, his self-despair is justified, for he can never save himself. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." Than the Lord Jesus there is no other name given under heaven or among men whereby we may be saved. While one may despair of himself, he need not despair, for our victorious Lord is mighty to save. Do you require proof? Well, then; He has already done it. He is doing it every day all over the world. In this very city some desperate men have been saved—who were degraded, lost, and perishing. I think I can truthfully say that I have seen hundreds of souls, here and elsewhere, some of them degraded and well-nigh abandoned, converted to God, and changed in character and life. I have also a personal testimony to bear. It is that when I came to Him He saved me, forgave my sins, and gave me a new heart and a right spirit. And through these many years, despite my backslidings and manifold imperfections, He has not left me to myself, He has saved me, and He saves me now by His almighty grace. He who was able to save me and these others I have mentioned is able to save any, even the vilest and worst. Ask Him to repeat these miracles of His grace and power and save you now. I speak with confidence: He who is mighty to save is able to save you from the uttermost this very hour.

Are *you* saved? Question your own heart. Are *your* sins forgiven? Have *you* passed from death to life? Have *you* the witness of the Spirit to your acceptance in Christ? These questions are of infinite moment. If you are unwilling to be honest with yourself, it is a bad sign; you are still unwilling to turn your back on all sin.

But if you are resolutely bent on putting all sin away, and are enquiring, "What must I do to be saved?" thank God, the answer is ready, and the salvation is within easy reach: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Cast yourself upon his power and love. Believe in Him as able and willing and ready to save you now, and I am bold to say He does save. What! trust in Him and not be saved? It is impossible. His word cannot be broken. His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, and His ear is not heavy that He cannot hear. Give yourself utterly away to Him, and instantly He saves you from all your guilt and condemnation, from the dominion of sin and the tyranny of the devil, and writes your name in the Book of Life. Even then all is not done. Your salvation is but partial. It is to be perfect, and it is to be forever. He alone can perfect that which concerneth you. But He will do it only with your full consent. It may cost you a sore struggle; it may prove a very Gethsemane, a struggle with your selfishness and depravity reinforced by your great adversary, who is full of devices and expedients and skilful to adapt his temptations to your inward bias and weakness. The conflict must be fought out in silence and solitude, with possibly no human helper or counsellor to smile encouragement or offer friendly suggestion. But in this solitary conflict for your soul's life, you will have to cheer and encourage you the help of Him who came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. He is with you to pour energy into your will and infuse courage into your heart, to impart skill to parry the lethal stroke, and power to

inflict with the sword of the Spirit the mortal wound upon your bosom foe. He is mighty to save. He will make you, not merely an object of His protection, but also an organ of His power; and you will find, as you commit yourself perfectly to Him, energy pouring into you which will make you more than conqueror in this mighty struggle.

I have lately exhorted you to the Imitation of Christ. In the prophet's vision of the one lone figure, magnificent but solitary, returning from treading the winepress alone, and travelling in the greatness of His strength, is there presented an example for us to copy? Can we here follow the footsteps of our Lord? This much is true that His work can not be shared by man or angel. But if we may not do His work, there is a work we may do in His Spirit. Turn we now to Revelation xix. where we find heaven opened—a vision of the heavenly places not necessarily beyond the grave, rather in the region which is purely spiritual. Sitting upon a white horse is He, who is called Faithful and True, plainly identified with the Conqueror of our text by His vesture dipped in blood, and by His treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. He has already conquered His enemies, and now He is about to inflict upon them their final doom. The armies of heaven sitting upon white horses *follow* Him. Each of these armies has its own special work, and in each army each soldier has, in addition to the work which he does in co-operation with his regiment or company, his own individual task. It is a work of righteousness, not so much to be spoken

of, as to be done. Great is the value of the societies through which the Churches carry out their schemes. But not unfrequently they dull the sense in us of our personal responsibility to God and man. There is needed more individual, solitary work. You feel drawn in spirit, perhaps, to redress some great social wrong, or to uplift some section of the lapsed masses. You throw yourself with ardour into the scheme. You are sure that you will have the sympathy and co-operation of all right-minded men. But you find to your chagrin and disappointment that for some reason or other you are left to your task alone, with none whatever to uphold. Then in the hour of your temptation to give up all and live the life of the multitude, the life of easy self-indulgence, Isaiah's consolation and support will be yours. God has called you—count it an honour that you are so called, as Isaiah in the olden time, as George Muller and many others in the Christian Church—to a noble and single-handed work, entirely distinct from the work done by the societies. You are alone, yet near by is One, who has undertaken to establish His kingdom all over the world, and yours being a section of His great plan He will assuredly give you ultimate triumph.

THE LORD'S CANDLE.

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." Prov. xx. 27.

[This sermon was preached before the Conference of the Canadian Methodist Mission in Shidzuoka, Japan, on Sunday, July 1st 1894, prior to the ordination of several young men to the office of the Christian ministry.]

The history of illumination from the blazing pine-knot and the lighted flambeau and the flat saucer with a wick swimming in oil up to the lamp with fish oil or kerosene, and higher still to gas and electric light, would carry with it the history of civilization. An important step in the upward movement was the first manufacture of candles. The candle has not lost its uses, nor is it likely to lose them. The Bible makes use of it for illustration, as we see in the text of to-day.

You come into your dark chamber from without. You ignite your match and with it light your candle, and it throws light upon every object in the room. As Phillips Brooks says in his noble sermon on this text : "The two (the fire and the candle) bear witness that they were made for one another by the way in which the inferior substance renders obedience to its superior. The candle obeys the fire. The docile wax acknowledges that the subtle flame is its master and it yields to its power ; and so like every faithful servant of a noble master it at once gives its master's nobility the chance to utter itself, and its own substance is clothed with a

glory which is not its own." Clearly they are fitted to one another—the candle and the fire—as some other things are not. Thus the spirit of man is fitted to the Spirit of God, as other orders of being are not fitted to Him. The spirit in man is that special part of his nature which has been designed as the meeting-place of God and man. It is this faculty that wrought upon by the Spirit of God makes us religious, and we are religious in the degree in which we yield ourselves up to the Divine breath which we feel stirring what we recognize as deepest and best within us.

This faculty we have because we are human beings. Here is a young child. It may for a long time show little traces of memory, understanding, conscience. But give it time and these now latent will be developed. God has no such relation to the lower orders of creation, as the lion, the eagle, the nightingale. The human being is His child fashioned after His image and likeness. "There is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding," conscience, and heart, which are the things that correlate us with God.

In some true sense one human being is the candle of other human beings. In the home often is a mother, in whom is "a meeting of gentle lights." To her children she is a candle, as they grow up and go out from the parental roof. And when she dies she feels perhaps that her influence ceases; as Clifford cries in King Henry VI:

"Here burns my candle out, aye, here it dies,
Which, while it lasted, gave King Henry light."

But she errs, for long after she is gone, the light that God helped her kindle in the bosom of her children will shine on and on—a bright illumination upon the path of their contemporaries and of those who shall succeed them.

Let us now look at our text and see if we can in the light of these illustrations get at its meaning. God is fire. It was Shelley who said: "Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is." What is there that will so fitly represent Him as

"The friendly fire which blazes clear and bright,
Whose temperate splendour cheers the gloom of night!"

Whether on the one hand, glowing on the hearth or in the sun, it is gracious, and welcome, cheering and enlivening our chilled bodies, and diffusing life through our sluggish veins, or on the other it is terrible and destructive, as in the volcano's burning floods, in the red lightning that smites some lofty tree or towering spire, or in some destructive conflagration, fire is appropriately used to represent God. For He both builds up and destroys.

Fire, it was fabled, came from heaven. The ancient Greeks attributed to Prometheus, a supposed supernatural being, its introduction. It was often counted a god. Vesta had no image or statue in her own temple, the vestal fire being considered as the very goddess herself. Its flame was to be kept bright and pure. It was considered a fatal omen if it died out on the hearth. The nation, the tribe, the clan, the family, had fire for their common origin and esteemed it as the cause of their existence.

Coming to the early Bible we find that Jehovah revealed Himself by fire. The Shekinah was a manifested glorious presence of the Most High among His people, called often the glory of the Lord. When Adam and Eve were driven from Eden, cherubim with a flaming sword guarded the way of the Tree of Life. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, a supernatural light glowing with a lambent and vivid but innocuous flame. The glory of the Lord appeared as a devouring fire on the summit of Sinai. The Shekinah dwelt between the cherubim on the Ark, and as Israel journeyed through the wilderness, Jehovah went before them a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

Now, as fire is universally diffused, latent it may be yet pervading all things even the iceberg and avalanche, so God is everywhere. There are those who see Him in shining stars and glowing sun, in mountains, streams, and groves, in plant and flower, and in the animate creation about us.

“ Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes—
The rest sit round it and pick blackberries.”

The flame, the glory, the majestic splendour, the personal God, are here, there, all around us all the while. Alas, how many “having eyes see not,” “the god of this world” having “blinded the minds of them that believe not!” How many have put out their eyes, their spiritual organs, by neglecting to use them in the service of God, and by allowing their minds and

hearts and lives to be absorbed in other matters than personal religion. The capacity of religion, says Bushnell, is extirpated by disuse. He who studies nature with no recognition of God, who is in it all, must lose insight.

Yes, God is all about us as a fire diffused, and to the open reverent eye, all-pervading like an atmosphere, burning up what is evil, and saving and purifying what can endure it. But He has such a respect for the will in man that He has made free, that when He would consume the evil that is in him, He always asks, By your permission? Then if the permission is not accorded, after a merciful respite the rebellious sinner himself is attacked. The sap of life dries up, the sensibilities are scorched, the nature becomes arid, the faculties shrivel, the conscience is seared, till nothing remains but a living creature, with understanding and mental power, passion and will power, but the angel-life has ceased to be. But at any time before the destruction was quite complete, had the man yielded to the claims of God, he would have been a brand plucked from the burning. The question which concerns us is, Which shall be destroyed, the sin or the sinner?

You do not see it so? Yet this is a real picture of life. The reason is you are looking through a coloured glass, and while you see the process of destruction going on, you do not see the destroying agent. Drop the glass and you see the flame raging in the burning house and the blocks of buildings it is sweeping away. Here is the difference between the Christian man with his open eye, and him with closed vision. The latter

looks through a glass darkly, and he sees immense changes in individual character and fortune, in political and social life, but he does not see the fire of God at work, pitifully punishing sin. The former sees the fire of God's righteousness burning up evil and purifying and beautifying what is good and like to God. This and this only is of the nature of asbestos, inconsumable by this scorching fire. Many a man had slept on the backbone of the Palestine hills where Jacob lay with a stone for his pillow amidst piles of bare rock, but arose with no such dream as Jacob had, and with no such conviction that 'The Lord is in this place.' Many a man had gone about Horeb without ever having seen the burning bush, and many a time during those forty years had Moses himself passed that way, in search of spots where the grass grew most lush and sweet, without having once before seen the striking phenomenon which fixed his eye and drew his heart that day when on a sudden the Invisible appeared in sight, and the glory of God was seen like a flame of fire in the midst of the bush. Many a young man full of patriotic zeal had waited on God in prayer for Jerusalem, but to none beside had come the revelation which came to Isaiah in the year that King Hezekiah died when he saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and above it the six-winged seraphim, which cried one to another Holy, holy, holy. Suddenly to each of these three men came the wonderful revelation of the Lord, which changed so greatly their character and career. So He waits to do with you. One day when Jesus was here among men, as He was passing

by there arose a great cry from two blind men sitting by the wayside, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.' They were rebuked by the multitude, but they cried the more, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.' Now notice. '*Jesus stood still*, and called them and said. What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes received sight and they followed Him.' "Ah," you say, "I have been a very bad boy, trickish, knavish, unscrupulous, not stopping at any measures to accomplish my selfish ends. I am afraid my eyes will never be opened." Why, you have been picturing the character of Jacob, to whom Jehovah appeared at Bethel with wonderful promises to be with him and to keep him and to bring him again into his native country, and never to leave him till all was fulfilled. Pray God that your eyes and ears may be opened that you may see the Lord—the covenant-keeping Jehovah—and hear the gracious words that fall from His lips.— "Ah," says another, "my case is very different. I am an old man, weighed down under the weight of many years. My race is nearly run. My life has been wasted. I made a mistake long ago, and from the consequences of that bit of impatience and desperation I have never been able to escape. Nothing remains for me but to die as I have lived without the vision of God." Why, my friend, your case is exactly parallel with that of Moses. He was now eighty years old. Forty years before he had in hot indignation killed an

Egyptian and had ever since been an exile in Midian. Perhaps that very morning Moses had said to himself : "The consequences of my folly will pursue me until the end. Alas, how I have ruined my life ! What brave thoughts I had of serving God forty years ago ! And here I am an old man, my life wasted, my hopes blasted, my ideals in the dust." Yet that morning he saw the Burning Bush, and talked with God and received his high commission and strength to serve God, as perhaps no other man ever served God, for forty years more. Do not be discouraged, my brother ; you may see God this very morning and receive strength to enter upon a career of eminent usefulness, from this very hour. Remember that the Master of Assemblies is present, and is saying, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Be it your reply, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened."—Another says : " I am a young man full of the Japanese spirit, clad with zeal as a cloak for the honour of my country, and with my heart engaged in prayer that God will honour me by making me a great blessing to Japan. And this morning the burden of my native land is on my heart. I am persuaded that there is a certain course of life which God recognizes as serving Him, that that course of life involves the inspiration of His love, and obedience to His will, the putting away of evil and cleaving to what He declares in His word to be good, that nations are as much bound as individuals to live this life, and that what in an individual would be a crime is no less a crime when committed by the nation. I am convinced from the Bible and from history that the nation that

will not serve God shall perish, its commerce waste away, its government be dissolved, its institutions die out, and worse still the spiritual life of the nation come to an end." Such, my brother, was the feeling of young Isaiah as one day he came up to the temple, when an eclipse had come upon Jerusalem in the death of her great king. It had been a terrible blow to the young worshipper, but it was a blow in mercy, for he now turned to God and faith was born within him, and he had a vision of the Divine majesty in all its sublimity. Humbled to the dust he cried, "Woe is me," and an angel flew with a live coal and touched his lips and pronounced absolution and cleansing. And when God asked for a messenger Isaiah offered himself and was accepted. He became a candle of the Lord and entered upon a career, which I would call that of the greatest of the prophets, had not our Lord said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." May your eyes, young man, be opened to see the King in His beauty, and your spirit lighted to be a candle of the Lord!

A candle of the Lord! Such was Jesus Christ. See Him a babe, a boy, a man, glorious in holiness, perfected through sufferings, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "I am," said He, "the light of the world." The brightest candle of the Lord that ever shone, "vivid with celestial fire."—Another bright candle of the Lord is the Church of Christ. The Church is the temple of God, who dwells in us and walks in us. Because He is the light of the world, and

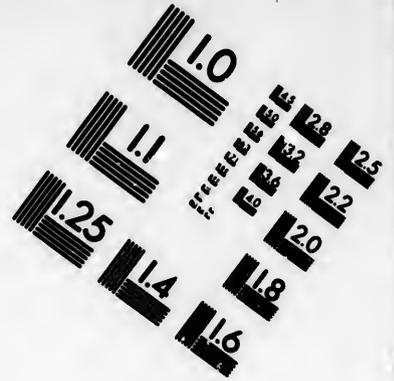
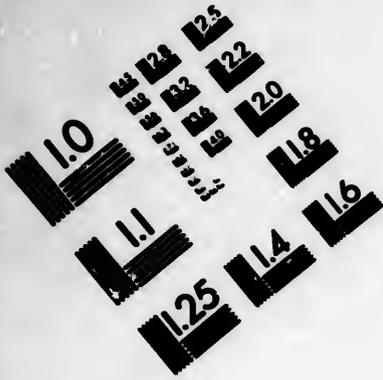
because He is in us, we are the light of the world, and are bound to represent Him, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we are to shine as lights in the world. May sin more and more die in Zion, that she may become indeed the perfection of beauty!—A candle of the Lord is every godly man. He was not always thus. He began in darkness. If there were in him any light, it was a fire of his own kindling, the light of youthful animation, of a glowing imagination, of a glancing intellect, of a brilliant genius, of a false philosophy. But he becomes conscious of his sin and of an evil conscience. He is led to believe that the blood of Christ can purge his conscience from dead works. He looks to Christ for the rectification of his nature at its very centre and spring. He prays and trusts. He offers a burning petition in the name of Christ. He cries with David, "Thou wilt light my candle; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." And the air becomes electric with divinity, throbs and thrills till the Invisible almost bursts into visibility, and the fire of God takes hold of him. The true light shineth, for it has seized upon the spirit of man, (which includes both intellectual and moral factors), and the man becomes a candle of the Lord.

"O that it now from heaven might fall and all our sins consume;
Come Holy Ghost, for Thee we call, Spirit of burning, come!"

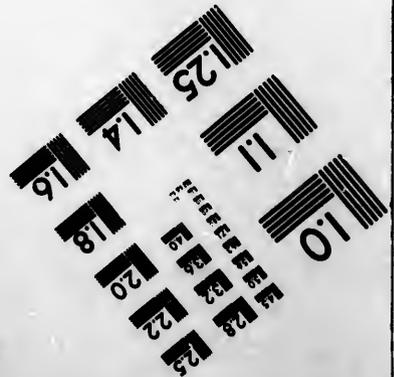
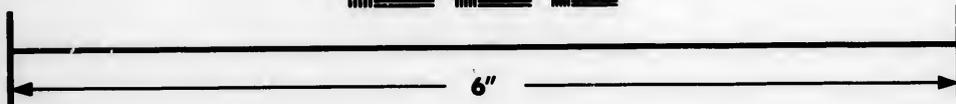
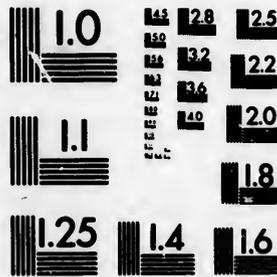
This it is that makes the regenerate man so helpful to others. His dark nature lighted up by the Spirit reveals God to man.

Without this heart-renewal you cannot shine. You may like polished metal reflect light from without. You may be like bright and glittering windows which you have sometimes seen at sunset, and wondered if the house was on fire within : but it was only the reflection of the setting sun, which as soon as the sun has gone down becomes dark. How much better to be like some other windows, where the lamp has been lighted within, that continue to shine when the sun goes down and shine all the more brightly as the night grows darker. The light is within and shines out. What are you like? Like the lights in Goethe's "The Tale," mere will-o'-wisps that "laugh and jig and compliment the ladies and eat gold and shake it from them," the spirit of man elaborated, finished, candles lighted by culture, but lacking the fire of God? Or like the fires that wreckers kindle on rock-bound shores to lure passing vessels to destruction? If this be so, you fall under the terrible words of the prophet : "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire and compass yourselves about with sparks. This shall ye have of mine hand : ye shall lie down in sorrow ;" and of the Great Master : "If the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Little will it avail that you have the keenest wit, and can utter brilliant epigrams and startling paradoxes ; you may startle, astonish, and bewilder, possibly fascinate and charm, but you shall fail to give comfort, afford guidance, or impart strength, and all for the lack of the fire of God. Oh, my young brethren, your spirit bears an affinity to God, and, as it becomes more pure, loving, and holy, by an instinctive





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law it aspires after Him, longs to see Him, be embraced by Him, and have uninterrupted fellowship with Him. Your spirit in turn is highly valued of God the Father, who has a deep sympathy with it, and longs to be possessed of it, that He may fill it with His life, and influence it with His love, and kindle it into flame. This work of kindling your spirit for God's service will never be accomplished without your co-operation. It is a work of infinite responsibility and solemnity. Hear Bishop Brookes in the same sermon from which I have already quoted: "In certain lands, for certain holy ceremonies, they prepare the candles with most anxious care. The very bees which distil the wax are sacred. They range in gardens planted with sweet flowers for their use alone. The wax is gathered by consecrated hands; and then the shaping of the candies is a holy task, performed in holy places to the sound of hymns, and in the atmosphere of prayers. All this is done because the candles are to burn in the most lofty ceremonies on most sacred days. With what care must the man be made whose spirit is to be the candle of the Lord! It is his spirit which God is to kindle with Himself. Therefore the *spirit* must be the precious part of him. The body must be valued only for the protection and education which the soul may gain by it."

But still it must be valued, for while "no one can mistake his body for himself—it is *his*, not he"—yet it is a portion of common dust set apart by the Divine Creator for the enclosure of the soul and spirit of a man. It is a micro-kosmos, a world in little, a system

of many members with varied functions and lofty offices, a structure of Divine art for the highest and most sacred uses:—it is the temple of the human soul, it is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Now the connection between mind and body is very close. And other things being equal it is the healthiest man who can do the best intellectual and spiritual work. The faculties which go to make up effective public speech depend largely for their effectiveness upon vigorous health. Hence you are responsible to your Lord, who has given you this body as an instrument through which to work, to make the most of it for effective, long-continued service.

The body is the seat of our physical sensibilities, of our sensuous experiences, and of our animal propensities. They are all innocent when subordinated to the mind and will of God. But the adversary will try to make use of them to tyrannize over us and enslave us. Keep your body under, therefore. Make it the obedient servant of your better nature. Study the laws of hygiene and scrupulously obey them. Mortify the deeds of the body. Present it a living sacrifice to God."

Mind, too, must be subordinated to spirit. Mental endowments call for gratitude and consecration to His service. If you are highly gifted, all the more should you be grateful and humble, all the more on the guard against the temptation to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, and to forget "the Father of Lights." Read none but the great masters, the Bible most of all. And have no fears of the future of the Bible. By many lines of argumentation which cumula-

tively have all the force of a demonstration, you have reached the safe conclusion that this is indeed the Book of God. Rest there. Higher criticism has its mission, and will accomplish it. It will remove such traditional notions as have gathered like barnacles upon the Ship of Truth as she has sailed down the flood of ages. The Ship of Truth herself will be all uninjured and untouched; depend on that. Whatever havoc may be made of human theories and inventions, be loyal to truth and to God. You are to be the organ of the Great Teacher, the Spirit, and He can only teach you if you are honest and loyal. You can only teach men as you have been taught. To manifest Him to men you must know Him. Whatsoever maketh manifest is light. God is light, and Love. And be in no haste to conclude that the apparent results of higher criticism are trustworthy. Be patient. God moves slowly. Truth is not rapidly evolved. Wait on God, wait patiently, and all will be clear in due time. Commune frequently with those who can quicken you. And study to show yourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed. Continue your studies as earnestly as during your probation. In no other important functions of life will men put up with unqualified practitioners. Would you trust yourselves to a train driven by an amateur engineer? And in an age of doubt and difficulty ought you to be satisfied with anything short of the fullest preparation for your momentous calling? Rightly to divide the word of truth requires mental and moral training, severest discipline, perfect consecration. Train your minds to grasp the great truths of the word of God.

A vigorous intellect, with a strong hold on the great truths of revelation, setting them forth with grace and power, and illustrating them with abundant resources of learning and thought, shines to the glory of God. Be men of strong convictions. Get your hearts and minds saturated with the truths of God, drenched with this solar fire, and you must "shine as lights in the world."

Seek above all for the fulness of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The charm of good bodily health, of a handsome person, of a melodious voice, not all ministers possess. Nor are many in the enjoyment of great intellectual vitality. But all may be resplendent in the beauties of holiness and wear the crown of spiritual life and power. You must shine more and more. Every gleam of light that comes from heaven is that you may know God's will, with the intent of doing it, and of becoming what He wants you to be. Light is knowledge, but it is a light to guide your feet. Remember this and you will be saved from two errors: the one of thinking Christianity is merely a system of truth to be believed, and the other of attaching no importance to Christian doctrines but of laying all the stress on Christian morals. "Knowledge is sound when it moulds conduct. Action is good when it is based on knowledge." The advancement will be perhaps not in leaving behind old truths, but in a profounder conception of what is contained in these truths. The stars that ancient astronomers surveyed are the same that astronomers to-day are studying, but how much more do they know of them now than was known in the olden time!

But knowledge and true piety act happily the one upon the other. Knowledge turned to practical account subserves the interests of true religion, and fidelity in all the relations of life tends to give us deeper insight. "If any man wills to do my will, he shall know of the doctrine."

Henceforward let Christ shine through you, through your intellect, your affections, your conscience, your will. Shine till hope is radiant as a star, and love is kindled and imagination glows, and mind and heart and conscience and will are all aflame, till your lips are touched with a live coal from off God's altar, and your tongue becomes a tongue of fire, till in short your whole being burns like a conflagration. Are you at a loss to know how you can come to shine with such splendour? Wait on God, your Saviour, with a longing heart and in the spirit of implicit obedience. Wait and wait. Look to Him and continue looking till He baptizes you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Then shall you understand the great promise: "I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "Ye are the light of the world."

An important question to which for a moment we must turn. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts—why? That we may impart this light to others. Then labour to make Christ known, to lead others to Him that He may kindle them into shining lights. Shakspeare says,

"Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
Not light us for ourselves."

Some of us of course will be greater lights than others, but let us each shine as brightly as we can, luminous with God. Thus will men be led to glorify God. *Sings Lowell:*

"As one lamp lights another, nor grows less,
So nobleness enkindleth nobleness."

So to shine for Christ, that He can make use of us to light other candles, is a service to God and man with which no other is comparable. Were you able by your largesses to the very poor to lift vast multitudes to a moderate comfort, that were a great thing; but to light another candle of the Lord is something vastly better. Were you able to enlarge the sum total of human knowledge by some brilliant scientific discovery, or by your researches to contribute largely to the realm of knowledge, or to add to the Temple of Art its most illustrious master-piece, or to solve some social problem which will remove heavy burdens from the down-trodden and oppressed, that were a glorious thing, but to light one single candle of the Lord were an achievement immeasurably greater. Were you to enter the field of politics and win your way to the presidency of the Diet or the Premiership of the Empire, that might be deemed worthy of the loftiest ambition of the Japanese heart; but let me assure you that to save a soul from death is something better and grander far. For oh! in eternity it will be found that they who have been instrumental in leading men to Christ, once only candles shining a little way in the darkness, shall then shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever.

This then is your vocation : to shine. Be true to it. But to do this you must be yourself. Get your message from on High, not disdainng light from any quarter, and deliver it as an angel of the Lord. Tell the people what God the Lord says to you, not simply repeating the words of men, but be in truth the messenger of God. Live, therefore, at first-hand with Him. Be much alone with Him. Trim the wick daily and hourly with meditation and prayer and study of the Word. So shall you shine as lights in the world.

Lighted, you must be set. Our Lord has said, " Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." It must be in its proper place, or it will be of little use. God has many ways of placing men ; in the Methodist Church it is through the Stationing Committee. God knows where it is best for you to go. Don't quarrel with your allotment. Accept the solar system and all it involves. May I say that while in the active work in the Methodist Church in Canada, the place to which I was most reluctant to go was the place where, before my time of service in that station was completed, I was most glad that God had sent me. Be very sure that He has a wise and gracious purpose in sending you where you are stationed. Shine *there*, shedding a flood of light on the great questions that concern your people most. But oh ! if you are unfaithful, little by little you will grieve the Spirit of God till He takes His everlasting flight. Bildad and Job and Solomon agree in saying (Job xxi. 17 ; xviii. 6 ; Prov. xxiv. 20) : " The candle of the wicked shall be put out." A

sadder thing I do not know than the candle of the minister of Christ going out in darkness. You are set in your families, churches, communities, for the defence of the Gospel, for the salvation of souls. Shine, shine, shine, in the place where you are set till the candle burns down in the socket ; or tremble for fear lest He who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks remove your candlestick out of its place, or withdraw the fire which makes you a light.

Magnify your office. Be true to it. Let it be the struggle of your life to keep your body, soul, and spirit in strictest subordination to Him whom you call your Lord till

" Night's candles are burnt out and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain top ;"

till we get home where there shall be no night, and we shall need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God shall give us light and we shall reign forever and ever.



ESAU SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright. For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears. Heb. xii. 16, 17.

Human nature in all ages is essentially the same. The differences are only on the surface. Beneath the superficial strata, that are under our feet, are the primeval formations, which wrap the round globe with a solid shell of stone. Pierce deep enough anywhere and you reach the glowing heart of humanity. The first book of the Bible pictures the humanity of to-day. For to-day and always men share in a common nature, and one touch of nature makes the whole world kin. The differences between men are the differences in the relations of their spiritual endowments and animal appetites. In the multitude the latter are sovereign; in the few the former rule. Esau was a creature of wayward and generous impulses, a subject of powerful passions, who had never learned to subordinate impulse or passion to the judgment of conscience and the will of God. There have been men of the same kind in every age, and we have them to-day, subject to precisely the same temptations under which the subject of our text fell. Let us therefore look diligently lest there be among us any

profane person as Esau who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

From the outset the twin brothers differed from each other. Esau at birth was covered with hair, which was regarded as shadowing forth his sensual character. Jacob was born clutching the heel of his brother as if already he was endeavouring to overthrow and supplant him. These circumstances were ominous of their lives. The younger grew up a quiet, crafty youth, full of resources and expedients, a man of dogged tenacity, whose tastes led him to the care of flocks and the tillage of fields; and he became the idol of his mother. The elder given to the chase, a true Arab like his more or less remote ancestors, a ranger of the desert, a skilful archer, breezy, outspoken, generous, was the favourite of his father. One day Esau had been hunting from morn to dewy eve, chasing the antelope over the plains, or in more dangerous adventures pursuing the wild beasts of the mountains. Absorbed in pursuit, he took no note of time or distance or the clamours of appetite, till dispirited by his ill-luck and warned by the approach of night he turned him homewards. Then he began to feel weak and faint, and by the time he reached Jacob's tent his hunger was importunate and clamorous for food. Jacob had been boiling some lentil pottage for himself, the fragrance of which travellers tell us is exceedingly appetizing, and almost dying with exhaustion Esau asked Jacob for a portion. The latter was quick to see his opportunity, and mean and unscrupulous enough to take advantage of it. "Sell me this day thy birthright." And Esau replied: "Behold I am at

the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Who would have dreamed that the heir to the patriarchy would sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, when a little later he could have got the meat as a right? But Jacob knew his brother well, and knew that Esau's hunger would demand satisfaction at any price. And Jacob said: "Sware to me this day," and he sware to him; and he sold his birthright with all its honours and all its dowry for a bit of bread and a bowl of red lentil pottage.

But what are the blessings of primogeniture? Right to succession to the headship of the family, authority over his brethren, priesthood in the family, a double portion of the father's property, claims under the promise made to Abraham and renewed to Isaac that Abraham's seed should possess Canaan, and should become a nation and a line of kings, and finally progenitorship of the promised Seed, through whom blessings were to come to all the world. That Esau should despise what was spiritual in this birthright stamps him as unspiritual, and a typical character for all time. Had it been something to eat he would not have sold it. How childish, infatuated, and blind! "Behold I am at the point to die. What will this birthright avail? It means only the priesthood of the family, and my tastes do not run that way. Besides, if I do not get the pottage I shall die." He distinctly preferred the gratification of appetite to the favour of God. His was the profane worldly spirit which mocks at the very idea of invisible possessions. His thoughts never rose above the earth. "He could scoff at honours that better men value beyond all price."

And so he lost them, not because Jacob cheated him out of them, for this Book does not say so; but because he despised his birthright.

Despising his birthright, he despised Jacob also, and with reason too, for resorting to so base a trick to gain his ends. We can scarcely speak of Jacob, as spiritual at that time, but he had spiritual instincts, for which reason Esau could not understand him. But Jacob could take his measure, for "he that is spiritual judgeth all things"—and all men lower in the scale than himself—"yet he himself is judged of no man;" and judging him at his proper value he despised him. We despise both: Esau for throwing away brilliant prospects by one desperate act of folly; Jacob for the cold-hearted and unscrupulous manner in which he contrived to betray his elder brother, and secure from him by promise and oath the surrender of his birthright. But our preferences are rather for the shaggy, red-haired huntsman, so full of generous impulse, so affectionate to his father, so forgiving to his brother, and when we see him fall before the successful plots of his intriguing brother, our sympathies are all the more drawn out after him. Nevertheless God who judges the heart is infinitely better able to judge than we. And unquestionably He prefers Jacob to Esau. It is not that He regards Jacob's crookedness and perfidy with less abhorrence than we. It is not that Esau's brave and manly spirit is less pleasing to Him than to us. His hatred of what is base, His love of what is magnanimous, are infinitely stronger than with us. But He saw what was the c .-

come of the character of these two brothers. He saw that Esau with all his magnanimity was godless and profane. He could not appreciate his birthright. Doubtful too whether he could rate at its proper value his father's blessing till it was gone past recovery. By his passionate and reckless nature, by his inability to live for a glorious future, he was disqualified, as history plainly shows, from becoming the head of a great nation. While as for Jacob, with all his faults he was a man of spiritual tendencies who attached a very high importance to the birthright and the blessing ; and the very measures he resorted to in order to secure them, base and unworthy though these measures were, showed how highly he valued them. It is this feeling of religion, this yearning after spiritual things, that God appreciates, and for which He puts up with much sinuosity and meanness in the hearts and lives of His chosen ones. I have heard men before now rail at Christian men for meannesses, when perhaps at the very time, the men railed at in God's sight were superior to their traducers, and would turn out to be in the long run immeasurably nobler characters. It is this feature of character which looks forward to the future, forms plans in reference to it, and then with constancy adheres to them in the face of difficulty till they are accomplished, that God seeks for in the man whom He would make the patriarch of a family and the head of a great nation.

Esau was in the judgment of God a profane person ; a man whose inner nature, the shrine that should have been set apart for God, a garden enclosed, a fountain

sealed, was invaded and trampled upon by unholy intruders—a man who has no reverence for the higher world, not decidedly corrupt, but secular and worldly, not able to sacrifice the gratification of to-day for, I do not say the infinite good of the next world, but the substantial advantage which to-morrow may bring. This is profanity, for when the temptation came in an hour of hunger or weakness to obtain gratification of appetite at the cost of precious and holy privilege, “he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way ; thus Esau despised his birthright.”

From that day Esau shrank and shrivelled in the volume and amplitude of his being, albeit he became a rich and mighty Arab chief in his stronghold on Mount Seir, till at last deteriorated and degraded he lay down in darkness to sleep the sleep of death. Alas, the day which began with so bright and sunny a morning ended in a night of gloom and disappointment ! His unsteadiness and want of faith and lack of principle vitiated and ruined those splendid qualities of vivacity and brilliance and good nature which had early distinguished him. While Jacob, full of craft, subtilty, and deceit to begin with, has that within him in his constancy of purpose, and power of subordinating the present to the future, and especially in his faith in God, which transmutes even these base elements of character into purest gold ; and the day which began with cloud and tempest brightens as the hours speed on toward noon, and ends in peace and glory.

“ Now the fair traveller’s come to the west,

His rays are all gold, and his beauties are best ;

He paints the sky gay as he sinks to his rest,
And foretells a bright rising again."

"Esau despised his birthright." How have we treated ours? You ask, What inheritance? An inheritance of the Bible, of the Sabbath, of the Gospel, of the Spirit, of "the power of subordinating all inward impulses and outward circumstances to the increase of knowledge, the growth of virtue, the unfoldment of faculty and the centering of self in God,"—an inheritance of salvation, fellowship with God, acquittal on the last day, and eternal glory. An inheritance immeasurably more precious than that of Esau. To be the progenitor of our Lord was a great thing. More glorious far to have spiritual fellowship,—to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ!

Are we tempted for some worldly consideration, some temporary advantage, for wealth or popularity, or fame or ease or pleasure, to barter away this glorious inheritance? Esau stands for all time the type of those who, brought up within the Church of God, amid the advantages and privileges of a godly family, will yet for the gratification of appetite or lust barter away a magnificent heritage and suffer for all time the consequences of their folly. For what did he barter his heritage? *All for one mess of pottage.* And what are the pleasures of fashion and dress, of the theatre, the ball-room, and the card table, for which men sacrifice the joys of heaven? What the applause of society and the praise, for which men part with the smile of God? What is the wealth even of an Astor, for which are sacrificed the unsearchable riches of Christ? What, but a mess of pottage?

And to think how many are guilty of this profane exchange! I do not speak this moment of a Belshazzar in the Old Testament or of a Pilate in the New, for they were both out of the Church of God, but there were Achan who parted with his heritage for a wedge of gold and a Babylonish garment, and Judas who parted with his for thirty pieces of silver—two instances, one in the Old Testament and the other in the New, of the many in the Church who in old times parted with their inheritance for what brought them not one moment of pleasure. Yes, we too in some moment of weakness or weariness have again and again parted with a good conscience and communion with God for what was no better than a mess of pottage. Alas, alas, how often after repentance and self-loathing and a restoration of the light of God's countenance have we been tempted to fling away this inestimable blessing for some temporary gratification! And if we extend the range of our observations beyond the Church we shall find that from the time that Eve sold her lofty place for a forbidden fruit down to the present hour, nothing has been more common. To-day there are thousands and thousands in the streets, in the houses, in the offices, behind the counters, in the factories, in the mansions, in the professions, on the bench, and in the pulpit, who sell their birthright of a tender conscience, the love of God and a stainless purity, for a temporary delight in sin. Strange the infatuation with which men are led into sin! Marvellous "the glamour might" that it exerts upon the judgment, the heart, and the will of man! With what excessive

folly the drunkard parts with business and home, honour and health, wife and children, and the dear hope of heaven, for the deadly charm of the wine-cup! And what infinite stupidity is his who, epicure, voluptuary, sensualist, or debauchee, more or less gross and indiscriminating in his tastes, finds his chief enjoyment in the indulgence of lust. Let such men be warned that most venomous serpents have their dens under the most beautiful blossoms, and that Cleopatra's asp was smuggled to her in a basket of flowers. Even now at times under condemnation they are plunged into gloom, but when the light of eternity will shine upon their sins, what torment must the memory of their pleasure bring! Far higher in the scale of being than the mere sensualist are you to whom for one moment I venture to address a remark. If you are here who are allowing the rush of business or the ardour of intellectual pursuit to absorb you, as the eagerness of the chase engrossed the heart of Esau, little by little aspiration will die, and your soul will shrivel into a point of intense worldliness; but none the less certainly if you persist in your folly, will your fears and remorse some day awake, and as you see the upshot and final consequence of a life of neglect of Christ, you will utter a cry of despair "exceeding bitter"—but all too late to avert the impending doom.

Oh, bethink you, my friend, how poor is the morsel for which you are tempted to sell infinite good. Was not Esau's sacrifice of his birthright a bit of arrant folly? Is it wiser to sell God's love here and hereafter for the whole world? How small a portion of it can you secure, how infinitesimally small, and how short will be

the time of your enjoyment of it! Even before you leave it, as Esau had his regretful thoughts of his bad bargain, you will not be able to escape the suspicion that will haunt you like a ghost—the suspicion that the needs of the soul will survive the appetites of the body, that the true well-being of man depends upon the development of his higher at the expense of his lower nature, and that the pleasures of sin are paid for at the cost of terrific pain long after the pleasures have passed away. It is *foolish*, it is also *base*, to sacrifice so great a future for so small a present. To part for an empire with an inheritance such as we have offered us in Christ would be base, but to part with it for a transient joy—what is it but selling the Creator for a creature, the eternal joys of heaven for a momentary pleasure on earth! This is surely a profane exchange, and if you are guilty of it you are profane, and of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, you are incapable of forming the dimmest conception. And do not deceive yourself with the notion that you are not responsible for the choice. Lodged in the very centre of your being is the power of decision. You are under no compulsion to yield to sin. The motives to do right are infinitely stronger than those which are opposed. The Scriptures set before you life and death, and bid you choose wisely. Choose this day whom you will serve. For lack of consideration and painstaking effort to make a wise choice, thousands and thousands fling themselves away.

Our text still further teaches that neglect of privileges and responsibilities involves irreparable con-

sequences. "For ye know how that afterward when he wished to inherit the blessing he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears." The consequences of his act reached further than he had anticipated. From the moment that he despised his birthright an awful change passed upon him. Probably he did not know it. He saw no change in nature, he felt no change in himself. But one day there came the discovery of his loss, and he wailed out his bitter cry, 'Bless me, even me also, O my father,' but the opportunity which he had neglected to buy up was gone forever. Forgetting that he had despised his birthright, he wished to occupy "the coign of vantage" which he had voluntarily abandoned. He had sold the right of the first-born, and yet he wished to inherit the blessing which belonged to it. No, no, the blessing is gone as well as the birthright. "His fate," says Bishop Lightfoot, "was up to a certain point in his own hands. After that it was placed beyond his reach. We may wade for a time amid the shallows of sin, feeling our footing and heedless of danger. A single slip more places us at the mercy of the waves and we are swept away into the ocean of ruin." It is that step which made irretrievable his enjoyment of the blessing. Up to then had he severed himself from all improper connections and conformed himself to the precepts of the God of his fathers, he would have found place for repentance. But now there was no room for him by repentance to repair the past, to retrieve the unhappy choice he had made under the temptation of appetite.

Thus before us doors of opportunity are open, and if we do not enter them the day will come when we too shall cry with an "exceeding bitter cry." When we do see our folly we cry—'If I had only entered that open door!' but it is now shut, and shut forever. We have made our bed and must lie in it. Alas for them who have re-enacted the part of Esau, and come to see the full significance of their unhappy choice!

"For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, 'It might have been.'"

But it will be asked, Can a man repent and find no room for repentance? Yes, he may repent, that is turn his back upon his past life, reverse the prophecy of ruin that his sins have uttered, but the consequences of his past sins will always follow him. Bishop Westcott well says: "It would be equally true to say that in respect of the privileges of the first-born which Esau had sold he found no place for repentance and that in respect of his spiritual relation to God, if his sorrow was sincere, he did find a place of repentance." The doctrine is true that

"There is a line by us unseen
By which our lives are crossed,
Beyond which God Himself hath sworn
That he who goes is lost."

That is true, but it is not the teaching of our text. Esau though he lost his birthright and his father's blessing did not necessarily lose heaven. Yet here is the red signal of danger. Beware, it says; trifle not with sin; it is always perilous. But the language of our

text is not designed to take away all hope of Esau's future. The birthright was lost beyond recovery; the blessing that belonged to it was gone forever. "There was a lesser blessing left. Esau after years of servitude should break the yoke and have dominion. Much is lost for you and me; but much remains." So long as there is any yearning after God and righteousness there is room for hope. Though you do not loathe the things of the flesh you may be born again of the Spirit. You can never attain the innocence of childhood. It was beautiful and delicate, but it was always conjoined with weakness. You may have something better. You may have your sins washed away in the precious blood of Christ. You may attain the relation of sons of God, and receive the Spirit of adoption. It is just such as we are, lost men and women, that Christ came to save. While there is any loathing of sin, any longing after Christ, all is not lost. Cherish these feelings, feeble though they may be, for they are the beginnings of a life which may through care and cultivation become the life more abundant, the life everlasting. Behold our Lord among men! See Him seeking harlots, publicans, and thieves, the men and women that had made shipwreck of themselves! Did he despair of them? Not He. For He is able to save from the uttermost to the uttermost. The last may be first. He has said, "Come unto me," and "him that cometh unto me"—however vile, however deeply stained, though burdened with all the sins of the calendar—"I will in no wise cast out."

We are taught (1). That small temptations, if yielded to, will work havoc and mischief in character and

life. It is generally the case that trifles determine character. Bengel says that "sometimes a single action has the greatest force for good or evil." How small the hinges as compared with the doors which turn on them!

(2). The great lesson is, of course, the madness of flinging away a great future good for a temporary gratification of sense or passion. Some paltry theft, and a course is begun which ends in the prison and lifelong disgrace. How much is lost by yielding to passion! Let us not be blind and heedless of a certain future reckoning and the consequences of our sins that inevitably follow. I have read of one who entered a restaurant, called for his dinner, ordered all the delicacies of the season; and when he had eaten, his bill was placed in his hands, at which he cried out, 'It never occurred to me that I should be called to account.' Rankst folly, you say. Yet thus men live without a thought of the day of doom, when a strict account will be demanded of every human being.

Oh my brother! prize your birthright. Do not barter it away for any earthly good. To say of a fine mansion and extensive estate, "This is mine," what a joy! But to be a joint-heir with Christ, to be able to look up and say, "This God is my portion forever," what a bliss! Here is a birthright greater than that of kings. Claim it in its entirety. Be not satisfied with the porter's lodge. Take possession of the mansion and all the glorious things that are promised, and hold them strenuously against all comers.

THE CUP OF COLD WATER;
OR,
INCONSPICUOUS SERVICE REWARDED.

“Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” Matthew x. 42.

The world of nature and of social life into which the Lord Jesus entered was full to Him of spiritual significance. He found “tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.” He understood the language of the birds. The lilies of the field told Him their secrets. Clouds and rain, sunrise and sunset, mountains, hills, and rivers, which brought Him messages and consolations, encouragements and hopes, form a part of the wealth of illustrations with which His Gospels teem. A woman kneading dough, or seeking a lost piece of money with candle and broom, a farmer sowing his grain, his enemy at night sowing the same ground with tares, the children playing in the market place—such things as these were interesting to Christ for the lessons they taught, and He uses them to illustrate truths of the highest importance.

It is no unimportant principle which Christ would here enforce. In a solemn charge to the twelve, He warns them of opposition. They were sheep among wolves. If He, the Master, suffers at the hands of the world they must expect to fare no better. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. They must be courageous for God is with them. They must expect that the message they carry will set at variance dearest friends, and break up the peace of families. They will find themselves hated of all men, yet they will find friends. And Christ promises that they who are willing to receive them into their homes, and become their disciples, shall not fail of a reward. He thought, too, of the many in that impoverished country whose good wishes might outrun their ability, and He gives them a word of comfort. Even a cup of cold water, if given with a proper motive, shall have a reward. Now a cup of cold water, even in some Eastern lands where on account of excessive heat it is not so easily obtained as with us, is a comparatively trifling gift and within the reach of all except in very unusual conditions. The point is that Christ notices and keeps careful account of the smallest kindness to His little ones.

I. *The Divine Being takes kind notice of His little ones.*

Whether by "the little ones" Christ meant little children whom he saw in the crowd, or his twelve disciples, we know not. The disciples could not utilize their miraculous gifts to defray the expenses of their maintenance, and were unable, any more than children, to make any return for the bounty of their friends except gratitude, instruction, and prayer. It is touch-

ing to notice that God gives heed to even "*one* of His little ones." He notices Joseph, a child in his father's house, and gives him dreams in the night prophetic of his future. He never loses sight of him when sold by his brethren, when a servant in Potiphar's house, when in prison for righteousness' sake. Nay, He led him in these strange paths to fit him for his elevation to the second place in Egypt. He saw His little one Samuel in the temple with Eli. And He called him "Samuel, Samuel," till he answered, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And thus began a life-long fellowship between the Infinite Father and the child, till at last full of years and honours, the grand old prophet fell on sleep and awoke to the lofty associations and the beatific visions of the skies. His regards, too, were fixed upon David the shepherd boy, and by a discipline full of hardship He qualified him to fill worthily the throne of Israel.

Observe, too, our Lord—where His affections rested. It was not upon the great, the noble, the mighty, but upon the fishermen of Galilee, the lowly publican Matthew, whom He raised to thrones in His kingdom. It was upon little children, whom His disciples would have sent away. Notice the endearing epithet "little ones." He takes them up in His arms, puts His hands upon them and blesses them. They who are mean in their own eyes, despised by the world perhaps, have Christ's eyes upon them. James Watt, who gave to civilization the steam-engine, the aggregate power of which in the world to-day is vastly greater than the manual power of all male human beings in the

whole world, was a poor man, permitted as an act of charity by the University authorities to put up the sign on his humble shop, "Instrument-maker to the University." How Christ lifted him up to be the world's benefactor! Faraday, who has done more for physical science than any other man, was an errand-boy in a merchant's shop; the elder Herschell was a soldier; Sir Humphrey Davy, a shoemaker; Luther, the son of a miner; the great missionary Carey was a cobbler. Yet these lowly ones Christ noticed, led, and blessed by making them the almoners of His great mercy to the world of humanity.

That the Divine Being takes notice of us at all is wonderful when we consider the infinitude of objects which His hands have made, and which call for His unceasing attention and care. The microscope of greatest magnifying power brings to view creations of God infinitesimally small, in which are found evidences of most perfect adaptation to ends, all traced with lines of most exquisite delicacy, enriched with loveliest tints, and perfected with finest finish. With the most powerful telescope the astronomer explores the heavens, and finds worlds, systems of worlds, and clusters of systems, unnumbered and vast beyond his loftiest conception, crowding upon his view. And He, who upholds all these things by the word of His power, amidst the vast cares of His immense empire over the magnificent and the minute, never allows His attention to be diverted even for one moment from "one of His little ones." Ah! He careth for us. However insignificant, however unworthy, if I put my trust in

Him and keep His words, I am one of His little ones, and He knows and loves me, and is pledged in His covenant, well-ordered and sure, to secure my future well-being. Oh, if I am always under His eye, then every act of my hands, word of my lips, glance of my eye, thought of my mind, emotion of my heart, and volition of my will, are perfectly known to Him! Graciously, O Lord! put within me a holy and an ever-abiding fear of Thee! The subject shows us

II. *Things may be of greater value than we think.*

To the unaided eye of man the wonders of nature appear only in part. Who would dream that mould is a forest of beautiful trees, with branches, leaves, and fruit? Would it ever occur to any one that each drop of stagnant water contains a world of living creatures? Is it credible that the surface of our body is covered over with scales like a fish, a single grain of sand sufficing to cover 150 of these scales, and each scale covering 500 pores, through which the perspiration oozes? Yet all this the microscope reveals. Nothing is clearer than that the creative work of God is infinitely great even in the infinitesimally small. And Ehrenburg's motto, the key-note of all his labours in microscopy, expresses a profound truth :

“The small, too, in the universe is wondrous and great,
And worlds are constituted out of that which is little.”

Now, if God has so adorned, and beautified, and cared for His minute creatures, be sure we do wrong if we fail to attach great importance to little things. A leaf or a shell may instruct us as to the attributes of God and lead us to worship. Huxley lectures on “A

Bit of Chalk," and the subject is found to be one of vast extent. To the scientific lecturer "A Cup of Cold Water" would be a subject of thrilling interest worthy of the best powers of the author of "Forms of Water," because it suggests some of the deepest problems of natural science. But to Christ a cup of cold water is of unspeakable moment, because on the spirit with which it is given may depend, not the life of a famishing one, for this does not depend on the motive with which it is given, but possibly the eternal well-being of the donor. This leads us to observe that

III. *Things are great or small in God's sight according to the motive with which they are done.*

Observe the way in which Christ qualifies the act—"in the name of a disciple," "because ye belong to Christ" (Mark ix, 41). On the last day men's doom will be settled upon the principle of good works (Matt. xxv. 31, 46); but if the mere doing of good works without regard to motives were enough to save, comparatively few would perish. Now the Lord in the sixth chapter of Matthew teaches that if we give alms, pray or fast, to be seen of men, our reward shall be their praise. Very different from the reward which is to come from Christ, promised in our text. Motives are of different grades. Of three men who give to the needy, speaking roughly and inaccurately (for we are influenced by a complexity of motives), one does so for the praise of his fellows, the second to gratify mere animal kindness, the third to please God. In the eyes of God the quality of an action resides in the intention. And only the last of the three will stand the test of the last great

day. The Pharisees acted from the first, and pretended it was from the third. They were hypocrites. The man who lived on the borders of an African desert, and was accustomed daily to carry a pitcher of cold water and leave it on the roadside for any thirsty traveller who might pass, certainly did not do his deed for the praise of men. Professor Reinsch tells us that in the North Pacific Ocean "there is a submarine plant which dwarfs all others. The *Macrosystus Pyriferus* covers vast areas of the ocean bed. One specimen was found by measurement to cover three square miles. And yet of this gigantic species there are some specimens so small as to be microscopic." So the gift of a cup of cold water inspired by different motives may appear equally dissimilar in the eyes of God—in the one case small and contemptible, in the other large, generous, and beautiful.

" No service in itself is small,
None great though earth it fill ;
But that is small which seeks its own,
That great which does God's will."

We are reminded of the widow's mites and the rich man's gifts, and of the different estimate which men would form from that of our Saviour. It is not for us to judge, for we know not the heart. And it is charitable when the act is good to attribute it to the worthiest motive. But the All-seeing One none can deceive. We may deceive ourselves and our fellows, but on the last great day everything shall be brought into judgment, and sentence will be pronounced according to the spirit of the life. Go and distribute tracts and Bibles,

feed the hungry, clothe the naked, teach the ignorant ; but if you would have the reward of Christ's promises, I entreat you, do all to the glory of God. As Ruskin said : " There is no action so slight nor so mean but it may be done to a great purpose, and ennobled therefor ; nor is any purpose so great but that slight actions may help it, and may be so done as to help it much, most especially that chief of all purposes—the pleasing of God. . . There is nothing so small but that we may honour God by asking His guidance of it, or insult Him by taking it into our own hands."

IV. *Life is made up of little things which may become great.*

It is natural for us to desire to do some great deed, which would accomplish an amazing amount of good at a stroke. But God does not often put the opportunity of doing conspicuous service within our reach. Nor would it be well if all of us attempted great things. Showers, gentle and frequent, are better than a sudden cloud-burst. Would that our lives were characterized not by great deeds perhaps, but by quietness, humility, fidelity to Christ in little things, good temper in our homes, consideration in the treatment of servants, faithfulness towards employers, justice and truthfulness to all—for acts springing from such a spirit are like streams of benefits which at once enrich our own character and bless the world about us.

" He who tempers the wind to the lamb that is shorn,
Will! help those who take from life's pathway a thorn :
And the cup of cold water that kindness bestows
On the heart back in rivers of gladness o'erflows."

Not only so. We may be unable to trace any one of these streams to a distance, yet it may now be threading its silvery way on the surface. and now like the fabled Arethusa plunging underground beneath the surface of society, doing its beneficent work unseen by the eye of man, and anon reappearing to bless far-off places by its exuberant outflow.

Moreover, good deeds have a fructifying power. Like seeds, they carry the principle of reproductive life. They are small, yet they contain all that proceeds from them. A precious gem planted in the earth cannot grow and multiply itself. It remains unchanged. But a tiny seed contains that which may go on indefinitely multiplying itself after its kind. A sunny smile, a loving word, a word of instruction and hope, a tract or good book—who shall trace the bright succession each producing “seed after its kind,” perhaps in endless sequence.

But as life grows richer, one's deeds may become nobler and more beautiful. How kind of Christ to promise a reward to the poor and weak and helpless for what is quite within their reach! But you greatly mistake if you think He had no ulterior design. That promise is a lure to draw them on, having tasted the luxury of doing good, to do nobler things than what costs no money and requires no effort. There was a time in the history of David, when the Philistines had possession of Bethlehem, and he was the captain of a band of outlaws in the cave of Adullam. Water failed them, and David longed for the water of his native town. Three of his mightiest heard him, and at the peril of

their lives broke through the host of the Philistines, drank freely of the fountain, filled their water-urns and returning offered a cup of the pure, cold, sparkling water to their chief. The flower of England's chivalry, Sir Philip Sydney, a man of stainless character, skilful generalship and subtle diplomatic skill, was dying on the victorious field of Zutphen. Faint with the loss of blood, he felt an intense craving for water. It was brought, but just as he was about to drink, his eye met the longing glance of a dying soldier, and crying, "This man's necessity is greater than mine," he gave it to his fellow sufferer. Giving to-day to some thirsty one and tasting the divine luxury of giving, you may be led on till in your delight in doing generous deeds, like the three mighty ones you shall be found willing to imperil your life for your neighbour's weal, or like Sir Philip Sydney crown a life of noble deeds by a simple yet illustrious act of self-denial, which will stir the hearts of multitudes to a like noble achievement.

V. *The Inconspicuous service must be true service.*

A cup of cold water! Prepared by the great Father of us all in the clouds above us, distilled upon the mountain-tops till fountains and bays and rivers are filled, how precious is this beverage of life! A *blessing* on him who puts it to his neighbour's lips! But cries the prophet with impassioned fervour: "*Woe* unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth the bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also." That is the bowl whose foam has madness and crime in it, over which pale widows and orphans weep, and in which souls are drowned. Homer tells of Circe, famous for

her knowledge of magic and venomous herbs, and of numbers of human beings whom she had by drugs changed into beasts of prey. Such is that hospitality which puts the cup into the hands of men and women, and reduces them to such a condition as to commit crimes of which brute beasts are incapable. How little do men who begin to sip the intoxicating bowl, suspect the end of these things. The wise man has said: "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Mr. Dougall, the late aged editor of the New York Witness, a consistent temperance man for half a century, the first time he crossed the Atlantic, was placed at a table between two officers who drank freely. Said he, "Gentlemen, you may either of you have my place; I am willing to go anywhere or to do anything to oblige you, but *I will not pass your bottles.*" Touch not, taste not, handle not, the accused thing. And I charge you by the love of God and man, never to put a glass of liquor to another's lips.

When Edward Payson was dying he exclaimed: "I long to hand a full cup of happiness to every human being." If with such urgency of desire we should daily go out among men, how selfishness would perish out of our dealings with them. What love would be in our homes! What changes would be wrought in human society! Now relieving the destitute, now giving food to the hungry or clothes to the naked, now giving a good book to one who will prize it as the famishing do cold water, now bestowing a trinket upon a child—this

is the way to make streams of water flow through life's deserts, and to press the cup of comfort to fainting lips.

Finally, the reward of all inconspicuous service is very sure. Nothing in the wide kingdoms of nature is lost. Storm, earthquake, torrent, chemical change, flood, fire, frost, death, cannot destroy a particle of matter. Nor can the truth of the Gospel return to God void. It will assuredly accomplish the end for which it is sent. Thus, too, with every good deed done for Christ. On the day after the battle of Fredricksburg in 1862, the wounded, dying and dead soldiers of the Union army lay between the two opposing lines, and any one who exposed himself but for a moment was sure to fall by a fatal bullet. General Kershaw gives the following account. All that day those wounded men rent the air with their groans, their agonizing cries of "water! water!" In the afternoon Sergeant Kirkland, unable any longer to resist their call, begged the General for permission to carry them water. The general warned him of the risk he ran, refused to let him show a white handkerchief, but with some hesitation granted him the permission he asked. He was watched with great anxiety as he stepped over the wall on his errand of mercy. Unharmd he reached the nearest sufferer. He knelt beside him, tenderly raised the drooping head, rested it upon his breast, and poured the precious life-giving fluid down the fever-scorched throat. This done, he laid him tenderly down, placed his knapsack under his head, straightened out his broken limb, spread his overcoat over him, replaced his empty can with a full one, and turned to

another sufferer. By this time his purpose was well understood on both sides, and the danger was all over. From all parts of the field arose cries of "water! water! for God's sake, water!" For an hour and a half did he pursue his work of love, till all the wounded on that part of the field were relieved. He returned to his post wholly unhurt, and rested, who shall say how sweetly that winter's night beneath the cold stars!

Oh, sighs one, I have neither opportunity nor courage for such an achievement; I can do but little. Well, do that little for the Lord Jesus, and do it as well as you can, and He will count it as done to Him. The knights of the Round Table sought long and earnestly for the Holy Grail, which was supposed to be the marvellous cup wherewith Pharaoh used to divine. It was believed to have been handed down till it reached our Lord, and was the cup out of which He drank at the last supper. It remained afterward in the possession only of those whose lives were pure, and when evil multiplied was withdrawn from men. The legend runs that it appeared only to those who lived spotlessly. Russell Lowell in his "The Vision of Sir Launfal" represents our Lord saying to the knight:

"Not what we give, but what we share,—
For th: gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Hir.self, his hungering neighbour, and me."

Yes, the cup of cold water given away is not lost. On an American battlefield, a canteen of water, the last to be had, was once put to the parched lips of a soldier. He was sorely wounded, but as he was about to drink,

his eye fell on another sufferer, whose necessity was greater than his own, both of his legs being shot away. Without speaking a word he handed him the water. The dying man, who was rich, drinking it, asked his name, regiment, and residence. They were immediately separated. The dying man called a comrade to his side, and dictated a codocil to his will, directing his executors to pay to A. B. of such a place and state, and of such a regiment, "the sum of \$10,000 for his humanity to me on the field of battle." And will Christ be less mindful of us? Is He unrighteous to forget your labour of love? No, blessed be His name! He keeps a strict account of the minutest deeds, the most inconspicuous service to Him. On the last great day He will hold a cup of cold water in His hand. Once more "the conscious water" beholding its God will "blush." He will hand it to you saying, "Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me;" and as you drink it you will exclaim, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." And that cup will symbolize all felicity, honour, and dignity, world without end.

CHRIST KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Revelation iii. 20.

These Churches of Asia are symbolical of the universal Church, as we see in the mystic number seven, and also in their manifold conditions, which exhibit every conceivable form of church life. The communications to these churches are of the highest possible importance, and are from the lips of the great Head of the Church, written down by His servant John, and by him transmitted to the angels of the churches for which they were intended. The text is part of the Epistle addressed by the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, unto the Church of the Laodiceans, a church over which the world had gained an almost overwhelming power, a church neither cold nor hot, but full of the spirit of pride and self-deception; but the words are also written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world have come. Yet even to this church Christ says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” and enlarging the offer of His grace to the uttermost limit of humanity—the farthest in space, the deepest in guilt and moral corruption, and the most distant in time,—He exclaims:

"If *any* one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

"If any one." Man is his Maker's masterpiece. In His other works there was not a theatre sufficiently broad for the display of His perfections, and so God created man and invested him with excellent ornaments and dignities. But oh, how changed from what he was! He has fallen, and the relation of the soul with God, subsequent to the Fall, has been that of rebellion against the Sovereign.

Now, it is not the custom of sovereigns to supplicate peace of revolted subjects, who are completely in their power. It is usual to beat down the arm of rebellion until there is a willingness on the part of the rebels to accept of any terms which the conqueror may impose. Does God compel sinners to be at peace? Does He storm the city of Man-soul? Nay, Jehovah Jesus lays aside His ineffable glory, comes down to earth, and seeks admission to human hearts. He uses no compulsion. Nor does He think it beneath His dignity to ask for entrance again and again, though as often repulsed. Our text speaks of three great marvels:

I. FIRST GREAT MARVEL:—"Behold I stand at the door."

Is Christ standing at the door? Then

I. *Our depravity in its strength and arrogance is vividly depicted.* Christ presents Himself, my friend, at the door of your understanding, through which all must pass that enter the heart. His credentials we know. "The works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. The Father Him-

self hath borne witness of me." He appeals to the Holy Oracles: "Search the Scriptures; they bear witness of me." If admitted thus far, He knocks at the door of the will. Alas! how often to no effect. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." This door—a door of triple brass—is firmly secured with bolts and bars. One evil effect of sin is that it induces a permanent habit or attitude of the will, of which each outward act is a symptom and an aggravation. The seat of the principle and spirit of rebellion is in the will, which if deliberately tolerant of sin is from the necessity of the case hostile to all the claims of God, and each rejection of offered mercy increases the difficulty of submission and the probability of final impenitence. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." How *determined* and *obstinate* is this depravity! But Christ's being kept outside the door indicates also the stupendous *arrogance* of depravity, which very often makes it a point of honour for the sinner not to submit to the call of Christ. Man in his infinite pride will not humble himself to be on terms of friendship with God. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God." Nay, not only will he not seek after God, but such is the intense disgust with which the sinner regards spiritual fellowship with the all-holy God, that from all the blessed Saviour's urgent strivings and pleadings he turns away with an inward shudder, preferring sin to holiness, and even hell to heaven. The charge which Stephen pressed with all tenderness but with all fidelity

upon his persecutors is true to-day of all who refuse to admit the knocking Saviour: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye."

Again: Is Christ standing at the door? Then

2. *We are reminded of His great redemptive work.*

How, consistently with His declaration, "the soul that sinneth it shall die," can He stand at the door of a human heart, asking admission and promising immortal life? Let the blood "which speaketh better things than that of Abel" answer. It tells of the sword of Justice buried, not in the heart of offending humanity, but in the heart of an unoffending Deliverer, of the claims of the divine government satisfied, and of God justified when He justifies penitent believers. To get to the door of your heart, my unsaved friend, He had to enter our nature, to be made a curse, to make His soul an offering for sin, to bear the aggregate weight of the guilt of the world, to cry "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" to die an ignominious and painful death, to descend into the grave, to break the bars of the tomb, to rise again, to ascend on high "leading captive multitudes captive," and prepared thus to give good gifts to men, even to the rebellious also—all this had He to do, before He could come and stand at the door of your heart and offer salvation.

"Oh for such love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
Our Saviour's praises speak!"

Is Christ standing at the door? Then it is evident that

3. *He shows great condescension.* Usually the less stands before the greater. Men seeking for office, honour, or wealth, stand hat in hand before those who have the gifts of fortune to dispose of. Sometimes the case is reversed, as when the great founder of the Russian Empire, for a time forsook the barbaric pomp and splendour of his court to come and stand as a common apprentice in the dockyards of Western Europe. But oh what infinite condescension is it for Christ to stand at our heart's door! It is midday standing beside midnight. Though we are worms of the dust, creatures of a day, at the door of our hearts stands He, who is far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, and who has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written King of kings and Lord of lords, before whom we shall some day fall in speechless wonder, love, and praise, or from the withering glance of whose eye we shall take refuge in hell, crying out to the mountains and to the hills, "Fall on us"—and now perchance we are not bent lowly before Him, or standing to receive His commands, but are sitting in the seat of the scornful or reclining on the couch of carnal security. Let us remember who has said: "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

II. THE SECOND GREAT MARVEL:—*Christ knocking and pleading.*

1. *He begins the work of salvation.* Yes, if He had not sought us, we must have been lost. Saved we never could have been, if He had not made oft-repeated over-

tures of mercy. It shows us that the question is not, Will Christ save me? but, Am I willing to be saved? Not, Will Christ refuse to save me? but, Do I refuse to have Him for my Saviour? "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name!"

Further, Is Christ knocking and pleading? Then

2. *His patience is evinced.* He bears with men's caprices. If refused admission, He does not resent the insult and take His final departure, but burning with anxious desire, as if it were His interests and not theirs which are at stake, with long-suffering He waits, and waits, and waits. His patience is seen in His *repeated knockings*. The word translated "I stand" bears the meaning of "I have stood and continue to stand," which modifies the meaning of the word "knock," so that the clause is equivalent in sense to "I have stood and continue to stand knocking." He has been knocking, then, for some time already—at some hearts here for ten, twenty, forty years. Well is it for you that your salvation was not dependent on the patience of some dear and valued friends! Oh with what patient and pitying love He has lingered at the door of your heart, and softly knocked there these long years. Let it smite you with a rebuke far more telling than all the thunders of Sinai.—His patience is further seen *in the variety of means* which He employs to make a man hear His voice. He both speaks and knocks—"If any man hear my voice." He appeals to every principle of your heart. He runs His hand up and down the entire scale of human emotion, sweeps every chord, touches every string, in the en-

deavour to secure a right response to which He will key your whole nature, that thence He may elicit heavenly harmonies. He appeals to *gratitude and love*. He reminds you of all that He is, and of all that He has done in your behalf. Does this not win you? He appeals to *hope*, and paints before your mental vision a beautiful picture warm with the rich tints of heaven. Does not this attract you? He appeals to the principle of *fear*, and warns you of the evils of persistent rebellion—a death without hope, a judgment without mercy, and an eternity of despair. Does not this alarm and convict you?

The *means* which He employs to secure an entrance are numerous and varied. The instrument usually employed is His word. That word read at a mother's knee, explained in the Sunday School, or the pulpit, or read in secret, sometimes comes with power, proclaims itself to be spirit and life, and the loud knock of a present Saviour is distinctly heard, and the powers of the world to come impressively felt.

Perhaps He knocked and spoke by a series of providential visitations, which grew in solemn and impressive character till His knockings, instead of being merely a gentle tapping at the door, sounded an awful summons, as if some giant fist were smiting at the gate, till His voice

"whispered no longer,
But spoke as the thunder doth, louder and stronger.

Trials and losses, inconsiderable at first, were succeeded by others more formidable, till at the door which had admitted unclean spirits, and which was locked and

barred against the loving and kingly Saviour, He knocked not vindictively but loudly, breaking down your health, impairing or ruining your fortunes, bereaving you of dearest ones, in the hope that perchance judgments, trying and severe, would open ears that are deaf when only gentle mercy knocks. Oh "why is His head wet with the dews, and His locks with the drops of night?"

Is Christ knocking at the door and pleading? Then

3. *He pays respect to man's free-agency.* The custom of knocking at the door of a house is a very ancient and very beautiful one. The man who was the first to knock at another man's door had a very fine and delicate sense of propriety. He would invade no man's sanctuary or privacy, unwelcome or unbidden. A general besieging a city beats down the gates and walls. Officers of justice pursuing a criminal break in the door of the house where he is hidden. But the Saviour, in accordance with the eternal fitness of things, for reasons which appear in part to us, is nowhere represented as trying to storm the city of Man-soul. He seeks, He pleads, He expostulates, He promises, He warns, but He will not force. It is impossible to conceive of a finer delicacy, a more tender consideration for the sacredness of a man's own free agency, than Christ shows everywhere. The heart that becomes His must be freely offered to Him, or it never will be taken. Christ goes so far as to awaken a man, to liberate him to such degree from the power of Satan who has led him captive at his will, that he realizes that the responsibility of his salvation is thrown upon himself, and

that he now has the power of moral choice, a power given him in his creation, of which sin had largely despoiled him, but which now may be exercised for his salvation. So far Christ goes, but no farther, till the choice is made, when, if the door is flung open, He enters to carry out His purposes of grace. Hence it is that He represents Himself as standing without and knocking and pleading there. Hence it is that He so frequently has to turn away with the voice of refusal ringing in His ears.

“The day creeps on with stealthy, stealthy pace,
He knocks again as He has knocked before;
The patient sorrow deepens in His face;
Soon will He knock—no more!”

Once more : Is Christ knocking and pleading outside?
Then

4. *Procrastination is unsafe.* He may not tarry long. When you see a man standing before a door, if you think at all you will expect him, if not soon admitted, to go away. A man was sent to collect an account of another, who had succeeded for some time in avoiding a dun. This man knocked and was not admitted. He knocked again and again, but no attention was paid to him. Thereupon he borrowed a chair from a neighbouring house and deliberately sat down to knock till he should bring the proprietor of the house to terms; and he succeeded. When Christ ascended to heaven, He did not stand. He sat down by the side of the Majesty on high. But He does not sit at the door of your heart; He stands. If He goes away, you are

undone. If repelled now He may retire forever. When He withdraws, the Spirit ceases to strive, the spirit of rebelliousness within reaches its consummation, the heart becomes "past feeling," and is given over to final impenitence. Oh pray

"Stay, Thou insulted Saviour, stay,
Though I have done Thee such despite,
Nor cast the sinner quite away,
Nor take Thine everlasting flight."

III. THE THIRD GREAT MARVEL:—*Christ Within.*

"I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." The manner is mysterious, but the fact of this indwelling is a fact of revelation and of consciousness, and is therefore undeniable. Christ prays: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; I in them, and Thou in me that they may be made perfect in one." Similarly Paul prays for the Ephesians: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Like the great Napoleon's soldier who, when wounded by a bullet and the surgeon was probing the wound, exclaimed: "An inch deeper and you will find the Emperor," the true Christian knows that were his heart laid bare it would reveal the indwelling Christ. This indwelling includes

1. *Reconstruction.* Christ is come to ask no personal favour. He wished to restore the miserable tenement to its former beauty, wealth, and comfort. And if with penitent submission and joyful haste the door is opened, and He is welcomed,

“Come in, come in, Thou heavenly guest ! Nor ever hence remove ;
But sup with me, and let the feast Be everlasting love,”

a transformation will take place more wonderful than ever was depicted in human speech. In Goethe's "The Tale," translated and expounded by Carlyle as a kind of emblem of universal history, by virtue of the lamp locked up in the hut of the ferryman, the hut became converted from inside to outside into solid silver, its form was changed and expanded into a noble structure of beaten, ornamented workmanship. But here in place of the wretched dwelling at which Christ knocked and which has admitted Him, we see a lovely mansion, lit up from foundation to coping with the glory of God, in every room order, and beauty, the voice of song, and the fragrance of flowers, for "old things have passed away and all things have become new." Finally it includes

2, *Fellowship*. "I will sup with him and he with me." The same cement which binds human spirits together—love mingled with confidence—binds together the saint and his Saviour. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." This implies (1) that He takes pleasure in us. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." He puts His Spirit within us and delights to see His image reproduced there. It implies (2) that we have joy in Him. There are those who know what it is to have a present Saviour, a loving friend, into whose ear they pour their confidences—doubts, fears, and temptations—in return for which they have the secret messages of His grace, the hidden embraces of His love. Their

prayers and praises are not like letters transmitted to some far-off friend by some heavenly post. Nay, soul speaks to soul, heart touches heart, hand clasps hand. "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." "I am married unto thee." Whatever of intimacy, of delight, of confidence, or of love, is to be found in the closest of all the relationships of life, is realized in an augmented degree in the union between the saint and the Saviour. To him, who hears His voice and opens the door, Christ says, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk;" and then spreading a banquet of heavenly manna, of angels' food, a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines well refined, He exclaims, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Who then would regale his appetite upon the viands of heaven? Let him admit a knocking Saviour, and a feast will be spread, compared with which the far-famed refectories of the literati with their "feast of reason and flow of soul," or the most imposing banquets ever spread in royal palaces or ducal halls, where wit and beauty blaze and corruscate, or the fabled nectar and ambrosial sweets of high Olympus, are common fare indeed. Here no want goes unsatisfied, no desire unmet. Christ gives *Himself* in the fullness of His being to the soul that will admit Him. "Heathenism in its cultus of domestic and local deities bears witness to the intense longing of the human soul for the individualizing love of a loftier being." Christ

comes to satisfy that want. It is with large reserve that man gives himself to his fellow. But it is a necessity of His perfectness that Christ cannot divide His love. He gives Himself to the single soul with an absolute completeness as if there were throughout the universe no other being on whom He could pour out His boundless affection. He endows His bride with all the riches of His own inheritance. And the cold-hearted Christian, waking up to a sense of the Saviour's love, becomes enraptured like Rutherford, or Summerfield, or McCheyne, and seems to us, who have not yet attained, extravagant in his expressions and demonstrations. But the exile on far distant shores, separated from all he loves for long and weary years, feels not such tides of rapturous emotion swelling in his heart, when he meets with the loved ones at home, as he, who has wandered far from God in sin, experiences when he comes back to his truest and best Friend's embrace.

"When God is mine, and I am His, Of paradise possess,
I taste unutterable bliss, And everlasting rest.
The bliss of those that fully dwell, Fully in Thee believe,
'Tis more than angel tongues can tell, Or angel minds conceive."

To apply: I. Is Christ within or without? If within, what a matter for thankfulness! If without, what occasion for shame and grief and confusion of face! Why is it so? If you say you have not heard His knocking or His voice, know this that you are responsible for preventing such an uproar, and clamour, and riot of passion within, and hubbub and strife of the world without, as make it difficult to catch His faintest whisper, His gentlest tapping at the door. There

are within you daring intriguers against your peace and security. Christ assures you that your danger is imminent, that He must be allowed to come in, if you would have Him cast them out. How long should you be deciding whether or not to comply with His wish? Fling wide open the door and let Him now come in.

"In thy silent midnight slumbers, List—thy bosom door!
 How it knocketh—knocketh—knocketh, Knocketh evermore!
 Say not 'tis thy pulse is beating: 'Tis thy heart of sin;
 'Tis thy Saviour knocks and crieth—' Rise and let me in.'
 "Death comes on with reckless footsteps, To the hall or hut:
 Think you, Death will tarry knocking Where the door is shut;
 Jesus waiteth—waiteth—waiteth, But the door is fast;
 Grieved away thy Saviour: goeth; Death breaks in at last.
 "Then 'tis time to stand entreating Christ to let thee in;
 At the gate of heaven beating, Waiting for thy sin.
 Nay—alas, thou guilty creature! Hast thou then forgot?
 Jesus waited long to know thee, Now He knows thee not."

2. The experience after which we should aspire with ardent desire is a personal consciousness of Christ's perpetual indwelling. Said an old woman in the East Indies when asked if she knew Jesus: "Yes, I know Him; He is there (pointing to the Bible,); I know Him; He is there (pointing to heaven); I know Him; He is here" (clasping her hands over her breast). Luther spoke not too strongly when, having through the obedience of faith reached a rich experience of death unto sin and life unto God, he said: "If any man knock at the door of my heart, and ask, 'Who lives here?' my answer will be, 'Jesus Christ lives here, not Martin Luther.'" How did he attain to this ripe fulness of the life divine? Just as we may all attain it

—out of every twenty-four hours, three hours alone with God, searching the Scriptures, studying the promises, and wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant.

One last word : If Christ be in us, He is our Palladium, our guarantee of safety, our high tower. Said Caesar to the affrighted ferryman, " Fear not, cheer up ; thou bearest Caesar and his fortunes." If you carry Christ in your heart, you need not fear. Storms may rage, but the ship can never sink that bears the Lord. In good time to save you, He will say to the raging wind, " Peace," and to the stormy seas, " Be still," and there shall be a great calm. Or, if He permits the storm to grow more violent, still all is well, for

" The rougher the way,
The shorter your stay ;
The storms that arise
Shall hurry you gloriously
Home to the skies."

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LESSON FROM THE EAGLE'S EYRIE.

“ Like the eagle.” Psalm ciii. 5.

The lapidary cuts the diamond so that it presents to the eye many facets, every one of which flashes its own volley of rays. In like manner God has so constituted many things in nature that each of them illustrates many different objects in the spiritual kingdom. Let us take the eagle, and using it in the light of Scripture endeavour to obtain from it the instruction which abounds.

I. *Riches are “ like the eagle.”*

Riches, which so often suddenly leave their possessor, are said to fly away quickly like eagles : “ For riches certainly make themselves wings ; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” To the testimony of Scripture is added the experience of men. Croesus, whose name is a synonym for great wealth, was himself taken captive, stripped of all his treasures, and in old age was supported by the charity of Cyrus. How many whom you knew as wealthy are now poor, and how true is the Scripture, “ The last shall be first and the first last.” Nothing melts away faster than a great fortune. Poverty treads upon the heels of great and unexpected

riches. Are the birds yours that after circling round settled upon your garden? No more the riches that are apparently yours to-day, and to-morrow may have flown away. A thousand ways there are of losing them. Riches have wings, and hop from branch to branch, from one man to anot No fence however high will hold the eagle which has alighted for a moment upon your field, so riches when they list will fly away, do what you may to prevent. They are "*uncertain*,"—the only element of certainty about them is that we are not sure of them.

Said Gotthold to bystanders who stood amazed at the sight of much money paid to him: "Learn in youth to withstand the fascination of money and not to contemplate it with pleasure or desire it, as if it were some precious thing. It is in fact glittering earth and nothing more. Unstable and fugitive it flits from one to another, and is like the withered leaves which the wind drives to and fro, and collects here in one heap, there in another. I do not know whether there exists such a thing as a coin stamped with a pair of pinions; but I wish this were the device which monarchs put upon their dollars and ducats to show that riches make themselves wings and fly away."

Do you feel this a great calamity? But how much better is it than that the evils of worldly prosperity should come upon you! "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." And said our Lord: "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of

heaven." Sometimes mariners save their vessels from destruction by casting out the lading. So Christians on their way to heaven often need to be stripped of their worldly possessions that they may safely reach their glorious destination. While then you have them use them well.

"Forever the sun is pouring his gold on a hundred worlds
that beg or borrow ;

His warmth he squanders on summits cold, his wealth
on the homes of want and sorrow ;

To withhold his largess of precious light is to bury himself
in eternal night : To give is to live."

Clip the wings of your riches by sharing them with the poor and needy. You are a steward of God. Wise men were they who brought to the Babe of Bethlehem gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Princes before now have dissolved pearls in the wine wherewith they entertained monarchs. Make rich offerings to Christ. Nothing is too good for Him. On the tombstone of an Italian lady is inscribed, "Here lie the remains of Estella, who having transported her fortune to heaven has gone thither to enjoy it." Transfer some portion of your riches to heaven by largesses to the poor and to the cause of Christ, and you will find by-and-by that this is the best way to insure your property and enjoy it when life is past. Oh, there are better riches than earthly riches! A gentleman one day took an acquaintance upon his housetop to show him the extent of his possessions. Waving his hand about he said, "There is my estate." Then pointing to a great distance on one side he said,

"Do you see that farm?" "Yes." "Well, that is mine." Pointing to the opposite side, "Do you see that house?" "Yes." "Well, that also belongs to me." Said his friend, "Do you see yon village?" "Yes." "Well, there is a poor woman who can say more than that." "Ah, what can she say?" "Why, she can say, 'Christ is mine.'" "Treasures of grace to us be given, and crowns of joy laid up in heaven." Said one who saw the dangers of riches and poverty: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." But certainly it is easier to enjoy Christ in poverty than in wealth. Cried a rich woman in a revival as she saw the poor flocking to Christ, "My God, is there no mercy for the rich?" To the poor the Gospel is preached, and among the poor we find many rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

With the words of the holy Apostle let me close this portion of my theme: "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in *uncertain riches*, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. vi. 17-19).

II. *Retribution is "like the eagle."*

It is a law of God, Honour thy father and mother that thy days may be *long*. "The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." This is one illustration of the *lex*

talionis, under which we live. So Adoni-bezek, who had conquered seventy of the petty kingdoms about him and had cut off the thumbs and great toes of their kings and then allowed them to gather their meat under his table, when he was himself overthrown by Judah and similarly maltreated, exclaimed, "As I have done, so God hath requited me." "The Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite." How signal the action of the *lex talionis* upon the presidents and princes, who persuaded Darius to cast Daniel into the den of lions, which however wrought on him no manner of hurt, when they were in their turn cast into the same den and were instantly torn to pieces! Scarcely one, if any, of the prominent persecutors of the Church escaped signal retribution. And God punishes sin in such a way that you may read the sin in the punishment. When they who have eaten unjustly that which others have saved, shall have that eaten up which themselves have saved, is not this strict justice? (Is. xxxiii. 1; Hab. ii. 8). If men have been wanton and lustful, and stolen waters were sweet, and bread eaten in secret was pleasant, the Lord feeds them with gall and wormwood and gives them the wine of astonishment in great plenty to drink. Was not that something more than poetic justice which led Hercules to adapt his mode of vengeance to the peculiar misdoing of the transgressor? On Inchcape rock to warn ships of their peril an abbot put a bell which was taken down by Sir Ralph the Rover, who with his ship one year thereafter upon the self-same rock, in the righteous judgment of God, perished. "For

'tis the sport to have the engineer hoist with his own petard."

To deny this is idle for we have within us a prophet which predicts precisely such an issue. One has well said: "There is a tribunal set up every day in the human heart, where a judge presides and sentence is pronounced. When you analyse the nature of these afflictions you will find them to be *dread* and therefore no one can get rid of the evidence of the dreadful character of future retribution." And as Baalzac says, "With every one the expectation of misfortune constitutes a dreadful punishment. Suffering then assumes the proportions of the unknown, which is the soul's infinite." The certainty, then, of future retribution is not to be disputed by one who reads his own experience. "Wheresoever the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together." No sooner is the sin committed than the eagle of retribution is in pursuit of the offender. He may flee, but he cannot escape. Conscience pursues him everywhere. And if he finds not the only refuge for the sinner in the wounds of his crucified Lord, he must fall a prey to retributive justice. Some time or other the substance of these shadows and symbols must be reached, and the sinner know by actual experience of what he had been faithfully forewarned. In the agonies of the guilty conscience of the lost soul, the law of retribution will have its perfect, final, and everlasting effect, while its justice in the awards of the present life, so often impugned, so often denied, will receive its ample vindication. The vengeance, which like an eagle, tracked him through every

lane and path of life, and now and again threw her baleful shadow across his path, waiting for him to fall in death, and impatient of the delay often striking him with her fearful talons and bloody beak, will then seize upon him as her rightful prey and in the region of the lost inflict without cessation and without pity the penalties so long delayed. Woe to the man who falls its prey! Are you shutting your eyes to Gospel truth? Well, if you will not see, you shall not see; the power and capacity of spiritual vision shall pass away. Are you striving to obliterate the letterings chiselled by painstaking and holy mothers upon the minds and hearts of the young? Better a millstone were hanged about your neck and you were cast into the sea than that you should offend one of these little ones. Have you oppressed the poor and needy? For this you may yet suffer the loss of your own property,—certainly you must fall under a future penalty. Do you look down with superciliousness and pride upon your fellow men? There may be for you a resurrection unto shame and everlasting contempt. Do you esteem the Word of God to be of little worth, and set at naught all His counsel? Take care lest by-and-by you be set at naught, when He laughs at your calamity and mocks, when your fear cometh. Oh, of how little worth is he who counts God's word of little worth! And what reason has he to weep forever, at whose weeping God shall laugh! This is the portion of evil men from the Lord: He will clap His hands at them and hiss them out of their place. But have I no Gospel for you to-day? Thank God, yes. My impenitent and unfor-

given hearer, the eagle is in pursuit of you, but there is a refuge for you in the grace of Christ. Haste thither. I repeat the old, old story of Jesus and His love. He was wounded for your transgressions and bruised for your iniquities. He is a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest. In Him you shall have deliverance from the guilt, power, impurity, and final consequences of sin. Hide in Him and the devil shall be disappointed of his prey and hell of her expectation.

III. *The Lord Jesus is "like the eagle."*

"As the eagle so the Lord" Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.

1. What the eagle is among the birds, the Lord Jesus is among men, monarchs, angels, and hierarchies, the Prince of the kings of the earth. In all things He has the pre-eminence, and to Him every knee shall bow.

"God over all, we bow the knee, And own all fulness dwells in Thee!"

2. The eagle builds not its nest among reeds and rushes, on house-top or tree-top, but in the highest and most inaccessible cliffs of the mountain. It is her fortress, where she enjoys security. This instinct has God put into her nature to provide for the safety of her young. Up in yon airy home, amid solitude and desolation, the mother-eagle builds her nest and rears her young. Our Saviour God has His home too on high. Heaven is His throne, and earth is His footstool. Everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good, His residence is yonder. "Thou hast ascended up on high"—far beyond where the eagle can follow Thee—beyond the visible skies (Eph. iv. 10).

"Eternal power! Whose high abode becomes the grandeur of a God:

Infinite lengths beyond the bounds, where stars revolve their little rounds."

3. Has the eagle a piercing eye? Naturalists tell us that so keen is her sight that, when quite beyond our vision, she perfectly beholds her prey, the hare in the bush, the fish in the water. And the Lord Jesus from the highest heaven beholds us all the while, as from the mountain top through the black night He beheld His disciples in the midst of the storm on Gennesaret. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. No night so dark but He sees you distinctly, in the midst of vast crowds He distinguishes you perfectly. Every man's secrets, and the hell of every bad man's heart, are laid perfectly open to His inspection. He looks quite through men, the wisest and most reserved. Carry about with you then, wherever you go, as a perpetual dissuasive from evil and encouragement in the pursuit of good, this quickening thought, "Thou, God, seest me. I can have no secrets from Thee, for all things are naked and open to Thine eyes with whom I have to do." And pray, "Guide me with Thine eye; help me to please Thee that I may enjoy holy fellowship with Thee forever."

4. Is the eagle swift of wing? She has a wonderful power of darting suddenly down upon her victim. The Italians compare her descent upon her prey to the fall of lead into water and call her *aquila piombina*, the leaden eagle.

"Descending in a whirlwind to the ground Her pinions like the rush of waters sound."

Thus with the Lord. The upward glancing of an imploring eye brings Him instantly to our relief.

"How slowly doth His wrath arise, On swiftest wings salvation flies ;
And if He bid His anger burn, Soon shall His frowns to pity turn."

When a man is in his extremity, Peter sinking in the waves, the dying thief breathing out his expiring life, the publican in the temple groaning under his load of sin, the father of the demoniac crushed and despairing, Jairus with his daughter dying, he needs instant help, present deliverance ; and swifter than the wings of the eagle Christ speeds to the rescue. Before you call upon Him He will answer, and while you are yet speaking He will hear.

5. Is the eagle careful and tender to her young? The mother-eagle is a true parent. While her eaglets need feeding she feeds them. All plunder and spoil she brings home to them. The Lord is our Provider and we shall not want. For the body, our bread shall be given us and our water shall be sure. With the finest of the wheat He will feed us and with oil out of the flinty rock. And if this land in which we live flows not with milk and honey, at all events no *good* thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. As to our minds, in the vast stores of learning and suggestive thought handed down from past generations, and in the treasures which are being amassed in this the most active-minded of all the ages, we have a goodly heritage. Above all, as to the needs of the spirit within us, what ample provision has been made in the records of eternal truth, in the doctrines of God, of Christ, of man, of redemption and immortality—truths

which when believed excite within us an intense hunger and thirst for righteousness, and lead us to satisfaction to the feast of fat things—the provision of His house, even of His holy temple!

“As the eagle stirreth up her nest, flourisheth over her young, expandeth her wings, O THY LORD alone did lead them and there was no strange god with them.” That is to say, when the eaglets are old enough to try their wings the mother bird tears up her nest so as to oblige them to make a venture. So when our Lord sees us nestling down among creature-comforts, building earthly nests for ourselves and fixing our affections upon our homes, estates, our refined associations, and our growing wealth, and sees us rocked to sleep, forgetting closet-duties, the Bible, self-denial, and Christ, is it any wonder if He tears up the nest however cosy, sends loss upon loss, and snatches away our cherished idols? until stirred up from slumber, sloth, unbelief, we plume our wings for a heavenly flight and cry as we mount, “Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee, even though a cross it be that raiseth me, still all my song shall be, Nearer, my God, to Thee.” And is it not in love that this is done? Would the eaglet be the better for remaining in the nest? Can a greater curse come down upon any one than to be let alone of the Spirit? Is it not better to take nauseous medicines than to be sick? to be rudely disturbed amidst your dreams and unceremoniously turned out of house and home than to be left to perish in the flames? Oh my unsaved friend, if a career of prosperity has not led you in gratitude to present

your body to Him a living sacrifice, God grant that the invariably kind and long-suffering Saviour may in mercy and in love by severer methods of treatment break up your indifference and bring you to penitence. But having stirred up the nest by way of admonition to flight, she hovers over it in order to show her young an example of flying that they may see how it is done, and thus be encouraged to imitate what they see. And what are these Gospels but a picture of Christ fluttering over the Church, to teach us to fly, to practise self-denial, to ascend above the world? When the mother bird sees them afraid to follow her, she spreads abroad her wings, and stretches away for a sail. It is dizzy work up there and dangerous. But they cling to her and she transports them in safety. Afterwards they must learn to fly for themselves. She aids with her wings their feeble and imperfect attempts, till emboldened they fearlessly commit themselves to the air. At first they will reel and flutter and fall down and bruise themselves on rocks and tree-tops, but they are learning. At last, after their wings have become stronger, and they are more expert in using them, they soar away with her, rising from the top of the mountain in the eye of the sun, making small circles, then larger gyrations, always rising towards the sun, in ever-expanding spiral, till they become mere points in the air, and are soon lost to human vision. From that time onward they keep her company in all her voyaging for plunder. Thus Christ looks after the weak and feeble, bearing with their infirmities, encouraging their initial exercises of faith and love, appreciating their smallest service.

He carries the lambs in His bosom and gently leads them that are with young. He teaches us to die to things below, and to rise to things above, and in all our soarings of trust and aspiration, we cannot fall so as to perish, for underneath are the everlasting arms.

IV. *The Christian is "like the eagle."*

1. He renews his youth like the eagle. The eagle sheds its feathers every spring, when it becomes very weak; but with growth of its feathers returns also its vigour, so that even in old age it has all the freshness of youth. This is most beautifully alluded to by sacred writers to show how the Christian is revived and renewed in body and spirit by the quickening influences of God's grace. Thus Isaiah (xl. 29-31): "He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." So the Psalmist in the context (Ps. ciii. 1-5). This renovation of youth may be understood (1) as to his bodily strength. When our bodies are ready to drop into the grave and crumble into dust, God can by a word restore them to health and strength. When Naaman had once submitted to the prophet's counsel which at first he despised, his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child. But if the outward man perishes, the inner man may be renewed day by day. (2) As to his worldly successes, civil honours. (3) As to his spiritual condition. Probably in all these regards he had suffer-

ed and at last through the goodness of God was renewed in every respect. The eagle's youth is renewed by a succession of new feathers of the same kind in place of the old; but the believer's youth by casting off the remains of the old nature, which is corrupt, and by putting on more of the new man. "Less of self and more of Thee." "None of self and all of Thee." Naturalists say that the eagle renews his strength, when he is so weak as not to be able to feed upon flesh, by sucking the blood of his prey. So saints renew their strength by eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of Christ, and get rid of their weakness by believingly laying hold of His strength, offered to us in the promises and ordinances of the Gospel. Wait upon the Lord, admiringly contemplate His sufferings and the effusion of His blood, and you shall mount up as on eagle's wings. This leads me to say

2. He soars aloft. He mounts up with wings as the eagle, which in his daring excursions swings himself gradually upwards, past mountains with their glittering coronal of snow, past clouds and the region of thunder and lightning and tempest into the clear golden sea of sunshine towards the limits of the atmosphere. Bats may hide in caverns; owls may hoot in midnight forests; swallows twitter on tree-tops and house-tops. But eagles are "children of the sky and playmates of the storm." So God meant that every Christian should leave the lower atmosphere of worldliness and sin behind him and stretch away toward the highest heaven. His conversation should be in heaven. As an heir of glory he has a right to breathe its pure air. God did not make him to

creep and grovel and burrow, but to set his affections on things above, and go on from strength to strength. Ruskin in his second lecture on "The Eagle's Nest" quotes from a poem of William Blake, that fiery genius, whose poems had more merit than his paintings.

"Doth the eagle know what is in the pit,
Or wilt thou go ask the mole?"

The soul of the Christian should not cleave to the dust, but should tower away towards Christ and heavenly things. Defile not yourself, my brother, in the pit or on the dunghill, but triumph over the world, rising upon the wings of faith and Divine support.

3. Ye parents; learn the lesson: amid all your soarings, forget not your children. Teach them to elevate their thoughts towards heaven and the Sun of righteousness, and to soar more and more to that region of light and blessedness. So Goldsmith sings of the village pastor:

"Thus in his duty prompt, at every call
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;
And as a bird, each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay
Allured to brighter worlds and led the way."

Oh, shall it be said that birds are wiser in training their young to soar on high than Christian parents their children in those experiences which will fit them to people the skies?

4. A lesson there is, too, of personal watchfulness. After having aspired in prayer and meditation after God, and been lifted in spirit to your future home,

when you come back to earth to attend to daily duties, be sober, be vigilant. When our Lord and the favoured three came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, they found the adversary entrenched in a human soul at the base. A shepherd watched an eagle soar up from a cliff. It flew far up, then grew unsteady and reeled. One wing drooped and then another, and the bird fell with dreadful speed to the ground. The shepherd ran and saw that while it was on the earth a little serpent had twined itself about its leg, and as it rose gnawed it further and further till the heart was struck. So you have seen one fall into hopeless disgrace and ruin. Beware of that neglect of prayer, secret dishonesty, stealthy connivance at sin, or licentious indulgence, which is the serpent that has destroyed so many.

But do not dream that while in this world you shall be freed from temptation. If you rise permanently above wickedness and worldliness, new forms of temptation will assail you. Nevertheless, blessed is the soul that lives above! Blessed the discipline that stirs up our nest! Blessed the truth that makes us like Christ! In old copies of the Bible is a picture representing John writing the Apocalypse, and an eagle bringing him a quill. There is much of the eagle in John soaring to heights which no mortal had ever before attained. Raphael painted him reposing on eagle's wings. Oh, ye sons of God, never bedraggle your wings in the mire! Rise from transitory things to heaven your native place.

A word in conclusion to the young: aim at nothing lower than the skies.

"What is that, mother? The eagle, my boy,
Proudly careering his course of joy;
Firm on his mountain-vigour relying,
Breasting the dark storm, the red bolt defying,
His wing on the wind and his eye on the sun,
He swerves not a hair, but bears onward, right on.
Boy, may the eagle's flight ever be thine;
Onward and upward and true to the line."

Thus living, the end of your mortal career will be
triumphant. You will soar away to mingle with the
blaze of day.

THE EXISTENCE AND INFLUENCE OF THE INVISIBLE.

“ We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor. iv. 18.

“ And Elisha prayed and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man ; and he saw : and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” 2 Kings vi. 17.

In the early morning Elisha's servant saw the city of Dothan invested by the Syrian host, and came in consternation to his master to ask what should be done. Elisha answered, “ Fear not ; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them ; ” and in answer to his prayer, the Lord opened the young man's eyes, and he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire to protect the man of God.

Now my point is that they were there before the young man saw them. They were there where to his unopened eyes nothing appeared. There are unseen forces as real at least as those that appear to our senses.

From the standpoint of finite beings the universe may be divided into the seen and the unseen. There is but one Being to whom nothing is unseen. It is He who filleth space and inhabiteth eternity. Much by

the angels is seen, but a vastly larger field remains unseen. While as for *men*, that which is seen is included within a comparatively small circle. The whole system of things which comes under man's observation, as compared with the universe, is but as a drop in the ocean. Now, man's compound nature fits him to communicate with both the seen and the unseen. In early life and until our physical being is somewhat developed, our lives are sensuous; we are learning to live as animals. It is the evident intention of God that intellect should then awake and in due time take hold on truth, to which it had been originally configured. Nor is this all. It is plainly the will of God that when the mental powers are somewhat advanced we should go on and hold communion with the invisible world through our loftier nature, which without such communion dies. The world is not an empty void, but is alive with tremendous forces, and peopled by many beings.

There is much to make us forget and ignore the unseen world. Our *work* with its constant stress and strain, unrelenting and inexorable, to which we are ever driven by the unceasing clamours of appetite and the demands of the family and of society; our *pleasures*, whether they be those of toys or lust or wine, or search of deep philosophy, wit, eloquence, and poesy—whether obtained in relaxation, in books, in convivial society, or in our happy homes; our *afflictions*, whether in the form of physical pain, mental anguish, remorse, bereavement, shame, filling the mind to the exclusion of every other subject of thought—these constitute the awful tyranny of the seen and the temporal, and are made use of by

the great adversary of man to keep us unmindful of our highest interests.

There are those who deny the existence of the invisible world. Mr. Mallock says: "The highest generalizations of modern science are denials of the duration of the human soul and body." Mr. Leslie Stephen says: "People have discovered that heaven and hell belong to dreamland." In a certain work one asks, What do you believe? With a stamp of the foot on the solid earth the answer is, "I believe in *that*." As if there was nothing to believe but what was palpable to the senses. Is there, then, nothing but what is appreciable by the senses? If so, by what senses do men come to know that thought and emotion exist, become cognizant of the operation of the conscience or the will? Indeed, we can go but a little way before the region of the invisible and the occult impinges upon us. This muscular movement, how account for it? By a nervous impulse, which it obeys. Yes, but whence comes the nervous impulse? From the mind, the will. Surely, but how does the will communicate itself to the nerves? Here we are in the undiscoverable. Look at this beautiful flower. Please account for its form, hue, and fragrance. All your explanations involving the question of supply from earth, air, and sun-beams, of changes chemical, mechanical, and vital, only give us names for what is not explained, and leave us where we were at the outset—in the dark. What a pity and a shame that, while Plato living in dark days held a philosophy that led beyond what is seen and sensuous to the eternal prototypes of

the true, the beautiful, and the good, many modern philosophers living in the blaze of gospel day, deny the existence of the spiritual and eternal !

Indeed God will not leave us to be swallowed up in the present without intimation from various quarters of the existence of the higher world. The telescope and microscope have revealed to us new worlds in space and in drops of water. May not other worlds be opened up to us as time rolls on? On the border line between the seen and the unseen, or just on this side or the other, are the electric fluid, chemical forces, the odylic power, impalpable but real, intimating the existence of an unseen world.

Again : what is to us most real is not present to the bodily senses. Our past lives and future destinies are completely beyond the reach of our senses, and yet how much more do our thoughts and feelings dwell in the invisible past and future than in the visible present. It is this that raises us above the brutes that perish, and that gives breadth and dignity to human life. And who is there whose inner life, shut up not only against the intermeddling of strangers but against the intrusion of all—an inner life of secret hopes and fears, of joys and sorrows, of remorse and anguish, of backward looks and forward glances—does not speak to him of the likelihood that there is a mysterious world, beyond the ken of human eye or ear?

Besides, how can you reconcile the wisdom of the Creator with the pessimist creed of despair of the future and of the unseen? Think of man with his wonderful powers of investigation and invention, his

skill in reasoning, his memory a storehouse which admits of endless accumulation, his conscience the oracle of God ; think of this being, winged with imagination and hope, and constructed upon the principle of endless progression in knowledge and moral excellence, and tell me where would be the wisdom of creating such a being, of kindling such a flame only to extinguish it in the moment of death? Even human wisdom adapts means to the end proposed. But if this life be all, the enormous folly has been committed of a lavish expenditure of moral and intellectual wealth upon a creature of a day—folly infinitely greater than if the great masters of art had immediately destroyed the monuments of their genius by which they won their enduring fame as soon as the finishing touches had been put upon them !

Still further : if at death our career is finally and forever closed, why is it that we have an inward craving and longing after the things unseen? Why if we sin do we dread the future? Why hunger and thirst after righteousness? Why in the times of sorest trial are we, as it were, roused by God's own right hand from deep sleep and vain dreams of frivolity and worldliness, and made to pass our verdict upon this world as vanity and vexation of spirit? Oh ! if there be no future for man, then our nature is a lie, and the promise which our Creator has written upon our hearts and minds, and subscribed with His own autograph, is the most cruel of deceptions.

Moreover : it is an impeachment of the divine justice to deny the existence of the eternal world. Here in this world is a very unequal distribution of earthly

comfort and creature good. See how often the wicked flourish like the green bay tree! They have more than heart can wish. They grind the faces of the poor. In the enjoyment of great prosperity they live, flourish, and die. Behold the virtuous and godly! How often they are crushed by poverty and oppressed by the powerful; they languish on sick-beds; they die as martyrs for the truth. Is there no world where the inequalities of the present life shall be adjusted, where the base and unrighteous shall be driven from their usurped dominion, and be compelled to disgorge their ill-gotten gains, and where the pure and the meek shall inherit the high places of honour, behold the beatific vision, and exult in the felicity and glory of the skies? But they who affirm that there is no such future reckoning and readjustment will find it difficult, not to say impossible, to show that there is justice in the administration of the Judge of all the earth.

Yet once more: come, my sceptical friend, to the bedside of your mother, sister, wife, child. That pure and loving presence is about to be withdrawn. As the frame grows weaker, the spirit within grows stronger, as though pluming itself for its heavenward flight. Her intellect was never so strong; her manners never so engaging; her hopes never so radiant. She tells you (does she?) that she is about with Hobbes to take a leap in the dark, or, as Tyndall says, that like a streak of morning cloud she is about to melt into the infinite azure of the past? No. She tells you that she is going home to die no more, that she loves the Lord Jesus, has long loved Him, has had distinct communications of

His favour and assurances of His love, that her sins are forgiven, her heart is changed, and that secure in the righteousness which is by grace through faith she can welcome death and the Judgment Day. On a sudden with the light of gladness shining in her eyes she cries, "They have come," She assures you that she sees departed friends and angelic spirits. She wonders you do not see them. "Don't you hear them singing? Such strains I never heard. Hark, they whisper, angels say, Sister spirit, come away." Oh, what a strange beauty the pale face and dark eyes put on! She reaches out her hands as if to embrace the heavenly visitants; they fall; the celestial brightness lingers a little on the face and then fades away. She is *gone*. Did I say aright, my friend? Or should I have said that you have seen the last of all the brightness and wit, and love, and hope, which you have here enjoyed, for the light in which you have so long sunned yourself, is put out forever? No, no, no, your heart indignantly protests, it shall shine on, if not here, somewhere else forever. She is gone to the invisible world, your heart's best instincts declare, to live forever, and you may meet her yet.

But the testimony of God Himself puts its *quictus* upon all doubts of this kind. All that I have said is only to make credible the doctrine of a future life—to prepare our minds for the doctrine of an unseen world. We speak, of course, of those awful verities, which no light of natural science has ever fallen upon or can reveal, which God's word, however, has revealed to our faith, and which we confidently believe to exist. Now "faith is the substance of

things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Human faith is based upon the testimony of a competent witness, one who knows whereof he speaks, and is of such a character that he will not utter a falsehood. In human affairs the value of faith is incalculable. And we are bound for the sake of society and of ourselves to trust competent witnesses. Divine faith, says Bishop Pearson, is an assent unto something as credible upon the testimony of God. This assent is the highest kind of faith, because the object has the highest credibility, being grounded upon the infallible testimony of God. His knowledge and wisdom are infinite. "The Lord is a God of knowledges," said Hannah. "Of His understanding there is no end." He cannot, therefore, be deceived. His justice is equal to His knowledge, nor is His holiness inferior to His wisdom. "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." "If we believe not He abideth faithful; He cannot deny himself." It is, therefore, says the Bishop, most infallibly certain that being infinitely wise He cannot be deceived, and being infinitely good He cannot deceive; and upon these two immovable pillars rests the authority of the testimony of God. Where is this testimony? In this Book, these lively oracles—

"The Author God Himself;
The subject God and man; salvation, life
And death—eternal life, eternal death.
Dread words, whose meaning has no end, no bounds.
Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!"

Taking then this bright candle, this flaming torch of revelation, and thrusting it out into the dense darkness

which broods over this world, and the denser darkness which broods over the invisible world, what do you see? Deluded multitudes, pursuing phantoms, satisfied with husks, giddily dancing on the margin of a pit, and beguiling with idle songs and merriment the lazy-footed hours between them and their ruin. Behold! what do you see? The devil stealing on them, often unsuspected and always invisible, luring them nearer and nearer to the tremendous gulf. Behold! what see you? Death pushing one off and now another. Behold! what see you? Our best friend, the invisible God and Saviour, in whom we live, move and have our being, who has us under His eye every moment of our existence, and to whom we are responsible for the right employment of all our powers. Behold! what see you? A great white throne, and One sitting on it, before whom all mankind is gathered, and the books are opened, and another book is opened which is the Book of Life; and the dead are judged out of those things which are written in the books according to their works; the wicked are consigned to everlasting misery and despair and the righteous are exalted to be forever with the Lord. Behold! what see you? Two worlds which my nature predicted, the one rising far above human unassisted vision, the home of the saved,

“ A region so radiant with glory and light
That hope's brightest visions are lost in the sight ; ”

the other sunk far below human sight, prepared originally for the devil and his angels, into which are cast also those that are contentious and obey not the truth, the wilfully blind, the rejectors of this great salvation,

"Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where Peace
And Rest can never dwell, Hope never comes
That comes to all."

To many this view of the unseen world is most unwelcome. It is a dreadful thought to the thief who steals as he supposes with impunity, because there are none as he vainly dreams to see the deed of darkness; to the fraudulent who overreaches the ignorant and helpless; to the murderer, the voice of whose victim's blood cries out to him from the ground, and whose conscience torments him before his time, but who endeavors to silence his forebodings with the vain delusion that the transaction was so well managed that no traces of his crime were left to betray; to the youth, whose imagination is a chamber of the vilest imagery; to the violator of the seventh commandment, whose solace is the hope that none are aware of it but the guilty partner of his sins. To every such one the thought that he is in the immediate vicinage of the invisible world, with its countless inhabitants, good and bad, that unperceived they mix with the throng, that from them he cannot sequester himself, even when secure from interruption from every other quarter, that from the highets intelligence to the lowest in the unseen world, millions of eyes observe him, millions of minds study him, and that especially he is never from under the keen scrutiny of the all-searching Eye, to which the night shineth as the day—this thought steadily considered must excite the most agonizing emotion.

But it need be terrible only to those who are determined to go on in sin. From the unseen world there

comes not one word to discourage the penitent, but everything to encourage him. Your state is such you need a Saviour. In the invisible world He is. He loves you, He died for you. He waits to be gracious. He invites you to look to Him, to come to Him, and be saved. Though you do not see Him, He sees you. He offers pardon for the past, a new life for the future. Hear Him say "Let the wicked forsake his way and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him." The lotus root down in the muddy ooze, true to its instinctive yearning after the sunlight, presses its way upward till it reaches the day, and bursts into blossom and blushes into beauty. Do you feel a longing after Christ and holiness and heaven? " 'Tis the Spirit's rising beam." If you are faithful to the strivings of the Spirit, despite your environment of moral feculence and social corruption, if you look up to the unseen Saviour, and press your way on, life will begin to throb within you and faith and hope and love will grow, and the beauty and fragrance of the bright consummate flower of your Christian life will be manifest to all, while to crown all by-and-by in His own time our Beloved, whom having not seen we love, coming down into His garden to gather lilies will transplant you into the Paradise of God, where you shall unfold your beauties and waft your fragrance before His throne in heaven.

My fellow Christian, looking is the condition of your life, success, and enjoyment. On the principle—"out of sight, out of mind" you will find yourself likely to forget the unseen world. You must refresh yourself

with arguments which establish the great doctrine. You will need much and frequently to reflect upon the eternal world which floats all about us and soars above us. If you would get the good that you may from this mental and spiritual exercise of looking—for it is all this and will call for the loftiest exercise of your highest powers—you must give not merely a transient glance, but a steady and persistent look of the attentive mind to these high matters. Such a look as the cherubim directed to the mercy-seat, or the angels to the mysteries of redemption—a continuous and protracted study with a view to self-improvement by constant self-application. You should look till your mind is filled with vivid images of spiritual and eternal realities, till you are fully possessed with the feeling, "Thou, God, seest me," till Christ to you is glorious, precious, real, loving, your Saviour, Brother, Friend; till you can almost hear the song of the redeemed; till heaven, instead of being a shadowy dream, becomes a glorious substance with every revealed fact as real to your mind as the scenery of your native place is to your bodily eyes.

But this can only be achieved when the heart has been drawn and constrained and renovated by the grace of God. Only when we have learned to love His favour more than the praise of men or the honours of this life, to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the short-lived pleasures of sin, to esteem the odium of the cross and the sanctified afflictions associated therewith as treasures with which we are endowed by our God, shall we be able to see Him who is invisible. "Blessed are the pure in heart

for they shall see God." And this purity is wrought within us only as the result on the human side of deep and sincere penitence, earnest consideration, hallowed meditation and fervent prayer. Prayer it is that will give spiritual value to our studies, and make our reflections a means of holiness. Prayer, fervent and importunate, will give strength and clearness to the intellect, vigour and definiteness of aim to the will; prayer will quiet the spirit, hush the tumults of disordered feeling and prepare the soul for the vision of the spiritual world.

"O Thou by whom we come to God, The Life, the Truth, the Way!
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod; Lord, teach us how to pray."

Such a habit of soul will be of infinite value in enabling one to estimate objects at their proper value. Because we take small standards by which to measure ourselves and our deeds, we become puffed up with pride and vanity. Great swelling words are upon our lips, and we play such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels smile or weep. But if, instead of comparing ourselves with ourselves, we look beyond and enlarge our horizon it will tend to correct our mistakes. On the level earth how small our world seems, and relatively how great are we! But ascend a mountain, and how the scene widens; reach the top and look around to see on all sides ranges beyond ranges of mountains, and the shimmering sea stretching far out, while on the extreme verge of the horizon the rim of heaven's vault seems to rest, and how overwhelming the aspects of grandeur! But what is all you see to what you do not see? What the vast world we occupy to

the created universe! And what is the vast creation to the invisible and eternal, to the Infinite and Eternal God! There is nothing great beside Him. One glimpse of Him and our pride must collapse, our fond conceits disappear, and our spirits sink into the dust.

This habit will conduce to the strength of our character. Wrote Huxley: "The lover of moral beauty struggling through a world of sorrows and sin is surely as much the stronger for believing that sooner or later a vision of perfect peace and goodness will burst upon him as a toiler up a mountain for the belief that beyond crag and snow, lie home and rest;" and he added, "could faith like this be placed upon a firm basis mankind would cling to it as tenaciously as ever drowning sailor did to a hencoop." The mind that has to do with the unseen world comes in contact with the most stirring facts, most glorious principles, and most quickening spirits. What gave to Moses his extraordinary strength of character so that never but once in his long command of the Israelities, though placed often in circumstances of the most critical character, did he fail of what was due to himself, just to his countrymen, and glorifying to God." "He endured as seeing Him who was invisible." What gave the apostles such power that they made the Sanhedrim tremble? They dwelt in the invisible; they walked and talked with God. If you would renew your strength wait on the Lord; so shall you mount up as on eagle's wings, you shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.

It will furnish one with guiding principles in life.
"What is really wanted," said Tyndall, "is the lifting

power of an ideal element in human life." Because our souls cleave unto the dust earthliness pervades our actions. But a man who lives in the consciousness of God's love, ever remembering that God's eye is upon him, is anxious to please Him, makes it his chief motive to do so, and is saved from a vast deal of trouble in the determination of many questions in practical life. Is it God's will? Will it stand the test of the Judgment Day? Is it according to the Golden Rule? A number of conflicting motives which waste time and fritter away energy in less elevated minds have here no room for play. His polar-star is God's will; his magnet his sincere intention of conforming his life to it; and thus he has guidance through the pathless wilderness or over the storm-tossed ocean. He is safe while acting from such principles whithersoever they may carry him.

It will arm with power to resist temptation. A young man came to a certain city, strong, confident, self-seeking. He fell into great temptation. Had he then fallen, it was afterward his conviction, he would probably never have risen. He was about to yield. All barriers were seemingly giving way, when as he sat in his room one evening he heard the murmur of voices in the adjacent room. At length he heard distinctly, "Deliver us from evil," and a little voice repeating "Deliver us from evil." It was a mother leading the devotions of her little child. For a moment it seemed the voice of his own mother. Back with a sudden bound through all the intervening years went his thoughts and he was again at his mother's knees.

Casting himself upon the floor he humbly and reverently repeated the prayer, heart and eye uplifted to heaven. The hour and power of darkness had passed. He was no longer on slippery places, but on the rock. Is one tempted to sin in the privacy of the most private chamber by Potiphar's shameful wife? The thought "Thou, God, seest me" rescues him, and exclaiming "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against the Lord?" he hides himself in the sure refuge for every sinner. "Surely," says Jeremy Taylor, "if we would always remember that Jehovah is the Eye of the world, ever beholding our actions, and an unwearied Arm ever uplifted to crush and smite into ruin, it would cause much sin to cease from among us and make us more like those who walk continually in the light before the throne."

It will sustain in the time of trial. Once when fording the Susquehannah on horseback, Mr. Astor became so dizzy as to be about to lose his seat. Suddenly he received a blow on his chin from his companion who cried "Look up." He did look up and recovered his balance. Looking on the troubled waters imperilled his life, the blow and looking up saved it. So it is often under God's discipline. A sudden shock comes to our persons, or death to our friends. Looking downward on self or the object of our idolatry, we are in peril. Looking upwards, we are blessed and strengthened, and the trial which was intended for our good is sanctified to our profit. We see it is the Lord; and as our friend has gone to heaven, we praise the Lord, who has seen fit to lift him up over our heads, for what is our loss is our dear friend's gain. He enjoys the cool

arcades, the refreshing rest, and the beatific vision. Oh, how many we have loved are yonder! More in heaven, aged saint, of those you have loved, than are here. As you have sometimes looked toward the invisible world and the dear ones within its pavilions and you have felt them near, very near, has it not seemed as though the things unseen, throbbing with life, trembled almost into visibility, and the songs of the glorified almost reached your ears? In such halcyon experiences, did not your sorest trial seem to be like a light affliction, and the most protracted agony but for a moment, and that both and all by God's amazing grace were working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? And is not this exactly what Paul says in the context: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; *while* we look?" You will see others down to the brink of the dark river. But as you bid them adieu with aching hearts, the Master will meet them and they shall be forever with the Lord. Anticipate all trials, go down into the dark valley of their shadow, remain in them, and come up out of them with much looking to the unseen world, for this is God's own method for converting curses into blessings and calamities into sources of thankfulness and joy.

Some of you are waiting near the curtain between the seen and the unseen; and looking for it to be lifted. It will be lifted and that ere long, and what are images more or less clearly defined will burst upon your ravished vision vastly more glorious than you had ever thought. You shall see the King in His beauty, and

with that glorious morn shall once more smile those whom you loved long since and lost awhile. Have patience a little longer and wait all your appointed time till your change come. And here are younger brothers and sisters who will not grow old in the Saviour's service here. The summons will come in the midst of life's labours and cares, a summons which cannot be disregarded. Lift your eyes from the seen and the temporal and regard the unseen and eternal. Project yourself forward amid heaven's splendours and glories. Study them till your soul flutters its wings as if ready for instant flight, and while yet in the body breathes the spirit of its future home.

And what shall I say to you who are as yet insensible to the awful realities of the future state? What but this, that you are setting your affections on things that shall perish and with them too your soul. Be persuaded to open your eyes, or rather to ask God to open them for you, and never rest until you have begun to realize wonderful things out of His law. He is here who is asking, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? Be this your reply: "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then shall the Bible be unsealed, and your heart renewed; Christ will become precious, sin abominable, holiness lovely. Till then you are starving while bread is within your reach; perishing with thirst though the brimming well is at hand; and drowning though the life buoy and the friendly rope are hard by your side. In jeopardy every hour and moment, and unaware. Who, my friend, so blind as you? Oh, pray God to open your eyes that you may see your-

self, your perils, your emergencies, and your only Saviour, and find yourself in a new world, a world full of God.

No, Mr. Leslie Stephen, people have not discovered that heaven and hell belong to dreamland. They are only dreaming that they dream and talking in their sleep. There is a world of the most grand and solemn realities around the sinner. Voices, deep and loud, speak to him. Visions of awful majesty pass before him. Hell flames almost at his feet. Heaven sends its music from above. But he is fast asleep. It were well if the German saying were true that "men are never so near awaking as when they dream that they dream." But I very much fear that words such as those from the pens of accomplished scribes will tend to hush men into profounder slumbers, only to be broken by the crash of doom when

"The waking soul shall feel itself
In light of blazing day,"

the morning of eternity, when they shall stand before the bar of the eternal judgment and behold their king and Judge, whose face they have never seen before till they behold it once in wrath and go out from its presence forever.



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