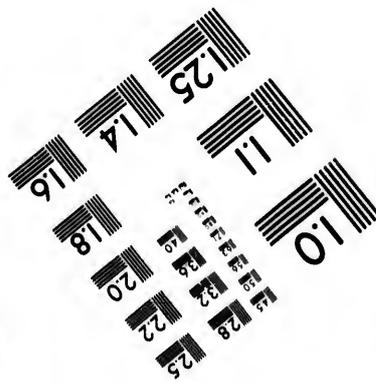
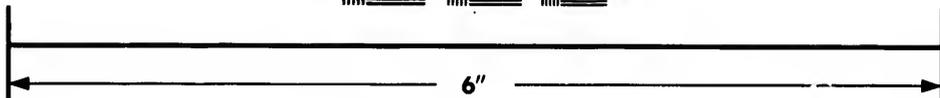
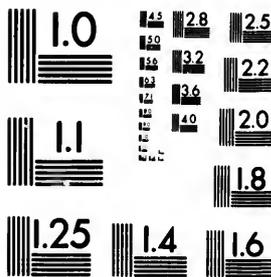


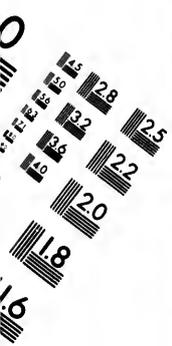
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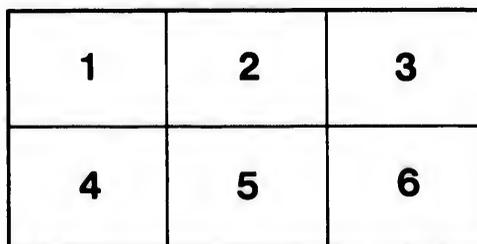
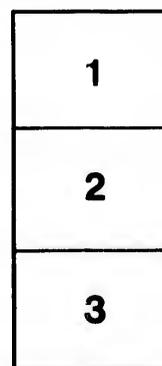
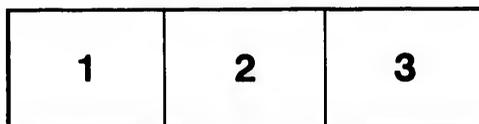
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GEHENNA AND ITS FIRE.

MARK IX. 43, 44

“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

THESSE words from the lips of Christ; what do they mean? That is the question which I am intent on trying to answer according to the vision granted me. It can hardly be that any apology is necessary, in bringing up the question before an assembly of Christian worshippers, or that any difficulty need be felt in doing so. To lovers of poetry and the drama, nothing is much more interesting and absorbing than the study of one of Shakespeare's obscure and controverted passages, nor would they consider time wasted, and energy misspent in attempts to elucidate it; and with our reverence for, and faith in the Lord Jesus, a dark and hard saying of His, must always possess strong attraction for us,

and we shall always be ready and willing to give attention to an honest student's thoughts about it, even when we may half suspect that our own are truer and better.

These words, then; what do they mean? They were evidently spoken in a very serious and solemn mood, and were evidently intended to represent a very serious and solemn reality. We cannot read them—thrice repeated as they are—without feeling that. They warn us severely of something to be guarded against and avoided, and that can only be escaped by taking earnest heed to ourselves; by means of earnest self-discipline; and the something of which they warn us is clearly of a grave and stern character. But it is conveyed, you see, in figures, not in plain, direct language; and we are left to find out *what* it is which the figures convey—*what* it is which they were employed to indicate or suggest. And let us remember at the beginning, one thing,—an important and fundamental principle for our guidance, to preserve us from drifting into mistake and error—viz., that whatever, on the first glance, they may *appear* to shadow forth, or however some may have interpreted them, it is impossible, supposing them to have been uttered

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by Christ, that they should contain ought inconsistent, or at variance, with His own manifestation of God in the flesh, with the image and idea which His whole life and teaching have given us of God—of God in His attitude toward, and His relations with men—with the Father, "*our Father*," the righteous Father, whom He has declared to us ; nothing inconsistent, or at variance, with this, must we venture to draw from them, unless we would deny the Lord. Should it seem to be there, we must shrink from and decline to accept it, even though unable to perceive for the time any other adequate explanation ; concluding, either that our vision is jaundiced by previous false traditions and influences, or that we have not a correct report of the great Teacher's expressions, and content to wait patiently for further light ; determined anyhow, not to admit profanely a contradiction of the God displayed in Christ, for the sake of bowing to the *apparent* sentiment of an obscure verse, and positive anyhow, that the contradiction could not have been delivered by Him ; exemplifying thus, a real and reverent allegiance to the Almighty Father, after the manner of a faithful and loyal son, who, on meeting, in the course

of a letter from his father, with a clause which he could only understand in a sense that made his father say what he felt to be wholly unworthy of him, and what he knew to be utterly alien from his spirit and character, would unhesitatingly refuse to receive it as his father's word, assured that there must be some different and more satisfactory reading of it, though at present not obvious to him, and resolving to let the clause lie unexplained, until it might yield him, on future inspection, its true import, or until he could see the author of the communication, and ask him about it.

Now we know, without my staying to describe it, what the popular opinion is, concerning the Hell of which Christ speaks ; and I must need begin by repudiating it, under the constraint, the irresistible constraint of the conviction, that it is diametrically opposed to all that He has shown, and told us, of God ; that it contravenes entirely the revelation which He has brought to us of the Father. I do not, however, acknowledge that there is that powerful countenance of it in the text, which has been claimed for it, or that it would have been difficult to derive from thence anything besides. I believe, on the con-

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trary, that a careful and unprejudiced examination of the sentence in the light of the context, and of the Scriptures generally, would have led to far other views—would have discovered in its terms, with ease, a far truer presentation—a presentation stern and severe indeed, yet in perfect harmony with, and not only so, but sweetly illustrative of, the Divine Fatherliness of which Christ was the grand certificate and unveiling; to my mind, in fact, the ungodlike and terrible Hell of orthodox Christianity would scarcely have been found here at all, but that the searchers, in their approach, brought it with them, and having unwittingly inserted what they brought, it soon appeared,—and to many has ever since appeared,—to belong there; the difficulty now being to cast it out from thence, and descry the reality which it has overlaid and hidden.

If you ask me how I can account for the origin and growth of the fearful thing, if it came not from the Book, but was carried thither and interjected; my suggestion would be, that, all God-contradicting and God-dishonouring as it is, it may yet actually have had its root in a profound sense of the enormity and the hopelessness of sin, engendered by the very impression

of God's great love ; thus, thrilled with the wonderful Divine grace and mercy that broke upon them in the face of Christ, and changed and transfigured them, the first believers in the Gospel, saw, as they had never seen before, the hideousness, the baseness, of persistence in sin, and in their intense disgust and horror could imagine nothing for it hereafter but unending woe. Could it deserve less ? Could less be inflicted on it for continued rebellion against, and rejection of, such love ? And then there would be also the feeling—when after a while it has failed to melt and win the transgressor—when after a while he has shown himself able to resist it, what more can possibly be done for him to save him ?—what is left wherewith to persuade him ?—what will remain but to punish him, to punish him with everlasting torment ? I would have us consider that the doctrine of the eternal Hell may be traceable, not to the low, the base, and the savage in our nature, but rather, to the effect produced in relation to the thought of sin—the half delirious, half intoxicating effect produced by the first rich shedding abroad in men's hearts of the love of God ; by the first torrent of enthusiasm for Him that swept them, beneath

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the new divine revealings of the Incarnation and the Cross. I think it may have been so ; their holy despair of, and wrath against, sin, under the vision of the magnificent Being whom they beheld in these, blinding them for a time, to the patent truth, that *such* a Being must need go on for ever to seek the cure and conquest of sin, and could never, while He continued the same Being, turn aside from or grow weary of the work ; that the love, the withstanding and rejection of which by the sinner aggravates his guilt, and renders him worthy of punishment, is the no less certain promise and pledge with regard to him, that instead of being left, at some point further on, to sink in unextinguishable flames of suffering, he will be pursued, and pursued, with whatever redemptive severities, until the lost is found.

But to come now to the words before us ; what do they mean ? What *is* this Hell, with its unquenchable fire, of which Christ warns us ? To go into Hell was, on His lips, as you know, simply to go into Gehenna, and Gehenna was the Syro-Chaldaic word for the Hebrew "Gahinnom," "valley of Hinnom,"—a narrow valley with steep rocky sides, running south-west of Jerusalem ; but a ravine with a *history*. It

had been, in ancient times, again and again, the scene of abominable and idolatrous rites. There, Solomon had erected high places to Moloch ; there, during the reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh, children were burnt alive in honour of the fire-god ; the name Tophet (signifying a drum), by which the valley was also designated, having arisen probably from the custom of drowning the cries of the little victims with noisy music. When, however, the devout young Josiah ascended the throne of Judah, and began the work of purging the land from its idols, he sought to express his abhorrence of the iniquities and atrocities that had been practised in the glen, by *polluting* it with heaps of human bones and other corruption, by making it the receptacle of all manner of uncleanness ; from which period it would seem to have become "the common cesspool of the city, into which its sewage was conducted, to be carried off by the waters of the Kedron," as well as the spot where combustible refuse of various kinds was gathered to be burnt. Hence, the Jews had learned to see in Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, an image of the place of future punishment, and used the name to denote the doom, the terrible doom, of the wicked. It

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represented to them,—as being “the lay stall of Jerusalem’s filth,”—the ultimate portion of corrupt souls.

Now Christ had already referred to this desecrated gorge, in the Sermon on the Mount, and His first introduction of it there, in a figurative sense, may assist in guiding us to a right understanding of His application of it here. When He declares that whosoever shall call his brother a fool—or rather, a rebel, an apostate—shall be in danger of Gehenna fire, it is obvious that He cannot be intending to represent by this, a state of eternal torment. The good Lord would never have thought of pronouncing a man deserving of such a state, who in a fit of passion, should launch at another a bad name, neither would He have adjudged the utterance to be indicative of an inner moral condition that deserved to be so recompensed; the idea is too preposterous. But look at the entire passage: “He that is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment,”—“the judgment” being the name of those “inferior law-courts, one of which was to be found in every Jewish city, which took cognisance of crimes such as robbery and murder.” The words, of course, are not to be interpreted

literally, as though they affirmed that causeless anger would render a man liable to be tried by these courts; the meaning can only be: "He who is causelessly unkind, is, in My estimation, not less worthy of condemnation than he, who, on account of a crime committed by him, is haled before 'the judgment.'" So then, the next statement: "He that saith to his brother, Raca"—thou worthless fellow—"shall be in danger of the Council,"—the highest court of judicature among the Jews, which dealt alone with the more flagrant offences,—*this* would signify that such a reviler was worthy, in the speaker's estimation, of a yet greater condemnation. And then by the sentence: "But whosoever calleth his brother apostate shall be in danger of Gehenna fire," He would intimate, that the man who carried his unreasonable wrath and quarrelsomeness so far as to slander his neighbour, by applying to him the worst epithet that a Jew could possibly apply to a Jew,—that *he* deserved to be excluded from society, to be shrunk from and avoided as an unclean thing; that he was fit only to be thrust out among *the filth* of Gehenna.

It seems evident, that in speaking of Gehenna

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here, our Lord was thinking of it as the place of corruption, as representing the gathering together of the worthless and the outcast. And now mark the antecedent context of the passage here: "If thy hand cause thee to offend, cut it off:" turn resolutely from, and renounce, whatever would hinder your growth and progress in goodness; whatever would prevent your becoming a true and healthy man; whatever would drag you down to a low level: do it at *any* cost, though it should involve the relinquishing of an indulgence, or the sacrifice of an advantage, as dear to you as your hand. "It is better for thee to enter maimed into life,"—better for thee to abridge and deny thyself thus, for the sake of rising toward the higher life, of attaining nobler being—than "to keep two hands,"—to escape losing aught of gratification or comfort to yourself, and go into Gehenna.

Now is not the meaning clear? that Gehenna was the state of moral unwholesomeness, of corruption, to which *they* would invariably reduce themselves, who refused to give up what they felt to be perilous, or prejudicial to their interests, as moral creatures; who should shrink from the suffering of letting go any habit or

pleasure, any gain or prospect, which lay in the way, and which they knew to lie in the way, of their assimilation to the Divine. When Christ says, Better life with self-mortification, than self-indulgence with Gehenna, Gehenna on His tongue, must needs stand for *corruption*, since corruption is the antithesis of life, and the literal Gehenna, as we have seen, was emphatically the *place of corruption*. Yes, the Hell by which Christ warns us to be loyal to the demands of faith, to the voice of the soul within us, is just the inward depravity which disloyalty and unfaithfulness in such directions are certain to breed; and what hell can be worse than *that*, whether the subject of it have the sense of its ugliness and wretchedness, or not? It has overtaken many around us. There are many who have kept, again and again, their two hands, rather than part with one of them in fidelity to God and right, and who are now, here upon the earth, weltering in the Gehenna of corruption, the spiritual element in them shrivelled and deadened; moral will and moral purpose infirm, diseased, paralysed; their finer susceptibilities and sensibilities decayed; the once sweet, pure heart a cage of uncleanness; there they lie, at

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home and abroad, working and laughing, eating and drinking, *in Hell*. Nor are any of us, ever guilty of unfaithfulness to conscience, of cleaving to self-gratification, when it calls us to deny ourselves, without more or less of participation in the same hell. Every violation of the soul tends to engender something of it; something of spiritual vitiation and debasement.

But the Lord Jesus goes on to speak—and speaks most emphatically and impressively—of *the fire* of Gehenna; passing thus, from the thought of the corruption induced by unworthy self-indulgence, to the thought of what such corruption shall be subject to. “Gehenna,” He says, “is frequently lit up with fires—fires kindled for the consumption of the refuse collected there; and remember, that in the moral world of God, wherever there is corruption, *there*, sooner or later, *fire* will surely come, to attack it remorselessly, until it shall be purged away. If, instead of cutting off your hand, when need arises, in order to preserve yourself wholesome and healthy, you fondly retain both hands, and grow corrupt, the issue will be, that the corruption formed shall meet, ere long, with fire seeking its destruction. If you decline to save your-

self from it, by rejecting that which begets it, think not, that you will be left to grovel in it in peace, for the flames shall lay hold upon it; *it will have to be burned out of you.*

And has not this often happened before our eyes? A young man clinging to, and following, his lower impulses, in defiance of the monitions of the higher, becomes gradually a corrupt soul, goes down gradually into Hell—into the valley of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness; and there, at length, he encounters fire, in the shape of a fiery trial of squandered means, ruined health, and body blasted with disease; and coming home to lie and suffer, *through* his sufferings he learns repentance, until he returns to life, or, perhaps, passes away into the other world, a healed and purified soul; his corruption consumed in the fire. Has it not often happened thus? Have we not seen Gehenna men, caught, and wrapped in fire that burnt till they were purged? It is the same with nations. How frequently did the fire play upon the ancient Jews, as they sank into corruption, and from time to time become their cleansing! Because they refused to keep themselves sweet, choosing the indulgence that brought putrefaction, rather

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than the denial that would have yielded life, there came among them again and again, devouring fires of affliction. And how was it in our own days, for example, with America? She contracted the corruption of slavery; it was her plague spot upon the body of her beauty—a plague spot that she would not, with sacrifice, put off from her; and though it tarried long, at last the fire came, fierce and terrible, and beneath its burning the spot disappeared, and she rose redeemed. Oh yes, Christ's words have proved themselves true, both in the experience of individuals, and in the histories of peoples: *corruption brings fire*. Surrender ignobly to your lower nature, decline to grow a man, a true, divine man, by working against the grain, by resisting the unworthy, and disciplining yourself for life, and you *do* go into Hell, and Hell involves fire—fire for the consumption of the corruption, which your surrender has produced.

Christ, you see, says not a word concerning *the time when*—says nothing whatever to imply that the fire is reserved for the future world. The Jews may have used Gehenna to symbolise the lot of the corrupt *after* death, but He was not bound by their ideas; He adopted their

figures, indeed, but put His own wider and deeper meanings into them, and He never leads us to suppose that the fire to which corruption is exposed, is *all* on the *other* side the grave. He knew that it would be *there* for those whose condition needed it, just as He knew that it was *here*. "Corruption ensures fire,"—*that* was all He said, leaving us to conclude that if the fire burn not *here*, or, burning, fail to destroy, why then, it will burn *there*, and burn there to destroy, since corruption must be consumed.

But you may ask, perhaps, did not Christ design to convey, rather, by His words, the *pain* and *woe* with which it would be punished?—that they who allow themselves to become corrupt, are destined to be tormented—merely tormented? No, I answer, unhesitatingly, because that would be at variance with His own manifestation of God, who is revealed by Him as seeking to "make an end of sin," "to destroy the works of the devil," "to turn everyone from his iniquity," and to pursue "the lost until it is found."

Such a God could never *finish* with the transgressor by plunging him in torment; He could only finish with him, by constraining him to cease

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wider and never leads to corruption in the grave. Those whose fate it was that it was all that if the fire destroy, why here to des- med. t Christ de- ds, the *pain* punished?— become cor- ted—merely itatingly, be- with His own aled by Him n,” “to des- turn every- sue “the lost with the trans- at; He could g him to cease

from his transgressions, which must always be the Divine end in dealing with him, so long as he remains unreformed. True, the application of fire to him implies suffering; but the object contemplated in making him suffer, or in leaving him to suffer, will be his *cleansing*, not his *torment*. The Scriptures tell us, that under the Divine govern- ment, chastening is for correction to teach us that this is one of the paternal principles of the Almighty; and can we imagine that, being God, He will ever change His principles? Can we venture to impute such variableness to the im- mutable One? Let us beware of the profanity. But consider, now, for a moment, two things. *First*, the figure employed—the fire of Gehenna. And for what were the fires of Gehenna lighted? To inflict pain and anguish? No; but to get rid of the city’s impurity. All its various filth was there; and for what purpose? That by the action of fire, it might be licked up, and purged away. The flame of the valley of Hin- nom cannot be made to represent the awful *suf- fering* in store for sin; it can only fitly represent the certain *consumption* of sin, to be effected through the sharpness of fire.

Then consider, *secondly*, the succeeding con-

text of the passage,—where, after having warned us that if we will not accept the painfulness, the often great painfulness, of preserving ourselves from corruption, we shall surely be cast into fire,—our Lord proceeds to add, “For everyone shall be salted with fire.” Here, then, is His own explanation—if men would but have recognised and received it—of what He meant by threatening our corruption with fire; and it shows that He had been contemplating, not an instrument of fearful torment, but an instrument of salvation from putrefaction. To be salted with fire, as the Hebrew sacrifices were salted with salt, sets forth fire, not as an avenging, but as a preserving, purifying agency; and such fire, says Christ, not a single soul shall miss; you must *ali* be cleansed; the Father will have it so, the Father is determined on it. But there can be no cleansing, there can be no rising out of sin into holiness, out of evil into good habits, without some fire of pain.

It is the *salt* through which, in connection with which, we can alone become pure oblations, offerings of a sweet smell to God. You may inflict it upon yourselves *now* if you will, so that it may not have to be inflicted on you *here-*

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after; you may now suffer, to live, if you will, of your own act and resolve, by cutting off the hand that causes you to offend, and I exhort you to do it. But if you will not, if you choose to go on in the corruption of self-indulgence, rather than endure, in order to life, the fiery smart of self-denial; be sure that you will not, therefore, escape the fire. Nay, your state of corruption will bring upon you, sooner or later, a yet severer ordeal; for, since the Father will have all men to be saved, everyone shall be salted with fire, if not by himself now, then somehow with God's ordering, and in God's way, later on. Refrain, shrink back from the voluntary self-infliction, if you will; but better, oh, better, to begin at once, and to continue burning your way into life with needful flames of self-discipline, than to develop, by weak and sinful yielding, a mass of corruption that will have to be burned out of you with hotter flames of Divine chastisement, together with keener heat of personal remorse and labour.

Thus, it seems to me, does Christ make His meaning clear. Such, it seems to me, is the fire of God, which He promises to souls that will not suffer, to heal and educate themselves—fire, not

for vengeful punishment, but for purifying correction ; fire rendered certain and inevitable by *His* holy love, who cannot leave aught of corruption in any of us unassailed, or unconsumed.

But this fire is never to be quenched : “ Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Now, these words are adapted, you know, from the ancient Book of Isaiah, which—closing with the prediction of a coming great destruction of Israel’s enemies, when they should be gathered in their pride and wickedness before Jerusalem—declares that as often thereafter, as the Lord’s people assembled to worship Him in the Holy City, they should “ go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men who had transgressed against Him ; for their worm should not die, neither should their fire be quenched.” It is patent, of course, that this is not to be understood literally : there must come *an end* to a conflagration of dead bodies.

The prophet would mean by his language, one of two things : either that the conflagration should never be extinguished in the *memory* of his grateful countrymen, so long as they lived—that their deliverance, and the doom of these transgressors, should be vividly recalled by them on each

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annual visit to the metropolis, to the end of their lives; or else, that nothing should put the fire out, while any portion of the carcasses remained to be devoured—that it should be unquenchable *until* it had done its work, and all was entirely consumed. The word is frequently used in a like limited sense, in the Old Testament Scriptures, to describe, not the absolute everlastingness of a judgment, but merely its certainty—its inexorableness, and its unrelenting continuance as long as the subjects of it continued impenitent; until it had thoroughly accomplished its purpose. "Thus saith the Lord, Because ye have forsaken Me, My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and not be quenched." Says Jeremiah in foretelling the woe for the cities of Judah, on account of their abominations, "His anger and His fury shall be poured out upon them, upon man and beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and not be quenched." And again: "I will kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, and it shall not be quenched."

When, then, Christ quoted the words of the Hebrew seer concerning the conflagration of

Israel's enemies, and applied them to the fire to which corrupt souls are to be subjected, and with which they are to be salted, what could He mean, according to Scripture usage, but that the fire should not fail without fulfilling the Father's design with regard to them; that so long as aught of their corruption lingered, needing some fiery trial for its correction, so long should it remain, "unquenchable"—"unquenchable" until the corruption had given way, and disappeared beneath it?

Such, to my vision, is our Saviour's blessed Gospel of good news, with reference to Hell-fire; that it is the fire with which God is striving, and will be always striving, to *consume sin*;—that if we neglect or refuse to judge ourselves, for our purification, He will judge us, and that nothing shall cause Him to refrain—neither the circumstance of our passing from the present world into the next, nor the continued obstinacy of our impenitence and resistance; that He will be unquenchable toward us, burning against our evil resolutely and perseveringly *for ever*, even until there is no more sin.

O Christ, I thank Thee for Thy word that sin is doomed—that it shall be destroyed; that the

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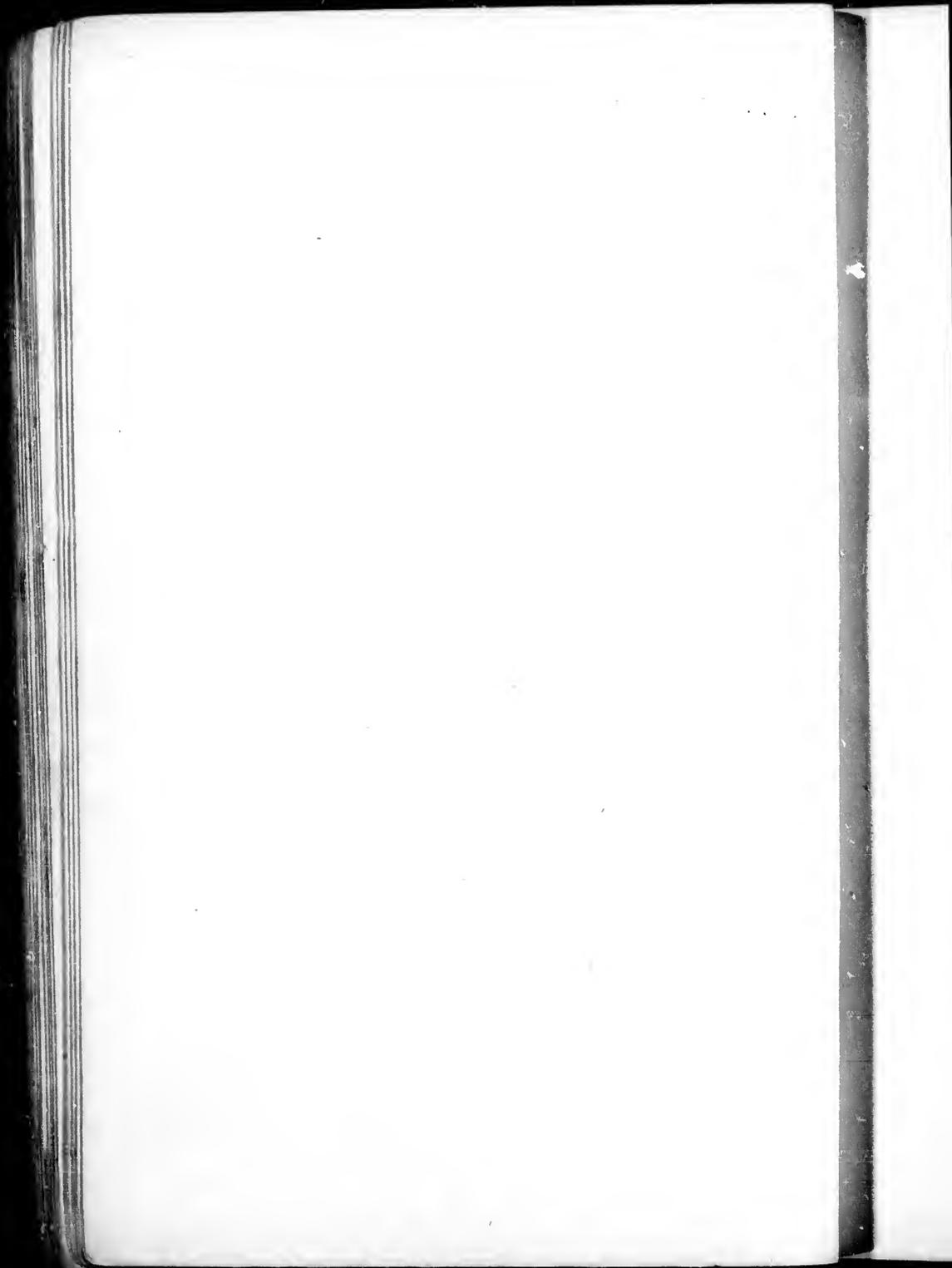
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Father will never grow tired ; that His fire is inextinguishable ; it is one of Thy sweet words to me. Sometimes, it seems as if the conquest of sin were hopeless—as if it never would be, never was to be, made an end of. The ages succeed the ages, and still it survives and re-lives ; but be of good courage, says Christ, its destruction is certain. God is meeting, and will be always meeting, the corruption of men with His fires, and His fire is unquenchable.

O Thou speaker of glad tidings, which shall be to all people, I thank Thee.

But, brethren, fire *is* fire, and the holy love *can* be very sharp. Let us not tarry in self-indulgence and wrongness, to make our cleansing the harder for God, and the more painful for us. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged," and it is better to enter into life through the suffering of present self-discipline, and self-denial, than sink by degrees, through guilty self-pleasing, into a gehenna of corruption, to encounter there the "salting" of the fire which is unquenchable.

"Now is the accepted time ;" let now be "the day of our salvation."



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DIVES IN HELL.

LUKE XVI, 22-31.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ; and 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. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house : for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, Father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

IS it not,—let me first ask,—is it not *satisfactory* to be assured that such a man as Dives came

at length to be "in torments"?—to read, after the description given of him, that Christ, on following him from hence into the other world, found him actually stung and anguish-struck; no longer the contented, complacent, untroubled soul that he had been, sunk in the enjoyment of dressing and eating, of fine linen and sumptuous fare, with Lazarus the beggar starving unheeded at his gate, but roused unto exceeding discomposure and pain? What could we have desired more for him, than that he, in whom neither the suffering of a fellow-creature, nor the meanness and vileness of his own sensual, selfish life, awoke apparently the least ruffling pang, should, in process of time—if not on earth, yet on leaving the earth—be overtaken with pangs, sharp and severe? Must we not feel that nothing better could have happened to him, that the change was good and hopeful? There are persons, you know, who vex and afflict us, just because they seem so untormentable, and whose easy-mindedness leads us to sigh for them. That they are obstinately serene or jovial, that they are not cast down or sorrowful,—*this* is our burden with reference to them, and *this* our despair concerning them. We say: "Oh that they were but capable of

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being a little disquieted and distressed !” It would rejoice us to learn that they had begun to worry or grieve ; we should welcome it with thankfulness, as a sign of commencing health, as a promise of improvement.

The schoolboy, coming home for the holidays, term after term, always unsuccessful in competition, and ignominiously outstripped and beaten by lads much younger than himself, yet always tranquil, satisfied, smiling : what would not his father give to see him chafed and disturbed ; to see him, instead of enjoying the vacation so thoroughly,—lift up his eyes in torment.

The novice, called to a position of great importance and responsibility, installed in a post that even superior ability and experience might well be awed by, and occupying it lightly, airily, confidently, with scarce a quickening of the pulse, or the least tremor of apprehension and anxiety : who would not wish that it were otherwise ; that his cheek blanched, and his heart throbbed painfully ? And who would not think more highly of him, and anticipate more from him, if they did ?

A man, living surrounded by scenes of human disorder and wretchedness, and able the while to

go on growing grapes, and cultivating rose-trees, and amusing himself with dainty dinners, or idle dilettantism, without the slightest trouble in his breast : do we not esteem it his disgrace, and an evidence of defect of nature, that he *can* ; and should we not be gratified to hear that his life was spoilt for him with palpitations of trouble—trouble that would allow him no longer to enjoy ?

Have we not known men, whose shame and degradation, whose peril and curse it was, that they were not in torments, concerning themselves, and who needed to be so, that they might be roused and saved, of whom nothing good could be made, and for whom nothing good could be hoped, until they began to be ? Have we not seen men die, on whose behalf all that it was possible to desire was, that they might lift up their eyes in torment ; their condemnation, and their exclusion from true blessedness being, that they had not learned to do so while here ; that they had lived entombed in a blind and false serenity, insensible to the awfulness of existence, to the solemnity of being ; insensible to the deformity of their own figure, to the offence and ugliness of their own corruption—at *ease* in a state of

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terrible *disease*? What could cheer and gladden us more with regard to them, than to believe, as we saw them expire, as they vanished from our sight, that at last, behind the veil, their deadly destructive repose would be interrupted—would be broken in upon with waves of pain?

Well, now, in the passage before us, we have Christ pursuing such an one into the spirit-world, and discovering and disclosing him there, "in torment." Is it not something to rejoice at: Dives wrapped in a low and unworthy content, amidst which, not even Lazarus' distress and misery can prevail to disturb him; and luxuriously unconscious of the leprosy of his mean satisfaction, and his cold selfishness—Dives after death, at all events, beginning to be in torment? Is it not something to rejoice at? For, let me ask you next to observe, that the anguish into which he is represented as dying, is the anguish of *waking*—waking to truth and reality. That it is so,—that the Divine Seer and Teacher is portraying here in an objective form, what He beheld taking place subjectively, in the *mind* of the deceased rich man; and that He meant to exhibit this as a sign of awakening—of awakening with agony—to truth and reality that had been

unfelt before ;—that it is so, may be inferred from the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, to which you must look, it seems to me, for the clue and key to a right understanding of the scene :—

“ The Pharisees, who where covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him ; and He said, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men ; but God knoweth your hearts : for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

He had been exhorting His disciples to the practice of giving freely out of their receipts, and warning them against the endeavour to serve at once the Lord and mammon ; and the Pharisees standing by, laughed at His word, being covetous. *“ Being covetous,”*—it sounded foolish and ridiculous to them ; so steeped were they in worldliness, that such teaching appeared to them *a joke* ; and Christ beholding them, says in effect : “ Ah, you do not perceive what miserable creatures you are ; your actual quality is hidden from you ; you commend and approve yourselves, dreaming that you are faultless and correct, but it is not so. There is One who discerns that it is not, and to Him, that which you admire, is odious and repulsive.” And then comes the story of Dives

and Lazarus, the point of which, therefore, must be,—not a difference of lot between the rich and the poor hereafter, nor yet the hopeless suffering of the wicked in the future, in contrast with the rest and rapture of the good,—but the agonised waking-up of a blind, worldly soul in death, to the awful truth about himself, and to the startling reality of things in relation to which he has been peacefully asleep; and the revulsion in his views and feelings which such a waking would produce.

It was indeed a Gospel of good news to the self-ignorant and self-deceived Pharisees, could they but have read it aright; intimating to them that they, who were now so tranquil and complacent in their utter darkness with regard to themselves, and to the actual aspects of life, would in another state, if never in the present, be painfully and terribly enlightened; be made, with pangs of distress, to see things as they are, and then, and thus, undergo a great change of mind. Yes, the story of Dives and Lazarus is just a description of a fearful, but ultimately beneficial, spiritual awakening on the other side the grave, suggested by the spectacle of *their* spiritual slumber, to whom the Divine doctrine was matter for derision, and who contentedly fancied themselves

right, while God, the All-seeing, was looking down upon the plague of their wrongness with abhorrence; Lazarus being introduced simply as a means of giving objectiveness and vividness to the picture.

And now, let us glance for a few minutes at the details, in this light. A sensual and selfish rich man, wholly at ease and quiet in his sensuality and selfishness, having died, begins straightway to suffer torments; and what was the flame that tormented him? Mark how subtly yet impressively it is indicated. *First*, he "sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." The idea thus clothed and embodied, can hardly be mistaken, can hardly be missed, namely, that then, there awoke in him a consciousness of *his whereabouts*—a consciousness of the small, despicable, low-pitched creature that he was; for had he not always lived comfortably under the assurance that he was a child of Abraham, included in his family and closely related to him, and that he was immeasurably the superior of a poor beggar such as Lazarus? and now behold; Abraham and he altogether apart, widely separated, and Lazarus the beggar, instead of beneath him, on high above him, in Abraham's arms.

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Here was the revelation to him of the truth with reference to himself, and his rank and place in the Almighty's world. Here was his anguish, that his eyes saw at last, the kind of soul he really was—his real measure and size—his real standing and attitude—remote, miserably remote, from the dignity that he had hitherto assumed to be his; below, ignominiously below, what he had hitherto spurned with contempt. Such self-discovery, after a life-time of self-delusion, is unspeakably painful. But what possibilities of amelioration does it evoke! Until one perceives and feels his deformity, what hope is there of his straightening himself? Once, however, let him perceive and feel it, and with that vision and conviction,—torturing as it may be, and for a while tending to despair,—with that vision and conviction, *hope is born*, and, according to Christ, to those who live and die without it, death brings it.

But observe, again, in answer to the cry for relief under the intolerable agony of the first flash of the true, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame,"—in answer to that cry for relief, comes the yet further

aggravation, of the word : " Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." And what is the idea,—what but an awakening of the mind to a new and—under the circumstances—an excruciating estimate of things ?

Once, the *evils* which the beggar suffered, had seemed to Dives things of the utmost moment to escape, and be exempt from ; things with which existence could not be worth the having ; while, on the other hand, the *goods* which he himself enjoyed,—the purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare,—had seemed to him things of the utmost value ; things with which a man might rest supremely content, and in possession of which he might exult. But now, having passed out beyond the circle of *time*, to which both Lazarus' "evils" and his own "goods" exclusively belonged ; and to transcend which, was to lose them both—now, how different is his estimate of them, alike of the "goods" and of the "evils" which are dependant upon and bound up with *time*, with the visible mundane world ; for, grievous as were Lazarus' evils, *being* dependent upon and bound up with the little space of his lifetime, the dying

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into eternity has brought him the *comfort* of emancipation from them; and delightful as were Dives' "goods," those also *being* dependent upon and bound up with the little space of his lifetime, the dying into eternity has brought him the *torment* of separation from all his goods. To what smallness and paltriness have dwindled now, both the "goods" and the "evils" of time, that once appeared to him, the one, so worthy of reposing and rejoicing in, and the other, of praying against and deprecating; and what anguish is his, under the sense of the nakedness and impoverishment which he has entailed upon himself through having made his whole portion in goods that could only be received during his lifetime. The voice of Abraham in the story, is just the objective presentation of the new and excruciating estimate of things which he had learned in death. And to learn to appreciate duly, and to discriminate rightly between higher and lower values—between the little and great in importance—this is a hopeful and promising acquisition, with whatever mortification and suffering it may be gained.

But there is something further, of which Dives became painfully conscious,—even of a great fixed

gulf, so that, says Abraham, "they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us who would come from thence;"—in which stroke of the picture, we see him waking to the fact, that our deepest and most fundamental relations are *spiritual*, and that according to these we are really classified, and take our place in the universe of God, that, according to these, they who *seem* near to one another, are often utterly remote from each other. He was an Israelite, who read the Scriptures, and worshipped in the synagogue, and was called "a child of Abraham," and Lazarus was a familiar object to him—had been living in close juxtaposition with him—lying daily at his gate, where he had touched him, going in and out a hundred times. Abraham and Lazarus! Oh yes, these both, he was well acquainted and nearly connected with; but *now* he discerns that both are immeasurably divided from him, and he from them; and that being what he was, contact with them, approach to them, was impossible. Now he discerns something more real and essential, more radical and profound, than neighbourhood, and descent, than physical contiguity or religious name—something which in

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spite of these, renders him a stranger and a foreigner to Abraham and Lazarus, and they to him ; so that it was as though an impassable gulf yawned between them. The whole aspect of the human scene is altered for him : he perceives that the true status and situation of men is determined, not by their learning or their ignorance, their wealth or their poverty, their external association or privileges, but by their moral life and being ; that the wrong and false heart excludes them from the circle of the right and the true, however they may *appear* to belong to it, or to be included within it ; he is realising, to his mourning and lamentation and woe, the fundamentalness of spiritual affinity, and the excommunications which it causes, the stern and terrible divisions which it makes ; *he*, lately bound in servile bondage to flesh and sense, *he* is waking with many a gasp and groan to the *supremacy of the spiritual* ; and how hopeful and blessed the waking, though it be never so painful. This is what numbers want to feel for their salvation, and with the feeling of which their salvation may be said to be begun.

We come now, it seems to me, in conclusion, to the beautiful firstfruits of the opening of Dives' eyes in torment, for mark what next follows in

the scene before us. The vision of his actual self, the new and true estimate of things, the conviction and impression of the determining power of the spiritual,—these, which he has gained through the stripping of death, are found in the Lord's picture, issuing at length, in a remarkable change. He is shown us, rising out of the slum and corruption of his old selfishness, and recognising the might and majesty of divine truth; *first*, you observe,—acquiescing in and accepting his present state of suffering,—he begins to forget it and himself in thought, pitying and tender thought, for others; and he said: "I pray thee, father, send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he testify to them, that they come not to this place of torment." Why, what a transformation was here! Who could have anticipated that the selfish sensualist, described in the 9th and 10th verses of the chapter, would be seen ere long, pouring himself out in concern for others—seized and possessed amid his anguish, with anxiety for the good of others—moved by the pains he was enduring, not to rave or complain, not to curse or growl, but to make efforts to save others. Better by far already, you will notice,

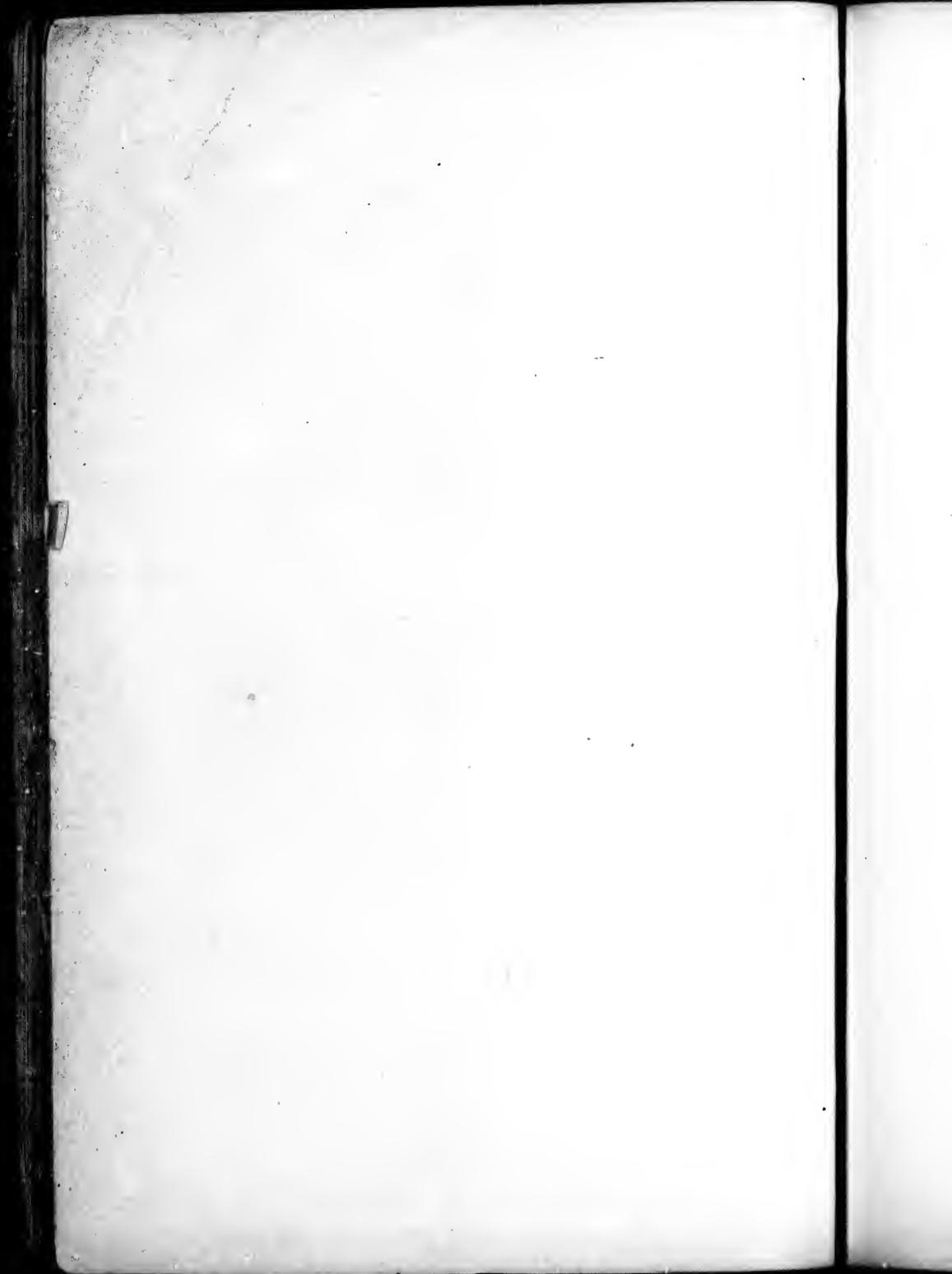
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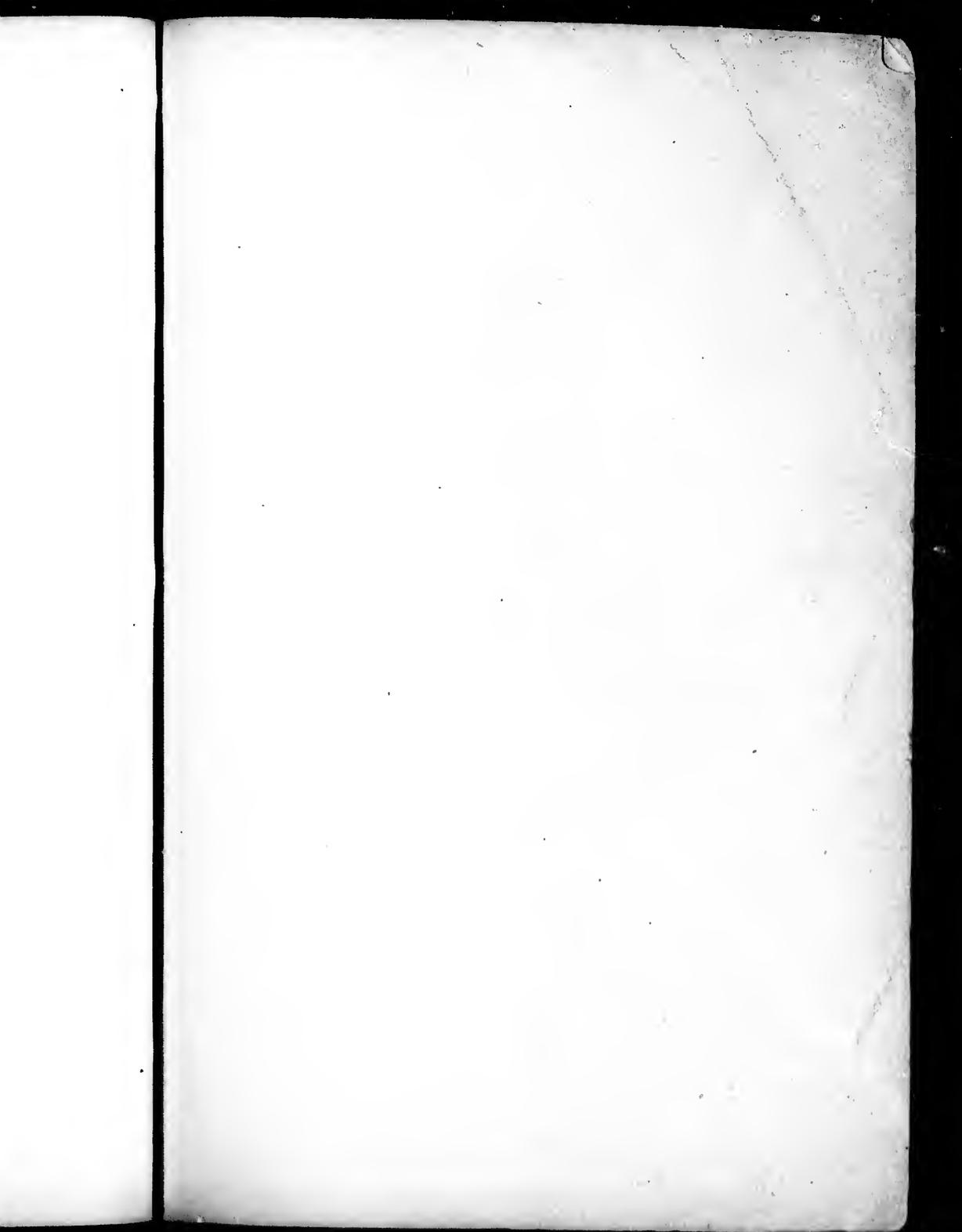
than those redeemed saints, of whom we have sometimes heard, whose happiness is to be intensified by witnessing and watching the torments of the damned, *he* is burdened in his damnation, with yearnings for the deliverance of such as appear to him in danger of becoming damned.

But surely, my friends, if, according to Jesus Christ, a man in hell may come to be inspired with the missionary spirit, and to pray and intercede that his brethren on earth may not be lost,—surely, souls in heaven, will long to be able to rescue the lost, and will be constrained to attempt it. Can there possibly be less bowels of compassion there? And, then, what of God Himself, the all-merciful, and His infinite love? But, *secondly*, you observe Dives is exhibited to us as learning by degrees to recognise and own the saving energy of divine truth. It is not learned all at once. There is some resistance and struggling for a season, but it *is* learned at last. "Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them; and he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him [the voice of Abraham being but the symbol, the parable, of his own heaven—im-

pressed mind.] If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Then, *silence reigned*,—the silence of sweet consent,—and Dives disappears from our view, behind the veil which the Master's hand had lifted, that we might see—might see an example of spiritual awakening in hell, and its effects. The soul tormented with the revealings of eternity, disappears from our view rising into a new spirit,—a spirit of love,—and becoming submissive to the might of the truth of God ; and as we stand gazing, does it not occur to us that in the voice of Abraham, the Divine Seer and Teacher may have meant to intimate the influence of "the spirits of just men made perfect" in *guiding* the minds of those who are suffering beyond death, the torments of awakening ; in *helping* them to work their way up into life and peace ?

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PUBLISHED BY THE MILTON LEAGUE.

