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WINTER WORSHIP.

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“And he that was healed wist not who it was.”—JOHN v. 13.

If the first power of Christianity was embodied in miracle, it was in miracle so distinctly expressive of its spirit, and so analogous to its natural agency in the world, as to invite rather than repel our imitation. Whatever be meant by the two great præternatural endowments entrusted to its earliest missionaries, — the gift of tongues and the gift of healing, — they represent clearly enough the two grand functions of our religion, — to bear *persuasion to the minds*, and bring *mercy to the physical ills*, of men. On that summer-morning in Jerusalem, when the men of Galilee stood forth within the temple-courts to preach the first glad tidings to the strangers of Parthia, and Greece, and Rome, and with their speech reached the minds of that multitude of many tongues, what better symbol could there be of that religion, whose spirit is intelligible to all, because it addresses itself to the universal human heart, and speaks, not the artificial jargon of sects

and nations, but the natural language of the affections, which are immortal. And when the crowd of weary sufferers thronged around the Apostles' steps in the city, the blind supporting the lame, and the lame eyes to the blind; or when the solitary leper saw them in the field, and made his gesture of entreaty from afar, and all were healed, how better could be represented the character of that faith, which has never set eyes on pain without yielding it a tear; which, in proportion as it has been cordially embraced, has sickened the heart of scenes of suffering and blood, and lessened, age after age, the stripes wherewith humanity is stricken. We neither claim nor ask for the cloven tongues of a divine persuasion; we boast not of any arm of miracle which we can lay bare in conflict with disease and sorrow: but in the *spirit* of these acts of Providence we may participate. While fanatics vainly pretend to repeat their marvellousness, we may choose the better part, and copy their beneficence. The world needs the preachers of wonders, less than the apostles of charity.

And amid all the splendors of miracle, nothing could be more unostentations than the diffusion of Christ's mercy by its missionaries in the days of old. Beginning at the provinces of Palestine, it passed, from village to village of the interior, from city to city of the vast empire's various coast: along the shores of Asia, beneath the citadels of Greece, to the world's great palace on the Tiber, it stole along, fleet and silent as the wind that bloweth where it listeth, sweeping through every foul recess, and leaving health where it found pestilence. Our imagination, corrupted by the vanity of history, dwells perhaps too much on the more brilliant positions and marked triumphs of the

ancient gospel. We follow Paul through his vicissitudes, and feel an idle pride in his most conspicuous adventures: and when he stretches forth the hand and speaks before king Agrippa; when idolaters mistake the bearer of a god-like message for a god, and bow before him, as to Mercury; when in Ephesus he becomes the rival of Diana, and ruins the craftsmen of silver shrines; when philosophy listens to him on Areopagus, and the Furies still slumber within hearing in their grove, we vainly think that he derives his greatest dignity from the scenes in the midst of which he stands, a contrast and a stranger. As we would deserve the Christian name, let us look more deeply into his mission, and adopt more fully the spirit of his mind. Watch him even in Rome, where he dwelt, though a prisoner, in his own hired house; and where shall we seek for him in that dazzling metropolis? He was not one to pass through its scenes of magnificence with stupid and fanatic indifference, to find himself surrounded by the monuments of ancient freedom, and listen for the first time to the very language of the world's conquerors, without catching the inspiration of history, and feeling the solemn shadow of the past fall upon him. I do not say that he never paused beneath the senate-house to think of the voices that had been heard within its walls; or climbed the capitol, once the palace of the republic, now its shrine; or started at the fasces, stern emblem of a justice now no more: or went without excitement into the imperial presence through the very gardens where his own blood should hereafter be shed in merriment. But his daily walks passed all these splendors by: they dived into the lanes and suburbs on which no glory of history is shed, and which made Rome the sink and curse, while it

was the ruler of the nations : they found the haunts of the scorned Hebrew : they startled the degraded revels of the slave : they sought out the poor foreigner, attracted by the city's wealth, and perishing amid its desolation : they crept to the pallet on which fever and poverty were stretched, tendering the hand of restoration, and whispering the lessons of peace. This was his noblest dignity : not that he publicly pleaded before princes, but that he strictly solaced the outcast and the friendless ; not that he paced the forum, but that he lingered in the dens of wretchedness, and refreshed the hardened heart with gentle sympathies, and linked the alien with the fraternity of men, and dropped upon the darkest lot the spirit of Providence and of hope. And what is true of this great apostle, is true of the religion which he spread, and which we profess. Its true dignity is, that unseen it has ever gone about doing good. Link after link has it struck from the chain of every human thralldom : error after error has it banished : pain after pain has it driven from body or from mind : and so silently has the blessing come, that (like the lame whom Peter made to walk) " he that was healed wist not who it was."

It can *never* be unseasonable for those that bear the name of Christ to imitate his spirit, and to address themselves to the great mission which Providence has assigned to their religion (that is, to themselves), as the antagonist power to those human sufferings, which may be lightened at least, if not remedied. But this period of the year* brings with it a distinct and peculiar call to remember with a thought of mercy the several ills that flesh is heir to. Every season has its appropriate worship, and de-

* This discourse was preached at the end of November.

mands an appropriate recognition ; for each presents in some peculiar form the physical activity of nature, which is, in fact, the spiritual energy of God. If, in the picturesque spirit of ancient times, we had our annual festivals for remembering the several aspects of our lot, and bringing successively before the eye the many-colored phases of human existence, we should cast lots among the days of spring for an anniversary of life and health, when earth is unburthening her mighty heart to God, and framing from a thousand new-born melodies an anthem of brilliant praise. For the celebration of disease and death we should resort to the days of the declining year : and instead of leaping on the green sod and pouring forth the hymn of joy, we should kneel upon the rotting leaves and pray. However constant the visitations of sickness and bereavement, the fall of the year is most thickly strewn with the fall of human life. Everywhere the spirit of some sad power seems to direct the time : it hides from us the blue heavens ; it makes the green wave turbid ; it walks through the fields, and lays the damp, ungathered harvest low ; it cries out in the night-wind and the shrill hail ; it steals the summer bloom from the infant cheek ; it makes old age shiver to the heart ; it goes to the church-yard, and chooses many a grave ; it flies to the bell, and enjoins it when to toll. It is God that goes his yearly round ; that gathers up the appointed lives ; and, even where the hour is not come, engraves by pain and poverty many a sharp and solemn lesson on the heart.

How then shall we render the fitting worship of the season ? We do so, when we think of these things in the *spirit of religion* ; when we regard them in their relation to the great Will which produces them ; when, instead of

meeting them in the spirit of recklessness, or viewing in them the triumph of disorder, or shrinking from them in imbecile fear, we recognise their position in a system of universal Providence, various in its means, but paternal in its spirit and beneficent in its ends; when "none of these things move us," except to a more reverential sense of mystery, and a serener depth of trust. In a season of mortality, it is surely impossible to forget the relations of other scenes to this: that departure from this life is birth into another; that the immortal rises where the mortal falls; that the farewell in the vale below is followed by greetings on the hills above; so that if sympathy with mourners here permit, the sorrows of the bereaved on earth are the festival of the redeemed in heaven.

We render the appropriate worship of the season, when we think of the painful passages of human life, not merely as proceeding from God, but as incident to our own lot; not merely in the spirit of religion, but in that of *self-application*. It is difficult for the living and the vigorous to realize the idea of sickness and of death: and though within a few paces of our daily walks there are beings that lie in the last struggle, and some sufferer's moan escapes with every breath that flies, yet whenever pain fairly seizes our persons in his grasp, or enters and usurps our homes, we start as if he were a stranger. And perhaps it will be asked, "Why should it be otherwise? Why forestal the inevitable day, and let the damp cloud of expectation fall on the illuminated passages of life?" I grant that to remember the conditions of our existence with such result as this, to think of them in an abject and melancholy spirit, is no act of wisdom or of duty. I know of no obligation to live with an imagination ever haunted by mor-

tality ; to deem every enjoyment dangerous, lest it cheat the heart into a happy repose upon the present, and every pursuit a snare, which fairly embarks the affections upon this world ; to consider all things here devoid of any good purpose, except to tempt us. The theory which crowds this life with trials and the other with rewards, which brightens the future only by blackening the present, which supposes that the only proper office of our residence here is to keep up one prolonged meditation on the hereafter, is a mere burlesque of nature and the gospel. Futurity is not to mar, but to mend our activity ; and earth is not given that we may win the reversion of heaven, so much as heaven revealed to ennoble our tenure of earth. I know of no peculiar preparation for immortality beyond the faithful performance of the best functions of mortal life : and if it were not that these will be more wisely discharged, and the attendant blessings more truly felt, by those who remember the sadder conditions of our lot than by those who forget them, there could be no reason why they should ever appear before the thoughts. But they are *facts*, solemn and inevitable facts, which come with least crushing power on those who see them from afar, and become reconciled to them, and even fill them by forethought with peaceful suggestion. The sense of their possibility breakes through the superficial crust of life, and stirs up the deeper affections of our nature. It refines the sacredness of every human tie : it dignifies the claims of duty : it freshens the emotions of conscience : it gives promptitude to the efforts of sympathy ; and elevates the whole attitude of life.

But, above all, we pay the fitting worship of the season, when we greet its peculiar ills in the *spirit of humanity* ;

when we think of them, not simply as they came from God, and may come to ourselves, but as they actually do befall our neighbors and fellowmen. It were selfish to gather round our firesides, and circulate the laugh of cheerfulness and health, without a thought or deed of pity for the poor sufferers that struggle with the winter storms of nature or of life. Who can help looking at this season with a more considerate and reverential eye upon the old man, to think where he may be? Year after year he has been shaken by the December winds; but not yet shaken to his fall: deeper and deeper the returning frost has crept into his nature, — and will it reach the life-stream now? You watch him, as you would the last pendulous leaf of the forest, still held by some capricious fibre, that refuses perhaps to part with it to the storm, and then drops it slowly through the still air. You gaze at him as he stands before you, and wonder that you can ever do so without awe; for the visible margin of existence crumbles beneath him, and he slips into the unfathomable. And as the tempest wakes us on our pillow, it is but common justice to our human heart, to send out a thought over the cold and vexed sea in search of the poor mariner that buffets with the night, or perhaps sinks in the most lonely of deaths, between the black heavens that pelt him from above and the insatiable waste that swallows him below. Nor will generous and faithful souls forget the dingy cellar or the crowded hovel, where in a neighboring street the fevered sufferer lies, and the ravings of delirium and the sports of children are heard together, or life is ebbing away in consumption, hurried to its close by the chill breath of poverty and winter. O could we but see the dread gripe of want and disease upon

hundreds of this community at this moment, and hear the cries of hungry children and the moan of untended sickness, the only difficulty would be, not to stimulate our generosity to do enough, but to persuade it to work out its good with patience and with wisdom !

And here indeed is a difficulty, which every considerate mind will feel to be grave, and even terrible. The multitude of miseries spread around us make humanity easy, — a wise direction of its impulses, most difficult ; the very spectacle which gives to benevolence its intensity, throws it also into despair. The perplexity arises partly from the state of society in which we live ; from relations among its several classes altogether new, and rendering the ancient and traditional methods of doing good in a great degree inapplicable. A slave-owning or feudal community, by killing out from the great mass of men everything above the rank of hunger, reduces the office of compassion within a very narrow compass : and the dish from the rich man's table, or the garment from his wardrobe, sent as to the domestic animals of his estate, to stop their cries and soothe them to sleep, are the only boons that are required, or possibly that can be given without peril of social revolution. Happily, — yet not without much unhappiness too, — such revolution is now effected or in progress ; greatly through the influence of that Christianity, which pronounces all to be children of one who “ is no respecter of persons ;” and assures us that whenever we say “ Be thou warmed and filled,” it is no other than “ *a brother or sister*” that comes before us “ naked and destitute of daily food.” Our current notions of benevolence have descended to us from the recent times of feudalism : yet we are conscious that they do not come up to the higher demands

which have arisen, or adapt themselves to the new intellectual and moral wants comprised in any Christian estimate of the poor of this world. The ease of ancient condescension is gone: the graceful recognition of human brotherhood is not attained. To aim at making men like ourselves into creatures with enough to eat, — though a thing unrealized as yet, — is felt to be insufficient; and how to raise them into the likeness of the children of God we cannot tell, — the very notion receiving at present but a timid acknowledgement. This, however, if we are in earnest, is but a temporary difficulty, attending on a state of hesitancy and transition. Let the mind fairly emancipate itself from that debasing valuation of a human being which the mere sentiments of property would dictate; — trust itself, with high faith, to the equalizing spirit of Christian piety and hope; and in paying to all, the reverence due to an immortal, it will attain to the freedom and power of a divine love: it will speak to sorrow with the voice of another Christ, and restore his holiest miracles of mercy. Who can doubt, that were his spirit here, the work of good need not despair?

But for want of this spirit in perpetuity, another obstacle obstructs the course of bewildered charity. We form our good intentions too late: and while benevolence, to be successful, must work in the way of prevention and anticipation, — at the very least putting resolutely down each confused and hurtful thing as it appears, — men rarely bestir themselves till evils get a-head and by no effort can well be overtaken. The physical, moral, and religious condition of the poor, which in our days begin to excite so much attention, shall have been studied thus half a century ago; easy in comparison had it been to prevent the

ills which now we know not how to cure. We permit a generation to grow up neglected, with habits a grade below their fathers; and then consider how they may be reclaimed. We suffer a new manufacture to start into existence, and seize, with the hands of a needy giant, on infant labor: and when it has appropriated a generation to itself, and boldly insists on its prescriptive right to be fed for ever from the same life-blood of our humanity, we look around on the degenerate bodies and stunted minds of an enormous population, and begin to cry out for an efficient public education, against which the immediate physical interests of poor as well as rich are now combined. The Providence of God is retributory: and too often it happens that the sinful negligence of one age cannot be repaired by the penitent benevolence of many: the unpaid debt accumulates its interests, till discharge becomes impossible: misery grows impatient and clamorous; and repays at length in fury the injuries inflicted by ancient wantonness and neglect. Neither in communities, nor in individuals, does God give encouragement to death-bed repentance: and societies that trust to it shall find themselves, after short delay, under the lash of demons and near the seat of Hell. Let them be timely wise, and maintain the vigils of benevolence, while the accepted hour remains.

Amid all controversies respecting the quarter from which the assault on the evils of indigence is best commenced, whether the physical wants should be remedied through the moral, or the moral through the physical, whether most is to be hoped for from legislative measures, or from individual efforts, one principle may be regarded as certain, and, considering the tendencies of our age, not unreason-

able. You cannot mechanise benevolence; you cannot put Christian love into an act of parliament, or a subscription-list: and however necessary may be the remedial action of laws and institutions, on account of the comprehensive scale of their operation, the ties between man and man can be drawn closer only by personal agency. Not one new sympathy can arise but by the contact between mind and mind: in the spiritual world life is born only of life: nor is any abrogation possible of that law of God which requires that we *seek* whatever we would *save*. The good comfort which with willing soul we tender to each other is of all things most precious to the heart. As the blow of calamity falls with three-fold weight when it desends from the injustice of men, so the deliverance brought by their pity and affection is a blessing infinitely multiplied. The one poisons and prevents our submission, as to a will of God; the other sweetens and elevates our gratitude to him; the one cancels, the other creates, what is most divine in the dispensation. Only so far as there is a "charity" that "never faileth" from the souls of men, can they live in communion together on this earth: and from Christendom every "faith" shall be cast out as a dead heathenism, except such as "worketh by love."

HUMAN ABILITY AND DIVINE GRACE.

WHAT is to be inferred concerning the moral capacities of men, and the nature of spiritual influences, from that declaration of our Lord, "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him?"

These words have been often employed to prove, that men are in a peculiar sense dependent with respect to

their spiritual interests and duties. All admit, that it is our duty to come to Christ: that is, to believe on him, or to become his true disciples. But many suppose, that there is a special and insuperable obstacle in the way; and that this consists not in the want of either natural or intellectual power, but in a depravity of heart, or stubbornness of will, which we cannot overcome, which our utmost efforts cannot remove. In other words, they believe that mankind have by nature such a disposition, that they cannot come to Christ, or believe his gospel, until they are visited with an extraordinary or supernatural influence. This influence, they further suppose, is given, not in consequence of their efforts to obtain it, but according to an eternal decree, which has no respect to the character of men. The whole of this system may be exhibited in the following series of questions and answers. "Is it the duty of men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?" It is. "Can they in their natural state exercise this faith?" They cannot. "In what does this inability consist?" In opposition or depravity of heart. "Can they remove this disposition, or do any thing, which shall incline God to remove it for them?" They cannot, because all their actions, and all their attention to outward duties, while they have in them this disposition, is sin. Even their prayers are an abomination. "How then can they become exempt from this depravity of nature, and exercise faith in Christ?" By the special influences of God's Holy Spirit. "Will this influence be granted to those who seek it?" It will be granted only to the prayer of faith. "Can we pray in this manner unless we first have this special influence?" We cannot. The question then returns, "How can we obtain that supernatural grace,

which alone can remove our depravity, and bring us to Christ?" God will grant it to his elect, and the rest of mankind must remain inevitably under condemnation. Though they are commanded to come to Christ, yet this is as much above their power, as it would be to create a world; because they cannot come without a will, and this will is the gift of God. To make them willing is as much the act of God, and as great an exhibition of divine power, as to raise the dead. "What then can we do to promote our salvation?" Nothing. Our strength and our wisdom are in God. "But are we commanded to do nothing?" On the contrary, we are commanded to do our whole duty, though we are unable of ourselves to do any part of it. At the same time, God is just in laying these commands upon us, because we lost our power by Adam's apostasy, and our inability is of a moral nature, belonging to the will, or heart, not to the understanding. The most learned philosophers are as unable to come to Christ as the feeblest child. All men by nature are equally destitute of that, without which they cannot come to Christ. It is the work of God to give them that special qualification, the gift of his special grace; and their own efforts to obtain it, are altogether unavailing, because altogether sinful. Yet are they justly condemned, for being destitute of it.

We believe that the preceding questions and answers exhibit a clear and just view of the prevailing system respecting the dependence of man, and the special grace of God. It is impossible not to perceive the apparent inconsistencies which are involved in the system. In all common cases, we feel the fullest assurance that men cannot justly be blamed for that which is given them by nature;

that, which is their original constitution ; that, which depended wholly on the will of another, and respecting which they exercised no choice. But here, if the sentiments or doctrine involved in these answers be correct, there is a very important exception to this principle, and we are required to bring our feelings to acquiesce in that, at which in all other similar cases, they strongly revolt ; and our reason, which is a good guide in other respects, must here be denounced as depraved, because it protests against the principles of an established creed. If the nature of men be such, that they must have a supernatural influence in order to be prepared for heaven, the blame surely must fall on him, who gave them that nature, and not on men, who necessarily must be what they are created. If that supernatural influence be not within their reach, or attainable on conditions, which they are able to perform, they cannot justly be blamed for being destitute of it : for no man can be blamed for not having that, which it is not in his power to obtain. If any, by the use of appointed means, cannot subdue their propensity to sin, and bring themselves to the exercise of repentance and faith, with that common or general aid, which God grants them, then, by the simplest reasoning, it is unjust to blame them, for continuing to sin, or to command them to come to Christ.

But, it is urged that the language of scripture plainly supports this system, inconsistent as it may seem with the dictates of reason, and backward as our hearts may be to admit its truth. It may be useful to examine the foundations of this plan, and to enquire, first, in what sense men are incapable of coming to Christ ; and, secondly, in what manner the Father draws them.

In what sense, we may first enquire, are men incapable of coming to Christ? It should be replied they are incapable of performing the most common actions of life. We are incapable of walking without divine aid, support, and guidance. We cannot, independent of God, procure the common comforts of life. We are indebted to him for power to make progress in knowledge, to exercise the kind and benevolent affections, and to perform beneficent and charitable deeds. In a similar manner are we dependent on him for capacity to come to Christ, or to exercise repentance and faith. But when he commands us to walk, he gives us the power of walking. Were we without the power, we should not be under the obligation to walk. A service of this kind is never required of an infant, or of one, whose strength is destroyed by sickness. Whenever God requires us to procure for ourselves, or our families, the comforts of life, he gives us the power and the means of so doing. If any thing in our constitution, or in the course of his Providence, hinders us, we are of course free from the obligation. If he commands us to acquire knowledge, to be charitable and useful, he gives us all the capacities, which are requisite to the fulfilment of these duties. If at any period, or in any condition in life, our power to perform these services ceases, the obligation to do them ceases also. In all these cases we see it would be utterly unjust to recommend men to do what they are unable to do. In like manner, whenever God requires us to come to Christ, he gives us the means and the power of coming. If he requires us to have certain dispositions and affections, such as love to God and men, and faith in Jesus Christ, he gives us the means and the power of forming within ourselves these dispositions, and of cherishing these af-

fections. If he calls upon us to repent and to be converted, to make to ourselves a new heart and a new spirit, to cleanse our hands and to purify our hearts, to become new creatures, then he gives us the power of effecting this change in our characters. It would be an unjust, as absurd, as cruel, to require these things of men, without giving them the requisite means and capacities, as to require any other service, which they are incapable of performing. If they are unable to change their hearts, and to come to Christ, they might, with the same propriety, be commanded to fly, or to create a world, as to perform these duties. The scriptures never intimate that men are in a peculiar sense dependent, or incapable with respect to the duties of religion, and the concerns of their salvation. Their uniform and explicit instruction is, that we are wholly and equally dependent upon God for every thing, for the good things of this life, as well as for virtue and future happiness. We may indeed say, with the Psalmist of old, "Open mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And we may also pray, as our Saviour has taught us, "Give us this day our daily bread." But the former prayer, and others resembling it, no more denote a natural blindness or incapacity for spiritual things, than the latter denotes that we are naturally incapable of tilling the ground, or pursuing those common employments, by which we obtain a subsistence. It has often been thought, that the prayer for spiritual blessings, such as holiness, love, submission, and a new heart, and the promises God has made to bestow these favours on man, imply a peculiar inability or dependence, and the necessity of a special influence or extraordinary grace. With as much propriety might it be pretended, that the prayers for temporal bless-

sings, and the promises God has made to bestow them, imply a peculiar inability, and the need of a special assistance. The truth is, that the inference is alike unwarrantable in both cases. Our dependence with regard to temporal blessings is not such as to render us incapable of performing our whole duty with respect to them; and in like manner our dependence on the grace of God, with regard to the exercise of repentance and faith, does not render us incapable of discharging these duties. It is indeed true, that no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him; and it is equally true, that no man can procure the necessaries and comforts of life, unless God grant him aid, strength, and success. But, as he never commands them to obtain these necessaries and comforts, without giving them the needed strength, aid, and success, so he never commands them to come to Christ, without granting them the needed drawing, or influence. In other words, he never commands them to perform any duty, without giving them adequate ability, or means to perform it.

We are hence conducted to the second enquiry. In what manner does the Father draw men? He draws them in a manner suited to their nature, as rational and free agents. His drawing is not compulsion; it is not irresistible impulse; it is not mechanical force; it does not constrain them to come. It places them in a situation to come. He draws them by the use of various means; by instructions, admonitions, invitations, promises, threatenings, and events of his providence. It may also be admitted, that he draws them by a positive or direct influence on their mind, exerted in a way, consistent with their free agency, and given in connexion with their

own efforts, and in answer to their prayers. "If ye, being evil," said our Lord, "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Those, who live in a state of pagan darkness, are not drawn to Christ; and therefore cannot come. Nor are they required to come. Persons in a state of infancy are not drawn to Christ, and therefore cannot come; nor are they commanded to come. In the former case, there is a want of means; in the latter, a want of capacity. Coming to Christ implies the exercise of the understanding, as well as of the will and affections; and the drawing or influence of the Father is through the medium of the rational and moral powers. He draws them by imparting to them, in his word, instructions respecting the character, the offices, and the works of Christ, and respecting their own duties, obligations, and interests. In these instructions, are included the various motives of the gospel. He admonishes them of the danger and ruin, which attend a rejection of Christ. He shows them the happy consequences of coming to him; that it is attended with peace here, and followed by everlasting life hereafter. In this way he addresses their hope and fear, their love of happiness, and their dread of misery, those powerful principles of action. But all this influence may be resisted; and on this account Christians are exhorted not to receive the grace of God in vain. There are also many calls of providence; events, which are fitted to awaken our gratitude and love, to inspire us with a religious awe, and to awaken in us a salutary fear. But this influence, as well as the other, may be resisted; it is not necessarily effectual. Hence God said, "I have called, but ye refused; I have

stretched out my hand, but no man regarded." The same remark is applicable to the direct influence of the spirit on the heart. For it is said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" and, "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: As did your fathers, so do ye." When, therefore, we see men, who do not come to Christ, we are not to infer, that the Father does not draw them, but merely that they resist his drawing. We are not to infer that this drawing, or influence is limited to a few, or to a select number, "for it is written in the Prophets, that they all shall be taught of God." If they receive and obey these instructions and hear and learn of the Father, they will come to Christ. If they do not thus hear and learn, let them charge their neglect, not to any deficiency in the instruction, or in the grace given by God, but solely to the sinful indifference or opposition of their own hearts. The supposed distinction between common grace and special finds no support in the scriptures, but originates in human authority and error. If common grace or influence be adequate to the salvation of men, special grace is needless. If common grace be not adequate to this end, it is no longer grace, it is no favour; it leaves men in a worse state than they would be without it; for it aggravates their guilt without rendering their salvation either probable or possible.

W. B.*

It is one sign of the tendency of human nature to goodness, that it grows good under a thousand bad influences.

Channing.

* In the Christian Disciple.

THE MYSTERY OF DEATH.

BY REV. E. H. SEARS.

DEATH is described in all languages as a monster and anomaly in the universe. It is the kingly terror, the sum of all the agonies which afflict human nature. Where is the path on which its pale shadow hath not rested? Who does not remember the time when the stern fact of mortality broke in upon the gay fancies of his childhood, as the one giant sorrow for which there was no consolation. It would seem, sometimes, from the prevailing tone of our religious literature, as if the principle office of Christianity were to pour light and consolation over this one province of calamity. One would think, from much of our preaching, that the chief motive to religion was the fright that comes from this haunting spectre, whose approach must be made the dread of all our pleasant places. It is the "last enemy." It is the "cup of trembling." It is the "*ultima linea rerum*,"—the dread boundary of joyous existence.

This calamity is peculiar to man. The inferior tribes know nothing of it. They obey the laws of their life, and so they have no dread of what is to come. The lamb gambols alike through the green pastures or to the place of slaughter. Up to the last flutter of her wings, the bird ceases not to trill her matins upon the air. But the only immortal being upon the earth lives in dread of death. The only being to whom death is an impossibility, fears every day that it will come. And if we analyze the nature of this fear, and explore the cause of it, we shall not be at all certain that it will not follow the mere

natural man into a future life, and have an important part in its retributions. Man fears death only because he has lost conscious communion with Him in whom alone is immortality. In so far as we preserve our relation to Him who is the soul of our soul and the life of our life, our spirits wear the bloom of everlasting youth, and no more than the joyous child do we dream of consumption and decay. When this is lost, no matter in what stage of our being, whether in this life or another, we feel our weakness, we seem to lie at the mercy of change, and to hang over the abysses of annihilation.

And how mysterious are the shapes in which the spoiler appears! He comes not like an angel of peace, but seizes his victim as his prey. He comes in a grisly train of diseases and sufferings, the seeds of which the infant brings with him into the world. Yes, the infant that never knew sin has the tender fibres of his frame torn by the destroyer, and the death-agonies are received with the very boon of existence. Womanhood fades away in its beautiful prime, before its swift day has "run to the even-song," and manhood fails amid the heat and burden of the noontide hour, and the impress of suffering is left upon its glorious brow. Not one fourth of the race attain to the period of natural decay. One half, it is computed, die during the periods of infancy and childhood.

Can it be said that a human nature which has all this inheritance of disease, suffering, and mortality, has the soundness of its primal state, and that no taint has fallen upon it? We do not argue that mortality is the effect of sin, nor do we believe that the primitive man would never have died if he had never transgressed. But we do argue that death could never become this monster in the uni-

verse, could never make this train of diseases and agonies the grim heralds of his presence, could never make the human frame a rack of torture and turn its vital streams into currents of fire, unless something had perverted the fundamental laws of our being. We are surely treading here amid the ruins of a disordered and a broken nature. There is nothing in the fact of moral change, which is merely outward and phenomenal, the flux and reflux of being on its course to the highest development of life — there is nothing in this fact that it should be draped about with mourning in our homes and churches. We look out at this moment into the natural world, and we there see the process of death going on under very different conditions. There is something soothing beyond description, when nature puts on her death-ropes, something which disposes to calm and holy musings. How peacefully does it come over the landscape, and what brilliancy does it fling upon the woods of autumn! And as we look along the western horizon, where “parting day dies like a dolphin,” whom every ebb of life imbues with a fresh glory, what a contrast have we in the aspect with which it comes to nature and to man! We do not put these analogies in an argumentative way, any further than to suggest what death might be, and what it would be to an untainted human nature. This flesh which we wear is the foliage of an unseen and an immortal life, and there is no reason why it should not fall away in its season, still and peaceful as autumn leaves, that this interior life may flower forth anew in the glories of unending spring. There is no reason why it should not steal on the decaying senses without a pang, so that while the mortal fades away, the immortal appears, one waxing as

the other is waning, every entrance into the spirit world being with a train of light lingering on the mind, sweet and mellow as that which rests on the hills at eventide.

But two things there are which barb the sting of death. There is this inheritance of disease that we speak of,— of organizations with broken laws and the earnest of swift decay. Hence death is not the unclothing of the spirit, but the rending away of its garment by violence. But more than this ; man becomes buried in sense and matter, and this world becomes all in all. This world is the substance, while the spirit-world is the shadow. This is real, while that is spectral. Therefore to leave the solid earth is to tread away into nothing, and to drop into the cold depths of the night, while on the ear from all that are loved and loving are falling everlasting farewells. On account of this seeming annihilation, nature sends up a deep and bitter cry. Or, perhaps, one sees before him the shadow-land which tradition has peopled with terrors, and where only phantoms are gliding past.

To a human nature in the freshness and purity of its morning prime, when celestial beings stood on the confines of both worlds and sang “ strains suitable for both,” the eye of faith would be open and clear ; the spirit-realm would be the substance, while this would be the shadow ; from infancy to age human beings would live in conscious fellowship with the sweet societies of the blest ; death would come in his season, not to tear them away, but to lift a veil from their eyes, and disclose to them that sphere which already had sent its peace into their hearts, and left its brightness on their souls.

RELIGION BY PROXY.

FROM MILTON.*

TRUTH is compared in scripture to a streaming fountain ; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth ; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. There is not any burden that some would gladder post off to another than the charge and care of their religion. There be who knows not that there be ! of protestants and professors who live and die in as errant an implicit faith as any lay papist of Loretto. A wealthy man, addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds religion to be a traffic so entangled, and of so many peddling accounts that of all mysteries he cannot skill to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he do ? Fain he would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbours in that. What does he therefore, but resolves to give over toiling, and to find himself out some factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs ; some divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keys into his custody ; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion ; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commenda-

* Speech for the Liberty of unlicensed printing.

tory of his own piety. So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is become a dividual moveable, and goes and comes near him, according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, prays, is liberally supped, and sumptuously laid to sleep; rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey, or some well spiced brewage, and better breakfasted than he whose morning appetite would have gladly fed on green figs between Bethany and Jerusalem, his religion walks abroad at eight, and leaves his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion.

Another sort there be, who, when they hear that all things shall be ordered, all things regulated and settled, nothing written but what passes through the customhouse of certain publicans that have the tonnage and poundage of all free spoken truth, will straight give themselves up into your hands, make them and cut them out what religion ye please. There be delights, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a delightful dream. What need they torture their heads with that which others have taken so strictly and so unalterably into their own purveying? These are the fruits which a dull ease and cessation of our knowledge will bring forth among the people. How goodly, and how to be wished were such an obedient unanimity as this? what a fine conformity would it starch us all into? doubtless a staunch and solid piece of frame-work, as any January could freeze together.

INWARD PEACE.

BY REV. G. W. BRIGGS.

INWARD peace is the fruit of an absolute trust. It belongs not then to that state of mind which clings intensely in hope or love, to any imagined arrangements of providence, either in the present time, or the coming future. It arises only in that entire submission of the will, which greatly ceases to question or to speculate. In the instant when man begins to question the ways of providence, his peace is disturbed. Why doth it remove the young and the innocent, he sometimes asks, and long spare the abandoned sinner, whose presence is pollution and wo? Why do some go in quick repeated bereavements to the grave, and others stand at the same hearthstone in an unbroken circle, through many flying years? Why doth judgement sleep long ages over the oppressions of the earth, and the wail of the injured seem to be uttered in vain? One suggestion of this course of reflection will suffice. Hosts of mysteries crowd around us when we enter it with a strange and fearful aspect. We cannot solve one single problem of that appalling crowd. Clouds and darkness are round about the throne. Ceases all such vain speculation. It is the temptation of every living heart to say, my lot is strange and dark. In other circumstances, however easy would have been the way of life? Ah! blaspheme providence no more, thou short-sighted soul, even by the momentary thought that God hath not placed thee in the best possible position in the broad universe for thy peculiar discipline. In things too minute to be seen by the unassisted eye, as science proves,

are multitudes of creatures, not one of whom liveth without the Father. Shall He not much more clothe thee? Every moment of such questionings is a confession of want of trust. Conform thyself, thou complaining heart, to the circumstances around thee, and a perception of their fitness, unperceived before, shall soon banish every doubt. Quicken the spiritual eye by a growing love and trust, and no instrument of art, bringing the wonders of heaven to your view in their surprising perfection and beauty, could reveal such tokens of the Father's love, as would then be disclosed even in the mysteries filling it before with painful doubtings. We cannot overstate the implicitness of the confidence, this absolute trust implies. It almost fears to indulge any questioning of the mind concerning the ways of God. Or if it pursue such great enquiries, it is rather because it loves in adoring gratitude to trace the Father's ways, than to seek a foundation in its researches for its deep reliance. It trusts, before it enquires. It trusts still, and equally, though no light come to bless its searchings. Doth not God reign, it asks in its firm, and its joyous hope? And that one supreme, all-comprehending ground of holy confidence, takes up within itself all imaginable specific causes of disquietude and fear, and soothes them to an endless rest. Ah! man may picture to himself bright conceptions of the movements of this holy providence, and of the glorious scenes yet concealed in the bosom of future time. But these are not the foundations whereon he rests his hopes. He may, and how fervently he must sometimes pray for deliverance from present change! I watch for an hour in Gethsemane, and I hear that prayer issuing from the Saviour's lips, in the untold strength of the feeling awak-

ened in his hour of agony. But the spirit of unquestioning submission breathes out sweetly in the prayer. It trusts, though it see no deliverance, or only meet a cross. Calvary cannot reach its joyful confidence. But it ascends the hill of shame and scorn, anxious for nothing save a deeper love, and in that cometh the peace passing all understanding.

BOOK NOTICES.

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE REV. SYLVESTER JUDD.

Boston : Crosby, Nichols & Co. For sale, in Montreal, by B. Dawson, Great St. James Street.

AN admirable biography of an able and interesting man, and efficient Christian minister. As an author, Mr. Judd had acquired a marked reputation by the production of "Margaret," "Philo," and "Richard Edney." The volume of sermons on "The Church," published since his death, gives us a fair view of his power and earnestness in the pulpit, and it shows us, moreover, how close to his heart lay that scheme of Church extension about which he wrote and spoke so much. The editor of the book before us has aimed to make it an autobiography. Mr. Judd has been made mainly to tell the story of his own life, through the writings and memorials he has left behind him. Born to the inheritance of a Calvinistic creed, his moral nature revolted from it, and after much painful struggling he set it aside, and advanced to the light of a more cheerful and Scriptural faith. "I reject Calvinism," he writes, "because it opposes my consciousness, my reason, nature, and the Bible." "Unitarianism — I am too well aware of the odor in which this name is held. But I have learned not to fear names. A hard lesson this has been to me." Again, in the pangs of conflict he writes, "Go to the Unitarian Church. Oh! it is misery

to think of it. It is an *open* step, which I have not yet taken. Truth, thy way is a thorny one * * * *” In order to understand his position at this time, we must consider him affectionately bound to Calvinistic relatives; and patronised by Calvinistic friends, who, attracted by the promise of his college life, had offered him a Professor's Chair in a Presbyterian College in Ohio. He declined the proffered Professorship, and became a Unitarian minister, settling in Augusta, Maine, where he ministered faithfully until he was called to rest from his earthly labors.

Mr. Judd was alive to what was going on in the world around him, and those who wish to see his relation to progress and reforms, will find it set forth in this volume. The frontispiece and title page are embellished by a neatly executed portrait, and an engraving of the cottage where he dwelt.

THE ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER. By Mary G. Chandler.

Boston: Crosby, Nichols & Co. For sale, in Montreal, by B. Dawson, Great St. James Street.

THE third edition of a book which, on its first appearance, we strongly commended to our readers. We take this opportunity to repeat our recommendation.

THOUGHTS TO HELP AND TO CHEER. Second Series. Boston: Crosby, Nichols & Co. For sale, in Montreal, by B. Dawson, Great St. James Street.

A LITTLE volume designed to assist at private devotions. It is so arranged that a text of Scripture, a brief meditation, and a few lines of devotional poetry, are presented under the head of every day in the year. This second part commences with the first day of July, and concludes with the last day of December. Its spirit and tenor are fitly indicated by its title.

DISCOURSES. By Abiel Abbot Livermore, of Cincinnati, Ohio. Boston: Crosby, Nichols & Co. For sale, in Montreal, by B. Dawson, Great St. James Street.

SOME one has said that the sermons usually preached in the Christian pulpits of the present day might as well have been uttered in Babylon of old, so far as any relation to the actual interests and events of our time is concerned.

But every general statement must submit to be qualified by exceptions. In this book we have twenty-four vigorous sermons on various subjects, wherein themes possessing a living interest for the men of to-day are honestly discussed, and the sinners of America in this nineteenth century, rather than those of ancient Babylon, are directly dealt with. Questions which now agitate men's minds, and follies and vices which deform our age, are here handled in a manly and Christian spirit. The style occasionally seems as if somewhat strained for the purpose of effect, but the devout Christian faith and fixed seriousness of the author are so evident throughout the whole, that we do not pause upon any apparent defects. The discourses are able and instructive, not dead sentences, but living words, moving the reader to a deeper faith in Christ, and through this to a nobler aim in life.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS. By Abiel Abbot Livermore. Boston: Crosby, Nichols & Co. For sale, in Montreal, by B. Dawson, Great St. James Street.

MR. LIVERMORE'S excellent Commentaries on the historical books of the New Testament have now been in the hands of the public for several years. Their circulation has gone beyond America, and they have been gratefully accepted on the other side of the Atlantic, where they have been reprinted for the use of our friends in Great Britain and Ireland. We are glad to find that he has entered on the Epistolary writings, and we thankfully receive the first fruits of his labor in this department, in the form which he has now given them. A popular Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans has long been a desideratum among the liberal body of Christians. The volume now before us is made additionally valuable by four introductory essays prefixed, and a revised translation of the Epistle appended, to the Commentary.

JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF THE TRUE CORNER STONE. A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Convention assembled at Montreal, October, 1854. By Rev. James F. Clarke.

THIS discourse has been published in Boston, and is now for sale in Montreal at the office of H. & G. M. Rose, Great St. James Street.

THE TENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MINISTER AT LARGE
IN LOWELL, TO THE LOWELL MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

We have to acknowledge the receipt of this excellent and very satisfactory report. In their Ministry at Large our friends in Lowell have evidently an institution of benevolence intelligently ordered, and worked out with that fidelity which springs from the love of God and man. Mr. Wood, the Minister at Large, says in his report,—

“The principles on which this institution has been conducted, which have been wrought out by our own experience and observation, aided by the experience and observation of others, of which we have been careful to keep ourselves informed both at home and abroad, it was proposed to spread out in detail, but the poor at the door want our time, and we will only state in general terms that they have been to lessen the miseries of poverty, to raise out of it, to *prevent* it, to open eyes to sin as a cause to awaken self-reliance, to strip off false and needless raiment and put on simple truth and industry, to bring nature and innocent amusements, and knowledge and religion to bear to this end. The reduction of poverty, a wise mercy toward all necessary poverty, but above all the *prevention* of it, have been our aim. This must be the secret of future success in public and private in this department of philanthropy. Opposite to well considered and improved system, ruinous and a shame in this time of luxury is the giving charity upon representation at the door, also the frequent hasty and, sometimes, exclusively partizan charity of religious societies, and the blind and heaping charity of some female charitable associations. When will the full light abroad break in upon the hearts of the benevolent and influence them to consistent wisdom? When too will the great expenditures of the city for the poor be controlled and directed steadily, mercifully, and by lofty views, commanding peculiar fitness and the whole time of one man,—the pauper department, like the street department, and the school department, of the government, having its superintendent? Never, until this is done, can we, or any other city, come up to the requirement of the times. The whole body of the poor should have full attention, and be regulated by the highest intelligence, and have the benefit of the experience of year upon year.”