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# THE PENITENT THIEF,

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“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”—Luke xxiii. 42-43.

Everything connected with Christ is precious to the believer, and especially, every word uttered upon the cross when the weight of a world's woe lay upon his heart. His dying words were few, short, for his agony was too great, for continuous discourse, but they were rich in blessing, and very expressive of the reigning disposition of his nature. It is said that the ruling passion is strong in death, that then the artist is busy with his sketches while his thin fingers are grasping at shadows; that the general is engaged (as in the case of the Roman Marius) in his last mortal hours in giving orders to his troops, and the mother clings to her child, as she supposes, in her vacant embrace. And so, also, we see the ruling passion of Christ, which was love to the souls of men, strong in death. We have an affecting instance in this passage of his tender mercy, and his ready ear being lent to the sinner, and at the same time a remarkable instance, the most remarkable upon record, of a sinner being enabled to exercise faith and expectation in his redeeming grace. We have the Saviour upon the one hand, shewing that his love for the race was strong in death; and we have the sinner upon the other, ready at one moment to join with the murderous crowd that surged like angry waves around the cross—to join with them in their resentments and revilings, but the next touched by a mysterious power, so that all his enmity is slain, his passions are laid, and as a new-born babe he sincerely desires the milk of the word. A ray of divine light suddenly enters his darkened mind, touches the secret springs of his nature, opens to him new views of

himself, of the blessed Saviour that hung by his side, and that eternal world into which he was so soon to enter. Everything connected with the conversion of this man was remarkable. His faith in Christ under such circumstances was remarkable; his prayer was remarkable; his testimony in behalf of Christ was remarkable; and his acceptance on the part of Christ, so ready, so tender, so full, was also remarkable.

I. *His Faith.* How came this man to call Christ Lord, and how came he to speak of him having a kingdom? As yet no supernatural tokens of the greatness of the sufferer had appeared in the heavens above or in the earth beneath. No darkening of the sky, no rending of the rocks. His disciples were gone,—his friends silent—his enemies everywhere triumphant.—There was nothing in the scene of suffering that was going on to show that he was other than an ordinary mortal. Whence then had this man that knowledge necessary for faith in Jesus? Had pious parents in his early youth instructed him in divine things? had a godly mother watched over his outgoings and incomings when he a free and innocent child played beneath the ancestral vine and fig tree?—had she sung to his young ear those old psalms that speak of a coming Saviour, who was to die for our sins and rise again for our justification? Or had he himself walked with Jesus and beheld his glory, and heard him preach the gospel of his kingdom? We cannot tell, but we know that as a Jew he must often have been in the Synagogue and heard the presiding elder read the Law and the Prophets, and how that

one was to suffer and die for the people, and how that this holy, spotless Lamb was to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He must have been familiar with the great truth, so deeply engraven upon the Jewish mind, that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Besides that same morning he had seen and heard much that was calculated to enlighten his mind, and raise his conceptions of the worth and the majesty of his fellow-sufferer. He had seen a picture of suffering patience, of grace and dignity, amidst unutterable provocations, such as mortal eyes had never seen before. He had seen him going faint and bleeding to the cross, like a lamb led to the slaughter, while the daughters of Jerusalem followed, weeping, and testifying to his goodness. He had seen the title written in the three great languages of the earth, reared above his head: This is the King of the Jews. He had heard from the railing accusations of his murderers that he had saved others, and he had heard from his lips intercession for the transgressors, claiming the Almighty God as his Father, and saying, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Such were the materials—the fragmentary portions of truth thrown in this man's way by the hand of that Good Spirit that takes of the things of God and presents them savingly to the soul; and his soul, all alive in that dread hour for something to rest upon—some words of eternal life upon which he may build his hopes, seizes them, collects them, combines them into something like a consistent whole, and then forthwith there springs up in his mind the sublime faith that deals with the unseen, and he sees in that strange sufferer by his side, the Lamb of God, pure and spotless, that he had seen so often symbolised in the sacrifices of the temple,—in his eye that looked upon him with such tenderness,—

the glance of Omniscience, and in his hand, stretched upon the cross, dropping sacred blood upon the tree and upon the ground—the hand that is mighty to save—the hand which garnished the heavens of old, and which even then exercised sway over a realm of grace and love; and hence his penitence and prayer—his humble request—"Lord remember me, &c."

II. HIS PRAYER.—It was short, as earnest prayers usually are, and not without some error, as the prayers of penitents always are. He speaks of the kingdom of grace as if it were some far-off realm of material splendour, to which it was necessary he must go before he could exercise any dominion. He speaks as if Christ had no power upon earth, no pardon to grant, no blessing to bestow until he would make his journey after death to that distant realm which he claimed as his own. He did not understand that the kingdom of heaven must first be within us before it can be without us. He did not understand that the kingdom of Christ was a kingdom whose elements were, not material, not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. In one sense, indeed, this kingdom is far-off, and in another very near—nearer than the atmosphere in which we live and move and have our being. To the soul estranged from God, and alienated by wicked works, it is indeed a far-off realm of glory into which it cannot enter. The love of sin in this case makes it an impassable gulf over which there is no intercommunion—a gulf which separates the sinful soul from the holy God, "wide as the poles asunder." For what communion is there between light and darkness, and what concord is there between God and Belial. Even in the lower sphere of earthly unions we see how true this is. It is not physical contact that brings one near to another. It is not the joining of hand to hand that binds two

loving souls together. That might take place, and has, when the heart has reluc- tated and refused to yield up the wealth of affection and pure and holy feeling which slumbered in its depths. Two have stood side by side at the altar of God—the one pure and good, sweet with the fragrance of a saintly life, the other coarse and carnal in his habits and tastes. And so, while they stood together hand in hand, united by a physical bond, they were separated far apart in mind, by reason of their mutual distaste and repellency. These two may dwell together under the same roof, and meet each other on the outer plain of material interests, but they will walk together strangers to each other in the deeper realm of thought and feeling and affection—not coming nearer but diverging more and more as years roll on. Here there is a great gulf, which neither the one nor the other can cross. Here they are separated far as the heavens are separated from the earth, and distant as the east is from the west. But conceive that in some favoured hour a change comes over the spirit of this brutish man—that a new, holy love springs up in his mind—the love of God, and holiness so that all old things pass away; and what a change takes place between these two kindred spirits so long estranged from each other! how sweet their intercourse, how deep their joy, and how close the union that binds their loving souls! Now he enters into a realm of love and tenderness, and taste and feeling of which he had previously no conception. And so with every brutish man, every sinful soul, in reference to God. While sin remains in its strength unconfessed and unforgiven, there can be no intercourse with the holy God, and his kingdom of grace, of light and love, though nearer to us than the air we breathe, will be a land of darkness, a *terra incognita*, a land unknown. But let the sweet, loving light of

heaven enter into his mind, let the sinner turn in reverence and in love to his God, and the King of glory will enter in with peace and pardon and all the blessings of his grace; and he will know that the kingdom is within him, and that whereas he was once far off, he is now brought nigh by the blood of Christ: In this respect the kingdom of heaven is nigh unto us, even at the doors. But this the penitent thief did not understand. He had some glimmering of celestial light by which he could see heavenly things, but as it were through a glass darkly. His views were not sound; his conceptions of the character and dignity of Christ were high, but not sufficiently high. Still, he who does not break the bruised reed did not turn away from his cry. He saw much that was wrong in his mind, but he saw a faith that could trust him in the darkness, a love that could bear witness for him when there was not a solitary voice raised in his behalf. And so he overlooked his errors, forgave his iniquity, and granted him his prayer abundantly, exceeding abundantly, far above what he had asked or thought. To day, not at some distant period—to-day, thou shalt be with me in Paradise,—to-day, before that sun sets beneath the western hills, before this angry crowd separate to their homes, thou wilt be with me, happy in my love, rejoicing in the fragrant bowers of the heavenly land.

III. HIS TESTIMONY.—We read that one of the malefactors railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us; but the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Here is a becoming testimony to the grace and the majesty of

the Lord Jesus, when not one of the multitude that he had blessed was so true as do him reverence. Here is language of becoming humility and contrition. What submission to his doom as a malefactor—renunciation of all personal righteousness, realization of the eternal world, zeal for the honour of his Lord! Here indeed is a testimony alike honouring to God and expressive of the fact that a great change had taken place in his heart, in his dispositions and views; that he now feared God and was renewed in the spirit of his mind. There were few at this moment that believed in the Messiahship of Christ—fewer still to show their allegiance to him in the hour and power of darkness. There were many to call him Lord, Lord, when he went everywhere preaching the Word and curing all manner of disease among the people. There were many, when he went in triumph into the city, to call him, Blessed, and say, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. But every voice was silent now. His disciples are scattered and gone, doubting whether they should ever see him again. They trusted that it had been he who should redeem Israel, but that hope had well nigh passed away from their minds. Even the holy women who ministered unto him, and who stood truer to him than the Apostles, are not to be found, save the mother of our Lord. All are dumb, or distant from the awful scene. They held their peace, even from good. Not one of them is there to call him blessed. It was a fitting testimony, therefore, to his grace and glory, that one should be raised up out of the dust to confess him before men, to own his divinity and show forth his power over the spiritual world—that while angry voices should be ringing in the air and the sound of horrid blasphemy should be rising from the crowd, one voice, soft and tender, should fall upon his ear, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' There were other testimonies indeed rendered to Christ at this time—testimonies in the heavens above and the earth beneath, to show forth his glory. The bright sun hid his face, as if ashamed of what was going on in this nether world; the earth staggered at the crimes that were perpetrated upon her bosom; the rocks rent asunder, and many that were in their graves arose and came into the holy city to witness for Christ; but the best and greatest of all those witnesses was the thief upon the cross, in whose heart a new love had been kindled—a love that would flow on in increasing strength and purity while he would have any being. That a soul so steeped in guilt, so darkened by a wicked life, should be arrested by the Saviour's hands in its downward career, and planted in his diadem to shine like a star for ever, was a fitting manifestation of his divinity in that dark hour. And it was a becoming tribute to his greatness, that, while all his friends were struck dumb and scattered like sheep without a shepherd, and nothing could be heard but the din of angry voice and the oath and the blasphemy of cruel men, that one of these railing tongues should be silenced and made to minister to his praise—that one out of that great crowd of Medes, and Cretes, and Arabians, that had come to the passover to worship and who had now come with wicked hands to crucify their Lord, should become his defender, and from the cross on which he hung proclaim his greatness and his glory. This was an eternal renown to the Lord Jesus; and amongst the multitudes of the redeemed that have been gathered out of every land, and who have made their way to heaven through great tribulation, none will be an object of greater interest than he, and none will sing with a deeper pathos the song of Moses and the Lamb, "Unto

Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

IV. HIS ACCEPTANCE BY CHRIST. To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.—The thief finding acceptance, or rather being enabled to exercise faith in God, after being a stranger to Him all his days, is, I consider, a remarkable circumstance, and one of the rarest things that takes place in the world. How can it be otherwise seeing the very faculty by which we exercise faith and hope, and love has become on such cases destroyed? True, we hear of many death-bed repentances but what do statistics bearing upon such cases say? How many of those that recover from what was looked upon as their death-bed prove to be genuine in their professions? Not one in an hundred. It is hard for the dying man—for one that has been living in rebellion up to the last hour of his life, when the fever is in his brain and the worm is in his conscience—when reason is all but paralyzed—it is hard for him to turn in faith and love to that God whom he has so long forgotten, and grasp those truths he has so long despised. I have lately read with melancholy interest an account of the last days of a profane, godless man, who occupied a high place in the world, and who died as a fool dieth by the hand of a brother officer.—When he found that he was shot through the heart, and that life was ebbing away, he sent for a clergyman, expressed some words of penitence, received at his hands the rites of the church, and in fifteen minutes from the time he was shot he died. But during this short space of time, when all his spiritual nature was aroused and torn with agony, how hard to settle the mind upon the blessed Saviour so long despised, so often pro-

faned? How difficult in such a case to listen to the still small voice of the gospel? The voice of the minister may be earnest and true, but that of conscience and memory is also true and louder than the minister. Oh it is hard to rise from an atmosphere of guilt and crime, and the horrid din of blaspheming voices, or even the light frivolities of dissipation, into the calm, blessed region of peace and reconciliation. We make too much of death bed repentance. We attach too much importance to mere signs of anxiety and expressions of penitence. And on the other hand we are prone to think unfavorably of one who has really lived a godly life, but whose sun went down in darkness. The felon, who up to the last three days of his life neither feared God nor regarded man, becomes suddenly penitent and prayerful, and he is regarded as *all right*, while grave doubts are entertained in regard to the man who has long walked with God, but who departs amidst clouds and darkness. A few words uttered in an orthodox style before death are more important in the estimation of some than a whole life spent in the service of God. Still we would not bate one jot of the encouragement and the comfort held out to the vilest of men in the case before us. We would point the dying man ere his eye closes upon this world, to that same Saviour that had mercy upon this penitent malefactor, and speak to him of that blood that cleanses from all sin, and that grace that saves to the uttermost; but we would warn the living man, and the man likely to live, to beware of the danger of periling the interests of eternity upon the dying hour. It has been beautifully said that there is one instance recorded of one finding mercy at the last that none might despair; and only one that none might presume.

In conclusion, let me remark, that the penitent thief is now in heaven, safe and

happy within the fold, shining in the beauty of holiness, and serving God day and night in his temple. He is an everlasting witness of the Saviour's tenderness and power. More than eighteen hundred years have passed since Christ took him to himself, and thousands from every condition of life and from every degree of de-filement have followed them into glory, and Christ is the same Saviour still. His delights have ever been with the sons of men. His willing ear is still ready to catch the first accents of earnest prayer, and his loving heart to rejoice in the first movement in the way of duty and of God. Hear the poet:—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.”

The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day;  
And there may I, though vile as he,  
Wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Be saved to sin no more.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream,  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.

Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I'll sing thy power to save;  
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue  
Lies silent in the grave.

## THOUGHTS FOR SPARE MOMENTS

### THE CENSURER REBUKED.

The first sermon preached by the late Rev. Robert Hall, at Cambridge, was on the doctrine of the atonement, and its practical tendencies. One of the congregation, who had embraced very erroneous views of the Gospel, said to him, “Mr. Hall, this preaching won't do for us; it will only suit a congregation of old women.” “Do you mean my sermon, sir, or the doctrine?” “Your doctrine.”—“Why is it that the doctrine is fit only for old women?” “Because it may suit the musings of people tottering upon the brink of the grave, and who are eagerly seeking comfort.” “Thank you, sir, for your concession. The doctrine will not suit people of any age, unless it be true; and if it be true, it is not fitted for old women alone, but is equally important at every age.”

### SAYINGS OF THE ANCIENTS.

When Æsop, in answer to the question put to him by Chilo, “What God was doing,” said that “He was depressing the proud and exalting the humble,” the reply is considered as most admirable. But the same sentiments are to be found in the Med-rash, though expressed, as usual with Jewish writers, in the form of a story. It runs thus:—A matron once asked Rabbi Jose, “In how many days did God create the world?” “In six days,” replied the rabbi; “as it is written, ‘In six days God made the heavens and the earth.’” “But,” continued she, “what is he doing now?” “Oh,” replied the rabbi, “he exalts the lowly, and depresses the haughty.”

In the Talmud are scattered a number of moral tales and apologies; one or two specimens will be sufficient to form an opinion of the character of other parts of this curious body of Jewish learning. There were discovered on the fragments of an ancient tombstone Greek words to the following purpose:—“I WAS NOT, AND I BECAME; I AM NOT, BUT SHALL BE.” The same thought is expressed in the following reply of Rabbi Gabiha to a sceptic:—A free-thinker once said to Rabbi Gabiiah, “Ye fools, who believe in a resurrection, see ye not that the living die?—How, then, can ye believe that the dead shall live?” “Silly man?” replied Gabiiah: “thou believest in a creation; well, then, if what never before existed exists, why may not that which once existed exist again?”

“You teach,” said the Emperor Trajan to Rabbi Joshuah, “that your God is everywhere, and boast that he resides amongst your nation; I should like to see him.”—“God's presence is, indeed, everywhere,” replied Joshuah: “but he cannot be seen; no mortal eye can behold his glory.” The Emperor insisted. “Well,” said Joshua, “suppose we try to look first at one of his ambassadors?” The Emperor consented.—The rabbi took him into the open air at noonday, and bid him look at the sun in its meridian splendour. “I cannot; the light dazzles me.” “Thou art unable,” said Joshuah, “to endure the light of one of his creatures; and canst thou expect to behold the resplendent glory of the Creator? Would not such a sight annihilate you?”

### CRUELTY.

“The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.”

A Persian usurper having taken his rival prisoner, and wishing to cause his death, without the stigma of wilful murder, erected a small castle upon a foundation of rock salt, in which he ordered his prisoner to be confined. The unhappy youth had not been in durance many days, when the tyrant took secret measures for producing an inundation round the walls of the prison. The salt was speedily melted; the castle fell; and the unfortunate prince was buried in its ruins.

## THE DISCIPLE ADMONISHED.

*"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."*  
—Luke xxii. 31, 32.

These words must have fallen with terrible emphasis upon the ears of Peter. In the present pseudo-philosophical age, the doctrine of Satanic influence is either altogether ignored or referred to as a myth belonging to the dark ages of the world's history. With what awful solemnity, however, does our Saviour refer to it, and how the heart of Peter must have quailed before His words; to be told by the lips that never erred that the great adversary had an especial desire for his destruction, how fearful, how awful! Why, it was like telling him that he stood upon the mouth of hell, and that the flames of the bottomless pit were spreading around him; and had not the Lord added the consolatory words, "but I have prayed for thee," the dreadful intelligence would doubtless have pressed him down to despair. And what, reader, would be your feelings were such language addressed to you? Would it not make you tremble to be told by the God who made you, that the Lion of hell was watching you, especially with a view to your present and everlasting destruction? Be it known to you, then, that thus you are addressed; for does not His book inform us that the "great Evil One" "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour?" And who can tell how soon he may cross your path, and you may be crushed in his awful embrace? No doubt Satan's thoughts have embraced you in common with others, though as yet you have not felt the sting of his perfected designs. Let us, therefore, prayerfully contemplate some few of the truths presented to our view by this solemn admonition from the lips of the Great Teacher.

*The Omniscience of Christ.*—It is interesting to contemplate Christ gazing upon the material world as it spread around him, and exhorting His disciples to consider the lilies of the field, and to listen to the good news they proclaim; to hear His voice giving utterance to the language of flowers, and to behold Him spreading them before His disciples as the mute expositors of His Father's love: but He appears more sublime and impressive as we behold Him looking into the invisible world and marking the movements of man's terrible adversary—gazing upon that fallen spirit whose footsteps though so noiseless, are ever attended by so much mischief

and desolation to men. Yes, not only did the panorama of this world paint itself upon the eye of Christ, but the persons and doings of an unseen world were reflected there. He looked upon Satan, He held his chain, and marked his every step; the heaving of his heart, the beating of his pulse, as by an electric chord, was communicated to His hand, and He knew how and when to loosen or to tighten his bonds; for while the hand was frail the power was divine. Christ looked upon Satan, did we say? more, He looked *within* him; the very heart of the Devil was open to his eye—all the dark chambers of that infernal palace were open to Him, He walked through them at his pleasure—all the wards of that intricate and mysterious lock were perceived by Him, and He could fit a key to them at His pleasure; deep as was the fountain of evil within that dark heart, He could fathom its secret depths; desperately wicked as was that heart, He knew its every device, could unravel all those subtle and ingenious threads, intended to entangle the feet of His saints; He watched their painful and elaborate production in that prolific house of misery and sin, and, as often as it pleased Him, put His fingers upon the cocoons of hell before the objects to be accomplished by them were effected. The nets intended for the birds of paradise He frequently destroyed, and many half-formed purposes of ill to His church He crushed in their birth. Beneath piles of Satanic produce, hidden in the most secret recesses of Satan's bosom, He saw coiled up the viper of burning hatred, whose especial vocation was to be the ruin of His servant Peter, and He put His foot upon its head at once. "I have prayed for thee."—Here was the dart that touched its life, and placed it beneath the feet of the impulsive but loving disciple. Oh, to be surrounded by such a wall of fire, to be shielded by the breath of Omnipotence, and made invulnerable by the cries and tears of the Son of God! And let us not forget that what Jesus did for His servant in days that are passed, He does for His disciples in every age: all are embraced in His petitions, and preserved by His prayers; like as the earth is surrounded by the air which ministers to the life of every living thing, so the intercession of Jesus perpetually embraces His church, and brings to her all those elements of truth, succour and consolation which are essential to her spiritual life and preservation.

*THE DANGER PERCEIVED.*—"Satan has desired to have thee."—The desires of Satan are vast and destructive; he desires to have all men, but especially the saints. These are the flowers of God's garden, and he loves to pull them up; the lamps of God's temple, and

he would fain blow them out; the epistles of divine truth, and he is ever anxious to tear them to pieces; the golden vessels of the upper sanctuary, destined forever to reflect God's praise and his disgrace, and hence he seeks perpetually to mar their beauty. Mere professors cost Satan but little trouble and seldom excite his ire; they mostly sleep in his arms, and he carries them where he pleases without trouble; their words, for the most part accord his will, and their lamp has no light to expose his designs; but all true Christians he hates, because they belong to Christ, love Christ, exhibit Christ, and fight for Christ; because they expose his designs, pierce him with the truth, and frequently conquer him by their prayers. Now the danger of Christians, as arising from their great adversary, is to be traced chiefly to two things; the character of their foe, and the failure of their faith.

*The character of their foe.*—Satan is not omniscient, but he has great knowledge; our acquaintance with ourselves may be very superficial, but it is not so with Satan—There may be but very little introspection with him, for what can he see within himself but misery? But he has a peculiar desire to look into man—has made him his especial study, and age after age has accumulated all kinds of information respecting him; and as the result, most men are better known to their great adversary than to themselves. This might well fill them with terror, and would, if they fully believed it. Most men, however, laugh at Satan's chains while they wear them. Philosophic pride may think itself quite able to fortify the soul against all danger, while Satan laughs at its efforts, and sits smiling in the midst of its fruitless labours. Living age after age, man's great foe seldom witnesses anything new, whilst his vast memory, with the experience of the past, can supply him in a moment with a suitable weapon, wherewith to bring down any foe. The heart of man may be deep, but he can find his way into its most secret recesses, and is perfectly at home amid all its unfoldings; hence, while man is often an enigma to himself, his arch enemy reads him with the greatest ease, and will ever present the right bait at the right time; and while his knowledge is ever accurate, practical, profound, and present, it does not terrify him. He has but to look within for the darkest and most bloody episodes of this world's history; but the sight of it does not unnerve him or divert him from his purpose. He has been accumulating wrath against the day of wrath, age after age, but still he works on, nor does the awful mounnd paralyse him. He delights in cruelty; and hence with the arrows of the Almighty in him, he loves to inflict

pain. He has witnessed the tears, the cries, and despairing and dying agonies of myriads not only without pain, but with joy. He is persevering, too, in the accomplishment of his designs; whoever may sleep he never does, but by night and day, at all times, and under all circumstances, he works on for the destruction of men. Arising out of his knowledge, cruelty, and perseverance, he has great power; so that even those who have been helped to conquer him, have mostly had to feel and to acknowledge the weight of his hand. This fact our Saviour brings before us, in the figure he employs. "Satan has desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat." Just as easily as a strong man tosses about wheat in a sieve, so easily does Satan toss men about under the influence of temptation.

What a forcible illustration we have of this in the life of Peter: had not the intercession of his Lord grasped the hand of his great adversary, with what ease would he have tossed him into hell, as has done numbers even while in the very act of denying his power. While thus contemplating man's weakness in contrast with Satanic power, with what a solemn emphasis do the words of Christ fall upon the ear, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat."

"Ah, Simon, thou art full of love, and zeal, and self-confidence, but alas! alas! shouldst thou be left for a single moment, did my prayers cease to embrace thee, thy weakness would soon appear, and thy soul would be lost. The enemy would put his hand upon thee, and thy ruin would be sealed." Dear reader, does not thy soul shrink within thee lest thou shouldst be so left? Oh, think of the numbers who have fallen in a moment, and that to rise no more. Oh, think of their tears and confessions; they meditated not the deed which destroyed them, but Satan was at hand, and they believed it not, and down they went. Trifle not with temptation; fly for thy life at once, O reader to the strong for strength.

But, after all, our great danger arises from another source, the failure of our faith. "I have prayed for thee," said Christ, "that thy faith fail not." While the hand of faith grasps its shield we are safe, the fiery darts of our great enemy fall harmless at our feet; but this hand, it seems, may, for a time be paralysed, and so leave us open and exposed to the assaults of our dreaded foe. Here, then, we have that which is more to be feared than Satan himself. Oh, ye who have no faith, what will ye do in the day of battle? do ye not perceive how certain it is, that unless this shield is thine the battle must prevail against thee? "Fight the good fight of faith,"

said a good soldier of the Cross; but if thou hast not faith, how canst thou fight? Here is thy weakness, reader; for it is faith that saves us. Dost thou inquire how? By teaching us to have no confidence in ourselves, but great confidence in God; by taking us to the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins; and his righteousness for the justification of our persons; by helping us to realize the presence of God—and who can sin in His presence?—by fetching fresh strength, and enabling us to watch, wait and, pray. But now mark, dear reader, while faith through these means, bruises Satan beneath thy feet, thou mayest not praise thy faith, deify thy faith, attach merit to thy faith; thy faith saves thee because Christ prays and prevails, because He lives. "I have prayed that thy faith fail not." We cannot be saved without faith, but Christ gives it, and his intercession is the root of strength. Faith works, but works by love, and Jesus finds this and keeps it alive. Like Peter, we sometimes forget to pray, forget to watch, but oh, what a mercy Jesus does not! His eye never sleeps, His arm never grows weary, His lips never falter, but the sweet incense of His adorable intercession constantly ascends before the throne, and hence His people live.— This explains how it is, believer, that thou hast been helped to persevere, and informs thee why thy faith has not become a withered blasted thing, and thy life as barren as thy faith; how, though often cast down, thou hast not been destroyed, though often wounded thou hast not been killed. Oh, then, while you watch and pray, and seek as for your life that your faith fail not, see to it that the praise of its strength and its victories be given to Him who is its great Author and Finisher!

But, dear reader, what if thou hast not faith? Then thou hast no intercessor? What words can describe thy danger; art thou not afraid, dost thou not tremble at the thought of being left in the hands him who has ruined myriads? Art thou a match for him who is the prince of the power of the air? art thou equal to his knowledge, power, cruelty, and perseverance? Oh, let him but loosen upon thee the full blast of temptation, and, unaided of God, all thy fancied strength, wisdom, and courage will be torn to pieces, and fly like a spider's web before the whirlwind. Fly thou to Christ, let Him be thy shield and buckler, and teach thee how to conquer him who otherwise must be thy victor and lord.

But if we have learnt these truths for ourselves, there is a duty incumbent upon us.— "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," said Christ; "tell them never to despair, that I can subdue their temptations,

and preserve them from the tempter; proclaim my love and faithfulness; let the weak, the timid, and the doubting hear how I saved thee from the hand of the spoiler; I have restored thee, go thou and restore others; I have bound up thy wounds, go thou and bind up the wounds of others. Dost thou see men rushing forth like moths towards the fire of hell, warn them of their danger, and inform them of your escape." Thus Jesus teaches and exhorts His servants, especially those whose backslidings He heals, and who are restored by His grace. Our plan is to keep the gold from the fire; His plan is to bring it through the furnace that it may the more abundantly reflect His praise. Our plan is to fill the mouth with words; His to fill the mind with thoughts and the heart with love.— "Prayer, temptation, and meditation," still make the ministers of Christ; let us pray, therefore, for such, and entreat the Lord to send forth men who, being thus qualified of Himself, shall be able to speak to the hearts of both saint and sinner, that so both may be profited and saved.

"Thou seest my feebleness:  
Jesus, be thou my power,  
My help and refuge in distress,  
My fortress and my tower.

Give me to trust in Thee;  
Be thou my sure abode;  
My horn and rock, and buckler be,  
My Saviour and my God.

Myself I cannot love,  
Myself I cannot keep,  
But strength in Thee I surely have,  
Whose eyelids never sleep.

My soul, to Thee alone  
Now, therefore, I commend;  
Thou, Jesus, love me as Thine own,  
And love me to the end."

## THE WORLD'S DISTINCTIONS.

Differences of high and low, rich and poor, are only calculated for the present world, and cannot outlive time. In the grave, at the day of judgment, and in heaven, there are no such distinctions. The grave taketh away all civil differences.— Skulls wear no wreaths nor marks of honor, Job. iii. 19. When civil differences vanish, moral take their place. The distinction then is good and bad, not great and small.—*Manton*.

## THE GRANDEUR OF HUMANITY.

Everything speaks the intrinsic greatness of humanity. This vast world, fitted up on a scale of such imperial magnificence, on whose furnishing and adornment are lavished the resources of Divine wisdom and power, attests the nobleness of its occupant. The sun, pouring from his solitary throne a flood of golden light over the universe; the sky, bending over us its majestic canopy, all "fretted with golden fires;" the multimiform elements, and the infinite variety of nature, all speak the greatness of him to whom they all minister. For nothing can be clearer than that all this boundless profusion of adornment, this exhaustless wealth of blessing, is primarily intended for man. Look at the curious adaptation of the eye to the light, and at the marvellous adjustment by which that minute and delicate little ball becomes a mirror for the boundless microcosm of nature. Look at the construction of the ear, and its capacity of receiving all the thousand melodies of inanimate and of animated nature. Look at the voice, with its capacities of endless modulation, its power to whisper, to speak, to shout, to scream, to laugh, to cry, to sing; and each of these with an untold variety of subordinate inflexions, and with the power, above all, of incorporating with these modulations thought and emotion, and of building up a world of human speech, answering to and even transcending the magnificence and majesty of nature. Look at the hand, which, with the aid of the entire body, and under the guidance of reason, can subject the mightiest powers, can tame the fiercest agencies, can draw forth all the capacities of nature, and accumulate on the earth untold treasures of beauty, power, utility, to minister to the wants, and fill the vast aspirations of man. Look at his æsthetic nature, answering to the myriad elements of beauty in the sights and sounds, the shapes and movements, the numberless hues, and the complicated harmonies of nature. Look, above all, at the godlike intellectual and moral faculties which distinguish man—at his power of observation, reflection, reason—at his capability to ransack all nature, draw forth her secrets, trace out her laws, build up

vast systems of science, rear on them vast systems of useful and elegant art: and thus, while he subjugates physical nature to his physical wants, sway her with a still mightier intellectual dominion, and evolve from the gross elements of matter an ideal universe, lighted by a brighter than the material sun, enriched with nobler than material treasures, and bounded by no such horizon as shuts down on the material creation. Who can doubt—irrespective, entirely, of the statements of Revelation—looking merely at the actual endowments of man, and the relations of subordination in which all nature stands to him—who can doubt that this mighty universe was planned, reared, furnished, decorated and upheld for man, and for such as he?—And who, then, can doubt, unless all nature is a lie, the grandeur of his origin and destiny?

Again, we infer the greatness of man from the greatness of his ruin. The depth of the fall can answer only to the preceding elevation; the capacity of abasement must be measured by the capacity of excellence. A plant may decay; a brute may become ferocious; but only a being, with the vast rational and moral capacities of man can climb to those heights, can sink to those depths of moral ruin which the history of humanity unfolds. What a profound nature must that be, the ocean of whose guilt and depravity rolls in every age and clime, dark and terrible, shoreless and fathomless! How potent, how grand must be those elements of being which are capable of such a terrible deterioration!

But yet again, even amidst all this ruin, what vestiges and reminders of man's original greatness! Even though a child of sin, and an heir of wrath—though enslaved by his lusts and passions, and clinging to earth with a guilty dread which dares not face the heavens, and its proper heritage, of immortality—even thus he still bears the unmistakable marks of his high origin and destiny. He still appears scarcely "less than Archangel ruined, or the excess of glory obscured." Still, his face erected confronts the heavens as with the lofty consciousness of his kinship with the skies. Still an inextinguishable sense of right within him attests the excellence of virtue, and wages an undying, though

hopeless, warfare against his lusts. Still Reason, Conscience, the perception and the conviction of right, stand as God's eternal witnesses, and Truth's eternal champions in the human soul. And still, slave as he is of sin and death, still he pants for the very immortality which he dreads, and cannot eradicate the conviction that "being, he shall be again," and is bound, whether for weal or woe, to an interminable hereafter. True, no philosopher has ever been able to prove the immortality of man. But there is one thing which, apart from Revelation, goes, in our judgment, far to demonstrate it, and that is simply the fact that man conceives it.

We wish for a moment to urge this point, for we think it has hardly received justice. We have no reason to suppose that a brute has any thought of immortality. Man has that thought, distinctly conceived, often consolidated into belief, and often swelling into aspiration. Whence came it? Why was it implanted within him? Why did the benevolence and the wisdom, which so manifestly presided over his formation, lodge in his bosom the sentiment, the conception of immortality?—Why make it swell with the thought of a being that should never end, and recoil with horror from the idea of "falling into naught?" It is inconceivable that it could have been a mere aimless, purposeless, mocking endowment. It is impossible but that, on the soundest principles of reason, man's conception of immortality is his guarantee of immortality. The stream does not rise above its fountain.—The effect is not mightier than the cause. The capacities of a being are, by every right principle of judging, the measure of its destiny, and the conceptions of a being are, on the broad scale, the measure of his capacity. The mind that can imagine an epic poem, can produce an epic poem. The man who can conceive a steam-engine, can make a steam-engine. That is, the order of power which is adequate to reach a certain conception is the order of power which, as a general rule, is adequate to realize that conception. A brute has no conception of science, and has, therefore, no part in the creation or heritage of science. Man's powers of conception in this life mark his powers of accomplishment, and it is but fair to infer that, throughout

his entire nature, his ability runs parallel with his destiny.

Let us be precisely understood. We are not now speaking of man's desire, his longing for immortality, though that might be made a part of the argument. We are simply speaking of that mental structure which enables him to embrace the conception of immortality, and which makes the *idea* of an endless function a part of his intellectual furniture. Into this single fact and argument, all the efforts which natural reason makes to demonstrate immortality, at last resolve themselves. It is simply that man can conceive of immortality, that he can cast his eye down the endless line of being, which, unless a lie has been stamped into the substance of his nature, demonstrates at once his capacity and his destiny. Far inland we behold a stream, and we ask ourselves, Will that stream reach the ocean? We look at the volume of its waters, the power of its current, its capacity to sweep away interposing obstacles, and to bear itself on through long reaches of desert plain, and we decide whether it will be drunk up by the beasts, waste itself in the sands, or hold on its triumphant course to the ocean. And the soul, the stream of our intellectual and moral life—who that contemplates it in the depth, the breadth, the grandeur of its current, will not decide that it is too deep, too mighty to lose itself in the arid wastes of life, but will rather hold on its tireless course, till it finds its destination and home in the ocean of eternity?—*Examiner.*

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## LOVE AND CHARITY.

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There is much vague talk in these latter days about love and charity. Men profess to admire, and desire to see them increased, and yet hate the principles which alone can produce them. Let us stand fast in the old paths. We cannot have fruits and flowers without roots. We cannot have love to God and man without faith in Christ, and without regeneration. The way to spread true love in the world is to teach the atonement of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost.—*J. C. Ryle.*

## GRACE, AND HER CHANGE OF HEART.

"Do ask your mother if we may not go into the woods this afternoon," said Fanny Storer, who was spending a week at the house of Grace Gray. "She'll give us leave, I am sure; but I will run and ask her now, so as to be certain," said Grace, jumping up from the step of the garden door where they were sitting, and running into the house to find her mother. Presently she came back and shook her head. "Oh, why not?" cried Fanny; "we depended upon it; besides, the Johnson's can't go any afternoon but Wednesday.—Why won't she let us go?" "Because the Mothers' Society meets here this afternoon, and she wants me to keep the door," answered Grace. "Then we shall have a good time at home," cried Fanny, brightening up from her disappointment. "We shall have to keep very still, Fanny," said Grace.

"What is the Mothers' Society?" asked Fanny; "I never heard of one before." "It is the mothers meeting together to pray for their children," answered Grace. "Can't they pray at home?" asked Fanny. "Oh, they do," said Grace; "but you know when people are interested in any thing how they get together and talk it over—so our mothers meet together to talk how to bring us up in the best way; and they pray because they want God to help them." It was a new idea to Fanny, and after reflecting a minute, "I think you ought to be very good, Grace," she said.—Grace had often thought so before, but now her pride was a little touched, and she wanted to say, "Well, I am not good?" but she did not say it; and soon after Mrs. Gray sent the little girls down town on an errand.

In the afternoon, Grace with Fanny was stationed in the sitting-room to go to the door and show the ladies up stairs; it was in the best chamber where they generally met when they came to Mrs. Gray's. Fanny sometimes went to the door with Grace, and the mothers, as they passed in dropped many a kind word to the little girls. "I am sure they love us," said Fanny; "I wish my mamma was at the meeting."

The children did not know how to amuse themselves in the sitting-room; they soon got tired of looking out of the window; at last they wished they had a book to read together, and Grace went up stairs to select one.—She went to the little room over the stairs where her books were, and as it was next to where the meeting was, she overheard a voice very distinctly; indeed, the door from her little room to the best chamber was ajar, and Grace heard part of a mother's prayer which went to her heart. Oh, thought Grace,

she means me with the rest; I know I ought to be good, as Fanny says. Tears came into her eyes, but she hastily brushed them away, found a book, and ran back on tiptoe to the sitting-room. It was a funny book; Grace was sorry, for she did not feel like reading a funny book just then. Fanny was delighted; but Fanny's laugh did not banish Grace's seriousness.

More than a week had passed away; Fanny had gone, and Grace had returned to her studies, when one morning having forgot her history, she went home after it. It was not down stairs, and Grace thought it must be in her mother's room. Stealing in, in order to take her by surprise, she found no mother there. It was very still: so still that a low noise from a little closet caught the ear of Grace. She hushed and hearkened. It was her mother in prayer, in prayer for *her*, that God would send down his Holy Spirit and make her a penitent and believing child.—"A'n't I as good as other children?" was the instant whisper of pride in Grace's heart, as she turned round and crept down stairs. "As good as others, perhaps," said conscience; "but are you truly and honestly good,—good in the sight of God, who sees you just as you are? don't you do anything to displease him?" Then, quick as thought, Grace remembered how, only the day before, she deceived her teacher by "making believe study," when she was reading the "Arabian Nights;" how she said her head ached because she did not want to be sent on an errand; how rudely she demanded Joseph's knife, and how angry she was because he said he had not got it; and how often she had neglected her prayers, because she did not want to pray. "Oh," said Grace, overwhelmed with the memories that came upon her convicting her of her sins and short-comings, "I am *not* good; I am bad, very bad. God sees that I am a sinner, and do not love him; my mother knows it, and she prays for me." Grace went out of the door crying, and very wretched, and went back to the school-room without her history. The teacher observed something unusual in her, but for the present forbore to ask questions.

Grace did not return in the afternoon, nor for several days, detained perhaps by a heavy storm which set in; but when she did come back her countenance looked like the clear shining after the rain. Grace well knew that she had faults; many of them were secret faults, known only to God, and she was often unhappy on account of them; but she hated to think long about them, and she put off the subject of religion to some more convenient season. Some people do so all their lives, and at last die without one penitent tear, or

prayer for forgiveness. The Bible says of all such, that God will cast them off for ever.

Grace had done so many times. But now, as she went home from school, and all that afternoon, her sins stared her so in the face that she could not help thinking of them. She felt they had displeased God. She wanted to hide from his searching eye, but she could not. She wanted to pray, but she was afraid to pray. She wanted her mother to pray again for her, but she was ashamed to ask.— Grace felt very bad indeed. After supper she went up to the little room next to where the mothers prayed for their children, and she thought may be God would hear her for her mothers' and all those good mothers' sakes, and the little girl took courage. Then she thought God would hear her "for Christ's sake." The great God had given his dear Son to be her Saviour, and Jesus Christ loved little children; and would not he hear her prayer for his dear Son's sake? With that she fell down on her knees and cried, "O God, pardon me, a poor sinful child, for Christ's sake, who died for me. Take away this naughty heart, and give me a new heart to love and serve thee." I do not know how long she staid in that little chamber, but I do know that God never despises or turns away from the humble, sincere prayer of the smallest child on earth. And from this time Grace's mother believes she became a child of God; for she was humble, dutiful, very watchful over herself, prayerful, and happy too.

God sent his Holy Spirit down into the heart of this little girl to convince her of sin and to bring her to himself. God has sent and will send his Holy Spirit upon thousands who read this story, for the same great purpose. Will you not yield to his Spirit, and seek forgiveness and peace through his precious Son Jesus Christ? Now is the only time you are sure of; to-morrow you may be too late.—*Child's Paper.*

### THE TEMPTING OFFER.

Two little girls, Fanny and Eliza, were twin sisters. They had kind Christian parents, who cared for them, and sought to train them in the right way, that they might be wise and happy.

When these sisters were five years old, an agent of the Missionary Society spent the night at their father's house. His business was to collect money to send missionaries and Bibles and other good books to the heathen. Fanny and Eliza had each of them a sixpence, which they were

to give towards purchasing books for heathen children.

The father of these little girls was an intelligent merchant; and knowing what impressions had already been fixed in their opening minds, he went to his store and selected two glass jars of beautiful candies. With one in each hand he entered the house, and calling his little daughters, drew their attention to the jars. Of course they were delighted to see the candies, and hoped to get a taste; but only a taste, for their father gave them very little of such things.

After the candies had been so long admired and talked about that their eyes and thoughts were full of them, he said, "Now, children, give me your sixpences, and you shall each of you have one of these jars of candy for your own." What a tempting offer. The sunshine came and went on their little faces as the struggle was going on within. Should they seek their own pleasure, or give their money for the perishing heathen? This was the question. Their mother was silently and anxiously looking on, and the agent was hardly less interested.

One of the little girls, I do not remember which one, was almost tempted to give up the sixpence, and take the inviting jar. Their father reached the jars towards them, saying, "Now the little heathen children must do without the books." Both Fanny and Eliza exclaimed at once, and very earnestly, "I'd rather give my money to buy books." "I want to give my money to buy the books." "We will rather do without candy. Here is the money; here it is;" and the two sixpences were given cheerfully into the agent's hand.

Fanny and Eliza's parents were well pleased with their decision, for it showed that a spirit of benevolence had been planted in their little hearts, instead of the mere love of self. The children themselves were happier by their self-denial than the tempting jars of candy could have made them.

So it will be with you, dear children, when you deny yourselves for the good of others. It may cost a severe struggle at first, but you will be all the happier in the end. The oftener you forget self, the easier it will become, and the more you will be like the gentle Jesus, who pleased not himself. Try and see if this is not true.

## THE GOOD NEWS.

NOVEMBER 1st 1863.

### THE WORD MADE FLESH.

Many, if not all of the world's events, will unquestionably afford subjects of discussion and conversation to the angels. But the appearance of the Prince Royal of heaven in human garb, created a sensation there which will never be witnessed again. How could it be otherwise? Prophet after prophet had told the story of His advent, and then gone up to wait the event, which with rapture they had seen drawing nigh. But who can describe the scene in heaven that morning when he started on his enterprise? He doffed his crown, laid aside his sceptre, and stepped down from that throne which he had occupied from eternity. There was a solemn pause in heaven. The angels stood amazed. But when it was announced that the fulness of time had arrived, and that the Son of God was about to descend to earth, both saints and angels strung their harps, and sang aloud of wondrous love, while he and his chosen escort passed through their long, shining ranks. The battlements of heaven are lined with eager spectators to behold his glorious descent, through the intervening fields of space. But how does he appear upon earth? He has not come in the full vigour of manhood, nor to be born of a princess mother, and to be surrounded by the plaudits of the great, but he comes in infantile weakness, the son of poverty. We would have expected that his advent would have moved universal nature—that the stars would have shone with unwonted lustre when the bright and the morning star came out of Jacob—that the sun would have lent his beams to encircle the brow of the Sun of Righteousness, and that the little hills would have skipped like rams around the Rock of Ages. Who would have been surprised had it been recorded that the flowers had sprung up in his pathway, to bear witness to the plant of Renown, the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the Valley—that the trees had sent forth their green boughs to the rivers, in honour of the Righteous Branch—

that the lions had come up from their desert lairs, and gambolled before the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and that the birds had hovered around his head, making the air vocal with song? We would at least have expected, that when He who is higher than the kings of the earth, condescended to set foot upon our globe, that unto him the gathering of the people would have been, and that earth's nobles and princes and sovereigns would have sent in their tribute, and cast themselves and their crowns at his feet, their hearts exclaiming, "Thou only art worthy, to receive honour, and glory, dominion and praise." But his coming was not thus honoured; with the exception of the angels, who acted well their part, he came unnoticed. And man may well feel ashamed of the reception he met with. Jesus came to Bethlehem, and there was no room for him in the dwellings of the rich, no, not even in the inn. There was room in Bethlehem's inn for pageantry, and wealth, and pride, but none for Nazarene humility. But "let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this great thing which has come to pass." Seven cities contended for the birth-place of Homer, but a greater than Homer is here. All the fulness of the Godhead is centred in that new-born babe. That "holy thing" is the Son that was to be given and the Child that was to be born. No wonder that angels have come to his birth, and are singing of his glory in exultant strains on the common that surrounds the town. The pious shepherds hear them, and in they go to Bethlehem breathless with the news, and their glad homage to the new-born king of the Jews. They find him nestling, not in the lap of wealth, but in the stable of the caravansera, as the angels had said, reposing in a manger among the camels, while his mother, a stranger from Nazareth, watches nigh. But O! is not the thought too vast to be grasped! The mighty God who had lived throughout all the infinite past, amid the splendours of eternity, becoming a feeble and defenceless infant, to be denied a cradle in an inn! The shepherds look and wonder, for they never expected that the seed-royal of David—the seed-royal of heaven—would come thus. The Messiah they looked for was to come in unmistakeable

splendour, to lead a career of unparalleled glory, and to set up in the city of David a tangible, visible throne, the pride of all the earth. Still they doubt not the fact of his arrival, but go and publish wide the gospel. The first of human mould that entered heaven was Abel the shepherd, and the first of human mould that announced Heaven's entry into earth were shepherds too, and it was the Great Shepherd, who had come to give his life for the sheep, of whom they had to speak. And what could they say of that infant? What can we say? That little one in Bethlehem's stable is the wonderful one, of whom Isaiah sung. That little hand shall yet grasp the sceptre of universal dominion, for he who now hangs upon a mother's breast has a universe hanging upon his care. Baby tears steal down his cheeks, and yet it is he who dries up every tear. Infant though he be, and in a camel's stall, he is the King of kings and Lord of lords, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, and of the increase of his government and dominion there shall be no end.

X. Y. Z.

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### "IN A STRAIT BETWIXT TWO."

#### I.—CLINGING TO EARTH.

Oh, do not let me die! the earth is bright,  
And I am earthly, so I love it well;  
Though heaven is holier, all replete with light,  
Yet I am frail, and with frail things would dwell.

I cannot die! The flowers of earthly love  
Shed their rich fragrance on a kindred heart;  
There may be purer, brighter flowers above,  
Yet with all these 'twould be too hard to part.

I dream of heaven, and well I love those dreams  
They scatter sunlight on my varying way;  
But 'mid the clouds of earth are priceless gleams  
Of brightness, and on earth oh let me stay.

It is not that my lot is void of gloom,  
That sadness never circles round my heart;  
Nor that I fear the darkness of the tomb,  
That I would never from the earth depart.

'Tis that I love the world, its cares, its sorrows  
Its bounding hopes, its feelings fresh and warm.  
Each cloud it wears, and every light it borrows,  
Loves, wishes, fears, the sunshine and the storm;

I love them all; but closer still the loving  
Twine with my being's chords and make my life;

And while within this sunlight I am moving,  
I well can bide the storms of worldly strife.

Then do not let me die! for earth is bright,  
And I am earthly, so I love it well:  
Heaven is a land of holiness and light;  
But I am frail, and with the frail would dwell

#### II.—ASPIRING TO HEAVEN.

Yet, let me die! Am I of heav'nly birth,  
And shall I cleave to sin and death and hell,  
Loving the stain they cast on all the earth?  
Oh, make me pure, with pure ones e'er to dwell.

I long to die. The flowers of earthly love,  
Fair, frail, spring blossoms, early droop and die;  
But all their fragrance is exhaled above,  
Upon our spirits evermore to lie.

Life is a dream, a bright but fleeting dream,  
I can but love; but then my soul awakes,  
And from the mist of earthliness a gleam  
Of heavenly light, of truth immortal breaks.

But heaven is dearer. There I have my treasure;  
There angels fold in love their snowy wings;  
There sainted lips chant in celestial measure,  
And spirit fingers stray o'er heaven-wrought strings.

There loving eyes are to the portals straying;  
There arms extend, a wanderer to enfold;  
There waits a dearer, holier One, arraying  
His own in spotless robes and crowns of gold.

Then let me die. My spirit longs for heaven,  
In that pure bosom evermore to rest;  
But if to labour longer here be given,  
"Father, thy will be done!" and I am blest.

FANNY FORESTER.

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### MISTAKEN PLEASURES OF WORLDLY MEN.

A few gay smiles of companionship, a few momentary gratifications dear bought at the price of after thoughts and after depressions, a few heavy excesses of spirit and extravagancies of language, and irregularities of conduct; that is nearly the sum total of the benefit. Are you free? Not a jot; you are the slaves of the customs, and dare not, on your peril, depart from one of them. You call religion a bondage? Yes, it is the bondage of angels strong and seraphs blessed! Nature's well-pleased bondage to her Maker, the creature's reverence for his Creator; but yours, yours is a bondage to idle floating customs, narrow rules of men like yourselves, whose statutes enslave you; you have no privileges worth naming; you have heaven forfeited; you have hell forestalled. Pitiful drudgery! And this is what you are in love with and cannot leave. So were the swinish herd enamoured of Circe's cup, forgetful of their former noble selves.

### Religion a Solace in Affliction.

If the Scripture doctrine of immortality is entitled to weight in the regulation of *life*, its influence is not less sovereign in dispelling the terrors of *death*, and consoling us under the loss of our dearest friends and relatives. I "would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we be forever with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." And who can fail being penetrated with the divine consolation they afford? If ever Christianity appears in its power, it is when it erects its trophies on the tomb; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments.

Nor are the words I have quoted adapted to support the mind of a Christian in the view of his own dissolution, only; they administer the firmest support amidst the breaches which death is continually making in the church of Christ. A degree of sorrow on such occasions, nature compels us to feel, and religion does not condemn. At the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, "Jesus wept." But the sorrow which a Christian feels in such situations, is mingled with hope. By the light of faith he traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. Instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them under the eye of Divine Providence. The period of their trial is closed; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is forever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living, and the pious dead are still one family, under one head; and when he "who is their life shall appear, they shall appear together with him in glory." R. HALL.

Every man shows fair in prosperity; but the main trial of the Christian is in suffering; any man may steer in a good gale and clear sea; but the mariner's skill will be seen in a tempest.

Herein the Christian goes beyond the Pagan's, not practice only, but admiration. "We rejoice in tribulation," saith the chosen

vessel. Lo, here a point transcending all the affectation of heathenism. Perhaps some resolute spirit, whether out of a natural fortitude, or out of an ambition of fame, or earthly glory, may set a face upon a penitent enduring of loss or pain; but never any of those heroic Gentiles durst pretend to a joy in suffering. Hither can Christian courage reach; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.

Is he bereaved of his goods and worldly estate? he comforts himself in the conscience of a better treasure, that can never be lost.— Is he afflicted with sickness? his comfort is that the inward man is so much more renewed daily, as the outward man perisheth. Is he slandered and unjustly disgraced? his comfort is that there is a blessing which will more than make him amends. Is he banished? he knows he is on his way homeward. Is he imprisoned? his spirit cannot be locked in; God and his angels cannot be locked out. Is he dying? to him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Is he dead? he "rests from his labors," and is crowned with glory. Shortly, he is perfect gold, that comes more pure out of the fire than it went in; neither had he ever been so great a saint in heaven, if he had not passed through the flames of his trial here upon earth. BISHOP HALL.

### SOME EXAMPLES OF FAITH FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.—All who know God trust him; but those who do not know God trust in themselves, in their own evil wills, and their own evil ways, and try to be happy without God.

We read in the Bible of men who in every difficulty and trial trusted God; and we see how strong, and peaceful, and safe they were when they did so; but how everything went wrong with them, how they got into confusion and misery, when they did not trust him.

Let me give you a few examples of this faith in God.

Noah trusted God when he was warned by him of coming danger, and was commanded to prepare the means for his own safety. The coming danger was the Flood, which was to destroy the wicked world, and the only means of escape was the Ark. Now such a thing as a flood had never occurred; but Noah believed God, and therefore built the large ark year

after year upon the dry land, and so he was saved, while those who did not believe God's word were lost. "By faith," says the Apostle, "Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

Thus let us be assured that God will save all who trust and obey him. Let us now fly for refuge to Jesus Christ, the only ark of safety, as destruction may come in a moment to those who are so wicked as to disbelieve God, as if he was not in earnest and did not mean to do what he threatens.

Abraham trusted God, who promised to give the land of Canaan to his descendants, through one of whom (Jesus Christ) all the families of the earth would be blest. When God told this to Abraham he was wandering about as a stranger in that very land, yet he never doubted God's promise. He had no son at the time, yet he believed God's promise to give him one. Then came a great trial of his faith when God commanded him to offer up his dear son—his only son—as a sacrifice! But Abraham never murmured—never objected—nor delayed a single day to obey God. And why? because he loved and trusted God, and was glad to yield up everything to him who was his Maker, his Preserver, his Father. He did not know *how* God would deliver him or his boy, or *how* he could keep his promise. He knew only God himself and his will, and so, like a little child, he obeyed his heavenly Father. Isaac, too, obeyed in the same spirit of trust, his earthly father when he was bound by him to the altar. Their faith was not put to shame! You have read the beautiful history in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis: read it again. "By faith," says the Apostle, "Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence he also received him in a figure."

Now, dear children, always trust God that he will keep every promise made to those who believe and do his will. When you know what is *right*, that is, what is God's will, do it. You may *think* it at

the time very hard, very difficult, and that it would be far better and happier to be selfish and disobedient. But *trust God*, and be sure that in the end you will see his way to be the happy way, because the right way. He will give you strength to do your duty, great peace in doing it, and greater peace when it is done. Make no excuses for disobedience, for there never can, by any possibility, be a good excuse for sinning.

Moses trusted God's power and wisdom, and goodness, in circumstances which severely tested his faith. For he gave up all the riches and splendour of Egypt, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And "seeing him who is invisible," he braved all the wrath of Pharaoh, and marched to the Red Sea, not seeing how God could deliver him and the thousands of Israel; but God made a path through the waters.—And Moses for forty years trusted God in the howling wilderness, when the people themselves so lost their faith that they "could not enter" into the Promised Land "Because of unbelief." It was this Moses who centuries afterwards appeared with Christ in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The God who guided and delivered Moses out of all his troubles will guide and deliver every boy and girl who will not be turned away from duty by *fear* of what other people may say or do, nor of difficulties which may come before them; but will "go forward" in the right path, trusting in the Lord their God for help in their time of need. They who thus live now, will in the end be glorified with Christ and his faithful servants.

Job trusted God in the midst of the sorest afflictions ever endured by man. When he was in the enjoyment of every earthly blessing, possessed of immense wealth, and surrounded by a large and happy family of sons and daughters, he did not depend on these for his true happiness, but on his God. Satan, the wicked one, alleged that Job did not care for God himself, but only for the good things which God bestowed. So the Lord was pleased to take from him his earthly riches and his dear family, and to visit him with a loathsome disease; so that all was lost to

him except God. And did Job then lose his trust in God, and think that God was no longer his father and friend? No! The old saint held fast his confidence in the dark as well as in the light, in adversity as well as in prosperity, and said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!"—"Though he slay me, yet will I put my trust in him!"

And thus, dear children, it may be the will of your Father to send you sickness and poverty, to deprive you of those you love most on earth, and leave you very lonely in the world; but the God whom Job trusted is still your God, and you must trust him as Job did, and believe that he loves you and can never forget you, but will in his own way and in his own time provide for you and comfort you. "You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the *end* of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

*David* trusted God when, a young lad, he went to fight the giant Goliath. It was not from any trust in his own courage or skill that he did this, but from simple faith in the help of God. Hear his noble words: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

When you feel, dear children, that you *ought* to do something which is difficult, perhaps to resist temptation, or to overcome a bad habit, never be cast down by the thought of your own weakness and the strength of sin. "If God is for you,"—and He is for you when you are for what is right—it is enough! "Greater is he who is for you than all who is against you." "He will perfect his strength in your weakness." "My grace," he says, "is sufficient for you."

Once more. *Daniel* trusted God when he was threatened with death if he prayed to God. Daniel had been carried captive to Babylon, and when young and in a strange land he had showed even then in many ways his love and obedience to the God of his fathers. But when he became the greatest man next to the king, and when upwards of eighty years of age, some envious and wicked people deceived the king and got a law passed by which Daniel should be cast into the den of lions if he prayed to his God. Yet Daniel prayed as he used to do. There was no one to stand by and defend him but his God. He had no church to go to in that idolatrous land; and few, if any, good people to pray with him. If he did what was right, there was no friend or companion to cheer him, while enemies watched him, and resolved to take away his life in a cruel way, unless he became a base idolater like themselves. Now Daniel did not say, "I will not be singular, but do as other people do;" or "I will worship God in secret, but not confess him before the world;" or "I will pretend to be an idolater, as the custom of the country is, but in my heart I will believe in God;" or "since they will put me to death, it is a good excuse for my not praying." No! He, the old man, the prime minister of the country, was no mean coward or hypocrite. He trusted God and did what was right, though it should cost him his life to do this. And so he was cast into the den of hungry lions.

The foolish king was grieved indeed, but even he could not save him out of the hands of his lords and princes. "Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him." And when Daniel was cast into the den, "Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him." But the king somehow believed that God would save his servant, and so we read that he "rose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.—And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel; and the king spake and said to Daniel, O

Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

What a sin and shame it would be if you, my dear children, were afraid or ashamed to do what is right; to pray to God, for example, because none of your companions do this, or because they may ridicule you, or annoy you! Learn to trust the God whom Daniel trusteth, alike in his youth and old age, and He will bless you and make you a blessing. Have a holy loving fear for God, and you will never have a cowardly fear for man. It is the good man alone who can have peace amidst lions. I think it very likely that you know all those true stories I have told you, as well as many others, in the Old Testament, of good men who trusted God. You will read them again for yourselves in the Bible, and I hope they will strengthen you to be "followers of God as dear children."

NORMAN McLEOD, D. D.

IS IT NOTHING TO YOU, ALL YE THAT PASS BY? BEHOLD, AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY SORROW LIKE UNTO MY SORROW, WHICH IS DONE UNTO ME, WHEREWITH THE LORD HATH AFFLICTED ME IN THE DAY OF HIS FIERCE ANGER.—LAMENTATIONS, i. 12.

It is nothing to you that a message of glory was brought unto man by the Holy and True? And O! if the Stranger's mysterious story Be written in blood—is it nothing to you?

Is it nothing to you that the valley of tears— Of the shadow of death, must be trodden by One

To whom the far sweep of eternity's years, Is as brief and as bright as a gleam of the sun?

Is it nothing to you that when vengeance was nigh,

The Meek and the Lowly was mighty to save— That a scepter of light, and a kingdom on high, Were exchanged for the cradle, the cross and the grave?

Lo! bearing his cross, the lone Sufferer appears, Slowly, wearily struggling up Calvary's steep; The pang of that hour is unsoled by tears, And the curse of the scoffer is bitter and deep.

He is nailed to that cross; but for you is the prayer

That the hour of fierce agony wrings from his heart;

Ah! think ye no bitterer anguish was there, Than the rack to that quivering frame can impart?

Ye know not the terrible mystery that crushed The life of his soul when the Father withdrew, And the voice of his ministering angel was hushed—

"It is finished"—O! say, is it nothing to you? —Niagara. GEORGE MENZIES.

### MINISTRY.

The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Since service in the highest lot, And all are in one Body bound, In all the world the place is not Which may not with this bliss be crowned.

The sufferer on the bed of pain Need not be laid aside from this, But for each kindness gives again "This joy of doing kindnesses."

The poorest may enrich this feast; Not one lives only to receive, But renders through the hands of Christ Richer returns than man can give.

The little child in trustful glee, With love and gladness brimming o'er, Many a cup of ministry May for the weary veteran pour.

The lonely glory of a throne May yet this lowly joy preserve, Love may make that a stepping-stone, And raise "I reign" into "I serve."

This, by the ministries of prayer, The loneliest life with blessings crowds, Can consecrate each petty care, Make angel's ladders out of clouds.

Nor serve we only when we gird Our hearts for special ministry; That creature best has ministered Which is what it was meant to be.

Birds by being glad their Maker bless. By simply shining sun and star; And we, whose law is love, serve less By what we do than what we are.

*The Three Wakings and other Poems.*

CHEMISTRY ADDUCED AS A WITNESS TO THE WISDOM, POWER, AND LOVE OF GOD.

Forty years ago many substances were supposed to be simple and elementary, which are now found to be compounds. One substance after another is crossed off from the rapidly diminishing list of elements. This fact alone is sufficient to call forth profound reverence and wonder. Wherever we look in Nature, the greatest variety meets our eye—variety in color, in taste, in form and use.—The various properties of different substances are innumerable; and yet all these are formed from a very few elementary substances.—Here, then, we come in view of the first great fact. The Maker of all things has in his wisdom produced an infinite variety out of a very few elements.

But if this is the case in *inorganic* chemistry—that is to say, in that department of the science which deals with substances without life, such as metals, earths, salts, and the like—how infinitely is our wonder increased when we find that the same thing holds good to a still greater extent in *organic* chemistry, or things possessing life! Behold that gorgeous Eastern lily, successful rival of Solomon in all his glory, or those varied and curious orchidaceæ, or these simpler and more common flowers and plants which are gathered by the wayside! Add to them these blades of wheat, these trefoils. Place them together, and consume them. We have as the result a charred and blackened heap. They are reduced to ashes. Try to distinguish now between the remains.\* Let us single out, if we can, the eccentric orchid, or the humbler wild flower. We cannot do it: it is one heap of charred remains; yet, a few moments since, how different they were, in form, in color, in smell, in properties!

We say they are reduced to ashes: but what is the meaning of that? What are ashes? Why do so many things, when subjected to the action of fire, leave the same residuum? These ashes are analogous to a substance, which, when pure, we call carbon. And here comes in the great truth, which is always startling, familiar as it is to many, that into the composition of all the living things which we see around us, *four* chief elements enter; and that though other substances and principles are present in small quantity, yet that the *bulk* of organised matter is made up of these four. Wonderful as this statement is, it becomes still more so when it is added, that of these four *three* are impalpable, gaseous fluids; the other is this carbon, which is the invariable result of the *action* of fire on organised matter.

Here, then, we have the explanation of the fact, that our lilies and orchids, our trefoils and ears of wheat, all present a uniform charred appearance. The carbon was one of the main factors in their composition. It had, indeed, three mighty co-agents—oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen—but the fire has dissolved the union between them; and as these last were, so to speak, of a spiritual nature, they have passed away, and are around us now, in new combinations.

The carbon alone was earthy, palpable material; therefore it is lying before us.—Minute chemical analysis would indeed detect in the various remains certain distinctive salts and essences, but they are not present in any quantity. We repeat, that carbon, with its wonderful gaseous companions, is answerable for the *bulk* of what we see around us. Those charred remains are surely an apt emblem of the body. The rude test to which you subjected your flowers drove away the more spiritual matters; and they being gone, it is but a poor mass of charcoal which remains. But the gaseous elements are not destroyed. We cannot, indeed, see them, but they exist as much as ever they did. So it is with the friend whose loss we may have mourned. *Body* and *spirit* he was, just as those rare flowers were solid and gaseous.—The spirit has fled, driven away by some rude shock to nature; the body remains, like the charred remnants of our orchids, or the humbler wild flower; but the soul exists just as surely, though it has for a time forsaken the companionship of the body.

There is a familiar experiment which will illustrate what we have been saying as to the small number of elements which enter into the composition of organised matter.

Let us suppose we are about to breakfast. A youth enters; he sees the loaf sugar before him, white, granular, and sparkling.—“And what is sugar made of?” is his enquiry. We proceed to show him, by taking a common earthen jar and a bottle of sulphuric acid.—Into the jar we put one or two lumps of sugar, and from the urn we take sufficient boiling water to make a thick syrup. The little jar is placed upon a breakfast plate. Upon the syrup we pour a little sulphuric acid. Instantly a black seething mass boils over the jar into the plate. The youth is amazed—the white sugar is turned black. We tell him it is carbon. “Is sugar made of charcoal?” he asks. We proceed to explain the experiment, and show him that sugar is composed of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen. In the trio, carbon is the only solid substance. We remind him that oxygen and hydrogen are the component parts of water, and that sulphuric acid has a wonderful affinity for wa-

ter. When added to the syrup, it not only combines instantly with the water, but it dissolves the union between the carbon and the atom of water which together form sugar, and forcibly takes the water to itself, upon the principle of might against right. The consequence is, that we have in the jar sulphuric acid and water, and at the top and on the plate the charcoal, which has been thus forcibly robbed of its companion, and ejected in the manner we have seen. Many would tell us that the acid had charred the sugar; but as in ordinary life we find strange histories lying beneath the surface, so in this little experiment there is a history—viz., the strong affection of the sulphuric acid for the companion of the carbon. Hence the contest we saw, with this strange result; charcoal is left.

During breakfast, we say to the youth.—“You know what spirit is?”

“Alcohol you call it, as you are a chemist,” is his reply.

“True; and it is very curious that its composition is same with that of sugar, with this very small difference, that one has an atom more of water than the other.”

“But,” he asks, “how is it that when the component parts are the same, the substances are so different?”

We cannot tell; it is impossible to say.—In the study of organic matter we are baffled at every step. The arrangement of the ultimate atoms is supposed to be the cause of the difference. No branch of human knowledge is calculated to fill us with more awful reverence for the power and wisdom of God than that of chemistry. When we look around us, and see on every side the beautiful things by which we are surrounded—flowers and fruit, the golden corn, the waving trees, the clouds, and rain, and stormy wind—and remember that God has made them out of but few elements, and further, that out of nothing He called even these, then we, in some small degree, realise the wonder and mystery of creation. We stand in awe of the mighty power of him who spake, and it was done; and there comes to us not only a sense of his power, but of his incomprehensible wisdom. What infinite variety stamps all his works! The flowers are not of one uniform hue or shape; the leaves of the trees are not cut in one pattern; and the perfume which rises to our gratified sense is not the same from each flower. The oak, casting abroad its mighty arms, clothed to its smallest twig with myriad leaves, is altogether different from the neighbouring elm; and yet each leaf on each tree is shaped, and cut, and colored to perfection, as though that alone had engaged its Maker's care. How delicate

the scent of that bunch of early cowslips, and yet it is altogether distinct from the scent of a bank of primroses, or a tuft of purple violets. How many things has God formed for our delight, and also for our curious and intelligent scrutiny, that through his works we might know more and more of the love and wisdom of Him who has revealed himself to us in his Word.

Let us take another instance of his wisdom and providential care. Our atmosphere consists, as to its main elements, of oxygen and nitrogen, in the proportion of four of nitrogen to one of oxygen. Of these is formed the balmy breath of spring; of these also the fresh and bracing breeze which comes to us from the sea. But notice this. Oxygen and nitrogen are capable of combining in various proportions. Of these I single out one—nitric acid—as most familiar. What a caustic, acrid substance we have here! the very fumes are dangerous; and yet the elements of this are just the oxygen and nitrogen which are present in such untold abundance in the air. Of two gaseous fluids, then, which are capable of combining in various proportions so as to form deadly poisons, God has formed a combination which is the pleasant and blessed air we breathe. And further, if the electric spark be passed through a mixture of nitrogen and oxygen, it serves to combine them, and to produce one of these caustic substances; yet the abundant electricity in the atmosphere has had a very slight effect in this way upon the enormous body of air in which it is contained. Here again we have proofs of the wisdom and loving kindness of our God. Let us gain our chief knowledge of him from a constant study of the pages of his inspired Word; but let us have eyes and ears open to the sights and sounds of Nature. Let us question Nature with reverential feelings and an unprejudiced mind. She will reveal to us her secrets, and the testimony which all her parts will bear will be this, “THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.”

#### QUESTIONS IN READING THE NEW TESTAMENT.

In the study of the New Testament, and of the Gospels especially, we need to inquire and compare. The inspired writings are infinitely rich in truth, and each verse is so connected with the rest that an intelligent inquirer may easily extend his investigation from one passage over the whole of Scripture. Without attempting to exhaust

topics of inquiry, we mention the following. The letters may be prefixed to each verse, or not, according to the taste of the reader.

- A. What *analogies* between sensible and spiritual things may be here traced?  
 a. What prophecy is here *accomplished*? wherefound? when written? what rule of interpretation is illustrated?
- B. What *blessing* is here sought or acknowledged, or promised, and why?
- C. What *custom* is here referred to?
- c. What trait of *character* is here given? good or bad? belonging to our natural or our renewed state? what advantages are connected with it?
- D. What *doctrine* is here taught? how illustrated? what its practical influence?
- d. What *duty* is here enforced, and how? from what motives?
- D. What *difficulty* is here found in history or in doctrine? how explained?
- E. What *evangelical* or other *experience* is here recorded?
- e. What *example* is here placed before us? of sin or of holiness? lessons?
- F. What *facts* are here related? what doctrine or duty do they illustrate? do you commend or blame them, and why?
- G. What is the *geographical* position of this country, or place? and what its history?
- H. What facts of *natural history* or of *general history* are here referred to or illustrated?
- I. What *institution* or ordinance is here mentioned? on whom binding? what its design? what its connection with other institutions?
- i. What *instructions* may be gathered from this fact, or parable, or miracle?
- K. What *knowledge* of human nature, or want of knowledge, is here displayed?
- L. What *lofty* expressions of devotional fervour?
- l. What *Levitical* institute is here mentioned? why appointed?
- M. What *miracle* is here recorded? by whom wrought? in whose name? what were its result? what taught?
- N. What is worthy of notice in this *name*?
- P. What *prohibition* is here given? is it word, or thought, or deed, it condemns?
- p. What is the meaning of the *parable* here given? what truth as to God, Christ, man, "the kingdom," is taught?
- P. What *promise* is here given? to whom?
- R. What prophecy is here recorded? is it fulfilled? how? when?
- S. What *sin* is here exposed?
- s. What *sect* is here introduced? mention its tenets.

- T. What *type* is here traced?
- t. What *threatening*? when inflicted?
- U. What *unjustifiable* action of a good man? what *unusual* excellence in one not pious?
- W. What *woe* is here denounced? what *warning* given? against whom, and why?
- X. What is here taught of the work, character, person, of Christ?
- x. What sublimity of thought or of language is here? what inference follows?

*Angus's Bible Hand Book.*

## PALMS OF GLORY, RAIMENT BRIGHT.

REV. vii. 13-17.

PALMS of glory, raiment bright,  
 Crowns that never fade away  
 Gird and deck the saints in light,  
 Priests, and kings, and conquerors they.

Yet the conquerors bring their palms  
 To the Lamb amidst the throne,  
 And proclaim in joyful psalms  
 Victory through His cross alone.

Kings for harps their crowns resign,  
 Crying, as they strike the chords,  
 "Take the kingdom, it is Thine,  
 King of kings, and Lord of lords!"

Round the altar priests confess—  
 If their robes are white as snow  
 'Twas the Saviour's righteousness,  
 And His blood, that made them so.

Who were these? on earth they dwelt;  
 Sinners once, of Adam's race;  
 Guilt, and fear, and suffering felt;  
 But were saved by sovereign grace.

They were mortal, too, like us:  
 Ah! when we, like them, must die,  
 May our souls, translated thus,  
 Triumph, reign, and shine on high!

1853.

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

It is good to notice, in the baptism of Christ, the clear setting forth of the three Persons of the Godhead. The Father utters that voice, "This is My beloved Son." The Son is seen standing in the river; and the Holy Spirit comes down in a visible appearance.

## Sabbath School Lessons.

15th November.

LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR  
DEFINED.

Luke 10, 25-37.

I. The question, verse 25-29.

*A Lawyer.* One who expounded and taught the law of Moses. He wished to test Christ's ability. He does not seem to have had a higher motive, nor to have been so much in earnest as the young ruler was, who asked the same question, Matt. xix. 16. *How readeest thou?* Christ does not ask here "What thinkest thou?" but simply refers to God's word. On the lawyer quoting the sum of the ten commandments, He says, "This do, and thou shalt live." Perfect obedience will secure eternal life.

*But he, willing to justify himself.* He felt he had not kept this law, and as an excuse for his neglect, he asks, "Who is my neighbour?" His blinded conscience does not seem to have accused him of any breach of the law towards God. The Jews did not admit a Gentile to be a "neighbour."

II. The parable, ver. 30-35,

Perhaps this was a real occurrence. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho, though only fifteen miles, was lonely, very bad, and very dangerous. Wild Arabs still haunt that part of the country. Coming "from Jerusalem," seems to imply he was a Jew.

*The priest* saw him, but did not stay to examine anything. *The Levite* went and deliberately looked on him, and then, like the priest, hurried from the spot. They could not know whether he was a Jew or Gentile, for he was stripped, and half dead; he might be a robber. His case would make them afraid, and they had too little pity to risk their own safety for him.

*The Samaritan* saw, pitied, and helped him. How naturally it is described! *Oil and wine* were used to soften and cleanse the wounds. Forgetful of himself, his danger, or his labour, he dismounted, slowly and carefully led him to the next inn, watched him

all night, and next morning provided for his comfort when he left him. *Twopence* was worth about twenty-seven cents; it was given as a pledge that he would pay all other costs.

III. The duty, ver. 36-37.

*Which was neighbour? What thinkest thou?* Christ appeals to the lawyer's conscience "which was neighbour?" Which understood rightly, "who is my neighbour?"—The lawyer had honesty to say, "he that showed mercy." Christ sent him to work—"do likewise." Be he Samaritan or Jew whoever needs thy pity and thy help, freely give them.

## APPLICATION.

1. *Never tempt Christ* by asking, "What shall I do?" when you do not intend to do it. Going to church and school, reading the Bible, and standing up to pray without being in earnest for your soul. Ask the question, ver. 25, as it was asked, Acts ix. 6, xvi. 30.

2. *How to treat a sinner.* Just bring him to the Bible—"How readeest thou?"—Then bring it to bear on his conscience—"What thinkest thou?" Lastly, try to get him to obey Christ—"Go, do likewise."—Thus Christ did.

3. *Are you trying to "justify" yourself?* To excuse and hide your sins, ver. 29. How vain! you are condemned already. The Jews, Rom. ii. 2; Prov. xxviii. 13; Matt. xxv. 44; Flee to Christ's blood, Psalm, cxliii. 2-7; Luke xviii. 13.

4. *Love your neighbour.* This is the great lesson. Love and do good to all. All are your brethren—the poorest, the vilest, Col. iii. 11; Rom. i. 14.

Do so at all times, by every means, and at any cost; seize the opportunity, Gal. vi. 10. The well of Sychar—John iv.; Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 25.

Do so for Christ's sake, as He did; He will notice, remember, and repay it all.

5. *Beware of passing by those who require, your help.* Christ notices "who pass by on the other side." God forbids such neglect even to an ox or ass, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. It was such neglect, Matt. xxv. 45.

## SUBORDINATE LESSONS.

1. Many know, and can teach the way to

heaven, who do not go themselves. This scribe knew much. The priest and Levite.

2. The whole passage may be used to illustrate the love of Christ to us; He is the good Samaritan.

3. Teach practically. Fellow-teachers, how often Christ's lessons terminated in the spirit of the words, "Go and do."

November 22, 1863.

### JOSHUA'S EXHORTATION TO ISRAEL.

Joshua 23. 1-16.

There are many pious patriots referred to in Scripture, but the lives of none of them shine with greater lustre than that of Joshua: When his whole nation was sinking under desponding fears, he encouraged them by his unshaken fortitude and confidence in God, see Numb. 6. 9; and when he had vanquished all their enemies, and put them into the quiet possession of the promised land, he still improved his influence to confirm their faith, and to establish them in the paths of righteousness. This lesson is his dying address to all the elders of Israel.

About fourteen years after Israel had rest Joshua called, probably to Shiloh, the usual place of such assemblies, all Israel, to speak to them. He told them in this his dying charge, that for their sakes the Lord had subdued all these nations over whom they now were; and that He would still continue to help them, but they were not to be dismayed. They were to be very *courageous*, and not to turn to the right hand, or to the left. He warns them not to have familiar intercourse with them, lest they come to serve their gods, but to cleave to their own God, who would be with them as long as they continued with Him, but who will be opposed to them if they departed from Him.

Obs. 1. The progressive nature of sin.—"Come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor come to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them, ver. 7. It is no wonder

if some things, not simply and in themselves evil, be forbidden by God, as here the naming of their gods is, because they are occasions and introductions to evil.

Obs. 2. *Our successes, like those of the children of Israel have been owing to God.* It is He that fights for his people, ver. 10-11. Therefore every mercy we receive from Him, is an additional obligation to love and serve Him. But we are prone to forget all His benefits. We are like metal, which is melted in the furnace, but returns speedily to its original hardness as soon as it is taken from the fire.

Obs. 3. *The power of those with whom God is.* "One man shall chase a thousand," v. 10; see Lev. 26. 8; Deut. 32. 30. Shamgar, the son of Anath, slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad, Judges 3. 31.—Samson took the jaw bone of an ass, and slew a thousand men therewith, Judges 15. 15. The Tachmonite, the chief of Dav d's captains, with his spear, slew eight hundred men at one time, 2 Sam. 23. 8.

Obs. 4. *The penalty of departing from the Lord.* "If ye in any wise go back, know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you, &c." v. 13. *They should be snares and traps unto them*, by their indulgence to them, and converse with them, they would be enticed and drawn by degrees into their errors, and impieties, and brutish lusts. When they had inveigled and seduced, and thereby weakened them, then they would molest and vex them, no less than a severe scourge doth a man's side, or than a small thorn doth the eye when it is got within it.

Obs. 5. The accomplishment of God's promises is a pledge or assurance that he will also fulfil his threatenings; both of them depending upon the same ground—the faithfulness of God.

A man's most glorious actions will at last be found to be but glorious sins, if he hath made *himself*, and not the glory of God, the end of those actions.

## THE UNFRIENDLY LETTER.

"Spread it before the Lord, Leonard," said Lucy Grey. "Do not say any more about it, nor answer it, nor take any steps about it, till you have spread it before the Lord."

Leonard Grey made no reply to his sister, but continued to pace the room with unequal steps. His countenance betokened anger, and he thought he did well to be angry. It was natural anger, and just anger, and righteous anger, and generous anger: so he would have said. An open letter was in his hand. His first impulse on reading it had been to tear it up and trample it under his feet in token of his angry contempt of the writer; so far he had restrained himself; but whether the offending sheet would be thrust between the fire bars or thrown into his desk was yet an open question, when his sister interposed again.

"Be angry, but sin not, dear Leonard. Follow Hezekiah's example."

"Hezekiah! Hezekiah! what are you talking about Lucy?" said Leonard, turning round upon his sister, rather sharply perhaps; at least he thought so himself afterwards, when he became cooler. It is to be noted that, though Leonard Grey was a Bible student, he was just then so carried away with his angry feelings, that for the moment he did not catch his sister's meaning. He heard her words indeed, but they conveyed little sense to his mind.

It is a great blessing and a great mercy too when an impetuous, hot-headed, generous-hearted man has a better angel by his side, in the shape of a wife or a sister, for instance; who is not afraid, on any needful occasion, to tell an unwelcome truth in a gentle way, or to pour the oil of mild persuasion and judicious counsel on the turbulent waves of passion. Such an one was Lucy Grey to her brother, who at this time, however, felt far too provoked and excited to listen at first to his sister's mild remonstrances.

"Is it not an abominable letter, Lucy? tell me that," said he, striking off from Hezekiah at a tangent.

"If I were to say yes, would that do any good?" asked Lucy, with a half smile

on her countenance, though in truth she sympathized deeply with the insult and injury her brother had received.

"Good! why, you know it would do good, Lucy. I should feel doubly sure then that the man who wrote this"—Leonard crushed up the poor letter in his hand as he spoke—"that the man who wrote this is a detestable, sneaking, undermining—"

"Leonard, Leonard, dear brother; 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin,'" interposed Lucy.

"Sin, Lucy! it is no sin to call things by their right names."

"But there may be sin, brother, in the temper of mind which induces us to call things by even their right names. Besides, we may be mistaken; and though this letter seems very unkind, illiberal, an unchristian —."

"Seems, Lucy! It is all that, and more. I am sure you cannot deny it, gloss it over as you may," said Leonard, breaking in upon his sister's apology for the writer.

"Well, dear Leonard, say then that it is all that and more; what a fine opportunity here is for showing a better spirit. Do not forget, my dear brother, that you are a Christian; a follower of the blessed One who, 'when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.'"

"I am to submit, then, to these imputations, Lucy; and the fellow who wrote this letter"—once more the poor sheet of paper was crushed up in Leonard Grey's hand—"is to go over half the world blasting my character? Do you mean that?"

"Half the world is a long journey, Leonard. But better even that he should do this than that you should do wrong. Two wrongs can never make one right, you know. They never have yet; and they never will."

"A word spoken in season, how good it is!" Leonard paused in his erratic course across the carpet of his drawing room, laid the offending epistle on the table, and sat down in silence by his sister's side.

Now, what was in that letter need never be known: our readers may supply this

want of information for themselves. Perhaps it contained false accusations affecting the personal character of the receiver. It might have been a retaliatory letter, threatening injury for some imagined wrong.—Or it was possibly a legal demand for a large sum of money not really due to the writer except by some flaw in an agreement or in consequence of some pettifogging quibble. Or it was, perhaps, a mean and spiteful letter, intended to give offence to Leonard Grey by some rival in business. On the other hand, it was probably an honest though mistaken outpouring of wrath stirred up by a tale-bearer and backbiter, or by some mutual misunderstanding. All these things have happened since the world began, and will happen again and again before it comes to an end: at any rate until the happy time comes, prophetically prefigured by the dwelling together of the wolf and the lamb, the lying down of the leopard with the kid, and the cow and the bear feeding together. Until then it must needs that offences come; and brother will sometimes sin against brother.

Whatever the subject of the letter, or the manner of the letter, or whoever the writer of the letter might be, it was an ugly, disagreeable epistle, or it would not have touched Leonard Grey to the quick as it did. And if you, reader, have ever had your choler stirred by an unkind and unjust, a hasty and ungenerous letter from either friend or foe, as very likely you have, you will know how to sympathise with him.

"Well, Lucy, what am I to do?" said Leonard, presently, when the first outbreak of his wrath was over.

"Spread it before the Lord," said Lucy, again. "Remember David's counsel, 'Cease from anger, and forsake wrath.—Fret not thyself in anywise to do evil.'—Spread the letter before the Lord, as Hezekiah spread the threatening letter of Sennacherib the Assyrian."—See 2 Kings xviii.

Leonard understood his sister now; but his mind was still in a ferment. He was writhing under the insult received. He answered more mildly, however.

"I dare say you are right, Lucy; that is to say, looking at it only from one point of view. But the fact is, the letter must

be answered; and it resolves itself, after all, into a matter of business—disagreeable enough; but it is business, and it must be answered in a business way."

"And you think that God does not understand business, Leonard: is that what you are thinking?" asked Lucy, quietly.

"Lucy! what a strange question to ask!" exclaimed Leonard, turning quickly round upon his sister.

"Is the question stranger than the thought, Leonard?"

"I do not say that it is, Lucy; but——." Leonard Grey did not get any further, for he knew that his sister was right.—Yet, like some other professing Christians, he had never sufficiently recognised the fact that his heavenly Father really concerned himself about his "mean affairs." He, as we, knew very well where it is written, "In all thy ways acknowledged him, and he shall direct thy paths;" and again, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." But it is likely he had not realized the full meaning of these encouragements. At any rate, his practice was defective if his faith was sound: no wonder, then, that in time of petty trials his patience failed him.

So Leonard passed that day with his mind unhinged, and his temper soured.—He could not help thinking a good deal of the insult and injury conveyed in that unhappy letter; and the more he thought of them the deeper they seemed, as was but natural.

He answered the letter too—and he thought he had answered it well—with angry dignity, but in a tone of defiance which clearly proved, or was intended to prove that he did not fear his adversary.

Nevertheless, he was not satisfied. His sister's words rang in his ears, or at any rate, fastened themselves on his memory. "Spread it before the Lord, Leonard; spread it before the Lord." So pertinaciously did they adhere there that he could not shake them off; and the more he thought of them, the more wise and reasonable did the advice seem. "Am I a Christian?"—so he argued, later in the day; "And shall I neglect what is obviously a Christian's privilege? Not that it will make any difference—how can it!—no difference,

that is, to the steps I shall have to take about this letter, or to my reply to it.— But it may calm my mind, and—yes, Lucy is right; and I will ‘spread it before the Lord.’”

So Leonard Grey went into his “closet,” and shut the door, and prayed to his Father, who seeth in secret. How long he prayed, or what words he used is not of so much consequence as that he prayed “with the spirit and with the understanding.”

\* \* \* \*

Leonard Grey looked at the unfriendly letter again. His opinion of it was not altered: if possible, it seemed blacker and more malignant than ever. “I would not have written such a letter,” he thought, “for any amount of advantage I could gain by it; and I pity the man who wrote it.” Then he glanced at his reply; and a blush mounted to his cheeks. “This will never do,” he said within himself; and he tore it into fragments.

It was almost post-time, and there was not time to compose another reply. “I must write something however,” thought Leonard: and sat down and wrote,—

“SIR,”—(he could not write “dear sir.”)—“Sir, I received your letter to-day; and I have ‘spread it before the Lord.’

“I am, sir, yours respectfully,  
‘LEONARD GREY.’”

We may follow this short note to the writer of the unfriendly letter.

“‘Spread it before the Lord!’ What does Grey mean by sending such an answer as this?” he said, as he turned it over and over to make sure that nothing else was written. “He has spread it before the Lord, has he?” he continued, when he could find nothing else. “A pretty sort of answer to give to my letter. Is the man making a fool of me? I’ll let him know that I am not to be treated this way.”

To all appearance, certainly, Leonard Grey had not improved his position with his unfriendly correspondent by his reply.

Nevertheless, when this correspondent sat down to pen a rejoinder, he could not get on. He wrote about half a page, and then he paused.

“Grey will be spreading this before the

Lord, I suppose,” said he; and he took another sheet. He tried to write again, but with no better success. Then he took another sheet and another: but frame his words as he might, he could not please himself. The truth is, his conscience began to be touched; and this appeal to the highest court of all gave him more uneasiness than he liked to acknowledge even to himself. If the dispute between himself and Leonard Grey had to be referred to a court of honour, or a court of common pleas, or a court of queen’s bench, or a court of chancery, he would have fought out the battle, inch by inch, and his natural obstinacy and self-importance would have carried him through the controversy, whether he were in the right or in the wrong. But to have it taken into the high court of heaven, and before the Judge of all—so unceremoniously too, and without any preliminary notice! He was not prepared for this. He threw his pen aside, and tore up his unfinished sheet. He would have nothing more to do with a man who could spread his letter before the Lord, like that. He began to be half afraid of him.

\* \* \* \*

A good many weeks passed away, and Leonard Grey began to wonder.

“I have not heard a word more from Mr. E—,” said he, one day to his sister.

“Nor written to him about that business?”

“No; for when I came to look at it again there was nothing for me to write about. It was for him to follow up his letter, and nothing I could have written would have made any difference; so I thought the wisest plan was for me to be silent.”

“You did not think so at first,” said Lucy.

“Well, no, I was too angry; but after I followed your advice and spread his letter before the Lord, it came to me that there was nothing else for me to do. Was I right?”

“I suppose so, Leonard; I believe so. But are you quite sure that Mr. E— is not following up his letter, as you say?”

“Not quite sure; but yet if he had been I should have heard of it. As

I have not, I am very well content to wait."

Leonard Grey had not long to wait.— That same evening there was a knock at his door, and Mr. E— was admitted.

"I wrote an ugly letter to you some time ago, Mr. Grey," he said.

Leonard could not deny this, so he said nothing.

"And you sent me a very proper answer. I am come to thank you for it."

"I am glad you think so," said Leonard.

"I did not think so at first: it put me out more than I care to acknowledge now," continued Mr. E—; "but it was a right and proper answer. And I am come to tell you now that I was in the wrong altogether. Will you shake hands with me over it?" He held out his hand as he spoke, and Leonard took it.

"I have something else to say to you," Mr. E— went on; and his voice trembled a little.—"I have been ill since I wrote to you"—Leonard Grey noticed now that his visitor looked weak and palid—"and when I was at the worst, your letter kept haunting me. You wrote that you had 'spread' my letter 'before the Lord;' and I thought how all my thoughts, and words, and deeds had been spread before him all my life long. I thought of this, Mr. Grey, till I could bear the thought no longer."

"And then——"

"And then I spread my own unhappy case before the Lord. I said, 'Enter not into judgment with me, O Lord; for I have sinned: I have sinned!'"

"And then, Mr. E—?" said Leonard, with a beaming, eager, anxious smile——

"And then, sir, the blessed truth was brought home to my soul, as I hope and believe,—'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' And now, Mr. Grey, I ask you once more to forgive me for writing that unfriendly and unjust letter."

We need not write down Leonard Grey's reply.

## THE POOR LITTLE BOY.

I saw just now a little boy  
Go limping down a narrow street;  
His clothes were wet and ragged too,  
He had no shoes upon his feet.

His feet were red and blue with cold,  
He look'd at me so sad and grave;  
And as he pass'd he seem'd to say,  
Oh! what a happy home you have!

His hair was rough, his cheeks were pale,—  
I wonder where his home can be;  
And if he has a mother there  
To take him kindly on her knee.

I wonder if he has a bed,  
And where he went this stormy day;  
If he has milk, and meat, and bread,  
And books to read and toys for play.

I've read of little orphan boys  
Who had no home but in the street;  
And begg'd about from door to door  
For bits of broken bread and meat:

Who slept on straw, alone and sad,  
With hunger pinch'd and full of pain  
Oh! I do wish that little boy  
Would come along the street again.

I'd take him gently by the hand,  
And speak as mother speaks to me:  
So sweetly kind, poor little boy!  
I wonder where his home can be. !

I should not like such clothes to wear,  
To limp along with naked feet;  
I should not like such tangled hair,  
Nor home in that dark dirty street.

How many pleasant things I have!  
I never thought of that before;  
I will not keep them all myself,  
But give some of them to the poor.

Like Jesus Christ—who could not bear  
That we should not to heaven come;  
He wish'd so much that we should share  
The pleasures of his glorious home.

If I can act like Jesus Christ,  
I know I shall be always right;  
If I could find that little boy,  
I'd give him all my tea to-night.