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*Wm. Robt. Ross*

# THE GOOD NEWS.

A SEMI-MONTHLY PERIODICAL:  
DEVOTED to the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION of the OLD AND YOUNG

## SELF-IGNORANCE.

BY THE REV. JOHN CAIRD, D.D., GLASGOW.

"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—PSALM xix. 12.

Of all kinds of ignorance, that which is the most strange, and, in so far as it is voluntary, the most culpable, is our ignorance of Self. For not only is the subject, in this case, that which might be expected to possess for us the greatest interest, but it is the one concerning which we have amplest facilities and opportunities of information. Who of us would not think it a strange and unaccountable story, could it be told of any man now present, that for years he had harboured under his roof a guest whose face he had never seen—a constant inmate of his home, who was yet to him altogether unknown? It is no supposition, however, but an unquestionable fact, that to not a few of us, from the first moment of existence, there has been present, not beneath the roof, but within the breast, a mysterious resident, an inseparable companion, nearer to us than friend or brother, yet of whom, after all, we know little or nothing. What man of intelligence amongst us would not be ashamed to have had in his possession for years some rare or universally admired volume with its leaves uncut?—or to be the proprietor of a repository, filled with the most exquisite productions of genius, and the rarest specimens in science and art, which yet he himself never thought of entering? Yet surely no book so worthy of perusal, no chamber containing objects of study so curious, so replete with interest for us, as that which seldom or never attracts our

observation—the book, the chamber of our own hearts. We sometimes reproach with folly those persons who have travelled far, and seen much of distant countries, and yet have been content to remain comparatively unacquainted with their own. But how venial such folly compared with that of ranging over all other departments of knowledge, going abroad with perpetual inquisitiveness over earth and sea and sky, in search of information, whilst there is a little world within the breast which is still to us an unexplored region. Other scenes and objects we can study only at intervals; they are not always accessible, or can be reached only by long and laborious journeys; but the bridge of consciousness is soon crossed; we have but to close the eye and withdraw the thoughts from the world without, in order at any moment to wander through the scenes and explore the phenomena of the more wondrous world within. To examine other objects, delicate and elaborate instruments are often necessary; the researches of the astronomer, the botanist, the chemist, can be prosecuted only by means of rare and costly apparatus; but the power of reflection, that faculty more wondrous than any mechanism which art has ever fashioned, is an instrument possessed by all; the poorest and most illiterate, alike with the most cultured and refined, have at their command an apparatus by which to sweep the inner firmament of the soul, and bring into view its manifold

phenomena of thought and feeling and motive. And yet, with all the unequalled facilities for acquiring this sort of knowledge, can it be questioned that it is the one sort of knowledge that is most commonly neglected; and that, even amongst those who would disdain the imputation of ignorance in history or science or literature, there are multitudes who have never acquired the merest rudiments of the knowledge of Self?

What has now been stated as to the too common neglect of self-knowledge in general, is emphatically true with respect to that branch of it to which the text relates. It is the moral part of our nature with reference to which defective knowledge is at once the most common and the most dangerous. As a matter of curiosity, an object of interesting study, every intelligent man should know something of the structure, organization, laws, and processes of his physical and of his intellectual nature; but as a matter, not of curious interest merely, but of the last and highest necessity, we ought to be acquainted with our moral nature—with the condition of our hearts in the sight of God. The care of our bodily health we may depute to another, and the skill of the physician may render our ignorance of physiology of little or no practical moment; to be unacquainted even with our intellectual nature, inobservant of its operations and mistaken as to its character, may lead to no consequences more serious than vanity, self-conceit, an undue reliance on our own opinions;—but when our ignorance relates not to the body but to the soul, not to the head but to the heart, no language can exaggerate its danger. For the care of our spiritual health, the moral culture and discipline of the soul, we can never depute to another; no friend on earth can be the soul's physician, or free us from the burden of our solitary responsibility with regard to it; and unnoticed errors in the heart, unlike intellectual deficiencies, not merely affect our temporal condition or our social reputation, but may issue in our eternal ruin.

Yet the text suggests, what all experience corroborates, that it is a man's moral defects that are most likely to elude his own scrutiny. There is a peculiar secrecy, an inherent inscrutability, about our sins. Bodily disease or injury, in the great major-

ity of cases, manifests its presence by pain—so obtrudes itself on our consciousness, that it is impossible for the sick man to be long unaware of his danger, or indifferent to its removal. But it is the peculiar characteristic of moral disease, that it does its deadly work in secret. Sin is a malady which affects the very organ by which itself can be detected; it creates the darkness amid which it injures us, and blinds the eyes of its victim in the very act of destroying him. If there be any bodily disease to which it is analogous, it is to that fatal malady which often cheats the sick man into a delusive tranquillity, the deeper and more deceitful in proportion to his danger. And if the unconscious cheerfulness of the dying be sometimes both strange and sad; if it has ever happened to us, as we looked on the wan and wasted countenance on which consumption had set its ghastly seal, to listen with mingled wonder and pity to the words of unabated hopefulness from the sick man's lips, surely more deserving of our pity is he who, all unaware of his spiritual disease, is hastening on, in undisturbed tranquillity and self-satisfaction, to everlasting despair and death!

Now, it is this self-concealing tendency of sin, and the consequent difficulty of forming a right estimate of ourselves, to which the Psalmist refers in the prayer of the text—"Who can understand his errors?—Cleanse thou me from secret faults!" And what I now purpose, in following out the train of thought here suggested, is to point out to you a few of the causes or considerations which serve to explain the self-ignorance of the erring and sinful mind.

I. One reason why the sinful man does not "understand his errors" is—*That sin can be truly measured only when it is resisted.* It is impossible to estimate the strength of the principle of evil in the soul till we begin to struggle with it; and the careless or sinful man—the man who, by supposition, is not striving with, but succumbing to sin, cannot know its force. So long as evil reigns unopposed within the soul, it will reign, in a great degree, unobserved. So long as a man passively and thoughtlessly yields up his will to the sway of worldly principles or unholy desires and habits, he is in no condition to measure their intensity—scarcely to discover their existence. For in this, as in many other

cases, resistance is the best measure of force. The most powerful agents in nature, when unopposed, do their work silently and without attracting observation; it is only when some counteracting power arises to dispute their sway that attention is drawn to their presence and their potency. The rapid stream flows smooth and silent when there are no obstacles to stay its progress; but hurl a rock into its bed, and the roar and surge of the arrested current will instantly reveal its force. You cannot estimate the wind's strength when it rushes over the open plain; but when it reaches and wrestles with the trees of the forest, or lashes the sea into fury, then, resisted, you perceive its power. Or if, amidst the ice-bound regions of the North, an altogether unbroken, continuous winter prevailed, comparatively unnoticed would be its stern dominion; but it is the coming round of a more genial season, when the counteracting agency of the sun begins to prevail, that reveals, by the rending of the solid masses of ice, and by the universal stir, and crash, and commotion over the face of nature, the intensity of the bygone winter's cold.

Now, so too is it in the spiritual world. Sin's power is revealed only in the act of resistance. No agent more potent, and none, if undisputed, more imperceptible in its operation. In many a worldly and godless heart it reigns viewless as the wind—silent as the smooth and rapid stream. Rule in whatever form it may—in selfishness, or worldliness, or pride, or ambition, or covetousness, or sensuality—sin often breathes over that inner world an influence, not only as stern and withering, but also as still and unobtrusive as an unbroken winter's cold. On the other hand, resistance discloses it. When the aspiration after a purer, nobler life, begins to rise within the breast, and the long-passive spirit rouses its energies to check the pride of evil, to force back and stay the current of unholy desire and passion; when the softening principle of divine love and grace begins to thaw the icy coldness of a godless heart, then it is that the soul becomes aware of the deadly strength of sin. Often the sense of guilt breaks upon the awakened spirit with all the strangeness of a discovery. With the rise of its new and higher consciousness there comes upon the soul the feeling of a hitherto unrealized burden—a

heavy and intolerable weight of evil, restraining and crushing back its new-born energies. Hitherto at ease in the embrace of sin, when the vision of God dawns upon the spirit, there is a yearning to get near Him, and an impatience and galling sense of bondage in that which keeps it away from Him; as when a child, contentedly reposing in a stranger's arms, no sooner catches a glimpse of the parent than it struggles and stretches out towards the loved form, ill at ease in that embrace in which it had till now unconsciously rested. Nor is it only in the first struggles of penitence that sin is revealed in its true character to the soul. With every increase of spirituality, whatever of evil remains in it becomes more repulsive to its keener sensibilities, more irksome to its aspiring energies. Faults and errors, unapparent or venial to its former consciousness, become in the higher stages of the spiritual life more and more odious; and in the purest and best actions more of evil is now discerned than formerly in the basest and worst. The quickened conscience feels the drag of sin at each successive step the more heavy; and as the believing spirit yearns with an intenser longing for the life of God, with a more indignant impatience does the cry break from the lip—"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

II. Another reason for the self-ignorance of the sinner is—*That sin often makes a man afraid to know himself.* The suspected existence of something wrong in the soul makes us shrink from self-inspection. Strange though it may seem, the state of mind is by no means an uncommon one in which a man has a latent misgiving that all is not right with his soul; yet, from a disinclination to know the whole truth, and to act up to it, refrains from all further examination. There are few men who do not know a little of themselves; multitudes whom that little so disturbs that they refuse to know any more. Ever and anon, even in the most careless life, the veil of custom drops, and the soul catches a glimpse of its own deep inward wretchedness; but the glimpse so terrifies that few will look again. The heart of a sinful man, laid bare in all its nakedness to its own inspection, is a sight on which it would be terrible to look long; and most men prefer the delusive

tranquillity of ignorance to the wholesome pain of a thorough self-revelation.

And yet, this voluntary ignorance, where interests so momentous are at stake, strange in itself, becomes the more strange when contrasted with our conduct in other cases. In the affairs of this world men will, indeed, often shun the sight of inevitable evils, and refuse to disturb themselves by the contemplation of calamities which it is beyond their power to avert. But where the suspected evil is not beyond the reach of remedy, in most minds there is a disposition of quite an opposite character—a disposition that seeks, on the least appearance of any alarming symptom, to know the worst at once. Does the prudent man of business, for instance, light on something strange in his confidential servant's accounts, or are his suspicions awakened as to the state of some debtor's affairs with whom he is deeply involved—what, in the great majority of cases, will be his immediate mode of action? To shut his eyes to the disagreeable information, and, by refraining from all further investigation, purchase present ease at the risk of future ruin? Not so; but rather instantly to set about a rigid scrutiny, and not to rest till he has sifted the matter to the bottom, though the unpleasant discovery should be that his servant has embezzled his property, or that his debtor is on the brink of bankruptcy. Or does the anxious and affectionate relative note with alarm the symptoms of dangerous disease in the person of one he loves—does he see, or persuade himself he sees, the hectic flush beginning to gather on the cheek—does he hear, or think he hears, the short sharp cough, that rouses all his fears for the future,—and need I ask what, in general, will be the effect of such misgivings? What parent, husband, friend, at such a time, could consult his own selfish tranquillity by ignoring the danger, taking no means to discover its extent, and, if possible, to check its progress?

But, however rare in the sphere of our worldly interests, this voluntary blindness, this reckless evasion of disagreeable intelligence, is in spiritual things, even among prudent, wise, sagacious men, not the exception but the rule. Inquisitive, restless, easily alarmed in other cases, most men become strangely incurious here. Our

fears and suspicions diminish instead of increasing, in proportion to the magnitude of the interests involved; and when it is not our health or wealth, or worldly fortunes, but the character and happiness of the soul for time and eternity that are implicated, the almost universal endeavour is, not to provide against threatened danger, but to evade or forget the signs of it. Few men, indeed, however thoughtless and indifferent to religion, can pass through life without occasional misgivings as to their spiritual state. There are times when conscience speaks out even to the most careless ear, and passing visitations of anxiety as to the soul and its destiny trouble the most callous heart. Amidst the superficial cares and pleasures of a worldly existence a man's deeper nature may slumber; the surface-ripple of the stream of common life may fill the sense and lull the soul to sleep, but to almost every one there come occasions when the smooth current of the life of sense is interrupted, and his true self is roused to a temporary wakefulness. In the stillness of the lonely sickbed, amidst worldly reverses, in declining health, or under bitter bereavement, when we stand by the bier, or bend over the closing grave of old friends and coevals—in such passages of man's history, the soul, eternity, God, become for the moment real things, and the most thoughtless and worldly-minded is forced to pause and think. Or, again, when the sinful man listens to some very earnest exhibition of divine truth, or is brought into contact with one who is living a very holy, pure, unselfish life, a painful impression of his own deficiencies—a transient glimpse of a nobler, purer ideal of life, to which his own presents a miserable contrast—may visit his mind. But such thoughts are too distressing to be long dwelt upon. Very rarely have men the resolution voluntarily to arrest and detain them before the mind's eye. We do not like to have the easy tranquillity of our life disturbed by spiritual anxieties. We do not care to have our self-complacency hurt by the repulsive spectacle of our proper selves: and, as the fair face on which disease has left its ugly seams, turns with pain from the first sight of the reality which the mirror reveals, so the mind hastens to avert its view from the too faithful reflection of self which an

awakened conscience presents. Instead of seeking true comfort by the steady, however painful, contemplation, and then, through God's grace, by the deliberate, persevering correction of its evil self, the mind too often seeks a speedier, but most unreal satisfaction, by forgetting its convictions, and seeing itself only in the false glass of the world's opinion. Thus, with many, life is but a continuous endeavour to forget and keep out of sight their true selves—a vain eluding and outstripping of a reality which is still ever with them, and to the consciousness of which they must one day awake. Often, however, it is an endeavour attended only with partial success. Deep down, in the most worldly and careless mind, there is often a hidden restlessness, an uneasy, disquieting consciousness, as of an evil half realized, and which it would fain, but cannot forget. Inadequate to produce any serious reformation, the convictions of conscience yet remain as a latent foreboding—a vague sense of a debt undischarged, and still hanging over us—a disease uncured and secretly working within us. Refusing to know himself, the man is often far from happy in his forgetfulness. His brightest hours are overshadowed as by the vague sense of a coming danger. There is a feverishness and uncalcity in all his joys; and the nearest approach to happiness he attains is but, after all, as the wretched enjoyment of the poor spendthrift, who revels on for a little hour in unreal splendour, rather than be at the pains to examine into his embarrassed affairs; or of the hapless wretch in the sinking ship, who drives away by intoxication the sense, but only thereby unfits himself the more to encounter the reality, of danger.

III. Again, the self-ignorance of the sinful may be accounted for by *the slow and gradual way in which, in most cases, sinful habits and dispositions are acquired.*

Apart from any other consideration, there is something in the mere fact of the gradual and insidious way in which changes of character generally take place, that tends to blind men to their own defects. For every one knows how unconscious we often are of changes that occur by minute and slow degrees. If, for instance, the transitions from one season of the year to another were more sudden and rapid, our attention

would be much more forcibly arrested by their occurrence than it now is. But because we are not plunged from midsummer into winter—because, in the declining year, one day is so like the day that preceded it, the daylight hours contract so insensibly, the chilly feeling infuses itself by such slight increases into the air, the yellow tint creeps so gradually over the foliage—because autumn thus frequently softens and shades away into winter by gradations so gentle we scarcely perceive while it is going on the change which has passed over the face of nature. So, again, how imperceptibly do life's advancing stages steal upon us? If we leapt at once from boyhood into manhood, or if we lay down at night with the consciousness of manhood's bloom and vigour, and waked in the morning to find ourselves gray haired, worn and withered old men, we could not choose but be arrested by transitions so marked. But now, because to-day you are very much the same man as yesterday—because, with the silent growth of the stature, the graver cares, and interests, and responsibilities of life so gradually gather around you; and then, when you reach the turning point and begin to descend, because this year the blood circulates but a very little less freely, and but a few more and deeper lines are gathering on the face, than in the last; because old associations are not suddenly broken up, but only unwound thread by thread, and old forms and faces are not swept away all at once by some sudden catastrophe, but only drop out of sight one by one—you are not struck, you are not forced to think of life's decline, and almost unawares you may not be far off from its close.

Now, if we know that changes such as these in the natural world and in our own persons take place imperceptibly, may not this prepare us to admit, that analogous changes, equally unnoted, because equally slow and gradual, may be occurring in our moral character, in the state of our souls before God? And with many I maintain that it is actually so. There is a winter of the soul, a spiritual decrepitude and death, to which many are advancing, at which many have already arrived, yet all unconsciously, because by minute and inappreciable gradations. For character is a thing of slow formation. Seldom or never does

the soul reach its mature and consolidated state by broadly-marked and rapid transitions. The incidents of each passing day help, by minute touches, to mould it. The successive changes of our outward life leave each their little deposit behind, though it may be long before the formation becomes of noticeable dimensions. Every passing breath of moral influence shakes and sways the stem of our being, but it may be many a day ere, by the bent acquired in one particular direction, we can mark the prevailing wind. Differing as we all do from each other, perhaps as much in our individual characters as in the form and expression of our outward features, we did not issue, each with his own separate stamp of character full formed, from Nature's mintage; and in the case of the irreligious and sinful, it has been by the slow and plastic hand of time, that the natural evil of man's being has been moulded into the manifold forms and aspects which their characters now exhibit. A character of confirmed selfishness, or covetousness, or sensuality, or harshness and irascibility, or hardened worldliness and unspirituality—whatever may be the special type of character in any one here, it never was formed in a day, or by a few strokes upon the raw material of mind. On the contrary, it has been by many a small sin, by innumerable minute tamperings with conscience, by a thousand insignificant sacrifices of principle to passion, of duty to inclination—by multiplicity of little fits of anger and unnoted acts of sensual indulgence—it has been, by a long series and succession of such experiences as these, that many a man's moral being has been fashioned into the shape it wears. The change for the worse, though on the whole, and to other observers, very marked, has been from day to day slight and inappreciable; so that not only the worldly, the careless, the unspiritual, but even the openly wicked and abandoned, have often a comparatively slight and imperfect sense of that evil in them which has grown, and deepened, and darkened, and shaded by shade. The most hardened and shameless profligate, had he reached his present maturity in sin by a single stride, would probably be as much horrified at the change, as if the merry innocent face and clear bright eye of his childhood had been transformed, in a single day, into the

bloated aspect and suspicious scowl of guilt. But just as men note not the lines of deformity, settling day by day over the countenance, so neither do they discern the lineaments of moral repulsiveness daily deepening into the soul.

IV. It tends greatly to increase this insensibility to the progress of sin in the soul, that, as *character gradually deteriorates, there is a parallel deterioration of the standard by which we judge of it.* As sin grows, conscience declines in vigour. The power that perceives sin partakes of the general injury which sin inflicts on the soul. It does not remain stationary while the other elements of our being—the desires, affections, moral energies—are in downward motion. It does not resemble a spectator standing on the shore, who can discern the slightest motion of the vessel in the stream, but rather to the other powers conscience stands in the relation of a fellow-voyager, who cannot perceive in his companions the motion of which himself partakes. Or, as in fever and other diseases that affect the brain, the disease soon unhinges the power by which the patient is made conscious of its ravages; so sin is a malady which cannot proceed far without injuring the moral consciousness by which its presence can be known. Even to the natural conscience, weak and unenlightened though it be, sin, in many of its forms, has an ugly look at first, but its repulsiveness rapidly wears off by familiarity. To the call of duty, the voice of religion, the first announcement of the solemn truths of death and judgment and retribution, the mind even in its natural and unrenewed state, can never be altogether insensible; but, if unregarded, the impression soon fades, and the solemn sounds grow fainter and fainter to the ear. By every act of disobedience to its dictates we sin away something of the sensitiveness of conscience; and it is quite possible for the process of disobedience to go on until even from the grossest sins all the first recoil of dislike is gone, and to the voice of warning and instruction there rises not the faintest echo of compunction in the soul. Just, as in winter, the cold may become so intense as to freeze the thermometer, and thereby to leave you without the means of marking the subsequent increases of cold, so there is a point in the lowered tempera-

ture of the inward consciousness where the growing coldness, hardness, selfishness of a man's nature can no longer be noted—the mechanism by which moral variations are indicated becoming itself insensible and motionless. And then—*then* in an awful sense—does his sin become a hidden thing to the sinner; *then* is attained a dreadful freedom, an ominous emancipation from all restraint. The soul has reached that condition in which it can sin on unchecked, contracting a daily accumulating debt of guilt, yet all unconsciously—inflicting deeper and more incurable wounds upon itself, yet without pain—heaping up without remonstrance, wrath against the day of wrath. No matter how rapid its fatal descent, no warning voice can retard it now; no matter how terrible the ruin before it, no prognostic of danger can startle it now. “The light that was in it” has become “darkness, and how great is that darkness!”

Such, then, are some of the ways in which sin effects its own concealment. And surely, if it is possible that any one who now hears me is in the condition I have attempted to describe, it will need few words to set before him its guilt and danger; its guilt,—for let no man flatter himself that unconsciousness of sin divests any act of its culpability, or even of necessity extenuates the fault of the transgressor. Voluntary ignorance, so far from being a palliation, is only an aggravation of the offence. He who willingly extinguishes the light escapes not the consequences of the errors to which darkness leads. The drunkard, who prepares for crime by first heating his brain to madness, is not therefore treated as if he were naturally irresponsible. And to have evaded the light of conscience, or persisted in sin till the light of conscience dies out, instead of palliating ulterior acts of guilt, is itself one of the greatest that can be committed. No! he who never knew and could not know, God's will, may honestly offer the plea of ignorance; but the wilful ignorance of hardened insensibility is at once a grievous aggravation of the offence and its most awful punishment.

And the danger of self-ignorance is not less than its guilt. For of all evils a secret evil is most to be deprecated,—of all enemies a concealed enemy is the worst.

Better the precipice than the pitfall; better the tortures of curable disease than the painlessness of mortification; and so, whatever your soul's guilt and danger, better to be aware of it. However alarming, however distressing, self-knowledge may be, better *that* than the tremendous evils of self-ignorance.

If indeed there were any possibility of your state being beyond hope or help, if your sin were irremediable, and your doom inevitable, then might you be excused for refraining from all inquiry.—then might further remonstrance be cruelty, not kindness. The dying man need not be tormented with useless remedies. The doomed felon may be let alone, to pass quietly the interval till his execution. But it is not so with you. No man here need, by himself or others, be given up for lost. No living soul is beyond the reach of remedy. You need not shrink from laying bare the sore, however hideous—from probing the wound of the soul to the quick, however painful the process, as if it were all in vain. Far less need you “heal your hurt slightly,” or seek from false remedies a superficial peace, when, for each and all, the sovereign specific, the divine Healer, is at hand. “There is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there.” No case beyond His intervention; no soul so far gone in sin as to baffle His skill. Open your whole heart to Jesus. Tell Him all your case. Confess at His feet every hidden grief, every secret sorrow, every untold guilty fear. He is ready to hear and help; He is infinitely able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto Him. At the last extremity, spiritual life and death trembling in the balance, call Him in; lay open your soul to His inspection; cast yourself in confiding love on His all-sufficient aid, and your recovery is sure.

But, on the other hand, if indolence or indifference prevail, and you refuse to know your danger, and to seek the Saviour's proffered aid, reflect, I beseech you, that a time is approaching when self-knowledge shall be no longer a matter of choice. It is possible now to exclude the light; but a light is soon to dawn that, whether we will or no, shall pierce to the hidden depths of every heart, and lay bare the soul at once to the eye of Omniscience and to its own. It is possible now to seek the peace of self-



forgetfulness,—to refuse to be disturbed,—to sink for a little longer into our dream of self-satisfaction; but it is a peace as transient as it is unreal. Soon, at the latest, and all the more terrible for the delay, the awakening must come. There are sometimes sad awakenings from sleep in this world. It is very sad to dream by night of vanished joys,—to revisit old scenes, and dwell once more among the unforgotten forms of our loved and lost,—to see in the dreamland the old familiar look, and hear the well-remembered tones of a voice long hushed and still, and then to wake, with the morning light, to the aching sense of our loneliness again. It were very sad for the poor criminal to wake from sweet dreams of other and happier days—days of innocence, and hope, and peace, when kind friends, and a happy home, and an honored or unstained name were his,—to wake in his cell, on the morning of his execution, to the horrible recollection that all this is gone for ever, and that to-day he must die a felon's death. But inconceivably more awful than any awakening which earthly daybreak has ever brought, shall be the awakening of the self-deluded soul when it is roused in horror and surprise from the dream of life—to meet Almighty God in judgment!

### LITTLE BY LITTLE.

Do my dear young friends ever think how almost all that is good comes to us? Did you ever see a farmer planting and sowing? Down in the moist earth goes the seed and yellow corn, grain by grain, little by little. God sees the farmer at his work, and knows full well that he has done what he could; so he kindly sends the gentle rain, drop by drop, and not one of these little drops ever forgets its errand upon which the good God sent it to the earth.

"I have found you out," said the rain-drop to the tiny grain of wheat, "though you are dead and in your grave. God has sent me to raise you up."

Well, there is nothing impossible with him; so when the rain-drop has done its errand, a spark of life shoots out from the

very heart of the tiny grain, which is dead and buried, and little by little it makes its way out of the tomb, and stands a single blade in the warm sunlight. That is nobly done; and if the great God pleased, he could make that little blade strong and fruitful in a single moment. Does He do this? No. Little by little does the stalk wax strong; and its leaves grow slowly, leaf by leaf.

Is it not so with every thing that is good? Should we like another way better? Impatience would.

It was only a few days ago that I heard a little girl say:

"I am tired, tired, tired! Here is a whole stocking to knit, stitch by stitch!—It will never be done."

"But was not this one knitted stitch by stitch?" I asked, taking a long one from her basket, and holding it up.

"Yes."

"Well, that is done."

The little girl was counting, instead of knitting, her stitches. No wonder that she was tired.

Did you ever see a mason building a house of bricks? "Poor man!" impatience would say; "what an undertaking, to start from the earth, and go on so far towards the sky, brick by brick!" Who ever saw a patient, persevering person try, and not succeed at last! So, then, step by step, which is God's way, must be the best way.

Let us see that we do every day what we can. Any little boy or girl who, in looking back upon a day gone by, can say, "I have done one thing well," may be happy with the thought that he has taken one step in the way of wisdom. But remember one thing, dear little friend, the buried grain of wheat would never start into life if God did not send it help; and it is by the same help that it increases day by day.

As the little rain-drop—God's beautiful messenger—descends into its tomb, so, in the darkness and death of sin, the Holy Spirit comes to us. If he breathes upon our hearts, we live to do good; without Him, we do nothing good. Let us obey this Spirit, and all good will be ours at last, though we gain it little by little.—*Early Days.*

## LOST AND FOUND.

### A STRANGE STORY.

Her voice is low and sweet,  
An' she's all the world to me,  
An' for bonny Annie Laurie  
I'd lay me down and dee."

Rain, rain, rain—patter, splash, patter. What a dismal night! It poured off the roofs of the aristocratic mansions in the Royal Circus into the flooded areas below; it streamed down the spouts in torrents; it blew in my face, blew at my back, streamed down my mackintosh, rained from my silk umbrella. Such a night! and such a profession to necessitate my going out into it! I ejaculated fretfully. I was a doctor, and had been called out from my study fire. It was only to the next square, and yet I was completely saturated ere I reached it. Dismal and uncomfortable as I had found the storm, I eagerly rushed again into it with a strange perversity the moment my professional duties were over. Its fierce, dreary, resentful mood was more in harmony with my own tempest-tossed spirit than the scene of love and joy I left. The sight of a fair young mother, a tender, anxious father, recalled too vividly the first years of my own married life, with their bitter ending. Vainly I strove to banish the humiliating memories fraught with shame and sorrow. They were beyond my control.

Feeling that battling with the elements, undergoing any personal inconvenience, was better for me than the solitude of my room, the companionship of my own thoughts, I trudged fiercely up and down the streaming pavement, seeking to find in the wailing, howling winds, the ceaseless patter, a voice for the passions that mastered me. At last the storm in some measure abated, the tumult of my feelings subsided, and in earnest I turned my face homeward, thinking of the sweet face that would watch for her father's returning step, while I was strongly alive to the discomfort, no less than the folly, of my situation. As I entered the crescent shaped street on which stood my home, an unusual sound arrested me. It seemed the voice of a singer;—but I must be mistaken, all was again still. No; list!

"Like dew on the gowan lyin,  
Is the fa' o' her fairy feet,  
An' like winds in summer sighing,  
Her voice is low and sweet.

A short, convulsive sob, which I was now near enough to hear, told what the tremulous, unsteady tones already betrayed, the hardly restrained emotion of the singer.—The voice was one of rare compass and sweetness, yet neither that, nor the peculiar circumstances of the singer would account for the bewildering thrill the first notes of the familiar old ballad sent through me.—It was as if a master-key had unlocked the chambers of my heart, and sent gushing through my startled frame passions and feelings, which had slumbered till I believed them dead. I hastened on a few steps, anxious to see what voice had power thus to move me, and what fate compelled any woman to brave that dismal storm. There on my own steps the singer stood—a slight figure dressed in dripping, shabby black, as the lamp that hung over my door informed me. Poor creature, I thought; the old story—better days, reduced circumstances, idle, drunken husband, starving children. Ere I had made up my mind to address her the door opened, and I stood back in the shade to see what would transpire.

In the door stood my daughter Ada, peering curiously out into the darkness, and behind her stood Miss Forbes, who had been her governess, and still resided with her. When the woman saw them she stepped hesitatingly forward and spoke, but in so low a tone that I could not distinguish her words.

"Come in; come and get warmed and dried; you sing so sweetly," Ada's musical voice urged, laying her hand on the stranger's arm, but the woman shrank from her touch and glided back into the shade, while she seemed to be refusing the proffered invitation. Miss Forbes and Ada consulted a moment, and then Ada sprang lightly up the stairs.

"Is this Dr. Morris's house?" the singer asked, in that hushed, earnest voice which is so audible.

"Yes, it is. Do you know him?" answered Miss Forbes, startled out of her usual imperturbable calmness by the eagerness of her questioner.

"A hurried "No," as Ada reappeared,

satisfied Miss Forbes, and she did not notice how the woman clutched her hands nervously and groaned.

Ada held a woolen shawl of her own and a purse in her hand. She folded the shawl and threw it around the slight shoulders, and placed a piece of money into the now passive hand.

"Oh, dear! such a night to be out!" shuddered my delicately reared child, shrinking back from the cold. The woman still lingered, gazing eagerly on her, then, ere Ada could prevent, she took hold of her hand and uttered a fervent

"God bless you, my child, and guard you from sin and sorrow. Farewell!"

In a moment more she had glided down the steps, passing me so closely that her dripping garments brushed me, yet evidently unconscious of my presence.

"Why, how very strange! Who can she be?" I heard Ada exclaim, as she shut in the warmth and light.

It was strange. Who, indeed, could it be? Why should my name move her?—and why should her voice have so moved me? A horrible suspicion forced itself upon me. I must follow her and put it to rest or confirm it. The lamp at the corner of the crescent just revealed her for a moment, gliding round the corner. With this clue I pursued, and soon sighted her. Fearful of her suspecting that she was followed, and trying to elude, surmising the quarter of the town she would be likely to occupy, I took a short cut through the back streets, and came out on Princes street just as she passed. She walked slowly and wearily now. I could scarce, without suspicion, keep pace with her, so I lingered at the engraver's windows, which were still unshuttered. Now passing and now allowing her to pass, I tried to see her face, but it was resolutely turned from the glaring shop-windows. I could just tell that it was a pale, wasted, delicately outlined face, and I could tell no more.

Several times I almost gave up the chase as a wild one, when a step, a movement, a glimpse of the figure, would again stir me, and with renewed earnestness I would again follow. On, on, on, up George the Fourth's Bridge (my scene is laid in Edinburgh,) down Candlemaker's Row, I followed slowly that weary, shabby-looking

figure. Closely she had gathered the shawl my daughter had given her around her shoulders, yet I could see that she shuddered. Now she stopped, and a hoarse, hollow, racking cough rung her death-knell to my practiced ear. Her days, be she who she may, were numbered—numbered all the more surely and shortly from this night's exposure. Now she had passed the Grassmarket, and paused before a baker's shop, which was already crowded to the door with haggard, hungry-looking men, women and children.

I stood at the window, unmindful of the curious look cast from bleared, famine-sharpened eyes at my unwonted appearance on such a night, in such a place, at such an hour. I saw old age, which bore no crown of glory, but deep wrinkles traced by vice and wretchedness, tottering on a staff; fierce, besotted, hardened-looking men; pinched, sharp-eyed, half-clad women; and children with only fragments of clothing on them, old in vice though young in years, alike jostle the little figure in faded black.—"She was none of them. What right had she to be there?" was the thought their actions gave utterance to. It might be half an hour, for many who came after her were served before her, ere she finally succeeded in getting her errand, a loaf of bread, for which she put down a half sovereign. (I had given it to my daughter only the night before to buy a new book.) How the sharp, hungry-looking eyes glistened as they saw the gold, and how many sharpened, curious faces scanned its owner. I could not yet see her face, but she took the change without looking at it, put the loaf under her shawl, and turned away.—Again I followed her, till she disappeared down a cellar stair, at the head of which I could just decipher on a painted board—

"Coals, milk, and groceries.  
Mangling done here."

This was not her home. I knew; so I stood back awaiting her reappearance, for the first time asking myself how this was all to end? I could not tell—circumstances must decide. In a few moments wearily she dragged herself up again, behind her a boy carrying a bag with a few pieces of coal in it;—at least so I judged from its black, sooty appearance.—I had not far to follow this time. They

both disappeared up a narrow arched court that stood at the head of the stairs.

I tried to grope my way in too, almost suffocated by the unwholesome vapors of the place. Judging it best to await the re-appearance of the boy who was carrying the coals, as he would likely be able to give me all the information I wanted, I retraced my steps. I had not long to wait. He soon returned, whistling with true boyish nonchalance "Nancy Till," swinging his bag round his arm.

"Who is that woman?" I asked approaching him.

"Duzzn't know," answered the boy, scanning me as closely as he could, though I had taken the precaution to turn my back to the light.

"Has she been long here?"

"P'raps. Be you the beak?" (*Anglice*, policeman.)

"No," I answered, slipping a shilling into his hand as the surest method of untying his tongue. "Tell me all you know about her, I am a friend."

Holding the shilling up between his finger and his thumb for a moment, as if to satisfy himself of its genuineness, he gave an account, of which the following is the substance:

That about eighteen months ago or two years, he was not sure which, Mrs. Arnott had first come to his mother's shop. It was she who sold "coals, milk, and groceries." That his mother thought she was a widow, though she never told any one anything about herself. "Never spoke to nobody," the boy said. That she did white sewing for the shops, was dreadful hard up at times, had been sick lately for a month, and had been obliged to sell almost all she had. That his mother had been very kind to her while she was sick. That she had got some money to-night. She thought she'd be comfortable to-night anyway.

The boy was evidently anxious to know the object of my inquiries, and lingered about after I had dismissed him; so as I did not care to be watched, I turned away after securing a particular description of the exact door at the head of the stair occupied by Mrs. Arnott. I went to the foot of the stair that there might be no mistake. I needed some time to collect my un-

settled, thronging memories, so I walked away.

What were these memories!

It was now nearly eighteen years since Minna Arnott became my own wife!

It was twelve years since that fearful night, when I returned home from a professional visit to find my young wife (she was but seventeen when I married her) gone. Whither? I was too soon informed. The friend I had trusted, the wife I had loved, had betrayed me—had fled together—where? I scarce cared to ask.—I was legally freed from the now hateful bond. Her name was forbidden, and I strove (how vainly those who have loved deeply well know) to shut out the memory of her existence—and I thought that save for the child she had left me I had succeeded. I had vowed that should she ever kneel, pray for my forgiveness, I should turn from her and leave her in her misery, as she had left me. All these twelve lonely, unhappy years, I forgot the wife I had loved. I remembered only the woman who had deceived and dishonored me—who had taken with her the sunshine from my life. I had even shrunk from the caresses of my own daughter, when she too strongly reminded me of her mother. I had looked calmly forward—revengefully I had almost said—to this meeting for twelve years, and now that accidentally—providentially, if you will—it had occurred, my heart fluttered as if it had beat but for sixteen summers, instead of gathering rust for five-and-fifty. My brain was in a whirl. I could decide on no single course of action. Like an accusing angel my conscience, long silenced, stood up and charged me with being accessory to my wife's fall.—She came to me a gentle, loving girl, grateful for the love that had placed her above want, a friendless orphan, who clung confidently, leaned lovingly upon me. I was twenty years her senior; had marked out for myself an ambitious course, from which even my love for her did not divert me. I loved her passionately, too; but my love, after its first heat, was second to my ambition. Naturally suspicious, I doubted whether her love was aught but gratitude, and to test it I grew exacting.—Conscience now upbraided me with having frequently, coldly, even sternly, repulsed her when she sought by a thousand devices

that love only could suggest, to win from me the endearing epithets I had been wont to lavish so freely upon her. Then he—my friend—came to reside in our neighbourhood. He was much younger than I, more nearly her own age, ardent in temperament, generous and kindly. The frequency of my absences made me glad to accept his services for her, and the two were consequently thrown much together. I must have been mad, infatuated, or I would have anticipated the result.

And he? Where was he now? I could not yet think calmly of the possibility of his being yet alive. Unyielding, stern, and prompt in manner, I had always been well adapted to face and battle with the harsh realities of life, but totally unfitted for the display of the gentler graces. Consciously wanting the tact to pour the oil of consolation and forgiveness on the wounded spirit, in the manner and degree that it was able to bear, I felt strongly the need of a third party, able to sympathize with both, loved by both, who should stand as a mediator between the injured husband and the erring, desolate wife. And for that office, who could be more suited than our daughter, equally near to both? Partaking sufficiently of my stern, rugged nature to appreciate me, she alone had dared to plead with me for her mother, to beg of me to try at best and learn her fate.

I knew that the yearning for a mother's love was stronger with her than any feelings of resentment for the shame and dishonour that mother had brought upon her. But I would not seek her till I had again looked on my wife, (as I could realize the wreck I had seen her to be,) till I had satisfied myself that I had not been merely giving the rein to imagination, and investing a stranger with the loved features, the grace of movement, once my pride.

I crept again down the court, up the broken stone stairway, carefully bending my head to avoid obstructions, for from the stifling air of the stairway I judged its height to be considerably less than mine. Up, up, till I had passed four landings, with their numerous doors, and still I had another to climb. The increasing cracks in the doors, and evidences of dilapidation, showed me that there the grades of poverty were distinguished by their height—first

floor being comfort in comparison with the wretchedness of the attic. When I at length climbed as far as I could go, a racking cough, the same intensified which I had heard on the street, directed me to the object of my search. The door, it would not close, was tied inside by a rope to a nail, leaving a sufficient crack for me to see in. A small but cheerful coal fire lessened while it displayed the dreariness of the room. At the room I merely glanced; the figure at the fire, crouching almost over it, took all my attention. Her bonnet and shawl were thrown off, but the face was still from me gazing into the fire. She was weeping, I knew from her movements—very bitterly, as an occasional sob told me. She had the shawl my daughter had given her in her hands. I saw her press it to her lips and murmur, "My child, oh! my child!" I stole softly down stairs. I could trust myself no longer.—The pride, anger, sternness, and resentment of years were fast thawing away, leaving me weak as any child. At the first cab-stand I hailed one, and directed him to drive me home; then requesting him to wait for a few minutes, I hastened up stairs to my daughter's room, and hastily told all I had seen. In a moment, as I had expected, she sprang up and said, "I must go to her, go to my mother."—"And tell her all," I said. I knew I need say no more, for she understood my strangely conflicting emotions. Taking my arm she came down stairs with me, strangely excited I knew by the trembling of the hand that rested on my arm. I would willingly have spared her the pain, the humiliation she must experience, but I could not do without her. We had exchanged positions. My reason yielded involuntarily to her warm heart. We spoke but in monosyllables during our long ride.

When we reached within a street of our destination I dismissed the carriage, and we walked down the now almost deserted street, which no longer derived even a semblance of cheerfulness from the lighted shop-windows. I could feel how tightly Ada's arm grasped mine in terror as we turned down the narrow court, which scarce afforded passage for two. I took her hand as we ascended the stairs, cautioning her to silence. Very slowly was our ascent made, for Ada, unnerved already,

and unaccustomed to such scenes, fell at almost every step. At length we reached the head of the stair. The door was ajar, as before, but the fire had burned down, and, dark and comfortless-looking, scarce revealed the slight figure crouching still over it. She moved not, though she must have heard the steps ascending.

But now I was afraid I had asked too much of my child. Excited and trembling, she leaned heavily upon me, and she whispered, "I cannot go in, papa." I saw that she could not realize that that drooping, attenuated, wretched-looking creature could be her mother, and she shrank from the recognition. Again she whispered, "It isn't! It can't be her!" But just then, as I hesitated between returning and going forward myself, she rose with the shawl still in her hands, which she again pressed to her lips, and going to a small box that stood in a corner, untied what seemed to be a bundle of rags. An ember blazing up for a few moments revealed to us its contents. A doll and bunch of corals were alternately pressed to the thin, faded lips. I remembered when she had bought them for our child. Ada, too, recognized them. A small gold locket, which I had given her after our marriage, containing my likeness, was pressed again and again to her lips, while we could hear the low voice murmuring, "God bless them, my husband and child." Ada gently withdrew her hand from my arm, and, stepping forward, gently knocked. A cloth was thrown over the carefully preserved mementoes, and then *her* voice bade her daughter "come in."

"My mother!" was all Ada said, as she sprang forward, but it was enough.—In a moment they were locked in each other's arms. Bewildered at the unexpected entrance, the woman raised the face that lay on her breast, sobbing convulsively, and gazed into it. "It is my child," she at length said, satisfied it was no dream, but a reality.

There are scenes which the pen feels itself powerless to describe. This was one.—Freely from my heart I granted Minna the forgiveness she knelt to ask for the great wrong she had done. . . . That night I had seen more clearly than I had ever done where I had been to blame. I had loved my wife passionately, but that love was

veiled under a calm, cold exterior. What her temptations had been I knew not—asked not; I only asked if he, the destroyer of my peace, were yet alive.

He had died ere a year had passed from the time she left me; killed in a gambling quarrel; died bitterly repenting the great wrong he had done. As I listened, the bitterness died out of my heart. I felt thankful that I had not yielded to the first wild promptings of revenge. I felt solemnly the power of him, whom in my pride and rebellion I had rejected. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." He had died in a disgraceful brawl in the noon of his days, in a foreign land, the victim of deep remorse, consigned to a dishonored grave, unwept save perchance by the woman he had so foully wronged.

"And you," I asked, "what did you?"

"I sewed for my daily bread; washed, ironed, did anything I could find to do for ten long years, depriving myself latterly of the necessaries of life, that I might save enough to bring me back to my native land once more to die. I wanted, unseen, to look on your faces once more, and I did so many a time, when you did not know. I have longed to clasp my daughter to my arms, but my sin stood before me, an impassable barrier. I have longed to throw myself at your feet and seek but forgiveness. I thought I could die then in peace, but you looked so stern, so unrelenting. I dared not, when I knew it was I that had brought that expression to your face. I supported myself by sewing for the shop, and managed to live; but I have been sick for a month, and reduced to the last extremity, and here none can help another. To-night I carried back some work I had finished, hoping to get for it sufficient to buy me a morsel of food. I had tasted none to-day. My hands had been weak and trembling, and the work would not do. It was sent back with me. In desperation, unable to bide the cold and hunger up here, I wandered up and down the streets, not caring whither I went, till I had reached, without noticing, your door. I leaned against the railings, unable to banish the gnawings of hunger. I saw light and warmth inside, and, regardless of everything but the longing for food and shelter, I commenced to sing 'Annie Laurie.'—You had often praised my skill in singing

it. When I saw at whose house I had asked for food and shelter, I shrank back and refused to go in, dreading recognition. You know the rest."

The account was frequently interrupted by that tell-tale cough that shook the weak frame so violently. In tears and silence we listened; no words of reproach on our lips, no looks of coldness and rebuke in our eyes. Oh no! She had sinned, but she had also suffered. She shrank from my proposal that she should now accompany us home, but she yielded when I said, "Then you do not accept my forgiveness."

"Oh yes!" she faltered; "but I am so unworthy. I have so wronged you."

"Let the past be forgotten."

And so we went away from that attic, the silent witness of how hard are the wages of sin, unmindful of the strange faces that peered out upon us from the adjoining doors, for the unusual sound of voices in the lonely woman's room had awakened their curiosity, Minna only taking with her the doll and corals, the locket and shawl, the dearly cherished relics of other days. The rest, the next day, I gave to a poorer than she.

Having taken the precaution to take a latch-key with me, we entered without disturbing the servants; and then leaving my wife (the word sounded strangely to my ears) in my daughter's care, who supplied her with garments, I left them together. I passed a sleepless night in my study. Not the least marvellous of the exciting events of the evening was the wondrous change that had passed over myself. I could only explain this change by remembering that "He who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, turneth them as the rivers of water whithersoever he will."—In that midnight hour I felt his power, his omnipotence, his love, and I bowed to them. I knelt humbly at his feet, thanking him for his kindness in remembering me, though I had despised and rejected him. I sought his grace and pled his promises, nor did he prove unfaithful to them. I thought of Minna's words, "Had it not been for Christ's love, which allowed me, poor Magdalen though I was, to claim his promises, I should have often sought relief in death from all my sorrow and despair, but he granted peace even to me."

And even in this I could afterwards trace the workings of an overruling Providence. If her desertion had left me desolate and despairing, her return had restored to me a joy, a faith, a Friend I had never known before.

The near approach of death silenced the wondering of officious friends. For, as I had dreaded, the excitement and exposure of that night hastened her end. She never rose again. Ada and I watched unremittently by her, attracted by the chastened, humble, repentant spirit that lingered in the worn body. The waters of her life had been turbid and winding, but the end was peace. As we stood alone beside her to catch her last whisper, we thought not of her sin, but of the great and manifold sorrows out of which she had come—as gold tried and purified in the fire. We did not bury her in the family lot, for she forbade it; nor have we put a tombstone over her grave, for she forbade this also.—But the beautiful spot where she lies, though unmarked by any monument, is not unvisited by a husband and daughter in whose hearts the dead woman's memory grows greener by time. Since the making of that grave, no text of the Holy Word has so often come to my mind as this: "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone."

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## ON FRETFULNESS.

BY PLAIN JOHN.

"It's the fretting horse that sweats," said the coach driver. Up hill and down, over the smooth hard sand, and over stone and through ruts, it was all the same to the steady greys. But the young black champed his bit, and pranced over the ground and crowded his collar on the sand. The foam lay in streaks under his haunches and on his chest. After an hour's drive, he was more fit for the stall than for the harness.

It is quite as true of men as of horses that "the fretting one sweats."

In our common toils occur many little annoyances which we wish were out of the way. Some pin loose, some article mislaid, when we are in instant need of it, disturbs the mind. It loses its balance by the vexation, and foams and complains till its

fit place is a solitary bed. Others, better disciplined, take these things as a matter of course; they let nothing worry them.— If a pin is lost, while peevishness is fretting, they have a new one made and are off.— If a tool is missing, they have the calm eye, which will find in five minutes that which eludes the fretful half a day.

Give a composed, patient man oversight of laborers, or a patient woman charge of a large household. That patience oils every wheel; things run smoothly and run well, while an irritable, fretful mind, with twice the help and half the cares, will keep all in a foam from January to December.

With some fretfulness, becomes a habit. Even those professing the virtues of piety are sometimes the victims of this chronic plague. Nothing contents them. Surrounded by bounties that are enough to gladden into a grateful repose, they have no eye for mercies. At the much and the little they carp alike. If a pin is lost, or a servant beyond call, they complain as loudly as over a year's rheumatism. There is no joy of harvest if half a hundred of hay spoil. The journey is tedious if the sun shines, dull and gloomy if it does not. The servant is absolutely vicious and good for nothing who once a week errs, or is late or slow.

There are several reasons why such a disposition should be overcome, especially by the children of God.

It is foolish; nothing is gained, but much is always lost by losing one's patience and equanimity of mind. When difficulties beset or annoy, we overcome them only by a cool head and a firm hand, while fretfulness increases every annoyance.

It is hurtful to others. They perhaps are already sufficiently reproved by a glance at the results of their carelessness, or have erred by accident when honestly endeavouring to do well. It is a cruelty which debases and hardens them, at such a time to be obliged to endure an undeserved or severe reproach. It is sinful. We are less than the least of the mercies we enjoy. If truly grateful, whatever our estate, we shall find occasion for praise. Seldom—never, indeed—do we suffer or endure so much that we do not deserve far more. To repine, chafe, fret, complain, is therefore wicked. It is to stand before God, holding in our hands the manifold blessings he has in wise mercy given, and say, like proud beggars, 'Lord,

is this all? Why did you not give me more? or, why did you give me a tarnished good?"

O, this fretfulness! It destroys the comeliness of piety—wastes its strength—robs it of commendation; let us then cease from it, as unbecoming the household of faith—as being really what it is, a sin.—*N. Y. Observer.*

### HALF DESTROYED BIBLE.

A father in South Carolina was about sending his son to College. Fearing lest the principles of Christian faith which he had endeavoured to instil into his mind would be rudely assailed, but trusting in the efficacy of that Word which is quick and powerful, he purchased, unknown to his son, an elegant copy of the Bible, and deposited it at the bottom of his trunk. The young man entered upon his college career. The restraints of a pious education were soon broken off, and he proceeded from speculation to doubts, and from doubts to a denial of the reality of religion. After having become in his own estimation, wiser than his father, he discovered one day, while rummaging his trunk, with great surprise and indignation, the sacred deposit. He took it out, and while deliberating on the manner in which he should treat it, he determined that he would use it, as he should need it, to wipe his razor on while shaving. Accordingly, whenever he went to shave, he tore out a leaf or two of the Holy Book, and thus used it until nearly half the volume was destroyed. But while he was committing this outrage, a text now and then met his eye, and was carried like a barbed arrow to his heart. At length he heard a sermon which discovered to him his own character, and his exposure to the wrath of God, and rivetted upon his mind the impression which he had received from the last torn leaf of the blessed yet insulted volume.— Had worlds been at his disposal, he would freely have given them all, could they have availed in enabling him to undo what he had done. At length he found forgiveness at the foot of the cross. The torn leaves of that sacred volume brought healing to his soul; for they led him to repose on the mercy of God, which is sufficient for the chief of sinners.



# THE GOOD NEWS.

December 15th, 1861.

## CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

With this number of the "Good News" the first year of its existence ends. Those whose annual subscriptions began on the 1st of January, 1861, will see that the term of their subscription has expired, and are reminded that the present is a fitting time for renewing the subscription for the ensuing year.

In closing this year's publication we have reason to be thankful, and say, "hitherto hath the Lord led us." We commenced this publication a year ago, to provide for a want expressed by some of our subscribers to the Evangelizer, who wished a similar periodical three or four times larger. We had many fears as to the probability of such a publication being supported, but we have reason to be grateful as our subscription list has been steadily increasing, and has reached nearly Twenty-Five Hundred within the year.

We were grieved, at the beginning of the year, that the printing of the periodical was not as satisfactorily done as we had a right to expect it to have been. Since then we have had our work done in our own office, and we think our readers will allow that the mechanical part of it has been gradually improving. We are aware that there is still room for improvement, and we promise to do our best towards making it as perfect as possible.

When we look over the table of contents published in this number, and observe that the publication for the year numbers Seven Hundred and Sixty-Eight pages, we feel bold to say, that our subscribers have certainly got the worth of their money. There is no purely Religious publication in this country that is as cheap, and when it is remembered that we are at

considerable expense for an agency to have it circulated in the country, it will be allowed that the pecuniary advantage to ourselves cannot be great. It would not be worth the time and energies required were it not for the influence for good which it must exert on the hearts and minds of sinners and saints.

We have, in common with publishers of similar periodicals, been somewhat disappointed with the amount of literary assistance we have received. Many who can write have very little time to write. Others who have both the time and the ability, have been accustomed to another class of articles. And a great number who have time, but who have not directed their talents to writing, are unconscious of their ability for a kind of writing that would help us, and be the means of advancing the Lord's work. We solicit the co-operation of all who are qualified to help us.

In looking over the past, we are conscious of many errors and defects, but we are thankful that we have not consciously published a line, the tendency of which is not for the glory of God and the good of man. In looking forward to the future, we trust to the grace and the mercy of God, that He will strengthen us for all duty, that He will lead us into all truth, and that He will preserve us from all sin and error. And that we may receive these blessings, we ask the prayers of God's people. We ask them to be as Aarons and Hurs, that though we be but a feeble instrument in the hand of God, He may show Himself strong through us, in subduing His and our enemies.

There are two ways of being dishonest. One is, to take things that are not your own; and another is, to buy things you can't properly afford. It is being faint-hearted and cowardly and untrue, too, because you are not brave enough to seem as poor as you are, or to look different from other people; and it is being untrue, because it is trying to pass for being richer than you are.

## LIFE WORK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE MISSING LINK.

Published by Robert Carter & Brothers,  
New York.

Those who have perused the Bible and its Story, and the Missing Link, will hail with pleasure this Volume. It is by the same author, and though it wears a different name from its predecessor, it is filled with information of a similar kind in connection with the great work now being carried on in London by the Bible Women. The work itself is new in modern days, and the way in which the narrative of the work is given is about as new. It is substantially a "Report," but as different as day and night from the cold, formal, repelling reports that so many societies go to the trouble of publishing annually, but which nobody thinks of reading. It is the production of a clear and practical mind, influenced by a large heart swelling over with love to God and man.

We wish it a wide circulation, and pray that it may be instrumental in the Lord's hands in calling into being the Bible Woman's Missions in all lands.

We have marked a few passages that are suggestive of reflections.

"The Charities of London are its curse." "Ten years ago such a saying would have been execrated, and yet the last decade of observation and experience has turned a stream as of electric light on facts which prove that in the districts where most alms are given, the population is the most demoralized; mere relief of an ephemeral character makes way for future petitions."

This has long been known to reading, observing, and philanthropic men, but it is not so well understood by the generality of men as it ought to be. Gratuities favour indolence, increase the luxury of begging, and favour the progress of vice, and yet men are ready to give these plausible and bare-faced

mendicants, from no higher consideration than that they wish them to move on and not be troublesome. This is often no kindness to the receiver. There are few who beg who cannot do something towards their own support. If they can do anything they ought to be encouraged, and helped to do what they can. They should endeavour to carry their own burdens. They may not be able to carry it all themselves, and in these cases we should put our shoulder to the weight and assist them. But if they will not work neither should they eat. All practical sympathy is thrown away, and the generous tendencies of the philanthropists towards the well-disposed, are dwarfed by the manifest unworthiness of the objects of their mistaken benevolence.

## 2.

"The book is listened to, often where human systems of worship are rejected." p. 58. A man whom his wife had represented as an infidel, said, on being asked to come to the mission room on Sunday evening, "I am so tired of hearing people talk about religion, I hate the very name of it; but if it is only the Bible that is your religion, I will come and gladly too."

The distinctive characteristic of this mission is that it is undenominational.—The labourers in connection with it seem to belong to one or other of the different denominations of Evangelical Christians, but in this work they endeavour to confine themselves to the great and glorious truths which they all agree in holding, rather than in advancing those special views on which they differ. Hence neither the creed nor any other confession of faith is their text book. Their bond of union is the good English Bible. It they receive as the word of God. It is sufficiently clear and definite on all the important truths necessary for salvation, and when these devoted labourers go into the streets and the lanes, not to make proselytes to

their own denomination, but to gather trophies for the Lord himself, and use only the weapon which he has placed in their hand, they may expect that the Lord will honour them who honour Him by employing His Word.

We do not wish to throw discredit on creeds and confessions. They are perhaps necessities for certain circumstances in the Church. But we have observed, that in times of a revived interest in the cause of Christ, and in the case of very devoted servants of the Lord, on whom manifestly the Holy Spirit had been poured out in abundance, God's Book was more honoured than at other times and in other cases. Creeds and confessions were laid aside as too stiff, cold and formal. The word of the living God was the only thing that satisfied the soul and it was made the only guide of their actions. We have observed, moreover, on the other hand, that in times of greatest spiritual deadness, and in men who gave the smallest evidence of the Spirit's operation on the soul, creeds and confessions were deeply honoured—They were always brought forward by them as the rule, and often employed to the injury of the scriptures themselves. Now, valuable as some creeds and confessions are, and some of them, in our judgment, are very valuable as embodiments of Scriptural truth, yet they are at best but human, and must occupy a second place to the Word of God. They may be well adapted for the end for which they were framed, but they cannot have the comprehensiveness, nor the adaptation which the Scriptures have for the varied manifestations and developments of the Lord's work in the course of generations. Neither can they be assumed to be the infallible embodiments of divine truth. We hail, therefore, every indication of a revived interest in the book of God, in the case either of individuals or societies, believing that the more the Scriptures are read and understood, the

more rapidly the work of God will advance and prosper.

## 3.

"We are beginning to perceive that when the Lord of the harvest sends forth His labourers, His true labourers, in the day of His grace, their first act must be to welcome one another to His field, and to forget themselves in that welcome."

We wish that sentence, or a sentence embodying the same truth were written in gold, and continually before those who are in the Lord's work and profess themselves the Lord's workmen. We believe it to be a valuable test of the genuineness of the servant. If a man cares more for the FLEECE than the FLOCK, if he desires his own glory more than the glory of His Master he will give no welcome, but the very reverse, to a true labourer of the Lord coming to help him. He does not care for the Lord's work advancing, and if he does manifest any interest at all, it is that it may advance after his own interest is secured. The true labourer, however, seeks his Master's glory, not his own.—He knows, moreover, that in seeking his Master's interest, he but advances his own. He knows further that no two labourers in the Lord's vineyard have precisely the same work to do, and that the labours of God's true labourers can never hinder each other. So he extends the right hand of fellowship to all who are labouring towards the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

## 4.

"The habits which have hitherto led to success in our particular kind of missionary work, have been, not to inquire, or advertise for helpers, but to accept all that have offered themselves in either class—unless there has been some reason for not doing so—and a wonderful clue of providential connexion has often been developed in the right and fitting co-workers coming to light at the same period." p. 132.

For every work God has to do in the world, he provides workmen wonderfully adapted for carrying it on. These gener-

ally arise at the right time, and when they are not prevented by the conventionalisms of society or the church, the work advances rapidly, and markedly, leading every beholder to exclaim, "This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes." This fitness between the men and their mission, which is to be expected from the arrangements of a Being infinitely wise, suggests to us that there must be something wrong in individuals or in the arrangements of Churches when the special talents, energies or acquirements of God's servants, are not employed, or if employed, are not employed in that sphere for which they are best adapted. Men who have extensive manufactories, large business connections or great operations to carry on, invariably put, according to their judgment, the right men in the right place. They feel it to be their interest to direct energies where they will have most productive power. If this be so in the world, it ought to be so also in the Church.

## 5.

"We desire to attach considerable importance to the little word WITH. To work with all who worked for God, has been from the first our earnest desire." p. 279.

This ought to be the spirit of all engaged in the Lord's work. We believe it to be the spirit of many, but observation shows that it is not of all. Though the profession of some is loud, that Christ's cause is dear to them, their practice shows that it is only in connection with their own denomination. Though they hold by the Bible as the only rule of faith and manners, they exhibit no excess of charity to those who draw from the prayerful study of it, views that may be as correct as their own. And accordingly these men will not give the right hand of fellowship, nor the least encouragement to others who are beyond their own pale, or not in *their* way advancing the Lord's work. Their language is "As you are not of us, we will not be with you," and hence they would not say as much as "God bless you." to their undertaking. We thank God that many are not of this stamp. We thank God that He has given a spiritual instinct to many to discern the Lord's labourers in every department of the Lord's work, the sense

to know that their work is conducive to the general object which they have all in view, and the hearty disposition to work with all who work for Christ.

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### The Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church.

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The second number of this Monthly has just reached us. This periodical, under a new name, and in a different form, is a continuation of the "Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record of the Presbyterian Church of Canada," under the same editor. The typography, paper and form of the periodical are decidedly superior to what they were formerly, though these advantages are gained at the loss of a considerable quantity of reading matter.

Now that the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the United Presbyterian Church are united under one, the Record must have a much larger circulation, and must exert considerable influence within the denomination. We are pleased to know that the Rev. Mr. Reid, who was editor for some years of the Record under its old form, is continued in office. We regard him as the right man in the right place. It is no easy matter to edit the Record of any church, and we think the Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church no exception. Every minister, and almost every elder, thinks that because it is an official paper he has a special license to growl. The articles are too long, or too short; too spicy, or too tame. There is too much about home missions and too little about foreign missions, or the reverse! Now, if there was some way of letting these growlers hold the office, it would soon become manifest that grumbling was their highest qualification. Mr. Reid has shown himself well qualified to steer quietly and wisely in spite of all, creating less dissatisfaction than would be found with almost any one else. We wish him a long and happy term of office.

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### Harry Dangerfield.

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This is one of Carter's Fireside Library, and written by the well-known A. L. O. E. It is a book of thrilling interest, suited for young men, and illustrative as a tale of the beautiful parable of the prodigal son. We could in a few sentences furnish our readers with a tolerably correct idea of the story, but that would to some extent rob the book of the inducement to read it. We heartily recom-

mend it, inasmuch as it presents the essential truths of the gospel in a clear and forcible style.

We make two extracts from it, that are well worth perusal :

"Why is the mountain raised above the valley, instead of one dead level pervading the world? Is it not that it may collect the waters, and send them down to the lowliest spots to gladden, and fertilize, and refresh? Such is, or such should be, the position of the rich towards the poor. There is no dull uniformity in God's world; there is room in it for the lofty forest tree, as well as for the daisy which springs from the turf at its feet, and the bright fields of golden corn. All have their appointed place, their appointed use; and he would be equally a madman who would level the mountains, and cut down the trees, to realize a wild dream of equality, as he who would despise the precious ears of the harvest, because they rise not to the height of the oak. Rich and poor! there should be a bond of brotherhood between them, which neither envy on the one part, nor pride on the other, should be able to loosen or break! God help me to make such use of my wealth, that the needy may be helped, the industrious encouraged, aye, and the idle reclaimed, and may the poor feel that I only value my position as it enables me to be to them a more powerful friend."

"If there be one sin more stamped with the character of madness than another, it is the profane habit of swearing. It is not merely that it is the breaking of a solemn commandment—*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: Swear not at all: Above all things swear not!*—but it is a vice for which the great deceiver himself could scarcely invent an excuse or a reason. I was struck by an anecdote which I once read of a fisherman, who being questioned by a clergyman as to the baits which he used, mentioned the various things which he found most alluring to the different kinds of fish for which he angled.

"But I once," said he, "caught a fish *without any bait at all*; it seized my hook when there was nothing upon it!"

A strange idea rose in the mind of the clergyman. He thought of the Evil One angling for souls. He baits with gold for the covetous, with power for the ambitious, hope of enjoyment for the sensual and vain. But for the *swearer* he needs no bait on his hook, nothing to hide the sin or make it alluring; he finds victims ready to throw away their souls for that wherein is neither profit nor pleasure!"

### Angus Tarlton,

Published by Carter & Brothers, New York.

This is another of A. L. O. E.'s admirable productions for the young. It is a narrative of thrilling interest, intended and calculated to illustrate that the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

We make a short extract that illustrates a truth :

"But why are they called the fruit of the Spirit? If I ever have them, it is because mother and you have taught me to be good."

"We have tried to make you know the truth, my boy, but we cannot make you love it. We may put many a text into your head, but God's Holy Spirit only can write one on your heart. We may plant an apple-tree, and watch it; but if no sun ever shone, no rain or dew ever fell, it would never bring forth either blossoms or fruit."

"That is very true," said the little boy, thoughtfully. "I remember mother teaching me a little text last year, and it was very easy indeed to learn; the text was, *God is love*. It pleased me very much then, and I liked to think of it and repeat it to myself; but now that dear mother is sick, and father goes"—the child lowered his voice—"you know where, then the sight of my poor eyes is gone, and I can't see the flowers any more, somehow that text does not seem at all easy to make out. I can't think how, if God is really love, He lets us have so much trouble and sorrow."

Sarah clasped her hands and glanced at her mother; Widow Lyle paused in her occupation, to reply.

"When you were ill in the winter, and I gave you that bitter drink that helped to make you well,—did you think that I did not love you? When I stood by while the doctor cut your poor mother's arm, and put her to so much pain, did you think that I did not love her?"

"O! no; I knew that it was all in love."

"And last week I pruned your tree, which looks so beautiful now. I cut off some little boughs, even though they were full of blossom,—were you afraid that I should do harm to your tree?"

"O! no, granny, because you knew what was best for it."

"And shall we not trust Him who made us, and loves us, who has watched over us all the days of our lives? We know not what is best for us now,—God knows all,—and hath he not promised that *all things shall work together for good* to them that love Him, who trust in His wisdom and kindness?"

"The Lord said," murmured Sarah in a faint voice, "*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* In heaven we shall see that all indeed was for the best, and thank the Lord for the trials which were bitterest here."

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### WEE DAVIE.

This is the title of a small book, published by Carter & Brothers, New York, and written by the Rev. Norman Macleod, D.D., of the Barony Church, Glasgow. The book is written in the author's usual happy style, and is intended to illustrate in the narrative form, God's dealings with parents in snatching from them a beloved child, in order that he may draw the hearts of the parents to Himself. When a sheep will not follow the shepherd, he lifts up its lamb, carries it along in his arms, and the dam follows him bleating whithersoever he goes. So it seems to be often in the providence of God. The taking away of a parent's treasure, serves as a golden chain to link the parent's heart to heaven. For "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also."

We copy a very instructive story, illustrating the folly of religious dissension :

"I mind," said David, warming with the conversation, and the pleasure of getting his better heart out—"I mind twa neighbours o' ours, and ye'll mind them, too, gudewife? that was Johnny Morton and auld Andrew Gebbie. The tane was a keen Burgher, and the tither an Anti-Burgher. Baith lived in the same house, tho' at different ends, and it was the bargain that each should keep his ain side o' the house aye weel thatched. But they happened to dispute so keenly about the principles o' their kirks, that at last they quarrelled, and didna speak at a'! So ae day after this, as they were on the roof thatching, each on his ain side, they reached the tap, and looking ower face met face. What could they do? They couldna flee. So at last, Andrew took aff his Kilmarnock cap, and scratching his head, said, 'Johanie, you and me, I think, hae been very foolish to dispute as we hae done concerning Christ's will about our kirks, until we hae clean forgot His will about ourselves; and so we hae fought sae bitterly for what we ca' the truth, that it has ended in spite. Whatever's wrang, it's perfectly certain that it never can be right to be uncivil, unneighbourly, unkind, in fac, tae hate ane anither. Na, na, that's the deevil's wark, and no God's! Noo, it strikes me that maybe it's wi' the kirk

as wi' this house; ye're working on ae side and me on the tither, but if we only do our wark weel, we will meet at the tap at last. Gie's your han', auld neighbour!' And so they shook han's, and were the best o' freens ever after."

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### The Religious Element the Greatest Power in the World.

Our own is an age when the moral or religious element is the strongest power. Underlying all efforts to establish government in earth, superior to all considerations of trade, mightier than the struggles of human ambition, is that principle which demands the extension of religion in the earth, and the subjection of the heart and mind to the power of truth. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, there was great significance in his declaration that he came not to send peace on earth, but a sword. It was the avowed object of those whom he commissioned and sent forth to preach in his name, to subdue the world unto him. The conflict has been one of opinion. The sword is but an emblem of the power with which the truth, sharper than one with two edges, is to be carried forward, slaying all who oppose themselves, and subjecting one nation and kingdom and people after another, until the earth is in captivity to Jesus Christ.

This fact is coming to be felt in every department of human enterprise. Those nations that are now exerting the mightiest influence upon the destinies of this world are the people with whom the true gospel is the ruling sentiment. On the map of the world, mark those countries where the religion of Jesus Christ is the dominant moral sentiment, and you have those nations from which there is now going out into the earth the light of the gospel, and science diffusing the principles of liberty, civilization, and truth among the people of the globe. Those nations where, as yet, the gospel has not become the ruling sentiment, are comparatively weak and inefficient. They may be self-sustaining, but they are not propagating; they may be able to enjoy and maintain their own independence, but they are not aggressive; they make no contributions to the advancement of the civilization of the world. The same is true of individuals within these nations. The power of religion is exhibited in the efforts which man makes to extend the blessings which he enjoys to those who are destitute of them.


There is no strength for good in anything that has not the moral and religious element as its basis. Every scheme for human reform, every attempt to ameliorate the condition of mankind, every project to save men from vice

and poverty, that has not in its composition the element of moral improvement, under the power of religion, is inoperative, inefficient, and futile. It may exert a superficial and apparently healing influence, but the grand cause of the evil is yet untouched and festering below, even though the surface may appear to be healed and whole. To make men happy in this world, they must be made good; to make society wholesome, it must be bathed in the waters of spiritual regeneration. But to make this world to bloom again in the beauty of Eden, and to fill it with the light of that morning when the Maker walked and talked with his creatures, as friend with friend, it must be filled once more with that glory which is to be reflected only from hearts freed from sin, and made new again in the beauty of holiness. God has promised this as the future condition of the earth. Nothing short of it will satisfy the desires of one who believes in the promise of our Heavenly Father, and regards the prophecy of His word as sure to be accomplished. The set time will come. It is a blessed privilege to live and labour in advancing that time when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters fill the sea.

Believing intensely the great fact that there is no power in philosophy, in science, in government, competent to make men good and happy without the gospel, we have no confidence whatsoever in any scheme of reform, in any combination of influences, in any system of doctrines, in any labours of philanthropists, in any schools of theology, which are not pervaded and energized with the religion which Jesus Christ lived and died to exhibit, and which should be regarded as destined finally to triumph over the hearts of mankind, and to make the world happy only in subduing it to Him whose right it is to reign. Therefore, with every prayer that is offered for the extension of liberty and happiness in the earth, with every prayer for the nations now groaning under despotic governments, or involved in the darkness of barbarism, paganism, moral corruption, and social misery, we would pray with the poet—

"O come, and to thine other crowns add this,  
The crown of all the earth? Thou who alone  
Art worthy!!"

—*New York Observer.*

 You may as soon fill a bag with wisdom, a chest with virtue, or a circle with a triangle, as the heart of man with anything here below. A man may have enough of the world to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him.—*Brooks.*

## THE HAND OF MAN AND THE HAND OF GOD.

"Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man."—I Chron. xxi 13.

Thus spoke David when he preferred three days' pestilence to three months of defeat, and three years of famine. Not that he did not see God's hand in calamities such as these, but his meaning was, that in the pestilence the hand of God was *more directly* put forth; there was no hand of man at any rate interposed; no human heart or hand managed that calamity; it was only and altogether sent forth by the Lord without agency of man.

I. *What a view of the heart of man!* "Let me not fall into the hand of man!" for there is no saying what his envious and selfish heart might prompt him to do. Who can tell what man's evil heart might prompt him to do. Who can tell what man's evil heart might inflict on a foe. David had just got a glimpse of *his own heart*. A flash of light from above had disclosed to him an abyss of deceit and pride in himself, which before he had never suspected; and that discovery made him ready to believe that there might be a thousand other such corruptions hidden deep within him. And his own heart was a fair sample of man in general. Who, then, would willingly be in the hand of such, that is, at the disposal of pride, malice, cruelty, revenge?

But not this alone. David's heart meditated on that moment specially what man would do in the case of one offending him. Will a man frankly give up his debt to his debtors? Will an injured man generously embrace the injurer as a bosom friend? No; this is not the manner of men. There is some kindness in man, but it is to the deserving; there is some generosity in some men, but not to base, unworthy objects. There is no *grace* in man's heart, man cannot love the unlovely, or feel kindly to the hateful. Indeed, it is because this is so true as to man that we feel it difficult to believe such a thing as grace to the unworthy *in God*. We judge of God by ourselves. We think what we would be likely to feel, and we apply our standard to God.

II. But contrast *the heart of God*.—Just because God is so holy, his is a heart

that is able to exhibit grace to the undeserving. It is only the holy heart of God that can feel kindness for the vile, and the hateful, and the base, and the selfish, and the ungodly. Side by side with infinite righteousness, and love of truth, and equity, there is that singular love to the undeserving creature which we call *grace*, and which so moves his heart toward them while He hates their sin. It was on this that David's eye was resting when he said, "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord; for Great are his mercies"—"very great."—2 Sam. xxiv. 14.

That peculiar feature of the Divine character may well attract the sinner's eye, and draw forth the sinner's hope. For that singular love which constitutes the *graciousness* of the Divine character led our God to send his only begotten Son, that on Him, as Substitute, might be laid the sins which the Holy One abhorred, and thereby the objects of his grace be freed from the accursed thing. Who that knows anything of this working of grace would not say, "*Let me fall into the hand of the Lord!*" It shines forth in its noon-day brightness at the Cross. Look at it there and say, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord!"

Fellow-sinner, you must deal with God directly and personally; not afar off, and not by means of ordinances and forms. You must "*fall into the hand of the Lord.*" The more direct your dealing with God the better; the less mixture of man the better. Go boldly to God in Christ, to God at the Cross in Christ, to God in the mercy-seat, to God who holds out the golden sceptre, to God who points you to the cleansing blood. Do not trust to the prayers of others; go yourself, and go at once. If you have got a true view of the heart of God, of his great mercies, of his provided atonement, you will now arise and say, "*Let me fall into the hand of the Lord!*" And why? Because "Great are his mercies" through the blood of Jesus. "Mercy (as Bunyan says) nigh thee; everlasting mercy upon thee! Long-lived mercy, for it will live longer than thy sorrow, longer than thy persecutors! Mercy from everlasting, to contrive thy salvation, and to everlasting, to weaken out all thy adversaries. What can death or hell do to him, that hath this mercy of God upon him?" Let my soul fall into this sea of mercy.

## WILLIAM TENNENT.

Once on a favourable occasion, an intimate friend of Mr. Tennent earnestly pressed him for a minute account of what his views and apprehensions were, while he lay in his extraordinary state of suspended animation. He discovered great reluctance to enter into any explanation of his perceptions and feelings at this time; but being importunately urged to do it, he at length consented, and proceeded with a solemnity not to be described:

"While I was conversing with my brother," said he, "on the state of my soul, and the fears I had entertained for my future welfare, I found myself in an instant in another state of existence, under the direction of a superior Being, who ordered me to follow him. I was accordingly wafted along, I know not how, till I beheld at a distance an ineffable glory, the impression of which on my mind it is impossible to communicate to mortal man. I immediately reflected on my happy change, and thought—Well, blessed be God! I am safe at last, notwithstanding all my fears. I saw an innumerable host of happy beings surrounding the inexpressible glory, in acts of adoration and joyous worship; but I did not see any bodily shape or representation in the glorious appearance. I heard things unutterable. I heard their songs and hallelujahs of thanksgiving and praise and unspeakable rapture. I felt joy unutterable and full of glory. I then applied to my conductor, and requested leave to join the happy throng; on which he tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'You must return to the earth.' This seemed like a sword through my heart. In an instant I recollected to have seen my brother standing before me, disputing with the doctor."

The successor of Mr. Tennent in the congregation of Monmouth, in a free and feeling conversation with him, while travelling together from Monmouth to Princeton, observed to Mr. Tennent, "Sir, you seem to be one indeed raised from the dead, and may tell us what it is to die, what you were sensible of while in that state." He replied in the following words: "As to dying—I found my fever increase, and I became weaker and weaker, until at once I found myself in heaven, as I thought. I saw no shape as to the Deity, but glory all unutter-



able!" Here he paused, as though unable to find words to express his views, let his bridle fall, and lifting up his hands, proceeded: "I can say as St. Paul did, I heard and saw things all unutterable! I saw a great multitude before the glory, apparently in the height of bliss, singing most melodiously. I was transported with my own situation, viewing all my troubles ended and my rest and glory begun, and was about to join the great and happy multitude, when one came to me, looked me full into the face, laid his hands upon my shoulder, and said, 'You must go back.' These words went through me; nothing could have shocked me more. I cried out 'Lord, must I go back?' With this shock I opened my eyes in this world. When I saw that I was in this world, I fainted, then came to and fainted for several times, as one probably would naturally have done in so weak a situation. And," said he, "for three years the sense of divine glory continued so great, and everything else appeared so completely vain, when compared to heaven, that could I have had the world for stooping down for it, I believe I should not have thought of doing it."

#### A LOST MAN.

Mr. Whitfield had a brother who, for some years, appeared to be an earnest sincere Christian. But he declined, and finally wandered from the path of duty. After hearing his brother preach one afternoon, he retired in distress of mind. At the supper table he groaned, and could neither eat nor drink, saying, "I am a lost man."

The Countess of Huntington, who sat opposite, exclaimed, "I am glad of it! I am glad of it!"

"It is wicked in you to say you are glad that I am a lost man," said he.

"I repeat it," said she; "I am heartily glad of it."

He looked at her, astonished at her behaviour.

"I am glad of it," said she, because it is written, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

With tears rolling down his cheeks he said, "What a precious Scripture truth is that. And how is it that it comes with such power to my mind? O! Madam," said he, "I bless God for that. Then he

will save me; I trust my soul in his hands; he has forgiven me."

He soon after went out, felt unwell, fell down and expired.

We are all lost. Happy will it be for us if we become sensible of it, and are found before the summons of death shall come. Let backsliders take warning, and see to it that they return to the Great Shepherd ere their feet stumble on the dark mountains of death."

#### A BOY'S SUBSCRIPTION.

Several years ago, the Rev. ——— was addressing a congregation in the Western part of Pennsylvania. He had newly returned from India, and described with great power the wretchedness of the heathen, as they rush blindfold into the gulf of despair, with none to tell them of the way of life. How his other hearers were affected, I am unable to say, but among them there was a boy, whom I shall call David, whose sighs and tears betrayed his inward emotion.— A sigh may be as empty as the moaning of the wind, and tears are often but the soft spray from a transient wave of feeling, producing nothing, and reflecting nothing. But with David, feeling led to action.

A paper was passed round to receive the names of those who promised to give something to aid in the conversion of the heathen. On this, David wrote his name in a clear, bold hand, and over against it the large sum of "one dollar." He had no money, and at first was at a loss how to get any; but pity for the perishing sharpened his wits, and stimulated his exertions. It was harvest; and he bethought himself of attempting to raise the money by gleaning the waste ears that lay scattered over his father's field. By the end of the week, a yellow heap of three bushels rewarded his industry. This realized three dollars, and after paying his subscription, David had remaining twice as much as he had given, as the Lord's blessing on a "cheerful giver."

But for David there was in store a yet greater blessing. He was brought to know and rejoice in that Saviour whom he was so anxious to make known to the perishing heathen.

How many of my young readers will give "a dollar" for the cause of missions? —*Foreign Missionary.*

## Sabbath School Lessons.

December 30th.

### HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.—MATT. VIII. 5-13.

I. When Jesus was entered into Capernaum, he was met by a Centurion who respectfully laid before him the case of his servant, "Lord my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented," v. 5, 6. The suppliant of our Lord was a centurion, that is, a subaltern officer in the Roman army, and himself a Roman. Being an officer in the army of the conquerors of Jerusalem, he was, doubtless, a person of great influence and importance there. He was probably commander-in-chief of the Roman garrison. Yet looking with the keen eye of faith through all the meanness and obscurity of our Lord's external circumstances, the centurion saw in Him a prophet, and more than a prophet.—He addressed Jesus as Lord, recognizing his universal sovereignty. It was not for himself, but on behalf of his servant, that he interceded with Christ. Others brought their friends and relations, this man brought before him the case of his servant. This Roman officer was not like some who, when their servants are unable from sickness to do their work, immediately dismiss them. The centurion was a kind and loving master. His was that faith which "worketh by love."—The servant could not have more earnestly pleaded for his master than the master for his servant.

II. The Lord Jesus prevented the centurion's request. No sooner was the case of the servant laid before him than he promptly replied, "I will come and heal him," v. 7.—This was far more than the centurion intended to ask. Thus the Lord answers the prayers of his believing people exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask, or even think, Eph. iii. 20. How condescending is the Lord! He would not visit the sick child of the nobleman when insisted upon to do so, John iv. 47-49; but at once proffers to go and heal the poor servant. His favours are not confined to the rich and the great, but are also extended to the poor.

III. This gracious condescension of the Lord, instead of exalting the pious centurion, only made him more deeply humble. "Lord," said he, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Regarding Christ as the Almighty and Omniscient God, the centurion could see no necessity for such marvellous condescension as that the Lord should deign, personally, to enter his unworthy roof. He considered the laws of nature and

all diseases to be as much the servants of Jesus as the soldiers placed under his command were of himself. Let us learn from this ancient Roman worthy, the lesson that diseases are but the ministers of our gracious Saviour, sent upon his people to purify and sanctify them, and can only extend so far, and continue so long, as he permits.

IV. "When Jesus heard it he marvelled," v. 10; not as though he knew not his suppliant's faith till it was thus manifested, for wherever faith exists though it be but as a mustard seed it is known unto him, it is his own gracious gift, Eph. ii. 8; but to show the high estimation in which he holds the graces of his people. And were not the human taste naturally perverted, the works of nature, however stupendous, and the works of providence however remarkable, would not elicit our admiration so much as the graces of the humble follower of Jesus.

V. Upon the faith of the centurion the Lord was pleased to bestow the highest commendation, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," v. 10. And as it was then, even so, is it to be feared, it is now. Not always they who enjoy the greatest privileges are the most eminent for gracious attainments. Though a Gentile by nature, yet was the centurion a true son of Abraham, having obtained like precious faith, Rom. iv. 11.

VI. Our Lord was pleased to answer the prayer of the centurion with an expression of his gracious purposes regarding the Gentiles generally, "Many shall come from the east and west," &c., v. 11. "Shall sit down," shall sit down as in a place of rest, Rev. xiv. 13, shall sit down as to a banquet, Isa. xxv. 6. Psal. xvi. 11. "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" in this world, on account of their sins, and cast into a state of still greater darkness afterwards in hell. There shall the wicked weep at lost opportunities, and gnash their teeth, being full of indignation against God and of hatred and malice towards them that are saved, v. 12.

VII. The petition of the centurion was granted. He found Christ as he had believed him to be, both able and willing, by a word, by a mere volition, to heal his servant, v. 13. Thus did our Lord show forth a truth which has been most abundantly evidenced since his resurrection, that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him, Acts x. 35.

Learn 1. That the Lord is omnipotent and omnipresent, Matt. xix. 26. Prov. xv. 3.

2. That the Lord hears and answers believing prayer, Isa. lxx. 24.

3. That the Lord is no respecter of persons, Rom. ii. 11. Eph. vi. 9. Col. iii. 25.

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