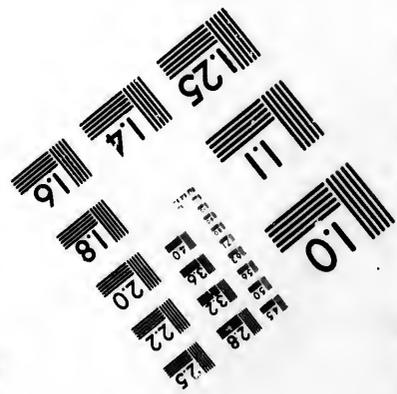
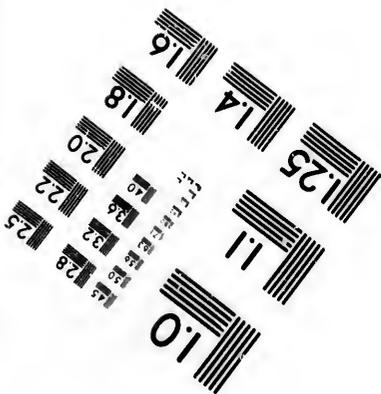
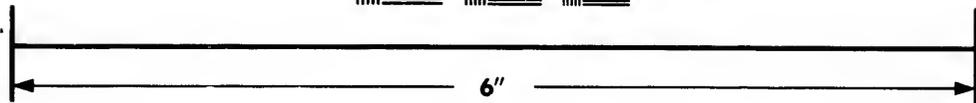
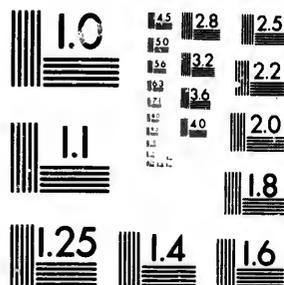


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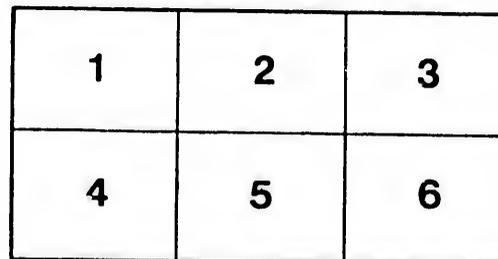
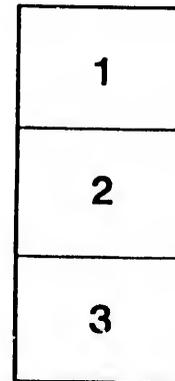
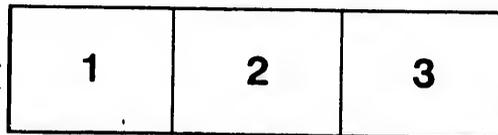
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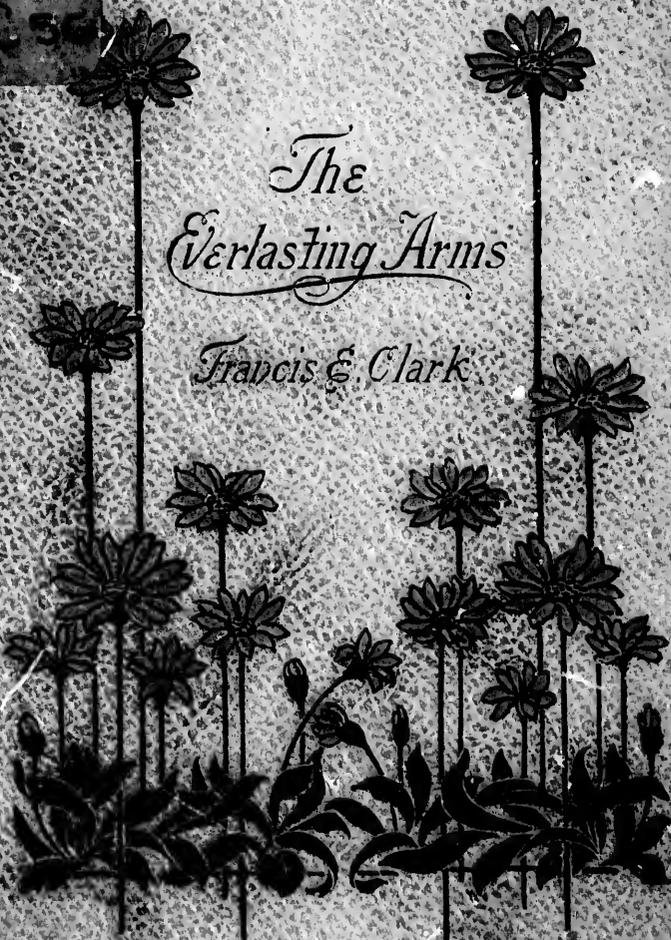
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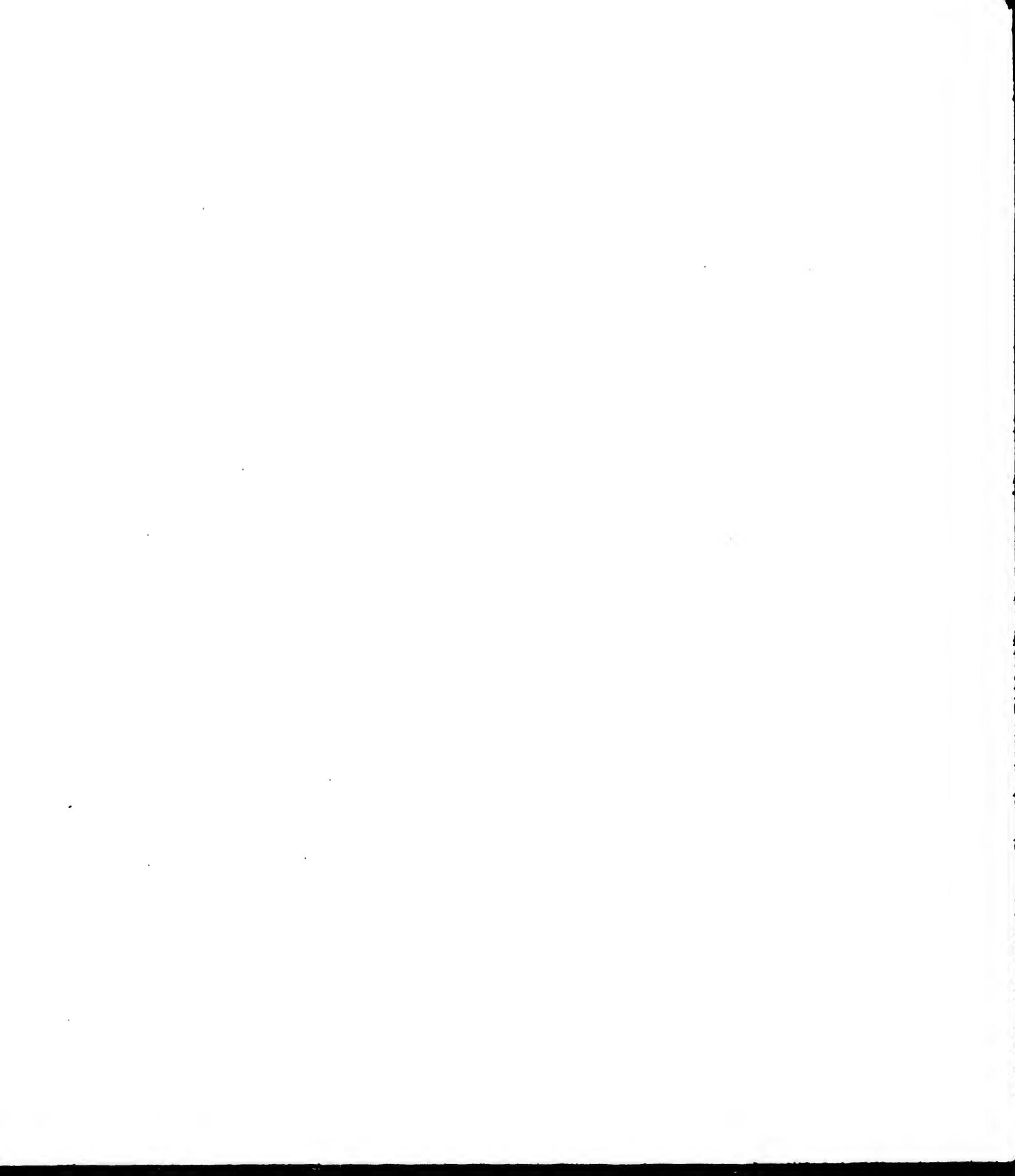
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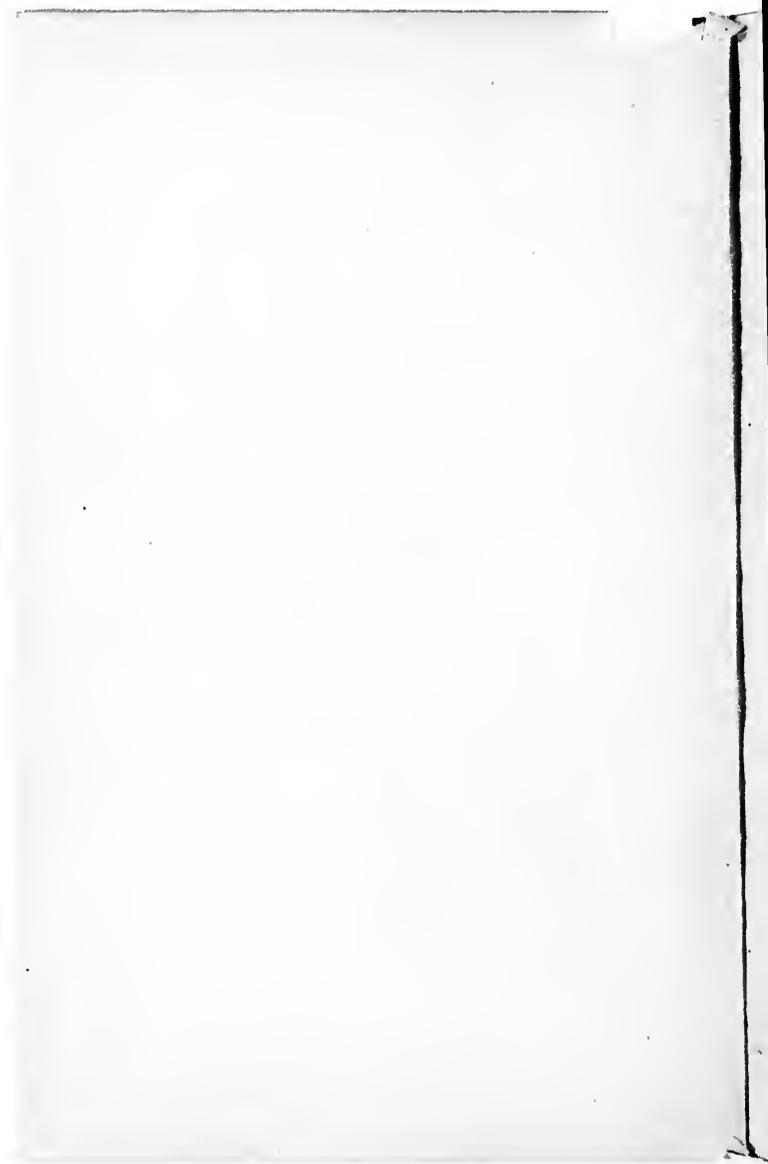
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*The
Everlasting Arms*

Francis & Clark







THE
EVERLASTING ARMS

BY
FRANCIS E. CLARK, D.D.

President of the United Society of Christian Endeavor

AUTHOR OF "WORLD WIDE ENDEAVOR,"
"THE GREAT SECRET," ETC., ETC.

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TO ALL THE SAD AND WEARY,
TO ALL WHO BEAR HEAVY BURDENS,
TO ALL THE GRIEF STRICKEN,
TO ALL WHO HAVE LOST HEART AND HOPE,

This Little Book,

WHICH ATTEMPTS TO TELL OF THE STRENGTH AND
COMFORT OF
THE EVERLASTING ARMS,
is Dedicated.

*The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath
are the everlasting arms.*

DEUT. 33:27.

THE EVERLASTING ARMS.

"GIVE me a great thought, that I may live upon it," said a poet of a foreign tongue. "Give me a great thought, that I may live upon it."

Here is such a thought: "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

God, the Christian's refuge and abiding-place! Surely no greater thought can be expressed in language.

Anything is really valuable, so far, and only so far, as it satisfies real want.

There are three factors that enter in, to enhance values. First, the urgency of the need; second, the universality of the need; and third, the completeness of the satisfaction.

Let me illustrate this in a very simple way. Air and water and light are of the utmost

value because they satisfy the most pressing, urgent needs. Neither man nor beast nor fish can exist without them; so, for this reason, they become, though neither bought nor sold, the most valuable of material objects.

Again, the universality of the demand largely determines values. This is shown in a rough way by a reference to the market quotations in the first newspaper we take up. Those articles are called *staple* products for which the demand is more or less universal and constant. Corn and wheat and rice and cotton are numbered among the staple articles, because they are wanted everywhere.

To be sure, man *can exist* without any one of them, and so they are not so important as air and water; but the demand for them is so constant and so nearly universal that they may well be called "staple," and their value is decided by the universality of the demand for them.

The Kaffir, in the South African bush, does not demand a genuine work of the old masters, a Van Dyke or a Murillo; but he must have his bushel of rice and his strip of cotton cloth.

The red Indian manages to exist without paying a thousand dollars a night for a popular lecture, but he cannot get along without his maize. The hardy dweller in barren Iceland can dispense with an illustrated paper and with a work of Grecian art, but not with his flour-barrel and the fruits of his garden-patch.

We often make a mistake in supposing that a thing is worth what it will bring, that value is synonymous with price. A genuine work of Raphael, perhaps, cannot be bought for ten thousand barrels of flour in some parts of Europe and America; but this is not its real value. In Labrador, in Zululand, in Patagonia, the Raphael might be used for a door-mat, while the flour-barrel might be worshipped as a god.

Or suppose a time of famine. Then the real value of each becomes apparent; the importance of the one increasing with the increasing need, while the value of the other steadily decreases, until a thousand Raphaels cannot buy a single barrel of flour.

The other factor that determines the real

value of an object is the completeness of the satisfaction afforded. The best flour, the best wheat, the best cotton, the best pictures, satisfy the need better than an inferior quality; and hence they are more valuable.

Now, I think it can be shown that the most necessary thing in the world, the want of which is most universally felt, is a sure and safe refuge; and that this want is alone completely satisfied by the Eternal God.

Even the birds and beasts and insects share this need with man. The young sparrow perches fluttering on the edge of the nest which has been its only home. It fears to trust itself to its untried wings, and soon falls trembling back into its moss-lined nest.

The timid hare, wary and alert, is always careful not to place too great a distance between itself and its burrow.

The herd of deer always keeps an outpost on the watch, with head erect, scanning the horizon and snuffing the breeze, lest a hunter creep between it and its safe refuge in the impenetrable woods.

Even the minutest insect, which we brush from our coat without a thought, has its refuge and means of defence from its enemies. In some varieties the defence consists in so identifying itself with the leaf or twig upon which it feeds that it cannot be distinguished by its enemy. Another has the power, though entirely innocuous itself, of so resembling, when it wishes, a poisonous insect that no bird or other foe will dare approach it. Still others carry with them a casemate, into which they may withdraw whenever danger threatens.

The child feels the need of a refuge as soon as the need for food. Why does the little tired romp nestle so confidently in the mother's arms, when the active day has come to a close and black night closes in, or when the slightest fear disturbs it, unless within its little heart is implanted the ineradicable need and desire for a safe refuge?

Take up again your morning paper and look in the column of "Wants," and you will find an illustration of our theme. Almost any one of these innumerable advertisements might be

headed: "Wanted—a refuge." Many of them are houses to let or to sell, but they imply that there are families here and there who are looking for a home refuge to which they may retreat.

Some of them are calls for a business or a business partner, or for capital; but the ultimate aim of the advertiser in all this is, that he may secure a comfortable and happy refuge for himself and family in old age.

The young man plans and dreams and aspires to this; the man in middle life labors and toils for this; and we may well say that all the world, consciously or unconsciously, is seeking an asylum for future years.

Modern philanthropy and humanitarianism busies itself with little else than providing refuges for those who cannot provide them for themselves,—refuges for the insane; hospitals for the sick; asylums for the blind, for the deaf and dumb, and for the cripple; homes for the tempted and fallen, retreats for released prisoners,—all an outgrowth of man's inextinguishable desire for a safe home, for a secure refuge.

But the defences which we raise and the refuges to which we retire are not all of such a material character. We perhaps more often find a refuge within ourselves than elsewhere. Some one insults us or wounds our pride, and we immediately incase ourselves in a fortress of repelling dignity and cold reserve toward that person. We are pitied for some misfortune about which we are sensitive, or offered a charity which we are too proud to accept, and forthwith we bristle all over with stateliness and disdain. We find a refuge within ourselves from these attacks, and often a most unsatisfactory one, it must be confessed.

The prime importance of a safe refuge, then, is manifest. It has the marks of true value; it is universally demanded; the urgency of the demand is extreme. The beggar in his rags, no less than the king in his royal purple, desires a hiding-place.

The Jews of old, you remember, had their cities of refuge, to which those guilty of inadvertent manslaughter might flee. It was the duty of the Sanhedrim to keep the roads lead-

ing to these cities in good repair. Forty-eight feet wide they must always be, and straight as the surveyor's line could make them, without a hillock or an unbridged river to impede the traveller in his race for life. Wherever there was a divergence in the way, a guideboard pointed out the right direction; and two law students were appointed to run with the unfortunate man, and lead him to the city of safety.

But the Christian's refuge is even more accessible yet. There are no obstructing hillocks or impassable rivers in the way. Almost every chapter in God's Word is a guideboard to the city of refuge. You have but to resolve aright, and you are in this refuge. You have but truly, obediently to desire to be there, and you are there, so accessible is God's heart of love.

I have read of a child stolen away from its father's home in very early life, and brought back at last, after very many years of gypsy wandering, to the parental roof. The little boy was not told who he was, but was left to wander at will about the house. Everything

seemed strange to him at first, as he wandered through the rooms, looking with curious boyish eyes at pictures and ornaments and furniture with which he had once been familiar. His glad father followed close behind, to see if any object would bring back the lost memories. At length he stopped before a picture of his own dead mother; something in the face arrested his attention; he gazed at it long and earnestly; a flood of recollections, well-nigh lost, poured into his soul; the other objects began to look familiar, and he threw himself sobbing into the waiting arms of his father, overpowered by the newborn hope and joy which the picture had awakened within him.

You are all in your Father's house, though you do not know it. Look around you! Do you not see a face on a cross, a face full of anguish, but more full of love? He is looking at you as the pictured mother's face looked from the wall at her lost boy. Does not this face bring back intimations of forgotten love, yet of love that is still yours; of a wandering

from home, yet of a home with wide-open doors, a home in which you are to-day did you but know it?

How exceeding sweet is this verse that tells of this refuge! — “The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Did you ever read verse of laureate more simply beautiful? It combines strength, tenderness, and poetic purity in such a way that it seems as if the writer must be a sturdy warrior, and a prince among poets both in one. And well may these beauties be found in this verse, for he who wrote them —

. . . “was the bravest warrior
That ever buckled sword;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word;
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage,
As he wrote down for men.”

“The Eternal God is thy refuge” — the very repetition of these words seems to raise a barrier between ourselves and evil. How impos-

sible loss and failure seem when we are in such a refuge.

"Conceive a range of mountains," says a well-known writer; "conceive a range of mountains extending the whole length of a continent, piled up in one unbroken wall of rock above the region of the clouds, resting upon a base broad enough to cover a kingdom. Conceive the power sufficient to uproot that adamant barrier from its deep foundation, and hurl it into the midst of the ocean. Such an act of power would be easier to perform than to defeat or change that word of promise by which God engages to fulfil the desire of them that fear him in all generations.

"Go climb with toilsome endeavor to the thunderous heights of the great mountains. Look forth from these rocky battlements which the fighting winds have stormed against for centuries, yet never shaken. Can you beat them down to the small dust of the plain truth by the stamping of your foot? Can you blow them away with your breath as the winds blow the leaves of autumn? You could a thousand

times easier do that than could one poor suffering child of faith be snatched from the protecting hand of the Almighty. You could more easily blow the Andes into the ocean with a breath, than fail of eternal life when trusting in him who alone has the infinite blessing to give." Such is the strength of the Christian's refuge.

How tender, too, is the expression! "underneath are the everlasting arms."

As the baby in its first journey across the floor is followed by the anxious mother, with her soft arms stretched out just behind to catch him if he stumbles, so we go through life with our heavenly Father's arms stretched out ready to catch us. The baby does not know that the mother's arms are there; and we do not realize that our Father's arm is so near, but on that account shall we say, in our infantile wisdom, that he is not near us. The baby only knows that when he stumbles and is about to fall he is always caught, and that is enough for him to know. The Christian only knows that when he stumbles and is

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The Christian's refuge has every attribute of superlative value. It meets the most urgent, imperative need, a need, too, that every son of man must feel. It meets it in the only way in which it can be met, by affording the abundant, absolute, eternal refuge of Omnipotence.

It is most interesting to note that in these days there seems to be a return to the great truth of the abiding presence of God. It is a truth, not only of the theologian, but of the common people. It is a doctrine that is finding its way into the lowly cottage, perhaps even sooner than into the classic halls of learning. It is a truth that is transforming lives, that is renewing outworn faiths, and lifting up drooping heads: It is at the basis of whatever is true in so-called Christian science. It has started the "Don't worry" clubs in all parts of the land. It is as new as the latest fad of the passing day; it is as old as the law-

giver of Israel; as old as Enoch, who walked with God; as old as Job, who, at the dawn of authentic history, was able to cry out concerning this same indwelling God whose presence he felt: "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee."

Our presses are teeming just now with books that seek to exalt the mental above the physical, the spiritual above the material. They try to tell us how to banish fear and anxiety. They tell us that to live free, wholesome, happy lives, we must, by a strong act of the will, abolish the thought of ill from our minds forever, deny the existence of evil and trouble and sin as unreal things, and admit that only good really exists.

What is this but an attempt, often a very crude attempt, to be sure, but nevertheless a real effort, to state the all-absorbing truth that God is our refuge and our strength, that God is all and in all.

But we do not have to look to the last book that dropped from the press for the fullest

and largest expressions of this truth. There is an old, old book called the Bible, which seems to exhaust all language to show that God is the refuge of his people, and that those that trust in him need fear no evil. He is our Fortress, our High Tower, our Rock, our Shield, our Abiding-place. He is our Habitation, our Shepherd, and our Fold.

I have often wished that all the verses in the Bible that tell of the immediate, personal presence of God, as the strength and refuge of his people, were brought together in one volume, that we might realize the exceeding fullness of God's Word upon this subject.

Let us take a brief excursion into a few of the Psalms, that we may see how largely the authors were absorbed by this thought of the immediate presence and personal protection of the Most High.

I will choose only the most obvious and unmistakable references to this subject, for the remoter meaning of almost every verse gives countenance to this idea.

"Thou, Lord, art a shield about me," says

David, in the third Psalm; "my glory, and the lifter up of my head."

Notice the slight change which the revisers give us in this verse, not a shield *for* me, but, a shield *about* me, as if the shield compassed him before and behind, and on every side, and was not simply a guard for the face or the heart.

"I laid me down and slept," he continued; "I awaked; for the Lord sustaineth me."

It is thought that at this time he was fleeing from Absalom, his son. Enemies encompassed him about on every side. His own son had rebelled, and set up a new empire. Wherever he went, danger lurked in ambush for him, and the bloody sword of an unnatural child was lifted up against him.

But even in these circumstances God was his Refuge, and his ever present Deliverer, and he lay down and rose up, he slept and awoke, because God was with him.

Again, under very similar circumstances, he encourages his own soul, and cheers all those who come after him with a like phrase, the

very repetition of which comforts and soothes the weary soul with its own gentle balm. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, alone, makest me to dwell in safety."

Again, in view of the gladness, the almost hilarious joy, which should come to those who know that God is their present and everlasting defence, he cries out, "Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee."

In the sixteenth Psalm, David expresses once more, in new and striking figures, his blessedness in the immediate presence of God. "I have set the Lord always before me," he cries out; "because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, my flesh also shall dwell in safety. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The eighteenth Psalm is perhaps the no-

blest pæan of praise that was ever written, and its whole theme, in all its fifty verses, is the immediate, outstretched arm of God in rescuing and delivering his people. "I love thee, O Lord, my strength," begins the exultant Psalmist, as he realizes the mighty power of his mighty Deliverer. "The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and my Deliverer, my God, my Strong Rock, in him will I trust; my Shield and the Horn of my Salvation, my High Tower." Then he goes on to say how God hath delivered him from the sorrows of death, how he has drawn him out of many waters, how he delivered him from a strong enemy, and brought him forth "into a large place."

"Thou wilt light my lamp," he continues; "the Lord my God will lighten my darkness."

It is as if nothing were too small for God to do for his beloved one. The service which the servant usually performs God will undertake. To give his chosen one light, with his own hand he will light the lamp.

Then into a more heroic and martial vein his thoughts run, as he cries out, "By thee I

have run upon a troop; and by my God do I leap over a wall. For who is a god save the Lord, and who is a rock beside our God? It is God who girdeth me with strength. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; exalted be the God of my salvation."

To be sure, the Psalmist had his days of depression like the rest of us. He was discouraged and cast down, and cried out in his anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me? I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent." Yet in the very next Psalm after this dismal wail we read the words that have comforted a hundred generations of men; words that will comfort a hundred generations more, and which are universally regarded as the sweetest words of the most gifted singer of all the ages: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. . . . I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Why is this Psalm the best-loved poem ever

penned? Because there is no other theme like this to appeal to the universal wants of mankind. There is no other thought that can dry the tear of every mourner, and comfort every sorrow-stricken soul, except the abiding presence of the ever-living God.

Antidotes of fear are sought in every direction. Looked at from one standpoint, all mankind seems to be fleeing from the gaunt spectre of fear. The miser fears poverty, and fills his coffers with shining gold, as though in this way he could escape the spectre.

The business man, wholly immersed in money-making, scarcely more wise than the miser, gives all his anxious days and nights to the accumulation of a fortune, hoping in this way to escape the fear of coming misfortune, as if stocks and bonds were a sure barrier against all ill.

The baser passions, envy, jealousy, and malice, all seem to be set on fire by fear. Envy is the fear that some one will surpass us in the race of life; that some one else will become more honored, more wealthy, more pros-

perous than we. Jealousy is the fear that we shall be supplanted in the affections of our friends by some one else; and the rapier of malice is raised to strike the deadly blow, urged on by the envy or jealousy that is born of fear.

And what is the dissipation to which many a man flees, except a refuge from his fears? The drunkard drinks the infuriating cup, not because of any especial pleasure it gives him, but because, for the time being, it affords a refuge from his fears. He is trying to get away from himself, from his past record, from his present misery, from his hopeless future, from the dismal memories that dog his steps. He drinks, and for the time being forgets himself and all his fears. He asks no favors now of any king. For a brief hour he has found a refuge in oblivion of the past and of the present.

The confessions of every opium-eater would tell us the same story. He wishes to benumb his faculties, that he may deaden his fears. In the fool's paradise of hasheesh he tries to es-

cape the swift, racing torments that are always at his heels.

All kinds of dissipation that degrade man, and at last seem to extinguish the last spark of divinity within him, are sought with the same purpose. Their object is, for a little time to escape from fear, to run away from self, to abolish the past, to draw a veil before the threatening future.

The giddy whirl of thoughtless society, that takes no time to think of serious things; the absorption of the business man, that never allows him a quiet hour for greater concerns; the dissipation at the gambling-table and the saloon, — all teach the same lesson, the universal demand of man for a refuge, the hungry craving of the human soul for a sure defence, the unsatisfied longing of every life to feel beneath it and around it the loving pressure of the Everlasting Arms.

We have already noticed how the Psalmist, feeling the terrible urgency of his need, found it met and satisfied. His experience is worth dwelling upon a moment longer.

When he felt that God was afar from him he was full of fears; and in bitter anguish of soul he cried out, in the very words that our Lord himself used on Calvary, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But soon he comes to himself again. He learns the secret of his strength and power, that great is his abiding refuge. He rejoices in the green pastures and the still waters; his soul is restored; he is led in the paths of righteousness; he fears no evil. Why? Not because stocks and bonds and houses and lands had increased, not because dissipation had brought momentary forgetfulness and a fictitious courage, not because power and fame had built up a rampart between himself and future evil. Ah, no, there is only one refuge, only one source of strength, only one pair of everlasting arms, "I will fear no evil, *for thou art with me.*" The abiding presence of God has driven away his fears, and now he can be confident that goodness and mercy shall follow him all the days of his life.

We have not time to trace through other

Psalms this vein of golden ore, but it runs through all of them. Every miner into the hidden things of God will do well to study them with close and reverent attention, an attention that will soon be turned into glad adoration when the secret of God's abiding presence as the refuge of his saints takes possession of his soul.

In the New Testament the expressions applied to our Saviour that reveal this sacred truth are quite as wonderful and varied. *He* is the one in whom we dwell, as a man dwells within his own home. The most wonderful chapter of all the Bible, perhaps, is devoted to this thought of the indwelling of the believer in his Lord.

The thought becomes even more intimate and intense in the New Testament than in the Old. The disciple abides in his Lord, not as the beleaguered soldier abides in the fortress, but as the branch abides in the vine. The abiding is not simply for refuge and defence, but for the purpose of drawing life and nourishment from the one in whom we abide. In

the New Testament the abiding becomes the immediate, intimate union of different parts of the same plant, of different members of the same body; of different organs, through which courses the same life-blood. This is the thought, in its highest and fullest and most glorious expression. Our Lord does not hesitate to go to any length to express the glory and the power that come from this abiding presence of God.

He causes our weak faith to stumble, and to ask if he indeed means what he says, when he declares that, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Over and over again he reiterates this thought, lest we should be afraid to appropriate it to ourselves; until at last, at the very end of his prayer, with Calvary full in view, he prays that all of us may be one, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

This is but the consummation, the full and final development, of the Old Testament idea

of God as the refuge of his saints from all fears and from all ills. This is the glorious summit to which the thought of the actual, abiding presence of an infinite God at last raises us.

But it is all ours. We need not refuse to believe it. The Bible declares it from Genesis to Revelation. The Scriptures would be indeed meagre and meaningless, if this great idea, of the actual presence, the surrounding, all-compassing, indwelling, life-giving presence, of Jehovah, were left out.

As the needs of mankind are universal, as fears chase him from the cradle to the grave, as trouble stalks after him in every age, so, thank God! the City of Refuge is never far away. In the Almighty is the universal need of man satisfied. In him alone is the urgent craving of the heart altogether met.

We could lose out of our literature whole libraries of the choicest books better than we could lose such simple sentences as these: "The eternal God is thy refuge;" "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

Upon these promises, in all the ages, men

have leaned, and they have never proved broken reeds. On these words of cheer the sorrow-stricken have rested, in them the dying have put their hope. They have brought strength to the weak and new courage to the strong. They have sustained and supported, as well as soothed and comforted. They have met and forever satisfied the world-weary craving of all who received them into their hearts.

Every faltering child of God can take them to himself. They are as intimate and personal and individual as they are beautiful and true; for each one of us who reads these words, if we are the humble children of God, can use the personal pronouns, and say without presumption, "Christ is the branch and I am the vine. He abides in me, and I in him. The Eternal God is my refuge, and underneath me are the Everlasting Arms."

