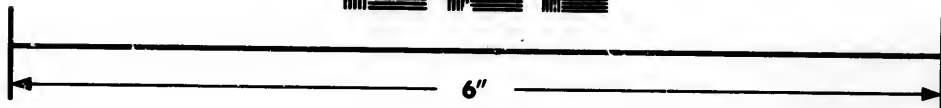
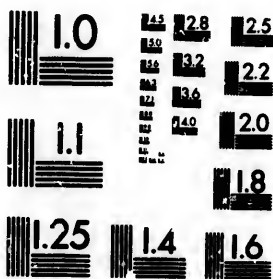


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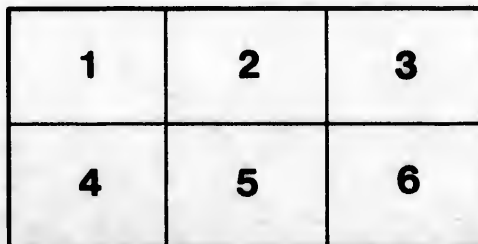
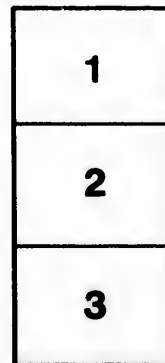
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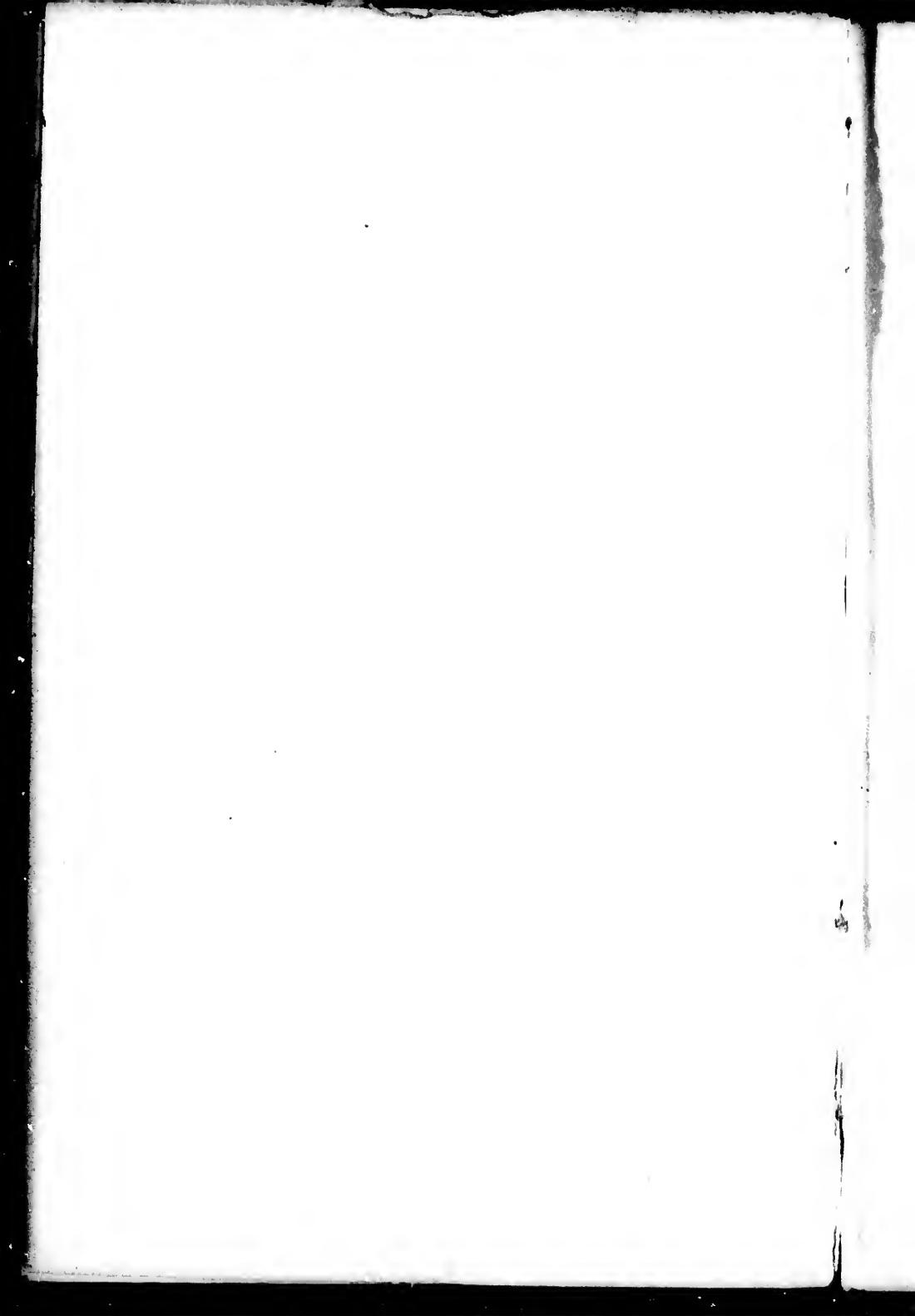
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A decorative floral ornament with a central diamond shape, featuring intricate scrollwork and a small crown-like element at the top. The text "Argent Appeals." is centered within the ornament.

Argent Appeals.



URGENT APPEALS

To the

Unsaved,

TO FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME, AND LAY HOLD ON
ETERNAL LIFE.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE SUTHERLAND.



CHARLOTTETOWN:

HENRY A. HARVIE, QUEEN STREET.

MRS. BREMNER, PRINCE STREET.

1867.

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Prince Edward Island.

BE IT REMEMBERED that on this the Eighteenth day of February, A. D. 1867, the Rev. George Sutherland of Charlottetown, in the said Island, has deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the Copyright whereof he claims in the words following:—"Urgent Appeals to the Unsaved, to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life, by the Rev. George Sutherland," in conformity with the Act for the protection of copyright.

T. HEATH HAVILAND,
Colonial Secretary.

1068



PREFACE.

An irrepressible desire in the pastor's heart to save the impenitent and unpardoned in his flock, will lead to an earnest application for that wisdom which winneth souls, and to the searching out of acceptable words which the Spirit may deign to employ in the conversion of sinners. Such is the history of this work. God has already condescended to bless the truths set forth in these pages. What He has done on a limited field, He can do in an extended sphere; and I have no doubt that in answer to believing and importunate prayer He will continue to bless appeals which are His own to the salvation of many.

In the selecting, arranging and illustrating of the various passages of scripture, a natural and logical order has been followed; the whole presenting a complete exhibition of truth on the particular subject of the work. Everywhere an effort is made to bring the truth in immediate contact with the individual conscience.

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The continuous blessing of that Spirit, whose delight it is to reclaim lost souls, is fervently invoked on this effort to co-operate with Him in bringing the outcasts of Eden back to the mansions of the celestial Paradise.

Free Church Manse,
Charlottetown, Feb. 14th 1867.

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URGENT APPEALS.



CHAPTER I.

The anger of the Almighty to be dreaded.

“THOU—Thou art to be feared: and who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?” PS. lxxvi. 7v.

THE inhabitants of earth have cast off the fear of God. They have departed from God, and God has departed from them; and ceasing to desire or realize his presence, they have ceased to stand in awe of Him. Yet they have no peace. For they are frequently disturbed by a voice within asserting the violation of some law, and threatening the vengeance of some unseen power. This is the voice of conscience. The boldest atheist as well as the most degraded savage is subjected to this secret alarm. This is not the fear of God but an inward terror the result of casting off that fear. Man looks in awe at the manifestations of the powers of nature, without exhibiting any dread of

the God of nature. The seaman stands with palpitating heart, on the deck of his ship, in the gloom of a night of tempest, when his struggling vessel rises on the crest of the wave to have spars bent and rigging strained, and again descends to the trough of the sea, to have her deck swept by the raging billows, yet how seldom do his thoughts rise above the immediate occasion of his alarm? The untutored Polynesian rushes from his hut when the earth quakes beneath him, and while gazing in mute awe on the volcano in his neighbourhood belching forth its huge columns of fire, may feel a momentary dread of the displeasure of some supernatural being, but how little does he know and how little does he fear that Supreme Being whose mundane arrangements keep alive these subterranean fires? The civilized inhabitant of earth is often startled by the loud crash of thunder rolling along the sky and the fitful lightning's flash leaping along the earth; but he hears and sees what to him is not the voice of the Almighty, and the messenger of his will, but the rush and the roar of electricity. And even in those lands where that Book, in which God reveals himself, has free circulation, how many are found who, having no desire for the knowledge of God, and absorbed in the pursuit of the vanities, pleasures, and riches of this world, never heartily study its sacred pages—never *search* the scriptures

—and therefore fail to realize and reverence the presence of Him in whom they live and move and have their being, and who is absent from them at no moment of their existence? If the ordinary course of nature in all its simplicity and grandeur, if its occasional startling providential interruptions, if the possession of the Book of God itself does not impress the souls of men with an habitual dread of incurring the displeasure of their Maker, are we not constrained to admit the truth of that inspired statement concerning the race in general: “There is no fear of God before their eyes?” Why is this?—The human soul in that state which is now natural to it, is in such darkness that it cannot apprehend, and in such insensibility that it cannot feel the presence of the unseen but omnipresent spirit. Every effort must therefore be made to penetrate this darkness that by the entrance of light, life and feeling may be restored.

Reader are you in this darkness? Do the works of nature and the wonders of providence reveal to you the glory of God? Is their voice heard, or their utterance comprehended? You may behold and admire what is beautiful and grand in nature, and stand in awe at what is startling in providence, and yet be devoid of the fear of God. A Humboldt, or a Halley, may wander over our globe, or explore with the telescope the stellar worlds around us, may gaze upon the natural curiosities, and inves-

tigate the singular phenomena of the one, or calculate the motions and the distances of the other, and yet never once realize, reverence, or rejoice in the presence of that Spirit who gave him and them their being. Experience teaches that they who rise from nature up to nature's God, have first had an acquaintance with the God of nature.

Does the word of God so occupy your thoughts—so “dwell in you”—as to lead you to aim at setting the Lord ever before you, or is your knowledge of it so superficial and your meditation on it so rare, that no sense of His presence ever restrains you from sin or stimulates you in duty? If so may I not conclude that spiritual darkness and insensibility still characterize you—that you are a stranger to God—that his fear is not before your eyes—that you are yet in your sins, and in immediate danger of eternal damnation. Let me reason with you most kindly but faithfully.

I. WHY IS GOD TO BE FEARED?

Because he is *holy*. Holiness is the essence of all morality. No being can be called absolutely holy in whom any one feature of morality is found to be defective. But the term is often used in a restricted sense, as indicating an absence from all impurity. Thus God is said to be “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.” God's holiness is perfect and unchange-

able. Hence no sin can ever elude his dislike and opposition. The perfect holiness of Jehovah renders him an object of profound reverence to the heavenly hosts. A mortal's ear heard the seraphim cry one to another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." The commission of sin by any creature renders that creature an object of aversion to a holy God, and the greater and more numerous the sins, the greater the degree of aversion. This aversion leads to separation. No matter how lofty the spirit, or how near the throne of the Eternal, sinning, he must depart from the presence of the holy Jehovah. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." The angels that kept not their first estate, have been cast down to hell; and Adam, who transgressed the express command of his maker was cast out of paradise. God's holiness being unchangeable, this aversion and separation must continue for ever, unless by some means the sin of the past be purged away and forgotten, and holiness be restored to the creature, and rendered permanent.

You, therefore, as a sinning mortal have everything to fear from the presence of a holy and sin-hating God. Did he delight in sin, or did he even regard it with indifference, you might in the midst of your sins, maintain the utmost complacency of mind; but because "his soul hateth the wicked,"

"stand in awe, and sin not." Unpardoned, and "in your sins," you are a stranger to Him, and were you to die as you now are, he could not and would not admit you into that glory where there are pleasures forevermore. Reflect, then, that every additional sin which you commit increases God's aversion to you, and that aversion ripens into confirmed hatred, and that hatred, through perseverance in sin, grows into fury, and that fury, through contempt of mercy, breaks out into vengeance, and the sinner sinks to perdition under the frown of his holy Creator. If this is the end, what says reason?—"Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, cease to do evil." Let the fear of the displeasure of a holy God, deter you from every sin, as the fear of losing your life would deter you from planting your foot on a rolling stone on the verge of a precipice.

God is to be feared, because he is *just*. He is just who renders to every one his due. God as the supreme ruler is perfectly just. This perfection is everywhere attributed to Him in scripture. There he is described as "a God of truth and without iniquity, *just* and right is he." And even in accomplishing what seems incompatible with justice, namely, saving those who have rebelled against him from merited punishment, it is careful to assert that he is "a just God" while yet "a Saviour." He is represented as revered and adored for his justice by

the saints in glory when they exclaim: "Great and marvellous are thy works Lord God Almighty; *just* and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." They who have no sin, and who are forever freed from all danger of sinning may revere God for his justice, while they stand in no dread of it; but they who have sinned and are habitually sinning have reason to tremble at the thought of it. The children of men can only excuse themselves for not fearing a just God on one of two grounds, either they do not transgress His commands or they cannot and will not be compelled to answer for their conduct before His tribunal. Few are so ignorant or so depraved as to deny that they are sinners against God; and none can doubt that they shall yet appear before the bar of God without impugning divine revelation, and disregarding the convictions and foreshadowings of their own consciences. Hear the God of truth on these two points. "There is none righteous, no, not one:" All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." He will not lay upon man more than is right; but he will exact that right; "for every man shall bear his own burden." Though in this life the wicked often seem to prosper, and the righteous are oppressed,

yet even here, proofs are not wanting that God has marked the conduct of transgressors, and will reward them according to their deeds. In his just indignation he destroyed untold millions in the dreadful catastrophe of a general deluge. This was no hasty and inconsiderate act of retribution, for "the longsuffering of God waited" for one hundred and twenty years for the repentance and reformation of an ungodly race, but in vain. In like manner, he overthrew the cities of the plain of Jordan, consuming their dwellings and submerging their land, the elements above and the earth beneath, combining as in the former judgment to execute the righteous displeasure of their Creator. These cities in their sudden and terrible doom "are set forth" says the apostle Jude, "for an example" of God's justice against sinners suffering *the vengeance of eternal fire.*" In respect to individuals, instances of the swift vengeance of a just God are no less striking. The fire of God strikes dead, in a moment, the two sons of Aaron for approaching Him, and presuming to serve Him, in a way expressly forbidden. A husband and wife, Ananias and Sapphira, are instantly smitten with death for deception and lying against the Holy Ghost. These examples are sufficient. The justice which requires one sin to be visited with merited punishment, will if impartial, require every sin to be treated in a similar

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manner. Jehovah's justice is as impartial as it is inflexible. He "will by no means clear the guilty." If the reader seek a proof for this, let him look on Him who is stretched on the cross on Calvary. He who hangs there dying in gloom is legally guilty, though personally innocent. Justice will not suffer the sinner's cup to pass from the lips of the sinner's substitute, although that substitute be no less a personage than the eternal Son of the supreme God. Who hereafter can ever doubt that God is just? When his beloved Son undertook to bear our burdens, and atone for our sins, the just judge exclaims—"Awake O sword! against my shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow saith the Lord of hosts—smite the shepherd." If God spared not his own Son, when bearing the sins of others how can the sinner expect that he will escape the wrath of God when bearing his own sins? It is absolutely hopeless.

Unconverted reader, God has marked every sin of your past life, and he will bring you into judgment for them all. You cannot, if you would, remove from under his eye, even for one moment. You cannot, if you would, prevent him from marking down in the book of his remembrance every sin as you commit it. You cannot, if you would, by any possibility, prevent your personal appearance before Him in judgment. And you cannot, if you would, resist the execution of his sentence, al-

though it should consign you to the flames that shall never be quenched. O then should you not fear him because he is just!

God is to be feared because he is *almighty*. If man dreads the powers of nature, why not the God of nature? They are but the instruments, His the arm that wields them. Man crouches beneath the overhanging rock to escape the blast of the hurricane, he starts back with terror when the fiery arrows of heaven flash before him, he creeps to his cabin to seek shelter from the resistless sweep of the ocean billow, and flies with consternation from the yawning chasm of the earthquake, and yet maintains the most perfect indifference with regard to the displeasure of that Being of whose might these are but the faintest indications. "If I speak of strength lo! He is strong." Is there anything too hard for the Almighty?

To attempt to prove his omnipotence is needless, fully to describe it is impossible. His own language is best adapted to illustrate his character. Of himself he says: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance." What can he not do? He can shake the mountains out of their place—sweep the bed of the ocean dry—rend the earth into fragments—crash the machinery

of our system with his grasp, and toss the crumbled atoms beyond the boundaries of order; yes—He can rise in his might and extinguish for ever, those millions of lights that pierce our heavens with their rays, and people with fresh creations of his hand the boundless realms of space. Who then shall contend with God? What madness for the insignificant creature man to dash his head against the Rock of Ages! If the bare possibility of incurring the displeasure of such a mighty one should awake a wholesome fear, what should be the feeling of those who, times without number, have provoked him to anger? If you could withstand him or his approach, if your armour could prove impenetrable to his arrows, if you could laugh when his flaming sword flashes before your eyes, or if you could escape at your pleasure the fleetest pursuit of his wrath, there might be some reason for your present indifference and imaginary security; but when the worm beneath your foot is less at your disposal than you are at his—when his very frown can annihilate you, or fill you with terrors which eternity will not assuage, how can you disregard his will or trample on his laws, and still cry peace, peace, to your deluded soul? You do not question Jehovah's might, you cannot question the sinner's exposure to the full force of his vengeance, and why do you not question that strange security in which you rest, and to which you blindly cling?

We do not expect the stunned combatant to heed the exploding magazine on which he lies, or the slaughtered marine to rise from the blood smeared deck of his battered and dismantled and now sinking ship, but might we not expect that the boasted reason of man would give him some note of alarm in time to escape from the unspeakable dangers of an impenitent state? Reason has failed, God must speak, and his voice alone can awaken the slumbering sinner to a consciousness of his real condition.

God is also to be feared because he is *true*. He is styled the "God of truth." Of him it is emphatically said: "He cannot lie." And what has He said? He has uttered to man many gracious promises, and many awful threatenings. It is only to a few of the latter that your attention is now asked. He said to Adam: "In the day that thou eatest thereof (the forbidden fruit) thou shalt surely die." Man did eat, and that very hour he died. His soul till that moment of disobedience enjoyed the presence of God which was its life; that presence was withdrawn, and the soul died, as an immortal soul only can die, although the full horrors of that death were not immediately developed. He said at the time of the flood: "The end of all flesh is come before Me, and behold I will destroy them from the earth." The days of respite ended, this most terrible judgment, so long talked of and at which so many had laughed, came and left not a

soul alive on the surface of our globe save those within the ark. And many ages after, speaking of the just retribution that should come upon Jerusalem for her extraordinary crimes he said: "In those days shall be affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be"—and history records that the sufferings of those besieged by Titus, in the city of Jerusalem, were unparalled in the annals of warfare. To our race he has uttered this general threat: "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and universal experience proclaims the fulfilment of the decree. Judging from these testimonies and examples must we not conclude that all his threatenings against particular sins shall be fulfilled. He has said that he will render "to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Let those who cavil at God's word and despise instruction take warning. He has said: "He that believeth not shall be damned;" and he will no doubt keep his word, although it should result in the eternal ruin of millions. Against those who refuse his call, and make light of his invitations he pronounced some special threats—He "will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh—when they call upon him he will not answer, and though they seek him early they shall not find him." Such

threats are intensely alarming to all who have heard the gospel and have not yet been reconciled to God. The hopes, therefore, of the impenitent and unpardoned rest upon the groundless supposition, that God, to favor his enemies, will prove himself a liar! Will you, unconverted reader, risk your eternal interests upon such a broken plank? Thou, even Thou most holy, just, mighty, and true God art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight when once Thou art angry?

II. WHAT PROVOKES HIM TO ANGER?

Any and every sin, being an act of rebellion against his righteous authority, and fatal to his moral workmanship, awakens his displeasure. But some sins especially provoke his indignation. A few of these may be illustrated. Among such sins *pride* holds the first place. This sin is an idolization of self. It fastens on some real or imaginary excellence, physical, mental or accidental, and so feeds upon it, that it raises in the mind the most extravagant ideas of its superiority in this or in many respects over others. It is generally considered as the original sin of that fallen spirit who is styled in scripture the god of this world and "the prince of the power of the air." So far as our conceptions can reach amid the gloom of earth, and where scripture is not explicit, this is highly probable. Satan was an angel of exalted rank and

of great and brilliant powers. His superiority over many was seen and felt. The comparison, we may suppose, led him to such an admiration of his transcendent gifts as in his creature-weakness induced a self-glorying, a self idolizing which robbed the Most High of the glory due to him alone, and the son of light, the brilliant star of heaven sank to rise no more. This is certain, that all the devils, glorying in themselves rather than in their Maker, are now guilty of pride. They have stamped their image on the race which they have seduced into rebellion, and now pride is universally characteristic of the fallen descendants of Adam. It may excite wonder that a people so low in the scale of rational being, so depraved in their nature, and so destitute in their spiritual condition, should still entertain high ideas of their own excellence. But the truth is, their excellence and independance are purely imaginary. They imagine themselves to be rich and increased in goods and to have need of nothing, when in reality they are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked," So disgusting are such to God, that he says he would "spue them out of his mouth." Pride is idolatry, and idolatry so destructive that it rivets the chains on the captive, and closes the door against help, and disdains the proffered aid of the Almighty himself. While the Most High stoops to hold intercourse with the lowly on earth, he beholds the

proud from a distance, "resists" them, and denies them admission to his presence. It excludes from the kingdom of heaven, when the contrary disposition secures its possession; for Christ has said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The soul under its influence asserts its own goodness, denies the rectitude of God's law, spurns the righteousness of Christ, and impudently disputes God's right to reign in and over his own creatures. Is it any wonder that this sin provokes the Lord to anger?

Reader, does pride reign in your heart? or have you seen your own vileness, and like Job abhorred yourself and repented in dust and ashes? He who reduced and humbled the haughty and God-defying Pharaoh, he who poured contempt on the proud Sennacherib, hurrying him back in disgrace to his own land, he who brought down the vain-glorious Nebuchadnezzar from his magnificent hanging gardens, stripped him of his royal robes, and turned him out to eat grass like an ox, will surely, sooner or later, compel you to stoop low indeed before him. Your hopes for eternity rest on your speedy and profound self abasement before Jehovah.

A second sin of darkest hue is *sensuality*. As pride is a perversion of the spirit, so sensuality is a perversion of the body. It is a subjection of the spirit to sense, and such a subjection as degrades, enfeebles and destroys both soul and body. When

the soul is once fully enslaved, it becomes a willing captive, and imagines, thinks, plans, and determines solely for the gratification of sense. This sin is, and has been in all ages, universally prevalent. The history of all ancient nations, and the abounding drunkenness and licentiousness among the modern, plainly warrant this statement. Christ and his apostles represent sins of this class as the common disgrace of humanity. Such general results must have a general cause. The simple fact is, man having ceased to find his supreme happiness in God, has sought it through the creature, and that chiefly by the gratification of sense. The limited and subordinate enjoyment of the creature was allowed, but man has made it exclusive and supreme. The gratification of the sight and the taste was involved in the first great sin, and ever since, sense has asserted a right to dictate its will to the human soul. Alas! that the soul should so readily accede to that dictation. Body and soul have suffered together and fallen together. The passions are now always unruly, easily become excessive, and frequently become ungovernable. With sins of sensuality God is greatly provoked. After enumerating some of these, the apostle Paul adds: "For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." God is displeased because it destroys his workmanship. The human body is the most extraordinary and

admirable material creation on earth. Sensuality utterly debases and destroys it. The body was intended to be the temple of God—this sin not only deprives God of his right of dwelling there, but renders the body extremely offensive even to man. Its natural result is death, the dissolution of the body, corruption. "He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

Reader, have you "walked after the flesh?" Has the "carnal mind" reigned in you? If so, you have been defiling and destroying the temple of the holy God, and he threatens to destroy you for so doing. Continue a little longer in this course, and even sin will cease to gratify you, for your appetites will become insatiable and your condition incurable. Say, is not the past time of your life more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh? And for what profit?—O awake to righteousness and sin not,

Another sin little thought of, though very common, and irritating in a high degree, is *indolence* during the respite of divine mercy. Indolence is a waste of gifts, privileges, and opportunities. God has given man powers to be exercised wisely and usefully. Indolence enfeebles these powers, and deprives the possessor and others of the benefit that might be derived from them. Culpable at all times, it is doubly so in the midst of poverty, destruction and danger. Who can enter the abode of

penury, and witness all the evils attending want, of which the main cause is known to be idleness, without experiencing a feeling of censure rise within him? Who can excuse the indolence that would fold the arms in mute indifference while a conflagration is seizing a neighbour's dwelling, or a rising flood is sweeping away his property? And who can repress his indignation when human life is at stake, and the means of assistance within reach, to see mere sloth restrain active exertion until all effort is hopeless? And this indignation is not a little increased when the subject of sloth is one specially appointed to rescue those who are ready to perish. And intensity is added to it when the perishing one is suspended for a time between life and death with the express view of being saved. Now God beholds man, the chief of his works on earth, pining in spiritual destitution, consuming in the fires of corruption, and ready to sink into the pit of perdition. This last and irremediable woe, the demand of his inflexible justice, is delayed in infinite mercy in the hope that the sinner, by repentance and timely effort, may escape. The Lord is not slack concerning either his promises, or his threatenings, but is longsuffering to us-ward not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Therefore does he "wait that he may be gracious;" and therefore does he call to the perishing: Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die!

and in the urgency of the occasion exclaims : "To-day if ye hear my voice harden not your hearts."

Yet such is the carnal security, and inveterate spiritual indolence of fallen man, that the threatenings and promises alike of the great Jehovah often fail to arouse him to exertion. Man has a soul to save ; and no amount of diligence in any worldly calling will excuse him for neglecting his eternal salvation. One thing is needful ; and until that has been properly attended to, anything which would set it aside, or give it a mere secondary place is unlawful. But why should God be angry with man for neglecting his own salvation ? If man perish, is it not his own loss ? But I answer, is man his own master ? Has he a right to dispose of himself as he pleases ? Is suicide less heinous than murder ? Provocation or necessity may be urged as an excuse for taking away the life of another ; what provocation or necessity can be urged for taking away one's own life ? We would all condemn most sincerely the man that would cause the eternal damnation of another man's soul, why not condemn, in like manner, the man who would cause his own damnation ? If it is a sin to expose the soul to divine wrath, is it not a greater sin to persist in that exposure ? And if God would be angry in the former case, would he not be specially so in the latter ? You may now see that indolence in the impenitent sinner, while

God waits to be gracious, and delays his justice for that purpose, is not only sin, but a confirmation of sin in its worst form, and provokes an outburst of the divine indignation. Reader, are *you working out* your own salvation with fear and trembling, or are you crying, 'peace and safety'—when sudden destruction is coming upon you?

The companion of this sin is another not less offensive—*despising God's warnings*. Its very spirit is breathed in the following language from Isaiah. Answering the Almighty, bold and profane men say: "Let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come that we may know it!" Amos replies to them by saying: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you?—the day of the Lord is darkness and not light."

Warning proceeds from friendliness. An enemy does not give notice of coming danger. To despise God's warning is to cast a reflection on his foreknowledge or friendliness, and to set up our own judgment as superior to his. How often did he complain of this treatment from his ancient people! Why were they subdued and oppressed by the nations that lay along their borders? Why were the Assyrians allowed to carry them captives? And why long afterwards was their renowned city, Jerusalem, destroyed by the Roman conqueror,

and they themselves scattered over the earth? One answer meets all—they persistently despised the warnings of God. How often does God refer to the messages sent to them by his servants the prophets; which messages generally remained unheeded. Patience at last has run its course; forbearance has ceased; and so great is the provocation that God refuses to be entreated of by them; he forbids his messenger to pray for them; and declares that although three of the greatest favorites of heaven, Noah, Daniel, and Job stood up to plead for them, their destruction would not be averted. Let no one imagine that he may safely despise even one admonition from heaven. God governs his creatures to-day on the same principles on which he governed them three thousand years ago. Increased light will increase the guilt of sin committed in it. And the man who habitually disregards friendly advice in a matter of so much importance as his soul's salvation can have no one to blame but himself, if the dangers so often addressed to his unwilling ears should some day suddenly overtake him, and all his efforts to escape prove utterly futile. God will not meet him "as a man," but as the avenging Judge, and even rocks and mountains will then fail to hide him from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. O take warning and flee *in time* from the wrath now coming.

One more sin I shall mention ; it is the sin of *rejecting the Son of God*. This is the crowning sin : it is the greatest of all sins. It puts the seal of damnation on the soul. It not only rejects salvation but rejects it at the hand of its author. It says, 'I will not be saved, although God himself should come to save me.' It rejects the Father who sent, and the Spirit who endowed the Son. It disregards the love of the Father, the gifts of the Spirit, and the condescension, compassion and power of the Son. It locks the only door by which the sinner can escape from his prison, and throws away the key. It turns the back upon heaven, and surrenders the soul to the guidance and control of hell. It puts the foot upon all the mercies of God, and raises the hand of defiance against the Almighty. It treats as weakness the delays of justice, and scorns as deception the alarms of danger. This is strong language, yet it is a truthful description of a very common sin. It will be admitted that if anything on earth could provoke the indignation of the Lord it would be this sin. The truth is, God is angry with the wicked every day, and for no sin more than for rejecting his Son. He is still without form or comeliness in the eyes of the worldly ; he is daily *despised* and *rejected* of men, as of old ; he comes to his own, but his own receive him not ; and while his servants urge obedience to Him as the only lawful ruler, they

receive as a reply—"We will *not* have this man to rule over us." Reader, have you received this Saviour in the arms of a living faith? Have you enthroned him in the purest affections of a loving heart? Beware of delay, Receive him *now*, and heaven is yours.

III. WHO SHALL STAND WHEN GOD RISES UP TO TAKE VENGEANCE?

Not *the monarchs and nobles*, whose only excellence is their earthly grandeur. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men . . . and the chief captains and the mighty men . . . hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks,—Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

Their high rank in the sight of men adds nothing to their dignity in the sight of God. God looks upon the heart; and the soul of a beggar may, in his estimation, be more noble than the soul of an emperor. The power which they could wield on earth fails them in the hour of death, and the homage which they could claim from man, secures no respect at the bar of the Eternal. They stand as helpless as the meanest slave in their dominions, when the Almighty summons them to their account.

Not *the rich*, who love this present evil world. How is mammon worshipped in this generation!

How eager the race to be rich ; and in their haste how many " fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition !" While they increase their wealth, they increase their difficulties in getting to heaven. The rich may enter the kingdom of God, but it is " hardly." But they who trust in their wealth, and delight in it as their sole portion cannot redeem their souls from death, nor purchase exemption from the torments of hell. What availed all the wealth of that rich man, of whom Jesus speaks, when in the place of woe he could not obtain so much as a drop of cold water ? What does the Almighty care for the sordid dust of earth with which so many strive to burden themselves. Their gold and silver may bribe an earthly judge, and may avert the stroke of justice from a guilty head. but God will condemn and strike down the richest of his foes, as if he were the poorest of the poor.

Not *the men of science*, who are destitute of the knowledge of Christ. Scientific attainments and high erudition, may secure to man fame, may adorn him with titles of rank, and put him in possession of wealth ; but with all this, he may remain in spiritual ignorance, unrenewed in heart and an enemy of God. The human soul has lost its power of perceiving the things of the spirit of God as they really are ; hence it calls evil, good,

and good, evil; and puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. The restoration of spiritual sight is the work of the Holy Ghost alone, and with it follow a belief and a love of the truth. Without this illumination the greatest scholar knows not God; cannot love him; does not serve him; and when God arises to take vengeance will tremble and fall before him, undistinguished except by the intensity of his dismay, from the most ignorant savage. "Not many wise are called." "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent."

Not the nominal Christian. External appearance may deceive man, but not God. A profession of religion, without its possession, is self deception or hypocrisy, either of which is an abomination before God. Disrobed by death of his assumed garb, he will appear before God in his proper spiritual nakedness; and confounded by the exposure, he will sink in terror from his sight into the abyss of woe.

Not the proud. His disturbed visage betrays his dismay. His high looks have come down: and trembling in every joint, he awaits with abject terror, the execution of his sentence of eternal humiliation.

Not the sensual. He carries with him a disease which excludes him from the general assembly of the saints: and on his corruptions feeds the worm that never dies.

Not the slothful. His soul's salvation has been neglected. His master's work has not been done. The command goes forth—"Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Not the despiser of warnings. Where now is his courage? Where now are the vain hopes on which he rested? Can his heart endure or his hands be strong, now that God is dealing with him? Alas! his agony is unutterable—a flood of wrath overwhelms him.

Not the rejecter of Christ. He has refused reconciliation; now he shall feel the force of indignation. He would not be a friend, and he shall be treated as a foe; and as such he shall be made Christ's footstool and be slain before him. Who shall intercede for him? Not a voice shall be raised in all the countless throng of the saved to stay, for one moment, the execution of the sentence of eternal execration. O hearer of the gospel beware!

But THESE shall be safe in the day of vengeance, viz;

The regenerate. These are the spiritual offspring of God, the work of his hands in which he delights. Conformed to the image of his Son, and enrolled among his children, they find shelter under the shadow of his wings.

The reconciled. Once in rebellion, now they are loyal subjects; once filled with hatred to God,

now they are filled with love to him. Once God was angry with them; but they dreaded his displeasure, and fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel: they made their peace with God, while the day of mercy lasted by trusting in the atonement of Christ. Now clothed in the bright robes of his righteousness, no voice of condemnation can be raised against them; God himself delights to look upon them; the holy angels greet them as their companions; and they feel perfectly safe, amid the conflagrations of the heavens and the earth.

The sanctified. The fire of God's anger fastens on the sinner wherever he is found; it leaves the saint unscathed. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Christ presents them to his Father without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; and thus perfected in holiness, they are welcomed with ineffable joy. A wide gulf will separate them for ever from the objects of divine wrath.

The self-denying. These parted with what was as dear as a right eye, hand, or foot rather than offend God. Now they are rewarded. They sacrificed ease, health, wealth, home, friendships, honour and life itself, at the call of duty. Now they are distinguished; and what was lost is restored a thousand-fold. They have passed through great tribulations, reproaches, persecutions, dungeons, and flames—to their place of safety, the right hand of their Judge.

Those who *love the Lord Jesus Christ*. Love is the first principle of true religion. No man is a disciple of Christ who does not love Christ supremely. And where this love really exists, it will constrain the soul to honour and obey him with a zeal, intensity and perseverance proportionate to its power. When Christ who is their life shall appear they shall exclaim: "Lo! this is our God: we have waited for him. and he will save us: this is the Lord we have waited for him we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." They are safe indeed, everlastingly safe. And,

All who have made it *their delight to glorify God*. Man's chief end was to glorify God, and in so doing to enjoy him for ever. His rebellion has dishonoured God, and brought destruction on himself; but his renovation and consequent new obedience glorify God and bring salvation to man. They glorify God, and fulfil their whole duty, who habitually fear him and keep his commandments; and his chief command is: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Reader, where shall your place be in the great day of Jehovah's anger?

CHAPTER II.

Consideration demanded by God.

“Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces,
and there be none to deliver.” PSAL. L. 22v.

WANT of due consideration occasions the ruin of multitudes, both for time and eternity. The covetous man, in his eagerness to be rich, will not reflect on the consequences of extortion, roguery, and theft, until the loss of substance, reputation, or liberty convince him of his mistake. The votary of pleasure will rush into the whirl of dissipation, and flit round in its giddy circles, not considering that health, peace, and honor are the high price paid for the short-lived enjoyment. The man of fashion must live as splendidly, dress as finely, and drive about as gayly as his neighbour, whatever be his wealth, without stooping to the irksome task of balancing his income with his expenditure, until the pressure of uneasy creditors suddenly shuts off the stream of his resources, strips him of his grandeur and leaves him in the cold

shades of poverty, or compels him to hide his shame in a foreign land. On a wider field inconsideration, less frequently perhaps, but more sweepingly slays its victims. The driver of a passenger train on a railway heeds not the signal that another train is coming down on the same track, but rushes thoughtlessly onward until a terrific crash blends the fragments of engines and cars together, and buries beneath their ruins scores of dead and wounded. The captain of an emigrant ship navigates her safely across the ocean. The land is made in the gloom of the evening, and instead of laying to till the light of the morning would reveal his true position, he holds on his way, mistakes a light on the shore, and drives his ship with her living freight hard up on a dangerous ledge lying out from the shore. As yet there is hope, but ere midnight arrives the storm rises, the ship breaks up, and amid the storm, darkness, and tempest, few out of hundreds escape a watery grave, and those who do, find themselves in dreariness and want on a strange land. A commanding officer suffers himself to be deceived by a wily foe, and pursues what appears to be a retreating army; when suddenly the enemy rises in his rear, and immediately shows himself in front also; he is surrounded, compelled to fight on most unequal terms, and a reckless and most fruitless waste of life is the reward of his indiscretion.

But it is in the great concerns of eternity that the most lamentable and fatal results of inconsideration appear. The inhabitants of earth occupy their thoughts with the affairs of time to the almost total exclusion of the things of eternity. With multitudes the sole questions of any importance in their eyes are, what shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? A timely and satisfactory provision for the world to come seems to elicit no concern. Many in their thirst for pleasure will not stop to think whether the stream from which they are drinking is poisoning or life-giving—their lusts are insatiable; and they will drink the fascinating cup within their grasp, although the dregs should prove the despair of damnation. Many will struggle up the rugged, steep, and slippery heights of ambition, expending their utmost energies to acquire the fame of great men, who will not pause to consider the vanity of the prize for which they risk and sacrifice so much; and who are so absorbed in their pursuit that they totally exclude from their minds the much more noble and more urgent task of securing the approbation of Him whose single plaudit outweighs the approbation of all creation. And a still greater number will spend a score of years in laboring to acquire a fortune, for which they will cross oceans or deserts, and endure all manner of hardship, toil and privation, who could not be induced to devote

one year to anxious thought how they might obtain an eternal inheritance in heaven.

Forgetfulness of God is the main cause of this want of reflection in regard to the things of eternity. If men thought more of God, they would think more about eternity, and be less carried away by the allurements, and less disturbed by the annoyances of time. By shutting God out of mind they act inconsiderately and foolishly—they spend their strength for that which will not profit in the end—they neglect their soul's salvation—they live and die in sin, and perish for ever.

Reader, do you consider your ways? Do you ponder the path which you are now treading? And have you chosen it with the lamp of God's word in your hand? Or, regarding your own judgment as sufficient to direct you, have you ignored the counsels of the Most High, and resolved to follow the bent of your own inclinations, let the consequences be what they may? If so, let me tell you, you will find the experiment to be disastrous. Thousands before you have tried the same course, and have either repented of their folly and returned back, or have passed on to inevitable destruction.

God now calls you to consider your ways, and threatens that if, through thoughtlessness, or obstinacy, you persevere in sin he will destroy you without mercy—tearing in pieces when there can be none to deliver.

I. WHO ARE ADDRESSED BY GOD. ?

Those who forget him. "Now consider this, ye that forget God." To forget is to let slip from the memory what was once heard or known. Those who forget God must, at one time, have heard or known something of his works or laws or character. This knowledge has been displaced or buried by what was to them more interesting or more urgent, more impressive or more important. Unregenerate men, everywhere, do not like to retain the knowledge of God in their minds. A consciousness of guilt makes the remembrance of the just Judge unpleasant; and hence they seek to exclude him from their thoughts that they may the more quietly pursue their chosen course. Still the forgetfulness is not absolute or perpetual. No rational creature can live without realizing, at one time or other, the presence or the existence of his Creator. But the remembrance in this case is so occasional, and so evanescent, that the forgetfulness may be characterized as habitual. The life is not regulated by these random thoughts of God; they are simply the ruffling of the surface by passing breezes, while the current is setting strongly in the opposite direction. The mind is then swollen with ideas of self sufficiency, discoloured by the violence of unruly passions, and carried onward by the unrestrained impulse of habitual vanity of speech and life. God is forgotten when,

Men of unregenerate minds make their own feelings the rule of their conduct. This implies that their feelings do not flow forth towards God. Is it not true? Is it customary to find men anxiously enquiring after God their maker? Is it not the declaration of the Holy Ghost—"There is none that seeketh after God?" Their thoughts, feelings, and inclinations all tend in the opposite direction. Their feelings are not devotional, therefore they seldom pray unto God, and the spontaneous uplifting of the heart in praise is an exercise with which they have no familiarity. If the feelings are to be the guide, and *they* turn away from God and his service as subjects with which they have no sympathy, and in which they find no enjoyment, will they not lead the soul to things more congenial to its fallen nature, and will not these things be as much as possible alien to God, and tend to banish all remembrance of him from the mind? Their feelings are not elevated and holy, but low and grovelling, and following them, they are led away from God, and indulge in sin—they give the reins to their lusts, and lest they should be restrained from their purposes, they will not turn to give a last lingering look towards Him from whom they seek to escape. Success attends their efforts. They turn from God, and he turns from them, and they arrive at that condition in which God is forgotten, so far as it is possible for a sinner to exclude all thought of him.

Their feelings are not humble, meek and forgiving—but proud, passionate and revengeful. Giving way to their pride, they despise and injure others. Acting under the influence of passion, they lose self restraint and become obstinate, fierce and quarrelsome. Influenced by revenge, they destroy the property, character or life of their fellow men. The tendency of such a life is not doubtful. Men of this stamp cannot walk with God. His presence is painful to them. They must separate from him; and they feel relieved when no stray thought of him lodges in their minds. Poor souls! what a choice they make. Darkness is preferred to light, sorrow to joy, and dishonour to glory. Alas! how many are there who acknowledge no law, especially in their inner life, beyond the inclinations of their depraved hearts. Reader, do your feelings rule you, or do you rule them? Are they your guide, or have you something more elevated, steady, and pure by which to regulate your life. The feelings are no safe guide to any on earth; for in the best of men a sense of duty must prompt to action when the feelings are most dormant; but when they are regarded as the main spring of conduct in all questions of morality, as in the case of the unregenerate, the soul must urge its way to a realm of thought in which God and eternity are unheard of and forgotten. You can tell how often the carnal mind has driven away the

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spirit of prayer and praise, if you were ever blessed with the desire to seek after God. Your experience may remind you that sensual and grovelling thoughts do not harmonize with thoughts of God—they do not associate together—the indulgence of the one is the exclusion of the other. And you need not be told that where the demon of strife reigns, the spirit of God does not dwell, and that to open the door habitually to the devil, is the most effectual means to separate your soul for ever from God. O examine, then, your heart. Are its emotions carnal, sensual, devilish? Do such feelings rule your conduct and reign within you? If so, you forget God; you are a stranger to him; you tread the path of destruction; and God calls loudly to you to-day—'Consider your ways lest I tear you in pieces!'

They forget God who make the opinions of men, and not the law of God, the rule of their conduct. In all ages a very large class prefer the praise of men to the good will of God. This praise they can only enjoy by adopting the opinions and imitating the conduct common among men. The profession of opposing principles, and their reduction to practice would deprive them of their favour and expose them to opprobrium. What are the opinions most common among men? Are they productive of genuine piety? Do they lead the soul habitually to remember God?—They are em-

bodied in two words *irreligion* and *formality*. Many admit that religion is quite allowable to a dying man, but deny all necessity for it in the ordinary enjoyment of life. They affirm that a man may discharge all the common obligations of his existence here without disturbing himself about religion. Religion is not condemned as a thing unbecoming or injurious—it is simply ignored. Others cannot go to this extreme. Their conscience, or their training, or the society with which they are surrounded impels them to observe, to some extent, the forms of religion; but beyond the forms they do not go. Having no heart interest in the matter, they simply submit to the ceremony as an observance of respectable society to which they do not feel prepared to offer any opposition. Such is the world in general. It knows not God; it acquiesces in the will and domination of the Wicked One. He who would retain the friendship of such, cannot be the servant of Christ, for what concord has Christ with Satan? If the ordinary opinions of the world are to guide you, you cannot retain a remembrance of your maker. Your opinions will rule your ways; and your ways will either make you a friend or a stranger to God—your meditation on him will be frequent and pleasant, or looking to the conduct of worldly men as your example, your thoughts of God will be few and far between. Now, has not your follow-

ing of the world in the past led you away from God? When you went with the vain and the worldly to the bar-room or the ball-room, to the card-table or the billiard-table, did you, could you remember the Lord? No; thoughts of God and eternity are intruders in those places, and an effort is instantly made to give them a summary ejection. Be this your rule—never to go where you cannot take God with you—never to part company with him. Then, when you die, you will change your place, not your company, and the singularity you were compelled to assume on earth, shall be rewarded by a distinguished and glorious singularity in eternity.

God is forgotten when men make a god of this world. The heart will follow the object in which it delights, and in its eagerness to reach it will shut out of thought everything else deemed unworthy of regard. If men delighted in God, they would follow hard after him and keep him constantly in mind. But they have forsaken him, they have all chosen ways of their own, they have said to this and that object: Be thou our portion, and receive the homage of our hearts, and the energies of our lives. One is bent on securing an independence of the ordinary fluctuations of trade, by laying up a sum sufficient to support him through an ordinary term of life. To attain this, every thought is given, every day spent, every

effort expended. No thoughts of religion or of eternity, of heaven or of hell can be suffered to interfere with his cherished object. Possibly he meets the voice of conscience by a promise of giving due attention to these matters when he has freed himself from the bustle and concern of his present business. In the mean time, God himself must stand by and wait the convenience of his poor misguided creature. From early morn till night every waking hour is absorbed in the cares of his occupation—he finds no time for God, no time for his soul, no time for eternity. Is not this forgetting God? Is it not a deliberate abnegation of his claims to any consideration? And should it be a matter of surprise if the money thus gained should never be enjoyed; if death should step in and say—Thou fool, this night thy soul is required to appear before God, and what wilt thou do with all the goods for which thou hast laboured? Another is born to wealth; luxuries surround him from earliest youth; gaiety and frivolity mark his associates, why should he not give way to mirth and pleasure? The world is to him a theatre of amusement, and his skill is exercised in constantly devising new methods of enjoyment. Does this man concern himself about God? His every day life answers the question. His portion is here, and he is satisfied with it, so far as the soul can be satisfied with earthly pleasure. As for God,

he desires not the knowledge of his character or laws; an entire absence of all thought of him is considered a positive relief. He drinks but thirsts again. Another cup of pleasure is tried with similar results. And still the vain pursuit is followed. Take his pleasures from him, and he exclaims with Micah the Ephraimite—"Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I else!" He is without God and without hope in the world.

In the eyes of many, fame has the most powerful attraction. The soldier, the scholar, and the politician are stirred to the heart by it. Having chosen the profession of arms, the aspirant to military rank and fame studies with assiduity the history of warfare, labours to master its mysteries, volunteers in the most hazardous enterprises, and grasps the wreath of fame over the mangled remains of his foes at the mouth of the cannon, or perishes in the attempt. What inclination has he to remember God? His profession has a powerful tendency to drive away religious thoughts, although the very opposite might be expected from the fearful risks to which in active warfare he is constantly exposed. He pants after distinction, and whatever will not contribute to this, or seems to stand in the way of its attainment is studiously avoided. Thus God is forgotten.

The scholar has his eye on future fame. For this he will barter time, strength, talent, health and

even life itself. He will study till his constitution is fatally undermined—he will prosecute a favourite branch of science day and night for a series of years, without even giving as much attention to his soul's eternal well-being as to enter the house of God on a sabbath—he will pore over the mysteries of nature with an intensity of interest understood by none but men of deep research, but will turn away from thoughts of God, as from a being devoid of interest to him—and will prosecute his studies and explorations with a view to future fame until his powers sink under the strain, and all this while persistently and deliberately forget God.

The politician grasps at greatness and power. For the possession of these he will neglect many religious duties—leave the Bible a closed book from one end of the month to the other, while the newspaper is his daily food—neglect private prayer for he finds little time and less heart for the duty—absent himself from the sanctuary that he may write his letters or despatches on sabbath—practice hollow professions and the most wily stratagems, and burden himself with a crushing load of cares, anxieties, annoyances and disappointments; and through all this, ignore the existence of God, by refusing to render to him the devout homage and obedience which he claims. Although distracted by the multitude of anxious thoughts, God finds no place among them—he is cast out of mind, and for the time totally forgotten.

Thus the poor, empty, vanishing portion of earth supplants in man's heart the God who gave him being—betrays its pursuer, and disappoints its possessor; and by excluding him who alone could guide the soul through the stormy sea of life, casts it away a hopeless wreck on the shore of eternity.

Reader, is your pursuit of the world in any one of its forms of business, honour, or pleasure causing you to forget God? O beware! If it exclude God from your soul, what can it give you in exchange? If you forget him what subject should you remember? Is there anything which you should keep more steadily before your mind! O nothing whatever. Give him the throne of your heart, and let your freshest, warmest, noblest thoughts be daily occupied with him.

II. WHAT GOD DEMANDS.

Consideration. "Consider this" saith God. Consider what? Read the foregoing words. "These [sins] hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this." That is, reflect that my silence while you were sinning is not to be understood as an approbation of your sins—that although then silent, I will yet speak out, and that in words of sharp reproof—and that having

stopped you in your career of folly and iniquity, I will set forth in order, in the light of my countenance, every one of your sins.

The absence of an immediate condemnation and punishment of sin is no indication of God's approbation of it. Although there is no outspoken voice from heaven charging the transgressor as guilty of violating a divine law, there is not absolute silence. Conscience often speaks in whispers of accusation, providence publishes its handbills of warning, and revelation loudly proclaims its condemnation. But men succeed in effacing, to some extent, the law written in their hearts, so stifling the voice of conscience ; they misinterpret the writing of providence ; and defiantly disregard the inspired statutes of heaven. Thus, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Because offences are not instantly followed by judgments, sinners begin to imagine that God is something like themselves—that he too may violate engagements, and that he is very little troubled when his creatures on earth disregard his commands, and carry out their own purposes. How vain such notions. How dishonouring to God. God like them ! The most high, just, and holy God, like weak, erring, polluted mortals ! He indifferent to sin, tampering with or delighting in it ! Let not men deceive themselves. Silence gives

no consent in this case. It is but temporary. Infinite patience and mercy impose this silence in kindness to you O sinner. A stream of mercy may have run parallel with your course of sin in the past. But do not imagine that it must always be so. If you repent not, the stream of mercy will be converted into a torrent of judgments; and these will converge upon your path until they have seized you with resistless and consuming might. God cannot approve of sin. His abhorrence of it is unchangeable. His toleration of it is, therefore, a mystery which we cannot fathom. This we do know that it is within his control, that it can be subdued by his power, and that it can be eradicated at his pleasure. But for men to suppose that God connives at sin because of indifference in respect to it, and from this to draw encouragement to continue in sin is the very height of folly. It is to be guilty of the great provocation of turning the grace of God into licentiousness. Consider, then, that present appearances are no index of what the future shall be in this case, that a profound stillness often precedes the blast of the hurricane, that a dead calm is followed by the tumultuous heavings of a tempest-tossed ocean, and that God being unchangeable in his moral character, your construction of his present silence into an acquiescence in your indulgence in sin, is to venture your very ex-

istence on the thin crust which covers a slumbering volcano.

The silence shall be broken—God shall yet speak out, and that in terms of reproof. The disobedient child must stand before his parent, the unfaithful servant must come into the presence of his injured master—the obstinate rebel shall be brought before the throne of his offended sovereign, and it shall then be God's turn to speak, and every mouth shall be dumb before him. If conscience was silenced when it spoke, if judgments were unheeded when they came, there shall be no mistaking the meaning of God's words when he speaks in person, nor any power to evade their force. He will reprove; and his word shall be like a two-edged sword piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. What was forgotten shall be recalled to memory, what was misunderstood shall be corrected, and who shall stand his withering rebuke? He shall charge the sinner with folly, with hatred, with disobedience, with contempt of mercies—what shall he answer? He shall say—Thou fool, what hast thou done? Thou hast spent thy time in vain, thy strength for nought! Thou hast chosen evil rather than good, the friendship of the devil and the world, rather than the favour of God! Thou hast bartered thy soul for gold, and thy hope of heaven for earthly pleasure! What canst thou say? Thou hast hated me with-

out a cause. My name, my sabbaths, my ordinances, my laws, my people have all been hated by you. My presence was so detested that thou wouldst not approach me in prayer. Songs, both vain and lewd, were sung when my praise was abhorred. Novels were read with intense delight, when my words of love and mercy, of salvation and eternal glory, were despised and neglected. My saints were scorned as fools, and hated as hypocrites. My sabbaths were polluted, and my ordinances ridiculed. Thou didst laugh at the mention of hell. The savor of godliness thou couldst not endure; and my very name thou didst not utter except in profane conversation. What canst thou say to this, O hateful enemy!

Thou hast disobeyed my voice. When I called thou wouldst not answer—when I called after thee, thou didst try to hide thyself from me! When I said: Thou shall have no God before me—thou didst refuse to honour me, and didst worship every creature that would minister to thy carnal mind! When I said: Thus will I be worshipped—thou didst reject my authority, and didst choose thine own mode! When I said: Reverence my holy name—thou didst profane it continually with polluted lips! When I said: Remember my sabbath to keep it holy—thou didst remember it only to indulge in vain amusements or carnal ease! When I said: Honour those in authority over thee

—thou didst set thyself up as wiser than all who could advise thee, and wouldst have thine own way in defiance of restraint! When I said: Preserve thy life—thou didst foolishly waste it in the service of sin! When I said: Keep thyself pure—thou didst give way to all manner of licentiousness! When I said: Defraud not thy fellow-creature—thou didst extort from thy neighbour what was not justly thine! When I said: Speak the truth—thou didst lie, and slander, and deceive as if thy tongue was framed for mischief! When I said: Be content with what thou hast—thou hast greedily coveted what was thy neighbour's, and didst murmur against me, as if I had wronged thee! O thou disobedient sinner, thou daring rebel, what canst thou say to all this? Thou hast despised my mercies. I fed and clothed thee all thy life, yet thou hast never acknowledged it. I restored thee in sickness, and preserved thee in danger, but thou didst soon forget it and went back to all thine old sins! I warned thee by conscience, by my servants, and by my word, yet thou didst obstinately refuse to repent and amend thy ways! I sent my Son to seek and save the lost. He offered thee redemption, held before thee the key by which he could open thy prison, and offered to take thee out, and thou despisedst his help: he offered to wash away all thy sins in his own blood, but thou wouldst not agree to it: he stretched his

arm to shelter thee, but thou didst flee from under it:—he entreated thee to follow him that thou mightst escape damnation, but thou wouldst not hearken, and didst press onward to hell even whilst the gospel was sounding in thine ears! O foolish hating, disobedient, contemptuous creature, my mercies are exhausted, my justice must be vindicated; thou art guilty; thou art inexcusable; how canst thou escape the damnation of hell! This is reproof indeed. May you, reader, never be exposed to it.

But will the sinner attempt to plead not guilty by saying:—Lord when did I act in this manner towards thee? Proof shall not be wanting. God makes no charges which he cannot promptly substantiate. His omniscience can point out the time, place and circumstances of every event; and he will set memory on the wing to call up the past, and present it in all the vividness of present observation before the soul. A record has been kept of all the moral acts of the soul from the first dawn of responsibility till the hour of death. This record is in the hands of the great Judge. And he has only to unfold its pages to find every sin of thought, word or action, committed by the individual now standing before him. He will point out those sins in their order of time and of nature, and set them clearly before the eyes of the sinner, and then ask if these are not his deeds. Now, to

his utter amazement will appear what was long buried in oblivion, what was done in secret when no mortal eye was resting upon him, what was done alone, and what was done in company with others, what was planned and resolved upon but never executed, what was done in ignorance, and what was done with the full conviction that the deed was wrong, what was done in the follies of youth, and what was done in mature years, what was spoken vainly, in exaggeration, detraction, lying, slandering and false-swearing; and, to all this, those dense pages of thoughts, proud, malicious, impure, cruel, blasphemous and diabolical, utterly confounding in their number, aggravation and guilt. O what can he say when all these sins are held up before his eyes in the light of the great throne of judgment, and when the two witnesses, conscience and memory, declare every charge to be true? Will not his brain reel in confusion, his heart sink, his bones shake, his knees tremble, and every joint be loosed, and the one prevailing wish be, that the clouds beneath him would part that he might drop forever from the sight of the sin-avenging Judge? O reader, is this terrible ordeal awaiting you? Will you not consider what is before you, and escape, while there is time, from the coming vengeance?

III. WHAT GOD THREATENS.

That he will tear in pieces, when there can be none to deliver. "Consider this, ye that forget God lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." An event is here threatened which could only result from fierce displeasure. The meaning cannot be mistaken. God threatens that an unheeding, unreflecting continuance in sin, by forgetting him, will awaken his sharp resentment, and lead to terrible consequences. He speaks what he thinks. He threatens what he intends. No hollow, hypocritical alarms to frighten his enemies proceed from his lips. Dread realities have ever attested the sincerity of his warnings.

The destruction will be extreme and complete. He will tear *in pieces*. Not the racking of a joint, not the removal of a limb, but the entire dismemberment of the whole system. He who came as a Lamb to be slain for the salvation of his people, will yet appear as a Lion for the destruction of his foes. "I will be," says he, "unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away and none shall rescue." Again charging them with pride and forgetfulness he says: "According to their pasture, so were they filled, they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." And what is the result?

"Therefore I will be unto them as a lion, as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion."

Such destruction is complete. Nothing can be added to it. The soul subjected to it is irretrievably lost. Who will put together what God has rent asunder? Who will build up what he has crumbled into dust? He casts away with the determination never to restore. He breaks in pieces as with a rod of iron the earthen vessel fitted for destruction. Is there any spirit so strong as to resist his stroke? Or can any still live after Jehovah has expended his wrath upon him? No; nothing will be left unbroken; and nothing thus broken will admit of restoration.

The destruction will be violent. God says that he will *tear*; that he will *rend*; that he will *devour*. These expressions surely have some meaning. Must we not interpret them as indicating that God will handle his foes with great wrath and determined energy? The time for reasoning, expostulation, and entreaty is now over; mercy and forbearance give place to justice; and God suffers the full consciousness of the sinner's guilt and peril to burst upon him. Agony the most intense now seizes him. His soul is torn with anguish. Conscience stirs the fires of imagination, and the most terrific

pictures of interminable woe are held up before him. Every feature is distorted, every faculty distracted, and above the loudest wailings of despair rise unceasing self-criminations. This heart-rending is not the bare effect of the full realization of guilt before God, but is also the result of the positive curse of God, a spiritual infliction which terribly lacerates the soul. Pronounced accursed, he is driven from the presence of the Lord, and violently thrust into hell. There the flames of perdition surround him—they consume him,—they everlastingly feed upon him. Thus our God, who is a consuming fire, devours his enemies. O is it not a fearful thing to fall unpardoned, unholy, hell-deserving into the hands of the living God!

And need I add that this utter and violent destruction will be irresistible and inevitable. “*I,*” saith God, “will tear in pieces, and there can be *none to deliver.*” We may be delivered from the hands of a violent and blood-thirsty mortal, we may be rescued from the grasp of the infernal spirit himself, but who shall interfere with the Almighty in his work of justice?—who shall take the criminal out of his hands, and declare that the judgment pronounced against him shall not be carried out? It is vain to imagine that ever such a thing will be contemplated, much less attempted. Those who behold the terrors of his wrath, know that resistance is hopeless. When the chaff of the threshing-

floor can resist the whirlwind, when the rush on the sea-beach can withstand the incoming tide, when the hand of an infant can stay the planets in their course, then may a lost sinner of earth retard for one moment the divine vengeance. Powerless in himself, his outcries for help bring no relief. The clouds which have supported him, while he stood his trial before his Judge, and which bear up the righteous as on eagles' wings, now cleave asunder, and cease to uphold him for a moment after his sentence is pronounced. The material creation obeys its Creator. The waters of the Red Sea may stand up as ramparts while the ransomed of the Lord pass through, but let not the Egyptians suppose that they will be equally serviceable to them. As they stood apart to open up a highway to save the favoured of their maker, so did they rush together to overwhelm in inevitable destruction those on whom he would be avenged. The infernal hosts will afford neither help nor sympathy. It is not in their nature to comfort or pity, and it is not in their power to aid. On them, as accursed, the same resistless stroke shall fall, and notwithstanding their great superiority in might they shall sink to the same depths of perdition as their deluded victims of Adam's race. The heavenly hosts will proffer neither counsel nor support. On the contrary, we are told that in obedience to the orders of their king, they will be actively em-

ployed in the punishment of the wicked. Whither will the condemned turn? The fires of vengeance rage all around. One avenue is open—it is the descent to hell. Down this burning passage the lost soul is hurried, and the smoke of the pit hides from our view the unutterable horrors which now overwhelm him.

O reader, do you habitually forget God? Is there any pursuit, or occupation, or amusement which shuts God out of your heart! O consider if the presence of God with your spirit is not worth ten thousand times more than all the gains, than all the charms, than all the joys of earth. Will you part with God for ever! You answer—No: I would not! What now are you doing? If forgotten have you not parted with him? Can he be with you, and not known, and not thought of? Never! You have parted with him, and if you do not speedily resume your intercourse, the separation will be eternal. Now or never! Instantly bethink yourself of God your maker whose eye is now resting upon you, and repent of the crime of forgetting him—a crime which involves rebellion and all its train of transgressions—and seek reconciliation through the intercession of Christ. If you will, intercourse may now be restored; friendship may be established; and your soul bask for ever in the sunshine of Jehovah's favor.

CHAPTER III.

Sinners standing on slippery ground.

"Their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." DEUT. xxxii, 35v.

Appearances often deceive. That may be least safe which appears most secure. Beyond appearances elements may be at work, mustering their forces and preparing for an overpowering effort; and the hours which immediately precede the onset may be wholly devoid of any indication of the approaching violence.

You walk by the ocean shore on an autumn evening, and delight yourself by looking out on its placid bosom unruffled by a solitary wave. From anything now seen you might launch a boat and make your way across its wide and lonely surface to some distant land, without one feeling of alarm. But beyond the range of vision, electric currents are rushing, the air is in motion, its powers are combining, and before dawn that same glassy surface will be broken by the fury of a tempest, its

mighty waves will wildly dash against each other, and the deep moanings of ocean's tortured bosom will sound on every shore.

It is midnight. The miners' huts are scattered along the silent valley. In them strangers from distant homes are slumbering, their weary limbs demanding rest from the eager toil of many hours. The bed of the river has yielded richly its golden sands; and the sleepers dream of absent friends, of happy homes, and days of pleasure. But lo! an unlooked for terror. Their temporary dwellings are smitten, filled and overwhelmed by rushing waters. Distant rains have poured an inundation through their valley. They rise and shout and struggle, but in vain; the torrent cannot be withstood; they are borne along, some to sink in turbid waters, others to escape a watery grave, far from their dwelling despoiled of all they earned and all they claimed.

It is morning. The sun is clothing the mountain tops with its glory. An Alpine cottage is the scene of sweet domestic happiness. The simple morning's meal is taken; the husband prepares to go forth to his labour; and the children are playing around the hearth. Suddenly the family is startled by a strange crashing sound of great vehemence. They rush to the door. In an instant they are overwhelmed. An avalanche has descended upon them from the mountain. The cottage is swept away,

and its inmates are smothered and buried, without a minute's warning, beneath its ruins.

Let us borrow from scripture. When David was in the camp of the Philistines, a strong band of Amalekites, wild marauders from the desert, attacked and plundered the south of Judah, and coming to Ziklag, the town of David, they vented their animosity in robbing and burning the place, and in dragging into captivity the women and children found in it. A dismal sight lay before David and his men when they returned to their home. They weep till nature is exhausted. This over, they think of recovering the lost; and encouraged by a divine promise, they set out in pursuit. The inhumanity of the robbers leads to their destruction. An Egyptian, abandoned because of his sickness, sets David on the trail of the foe. They are overtaken. But where are they?—Three days journey in the desert, in some favorite resort, out of the usual routes,—and there, at dusk, they are seen scattered in groups "eating and drinking and dancing," no thought of danger disturbing their minds. But for most of them it is their last feasting and dancing on earth, for before another night has come, the Hebrew chief has taken a terrible revenge; their dead bodies strew the desert on every side in the very retreat in which they deemed themselves most secure.

It was a memorable night in old Babylon when

king Belshazzar assembled his thousand lords, his wives and concubines, to a magnificent banquet. Every heart is intoxicated with pleasure. What thought have they of danger! It is true, an enemy has long besieged their gates; but, to their eyes, their city is as impregnable as ever. The king and his courtiers give way to wine, and in their madness, Jehovah must be insulted, and the gods of wood and iron applauded as his victors. But lo! the decree of the Most High is passed. A hand, not mortal, pens mysterious words upon the wall of the palace in the sight of the king and his lords. It is the lightning's flash before the thunder's peal. Awe is stamped on every face as the honoured Daniel foretells their doom. But hark! what rushing in the streets, what shouts! what cries! The Persians! the Persians! The palace doors are assaulted; they are forced open; in rush the assailants; terrible is the slaughter; and among the slain lies the pierced and bleeding body of the royal Belshazzar. While he and his nobles were carousing, Cyrus and his army entered the channel of the river, found the large river gates leading into the city open, and hurrying in spread themselves over the city and took possession. All this happened in a night when the people, as well as their leaders, gave way to reckless dissipation in their dreams of perfect security.

Behold another child of earth consenting to re-

ceive the homage of a god. No sooner has he placed his foot on that slippery height than he is precipitated into the foulest pit of corruption. Herod Agrippa addresses the assembled multitude in the theatre of Cæsarea. His speech is magnificent, and his royal robes resplendent with jewels. Struck by his appearance and speech, the people shout—"It is the voice of a god and not of a man." Who will dispute it? Whose rights does he invade? No opponent mutters even a dissent. But an unseen God has heard the adulation, and marked the heart of the creature who received it. "*Immediately*" he is smitten "by the angel of the Lord," and carried out of the theatre in terrible agony, his conscience assuring him that the vengeance of God is upon him, and that death is at hand. The most horrible disease of worms has seized him; and for five days they devour his intestines as if he had already been committed to the grave: when at length, every day seeming to be a year, his wretched spirit escapes from a body too loathsome to be looked at, or to be approached. How near was he to horrible corruption, when apparently most exalted, most honoured, and most secure!

There is a maturity in things. Events will follow their course, and develop their fruits until their force is expended. The tide will rise or ebb till its moving power is exhausted, whether

that be a foot below or above the expectation of man. The fever will contend with the vitality of the system till one or other is overmatched and destroyed. Wars will continue till the fires of animosity which keep them burning die out from want of fuel. Beyond the point of maturity, all is changed. A new power now reveals itself. It may not have operated before, or its operation may have been partially or wholly concealed, but now it appears supreme. A tree falls under the blast of wind; but it had previously stood many such blasts without any apparent effect. Why now has it fallen? The former blasts had done their work, the last completed what they had begun. One drop of water sinks the ship. Ten thousand had previously entered with little apparent result. The one drop has turned the scale of resistance, and a new power assumes control. When the superiority of one power is established, every addition which it receives accelerates in a rapid ratio the entire demolition of the opposing force. The water that rolls slowly over the gentle descent, leaps on the brow of the precipice. The avalanche whose first motions are imperceptible, rushes with amazing velocity before it reaches the base of the mountain.

Apply these illustrations to the condition of the impenitent sinner. His danger is extreme, but he perceives it not. He is standing on slippery

ground, but a slight covering of dust conceals from him the treacherous footing. Forces are combining to drive him from his place, but no idea of such a combination has taken hold of him. A time is fixed when the destructive power shall assume control, resistance being overcome or removed; and once supreme, its developed force will bear with terrible velocity on the shattered powers of the sinner, overwhelming him with utter destruction. Should not those who have examined the foundation tell the sinner where he is standing? Should not those who study the spiritual barometer forewarn him of the storm that is approaching? Will the unpardoned reader take it kindly, if I should endeavour to do this friendly work for him? Will he heed as one personally and immediately interested? Then, let us consider.

I. THE SLIPPERY GROUND ON WHICH
SINNERS ARE STANDING.

“Their foot shall slide.” The idea is, that sinners are standing on ground so slippery that they cannot maintain their footing. The standing ground of transgressors is one vast declivity, reaching from the base of the hill of rectitude to the brow of the hill of despair, overhanging the pit of destruction. There is no footing so uncertain as sin,—none more deceitful or more slippery. But, as sins differ, this declivity is not all equally

slippery, nor is it all equally steep. The descent is more gradual in the first stages from the hill of rectitude ; but the nearer the approach to the foot of the declivity, the steeper it becomes, and the more slippery, so that in certain places it is quite impossible to retrace a step once taken. All over the declivity there are many foot paths, all leading downwards, so glib that it is extremely dangerous to place a foot upon them. Many who have done so, have not been able to stop their sliding till they fell into the pit. These paths are temptation's slides. Not satisfied with the gradual progress of the sinner towards hell, the devils, who are incessantly occupied on this declivity, constantly labour to persuade him to tread some one of these smooth footpaths. Inducements are not wanting. Over one path will be held some beautiful flower, so attractive, so lovely, who would not like to grasp it and make it his own? And yet to secure it, you must mingle with the gay, the fashionable, and the foolish, and learn and delight in their ways. Over another is held some ripe fruit, pleasant to the eyes, and good for food. Why may it not be plucked and eaten? To seize it, you must defraud another, and be classed among the vile. Ah! the taste is pleasant, but the digestion is bitter. Over a third, is held the golden purse. Who does not desire money? who would not accept it? How vast a crowd throng and

press around in eagerness to grasp it! A few succeed, but find it transformed into a burden of anxieties and cares. The multitude struggle in vain; it is ever lifted beyond their reach; while many in their rapacity slip into the pits of dishonesty; and others scruple not to murder those who seem more fortunate than themselves, in order to dispossess them of the coveted money. The lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh, and the love of money are the chief decoys of the devil. As it is easier to go down than up; nay more, as it is perfectly easy to descend a declivity so slippery as that on which sinners are standing, the mass of mankind enticed by the desires of the carnal heart readily slide into the two great cavities of worldliness and corruption. From both of these there is a sloping descent into pits still nearer the brink of the precipice. Those in the cavity of Worldliness think and speak and act only for this world. They are imbedded in it, and wrapped up in it; and seem unable even to look beyond it. Their hopes are all here—and their efforts are all put forth to make themselves a permanent home here. Vain hopes, vain efforts! They are irresistibly sliding down, and sliding out; and when they think they are about to enjoy some repose and pleasure, death hurries them out of their nest into an unseen eternity.

In the cavity of Corruption are seen those whose sensibilities are blunted, whose purity is gone,

whose refinement, if it ever existed, is covered by a dress too thin to conceal the rankling sensuality, whose habits are brutalized, and whose indulgences are as unsatisfying as they are corrupting. They have stepped upon the slides of temptation, and in grasping the forbidden fruit have slid into this horrible pit. You need not tell them that they are in the mire; they know it; and yet they have a strange liking for it. Not a few that draw their feet out of the mire, and seem resolved to climb back to the firm foundation of virtue, return to their lusts, as the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. The loadstone of sensuality, at the bottom of this pit, is woefully powerful. But few surmount its influence; and these owe their escape to the divine arm which has laid hold on them. Even the poor gratification of their evil habits will not be continued to them, for they are moving in mass,—fast though their feet may be in the mire,—like a great landslide towards the centre of their gravitation, where the indulgence of their lusts will be impossible.

Not far from either of these cavities is the hollow of Dishonesty. The slippery path of temptation over which hangs the purse of gold leads directly to it. It is not all equally deep, but consists of a succession of slippery ledges or steps from the slight descent of trivial extortion to the deep fall of wholesale piracy. Alas! this staircase is crowd-

ed. Here are rows of pilferers and pickpockets, rogues and thieves, smugglers and forgers, robbers and pirates, all descending from ledge to ledge, as if an irresistible momentum of evil urged them forward.

Farther down the steep may be seen the pits of Infidelity and Blasphemy, opening on the face of the precipice. Into the one have slidden all those who, professing to be most rational, reject all that is supernatural as incapable of belief. Human reason is their sole guide ; and as the deductions of one mind differ widely from those of another, they have no uniformity of opinions, but every possible phase of belief is tolerated, from the denial of the being of a God to the pantheistic phantasm of a diffused deity animating all matter, and occupying alike the animalcule and the archangel. Their aim is to throw off all responsibility, to proclaim man his own master, to deify human reason, and to give the reins to licentiousness. The immortality of the soul is either denied, or shrouded in mystery. Eternity is, therefore, not allowed to influence their conduct. No judgment, no hell, no future for them ! A screen of thickest opacity veils their exit from earth. Truly, they must be blind who slide into this pit of darkness in search of rest or consolation.

Into the other have fallen those who have cast off the fear of God, and take his holy name into

their lips in every subject of vain conversation. Every vehement assertion is accompanied with an oath; and every subject of provocation is blasted with curses. The laws of God are despised, the ordinances of religion are ridiculed, and the day of rest, the holy sabbath, the test of man's character, habitually profaned. Here are many who were in sabbath school classes, who were early taught to read the Bible, who were led in early youth to the house of God, and who were favoured with the restraints of God-fearing parents; but the lusts of their wicked hearts, and the influence of evil companions have led them to the paths of temptation, and they now laugh at sin, and glory in their shame. Hence this pit is filled more by the prodigals, profligates, and outcasts of Christian lands than by the degraded devotees of idols. No man is more like a demon than a vile and daring blasphemer. These blasphemers and their neighbours, the infidels, may claim the unenviable distinction of being the first in advance towards hell, of having made the nearest approach to the final descent that will land them in perdition. Truly, if the footing of every sinner is slippery, the foundation of these enemies of God is specially so. One step more, and their hold of mercy, hope, and salvation is cast off for ever.

Of the multitudes who, singly, or in groups, or in great companies, are descending this slope,

either by the same gradual descent, or by the steep falls of its cavities and pits, can it be supposed that none are alive to their perilous and alarming position? The most are profoundly indifferent because deeply insensible; but many are conscious of their downward progress; and some are at times terribly agitated at the prospect of their approaching doom. Where danger is perceived, there is naturally an effort to escape from it. In providing against the apprehended calamity, various devices are resorted to. Refuges of lies are erected in which they deem themselves safe from all hostile influences. Three of the most frequented of these refuges are named respectively:— Self-righteousness, Presumption, and Defiance.

The inmates of Self-righteousness believe that none of their class ever fell into the pit—that any slips in the past have been more than made up by their good deeds—that God is indebted to them for their strict observance of his law—and that by no combination of events could any of them be debarred from the kingdom of heaven.

In Presumption every notion that dissipates alarm, no matter on what foundation it rests, is applauded. One avows that there is no such thing as sin, that his past falls were simply imprudent acts, the full consequences of which he has already suffered. To which many respond—'That's so.' A second asserts that God will never destroy

any creature which he has made, that in fact there is no hell, that if there was one kindled by some demon, the mercy of God would extinguish it as by an ocean of water. This brave opinion is loudly commended. 'I presume,' says a third, 'that we have been long enough scared by hobgoblins, let us shake off all fears for the future, God has made man to be happy, let us eat and drink and be merry, and now men, three cheers for our glorious deliverance from false fears, and the secure retreat we have reached.' With this, the walls of Presumption shook with the shouts of self-deluded mortals.

Defiance showed a motley crowd of desperadoes. The fear of God and man had long been cast off. Recklessness was stamped on every brow. In talk, who so bold as they? In answer to the threatenings of God, they exclaim: 'Let him make haste and come, that we may see what he can do!' They have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, and who else need they fear? Here, all the care-for-nothings, professing great stoutness of heart, congregate. With seared conscience they shut their ears against the voice of warning, and affirm their safety to be all that they desire. They wish no one to trouble them; they are prepared for all-comers, and can bid defiance to every foe. But, do they know where they are? Do they know what they are? Where are these refuges? On what foundation do they rest? Of what materials

are they made? Who is to defend them when the hour of assault shall come? Are they unassailable? Can they neither be overturned nor undermined? Did ever absurdity appear more manifest? Will a man go less speedily to destruction because he shuts his eyes on the way? Every thing based on sin is sliding to destruction. The vain shelter in which the sinner hides moves with no less rapidity because he imagines it is stationery. He and all he clings to, are pressed forward to destruction by a momentum which no arm but that of the Almighty can arrest even for a moment. Unpardoned sinner! no moment art thou stationery—no moment art thou safe—onward and downward art thou moving. Thou canst not stand where thou art; thy feet are sliding; every step is attended with danger; and the whole standing ground of the unconverted is a vast declivity of ice. Look around;—all are staggering; many trembling; many falling. Look back;—far in the distance is the heaven from which thou hast slidden. Look forward;—near in the foreground is the fearful pit into which thou art descending. What is to be done?—Fall down upon thy knees and cry for help. What! dost thou think that thou canst stand? Canst thou retrace thy steps unaided? Canst thou discover some safe spot on all this slope? Beware! The snow may cover the ice, but it is no less dangerous; the moss may cover the rock, but it is

no less slippery. The hollow places have all their sliding and slippery outlets. To seek shelter there, is more speedy destruction. Must I argue the case with you? Then let me show,

II. THAT THERE IS A TIME BEYOND WHICH
SINNERS CANNOT RETAIN THEIR STANDING.

No one can truly affirm that the foundation of the sinner is either firm or tenable. If then it is both unsteady and untenable, the sinner may be overthrown or cast down without the greatest difficulty. Thus feebly supported, he cannot maintain his position against a superior force. He may lose his footing in one of three ways, either by a power from before, dragging him down; by the failure of internal strength to resist the downward tendency; or by violence from behind. But a combination of these influences operating together must insure an early and rapid overthrow and destruction. Such is, or will be, the condition of every impenitent sinner. At present two of these influences are at work day and night. Sin is weakening, every hour, his moral and physical strength. It is a worm which, getting at the root, stops the flow of the vital fluid, and kills the soul. It is a rot which decays the powers of the soul from within. It is a rust which corrodes it from without. What soul unaided from the fountain of life can withstand the three-fold killing process from root,

heart, and surface. The external appearance is not the only, nor is it by any means, the safest index of the soul's condition. Do we not know that a person in the last stages of consumption sometimes assumes the flush and glow of one in the enjoyment of good health? In the East Indies the white ants bore into the timber of a house, and eat out the heart, leaving the surface of the wood almost untouched. In outward appearance the frame may seem to have undergone but little decay, but the day of storm will reveal broken timbers reduced to a shell by the hidden devourer. But sin, the triple consumer, scars the outside, eats out the heart, and gnaws away the roots. Can this proceed for any length of time, and strength remain unimpaired?—Impossible. For all purposes of good, for all enjoyment of happiness, the soul becomes an imbecile. It is a moral wreck.

While sin is corroding the pillars of the soul, Satan, the other power, is busily at work. He has no wish to see the sinner maintain his footing in a place of mercy. Every hour's delay is to him a risk of losing the soul which he would carry off as his prey. Every step forward is a gain to him, as the declivity becomes steeper the farther the soul advances. The power of temptation and the prospect of success increase as the sinner is allured onward. Hence no effort is spared to entice him on and on, from one sin to another, and from one

indulgence to another, and from one scene of mirth to another, all so many stages of descent to the pit. And not satisfied with this progress, the adversary and deceiver tries to accelerate it by mining. The slope is not so steep as he would wish, and he undermines the standing-ground of the wretched mortal who is his dupe. This is done by labouring to remove every consideration from the mind which would induce it to resist the temptation, and by pressing into it every imagination which can increase the power of the temptation. Then, on a pathway amply lubricated by the slime of the old serpent, the unwary mortal is drawn forward, and finds, as he proceeds, the foundation sinking beneath him. To return is impossible, his descent has been doubly secured. Progress after this sort would quickly bring the soul to perdition. But God, in mercy, restrains the violence of the enemy, and gives the sinner time to reflect, time to repent, and time to cry for proffered help. If this patience is undervalued, and the respite neglected; if sin is still cherished and temptation encouraged, forbearance will close, and vengeance begin.

Then, the third power comes into operation. The sinner weakened within by the prevalence of sin and the consciousness of guilt, and powerfully seized in front by the angel of darkness, is at the same time smitten from behind by the blast of

divine vengeance. What must become of him? Can he still maintain his footing?—Impossible. The stroke of the Almighty would hurl him into the abyss were he entrenched behind the everlasting mountains. What can he do on the slippery precipice of sin? Left to himself he would slide into hell; how certain and speedy his doom when he is, at one and the same time, dragged by the devil and driven by the Almighty. Poor, wretched sinner, what an object of pity art thou! Thy strength is gone, thou hast no power to resist, and there is no hand to help. Thine own heart condemns thee, all creation is against thee, and God himself destroys thee! O impenitent reader this shall soon be thy fate if mercy is not early sought. The day, the hour, the moment is fixed when mercy shall cease to restrain justice if thou repent not. When is that moment? None on earth can tell. Two powers, sin and the devil, now labour to bring thee down to hell, will you wait till the third shall finish what they have begun. O now is the day of salvation! Not yet smitten, not yet driven, seize the arm of mercy stretched to save, and you will be drawn up to heaven, Do not, I beseech you, hesitate for one moment. Mercy is *now* offered to you—yes to *you* personally, most *willingly*, most cheerfully—will you, can you despise it, or decline it? I do not wish to see you lost forever. I do not wish to see you drop into the flames that shall

never be quenched. O then let me press you still more by calling you to consider,

III. WHAT ARE HASTENING THE FALL, THE CALAMITY, OF THE SINNER.

The doom threatened against the ungodly is not to be delayed for ages, or centuries, or even many years; but shall come in a few years at farthest, and, it may be, in a few months or even days. The space to be passed over is short; and the agencies to hasten its coming are many. "The day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." Let me enumerate some of the things which facilitate or accelerate the progress of the wrath to come upon the sinner.

First, God's restraints are being cast off one by one. These held back the sinner from sliding as fast as he otherwise would into perdition. But now some warning voice that used to speak is silent. Some friend or neighbour, whose piety was a check on his ungodliness, is taken away. The preaching that once alarmed the soul and sent the man to his knees, no more disturbs him for he takes care to avoid it, having no more relish for it. Perhaps he has gone off to a foreign land where the sight of a relative will not prevent him from following his evil habits. He has now no fear of meeting one whose face would put him to shame. Above

all, God allows conscience to slumber. He long strove against the admonitions of this once faithful watch; and now his wishes are gratified; the watch is asleep, and he may go on undisturbed to the pit.

Second, God's forbearance is running out. Like the sand in the minute glass it is every moment running through. While it lasts judgment has not come; but while it wastes, wrath hastens. Who can tell when the last grain falls through. God himself holds the glass, and the moment it is turned, vengeance goes forth. Could this forbearance be stayed up; could its volume never be diminished, punishment had never come. But as it hourly falls away, it hourly brings near the threatened woes. The same power that propels the flight of forbearance, propels the approach of wrath. They are bound together. As the one moves, the other moves. If they stop, they stop together. If they haste, they haste together, and with equal progress. The rapid waste of forbearance, is the rapid haste of judgment.

Third, the devil is increasing his instruments. The nearer the soul descends to the pit, the more agencies can the devil bring to bear upon him. His evil companions are increased in number and in power to do mischief. The spirits of darkness haunt his footsteps more closely, and urge him onward more easily. He is more out of the sights

and sounds of heavenly things ; and all day long he is becoming habituated to the most abject servitude to sin. Every agent that can prevent serious reflection is called into operation. Around him congregate all that can laugh at death, judgment, and eternity ; and can dance, and make merry, and sing licentious songs, while the days of pleasure last. Many who could not be employed, without creating alarm, at the outset of the sinner's downward course, can now render much service with satisfaction. Alas ! how sad to think that the fallen should take pleasure in drawing others down to their own miseries.

Fourth, death is digging a channel for the flood of wrath to reach him. The full displeasure of the Almighty is reserved for the world of spirits. Whatever hastens the sinner to that world, hastens the approach of wrath. The curse opens the door for death ; and although he may long look the sinner in the face, without laying hold of him, he will not always keep that distance ; but coming to closer quarters, he will grasp him, and demand his appearance before his judge. Death is not idle while he stands at a distance. He is poisoning the atmosphere which the mortal is breathing, and sowing the seeds of disease. The way is prepared when the hour to seize has come. That preparation opens a passage for the pent up vengeance of Jehovah. Every hour the work goes

on. The loose and light materials on which the sinner rests his hopes, can offer no firm resistance to the rush of these mighty waters. They have been accumulating for years; but death was the appointed agent to open the floodgates, and until that was done, these stormy waters could only surge against their barrier. Could the sinner only see where he now stands; could he see the stayed waters swelling up; could he see death hard at work digging a wide and deep trench from their barrier down to his foundations, what must be his emotions as that work hastens to completion? What must he feel as the last spadeful of earth is thrown up, and the signal is made that all is now ready for the rush of wrath?

Fifth, a storm is gathering above with alarming rapidity. It seems prepared to burst upon the head of the sinner. Darker and darker it grows; now and again the flash is seen, and the distant peal is heard. It is approaching. The peals are louder and sharper. They shake the earth. Gusts of wind are felt. There is a rush. A hurricane is at hand. What shall be done? It is almost as dark as night. The soul of the sinner quails. He begins to feel that it is all prepared for him. O whither shall he flee? He sees before him the dreaded descent. It seems to grow steeper. He is borne onward to its verge. He shakes. Stronger are the blasts—the lightning gleams wildly, and the roar

of the thunder is now become most terrifying. The despairing mortal stands shuddering on the brink of everlasting woe.

Sixth and lastly, hell is prepared to receive him. It has now a terribly attractive power. Like a fierce fire, it draws to itself and devours all that comes within a certain range. Like the whirlpool, it has brought its prey to the vortex—there is no more whirling as if to see what danger was in store for the captive—but down to its infernal depths it must now plunge. O the heart-rending reality—there is no escape! God has withdrawn every restraint!—the last sand of his forbearance is dropping through!—the devils are assembled for their rush at their prey!—death is opening the floodgates for the torrent of vengeance!—the storm has come down dark as night upon him, and the hurricane blast is coming!—and now on the brink of the precipice and in full view of the infernal lake, the resistless suction of its unquenchable flames is felt in all its force!—the forces cooperate—his feet suddenly slide, and with a shriek never to be forgotten by those who hear it, he falls headlong, and disappears far down amid the raging fires of the pit of despair!

Reader, are you to see and hear and feel all this? You exclaim—No!—oh! no! But why? The wicked shall be turned into hell, and every sinner that forgets God. Are you one of the wicked?—

do you forget God. You can only escape by timely repentance, by genuine conversion to God. Will you now turn to God? Will you now abhor your sins? Christ has come to save the lost. He can hear, and he can help. His arm is not shortened; nor is his ear dull of hearing. Then lift up your prayer to him; just as you are; with all your sins and shame upon you. If alone, fall down upon your knees, and stretch your hands to heaven for help. You may be saved—you may be saved now, just as you are, just where you are. Do not slide one step farther down. You have gone too far. Stop now; and you may yet enjoy the full glories of paradise. Why may you not? Others like you have been saved. Hell has enough, more than enough, without you. Add not to the groans and tears and wailings of that dismal region; but swell the song of everlasting jubilation that shall roll over the plains of heaven. Look up for once; look to Jesus, look earnestly, look imploringly, and cast yourself without reserve on his infinite mercy! O may God bless for your salvation what you have read.

CHAPTER IV.

Judgment overtaking the Sinner.

"Be sure your sin will find you out." NUM. xxxii. 23v.

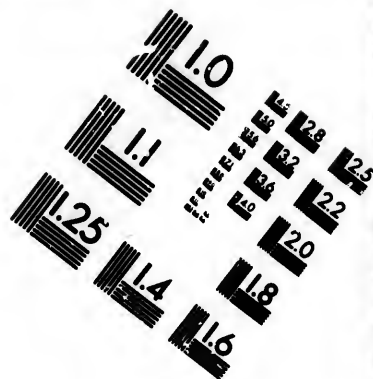
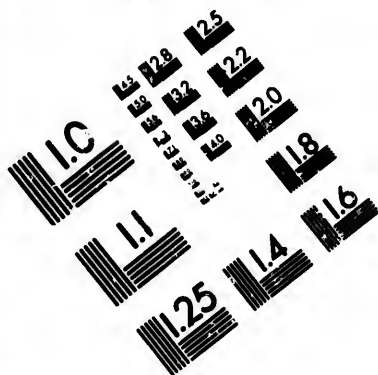
The context explains the circumstances in which these words were spoken. The tribes of Israel, after a long course of training in the wilderness, have reached the borders of Canaan. The towering Amorite has found himself no match for the furious soldier of the desert, and the wily Midianite has fallen before his avenging sword. The conquered territory is well adapted for flocks and herds. Two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad, rich in cattle, set their covetous eyes on these verdant fields, and desire to make this region their home. They lay their request before Moses, their renowned and now veteran leader. He replies in a strain of indignant remonstrance, construing their conduct as rebellion against Jehovah, their great invisible captain, and conceiving it to be the offspring of selfishness, cowardice, and unbelief. They ad-

mit their anxiety to possess the territory, but disclaim all thought of rebellion, or the least taint of cowardice, and declare themselves ready to go armed across the Jordan, along with their brethren, and share all the perils of war, until the last foot of the promised land has been won. This offer of co-operation in the coming contests is accepted; and, on its express condition, their request is granted. Moses cannot live to see their promise fulfilled; and, knowing well the character of the race, he warns them, in few but emphatic terms, that any violation of their engagement would be a sin against Jehovah, and such a sin, as should never go unpunished. "But if ye will not do so, behold ye have sinned against the Lord; *and be sure your sin will find you out.*"

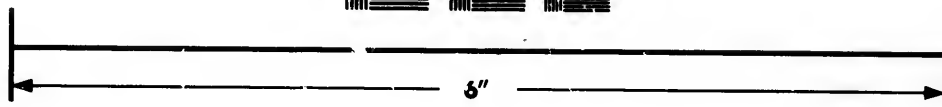
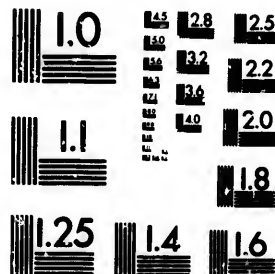
This warning embodies a principle of universal application. Sin will ever pursue, hunt out, overtake and seize upon the sinner, and that with violence proportioned to his crime. In the ears of every sinner these divine words ring an alarm; but there are certain transgressors to whom they speak in trumpet-tones. Among these the selfish and slothful professor of religion, and the secret, deceitful, and defiant transgressor hold the most prominent places. The slothful and selfish professor heeds not the command of the captain-general, the Lord of Hosts,—'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' Vast

territories promised to Immanuel still lie under the sway of the prince of darkness, but he cares not. The heathen may be at his door, or a thousand miles away, but his narrow and ignoble spirit never prompts the enquiry, what must I do to save them? He is in possession of green fields and still waters; and has no heart to buckle on his armor and go forth as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and display in the face of danger and death the courage, patience, and endurance necessary to rescue captive souls from the grasp of Satan. Millions may be perishing for the bread of life, but he, mean soul, can spare nothing from his personal and family comforts to send them that which will cause them to hunger no more, neither thirst any more. The collector for the cause of Christ, at home or abroad, is an unwelcome visitor; not knowing that it is a distinguished honor from God to be asked to aid, in any measure, his glorious cause. It matters not that the Bible has said that God loves a cheerful giver, he never felt and cannot value the love of God. His profession is a lie; he is neither a servant, nor a soldier, of Jesus Christ. Reader, art thou a slothful and selfish professor? Be sure your sin will find you out. Even here, it will wither your soul, and blast it with perpetual leanness. You think by withholding to be rich, but every shilling withheld from God, when claimed by him, is money put into a bag with holes. It is





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lost beyond recovery. Your sin shall follow you to the judgment seat, where you shall be asked—What have you done to conquer the world for Christ?—What have you done to rescue the perishing from ruin?—What have you given to send relief to the destitute? Unable to answer, you shall have your part with “the fearful and the unbelieving.”

The secret transgressor says within himself—‘No eye seeth me; I may carry out my plans; I may do as I wish, it shall never be known:’ forgetting or trying to forget that there is one whose eyes are on *all* the ways of the children of men, and to whom the gloom of midnight is as the noon-day. The deceiver wears false appearances, speaks with lying lips, conceals his real purposes by vain pretensions, and flatters himself that as the truth can never be attained, no disclosure can take place. The daring, defiant sinner looks upon might as right, takes by violence what is not his, oppresses the poor, condemns the innocent, and persecutes the just; and hushes every whisper of conscience by saying—who dare interfere with me? none can call me to an account—have I not the power?—may I not do as I please?

And is it so that these secret, deceitful and daring sinners shall escape detection and punishment? Nay verily; every sin committed shall spring upon their track with the keenness and

swiftness of the bloodhound ; and following them through every winding of their crooked course, and into every hiding place, come up with them at last, in time or eternity, startling them by its appearance, and terrifying them by its irresistible demands for immediate satisfaction.

Would you see this statement verified ? Turn and behold,

I. THE SINNER FLEEING.

See ! he has wounded himself. A sharp, piercing instrument has touched a deeply sensitive part, and he is manifestly ill at ease. Why, what has he done ? He has denied compassion to the wretched ; he has refused aid to the destitute ; he has driven the poor from his door ; he has belied his neighbour ; he has unjustly retained what is not his ; he has done a corrupt thing which cannot be wiped out ; his hands are stained with blood ; or, he has bound himself over to damnation by doing that which, by a horrible oath, he swore he would not do. Wonder not at his restlessness. He cannot be still. If he sit or stand, go out or come in, anguish of spirit cleaves to him. Does he pause for a moment ? Fix your eye upon him. His look is excited. His head instinctively hangs forward, his brow is clouded, and the blush suffuses his cheek. Shame clothes him as with a

garment. Freedom is gone. A restraint is upon him. He cannot look you calmly in the face. He shuns your scrutinizing gaze. He is perplexed as if the world was looking on him. A feeling more powerful succeeds, and takes full possession of him. Terror seizes him. The smouldering fires of conscience have broken out, and a voice is heard breathing in deep, authoritative, and angry tones words of wrath and danger. It is the voice of God. He cannot answer it. An attempt to hush it, is met by the terrifying response—Woe, woe unto thee for thou hast sinned! Hear he must, and yet he cannot. He starts to escape, but whither, O whither shall he go?

He must flee from *man*. He dreads the look, the scorn, the violence, the legal vengeance of man. Does the rumseller like to meet the prostrate form of the man whom his accursed avarice has beggared and besotted? Does the thief like to pass before the windows of the house into which, the previous night, he entered as a burglar? Does the rogue like to meet the man whom his dishonesty has impoverished and ruined? Can the manslayer desire to meet the family of the man whom his brutal violence laid low in death? Or can the seducer wish to confront the father or husband, whose home he has blasted with infamy? No—no! The look of no mortal is invited; but the face of the injured and the wronged is shunned

as the arrow of death. The sinner feels that his looks may betray him. You may often read the mind of a man by his looks. The anxious and the frivolous, the sorrowful and the joyful, reveal their condition in their face. Many arrested, on the ground of their troubled guilty look, have confessed their crime, and received their punishment. If the deed exposes him to legal prosecution, the sinner to avoid detection, and escape arrest, will flee from the scene of his iniquity, and hide himself from the officer of justice. The lonely deep, or the solitary forest, will be his resort; and the farther off, the better. He turns from every familiar face, and hurries away to strange lands and strange faces. Thus, many leave their country for their country's good. Their flight is a testimony to the evil of sin, to the power of conscience, and to the just and holy government of God. But are they now at rest? Far from it. It is one thing to change a country, or climate, and quite another thing to change the heart or disposition. They have fled from man, who might seize and punish them, but God is still before them as the avenger of sin.

They must flee from *God*. Hard and mournful task! In this attempt they are joined by a great multitude of sinners who, without changing their abode, feel constrained to hide their guilty souls from the gaze of their holy Creator. Like their

fallen progenitor Adam, they will go behind any screen that will conceal the face of God ; and like his ungodly son, Cain, they will count it a relief to get out from the presence of the Lord. But how shall they accomplish it? Not only, if they ascend to heaven is he there, but if they descend to *hell*, he is there. And could they make the morning light their wings, and fly to the utmost confines of space, they would find him there before them. Vain attempt! But if they cannot escape from the presence of the great Unseen, may they not, in some measure, rid themselves of that which reminds them of that presence? They may—to their own ruin. They may close their ears to the voice of God, as he speaks in the Bible, by excluding that book from their homes, or by leaving it unread, while the newspaper, the novel, or the review, receives daily attention. They may avoid the place where mortals meet to confess their sins, and supplicate the grace of the Almighty ; and make the card-table or the bar-room their resort. And they may refuse to go to the house of the Lord, on the holy sabbath, to participate in the public worship of God, preferring to enjoy their ease at home, or their pleasures abroad. What then? Are they now at ease? By no means. They have not yet inhaled the first breath of peace. They are on the wrong road. They are approaching a region where storms forever rage ; and the

gusty, moaning winds now meeting them, betoken a coming tempest. They are brought to a stand ; and now each, looking within, perceives the evil spirit of a troubled conscience flashing defiance in his face, and charging him with guilt in fiercest tones. What is he to do ?

He must flee from *himself*. Absurd ! Yes ; he must attempt the apparent impossibility of fleeing from himself, for he cannot look the inner man in the face. What can he do ? To change his place is useless ; to expel the foe is beyond his power. Alas, for man ! He has power to plunge the barbed arrow into his own bosom, but no power to extract it. This he will do. He will rush into business, and drown all thoughts of judgment and eternity, amidst the cares and perplexities with which he surrounds himself. Cain sets himself to build a city, after he has escaped from the presence of the Lord. Girard, the infidel millionaire of Philadelphia, rises each morning with the sole purpose, as he tells us, of working so hard all day that he may sleep well at night. These men want no time for reflection. The present world is every thing to them. Or, he will plunge into the vortex of pleasure, and float round on its frothy billows as long as he can keep his head above water. This is the end of many. They stifle an accusing conscience by the daily bustle of business, or by a constant routine of frivolous amusements. Ah

me! The sinner flees, but escapes not; for his flight is in a circle. He flees from an impending woe, but it is to be crushed by a still heavier one. He flees from the pain of a self inflicted wound, but it is to be pierced by the arrows of a thousand foes. For see,

II. JUSTICE PURSUING.

In every well governed country there are officers of justice whose duty it is to arrest those who have broken the laws. These men are chosen for their activity and strength, their expertness and courage, and they are expected to allow no criminal, by his cunning or strength, to escape from their grasp. When the supposed criminal has fled, they may pursue him by steam, and intercept him by electricity. But with all the modern agencies of justice some of the vilest offenders, adepts in crime, elude their pursuers, and remain at large. Human justice, with all its swiftness and sagacity, fails in tracing their footprints, and pursuing them to their hiding places. But the sinner never *outstrips* divine justice. He may sweep over the ocean before the blast of the tempest, but divine justice arrives in port before him—he may dash over a continent in express trains, but as he steps out, at the last terminus, divine justice meets him in the face—he may expatriate himself, and make some lonely

isle of the sea his home, like the mutineers of the Bounty, but as he walks that solitary beach, divine justice keeps step with him—he may make the darkest cavern within his reach his hiding place, but as he sits there in gloomy silence, divine justice takes a seat beside him—he may enter the brilliant circle of fashion, determined to expel every unpleasant thought of his vile deeds, but as he takes his place upon the floor to lead the dance, divine justice steps up, and whispers in his ear, 'Is it for *you* to make mirth, when the gates of hell are opening to receive you?—or he may mount upon a throne, but divine justice, with authoritative step, follows him thither, and pointing the finger directly at him says, 'Thou art the man for whom I come.' When the sinner, in his swiftness, can surpass the lightning's speed, and when, by his dexterity, he can elude the eye of omniscience, then may he outstrip divine justice—not till then.

It often happens that the detectives sent in pursuit of a fugitive from justice, fail in recognizing him, after they have arrived at the place, where he is believed to have made a stand. They may pass and repass him in the street, he recognizing them, but they not recognizing him. He has changed his name—altered his dress, assuming what is as unlike as possible what he usually wore—removed or assumed a beard—dyed his hair—it

may be, feigns lameness and carries a crutch—and claims a profession with which he had no known connection. Thus he escapes apprehension. Is it so with divine justice? No; divine justice can never be *outwitted*. Caring nothing for names or titles, looking through all external appearances of colour, or dress or attitude, as the most flimsy cobweb, and disregarding every assumed profession, the highest as well as the lowest, the preacher of the gospel alike with the sweeper of the street, it goes up to the man, and says, 'I have a message from God to thee.' Does the sinner affect surprise and attempt to deny the charge? A picture is held up before his face every line of which he can understand. The place, the time, the person or persons with whom, the circumstances in which the deed was committed are explicitly stated, and the crime rises unveiled before the perpetrator. Can he, dare he reply—'I was not there, I did it not?' Justice fixes its eagle eye upon him, and answers—'Thou art the man.' Evasion is impossible, denial equally impossible. He looks troubled, his tongue falters, his limbs tremble, and he feels like the wretched blood-stained Ahab when he exclaimed to the messenger of Jehovah—'Hast thou found me O mine enemy!' Reader, the best garb of hypocrisy, which you can wear, it is so full of holes that every sin which you have committed can be seen through it by the eye of divine justice.

But may not the criminal escape arrest although overtaken and recognized? He may from human justice. Armed with deadly instruments, he may prevent the officer of justice from placing a hand upon him. Or if seized, he may, by superior strength and desperate courage break away and escape. He may take shelter behind walls or within gates, which the pursuer cannot force open, or break down. He may occupy a place so high, and wield such power, that any attempt to interfere with his liberty would be followed by the death of the man who made the attempt. Thus some dress splendidly who should wear the felon's garb; some occupy palaces who deserve to be in dungeons; some fare sumptuously every day, who ought to eat the bread and water of affliction; and some hold the reins of power whose crimes merit the burdens of chains. It is not so with divine justice, when it undertakes the arrest of an offender. It can neither be *outbarred*, nor overpowered. Where is the deadly weapon which it need fear? Where is the arm which can break away from its grasp? Where is the gate which it cannot break open, or where the wall which it cannot scale or throw down? Where lives the noble, or the monarch, whose rank or influence it must respect? Behold, it seized Lucifer, the son of the morning, when he raised his head in rebellion against the Most High, and must it shrink from

touching a worm of earth? It has bound principalities and powers of angelic rank, in chains of darkness, which they never can throw off; and woe to the sons of mortals who count upon an escape from its inflexible grasp. Starting from the centre of authority, the throne of the Eternal, it sweeps with its influence the whole circumference of creation. There is no spot so low that it may not descend to it, nor any so high that it cannot ascend to it. Nothing is beneath its notice, nor is anything hidden from its gaze. Its accuracy estimates the demerit of a sinful thought; and its fidelity records the punishment demanded. Its impartiality binds in the same chain, the slave and the emperor; and its power constrains, with equal ease, the myriad and the unit, to stand before the great tribunal. O unconverted sinner, how vain your ideas of escape, concealment, or resistance! Unpardoned, justice is now on your track, and may at any moment lay its iron grasp upon your shoulder; and then, all is over with you. Your body collapses under the pressure, and your soul, loaded with chains of despair, sinks to the pit of eternal wailing. Will you yet doubt? Contemplate then,

III. JUDGMENT OVERTAKING THE SINNER.

If justice can neither be outstripped, nor outwitted, nor outbarred, nor overpowered, it follows as a

necessary conclusion that the sinner shall be arrested and brought to judgment. Can he there escape punishment?—By no means. When the Judge takes his place upon the throne of judgment, it is to render to every one according to his deeds. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? But is he not a God of infinite mercy, and may he not forbear to punish at the last moment? Alas! on this broken reed millions rest their hopes for eternity. He is, indeed, a God of infinite mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, but, at the same time, he never suffers the guilty to escape their merited punishment. The guilty are all the unpardoned. No mercy is dispensed from the throne of judgment. When we appear there, it is to receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or bad. Those who obtain mercy, obtain it before they are summoned to judgment; and, on appearing there, are pronounced righteous for there is nothing found against them. But the sinner in fleeing from God, bars his heart against repentance; and renders the instrument of mercy impossible; and thus exposes himself to the crushing stroke of divine vengeance. Judgment *must* overtake him. So long as the arm of omnipotence retains its strength, the sword of justice will not fail to descend upon the head of the guilty.

Judgment is not wholly reserved for the land of spirits. A part, and often an important, impressive

and instructive part, is administered within the confines of time. This is the case with those offenders who, in respect to their general character, are good men. Lot's undue regard for the possessions and enjoyment of this life, as seen in his choice of a rich, though wicked city, as his place of abode, found him out, in the double judgment of loss of property and character. The bloody transaction that laid the brave Uriah low in death, found David out. The sword that narrowly escaped his own head fell heavily upon his family, sending Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah to untimely graves. The mad rebellion which resulted in the preposterous flight of the hasty and ill-tempered Jonah speedily overtook him. He found it harder to get to Tarshish than to go to Nineveh. The sea refused to carry him, and a monster of the deep thrust him back on the very coast from which he had attempted to flee from the presence of Jehovah. In Corinth, the desecration of the Lord's supper, by the carnal feasting on the symbols of the body and blood of the Lord, soon overtook the ignorant and irreverent communicants. That which they intended should nourish the body, brought the judgment of death upon it in the case of many. Every generation has furnished its examples. And there are few intelligent and observant Christians who have not noticed particular failings and offences bring home their

fruits, in such a time and way, as left no doubt of their judicial connection. An inspired writer says : "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."

In respect to the ungodly innumerable confirmations of the doctrine might be produced. A few of the more prominent in sacred history are selected.

Cain, the first of a Satanic band of murderers, closed his eyes to the claims of kindred, home and humanity, and found his reward in a perpetual brand of infamy, and in expulsion from kindred, home and country. The sons of Jacob, in their envy against a younger brother, were deaf to his entreaties and unmoved at his tears, but had their sin brought home to them, at a future time, by harsh, severe and repulsive treatment, which constrained them, on bended knees, to supplicate the favour of that very Joseph whom they had cruelly and unnaturally sold into bondage. The Egyptians grew rich on the unrewarded labours of the Hebrews ; but they were glad, at last, to get clear of them by handing over to them their most costly jewels. They were deaf to the mourning in Hebrew homes, when their little ones were cruelly torn from them ; but their sin found them out, when every home in Egypt was filled with wailing, for *their* first-born was slain. They stood unmoved at the gurgling cry of the Hebrew infant sinking in the Nile ; but they had their reward

when the Hebrew stood unmoved at the drowning shrieks of the haughty Pharaoh and his mighty captains contending, in vain, with the raging billows of the Red Sea. Adoni-besek, a powerful chieftain in Canaan, took a brutal pleasure in maiming the hands and feet of the chiefs who fell into his power. He ran his course of victory for a time. But his sin pursued him, and when it came to be his turn to know the sorrows of captivity, his maimed hands and feet proved that his brutality was not forgotten. Joab, the son of Zeruah, was an able general, but an ambitious violent and unscrupulous man. He basely and treacherously slew his rival, Abner. Many years of honour and enjoyment rolled past, but the blood of Abner still followed him; and now in his grey hairs, vengeance overtakes him, and even the sanctuary cannot shield him from a violent death. The wicked sometimes fall into the pit, or are hanged upon the gallows, which they have prepared for the righteous. The plot of the enemies of Daniel succeeded in bringing him into the den of lions. There God befriended him, and the lions left him unharmed. But their crime quickly overtook the malicious schemers, in the horrors of that same den, with neither God nor man to befriend them. Haman, the wicked, prepared a gallows for Mordecai, the upright, but before many days he himself swung upon that gallows, while

Mordecai was adorned with princely honors. But to pass many others, the crime of crimes followed the perpetrators of it with unparalleled vengeance. In this case the judgment was madly invoked upon themselves and their children. It was granted. They shed the blood of the innocent Son of God, and their blood and the blood of their children for centuries was shed like water. And who has read the pages of Greek or Roman, French or Spanish, English or Scotch history without finding in every period traces of the same principle everywhere pervading the providential government of God? And let none suppose that only crimes of great magnitude, such as inhumanity, treachery, and bloodshed follow the perpetrators till they are overtaken. Every sin is in its measure animated by the same spirit, and acts upon the same principle of undeviatingly pursuing the sinner until satisfaction is obtained. Reader, may I press this subject on your present and earnest attention?

Do you sin, and in what? Is the first great commandment broken, by centring your supreme affection on some earthly idol?—Be sure your sin will find you out. That idol will be broken; and your hopes, based on it, will meet a sad disappointment; and in your sorrows you may read your sin.

Is your religion a mere form, a cold-hearted hypocrisy?—Be sure your sin will find you out. Every shred of hypocrisy will be torn off, and you

will be exposed; perhaps, at a time, when the shame and pain of the exposure, can receive neither sympathy, nor alleviation.

Do you ever take God's holy name in vain?—Be sure your sin will find you out. God keeps a record of your irreverent words, and he will show it to you some day, when you will see your sin come home to you, with the stings of a scorpion.

Is God's day profaned by you?—Be sure your sin will find you out. Did mortal man ever yet gain anything by robbing God? You are robbing yourself, and you will yet see it. Sabbath-breaking will blast your soul and your estate in this world, and if not repented of, will look you in the face in eternity with vengeful accusations.

Are the claims of relationship disregarded?—Be sure your sin will find you out. You will receive as you have given, good measure, pressed down, and running over; and you will not fail to trace the connection between cause and effect.

Are you destroying your life by intoxicating liquors, or are you dealing them out indiscriminately to others?—Be sure your sin will find you out. A broken constitution, or a premature death, will proclaim to others, if you are too deaf to hear, that your sin has found you out. And your ill-gotten gains by the traffic, will bring no blessing to your children; and in their drunkenness, or in that of their connections, you may see the judgment of your sin.

Are you practising uncleanness?—Be sure your sin will find you out. A diseased or enfeebled body, a wounded conscience, and a ruined reputation will speedily overtake you. You shall not go unpunished.

Do you deprive your neighbour of his rights by theft, deceit, or extortion?—Be sure your sin will find you out. A curse will rest upon such gain; and your sin will, in some unexpected hour, bestride your path, look you in the face, and demand immediate restoration.

Do you lie?—Be sure your sin will find you out. Your falsehood however far it may travel from home, will return to you, and not alone, it will bring a motley group of companions. You shall find them anything but pleasant. They will plant your bed with thorns, and arm every man against you.

Do you cherish a covetous and grasping disposition?—Be sure your sin will find you out. It will lead you to means and measures which if successful will distress and burden you, and if unsuccessful will disgrace, if they do not destroy you. Covetousness is the mother of many sins, and she is often compelled to own the relationship in the day of retribution.

Reader, how do you answer these questions? Do you say, I am innocent? No; you cannot; for you have sinned in some or all of these particulars

—and, perhaps, you are now living in some of these sins. If you are, let me assure you that your sins are in full pursuit of you, and, by a law as certain as that which moves the planets, will overtake you unless you find refuge in Christ. He is the great and only refuge for sinners. Would a criminal pursued by the officers of justice despise a door thrown open to receive him? Would he not hail the sight of it with rapture, and rush within it? See, then, O see the open door of heavenly mercy in Jesus Christ! Hasten to it, and you are safe. The sword of divine justice will not pursue you within that refuge, for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. At that door every demand is satisfied, and the refugee is set at liberty. Flee *now*. While you read these lines, pause, and lift your heart to Christ, and say—‘Receive me O refuge of sinners, into thy gracious shelter.’ If you tarry for an hour, the door may be shut, and then, the thunders of eternal vengeance will burst upon you, and O whither will you turn?—there will be no hiding place from the storm, no covert from the tempest. Sinner though you be, rush to Christ, and in one moment the everlasting arms of Jehovah are around you, and you are safe—for ever!

CHAPTER V.

The Punishment for slighting divine Mercy.

“Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.”
PROVERBS I CH. 24-26 vs.

It is well that men should consider that God's patience, although lasting, is not everlasting; and that his forbearance, although often wonderfully lengthened out, will be succeeded, if repentance prevent not, by an outburst of indignation. He has unalterably determined to punish sin wherever it is found. The highest archangel will be no more exempted than the meanest slave of earth. And his justice will demand that the punishment meted out, will be carefully balanced with the guilt. But that the connexion between the crime and the punishment may be more readily traced, and its effect more deeply felt, the punishment is often made to correspond to the nature of the sin, as well as to be in exact proportion to its guilt. “They have sown the *wind* and they shall reap

the *whirlwind*." The propriety or natural fitness of this result is very manifest.

Sin may be compared to a poisonous genus of the vegetable kingdom. Its species are numerous and varied. And while all are deadly in their effects, some display more extensively their virulent properties, and are more rapid in their destructive tendencies than others. If any person should choose to sow any of these poisonous species, what more natural or becoming than that he should gather the fruit corresponding to the species sown. One might feel disposed to scatter the less noxious seed, another the more deadly; and in both cases appropriate fruit would be looked for. Men are not accustomed to sow without the desire and expectation of reaping—nor do they contemplate reaping a harvest totally different from the seed which they have cast into the earth.

The same law prevails in the kingdom of morals. Every moral or immoral act bears its own fruit. The actor, in his ignorance, may not fully understand the nature of his deed, and hence may very imperfectly foresee the consequences, but this darkness will not change the nature of the result. "Be not deceived," saith the Holy Ghost,—alluding to the prevalent and fondly cherished error, that good might spring out of evil—"for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corrup-

tion—but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” This testimony is decisive. The analogy is drawn by him who is both Creator and moral Governor, and whose comprehension of all relationships and consequences is intuitive and absolutely perfect. Let the sinner pause. Let him consider. What he now sows, he shall reap both in quantity and quality. Repentance alone can undo what is done, and stop the growth of the poisonous crop before it reaches maturity. If it reach maturity, it must be appropriated by the sower. It may not be made over to another ; it cannot be cast aside as unsatisfactory. In this the moral differs from the natural. The gardener may reject the fruit which he has cultivated, because not adapted to his taste, and the farmer may sell his grain to another ; but in the moral kingdom, every man must eat his own fruit, whether healthgiving or poisonous, and on his own harvest must he feed for ever. Admitting this, is it not vain for any to sow that which in the day of harvest can afford no nutriment—no pleasure ; and has not vanity expanded into folly, when not simply the useless, but the noxious, are chosen for cultivation ; and has not folly ripened into madness, when of all the poisonous seed, the most corrupting, destructive, and deadly are selected by a rational soul to produce the sole harvest for future and eternal sustenance ?

Or, to alter the illustration. Sin, introduced into our world by the old Serpent, the devil, is a race of serpents. It is amazingly prolific, and of its numerous species, not one is harmless, all are venomous, and many exceedingly poisonous. All possess the power of charming, but some are intensely fascinating. Like their parent they can assume any guise that will secure their acceptance and indwelling in the bosom of the tempted. The most voracious can assume the gentleness of the dove, the most corrupting the whiteness of the lily, and the most horrifying, the loveliness of the rose. The sting of each is peculiar to itself. Hence he who would plant in his bosom the most venomous, need not expect to escape with the irritating bite of an insect, but may prepare for the mortal agonies which result from the injection of the deadliest poison.

Dropping all metaphor, the punishment of the sinner shall correspond to the nature of his crime—his mental agonies shall partake of a character peculiar to the sin which chiefly marked his rebellion against God. This is the idea of the text. God had called, beckoned, counselled, reprovèd; and his calling was refused, his beckoning disregarded, his counsel slighted, and his reproof despised. Here is sin of a very positive stamp, highly offensive, provoking, repeated, confirmed. It must be punished, it shall be punished severely.

But in what way?—It shall be shortly their turn to call, it shall be their turn to stretch out their hands, and cry for help; but now God will treat them as they treated him—as he called and they refused, so they shall call and he shall refuse—as he stretched out his hand to them in vain, so they shall stretch out their hands to him in vain—as they slighted and despised his counsel and reproof, so he shall slight and despise all their outcries and agonies; he will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh.” Thus shall they eat of the *fruit of their own way*, and be filled with *their own devices*.

Reader, life is your seed time, eternity is the harvest. Would the just equivalent for the past afford you an agreeable future? Should God deal with you as you have dealt with him, would you meet as friends or foes? You cannot avoid the future, you are rushing towards it irresistibly. What shall it be? You are now shaping its form—you are now weaving the garment which you are to wear—you are now building the house in which you are to dwell—you are now selecting your eternal companions—the whole everlasting future is taking form, colour, character, vitality from your present actions. If you are yet unpardoned, if you have rejected God till this hour, let me show you what God has done to reclaim you—what return you have made to him—and what consequen-

ces must certainly follow your conduct if persisted in, and may God open your eyes to see, and your heart to feel, what demands your immediate attention, to the exclusion of every other consideration.

I GOD'S ATTEMPT TO RECLAIM THE SINNER.

What has God done? *He called to the sinner.* Why, what was the matter? Had he lost his way, and was he advancing to some fearful precipice, on the brink of which there was no foothold?—Or was he floundering in the quagmire of corruption, and unable to discover any way of escape?—Was he drinking and carousing with those who professed to be his best friends, but who had resolved to rob and murder him, ere the day dawned? Was he profoundly asleep in a dwelling, around which the waters of a tremendous inundation were rapidly rising? Or was he, like some despised outcast, sitting down beside the swine's trough, seeking the meanest satisfaction of his animal wants?—Yes; in one or other of these positions the benign eye of God saw him, and he was moved to make a sincere effort to save him. In this he was actuated by the purest benevolence. He might have allowed him to go on till the sudden fall and painful crash had revealed his sad mistake. He might have left him to sink, uncared for, in that mire into which he had chosen to go, in preference to walking on

the sure path of the king's highway. He might have allowed him to enjoy the mirth of these false friends, until sharp experience would discover to him their true character. He could have allowed the chill waters of the overflowing deluge to be the first admonition of his woeful and hopeless condition. Or, he might have left him to live and die with the beasts of the field, to whom he had made himself so much akin, by the reckless indulgence of his lusts. But the parental solicitude of God prompted to a course directly beneficial to the sinner. He called to him. But how?—and why?

He spoke by *Providence*. The early, sudden, and unlooked for death of some friend, or acquaintance, proclaimed the vanity of human hopes. The mournful career of the profligate and criminal warned against the certain rewards of iniquity. The alarms and outcries of the impenitent's death-bed condemned, in loudest tones, the folly of those who neglect the salvation of the soul; and indicated in a way, too plainly to be mistaken, the future woes which await transgressors. Few are so deaf that they cannot hear this voice, few so callous as not to be startled by it, when its trumpet tones are sounded in their ears.

He spoke by his *Word*. The very sight of it in the opened trunk, on the family table, in the book store, or on the pulpit desk bespoke its object.

When read, or heard, or enforced in the sanctuary, the voice of God was heard. And what deserved more attention than the *law* of the eternal King, by which the destiny of each immortal soul will be determined, on the great day of judgment? What more entitled to minute investigation than the *testament* of Him who by his death left us, on certain conditions, the glorious legacy of eternal life? What could claim more frequent and careful perusal than the counsels and admonitions, the promises and encouragements, of the Teacher come from God—very God manifest in the flesh? Who, that ever comprehended the message of this wondrous book, could doubt that God has spoken by it?

He called by *Conscience*. There is in the breast of every man, a principle, a power, a voice which, acting the part both of sentinel and judge, gives notice of the approach of good or evil, and approves or condemns as the one, or other, is received and obeyed. It is true that this sentinel is sometimes dim-sighted, is frequently deceived, and too often sleeps at his post, and his decisions take shape accordingly; but this does not disprove his place and authority, or the powerful influence which he may wield when properly stimulated to fulfill his duty. At times the sensibility of this principle is amazing, and its accusations and oft repeated denunciations truly alarming. Then, it

is, that its voice sustained by reason and the dictates of humanity, may be regarded as the voice of God. It is he who has brightened the eye of the sentinel to discover the designing foe, and infused fire and courage into the judge to apply the lash with inexorable severity. How often, and in how many different circumstances, has the character of these internal admonitions revealed the judgment of the Eternal, in respect to our conduct. By the open grave, by the bed of death, in the house of God, in the market place, on the highway, and on the couch of rest, has this secret monitor dropped in broken whispers, or urged in fiercest tones, the will of the Supreme. Who will gainsay this?

He called by his *Spirit*. Who can dispute the ability of the omnipresent Spirit to indicate his will to the mind of his rational creatures, when and where he pleases? And who, in the face of scripture and experience, can deny that his influence has been felt—his voice heard—urging on to duty, and drawing back from sin? The prevailing tone of this voice is gentle and tender. It is the still small voice of the Unseen. But it is most decided; there is no hesitancy, no wavering. It is heard away from the bustle of this world, out from the crowd, in seasons of retirement, on the sick bed, and in the house of prayer. Its mild but firm remonstrances, its gentle but pressing

invitations, its prompt and keen appeals when circumstances offer special advantages are, alas! too often unheeded, and the Spirit slighted, disregarded and grieved, leaves the sinner to his folly, his carnality, his self-deception and his self-destruction. 'My Spirit,' saith God, 'shall not always strive with man.' The wonder is, that he should strive at all. But his thoughts are not as our thoughts. Often he calls through the voice of man. Selecting his instrument, he fills him with wisdom and power, and through him invites, exhorts and warns against approaching wrath. Thus, directly and indirectly, by his Providence, his Word, the human Conscience, and his own Spirit, and by none more condescendingly and more graciously than by the last, God calls to erring, dying man.

And why? Because he would recover and save him. He would recall him from danger, and point him to the path of safety. He would relieve his burdened spirit, with the sweetest consolations. He would rescue him from cruel captivity, and place him in the enjoyment of blissful freedom. He would restore to him his lost patrimony, and enrich him with a never-fading inheritance. And to crown all, he would redeem his soul from hell, and enthrone him in everlasting glory. O, it was all from pity, and from love, that he called; and it was all from the purest, and the noblest, and the

most benevolent designs. Why should not man answer; why should he not obey; why should he not come?

But God did more than simply call. He *stretched out his hand*. This was the natural outgoing of earnest feeling, and a significant expression of what he wished to be done. God was very earnest in seeking the salvation of man. There was no deception in him. He did not invite, and secretly wish that the invited would not come. He did not sound an alarm of danger, and feel indifferent whether the warning should be heeded or not. The providing of a glorious and all-secure refuge for those pursued by an awful vengeance ever gaining upon them, indicated anything but indifference to the terrors of the pursued. What man possessed of parental feeling could stand with folded arms, and simply call to his child running towards the brink of a precipice. Would not the thrust out arms accompany the loud call, and both be attended with an immediate rush towards the child? Deep feeling will show itself in the attitudes and gestures of the body. God speaks to us after the manner of men. He means that he clearly showed that he was deeply in earnest in calling to sinners, and that he gave evident signs, by which his will might be fully known. His arm was stretched out when he smote the Red Sea, that his ransomed might pass over; and a similar indi-

cation of his supreme will brought back the waters for the destruction of their foes. He showed himself equally mighty to save and to destroy. These were signs and seals which none but the wilfully blind could fail to perceive. At later periods, he frequently confirmed his word, and showed himself to be really in earnest in his threatenings by stretching out his hand over various countries, and desolating them by the scourge of war. But before it is stretched out to destroy, it is long and patiently stretched out to save. It was so in this case. His hand was stretched far down into the horrible pit, to lift the sinner from the miry clay. It was stretched far out and waved, to draw the attention of the lost, to the wide-spread and awful conflagration, ascending from the pit towards which they were hastening. It was stretched out most patiently, to direct the bewildered to the only way of escape, and the perplexed and despairing to the only rest for the weary. And oh! the gentle manner, in which it beckoned to, and encouraged the abased and wretched prodigal, to return to the arms of parental love. And when the soul would droop, and cleave to the dust, with what exquisite tenderness and condescension would it lift it up, and point to the Mount Zion above, encircled with light, and to the crowns of glory glittering on the heads of those who had triumphed over the corruptions of earth. And was all this earnest, powerful and winning signation in vain?

And while he stretched out his hand, he seriously *counselled*. And such advice! Was anything ever heard so wise, so opportune, so suitable? Ignorance and deception were alike impossible. He knew the true state of the sinner. All the influences that operated upon him were accurately scanned; and the certain consequence of each line of conduct clearly foreseen. Probabilities found no place in his calculations—all were certainties. The advice was timely. Mistakes had been committed, but these could be rectified. Reformation was yet possible. In vain do you counsel, when ruin is beyond remedy. But God saw that man could yet escape. He had provided the means for this. He therefore counselled, and that peremptorily. Now was the time to take advantage of most favourable circumstances. O the value of advice at such a time! And it was so suitable. It met the very condition of the sinner. It embraced all the possibilities of his state. No one could set it aside, as not meeting his case. It reached the most desperate within the domains of mercy. If he had not strength to rise and flee from the coming wrath, he might at least grasp the friendly hand placed within his reach to aid him. If he could not lay hold on that hope set before him, he might at least cry to be lifted and carried to the place of safety. If too much exhausted for utterance, the counsel was to look—to fix his eye,

like the wounded Israelite, on the object of faith—and the very look of faith to him who gave him counsel, would stay the progress of disease and death, and infuse new life and vigor into his soul. There was nothing unnecessary, nothing obscure. All was simple and perfectly intelligible by the most ordinary capacity. It was directly to the point, and it could not be mistaken. O the folly and perversity that could reject it!

But finding that advice was unavailing God proceeded to *reprove*. He named the sins that had been committed, stripped them of all pretences, set them in the light of his law, and charged the sinner as a high criminal in the sight of heaven. He had violated express commands, dishonored God, injured his fellow mortal, and endangered his own soul. And this was the aggravating circumstance, that he had persisted in his evil ways, in utter disregard of the call and advice and warning of God, showing clearly that he loved darkness rather than light, and would not come to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But now to the light God would bring his deeds, and compel him to look at them, until his soul would be filled with shame and sorrow. This was kindness on the part of God, although it may appear severity. He only brought facts to light; and he brought them now to light that they might be remedied. They must come to light at some time, and at a

later period mercy might be unattainable. Re-
proof and shame must follow their exposure—but
these unpleasant feelings have now become indis-
pensable, and they are designed to be salutary.
It is hoped that sharp, stern words may yet
awaken the dormant feelings of the soul, and open
the eyes of the understanding to the folly and guilt
of the course now pursued. If under all this,
there is no perception of folly, no sense of guilt,
no feeling of shame, the soul is "past feeling,"
and little remains, but that justice and judgment
should do their work. O mournful infatuation!
That God himself should call, beckon, advise and
reprove, and all in vain! Reader, shall it be so
with you?

II. THE SINNER'S REJECTION OF DIVINE MERCY.

Every effort on God's part was met either by
indifference, or opposition or contempt on the part
of the sinner. God called, but he refused. It
mattered not whether it was the voice of provi-
dence or of conscience, the word or the spirit; in
each case, the proud rebellious mortal disowned
the authority, and persisted in his course. So
blinded was he that his own way seemed prefer-
able to every other. So bent was he upon the
pleasures in which his soul laboured to find satis-
faction, that it was in vain that he was told that

there were joys nobler and better, within his reach, which he was entirely overlooking. He refused to give up his cards for the Bible, the dance for the prayer meeting, or the songs of revelry for the anthems of praise. In vain was heaven spoken of—it had no attractions for him; all he desired were the pleasures of time. The mention of hell awakened equally little attention; its very existence was doubted, and if it did exist, within the limits of God's universe, it was regarded at such a distance that there was no probability of his spirit finding a lodgment in it. The forgiveness of sins had no value in his eyes, for he did not feel himself a sinner. The robe of righteousness he could not comprehend, for he never supposed himself to be naked in the sight of God. The wrath of God was, indeed, something fearful, but he imagined himself to be among the very last on whom such a visitation should come. And as for any immediate danger, why, he could not descry it. In fact, he wanted to have nothing to do with God—spiritual and eternal verities being an unsought interruption to the business and enjoyments of life. Ignorance and fear, carnality and unbelief, combined to give a uniform refusal to every call from heaven.

The appeal to the eye was no more successful than the appeal to the ear. The hand of God was outstretched, but no man regarded. It was

brought down within the reach of the perishing soul, but none would seize it. It was held up in warning of coming wrath, but without avail. It pointed the burdened, downcast soul to Mount Zion as the region of eternal rest, but the eye was too much fixed on earth to heed the indication. It gave emphasis and point and force to the most urgent invitations, but the spell-bound spirit still held back. The hand may be withdrawn, the indifference is too strong to be removed by any exhibition of reason or feeling.

The advice, too, is despised. It is set at nought—counted as worthless. It is gainsayed and rejected. Is there any abject slave of Satan who does not consider himself wiser than the Most High? What need has he of counsel! In his own eyes he is equal to any emergency. Times and circumstances are not to be considered, he is prepared at all times. Does he not foresee all dangers! Is not every avenue of safety open at his hand! Has he not weighed all causes, and estimated all contingencies! Has not his own eye discovered the path of wisdom and who can demonstrate that he has ever gone astray! Alas! folly has reached its climax in absurdity. The creature has sat in judgment on the Creator, and condemned him as unwise! The advice of the all-wise God is set aside as of no value! Is it come to this?

Reproof he will not tolerate. He will have none of it, even should it come from God himself. He thanks no one for telling him his faults; and still less is he pleased for threatening any adverse consequences as attending them. What has he done more than a thousand others have done, and are they lost? Let every man, he says, look after himself—as for him he is quite able to do the same. When he thinks he has done wrong, he will try to do better, but he allows no one to be a judge of his actions. He considers himself his own master, and he will do whatever is right in his own eyes. Could insolence rise higher than this? Not only will he commit sin, but he insists on being left alone to sin. No one must tell him that he has erred—no one must interfere with what he is pleased to carry out. Let the Almighty stand out of his way, and give himself no further trouble about his conduct. These are the utterances of his proud spirit, and this the only request he has to offer. What is to be done? He will not own his sins, and hence will not bear to be reproved for them; he scorns all thought of repentance, and will persist in his own ways—he is bent on ruin, and to ruin he will go. There is no further remedy.

III. SIN SUITABLY AND DREADFULLY PUNISHED.

A change has come. The sunshine of prosperity

and pleasure has passed away, and the gloom of night has followed. The songs of mirth and the melodies of music are hushed, and the dance has ceased. The bustle and the turmoil of life have stopped, and the days of business are closed. The day of reckoning has arrived, and a settlement for eternity is demanded. God now appears on the scene. The soul acknowledges his presence. Earth can no longer absorb every thought. A new world now rises into view, and alas! for the sinner, it seems to him filled with terrors. Calamities begin to rain down upon him. His hopes fail one after another. He looks around to his friends and companions for comfort, but they stand aghast at his alarm. They cannot see what he sees—they cannot feel what he feels. Is the cup of pleasure held to him, he turns away from it with loathing. Is his wealth spoken of, the very mention of it awakens remorse for the folly that induced him to set his heart upon it. Are his good deeds spoken of, he feels that they afford no more shelter from the descending wrath than the spider's web from the tempest. He hastens to one excuse after another, but each in its turn has to be abandoned as the blast of divine vengeance hurls it, as a refuge of lies, upon the head of its occupant. And now his evil deeds assault him like hungry wolves. They leap upon, they seize him, they surround him; each one thirsting for blood—

each one greedy for vengeance. His imagination is on fire, but it grasps only realities. Memory has the eyes and wings of an eagle, and speeds over the journey of life, and detecting each error and each crime, pounces upon it and seizing it holds it up before the distracted soul until the imagination endows it with the powers of a fiery serpent, and the soul writhes under the bite of the venomous reptile. Who would have thought that those things so often styled harmless and delicious would have been transformed into ravening wolves and biting serpents? Every soul that has been injured by his career of ungodliness, profligacy, and infidelity now seems to rise up before him, and with flaming eyes and threatening gestures, cries out the day of vengeance has come at last. Calamity has increased to desolation. Look around; nought can be seen but the howling wilderness, over which the fiery curse has passed, blackening every object in its progress. No sweet sound reaches the ear, no pleasant sight attracts the eye. Every enjoyment, every comfort, even every hope has fled, and the soul is left a prey to those vile animals which inhabit the wastes of desolation. They do their work, for desolation ripens into destruction. The soul has no power to resist them. Like a ship caught by the tempest, and driven away, by its violence, towards the rocks; the anchors are dropped, but the chains are snapped

at once ; the helm is pressed, but in vain, the ship refuses to obey it, it is unshipped and broken—the desolation increases every moment—the waves roll higher as the waters grow shallow—at last the fatal blow is heard ; she has struck, and, in an instant, the decks are swept by the billows ; and, the next moment the masts are carried off by the tempest ; the waters are rushing in, the ship is parting—destruction has come. How wretched the condition of every soul of which this is a true representation ! Terrors within, around, above, and beneath. Who can picture its agitation ? At the first serious apprehension of danger, fear took up its lodgment in the soul, but that term failed to convey the real state of the sinner. He did indeed fear being left to his own thoughts, for he had become a terror to himself ; he dreaded the scoffing and tortures of the devils ; and was filled with alarm at the tokens of impending woe. But as calamities poured down upon him, the waters of trouble rolled in upon his soul. He felt as well as feared. He who often laughed when warned of the consequences of sin, could laugh no more. Sharp experience gave the best answer to all his boasted sophisms. However anxious to conceal his feelings, it was no longer possible. Trouble rose within ; and overflowed all restraints. Woe seemed to descend in ever increasing volume. All creation seemed at war with him—and no pitying look, no consoling word

came from any quarter. Anguish seized him. He cried out in his despair, 'Woe is me! woe is me! I am a lost soul. Hell is ready to receive me! The devils are waiting for me! I have loved sin, I have hated God, I have despised wrath, I have rejected mercy. God has forsaken me, I am undone forever!'

But is he not mistaken? Can not God save even to the very uttermost? Yes, but whom?—Those who come to Christ—those who seek in time—those who ask while mercy is offered. But none receive mercy after God has withdrawn the offer. None find God who, after despising advice, are left to their own blindness. And none come to Christ who have, in his day of grace, and throughout his time of acceptance, refused his call and disregarded his outstretched hand. It is in vain to knock, after the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. The soul, whose sad state we are considering, was long called, invited, counselled, and reproved but all without effect. It was bent on sin, absorbed in pleasure, engrossed with the world, satisfied with sense, and regardless of all the claims of God and eternity. Now it receives its reward. And who will dare to say that it is unjust or inappropriate? He reaps what he sowed. Is it wrong in God to refuse his call, when he refused God's? Is it wrong in God to pay no attention to his outstretched arms appealing for help, when he paid no attention to God's hand

outstretched to save him? Is it unjust in God to despise his trouble, when he so long despised God's counsel. Is it unjust in God to deride his anguish, when he so often derided God's warnings and reproofs? He is paid back in his own coin. And if any assume the hardihood to find fault with this proceeding, it can only be for a time, for if it should ever be his case, his mouth would be stopped, for conscience will say, "Amen!" to every sentence of Jehovah, as undeniably just.

Let this be considered that when Jehovah inflicts punishment, he does so on the principles of eternal justice—but when he dispenses mercy, it is out of pure sovereignty. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. Be you sure, O sinner, that when God offers you mercy, he is ready to bestow it; and when he withdraws that offer, mercy is not within your reach. You know not when it may be withdrawn; all you can safely count upon, is the passing moment in which it is held out to you. O then, then, is it offered now, *now*—let it not go past; seize it, it may never return. Now is the accepted time—now the day of salvation. Reader, are you reconciled to God? If not, let me speak plainly to you. God has often called to you, and you have refused; he has long held out his hand, and you have given no heed; he has often advised you and you have despised it; he has often reproved you, and you have not received it—now,

what have you any *right* to expect at his hand? Do you venture to *claim* an answer to your prayer, or to look for aid in the hour of danger? Beware. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Remember that instead of averting the terrors of wrath from him who slighted mercy, God himself will pour down those terrors on the head of the sinner. There is a day in which He will show no mercy. Perhaps, you are now reaching the limits of your time of grace, the last day of God's forbearance towards you may have now come. For your life, then, hear this last call—rise and go to the throne of mercy—prostrate yourself there a humble suppliant, a mourning penitent—and the God of mercy will pity you, and you shall not die.

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CHAPTER VI.

Heaven's last Invitation.

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come! And let him that heareth, say, Come! And let him that is athirst, come: And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

REVEL. xxii CH. 17 V.

A peculiar importance and solemnity often appertain to the last efforts to save what is in imminent danger of irrevocable destruction. A few illustrations may present the idea with vividness and force to the mind of the reader; and fix the lesson which it is intended to convey all the more permanently.

Let us imagine ourselves in the room where some beloved one is lying at the point of death. Around are assembled the children, relatives, or friends, of the sufferer. Every eye is moistened with tears, and every heart pierced with anguish. The disease has taken a turn, and the physician is sent for, it may be for the last time. With what anxiety is his coming awaited? How eagerly is every word uttered by him listened to, and how keenly is his look scrutinized.

The danger is not concealed. An emergency has come. One more effort may be tried, and if it fail, death ensues. Hopefully and anxiously in every direction observed. The last remedy is applied. The issue is awaited with scarcely a whisper. How important are those moments—how solemn the whole scene! Should the remedy succeed, one is restored who, it may be the stay, the light, and the joy of a family circle. Time is given for repentance, if not before experienced. Means of grace are once more within reach. The good results of severe affliction may be seen; and suitable preparation for death, yet to come in all its dread reality, obtained. But should the last effort fail, how sad the scene! The skies grow dark, and the showers of sorrow descend in quick succession. Slow and sad and solemn is every movement. An eye that spoke kindness to many, is now closing for ever on all held dear on earth; and a hand lies motionless, whose friendly grasp, and generous aid, will rejoice no more. And if the soul is not prepared to stand before its Judge, who can fully estimate the value of this last effort to stay the immortal spirit, if it were but a little, within the domain of mercy, ere the irrevocable sentence be pronounced that shall consign it to perdition? Can we prize too highly those moments, when an eternity of misery or bliss depends upon them? On this one effort,

hangs life or death with all its consequences for time and eternity, and while it is being tried solemnly broods in silent awe, oscillating between hope and fear, awaiting the result.

We change the scene. It is the hall of legislation. The representatives of a nation have assembled to deliberate on matters of the gravest moment. Long and fiery discussions have ensued. The majority seem bent on the policy of aggressive war. The enemy is by no means weak, nor are his allies to be despised; but self-confidence and bold speaking have carried away the minds of many. Before the motion is formally passed, a statesman venerable in years, and distinguished for sagacity, rises to address his countrymen. His keen mental vision penetrates the future. The heavy cost and bloody sacrifices of war lie spread before him. He sees his country taxed until the poor can scarcely obtain the necessaries of life; and the blighted homes and the fatherless children, and the weeping widows clothing the land with sadness. All this is reason enough to him to leave the sword in its scabbard, if peace can be maintained with honor. But more, far more than this is unveiled. Rightly estimating the character of the foe, and the forces of his auxiliaries, he sees the tide of war roll back upon his own land, the revengeful enemy take possession of their capital, tens of thousands slaughtered, the liberty and independ-

ence of his country destroyed, and its population reduced to slavery by the conqueror. Roused by what he perceives to be the inevitable results of such a war, he summons all his energies, and with a clearness, a force, an eloquence and a pathos never excelled in that hall, he throws his whole soul into the contest, and strives by one great final effort to save his country from ruin. The importance of the hour fills him; and the extraordinary energy developed throws solemnity on all.

Again, the scene is changed. It is the Niagara river, not far above the great Falls. A boat has crossed to the Canadian shore, freighted with pleasure-seekers. They have enjoyed a happy day, and are now on their return. Suddenly when near the centre of the river, a violent gust of wind sweeps down from above, and accompanying it a current of water rushing with great rapidity and force. The moment it strikes the boat, she is hurried from her course, and carried down the stream. In vain do the rowers bend all their strength to the oars; they cannot stem the current; they cannot escape from its range. In their desperate efforts, their oars are broken, and now they are wholly in the power of the stream, and death in all its terror appears inevitable. Pallid and nerveless from fear, they are scarcely able to shout for relief. But their perilous condition is seen from the shore, and crowds rush down to their

rescue. A small boat is launched, and moves out rapidly to the edge of the torrent, but dare venture no farther. She must return. Every moment is precious. Down the boat is sweeping, more and more rapidly every minute. Another boat shoots out to their help; but in vain, she too must return and narrowly escapes their peril. One more effort can be made, and if this fail, over the Falls they must go, for escape is impossible. A larger, and more ably manned boat is now launched, and she carries a rope which may be thrown from the edge of the current to the boat that is being carried down. With what breathless anxiety is this movement watched. Nearer and nearer the boat ventures to the dreaded stream, and drops down to keep pace with the imperilled crew. And now they are abreast—and now the rope is thrown. See! it is caught by one in the boat: it is fastened: there is hope. And now comes the struggle,—shall they be able to draw the boat out of the current, or will they be drawn in and perish also? O the terrible suspense! Every spectator is silent—solemnity rests on all. It is now or never. Every arm is strained—every oar is plied. Lo! the stress has come—they hold their own—they move the boat—they are succeeding—well done! they are safe! To characterize this effort is needless—it speaks for itself.

The scripture under consideration is a last effort

to save. The danger is imminent, the destruction awful and eternal. God's eye pities—he resolves to save. In carrying out his purpose, he, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake to the children of men, pointing out the only way of escape, and graciously offering his help. But at a later period to testify more strongly his love, he spoke by his Son, his only begotten and well-beloved, commanding all men to look to Him as their only Saviour. The Son fulfilled his commission on earth with fidelity and delight; and even after he ascended to his throne in the heavens, he continued to issue his free invitations to pardon and salvation through his apostles. This is his last invitation. How important! How solemn! Never more shall he speak in mercy to the inhabitants of earth. When he comes again, he will speak in judgment, and award to each his place. If this is accepted, the soul of the sinner is rescued from eternal flames; if this is rejected, no further call from heaven is heard, the sinner has made his choice, and deserves what he shall receive, a double condemnation. O unconverted reader, many have heard this last call, and have been saved, shall not you? Here observe,

I. TO WHAT MEN ARE INVITED.

To a free participation in the water of life. "And whosoever will let him take the water of life

freely." It is life, under the emblem of water, which is offered. This emblem is, all things considered, the most suitable that could be employed. We know that water is indispensable to the maintenance of existence on earth. It is one of the main things demanding consideration in selecting a place for a dwelling, in encamping an army, in equipping for a voyage. Behold Israel in the wilderness. Their cry is, "Give us water that we may drink!" And again, "the people chode with Moses and spake saying—would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord; and why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us in unto this evil place . . . neither is there any water to drink." The distress occasioned by prolonged thirst is extreme.

Take a modern illustration. A vessel has foundered in mid ocean, within the tropics, and, so suddenly, that the crew have scarcely time to save their lives by leaping into the long boat, and for hastily snatching any supplies that were at hand. They soon discover their short supply of water, and they feel as if the very scarcity increased their desire for it. The supply is soon exhausted; and they look with dismay on each other. For a day or two the craving is moderate and may be con-

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trolled. But after that, who can describe the restless, intolerable agony. They scan the horizon intently for some sail—they fix their eyes on heaven as if imploring a drop of rain to lessen their burning thirst—they would fain swallow the water around, but sad experience has taught them that it will only increase their distress. Death will do its work if relief is not speedily brought.

And what is the cry of this thirsting, dying world? Is it not for water—the water of life. As the cry of the thirsty crew was for water, water! so the cry of millions is, life, life! The struggle is for life. The toil, the race, the fight, the slavery is for life. Other sounds are heard, but as the hoarse moan of the mighty ocean rises far above the pattering of the rain-drops, so the universal cry of a dying world for life is heard swelling high above every other sound.

In response to this wail of distress the God of mercy issues a general proclamation, inviting all who will to come to the fountain of life which he has provided and now uncovers for their salvation. Let me in pressing this invitation on your consideration, notice some of the peculiarities of this life-giving fountain. Its grand property is its power to impart life to all who taste it. No man can drink of this water without feeling the grasp of death on his spirit relaxed, the warm current of health established, and the glow of a glorious

immortality restored. But of its distinguishing peculiarities I may select three.

First, it is *pure*. The river which was revealed to John, as flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, through the New Jerusalem, was clear as crystal. This fountain has its rise in the same place, and is in all respects similar,—“the pure river of water of life” being but an enlargement of the stream which has reached this earth, and which makes glad the church of God in its journey homeward. Every earthly fountain has its sediment; some their gross impurity; and others their deadly poison. But in this living water there is no intermixture—not the smallest particle can be discovered by the most refined spiritual chemistry. Hence so far as this water is drunk, unalloyed life is enjoyed, and the desire of all who have tasted it, is to partake of it alone. On earth life has to struggle with death, and bliss is restricted by the encroachments of sin. This living water overflowing the soul kills the roots of corruption; the trunks soon exhibit symptoms of decay; the leaves wither, the branches drop off; and eventually the old, decayed stumps are seen no more. Its vitalizing power invades the domains of death; its purifying influence encroaches upon impurity. It will suffer neither death nor sin to exist where it is received. Its daily use will wash out the last dregs of impurity, and take away the very seeds

of death. This is the drink for sin-stained mortals. They cannot indulge in this to excess. There is nothing to intoxicate—nothing to corrupt. But with its first draught the eyes are opened, and with every subsequent participation bliss is imbibed and sorrow disappears. Come, dying reader, drink and you shall live. Come, although yet young and but partially poisoned by the streams of earth. Here is what you need, what your spirit craves though you know it not. Life may not be long with you. The line beyond which you are not to go may lie far on this side of thirty. Come, if you are old, this water can revive your dried up spirits, and open before you an enduring, ever-blooming adolescence. Come, defiled mortal, this water shall purify within, and then you shall be clean indeed. Vile you may be, but this shall make you pure as the angels before the throne of God. Come, ye sorrowful in heart, here is something to cheer. Sin is your curse: this will take it away. Death is your dread: this will destroy him. Tears are your meat: this will wipe them off for ever. Life pure, sin-expelling, death-destroying is now before your eyes. Drink, and be holy: drink, and live for ever.

Second, it is *satisfying*. The streams of earth are not so. However sweetened they may be, by all that rank and wealth and luxury can bestow, they have ever failed to satisfy all the cravings of

man's soul. But of this water, it may, in truth, be said that he that drinks of it shall never thirst. That is, it will quench all the deep longings of the spirit which lie at the secret springs of action. It is the cordial that penetrates all the diseased mechanism of the soul, and restores what was paralyzed and defective. It is the specific of a divine physician for a sin-diseased creature. Where has it proved a failure? Millions have tested it; but as yet not one has come forward to dispute, from experience, its satisfying qualities. What does the soul of man long for, which it cannot impart? Does he seek strength? It infuses it. The man who drinks it becomes strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. He is a match for the devil, and can successfully resist him. He has the mastery over his former masters, his sinful habits. He can now firmly refuse all the pressing solicitations of his former companions to join them in the haunts of vice. Is not this power? Does he seek peace of mind? It has a wonderfully soothing influence. As oil poured on the waters breaks down the waves, so this water prevents the billows of trouble from agitating the soul. Fears are allayed. The fever of a troubled conscience is cooled down. The irritating influences of sin are neutralized. A lasting peace progresses as the foundations of trouble are undermined and swept away by daily draughts from this fountain.

We speak not of health. Spiritual strength and spiritual peace are its offspring and attendants. Does he seek joy? As the thirsty traveller, after a toilsome march under a burning sun, deems a cup of cold water a ravishing luxury, more precious than gold, so does the sin-parched sinner deem this living water from heaven's fountain, a priceless luxury. It is inspiring. It is exhilarating. Bright visions rise before the mind; and the clouds of sadness are dissipated as the mists of the morning. Before it lie opened the exhaustless treasures of paradise. The glory and the beauty of that land stretch far out before the enraptured vision; and what is all the tinsel glory of a court, of a ball-room, or of a theatre compared with this?

Sinner, would you be happy, yes gloriously happy even on earth, try this water. It will make you forget all your sorrows, and it will flood all your soul with pure and satisfying bliss. Here is strength for the oppressed of sin and the devil. Here is peace for the troubled in spirit that know no rest by day or night. Here is joy for the mourning, the sad, and the lonely, whose day on earth has been clouded, and whose hours of sunshine have been few and far between.

Third, it is *never-failing*. What it is to-day, it shall be when countless ages have run their course. It proceeds from a source that only fails when the self-existing Jehovah ceases to be. How short-

lived are all the joys and all the glories of earth? They dry up in an hour; they fade like a leaf. But here is something which is exempt from the fate of the products of a sin-cursed earth; it has its origin in heaven, and is sustained from this exterior and exalted source. It has supplied the wants of many; it shall continue to supply the wants of more. The generations that have passed away from earth have tasted its healing waters; and generations yet to come shall enjoy the same blessed privilege in greater numbers. Its volume has been small, as it glided from the temple of God; but it has increased as it rolled onward, and as it was sought for by the children of men, and it shall keep pace with the demand until the whole redeemed church of the Lamb have tasted the loving kindness of God. But we contemplate not only its diffusion in time, but its extension through eternity. It will not only bless the willing and obedient on earth but also bless the saved for ever in heaven. And as the comforts of earth diminish, its consolations abound. When flesh and heart faint and fail, it proves a strength and a joy to the drooping spirit. And when death has closed the eyes to the earthly channels in which it was sought and found, the spirit finds itself walking beside the same stream, enlarged to a river, and proceeding directly from the throne of God. O that river of life! O that river of joy! Every

drop is bliss most pure, most ravishing. To be beside it for ever! To see its mighty volume roll on for ever! To have unrestrained access to it for ever! This is heaven indeed.

And now, reader, do not forget that this water is offered most freely on earth. No money could purchase it—no money is asked for it. It was purchased for sinners. It is now offered to them as a gift. Come, then, without money and without price, and partake of the provision, the best provision of your heavenly Father. Do you say, where is this living water, where shall I find it? Do not be startled, do not be offended. It is CHRIST. He is the fountain of life. He is the living water. Do you say, you cannot understand this? Go and try. Ask of him this life-giving water, and the first taste of it will make dark things light. You shall know of this doctrine whether it be of God, or whether it is a vain imagination of man. It can cost you little to try. Do not condemn what you have not known, and what you will not take the trouble to investigate. You need this water, and must perish without it. Now for once act the man. Put that innate enmity against God beneath your feet, and go to Christ and humbly and reverently ask this priceless gift of living water.—It shall be yours.

II. WHO ARE INVITED TO PARTAKE OF THIS
LIVING WATER.

The invitation is in the most general terms. "Let him that is athirst come : and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." In similar language the prophet Isaiah was instructed to cry, many centuries before this, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money—come." The thirsty, the poor, any one that pleases. Can invitation be more general than this? As was becoming, the thirsty have the first offer—for who care for water like the thirsty? But that none may be debarred from coming who have any desire to taste and try, the offer is extended to all who choose to have it.

First, then, let the thirsty know that they are invited. But who are the thirsty? All who crave what this living water can supply. But what can it supply? All the wants of the sinful soul of man. What are these wants? They are numerous ; and and are all associated with ideas of Satan, sin, earth, death, judgment, hell, God, and heaven. Reader, does your soul thirst for spiritual mercies? Perhaps under one of these terms you may find your case described.

Ye that groan under Satan's yoke, come ! You have been in bondage—you feel that bondage. It is oppressive ; it is crushing. You would be free,

but have no power. You are filled with alarm, and yet you cannot escape. The enemy has bound you with fetters—your soul is bowed down—distress and anguish have laid hold on you. Come and try this living water. Christ shall say, 'Be free,' and your chains shall fall, Satan's power shall be broken, and his yoke shall no more bend your soul to the dust.

Ye that mourn the guilt and dominion of sin, come! You know that you have sinned. Iniquities compass you about: sins innumerable rise up before you. You are startled and terrified at the thought that for all these God shall bring you into judgment. You feel that you have no valid excuse, and sad experience has taught you that sin is too strong for you. When you would rise up, it casts you down—when you would be pure it casts you back into the mire. What are you to do? Guilt is weighing you down. It is too heavy for you. You cannot throw it off. And sin cleaves to you; you cannot cast it down as a rejected garment. It is within, and you cannot take it out. Is there no relief in this distressing perplexity. Poor, distracted sinner, there is. Come, taste this fountain. Here, the guilty lose their burdens. Here, the defiled lose all their stains.

Ye that are dissatisfied with earth, come! It has not met your expectations. You looked for much, and you obtained but little. Your day of

buoyant hope from earth has passed. Its dreams have not been realized. And what you have enjoyed has been fleeting as the summer's breeze, You have seen friends and relatives pass away, and gloomy shadows stretch over dwellings once filled with light and joy, and you have sighed at the desolations of earth, and you have longed for something more durable, something more satisfying than earth. And to this must be added the injustice, the ingratitude, the unfaithfulness you have experienced from man. You have been ready to exclaim—O earth, what hast thou here that I should desire to live! You would not live away, your spirit would fly away and be at rest. Come, then, and taste this soul-satisfying water. Drink, and you shall never more frequent the broken cisterns of earth as the sources of your joy: your soul shall know full satisfaction for ever.

Ye that are alarmed at the prospect of death, come! You have seen others die; you have joined in the solemn procession that marched to the resting-place of the dead; you have read there the names of one and another whom you knew among the living, but who are now silent and alone and forgotten in the darkness of the grave. You have felt that you too must die, and the thought sent a chilling, trembling sensation over your frame. You did not wish to die. You were attached to many on earth; and you were hoping to enjoy

much of life yet. But still the thought would intrude,—you must die; and you may die soon, and why not look the matter in the face, and prepare to take your turn like a man. That thought you could not cherish; oh! it was so gloomy; it was so unpleasant. But yet it often still returns; and it always brings uneasiness, as you think it to be a forewarner of an early death. Dying fellow sinner, death is coming—it must come—and will not tarry. You and I must go at the call of this officer of the Almighty. But we may meet him with joy, and with expressions of delight welcome his approach. Come, drink this life-giving water, and you shall never feel the bitterness of death. It will make death to you a narrow stream, through which you can safely wade; and it will reveal to you a land of glory on the other side to which you will gladly hasten.

Ye that dread a judgment day, come! The great judgment is before you. Your life will be disclosed. Every secret thing will be brought to light. No room then for excuses; no room for evasions. No allowance for regrets; no door for repentance. Life as it was; deeds as they are shall then be revealed. Would you dread the uncovering of your sins before heaven, earth and hell? Would you fear the frown of your Judge on that eventful day? Would you tremble at the doom which your misspent life merits? O come

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to this purifying stream. All who drink of it are pardoned; a white stone is given to them and on it a name which they alone can read; they are dressed in robes of righteousness, and their place is on the right of the Judge, the place of the justified. The judgment will have no terrors for you—it is the day of your complete redemption. Drink now, and your path is henceforth to honor.

Ye that are in anguish lest you should be cast into hell, come! You fear the anger of a just and holy God, and well you may. You know that you have sinned and that he has you in his power to destroy you if he please. He has declared that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and you can say nothing if he should cast you into that burning lake. Why may he not do it now, even this very hour? His mercy waits, his patience lasts. Come, then, now to this fountain of mercy. There is no wrath for those who drink this water. O shall it keep you from hell, and will you not drink it. Taste, and flee from the coming wrath, and that wrath shall not overtake you.

Ye that sigh for the presence of God, come! You have felt that your life consists in the favor of God. As the heart pants for the water brooks, so pant ye for the coming of God to your souls. You are in a dry and thirsty land without him. Nothing affords you comfort in his absence. He is your light, your hope, your joy, your comfort.

How can you be at rest when he is away. You are indeed thirsty, come, then, O come, for the well is opened for you. Its living streams flow freely by, and you are welcome. In Christ you will see the face of God. It has no frown for you. He will lift on you the light of his countenance, and your sorrows shall disappear as the dew of the morning before the rising sun.

Ye that long for heaven, come! You would be away from this troubled world, and be at rest with the saints above. Your thoughts are often on that better land, and you wander down in imagination to the shore, and with the telescope of faith you behold walking in white your kindred who have gone before; and their songs of joy seem to be wafted across the separating stream, and increase the longing of your soul to join them. Come then, and come often, to this living water. It will give you all of heaven that can be enjoyed on earth. O sinner, you sometimes think that heaven would be very grand and very good if only here,—come and taste the joys of heaven on earth at this flowing fountain. If there is the faintest breathing for that happy land, O come and know the bliss of it while walking in the shadows of this sin-smitten world.

But if some shrink from classing themselves among the thirsty, let them know that still they may be included among the invited. The words

of Heaven's last invitation are—"and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." If any man refuses this water, it will not be forced upon him; but if he will, he may take it. Nothing could be more generous than this. When the great of earth invite to a rich entertainment, their practice is to call the noble, the wealthy, the learned, the distinguished, and not to make such an indiscriminate invitation as this. But our merciful and bountiful heavenly Father is not like his fallen creature, man. This is His bounty. Who now shall deny himself or deprive himself of this inestimable blessing? If he die, shall he blame God for his death? If he descend to where no drop of water shall ever be tasted, even in the flames of hell, shall he have excuse for his woes?—shall he have any mitigation of his sufferings by reason of inability to avoid these tortures? Alas! that poor consolation will not be his. Heaven now invites him,—if he has any wish or will to live in glory for ever,—to come to this fountain of life. The invitation is in his hands; the voice of God sounds in his ears; a choice must be made; accept or refuse are the terms before him; one must be taken and the other left—no evasion of choice; no neutrality; hesitation itself is condemned.

Reader, are not *you* invited? Come, then, and be saved, if others will not. Don't put away from you a blessing such as this. Don't deny yourself

the advantages of its possession for even an hour. Go now to Christ, and crave this offered mercy, and you shall know that he is faithful to his promise.

III. WHO BRING THE INVITATION.

Three parties cry to the sinner, 'Come ;' the Spirit and the Bride, and he who has heard their call. Every agency fitted to spread the precious tidings is employed. The Spirit holds the first place. He has seen the arid waste of earth. He has marked in pity the parched and withered soul of man. And he has been a party to the opening of this fountain in the desert, to save the souls of the perishing from all the horrors of the second death. Shall his call be despised? He it is who waters creation, and brings out all its beauties. He seeks now to restore the lost life and health and beauty of man. Gently and softly his words drop into the soul. He seeks to allure and persuade—not to entice and deceive. His voice is one of love and kindness. No harshness, no severity now proceeds from him. He would win back the lost confidence of man. He would kindle anew the love of the creature to his Maker. And this by proofs of mercy and of love which amaze the enlightened soul. He arouses attention to spiritual things by the dealings of his providence. Death

and eternity are forced upon the consideration of those formerly careless. He calls conscience from his slumber, and sends him to his watchtower to give warning as directed. The eyes of the sinner are now opened to his guilt and destitution and danger. Then the Spirit comes with the sweet tidings of hope and salvation. There is a well in the wilderness, despair must not be entertained; that well is for such as he; why should he die? The voice still whispers within,—Go and try? Have you tried? Try again. The well is not far off, seek and ye shall find. There is a drawing, an increased craving for this water, a restless anxiety to taste it, an urgency to go forward, the very words of prayer are suggested—and an unseen One in tones of sweetest kindness, seems constantly to say—'Come.' Obey that voice. It is the voice of God. You see not yet the well, but go on and you shall see it. Faith leads right to it. Believe the word, and go, and to your enraptured soul the welling up of that living fountain shall be revealed. Do you not hear that voice now? It says, 'Come.' Again in solemn stillness, it says, 'Come.' Rise and go. Fear not; to Christ you go; to him you speak. There can be no deception. Believe and ask,—you shall receive.

The Bride, the church, believers bound in a covenant of love to their husband and head, Christ, join in this call, 'Come.' They, indeed, are specially

entrusted with the spreading of this invitation. When they cease to cry to sinners, they disregard the command of their King. Through them the world is to hear of the fulness of grace treasured up in Christ for the sons of Adam. While a thirsty sinner roams this weary wilderness, and while deluded men resort to broken cisterns for the wants of their dying souls, the church must lift up her voice loudly and patiently, and call them to the stream of life flowing from the smitten rock. She has called, and she will call, and while the Spirit of her King is with her, she will rejoice to call, and not in vain, to her famishing fellow creatures. Who knows better than she their wants? Were they not her own? Have her sympathies for others been dried up by her faith in Christ? The very reverse is true. Her heart is enlarged. She is pained for the woes of her kindred. She is ready to lay down her life for their salvation. Say not, O say not, she is unwilling to say, 'Come.' She has tasted that the Lord is gracious indeed, and she is willing to share with others her dearest joys. All the promises to her were verified, and she may go to all the world and say, trust him as I have done and find the truth of what I affirm. Experience is strong evidence. Send the enriched to sound the praises of the benefactor. Let the liberated proclaim the virtues of the redeemer. And commission the cured to

recommend the skill of the physician. She fears no reduction of her comforts by the numbers that may accept her invitation. The ocean may be drained but not the fountain from which she drinks. Let them come in crowds—let them come in myriads—the stream is inexhaustible. All are invited—why not come?

But that the glad tidings may have the fullest publicity, he who has heard, or does now hear, is enjoined to say—‘Come!’

“Salvation, O Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth’s remotest nation
Has learned Messiah’s name.
Waft, waft ye winds the story,
And you, ye waters roll,
Till like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole.”

Will not the traveller in the desert, who has been separated from his companions in search of water, shout to his fellows when he has espied the long desired fountain?—and will not he who is nearest to him catch the joyful sound and repeat it with gladsome emphasis to his more distant friends? No argument is needed to enforce this duty. It is the outburst of nature. Let the sound be apprehended, let its full import be known, and, selfishness excluded, who would not spread it?

Who would refuse to communicate to his fellows tidings of infinite value to them and to him, when their participation in the mercies revealed would not lessen his share but increase his happiness in the enjoyment of it? The very spirit of Christianity is an inviting, proclaiming spirit. It receives to diffuse as well as to enjoy, and to enjoy in diffusing. The hearer, while he called, was to lead the way. It was not, 'Go!'—but 'Come!' The tidings were precious to himself and he would go whether others followed or not. But his knowledge of their wants as well as his own, prompts him to take them with him if he can. If a large building is in flames in its lower stories, and in its upper are many persons vainly striving to find some door of escape, and if one of these hear a cry from the street directing where to go, will he not shout it to the rest as well as rush to find the way himself? Thus should the hearer of the gospel do. His life and the life of many others is at stake. Beneath them the flames of hell are burning fiercely. Has he seen his danger, has he heard the welcome sound of a Saviour—the way of escape—and shall he not cry aloud to others that they also may hear and flee from approaching wrath? O that men saw their danger! O that they felt their need of Christ! Then would they flee to him as their only refuge. Like Hagar in the wilderness, they will perish unless the Lord

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open their eyes to the fountain of life flowing freely beside them. How sad to perish so near to deliverance! To be hurled down and crushed by the storm, while a refuge is within reach! To die of thirst, while a pure fountain pours forth its living waters at a few yards distance! O sinners hear now Heaven's last call, or you die. Come, and say to others, 'Come!' Bring them with you. There is enough for all. The river of life will supply all your wants. You are welcome—COME.

CHAPTER VII.

God meets the returning Sinner.

“Therefore say thou unto them—Thus saith the Lord of hosts;
Turn ye unto me saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn
unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.”
ZECH. I CH. 3 v.

It is a deplorable fact that the unregenerate man walks not only apart from God but away from him. Born with a heart estranged from God, the developement of his faculties has developed this estrangement, so that his progress through life is a progressive separation from God. The judgment betrayed by ignorance, and inclination confirmed by habit, both tend in the same direction. The end of such a course cannot be doubtful. Every step from God is a step from light, purity, peace and life. Hence, the course being short, the unrenewed man is hourly approaching a limit beyond which darkness and death hold eternal sway. Now God does not delight in the death of the sinner. Therefore he has no pleasure in that sinful departure from him which results in death. So far from this, he sincerely and earnestly desires

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man's salvation, and therefore seeks his return as the only means to that end. In carrying out this purpose of mercy, he employs as heralds of his will, not the seraphim and cherubim that wait around his throne, but men of the lost race, inferior, fallen spirits confined to tabernacles of clay. "We have,"—said an apostle,—“this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” These ambassadors are all taught of God. They have been enlightened by his Holy Spirit to understand and appreciate his plan of salvation, and their hearts have been brought into sympathy with his designs of love and mercy towards their lost fellow creatures. Thus qualified they never fail to be efficient, whatever measure of success may attend their mission. To such an one the divine command came—‘Say thou unto them—Turn ye unto me and I will turn unto you saith the Lord of hosts?’

Reader, examine these words. Weigh their evident import. Reflect on the great disparity between him who is addressing and them who are addressed, and on the relationship in which they stand, at this time, to one another; and the conviction must be forced upon you that this message places the *honorable* character of Jehovah in a glorious light. They are weak, erring, offending; can it be considered severe on his part, or in any way unbecoming, to allow them to proceed, and

reap the result of their own deliberate choice? He would be justified in doing much more. Their weakness is no extenuation of their guilt; and cannot excuse them from receiving merited punishment. Their folly is their own,—chosen, loved, persevered in; in which they have set themselves up as wiser than God, and consequently rejected his most friendly advice. Would there be any injustice in punishing them for the pride, obstinacy and rebellion which they have shown in pursuing such a course? They have persistently offended him by transgressing his express commands. Would there be any impropriety in measuring out to them their due reward? But instead of crushing them in their weakness, confounding them in their folly, or pouring out the terrors of his justice for their offences, he kindly calls them to return to him, that peace and friendship may be established. How magnanimous! How honorable! Is this the manner of men? Is this their treatment of their foes? Do not the strong leave the weak to sue for peace? Do not the mighty continue their oppression of the feeble, until the latter cry out in their despair, for mercy? Is the folly of an enemy rectified by the voluntary advice of his opponent? Does he not rejoice to see his mistake, and rather accelerates than impedes his course to ruin? And is not the spirit of revenge rampant in the fallen spirit of man? Will he bear offences

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without retaliation? And how long will he return good for evil, when the offender is a subject and he a ruler, and when the kindness is perverted into increased occasions for sin? Well may we exclaim—"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?—he retaineth not his anger for ever because he delighteth in mercy!"

But the call stands not alone. To it is added a gracious promise—"I will turn unto you." This discloses the *benign* character of God. None understand as well as he the value of his presence to an immortal soul. None can comprehend as he does the miseries to which a departure from him inevitably leads. He sees what the sinner does not; that he is momentarily approaching the regions of despair within which no voice is heard but that of wailing—that his course is right out to the open gulf of perdition, and that already the ice is bending beneath his feet, and here and there, on both sides, the broken places where transgressors, such as he, fell through and sank to rise no more. He pities him, warns him of his danger, and calls loudly to him to return. But this is not all, he will go to meet him. His return is so gratifying that the depths of Jehovah's benignity are moved, and he waits not until the poor outcast has found his way back, but with every returning step on the sinner's part, advances to meet him, until

as yet, it may be, a great way off from settled peace and rest he receives and embraces him, and in the exercise of infinite love, wipes out, at once and for ever, from the book of his remembrance, all his misdeeds. O unconverted reader! could anything more hopeful be presented to you? Can you look for anything more encouraging? God will return to you, as you return to him. God will abide with you, while you adhere to him. God will satisfy your soul for time and eternity, when you make him your chief satisfaction. It is he who now speaks, and his voice is one of love, of kindness, of pity. Will you not hearken and allow it to penetrate your inmost soul, that awakening the dormant feelings of your too long impenitent heart, it may meet with this prompt response from you—'It is the voice of my Father and my God, I will arise and return *at once*?'

We must open up this heart-reaching subject: its most minute details are full of interest to the intelligent soul desirous of salvation.

I. THE CALL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS.

"*Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts.*" The call is to those not now with God, to those turned away from him, and going farther from him—to sinners. They have been estranged *in heart* from God, then in *life* and *conversation*. The

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fruits of that departure have been partly developed, and will soon be matured. These consequences God would prevent. Hence the call. How are they to comply with it? It is not a physical turning, it is not a transportation from one place to another. It is a change of mind and with it, its natural result, a change of conduct. What deflections or aberrations from the path of light, rectitude, and purity has the mind undergone? It has left the path of light, and in its darkness it has entertained incorrect and unworthy notions of God. It has regarded God as untruthful, and hence unworthy of credit. The idea is cherished that he threatens what he has no intention to execute—and promises what he has no purpose to bestow. He is regarded as so indifferent to the wishes and wants of his creatures, that in the mere exercise of his sovereign pleasure, without any other consideration, they are indiscriminately given over to destruction or torture—that as having no interest in, no sympathy, no parental solicitude for the creatures to whom he has given being, he is not entitled to their confidence. Others, in their deeper darkness, construing his manifest opposition to sin into a natural unfriendliness to the work of his hands, have arrived at the conclusion that their own pleasure is their highest law. If such notions of the supreme God have prevailed, it is no matter of wonder that the principles of morality,

which are but the emanations of the divine character, and the principles by which he governs his rational creation, should be misunderstood and misrepresented. Evil is conceived to be good, and good is reckoned evil. Instead of rejoicing in the paths of love, truth, justice, and benevolence, the mind is now found frequenting the ways of hatred, malice, envy, jealousy, revenge, pride, lying, covetousness, deceit, dishonesty, and such like. These are the ways of the world; they are not the ways of God, and they mark how widely man has separated from his Maker. In one or other of these paths of error every child of earth is found wandering, and no mere persuasion of man will constrain any one of them to walk in the ways of rectitude. Such departures from integrity leave their stains. Every aberration leaves its scar—the spirit is distorted and defiled, every repetition deepens the wound and increases the corruption, till the wandering spirit wears the aspect of dejection, perversion, and impurity. It has lost all desire for holiness, and delights in sin and is clothed with iniquity.

From these ruinous errors God would recall sinners. 'Turn ye unto me,' saith he. But how will they, entertaining such notions of him, return to him? He will not force them back—he will not drag them as captives, if they return it must be of their own choice. He would have them

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abandon their errors, by convincing them that they are such. Let them examine them—let them bring them out to the light of reason. Is it reason that the one living and true God should lie unto his creatures? What object could he have in deceiving them either by promises or threatenings? He is not depending on them. He stands in no dread of them. They cannot add anything to his fullness or sufficiency. There is no necessity for lying on his part; and we can conceive of no good resulting from it, either to himself or his creatures. Is it reasonable then to suppose that he should lie for the mere sake of lying, or in utter recklessness? There is no reason to suppose such a thing, there is every reason for the contrary; and any man who believes that God would lie on these grounds, would with more consistency believe that there is no God. It is an absolute and fundamental truth that God cannot lie, and of course has never lied. Let poor, erring man therefore take God at his word. Let him give implicit credit to every utterance from heaven.

Is it reasonable to suppose that God, who has given such proofs of his wisdom and goodness, in the formation of his creatures, and in the provision for their wants, should cast off the highest of his creatures, his rational creatures, without cause or consideration?—that he should feel no interest in his offspring, no sympathy in their suffering, no

joy in their happiness?—that he should take delight in their agonies or interminable sufferings. It cannot be. Such a heartless, cruel, tyrannical nature could never have given being to anything good, or established such arrangements as directly tend to happiness. Away with such unworthy thoughts of God! God loves his creatures. He made them good, and capable of happiness, and delights in seeing them happy. His justice requires the punishment of sin, and this necessitates the removal of the sinner from his presence, but in this act of severity he has not ceased to be good—an indifference to sin would be the destruction of all happiness.

As correct notions of God lie at the foundation of a return to him, so a true discrimination between good and evil is the first step to a return from sin. The benighted soul has followed evil as if it were good, how shall he be convinced of its true character? It is clear that so long as he conceives evil to be good, he will not abandon it. Let him reflect. Let him examine. Can there be good in deceit, dishonesty, lying, envy and the kindred propensities of the human heart? If they have no element of good in them, can their indulgence or practice have any other effect than evil? The voice of conscience and the lessons of experience give no doubtful answer. They universally proclaim,—the end of these things is death. Then,

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why should a man pierce his own soul with the sting of remorse? Why hesitate to cast the poisonous serpent from his bosom? Why carry for one moment longer the coal that is burning its way to his very vitals? If the traveller has wandered to the verge of the precipice, should he not now, at last, hear the friendly voice that recalls him from destruction?

And is the garment of impurity so honourable that a man should refuse to cast it aside, and accept the robe of holiness? Are the stains and scars of moral pollution so desirable that every friendly effort to remove them should be rejected? Is the leprosy of sin so pleasing, agreeable and attractive that the proffered aid of a never-failing physician should be despised?

O reader if thou art still a sinner wandering away from thy Maker, hear his call today—"Turn unto me." Open thine eyes and see how thou hast been beguiled by the great deceiver. Hast thou thought thy Maker false, cold, cruel, hostile to his own creatures? Away with such false and God-dishonoring thoughts. Thy Maker is true, kind, friendly to all who will confide in him, to all who will obey him. He is light, and in him is no darkness. He is love, and in him is no hatred to anything that should be loved. Hast thou called right, wrong, and wrong, right? Open thine eyes—can these bitter fruits in thine own experience come

from a good tree? Never! Thou art deceived. Thou hast believed a lie. God calls thee to abandon these false notions—to change thy mind—and call things by their proper names. God is truth; turn to him, and he shall shew thee the path from which thou hast strayed, and he will cause thee to walk therein. Thou art defiled—disgraced—what canst thou do? As a leprous wretch thou art an outcast from the holy God, and there is no place for thee within the Holy City. But lo! a fountain for thee, poor sinner! See! it is near. Ah amazing! it is the Redeemer's blood. Turn to it—wash, and thou shalt be clean.

But the erring has not been confined to the heart. Indeed, it could not be. It has been produced in the life, and by continuous practice has formed the character of the soul. The great beguiler has succeeded; his baits have been seized—his suggestions adopted, and the doings of man are in direct opposition to the will of God. The path of life is left, when lawful things are pursued to an unlawful extent. This is *the sin* of enlightened Christianized communities. Business is followed so closely as to leave little or no time for the enlightenment of the mind, or the renovation of the soul. The relationships of life are allowed to exact and absorb so much time and attention, that a renewed relationship with the eternal Father, and the holy family of heaven is overlooked and

neglected. Amusements or recreations of an exclusively vain or worldly nature fill the minds of many, specially the young of families in easy circumstances, to the destruction of all ability or desire for pleasures of a higher and holier character. But the wide divergence from God is most clearly marked, when men sin with a high hand—acting in direct opposition to his express command. Alas! for earth, no habited spot of it is free from these glaring proofs of hostility to heaven. Everywhere sin openly lifts its head, and proclaims war against God. Every command laid down for man's guidance is proudly and recklessly transgressed. Those which specially respect God's honor are no more regarded than those which concern man's welfare. Considerations of personal safety more frequently deter from a commission of the latter than of the former; man, in his darkness, being more afraid of the wrath of his fellow-creature than of his almighty Creator. No higher proof of this lamentable separation need be looked for, than the fact that man's heart is unmoved by any amount of dishonor done to God; and in no degree interested in any efforts which aim to please him.

Of course, they who live away from God, and have no fellowship with him, seek no enjoyment in him. They turn their anxious eyes to the creature alone. A poor sort of enjoyment they

often have. It is always fleeting, never lasting, often satiating and as often perishing in the using, seldom satisfying, and frequently debasing. The divine teacher represents the food of the prodigal as the husks on which swine were fed. The food of the children of God is called the finest of the wheat, and pure honey from the rock. Where shall we find the wanderers from heaven seeking their joys? They are seen in the social meeting where the name of God is excluded, and the great things of eternity never obtain a passing allusion. They are found in the ball-room where vanity is the presiding genius, and the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye hold open court. They are swarming in the theatres where the devil holds his grand reviews, and where exhibiting all the pomp and splendor of his kingdom, he gathers up fresh recruits in large numbers, and stimulates his old hacks to redoubled speed in their hell-ward career. But who shall mention the haunts of intemperance and vice, where the fallen spirit wallows in the mire? I pass them by. Every depraved heart will find some impure stream at which to slake his perverted appetite.

And now, reader, consider that it is to these vain, wicked, polluted wanderers the Lord of hosts sends this gracious message—'Turn unto me!' They are fools. While they are so eagerly grasping the things of earth, the time and opportunity

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of securing a glorious and eternal inheritance are passing beyond their reach. Engrossing themselves with repairing and fastening the ties which death is constantly breaking, they neglect to secure the spiritual bond, the heavenly relationship, which the hand of death can never sever. Instead of the amusements which leave an aching void when they are past, the fields of benevolence and devotion would open up scenes of enjoyment where perennial verdure and beauty never cease to charm. Return, O wandering sinner to God, and paradise again shall be your possession—God will be your Father, the holy angels your brethren, the saints of all ages your kindred and companions—you shall drink of a river every drop of which is life giving, and your joys while countless ages roll by shall know no diminution! What say you to this call? Will you go?

From your sins God calls you. What advantage is it to you to tread under foot the statutes of the Most High? His honor may not concern you, but it dearly concerns himself, and he will make you know it. Abandon your evil ways. Every sin is a wound inflicted on yourself, and a wound that no mortal hand can cure—a sore that will fester and give pain to all eternity unless cured in sovereign pity by the God against whom you sin. What infatuation to attempt to withstand the Almighty! Your own heart will yet condemn

you—your fellow men whom you injure will rise up in judgment against you—God himself will lay hold on vengeance. Turn then at God's call—you leave nothing behind that is worth the taking—your escape is from sorrow, woe and damnation.

From your lusts God calls you. You are feeding on ashes—God would give you the bread of heaven—you are herding with swine, God would place you among angels—you are intoxicated by the poison of sin, God would give you the living water from his eternal throne. Will you tarry for a moment? O rather exclaim—'Lord, I will come—I do *now* come!'

To whom would you come? "Turn unto ME saith the Lord of hosts." Consider this. It is to the Leader of the hosts of heaven and earth that you are to come. You are not to return to any subordinate officer—to any mere creature however high in rank—but to the great and absolute Commander-in-chief of all armies rational and irrational, celestial, terrestrial and infernal. Shall you disobey this summons? Shall you disregard this invitation? Oh, never! You are sent for in mercy, not in anger. It is to save not to destroy, to bless not to curse that the great Leader calls you to his seat. He is your Maker. Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it—'What have I to do with thee?' He is your owner, will you dare dispute his right to dispose of you as he pleases? Will

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you deny his claim to your immediate service, or assert your independence? Nearer still, he is your Father, should you not obey him? Must not his intentions be good when he invites his poor distracted, dying children to his happy and well-supplied home? Can he who sent his only begotten Son to die for his fallen children on earth, be prompted by any other feelings but those of love and mercy in thus calling you to him. Arise, and go back at once, poor child of earth, to your waiting heavenly Father. Go in humility, for he is great; go in penitence, for he is just and holy; go in confidence, for he is sincere and very gracious; and go without one hour's delay, for the salvation of your soul may depend upon it.

II. THE PROMISE OF THE LORD OF HOSTS.

"And I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." The call comes not alone. He who was pleased to call, condescends to disclose his feelings and reveal his intentions. His feelings are benignant, and his intentions not barely peaceful but generous. He will meet the returning sinner. What condescension! To have paid any attention to any request from the sinner, after he had found or won his way wholly back to God, would have been undeniably an act of grace; but to ask him to return and to go to meet him when yet a great way

off, with no instruments of vengeance but with every indication of overflowing parental love, is an amazing evidence of the divine benevolence. If such is the Lord's disposition towards the sinner, there can be no doubt as to the nature of his intentions in seeking this interview. He seeks reconciliation—the restoration of his fallen creature to his favor. And if this meeting should take place in the manner desired, how far would the sinner be affected by this promise?—what results would most surely follow this meeting?

The past would be forgiven. And what a stretch of mercy and grace would that be! God's authority had been disregarded habitually. The voice of the world, the suggestion of the devil, or the evil desire of his own heart was sufficient, at any time, to set aside the command of the Most High. The attitude which his proud spirit wore, ever said—Who is the Lord that I should obey him?—I know not the Lord, neither will I obey him. And if anything could add provocation to this sin, it was the utter insignificance of the trifle for the sake of which he could put his foot upon the law of God. Now, all this is forgiven. The sinner has felt and acknowledged the authority of the great God, and has bowed in the dust before him; and the folly and ignorance and guilt of the past is graciously put out of sight. But he had added hatred to contempt of authority. Every thing

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peculiar to God he had disliked. He was disgusted with his holiness, he could not bear his justice, his worship was most wearisome, and his laws enslaving. His very name, except when profanely used, awakened an uneasy feeling in his soul. How can all this ill-will be forgotten? How can such an inveterate enemy be kindly treated? He is, for he has bemoaned the enmity which he had wickedly cherished; and his hatred is for ever forgiven. But he had insulted God by refusing to believe him, thereby making him a liar. Though reason had been added to authority, and self-interest to reason, still the sinner had refused to confide in any thing which God said. Can this great provocation be forgotten?—It is. The sinner has been repented of, and now the returning sinner will accept God's simple word against a universe of rebels. But he has sunk so low, he has disgraced himself by so many vile sins, that in his own, and in God's sight, he is an impure wretch, how can these sins or the remembrance of the past be effaced? They can—they can. They are so heartily condemned and abhorred by the sinner, that he who comes to meet him, can apply his own most precious blood, and leave not a stain behind. O glorious truth to the anxious soul! The dark, vile, shameful past is wiped out—for ever wiped out; and the man stands forth liberated, unburdened, purified once again to do his best to

serve and glorify him who is now both Redeemer and God.

The future is secured by a covenant of peace. God does not do his work by halves. When he saves, he saves for ever. This is effected by a covenant engagement. "Incline your ear and come unto me—hear and your soul shall live—and I will make *an everlasting covenant with you*, even the sure mercies of David." This covenant is of special advantage to the reconciled sinner. He is able of himself to do nothing; but this willing surrender of himself and all that he has to God, to be disposed of at the divine pleasure, renders it consistent on God's part to secure the most precious blessings to him. By the engagement, the sinner now restored is to love and serve God all his days, and God passes his word to grant mercy to pardon, grace to sustain, and light to guide him, and promises never to leave nor forsake the soul but to bring it home to everlasting glory. But may not the sinner's misconduct neutralize and destroy all these advantages? Not entirely or permanently. The blessings may be diminished, or their enjoyment greatly curtailed, by reason of the negligence or sin of the creature; but the grand excellence of this covenant is, that it recognizes the weakness of the sinner, and makes provision against such a breach of the covenant as would necessitate the entire withdrawal of the

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Holy Spirit. O precious covenant in which divine grace effects all: the believer is preserved and God is glorified!

Another result of the meeting is that his presence will assimilate you to himself. All are influenced by the company which they keep. The stronger spirit influences the weaker for good or evil. Intercourse with the devil, a great and powerful spirit, must darken and corrupt the mind. In like manner, intercourse with God, of the intimate nature referred to, must enlighten, ennoble and beautify the soul. You cannot rise from a dark pit, and stand in the beams of a summer's sun, although they be but the slanting rays of the morning, without feeling and being penetrated by their light and warmth. And can you meet with him who fills all heaven with glory, and not be powerfully impressed with a sense of his transcendent excellence? But the influence experienced will not be simply a natural result but an intentional transformation. He will manifest his glory to you in a special manner, and for a special reason, if you will return to him. He will shine upon you to fill you with light—he will breathe upon you to fill you with life—he will turn his hand upon you and transform you—and softening your heart to receive the impression of his glory, he will cause his own beauty to adorn you. All this you shall have in contrast to the repulsive wretchedness and debasing

deformity of your past condition. Reader, will you not now go and meet your God, and become for ever like him?

But more, you shall be for ever with him. He turns to you now with the intention never to turn away from you. He will keep near to you while on earth, and when you die—which will be very soon—he will take you up to be with himself, and so you shall be for ever with the Lord. He will bind you to himself by the bond of love, the strongest tie in heaven or earth. His presence will be so agreeable that you will never weary of being with him. His capacity to instruct, interest, and enrapture will be found to be inexhaustible. The reconciliation, peace, love and delight will be complete and everlasting. Thus will he fulfil the promise, "I will turn unto you."

To confirm the decided, and to induce the hesitating to an immediate decision to return to God, let me add,

III. SOME REASONS FOR TURNING TO GOD.

The past statements abound with arguments fitted to induce the sinner at once to seek a friendly interview with God, and they might be multiplied indefinitely. A few only of the simplest and most direct will now be noticed.

First, you can lose nothing by turning to God.

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You may have to part with much, but what you abandon cannot truly be regarded as a loss. Sin, shame, sorrow, evil companions, the devil himself will be left, but will these be counted any loss? If you have to give up what in themselves may be dear and valuable, as friends, relatives, property, home itself, it will be more than made up to you. Is there not truth in those words of Jesus: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life,"? Who would complain of such a transaction? Does any one reply—"But I would lose all my happiness—I would have to give up my joys and my pleasures and my life henceforth should be shrouded in darkness"?—O how mistaken! No lawful pleasure would be denied you—your earthly joys would be exchanged for others, sweeter, deeper, holier, and sunshine instead of darkness may brighten the rest of your days.

Second, you will gain much. At present you are in dishonor. Then you shall have honor. Now as outcast, a wanderer, a rebel—then a member of the family of God, protected, respected, supplied. Now clothed in the filthy garments of sin—then adorned with the robe of Immanuel's righteousness. Now a companion of wretched sinners—then a companion of saints. Now a follower of the devil

—then a disciple of Christ. Now under the curse of the Almighty, the heaviest brand of disgrace which any being can wear—then rejoicing under the parental blessing of the same glorious Being. Now travelling to prison, as a condemned rebel—then marching to glory under an escort of angels, as a trophy of divine grace. In one word, now a child of hell—then an heir of heaven.

You shall gain peace. Peace is a blessing which rank cannot give, riches cannot purchase, nor honors secure. It is a divine gift. It dwells only where the spirit of God dwells. There is no peace to those who are away from God, nor can they find peace while departing from him. The nations of the world are ever sighing in their restlessness, because they have revolted from their Maker. Sin is the disturbing element—and where it reigns, it will not suffer peace to rest the sole of her foot. When you turn to God, he will cast sin out, he will break the power of sin, and speak peace to the troubled conscience, he will silence all the thunders of the law which shakes the awakened soul with terrors, and will whisper the sweetest consolations to the agitated spirit. Instead of upbraiding with a remembrance of the past, he will order the ring to be produced and placed on the hand, as a token of his love. Let storms rage without, let losses, persecutions, bereavements, and troubles beset and repress, there will be calm within. Let Death,

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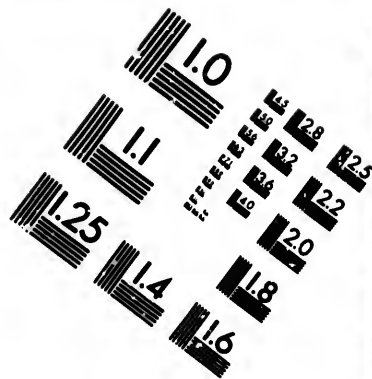
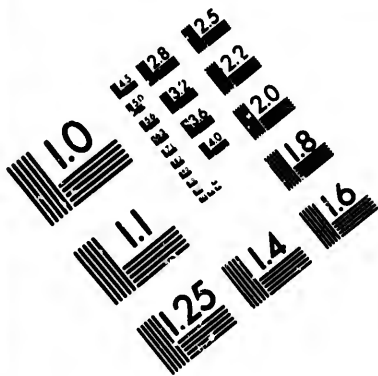
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the very king of terrors, come to frighten, the heavenly peace bestowed by Jesus meets and disarms him, when, assuming the garb of a ministering angel, he disrobes the soul of the encumbrance of the body, and permits it to pass untouched to the realms of everlasting peace.

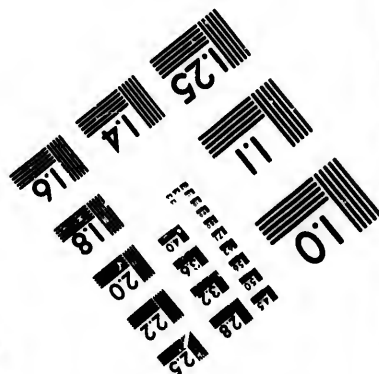
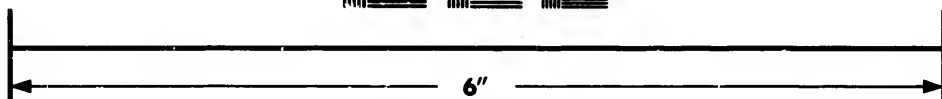
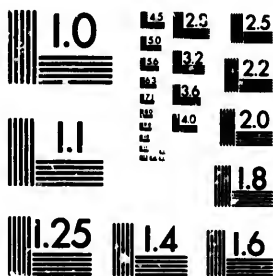
You will gain purity. While away from God you must remain impure. God alone can cleanse a soul defiled by sin. And whenever you return you shall be made clean. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word—that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But what, you reply, if I should be made pure?—Purity is the door to honor and happiness. No purity,—no honor, no happiness before God. Purity will admit you into the palace of the King Eternal, and permit you to behold his face. Purity will enroll you among the nobility of heaven, and give you a place among the angels of God. In comparison with it, the richest crown on earth, adorned with all the jewels that ever sparkled in a diadem, could not for a moment be looked at.

And let me simply say, you will gain eternal life in unending glory. If this has no value, I cease to speak. If it fail to induce you to return to God, nothing in the form of a reward can have any influence over you. Nothing can equal this.





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O let wisdom speak. Life, then, shall be yours.

Third, you will please God. The pleasure of your Maker should be no matter of indifference to you. It should delight you to please him. It should pain you to displease him. Now he is grieved at your folly, unbelief, and sin, and would rejoice to see you return, for he delights in mercy. Ought you not to please him in this matter above all things! Will you say,—'No! I will not please God even in what concerns my own salvation.' Ah then! you have no love to God—you are his enemy, and he will treat you as such.

For, fourth, if you turn not to him, you shall *burn*. So he has determined. All who obey not his gospel, his message of mercy, his call to repentance, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. And what that destruction is, he tells from the judgment seat. It is the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Will you now obey his call? A meeting with you he would have—a meeting he shall have. But it is for you to say where. He would meet you now, this very hour—on this side the grave—in this the only place of mercy. If you decline, or it may be only defer, he will meet you,—that you cannot avoid,—but it will be in wrath, not in pity, in a place of judgment, not of mercy, in eternity not in time—and as a *consuming fire*. O reader have you yet turned to

the Lord? If not, hasten, O hasten, and God may yet turn to you, and bringing all the glory of heaven with him, may embrace, welcome and bless you for ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

Self-denial indispensable to Salvation.

“ And if thy right eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” MATT. v CH. 29 v.

Nothing great or good is accomplished in this fallen world without difficulty. It is an easy matter like the dead tree to float down in the turbid torrent; it is quite another thing to stem the stream, and grasp a foothold on the sands of time, and strike deep the roots and throw wide the branches, defying alike the stormy winds and the rushing waters. It is one thing to go through the daily routine of passing and repassing between the field of labour and the table of refreshment, or the couch of rest; it is something very different to snatch up the hasty morsel at any moment, and do battle daily with a valiant and a vigilant foe. To lie like the inert mass of rock within the tide-mark to be overwhelmed or left dry by the flowing or ebbing waters, requires no effort; but, like the

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sea-plant, to float in all waters, and bear the head above every boisterous billow, is the work of the living, the energetic, and the brave.

The man who, with any foresight, sets himself to acquire wealth, distinction or honors, reckons on much self denial, much arduous toil and much patient, persevering labour. One act may, indeed, secure the object of his ambition, but is it not more generally the hard earnings of a lifetime? The American or Australian gold digger, while anxiously looking for the shining nugget which may at once elevate him to wealth, toils on, sinking his shaft deeper and deeper and enlarging his galleries, constantly swinging his pick-axe or pounding the stubborn quartz with his sledgehammer, and searching with untiring gaze for the shining specks of gold. Hard is his labour for the much coveted dust. The student who fixes an eager eye on the heights of fame follows his researches through the midnight hour, bending his mind with most resolute perseverance to comprehend his mathematical problem, to calculate a force in natural philosophy, or to estimate the result of the combination of certain chemical properties. It is after years of exhausting mental effort that he expects to make such an addition to scientific knowledge as will entitle him to a place among the learned of the earth. The man who to-day enters the ranks with the hope of rising to the high honor of general-in-

chief at some future time, counts upon daring exploits, hand to hand encounters, hard-fought battles, tedious sieges, wearisome marches, and innumerable risks of life. Through what an ordeal may he pass before merit can place him at the head of an army? Difficulties may the more certainly be looked for when serious disadvantages lie in the upward path. The gold seeker starts without capital and must rely upon his industry and vigorous constitution. The student is of humble birth and without noble patronage, and must work his own way or fail. The soldier is without funds or friends to procure him a commission, his rifle or his sword guided by a cool brain and a keen eye must open up a way for him. Does the invalid expect to regain his health at once, or the bankrupt to recover his lost property in a day?—In vain. Self denial—patience—toil, must have their time.

And if so much is done, so much endured to reach a worldly object such as perishable wealth, or unsatisfying fame, how much more should be performed and borne to attain a result so vast and inestimably precious as life everlasting? Circumstances may present extreme cases. The question then is not, shall all this outlay be made for so limited an advantage, but shall this sacrifice be made or this risk taken, or all be lost. A man is shipwrecked. He has to swim to the shore from

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the broken vessel. He has much dearly prized gold in his trunk. It cannot be taken. Shall he cling to it and perish, or turning his eyes from it boldly plunge into the deep and make for the land? 'Is not the life more than meat,' more than gold? It may be very unpleasant to leave the comforts of home, and endure the hardships and brave the ever-recurring dangers of the mighty deep, but the necessities of that very home demand the sacrifice and it is given. It is positively painful to separate from wife and children and go forth to the field of battle not knowing but that the very first volley from the rifles of the foe may lay low in death, but the honor and the defence of country and of home demand the sacrifice, and sadly but sternly the call of duty is obeyed. Who scruples to take the bitter pill that is to free the system from disease? Who refuses to have the mortified limb amputated, when the rest of the body is thus to be saved from corruption?

This is the idea of the text. Our circumstances are no longer a matter of choice. Necessity is laid upon us. We are diseased, we are dying, and the seat and root of the disease must be reached at once, and unsparingly dealt with, or we are lost. Shall we complain? It is vain. Sin has struck its cancerous roots into our system, and nothing short of the excision or extraction of the ingrafted evil can save us. Shall we hesitate?

What!—suffer the whole tree that might yet bloom in the paradise of God to be consumed rather than throw a rotten branch into the fire!—Consider,

I. WHAT IS THE OFFENCE OF THE EYE.

The eye is a wonderful exhibition of skill. Its adaptation to the purposes of vision is absolutely perfect. It is moved and moistened, washed and drained, warmed and sheltered in the best possible manner. And how useful! With it we gaze upon the starry worlds which, shining at immeasurable distances in the realms of space, reveal the vastness of Jehovah's empire. With it we look in silent wonder on the wide ocean whose countless billows dance in the sun-beam, or wildly roll in the darkness of the night of storm. With it the mind takes in the varied beauties of the landscape, the mountain tops, the winding stream, and the waving cornfield. But it is in the every day duties and dangers, labours and pleasures of life that its indispensable and invaluable services are most patiently rendered. And how expressive! What power is in a look! It may fill the soul with joy, or smite it with shame. It may pierce it as with a sword, or infuse into it the utmost ardour. It can kindle love or pity; or stir up wrath and pride. It can raise up or cast down, attract or repel.

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It is not surprising that an organ of such usefulness and power should be eagerly seized and vigorously plied by those spiritual foes who have done so much to debase and enslave our race. Through it the prince of this world allures uncounted millions to the regions of the lost. He holds up before their eyes the pomp and glory and splendour, the riches and pleasures of this evil world, dressing every crime in its most attractive garb; and they follow as readily as a thirsty animal a pail of water. Hence the eye is often an offence—a *stumbling-block*. While it is the inlet to unlimited knowledge and inexpressible pleasure, it is also the inlet to enormous crimes, and through these to unutterable miseries. Of the many sins of which this organ is the medium, the the agent, or the instrument, we may select three of the most common and most dangerous, for illustration,—the sins of pride, covetousness, and sensuality.

In the first great crime that precipitated our first parents from innocence and bliss to guilt and wretchedness, these three sins were blended together, and each was fostered by the sight of the eyes. Pride was predominant. That was coveted which was forbidden, and an unlawful appetite was cherished; but it was the desire to rise above their natural position, '*to be as gods,*' in the possession of a wisdom heretofore unknown, that

burst through all restraints, and silenced all remonstrances of conscience, and hurried them to woeful disobedience. And it was while the woman looked upon the forbidden tree, 'saw that it was good for food, and that it *was pleasant to the eyes,*' that this killing ambition, this soul-destroying pride, rose and grew and prevailed. Many centuries later, one of the greatest of the Babylonian monarchs, while walking in and around and upon the splendid palace which he had adorned for his residence, uttered the self-extolling words— 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?' The greatness and grandeur and magnificence of the palace and metropolis on which his eyes feasted inflated him with pride, and the Most High cast him down from his loftiness and excluded him from the society of men. And with what feelings do the monarchs of earth review their grand armies clad in all the habiliments of war, or their magnificent fleets presumed to be invincible? Do they feel that these hosts are flesh and not spirit; and their fleets but the foam on the ocean wave at the pleasure of the Almighty? What emotions swell the bosom of the nobleman as he rides through his extensive estates, and surveys their varied scenery and increasing wealth? Is he not inclined to think that he is made of superior clay to that man

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who digs in the drain along which he rides? What ideas float in the brain of the lady of fashion who can spend hour after hour before the mirror admiring her own face, and praising the beauty and richness of her dress? Her beauty is unquestionable, and so is her pride, and her assiduous attention to the one has consciously or unconsciously fed and fostered the other.

It is difficult for man to behold the evidences of his superiority over others without being elated. The orator looks around on the vast assemblage moved as the winds of the forest by his powerful speech, and feels proud of his abilities. The merchant gazes on his accumulating wealth, and his abounding luxuries, and looks down with disdain on his poorer neighbors. The man of dignity passes on the highway a man of meanest rank, and the very contrast increases his selfimportance, and he walks on with haughtier mien. This feeling is not confined to the great, the wealthy, and the distinguished. The very lowest classes have their petty distinctions at the sight of which they grow proud. Even the prospect of superiority will have the same effect. Let the eye rest on the means which are supposed to lead with certainty to the desired result and the soul is elated; and the man may turn round and despise those who are considered less fortunate. Pride, as understood in its peculiar signification, and as distinguished from

a proper self-respect and a right appreciation of our talents, means or circumstances, is a great and unmixed evil, and the eye is the main inlet by which it enters and through which it is nourished in the human soul.

In awakening a spirit of covetousness the eye is no less active and instrumental. How natural, in our fallen state, to desire to have what we see to be specially useful, attractive, or precious, without regard to the obstructions which lawfully prevent it from coming into our possession! Achan's discovery in the ruins of Jericho proved a sad sight to him and his family. 'When I saw,' said he, in his confession, 'among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them!' Swift and terrible was the vengeance that overtook him. Ahab, the wicked king of Samaria, had a palace in Jezreel, and hard by it was the beautiful vineyard of Naboth, a citizen of the place. As often as Ahab sojourned in Jezreel he eyed with covetous look the vineyard so close to his palace. His heart is set upon it, and he must have it. But Naboth will neither exchange nor sell. The disappointment is so great that it sickens the covetous king. His wife in her craft and audacity comes to his aid, and Naboth is murdered in form of law, that his property may be seized. But there is a just Judge above

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who beholds the transactions of men. Ahab goes down to possess the vineyard of the murdered Naboth, but while there the message of the Lord of heaven and earth rings in his ears, and causes his knees to tremble. Thus said the Lord to him: 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine'—and of the infamous Jezebel, he said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' And so it happened; the covetous glance of Ahab terminated in the crunching of the bones of Jezebel by the fierce Syrian dogs. Not many years after this, Naaman the Syrian, was cured of leprosy through Elisha the prophet. Gold and silver and changes of raiment were offered, as a present, by the grateful Syrian to the prophet. They were of no value in the eyes of the man of God; but they were viewed with very different feelings by Gehazi the servant of the prophet. When Elisha persistently refused to take anything, Gehazi wished that the same offer had been made to him; and with feelings of deep uneasiness saw the Syrian set out in his homeward journey, taking all his valuable gifts with him. He resolved to follow, and by a made-up story to secure some of the money and some of the garments. He succeeded; but he got more than he looked for. The silver and the garments became his—but so did the leprosy. The retribution was sudden and severe. It was fascinating

to look upon the bags of gold and silver, and the beautiful garments—but the end was the loathsome disease of leprosy on himself and his posterity for ever.

And to what shall we trace nine-tenths of the thefts daily committed all the world over? The eye has alighted on the valuable object and the covetous desire has been awakened; the resolution is taken, the deed is committed, and all the sad consequences follow. The valet of the Duke of Brunswick (who resided in Paris and who has a singular passion for collecting jewelry,) lately robbed his master, the Duke, of diamonds and jewels and gold to the enormous amount of a million and a half of dollars. The sight of the precious articles had kindled a passion in the bosom of the servant, and he gathers them up and makes off—but only to be caught and disgraced. In one case, the article exposed for sale is swept from the counter, on the eye of the merchant being turned away; in another, the fruit from the neighbor's orchard is plucked and eaten, when no human form is within view. On one hand, may be seen the clerk gazing on the bank notes in the desk of his master, till, pressed by the necessities of his extravagance, he stifles all the demurrings of his conscience, and appropriates to himself the amount he wants; and on the other, the ambitious man, stirred by the glitter and grandeur of his

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neighbor, rushing into reckless expenditure to equal him in appearances until a collapse shall involve himself and his family in ruin. How much better to let the eyelids drop, and recall the words of truth—'As the flower of the grass shall the rich man fade.'

The degradation of sensuality is attributable, in a great measure, to the instrumentality of a wandering, wanton, and untrained eye. No doubt the eye is often the agent and messenger of the previously existing desire; but it is also often the suggester and prompter of evil when the desire is dormant. In the general term, sensuality, are included the vices of gluttony, drunkenness, and uncleanness. Of the first we need not speak particularly, as its victims are comparatively rare and less infectious; of the other two, alas! the victims may be counted by myriads. How do men and women become drunkards? By looking on the beer, the whiskey, the gin, the brandy and the wine, and by seeing others drinking them. Many would never have begun the fatal descent to this infamy, had not some friend (?) brought the filled glass, and held it up before the eyes until all aversion was overcome, and the barrier of total abstinence was crossed. And is it not the sight of the intoxicating fluid that often drags back and hurls down those who for a time have escaped from the grasp of this foul demon? In sins of uncleanness

the eyes have ever been prominent agents. Hamor's wanton eyes brought disgrace on Jacob's family, and ruin on himself and his father's house. The wanton eyes of Potiphar's wife involved the Hebrew stranger in most alarming, danger and then consigned him to a dungeon. The king of Israel gazed upon the beautiful Bathsheba, and was led to commit the scandalous and atrocious crimes of adultery and murder, the consequences of which were humiliating and painful, in the last degree, to himself, and most disastrous to his family. So connected are the eyes with these sins, that the apostle Peter speaks of persons *having eyes full of adultery* and that cannot cease from sin. How many have fallen never to rise again by the ensnaring look of a degraded woman! And how many once innocent and pure have been beguiled from the path of chastity by the dotting eyes of a professed lover! These are stains neither easily wiped out, nor soon forgotten. The memory of them often survives the guilty, and casts a shadow over the innocent. That which is most useful, when perverted becomes the most destructive. The eye which should guide the soul into the way of light, and home to the palace of God, leads it into the way of darkness, and down to the prison of the lost. Many shall have reason to curse for ever their wanton eyes. By them they fell; and when fallen they were laid hold of by those who

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prevented them from rising again. The Creator has doubly guarded the material eye by brow and lid, besides giving it the quickest nervous sensibility to hide from approaching danger ; let rational and immortal man doubly guard by thought and vigilance those beautiful avenues of light and life from the contamination of pride, covetousness and sensuality. Then shall their possessor be honored to see the KING in his beauty, and the far-off land of glory.

II. THE TREATMENT PRESCRIBED FOR THE
OFFENDING EYE.

“If thy right eye offend thee, *pluck it out and cast it from thee.*” This treatment is severe and radical. It is not a turning aside or covering over of the eye, but a plucking out and casting away of the obnoxious organ. No sensible person supposes that this advice of our Saviour is to be literally carried out. He applies to the eye a treatment intended for the sins of which it has been the chief organ or instrument. Seize, tear out, and cast away, he says, those sins which have caused you to stumble, be they as dear as a right eye, and their extraction as painful as the plucking out of that organ. Deal resolutely, severely, and thoroughly, for no milder treatment will save the soul from hell. Under such a process of expurgation the literal eye will undergo a training which will be

tantamount to its extraction, in so far as these sins are concerned. And how is this treatment to be carried through? Only by a deep conviction of its absolute necessity. These sins are too agreeable to the carnal heart, they adhere too closely to it, they have wrapped their roots too firmly around it, to be removed without a painful struggle. The necessity will only be felt after a clear perception of the folly, guilt and danger of these sins. Let him summon his soul before him, and let these questions be asked. Is he proud? What has he to be proud of? Is it of his birth? Let him go back a few generations, and where shall he find his ancestor?—A day laborer, a poor foreigner, a serf, or an untutored idolator. Is it of his wealth?—It is an uncaged bird with unplucked wings. It is here to day, and may be far hence to-morrow. It is the loaned goods of another and may be demanded without a moment's warning. Is it of his talents? Are they his own creation? Are they not the unbought gift of God? They were unmerited and unasked; and must yet be restored with suitable recompence to the giver. Is it of beauty?—It is a rapidly fading flower, and no power on earth can retain its freshness or vitality. Is it of strength?—It is unnerved, and as tow before the flame, at the breath of disease and at the look of death. Or, is it of success in business?—That is owing to numberless co-opera-

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ting circumstances over which he could exercise no control, and without which all his energy and tact would have been unavailing. All is of God; before him let the man prostrate himself and not before his own image. If his pride is folly, is it not also a crime? Shall he boast of that which belongs to another? Shall he glory in appearances where nothing is enduring? Shall he claim the honor of an owner when he is but the temporary depositary? Is there no danger in all this? God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth. He will never suffer his glory to be given to another. Pride is an abomination in his sight. No one can assume that dress without instantly becoming an object of contempt to him. Does thine eye offend thee, reader, in this way? Pluck it out and cast it to the ground, and tramp it under foot. It is the dizziness of the mariner on the mast head which relaxes his grasp of the shrouds which surround him, and precipitates him into the yawning gulf below. Dash it aside and clear thy brain from this delirium or thou art a lost soul. No proud soul journeys heavenward; every step is towards the pit. What! spare the destroyer!—shrink from such severity! No timid, mild, half and half measures will now do. The enemy is in and will put you out of rest and bliss for ever, or you must put it out of heart and home with you. Beloved self must come down from its throne, and sit in

dust and ashes at the feet of Jesus, while the eye is fixed in mute wonder on the cross.

Does a covetous eye cause thee to stumble? Summon it to the bar of reason. On what does it look with such intensity of desire? Is it the noble, moral, and spiritual qualities which adorn and honor an immortal soul? If so, give it every license, keep the gaze steadily fixed there until the image is transferred to the beholder. But no; it is the perishable things of time. It is the rank, the fame, the wealth, and even the trifles of earth. What is there here for thee O undying soul of man! What is rank to thee among the flitting shadows of time? You have gazed upon the darting, dancing, changing lights which spread over our arctic sky in fall or winter. How unstable, how evanescent! Such is earthly rank. You are scarcely up, till you drop to make room for another, and then the whole family group is wiped away. What is fame to thee? It is a passing breeze—it is a fleeting shadow. You cannot retain it, you cannot live by it. What is fame *now* to Cæsar or Alexander, Wellington or Napoleon? Their stars have set on earth never to rise again. What is wealth to thee? It will increase thy worldly comforts; but it will also increase thy worldly cares and anxieties. It may give thee the purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare of the rich man at whose gate Lazarous was laid, but it may also hedge up

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thy way to heaven and give thee a place beside the same rich man in the torments of hell. Should you encumber yourself in travelling on a perilous journey?—Hear the words of Jesus: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God.' Reader, it is your great task to get there; and it is not wisdom eagerly to desire that which may obstruct your progress, if it do not wholly prevent your admission.

But more than this, God has said—"Thou shalt not covet." He deemed this sin of sufficient importance to condemn it expressly in the epitome of his law. As the parent of many crimes such as lying, theft, extortion, and murder, it was proper that it should be clearly pointed out, as incurring the divine displeasure. Man's law may not take cognizance of a look—not so God's law. And it is man's first concern to know how every feature of his conduct is regarded by his omniscient Judge. Would it not be strange if a deed was condemned as sinful, and the thought or purpose which gave birth to it, considered as harmless? The covetous look often gives rise to the midnight theft, and to the murderous attack, with all their train of evils to the doer and to the sufferer. Need we say that there is danger in such a look? Wherever there is sin, there is danger; and where there is a prolific source of sins, there is special danger. The bare sensation arising from the eye being fixed on

an object may become a grasp upon the intellect, and that grasp may assume resistless power, and the soul be led a helpless captive. If the eye must look upon the vanities of time let imagination lead the way to the end ;—till the beauty of earth had faded like a leaf, till the fame of earth had vanished like smoke, till the glory of earth was corroded with rust, till riches had disappeared like a bird in its flight, and till all the lands and possessions on which the heart was set had dwindled down to one narrow and lonesome pit, the silent grave.

Does a sensual eye offend thee? Pluck it out and cast it from thee. See the folly of it! Look at Nabal, folly by name, surrounded by the bounties of providence, surfeited with feasting, "very drunken," petrified at the report of danger, and sinking under his own utter helplessness. Look at Noah, the honored of all the earth, a preacher of righteousness, humbled and disgraced by the excessive use of the tempting fruit of his own vineyard. Look at Samson, the mighty, the renowned champion of Israel, the hammerer of the Philistines, ensnared by the licentious look of an abandoned woman, bound, shorn and enfeebled. See his athletic frame, with locks restored, bend in darkness in the prison of his foes, while his weary arms from day to day roll round the heavy millstone, the toil of the meanest slave. How is the

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mighty fallen ! The licentious eye which he spared was not spared by the haughty and exulting foe. These are but the loftier heads of the vast throng who in ancient times fell into this pit. And has the world grown wiser? Alas! the successive generations which appear on earth are but copies of the preceding. And to-day who can count the numbers who hourly fall into the vortex of sensuality through the lust of the eye? To reason about the folly, guilt and danger of it, is wholly superfluous. We point at once to the direct and inevitable consequences even in time, and ask, are these trivial?—are these desirable? It may gladden and gratify the eye to gaze upon the glass filled with the favorite drink, or to join in the song and the dance with the licentious; but will it gratify the eye to look, at a future day, on a bloated, debauched or diseased body clothed in rags, the shunned and abhorred by all the virtuous and pure?

What is to be done? If the stumbling-block is in the way, remove it; another step, and you may fall, and your broken bones may give you pain all your days. Resolution is demanded. The fascinations of sin are strong cords which mere faint wishes can never break. And where is strength of mind so well expended as in breaking the snares of the great soul-catcher? The pleasures of sin are sweet for the present; and the

eye delights to look upon the bait regardless of the hook. Severity must do its work. The dearly loved eye must come out, painful as the operation may be. These darling sins—these bosom friends which the eye had so long entertained with special pleasure, must now be abandoned, must no longer be even looked at. How hard to meet without a mutual recognition after so long an acquaintance, so close an endearment! But it must be so. Out it must come. The power to do evil must be taken away. No halting, no looking back to Sodom; no hankering, no furtive glances towards what is forbidden. In plain terms, the eye so long accustomed to ensnare, upset, and ensnare, must be so trained by firm, severe and persevering exercise that it will meet the old or new objects of temptation, as unmoved, as uninterested, as if it were an entire blank. It will look upon the distinctions and glory of earth, and feel that they are shadows. It will look upon the treasures of earth, and feel that they are dust and ashes. It will look upon the pleasures of sense, and feel that they are inferior, fleeting and unsatisfying. And turning away from things below, it will fix its steady gaze on heaven, and exclaim: "My soul thirsteth for *God*, for the *living God*: when shall I come and appear before God?" The self-sacrifice may be painful, but the result shall be salutary and glorious.

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III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECTING
THIS TREATMENT.

The whole body shall be cast into hell. This is the most terrible of consequences, the extreme of all material punishments. The words of Christ imply three things.

First, that there is a hell. All believers in the divine inspiration of the scriptures admit this. But a few carried away by mistaken and partial views of the divine character, deny a place of future punishment. Their hell is the grave or a pit of moral corruption on earth. It cannot mean the grave here, for the argument would lose all its force. An objector might reply—'I may spare my offending eye if this is all I have to dread, for should I pluck it out my body would still descend to the grave.' Should the disbeliever in a future hell, answer—'The passage is metaphorical—Christ speaks of moral pollution or corruption, and means that the whole soul would be contaminated if the eye was not plucked out.' We reply ;—moral corruption is only predicable of a soul, not of a body, and as a certain physical treatment was demanded of the natural eye, so a certain physical result was threatened to the whole natural body. Should the same objector shift his ground, and urge that the hell here spoken of, is simply material corruption the result of an unguarded eye—

we reply, the restriction would confine the punishment to a body suffering from disease, imprisonment, and such like, anterior to death, which would exclude a large number, and these great sinners, from any special, unpleasant consequences from the indulgence of the lust of the eye. What special suffering as the result of this sin had Nabal of the Old Testament or the Rich Man of the New, both guilty of pride and sensuality, to say nothing of covetousness? The both, for ought we know, may have died like many of their class in a painless stupor. If this is the hell of the text, many of the chief culprits in the sins referred to never enter it; and if the worst escape why may not inferior sinners run their chance? The divine warning would be shorn of its strength. But why restrict the term here to punishment on this side the grave, if the same term in other places must refer to future and everlasting punishment? Where did the Rich Man lift up his eyes in torment? In this world or the next?—"In hell"—after his body was buried. 'But oh! that is a parable.' Do parables speak lies? Is their main idea a falsehood? The main idea of this parable is, that the future condition of men is often the reverse of that in this life. Does not that imply a state of want and suffering to those who have lived sumptuously and sinfully on earth? In the parallel passage in Mark, the hell of the text is explained as "the fire

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that shall never be quenched :” and the solemn words are thrice added—“ Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” as if to silence, for ever, all cavilling as to a place of future punishment. Is there any state of material corruption on earth of which this description is true ? Where is “ the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ?” Is it in this world or the next ? Into that fire the wicked shall be sent. We need not say that on earth no such fire is known. No wonder that those who deny the existence of a place of future punishment, deny the existence of the fallen angels. They cannot stop here. The Bible is accepted only so far as it accords with their individual opinions ; the rest is repudiated as a human imposition. At this point, whatever they may call themselves, they are no better than deists. But, O mortal man, be not deceived ; as God is true, there is a hell, whose woes are unutterable and eternal. To escape it, now demands thine utmost energy and thought.

Second, that the body shall suffer in hell. The body is a constituent part of the human person. Hence the human being is not complete in a disembodied state. Neither redemption nor damnation is perfect till after the resurrection. The body must go to share the bliss or woe of the soul. It is just, that it should be so. In the case under consideration the body has been actively instru-

mental in the destruction of the soul. Alas! they have been mutually destructive. And now they must suffer together—and what is worse, be mutual tormentors. This implies a resurrection of the body. We see the body committed to the dust, and we know that it is converted into the very dust from which it was taken. It shall be restored and reanimated when the race has run its appointed course. And further, it implies that the torments of hell shall be so far material as to affect a material body. A fire there is, unquenchable, eternal, fitted to torture but not consume,—a fire so penetrating as to reach the inmost recesses of the soul, and throw its flaming folds around them, and yet so material as to feed upon the reformed material body. O horror of horrors! a human being, body and soul, enveloped in the unquenchable flames of Jehovah's wrath! Who, who with any reason, could be so cruel to himself as to expose his body to such a doom, if any sacrifice within his power could prevent it?

Third, That an unchecked, untrained eye will precipitate the whole body into hell. This is the end. however attractive certain parts of the road may have been. "For this ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these

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things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Ephes. v. 5, 6v. Let these fearful truths be repeated. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10v. If these sinners have no place in heaven, they shall have a suitable place in hell. In the perpetration of these crimes the eye has taken an active part. And this "evil eye" has been the agent of a corrupt heart. Stimulated from within, it has led the whole man into the mire of licentiousness, up the dizzy heights of pride, and into the labyrinths of covetousness. But wherever led by this corrupt and deceitful guide, the body finds its last resting place in the abyss of hell. None escape who follow it. If the tongue is at times influenced and controlled by the infernal spirit, so is the eye ; and those who follow it so influenced, follow the devil ; and there can be no question as to what quarter he conducts his dupes. While the offending eye is spared it will lead ; and while it leads it will destroy. What alone can save?—The extraction of this eye. It is the mortifying member, and must be cut off, or the whole body will die. When this is sufficiently proved to any

sensible patient, does he not consent to see the limb removed, dear as it may have been to him? Its usefulness is now gone; it is worse than useless; it is destroying; and must be cast off as a detested object. Can men part with a hand or foot to save a body for a short time from the grave; and will they not act with similar severity and self-denial to save soul and body from the pit of perdition? There is really no loss. The corrupt member is dead in respect to all advantage from it; and your duty is to save the rest of the body from contamination. Severity in this case will never be regretted; but leniency may be everlastingly bewailed. Who among the millions in glory now regret that they parted with an offending eye or hand or foot? And who among the millions of the lost does not bewail with ceaseless outcries the false and cruel leniency which spared the offending member which ensnared and beguiled him to destruction? Alas! the deep and bitter regrets are unavailing; no mistakes are remedied, though many are discovered, in hell.

Reader, does your eye offend you? Has it not often led you after vanity? Delay not to execute the voice of wisdom. You say, do you, that you can follow it so far, and turn back when you please; that you can give it free scope to range, and restrain it at pleasure? Be not deceived. If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the

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ditch. Your next step may occasion a wound from which you will not recover ; it may confirm a habit which will leave you as helpless as the shorn Samson in the hands of the Philistines. Would you not have your body, freed from corruption, walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem with elastic step and beaming eye, rather than, scarred and corrupt, it should lie in the pit of perdition a prey to the worm that never dies and to the flame that shall never be quenched ? Then act to-day, act now, with wise and stern and noble self-denial ; and, while maintaining unceasing vigilance let your prayer ever be : " Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity—and quicken thou me in thy way."

CHAPTER IX.

The Righteous honored in the Great Day.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." MATT. xxv CH. 34 v.

In my last appeal I urged upon the sinner the necessity of casting away every besetting sin, though as dear as a right eye, to prevent him from falling into hell; let me now by an exhibition of the glory of the righteous on the last day incite him to every effort to secure his salvation. The holding of a supreme judicial court in any realm is an event of some importance; and awakens a great interest among those specially concerned in its proceedings. There, things said and done in secret are to be brought to light, truth to be elicited from a mass of contradictory statements, innocence to be vindicated, and guilt to be exposed and condemned. There, property is to be restored or lost to the enrichment or impoverishment of many: there, character is to be purged from foul aspersions, or marked with the indelible stains

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of infamy ; there, the apprehended is to be set at liberty or descend to the prison house of bondage ; and there, the accused is to hear the sentence of life or death from the lips of the presiding judge. But circumstances may render this court the scene of unusual excitement and importance. If the number of the accused is very large, if among them are persons of the highest rank, if the crimes laid to their charge are capital offences, if the penalties are terribly severe, if the presiding judge is of eminent ability, if there is no appeal from his decision, and if the concourse of spectators is immensely great—these, all these invest the court with extraordinary interest. Need I say that the great supreme court to be held when the generations of earth have run their course, and in which heaven, earth, and hell are so much interested, will be invested with all the circumstances which can render it of paramount importance ? “ And I saw,”—said a favoured child of earth, elevated in spirit to behold the wonders of the future—“ a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea

gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works."

Here were assembled for trial all the descendants of Adam, men of every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue; the antediluvians and the postdiluvians; the builders of the tower of Babel, and of the pyramids of Egypt; the ancient Greeks and the ancient Mexicans; the central Africans and the central Polynesians; the Asiatic and the American,—a vast multitude. Among the accused were seen many who held high rank on earth—emperors, kings, nobles, statesmen, warriors and philosophers. The charge preferred was rebellion against heaven as witnessed in daring violation of known laws, and the habitual abuse of mercies. In the case of many, the crime assumed an aggravated form, they having rejected the Son of God commissioned by heaven to seek their restoration, and despised all his offers of reconciliation and pardon. The punishment announced, where guilt is established, is everlasting imprisonment in the pit of destruction, in the company and subjected to the reproach and torture of devils. He who is seated on the throne of judgment is GOD, the supreme God, in the person of his Son. From his decision there can be no appeal. There is no being above him, and this is his supreme court.

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He is the fountain of wisdom, and cannot err in judgment. He is the fountain of justice, and cannot do iniquity. He is the fountain of power, and resistance to his will is utterly futile. And what a concourse of spectators ! The seats of glory and the caverns of the damned are vacated. On one side may be seen the myriad hosts of heaven arrayed in all their splendor ; and on the other, the scowling legions of hell, terror-stricken and despairing.

Reader, you and I shall stand our trial at that great tribunal. The summoned shall not stand indiscriminately together. The congregated multitudes shall be formed into two great divisions, a wide space intervening. One shall occupy the right, and the other the left of the King-judge. The hosts of heaven, acting as a guard of honor, shall give to each his place, and maintain order. But how is this early separation before the trial is begun ? Their spiritual affinities and their outward appearances enforce and proclaim their relationships, and they naturally and readily segregate into two vast throngs. The righteous are posted on the right, the wicked on the left. We turn our backs upon the left, and look towards the right. O what magnificence and glory ! See ! the King fixes his eyes upon them. Mark ! they return his look. What ineffable joy beams in their countenances ! O to be among them ! The sight

is enrapturing. Let us draw nearer these glorified hosts that we may see their beauty, and hear what joyful words the King shall say unto them. And may we not enquire—

I. WHO AND WHAT THEY ARE.

They are spoken of as "the sheep," as "the blessed of the Father" and as "the righteous." From the throne of judgment they are addressed as the *blessed of the Father*; and an examination of this high distinction will show that those who were counted worthy to receive it, have been the sheep of the chief Shepherd, and have been so washed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit as to entitle them to be called "the righteous." What is implied in this distinguishing appellation? How have they been specially blessed by God the Father?

First, in having received from him the hearing ear to follow the call of the Son of God. Many are called, but few obey the call. The calls of heaven are deemed of less importance and less urgent than the calls of earth. Obedience is often promised to the former at a convenient season, but the latter grow louder and more importunate, and at last the voice from heaven falls unheeded on the worldling's ear. Our heavenly Father has blessed them who obey. The call which they have heard

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has penetrated the heart, carrying conviction and persuasion with it; and like Levi, the publican, they have risen up, left all, and followed Jesus. Is it not a favor for the sheep to hear the voice of the shepherd calling them away from the haunts of wolves? Is it not a blessing for the man lost in the forest to hear the call of him who has gone in search of him? Is it not a blessing for the sailor lost overboard in the midnight storm to hear the cry from the life-boat pressing back in search of him, before that, in his despair, he suffers himself to sink, to rise no more? This hearing stops the sinner on the road to destruction, and directs him in the road to life everlasting. Blessed, indeed, are those ears, for they hear.

Second, in restoration to the divine favor. They were out of the divine favor. They were children of wrath, even as others. The divine displeasure rested on them; and the divine vengeance followed them day by day, and would as surely have consumed them as the fire from heaven licked up the altar and the sacrifice of Elijah on mount Carmel. Was it not a blessing to have the power extended to shield, which had been stretched out to destroy? The Father received them into favor. He forgave and forgot their offences. He turned his anger away from them and lifted on them the light of his countenance. The storm gave place to a blissful calm, anger to

love, and hostility to friendship. This was the Father's doing. He opened the door for the return of the outcast. He employed the persuasive agencies. He appointed the Intercessor through whom correspondence could be re-opened; and at whose request the sinner was graciously pardoned, and all the follies of a past life blotted out from the records of heaven. All is peace and satisfaction. But a higher honor awaited them.

For, Third, the Father blessed them in adopting them into his family. This was love indeed. Could he place them higher or nearer to himself? Because his Son assumed their nature, they who are saved by him are brought into the same relationship with the Father. They too, are sons; and he their Saviour is their elder Brother. It is the Father's prerogative to adopt, and graciously and gloriously has he exercised it towards the lost family of Adam. They shall sit with him at his table; they shall reign with him on his throne. What can the members of this family ever want? Shall any be allowed to die when their parent is the author of life? Shall they ever suffer hunger whose Father feeds all animate creation? Shall they want for shelter whose Father reared the fabric of the worlds? What robes shall exceed in beauty those with which their Father shall adorn them? What fruits shall equal in sweetness those which shall be spread upon their Father's table.

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What company shall equal theirs in intelligence, refinement of manners, beauty of person, elegance of dress, sweetness of disposition, and kindness of heart? And what palace shall excel in splendor that which they shall occupy as their everlasting home? If all this is not a blessing, reader, what will you call a blessing? All this they held, in title, from the day of their justification. They are now assembled to be put in full possession of their inheritance. The very delay in receiving the inheritance has been a blessing, for it has fully prepared them for the enjoyment of it.

Fourth, in the gift of noble courage to confess Christ before men. The world is in arms against Christ. It hates and opposes all who boldly confess him. Yet Christ requires a public confession from all his followers. He declares that all who are ashamed to own him before men will be disowned by him on the great day. Why should any be ashamed of Christ? He is no usurper: he is no tyrant. He stands unrivalled in his claims to dominion, and in personal excellencies. Yet the heart of man is frail when testifying for God, before the combined opposition of hell and earth, unless sustained from above. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night for fear of the reproach of his countrymen. Peter, the boldest of the apostles, when left to himself quailed at the look of a servant maid who charged him with being associated with

Jesus, but the same Peter, gifted with noble courage by his heavenly Father, stood unmoved before an enraged Sanhedrim, confessing his Master, and reproving an ungodly priesthood. Thus, too, the noble Daniel looked in with unshaken nerves upon the lions among whom he was to be thrown. And how did John Huss and Jerome of Prague look with calm countenance upon the stake where their living flesh was to be consumed to ashes? They asked for strength, and God gave it. The almighty, everpresent Spirit upheld both soul and body. The flames had no terrors for them, while God was in them. And thus, too, Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart, and all their noble fellow martyrs on the Continent and in Britain, endured the torture of death by fire for the honor of their divine Master. To the same source must we trace the firmness and the courage by which many of their fellow countrymen, in the same holy cause suffered imprisonment, and banishment, and the loss of every thing dear to them on earth. Life was sweet, and the enjoyment of life precious; but eternal life was sweeter, and the pleasures of heaven more precious. But apart from consequences, they loved a Saviour who could love them so much as to die to save them, far too much ever to deny him, come what may. Nothing shall separate them from him. And although the church has greatly extended her domain

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in these later days, the world is unchanged. The Chinese or the Hindoo, the Mohammedan or the Jew, or the Papist who at this day embraces the truth as it is in Jesus, and announces his adherence to it, must be prepared for the loss of friends and relatives, and property and home. Who but God alone can give courage to leave all that is most dear on earth, and daily stand the taunts and reproaches and persecutions of the enemies of the faith, for the name of Jesus. And not among avowed enemies only, but among professed friends of Christ is noble courage needed. The man who condemns the fashions of the world as subversive of true religion, and represents a life of faith in the Son of God as that alone which leads to heaven, requires great firmness and boldness among a formal and time-serving people. Who shall stand up for Christ a living witness of the grace and love of God to man? To him must God give "virtue,"—that genuine courage which fears God and nought else beside. Who are these on the right of the King?—They are a chosen generation—a race of heroes—men who have dared to do and die for Christ, in defiance of all the threats and violence of hell and its auxiliaries on earth. God, their Father, blessed them with this spirit; and as soon could they subdue the Most High as the souls upheld by him. To yield was to fall; and falling to lose immortality with its crown of

glory. Was it not a blessing to be firm. Standing fast, they won the fight, and grasped the palm of victory.

Fifth, in receiving the merciful disposition of their Father. Mercy is a prominent feature in the divine character. And no sooner does God impart his Spirit to his adopted children than this feature becomes developed in them. 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.' Deeds of benevolence and mercy are more observed by heaven than the children of men generally suppose. Even a cup of cold water given to a disciple is neither unnoticed nor forgotten. And in the representation of the judgment, acts of kindness, compassion, and generosity are deemed worthy of special mention, as proofs of attachment to Christ—and the neglect of them as proofs of indifference to his cause. A disciple was hungry and they gave him food; he was thirsty and they gave him drink; he was a stranger and they took him in; naked, and they clothed him; or sick and they visited him; or in prison and they came unto him. The sight of destitution, or distress awakened the tenderest emotions in their breasts. They could not look upon the naked, and shut up their bowels of compassion. They could not turn the hungry away without food from their doors. They could not hear of deep suffering without a feeling of sympathy. The sick and the confined in prison

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were not forgotten because removed from sight. They had the spirit of their Father. When man was lost, he sent out to seek and save him. When the poor and needy cry unto him, he provides for them. When distressed, he relieves them. When oppressed, he comforts them. When cast down, he lifts them up again. When lonely and sorrowful, he visits and cheers them. When abandoned by man, he befriends them. And when the devils would make their souls their prey, he comes in to their rescue, and takes the captives from the mighty, and the prey from the terrible, and conducts them in safety to a city of everlasting habitations of which he himself is the maker and builder. What compassion and generosity can equal this? Is it not a blessing to be gifted with the same kind heart? Is not God perfectly happy?—Then every approach in spiritual likeness to him, is an approach to happiness. The generous distribution of a benevolent heart, is rewarded by a harvest of richest satisfaction, irrespective of the feelings of the benefited. The pleasure of doing good is a harvest of which no man can rob another. But this spirit is not only a fountain of joy to the possessor; it is also streams of happiness to all around. If it is more blessed to give than to receive; still it is blessed to receive. And God has made, and God will make his children the instruments of his providence and grace in blessing the

world. Through them he will water the desert lands; and for them the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. They are the channels of mercy through which the waters of salvation shall reach the very ends of the earth. Is it not a blessing to bring liberty to the bound, hope to the despairing, life to the dying? Cast your eyes over this vast multitude! See! there are thousands and tens of thousands whose faces are beaming as the sun. These are they who, animated by a spirit of love, pity, tenderness, and generosity were co-workers with God in saving their fellow man.

And now we have seen who they are that occupy the place of honor on the judgment day. They are those who have listened to the voice of heaven in preference to every other—who have heartily embraced the offer of reconciliation and have been restored to the divine favor through Christ—who have been adopted as beloved children into the family of God—who have had the noble courage to confess Christ before the world, and obey all his laws, notwithstanding the opposition and persecution of men and devils—and who, with the spirit of their Father and their Saviour, found their greatest delight in acts of kindness and works of mercy. Blessed, thrice blessed, everlastingly blessed are they. They are "the glory and the honor of the nations." Once, the scorned and

despised of all ; now, honored in the highest degree. Once, driven out of the world by the fiery torch of persecution ; now, exalted to glory at God's right hand. Once, obscure and forgotten ; now, the beheld and admired of all creation. Reader, will *you* be among them? Now let us hear—

II. THE JOYFUL WORD ADDRESSED TO THEM.

See ! the King has turned towards them. Glory adorns his brow. Joy speaks in his attitude and looks. Hark ! he addresses them. "COME"—he exclaims, with features brightened with intensity of delight,—“ye blessed of my Father!” What word could be more expressive, more suitable, or more appreciated in the circumstances than this precious word of welcome? The investigation has closed ; every legal step has been taken ; each character has been proved by the best of all testimony, his works ; and the whole number is complete, no one has been overlooked or forgotten, and no false character has crept in among the approved—it now remains for the Judge officially to deliver his sentence. He does so in language so lucid and forcible that he can neither be misunderstood nor disregarded. The adoption of this term indicates that the barriers which enforced a separation are now removed. A right comprehension of the nature of these barriers will afford a

right appreciation of the present glorious invitation.

'Come near, my ransomed, every legal barrier is now removed!' Christ's love was so strong towards his chosen that he would have brought them at once to his glorious home, but formidable impediments intervened. They had sinned; they had fallen. The law had reared a wall high as heaven, because of this, between the Son of God and the objects of his regard. A curse had rested on them which prevented all access to their Creator. Justice had drawn its flaming sword, and denied them all approach to the tree of life. This was no feeble law of changeable man—no harmless curse of a mortal creature—no flexible justice of an impotent sinner: but the law, the curse, the justice of the holy, almighty, and unchangeable Jehovah. Who that beheld them thus kept back, could ever suppose that they should be brought nigh to God? He who raised these barriers could alone remove them; and his wisdom was found sufficient for the task, without any detriment to his character, yea to the brighter display of his matchless perfections. 'I,' said Christ, 'will magnify the law and make it honorable.' Its claims are right, every demand shall be conceded. It was hard to be made a curse; but even here love prevailed; and he exclaimed—'Upon me, my Father, be the curse, and let thy blessing fall on these.' It was done, for he was nailed to the accursed tree. Justice, too,

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shall have its due. Sin was committed, suffering and death must follow. Who will stand the stroke of divine justice, and survive to benefit those for whom he suffers? Here lies the difficulty. But God clothed with humanity can do so. When justice demanded its victim, 'Here am I,' exclaimed the Lamb of God. 'Awake, O sword—smite!' cries justice—'death be to him, whoever he be, that sins or stands for sinners, respect of persons I have none.' Those towering battlements have disappeared, and a high-way is prepared for the ransomed of the Lord—the curse has vanished like a roll of parchment in the devouring flame—and justice stands at a distance with sword sheathed, and bowing, smiles and says 'Pass on!' It is *God* who justifieth, who is he that condemneth?—

'Come, my sanctified, every moral impediment is wiped away.' God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet he now invites to his presence those who have been stained with every species of crime. Here are they who have been idolators, blasphemers, sabbath-breakers, murderers, drunkards, whoremongers, liars and such like. How is this? Has God changed? No; but they are changed. They *were* such sinners—but they are washed, and cleansed and sanctified. No stream that washed the soil of earth could cleanse them; but their Redeemer opened the fountain of his blood, and there their souls have

been made purer than the snow. O precious fountain—the blood of God's dear Son! What virtue it must possess when the very men that shed it were cleansed by it. Who of all earth's guilty ones ever washed there, and carried away his stains with him?—Not one. The piercing eyes of the King can detect no spot in all that vast assemblage on his right. How perfect the purification! His own image shines on every soul. Draw near, my holy ones, he cries, though sin long barred your approach, you are sinners no more—though infirmities often humbled you, you are weak no more—though short-comings often shamed you, you shall fail no more—'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.'

'Come, my glorified, the ghastly form of death no more haunts your path.' What an enemy was this? Its terrifying spectre confronted man at every turn. It walked side by side with him in the open field. It followed him into his dwelling. It sat down with him at his table. It lay down with him on his couch of rest. Its shadow fell on his most cherished joys; and into scenes of highest revelry, it sometimes forced its way, and seized upon its victim. None could bribe him,—none could outstrip him. Abhorred by all; escaped by none. He bestrided the path of saint and sinner alike. When the Christian looked forward to his rest above, to his departed friends, to his glorified

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Saviour, his grim and ghastly visage looked him in the face. Many through fear of him were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Nature shrank from his approach; but the believer often found that his look was more terrible than his grasp. It seemed to deprive heaven of half its attractions that it could only be reached after a fell encounter with this king of terrors. But now the last of the redeemed have passed his gloomy domains, and they all can now look back upon the dark and lonely valley and feel that they shall never enter it again. The long and dreary night has passed away, and the everlasting day has come. They can now approach their King without the pains of dissolution, without the sight of weeping friends, without the pangs of separation from dearly-loved ones. All now owned and loved are with them; no other bond is felt. And none are left behind. "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away—for lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."

'Come, my restored and beautified creation, my chosen companions for eternity, the grave no longer intervenes to keep us separate.' The sentence was unalterable, 'Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.' Flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God, neither corruption inherit incorruption. The body however dearly prized and cherished must be left a prey to the worms. Its beauty must be tarnished—its vitality

extinguished ; and all covered out of sight beneath the clods of the earth. There it has lain for many long years, for centuries, or millenniums undistinguishable from the earth which surrounded it. But now, behold the change ! A new creation rises from the dust, fairer and more glorious than that which, in innocence, trod Eden's garden. The harvest has followed the first fruits. Christ's empty sepulchre is reproduced in the countless untenanted graves of his redeemed church. And what a goodly sight ! And what a glorious company ! Here is creation's fairest blossom destined never to fade. Never was matter more subtly blended, more skillfully combined ; its grosser elements are all expurged, and nature's finest, purest, swiftest and strongest elements retained. Bodies spiritual and incorruptible appear. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust !" And what shall they sing ?

"Behold ! what heavenly prophets sung,
Is now at last fulfilled :
That Death should yield its ancient reign,
And, vanquished, quit the field.

Let *Sight* exalt her joyful voice,
And thus begin to sing,
O Grave ! where is thy triumph *now* ?
And where, O Death ! thy sting ?"

Death and the grave were colleagues. The destruction of the former is the annihilation of the latter. The grave fed on the spoils of death, and

dies when death is slain. Those dreaded enemies are now no more. They have perished. The redeemed can now obey their Saviour's call in body as well as in spirit. No open grave, ready to receive a lifeless body, creates a reluctance to depart. Just as they are, their King will welcome them. No power in earth or hell—no law of God or man—no cause in nature or grace bars their approach. Therefore let them come; and in their coming let divine love receive its brightest triumph over the law, sin, death, and the grave.

But to whom shall they come?—To the *Lord of Glory*. It is to no earthly monarch however great and wealthy and powerful. The glory of such is tarnished, and it has passed as a shadow. But here is He before whom angels fall, at whose bidding creation rose, whose right hand controls the universe, and over whose throne no setting sun shall ever cast its shadow. Glory uncreated and everlasting surrounds him.

To the *God of love*. There are no joys comparable to those of pure love. To bask in its beams is to enjoy life. What must it be to approach its source! Its reflected rays were often inspiriting to the creature on earth, what must the glorified feel under the direct glow of its effulgence? As the caverns of the rocks are filled by the inrushing of the tide, as the dwellings of mortals are illumined by the beams of the rising sun, so shall the souls

of the righteous be filled and overflow with the ecstasy of love.

To *their Redeemer*. His glory shall not overpower them. It is the voice of their Redeemer. How shall they look upon him who paid their ransom with his blood! They will respond to his call with alacrity. If his dying love constrained them to obey on earth where so many things stood in the way, O how shall his living voice bestir them, when every impediment is swept away.

To *their Husband*. The bridegroom has come to take home his bride. The long-looked for day has come. Can any call be more welcome than his? His home is prepared, his attendants are with him, every needed ceremony has been observed, and now the joyful word—'Come, my beloved,' is heard. The bride is ready. With eager steps she hastes to meet her Lord. Shouts of welcome rise on every side. Never was there such a greeting. A ransomed earth and an exulting heaven blend their voices in one choral anthem such as creation never heard since its foundations were laid. To describe the rapture of that song, as the glorified bride in her snow-white robes bows before her everlasting Husband and King, baffles all mortal ingenuity. May you and I, dear reader, share that rapture!

But ere we leave this scene, look around and let the circumstances add their weight to the im-

portance of this word, 'Come!' What is now revealed to sight?—All the glory of heaven, and all the horrors of hell. Who look on?—Angels and devils, deeply interested on the one hand in the salvation, and on the other in the destruction of men. They shall share their joy or their misery, as they have helped struggling mortals up to glory, or deluded them to perdition. But who are on the left? Ah! millions of the same race as the saved. Men great in their day on earth—full of wealth—intoxicated with pleasure. Men of all classes and creeds—of all tribes and tongues. What a contrast do they present in appearance! No word of welcome to them—no look of love on them. Terror is depicted on every face. Beneath them blaze the fires of hell. They await their sentence of woe with feelings of unutterable anguish. With looks of vengeance, the Judge shall cry to them—"Depart ye cursed!" They know it, they anticipate it. Can mortal tongue describe the value of this one word, 'Come!' at such a time—from such a Judge? The fiat that gave birth to worlds alone can claim a place beside it. Be it yours, reader, to secure it to thyself on that great day.

III. THEIR REWARD.

They have come—they have received a joyful welcome, what now awaits them?—A Kingdom.

'Ye blessed of my Father, come! inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' What is this kingdom? It is the undisturbed reign of divine principles in the soul; grace ripened into glory; God reigning in the glorified spirit. It is the possession of a celestial country, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and fading not away. It is the special domain of the immortal King Immanuel where his redeemed subjects shall behold his glory and for ever enjoy his presence. There no error shall contend with truth—no sin with the principle of love to God. There the disinherited on earth shall regain an ample possession. There the oppressed on earth shall enjoy perfect freedom. If the Christianized kingdom on earth affords privileges to the citizen far in advance of those enjoyed by a citizen of an idolatrous country, how much more shall the glorious kingdom of heaven presided over by Christ himself exceed in advantages anything seen on earth. As a state of being, it is blissful; as a home and inheritance, it is most desirable and valuable; as a government under which the creature must live, it is perfect and preferable to any other that can be conceived. All this the reward of the righteous embraces. And this they have not by purchase, but by inheritance. They have become heirs by a connexion with him who purchased it. As the adopted children of God they are heirs; and as

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united to Christ they are "joint-heirs" with him. Their claims, however long laughed at on earth, are now confirmed by the supreme court of heaven. Who shall prevent their entrance into possession? Who shall disturb them when possessed? They have defrauded none. None are impoverished by their enrichment? This kingdom was prepared for them, from the foundation of the world. When the Most High drew the outlines of creation and planned the frame-work of the worlds, he marked out one central region where the magnificent and the beautiful, the precious and the good would receive their brightest development, and display their highest glory. That region we call Heaven. Its special adornment, as the abode of redeemed and glorified humanity, was left to the God-man Jesus Christ after he had accomplished his mission of mercy to earth. Where is this glorious region, this happy abode? We cannot here point out that favoured world. Our eyes were not formed for such discoveries. Some have supposed that the final abode of the righteous would be our purified world. But against this a thousand arguments militate. Heaven *now* is. Why should it be abandoned, at the last day, for such a limited sub-lunary sphere as our present abode, however free from sin. Earth, in all her arrangements, was made for a race of flesh and blood, of increase and change; and not only would the globe itself require

a thorough transformation, but the system to which it belongs must be radically changed before the glories of heaven could in the smallest degree be realized. For all this there is no necessity. Jehovah's empire is not so small that he must pull down our paltry dwelling, before he erects his magnificent palace for the occupation of his redeemed family. Let us dismiss this subject. Heaven is now prepared by our exalted Redeemer; and its actual glories far exceed anything which mortal eye has seen or human heart has conceived. Into its unending bliss the King-judge shall conduct the righteous, when the transactions of the great day have been brought to a close.

Reader, will you be one of that honored company? You hope so. But on what does your hope rest? Is the foundation so firm that it will stand the shock of death? You would like to hear the bliss-imparting word, 'Come,' addressed to you on that day so awful to many. But do you *now* hear the word, 'Come,' addressed to you? The same voice speaks. To the same glory he calls; but time now rolls its ensnaring scenes around you, and you perhaps are deaf to his gracious invitation. Remember that the call to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness must be obeyed, before the call to enter glory can be heard. Hear the present, 'Come,' and you shall hear the future—disregard the present, and

the future shall never be extended to you. You know that the citizenship of this country is preferable to that of any other, why not try and secure it? You know that the reward of this King is incomparably superior to that bestowed by any mortal monarch, why not try and obtain it? Others have tried and have succeeded, and so may you. They had not one advantage more than you. They had their evil habits, their evil companions, their worldly pursuits, their cherished pleasures, but they gave them up at the sight of this great prize. They took Christ at his word, and promptly left all and followed him. Do you the same. The same promise is to you—the same help is offered you. Now arise and go—just as you are. See! heaven is before you. Its gates are opened. You may reach it, and enter in, Linger not a moment longer. O come away, there is room for *you* yet!

CHAPTER X.

The Home of the Redeemed.

"Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." ISAIAH LX CH. 20 V.

It is fitting that these fervent appeals to flee from the wrath to come, addressed in so many forms to the unconverted sinner, should be concluded by a picture of the felicity and glory to which he shall attain if he will obey the warning voice of God. To some who, convinced of sin and impending wrath by the foregoing pages, have fled to Christ, and are now pressing forward in their heaven-ward course, this sight of home and rest and bliss above will infuse fresh energy, courage and ardour, and enable them to trample upon the temptations and corruptions which now threaten to retard their progress. Others, it may be, are hesitating what course to adopt. They feel in measure their guilt—they know in part their danger. But considerations of present loss deter them from taking the only path of safety. They need

such an argument as this subject affords. The gospel offers not only deliverance from danger, but also the possession of bliss. It brings present joy, and holds out the certainty of future, unutterable glory. Does any hesitating sinner ask me, in reply to my urgency—'Whether would you lead me?' I answer—Home—to glory—to God. Does he yet interrogate—'And what shall I have?'—I answer: all that your heart can wish—all that your nature can enjoy—all that your capacity can receive. Does he now respond—'I pray you, describe to me this home, and unfold to me its glory?' I reply—most readily, and to the full extent of the ability given, but O, my utmost efforts will fall far short of its indescribable attractions—for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

The home of the redeemed is called a 'House.' 'In my Father's house' said Jesus, 'are many mansions.' It is a house, for one roof covers it notwithstanding its vast dimensions; it is occupied by one family; and it is presided over by one Father. It is the Father's house for it was made by him, and he dwells in it. As his palace it exhibits all that is commodious and beautiful—all that is adapted and pleasing. Its many mansions are prepared for a countless multitude of ransomed souls who will yet form but one household, and

such a household—so harmonious and contented, so loving and happy. In its varied apartments, each varying capacity, from the infantile to the seraph-like intellect can find its appropriate sphere. Here are enjoyed in perfection the safety and the quiet, the abundance and the health, the confidence and the love which constitute the essential elements of a happy home.

It is called a 'Paradise.' 'To-day,' said the dying Saviour, to the penitent thief, 'shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' The word signifies a pleasure garden. In some parts of even this sin-stained world, there are gardens of surpassing beauty, enjoying perennial summer. There fragrant odours are wafted on every breeze, flowers are ever blooming, and trees are ever green. What then must be the loveliness of the celestial paradise? Planted by the hand of God, how perfect its arrangement, how choice its trees, how luscious its fruits, how gorgeous its flowers, and how fragrant its odours! Its location is the centre of creation; it enjoys eternal summer; and it is watered by the river of life which flows from the throne of God. O to walk with loved ones from earth through its sinless arbors, along the banks of its crystal stream, and gather its blooming flowers and luscious fruits, holding converse with angels, and enjoying the presence of even God himself!

It is called a 'City.' 'And he carried me away

in the spirit,' says one,—to whom were vouchsafed higher visions of future glory than to any other son of earth,—'to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.' Its site is unequalled, being built upon the Mount of glory, and far removed from the darkness and storms and shakings of earth. Its materials are of the most costly description. The foundations are of precious stones—the gates of pearls, and the streets of pure gold. Its grand characteristic is its holiness. Sin cannot enter there. And hence it is never disturbed by war nor famine nor pestilence. Its inhabitants all wear robes of white, to manifest their purity, and crowns upon their heads, to show their dignity. They are never diminished by deaths nor increased by births. All the relationships of earth are absorbed in one grand relationship to their Redeemer King, which at the same time binds them to each other in the bonds of purest love. Though ever occupied, they never weary, as they breathe the atmosphere of immortality. They are ever happy, and they give utterance to their joys in unceasing songs of praise to the author of their salvation. Every day is a feast day, and yet there is no voluptuousness. Perfect freedom is enjoyed, yet every action is regulated by the will of their King. Poverty is unknown, yet none are proud. Though all are

kings, yet all are servants to the King of kings. And together they walk the streets of their golden city, while he leads them to living fountains of delight, and reveals to them the unsearchable glories of the Godhead. As their knowledge is increased, their capacity for glory is increased; and so their eternity rolls its endless round of ever-growing bliss. O child of earth, dwelling in a cottage of clay, wilt thou not choose this city for thine everlasting home.

It is also called a 'Country.' Paul declares that the patriarchs confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and argues that such a declaration implies that they were still in search of 'a country,' a better than that from which they came or in which they were sojourning, 'that is an heavenly.' This is "the far-off Land,"—"Immanuel's Land."—"the Kingdom of glory." No narrow limits confine it, for its area exceeds human computation. Its plains are rich, and its scenery glorious. Its climate is exhilarating and delightful. No freezing blasts sweep over it—no deadly sirocco blasts it. No enemy approaches it—no destroyer lurks within it. Its inhabitants never grow old, and none complain of sickness. It is pre-eminently the "Happy Land." To it the passage at the head of this chapter refers. The King of the Country addressing a pilgrim whom he is conducting to that better land says:—"Thy sun

shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." What animating, what cheering words! They describe two of the great attractions of that upper world: its eternal day, and its eternal bliss. This, fellow mortal, groping in the shades of night and weeping in the vale of tears, is the world to which I would conduct you. May I not claim your heart with your attention while I unfold to you the glories of—

I. ITS ETERNAL DAY.

Terms are employed which refer to the present condition of our planet. Two great luminaries afford us light, the sun by day, the moon by night. Yet we have not perpetual light, for the moon does not always take the place of the sun, and its light at best cannot constitute day. But if both sun and moon poured continuously their rays of light on any particular portion of earth, that portion would enjoy perpetual day. The idea, then, intended to be conveyed by the language is—that country shall never be enveloped in the gloom of night, but shall be clothed with the beams of eternal day. But let not the inhabitant of earth, familiar with the light of sun and moon, imagine that the created light of the one or the reflected light of the other will illumine this upper world. It lies far beyond

our solar system, and is neither regulated nor influenced by the natural laws which conserve that system. Jehovah himself is its everlasting light. What need of sun or moon, with its limited and diminishable glory, when the Creator of countless suns and moons is present in his transcendent effulgence. Blend all the suns of the galaxy into one—even the superlative splendor of that luminary would be lost in the infinite brilliance of Jehovah's person. This is heaven's light—uncreated, undiminishable, immovable and therefore everlasting. Rotating on no axis, but stablished by the decree of the Unchangable, that world shall never turn from the glory that illumines it, nor shall that glory ever depart from it. Here perpetual day would not be desirable, for both mind and body are wearied by labor, and require the rest and repose of night to restore their vigour. But there, there is no toil to induce weariness, life never loses its elasticity; exercise enfeebles no faculty, and repose is sought by none. The glories of the eternal day may be seen—

First, in the life which its light develops. Our sun on its annual return draws out into fresh life the whole vegetable world. The gardens, the fields, and the forests all burst the bonds of sterility, and put forth their verdure. New branches appear on the trees and fresh shoots spring from the soil. The insect world comes forth as if from the tomb.

Earth, air, and water teem with countless myriads. The higher animals feel the glow of new life, and roam abroad to satisfy their wants. Even man himself is stimulated by the rays of a vernal sun, and the languishing constitution often revives, the strong delight in the exercise of their energy, and the enterprising find life in their activity. If such effects are produced by the beams of our material sun on the physical life of earth, what will be the effect of the rays of the Sun of righteousness on the spiritual life of heaven? Will they not stimulate and develop it? The life there manifested from the lowest sanctified human intelligence to the highest archangel had its origin in that light. Where it rests death cannot be, for life springs forth. And while it shines, the life which it originated continues to expand and grow. In its beams life enjoys its native atmosphere—nothing retards its progress, and all its latent energies are fostered. On earth the same sun which developed physical life, often withers it—scorching the tender herb, killing the animal with thirst, and striking down in its noon-tide powers the feeble frame of man. But no burning heat is blended with the light of this upper world. The effulgence of Jehovah's glory rests with measured power on all its inhabitants. It ever quickens—it never blasts. The earthly sun retires from year to year, and suffers desolation and death to resume

their places ; but the spiritual luminary of heaven never recedes from that favored land, and hence no corresponding calamities can ensue. Life, full, expanding, exuberant, everlasting is the natural offspring of the Sun of righteousness.

Second, in the knowledge which its light reveals. Light reveals to us external nature. What we know of its immensity or its limitations, of its grandeur or its simplicity, of its symmetry or its deformity is seen in the beams of light. The everlasting light of the heavenly world is the source of all knowledge to its inhabitants. In his light they see light. He reveals himself. No idea of his glory can be formed except by the light which emanates from his person. Over all the objects of glory there he will ever be infinitely pre-eminent, and afford a subject of devout and admiring contemplation through eternity. By his brightness the whole heavenly country in all its loveliness and attractiveness shall be brought to view. Here then will be ample scope for investigation and the joyous acquisition of knowledge. The light will not be dim—the research will not be painful—and the discovery will not be saddening. Investigation with the light of Jehovah will be pleasing, engaging and enriching. But not this happy land only but creation in its widest range will open its doors for the contemplation of “the saints in light.” Under the tuition of the great Illuminator, what

wonders will be unfolded to the gaze of his devoted students. Mysteries will be solved in a moment which the investigation of unaided human reason for ages could not unravel. The changes to which our earth was subjected before it became the abode of man, the peculiarities and uses of each of the planets of our system, the place which the system holds in connection with others, the extent and grandeur and purposes of other systems, and the laws by which these masses of matter act and react and conserve each other, will be no longer subjects of doubtful disputation. The great Artificer will show when and how the machinery was put together, how its movements are regulated, and what ends it subserves. The book of providence will be opened, and with the light now falling upon its pages it will be seen how angels and man, sinless and sinning, have been governed. What was inexplicable on earth will now be most plain. In all things the Lord's character will appear untarnished by the slightest deviation from the principles of truth and holiness. Light will be cast on the grand problem why sin was allowed to enter the creation of a holy and almighty God. It will be seen that this, the essence and source of all disorder and misery, was permitted and controlled for the grandest of all ends, the glory of God; and that even in its management the Most Holy remained uncontaminated. But it is in the retrospect of

the dealings of grace, as examined in the light of glory, that the profoundest gratitude and admiration will be evoked among the redeemed from earth. The wrath to which they were exposed—the price of their pardon—their personal guilt—the time and means of their awakening and conversion—the train of agencies by which they were preserved—the necessity for their various trials and the blessed effects of them—the perils from which they were on different occasions rescued, with the time and circumstances of their removal from earth, will all now be comprehended with a clearness and fullness unattainable in the dim conceptions of time. Such is a glimpse of the glorious knowledge which the eternal day will reveal.

Third, in the beauty which its light creates. Is there beauty on earth?—There is. In the evening sky of summer, in the rainbow, in the dew-drop, in the pearl, in the blooming flower, and in the human face in the glowing days of youth, there is real beauty—yet all this is attributable to light. Is there beauty in heaven? Yes; there the perfection of beauty is. In its house of many mansions, in its blooming paradise, in its golden city, and in its glorious country, every shade of physical beauty finds its place. Yet all this beauty had its origin in him who is its everlasting light. He himself is the essence of beauty; and he has transferred his own image to all the inhabitants of

his chosen abode. Their purified spirits, like the sea of glass which John saw before the throne, reflects the image of Him who sits upon that throne. O! heaven is the home of beauty—there is neither physical nor moral deformity there. Every thing is beautiful, and every one is beautiful; and all is created and disclosed by the glorious light of Jehovah. On earth beauty fades with time and fading light; but in the upper world time never passes, for it is unknown, and light never fades, for it is everlasting. Does the sight of beauty occasion delight? What must be the delight of heaven where everything beheld is beautiful? O what transformations are there! The charcoal has become the diamond indeed. Spirits found in the mire of sin, there shine with the brightness of the sun for ever. And some who had been the abject slaves of Satan on earth, now vie in beauty with the noblest of the sons of light. O lovers of the beautiful in nature and in morals, seek this as your eternal home! And,

Fourth, in the joy which that light imparts. 'Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.' How welcome the return of morning to the lonely night-watcher on the dark and stormy sea! The dwellers in the north hail the return of the sun, after their long bleak night, with joyful exclamations. Take the sun from our world, and you close ten thousand

sources of delight. The Sun of heaven is the great fountain of its joy. Every soul on which it shines is enraptured. In its beams unnumbered millions bask with unmingled pleasure. None are so remote, or so secluded, as to be unblessed with this joy. It is free, continuous, full and overflowing to all. To walk in this light is to be transported with joy. Hence those that march the golden streets with Jehovah's glory beaming upon them, cannot refrain from loudest acclamations of praise. How precious that light! How happy that land! —O to be there! There is no night there. They have no need of lamp such as that by which at midnight I am now writing. Their sun never goes down. And with their endless day is their endless joy.

Here are the glories of the eternal day; life pure, free, expanding, indestructible—knowledge profound, precious, engaging, pleasurable—beauty universal, glorious, perfect, charming—and joy full, holy, rapturous and everlasting. But of this joy we must speak more at length, as it has received special mention.

II. ITS ETERNAL BLISS.

“And the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” The terms imply that the person addressed had his days of mourning. And who among all the chil-

dren of earth has been exempt from affliction and sorrow?—Not one. From the cries of infancy to the dying groans of old age, human life is marked by constant recurrences of grief. To many life is a journey through a vale of tears. Others enjoy more sunshine and comfort ; but the dashing storms of affliction cross every path trodden by sinful mortals. Few and sorrowful are the days of man on earth. This heavenly pilgrim is assured by his guide that his days of mourning shall be ended. Why did he mourn ?

First, he mourned for his sins. There is nothing that demands grief like sin. It is the greatest folly and the greatest wrong. It is an offence against God and an injury to man. It kills the body and the soul. It blasts the peace, the hopes and the happiness of the rational being for time and eternity. Grace opens the eyes to see the nature of sin, as well as its consequences. Then follow sadness, sorrow, tears, anguish. The soul is bruised, torn and rent. It bewails its condition and laments its folly. And although the fountain of mercy washes the sins of the penitent away, it leaves behind a contrite heart ; and this tenderness of spirit is frequently wounded by contact with the corruptions of earth. How bitterly did the pilgrim mourn before the fetters of sin were broken ; and before he dared hope that one so vile as he was welcomed in the arms of mercy ! And

how often, after passing the strait gate, were his hopes overcast, and from the darkened sky tears of sorrow fell because the voice of the tempter had successfully allured, and the path to life had been left, and the forbidden fruit had been tasted! Ah! there is a mourning for sins after conversion peculiarly melting, peculiarly bitter. But O this mourning shall be ended, and for ever. Ere long the last step is taken in this sin-stained world, and the soul enters a region undefiled by guilt. There no omission, no transgression, no shortcoming, no imperfection ever occasions the slightest uneasiness, for all obey perfectly the will of their God. Sorrow for sin has passed away.

Second, under the violence of temptations. Earth is a battle-ground to the Christian. He has foes within and foes without. The struggle is often desperate. Antagonistic principles contend within him for the mastery. Wherever he goes he has an enemy in his bosom which is ready to take advantage of seasons of weakness or facilities for indulgence in sin. On either hand fascinating allurements press upon him, and distract him by their powerful suggestions. And numerous spiritual adversaries unseen throned on his path, at times obstructing his progress, or shrouding him in thick darkness, terrifying by alarms or wounding by showers of fiery darts in the shape of vile and blasphemous thoughts. On other occasions they

combine their forces to hurry him away from the way of life to the bleak and rugged wilds of despair, or crowd him into a pit of corruption near which his path may lay. Harrassed, wearied, wounded, bleeding he may be seen pressing slowly forward, in heaviness through manifold temptations, and sighing for the time when he shall leave for ever the domains of the prince of darkness. Fainting soldier of the cross cheer up, the days of thy mourning shall be ended! You will soon be beyond the reach of devils and all their fiery darts. The enemy within shall be expelled; and you shall go where the foes without cannot follow you. All danger shall be over. You shall hear the sound of the trumpet and the clash of arms no more. No enemy shall be there. Peace, everlasting peace shall reign all around.

Third, for the wickedness of men. The children of God share in the feelings of God. What these feelings are, in respect to the sinful conduct of men, there can be no doubt. God is said to have been "grieved at his heart"—that is deeply, intensely,—because of the intolerable wickedness of the old world. Jesus beheld with grief the human heart persistently resisting his gracious words, and wept over self-blinded and impenitent Jerusalem. The Israelites are charged with habitually, and from age to age, vexing and grieving the Holy Spirit. And how felt those who were made "par-

takers of the divine nature?" Lot vexed his righteous soul from day to day in seeing and hearing the shameless wickedness of Sodom. The man after God's own heart says: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law." Jeremiah, the pathetic and patriotic prophet and preacher, after exhorting to repentance and confession, exclaims; "If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride." Ezekiel tells us that God marked as his own, "the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations which were done in Jerusalem." And Paul could not write of the enemies of the cross of Christ, who gloried in their shame and minded earthly things, without "weeping." The reason is obvious. They are identified in spirit and life with the cause of holiness; and they cannot see God dishonored and man ruined, by the prevalence of sin, without the deepest sorrow. Would that there was more of this feeling in the church of Christ! No believer, in a right state, can see or hear what is sinful without his nature being shocked, and his grief awakened; and the more holy, heavenly and Christ-like he is, the more keenly will he feel, and the more deeply will he mourn. And where can the pilgrim turn his eye on earth without meeting sin in some form! Often the relative, the neighbour, or the friend may be the object of deep though silent grief, because of the manifest do-

minion which sin has over him. So long as earth lies fettered, degraded and dying under this vile scourge, so long will the pilgrim mourn for its condition, as he passes through it to the better land. But there no sinner is found. No thought, word nor deed is defiled by the curse of earth. Amid all the intercourse of redeemed millions no light nor sound offensive or grieving is ever seen or heard. The wicked neighbour, the ungodly relative, and the carnal professor awaken sadness no more. The state of the lost is sealed; and their condition begets no sorrow although among them may be many who were near and dear on earth. All sympathy for any suffering the wrath of Jehovah is absolutely eradicated under the overwhelming conviction of the justice, necessity, and propriety of their sentence. Instead of mourning for the lost, they are absorbed in rejoicing for the saved. And lastly,

Fourth, from the pressure of afflictions and bereavements. Faith in Christ does not exempt from the ordinary trials of humanity. It may even occasion some peculiar additional troubles. "In the world," said Christ, "ye shall have tribulation." Hence, the believer may be seen oppressed with poverty, languishing in sickness, driven from home or country by persecution, or desolate by domestic bereavements. He may have a large share of trouble and sorrow on earth. But oh!

the days of his mourning shall be ended, and that right early too, for "he that shall come, will come and will not tarry." His affliction, which is light compared with the woes in store for the wicked, and but for a moment when contrasted with eternity, shall prove instrumental in preparing him for an immeasurably great and eternal weight of glory. Poor, it may be, on earth, rich in heaven. A slave to man here, a child of God there. Racked with ever-recurring pains in a mortal body below, clothed with glorious immortality above. Hiding in dens and caves from the wrath of man here, sitting on thrones of light under the smile of Jehovah there. On earth weeping for loved ones gone no more to return, in heaven rejoicing for ever in their company. O earth, earth, who would tarry in thy dreary, sorrowful domains, when the portals of heavenly glory are opened before him!

The night is past, and the eternal morn is come. Farewell, a long farewell to earth and all its troubles. Gone by are sins defilements, Satan's temptations, man's provocations, and mortality's afflictions; and in their room have come purity and peace, honor and immortality. Eternal bliss pervades eternal day.

Christians! this is your home—think of it—press forward to it—prepare for it.

Sinners! where shall your home be? In the light of heaven or in the gloom of hell—in the joys

of paradise or in the woes of perdition? O remember that as you live, so shall you die. Tarry a little longer in the shades of unbelief, and darkness will settle down upon you, and you shall never find the path to life. O once more would I hold the lamp of truth over that path and cry— Rise sinner and flee from the wrath to come. See you that narrow gate, haste thither, and knock as one that must get in or perish on the spot, and it shall be opened to you. From that gate you shall see a way, the highway, the way of holiness wherein the redeemed walk; by taking it you shall leave sorrow and sighing behind; you shall obtain joy and gladness; and your path, being that of the just, shall grow brighter and brighter until ere long you shall reach Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, where everlasting glory shall surround you.

To assist the memory in retaining the bright conceptions of this chapter let me express in verse—

A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

O Land of liberty! O Land of light!
Thy brilliant plains enchain my ravished sight:
How have I longed thy cloudless sky to see,
While treading Earth's dark vale of misery!

How sweet the fragrance from thy scented bowers!
How bright the radiance from thy snow-white towers!

Thy fields how fair ! thy foliage how green !
Profusely watered by life's crystal stream.

No winter sweeps thee with its chilling blasts,
No gloomy night on thee its shadows casts,
No pestilence can tinge thy gorgeous flowers,
No shade of death in all thy arbors cowers.

But see ! yon groups that stand in garments white,
Their faces beaming with resplendent light ;
Their actions, movements all, proclaim that love
Sustained by bliss most pure, prevails above.

And hark ! what thrilling notes, what rapturous sounds,
As throng on throng that glorious Throne surrounds ;
Now, voices blending in one chorus rise,
And JESUS' name is heard 'mid rending skies.

O child of Earth ! care-worn and stained with sin,
Ev'en *thou*, by faith and prayer, these realms may win ;
Rise, *rise*, and seek thy native Heaven *to-day*,
And let sin's snares no more thy steps delay.

Reader, is all this glory in store for you?—
May our most gracious God bless these urgent
appeals for your soul's salvation !



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