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JUDAS ISCARIOT.

BY THE REV. R. F. BURNS, ST. CATHARINES, C.W.

LUKE XXII. 47, 48. JOHN XIII.

HISTORY OF HIS TREACHERY.

"It was night." Not without reason is this inserted. A deed so black could not bear the light of day. On such hellish plottings the sun would blush and be ashamed to shine. All sinners love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. They hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. Little think they that though men slumber, there is one unseen who neither slumbers nor sleeps: one who has an eye from whose fiery glance nothing is hid, and an arm from whose tremendous sweep none can escape. "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? O that they were wise!" "It was night;" but what of that? for if we say, Surely the darkness shall cover us, even the very night itself shall be light about us. Stealthily, silently, as the night-wrapt thief who lurks to seize the expected prey, creeps this miserable man along the deserted streets, till he reaches the Sanhedrim chamber. What a contrast does it present and the inner chamber of his own spirit, to that upper chamber he had just left. THAT, the abode of love and peace, like one of the many mansions in our Father's house. THIS, the scene of a conspiracy the darkest ever concocted out of hell, and the traitor's heart the home of the devil—the cage of every unclean and filthy bird. The rulers are ravening for the blood of Him with whose fame the country is ringing. Here comes the very man they want. Some days previously he had become privy to their plot, and the base bargain had been closed with them. Ever since the meal in the house of the family of Bethany, about the beginning of this memorable week, when the

mask partially fell off from him, and his mean, mercenary spirit, came repulsively out, his breast had become inflamed with the idea of betraying his Master. Luke xxii. 3, 4.

"What will ye give me?" This lets us at once into the secret of his character. The mask is removed entirely. Before, his covetousness had sought concealment beneath the cloak of an affected charity. Now there is no disguise. If only they will pay him, he is at their service. Never had the covetous man looked the monster as now. Never had this prolific sin looked so loathsome. And what a price for blood, one drop of which is more precious than the wealth of the universe. What will a man give in exchange for his soul? Too often, we know, the veriest trifles; but to barter away the Saviour of the world for less than twenty dollars, exceeds our utmost conceptions of the despicable meanness of avarice. Every opportunity is watched. His malice had been stirred by his Master saying, "One of you is a devil;" by the rebuke dealt him in connection with the alabaster box, and by the hints thrown out at the last Supper: "Ye are clean, but not all," and "One of you shall betray me." His presence had become oppressive and offensive to his Master, and his Master's presence had become embarrassing to him.

Now that he enters the council chamber, it is not for the first time. He is no stranger there. The eager looks cast on him seem to say, "What news." The favourable chance he thinks has come. He knows well the sequestered spot to which, in all probability, his Master would retire from the upper room. Considering the exhausting and exciting scenes through which the Saviour had been passing, and

the advanced period of the night, peradventure, he may be asleep. Then Judas would not have to face him at all, for from that glance he shrunk. He could skulk behind, and his interference not be apparent. At all events, Jesus was likely to be alone, as whole nights had often been spent by him thus in the garden and on the mount. In the day-time there would have been the risk of a popular rising. Myriads of swords besides Peter's would have sprung from their scabbards, in defence of Him who had become the people's idol. To find him alone and unprotected was their only chance. To come on him thus unawares but increased the baseness of the deed. It lent a deeper, darker shade, to the treachery of Monteith, that he came on the patriot Wallace asleep and alone. But Jesus sleeps not, and perhaps as the murderous gang skirted, with suppressed breath, the garden wall, the strong crying of Jesus during part of his agony and bloody sweat, fell on their ears. In the expectation of concealment the traitor is balked. He must face his friend. Will he turn back now? Will he not relent, and repair even yet, a broken-hearted penitent, to his Master's feet. Ah! it is too late. He stands committed. The Roman soldiers are at his heels. Even the warnings of conscience become as officers of justice, dragging him forward to execution. And O! is there not something terrible in the *involuntariness* and *irresistibility* of sin after it reaches a certain point. The wretched victim cannot stop even though he would. He is on the precipitous declivity, and is urged forward to his ruin. It shows how hardened Judas had become, that with such ease and assurance he can brace himself up for the meeting. And what a meeting. How different from that an hour or two before, when Judas sat near John, close to the head of the table. Probably, to disarm suspicion, soldiers and assistants lay in sort of ambush beside the garden gate, while the traitor, like a snake

in the grass, with characteristic cunning went forward alone, as if returning from some benevolent or business visit. Each re-union between Christ and his disciples after a temporary absence, seems to have been signalized by the holy kiss of love. This consecrated symbol of affection is now pressed into the devil's service, and becomes the instrument of treachery. This friendly salutation is the climax of villainy.

"Kissed him." Thus Esau and Jacob met after their prolonged estrangement, and Moses and Aaron on the mount. It was the universally recognized token of love. And to have treachery hide itself beneath this! Had he struck him with his hand or spat in his face, Jesus, who gave his back to the smiter, and hid not his face from shame and spitting, would not have felt it so acutely. How dignified and self-possessed the deportment of Jesus! He is not taken by surprise. He can never be thrown off his guard. How acutely sensitive and gently upbraiding the words—"Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss." Every word must have stuck in the traitor's conscience like a barbed arrow.

BETRAYEST. What single item in the entire calendar of crime meets with such detestation as treachery? Almost any crime will find some palliation in history, but no pillory is too high, and no execration too deep and thorough for the traitor. Of what avail the brilliant exploits of the notorious Arnold? this burning brand on his brow has effaced them all. Hast thou sunk so low?

Betrayest THOU? When Cæsar wraps his mantle round him, and fell beneath the blows of the remorseless assassins that rushed on him, his eye fell upbraidingly on his old friend Brutus, "Et tu, Brute!"—"And thou too, Brutus!" was his touching exclamation.

"Betrayest THOU," comes with similar effect—*thou*, a professed friend, who hast known me and followed me—listened to

my words and seen my works these years past—who hast had such opportunities of becoming acquainted with me, and for whom I have done and suffered so much. “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” It was an extenuation of the sin of Paul that he “did it ignorantly:” and of the “princes of this world that they did not know Christ, for, had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” No such excuse had Judas. On the contrary, he was admitted to the most intimate fellowship with Jesus. He therefore sinned against the clearest light. “Betrayest thou the *Son of Man*—a title in which Deity and humanity were blended—thy truest friend, the world’s greatest benefactor. “Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” This makes the sin aggravated to the last degree. When Joab took Amasa aside, as if he would have a familiar talk with him, saying, “Art thou in health, my brother?” and then drove a dagger to his heart: when he took Abner by the beard as if he would kiss him, and then stretched him a bloody corpse on the plain, the professions of friendship deepen the dye of the double murder. The kiss of Judas, like the kisses of Joab, sounded like the hiss of the serpent, and had in it the sting of the scorpion.

This emphatic, withering sentence, that expressive, gently reproving look, sunk into his shrivelled, shrunken soul, and stirred up the dying embers of his conscience. Each word rolled up into his soul like a wave of fire. The light of that countenance became a burning brand in his conscience. Wherever he goes, these words ring in his ears—that meek and gentle look haunts him. It is as if fiends and furies chased him. What avails money to a conscience in which the arrows of the Almighty stick fast! His silver is cankered, and eats his flesh as it were fire. We lose sight of him altogether for a while. He follows not his

master. He had confronted him unblushingly, and boldly given orders to the soldiers, “Hold him fast,”—bent on making a sure seizure, knowing as he did how easily on three different occasions he had slipped from the hands of his foes; but a single glance, and that appalling sentence, send him away abashed. He never faces Christ again. The rulers wait for him. They had counted on his acting the part of king’s evidence. But they wait in vain. At length the traitor, haggard and woe-begone, makes his appearance. There is a sensation in the crowded court. “Make way for Judas.” A death-like silence reigns. Disclosures are looked for—a thorough exposure of the Nazarene imposture. But no. The pieces of silver are thrown convulsively down, and shrieking in agony, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood,” he rushes from the court into eternity. “He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy.” I know not if these unhonoured remains ever were entombed, but if so, surely no better epitaph could have been found than this—“It had been good for this man if he had not been born.” From this melancholy story learn the following lessons:—

I. *The hardening influence of SIN.*

How thoroughly hardened Judas must have become to join the holy family in the upper room, after having entered into the fiendish conspiracy with the Jewish rulers! For him, a devil incarnate, to recline on the couch adjoining his Master, to meet unblushingly his Master’s eye, to let his feet be washed by his Master’s hand, and to swallow without shrinking the extended “sop,” at the very moment when a hellish hate was harboured in his heart, when the brand of blackest infamy was printed on his brow, when his foul soul was stained with a crime such as can never find its parallel in earth’s voluminous calendar, when the poison of asps was under his lips.

and his feet were swift to shed blood—blood the most pure and precious that ever warmed a human heart or coursed through human veins—O! never had such a depth in the horrible pit been reached before, or that terrible truth started out into such startling prominence: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?”

Does he not pause ere lifting the knocker of that door? As he looks up at those lighted windows within which sat the counsel of the ungodly anxiously awaiting him, does he not mutter, turning on his heel, “My soul, come not thou into their secret, into their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.” The silent stars witness no such soul-struggle—the night winds catch up no such penitent words. If he has hesitated before, all compunctions are now at an end. He is utterly “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” He is bent only on not missing the chance, and on seizing his victim. “See him yonder—that is he; hold him fast” What though it be the hour for his Master’s rest or devotion? What though the holiest memories gather round the spot? What though the gentle Jesus, meek and mild, be handcuffed and buffeted as a worthless malefactor, and his favourite love-token be converted into a badge of treason? No matter to Judas. He has sold himself to commit iniquity. He “draws sin as with a cart-ropes,” and is dragged by it in turn with resistless rapidity towards the awful abyss, down into whose fathomless depths the fatal plunge must soon be taken. Judas became not thus hardened all at once. There was a period in his history when his heart was as impressive as that of any child amongst us. A blooming boy, perhaps an associate of Him whom he now betrays with a kiss, little thought he when he made his start in life, that he was destined to reach such a miserable end. And what was the master sin of Judas? one thought the least of by the

bulk of mankind—by some counted no sin at all. He was a covetous man, like Achan, and Balaam, and Gehazi. The demon of covetousness possessed him, and drowned him in perdition.

It matters not what be the form of sin you indulge, let it be persisted in, and although you may think you can control it as you like—that you may commit it or avoid it as you please—you will by and by find you are in a tyrant’s iron grip—who is hurrying you, insensibly, on your path down the slippery slope to a pit that is bottomless. Listen to the syren strains, lay your head on the lap of the enchantress, and sooner than you are aware will Delilah prove your destruction. You may think yourself a Samson—strong in principle, resolute in purpose—but soon you will be shorn of your strength, the eyes of reason and conscience will be put out, and bound hand and foot by the cords of sin, you will be cast into prison.

If a single sin possess such power, what must sin itself be in the myriad forms it assumes? Surely this is no thing to trifle with, to tamper with, any more than you would cast a burning brand into a magazine of gunpowder, and cry, “Am not I in sport,” or merrily dance on the edge of the crater of Vesuvius or of the cataract of Niagara. “Fools make a mock of sin.” The current may be smooth and the sky bright, the banks may be fringed with flowers, and the motion be easy and delightful, nevertheless that river will lead you to the rapids, where it will be impossible for you to stop, any more than could Judas at the garden gate. Act the deaf adder to the notes of warning now, like the Indian who sat down coolly in his bark canoe, till it shot over the beetling crag into the boiling caldron, and you will start up from your fatal stupor, to find yourself “mid ‘perils of waters.” O! then every member, every nerve and sinew, will be strained as if they would burst; but it will be too late.

the current which, without difficulty, you could have breasted when first you launched, is now irresistible, and whirling, leaping, boiling, your cries in vain, your convulsive efforts fruitless, you are swept over. Be wise then in time. *To-day* hear his voice. To-morrow it may be too late. You may be in the rapids. You may be engaged in the last great struggle.

"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

II. *The power of conscience.*

The conscience of Judas, we have seen, was not dead—it only slept. And when it awoke, it was as a giant refreshed with wine, to lash him with scorpion whip. He went about, haunted as by grim spectres, hunted as by raging furies, till life became a burden to him. He courts destruction; by a rope he swings himself out into eternity, and goes to his own place.

"A wounded spirit, who can bear?"

Many, groaning, being burdened under it, have taken the same fatal leap. When Cain went forth from the presence of the Lord, it was as if that ancient punishment of murderers, the binding to them of the dead body of their victim, was inflicted on him. It was greater than he could bear. Of that mangled body he could not get rid. It followed him wherever he went. That gentle, pitiful look filled his eye, and the blood glared on him. Every step he took, the ground seemed vocal with it, and there sounded in his ears, in answer to the voice of his brother's blood, subterranean thunders and responsive echoes from the rending sky. He felt himself a marked man, as if the elements of nature were leagued against him, and each object of nature cried "murderer" as he passed, as if each roaring blast and rippling stream, each bird of the air and beast of the forest, uttered his unnatural scree, and joined with his brother's blood in calling to heaven for vengeance. It was the working of conscience. And so with

the crime of Herod. Though a Sadducee, and disbelieving the idea of a resurrection, so soon as he heard of the fame of Jesus, he said it is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead, &c. Those eyes long sealed, which once frowned sternly upon him, those lips which cried aloud and spared not against his sins, continued to look to him, continued to speak to him, the charger with the bloody head never faded from his eye—the headless man made the monarch tremble on his throne. Just so with Judas. The haggard, woe-begone look he casts on his employers, the piteous accent wherewith he cries, "I have betrayed innocent blood," and his rapid rush into eternity, attest the gnawing at his vitals of the worm that never dies.

Is not this of itself an argument against sin? Who would have such a conscience? How many sell their consciences for money, and when it is too late, find that they have made a wretched bargain, and that in spite of all their efforts to part from their conscience, *their conscience will not part from them.*

III. *Personality and power of SATAN.*

"Satan entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." "After the sop, Satan entered into his heart." They who do not like to retain God in their knowledge, do not like to retain the devil either. A personal devil is distasteful to them, calling up thoughts of a place of torment, which interfere with the gratification of their evil passions, and break in on their gay dreams of worldly pleasure. Let men bring themselves to believe there's no such thing as a thief, and they will be off their guard, they will have no dread of their house being broken through. To the fraternity of thieves nothing so popular as this. They can, under cover of it, pursue their craft with impunity. And so it is the policy of the devil, as a quaint old writer, has it, to "sham dead," that he may act the part of

robber and murderer all the more easily. Giving men over to this strong delusion to believe this lie, they are led captive by him at his will. Lest Satan take advantage of us, let us not be ignorant of his devices. He is the same cunning devil as when, in the days of Job, he came into the presence of the Lord from wandering up and down through the earth in search of victims,—the same as when, in the days of David, he stood up and prevailed on the king to number the people,—the same as in the days of Joshua the high-priest, when he stood in the Lord's presence to resist him,—the same as when, in the days of Jesus, he filled the bodies and the souls of men, and led even the Holy One himself, who voluntarily submitted to the ordeal, to the top of the high mountain and the pinnacle of the temple. We do not see him, but that does not disprove his existence, any more than our not seeing God or the soul disproves the existence of either. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;" 1 Pet. v. 8. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Let no man, however, when tempted to sin, lay the blame on the devil any more than on God. No man is compelled to sin. Our first parents might have resisted, and had every inducement to resist. And so with Judas—hence he takes guilt home to himself. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed." And what a return does this stern, remorseless master, give to his slaves. What is that to us. "*See thou to that.*" Of what avail his paltry bribes. "The wages of sin is death." "What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death;" Rom. vi. 21. He cares not for their pangs. He has got his own out of them. He rejoices over their ruin. "Art thou also become as one of us?"

IV. Reality of a future state of punishment.

Though the devils believe it and tremble this also there are men who doubt. Instead of listening to God, who hath said, "that the wicked shall be separated from among the just, and shall be cast into the furnace;—that they shall be turned into Hell;—that they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and be consigned to everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels,—where three times over, he in the same breath assures us, the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched: that sinners shall be cast into the lake of fire, and the smoke of their torment ascend for ever and ever." Many prefer opening their ears to him who says, "ye shall not surely die." Making God a liar, and believing in preference, the father of lies. But surely the fate of Judas is sufficient to set the momentous matter for ever at rest. Whatever doubts a spurious charity may entertain, respecting the fate of others, there can be none respecting his. He is pronounced the Son of Perdition. Christ, the faithful and true witness, says of him, "It would have been good for that man if he had never been born." And his miserable history terminates with the announcement that he "went to his own place." "Perdition," or the state of the lost had become his very element. It was assigned him as his final home. He was the very "child of hell," yea, by reason of his erroneous crime, he had become ten times more the child of hell than all besides. Hell then was "his own place," his proper quarters, the very antipodea of the place which Jesus promised to prepare for his companions, when he said, "I go to prepare a place for you." That it could not be *that* place, the peculiar character of the man, put beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt. Jesus hath

prepared a place in his Father's house for his own chosen. For that place of holiness and happiness it is enough to say, Judas was not prepared. How would he have looked there—fresh from the scene of his unparalleled villany. How could he have met the glance of God's all-seeing eye? What reception would he have met with from the heavenly hosts, who found in Jesus the centre of their joy and whose favourite employment it was to watch over him when a wanderer on earth, and to fill Heaven with his praises? And how could Judas, with no spark of love in his heart, or tear of godly sorrow in his eye, bear to meet that Master whom he had so foully wronged, when he exchanged the ignominy of the Cross for the honors of mediatorial sovereignty? He who slunk speedily away from his melting look in the garden of Gethsemane, would have fled, terror-stricken, from his presence in the paradise above. To one, so stained as he, the purity of heaven would have been perfect misery, and the very sight of him entering the pearly gates would have been enough to unstring the harps of the blessed, and to silence their songs. Justice, reason, and common sense teach that law should be enforced, and that criminals should not be sent forth on society unpunished, and shall not the "Judge of all the earth do right." Hell, the impenitent sinner's own place, is to the Universe what a prison is to any well ordered community. But the solemn sentence of Jesus, "It had been good for that man, if he had not been born," settles the question. Had Judas passed into a state of happiness, this would not have been true—or even were a purgatorial process of ages, to terminate, after a protracted interval, in bliss endless and unalloyed, this would not have been true. Had he even passed into a state of annihilation, this would not have been true. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, if destined to be enjoyed at some future

period, however distant, would more than compensate for the severest sufferings of life, or even for a temporary fiery trial.

Sinners, think of this. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3. Hear the words of the gentle Jesus, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell!"—"Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and *there be NONE TO DELIVER,*" Psa. l. 22.

V. *Truth of Christianity.*

For aught we know, the thought of treason had been harboured in Judas' heart for long. He had never disclosed it or sought that the thought of his heart might be forgiven him. Yet such an one, he who knew what was in man receives into his service and retains. Though he knew him to be a spy ever fastening his basilisk eye on every step he took—yet he keeps him on to the last—till the secret plot is developed. This an impostor would not have done. He would, of course, surround himself with those on whose devotion to his interests he could fully rely. Every one in the least suspected would be at once excluded from the circle of his immediate friends. Taking the more favourable view of Judas' character, that in joining the Apostolic band, he was influenced simply by the desire to gratify a disposition naturally ambitious and avaricious; expecting that Christ was to set up a secular kingdom, in whose honors and immunities he would share; and that he left through chagrin and disappointment, there is strikingly brought out, that Jesus offered no worldly inducements to his followers. He led them to expect nothing from adherence to his cause, but bonds and afflictions. The frankness and fidelity, too with which the case of Judas is recorded by the Scripture writers, strikingly attest the credibility of their narrative, and the transparent honesty of the entire testimony they bear. It redounded not to the credit of the apostolic band, that one of them, and he too, filling an important official station, should have acted so base a part.

Then, how strikingly was the Scripture fulfilled in the whole melancholy transac-

tion! Hundreds of years before, David had sketched the traitor's character, and marked out his course; Psa. cix; lxix; xli. Zechariah had specified the very amount that was destined to be paid him; Zech. xi. 12. The connection between the prophecies and their fulfillment is strikingly brought out in Acts i. 16. All efforts to the contrary, God's purpose must stand.—“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;” Luke xiii. 33. But the most remarkable confirmatory feature of all, is the evidence freely borne by Judas in his Master's favor. The evidence of the other disciples will be charged with partiality. They were special friends of Christ. They were interested parties. A favorable testimony from them was only what was to be expected. But here is one who, if he could have fastened on anything against Christ, had every inducement to act the informant. He was filled with malice against his Master; he had recklessly thrown himself into the arms of his Master's foes; he had committed himself to a fiendish plot, and if he could have pointed to a single blemish in the character of his Master, if he could have dragged to light a solitary deviation from the path of rectitude, assuredly it would have been done. He had every opportunity as well as every inducement. For more than three years he had been on an intimate footing with Christ. He had seen him, not on the public stage merely, when a character may be assumed, but in his private moments, when men will be *en deshabille*—off their guard—seen as they really are; he had been with him on all occasions, eyeing him closely, but he found nothing in him; not one flaw—not the appearance of evil.

And as, stung with remorse, and furrowed by care, he comes into court and makes the marble pavement ring with the “reprobate silver” which he convulsively flings from him, this is his expressive testimony, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.”

VI. *The harmony subsisting between the purpose of God and the freedom of man.*

The treachery of Judas was decreed.—The purpose of God fixed it. The prophecies of God fixed it. Like every other part of the sad tragedy of Calvary, it was

but the acting out of the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” That counsel cleared not the other actors in this tragedy. Their guilt is charged home on them by Peter in the very same breath wherein he tells them that they were but ministers of the Divine will. “And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses,” Acts iii. 15. “By wicked hands have crucified and slain,” Acts ii. 23. Nor when many of them were subsequently pricked to the heart, do they presume to lay their load of guilt at the door of God. Like the brethren of Joseph, whose treatment of their brother is also specially spoken of as decreed, (see nar. in Genesis,) they feel themselves verily guilty. And so does Judas, though repentance (of the genuine stamp) is hid from his eyes. His destiny was decreed, but he feels that in working it out, he was a perfectly free man. The Divine decree neither helped nor hindered him. It was as if it had never been. He felt himself free in joining the circle of Christ's disciples—free in retaining that connection—free in making the black bargain with his Master's enemies, and no less free in its execution. He acts not under any compulsion, he is left to the freedom of his own will. The Lord even declares the decree. Judas knows perfectly well that his Master is cognizant of his intentions, and had probably perused again and again, the prophecies bearing on himself, but Christ's declaration, and these prophecies place him under no necessity, and he finds in them not the least palliation. Could any shelter for his poor naked soul have been found, under the decree of God, and the declaration of Christ, he was the very man to seek it. But, no. Such refuge fails him. He attempts not to say, “I am tempted of God.” He takes guilt home to himself. “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood,” Matt. xxvii. 4. Had Judas been the victim of a stern fatalism—had he been placed under an invincible necessity,—he could not justly have been held accountable, and Jesus would have commiserated rather than condemned him. Jesus would have folded him in his arms instead of delivering him over to the tormentors. “Ah, poor soul, you are to be pitied. I know your kind intentions; but it is impossible

for you to carry them out. You would **rain** keep by me, but you cannot; you are pressed against your will into the service of my enemies." Speaks he thus of him? Ah, no, the thunder rolls, forked flashes shoot, Judas is scathed, blighted by the tremendous sentence, "Woe be to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed," Mark xiv. 21. "It had been good for that man if he had not been born," Matt. xxvi. 24.

VII. *Finally*—Beware of hypocrisy and self-deceit—be on your guard against hollow-hearted professors, but be not discouraged because of them.

Within this little flock creeps a wolf in sheep's clothing. See how far a man may go, and how long he may pass without being detected. Judas has secured so much of the confidence of his comrades, that they do not suspect him to the very last. He has kept company with them on all occasions, and has secured their good opinion to such an extent, that from his business habits or supposed honesty, he is made their treasurer. A man may be a professed follower of Christ—may be a minister of Christ—may hold high office among his brethren, and be universally esteemed—may be guilty of no open sin—may keep company with the best Christian society, and yet prove false.

Take heed that your hearts be not deceived. Be not high minded but fear.—Be jealous over yourselves.

God's dear people are apt to be discouraged by the discovery of such hypocrites, and many are deterred from casting in their lot with them, because of this. Some will call in question the reality of religion altogether. They forget that if there were no genuine coin there would be no counterfeit, and that after all it is the greatest compliment to religion, that men have recourse to it as a cloak for their sins. The mask of what is bad will never be assumed. We can never expect perfection in any Church. And perhaps Judas was allowed to remain so long in the band of disciples to teach this truth.

"It must needs be that offences come." But let all who would throw such a stone of stumbling and rock of offence in a brother's way, over which so many have

fallen into perdition, remember—"Woe be unto him by whom the offence cometh.—It were better that a mill-stone were tied about his neck and that he were cast into the sea."

"SHOULD WE THEN MAKE MIRTH?"

A malefactor might perhaps say that he would be merry as long as the scaffold was not erected on which he was to die. But if he were told that the scaffold was quite ready—that the sword was sharpened, and the executioner standing ready—oh! would it not be madness to make mirth? Alas! this is your madness, poor Christless soul. You are not only condemned, but the sword is sharpened and ready that is to smite your soul; and yet you can be happy, and dream away your days and nights in pleasures that perish in the using. The disease is ready, the accident is ready, the arrow is on the string, the grave is ready, yea, hell itself is ready, your own place is made ready; and yet you can make mirth! You can play games, and enjoy company. How truly is your laughter like the crackling of thorns under a pot: a flashy blaze, and then the blackness of darkness forever!

Not only are Christless souls condemned already and not only is the sword of vengeance quite ready, but the sword may come down at any one moment. It is not so with malefactors; their day is fixed and told them, so that they can count their time. If they have many days, they make merry to-day at least, and begin to be serious to-morrow. But not so Christless persons; their day is fixed, but it is not told them. It may be this very moment. Ah! should they then make mirth?

Some malefactors have been found very stout-hearted to the very last. Many have received their sentence with quite unmoved, and with a determined countenance. Some have even gone to the scaffold quite unmoved; some even with a light, careless spirit. But when the head is laid down upon the block, when the eyes are covered, and the neck laid bare—when the glittering sword is lifted high in the air, and may come down any one moment—that is a dreadful time of suspense. It would be very horrible to see a man in a light, careless spirit at that time. Oh! it would be madness to be merry then.

Alas! this is your madness, poor Christless soul. You are not only condemned, and not only is the sword ready, but it may fall on you at any one moment. Your head is, as it were, on the block. Your neck is bared before God, and the whetted sword is held over you; and yet can you make mirth? Can you take up your mind with business and worldly

things, and getting rich, building and planting, and this night your soul may be required of you? Can you fill up your time with games and amusements, and foolish books and entertaining companions? Can you fill up your hours after work with loose talk and wanton behaviour, adding sin to sin, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, when you know not what hour the wrath of God may come upon you to the uttermost? Can you go prayerless to your bed at night, your mind filled with dark and horrid imaginations not fit to be named, and yet you may be in hell before the morning?

Ah! do not then make mirth. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Take the kingdom of heaven by violence. Press into it.—Never rest till you are in the bonds of the covenant. Then be as happy as the day is long.—*M. Cheyne.*

TACT IN SEEKING SOULS.

Every Christian should study the art of leading sinners to Jesus. Love to Christ will make a Christian desire to save souls, but will not necessarily give him skill to do the work. That he must acquire by thought, prayer, observation, and practice. The remark is suggested by an incident with which I have just met in my reading.

A pious physician had access to a jail, and tried to minister both to the souls and bodies of his patients in prison.

One day he pleaded with a murderer to seek pardon. He urged all the motives of the gospel to repentance he could command, and threw his whole soul into the plea. The murderer was cold and obdurate; excused his crimes by quoting the example of David, Solomon, and other Scripture characters. In fine, he said, "I don't know that I have much to repent of."

This from a murderer was terrible. The physician left his cell thinking the case hopeless.

Anxious, however, to do all he could, he invited a dear friend—an aged, devoted man—to visit him. The old man consented, and when after some time the doctor again ventured into the cell of the murderer he was surprised to hear him say, "Doctor, you don't understand your business. You come here to do good, to benefit the souls of us poor prisoners, but you don't go about it right.—You always urged me to 'repent,' to 'repent.' But, doctor, do you suppose there is one poor fellow in this prison who doesn't know he must repent if he would be saved? That dear old friend of yours that you left behind understood his business. He came here, sat right down by my side, He looked indeed like a really

good man. With a look full of tenderness he said to me, 'John, wasn't it gracious goodness on the part of the Almighty that he should have loved us so much as to send his only begotten and well-beloved Son into the world to save such sinners as you and I?'—Why, doctor, that word *I* killed me. It killed me dead. I couldn't get over it. That that holy, venerable man should put himself on the same level with me, a vile murderer, neither fit to live nor to die! I cannot keep it out of my thoughts. It is working its way to my heart."

How great is the value of *tact* in soul-seeking! The doctor's *direct* appeal only stirred his depravity. The old man's indirect but adroit address, mingled as it was with exquisite tenderness, conquered him. The doctor was faithful but unskillful, and failed; his aged friend was both faithful and skillful, and he prevailed—he was *wise to win souls*.

'Seek this divine wisdom, Christian; so shalt thou win many to righteousness. Dost thou need motive power? Get more love to Christ, until thou canst busy yourself in the work, saying, "The love of Christ constraineth me." Consider, also, "that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Alas, alas! that we should take so easy the destruction of souls around us, and sometimes even "the destruction of our kindred!"

MY CHURCH.

"Mamma, can't I go to my church this afternoon?"

"What is your church?" inquired her mother, somewhat wondering.

"Oh, don't you know, mamma, where we go when we don't have Sunday school?"

And then her mother knew it was the monthly meeting in the church for catechising, to which the child had reference, for she had sent her to a Sunday school nearer than the one connected with their own church,

"Would you rather go there than go to church with papa and mamma?"

"Oh, yes," replied the child, "because I can't tell what papa's minister says, but our minister only talks to us, and I like to go."

Ah, how many of Christ's ministers, like Christ's apostles, forget that Jesus is waiting to lay His hand of blessing on little children; that to them also is the word of salvation sent. He that said to Peter, "Feed my sheep," said also "Feed my lambs."

"HOW LOVE I THY LAW!"

"Christians do not study the Bible enough," said the excellent Wilberforce in his last illness. "In all my troubles I never read any other book, nor felt the want of any other. It has been my hourly study, and my knowledge of its doctrines and teachings has been derived from the Bible itself. Books about the Bible may be very useful, but they will not do instead of the simple truth of the Bible."

How many make an excuse for not reading the Scriptures every morning, "I am so busied with my other cares, I forget it!" Yet they would think a person almost insane, who forgot to take his daily food. Can the soul live and grow, without its proper nourishment, better than the body? O! if we only realized the value of spiritual, as we do of temporal blessings, we should not so lightly forego the means of securing them. Make the daily reading of God's word a habit, and you would no more think of neglecting it, than of going about your daily business without your morning meal. He who can truly say, "How love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day," has in his bosom a well-spring of happiness, which no burning drought of earth can affect.

I called on a friend one day, and found her, as usual, engaged with her needle-work, an expression of joy and peace resting upon her countenance. On the chair before her lay a course-print copy of the Testament and Psalms, so placed that when she raised her eyes a moment—it might be, to tie a knot in her thread, or to pick up her scissors—she could read a precious verse, to think about as she went on with her work. It was no hindrance to her labour, but rather a sweet stimulus, and a gentle solace to every care. I do not doubt that her busy fingers moved quicker for such resting, for we can work fast when the heart is light.

What an excellent safeguard, also, against vain thoughts, those hourly "tempters of the mind!" If Christians would only keep the Bible at their hand, that they might read a passage now and then, in the intervals of labour, how their souls might grow in spiritual knowledge! The deeper we drink of these healing waters, the keener will be the relish. A lady, who had long

loved and studied the Bible, used often to come back to her table once more, when about to lay her head on her pillow, that she might read still another precious passage before she went to sleep. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth."—*Presbyterian*.

BE DECIDED.

Two gay and careless young men were walking together one Sabbath evening, and passing a church they thought they would go in. On entering they found it so much crowded they were compelled to stand by the door. The preacher took for his text, "Mine iniquities have gone over my head as a heavy burden; they are too heavy for me." One of the young men was struck to the heart, and felt himself to be a vile sinner in the sight of a holy God, and he resolved by the help of God he would seek the salvation of his soul. His companion observed that he was serious, and determined to dissipate his impressions; so, on leaving the church, he spoke in a careless, indifferent manner, and ridiculed his seriousness. The young man paused; this was the time to make a decision which to choose—heaven or hell, life or death. Turning to the tempter, he said, "We must now understand our position in regard to each other. I feel myself to be a great sinner and I am resolved to try to be a Christian, and you must let me alone."

They parted. One of these young men is now a merchant in the West, prosperous in his worldly affairs, but an infidel, and living without God in the world. The other, who so bravely decided to seek the Lord, is now one of the most useful ministers of the gospel. *Be decided*, young men and women; when the Spirit calls, look those in the face who would ridicule you, and bravely say, "You must let me alone, for I will try to be a Christian."—*American Messenger*.

THE KITES AND THE LITTLE MESSENGERS.

I was walking over the common on a beautiful summer afternoon. There seemed to be hundreds and hundreds of little boys and girls at play with balls, and shuttle-cocks, driving hoops, or playing marbles. Some were sailing their little boats in the sweet little pond, near the old, big elm. In one place was a group of boys flying their kites. With long strings they let them off, and they hung up high and far over the waters beyond the great mill-dam, so that they looked like little birds poised up in the air, afar off. And I noticed every minute or two each boy would slip a bit of paper on the string, some blue, some red, and some other colours.

"Boys, what are those little papers you put on the string?"

"Messengers, sir."

"Messengers! Pray what are Messengers?"

"Why, sir, we put one on so (slipping on one), and it begins to whirl (don't you see it whirl?) and then it goes all the way up to the kite. We call them messengers."

"Do they do any good? Well, well, I see it go up, up; there, now, it's out of sight!" But what's the use?"

"O, sir," said a laughing, chubby fellow, "we love to see them go, and we write messages on them to our kites, and when they get there, perhaps they do a *leetle* good, and make the kite go up higher."

"Happy fellow," said I to myself, as I walked away. "But have I not learned a lesson from these little messengers?"

There is my old mother, a great way off. She is very old and loves me much. I have not written to her often or lately. I will write to her this evening, and once every week.—My little messenger will tell her that I think of her and love her, and perhaps it will lift her up a little in comfort!

There is my poor lame cousin, not able to get out of her chair, and will never walk again. I will at once send her the new book which I have been reading, and a basket of fruit just given to me. Neither of them cost me anything, but these little messengers will let her know that I have not forgotten her, and they may lift up her spirits a little!

There is poor old Katy Hoose living down in the little room in Smith's alley. She is above four-score years old, very feeble and poor; But I do believe she belongs to Christ, and in a very short time will be with him. I have not seen her lately at church. I will take a little basket of food and go and see her as soon as possible. It may be that my call may be to her a messenger from the great Master, that will lift her up in faith a little.

And there are those missionaries whom I

saw last week, some going east and some west. I told them to be of good courage, and we would not forget them. And last night I attended the concert of prayer, but did not seem to enjoy it! Ah! I see how it is! I must pay in that money that I promised the Lord I would contribute, both for foreign and domestic missions. These prayers are like the boys' kites—they go up high, but we must send messengers after them, we must send our alms after them, and they will lift them up higher, and they will come up as memorials before God! They are not lost, though they go out of sight. Ah! how many little messengers I could send here and there every day, if I only had a heart to do it!—*Rev. Dr. Todd.*

REMARKS ON SERMONS.

Many very good people often do harm by thoughtless remarks in going from Church. On one occasion a gentleman, as he went out said, that was the best sermon ever preached in that church; a lady remarked, that was the gem of the season; and such-like criticisms were heard. Now, to a minister of some years of ministerial experience, such remarks are idle as the wind, for he knows they mean little or nothing. But a young minister might be injured for life, by just such thoughtless expressions. We remember once having heard a young friend from the seminary preach. It was his first sermon. He preached with great fluency and vast vociferation, with occasional snatches of poetry from Pollock and Young. A lady, as we passed out, very injudiciously said to the student, "That was a splendid sermon, may God spare you to the Church." This young brother actually conceived he was a very great preacher, shortened his course of study in the seminary, and to this day he feels the sad consequences of that fulsome and ill-timed flattery. Let those who go to the house of God beware of heedless remarks about the sermon. If people go away saying, that was a beautiful or splendid sermon, it is manifest that whatever the sermon might be, it failed on them. Rather go from the house of God with prayer that the word preached may be to you the power of God unto salvation—a savour of life unto life, and not a savour of death unto death.—*Lutheran Observer.*

SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS OF MAN.

A dew-drop, falling on the ocean wave,
Exclaimed in fear—"I perish in this grave;"
But, in a shell received, that drop of dew
Unto a pearl of marvellous beauty grew;
And, happy now, the grace did magnify
Which thrust it forth—as it had feared—to die;
Until again, "I perish quite," it said,
Torn by rude diver from its ocean bed.
O unbelieving! So it came to gleam,
Chief jewel, in a monarch's diadem.

—Trench.

HOME QUESTIONS.

What is thy wealth, reader? Is it money, or houses, or lands? Hast thou gold, and bills, and bonds? Dost thou heap up riches in the coffer? or dost thou make the bank thy treasury? Surely thou hast heard that riches have wings; and that many who are rich for this world are poor indeed for that which is to come! Ask, then, of God, that he may show thee the riches of his grace, and make thee a partaker of the riches of his glory.

What is thy strength? If it be that of a vigorous frame, a broad chest, and a sinewy arm, the ague may shake thee, the fever may burn thee, and consumption may waste thee till thou art weaker than other men. Dost thou ever think of this? Art thou ready for the throes of pain, and the languor of sickness? Be assured thou wilt have them. Go to the strong for strength, and to the wise for wisdom, and then, as thy day is, thy strength shall be.

What is thy choice? Is it the applause of the world? pomp? ambition? fame? Why, these are play-things which are soon broken! glittering bubbles that soon burst! Is it wise to choose food that will not keep? garments that will not wear; and possessions which are here to-day and gone to-morrow? Choose something better! Make a better choice, for thou can hardly make a worse. Choose the one thing needful? the Pearl of great price, the hope of eternal glory.

What is thy zeal? Is it for trifles, or for things of value? for thine own weal, or for others good? for time or eternity? for earth or heaven? Is thy zeal foolish, or according to knowledge? Does it bind thee to the world, or wean thee from it? Is it hot, hasty, and fitful; or calm, enduring, and persevering?—Saul had a zeal, but he was a persecutor.—Peter had a zeal, but for all that he denied his Master. Be zealous in love; be zealous in faith; be zealous in good works; and be zealous in promoting the kingdom of the Redeemer.

Who are thy friends? Are they rich, powerful, and devoted to thee? Have they indulg-

ed in large professions, and made large promises? Still have a care! Hast thou tried them in trouble? Hast thou sought favour of them in the day of calamity? "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint." [Prov. xxv. 19]. Choose for thine earthly friends lovers of peace, and remember there is a heavenly Friend "that sticketh closer than a brother."

What is thy heritage? Is it an estate?—The cast-off property of those who have gone before thee? A mere life-interest, that may be but for an hour? O there are better things than these! Give up the chaff for good grain; thy husks for the fattened calf; thy passing shadow for a permanent reality. Look higher than earth, and trust in thy Redeemer, so shalt thou have a heritage of peace and joy, and be an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.—*Evangelist.*

HOW MEN DIE.

Some men die in ignorance, unconcerned, and seemingly without fear for the future. Others are sullen and silent, as if determined to brave it out at all hazards. Others are so wearied out by long illness and continued pain, that they are eager for the change, yet give no evidence of being in a fit state to appear before God. Others abound in professions of hope and confidence, yet leave impartial observers at a loss to conceive what basis there can be for such assurance. Others, again, give their friends every reason to think that they are real children of God, and make the dread passage with little or no sensible comfort—in not a few cases, under a dark and heavy cloud.

The majority of consistent Christians have their last end as it is described by the Psalmist in a single word; it is "peace." A few of them, however, taste heaven this side of the cold Jordan, and their rapture is a thing to be witnessed in order to be understood.

There is a very simple rule for the direction of any one who feels concerned about the manner in which he is to meet the last enemy. This is to live habitually in communion with God through Jesus Christ. Such a life cannot end miserably. Death must be to it only the crowning seal of its steadfast course, the finishing touch of its pure blessedness.—*Christian Intelligencer.*

THE GOOD NEWS.

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THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

BY THE REV. W. B. CLARK, QUEBEC.

Matthew i. 18-25.

When we last heard of the blessed virgin, she was just taking leave of Zacharias and Elizabeth, under whose hospitable roof she had sojourned for about three months, and was setting out upon her return to her own residence at Nazareth. We have no information regarding her spiritual exercises about this time; but we have every reason to believe that her faith in the justice, and goodness, and mercy of God, was unwavering; and that, whatever might be the trials to which she was exposed, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, kept her heart and mind.

It is probable that the delicacy of feeling, the virgin modesty, of Mary, prevented her from opening her mind to any one at Nazareth. Indeed, the narrative of Matthew leads us to believe that her condition had become apparent to her friends, before she revealed it. Doubtless Mary, in justice to herself, and with a view to instruct her friends in regard to the great salvation, which God was preparing for his people, embraced this opportunity of stating to them all the circumstances of her case. It is probable that some of them were incredulous. So long, however, as a hope remained of the honour of the family being unsullied, we may well believe that the whole matter was kept private. But it was needful that Joseph should be made aware of what had occurred.

We may well conceive the tumult of emotions which would be excited in his righteous soul. It was hard to believe one guilty of so great a crime, whom he so ardently loved, and so highly esteemed; but yet the account which she gave was so extraordinary and unlikely, that he could not help giving way to his suspicions, and believing that it was a story ingeniously contrived to save her reputation, and impose upon himself. Being a just man, he could not think to take one to his bosom whom he believed to be polluted: and at the same time, amiable, and gentle, and

kind as he was, he did not wish to expose her, and still less subject her to the rigour of the law, which would have condemned her to be stoned to death. In these circumstances, it occurred to him that his most judicious course would be to give her privately a bill of divorce, without specifying the reason, which, according to Jewish law, a husband had it in his power to do.

No doubt all this was a severe trial to Mary, but we may well believe that she was still, and knew that the Lord was God, and that he would bring forth her righteousness as the light, and her judgment as the noon-day. God does not promise to keep his people from trouble, but he *does* promise to support them under it. He does not prevent them from becoming objects of suspicion, or their good name from being assailed by the strife of tongues. This is a species of discipline to which they are often subjected. But if we are careful to keep our consciences void of offence towards God, he will be careful to keep our characters from ultimate ruin.

We have cause of thankfulness now, that Joseph did not at once receive the statement of Mary; for, from the caution and deliberation which he manifested, we may have thorough confidence in the accuracy of the conclusion at which he ultimately arrived. Happily, he was not left to his own resources in investigating this matter; for, whilst he was meditating on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared to him. It is somewhat remarkable that this angel, who was probably Gabriel, did not appear to him in open vision, as he had done to Zacharias and Mary; but it is useless to enquire into the reason, and better far simply to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." We may be quite sure, however, that the dream was of such a nature, that no doubt could remain on his mind that an express from heaven had, in this way, been sent to him. In this way God's will was often communicated to the ancient prophets. Thus we find God saying to Aaron and Miriam: "If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream;" Numbers xii. 6. But in ancient times, divine communications were thus made not only to prophets, but occasionally to the people of God in general, and even at times

to distinguished heathens. The cases of Joseph, and Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar will readily suggest themselves. Experience teaches us that, on ordinary occasions, no confidence is to be reposed in dreams, which are the imaginings of the soul shut up in the prison of the body, when the windows of the senses are closed, by which alone it can receive communications from the material world; but then, it is fully alive to impressions from the spiritual world, and perhaps can communicate with it all the more immediately, from the distractions of sense being withdrawn; and rash would be the man who would say, that spiritual communications may not sometimes be made in dreams, even at the present time.

The angel addresses Joseph, as the son of David, as if he would remind him, that humble, though his present circumstances were, he was a descendant of the royal prophet, and probably the representative of Judah's royal family, that he might thus prepare him for the surprising intelligence of his relation to the Messiah, who, as every Bible reader knew, was to be descended of David. He then tells him to have no scruples about taking, to his house and to his heart, Mary his espoused wife; for that far from being what he suspected her, she was one of the purest of the daughters of Eve, and as such heaven's highest favourite; and that the infant, with whom she was then pregnant, had been created in her womb by the miraculous agency of the Holy Ghost. He farther informed him, that she would give birth to a son, and instructed him to call the child Jesus, that is, being interpreted Saviour,—a name descriptive of his character, "For," said the angel, "he shall save his people from their sins." Thus early, the true nature of the salvation which Jesus accomplishes for his people, was clearly indicated,—a salvation not only from the consequences of sin, but from sin itself,—a deliverance not only from the punishment, but from the power of sin, or, in other words, the salvation of sinners, not in their sins, but from their sins. O! what cause of thankfulness for the completeness of the salvation, which has been provided for sinners, in the scheme of redemption, through a crucified Saviour, that ample provision has been made not only for our pardon, but for our purification; not only for our acquittal

through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, but our progressive holiness through the sanctification of the Spirit; a holiness begun, often advanced very far on earth, and perfected in heaven. Brethren, let me ask, have you been made partakers of this holiness? have you been delivered from the dominion of sin, and are you seeking entire emancipation from the remains of its influence? Have your eyes been enlightened by the Holy Spirit given unto you, so that you can realize eternity in all its unutterable importance, and spiritual things, in all their incalculable value? Are you seeking to be conformed to the image of God, and crucified to a present world? If so, happy are ye, for ye are Christ's, and none shall be able to pluck you out of his hands? But if ye are not thus holy, if ye are not thus enlightened, and endeavoring to glorify our heavenly Father, by bringing forth much fruit, O do not delude yourselves with a name to live, whilst ye are dead; do not delude your-elves with the idea, that because Christ has died, ye must necessarily live. Remember that he came to save his people not in their sins, but from their sins; and that so long as ye live in sin, this is a plain proof that ye are not in Christ, and can have no part in the great salvation.

The evangelist goes on to inform us, that all these mighty events were brought about by the Lord, in order that the prophecy delivered by Isaiah, speaking under the influence of the Spirit of God, more than 700 years before, might be fulfilled. "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which being interpreted, is, God with us. It is admitted that there is considerable difficulty in perceiving how this prophecy could apply originally to the Messiah. I shall endeavour, in humble dependence on God's help, to clear this matter up, and show you that it applies to the Messiah, and to none else.

When Ahaz, king of Judah, was apprehensive of utter destruction from the confederated forces of Syria and Israel, under Rezin and Pekah; when he was apprehending nothing but the subjugation of Judah, and the extinction of the royal family of David, Isaiah was sent to assure him that the attempt of his enemies would be unsuccessful. With a view to convince him

of this, Isaiah was authorized to invite him to ask for any sign either in earth or in heaven. And when Ahaz declined, in affected humility, to ask a sign, Isaiah said, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."—But how, it may be asked, could the miraculous birth of the Messiah be a sign to Ahaz, when it was not to happen till more than 700 years afterwards. I answer, it was a sign and assurance in this way,—that till such a time as a virgin conceived and bore a son,—the virgin who was to bear the well known seed of the woman, that was to bruise the serpent's head, till this was the case, David's house could never be extinguished. As much as to say, 'Away with those unbelieving fears—the first promise of God to our fallen race was, that a virgin's seed should effect the spiritual deliverance of the human race; that seed, it was afterwards said, would arise in the house of David, therefore, till that virgin's seed shall come, the Royal family of David can never be extinguished.

Another interpretation has been put on this passage by many Christian expositors. It has been alleged that this prophecy, like many others, has a double meaning; the first referring to a child, whom a young woman, then a virgin, should bear; that this child should eat butter and honey, in token of the prosperity of the country, when he should be old enough to distinguish between good and evil; for before that period the two kings whom he dreaded, should be destroyed. The birth of this child was to be a sign to Ahaz, and it is alleged that this child was to be a type of the Messiah. I can see neither meaning nor consistency in this interpretation. How could it be a sign to Ahaz, that a young woman then a virgin should bear a child, and that before that child should be able to distinguish between right and wrong, the land should be rid of its enemies. There was nothing remarkable in a young woman bearing a son, and therefore, this could be no sign to any man; and consequently without removing the supposed difficulty, this creates an insuperable one.

But the child of whom the prophet speaks, was to be called Immanuel, i.e., God with us, indicating plainly enough

that in this child, the divine nature would be united to the human. This child is again mentioned Chap viii. 8. "And he," i.e. the king of Assyria, "shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!" Here the land of Judah is represented as Immanuel's land; from which it is plain enough that the child, who was to be born of the virgin, was to be, in some sense, Lord of the country. But this could not apply to any child born at that time; for Hezekiah was Ahaz's successor, and he was a young boy at the period in question.—But there is a flood of light thrown upon this passage by Isaiah ix. 6, where the same wonderful child is still spoken of.—There it is said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace; of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end," &c. This passage explains the propriety of this child being called Immanuel, and affords us a tolerably accurate idea of the nature and extent of his government, and shows the utter absurdity of applying the prophecy in any sense, to any, but one possessed of royal authority, but we have shown that it could not apply to Ahaz's son, therefore, it must apply to Christ, the son of David, who was to sit upon his throne for ever. Whilst I have no doubt that the 14th verse refers exclusively to the Messiah, it seems probable that the 15 and 16th verses refer to Shearjashub, Isaiah's son, whom God commanded him to take with him. God must have had some object in view, in commanding Isaiah to take this boy with him; but if these verses do not refer to him, we can see no object in his being commanded to take this boy with him. After Isaiah had delivered his prophecy regarding the Messiah, we may suppose him pointing to his son and saying, "Butter and honey shall this boy eat, in token of the peace and plenty that shall be in the land till he shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good; for before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall

be forsaken of both her kings." The best explanation of this passage that I have seen in any English commentary, is given by Dr. Adam Clarke, in these words,— "But how could that be a sign to Ahaz, which was to take place so many hundreds of years afterwards? I answer, the meaning of the prophet is plain: Not only Rezin and Pekah should be unsuccessful against Jerusalem *at that time*, which was the fact; but Jerusalem, Judea, and the house of David should be both preserved, notwithstanding their depressed state, and the multitude of their adversaries, till the time should come, when a VIRGIN should bear a son." This is a most remarkable circumstance—the house of David could never fail, till a virgin should conceive and bear a son—nor did it; but when that incredible and miraculous fact did take place, the kingdom and house of David became extinct! This is an irrefragable confutation of every argument a Jew can offer in vindication of his opposition to the gospel of Christ. Either the prophecy in Isaiah has been fulfilled, or the kingdom and house of David are yet standing. But the kingdom of David, we know, is destroyed; and where is the man, Jew, or Gentile, that can show us a single descendant of David on the face of the earth? The prophecy could not fail, the kingdom and house of David have failed; the virgin, therefore, must have brought forth her son, and this son is Jesus, the Christ. This Moses, Isaiah, and Matthew concur in; and facts, the most unequivocal, have confirmed the whole! Behold the wisdom and Providence of God!

When Joseph awoke to consciousness, his scruples were all removed, and in obedience to the divine injunction conveyed to him by the angel, he took unto him his wife. It is probable that these scruples had never been communicated to any one, and that suspicions of Mary's unfaithfulness had never been whispered beyond the family circle. Thus God not only put honour on the married state, in causing Jesus to be born of an espoused virgin, but effectually preserved from the withering blight of calumny the spotless character of the virgin, provided for *her* a suitable protector, and a tender, affectionate, and judicious guardian for the Saviour in his infancy and youth.

A question has been raised, and very

keenly agitated in the church, as to whether Mary had afterwards a family to Joseph. The Romanists in general contend very earnestly for the perpetual virginity of Mary. This, however, is a purely Popish figment, not only without authority in Scripture, but in direct opposition to it. Let any plain, sensible man read the 25th verse of this chapter, and the conclusion which he will draw from it is, that after the birth of the Lord Jesus, the virgin's first-born son, Joseph lived with her as his wife. This view is confirmed by Matthew xiii. 55, 56, where it is said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James and Joses, and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" It is difficult to conceive words plainer or more precise than these, and what man who had not a purpose to serve, would put any other meaning upon them, than that Jesus had four brothers and several sisters. It is strange indeed, and an awful illustration of the effect of early prejudice transmitted from generation to generation, that many Protestant commentators seem to favour the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary. It is, however, a dangerous and anti-scriptural doctrine, and smells of the wine of Babylon. Jesus put himself into the very condition of a man, and as such it was desirable that he should feel all that man is capable of feeling,—that he should experience not only the emotions of filial affection, but also the feelings of fraternal love. And had he not known the latter, it seems that his experience as a man would have been imperfect.

The doctrine regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary, seems to take its rise from the same source as that regarding her immaculate conception, that is, from a desire to ignore her pure humanity, and elevate her to the rank of a goddess. It is perfectly consistent, in those who entertain such ideas, to speak of her as the bride of God, and the queen of heaven; but any thing countenancing, even in the remotest way, such gross, materialistic, blasphemous views, ought to be shunned and feared by every Bible Christian. See Luke xi. 27, 28; Luke viii. 21.

With regard to the doctrine of the immaculate conception, or that which teaches that Mary was conceived without the taint

of original sin, I am not aware of the passage of Scripture on which it is founded. It is not in the Bible, and I am not aware of any passage which gives the slightest countenance to it. Melchior Canus, a celebrated Roman Catholic divine, who holds that this doctrine is piously and probably maintained and defended in the church, honestly admits, that it is nowhere delivered in the Scriptures, according to their proper sense, that the blessed virgin was free from original sin. "Nor can it be said" (we quote his own words), "that in the time of the Apostles this doctrine was received in the church; for it is manifest that the ancient writers did not obtain it from their ancestors; nay, all the saints who have made mention of it, assert with one voice, that the blessed virgin was conceived in original sin." If, then, this dogma is not to be found in Scripture, if the contrary opinion was held by all the ancient fathers, and if it was never received as an article of faith, even in the popish church, till little more than seven years ago, we may be assured that it is of man, not of God; a recent addition to the system of falsehood and delusion which has so long imposed upon the minds of men, and dishonoured the pure and spiritual religion of Jesus.

Brethren, let us be thankful that we have free access to the Word of God, and that we have been taught to test every doctrine by that infallible standard. To the law and to the testimony, if any speak not according to them, it is because there is no light in them. Every thing that is needful for salvation, and safe to be believed, is clearly revealed in the Word of God; and all religious opinions which are not contained therein, are to be rejected as false and dangerous; as dishonouring to God, and injurious to the souls of men. Let us be jealous of the honour and sufficiency of God's word, let us appreciate and search it more fully than we have ever done, so shall it prove a light to our feet and a lamp to our path, a sure guide through life, our comfort in affliction, and support in the prospect of death.

The slanderer harms three persons at once; him of whom he says the ill, him to whom he says it, and specially himself in saying it.—*Basil.*

LENDING.

BY LYNDE PALMER.

Mr. Crampton sat in gown and slippers, ensconced in a great padded chair, wheeled comfortably in front of the glowing grate. Nor did it at all detract from his satisfaction that, when now and then he paused in reading the evening paper, he heard the winter wind blowing fierce revels without, and the stinging sleet driving against the double windows muffled in the heavy curtains.

"It's a terrible night," he at last remarked to his wife, as he folded the paper, and leaned back in the chair, may God have mercy on the poor;" after which benevolent ejaculation he felt as benignant and warm-hearted as if he had just distributed a load of coals among shivering paupers, or ordered a barrel of flour to some starving family's door.

Mr. Crampton was a member in good standing in a famous Laodicean church, and he had a habit of family prayers, which was not omitted upon this evening. And as the tempest continued to increase, he again remembered, with quite a glow of feeling, the condition of the poor, and prayed with much fervency that they might be preserved through this inclement season.

He had risen from his knees, settled himself again in the very easy chair, and was talking comfortably with his wife about his golden prospects for the future, when the door bell gave a little shivering tinkle.

"A boy wishes to see you, sir," announced the servant.

Mr. Crampton rose fretfully. "How annoying! What can a boy want at this late hour?"

As he appeared in the hall, a shadow at the farther end seemed to become animated, and a slight figure, drenched with the storm, advanced, bowing.

"Ah, Jack, it's you, is it?" said Mr. Crampton, with a frown. "Well, what's the matter now? I suppose your father has broken his leg, and all the children are down with the scarlet fever?"

"Please, sir," said the boy, with an effort "you forgot father has gone to the war. But little Susan is very sick indeed, sir.— We are afraid she'll die. Mother wouldn't let me beg for anything if she knew it, but

I ran away because the the fire had all gone out, and——"

"There, that will do," said Mr. Crampton, sternly. "I don't believe a word of it.—I've seen you with very bad boys, and I believe you're a little vagrant, and want the money yourself. Can you look me in the face, and tell me it is all true?"

An indignant crimson stained the boy's thin cheeks as he lifted his heavy eyes. "Yes sir, I can, but," he added lower, "I don't like to look in your face."

"What!" cried Mr. Crampton, angrily; but the boy moved slowly to the door.

Mr. Crampton called after him a little uneasily. "Here, take this. It shall never be said that I sent the poor empty away," and he dropped sixpence into the little frozen palm, that made an involuntary motion to throw it back and then convulsively clasped it again.

"Well," said Mrs. Crampton, as he returned, "did you give the child anything?" "Oh yes," said he, shortly, sinking back in his chair.

"I am glad you did," said his wife, gently. "It is a blessed thing to give, and he that giveth to the poor, leudeth to the Lord."

The easy chair suddenly became strangely uncomfortable, and a painful crimson suffused Mr. Crampton's plethoric cheek. He was a business man, and sometimes when with painful effort he had united his purse strings at some benevolent appeal, this same verse had occurred to him in connection with a vague consoling idea that he was taking stock in some desirable portion of the golden street, in convenient contiguity to the tree of life. But to-night the thought smote him that he had made rather a small investment, and wasn't it just possible that the great Master might resent such a niggardly loan? He thought of John Staples, his honest, faithful porter till he went to the wars. Wasn't it just possible that his family were really suffering? And oughtn't he to have inquired, or sent a servant with some nourishing food, and a basket of coals, which he would never have missed? In vain did he say to himself that it was too bad for a man to be disturbed so late at night after his hard day of toil, and besides, hadn't he that very day given a dollar to the Bible Society? In spite of all his efforts another

verse kept ringing unpleasantly in his ears—"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

The next morning, as Mr. Crampton sat in his counting-room, busily engaged with a column of figures, a little morsel of frost and rags stood before him.

"Here's your sixpence, sir, we did not use it,"

"Here—stop, boy! what do you mean?" stammered Mr. Crampton. "How's your sister?"

"Dead," gasped the boy, rushing from the door, and Mr. Crampton, dropping his head on his hand, thought of an account he had with the Lord, very different from what he intended it should be.

Blind, cold, selfish Laodiceans, who shall anoint your eyes with eye-salve that ye may see? For a little time to us is granted a glorious privilege, and we know it not.—The angels and redeemed saints can no longer suffer nor make sacrifices to prove their boundless love; but to us is the boon still given, and it is enough to glorify the saddest life. Let us try to realize it while there is yet time. How strange! how wonderful! We—mere motes in the sunlight of God's presence—so poor, so weak, so infinitely inferior, may yet have the glorious honour, the exquisite joy of lending to the Lord.—*Congregationalist.*

God's Word to Young Women.

Holy, consistent young women are among the greatest ornaments of our race, and the greatest blessings to society. Their influence is great, and when rightly used, proves of immense importance. It is no wonder, then, if we are anxious to see them converted to God, walking with God, and adorning the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. To young women we think the language used in the Psalm may be applied:—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." Ps. xlv. 10, 11. Mark—

THE EXHORTATION. A father calls for attention, for the attention of his child. He loves that child; he seeks its welfare; he has something of importance to say unto it. He calls not only for attention, but for consideration—"Hearken and consider." Who speaks? "God, as a Father;" as a father full of pity, full of love, and deeply concerned for your everlasting welfare. What does he call you? "Daughter." Intimating endear-

ment and tender sympathy. To whom does he call attention? "To the King;" that is, Jesus, his beloved and only-begotten Son: whom to know is everlasting life; whom to love is true happiness; to be united to whom is the highest honour. Why does he speak? Because he seeks your happiness, and desires your everlasting welfare. Consider then, the consequence of attending to his word—you are made for ever; the result of refusing to listen to him—you cannot escape the due desert of your sins. "Incline thine ear;" pay close attention; listen, until your heart is won. "Forget" all old connections; forsake your former pursuits; resign your carnal pleasures; give up your old follies, and give Jesus all your heart!

THE ASSURANCE AND DIRECTION. "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." This will make thee beautiful in his eye, and draw out his love to thee. He says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." He will accept thee at his throne, listen to thy requests, betroth thee for his own, unite thee to his person, and confer all he has upon thee. "He will greatly desire thy beauty." Nothing will satisfy him but the possession of thee, the closest union to thee; and thou wilt find his love to be strong as death. "He is thy Lord;" intended to be thy husband, by the arrangements of the Father; and as thy husband he will support thee, rule thee, love thee, bless thee, and make thee truly happy. "Worship thou him." Treat him with the deepest reverence; cheerfully do his pleasure; in all things serve him, and honour his name. Reverence his person, word, and will. Adore his divinity, and glorious perfections. In this way you will become happy, wealthy, holy, safe, and ultimately glorious.

God speaks on behalf of his Son. He speaks to win our hearts, engage our affections, and bring us into his family. God speaks lovingly to you. He sees you connected, mixed up with, and at home in the world; and he says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Listen, then, to his words. This is the least you can do. If you have any respect for his authority, if you have any regard for your own welfare, listen to what our heavenly Father says; not only listen, but carry out his exhortation; and in so doing you are made for ever. Believe, and engage the heart of Jesus; obey, and honour the commands of Jesus; keep your eye on the King, and honour him in all things, always, and everywhere. So will he greatly desire thy beauty, and will commend thee before his Father and the holy angels. Yea, he will say to thee, as to his church of old, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee!"

THE PRAYER AND THE LIFE.

BY A FEMALE SERVANT.

Do I mean the prayers I offer?—do I feel the words I say,
When before our Heavenly Father I kneel
down from day to day,—
When at morning and at evening I incline
to seek His face,
And my voice goes up in pleading to His
glorious Throne of Grace?

I tell Him of my wants—my needs; but
when I turn away,
Do I think of what I asked for? Do I watch
as well as pray?
Do I strive against temptation? Do I seek
like Christ to live?
Do I use aright the blessings that so freely
He doth give?

My prayers are with much speaking—yet
when I leave the spot,
How quickly are its memories fled—how soon
these prayers forgot!
O, if the thought that gave them birth so
lightly treasured be,
How can I think God's mercy will remember
them for me?

Yet one petition farther, Lord! Wilt Thou
not deign to hear?
O, let Thy Spirit breathe anew through all
my daily prayer.
Then help me, as I pray, to live, kept by Thy
grace Divine—
And the glory of the prayer and life, alike,
O Lord! be Thine.

December, 1861.

JESUS PLEADS.

BY THE REV. J. R. MACDUFF.

Jesus pleads! Still the Great Intercessor
"waits to be gracious." He is at once Moses
on the mountain, and Joshua on the battle-
plain—fighting with us in the one, praying
for us in the other. No Aarons or Hurs
needed to sustain His sinking strength, for
it is His sublime prerogative neither to
"faint nor grow weary!" There is no loftier
occupation for faith than to speed upwards
to the throne and behold that wondrous
Pleaser, receiving at one moment, and at
every moment, the countless supplications
and prayers which are coming up before Him
from every corner of His Church.

The Sinner just awoke from his moral
slumber and in the agonies of conviction,
exclaiming "What must I do to be saved?"
The Procrastinator sending up from the
brink of despair the cry of importunate agony.

The Backslider wailing forth his bitter
lamentation over guilty departures, and
ingratitude, and injured love.

The Sick man feebly groaning forth

under-tones of suffering, his petition for succour.

The Dying, on the brink of eternity, invoking the presence and support of the alone arm which can be of any avail to them.

The Bereaved, in the fresh gush of their sorrow, calling upon Him who is the healer of the broken-hearted.

But all heard! Every tear marked—every sigh registered—every suppliant succoured. Amalek may come threatening nothing but discomfiture; but that pleading Voice on the heavenly Hill is "greater far than all that can be against us!" He pleads for His elect in every phase of their spiritual history: He pleads for their inbringing into His fold—He pleads for their perseverance in grace—He pleads for their deliverance at once from the accusations and the power of Satan—He pleads for their growing sanctification;—and when the battle of life is over, He uplifts His last pleading voice for their complete glorification. The intercession of Jesus is the golden key which unlocks the gates of Paradise to the departing soul. At a saint's dying moments we are too often occupied with the lower *earthly* scene to think of the *heavenly*. The tears of surrounding relatives cloud too often the more glorious revelations which faith discloses. But in the muffled stillness of that death-chamber, when each is holding his breath as the King of Terrors passes by—if we could listen to it, we should hear the "Prince who has power with God" thus uttering His final prayer, and on the rushing wings of ministering angels receiving an answer while He is yet speaking—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!"

Reader! exult more and more in this all-prevailing Advocate. See that ye approach the mercy-seat with no other trust but in His atoning work and meritorious righteousness. There was but *One* solitary man of the whole human race who, of old, in the Jewish temple, was permitted to speak face to face with Jehovah. There is but *one* solitary Being in the vast universe of God who, in the heavenly sanctuary, can effectually plead in behalf of His spiritual Israel. "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, . . . let us come boldly to the throne of grace." If Jesus delights in asking, God delights in bestowing. Let us put our every want, and difficulty, and perplexity, in His hand feeling the precious assurance, that all which is really good for us will be given, and all that is adverse will, in equal mercy, be withheld. There is no limitation set to our requests. The treasury of grace is flung wide open for every suppliant, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name He will give it you." Surely we may cease to wonder that the great apostle should have clung with such intense interest

to this elevating theme—the Saviour's *intercession*;—that in his brief, but most comprehensive and beautiful creed (Rom. viii. 34), he should have so exalted, as he does, its relative importance, compared with other cognate truths. "It is Christ that died, *yea rather*, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, *who also maketh intercession for us.*" Climbing, step by step, in the upward ascent of Christian faith and hope, he seems only to "reach the height of his great argument" when he stands on "*the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.*" There, gazing on the face of the great officiating Priest who fills all heaven with His fragrance, and feeling that against that intercession the gates of hell can never prevail, he can utter the challenge to devils, and angels, and men, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"—From *Memories of Bethany.*

THE TRACT AND THE HAY-MAKERS.

The following anecdote of the late Leigh Richmond, forms an interesting fragment of the early annals of tract distribution.—It occurs in that admirable, well-written and instructive book, "The Pastor of Kilsyth," lately published, and may be relied on as authentic. May the Lord give encouragement to his many tract distributors, by the perusal of it.

On one occasion, as he with the other passengers in the public conveyance were ascending the well-known Moncrieff Hill, near Perth, and having left the coach to lighten the horses and enjoy the magnificent prospect, he began to give a tract to any wayfarer he might meet. One of his fellow-travellers, smiled when he saw one of the tracts given, treated contemptuously by the receiver, torn in two, and thrown down on the road.

"See how your tract has been used," said he; "there is one, at least, quite lost."

"I am not sure of that," said Mr. Richmond, "at any rate the husbandman sows not the less that some of the seed may be trodden down."

When they turned round at the top of the hill to take another look at the prospect before mounting the coach, they saw distinctly the fate of the little tract. A puff of wind had carried it over a hedge into a hayfield, where a number of haymakers were seen seated and listening to the said

tract, which one of their number had found. He was observed carefully joining together the two parts which had been torn asunder, but were held together by a *Thread!* The devil had done his work imperfectly; for instead of tearing the tract to tatters, his agent had left it still available for use, a little pains sufficing to make it legible. Thus the poor man who had torn the tract in two, was the means of its being read by a whole band of haymakers, instead of by a single individual. Thus, no doubt, moralized the excellent Leigh Richmond.

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good.”—*Congregationalist*.

BIBLICAL NOTES.

ZECH. iv. 10. “Who hath despised the day of small things?”

“THEY’VE FORGOTTEN THE ROPE.”—A tall chimney had been completed, and the scaffolding was being removed. One man remained on the top to superintend the process. A rope should have been left for him to descend by. His wife was at home washing, when her little boy burst in with “Mother, mother, they’ve forgotten the rope, and he’s going to throw himself down!” She paused—her lips moved in the agony of prayer—and she rushed forth. A crowd were looking up to the poor man, he was moving round and round the narrow cornice, terrified and bewildered! He seemed as if at any moment he might fall, or throw himself down in despair. His wife from below cried out—“Wait a bit, John!” The man became calm. “Take of thy stocking—unravel the worsted.” And he did so. “Now tie the end to a bit of mortar and lower gently.” Down came the thread and the bit of mortar, swinging backwards and forwards. Lower and lower it descended, eagerly watched by many eyes; it was now within reach, and was gently seized by one of the crowd. They fastened some twine to the thread. “Now pull up.” The man got hold of the twine.

The rope was now fastened on. “Pull away again.” He at length seized the rope and made secure. There were a few moments of suspense, and then, amidst the shouts of the people, he threw himself into the arms of his wife, sobbing—“Thou’st saved me, Mary.” The worsted thread was not despised—it drew after it the twine, the rope, the rescue! Ah, my friend, thou mayest be sunk very low down in sin and woe, but there is a thread of Divine love, that comes from the throne of heaven, and touches even thee. Seize that thread. It may be small but it is golden. Improve what you have, however little, and more shall be given. That thin thread of love, if you will not neglect it shall lift even you up to God and glory. “Who hath despised the day of small things?”—
REV. NEWHAM HALL, LL.B.

PSA. xix. 7, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”

THE BOOK-MARK—A correspondent of a foreign journal relates the following:—“A young lady once presented me with a book-mark, having the inscription, ‘God bless you,’ and exacted a promise that it should be placed in my Bible, but never to remain a day opposite the same chapter. Faithful to my promise, I took it home, and rubbing from the lids of my Bible the dust of a week, I placed it in the first chapter of Matthew, and daily read a chapter and changed its place. I had not read long before I became interested as I had never been before in this good book; and I saw in its truths that I was a sinner, and must repent if I would be saved. I then promised God that I would seek His face at the earliest opportunity, and if He saw fit to convert my soul, that I would spend my life in His cause. It came; I sought His face and received the smile of His love, and now I have a hope within me ‘big with immortality;’ and to all do I attribute to that book-mark and the grace of God. And this was the beginning of a great revival at S— Many sought His face and found it; and the flame kindled there spread over the entire district, and scores were brought into the church of God, ‘Despise not the day of small things.’ A word spoken in season—a simple Christian act—a sincere, simple prayer, may turn a poor wandering sinner from the error of his ways.”

Sabbath School Lessons.

March 16th.

THE FIRST JOURNEY TO BUY CORN.—GEN. XLIII. 1-29.

1. *Jacob sends his sons into Egypt to buy corn.*

It is remarkable that the patriarchs had to encounter famine even in Canaan, the land of promise. This was designed by their covenant God to wean their affections from the things of this earth, and to direct them to the things of heaven. They therefore desired a better country, that is, an heavenly; Heb. xi. 16.

The sons of Jacob, prostrated by the greatness of their calamity, sat looking one upon another in inactive despondency. Jacob had heard that there was corn in Egypt, he had probably seen it conveyed thence by his neighbours, he therefore, as head of the tribe, stirred up his sons to action. We should not only pray for our daily bread, but we should use every lawful means in our power to obtain it; 2 Thes. iii. 10. And shall others obtain food for their souls, and shall we despair?—Nay, rather, let us have immediate recourse to the throne of grace, that we also may live and not die. Jacob sent his ten sons into Egypt, but would not send Benjamin with them; for, he said, "Lest peradventure mischief befall him." The loss of the other son of his beloved Rachel had rendered him cautious. "And Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth;" v. 6. This was the accomplishment of Joseph's dream, Chap. xxxvii. 7, now did the sheaves of his brethren bow themselves to his sheaf.

2. *Joseph's harsh treatment of his brethren*

He knew them though they knew not him, v. 8. He probably expected that they would be compelled by the famine to come to Egypt to purchase corn, but they had no idea that he whom they sold as a slave, was the governor of Egypt, before whom they now presented themselves. Joseph remembered his dreams; he naturally associated them with their evident fulfilment. Twenty long years had elapsed since God had pre-signified to Joseph his future designs, and though many times it seemed most unlikely that these designs would ever be realized, yet now, in God's time, and Joseph's vision completely verified; Hab. ii. 3. Joseph spoke roughly unto his brethren, and signified even to regard them as spies; v. 9. Similar to this is Christ's treatment of sinners. He first calls up their sins to their remembrance, speaks roughly unto them and seems to hide himself from them, and then reveals himself unto them as a Saviour of infinite love;

see Matt. xv. 21-28. Joseph's brethren answered him truthfully and respectfully. They had formerly nicknamed Joseph "the dreamer" they now addressed him "my lord;" v. 10.—In Egypt where they were strangers, where they were even an abhorrence, Chap. xliii. 32, no witnesses could be called to substantiate their words. Apparently to prove the truth of their statements, Joseph demanded that their youngest brother should be brought before him, declaring that till this was done he should keep them in confinement; v. 16.—From long communion with the ungodly, Joseph seems to have learned somewhat of their language—he swore 'by the life of Pharaoh.' Truly "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;" Ec. vii. 20. After three days imprisonment they agreed to fetch their youngest brother and to leave one of their number as hostage. In their calamity they saw the hand of a righteous God. Their sin had found them out and conscience now began to do its office; v. 21. Only Reuben who was innocent in the matter experienced no self-upbraidings, and now blamed them for their folly in not having attended to his admonitions; v. 22. The conversation of his brethren was overheard by Joseph who, they thought, did not understand them, as he spoke unto them through an interpreter; v. 23. When Joseph heard them mourning their sin concerning him, it was too much for his feeling heart to bear, he turned himself about from them and wept; v. 24. In all this painful process, which was necessary to bring his brethren to repentance, Joseph resembled the kind-hearted operator who, while he grieves for the pain of his patient, unflinchingly amputates his limb to save his life. How fearful does a guilty conscience make us! From the restoration of the money, paid for the corn, which each one found in the mouth of his sack, they augured further evil; "their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?" v. 28.

Learn—1st. That it is in vain for man to attempt to thwart the purposes of God, Dan. iv. 35; Acts v. 39.

2nd. That God whenever he pleases can awaken the slumbering conscience of the sinner, Dan. v. 6; Matt. xxvii. 3. 4.

3rd. That everything is a cause of terror to the wicked; Prov. xxviii. 1.

March 23rd.

WE WOULD SEE A SIGN.

MATT. XII 38-45.

1. *The insolent demand of the Pharisees.*
They professed great respect for the Lord Jesus—they called him Master, but they flattered him with their lips, while their

hearts were far from him." Not all those who appear to men to honour Christ shall be saved; **Matt. vii. 22.** Though Jesus was daily working miracles, doing among them the works which never man did, giving hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, casting out devils, raising the dead, and curing all manner of diseases, yet obstinately shutting their eyes to all these, the Scribes and Pharisees would have from him a miracle of their own devising.

2. *Our Saviour rejects their proposal.*

They sought a sign, not for the confirmation of their faith, but as an excuse for remaining in unbelief. Similar requests, when made in the right spirit, had been granted Gideon. These Pharisees had in reality no wish to be convinced. They asked and received not, because they asked amiss; **James iv. 3.** Our Lord calls them a wicked generation—they killed the prophets, and stoned them which were sent unto them, **Matt. xxiii. 37,** and now they were persecuting the Lord of glory. He calls them an adulterous generation. The expression "adultery" is often used figuratively in Scripture for idolatry. Since the Babylonish captivity, the Jews had not been guilty of the sin of worshipping images; they professed to worship God, and to observe his ordinances. They had but the form of religion without the power. The love of God occupied not the chief place in their heart and affections, but the love of the world; **Jno. v. 42.** In the sight of God they were therefore idolaters. Our Saviour tells them that though they should not obtain the sign which they demanded, yet a sign should be given them—the sign of the prophet Jonas; **ver. 39.** The greatest of all the miracles of our Lord was his rising from the grave by his own power (**John x. 18**), on the third day. This was the complete demonstration of his Messiahship; **Rom. i. 4.**

3. *Our Lord contrasts the position of the Jews in the final judgment, with that of the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba.*

Jonah was a stranger in Nineveh, our Saviour laboured among his own countrymen. Jonah wrought no miracle in proof of his mission—Jesus performed miracles innumerable; **John xxi. 25.** Jonah desired no good to the Ninevites, Jesus was continually holding forth the most heart-melting and persuasive invitations to repentance. Jonah was a mere man, Christ was God himself. Yet Jonah was received by the Ninevites, while Jesus was rejected by the Jews. The men of Nineveh improved their small privileges—the men of Jerusalem abused their great ones. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." And if the men of Nineveh will rise in judgment to condemn those Jews who continued in unbelief, shall they not much more condemn us who enjoy such great and innumerable privi-

leges, if we remain barren and unfruitful in the work of the Lord. The Queen of Sheba travelled far to hear the wisdom of Solomon—the Jews neglected the fountain of all wisdom. They contemned him who not only "spoke as never man spake," but had power to inspire others with wisdom, who of God is made wisdom unto all his people; **1 Cor. i. 30.**

4. *The lamentable condition into which their unbelief was bringing the impetent Jews.*

Since the Babylonish captivity the Jews had renounced the worship of images, the sin to which they had formerly been so prone; they had enjoyed many advantages, and now the promised and long-expected Messiah dwelt amongst them. They heard his teaching and saw his miracles. But their hearts continued empty; **ver. 44.** Christ had not been received as an inmate there. Evil spirits, therefore entered in and usurped Christ's throne. Under these very privileges, which should have tended to their eternal peace, the unbelieving Jews waxed worse and worse. And as it was with the Jews as a nation, so is it with each individual. The longer he turns a deaf ear to the gospel, all the worse, all the more dangerous will be his condition; see **Heb. vi. 7, 8.** This should be an incentive to every Christless soul to flee immediately to Jesus; **2 Cor. vi. 2.**

Learn—1st. The natural unbelief of man.—**Isa. liii. 1; 1 Cor. ii. 14.**

2nd. That our sins are more or less heinous according to the privileges we enjoy.—**Math. x. 15; John ii. 19; xv. 22.**

3rd. The great danger of continuing in a state of impotence.—**Hos. iv. 17; Jno. ix. 41.**

PAUL would not take to himself any portion of praise on account of the labours and success of others. He spoke only of the success which Christ had given him in his own work. This shows, that although all success is of God, yet that it is an honour and a ground of praise to be successful in Christ's work. Many have supposed that it is wrong to give any praise to the Lord's servants, on account of their labours, diligence, and success in his service. They have judged that this encourages a spirit of self-righteousness and of pride. But this wisdom is not from God. It is human wisdom, and tends to damp exertion in the service of Jesus Christ. All our success is in Christ Jesus, as well as our ability and disposition to labour. Yet God has given praise to his servants for their diligence and success in his work. It is a sin and refinement to blame what God approves.

R. Haldane.

WHICH CLASS!

A QUESTION FOR YOU.

Reader,—There are only two sorts of people in the world. There are believers in Christ and unbelievers. There are converted persons and unconverted. There are those who have grace and those who have none. To which class do you belong?

There are many classes in Britain. There are peers and commoners,—farmers and shopkeepers—masters and servants,—rich and poor. But God's eye only takes account of two orders,—the righteous and the wicked.

There are many and various minds in every congregation that meet for religious worship. There are some who attend for a mere form, and some who really desire to meet Christ,—some who come there to please others, and some who come to please God,—some who bring their hearts with them and are not soon tired, and some who leave their hearts behind them and reckon the whole service a weary work. But the eye of Jesus only sees two divisions in the congregation,—the believers and the unbelievers.

Reader, I know well the world dislikes this way of dividing professing Christians. The world tries hard to fancy there are three sorts of people and not two. To be very good and very strict does not suit the world:—they cannot, will not be saints. To have no religion at all does not suit the world:—it would not be respectable—"thank God," they will say, "we are not so bad as that." But to have religion enough to be saved, and yet not go into extremes,—to be sufficiently good, and yet not be peculiar,—to have a quiet, easy-going, moderate kind of Christianity, and go comfortably to heaven after all—this is the world's favourite idea. There is a third class—a safe middle class,—the world fancies, and in this middle class the majority of men persuade themselves they will be found.

Reader, I denounce this notion of a middle class as an immense and soul-ruining delusion. I warn you strongly not to be carried away by it. It is a vain invention. It is a refuge of lies,—a castle in the air,—a Russian ice-palace,—a vast unreality,—an empty dream. This middle class is a class of Christians nowhere spoken of in the

Bible. There were two classes in the day of Noah's flood,—those who were inside the ark, and those who were without;—two in the parable of the Gospel net,—those who were called the good fish, and those who were called the bad;—two in the parable of the ten virgins,—those who were described as wise, and those who were described as foolish;—two in the account of the judgment-day,—the sheep and the goats;—two sides of the throne,—the right and the left;—two abodes when the last sentence has been past, heaven and hell.

And just so, there are only two classes in the visible church on earth—those who are in the state of nature, and those who are in the state of grace—those who are in the narrow way, and those who are in the broad—those who have faith, and those who have not faith—those who have been converted, and those who have not been converted—those who are with Christ, and those who are against Him—those who gather with Him, and those who scatter abroad—those who are wheat, and those who are chaff. Into these two classes the whole professing church of Christ may be divided. Besides these two classes there is none.

Reader, dear reader, see now what cause there is for self inquiry. Are you among the righteous or among the wicked? Neutrality is impossible. Either you are in one class, or in the the other. Which of the two is it?

You attend church, perhaps. You go to the Lord's table. You like good people. You can distinguish between good preaching and bad. You subscribe to religious societies. You attend religious meetings. You sometimes read religious books. It is well; it is very well. It is good; it is all very good. It is more than can be said of many. But still this is not a straightforward answer to my question,—*Are you converted or unconverted?*

Have you been born again? Are you a new creature? Have you put off the old man, and put on the new? Have you ever left your sins, and repented of them? Are you looking simply to Christ for pardon and life eternal? Do you love Christ? Do you serve Christ? Do you loathe heart-sins, and fight against them? Do you long for perfect holiness, and follow hard after it? Have you come out from the

world! Do you delight in the Bible!—Do you wrestle in prayer! Do you love Christ's people! Do you try to do good to the world? Are you vile in your own eyes and willing to take the lowest place? Are you a Christian in business and on week-days, and by your own fireside?—Oh! think, think, think on these things, and then perhaps you will be better able to tell the state of your soul.

Reader, I beseech you not to turn away from my question, however unpleasant it may be. Answer it, though it may prick your conscience, and cut you to the heart. Answer it, though it may prove you in the wrong, and expose your fearful danger.—Rest not, rest not, till you know how it is between you and God. Better a thousand times find out that you are in an evil case, and repent betimes, than live on in uncertainty, and be lost eternally.—*Rev. J. C. Ryle.*

God Moves in a Mysterious Way.

J. CRAIG AT THE SURREY THEATRE, LONDON.

God's children have a multitude of experiences in being brought to Him; but there is but one way with God in bringing them, the Gospel way. I remember a young woman down in Manchester who for years had been in the habit of getting punctually to church every Sunday morning; but one Sunday morning she had put on a new dress, and was longer than usual in preparing to go out, and when she found she was too late, she resolved to walk about. That very morning she passed where a man was speaking to a group of people, and she heard him say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Who was this poor and despised Son of Man? she was led to inquire, and in inquiring she found salvation. That is one experience, I will tell you another. Three cock-fighters at Bradford went out with their cocks to a village a few miles off, and enjoyed their brutal sport. In returning, with two dead cocks under their arms, they passed a house where worship was being conducted, and praise was ascending to God. "Let's go in," says one of the men, "and knock the preacher down with the dead cock," and

they cast lots, with bits of straw, who ~~was~~ to do it. In they went, but a fear came over the man who was to do the deed; and instead of knocking down the preacher, God came, and with strong conviction of sin brought down that strong man, till he seemed to be as one dead. That man was the father of my landlord at Bradford, and had been for twenty-three years a consistent Church member. Ah, God moves in a mysterious way! If I speak of myself, I may seem to do that which the Bible denounces as folly—seeking, I mean, my own glory; but that isn't my purpose, though I tell you a bit of my own experience.—Twelve years ago I was a conjurer, away over there in Oxford Street, and travelling over the country in bad company, none of it worse than myself. One Sunday morning I happened to be in Sheffield with some of my companions. Among them was a quack-doctor, who began rummaging in his chest; my eye lighted on something shining in his chest, and I found it was a fourpenny Testament. I asked him if he would let me have it for 4d., and he said he would; and I took it away with me, and my eye fell upon 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; and I felt that I was a lost sinner, and if I died in my sins I should be damned. I tried to pray and couldn't; and moving about the country didn't drive these thoughts out of my mind, till in Manchester a city missionary pointed me to Jesus, and I found salvation. And this salvation is free to you—to every one of you—as it was to me; glory be to God for it. I know that now, if I were to be summoned away this minute, my home would be in heaven, and this assurance you may make your own; and, as I said when I began, though there are different ways of awakening, there is but one way of saving. Why, there was the man who threw a crumb of bread to a robin-redbreast, and noticed that before it ate it up, the robin sang a song of praise to its Maker, which made that man wonder and say, "What have I rendered to the Lord for all his benefits?"

Now, when we say there's but one way of coming to God, and that that is through the Gospel, you may ask, What is the Gospel? Well, here it is in Romans v. 6-8: "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly; scarcely for a righteous man will one die"

betrayed for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Or again in Philip. ii. 5-8; or in 1 Tim. i. 15; or in Heb. i. 1, 2. I have heard a story of a gentleman examining a large congregation of children in the Scriptures, and he asked them, "Are we not all sinners?" and all answered "Yes;" "then," said he, "must we not all go to hell?" and there was a complete silence; three times he repeated the question, and then from the backs of the crowd of children came a voice, the voice of a little girl,—“Christ did.” That's the Gospel—very simple and perfectly true, accept that truth for yourself—and though you may have come into this theatre a foul and black sinner, you may go out a rejoicing saint of God. But how do I know this to be true? I will tell you. When I have gone to a strange town or district, I have often examined what is called a guide-book; I have found it stated there for instance that in Birmingham they make guns and iron manufactures; that a village is so many miles off; and I have tramped the miles one by one by myself, and found that the guide-book was true; and so when I found that all the statements which I tried in that guide-book were true, I concluded that other things which I had no need to try were true also. So when I find the Bible telling me that drunkards and gluttons will come to poverty, and you as well as I have seen that to be true dozens of times over; when I read in the prophets, that the daughters of Israel will have “baldness instead of beauty,” and in my walk through Petticoat Lane over in Whitechapel, I find that it is even so; and when I have tried many blessed things in the Book, and have found them to be all true, I believe it to be a true book, altogether true. Ah! you may believe it, and the way of life is simple and easy; easy for you, sinner, you have only to come and accept it; but it wasn't easy for Jesus, it was a sore and weary way he had to travel to get it for us. None need despair or fear to come. I remember a miserable and degraded man, he belonged to a drunken land of Ethiopian serenaders, and walking along on the outskirts of Manchester, he and his companion heard a man preaching on the other side of a hedge, and he said,

“I say, old black devil, let's go over and hear what this man is saying;” but he wouldn't, so he went alone, and he heard the man, (it was Richard Weaver) cry out, “is there any man here that has got a mother in heaven, and wants to go and meet her there,” and the filthy, black-faced man cried out, “Yes, my mother is in heaven, and I'd like to go there too;” and he believed and went home to his miserable home, and laid his banjo on the ground, and jumped upon till he had smashed it quite; and oh! how pleased his wife was to hear he was going to work steadily; and he got some old shoes and cobbled them up and sold them; and then he got more; and now he has plenty to do, and three men working under him. He wasn't cast out, nor will you be unless you reject the message of salvation. Why, there was once a time when 3000 men, red-handed with the blood of the Lord Jesus, whom they had just murdered in Jerusalem, came together, and, under conviction of sin, called out, “What shall we do?” and they heard of the way, and they didn't refuse the mercy offered. Do you want this forgiveness? You may have it, as I have had it, as sinful companions of my own have had it, and as multitudes in all ages have had it.

Source of my life's refreshing springs,

Whose presence in my heart sustains me,

Thy love appoints me pleasant things—

Thy mercy orders all that pains me.

If loving hearts were never lonely,

If all they wished might always be,

Accepting what they look for only,

They might be glad, but not in Thee.

Well may Thine own beloved, who see

In all their lot, their Father's pleasure,

Bear loss of all they love, save Thee,

Their living, everlasting treasure.

Well may the happy children cease

From restless wishes prone to sin,

And in Thine own exceeding peace,

Yield to thy daily discipline.

We need as much the cross we bear,

As air we breathe, as light we see;

It draws us to Thy side in prayer—

It binds us to our strength in Thee.

A. L. WARREN.

THE GATHERING HOME.

The following lines by the daughter of an English Baptist missionary in Calcutta, seem to us worth preserving:

They are gathered homeward from every land

One by one,

As their weary feet touch the shining strand

One by one,

Their brows are inclosed in a golden crown,
Their travel-stained garments are all laid down,
And clothed in white raiment they rest on the mead,

Where the Lamb loveth His chosen to lead

One by one,

Before they rest they pass through the strife

One by one,

Through the waters of death they enter life

One by one,

To some are the floods of the river still
As they ford on their way to the heavenly hill,
To others the waves run fiercely and wild,
Yet all reach the home of the undefiled

One by one.

We too shall come to the river side

One by one,

We are nearer its waters each eventide

One by one,

We can hear the noise and dash of the stream
Now and again through our life's deep dream,
Sometimes the floods all the banks o'erflow,
Sometimes in ripples the small waves go

One by one.

YOUR MOTHER.

BY THE REV. A. L. STONE.

Young man, have you a mother living still on God's earth? What is she to you? An old woman with wrinkled face, and gray locks, and plain cap, high-waisted dress, and form bowed and crushed together with the weight of years, altogether uncomely to your fastidious eye. Ah, look again. Each of those wrinkles is a sublime poem of self-devotion; each furrow on that face some long-enduring care has ploughed; the silver lines in those dark locks have changed their hue in busy household thoughts, the patient toil of day, the wearying nightly watches, and burdens borne for you, as well as others, have lain more heavily on her head than the pressure of years. Can there be another face that can match that wrinkled face in beauty to your eye? Do you touch any hand with such tender deference as that with which you lift that trembling clasp of age to your heart?

Where dwells this mother of yours? In the old early home, with but few of the voices that have once been musical there left to cheer her gathering loneliness. The ashy gray evening is coming upon her. What lights do you keep burning there to drive the gloom away? Does the frequent post carry her filial greetings from you? Do little tokens, precious to her heart, not because of the cost, but of the

loving remembrance they attest, go from your hand to hers? Does she know she is forgotten in your bright, busy career? As of Providence permits, does your face break in upon her solitude? Are you repaying to her uncheered age, the debt your early years contracted? The dear friends of long ago have most of them left her side; do you feel that, and feel it for her? Does she have it to muse upon in the brooding hours of her long twilight, how thoughtful this great, grown boy of hers is of her comfort? She never complains of you, I know. That she would not do. But silently, like a cancer, neglect, your neglect, would eat into her heart.

Or is she beneath your own roof? Has she the seat of honour? every available comfort there? Does she feel in your way there?—Are you more deferential to her will than even in childhood's days? To her does your voice ever utter impatience, your eye look reproach or anger?

Oh, how soon will the inexorable gate ring its sharp clang between you! Then memory will sit down with you every evening to rehearse to you the story of your filial life—what you have been as a son! If you have brightened and gladdened that life's decline, that evening's recital will be as heavenly ministrals to your spirit. If there is one painful recollection, no grief can be so bitter as that in which you groan out, "Oh, if she could but return!"

Let the ministers of the Gospel remember that they are called the friends of the Bridegroom, a dignity infinitely superior to all the honours of this world. No one is fit for this employment, unless his heart burns with love to Jesus Christ. Hence arises their faithfulness, to lead the bride to Jesus Christ alone, and to have no other joy than to see her united to Jesus Christ, and living in tender communion with Him.

By faith we embrace Jesus Christ, and are so united with Him, that we are in Him, and He in us. As He was pleased to take upon Himself all our miseries, and make them His own, so by faith He has made ours; His obedience is ours, His innocence, His righteousness, His holiness; nay, all that He has