
RILLS FROM THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

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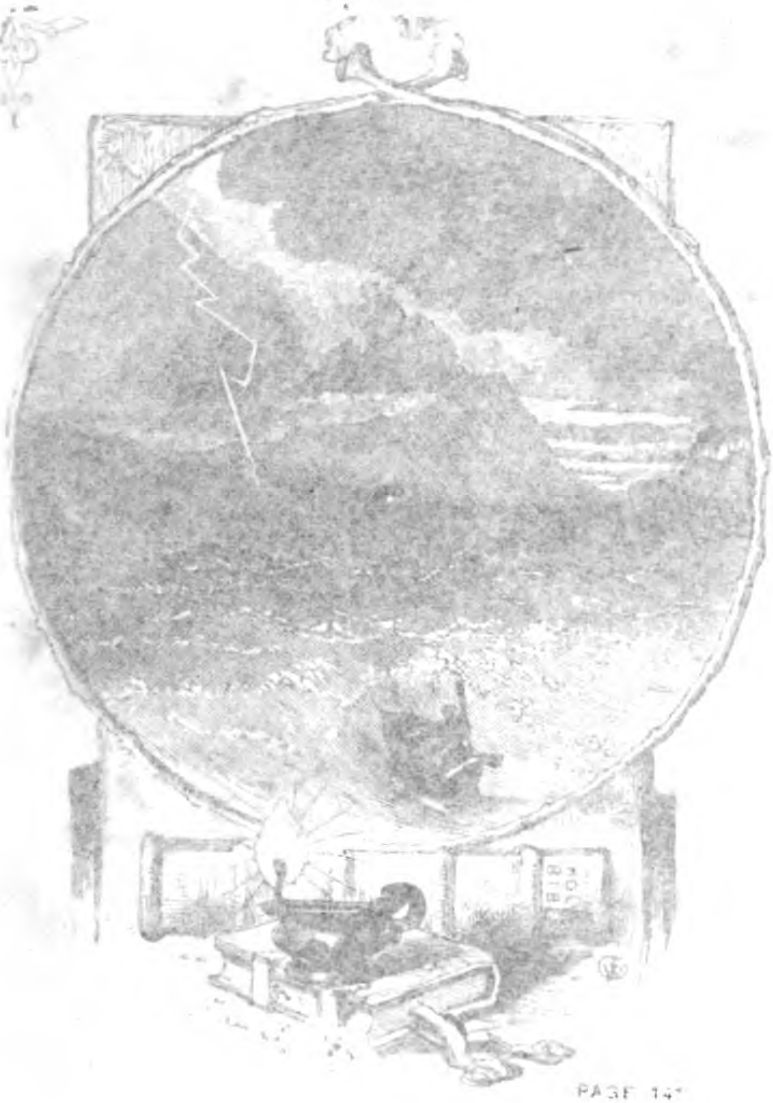

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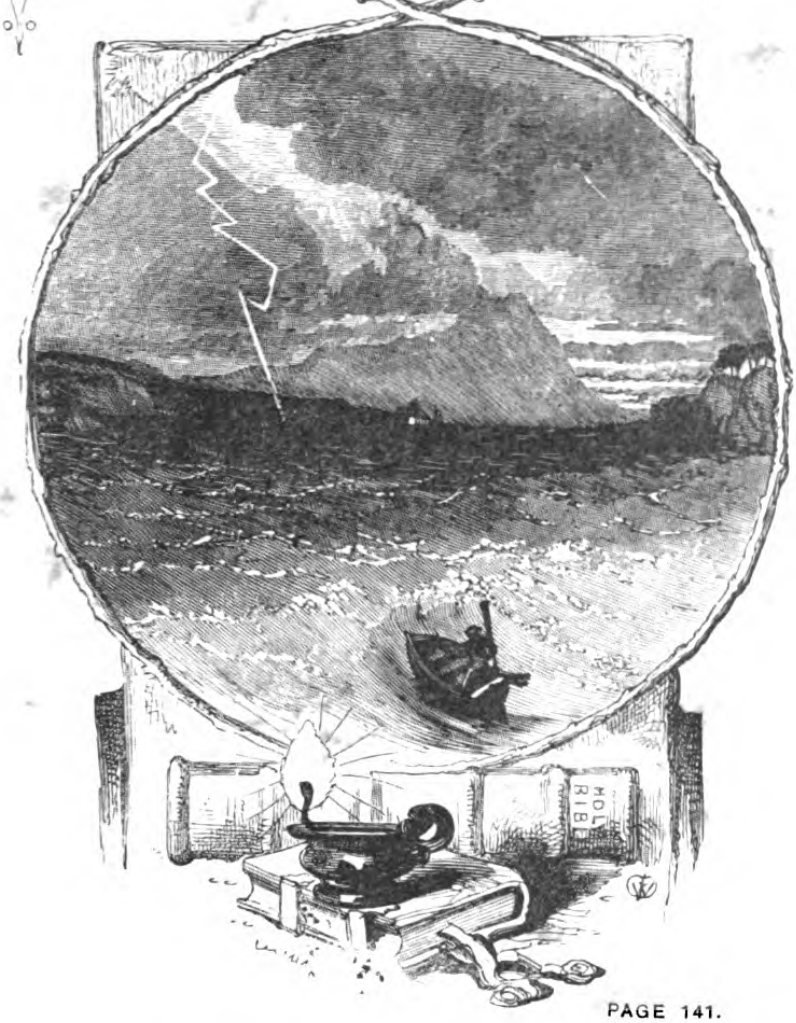
RILLS FROM THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE



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RILLS

FROM THE

FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

By

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Author of the "King's Highway," &c., &c.

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GREAT IN GOD'S SIGHT.

I.

The Great Man in God's Sight.

"He shall be great in the sight of the Lord."—
LUKE i. 15.

IF you had never heard these words before, my dear children, I suppose you would have been ready, as soon as you heard them, to ask, "Who can this mean? Does it refer to some mighty king or conqueror? Is it David, who killed the giant; or Daniel, who was thrown into the lions' den? Or is it some great soldier, like Alexander, or Julius Cæsar, or Napoleon, that is intended?" No; it is none of these. It is nobody like them that is spoken of here. Our text refers to John the Baptist. And who was John the Baptist? He was the son of a poor priest. He was very poor himself. He was born in a little village among the hills of Judea. He lived in the wilderness, and was never heard of, out of his own family, till he grew to be thirty years old. Then he began to preach in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. He continued his labours as a preacher for about twelve months. One day he preached a sermon

which offended Herod, the king of Judea. Herod became very angry with him, and put him in prison. There he was kept for a while, and then he was beheaded. This is the history of John the Baptist. And yet, before his birth, the angel Gabriel was sent from heaven to tell the father of John that he was to be a great man in the sight of God. Perhaps some of you are ready to say, "Why, this seems very strange; we do not see anything so very great in the life of John the Baptist." I dare say a great many people have thought so. But we must bear in mind that there are two kinds of great men. Some are great in the sight of men, and others are great in the sight of God. There is a wonderful difference between these two kinds of greatness. Now let us consider three questions.

The first is, What makes people great in the sight of men?

The second is, What makes people great in the sight of God?

And the third is, Why is it better to be great in God's sight than in man's sight?

Our *first* question is, *What makes people great in the sight of men?* Several things do this; but *birth*, *money*, and *talents* are the chief things which give this kind of greatness. Some people are considered great simply on account of their *birth*. They happen to be born of parents who occupy a distinguished place in society. We have all heard a great deal about the son that was born to Louis Napoleon, the Emperor of France. For a long time the news-

papers were filled with accounts of the wonderful preparations that were made to celebrate his birth. He was to be called the King of Algiers. He was to be rocked in a silver cradle. When he was born guns were fired, bonfires were kindled, illuminations were made, bells were rung, flags were waved, and all Paris, if not all France, was in a perfect tumult of excitement. One might have supposed that *that* unconscious baby was really the greatest person ever born into this world. It was a great baby in the sight of men. And yet there was nothing but his birth to make him great. No doubt many a baby was born that same day in humble life, perhaps in some garret or hut, that will really be a great deal more useful to the world than that emperor's son. Greatness in the sight of men belongs to that child of a palace, but it is greatness which owes its existence to nothing but his birth.

But *money* is another thing on account of which persons are sometimes considered great in the sight of men. It is a poor, mean, contemptible thing when a person's greatness grows out of his gold. Yet it often does so. Plenty of money is often enough to make people be considered great in the sight of men.

But there is another thing on which this kind of greatness rests more frequently still,—and that is *talent.* By this is meant the power of mind to do things that other people cannot do, or else to do them better than others can. Here are two little boys, John and William. They both go to the

same school at the same time, and they are both put into the youngest class. John learns the alphabet in three lessons; but William has to go over his again and again, day after day, and week after week, for three months, before he knows it. We should say that John has a talent for learning, while William has not. Now this talent, or power of mind to do things, assumes many different forms, and shows itself in many different ways. Sometimes a man's talent will show itself in a remarkable power to learn languages, as in the case of Sir William Jones. This man learned to read and write twenty-eight different languages. He became one of the most learned men of the age in which he lived. His talent made him a great man in the sight of men. And so it was with Dr. Carey, the celebrated missionary to India. When a young man he was a shoemaker; but his heart was full of the love of God, and he resolved to give himself up to the work of preaching the gospel to the heathen. Some people ridiculed the idea of his becoming a minister. They made sport of him, and called him "the consecrated cobbler." But he paid no attention to their mockery. He gave himself up to the work he had chosen. He had a remarkable talent for learning languages, and he lived to translate the Scriptures into the languages of many of the Eastern nations; and thus became the means, as it were, of opening the kingdom of heaven to thousands and thousands of people who would never have heard of Jesus and his salvation but for him. Sometimes

a man's talent will lie in a power for painting, as was the case with Benjamin West, the son of a farmer, who became one of the most celebrated painters in the world. Sometimes it will show itself in a power for writing, as was the case with John Milton, who acquired a greatness in the sight of men that will last as long as the English language continues to be read in the world. Sometimes it will show itself in a power to find out curious things about the stars and other heavenly bodies, as in the case of Sir Isaac Newton, who saw an apple fall from a tree one day, and set to studying about it, and found out from it how it is that the stars move so regularly, and a great many other wonderful things which nobody else had ever known before since the world was made. Sometimes this talent will show itself in a power to make curious machinery, as in the case of James Watt, the celebrated engineer. These persons will always be considered great in the sight of men, on account of their talents. And sometimes, though very rarely, a man's talent will show itself in a power to do *anything* better than other people can do it. This was the case with the great George Washington. He had a talent for everything he was called upon to do. He had great talent as a soldier, and great talent as a statesman, and great talent as a farmer; and better than all besides,—he had great talent as a good citizen and a good man. He was great in the sight of men, and great in the sight of God too.

These are the three chief things that make per-

sons great in the sight of men. And this was the first question we were to consider.

And now we come to our *second* question, which is this, *What is it which makes people great in the sight of God?* It is not any of the things which lead to greatness in men's sight. A person may be born of the greatest king that ever lived, and be as rich as Crœsus was, and have the talents of all the different great men that I have mentioned, and yet never be great at all in the sight of God. And then, on the other hand, a person may be born in a garret or a cellar, and never have any money to call his own, and no talent at all to do anything that men call great, and yet may be really great in the sight of the Lord. This was very much the case with John the Baptist. He had neither birth, nor money, nor talents, to make him what men would call great; yet God called him a great man. What made him great, and what will make others as great as he was? Now, all that need be said in answer to this question is included in a single word. What an important word it is which leads to such an important result! This word is—OBEDIENCE. It was simply his obedience which led to all John's greatness. He did just what God wanted him to do. He did nothing else; and he did this always. God wanted John to stay in the wilderness till he was thirty years old, and he stayed there. God wanted him to preach repentance, and he did it. God wanted him to tell Herod of his sin. Now, John knew that Herod was a wicked man, and that he

would get very angry with him; yet he went and did it. Herod put him in prison, and killed him for it; yet John was great in the sight of the Lord. He had nothing but the obedience to make him great.

And if *we* obey God, as John did, it will make us great in his sight too. Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye are my *friends*, if ye do whatsoever I command you;" that is, if ye obey me. But Jesus is the Almighty God. He rules and governs more than ten thousand times ten thousand worlds. All the angels of heaven worship him. It is his *smile* which makes the happiness of heaven. Jesus is so very great himself, that anybody is made great who is permitted to become his friend. You know, my dear children, how often, when evening comes, the setting sun will shine upon the clouds that are floating in the western sky, and make them look so bright and beautiful, that you stand and gaze upon them, and feel as if you never should be tired of looking at them. Before the sun shines on them, those clouds look so dark and black that you have no pleasure in seeing them. They owe all their brightness and glory to the sun. And yet the glory which the sun gives them is only in appearance, not in reality. Now, if the sun had the power of making all the clouds he shines on really *be* what they *seem* to be,—if he could actually turn them into glorious glittering gold,—he would then be doing for the clouds just what Jesus does for all who obey him and become his friends. He sheds his glory upon them, and makes them like himself. He not

only makes them *look* great and glorious, but he makes them really *be* so. When David was thinking about all God's goodness to him, he said, "Thy gentleness hath made me *great*." All the greatness which people get in men's sight is little and empty; but it is vast, wonderful, substantial greatness which they get who become great in the sight of God. And this is what we have Sunday-schools and churches for. This is the end of all our teaching and preaching. The object we have in view in it all, is to persuade you to love and serve Jesus. It is to induce you to become the friends of Jesus. And if you do this, you will secure true greatness to yourselves. This will make you like John the Baptist,—"great in the sight of the Lord." And this is a great deal better than being great in the sight of men.

And now we come to our *third* and last question, which is, *Why is it better to be great in the sight of the Lord than in the sight of men?*

We may answer this question by saying that it is so for *three* reasons. Greatness in God's sight is better than greatness in man's sight, because it is *more useful.* Great men in God's sight are more useful than others by *their example.* Now, the most useful thing that can be done to anybody is to make him a Christian. And whatever is the best help towards making any one a Christian, that is the most useful thing to him. But there is nothing like the influence of a Christian's example to help to make others Christians. And in this way

a real Christian is always doing good to those about him. A person may be born a prince, and be very rich, and very talented; yet there is nothing in any of these things to make his example useful in the way of which we are now speaking. But when any one is great in the sight of God, as John was, by obedience to his will, he is always exerting an influence which tends to make others obey him too; and thus such a person is more useful by his example than those who are merely great in the sight of men.

And then by his *prayers*, as well as by his example, such a person is more useful. Suppose a great king had a treasure-house filled with all kinds of good things; and suppose he should give the key of this treasure-house to one of his servants, and should tell him that he might open it whenever he pleased, and take out anything that was necessary for his own happiness or that of his friends. What a privilege this would be! How much good this person might do! How very useful he might make himself! But this is just what God does to his people. He has a treasury in heaven, which contains everything necessary to our happiness. Prayer is the key that unlocks this treasury. God puts this key into the hands of his people, and allows them to use it for themselves or others, as there may be occasion. As the hymn says,—

> "Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw;
> Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
> Gives exercise to faith and love,
> Brings every blessing from above."

The prayer of Abraham would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah from being burnt if ten good people had been found there. The prayer of Moses saved the whole nation of Israel from destruction. The prayer of Elijah brought rain on the land, when there had been none for three years and six months. And a great many such instances may be found in the Bible. But every Christian loves to pray; and by his prayers he will be more useful than those can ever be who have not learned to pray.

And then, those who love and serve God, and are great in his sight, are more useful than others by their *efforts*, as well as by their example and prayers. You remember, my dear children, when Jesus was on earth, as soon as he called some of his disciples, and they found out who he was, they went away at once to tell their friends and relatives, and tried to bring them to Jesus too. And just so it is now. As soon as a person becomes a real Christian, and finds out what a precious Saviour Jesus is, he will try to persuade others to love and serve him too. Hence you will find such a person becoming a Sunday-school teacher, or a tract-distributor, or a Bible-reader, or a visitor of the sick. And these are among the most useful things that any one can do. The reason why they are so is, because they are means which God has appointed for saving souls from death; and to save a soul is the most useful thing in the world. If you or I could make a world like this we live in, we should feel that we had done a very great thing. Yet Jesus has told

us that *one* soul is worth more than a whole world. If we should be the means, therefore, of leading one person to love and serve Jesus, we really do more good than if we could make a world. This is one reason, then, why greatness in God's sight is better than greatness in the sight of men,—it is more *useful.*

But it is so, again, because this greatness is *more lasting* than the other. Greatness in man's sight—a greatness that connects itself with birth, or money, or talents merely—will soon pass away; but greatness in God's sight—a greatness that connects itself with our being made good and holy—will *never* pass away: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness *as the stars* for ever and ever." Greatness in the sight of God is better than greatness in the sight of men, because it is more lasting.

And then it is so, again, *because it is within the reach of all.* This is not true of greatness in the sight of men, but it *is* true of greatness in the sight of God. Can we all be the children of kings or princes? No. Can we all become rich? No. Can we all become great poets like Milton, or great painters like West, or great generals like Wellington, Napoleon, or Washington? No. But may we not all become great in the sight of the Lord, as John the Baptist was? Yes, we may. For it was the grace of God which made him what he was, and the same grace will be given to us if we

seek it with all our hearts. It is spoken of as "the grace of God which bringeth salvation to *all* men." All may seek it, all may secure it, and all may be made great by it.

A steam-boat is making her way through the sparkling waters of a lake in America. The pilot at the wheel is a bluff, weather-beaten sailor, tanned by many a burning summer's sun and many a wintry tempest. From one end of the lake to the other he is known by the name of "Honest John Maynard;" and the secret of his honesty to his neighbours is his love to God.

The land is about ten miles off, when the captain, coming up from his cabin, cries to a sailor,—

"What's all that smoke there, coming out of the hold?"

"It's from the engine-room, sir," said the man.

"Down with you, then, and let me know."

The sailor disappeared for a moment beneath, and then returned much faster than he went, and exclaimed, "The hold's on fire, sir!"

The captain rushed down, and found the account too true. Some sparks had fallen on a bundle of tow. No one had seen the accident; and now, not only much of the baggage, but also the sides of the vessel, were in a smouldering flame.

All hands, passengers as well as sailors, were called together, and two lines being formed, one on each side of the hold, buckets of water were passed and repassed. Filled from the lake, they flew along the line of ready hands, were dashed

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THE BRAVE SEAMAN.

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hissing on the burning mass, and then passed on the other side to be refilled. It seemed, for a few moments, as if the flames were subdued.

"How's her head?" shouted the captain.

"West-sou'-west, sir," answered Maynard.

"Keep her sou' and by west," cried the captain; "we must go ashore anywhere."

It happened that a draught of wind drove back the flames, which soon began to blaze up more furiously towards the saloon; and the partition between it and the hold was soon on fire. Then long wreaths of smoke began to find their way through the skylight; and seeing this, the captain ordered all the women forward. The engineer put on his utmost steam; the flag was run up with the union down, in token of distress; and water was thrown on the sails to make them hold the wind. And still John Maynard stood by the wheel, though now he was cut off by a sheet of smoke and flame from the ship's crew.

Greater and greater grew the heat. The engineer fled from the engine-room; the passengers were clustering round the vessel's bow; the sailors were sawing planks to lash the women on; the boldest passengers were throwing off their coats and waist-coats, and preparing for one long struggle for life. And still the coast grew plainer; the paddles as yet worked well; they could not be more than a mile from the shore; and boats were seen starting to their assistance.

"John Maynard!" cried the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir!" said John.

"Can you hold on five minutes longer?"

"I'll try, sir."

Noble fellow! And he *did* try. The flames came nearer and nearer; a sheet of smoke would sometimes almost suffocate him; his hair was singed, his blood seemed ready to boil with the intense heat. Crouching as far back as he could, he held the wheel firmly with his left hand, till the flesh shrivelled and the muscles cracked in the flames. Then he stretched forth his right hand, and bore the same agony without a scream or a groan. It was enough for him that he heard the cheer of the sailors to the approaching boats, and the cry of the captain, "The women and children first, then every man for himself, and God for us all!" These were the last words he heard. Exactly how he perished was never known. Whether, dizzied by the smoke, he lost his footing in endeavouring to come forward, and fell overboard; or whether he was suffocated and fell into the flames, his comrades could not tell. At the moment the vessel struck the boats were at her side; passengers, sailors, and captain leaped into them, or swam for their lives; and all escaped save he to whom under God they owed everything.

We see from these cases, my dear children, that the poorest persons, and those in the humblest positions of life, may become great in the sight of the Lord. Who would not rather be great in the sight of God than in the sight of men? This greatness we may all attain to, if we only try aright.

But there were three things in John's case that we must remember, if we want to succeed :—*John began early.* He did not wait till he grew up to be a man before he loved and served God. He began while he was yet a child. And so must we, if we wish to be really great in goodness.

And then, *John had the Holy Spirit to help him.* When the angel Gabriel told John's father, Zacharias that God was going to give him a son, he said that he would be "filled with the Holy Ghost" from the time he was born. John never would have been good or great in the sight of God without the help of this blessed Spirit; and nobody else ever will either. If you want to be great as John was, you must get the help of the Holy Spirit as he did.

And then again, *John gave up everything that was likely to hinder him from becoming great.* We are told that "he drank neither wine nor strong drink." He was a temperate man, not only in drinking, but in eating, and in everything. And so must we be, if we would be great in the sight of God. May God help us all to remember these things, my dear children! May he give us grace "to follow John's doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and, after his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen.


THE GIFT FOR GOD.

II.

The Gift for God.

"My son, give me thine heart."—PROV. xxiii. 26.

SUPPOSE the angel Gabriel should come down from heaven, and stand here before us all, dressed in shining white, with his face brighter than the sun: what a beautiful sight he would present! And suppose he should take a roll of paper from his bosom, and say he had a list of names, that God had given him, of fifty girls and fifty boys, and that God wanted all of them to give him something which they had; and suppose he should begin to unroll the paper, and say that he was going to read out the names, and tell us what it was that God wanted: how strange we should feel! Each one would be saying to himself, "I wonder if *my* name is there; I wonder what He wants me to give." And when you heard your name read out, how glad you would feel! And suppose the angel should say that he wanted you to go home and get what he was sent for, that he might take it back with him: how gladly you would go! how quickly you would run! how soon you would be back, and bring what he wanted!

No matter what it might be,—if it were something that you prized most of all that you possessed,—how gladly you would bring it!

But, my dear children, there is no angel here. There is only a man speaking to you; but still he is a minister of God who is speaking, and it is a message from God he has to deliver. He comes to tell you of something which you have, that God wants! Listen to what the text says; it is God who is speaking in the language of the text; it is God who says, "My son, give me thine heart."

Now there are two things I wish to talk about, in connection with these words.

The *first* is, *What it is to give God our hearts.*

The *second* is, *Why we should give them to him.*

Now, my dear children, you will notice that God does not ask us to give him our heads, nor our hands, nor our feet. Is not this strange? Yet there is a reason for it. What do we do with our heads? We think with them. What do we do with our hands? We work with them. What do we do with our feet? We walk with them. But we don't do any of these things with our hearts; these are not what our hearts are for.

Look! here is a little boy who has just returned to his home. He finds his father there, and he hastens to him and throws his arms around his neck, and says, "Oh, my dear father, I do love you with all my—" what?—why, *heart*, to be sure.

Then what is it that we do with our hearts? Why, we love with them. Yes, my dear children,

our hearts were made for this. The heart is the seat or place of the affections.

In every large city there are different places where different things are made. We have printing offices, where books are made; and machine shops, where engines and locomotives are built; and tailors' shops, where gentlemen's clothes are made; and milliners' shops, where ladies' bonnets are made; and confectioners' shops, where cakes and sweetmeats are furnished; and apothecaries' shops, where medicines are prepared and sold. It would be impossible, in a great city, to have one place which could furnish all these different things. And so it is in any great manufacturing establishment. There are a great many different things to be done; and these are done, not all together, but each separately, and in a different place. Each part of the work is done by itself, and kept separate from the rest. And just so it is with our bodies and souls. Every man, woman, or child, is like a great machine. A multitude of things are to be done, and there is a separate place for the doing of each. There is much seeing to be done, and the eyes are appointed to attend to this. There is much hearing to be done, and the ears are made for this. And then we have the nose for smelling, and the tongue for tasting, and the finger-ends for feeling, and the brain for thinking; and the heart is that part of our frame which has to do with the affections. The heart, you know, is placed right in the centre of the body. When we speak about the

heart, we sometimes place our hand on the left side, as if it were situated just there. But it is no nearer the left side than the right, only we can feel its beatings more distinctly there. Its true place is in the centre of the body. The heart you know, my dear children, is a hard substance, almost round, and about as large as one's fist. It is divided into four little chambers. Two of these are employed in pumping the blood into the heart, and the other two in pumping it out; and this pumping is going on day and night, constantly from the moment we begin to live until we die. You can feel this pumping when you lay your hand on your left side; and if you lie very still at night, when you are in your bed, you can hear it. But is *this* what God wants? Does he wish us to take these real hearts out of our bodies and give them to him?

Oh, not at all! We read about a nation who used to worship their idol god in this way. The Peruvians, who lived in South America, used to make offerings to their idol in this manner: They would drag persons into the temple of their god, and lay them on a table or altar before his image, and take out their hearts, and present them, all smoking and quivering, and almost alive, as an offering to him. But, my dear children, this is not what God wants of us. It is not the literal heart that God wants. He speaks of the heart here in the way of figure, as the place where our affections lie; and what he wants us to give him is, not the fleshy hearts out of our bodies, but the affections

which are seated in these hearts. When he says, "My son, give me thine heart," he means, My son, give me thy love; give me thy affections; set thy affections on me; love me above all things. This is what the text means when God says in it, "My son, give me thine heart."

Now, this is the answer to the first question that we proposed,—what it is to give our hearts to God.

The *second* question is, *Why we should give our hearts to God.*

There are *two* reasons for this.

In the first place, we should give our hearts to God, *because he has the best right to them.*

He made them for himself, and they belong to him. There is a place in our hearts, in our affections, which God designed for himself to fill or occupy, and nothing else but God can fill that place; and unless God does fill it we never shall be happy, either in this world or in the world to come. And if God made our hearts on purpose that we might love him with them, surely this is the best reason in the world why we should give them to him.

Suppose a little girl should spend a holiday in dressing her doll, or a little boy in making a kite or a boat, and just when they were finished,—the doll all dressed looking very pretty, and the kite ready to fly, or the boat to sail,—some one should come and take it away by force: how wrong it would be!

Suppose a gentleman should build himself a

beautiful house, and fit it up for his own use, and, just as he was getting ready to move into it and live there, one of his neighbours should get in, and not be willing to let him enter and live in the house that he had made for himself: how unjust that would be! That man would have no right to the house. That girl would have no right to the doll, or that boy to the kite or boat. The house, the doll, the kite, or boat, each belonged to the person who had made it, and no one else had any right to it.

What should we call the person who should act in this way? We should call him a robber.

Just so it is, my dear children, with our hearts. God made them for himself. God desires to keep our hearts. He wishes to come in and dwell in them. He wishes to possess our affections. He desires that we should love him above all things.

He says in one place in the Bible, "Behold, I stand at the door" of your hearts "and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him." But until we are ready to give our hearts to God,—to set our affection on him,—we are unwilling to let him come in and abide in the place he made for himself to dwell in. Surely this is robbing God!—robbing him of what he made for himself,—of that which he desires to possess above all things! Oh, how great the wickedness those commit who refuse to give God their hearts! How many people there are who would be ashamed to rob their fellow-

creatures, who are not ashamed to rob their God! How many people we find who would not take a shilling, a farthing, a pin, from one of their fellow-creatures, who do not hesitate to take from God all the affection which belongs to him, and rob him of those hearts, those affections, which he has made for himself!

God once sent a prophet to ask the Jewish nation a very singular and startling question. I think it must have surprised them very much when they heard the question. It was this,—"Will a man rob God?" (Mal. iii. 8.)

We are not told what the Jews said to the prophet when they heard his question. I daresay they were ready to exclaim at once, Why, no! surely nobody can be found guilty of such enormous wickedness! But, before they had time to say anything, God answered the question himself. He charged the dreadful guilt of this sin upon them. He said, "Yet *ye* have robbed me, even this whole nation." And then, as if he thought they would ask, in surprise, Why, how have we done this? he said, "In tithes and offerings." The *tithes* here spoken of referred to the *tenth* part of all their gains and the produce of their grounds, which God required them to present as offerings to him. And when they failed to do it, God said they were robbing him. And if God called them robbers because they would not give him the money, or the cattle, or grain, that belonged to him, how much more will he consider us as robbers, if we refuse to

give him our hearts or affections, which he commands us to give, and which he made on purpose that they might be given to him! Bear this in mind, then, my dear children, that if we do not set our affections on God, and love him better than everything else, we are robbers; and the worst kind of robbers too, for we are robbing God. We ought to give our hearts to God, because he made them, and has the best right to them.

But again, we ought to give our hearts to God, *because he can make the best use of them.*

What sort of hearts are ours when we are born into this world? Are they good or holy? No. What do the Scriptures say of the heart? They say, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately* wicked."

And what can God do for hearts like these? *He can make them new.* God has promised in his word, (Ezek. xxxvi. 26,) saying, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." When our Saviour was talking with Nicodemus, he said it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that God caused his people to be born again, or to have their hearts made new. And the Apostle James (i. 18) tells us what are the means which the Holy Spirit makes use of in accomplishing this work. He says, "Of his own will begat he us, with the *word of truth.*" The truth of his blessed word—that is, the truth of the Bible—is what the Spirit employs for this pur-

pose. Nobody can tell how this great change takes place. We only know that it is a change which the Holy Spirit works, and that he makes use of the truth of the Bible in order to bring it about. But there is the greatest difference in the world, my dear children, between an old heart and a new heart,—between the heart we have by nature and the heart when it is made new by the Holy Spirit.

I remember, some time ago, seeing pictures of these two hearts in a book. In a picture of the old heart,—the natural heart,—Satan was represented as sitting in the midst of it, while frogs, and toads, and lizards, and other reptiles, were creeping in and out of it; illustrating the bad tempers and dispositions which belong to the natural heart. In the picture of the new heart, Jesus was represented as sitting in the midst of it, while light was streaming down upon it from above, and a dove, representing God's Holy Spirit, was hovering over it.

The old heart is proud, and cross, and disobedient, and selfish, and obstinate. The new heart is humble, and gentle, and kind, and obedient, and holy, and good.

God has given us in his word a picture of these two hearts. You will find it in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians. The natural, or old heart, is there described as being filled with things like these: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings,

murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." But the renewed heart is represented as being filled with the fruits of the Spirit, which are these: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." What a contrast between these two hearts!

It is better for us, my dear children, to have our hearts made new than to possess thousands of gold and silver; but none can make these wicked hearts new but God himself; and it is for this reason he desires us to give our hearts to him, that he may make them new.

But again, *God will make our hearts clean and holy as well as new.* This is another reason why we should give them to him. No heart ever can be made clean till it is first made new. What a sad thing it is to have a heart that never has been cleansed! What would you think of a boy who had lived till he was twelve or fourteen years old, and had never been washed? How frightful he would be! And yet, my dear children, how much worse it is to have a heart that has never been washed or made clean!—a heart all defiled by sin, and which has been getting worse and worse every day! But how many such hearts there are! and they never can be washed and made clean until we bring them to God, that he may cleanse them. And the way in which God cleanses wicked hearts, and makes them holy, is by his word. We read in one place in the Bible that it is "with the washing of water by the word" that he cleanses wicked

hearts and makes them pure and holy. The meaning of this is, that just as we wash our hands, or our clothes when they are dirty, and make them clean in water, so by his word,—the word of his truth,—does God cleanse sinful hearts and make them pure. Let me give you, now, an illustration of what I mean by this.

"A clergyman was once walking near a brook when he observed a woman washing wool in a stream. This was done by putting it in a sieve, and then dipping the sieve into the water repeatedly, until the whole became white and clean.

"He entered into conversation with the woman, and, from some expression she used while she was speaking, he asked her if she knew him.

"'O yes, sir,' she replied; 'and I hope I shall have reason to bless God through eternity for having heard you preach some years ago. Your sermon was the means of doing me great good.'

"'I rejoice to hear it,' said the clergyman. 'Pray what was the subject?'

"'Oh, sir, I cannot recollect that, my memory is so bad.'

"'Well, how then can the sermon have done you so much good, if you don't remember even what it was about?'

"'Sir,' said the woman, 'my mind is like this sieve. The sieve does not hold the water; but as the water runs through, it cleanses the wool. So my memory does not retain the words I hear; but as they pass through my heart by God's grace they

cleanse it. Now I no longer love sin, and every day entreat my Saviour to wash me in his own blood, and cleanse me from all sin.' "

Thus it was that this good woman had her heart cleansed "with the washing of water by the word."

Surely, then, dear children, this is a good reason why we should give our hearts to God,—because he can make the best use of them: he can make them *new and clean.*

But God will not only make our hearts new and clean; he will also make them happy. And surely this is a good reason why we should give them to him. We never can be happy until our hearts are made new. Suppose your arm were broken, or out of joint: could you ever have any comfort in using it while in that condition? Of course not. The more you used it, the more uncomfortable it would make you feel. You must get the bone set, or the joint replaced, if you ever wish to use it again with comfort. And just so it is with our hearts. Until they are renewed by God's grace, we can have no more real comfort, no more true enjoyment with them, than we could with a broken or disjointed limb. And we never shall find any real happiness or comfort until these hearts are renewed; and it is because God knows this so well, that he desires us to bring our hearts and give them to him.

Now, God has told us, my dear children, what he wants of us. He has told us from whom he wants it. He wants it of each one of you.

Let me, before closing, ask you the question, Will you give God your heart? Will you begin to-day and pray for him to give you the help of his Holy Spirit, that your heart may be made clean and new, and that you may find that happiness and peace which can only be found by those who know and love him?

There is a very sweet hymn which any one may use as a prayer who desires to obtain this greatest of all blessings that we can ask, or God can give. It is this:—

O for a heart to praise my God!
  A heart from sin set free!
A heart that's sprinkled with the blood
  So freely shed for me!

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
  My great Redeemer's throne;
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
  Where Jesus reigns alone!

An humble, lowly, contrite heart,
  Believing, true, and clean;
Which neither life nor death can part
  From Him that dwells therein!

A heart in every thought renewed,
  And full of love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,—
  A copy, Lord, of thine!

Fruit of thy gracious lips, on me
  Bestow thy peace unknown;
The hidden manna, and the tree
  Of life, and the white stone.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
  Come quickly from above;
Write thy new name upon my heart,—
  Thy new best name of Love.


THE LESSONS JESUS TEACHES.

III.

The Lessons Jesus Teaches.

"Learn of me."—MATT. xi. 29.

THIS is a short text. There are only three words in it. But it is a very important text. Do you know, my dear children, who spoke these words? Jesus spoke them. Now what do we call the person from whom we learn anything? We call him our *teacher*. Then in what character does Jesus here come before us? As a *Teacher*. It is a great thing to have a good teacher. It is said that the Queen, when at home in her beautiful palace at Windsor, has a Sunday school, in which she teaches a class of children. If this is so, it reflects great honour upon her. And I suppose the children of her class feel it to be a great privilege to have the Queen of this great and mighty nation for their teacher. But, my dear children, what is an earthly governor, or president, or king, or queen, compared with Jesus? Jesus is the maker and ruler of the world. He is the maker and ruler of all worlds. He is the greatest and best teacher that ever was. His *position* makes

him great. He sits at the right hand of the throne of God. His *power* makes him great. "All power in heaven and on earth is given unto him." He can do whatever he pleases. His *wisdom* makes him great. He knows all about everybody who is living now, and everybody who ever has lived. He knows all about everything that ever has taken place, or ever will take place. Oh, he is a great teacher! What a happy and glorious thing it must be to be *his* scholars! Yet this is just what he wishes *us* to be. In our text we have his invitation to us to enter his school, and join his class, and have him for our teacher. "Learn of me." This is what Jesus says to us all. Now, when we go to school we wish to know what it is that the teacher will teach us, or what lessons we shall have to learn. And if we have Jesus for our teacher, we may very well ask what it is that he will teach us. He will teach us *four* things, which it is of the utmost importance for us to learn, but which we never shall learn at all unless he become our teacher. The difference between earthly teachers is, not only that some teach things which others do not, but that some teach them better than others. But the difference between Jesus and other teachers is, not only that he teaches better than others, but that he teaches things which nobody else can teach at all, and which we must for ever remain ignorant of unless we learn them from him.

Now let us see what these things are.

And, in the first place, Jesus will teach us to KNOW GOD.

The Bible is the lesson-book which Jesus has prepared for his scholars. It is his *first* lesson-book, his book for beginners. It contains the simplest lessons we can learn on this subject—the very alphabet of the knowledge of God. And it contains not only the alphabet of this knowledge, but many higher lessons also on the same subject. All that we can learn about God in this world is contained in the Bible; and if it were not for the Bible, and what it has taught us, we should know very little about God. Almost everything else men can study and find out by themselves; but however long or hard they might study by themselves, they could never find out much about God.

This is the meaning of that question which is asked in the Bible: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? it is deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"

There was a heathen king once, who had no Bible, but who wanted to know something about God. It happened that a very celebrated philosopher, and the wisest man then living, was in this king's dominions. So the king sent for the philosopher, and told him he wanted an answer to this question,—*What is God?* The philosopher said that this was a very difficult and important question, and he wanted three days to consider it before he

attempted to give an answer. After the three days, he came to the king and asked for five days more. After the five days, he came again and asked for ten; and when the ten were past, he came again, and told the king that he could not answer his question, for the longer he thought upon the subject, the less able he was to say anything about it. And, if we were left to ourselves, we should know no more about God than this philosopher did. And if Jesus had not come to teach us, we never should have known any more. Suppose that you were in a dark room which had a great many pictures hung round on the walls, and you were asked to find out what those pictures were about: could you do it? No. You might strain your eyes ever so much in trying to see through the gloom; you might grope your way in the dark, and go feeling about among the pictures; but your fingers would be unable to detect the forms and figures painted there. You never could tell what those pictures were, so long as you were left in the dark. And what is it you would need, to enable you to know the character of those pictures? Light; yes, light is what you would need. Only let a window be opened in that dark room, let the blessed beams of the sun come pouring in around you, and *then* you could see the pictures, and tell in a moment what they were. And this is just our position, without the teaching of the Bible, in reference to God. The world we live in is like a dark room. The glorious works of God that surround us are like

pictures of him hung round the walls of this room. But they are hanging in the dark, and we strive in vain to tell what these pictures represent to us of God. But Jesus has let in the light. He is *himself* that light. St. John said of him, "He is the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Jesus said of himself, "I am the *light* of the world." He came into the world to teach us about God. And this is what Jesus meant when he said, "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him." We know very little about God, except what Jesus has taught us. The Bible is full of his teachings. It is the lesson-book he puts into our hands. It is the only book he uses. Earthly teachers have a great many lesson-books for their scholars to learn from, and they change them very often. Jesus has but one book, and he never changes it. It is the same book that prophets, and apostles, and holy men of old read, and meditated on, and prayed over. It is the same, only made larger, that David loved so much; in which he used to read by day and meditate by night; which he made the "man of his counsel and his guide;" and which, he said, was "sweeter to his taste than honey and the honeycomb." The child of seven or eight years of age, who has learned to read the Bible, knows more about God, and can tell about his character better, than all the

philosophers and wise men who ever lived, without the Bible. Here Jesus teaches us that "God is a spirit;" that "God is love." Here we learn that "the Lord our God is holy." Here his character is described as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and who will by no means clear the guilty." Jesus can give us new lessons from this wonderful book every day. No matter how long we study it, we never can get to the end of its teachings. It is very different in this respect from all other books. If we study any other book, and go through it two or three times, we can master it, and find out all that is in it. Then we get tired of it, and find that it does us no good to read it any more. We want another book. But it is not so with the Bible. The oldest Christian, who has been studying the Bible for forty, or fifty, or sixty years, and who has read it all over again and again, has not learned half that is in it. Jesus teaches him new lessons from it continually. He is always seeing something new and interesting in it; or rather, the old things in it come up to his mind with fresh interest and pleasure, just as if they were quite new. He never gets tired of it. He feels that it is the book which Jesus has given him to teach him about God; and he finds so much to learn in it, that if he should live to be as old as Methuselah, yet, while growing old himself, and everything growing old around him, *the Bible would never grow old;* and he never would get tired of

studying it. This is the first lesson that Jesus teaches: *He teaches us to know God.*

But there is a second lesson to speak of: Jesus teaches us to LOVE GOD.

There are different ways of teaching a thing. Deaf people, who cannot hear, are taught by signs. Blind people, who cannot see, are taught by feeling. But even people who are neither blind nor deaf, who can both see and hear, are taught in different ways. Sometimes people are taught things by studying text-books which tell all about what they want to learn; sometimes they are taught by lectures; and sometimes by conversation. But there is only *one* way in which Jesus teaches us to love God. And what is that?

Is it by showing us the *power* of God? Does he teach us

> 'To sing the almighty power of God,
> Which made the mountains rise,
> Which spread the flowing seas abroad,
> And built the lofty skies,"

in order that we may be led to love him? No, my dear children; the mere possession of *power* will never excite love.

Is it by showing us the *wisdom* of God? Does he point us to all the marvellous things he has made;—the birds with their sweet songs and beautifully-coloured feathers; the insects with their curious contrivances; the trees with their graceful forms; and the fragrant flowers with their hues of varying loveliness? No; this is not the way. If we find out that a person is very wise, we may ad-

mire him for his wisdom, but we never should love him for it.

Well, is it by showing us the *riches* of God? Does he point to all the mines of gold and silver, all the treasures of gems and jewels, that are in the world, and tell us that they belong to God? Does he tell us that "all the beasts of the forest are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills;" and ask us to love God because he is so rich? No; this is not the way. Nobody was ever *loved* because he was rich. A great many people love money very much indeed; and people often serve others, and even live with others, because they have money; but nobody ever *loved* another because he had money.

It is not in any of these ways that Jesus teaches us to love God. Then how is it? In what way does he do it? Now mark what I say. *Jesus teaches us to love God, by showing us that God loves us.* The surest way to get other persons to love us, is to show that we love them. This is the meaning of that old saying, "Love, if you would be loved again." Dr. Doddridge, a celebrated minister in England, had a little daughter who was a great favourite with all who visited at her father's house. One day a gentleman who was there said to her, "Mary, my dear child, tell me what it is that makes everybody love you so." "Indeed, sir," said Mary, "I don't know, unless it is *because I love everybody.*"

But that was just the secret of it.

A little girl once tried the effect of kindness on a

companion at school. There was a girl in the school to which she went who was considered the very worst of all the scholars. Her temper was extremely violent and disagreeable. She never tried to control or subdue it. The consequence was, that she was disliked and shunned by all the school. Nobody kept company with her, or spoke to her, unless when it was absolutely necessary. This mortified and vexed her, and she was as unhappy and miserable as she well could be. One of the scholars, who was a very good girl, felt great pity for her poor unfortunate school-mate, and resolved to try the power of kindness in effecting a reformation. She resolved to take advantage of every opportunity of speaking kindly to her. She often carried her some flowers or fruit, or a piece of cake. She tried in various ways to do her some favour. At first these efforts were rudely rejected; then they were received in sullen silence; at length they were cheerfully accepted, and thankfully acknowledged. A gradual softening and improvement took place in the conduct and character of this bad girl; and eventually she became one of the best girls in the school.

Almost everybody has heard of the noble and excellent Mrs. Fry, and of her visits to the prisoners at Newgate. This is a prison in which those who are condemned to death, and persons of the very vilest character, are confined.

Nobody took any interest in these poor creatures, and they were treated with great harshness

and cruelty. The consequence of this was, that they became so violent and desperate that everybody was afraid of them, and there was the greatest difficulty in managing them. The keepers of the prison were afraid to go in, even with the food of the prisoners, unless they had a guard of soldiers along with them, with loaded muskets. But Mrs. Fry resolved to go in among these desperate creatures, and try to do them good. Her friends were alarmed when they heard of her intention. They told her she would certainly be insulted or injured, if not killed, and tried to persuade her not to go. But she was resolved to go, and said she had no fear. Then they wanted her, at least, to take a guard of soldiers with her; but she refused. With nothing in her hand but the New Testament, she ventured in among that hardened, lawless crowd. They were men and women more fierce than the hungry lions in the den into which Daniel was thrown.

It did seem like a very dangerous experiment. But she spoke to them in tones of tenderness and affection. This was what they had not been accustomed to hear. It acted like a charm upon their hardened hearts. She opened her book and read to them. She closed the book, and spoke to them freely of the love of Jesus. They listened with profound attention. Sobs and groans were the only sounds heard while she was speaking, and tears were seen coursing down the cheeks of those who had long been unused to weep. After that

she often repeated her visits, which resulted in a great reformation among the prisoners, many of whom were reclaimed from their evil ways, and made useful members of society. And what was the charm about this noble woman, and the secret of the great power she exercised over those abandoned prisoners? The charm about her was the spirit of love. The power she exercised was the power of love. She convinced those poor creatures that she really loved them, and wanted to do them good. This made them love her, and then she could do almost anything that she wanted with them.

Now these instances show us, my dear children, how it is that people, even very wicked people, may be made to love others, although they are very different from themselves. And it is in this way that Jesus teaches us to love God. He proves that God loves us. How does he prove it? Turn to the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, and there you will find the proof. It is in these wonderful words: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus came down from heaven to prove that God loves us. And when he took our nature upon him, and was born a feeble infant, and was laid in the manger; when he lived a life of poverty and suffering; when he passed through the dreadful agony endured in the garden of Gethsemane; when he was taken by wicked men and mocked, and scourged, and crowned with thorns,

and nailed to the shameful tree; when he suffered, and groaned, and died, and was laid in the grave, —he was all the time proving to us how much God loves us. And this is the reason why preaching the gospel to people, and telling them about Jesus, leads them to love God, when nothing else will do it. *Jesus teaches us to love God.* This is his second lesson.

But there is a third lesson we are to speak of; and that is, that Jesus teaches us to SERVE GOD.

Now people make a great many mistakes about the way in which they can serve God. Jesus said that the time would come when men would persecute and kill his people, and think they were doing God service. And this has often been done. The Church of Rome used to have a place called "The Inquisition;" which was a horrible kind of prison, to which the priests sent people who would not believe just whatever they chose to teach. In that prison they would put people in chains, and in dungeons; they would beat them, and burn them, and torture them in a great variety of cruel ways; and think that *this* was serving God.

Some people think that serving God means to be honest and industrious, and mindful of their own business; some think it means to be kind to the poor; and some think that if they only read the Bible every day, and go to church every Sunday, they are certainly serving God. But people may do all these things, and yet never serve God at all.

Now, in order to serve God aright, there are two things especially that we need; and these are, a

knowledge of what it is he wishes us to do, and the *power* to enable us to do it. And Jesus gives us both these things when he teaches us to serve God. And if you ask what is the knowledge Jesus gives us about serving God, I answer, he shows us in the gospel that we must repent of our sins and believe in him as our Saviour; that is, we must become true Christians. Nobody can begin to serve God aright until their hearts are changed. Whatever we may do, until this takes place we cannot please God. But can we change our own hearts? No; we can no more do this than we can fly. Then where is the power to come from that will change our evil hearts and make us Christians? It can only come from Jesus. His *grace* can do it. Without him we can do nothing; but with his help we can do all things. And thus it is, my dear children, that the *knowledge* and *power* to serve God come from Jesus. If we want to be the servants of God, then we must *learn of Jesus.* Earthly teachers can often give their scholars knowledge, without being able to give them power. They can show them what to do, but they cannot help them to do it. But Jesus can do both these things. He can give to all who learn of him both the knowledge and the power that they need. What a blessed thing it is to have such a teacher! How anxious we should all be to learn of Jesus! *He can teach us to serve God.*

And then there is one lesson more which Jesus can teach us. He can teach us to ENJOY GOD.

My dear children, do you know where all the water which supplies the springs, and fountains, and rills, and rivers of the world, comes from? It comes from the ocean. The sun makes it rise from the surface of the ocean in vapour; the vapour floats away in the sky and forms clouds; and, when the clouds are full, they empty themselves in rain; and the rain supplies all the springs and fountains.

The ocean, then, is the grand reservoir from which all the water in the world is obtained. There is more water in the ocean than in all the rest of the world put together; and there is no water in the world but what comes from the ocean. And what the ocean is to the world in regard to the supply of water, God is to the world in regard to its supply of happiness. God is the great ocean of happiness, from which all the fountains or sources of happiness are supplied. All the real happiness which any of God's creatures experience comes from him. And there is more happiness in God than in all the rest of the world, or of the universe, put together.

Now, seeing this is true, you may well say, "What a wonder it is that all people do not come to God, in order to enjoy him and be happy?" It *is* a wonder. But the reason of it is, that people do not know, or believe, that there is so much happiness in God. They need some one to show them this. And no one can teach us this but Jesus. We have a striking illustration of what I am now speaking

of in the history of Hagar in the wilderness. You can read the account of it in the twenty-first chapter of Genesis. Hagar was wandering in the wilderness with her son Ishmael. The water she had carried with her was all gone. They were parched with thirst, and her child was likely to die. She was in great distress. She laid him down under a bush, and turned away from him and wept. While she was weeping, the angel of the Lord called to her, and showed her a well of water. Then she was glad, and drank from the well, and gave her son as much water as he needed. You see, my dear children, it is not said that the angel *made* a well of water. He did not strike a rock, as Moses did afterwards, and make the water gush out. He only *showed* her the well. It was there before, and probably not far off; but she did not see it. She needed some one to show her the well. And just so it is with us. We need happiness, but know not where to find it. God is a well-spring of never-failing happiness; and "he is not far from every one of us." Still, we need some one to act the part of this good angel, and show us where the well is. We need some one to teach us how to find our enjoyment and happiness in God. And this is what Jesus is able and willing to do for us. This is one thing that he means when he says, "*Learn of me.*" And if we do learn of him, he will make us really happy. He said, on one occasion, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give

him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Those whom Jesus teaches to enjoy God are the happiest persons alive. They have more happiness in *this* life than any other persons; while nobody can describe the happiness prepared for them in the life to come.

Surely, my dear children, these are the most valuable lessons we can ever learn. Nobody in the world can teach them to us but Jesus. Then, let us come and *learn of him.* If we want to *know* God, let us learn of Jesus; if we want to *love* God, let us learn of Jesus; if we want to *serve* God, let us learn of Jesus; and if we want to *enjoy* God, let us learn of Jesus.

Jesus is the best of all teachers, and the knowledge which he gives is the best of all knowledge. The apostle Paul was a very learned man. He had been taught by one of the most famous teachers in the world, at that day. But when Paul became a Christian, and began to learn of Jesus, he thought the knowledge which He gives so excellent, that all the other knowledge he had gained was good for nothing in comparison with it. And Paul was right. And the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord is just as excellent and valuable to us as it was to him. Then let us all begin at once to learn of Jesus, and he will make us wise unto salvation. Remember, my dear children, that this is the message of Jesus to you. He says to each one of you, "LEARN OF ME."


THE LILY'S LESSONS.

IV.

The Lily's Lessons.

"Consider the lilies of the field."—MATT. vi. 28.

I REMEMBER reading about a missionary, who was stationed in a distant country, far away from all his friends and loved ones at home. He had many trials to bear. At first he bore them cheerfully. He loved his work, and was very happy in attending to it. But, after a while, a change took place in his feelings. He lost his trust and confidence in God, and began to think there was no truth in what he had been believing and teaching. He had doubts about the Bible and the truth of God's word, and even doubted whether there was a God at all, who made the world and all things. And in this uncomfortable state of mind he was not fit to preach nor attend to any of his duties. But once, while going on horseback to preach, and thinking of all these things,—of his unhappy state, and his doubts about the truth of what he was to preach,—his way led him along a thickly-shaded path; and, as he went on, a little leaf dropped from one of the

trees over his head, and came shaking and trembling down, (you know how the little leaves fall), and lighted right in front of him, on the saddle. He picked it up, looked at it, turned it over; and, as the sun was shining through the trees, held it up to the sunlight and saw all the beautiful little veins, looking like a delicate piece of lace or network. He thought, "Yes! that little leaf tells me the Bible is true—tells me there is a God; for none but a wise, merciful, good, and powerful Being could have made a little leaf like that. I am sure it is all true." And he went on his way rejoicing, feeling happy and thankful.

Now, dear children, had not that leaf a tongue for the missionary? Did he not find a tongue in the tree from which that little leaf fell down? Certainly he did; and if we will only consider the flowers and leaves that God has made, we shall find them *always* telling us about God and good things.

It was in this way, dear children, that our Saviour taught the people wise and good things. Once, when he was walking through the fields, he saw a man sowing, and he began to teach a lesson about sowing the seed of divine truth. Again, while going along, he saw a shepherd leading his sheep to pasture, when he spoke of himself as the Good Shepherd. And yet again, while walking by a lake, he saw some fishermen in their boats mending their nets, when he spoke to them about being fishers of men, or engaging in the ministry. One day, being

under a shady vine, and seeing the beautiful clusters hanging down from the branches, he compared himself to the vine, and his people to the branches, and spoke about that. At one time he told the people about the little birds; and here he tells us about the lilies,—" Consider the lilies of the field."

The lessons we are about to consider are those which the lily teaches.

There are *four* lessons we should all learn from the lily.

In the *first* place, there is *the lesson of its growth.*

The lily, in its beginning, is a very unpromising plant. It starts out of the earth from an ugly-looking bulb or root, in size and shape something like an onion; so that, without knowing what the lily is, you would never think that anything beautiful could come out of that unsightly and unpromising little root. Nobody would think so. But, children, put it in the ground, and cover it up, and then we shall see. God will make the rain and dew come down upon it; he will make the sun shine upon it and warm it; and by-and-by a little sprout will begin to grow, so tender that you could take it with your finger and thumb and destroy it with the slightest nip; and yet it has the power to thrust aside the earth, and force its way through the ground, until it comes to the surface. Then, when it feels the warm sun and fresh air, it grows faster, sprouts up higher and higher, and by-and-by come the beautiful green leaves, which drink in the dew and rain, and seem to rejoice in the sunshine when it falls

upon them. Then the pretty bud comes out from the beautiful leaves, shows its little head, grows larger and larger, until it bursts into the lovely white lily.

What a lesson the growth of the lily teaches! Yes, my dear children, the growth of the lily, and our own growth, both teach us a lesson of the power and wisdom of God.

Now, when you look upon the lilies, or roses, or beautiful flowers of any kind, as you wander in the woods; when you sit beside the pebbly brook, or under the shade of the trees, and see a little flower peeping up from among the grass around it, and stoop down and pluck it, think of this text, "Consider the lilies." Consider the flowers, and think what they teach of the power of God and the wisdom of God, to make all these beautiful things come out of the dust! Remember, then, dear children, the first lesson,—the lesson of its *growth.*

The *second* lesson which the lily teaches us is *the lesson of humility.*

It teaches us the lesson of humility in two things about it,—*the position in which it grows,* and *the attitude which it assumes.*

The lily loves to grow in lonely and retired places. It loves to stay in the background,—to be in the shade. It is the "lily of the valley." You do not find it on the mountain-top, or growing in the streets, or garden-walks, but you must go into the retired and shady places; and when you want to look for its flowers, you must push aside the leaves,

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and there you will see the beautiful flower, all alone, in the seclusion of a shady corner. It is an humble flower, and it teaches a lesson of humility in *the place in which it grows.*

And then its *attitude* shows its humility, as well as its position; for, when the lily grows up, it hangs its head down as though it wanted to hide itself. It does not spread itself out like the proud dahlia or tulip. O no; when the lily gets its full growth, and its beautiful white flowers are formed, it hangs down its head, as though it wished to hide its beauty, and felt that it had nothing to be proud of at all,—as though God meant the very form and attitude of this flower should teach us humility.

Now, dear children, humility is one of the sweetest things for anybody to have, and especially for boys and girls. Nothing is more lovely in young persons than to be humble,—to cultivate humility. I will tell you what I mean by humility.

There was once a nobleman who lived in a fine country place, who was the richest and greatest man in all that country. There were also some poor farmers, who lived around him, who used to hold a prayer-meeting once a-week. This nobleman was a very pious man, and he thought he would like to go to their prayer-meeting. The first time he went, as soon as he opened the door and stepped inside they all got up, as though they could not go on with their meeting because the nobleman was there. Then they wanted him to go up and take the best seat. He said, "No, my friends; sit down

where you are, and I will sit here by the door. I came here a poor sinner, like the rest of you; we are all on a level when we come before God. When we go into the world, God has been pleased to give me more riches than you,—it is right that some respect should be shown to this; but when we meet here, we all meet on a level, as sinners, to pray for God's blessing."

This, dear children, is one example of humility. Now let me give you another.

You have all heard about Dr. Morrison, a missionary to China. As his labour was great, and almost too much for one to accomplish, he wanted some one to help him; and he wrote home to the Missionary Society to send out another missionary. When they got his letter they set to work to inquire among their friends for a suitable young man to go out to China as a missionary, to help Dr. Morrison. After a while, a young man from the country—a pious young man, who loved Jesus Christ—came and offered himself. He was poor, had poor clothes on, and looked like a countryman, —rough and unpolished. He went to these gentlemen, was introduced to them, and had a talk with them. They then said he might go out of the room till they consulted with each other about him. When he was gone, they said they were afraid the young man would never do to help Dr. Morrison, —that it would not do to send him as a missionary, as he was but a rough countryman. Finally, they said to one of their number, Dr. Phillips, " Doctor,

go out and tell the young man that the gentlemen do not think him fit to be a missionary; but if he would like to go out as *servant* to a missionary, we will send him." The Doctor did not much like to do it; but he told the young man that they did not think he had education enough, and a great many other things necessary for a missionary, but if he would go as a servant they would send him out. Now, a great many would have said, "No; if I cannot go as a missionary, I won't go at all; I will not go as anybody's servant!" But no, children; he did not say so. He calmly said, "Very well, sir; if they do not think me fit to be a missionary, I will go as a servant: I am willing to be a hewer of wood, or drawer of water, or to do anything to advance the cause of my heavenly Master." He was then sent out as a servant, but he soon got to be a missionary. He became well known as the *Rev. Dr. Milne*, one of the best and greatest missionaries that ever went out to any country! All this, my dear children, sprang out of his humility.

One time, in the reign of George III., there was a learned and a good man who had been appointed Chief-Justice of the country,—one of the highest and most honourable offices in England. This gentleman had a son about sixteen years of age, and one evening, as he was about retiring, he called him to his room and said, "My son, I want to tell you the secret of my success in life. I can give it to you in one word,—*humility*. This is the secret of it all;—because I never tried to push myself for-

ward, and was always willing to take the place assigned to me, and do the best I could in it. And, my son, if you want to be successful, learn humility."

And humility is a very lovely trait, and beneficial not only to ourselves, as in the case of this Justice, but to others, as I will now show you.

A young preacher once was sent to preach the gospel, not in the city, but in the country. One evening, as he was going upon his journey to preach, he stopped at the house of a farmer. This farmer, though a good man, was sometimes very cross. He had met with some people who deceived him, and professed to be what they were not. When the minister, therefore, came to his house,—as he was rather rough-looking and uneducated, though the love of God was in his heart, and he desired to preach the gospel,—he told the farmer what he came for. The farmer was very cold to him, and even said something about being often deceived by people who were not what they seemed to be. "There's my barn," said he; "put up your horse in the barn." He had plenty of servants, and might have sent one of them, the young minister thought; and he was about to mount his horse and go on his way, although it was going to rain. Then he thought he would not: "That is not the way Jesus would have done," he said to himself; so he took his horse to the barn, and went to the house. When he came to the front door, the farmer sent one of his servants to take him round to the kitchen: and when there he found some very coarse provi-

sion spread out for him on a rough, solitary table. He thought it very strange, and the servants in the kitchen thought it strange too, that their master should send the minister to the kitchen. The young man felt much hurt, and thought he could not stand it, and would get his horse and go on again: but he said to himself, "Jesus would not have done so; I will try to be humble like Jesus." He sat down to eat the bread, and did not complain. After a while he heard the bell ring for prayers, and he went in with the servants to the room and took his place. The farmer read a chapter; and, on finishing it, it was very clear he had not made up his mind whether he would pray himself or call upon the minister. At last he called on the young man, and asked him to pray. The minister felt glad to have an opportunity of praying; and when he began, he forgot everything but the presence of God, and he poured out his feelings in prayer before him. His heart was full, and his feelings, which had been wounded by what he had just borne, were relieved by tears. He wept; the servants wept; the people of the family wept; and even the farmer himself wept;—they had a weeping time of it,—all kneeling down, and all melted to tears. When they got up, the farmer came to the young minister, the tears running down his cheeks, and took him by the hand and said, "Oh, forgive me, my dear friend and brother, forgive me, and I will pray God to forgive me too, for treating you so unkindly. I do not know what is the matter with

me. Satan has been tempting me to do everything that is wrong. I am ashamed of myself for treating you so. I wonder you said nothing cross, and was willing to stay when I sent you to the kitchen." The minister said, "I was trying to do like Jesus, and as he would have done; and I hope you will try to do so too." Next day the minister preached to a gathering of the people of several neighbouring families. His sermon was blessed. Two or three of the farmer's family were converted to God, and became useful Christians. Oh, what a blessed thing it was for that farmer's family, and for that neighbourhood, that this minister understood humility! —that he was an humble-minded man, and had learned the lesson of humility that the lily teaches, and that Jesus teaches!

Jesus is the great pattern of humility. He came on earth to teach us to be humble. He came, not as a full-grown man, but as a little child, to teach us humility. He was born, not in a splendid mansion, or a costly palace, but in a stable, and his cradle was a manger. And when he grew up to be a man, and went about preaching, he was so poor that he had not where to lay his head,—so dependent that women ministered unto him. He was a servant, and not a master. On one occasion, when his disciples were all in a room together, he took a towel and girded himself. Then he took a basin of water and washed their feet, and wiped them with the towel. He did all this to teach us the lesson of humility.

Now, my dear children, I want you all to learn the lesson of humility which Jesus teaches, and which the lily teaches.

The *third* lesson the lily teaches us, is *the lesson of contentment.*

The lily is satisfied with the place in which God has put it. It grows there, and likes it better than any other; and, although the roses are out in the middle of the garden, the lily does not fret nor envy them; and, though the rose-bushes are much larger, the lily is satisfied with being a little plant that can just grow up in the shade, and lets the other plants grow up above it. The lily is content with its position, and size, and colour; and, although the rose has its beautiful red, and the lilacs and dahlias have their different colours, the lily has only the one beautiful white.

There was once a good bishop who had a great many things to vex him; but he never murmured, —he was always pleasant. Some one said to him, "Well, bishop, I should like to know what is your secret of always being so happy. You have a great many troubles, trials, and difficulties; but I never see you worried, nor hear you complain about them. What is the secret?"—"Oh," said he, "the secret is, I look up;—my object is to get to heaven, which is above. I look around, and I see a great many people having worse trials than I have; and I am satisfied with my lot. I look to the grave-yard, and see that when I die I am to occupy but a small space there; and I am satisfied with what I now have."

That was the secret:—looking up to heaven, hoping to get there at last; looking around at others who are worse off; and then to the grave, in which we must all soon be laid.

Now, children, I have a rule to give you about fretting and grumbling,—a very short rule, which it is worth your while to recollect, if you want to cultivate contentment. Now, listen while I tell you this rule, and try to practise it:—"*Never fret about what you can't help;*" because it won't do any good. "*Never fret about what you* CAN *help;*" because if you *can* help it, do so. When you are tempted to grumble about anything, ask yourself, "Can I help this?" and if you can't, don't fret; but if you can, do so, and see how much better you will feel.

Oh, remember this little rule! I want all children to begin while they are young to practise it. Before you go to bed to-night think about it:—"Never fret about what you can't help, nor about what you can help,"—*fret not at all.*

Everybody in the world has trials; and the only way to get on is, not to be wishing for what we cannot get, but to learn the lily's lesson of contentment, and be satisfied with what God has given us.

The *last* lesson the lily teaches is, *the lesson of its beauty.* Oh, if I only had one here, you could see for yourselves how beautiful it is! There are three things in which its beauty consists:—its form, its colour, and its fragrance. It grows into a beautiful round flower, and has no sharp edges or corners. Then, its colour shows its beauty. It is a beauti-

fully pure white. It is satisfied with one colour, and doesn't want red, or yellow, or purple, or blue, or pink, but is content to be a beautiful white lily. Then, its fragrance forms a part of its beauty. It perfumes the air, and before you see it you say, "There must be a lily here." You search for it, and trace it by its scent, until you find its little head in all its beauty hidden among the leaves. There is also another thing in which I may say its beauty lies. It is a type of Christ our Saviour. He calls himself the "Lily of the Valley," and the "Rose of Sharon." The form, and colour, and fragrance of the lily, are all emblems to us of the beauty of Jesus Christ, and of what Jesus will make us if we are his children.

May God give us all grace to be humble and contented! May he help us to learn and practise these lessons! for in so doing we shall find greater happiness and comfort than in anything else.

Now, children, during the summer, when you go into the fields and woods, oh, remember this text, —"Consider the lilies of the field;" and learn the lessons of their *growth*, their *humility*, their *contentment*, and their *beauty*.

My dear children, remember them. Do not be satisfied with having them in your *heads*, but try to get them into your *hearts*, and keep them there. Do not be satisfied with *talking* about them, but try to *practise* them, especially these two,—humility and contentment; which the lily so beautifully teaches. Again, you must begin to practise them *now*, while

young. It will be better for you than thousands of gold and silver, or the richest fortune you could possibly have, or the greatest luxuries this world can afford.

Pray God to give you grace to be humble and contented, and to learn wisdom from the flowers of the field. When you see or think of these flowers, lift up your thoughts to Him who made them and you; and that glorious Saviour, who likened himself to the lily, will teach you to find beauties in nature and in everything around you.


THE PLEASANT WAY.

V.

The Pleasant Way.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—PROV. iii. 17.

THE question any one feels tempted to ask on reading these words is, *Whose* ways are here spoken of? Now, if we look at the thirteenth verse of this chapter, we find that the person intended here is Wisdom. In the Bible, when Wisdom is spoken of as a person, it always means true Religion. And so we find that it is Religion of which Solomon is speaking when he says, "*Her* ways are ways of pleasantness," &c.

The Bible tells us of *two* great roads or ways in which the people of this world are walking. One of these is the world's way, or the way of sin; the other is Wisdom's way, or the way of Religion. One of these is called the *broad* way, and multitudes are always thronging it; the other is called the *narrow* way, and but few are found to travel it. In the language of the hymn,—

"Broad is the road that leads to death,
And thousands walk together there;
But Wisdom shows a narrow path,
With here and there a traveller."

Now, there are *six* things which help to make a road pleasant to those who travel it; and all these are found in Wisdom's ways.

The FIRST *thing which makes a way pleasant is to have* A SAFE GUIDE.

If you had to journey through a country in which there were no roads laid out, it would be very unpleasant, because you would never be able to tell with any certainty whether you were going right or not. When ships are at sea they find no roads laid out over the broad surface of its waters; there are no mile-stones to mark the distance, and no finger-boards to point out the way. But the sailor takes the compass, with its little trembling needle always pointing to the north, and this becomes his guide. This enables him to tell which way to go. This is just as good to him as roads and finger-boards. The sailor's way at sea would be a very unpleasant one if he had no compass as his guide. But the guidance which this gives him does much to make his way a way of pleasantness.

Near the city of Rome, in Italy, there is an extensive burial-place, called the Catacombs. It is all under ground, and reaches for miles in different ways. The paths among the tombs cross each other in every possible direction, so that even in the broad light of day it would be a perfect puzzle to find one's way through them. But no ray of light reaches that gloomy place. It is as dark as midnight there. Of course, then, you will easily understand that to enter the Catacombs without a

guide is a very dangerous thing. So many lives have been lost in consequence, that the entrances have been closed up, and no persons are now permitted to go in. Before this was done, however, there was once a young man who resolved to explore the Catacombs. He furnished himself with a light; and in order that he might not lose his way he took a ball of string, and, fastening one end of it at the entrance of the dark passage, he carried the ball with him, that he might guide his way out by it. Having thus furnished himself, he went in, and walked cautiously along, gazing in silence on the different names and memorials inscribed on the tombs in that dark city of the dead. He spent some hours in this manner, and, dark and dismal as the place was, his way was comparatively pleasant, because he had a guide. But when he was just turning to go back, his light went out; and in the alarm which this threw him into he dropped his string, which was all he had to depend on to lead him back to the outside world of light and life. He stooped down to pick up his guiding string, but he could not find it. He got down on his knees, and felt carefully around in every direction for that precious, precious thread, on which hung all his hope of life and deliverance; but in vain. He turned and groped, and groped and turned, till weary with the effort; but to no purpose. Then he began to despair. He felt that he was buried alive. He thought of his home, of his friends, and of the bright and beautiful world without, and wept

bitter tears of sorrow over his folly in entering that gloomy abode. But he soon felt that weeping would do him no good; so he resolved to make a desperate effort to escape before giving himself up to die. Then he began, in utter darkness, to grope his way back. But he had no guide; and, ah! he felt how dreadfully unpleasant his way was made simply by his want of a guide. He walked on in darkness till compelled to stop and rest. Again he walked, and again he rested. He continued his efforts for hours, that seemed like ages to him. But it was for life that he was struggling, and so he toiled on, and on, and on, till at last his energies were exhausted. He felt that it was of no use. He thought that he must die; but just as he was sinking in utter despair to the earth, he thought he saw a faint glimmer of light. This revived his sinking heart. He struggled on a little further; he turned a corner of the way, and, O joy of joys to him! there was the broad light of day! A merciful Providence had directed his steps in the dark, and brought him out in safety.

A *safe guide* is the first thing necessary to make a way pleasant. In Religion's way we have this. The *Bible* is our guide here. It is a safe guide. It never leads us wrong. It shows us the dangers in our path, and how we may avoid them. It will go with us all through life, and lead us to heaven at last. Religion's ways are "ways of pleasantness," because we have a safe guide in these ways (Prov. iii. 17).

THE MAN IN THE CATACOMBS

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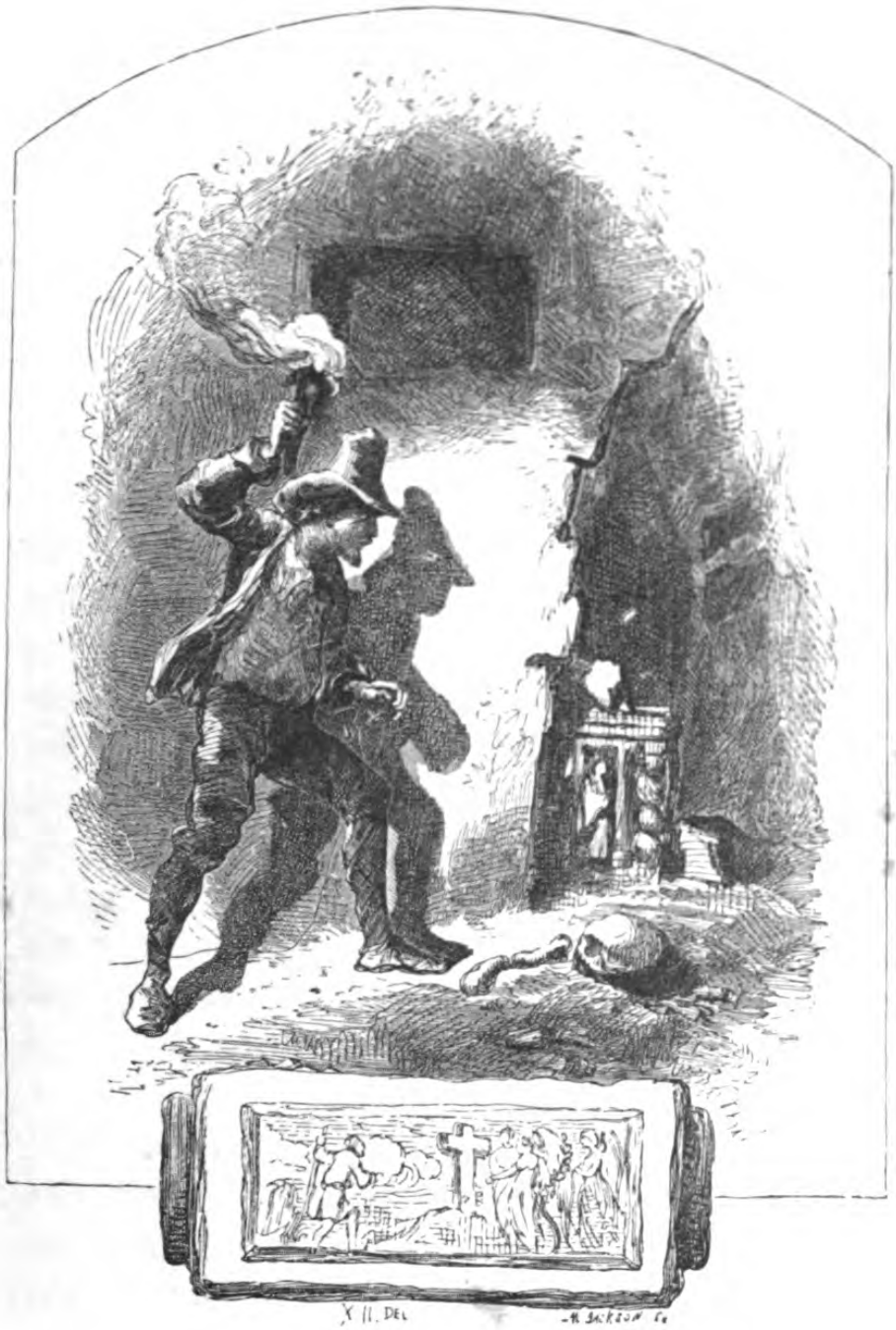

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But *the* SECOND *thing which makes a way pleasant is* GOOD COMPANY.

If you have a journey to take alone, with no one to talk to on the way, how long and dreary that journey will seem! But if you have two or three friends and companions with you whom you love very much, and they talk with you as you travel on, telling you all about the different houses you pass by, the names and characters of the people who live in them, and all about the different places that come in sight, and the various things that have happened in connection with them,—this will keep your mind fully occupied. You would not feel tired; the time would pass without your knowing it, and the way would seem very short and very pleasant. Now, those who walk in Wisdom's ways have the very best company. All good Christians are their fellow-travellers. You remember how Moses spoke to his father-in-law, when he wanted to persuade him to accompany him and serve God with him and his people. He said (Numb. x. 29), "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for we are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you."

And so, when we begin to serve God, we are travelling to the land of promise, the heavenly Canaan, the good land which God will give to his people. And Wisdom's ways are the ways in which we are to travel to reach that land, and all God's people are our fellow-travellers in trying to reach that happy land.

God himself will be the companion of all who walk in these ways. Enoch walked in these ways before the flood, and when the Bible tells us about him it says, "Enoch walked with God." And if Enoch walked with God, then God must have walked with Enoch. Jesus says, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, *and make our abode with him.*" And St. John says, "Truly our fellowship"—and fellowship, you know, is just the same as companionship,—"our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Ah! this is good company indeed; this is the very best company we can have. Only think, my dear children, of having the Lord Jesus Christ for a companion! And though he is invisible, he is not silent. Oh, no; he *speaks* to his people as he walks with them; and what he says makes them very happy. As he walked with his disciples when on earth, and talked with them, on one occasion "their hearts burned within them," and they were so happy they hardly knew what to do. And just so he talks with his people now. It is not, indeed, by words spoken to their outward ears that Jesus talks with his people now, but by thoughts put into their minds by his Holy Spirit. In this way he speaks to them of the precious promises of his word, of what he has done and suffered for their salvation, and of the glorious home which he has prepared for them above. There is nothing in the world can make us so happy as to have Jesus for our com-

panion. A good man, who loved Jesus very much, once wrote a beautiful hymn about the happiness he found in the companionship of Jesus; and in that hymn he says,—

> "While blest with a sense of His love,
> A palace a toy would appear;
> And prisons would palaces prove,
> If Jesus would dwell with me there."

The good company found in Wisdom's ways is the second thing which makes them "ways of pleasantness."

The THIRD *thing which makes a way pleasant is* SURE PROTECTION.

If you were walking along a road in which snares were hidden, and you were in danger at every step of being caught in them, there would be no pleasantness in that way. The danger would take away all pleasure. You remember our Saviour told a story once about a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who robbed, and stripped, and wounded him, and left him half dead. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a very dangerous road then. It is a narrow road that runs winding round between high mountains. There are dark caverns in the sides of the mountains. These caverns were infested with robbers, who watched for the passing travellers, and sprang out to rob and murder them. That road is just as dangerous now as it was then. So many murders have been committed there, that it is called "The Bloody Way." There would be no

pleasantness in travelling that way. There would be no *safety* even, unless you had a company of armed men to protect you. *Protection* in travelling is necessary, if we would have pleasure in it.

Now the way of life, through which we are travelling, is a way full of dangers. Like the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, it is beset with robbers. Satan with his evil spirits is there, like the captain of a band of robbers. His object is to rob our souls of all right feelings and principles, and drag us down to his own dark den for ever. He is the worst robber that ever was. There is nothing we should dread so much as falling into his hands, and being left there. Yet this must happen to all who do not walk in Wisdom's ways. We cannot protect ourselves against this robber. Our best friends and dearest relatives cannot protect us. Jesus alone can afford us protection here. *We* cannot *see* Satan, but *He* can. We know not where he lays his snares for us, but Jesus knows; and he can turn away our feet, and keep us from falling into those snares. He said to Abraham once, when he was in danger, "Fear not, Abraham; I am thy *shield.*" Abraham was travelling the same way of life that we are travelling. He was exposed to the same dangers from Satan's power and malice that we are exposed to. Protection from this danger was necessary for him, in order that he might find pleasantness in that way; and Jesus promised to be his shield, and assured him of his protection. And this promise belongs to you and me, if we

walk in Wisdom's ways, as much as it did to Abraham. Jesus will give us sure protection from Satan, the great robber of souls. Do you ask how Jesus will protect us? Let me tell you. In the sixth chapter of the Second Book of Kings we find a very interesting story of the prophet Elisha. He was living in a little village on a mountain in Israel. The King of Syria was at war with the King of Israel at that time, and whenever the Syrian king held a secret council with the captains of his army, and laid a plan for making a sudden attack upon the Israelites, Elisha knew it by the spirit of prophecy, and sent word to the King of Israel, who went there with his army and prevented the attack of the Syrians. This made the King of Syria very angry, and he sent an army of soldiers to take the prophet prisoner and put him to death. This army came by night, and, finding out the place of Elisha's abode, they quite surrounded the mountain, and filled the lower part of it with their numbers. When the prophet's servant arose in the morning, and saw how they were surrounded by the horses and chariots of their enemies, he was greatly afraid, and cried out, "Alas, my master! what shall we do?" But Elisha felt no fear. He knew very well what safe protection they had, and he wanted his servant to know it too. Then he prayed that God would give his servant power to see what he saw; and God opened his eyes to see spiritual beings, and oh, what a sight he beheld! How it must have amazed him! He

saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round his master and himself! These were angels that God had sent to take care of them. What harm could the Syrians do them while they had such a guard? None at all. No wonder, then, that Elisha was not hurt, but was saved in the singular way described in the chapter which tells this interesting story. This shows us what a wonderful shield God is to his people, and how he can protect them from Satan and his hosts just as easily as he protected Elisha from the army of the Syrians. Here we see how true the language of that hymn is which says,—

> "That man no guard nor weapon needs
> Whose heart the blood of Jesus knows
> But safe may pass, when duty leads,
> Through burning sands or mountain snows.
>
> Released from guilt, he feels no fear,—
> Redemption is his shield and tower;
> He sees his Saviour always near,
> To help in every trying hour.
>
> His love possessing, I am blest,—
> Secure whatever change may come;
> Whether I go to east or west,
> With him I still shall be at home."

Yes, yes, dear children, there is *sure protection* to those who walk in Wisdom's ways; and this makes up part of the pleasantness which is found in those ways.

But there is a FOURTH *thing which tends to make travelling pleasant in any way; and that is, to have* PROPER PROVISION *made for our wants.*

Those who walk in Wisdom's ways have a provision for their wants that never fails. The Bible

says to them, "God will supply all your need out of the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus." God's Sabbaths are the resting-days which he has appointed for the refreshment of those who are travelling in Wisdom's ways. The church is like an inn, which he has fitted and furnished for their comfort. Here a constant feast is prepared for them. Here is the bread which came down from heaven, and of which whosoever eateth shall live for ever. Here are the wells of salvation, from which his people draw water with great joy. It is living water which they yield. Those who drink of this water never thirst again, but they carry it with them,—"a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." When David was walking in these ways, he said, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." In another place he says that others "may lack and suffer hunger, but they that wait upon the Lord"—and this means, those who walk in Wisdom's ways—"shall want *no manner of thing that is good.*" *That* is a glorious promise indeed, and it is a precious provision which it makes for all who are walking in Wisdom's ways. Truly there is a proper provision for them, and this makes the ways in which they are walking "ways of pleasantness."

But there is a FIFTH *thing which helps to make a way pleasant, and that is* A PLEASANT PROSPECT.

Everybody, I suppose, has heard of the great desert of Sahara in Africa. It reaches for hundreds

of miles in every direction, like a vast ocean of sand. There are no roads, no shady resting-places or cool fountains there. No tall dark mountains there lift up their huge forms to the view. No fields of grain, no valleys thick with corn, no murmuring brooks, no flowery gardens, no beautiful groves are there. Go where you will, turn where you may, wide wastes of barren burning sands are all the eye can rest upon. Suppose we had to travel, day after day, over those dreary desert sands: would there be much pleasantness in our way? No indeed. The want of a pleasant prospect would make it as uncomfortable as it well could be. We should be all the time thinking about some of the beautiful roads we had travelled in our own country, and the remembrance of them would make the desert seem gloomier still by contrast. Switzerland, you know, is a country famous all over the world for its beautiful scenery. Hundreds and thousands of people go there every year just for the purpose of admiring its beauties; and those who travel through that country find their ways made ways of pleasantness simply by the *pleasant prospects* which are before them there. They see mountains whose tops are covered with snow. Sometimes the clouds gather round them, and then again the sunbeams are reflected from them in all the varying colours of the rainbow. Other mountains are seen clothed with dark green woods, and streams of water are gushing down their sides like threads of silver, and wild torrents dashing

themselves into foam and spray. The prospect varies and changes continually, and affords unceasing pleasantness to those whose ways lead them through that land of beauty.

But now you may be ready to ask, What sort of prospects are afforded to those who walk in Wisdom's ways? Oh, here are pleasant prospects indeed! Nothing in all the world can be compared to them for interest and beauty. Prospects of heaven are to be seen from these ways. Have you ever read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress?" Next to the Bible, it is one of the best books in the world. Everybody ought to read it. It represents the Christian, in one part of his journey, as reaching an elevated region called "the Delectable Mountains," and looking through a telescope, and getting a view of heaven. Now there are many of these mountains in Wisdom's ways, and heaven can be clearly seen from the top of them. The promises which God has written in the Bible are what I mean by these mountains. Look, for instance, at the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation. What a beautiful description of heaven we have there! Why, when we read those chapters we feel as if we were standing on the top of a high mountain and having a prospect of heaven in all its glory spread out before us. That is the fullest and clearest prospect of it that we have. But there are a great many other prospects of heaven to be met with in Wisdom's ways—less clear and extensive than this, yet all beautiful and pleasant pro-

spects; and the writer of that sweet hymn which we sometimes sing had been looking at these prospects, or meditating on the promises of God's word, when he wrote,—

> "There is a land of pure delight,
> Where saints immortal reign;
> Eternal day excludes the night,
> And pleasures banish pain.
>
> There everlasting spring abides,
> And never-fading flowers.
> Death, like a narrow sea, divides
> That heavenly land from ours.
>
> Bright fields, beyond the swelling flood,
> Stand dressed in living green:
> So to the Jews fair Canaan stood,
> While Jordan rolled between."

And these *pleasant prospects* found in Wisdom's ways make them ways of pleasantness.

There is only one other thing I would speak of as making a way pleasant, and that is, to have A COMFORTABLE END *in view.*

Among these passengers are two young men. They are both going to the same place; they are going by the same road; they are in the same conveyance, sitting on the same seat; they eat the same food; they breathe the same air; they look out on the same beautiful scenery;—and yet, while one of them talks, and smiles, and looks bright and happy as a summer morning, the other looks very differently. He speaks to no one; he never smiles; he takes no notice of the beautiful country; but, with downcast eye and melancholy looks, he tries to avoid the observation of those about him, and seems like

the image of sorrow and despair. The way they are travelling is a way of pleasantness to one of these young men, but a way of gloom and sadness to the other. And what makes the difference? It is the *end* they have in view. One of them has been travelling abroad for several years, and is now returning to the home of his childhood. His family and friends are all eagerly expecting him, and ready, with open arms and warm affectionate hearts, to welcome him back again. His heart is rejoicing within him, and every nerve in his system is thrilling with delight. He has a comfortable end in view, and *that* makes his way all pleasantness. But the other—poor fellow!—he has committed forgery. His crime has been found out. He has been taken up, and is now on his way back to be tried, condemned, and punished. The grief of his family and friends, and a prison, with its deep and enduring disgrace—this is the end before him. And can you wonder that it makes his way a way of unpleasantness?

And the end we have in view in the great journey of life has just the same effect upon our feelings. Those who are walking in Wisdom's ways have a very comfortable end in view. They have a glorious home in heaven to look forward to. *There*, in the company of all good people, with the holy angels, and God their Father, and Jesus their blessed Saviour, they shall dwell for ever in unspeakable happiness. Oh, this is a comfortable end to have in view! This cannot fail to make the ways of Wis-

dom pleasantness to those who walk in them. And when you think of these six things—*the safe guide, the good company, the sure protection, the proper provision, the pleasant prospect, and the comfortable end*—which are found in Wisdom's ways, you cannot wonder to hear it said that "her ways are ways of pleasantness."

And now I think I hear some of you asking, "How can we get into these ways and walk in them?" Let me tell you in a few closing words. When Jesus was on earth he said, "*I am the way.*" At another time he said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Now we learn from these words that Wisdom's ways are all in Jesus, and the door of entrance into these ways is found in Jesus. If any one feels that he is a sinner, and wants to get his sins pardoned, he must go and pray to God to pardon his sins for Jesus' sake. If any one feels that his heart is wicked, and he cannot make it any better, he must go and pray to God, for Jesus' sake, to change his wicked heart, and take away all his wrong feelings, and make him like Jesus. We must read the Bible, to find out what Jesus did, and what he has told us to do, and then pray to God to give us grace to do these things; and then we shall be walking in Wisdom's ways, and shall know ourselves how pleasant those ways are.

May God guide us all in these pleasant ways, and bring us to his heavenly home at last, for Jesus' sake. Amen.


THE BEST MERCHANDISE.

VI.

The Best Merchandise.

"The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver."
PROV. iii. 14.

A MERCHANT is one who buys and sells. Merchandise denotes the *things* which a merchant buys and sells. If you walk along the city you will find merchants there of different kinds, and you will see their merchandise in the boxes or bales lying along the streets.

But the merchandise spoken of in our text is very different from this. Here Solomon says, "The merchandise of *it*." Now the question is, What does this *it* refer to? The merchandise of what? If you look back to the verse before our text, you will find that Solomon is saying there, "Happy is the man that findeth *wisdom*;" and then he goes on to say in our text, "for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver."

The "it," then, refers to wisdom; and wisdom, you know, my dear children, means *true religion*,—the love and fear of God. There is a text in the

Book of Proverbs which says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This shows us what wisdom means.

Now we learn from this text, then, that to deal in wisdom—to be concerned with religion—is better than to deal in anything else: "The merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver."

If you had a mine of silver, and were occupied in getting out the silver and selling it, then this silver would be your merchandise; this would be the thing with which you would trade. And if you had such a mine, you would not be willing to work as a bricklayer or shoemaker, because you would have your merchandise in silver, and you would think it better to be occupied with it than with anything else. But here we learn from Solomon, that the merchandise of wisdom is *better* than even that of silver.

And now the question arises, *Why* is the merchandise of wisdom better than that of silver?

I wish to point out several reasons why it is so, —why this is the *best* merchandise that any person can engage in.

The *first* reason is, *Because it is a business you can begin sooner than you can any other.*

If you wish to be a lawyer, or a physician, or a minister, you must finish your education, and go through a long course of study, to fit you for the important duties you will have to perform. You must wait for a long time before you can begin to enter these professions. So, if you wish to be a

carpenter, or a printer, or a merchant, you must serve an apprenticeship to these different sorts of trades, and wait till you grow up, before you can begin business for yourselves.

But it is very different with the merchandise of which we are now speaking. You can begin this to-day. The youngest among you can begin it without waiting another hour. Why, children as young as four or five years old have begun to be wisdom's merchants, and have found the merchandise of it better than the merchandise of silver!

We read in the Bible of little Samuel, who was called to be wisdom's merchant when he was very young. I suppose he was not more than seven or eight years of age when God first called him, and when he began to trade in wisdom. Then we read of Timothy, who "from a child had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation."

Have you ever thought how much God has done to show his interest in children, and his earnest desire to have them engaged in the merchandise of wisdom? Why, if he had done nothing more than write in his blessed Book that one sweet promise which we find in Prov. viii. 17,—"Those that seek me *early* shall find me,"—it ought to encourage every child who reads the Bible to begin at once to serve God.

But ah! how much more than this God has done! When he made a covenant with Abraham, and promised to be a God to him, and do everything

for him that was necessary for his salvation, he made Abraham bring all his children with him into fellowship with God. And he commanded the Jews, as soon as their children were eight days old to bring them and consecrate them to him, and cause them, as it were, with their unconscious, tiny hands, to take hold of that covenant, and begin to trade in wisdom's merchandise. And though baptism, the sign and seal of God's covenant as used by us, is very different from that appointed for the Jews, yet the Church of Jesus Christ is still open for children; and in their very earliest age they can be made to share in the blessings of God's covenant.

And when Jesus was on earth you know what an interest he manifested in children. O how thankful every child and young person should be for what Jesus did to show his interest in them! Ah! my dear children, the sweet and gracious words of Jesus ought to engage a warm place for him in your hearts. Jesus was fond of children; and he showed this when he rebuked his disciples for trying to send them away, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And then "he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them and blessed them."

What blessed words these are, to come from the lips of Him who created the mighty universe, and who sits now at the right hand of the throne of God! What a surprising thing it is to know that

Jesus thinks about children, and loves them!—that he has made room for them in his church on earth, and room for them in his kingdom in heaven!

There is another passage in the New Testament which shows the great interest Jesus feels in children, and how anxious he is that they should be taught how to trade in "the merchandise of wisdom." One day after his resurrection, when he was talking with Peter, who had denied him, he asked Peter if he loved him. Peter said to him very earnestly, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And then Jesus told him what he wanted him to do in order to show his love to him. And what was it? It was this, "*Feed my lambs.*" Children who are trying to love and serve Jesus, are his lambs. The word to *feed*, in the Bible, means to teach or instruct. And when Jesus spoke these words to Peter, he meant them for all his ministers, to the end of the world. It was just as if Jesus had said to every minister of the gospel, "If you want to show your love to me, be kind to the children in your church. Take an interest in them. Do all you can to lead them to think of me, and to love and serve me." It was thinking about these words of Jesus which first led me to take an interest in children, and preach especially to them. And if ministers would only think more about these words, I feel sure they would feel more interest in their Sunday schools, and show their love to Jesus by trying to do more to feed his lambs.

And all these things show you, my dear children, that God loves to have young people serve him;

and that, although you cannot engage for yourselves in other business until you are of age, yet you are all, even the very youngest of you, old enough to engage in the merchandise of wisdom. And this is one reason why it is better than any other merchandise, because you can engage in it so much sooner.

But a *second* reason why this merchandise is better than any other is, *Because it is easier to trade in.* I mean by this that it requires less money and less labour to carry it on.

When a person is going to set up in business, the first thing that he wants is *money.* If he wants to open a shop, for instance, he must have money to furnish it with the merchandise he is going to trade in. If he wants to set up as a carpenter, or as a machinist, or any other trade, he must have money to furnish himself with a shop, to provide himself with tools, and with all the things necessary for him to carry on that trade. He can do nothing at all until he get these.

But, my dear children, no money is needed to begin to trade in the merchandise of which we are now speaking. Every one of us has all the materials ready at hand that are needed to begin this business. These materials are, our sins, our evil hearts, our sinful dispositions. We are to "set up" with these, to begin with these. We are to carry these to Jesus, and tell him of them, and pray of him the grace that will enable us to get rid of them.

This is the way in which we must begin the merchandise of wisdom. It requires no money.

When God invites people to come and buy the blessings of his grace, he says they can buy them "without money and without price."

But then, besides money, a great deal of *labour* is needed in order to be successful in any other pursuit. No farmer will succeed in the cultivation of his ground, no tradesman will succeed in the carrying on of his design, unless he bestows upon it a great amount of labour and toil.

If you get up early in the morning, the first sounds you hear are the sounds of men hastening to their work. And we find them doing this always, —day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year; and all in order that they may succeed in their business. Now it is very hard to be doing this always. But God does not require such hard service on the part of those who try to love and fear him.

I would not have you suppose, my dear children, that you can get to heaven without great efforts. It is not sitting down and wishing yourselves in heaven that will bring you there. We are told to "*work* out our own salvation." Jesus says, "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate." The life of the Christian is compared to a race, a struggle, a conflict. And all this implies that vigorous efforts must be put forth, if we would gain the prize of eternal life. What I mean to say is, that it is easier to serve God than it is to serve Satan; that less real labour is required to secure the true riches, "the durable riches" of the kingdom of heaven, than

is put forth by many to obtain the riches of this world.

Jesus said when upon earth, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for my yoke is *easy*, and my burden is *light*." It is because Jesus makes his people love his yoke, that it feels so easy; and because of the help he gives them in bearing it, that his burden seems so light.

Oh, dear children, how many people there are who spend more time and pains to secure to themselves a house of brick, or wood, or stone, that will soon crumble to decay, and perish, than they are willing to put forth in order to obtain a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" How many spend more time to secure the "gold that perisheth" than is needed to obtain that gold which endureth for ever and for ever!

Thus, my dear children, you see that "the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver," because it is easier to carry it on.

Then there is a *third* reason why this is the best merchandise to engage in; and that is, *Because it yields more profit than any other.*

What do men engage in business for? It is for profit, for gain. When you look out on our streets at noonday, all crowded with men running to and fro, on various errands, to accomplish various ends, the great aim and object they have in view is profit or gain of some kind; they all have an eye to this. The bricklayer, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the shopkeeper, the merchant, and the salesman, are

all expecting gain and profit as the result of their labour. And it is right to look for it, and right that they should have it.

Sometimes we meet with men who have secured to themselves great gain in this way. The richest men now in the world belong to a family in Europe called "the Rothschilds." They were once poor, but they are now richer than kings; and they made all their money by merchandise of one kind or another.

But, my dear children, should we try to make money by religion? Should we engage in the merchandise of wisdom for the purpose of getting gain of this kind from it? No, not at all.

And yet, think what our text says: "The merchandise of it is *better* than the merchandise of silver." Does the Bible teach us that it is profitable to serve God? Yes, it certainly does. It says that in keeping His commandments there is "*great reward.*" It tells us that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It yields a greater profit and a better gain than gold or silver.

And do you ask me what this gain is? I answer, it is the pardon of sin; it is peace and happiness here, and a treasure in the heavens that will last for ever hereafter.

We read in the Bible of the rich man and Lazarus. We are not told how this man made his money. He had probably been a merchant, and made it in the buying and selling of merchandise. He had

retired from business, and was living at his ease upon the great gains he had secured for himself. But, while attending to these things, he had forgotten the concerns of his soul; he had laid up no riches for the world to come.

There was a poor beggar who was laid at his gate, and asked only for the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

But, oh, what a wonderful change took place in the condition of these two men when they died! The rich man on earth became the poor man after death; and the poor man on earth became the rich man in heaven. The reason was, my dear children, that while the poor man had engaged in no earthly business, he had not forgotten the merchandise of wisdom; and he found, to his everlasting happiness, that "the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver."

Have you ever in a dream thought yourself the owner of a large house, and possessed of great riches? It seemed for the time as if it were all real. But in a little while you awoke, and, lo! it was gone! It was only a dream! Many a beggar has had such a dream. He thought and felt, for a moment, as if he were rich. He awoke, and found himself in rags and poverty. My dear children, just such will the riches and gains of this world seem to those who die and wake up in eternity without having the true riches. Life will be like a dream. They dreamed that they were rich, but wake up to find that they are poor for ever. But

the gains of wisdom's merchandise are real, lasting riches. The merchandise of wisdom is better than any other, because there is more profit in it.

There is a *fourth* reason why this is the best of all merchandise; and that is, *Because there is more room for engaging in it than in any other.*

Can you think of any one kind of business in which all that are here present could engage at once? Could you all become ministers, or lawyers, or physicians, or merchants? Certainly not. Some of you would not be fit for one of these professions, and some would not be fit for others.

And even if you were all fit for any one of them, there would not be room for you all to enter upon it at once. You would not be wanted. You would not find employment. It would be impossible for you to succeed.

But how different it is with the business of serving God! Here there is room enough for you all. It is a merchandise which all can understand, a pursuit for which all are fit. Just look for a moment at some of the things which those must have who engage in this business, and then you will see who are fit for it. It is those who have sinful natures who can engage in it. And is there one of us to whom this does not apply? The Bible tells us that we "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It is those who are burdened with sin and sorrow who are fit for it; for Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is those who are in danger

of losing their souls who are fit for engaging in this business. And we are all in this danger till we learn to love and serve God. Jesus said, "He that believeth not is condemned already." Now you know that a *condemned* man is one who has been found guilty of some crime, and who has been sentenced to be executed, and is only waiting for the appointed time to come, when he will be led out and put to death. And this is our condition until we truly repent and become Christians, by exercising faith in Jesus. We have been found guilty of breaking God's holy law. We are condemned already to everlasting punishment. And if Death, the great executioner, should come to us while we are in this state, we are lost for ever. This shows how fit we all are to engage in the business of which we are speaking.

But the help of God's Holy Spirit is necessary to fit us for entering upon this business. And can we all get this help? Read Luke xi. 11–13 for an answer. There Jesus tells us that our heavenly Father is more ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask than parents are to give bread to their children.

The merchandise of wisdom is a business, then, in which we are all fitted to engage. And we are not only all fitted, but all *invited* to engage in it: "Wisdom crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors: Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. Now, therefore, hearken unto me, O ye children;

for blessed are they that keep my ways." Yes, we all have sins enough to fit us to begin the merchandise of wisdom; and God has grace enough to enable us all to go on with it, when it is begun. There is room for us all here. There is room in the Church for us to enter; there is room in the world for us to trade in wisdom's treasures; and there is room in heaven, my dear children, for us all to enjoy the everlasting gains of this heavenly merchandise.

We have considered *four* good reasons why the merchandise of wisdom is better than any other: It is a business we can *begin sooner;* it is *easier to carry it on;* there is *more profit* in it; and there is *more room* for it. These are all sound, substantial, and satisfactory reasons. Then let me entreat you all to begin this business without delay. Resolve, by God's help, that you will set up at once to be wisdom's merchants. It will not interfere with any other lawful and honest business or pursuit that you may have to engage in. On the contrary, it will help you in whatever else you do. Jesus says, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."


CROOKED THINGS STRAIGHTENED.

VII.

The Crooked Things Straightened.

"That which is crooked cannot be made straight."
ECCLES. i. 15.

THIS does not mean that no crooked thing can ever be straightened; for we all know very well that this is not true. It is easy enough to straighten *some* crooked things. Take, for instance, a piece of paper. I can take it in my hand, and squeeze and crumple it all up till there is not one straight piece in it as big as your little finger; and then I can spread it out on the table, and smooth it down, and make it just as straight again as ever it was. Or take a piece of dough, or a bit of clay. I can roll it out, and twist it round, till it is as crooked as a ram's horn. Now, if I put it into the oven and bake it while it is in this state, why, then our text will apply to it, and "that which is crooked cannot be made straight." But before it gets thus hardened, I can take and roll it out between the palms of my hands, and make it as smooth and straight as I want it to be. And just so if I take a tender willow-twig, I can wind it round

my finger like a thread; then I can unwind it again, and it will come out as straight as ever. But let that willow-twig remain crooked while it is growing, for five or ten years, and then you may write on it the words of our text; for "that which is crooked cannot be made straight." Now, God compares himself in the Bible to a potter, and his people to clay. He compares himself also to a gardener, and his people to plants or trees which he has planted. And as it is true of clay and of trees, that if you begin at the right time, and take proper pains, you can straighten what is crooked in them, so it is true of boys and girls. And as it is true of clay and trees, that if you let the one get baked or the other grow old while it is crooked, you cannot straighten it, just so it is true of boys and girls. How very important then it is for us to know what there is crooked about ourselves, and how we may get it straightened! I have chosen this text on purpose to help you to understand this matter. And there are *four* things which I wish especially to show you, while talking about these words of Solomon.

The *first* thing I wish to show is, *that we are all born with crooked hearts.*

What sort of hearts are we born with? Crooked hearts. But some of you may be ready to ask, "Well, what sort of a heart is a crooked heart?" Why, a crooked heart is a wicked or sinful heart. I say, then, we are all born with sinful or wicked hearts. Now, a great many people don't believe this; but it is just as true as that two and two make

four. I can prove this to you, my dear children, in two ways. I can prove it *from the Bible*, and then I can prove it *without the Bible.*

Now, I might point you to a good many places in the Bible which prove that we are born with sinful hearts; but I will only point you to two. In the fifty-first psalm and fifth verse David tells us that he was born a sinner. But David was born just as you and I and all of us were. His heart or nature was just the same at his birth as ours is. And if some of you think that perhaps David was born with a heart more crooked or sinful than other people, and that perhaps some children are born with a heart that is not at all sinful, I can show you, from another passage of Scripture, that this is not the case. The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians, second chapter and third verse, that "we are *all by nature* the children of wrath." Now, when he tells us here what we are "*by nature*" he means what we are at the time we are born. And when he says we are "the children of wrath," he means that we are born children with whom God is angry. But God is never angry with people for anything but for sin. And if God is angry with us when we are born, then it is very certain that we must be born sinners. This is enough, then, to prove from the Bible that we are all born with crooked, sinful hearts.

But then I said we can prove this *without the Bible;* and so we can.

The way in which children grow up proves it. All children grow up to be bad, if they are left to

themselves. Since the world began there never was a child, born and left to grow up as it pleased, that grew up to love and serve God. Now this proves something or other, and it is very easy to tell what it proves. If you go into a garden and see the sweet-smelling mignonette growing around one of the beds, what kind of seed, do you know, must have been sowed there? Mignonette seed. If you pluck a sweet juicy apple from a tree, what sort of a tree must it be from which you plucked it? A sweet-apple tree. If you pluck an apple from another tree, and find it to be a sour crab-apple, what kind of a tree must that be on which it grew? A crab-apple tree. How do you know this? By its fruit. Do apples or peaches ever grow on thorn-bushes? No. If the berries that grow upon a certain bush, or the fruit on a certain tree, are always poisonous, what sort of a bush or tree must that be? Poisonous. Now, our actions may be compared to fruit, and our hearts to the trees on which they grow. And if we find that, in all countries and in all ages, children left to themselves grow up only to bear evil fruit,—the fruit of opposition to God's law and hatred to God's character,—what must their hearts be, which bring forth these wicked fruits? They must be wicked hearts. For as the tree is known by its fruit, so is the heart known by the actions which it leads men to perform.—And in this way we can prove, both from the Bible and without the Bible, that we are all born with crooked or sinful hearts.

This is the first of the four things I wish to show you, while talking about our text.

And now we come to the *second* of these things. It is this :—*that, like the tree or the clay, our hearts are having something done to them which will make it much harder to straighten what is crooked in them.*

With the tree, it is its growth that will make its crookedness hard to straighten. With the clay, it is the baking or burning of it. With ourselves, it is the exercising or practising of what is sinful in our hearts, that will make it hard to straighten them. There is a kind of education for our hearts to go through. When we are acquiring learning of any kind, we call it getting an education. And the places where we learn things we call schools. And there are a great many different kinds of schools. There are the common schools, where we learn the things necessary to make us useful in life; and there are medical schools, where young men go to learn to become doctors; and law schools, where they learn to become lawyers; and divinity schools, where they learn to become ministers. And then the shops in which the mechanics learn their trades are a kind of school. The carpenter's shop is a school to him; and so the blacksmith's shop and the tailor's shop are schools. Wherever we learn to think, or say, or do anything, that is a school to us. Now, a great many children never go to school anywhere but on the playground and at the corners of the streets. There they learn to do wicked things. All that is crooked

in their hearts becomes fixed in crookedness. There the crooked parts of their nature get educated. There the little twigs of evil in them grow into great strong limbs, that nobody can bend. There the clay of their nature gets baked and hardened before it is straightened. The habits we form and the characters we acquire while we are young will remain with us when we grow up to be men and women. And so the habits and characters we form in this world will remain with us after death, in the world which we must enter then. This world is God's school. All the time spent in it is time spent at school. We are getting educated here for eternity. And when we form a wrong habit of thinking, or feeling, or acting, we are hardening a crooked point and fastening it upon our characters. And when we go out of the school of life,—that is, when we come to die and go into eternity,—then it will be true that "that which is crooked cannot be made straight." If the potter is making a pitcher, and finds that the handle or side of it has got out of shape and crooked, he can very easily alter it and make it straight again, if he only finds it out *before* it has been put into the oven and baked. But if he does not see it till *after* it comes out of the oven, then there is no help for it. However strangely out of shape it may be, it must remain so. Then he knows that "that which is crooked cannot be made straight." And so it is with the gardener and his trees. While they are young and tender it is very easy to straighten them when they get crooked; but

let them only *grow* crooked, and then he can do nothing with them.

And now we come to the *third* thing we wish to speak of in connection with our text; and that is, *the importance of keeping straight while we are getting educated.*

Did you ever know a person who had charge of a nursery of young trees? If you did, you might learn some very useful lessons from his example. The great object with him is to keep his trees in proper shape while they are growing. He walks about among them very often, and watches them closely. If he sees one getting crooked, he tries to straighten it. If merely bending it with his hands will not keep it straight, then he puts a stake in the ground and ties the young tree to it, so as to keep it in a right position all the time it is growing. And if the gardener thinks it worth his while to take so much care and pains with the education of a mere *tree*, which, after all, will only last for a few years, how much more careful should we be in educating our *souls*, which are to live for ever and ever!

There is only one other point I would speak upon in connection with our present text, and that is this:—*How can we get straight, and keep straight, in our journey through life?*

Now how are we to *get* straight? This is the most important question we can ever have to think about. Remember we are not straight to begin with. Recollect that the first of our four points was, to show that we are all born with crooked or sinful hearts.

They must be *made* straight before they can be *kept* straight. How then can a crooked, sinful heart, be made straight or good? We must take it to Jesus, and pray him to take away all that is wicked in it. Jesus is able to do this. But no one else besides him can do it for us. When David, the King of Israel, was mourning over his own heart because it was so sinful, this was just what he did to get a new heart. He kneeled down and prayed most earnestly to his Saviour to do for him this very thing that we are now speaking of. Would you like to know what he said in his prayer? You can read it all in the fifty-first psalm. It is a beautiful prayer, and one which we may use for ourselves. In the tenth verse of that psalm he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." That is the way, and the only way in the world, to get a crooked heart made straight. Jesus is just as willing to hear such a prayer from a little child now as he was to hear it from King David three thousand years ago, if it is offered as earnestly as David offered it. And he is just as able to answer it now as he was then. He is called *Jesus* for this very reason, because he saves his people from their sins. And he does this by making new hearts in them.

In one of the hymns we sometimes sing is this verse:—

> "Can aught beneath a power divine
> The stubborn will subdue?
> 'Tis thine, Almighty Saviour, thine,
> To form the heart anew."

This, then, is the way to get a crooked heart made straight: It is to take it to Jesus in prayer, and ask him to do it for you. Every one of us may do this for himself. Every child who feels his heart to be crooked may bring it to Jesus to be made new, just as well as the greatest king or the most learned minister on earth. Jesus said, "Suffer *little children* to come unto me." And there is nothing for which he so loves to have them come to him, as to bring their crooked hearts to get them straightened.

But when our hearts are *made* straight, *how are we to* KEEP *them straight?* Two things are necessary for this:—*we must get Jesus to help us, and we must help ourselves.* We must get Jesus to help us. Without his help we can do nothing at all in this matter. In this work of cultivating our hearts God deals with us just as he does with the farmer in cultivating his fields. The farmer must have God's help, and he must help himself, or he will never succeed in raising his crops. He may plough his fields, and sow his seed; but if there were no sun to shine on it, and no rain to descend, or no dew to distil upon it, do you suppose that the seed would ever spring up and grow? Never in the world. Now this is the way in which God helps the farmer. But the farmer must help himself, by preparing the ground, and putting in the seed at the right time, and in the right way. And if he neglect to do this, the sun may shine ever so brightly, and the rain may pour down ever so plenteously, but will there be any harvest yielded? Of course not. And just

so it is in the work of straightening crooked hearts. We must have God to help us, and we must help ourselves. But how will God help us here? By giving us his grace and his Holy Spirit. These are just the kind of help to us, in trying to keep our hearts straight, that the sun and rain are to the farmer in making his crops grow. But how are we to get this help from God? By earnest prayer. God promises in his blessed word to give his grace and his Spirit, and all that his people need, in answer to their prayers. He says, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Jesus tells us that his Father is more ready to give these good things to them that ask than parents are to give bread to their children. If you want to keep your hearts straight, then, you must go to Jesus whenever you find anything crooked in them, and beg him to take it away. Yet he will not help us unless we help ourselves; and all our efforts will do no good unless we have his help. But if we have both, our work will be easy and pleasant, and effectual too. You remember the fable of the waggoner whose team was fixed in the mire. He felt that he never could get it out of himself; so he fell down on his knees, and began to call on his god to help him. But he was told to get up, and put his shoulder to the wheel, and whip his horses, and then call for help from heaven, and it should be granted to him. There is a great deal of truth in this fable. God only helps those who help themselves. He does so in reference to the body and the things of this world; and he does just the same in reference to the soul

and the things of the world to come. Begin at once, then, my dear children, to find out all that is crooked in your hearts; and as fast as you find these crooked things out, take them to Jesus, and pray him to make them straight. And when they *are made* straight, seek his help, and help yourselves, to *keep* them straight. This is the Bible way of straightening crooked hearts. This is the way, the only way, of reaching heaven—that glorious, happy place, where nothing crooked ever enters. May God help us all to walk in this good way now, and may he bring us safe to that blessed place at last, for Jesus' sake! Amen.


THE WONDERFUL LAMP.

VIII.

The Wonderful Lamp.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet."—Ps. cxix. 105.

THE Psalm in which these words are found is the longest chapter in the Bible. It is divided into twenty-two parts, and contains one hundred and seventy-six verses. The shortest chapter in the Bible is the next but one before this—namely, the 117th Psalm. It contains only two verses. Now it is worth remembering that the longest and the shortest chapters in the Bible are found so close together. The 119th Psalm is remarkable not only for its length, but for other things also. It is all written about the Bible. The great object of it is to show what a wonderful and excellent book the Bible is. And this Psalm is remarkable, also, for the many different names it applies to the Bible. There are no fewer than *ten* different words made use of in this Psalm to signify the Bible. These are—*law*, *commandments*, *testimonies*, *statutes*, *judgments*, *word*, *precepts*, *ordinances*, *way*, *truth*. And out of all these one hundred and seventy-six verses there is only one

which does not contain one or other of these names of the Bible. Read over this Psalm, verse by verse, and see if you can find more than one verse in which some one of these ten names of the Bible does not occur. Every one of these hundred and seventy-six verses, except the hundred and twenty-second, has something to say about the Bible.

Now, our text is the hundred and fifth verse of this psalm. And which of these ten names of the Bible is found here? "Thy *word*." And what does it say of this word? "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." Here the Bible is compared to a lamp. The object of a lamp is to give light; and light is needed by those who are in darkness. And God tells us that this is exactly our condition in this world. He says that "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." This does not refer to the outward or natural world which we see with our bodily eyes. No; for there we have the glorious sun to give light by day, and the moon and stars, in all their beauty, to give light by night. But it refers to the inward or spiritual world—to the state in which our souls are. In the Bible darkness means ignorance; and when it speaks of the people of the world as being in darkness, it means that they are in ignorance respecting God, and heaven, and the things which belong to salvation. And because the Bible gives us all the light we have on these matters, it is called "a lamp,"—"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." God has hung out this blessed lamp in a dark dark sky, and

its heavenly light shines calmly and sweetly down on multitudes of poor wretched wanderers, who are groping their way amidst all the horrors of midnight gloom and darkness. And while we are thinking on this subject, there are two questions that it will be well for us to consider.

The first is, What sort of a lamp is the Bible?

The second is, What should those who have this lamp do with it?

Now, there is one word which contains all that need be said in answer to the question, What sort of a lamp is the Bible? and this is the word *wonderful.* The Bible is a wonderful lamp. Almost everybody has heard the Arabian story of Aladdin's wonderful lamp. The story says that this lamp was given to Aladdin by a magician. When the owner of this lamp wanted anything, all he had to do was just to rub it, and instantly the thing that he wanted would be ready for him. Plenty of money, splendid houses, beautiful carriages and horses, or anything else, could be had in a moment by a simple rub upon the lamp! This *was* wonderful indeed; but I need not tell you there is not a word of truth in it. There never was such a lamp. And even if there had been, the Bible is more wonderful still than that. I would rather have the Bible, and the happiness which it brings, than ten thousand such lamps as the Arabian story tells of, although every word said of them were true. Why, one of the very worst things that could possibly happen to any of us would be to have our

own way, and be able to get everything that we desired. We should make ourselves perfectly miserable, and ruin ourselves in a short time. The blessed thing about the Bible is, that it promises only those things which are really good for us; and these it not only *promises*, but *secures* to us. It is a wonderful lamp. But how is it so? What is there about this lamp that makes it wonderful? There are *three* things about it which are wonderful. It is *wonderful for the* LIGHT *it sheds; wonderful for the* COMFORT *it yields; and wonderful for the* SAFETY *it affords.*

The Bible is a lamp that sheds *wonderful* LIGHT. And the light which shines from this lamp is wonderful in several respects.

It is wonderful for *the length of time during which it has been shining.* Most lamps only burn for a few hours at a time, and then go out. But this lamp has been shining for almost six thousand years. It was lighted in the garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, he brought that darkness on the world of which we have before spoken. The first promise which God gave him about the Saviour who was afterwards to come, was like kindling one little thread in the wick of this lamp. And then, as other parts of the Bible were written, the lamp burned brighter and brighter, till Jesus came and the New Testament was finished. And now for nearly two thousand years this lamp has been fully lighted, and burning all the time. It is a wonderful lamp, when you think

of the length of time during which it has been shining.

It is wonderful also *for the distance to which it shines.* Most lamps, you know, cannot shine very far. If you want to see clearly by a lamp, you must go very close to it. You can see its light, indeed, for hundreds of yards; and if it is lifted up very high, it may be seen even at the distance of several miles. The lamps on some light-houses can be seen so far off as twenty or twenty-five miles. Yet even this is a very trifling distance. The Bible —God's wonderful lamp—shines all the way from heaven to earth. We think it wonderful to have the light of the sun come to us from a distance of ninety-five millions of miles; and so it is. But the light of this lamp shines further still. Nobody knows how far it is to heaven. But though we cannot measure the distance, yet, in the light of this lamp, we can see into heaven. It shines so clearly, that when we look steadily in its light, the pearly gates, and golden streets, and crystal streams of heaven may be distinctly seen. And not only from heaven to earth does this lamp shine, but from one end of the earth to the other its light is reaching. It is shining now across the widest oceans, and over the highest mountains, and into the darkest corners of the earth. Oh, it is a wonderful lamp, *for the distance to which it shines!*

And then it is wonderful also *for the power with which it shines.* Some lamps burn so feebly that the least puff of wind will blow them out. If you

want to carry one of them about, you must put your hand before it, and go very carefully, or you will be left in the dark. And then, again, if the air is not pure, you often find that lamps cannot burn. Sometimes when people are going down into wells, or other deep places where the air has become impure, the lamps they carry with them go out in a moment. But it is very different with God's wonderful lamp. This shines with so much power that no tempest that ever beat, no wind that ever blew, has been able to put it out. Satan and wicked men hate this lamp, and have tried all they could to stop its shining, but in vain. They have raised storms of fierce persecution, and fire and sword, and chains and dungeons, have been employed, to stop men from reading and circulating the Bible; but they have never succeeded. They have never been able to put out this wonderful lamp, or stop it from shining. And as no wind is strong enough to blow it out, so no atmosphere is impure enough to put it out. It has been carried down into the darkest mines, the deepest pits, the foulest dens on the earth, and it has continued shining there, with a clear, steady light, till the darkness was all dispelled and the impurity all removed.

And when we think of all these things,—of *the length of time* during which it has been shining, of *the distance* through which, and *the power* with which it shines,—we see how truly it may be called a wonderful lamp. It is wonderful *for the light which it sheds.*

But it is wonderful also, *for the* COMFORT *which it yields.* This lamp yields comfort to people *under the trials of life*, and it yields comfort *in the prospect of death.* There are trials numerous and great to be passed through in life. Whether we are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, we shall find trials which must be passed through; and there is nothing like the Bible—God's wonderful lamp—to give comfort under them. You know there is a hymn which says,—

> " 'Tis religion that can give
> Sweetest pleasure while we live;
> 'Tis religion must supply
> Solid comfort when we die."

Look at Daniel. He was a great man, a wise man, an honourable man. Next to the king, he held the highest position in a nation that was then the mightiest on the face of the earth. But wicked men formed a plot against him. He was falsely accused of being unfaithful to his king and country. He was dragged, as it were, in an instant from his home and his honours. He was hurried away, as it was supposed, to a cruel and disgraceful death. The dark den of hungry lions was opened, and he was thrust into it. But, fierce as those untamed beasts were, they acted with the gentleness of lambs to him. Their mouths were closed, their violence was restrained, by an unseen but mighty power, and they hurt him not. Still, Daniel's position was one of great trial. But he had God's word to think of. In the darkness of that dreadful den

this wonderful lamp was shining in upon Daniel's mind, and he found comfort from it.

Or look at Paul. God had sent him to preach the gospel. He was going about telling everybody, as he had opportunity, what a glorious Saviour Jesus is, and what great blessings he bestows on all who love and fear him. But there was a wicked ruler who did not wish Paul to preach about Jesus. He told him to stop his preaching. Paul would not do this. Then the ruler sent an officer to take him. He ordered him to be beaten with rods on his bare back till the flesh was torn and mangled, and the blood flowed down in streams from the cruel wounds. Then he was loaded with chains and thrust into a wretched dungeon. Oh, what a trial that was! And how did he bear it? Did he pass the night in crying and groaning over his hard lot? No, indeed. He had God's wonderful lamp with him, and it shone so brightly into his heart, and made him so happy, that he forgot his mangled bleeding back; and, as if he had been in a palace instead of a prison, he sang psalms and hymns, in the gladness of his heart, till all the prisoners heard him.

But here is a case from our own times. There is an old man who is a cripple. He lives alone in a poor miserable hovel. It is so old and shattered that the wintry winds sweep freely through it. The roof is so out of repair that the melting snows and drenching rains come dripping down in every part except one little corner, which is occupied by the

poor cripple's bed of straw. We can hardly think of any situation more wretched and uncomfortable than this. Yet that poor cripple is a real Christian. He loves Jesus, and has a hope of heaven. Would you like to know how he feels in that lonely and cheerless hut? Well, a Christian friend and neighbour is going in to make a morning call. It is a raw, cold, December day. The visitor opens the door, and says to the poor sufferer, "Well, John, how do you do this morning?" "Oh, sir," he replies, "I am sitting under His shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." He meant to say by this, that he felt the presence of his Saviour, and that this gave him peace and joy amidst all his poverty and pain. God's wonderful lamp was shining in that lowly hovel, and the poor sufferer living there was comforted by it under the trials of life.

But we need comfort *in the prospect of death*, as well as under the trials of life; and this wonderful lamp can give it to us here also. It is a solemn thing to die! To bid farewell to all the familiar scenes of earth; to be separated from all the dear friends we have known and loved here; to lie down in the silent grave, and moulder into dust; to enter upon the awful and untried scenes of the eternal world; to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and have our condition fixed in happiness or misery for everlasting ages;—oh, there is something unspeakably solemn in all this! Who can think of it, and not feel his spirit awed within him? Ah! we need

comfort in the prospect of death, more than we can possibly need it at any other time. And we *must* have it too, or we shall be badly off indeed. Yet there is nothing that can give us real, substantial, satisfying comfort except the Bible.

This wonderful lamp was lighted on purpose that it might shine on the darkness of the grave. When it *does* shine, there is comfort in the prospect of death; when it does not shine, there is none. Here is a striking illustration of this:—Two Hindoos are dying. One of them is still a heathen; he is without this lamp. The other is a Christian; he has it. Now mark the difference between them. The heathen Hindoo feels that death is approaching fast. He sends for the Brahmin, his priest, and asks him with great eagerness, "What will become of me when I die?"

"At your death," said the Brahmin, "your spirit will enter the body of some reptile, and live there a long period of time."

"And when that is over, what will become of me?" asked the dying man again.

"Then," said the Brahmin, "you will pass into the body of some animal for another long period."

"And what then?" asked the poor man.

The Brahmin led him through a long series of changes, reaching over some thousands of years. At every step in the progress he was met by the earnest inquiry of the dying man: "And what then?" He felt that thousands of years were as nothing to eternity. The Brahmin got to the end of all his changes, and still the cry met him:

"*What then?*" But he could not answer it. He had nothing more to say; and the poor dying heathen, without hope or comfort, was compelled to take a leap in the dark, and find out the answer to his question in his own sad experience. God's wonderful lamp had never shone upon him, to give him comfort in the prospect of death, and therefore he could find none.

But another Hindoo is about to die. He is a young man connected with the mission school. There he has learned to read the Bible, and it has taught him the way of salvation. He feels that his last hour has come. He calls one of his friends to his bedside, and, with a countenance beaming with peace and joy, he exclaims: "Sing, brother, sing!"

"What shall I sing?" asks his companion.

"Sing of salvation through the blood of Jesus. Sing, 'Thanks be to him who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ;'" and then he sank back upon his couch and died. He *had* this wonderful lamp. It had been shining in upon his soul; and its clear shining gave him comfort in the prospect of death.

But this lamp is wonderful *for the* SAFETY *which it affords.* Persons who have to go into coal mines are exposed to many dangers. One of these arises from a particular kind of gas which is sometimes found there, and which, the very moment it comes in contact with the flame of a lamp or candle, explodes like gunpowder, burning and destroying all persons within its reach. Hundreds

of lives have been lost in this way. Some years ago, a wise and good man, whose name was Sir Humphrey Davy, invented a lamp for the purpose of guarding against the danger of explosion from this gas. It has fine wire gauze arranged round the flame of the lamp, in such a way that it gives notice to the miners of the presence of this dangerous gas, and at the same time keeps the flame of the lamp from touching it, till they escape from the danger. It is called Davy's safety-lamp, and has proved a great comfort and blessing to miners. It has saved hundreds of lives.

Now, this world is like a great coal mine, and all its inhabitants are like miners. The sins that abound here are like this dangerous gas; and when they come in contact with our evil passions, violent explosions are often produced, and great damage is done. We need a safety-lamp to show us where the dangers lie and help us to escape from them. And just such a lamp we have. The Bible is a safety-lamp which God has provided for this very purpose. If we carry it with us, as we move about in this great mine, and use it carefully, it will guide us to safety. It will always warn us when danger is nigh, and show us how we may escape it. This is exactly what our text means when it says: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." It is a wonderful lamp. Those who have been guided by it to the true Refuge are said to be "under the shadow of God's wings;" and "in the hollow of his hand." What a position of safety

this is! This was the position which David occupied when he said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid!" He knew that an eye which never slumbers was watching over him, and that an arm which never wearies was stretched out for his defence. And this is as true of us as it was of David, if we are walking by the light of this wonderful lamp. Then the words spoken in Ps. cxxi. 5–8 refer to us, and show the safety we enjoy: "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore."

And when we think of the *light* which this lamp sheds, of the *comfort* which it yields, and of the *safety* which it affords, we see how truly it may be called a wonderful lamp. This answers our first question: What sort of a lamp is the Bible?

The second question can receive a much shorter answer. This question is: *What should those who have this lamp do with it?* They should do two things with it: *They should use it themselves*, and *they should send it to others.*

We should use this lamp ourselves. This is what it is given to us for. We all have need to use it. It is shining about us, and into our hearts, on purpose that we may see the greatness of our sins,

and then come to Jesus to get rid of them. This wonderful lamp can do us no good unless it shows us the way to Jesus, that we may learn to love and serve him. We may as well be without it—nay, we had much better be without it, than fail to make a right use of it. *To neglect to use this lamp aright is one of the greatest sins we can commit.* Many shall be condemned to everlasting destruction for this very thing. Jesus said, when he was on earth: "This is the condemnation," (that means, this is the thing for which men will be condemned,) "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Then let us, my dear children, use this lamp to find out the way to heaven; and when we see that way let us strive to walk in it. This is the right use to make of this lamp for ourselves.

But then we must send it to others, as well as make a right use of it ourselves. There was a fisherman, once, whose cottage was situated on a high and rock-bound coast. Near it was a snug cove, with a smooth, sandy beech, where he was accustomed to draw up his little boat, and from which he went forth, day by day, to engage in his toilsome occupation on the waters of the stormy sea. On one occasion he went out as usual to spend the day in fishing. He toiled on with encouraging success till towards the close of the day, when, looking up to the sky, he saw signs of an approaching storm. Immediately he hauled up

his lines, resolving, if possible to reach his home before the gathering tempest should burst upon him. But he had a long distance to go, and the wind was a-head, and the sea was rough, and the storm came on fast, and the day was almost gone. Yet, with a brave and trusting heart, he turned the bow of his boat in the right direction, and began to row towards home. Right manfully did he bend upon his oars, and his boat flew rapidly over the white-capped billows. But darker and darker grew the heavens above him, and soon all trace of daylight had disappeared. The outline of the coast had faded from his view, and he could no longer see any of those well-known landmarks by which he was accustomed to direct his course. He went as near the coast as he could without being dashed against its jagged rocks, and then he rowed on till he was exhausted; but no sign of his cottage, or of the little cove near it could he discover. The storm raged fiercer, and the night grew darker. Hope died away within him, and death stared him in the face. He expected every moment that his frail boat would be swallowed up in the stormy waters. But just then a faint ray of light met his eye. It renewed his strength. He rowed on more heartily. Very soon he found that it proceeded from the window of his own little cottage! It guided him to the cove he was accustomed to enter. He drew his boat up safely on the sand, and, grateful for his own deliverance, before he went to bed that night he trimmed the

lamp, and filled it with oil, and set it in the window of his humble dwelling, that its friendly light might shine out upon the stormy sea, and perhaps guide some other tempest-tossed voyager to a place of safety. And as long as he lived he continued this practice. It was very proper that he should do this. He made a right use of the lamp himself, and then he tried to extend the benefit of it to others.

And this is just what we should do. We *have* God's wonderful lamp. It is shining all about our path. It shows us how we may sail over life's stormy sea so as to reach the haven of enduring rest and safety at last. But there are multitudes of our fellow-creatures who are tossed on this tempestuous sea without a single ray of light to guide their way. What is our duty? Should we not send this wonderful lamp to them? This is all they need. It is abundantly able to guide them to the only place where they can find safety. And when we present our offerings to the missionary cause, when we give our money to send the Bible to the benighted heathen, and when we pray to God to bless our offerings, then we are holding up this wonderful lamp, that those who are in darkness may see its light, and follow its guidance, and be happy for ever.

There are two things, my dear children, that you should earnestly pray for. One is, that God would give you grace to make a right use of this lamp yourselves; and the other is, that he would

help you to do all you can to send it to others. When Jesus was on earth he said to the people: "While ye have the light walk in the light, lest darkness come upon you." And he says the same to us. If we neglect to use this lamp properly ourselves, we commit a great sin, and expose ourselves to great danger. And so we do if we neglect to send it to others; for there is a passage of Scripture which says: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

May God enable us "both to perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also give us grace faithfully to fulfil the same," for Jesus' sake. Amen.


THE CHILD'S FORTUNE TOLD.

IX.

The Child's Fortune Told.

"Even a child may be known by his doings."—PROV. xx. 11.

THE wise man tells us here that "even a child may be known by his doings."

Now there are *two* questions to be considered in connection with this text.

The first is, What is meant by "doings" here?

The second is, What may be "known" of a child in this way?

Now, I suppose, when Solomon used the word "doings" here, in reference to a child, he meant to speak of three things,—namely, *the tempers he indulges; the habits he forms;* and *the company he keeps.*

The *tempers* indulged by every young person constitute part of those *doings* by which he may be known. We all know what *temper* means. It is a word we use to express the kind of feelings we have towards those who are about us. And our tempers have very much to do with making up our characters. Sometimes we look at persons, or things, through something which makes them appear very different from what they really are. If I look at

you through a piece of green glass, you *appear* to be green; and if I look at you through a red piece, you will look red. But this does not prove that you *are* green, or red, does it? Of course not. It only proves that I am looking at you, and judging of you, in a wrong way. But when we look at persons, and judge of them by the tempers they display, we are likely to see their true characters. We are all just what our tempers make us. Now, there is as much difference in the tempers of children as there is in the colour of their hair or their eyes, or in the complexion of their countenance.

Some children have *cross* tempers. If you speak to them, you are sure to get some sharp, surly answer. They snap and snarl like some ill-natured dog, whose delight is to be as ugly as he can. If you ask them to do the smallest favour, you are sure to be refused, and that, too, in a rough, ungracious manner.

Other children have *kind* tempers. They always have something pleasant to say, when they are spoken to. They are ready to do everything in their power to accommodate others. They are always striving to make those about them comfortable. They are like little sunbeams, and diffuse a cheerful, happy light, wherever they go.

Some children have *fretful* tempers. They are constantly finding fault with something or other. They fret about the weather. It is either too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry. They fret about their clothes. Imagine one of these fretters getting

dressed. Just listen to him a moment. He takes up his coat. "Such a coat!" he murmurs. "Who ever saw anything like it? About half a mile too big!" *Observe, fretters never tell the truth.* And so he goes on with everything he takes up. His stockings are too thin, and his shoes too thick. One thing is too long, and another too short. One thing is too tight, and another too loose. These children fret about their *food* too, as well as their clothes. It is either done too much or not done enough. It is either too coarse or too fine, or too something or other that must be complained of.

Other children, again, have *patient* tempers,—the very opposite of these. They never fret about the weather; because they feel that God, who sends it, knows better than they do what kind to send, and what *he* sends must be best. They never fret about their clothes; because they know that hundreds of people are wearing clothes much worse than theirs. And they never fret about their food; because they know that, however bad it may be, it would be a great deal worse to have none.

There were two gardeners, once, whose crops of pease had been killed by a frost. One of them fretted and grumbled, and said nobody was so unfortunate as he was. Visiting his neighbour, some time after, he called out in astonishment, "What a fine crop of pease! What are these?"

"These are what I sowed while you were fretting," said the other.

"Why, don't you sometimes fret?"

"Yes; but I put it off till I have repaired the mischief."

"But then you have no need to fret at all."

"That's very true," said the other; "and that's just the reason why I put it off."

Some children have *selfish* tempers. They always think of themselves first, and help themselves to the best of everything. A little girl of this kind, whose name was Mary, was out visiting once with her mother. She had a little brother called Charlie, who was left at home. The lady at whose house they were visiting gave Mary two peaches. One of them was a nice, plump, mellow, juicy peach, freshly gathered from the tree. The other was a poor-looking one, with a great spot on the side, showing that it was half-spoiled. Mary began at once, very eagerly, to eat the ripe peach. Presently her mother said to her, "Mary, my child, are you not going to keep one for Charlie?" "Oh, yes, mamma," said Mary; "I am keeping *the little one for Charlie!*" And people who indulge this selfish feeling while they are young, will find it remain with them when they grow up. There is one place in the Bible in which God blames the Jews because they kept the best of their lambs and sheep in their flocks, and offered him "the lame and blind." The people who would do this when they are grown up, are the very ones who when young would "keep the little one for Charlie." And these sort of people are to be found among us as well as among the Jews.

KING

"Yes; but I put it off till I have repented of my mischief."

"But then you have no need to fret at all."

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Some children have *selfish* tempers. They always think of themselves [illegible] help themselves to the best of everything. [illegible] this kind, whose name was [illegible] once with her mother. She had a [illegible] called Charlie, who was left at home [illegible] lady at whose house they were visiting [illegible] two peaches. One of them was a nice, large, yellow, juicy peach, [illegible] The other was a poor [illegible] on the side, [illegible] spotted. Mary began at once, [illegible] each. Presently her mamma [illegible] each, "Mary, are you not going to [illegible] yes, mamma," said Mary, [illegible] *one for Charlie!*" Are [illegible] selfish feeling while they [illegible] remain with them when [illegible] one place in the Bible [illegible] God [illegible] Jews because they kept [illegible] of their lambs and sheep in their flocks, and [illegible] "lame and blind." The people who would do this when they are grown up, are the very ones who when young would "keep the little one for Charlie." And these sort of people are to be found among us as well as among the Jews.

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Other children have *generous* tempers. They always like to share what they have with others. If they have a cake, or pie, or something very nice to eat, they do not sneak away into a corner and eat it all themselves; they love to go among their brothers and sisters, or companions, and share it with them. They feel happier for it, and enjoy what they have in this way much more than if they kept it all for themselves. It is said of Alfred, a great and good king of England, that, during the time in which he was driven by the Danes from his throne and was wandering in disguise and poverty, he was reduced so low that a part of a loaf of bread was all his supply. While in this state, a hungry beggar approached him, and implored relief. The generous monarch opened his wallet, and shared freely his last morsel with one of the humblest of his subjects. And he who could act thus, as a man, must have been accustomed to act so when a child. Selfish feelings indulged are part of the "doings" of a child by which he may be known.

But again, *by the habits he forms*, as well as by the tempers he indulges, a child may be known. By habits we mean the ways in which we are accustomed to do things. Somebody once said that "man is a bundle of habits." And this is just as true of boys and girls as it is of men and women. Indeed it is while we are young that we tie up this bundle. And, as it is a bundle we carry with us all our lives, we should be very careful what we put into it.

Some children form *idle* habits. They love to lie in bed late in the morning. It is troublesome to waken them, and get them up; and when they are up, it is difficult to get them to work, or study, or do anything but play or loiter about. Such children remind one very much of the farmer's horse. This horse, the farmer said, had only two faults. One was, that he was very hard to catch. The other was, that when he was caught he wasn't good for anything.

Other children have *industrious* habits. They rise early, they study hard, and get their lessons well. If they are set to work, they do it cheerfully; they are not easily tired, but keep on till the work is done. People with these habits always succeed in life. There is no difficulty which industry has not conquered. One day a load of coal was thrown down before the door of a cellar, in which a poor family lived. A little girl went out with quite a small shovel, and began to shovel it up. "My little child," said a gentleman who was passing, "you can't get all that coal in with your small shovel." "Oh, yes, I can, sir," said the little girl, "*if I only work long enough.*"

There was a poor boy, once, who resolved to get an education. He had to work hard all day, and when evening came he had no place to read in, and no light to read by; so he used to take his book, and go into the street, and stand by some shop window, and study in the light that shone from it. And sometimes, when the stores were closed before he got through, he would climb up a

lamp-post, and hold on with one hand, while he held his book with the other. It is not surprising that he became a man who was distinguished for his learning.

Some children form *careless* habits. They never put things in their proper places, but lay them down and leave them just where they may happen to be. Then, when they want them, they can't tell where to find them. Suppose you were visiting in a family where several children live who have formed careless habits. The morning hour for going to school is come. There is a great noise and confusion. You go to your room door to find out what is the matter, and you hear sounds like these: "Where's my hat?" "Where's my bonnet?" "Who's taken my books?" "Somebody's always taking my things. I do wish people would mind their own business, and let my things alone!" Poor children! Who has been taking their things, and teasing them so? Nobody at all. Their things are just where they left them, and they find them presently,—one in the parlour, another in the dining-room, and another in the kitchen. Now, there is no telling, my dear children, how much evil sometimes results from the formation of careless habits. Several years ago a dreadful explosion of gunpowder took place. Three large waggons were carrying powder in kegs from the mills to a powder magazine. As they were passing the outskirts of a city, and while just opposite a beautiful mansion, there was a flash—a tremendous

noise—and all was over. In an instant, the waggons, the horses, the drivers, and all about them, were blown to atoms! Nobody ever could tell exactly how it took place. But, if the truth were known, I daresay it would be found that an act of carelessness was the cause of it. Suppose, for instance, that a cooper of careless habits had made one of the kegs. While making the keg, he took up a stave which had a little hole in it. He was too careless to notice it, or to mind it if it were noticed. He put that stave in the keg. The keg was taken to the mill, and filled with powder. The waggon is loaded. That keg is put in. The motion of the waggon shakes the powder through the hole. Presently a spark, either struck by the horse's shoe or coming from some other source, lights on the scattered grains, and the awful mischief is done. How many a calamity, equally terrible, has been caused by a single act of carelessness.

Other children form *careful* habits. They never waste anything. In regard to time, and money, and everything else, they remember our Saviour's words, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." They put things in their proper places, and always know where to find them. Their rule is: "A place for everything, and everything in its place." It is an excellent rule, and attention to it will work wonders. Those who form habits of this kind, when they grow up are almost sure to be rich and useful. Two gentlemen were once engaged in procuring subscriptions to the Bible Society. As

they passed by a fine large house, they heard the gentleman who lived there reproving the servants in the kitchen for extravagance, in throwing away the ends of candles and half-burned lamp-lighters.

"Well," said one of the collectors to the other, "it's not worth while to stop here; for a man who is so careful about the ends of his candles will hardly give anything for the Bible."

"It will do no harm to try," said the other.

They went in, and were agreeably surprised at receiving a very large subscription.

"Sir," said one of the collectors, "the amount of your subscription greatly surprises us. For when we heard you, a few moments ago, reproving your servants for not saving the ends of candles, we thought it hardly worth while to stop."

"Ah! gentlemen," said he, "it is by the habit of carefulness in little things that I am able to give largely to the Bible Society, and other good objects."

A young man once went into the city of Paris to seek a situation. He had letters of recommendation to a large banking establishment. He called on the gentleman who was at the head of it, full of hope and confidence that he should find employment. The gentleman heard what he had to say, and looked over his letters hastily, and then handed them back to him, saying, "We have nothing for you to do, sir." The young man felt his heart sink within him. He was ready to burst into tears. But there was no help for it. So he bowed and retired. But as we was passing in front of the

building, there was a pin lying on the pavement. He stopped, stooped down and picked it up, and then stuck it carefully into the sleeve of his coat. Now it happened that the gentleman with whom he had just been speaking was standing at a window, and saw what took place. In an instant the thought occurred to him, that the young man who had such habits of carefulness as to stop in such a moment of disappointment and pick up a pin, would make a useful business man. He sent immediately and called him back. He gave him an humble situation in the establishment. From that he rose, by degrees, till he became the principal partner in the concern, and eventually a man of immense wealth, and the chief banker in Paris. Here was the case of a young man who, through habits of carefulness, may be said to have *made his fortune by a pin.*

Some children form *dilatory* habits. They will do what they are told; but they never do it *promptly.* For example, Mary is a dilatory girl. If her mother says to her, "Mary, go up stairs and bring me the baby's blue frock from the closet;" "Yes, mamma," says Mary, "I'll go in a minute;" and then she will go on with her reading or play, and keep her mother waiting for a quarter of an hour. John is a dilatory boy. His father said to him one day, "John, I want you to take this letter to the post-office directly after dinner." "Yes, sir," said John. But after dinner he went to play for an hour or two. Then it was too late for the mail; and this was the cause of a very serious loss to his father. That boy will

be one of those who are always too late. When going on a journey, he will reach the wharf two or three minutes after the boat has started. He will learn to put off doing things at the right time when he is young, and the habit will remain with him when he grows up. He will learn to do this in little things, and then he will go on to do it in great things. And in this way multitudes lose their souls at last. When Elizabeth, a great and gifted but ambitious queen of England, was dying, she cried out, "An inch of time! Millions of money for an inch of time!" Poor woman! she was lying on a splendid bed; she had been used to have a new dress every day; she had ten thousand dresses in her wardrobe, and at her feet a kingdom on which the sun never sets;—but all was of no value then. She had lived for seventy years, but had put off preparation for eternity to the last. That which should have occupied her whole lifetime was crowded into a few moments; and, when it was too late, the wealth of her kingdom would have been given for "an inch of time!"

Other children form *prompt* habits. When they are told to do anything, they go and do it at once. If they are reading when called, they will lay the book down in a moment. If they are at play, they break off without any delay, and hasten to do what is required of them. And this habit is of great importance in order to success in life. General Washington was never known to fail in meeting an engagement, or even to be late at an engagement,

in all his life. This is a most valuable habit to form, and one which every person should acquire who desires to succeed in life.

And then the *company which he keeps* goes far to make up those "doings" of a child by which he may be known. The choice of companions is a very important thing. Few things have more to do with the formation of our character than the company we keep. You can generally tell what sort of a person any one is, by noticing what kind of company he chooses. There is a little animal called the chameleon, which is said to change its colour according to the light it is seen in, or the ground it is seen on. But we all have something of this quality. We soon grow like the persons we associate with; and this makes it important that we should be very careful who those persons are.

There was a gentleman, once, who was very particular about the company that his children kept. One day he had forbidden his daughter Susan and her brother to go with some acquaintances, whom they were very anxious to join in an excursion.

"Dear father," said Susan, "you must think us very childish, if you suppose we could not go into this company without being injured by it."

The father, in silence, took a dead coal from the grate and reached it to his daughter. "It will not burn you, my child," said he; "take it."

She did so, and, behold, her delicate white hand was soiled and blackened; and so, as it happened, was her white dress also. "We cannot be too careful

in handling coals," said Susan, with a little feeling of vexation.

"That is true," said her father; "for you see, my child, that coals, even when they do not burn, will surely *blacken.* And so it is with improper company."

These, then, are the things by which a child may be known. And thus we have the answer to our first question.

Now the other question is, *What may be known of a child by his doings?* This can be answered in much shorter time than the other. And, in answering it, we may say that you can tell a child's *fortune* by his doings! There are some wicked persons who pretend to be fortune-tellers, and to be able to find out, in various ways, all about what will happen to anybody for years to come. And many people are foolish enough to believe them. These people mean by *fortune*, the things which they suppose will happen to them, as if it were by chance. But there is no such thing as fortune in *this* sense. Our word "fortune" comes from the name of the idols that used to be worshipped by the Romans. This idol was called Fortuna, and was represented as a female, blindfolded, and holding a horn of plenty, out of which she scattered blessings among the people at random, without any knowledge or discrimination. Now we all know, my dear children, that this is a heathen idea. There is no such person or thing as Fortune, in this sense. And it is just as well to avoid the use of the word, or at least

avoid attaching any such idea to it. The blessings we receive are not given to us by blind chance. The Bible tells us that "every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Again, it tells us that it is God who gives us "life and breath, and *all* things." But God does not bestow his blessings blindfold. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He knows what he gives, and he knows to whom he gives it. And he gives the best things he has to those who love him most. I do not mean by this that he gives the most money, or the largest proportion of the good things of this life, to those who love him, O no; for these are not by any means the best things God has to give. His grace and his Spirit, and the things which belong to salvation,—*these* are God's best gifts. These are his really good things. And these he has promised to give to those who love him.

But you may ask, What has all this to do with telling a child's fortune? and how can this be told by his doings? Why, it has a good deal to do with it; and let me show you how. God has commanded us to do certain things. If we do them, he has promised to bless us and make us happy It is only the blessing of God that will give us a good fortune. If we fail to obtain his blessing we shall have a bad fortune. And if you want to find out whether any person is likely to receive God's blessing, you must inquire whether he is doing what God commands him to do. And how can

we tell this? Why, by looking at his "doings." God's commands to us refer to our "doings;"—that is, they refer to the tempers we indulge, and the habits we form, and the company we keep.

Now show me a child who is cross, and fretful, and selfish in his temper; who is idle, and careless, and dilatory in his habits; and who keeps company with persons like himself, or worse; and I will tell you what that child's fortune is likely to be. Unless that child's heart be changed by God's grace, he will grow up to be poor, and miserable, and good for nothing in this world; and in the world to come, he will be unhappy for ever. But show me a child who is striving, by the help of God, to be kind, and patient, and generous in his temper; industrious, and careful, and prompt in his habits; and who keeps company with those who love and fear God, and is striving to become like them; and I will tell you that child's fortune just as easily as in the other case.

You can tell what the farmer's fortune will be, when you see him rising early, and working late, and ploughing, and sowing, and tilling his grounds, with untiring care and industry. You can tell what the merchant's fortune will be, when you see him always in his place, and doing everything in his power to make his business prosper. Solomon says, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." That means, he will be sure to succeed.

Bear in mind, my dear children, that you are

making your fortunes now, every day. You have read in story-books about persons "going off to *seek* their fortunes." You can do this just as well by staying at home, and a great deal better too. You are all busy now in making your fortunes. The tempers you are indulging, the habits you are forming, and the company you are keeping, are all helping to make them. What kind of tempers, and habits, and company are they? What an important question this is? How careful you should be to find out what is wrong in your tempers or habits, and pray to God to help you to correct it at once! It is easier to do it now than it will be by-and-by.

When you find out a bad temper or habit, *attack it at once.* Don't wait till it grows so strong and fierce that you can do nothing with it. But don't try to do this in your own strength. If you wish to succeed, you must pray to Jesus for help. Without him we can do nothing; but by his help we can do all things. And if we have his grace given to us, then we shall be able to have our ways ordered so as to please him; we shall "love the things which he commands, and desire those which he has promised; and so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts will surely then be fixed where true joys are to be found." And the Lord grant that this may be the case with us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.