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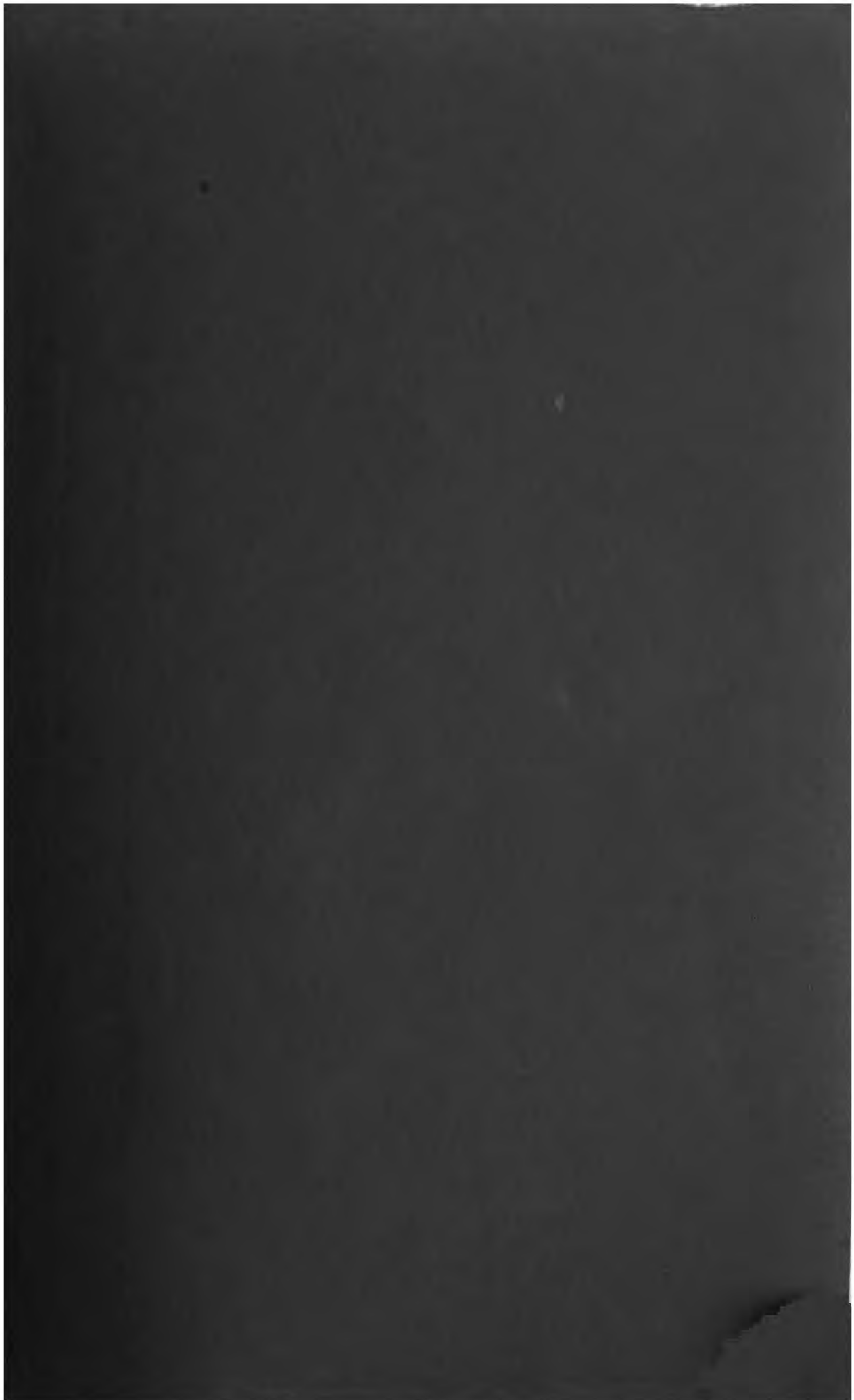
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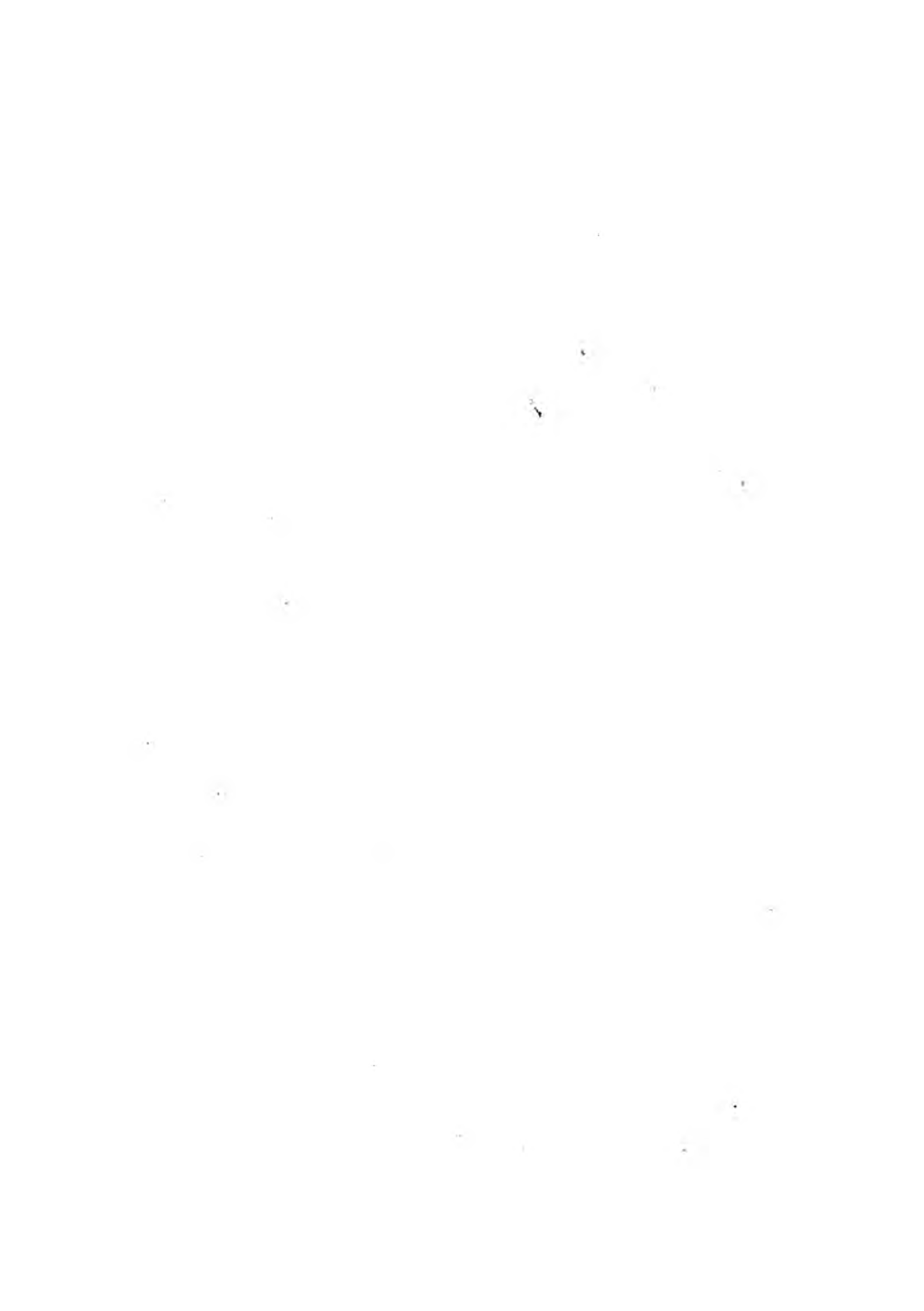


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SEVEN MAY DAYS.







SEVEN MAY-DAYS:

DISCOURSES AND LECTURES TO THE
YOUNG AT STEPNEY.

BY THE
REV. JOHN KENNEDY, M. A.,
F.R.G.S.



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AND AT CHURCH PASSAGE, CHANCERY LANE,

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INTRODUCTION.

Origin of the May-day Lecture.

THE origin of the May-day Lecture at Stepney is involved in no obscurity. In his Preface to a volume of Sermons on "The Good of Early Obedience," Matthew Mead says:—"In April, 1674, a gentleman, who was till then a stranger to me, came with an earnest request that I would undertake a sermon yearly, on every May-day, to the younger people. I desiring to know his reason why to them, rather than to others, and why on that day rather than on any other, he told me it had often been the grief of his soul to behold the vicious and debauched practices of youth on that day of liberty, and did hope that many might be induced, either by their own inclinations, or by the counsels of their parents and masters, rather to spend their time in hearing a sermon than in drinking and gaming, &c., by which means, many might be converted and saved. The design being so honest, and the reason so cogent,

I was persuaded to comply with it, and began upon the following May-day, and so it hath been continued ever since; and I may say it, not in any boast, but to the praise of the glory of the grace of God, with great success."

May-day, then, two hundred years ago, was "a day of liberty," a general holiday, which apprentices and clerks and other young people devoted to merriment. But the merriment of the day was associated with "drinking and gaming," and with "vicious and debauched practices." And it was these that awakened the zeal of Mr. Mead's unknown visitor, and led to the institution of the May-day Lecture. The Lecture was not in its beginning, nor has it ever been, a protest against the innocent joyousness of youth. It did not originate, in what some would have us to believe was the only attribute, or at least the most distinctive attribute, of Puritanism—moroseness. It has ever unfeignedly recognised the principle that "religion never was designed to make our pleasures less." But it has refused to allow the deception of appearances, or to accept the poetry of May-day as the true index to its sober realities. The May-pole with its merry dancers around it makes a beautiful picture. The village maidens, hastening forth to bathe their faces in the dew of May morning, are a pleasant subject of song. Even "Jack-in-the-Green," almost the only relic of the olden May-day which our eyes ever see, is a picturesque object to look on. But when we get

beneath the surface, and ascertain the real prose of the thing, and find on good testimony that it was characterised by vicious and debauched practices, our complacency is destroyed, and we will not consent to have the protests of our fathers treated as mere Puritanism, and a want of sympathy with what is glad and joyous, or bright and beautiful.

Where the first May-day Lecture was delivered we do not know; for it was on the *tenth* day of May, 1674, that the foundation of the old meeting-house was laid.

During the one hundred and ninety-eight years which have passed since Matthew Mead preached the first May-day Lecture, great changes have taken place; and in nothing, perhaps, more conspicuously than in the observances of May-day itself. The first day of summer is no longer what Matthew Mead's visitor called it, "a day of liberty." And those practices to which, unhappily, that liberty was abused, though still, alas! associated with other holidays, are no longer characteristic of May-day. But the lecture has not passed away with the evils which gave it rise, and one generation after another, it has been greatly honoured of God for the conversion of the young.

The lecture has been perpetuated zealously and lovingly by all Mead's successors—Galpine, Mitchell, Hubbard, Brewer, Ford, and Fletcher, and is not known to have been ever omitted. The last in the old meeting-house was delivered in 1862; the first in

the new in 1863. It has been the happiness of the present pastor to preach to the young on five-and-twenty May-days; and he hopes that a service which has been so much blessed in the past will never be discontinued by the ministers of Stepney Meeting-house.

This little volume is designed partly to be a memorial of days and services of very pleasant memory, but chiefly in the hope that it may revive profitable impressions, and be a means of blessing to some who have never *heard* a May-day Lecture. The Author has felt no small difficulty in determining which of his twenty-five Discourses he should put into the printer's hands. But having resolved to publish his first (1847) and his last (1871), he has aimed at variety in the selection of others, and has refrained from any attempt to re-cast or re-write them. Some of them have already been published separately as tracts or in periodicals. Such as they are, he commends them to the blessing of God.

YOUTH AND SUMMER.

While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."—Genesis viii. 22.

FOUR thousand years have passed since these words were uttered, and the covenant is unbroken. The bow is still in the clouds, and tells us of the mercy, and power, and faithfulness of its Maker. Another summer dawns on us this day, but not in virtue of an original impulse from the Creator's hand, whose force is not yet spent—nor in virtue of inherent powers in nature, which render it independent of the continuous operation of omnipotence—but in virtue of the faithful exercise of covenanted mercy and power. And with the return of summer our hearts are summoned to rise to the heights of God's goodness, and join in the celebration of His praise.

In olden times our country was called "merry England." How far the title was appropriate it were difficult to say. The face of England has often been merry when its heart has been sad. And the super-

ficial gaieties of a holiday are but a very imperfect index to the tone of every-day life, and a very poor compensation for the sorrows of ignorance and abjectness. If the merry-makings which have come down by tradition from our fathers, and are still enacted in our fairs, be our standard of judgment, we shall not conclude that England has lost much of real enjoyment by the disuse or abatement of many of its ancient customs.

Another summer has dawned upon us. How far the olden celebrations of its advent are still practised, I know not. Whether the May-pole is still erected, and the merry dance around it still survives—whether the queen of the May is still crowned, and her fair rivals still bathe their faces in the dew of May-day morning—you know better than I do. But we are witnesses together at this hour of the happy survival of the May-day Lecture. It was begun in no spirit of sourness or want of sympathy with the joyousness of the season, but to counteract light-heartedness and revelry, and lift the souls of the young to the fountain of light and joy. Generations have heard it, and to many it has been a savour of life unto life. And once more do these walls echo the praise of Him whose is the summer, and whose the winter, and once more will they echo the counsels by which we would persuade the young to say to Him, “Thou art our Father: be thou the Guide of our youth.”

My dear young friends, your age is naturally a cheerful one; and my own is too near yours to render it possible for me to have lost all sympathy with you. The burdens of an office which "might fill an angel's hands," often press down the young heart within me, but have not yet extinguished the feelings of youth; and I have no plot, I assure you, against your right and privilege of cheerfulness.

The season adds to the cheerfulness of your age. It unseals the fountain within you, and makes its waters gush up and flow over. All we desire is, that these waters be pure, that they spring from a pure fountain, and bless yourselves and others. We join you in responding to the voice of the season and rejoice, only we would rejoice "before the Lord," for we dare not forget that "He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth."

You are entering, my dear young friends, on what is usually considered the summer of life—and there are certain ANALOGIES BETWEEN YOUTH AND SUMMER, in which you may find some instruction.

1. *The seeds which were sown in spring are now beginning to show themselves above ground.*—When you were younger than you are, in the early spring of your life, your minds were fields on which many sowers went forth to sow. Your parents sowed, perhaps wheat and tares together—we shall hope the wheat preponderated. Your companions sowed most diligently, and without ceasing, yet cared not

what they sowed—we may fear the tares were more than the wheat. Teachers sowed, and your own hands sowed. And now that the rains of spring have fallen, and the genial sun of summer hath shone on you, and the free winds of the advancing year have unbound the soil of your bosom, these sowings are manifesting themselves, perhaps in somewhat mingled verdure. In some fields it may require a practised eye to discern one blade from another, and few will venture to prophesy. But in others the nature and character of the growth is very obvious. We look but for a moment on one, when we are delighted to remark how manifest it is that good seed has been sown, and that God's blessing is giving it its own body. We look but an equally brief moment on another, when we are pained to conclude that if, at any time, good seed was sown, it has either been taken away, or choked by other seeds which have been found more congenial to the soil and are drawing nourishment from all its powers. It is in the light of the family, or social circle, or in the light of the shop or counting-house, that we best see the produce of your early seed-time, and we cannot doubt its character. We must leave it, however, to every one to turn his eye on himself, and decide meanwhile whether these are tares or blades of wheat, which all men's eyes behold.

2. *In summer we already anticipate the harvest from our appearances.*—Our anticipations are subject to

uncertainty, from the operation of causes that are unknown and unforeseen. Many blossoms which are now full of beauty and promise may perish through an untimely blight; and what is now backward and unpromising, without any prospect but of barrenness, or, what is worse, an overgrowth of rank and noxious weeds, may through much toil and the special rain and sunshine of heaven's blessing, be converted into fruitfulness and beauty.

But we form our anticipations of the harvest, and feel that as a general rule we are entitled to do so, from the appearances of early summer. Are you content, my dear young friends, that the autumn of your days should be the ripened product of your spring and summer? Should we now part and not meet again till your head is grey and your limbs have lost both the elasticity of youth and the strength of manhood, are you content that we should find your present characters not changed but confirmed and matured? Or if we should not meet on this side eternity, are you content we should recognise, on our first meeting on the other side the gates of time, the perfection and maturity of your present moral man?

Pause before you assent. What are the elements of your present moral life? Do I not see in some of you entire though not very daring ungodliness? Are not some souls the slaves of this corrupt passion and others of that? Does not this earthly principle rule one and that another? Are not these weeds of

various noxious kinds which we see just springing up above the soil? And will you that we return in the autumn of your life or in the harvest of your eternity, and find them bearing their ripest fruits of poison and death?

No; you would not. You know something of yourselves. You have sometimes been compelled to stand before a faithful mirror, not very patiently or pleasedly perhaps, but you have seen what manner of persons you are. There are lines in your face which are not very pleasant even for yourselves to look on—how repulsive must they become when deepened into the furrows of age! There are spots which you would fain hide from your own, and all other eyes—how large and dark must they be when all the suns of a lifetime have deepened and extended them! There are entire features which you know not what to make of—you will not, you cannot part with them—they are dear as your life; but oh! what utter deformity they produce, and how painful their exposure! But what must they be when they have grown into greater grossness! Let your moral portrait be taken when you are old, and, think you, will you be able to look upon it?

3. *In summer weeds grow spontaneously—this can scarcely be said of anything else.*—The husbandman needs not to sow weed-seed, and needs not to care for the life of the weed-plant. Let him withhold his hand and sow no other seed, and his fields will soon

be green, thickly and brightly green, mixed with flowers of many colours, all from seeds which had been wintered in no storehouse but the bosom of the earth, and many of which the winds had carried on their wings, perhaps over many a day's journey.

Your hearts, my dear young friends, are equally fruitful of chance and doubtful products. You may ask no questions, and take no pains, you may sleep and awake, and awake and sleep again, your hand may be in your bosom, and your thoughts in all the ends of the earth; something will grow, it will grow spontaneously and luxuriantly—you need not guard it, you need not water it, its life is in itself, it is its own keeper. But nothing good will grow after this fashion. All things good must have careful training and watching, and watering. Leave your minds untaught and your hearts uncultivated, place yourselves in the hands of circumstances, subject your nature to all stray influences, and the result will be disastrous.

And yet there are those who are not only willing to let the weed grow spontaneously, but seem to take all manner of delight and pains in its cultivation. Who is the companion of their walks, and of their thoughts? Of what kind is the social party in which they spend so many hours? What book is that over which they pore with so much interest and devotion? Do these not all proclaim the resolute purpose with

which they strive to repress all good in their character, and to foster all evil? It does not seem enough that evil be left to its own vital force, it must be cherished and matured under the most genial influences!

Kind friends, do any of you recognise the youth of whom I speak? Is it yourself? If it is, blush and repent.

4. *Summer is the season of warmth.*—You perceive the analogy at once. Not your blood only, but your affections are warm in youth. It is the season of passion. But heat is injurious or beneficial as it is applied, it is prejudicial or healthful according to circumstances. The fens and marshes of a cold and frosty land are comparatively harmless: it is the sun of a tropical climate that converts them into fountains of pestilence and death. If you live in a warm atmosphere, there is the greater need that it be otherwise pure and wholesome.

The moral is obvious. Your warm affections must be pure. Their objects must be worthy of them, and worthy of them in the proportion in which they are rendered. They must have the sanction of the judgment and the conscience. They must be penetrated by the sanctifying power of principle.

There is no mistake to which you are more liable than imagining mere excitement of affection, or emotion, or passion, to be happiness. The fire that burns so strongly may only consume you. The sun

smites as well as cheers. To judge of your happiness, we must know more of the affection or passion with which you are filled, than its warmth. We must know the fire which has enkindled it, and the fuel which sustains it, and the circumstances in which it burns.

Test this principle. Go into the cell of the condemned prisoner the night before execution. Some of his companions have been admitted to cheer him. They resolve to live over again one of their merriest and happiest hours, and to give the poor doomed man one last large draught of this world's pleasure. The gaming-table is spread, the implements of the game are produced, and they plunge into all the excitement of the contest. The wine-cup flows—it is filled and emptied, it is filled and emptied—the heart expands under its generous impulse, the tongue is loosed—the merry song is sung, and the old tale is told. No thought of the morrow casts its dark shadow over their joyous spirits, and after an hour of delirious joy they part as if to meet in joy again. The prisoner, now alone, sinks on his couch, and finds no thorns in his pillow, and no torments in his dreams. He wanders in his slumbers to the scenes of his successful violence and of his rude wicked joys; and he awakes, he imagines, to share the spoils of a new enterprise, when, lo! the executioner stands before him, and the knell of death is in his ears. Call you the engrossing and joyous excitement of

that man's last night on earth, happiness or madness ? I leave the verdict in your own hands.

We have no wish, my dear friends, to repress the warmth or energy of your youth. Everything is beautiful in its season. But we would not have you be deceived by appearances. Thomas Hood, who filled the land for many years with the echoes of his humour, was a man of a deeply pensive and melancholy mind. And the only, or almost the only ludicrous poem which Cowper ever wrote, and which never fails to awaken the spirit of laughter, was written when he was in a state of the deepest dejection. The maniac can dance in his chains to the music of his own fetters. You must be "in a right mind" before the warmth of your affections can be happiness, or the energies of your soul be worthily expended. When God is enthroned in your hearts, and His law is the rule of your consciences, and His glory the end of your being, the intensest flame which rises from the altar of your youthful spirit will burn nought but dross, and will purify as it burns, and your boldest energies will be justified by their godlike aim. But till then the internal fire will minister only sorrow and bitter disappointment.

5. *Summer is the season of beauty.*—Even amid this world of brick, in which we dwell, we can discover some traces of the restored beauty of creation ; and when we emerge from our streets, and penetrate the fields, and wander on our river banks, we see that

beauty in its own chosen homes. Some months ago the same fields and river banks were sterile and frost-bound. The trees existed but did not seem to live—foliage there was none; you would find it difficult to identify them with the living and luxuriant fields and woods which are now spread out before you, and which kindle your sympathy with all that is beautiful and joyous.

The contrast reminds us of the extremes of which our spirits are capable. There is nothing in the dark midnight of winter, there is nothing in the howlings of the dreaddest storm, there is nothing in the utterest desolation with which the tornado strews mountain and plain, which may not be found in the moral state of a human spirit. There is nothing in the brightest sunshine of summer, there is nothing in the most exquisite beauty of mountain, and wood, and stream, there is nothing in the most abundant fruitfulness of harvest, which may not be found in the moral state of a human spirit. The contrast between the earth, when all things were without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the same earth when fiat after fiat from the Creator's lips restored its elements to order, and covered its surface with light and beauty, is not greater than the contrast between the human spirit, wandering from its true orbit in the love of God, and desolated by the raging waves of its own passions, and the same spirit restored to God and to peace,

and reposing under the beams of God's countenance.

You are now enjoying your summer, my dear young friends, and we come to you to find not the desolateness of winter, but pure and sunny beauty. Where is it? Is your character radiant with the lovely glow of a kindly spirit, and the still more lovely glow of youthful piety? Do you reflect in some dim and imperfect, but truthful measure, the loveliness of the virgin's Son.

“Earth has nothing bright or fair,
But mine eyes see pictured there ;
Him of beauty, the sole spring,
Christ my bosom's gracious king.

“When the sun, with fervid ray,
Flings o'er earth the golden day,
I a brighter Sun can see,
Shining through eternity.

“Sweet to think, when glittering high
The starry train have filled the sky,—
He who gave yon orbs their light,
Is a thousand times more bright.”

But His brightness and beauty are diffused over the character of His redeemed. And we turn with anxious eye, O young, to see their reflection in you. Perhaps we are not near enough to discern the begun dispersion of the darkness of sin, the incipient un-

folding of the beauty of holiness. Do your parents see it? Do your companions see it? Do your own consciences see it? Then we congratulate you, and adore the new-creating Spirit, and rejoice.

6. *Once more may we not say that summer is the season of wonders?*—Every season has its own wonders, but summer may still be called *the* season of wonders. It presents a new world every time it comes, and 'tis with its return you go out in search of the marvellous. And you do love what is marvellous. Nothing moves you sooner and nothing moves you more. When your youthful eyes open on life you discover wonders on every side. Human life and human nature are full of them. The earth, the sea, the heavens, are full of them. And yet, however long you gaze and listen, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. We would satisfy you to-day—we would show you a wonder which cannot be transcended, and which will leave nothing to desire of greatness, or of glory, or of mystery.

Come with me then, O youthful spirit, to the cross of Jesus Christ. Behold there the greatest of wonders. Godhead and manhood are mysteriously united—time and eternity meet in His person. And why is He, the only great, the only good, there? Why are those hands and feet nailed to that accursed tree? Why is He crowned with these thorns? Whence the anguish that expresses itself so awfully


in a countenance so benignant? What mean those dreadful words which seem to imply that He is now alone in a most mysterious sense, separated from all being beside, and forsaken by heaven and earth? His soul is bearing a load which would sink the world for ever, and He is bearing it alone. He is making atonement for the sins of men.

“ It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly,
But love to sinners fills His heart,
And makes Him choose to die.

“ ’Tis love the cause unfolds,
The deep mysterious cause,
Why He who all the world upholds,
Hangs upon yonder cross.”

Behold this great sight. There is nothing visible but the outward form of a man of sorrows, and His visage marred by internal sufferings more than that of any man. But while He seems the very image of distress and helplessness His power is going forth uninterruptedly, giving and sustaining life throughout the whole universe.

Here, my young friends, is a wonder for you to look upon and to study. Where amid all science and art, where amid all history and fiction, will you find its like? And not only is it the greatest. You can afford to lose the sight of almost every other in the world, but lose the sight of this and you die for



ever. Most others only gratify an idle curiosity; they minister at best to a few moments' pleasure, and the time is lost that you spend looking at them, but in this is life eternal.

Come, then, and gaze upon it. The wonder of the Cross is ever new. Two thousand years have not deprived it of its freshness, or of its interest, or of its power to move. Would you satisfy the love of wonder that is in your nature? Would you feed it with food convenient and healthful? Come, and gaze upon the Cross; gaze upon it till all things else wax dim and worthless in your eyes; gaze upon it till your hearts are transfixed with the conviction of your own sinfulness; gaze upon it till the frost and hardness of your souls melt in humble and unreserved contrition; gaze upon it till the blinding tears of anguish are dried up, and your eye beams with the light and joy of peace with God. So gaze upon it now. The days of this summer will follow each other into eternity with all the rapidity of those that are gone. And before they are numbered yours may be ended. It matters nothing whether the storms of winter howl over your open grave, or the bright sun of summer warm it. But oh! it matters everything whether you lie down in the sure hope of a resurrection to life, or in the awful certainty that you shall rise to shame and everlasting confusion. They only sleep safely and in peace who sleep in Jesus. And they only sleep in Jesus

who behold His Cross, and trust in His sacrifice. Away with everything that stands between your eye and the Cross! Away with everything that stands between your heart and Christ! Bend your knees and give your heart. And the sun shall be no more thy light by day, O child of mercy! neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

THE BIBLE, THE GREATEST WONDER IN THE EXHIBITION.

“Come and see.”—John i. 46.

THERE have been nearly six thousand May-Days since this beautiful world of ours came forth from the dark night of chaos by the word which said, “Let there be light!” And each of them has had an interest of its own. We should all be pleased to know how the first of them was spent by Adam and Eve, whether in the garden of Eden or out of it. If in the garden, what a happy day it was to them! Not more so, indeed, than other days, for all their days were happy. They knew none of the perplexities which constitute a large part of the life of many of their children. Their hearts were full of love to God, and God was not slow to bestow His love on them. Heaven and earth were very near each other, for sin had not yet separated them. What Jacob saw long afterwards in vision, a ladder set up to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, was then a joyful reality. There was uninterrupted

communion between God and the pure and lovely beings He had made so lately in his own image. Adam and Eve had not yet to ask the question, Who will show us any good? For good, perfect good, was always in them, and everywhere around them. It gushed up in their souls with every emotion and thought. It streamed down upon them in every ray of light. Every sound poured it into their ears. All the trees of their beautiful garden produced it. The wings of every wind were laden with it. And, above all, it came direct, in a channel that was never blocked up, from the Fountain of all well-being, their God and Father. That was a bright and happy May-Day when there was no sin.

But who knows whether the first May-Day did not come after the fall? Perhaps it did. And then, what a day was that! There was a gloom on the spirits of our first parents which the brightest sun could not dispel. There was a sense of mortality in their bodies which the healthiest breezes could not remove. They had no anxiety about their daily bread, it is true, for the earth, though under the curse of barrenness, brought forth abundantly. They were not poor, for all the world, with the exception of one garden, was theirs; all the broad fields and narrow valleys, all the mountains and mines, were theirs. If they had no ships, they had no need of them. If they had no palaces, they had no need of them. They were the greatest landowners that have

ever been, and the greatest sovereigns likewise. Alexander Selkirk, who was left alone on a small island, is represented by Cowper, as saying: "I am monarch of all I survey." But Adam could say this of the whole world. He could walk from continent to continent, gaze over the widest plains, and from the tops of the loftiest mountains, and if he travelled round and round the earth, he could say everywhere, "I am monarch of all I survey." What a King was Adam! what a Queen was Eve! But were they happy? Ah! they had sinned! There might be no thunders, no lightning, no earthquakes, on that May-Day, to remind them of their sin. The sky may have been cloudless, the air balmy, and everything there may have been to make a good man happy; but they had sinned, and that is the source of all sorrow. God had told them enough to give them hope, and they believed it no doubt, and worshipped, and loved Him in the faith of it, and they were very far from despair. But they could not forget that they had sinned, and they were prophets enough to know that the fountain which had been opened in their first sin would pour forth a stream which would flow through every land and every age down to the last, and carry pestilence and death everywhere in its poisoned waters. With such thoughts they could not be very happy.

There was a day, four thousand years after this period, which claims pre-eminence as the chief of

May-Days. It lay between the death and the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. That was a day of joy to the world, if the world had but known it. But a few years before, a babe was born in Bethlehem, amid signs which showed how greatly his birth concerned both man and angel. The child became a man, and though he chose to be a poor man, there was evidence enough that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him. After a few years spent in teaching truths which were evidently not "of man," and in doing works which none other man did, he died a death such as no man had ever died before. But he did not lie long in the grave. His sacrifice was well pleasing to God. The price of our redemption was accepted. And Christ rose from the dead on the third day. He was still on earth when May-Day dawned. That May-Day may have been one of those first days of the week on which He appeared in the midst of the little company of His disciples, and diffused the very air of heaven over their spirits by His loving salutation, "Peace be unto you." The world did not know what a happy day that was! They did not know that the God who had made the earth was treading its surface with human foot. They did not know that Heaven and Earth were reconciled, and that the reconciler was still among men. They did not see the bright bow of hope and pardon and peace, whose arch reached up to the very throne of God, and encircled all nations in a brotherhood of holiness

and love. It was some weeks later before the apostles received power to make the announcement,

“The year of Jubilee is come,
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home.”

But that was a happy May-Day, the brightest the world had seen since the fall, when the Sun of Righteousness was just appearing above the horizon, with mild and beautiful radiance, and with healing in his beams.

The day which has dawned this morning is not to be compared with the May-Day which the risen Saviour spent on earth; but still it is distinguished by an event to which the eyes of many nations are now turning with great interest and expectation. There are thousands in this city who slept none last night for thinking of it. For fifteen months ingenious and skilful men in many lands have been making preparations for it. It has been spoken of in the palace and in the cottage. The long looked-for day has come, and the Crystal Palace has opened its gates. The Queen has been there this morning. And now, while we are here, there are thousands gazing on its wonders. Were Solomon there, he would probably meet with many a proud inventor and mechanic who would tell him it is time to recall that famous old saying of his, “There is nothing new under the sun!” We can imagine many a man from Birmingham, and Sheffield, and Lyons, and

Antwerp, saying, " King Solomon, look here ! Could those Tyrian artisans whom Hiram sent you make anything so beautiful, so ingenious ? Sure I am (the exhibitor would say), none of them ever fashioned anything like this, for it is my own invention ; the idea of it, springing up in my own imagination, was cherished by my own mind, till these hands fashioned it. This, at least, is a new thing under the sun ! " *

But Solomon, not disposed to discuss the comparative merits of ancient and modern art, and intent, as of old, on the study of man himself, might look into the man's eyes and say, " I have surely seen those eyes before, the same clear and searching intelligence, the same earnest and intense spirit, the same restless and unsatisfied ambition, and when I look from your invention to yourself, I have only to say, as I said before, 'All things are full of labour ; man cannot utter it ; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been is that which shall be ; and that which is done is that which shall be done ; and there is no new thing under the sun ! ' "

We all mean to go to the Crystal Palace some day and see it for ourselves ; and when we do we should like to know what is the greatest wonder there. And we shall need a guide to tell us. Suppose we take Solomon for our guide. I am sure we shall not find a better judge, or a greater admirer of skill, and beauty, and splendour, and greatness. He is no cynic, no ignorant and narrow-minded man who will

despise what he cannot understand or appreciate. The very reverse. He made Jerusalem a city of palaces, and converted deserts into gardens, and lavished all the resources of the skill and science of his age on the great temple which bears his name, and his heart rejoiced in all his labour. Let us follow him through the Exhibition. He examines everything with a keen eye and a large mind. There is not one line of beauty which he does not discover and admire ; there is not one useful invention which he does not perfectly understand and appreciate ; but he passes on in silence, and we follow him, inwardly wondering what that is to which he will give the first prize. He stops. He sees something. His eye is fixed. Look at his cheeks. His heart is moved. Watch him, he is excited. His lips quiver. His whole soul is in his face. Thought and emotion follow each other in quick succession. There are painful recollections suggested by something before him. Look again ; his brow seems to expand. In shorter time than we take in telling it, his expression becomes peaceful, satisfied, noble, benevolent. A pure intellect, a pure heart, now beams in his eye. He has found it ! He has found it ! There it is—he cannot take his eye from it—the greatest wonder in the Exhibition—“ beautiful, sublime, and glorious ”—**THE BIBLE !**

But what makes **THE BIBLE** the greatest wonder in

the Exhibition? Why! IT HAS COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN. There are many things there that have come from far countries. They have been carried across seas and continents, at a great expense. But the Bible has come from a farther country. The paper of which the visible book is made, and the types with which it has been printed, are as much the work of man as any beautiful piece of furniture or ingenious machine that may be placed beside it; but it is the thoughts that are in it that constitute the Bible; and these thoughts have come down from God. God put them into the minds of holy men, and taught their hands to write them for the use of all ages; and there they are now in the Bible; and because they are there the Bible is, "without controversy," the greatest wonder in the Crystal Palace.

The Greek poets tell us of a statue of the Goddess Minerva, in ancient Troy, which was called Palladium. They say that it fell down from heaven near the tent of Ilus, when that prince was building the citadel of Troy, and that on its preservation depended the safety of the city. The people of Ephesus had an image in one of their temples which their priests made them believe had come down from Jupiter, the chief of the gods. But these stories bear falsehood on the face of them. The descent of a statue is a thing that might be seen, but no one ever saw it. Besides, there are no gods and goddesses in heaven; there is only the one living and true

God; and He is not like to gold, or silver, or precious stone.

But we know that the Bible is of God. Its thoughts, its laws, its promises, its facts, are not of man. To say nothing of those mighty works which were wrought by prophets, by Jesus Christ, and by apostles, to prove that they had authority from God to do what they did, and to say what they said, multitudes have felt, in reading the Bible, that they were conversing not with the mind of man, but of God. It is told of Napoleon Buonaparte, that he studied the Bible much in his last days, and that on his death-bed he said, with an accent and emphasis which had an electric effect on those who heard him—"I know men, and I tell you that Jesus was not a man. His religion is a self-existent mystery, and it proceeded from a mind not human." And he concluded by saying to General Bertrand, "If you do not understand that Christ is God, I have been wrong in calling you General." An old negro was once asked how, seeing he could not read the Bible, nor examine the evidence for or against its truth for himself, he could *know* that it is the Word of God, and he replied, "You ask me, sir, how *I know* the Bible is the Word of God: I *know* it by its effect on my heart." Many feel that the Bible is all too pure and too sublime to have come out of the mind of man. It has given peace to their consciences; it has cleansed their hearts, and made their lives holy. And you might as soon tell

them that man made the sun as that he made the Bible. The one is as great a miracle of light and glory as the other.

What do my young friends say to all this? The only book in the world that has come down from heaven is in their hands. There are a great many books they have never seen; but the best of books is their own—the child's own book, the boy's own book, and the girl's own book. And they can read and study it when they please. How eagerly and devoutly these poor Trojans, who were made to believe by lying priests that the Palladium fell down from heaven, must have gazed upon it! How vehement was the enthusiasm of the Ephesians, when stirred up by cunning silversmiths, who made rich by the trade of making small shrines and idols, to cry out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." How is it with your Bible? Does it lie neglected on a dusty shelf, or locked up in the prison of a private drawer, from Sabbath night till the next Sabbath morning? Shall the people of Troy and of Ephesus rise up in judgment against you?

We have other reasons for believing the Bible the greatest wonder in the Exhibition. ITS CONSTRUCTION IS MORE WONDERFUL THAN THAT OF ANYTHING ELSE. That is, it displays more wisdom and skill, and power, and goodness, than anything else, or all things else that are there. We shall

all be dazzled and bewildered, I expect, when we enter the Exhibition. There we shall see what the old civilisation of China in the far east, and the young civilisation of America in the far west, and hundreds of countries lying between, have thought most precious and most beautiful. And we shall be barbarians if we do not give ourselves up to a spirit of delighted admiration. But still we cannot hesitate to say which of all the things there displays most of wisdom, and power, and goodness. It is the Bible. Many of the exhibitors will not agree with us in this. They know very little about the Bible, and care still less. Many of them have never seen it—persons from heathen and Mahomedan countries, and even from what are called Catholic countries. And many who have seen it, and who would not dare to say it is false, yet in their hearts consider it a book only for women and priests, who have nothing else to do; and they think they “quit themselves like men,” in minding other things. Quite alive and quicksighted to discover the combination of skill and power, of science and art, in all the other constructions that are crowded into the Crystal Palace, they are only disposed to curl the lip at the sight of the Bible.

And yet we are bold to say that there is no construction there that exhibits so many wonderful properties as does this book. Were it only a common book we might say much for it. A book, a printed book! What a wonder it is, if you but think

of it! Common, indeed! very common! But so is the air, so is the light of the sun, and are not these great wonders? Take a book in your hand—the very printing is a wonder; but set that aside, and look at its substance. It contains *thoughts!* What a mystery is thought! And what a mystery is the mind which thinks. There is no other product and no other producer in the Exhibition half so mysterious. Steam-engines, electrical machines, galvanic batteries, electric telegraphs, with all their products and doings, are very wonderful. We do not half understand them, nor do those who make them and work them. But mind, and its product thought, are still more wonderful. It is not likely we shall ever understand the mysteries of magnetism; but it is still less likely we shall ever understand the mysteries of mind. Mr. Joseph Paxton is himself a greater wonder than his Crystal Palace. James Watt was a greater wonder than his steam-engine. The exhibitors, whom the crowds will pass by without looking at, unless they are distinguished by foreign costumes and a foreign complexion, are themselves greater wonders than those marvels of skill they have brought to London. The inventing mind is greater than the invented thing. And the BOOK containing that most mysterious product, thought, coming from that most mysterious producer, mind, is entitled to precedence before everything else in the Exhibition.

But, if you choose, you may look on everything that is there as a book, that is, as an outward expression of the thoughts of some mind, or an outward visible medium of conveying the thoughts of one mind to other minds. And then one thing will excel another, just as the thoughts which it conveys excel the thoughts which the other conveys. The question to be determined will be simply, which of all the things there, including the Bible, expresses, in its own way, the greatest, the best, the most wonderful thoughts. And if this be the question, we demand the first place for the Bible.

“ On every line
 Marked with the seal of high divinity,
 On every leaf bedewed with drops of love
 Divine, and with the eternal heraldry
 And signature of God Almighty stamped
 From first to last.”

That great scholar, Sir William Jones, did not exaggerate when he said, “This volume, independently of its Divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written.” The philosopher, John Locke, only spoke the simple truth when he said, “In the New

Testament are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter." But we might spend days in recounting the praises of the Bible; and after all, those who know them best would tell you, "the half has not been told." Angels desire to look into the things which it contains. They see, in the incarnation of the Son of God, and in his obedience unto death for sinners, manifold wisdom, eternal righteousness, boundless mercy. In the mediation of the Son of God they see the embodiment not of the highest and sublimest human thoughts, but of thoughts purely and entirely Divine. "Principalities and powers in heavenly places" see more of the majesty, and justice, and power, and wisdom, and love of Him whose pleasure they fulfil, in the great salvation which the Bible reveals, than in all the universe besides. "If," to use the words of that true philosopher, the Hon. R. Boyle, "the meanest living creatures of God's making are far more wisely contrived than the most excellent pieces of workmanship that human heads or hands can boast of," what shall we say of His greatest work, the mystery of redemption! "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" We dare not but place far, far beneath the book which reveals it, the highest and best of the works of man.

There is a third reason for which we are prepared

to maintain that the Bible is the greatest wonder in the Exhibition. IT CAN DO MORE FOR THE WORLD THAN ANYTHING ELSE, OR ALL THINGS ELSE, THAT ARE THERE. And, in saying this, we are not forgetful that we owe very much to many things that are there. We scarcely know, indeed, how much we are indebted to the arts for comforts and modes of living which have now become a second nature to us. Were every nation to possess all the arts which are now represented in Hyde Park, it would, we confess, advance them greatly in comfort and culture. But still we do not consider it presumptuous to say, that the Bible can do more for the world than all the arts and sciences put together. Were a deluge to sweep over the earth, and carry away everything but man and the Bible, we should have abundant reason to weep over the desolation; but man could begin the world anew with everything he needs to produce a new civilisation. His Bible is no encyclopædia; it is not even a manual of science and art. But it can purify his heart, it can quicken his intellect; and, with a heart all pure, and an intellect all living and active, and such a world around him, he will soon re-people the earth with wonders sufficient for a new Exhibition. But suppose the Bible alone destroyed, and all things else preserved, could man make a Bible out of them? No! though you gave him ten thousand years to make the trial, he would not find out what the Bible tells him, though all the world

sent its treasures of learning and science to help him. We know this from what has already been; for "what has already been is that which shall be." The experiment was tried for thousands of years before Christ came, and "the world by wisdom knew not God." Let it be tried again, and for a still longer period, and you shall never see a Bible spring up out of the dust of man's toil, or descending from the clouds of his speculations. And what is more, the many things that shall still remain to man, when the Bible alone is gone, will not compensate the want of the one thing that is lost.

"Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!
Star of eternity! the only star
By which the bark of life can navigate
The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss."

Let us hear what the Bible can do for us. *It can restore us to God*—and nothing else can. We are all prodigal children, who have gone away from our Father's house, and have done very wickedly. The Father we have forsaken is full of love, but He is holy and just likewise. How shall we return to Him? Who shall open the door which our sins and his justice have shut? Who shall bridge over the tremendous gulf which has widened and widened between God and us the farther we have gone from Him? The science of the stars will not answer this question.

No science will. But the Bible does. "God hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we may become the righteousness of God in Him." God hath set forth His Son "to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." This is the Bible answer. And now, no father ever received his prodigal and long-lost child with a more cordial welcome than that which awaits every one of us on our return to God.

The Bible can *make us good*, and nothing else can do this thoroughly. When it restores us to the family of God, it gives us the heart and character of a child. And this is true goodness, the purest and highest style of goodness. Now, to be good is to be truly great; and it is far better than to be great in any other sense. How men run after and worship great warriors, great statesmen, great orators, great poets! But goodness is better than all greatness besides itself. The devil is great. He has great power, great knowledge, great genius, and a great empire. He is the greatest of all creatures who do not love and serve God. But, for that very reason, he is and will be the most miserable. If my young friends seek greatness, let them seek it in the form of goodness. And there is nothing that will make them good but the Bible, or the motives and principles which the Bible contains. It is the truth as

it is in Jesus, that makes sinners new through the grace of God. And all the other appliances in the universe will not accomplish this.

The Bible can *make us rich*, richer than anything else in the Exhibition. If you had the money that has been expended on that glass building, and on its contents, what a fortune it would be to you! There is one very small thing there, not larger than a pigeon's egg, which would be a fortune in itself. It is literally "one pearl of great price!" It is the largest known diamond in the world. For ages it has been in possession of the rulers of India, and it has passed, with the sceptre of that country, from one hand to another, till at last it has come into the possession of the Queen of Great Britain, the Empress of India. The Hindoos call it "Koh-i-noor," or "the mountain of light." There it is now in the Exhibition challenging admiration, and no doubt exciting envy. But there is a pearl of greater price beside it—more brilliant, more precious by far. It has made millions rich already, and is as valuable as ever. And the riches which it imparts are the true riches—*true*, because they are the riches of the soul, which is the true man; and they are the riches of eternity, which is man's true lifetime. It is related of the Sultan of Gazna, who had amassed great wealth by the spoils of temples and palaces, during an invasion of India, that a day or two before his death he ordered his whole treasury to be laid before him. And having

for some time, from his throne, feasted his eyes on innumerable sacks of gold and caskets of precious stones, he burst into tears. Poor man! he needed no Solomon to teach him to exclaim, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." The Bible reveals to us the true riches. "Ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." The inheritance to which we are begotten, through faith in Jesus Christ, is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away. And whatever the world think of it, in their devotion to things seen and temporal, it is all substance, and the smallest earnest of it is more to be desired than all their stores of gold and silver.

The Bible can *make us happy*, and that is more than the whole Exhibition can do. It was a great conqueror, a great king, and a man of great wealth, that said, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." And if it was while yet a youth, poor and persecuted, that he said this, he could repeat it when he was an old man, and the greatest monarch of his time. So could his son Solomon. It was after all his acquisitions, and all his experiments on earthly means of happiness, that he inscribed on them, "Vanity of vanities." This was his solemn

sleep upon hay and straw. This meeting continued for a fortnight, and was a succession of tournaments and entertainments, during which the two kings formed treaties of friendship and alliance. But there was no spirit of peace in all this outward show of amity. Henry VIII., and Francis I., and Charles V., were youthful monarchs, and all equally emulous of fame and power. The King of France and the Emperor of Germany were especially rivals. And it was nothing but selfishness that made the King of France court at this time the favour of the King of England. The great gathering in Hyde Park has far more moral splendour than that of the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." The nations it represents are more numerous, and the purposes it seeks to accomplish are far nobler. God grant that it may more than realize the highest wishes of its projectors! It will be a wonder, indeed, if many do not reflect, while they walk through the aisles of the Glass Palace, "What fools men are to fight with each other, and kill each other, instead of trying to help each other, and provoke one another to love and good works in this form!" And the same thought will surely occur to many who cannot come to London to see it with their own eyes. The text on which the Exhibition preaches to the world is, "The interests of all nations are one." And though this is not the highest truth, nor the truth which appeals to the noblest part of our nature, it is a truth which one

Amen to what he had said before, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Would we be happy, we must return to God our Father, and be in favour with Him. We must have our hearts cleansed from all evil thoughts and passions. We must walk in the ways of truth and godliness. "The way of transgressors is hard," even when it leads to wealth and a crown. The way of holiness is the way of peace, even when it leads to the fires of martyrdom. For "so hath the Lord ordained." And we may as soon change the courses of the stars as reverse the holy decree.

The Bible can *make us brothers*. This is what it is hoped the Exhibition itself will help to do. And I pray that it may. The assembly within those bright walls in Hyde Park is certainly one of the most brotherly meetings in which the nations of the world have been represented since the day they parted at the Tower of Babel. They have met often enough on the field of battle. It is time for them to learn to meet for purposes of peace. There is a meeting between the monarchs of France and England, celebrated in history by the name of the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." It took place near Calais, in the year 1520. Two thousand eight hundred tents were pitched in the surrounding plain; but even this number was insufficient for the multitudes who flocked to the splendid festival; and many ladies and persons of rank were glad to obtain a lodging in barns, and to

sleep upon hay and straw. This meeting continued for a fortnight, and was a succession of tournaments and entertainments, during which the two kings formed treaties of friendship and alliance. But there was no spirit of peace in all this outward show of amity. Henry VIII., and Francis I., and Charles V., were youthful monarchs, and all equally emulous of fame and power. The King of France and the Emperor of Germany were especially rivals. And it was nothing but selfishness that made the King of France court at this time the favour of the King of England. The great gathering in Hyde Park has far more moral splendour than that of the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." The nations it represents are more numerous, and the purposes it seeks to accomplish are far nobler. God grant that it may more than realize the highest wishes of its projectors! It will be a wonder, indeed, if many do not reflect, while they walk through the aisles of the Glass Palace, "What fools men are to fight with each other, and kill each other, instead of trying to help each other, and provoke one another to love and good works in this form!" And the same thought will surely occur to many who cannot come to London to see it with their own eyes. The text on which the Exhibition preaches to the world is, "The interests of all nations are one." And though this is not the highest truth, nor the truth which appeals to the noblest part of our nature, it is a truth which one

would like to see spread through the world, and well impressed on all men's minds, for it would prevent many a conflict, and blunt many a sword.

But, after all, the Bible will do more to make brothers of mankind than all the Exhibition besides. It teaches them that they are brothers by blood relation, the children of one Adam, and of one Father in heaven. And it gives them a brother's heart. This is what is wanting. Cain knew that he was Abel's brother, but he had not a brother's heart. This is what the Bible gives to men. It teaches them to love God, their one Father, and to love one another as His children. This is the true cure of the alienations which have converted the great human family of God into a thousand rival, hating, and hostile races. And we look with confidence for a period when, through the influence of Divine truth, men shall unlearn the art of war, and cease to meet on battle-fields, and, "like kindred drops, shall mingle into one."

"O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true!
Scenes of accomplished bliss! which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy!
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty. . . .
The lion, and the libbard, and the bear,
Graze with the fearless flocks; all bask at noon

Together, or gambol in the shade
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.
Antipathies are none. No foe to man
Lurks in the serpent now ; the mother sees,
And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand
Stretched forth to dally with the crested worm,
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
All creatures worship man, and all mankind
One Lord, one Father."

The reality will transcend the prophetic raptures of Isaiah, and it will be acknowledged, in the day of the world's regeneration, that the Bible, and the mighty blessing of its God, have done it all. Who can believe these things, and hesitate to pronounce this book the greatest wonder in the possession of men ?

Our reasons for this decision are not yet exhausted. THINK HOW OLD THE BIBLE IS, HOW MANY PERILS IT HAS SURVIVED, AND WHAT A DESTINY AWAITS IT IN THE WORLD. Some parts of it are more than three thousand three hundred years old, and it took about fifteen hundred years to finish it. The books written by Moses are the oldest books in the world. They were in the hands of the Jews more than five hundred years before Homer sang the wars of Troy ; and their age, so venerable and pure, is "a crown of glory" to them.

Did you know an aged mariner whose history was one long series of romantic perils, which he had happily escaped, to spend the brief evening of his life in the security of a quiet home, you would gaze on his hoary head with much interest. But the hairbreadth escapes of the deep give us little idea of the dangers through which the Bible has passed, some portions of it for these thousands of years. The Jews, whose civil as well as religious charter and constitution it was, instead of guarding it with jealous care, often turned their back upon it, and sometimes almost forgot its existence, as in the idolatrous reigns which preceded that of Josiah. But the eye which never slumbers kept watch over it by day and by night. At a later period, when the Jews abhorred idolatry, but were quite alien from the spirit of the Bible, instead of forgetting it, they counted its very words and letters, and made it their religion to watch over its minutest fractional parts. The idolatry of one age could not destroy it, the superstition of another was the means of its preservation. Since the beginning of the Christian era, and the completion of the book, it has had to encounter every sort of enemy that can be named. Heathen emperors, and magistrates, and philosophers, and priests, have used their respective swords of steel and argument and superstition, to crush and utterly destroy everything Christian. And when a nominal Christianity became triumphant in Europe, the Bible

only passed into a sea of new perils. Those who were, or ought to have been, its friends, thought the best thing they could do with it was to hide it; and they put it out of sight, away from the noise and the profaneness of an evil world, into monastic libraries, where the fate of many copies of it was to have their golden truths cancelled from the parchments on which they were written, and replaced by lying legends. Yet God preserved it even in these circumstances, and made one copy of it, long covered with the dust of neglect in a German monastery, the fountain of the Reformation in the soul of Luther. The enemies of the Bible were never busier than they have been during the last fifty or hundred years. But the more they have dug about it to undermine it, the deeper and stronger have they found its foundations. The fiercer the storms that have assailed it, the deeper has it struck its roots into the ground, like the oak, and the more majestically has it spread forth its branches, while its leaves have been found as efficacious as ever for the healing of the nations. We may adapt to it the words of the second Psalm, and say, "Why do men rage, and people imagine a vain thing against a book whose life is more than charmed?" It is far beyond their power to do it harm. Its Author is a wall of fire around it, as He is certainly the glory in it. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. . . . But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever."

This book is on its way to universal influence and dominion. It will yet be the world's ruler and master, and nothing can prevent it, for God hath spoken it. Let others, then, admire what they will in the Exhibition—we shall join them in much of their admiration, but shall call the Bible the greatest wonder there.

There are many things which give additional interest to the circumstance that the Bible has its place in the Glass Palace.

For example, it is *the only book* that is there. There are book-bindings exhibited among other works of industry, and, for the sake of the bindings, there may be books within the boards. But the Bible is the only book there as such.* And it deserves to be thus singled out. It is the book of books. When the sun makes his appearance in the heavens, it is meet that the moon and stars should retire. We would have our foreign visitors understand that we owe everything that is great and good among us to the Bible; that it is our very Palladium on which our prosperity and security depend;

* The author learns now that there is an exception to this statement. The Tract Society has been permitted, at the last hour, to exhibit some of its books. One almost regrets that the sublime solitude of the Bible has been thus invaded. Still, whatever value the publications of the Society named possess, its best friends will admit they derive from the Bible.

and we would invite them to consider whether they do not do themselves great wrong by their neglect of, or hostility to, a book, which we do well to exalt so highly, because it has exalted us.

Then it is *the complete Bible* that is there. The Bible of David consisted principally of the books of Moses. The Bible which Timothy found sufficient "to make him wise unto salvation," consisted of the Old Testament Scriptures. We have the complete book—with the superscription of God upon it, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

It is *the open Bible* that is in the Exhibition. The book is not shut or sealed by the hand of ruler or priest. It lies open for every man to read at his pleasure. Let Pope Pio Nono, and Dr. Wiseman, and all their followers, ponder this fact. They would have this country return to the night state from which it came forth at the Reformation. But they must take our Bible from us first—or they must shut it, and seal it, and put it into their monastic libraries again. So long as we have it open, and read it, and understand it, we shall not forsake Christ for antichrist.

It is the Bible *in all languages* that is there—at least in all the languages in which the Bible Society possesses it, and they are nearly one hundred and seventy in number. This fact has a peculiar significance at this moment. The Popes have, one after another, since the formation of the Bible Society, issued denunciations against its proceedings. And we are not surprised. If they are against the Bible, it is because the Bible is against them. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Mentz met with a Bible accidentally in the year 1530, and, having read some portion of it, observed, “Indeed, I do not know what this book is, but this I see, that everything in it is against us.” This witness is true. The predecessor of the present Pope addressed a letter, in 1844, to all patriarchs, primates, archbishops, and bishops, in which he condemned the Society for making the Scriptures “common to the garrulous old woman, the doting old man, the wordly sophist, and all men of every condition, provided only they can read,” and pronounced it “absurdest of all, and almost unheard of,” that “they do not even exclude unbelieving nations from such community of intelligence.” Now, what the Pope denounced as our sin and shame, we go to the Exhibition to proclaim to all the world as our glory. Would that every old man and old woman in the world had the Bible in their hands to comfort them amid the infirmities of age, and light their way through the dark valley into which they

are just entering. Would that all the “unbelieving nations” that are represented in Hyde Park, took the book and read it for themselves; it would tell them its own story of grace and mercy. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Let the *open* Bible, in the *vernacular* tongues of men, be a sign to the world that we are the true followers of those apostles who, in the exercise of the newly-bestowed gift of tongues, declared to all men, in the tongues wherein they were born, the wonderful works of God. And let the world listen with joy while the sound goes forth in all languages: “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

The end of all this, my dear young friends, so far as you are concerned, is to induce you to love and study the Word of God. You all have a copy of it, or may have for a few pence. Had you lived in the thirteenth century, and been a labouring man, it would have cost you the earnings of fourteen or fifteen years to purchase a Bible. The wages of a labouring man at that time were only three half-pence a-day. The building of two arches of London Bridge cost only twenty-five pounds, whereas a Bible bequeathed to the Abbey of Croxton by its abbot,

had cost him upwards of thirty-three pounds. Little more than three hundred years ago it might have cost you life itself to read the Bible. Bishop Bonner, whose name is associated with some of the most blotted pages of our national history, professed at one time some zeal to supply the people with the Holy Scriptures, and put six copies for their use into old St. Paul's. Each copy was fastened to a pillar with chains, and when anyone who had a good voice and could read well opened it, he was sure to get a great many persons around him to listen, for there was a "famine of the hearing of the words of the Lord" in those days. There was a tall, good-looking young man, who understood the Bible well, and loved it much, who used often to read out of one of those chained books to great multitudes, who were delighted with the wonderful things that were in the law of God. But this offended Bishop Bonner, and the cruel man sent young John Porter to Newgate, where he was fastened to the wall of his dungeon with an iron collar about his neck, and with iron fetters on his legs and arms. The keeper of the prison was more merciful than the Bishop, and released the innocent youth from those cruel irons, and allowed him to go among other prisoners, who were there for felony and murder. John Porter was as happy as Paul and Silas, when they sang praises in their dungeon. He loved the Bible as much as ever, and taught what he knew of it to the poor felons and murderers, for whose

souls no one else cared. And what was his reward? For this good deed he was put into the lowest dungeon in Newgate, oppressed with bolts and irons, and was found dead in his chains eight days after!

Think of this, ye who neglect the Bible! A dungeon and iron fetters and death, with *the Bible in the heart*, are far better than a palace, and gold rings, and a long life, with the Bible only in the hand, or in the pew, or in the book-case. And this is what we desire—that you may have the book in your hearts, and that the Christ whom the book reveals may be formed in you the hope of glory. There are beautiful stories in it, and romantic too—such as the stories of Joseph and Daniel, and others—and I do not see why you should not pore over them with all the interest which rivets you to the pages of Robinson Crusoe. But there is a better story than these, and we wish you, above all things, to understand it, and to love it. It is the story of Jesus Christ—of His love to sinners, of His death for them, of His ascension to heaven, and of the descent of His Holy Spirit upon men. It is faith in this that will make you happy, that will make you holy, that will arm you to resist the devil, and to overcome the world. With it, you live; without it, you die. And the possession of the Book which reveals the object of it, involves responsibilities from which you cannot free yourselves.

“ Within this awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries !
O happiest they of human race
To whom their God hath given grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch, to force the way :
But better had they ne'er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.”

THE YOUNG SOLOMON AND THE OLD.

—◆—
“Solomon was king over all Israel.”—I Kings iv. 1.

WE are assembled, my dear young friends, once more around our May-pole, not for the merry dance and the sprightly game, but for an hour's instruction. This may be seem a sorry substitute for the excitement of the May-days of the olden times. But you know it is not all gold that glitters. Every man that laughs is not a happy man, for “even in laughter the heart is often sorrowful, and the end of mirth is often heaviness” (Prov. xiv. 13). Many a young person has got up on a May-day morning, and bathed his face in the early dew, and spent the day in merriment, and then gone home with an aching head, and a still more aching heart. But the 178 hours of instruction that have been spent within these walls on the May-days of the last 178 years have produced fruits of the purest happiness, which, after the enjoyment of a life-time on earth, are now blooming more richly than ever in the unending summer of heaven above. We have no design, then,

be assured of it, against your happiness. Far from it. Our wish is to teach you where, and how to find, that much-coveted thing.

You will remember that last year our May-pole was the "Greatest Wonder in the Exhibition." We were gathering around it, and speaking of it, on the very day the Queen was opening the Crystal Palace. We had not been there, and we had not heard the names of ten thousand of the beautiful things that were assembled there; but we felt quite sure the Bible was the greatest wonder of them all. And we were not disappointed when we went. Our expectations, it is true, were far exceeded. We found that our heart had not conceived beforehand one-half of the splendour of the place. But still we found nothing to compare with the Bible. When we gazed on it, and remembered its history, and its contents, and its doings in the world, we felt that it stood alone in its glory.

To-day we have not an Exhibition to speak of. But we have a subject much older than the Exhibition, and one, too, whose memory will live longer—just because it forms a part of that Word which liveth and abideth for ever. Our May-pole to-day is "The History and Character of Solomon." I shouldn't wonder if it has been erected before by some former minister of this place, in the midst of some former crowd of young people, all of whom have gone away to that invisible world where Solomon has

been for nearly 3,000 years. And, perhaps, it was the means of teaching some of them, what he learnt only by the most painful experience, that neither wealth, nor pleasure, nor learning, nor anything but God himself, can satisfy the soul, and fill a man's nature with the life of pure enjoyment. May some of my present hearers receive this lesson to-day in a form that shall never be forgotten!

Solomon was born in a country much warmer than ours. Its May-days were not the dawn of summer, but the very middle of harvest. But they were as bright as any summer day that has ever shone on England. The latter rains fall in Palestine in April, and cease before the 1st of May, and then the sky becomes cloudless, and the sun shines out in his majesty, and the land rejoices in warmth and plenty. Here was Solomon born, 1033 B.C., when his father, David, was already upwards of sixty years of age. This young prince was only ten years old at the time of the rebellion and unhappy death of his brother Absalom. And who knows but he may have seen his father, as he went up to the chamber over the gate and wept, and may have heard the bitter dirge in which he gave vent to the distress of his heart, as he went up, and said, "O, my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." And, if he did, these words were likely to produce an impression that would not soon be forgotten.

Eight years after, when David, who was now old and stricken in years, was failing in strength, and evidently approaching the end of his life, another of his sons aspired to the throne, not with a view to dethrone his father, as did Absalom, but with a view to supplant Solomon, whom David had nominated his successor. Adonijah was much older than Solomon, having been born in Hebron, when that highland city was the capital of the kingdom, before Jerusalem was wrested from the Jebusites. And, I daresay, he thought himself better entitled to reign than the stripling Solomon. Now that his father could not hold the sceptre firmly or long, Adonijah "exalted himself, and said, I will be king." He prepared him, at the same time, chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. The old general, Joab, who had fought so often and successfully by the side of David, joined him, and so did Abiathar, the priest. And away they went one day out of the city, down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, near where the valley of the sons of Hinnom runs into it. And there, beside the well of Rogel, not far from the village of Siloam, they slew sheep, and oxen, and fat cattle, and prepared a great feast, and invited the king's sons and the king's servants to partake of it, and quite expected that they would all proclaim Adonijah king, and that he would return to the city in triumph, and be hailed in its streets as the king of Israel. Meantime, there was a counter plot

got up, quietly but cleverly. The feeble old king, who needed to be nursed, rather than disquieted by such troubles as these, knew nothing of what was going on, till the mother of Solomon and the prophet Nathan came and told him. And he awoke as from a slumber, and, with all the promptness and vigour of former days, he declared his will, and told them what to do, and commanded them to do it at once. "Take with you the servants of your lord," he said, "and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon; and let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anoint him there king over Israel; and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save King Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah" (1 Kings i. 33). And this they did. While the friends of Adonijah were feasting in the valley on the south-east of Jerusalem, Solomon was anointed king, and crowned in the valley on the west of the city. And just as Adonijah and his friends were finishing their feast, they heard the distant sound of the acclamations with which the streets of the city rang, when Solomon rode along in procession, on the king's mule, towards the palace, to sit on the throne of his father David. And when they understood the cause of the uproar, whose murmurs had reached them down in that secluded spot, they broke up in

confusion, and every man fled away for safety. Adonijah fled to the tabernacle, and laid hold of the horns of the altar as his refuge. And Solomon promised security to his life if he proved himself a peaceful and worthy subject. But, not long after, it became too evident that the young king's brother and his old friends were secretly plotting against him, and it was decreed that they could not live consistently with the safety of the king and of his throne. This seems a very harsh measure; but Solomon cannot be charged with being fond of blood, and he must have felt there was an inevitable necessity for the severity which he exercised. In the course of about a year, "the kingdom," we are told, "was established in the hand of Solomon."

See the young monarch now fairly seated on his throne. His enemies are removed, and he holds a peaceful sceptre. He is a fine young man, only nineteen years of age, with refined and magnificent tastes, a lover of peace and learning. Moreover, "he loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David." What would you not expect of such a man? But there are two things mentioned at the very outset which forbode evil. They are as clouds not bigger than a man's hand, but by and bye they will cover the whole moral horizon with blackness. He "loved the Lord," we are told; "*only* he sacrificed and burned incense in high places." This indicated a lurking superstition which regarded high

places as peculiarly pleasing to God. Such superstition, however, would soon have been burnt out of his soul by growing knowledge and advancing piety, but for another cause. The very first thing told us of Solomon, when quietly seated on his throne, is, that he "made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David." This was a most fatal piece of policy. Very natural and very wise it seemed, it is true. His country lay between the two most famous kingdoms in the world—Assyria and Egypt. To make war with each other on this mid-way battle field was the game which these kingdoms played at for ages after this period. And what so safe for Israel, in these circumstances, as a perpetual alliance with one of these mighty powers? Besides, what so desirable, in the eye of such a youth, as a marriage alliance with the royal house of the most civilized and enlightened kingdom in the world? His love of peace and his love of refinement combined to direct his eye to Egypt, and to make him ambitious of the hand of an Egyptian princess. But still it was a fatal step. Alliances and marriages with idolaters were forbidden by the law of Moses. And Solomon lived to know and to see that it is an evil thing and bitter to disobey the voice of the Lord. His sin found him out after a long time. And so will it always be. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be

burned?" The fire may lie smoking and smouldering for a long time, and a man be scarcely conscious of its existence; but it is very tenacious of life, and when once it is fanned into a flame its destructiveness is irresistible. Solomon found it so to his cost. Let young people take warning. There is nothing they do with so little of religious principle as making choice of partners for life. Taste and worldly policy are the principles which usually determine it. And a connection, which is destined to have the most serious influence on the spiritual and eternal condition of the parties, is formed with reference to no higher motives than romantic tastes and temporal interests. No wonder if such marriages should prove a curse rather than a blessing. It is a miracle of mercy when persons so "unequally yoked" do not drag each other down to perdition.

But now we come to one of the most important and pleasing scenes in Solomon's life. The youthful king goes up to Gibeon to offer sacrifice, and the Lord appears to him in a dream by night, and says—"Ask what I shall give thee." Nothing can be more beautiful for its child-like simplicity and true wisdom than Solomon's choice: "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people which Thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, Thy servant an understanding heart to judge

Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" (1 Kings iii. 7). The weight of governing any people, and especially the chosen people of God, was very great for shoulders so young, and the best proof we can have of the wisdom he already possessed was that his choice now fell on wisdom, even "an understanding heart" to discharge the arduous and solemn functions of the office he had received from God. This is the wisdom Solomon asked—not wisdom in general, but wisdom for the discharge of the sacred trust he held as the king of God's people.

Some of my young friends may fancy that, as thus understood, there is nothing in the case of Solomon to serve the purpose of an example to them. But is there not? Think again. Are there not many of you who hold trusts, who occupy positions which require no small wisdom to hold and occupy them aright? Is your own wisdom sufficient? Are you independent of all divine teaching and guidance? Do you know perfectly what to do, and have you strength of your own to do it? If so, you are gods to yourselves.

But lest some should think that it is only a few special persons that are in positions of importance enough to be called on to make Solomon's choice, I wish to put it in a form that will include you all. You have a *body*. Is that no trust? Is it a matter

of course that you should use your body wisely and well? Do you need no heavenly teaching that you may present all your members as members of righteousness unto God? How will you discharge the great trust you have received in that body, so fearfully and wonderfully made? Then you have another still greater trust—a *mind* constituted in the image of God. This mind is, in the truest sense, *yourself*. The body is but your tent—the mind is *yourself*. And you are a trust in your own hands—and each of you must give an account of this himself. It matters little according to what system we describe the powers of this inner man. Each one is conscious of these powers by whatever name they are called, and in whatever order they are reckoned. You think—you feel—you will. These are three monosyllables—think, feel, will—which involve in them more than three worlds. Thought, emotion, choice! How easy to say the words, and how familiar we are with the things! But what heights and depths of glory and debasement, of enjoyment and suffering, of holiness and wickedness, they involve! Think you that you have wisdom enough to guide you that your thoughts shall all be true, your emotions all pure, your will all holy? If not, follow Solomon's example, and ask of God the understanding heart that shall enable you to exercise your high trust for His glory and your own eternal good.

Young men and women setting out in life are in

a position of great difficulty and responsibility. It is somewhat like the position of the fleet of outward bound ships which you sometimes see at anchor at Gravesend. If you have paused to reflect you have, probably, thought of the riches they have on board, of the perils of the long voyage they have in prospect, and the risks there are that they shall not see the end of it in safety. And perhaps a spontaneous prayer of "God speed to them," has ascended from your very heart of hearts. Now you young men and women are setting out on a voyage of far greater peril, and which may be attended with far greater damage. You are just leaving port, and you carry in your bosom greater treasures than were ever placed on board of an East Indiaman. And of these treasures you are not proprietors but stewards, and at the peril of your life you must deliver them up safely at the end of your voyage. Think you, then, that you have all the wisdom you need for such a trust? Is your knowledge of the practical seamanship of life so perfect, and your means of weathering every storm so complete, that you have no need to cry to God for help? If not, follow Solomon's example, and ask of God an understanding heart.

The reign of Solomon now became everything that heart could wish. The structure of which David had laid the foundation by his prowess and arms, was built up by the impression which went

abroad of the wisdom and magnificence of his peaceful successor. Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms from the river Euphrates, in the east, to the land of the Philistines, on the coast of the Mediterranean, towards Egypt, on the west. And the monarchs of these kingdoms brought tribute and acknowledged his supremacy all the days of his life. "And he had peace on all sides round about him." And there was internal peace in his kingdom likewise. Unlike the troubled times of his illustrious father, "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba." (1 Kings iv. 21—25.) "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts and fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom."

What a picture! An Alexander, careering through

the nations, and leaving his track in devastation and blood—a Bonaparte, erecting an Imperial throne on the ruin of the liberties of Europe, and at the cost of millions of lives—we may sometimes call such men great, and their actions brilliant, but it is such greatness and brilliance as might be ascribed to the powers of the Prince of the Devils. We stand aghast, and weep in bitterness, that this fair world should be given up to the sweeping ravages of these comets of destruction. But look at Solomon. He sits on the throne of the small kingdom of Palestine, not larger in extent than the fourth part of England. He cultivates the arts of peace. He studies natural science. He is a poet and a philosopher, and, at the same time, a judge of consummate wisdom and the purest equity. And, by the force of these characters, he attracts the admiring gaze of all the civilized nations around, and kingdoms, which owe him no natural allegiance, offer voluntary homage to his throne, and are glad to enjoy some of the reflection of his glory. This is a picture of beauty—find it in any age. And all the more beautiful for the age in which you do find it. It tempts one to pause and rest amid the dreary wastes of human history, and helps him to feel that the world is not altogether outcast, and given over to grow nothing but thorns and briars.

It would be aside from my present purpose to describe all the great works which distinguished the

reign of Solomon. It is said of a Roman emperor that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble. This is much more true of Solomon in relation to the capital of his kingdom. "He made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones." The ships which went out from Eziongeber, at the head of the Red Sea, traded in all the natural wealth of the Arabian, and African, and, perhaps, Indian coasts. The great Tadmor, in the wilderness, whose magnificent ruins still fill European travellers with wonder, was originally built by Solomon, and was the emporium of all the traffic of the East, across the Euphrates and the great Syrian desert, with the nations of the West. Controlling, as thus Solomon virtually did, the commercial relations of the Eastern and Western world, he acquired a wealth and an influence which it is difficult to estimate. Jerusalem was not only filled with splendour, but, under the patronage of its learned monarch, was the scene of zoological gardens and museums, such as no city had ever yet seen.

But the most memorable of his works was the temple on Mount Moriah, in which the God of heaven condescended to manifest a special presence by a bright supernatural cloud in its inner sanctuary. And more glorious by far than the outward structure was that sublime prayer which he offered at its dedication—1 Kings viii.

Seven years were spent in the erection of this temple, and thirteen in the erection of a palace for

himself. "And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, that the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments; then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel." 1 Kings ix. 1-5.

But now comes the danger. 'Tis a fearful thing to get all one's worldly wishes. 'Tis more than most men can stand. Absolute power is a terrible corrupter. Will Solomon be found proof against its seductions? Will he stand firmly on that lofty pinnacle which he has attained, without becoming giddy? Alas! alas! The scroll of his history becomes henceforward blotted and disfigured, and covered with records of lamentation and woe.

The temple stands as it did on Mount Moriah. Its gates are not shut nor its altars demolished. But

look across the brook Kidron. What are those proud fabrics that rear their heads on the Mount of Olives? They are the idol temples built for the gods of Moab and of Ammon. The hands which lavished all the appliances of imperial wealth and power on a temple for Jehovah, have now enshrined Chemosh and Moloch in rival temples, within full view of the very place where the glory of the Lord still shines in the Holy of Holies. The very lips from which flowed that stream of purest and loftiest devotion at the consecration of the temple, offer homage to the abominations of the heathen. Walk around Jerusalem, the place which God has chosen for himself, and on all the surrounding heights you find a shrine, or an altar, or a sanctuary, bearing the name of some worthless and polluted idol, and all these are the work of Solomon. Surely the wise man has become a fool. The king has lost his right mind. David's son is beside himself.

“So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn which once
he saw!

The glory from his gray hairs gone.

Of all we loved and honoured, nought save power
remains;

A fallen angel's pride of thought, still strong in
chains.

All else is gone; from those great eyes the soul
has fled:

When faith is lost, and honour dies, the man is
dead.”

But, surely, there must have been a cause, or perhaps, many causes. The beginning of the evil must, of course, be found in those remains of corruption which survive in the best of hearts. And there was, as it appears to me, a two-fold stimulus to give life, and power, and supremacy to those remains. You will remember the fatal mistake which Solomon committed in his youth in the marriage of an Egyptian princess. When speaking of it we predicted that his sin would find him out. And now the poison has taken effect. The influence of Pharaoh's daughter seemed, for a long time, inoperative. Solomon was too fervent and zealous in the service of God to be held back even by her loved hand. But a continual dropping wears the very stones. The continual presence of one so loved and honoured was sufficient, at least, to make idolatry less hateful than it ought to be.

Add to this, Solomon's love of external grandeur. In so far as his tastes went in the direction of peace rather than of war, we commend them. The glory of peaceful magnificence is better than the glory of warlike conquest. But Solomon's tastes were a snare to him. He loved outward show much more than we could have expected so wise a man to do. We wonder that a man who could appreciate science and learning, and who, moreover, had spiritual tastes to purify and elevate his soul, should have set his heart so much on outward splendour. But so it

was, and this was his ruin. The law of God forbade the rulers of Israel to multiply horses; but Solomon must be, in all respects, the first king of his time. "And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen." The law of God forbade the rulers of Israel to multiply wives unto themselves, that their heart turn not away; but still Solomon must be the greatest man of his age, and he took to himself a thousand wives. Seven hundred of them were princesses in their own right. And, we doubt not that it was the love of magnificence, more than sensual indulgence, that induced the King of Israel to form so huge a seraglio. "The king who reigned in Persia in the early part of this century was reputed to possess wives and concubines scarcely less numerous than those of the Hebrew monarch. The same consideration of state which leads a Western prince or noble to multiply horses leads an Eastern prince to multiply wives, with often as little of personal consideration in the one case as in the other." We do not say that a love of display and the ambition to surpass all the kings of the earth was the only motive which led the Hebrew monarch to multiply wives; but it was, probably, the primary and the chief. And he paid dear for it. His wives turned away his heart from God. They who were, in one sense, his implicit slaves, became his rulers. Each one of them must worship her own god, and receive

from her king the gratification of all the means necessary for this end. And Solomon consented, and built high places, we are told, for all his strange wives. "And the Lord was angry with him, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing that he should not go after other gods." And no wonder. Such perverseness and ingratitude might well make angels weep and devils triumph.

What will Solomon do now? How will he fill the void that is occasioned by the absence of that Divine favour which had heretofore been his life? There is no conceivable expedient to which he does not apply himself. He makes wisdom, in its scientific and speculative forms, his study more than ever. He tries to fathom the depths of this world's being and providence, and perhaps makes out a system, in the main, like the modern theory which finds in all religions substantially the same thing; which sees no difference between the worship of Jehovah, Jove, and Baal; and recognizes in all rituals alike the strugglings of the soul after what philosophers call the absolute. And he looks on this invention of his speculative mind, and it seems very beautiful. But while he gazes upon it its real features become gradually distinct; and they are dark, and haggard, and hypocritical; a vile apology, and nothing more, for casting aside the love and service of the true

God. And he dashes his theory in pieces, and exclaims, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And now he betakes himself to mirth, and laughter, and wine and pleasure, and throws himself into a very fever and delirium of sensual enjoyment. And so long as he can keep at it, and banish reflection, he dreams himself into a paradise of delights. But he awakens to feel that he has been practising a deep-planned imposture upon himself. And as he dashes the cup of pleasure from his lips, it is his mortification again to exclaim, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." But his resources are not yet exhausted. There remains all the magnificence which had made him the envy of the world. He had made him great works; he had builded him houses; he had planted him vineyards; he had made him gardens and orchards, and planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit: he had gathered him also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; so he had become great, and increased more than all that were before him in Jerusalem. (Eccles. ii.) And now this magnificence must be his God, for he has no God besides. And he must make the experiment to find good, if he can, in the creature, because he has forsaken the Creator. And this experiment he made with the greatest zest, for whatsoever his eyes desired he kept not from them, nor withheld his heart from any joy. Some of you would scarcely credit the result if you hadn't

it under his own seal and signature. "Then I looked," he says, "on all the works my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Poor, wretched man! How could he find profit without God?

These experiments Solomon does not make in succession, but he combines them. He tries them all together, and hopes the one will make up what the other wants. But to no purpose. This also is vanity. At last he is wearied in the greatness of his way. He has caused his heart to despair, and he must either come back to God or sink beneath the splendours of his own state. And return, we believe, he did. The great sermon of the Book of Ecclesiastes was written when he awoke from his apostacy. In that sermon he, as it were, lives over again all his bitter experiences, to present them vividly and impressively before the eye of the world. And his last words are—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." He had brought himself into the very depths of guilt and despair by an opposite course; and now, in old age, he learns the lesson of his youth, that heartfelt and practical religion is

everything ; wealth, and fame, and pleasure nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit.

Now, my dear young friends, shall we let Solomon have lived in vain, care nothing for his experiments and discoveries, and sail along across the sea of life without any attention to the directions laid down in the chart which he prepared for after voyages at so terrible a cost ? What does the sea captain do when he leaves port ? Stow away all his charts in the ship's hold, and never look at them, and boast that he will find out everything for himself, and be indebted to no man for his knowledge of the rocks, and shoals, and coasts, and currents, and tides, and winds of the sea he has to cross ? How would you like to sail on board a ship with a master that should do this ? I trow, not at all. Well, Solomon performed the voyage we have to perform now. He had a noble ship, an ample crew, splendid winds. He was very observant of everything, and prepared a chart, in which he laid down with great accuracy what might be of use to those that were coming after him. And there you find him marking, with streaming eyes and a trembling hand, the rocks on which, through his own folly, he lay stranded for a long time, and on which his ship must have gone to pieces but for the mercy of God. Some of these rocks lie in your way, and they are as dangerous as ever. Many a man, through not heeding Solomon's chart, has gone on them and perished. We wish to

save you from this end. And in order to do this we would say—‘Let the Word of God, of which Solomon’s experience is one very important portion, be your chart; let the fear of God be your ballast; and let no wind fill your sails but the favour of God.’ And then, when we look for you at the end of your voyage, we shall find you not undone for ever, but safely at anchor within the haven of eternal rest.

Now to conclude. I would say to you, my dear young friends—*Begin well*. Solomon never repented of having remembered his Creator in the days of his youth; but, oh! what bitterness it cost him that he had forgotten Him in his old age. And there is no counsel into which he seems to throw more of his heart than this: “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” And if he sees a youth turning away contemptuously, and resolved to have his own evil way, he throws after him these admonitory words: “Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” And he must be a fool indeed, who, with these words in his ears, perseveres in ungodliness and sin.

Begin well, we say. But if you would you must

know your Creator as your Saviour. You have sinned against Him. You have come short of rendering to Him the glory that is due to His name. And if He should mark your iniquities, and visit you according to your transgressions, outer darkness must be your portion. But He delighteth in mercy. And the best proof of it is, that He gave His Son to die, the Just One instead of the unjust. You must flee to Him for mercy. It only flows through His mediation. There is no other name whereby you may be saved. The good beginning is that which takes its rise from the Cross on which He died. Get your sins forgiven through the efficacy of His atoning blood. Get your hearts filled with His love. And then go on your way rejoicing, the restored child of God, the privileged heir of a brighter crown than Solomon's.

Having begun well, beware of everything that would turn away your heart from God. It may be that by faith you see the light of the celestial city shining brightly, and alluring you to its joys. But the distance to it is great, and the road is encompassed with dangers. On the one hand you will hear the syren voice of pleasure, and on the other the threatening roar of terror; and while you are listening to the one or startled by the other, you may fall over some precipice, or into some slough of despond, from which nothing but a miracle of mercy can save you. Beware of everything of the

sort. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be established." Choose Christ as your Saviour from guilt and sin. Lean on His arm as your protector from evil. Be deaf to everything that will take you from His side ; and cleave to Him at every cost and hazard, for He is the soul's ALL in life and in death.

" He is a path, if any be misled ;
He is a Robe, if any naked be ;
If any chance to hunger, He is bread ;
If any be a bondman, He is free ;
If any be but weak, how strong is He !
To dead men, Hope is He ; to sick men, Health ;
To blind men, Sight ; and to the needy, Wealth—
A pleasure without loss, a treasure without stealth."

SHALL I FOLLOW CHRIST?

Luke ix. 57—61.

WHO is He that I should follow Him? Is He entitled to require that I should? Gamaliel was a great Rabbi, and many disciples followed him. Cæsar was a great conqueror, and many soldiers followed him to battle and to glory. But who is Christ? We answer, a better teacher than Gamaliel, a mightier ruler than Cæsar; His right to your heart and service is of an order to which no human teacher or prince can aspire. "In the beginning," says one who was taught of God to write His history, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." John the Baptist bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me." This mysterious visitant to our world, though He bore a human form and wore a peasant's garb, go where he would, saw nothing which His

own hands had not made, no life which His own power did not still sustain. The valleys rich in beauty, the mountains great in majesty, the silver waters of the Sea of Galilee—these were the works of His hands. Those men whom He encountered everywhere, men of high degree and of low degree, men from the east with their enchantments, men from the west with their swords; men of Judæa, lettered scribes, unlettered fishermen, proud pharisees, rapacious publicans; all were the work of His hands, and the subjects of His throne. But that pride, that rapacity, those many-coloured vices which degraded the land, were not His. Men had given themselves over to Satan, they had corrupted their ways, and incurred eternal death. And He, instead of taking the besom of destruction, and sweeping them from the soil which their presence cursed, assumed their nature, stood in their midst, lifted up a standard of grace and truth, and said, "Follow me." He would lead them out of the state of sin and guilt, of bondage and condemnation, in which they were, to enjoy forgiveness of sin, spiritual freedom, the Divine favour, and the hope of heaven.

Say now whether Jesus Christ, being true God as well as true man, had not a right to go to the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, to the publicans at their toll-booths, to the pharisees in their synagogues, to the buyers and sellers in their market-places, and say to all men, "Follow me." He might have claimed

a right to destroy the Jews as of old He destroyed the Canaanites. But the right which He did claim was to deliver them from the devil, to open their prison doors, to renew their hearts, and to save their souls.

There were some that felt and acknowledged His claims, and unhesitatingly forsook all and followed Him. This they did without understanding very perfectly how much of blessing He was to bestow on them or how He was to bestow it. Enough that He was the Son of the living God, and had the words of eternal life—to whom else could they go? And He accepted them with all their defects, and taught them wisely and patiently as they were able to bear. There were some whose hearts' "following" of Him was unreserved and undoubted, but whom He dismissed, like the saved demoniac of Gadara, to be witnesses for Him among their kindred and neighbours, rather than called to be attendants on His person. There were others, however, who saw His claims clearly and felt them strongly, "*but*"—" *but*"—oh! that dreadful little word, when it endangers the salvation of the soul! It is the rock, scarcely concealed beneath the surface of the water, on which the ship strikes when in full sail, and because of which it sinks like lead within sight of the haven. *But*—there is some one condition which they would like to lay down for themselves, some one exception which they would take to the absoluteness of the

requirement, some one concession which they think might be made to their feelings, perhaps some one sin which they would fain retain.

There is nothing new under the sun. The experiences of the days of Christ's personal ministry are re-enacted over again in every age of the world, and in our own age not less than in others.

I.

"I will follow Thee," says one, "*But*—my kindred oppose. Have patience with me till they are gone, or, at least, conciliated." To this plea there is only one response, stern it may seem, but loving as it is stern—"Now or never." The claims of kindred are most sacred, and Jesus Christ would be the last to make light of them. For thirty years He discharged the duties of an obedient son under the humble roof of Mary at Nazareth. And in the hour of his deepest agony, when the weight of a world's guilt wrung from him the cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" his heart turned in love to the mother whose soul was then pierced by the sword of which the aged Simeon had spoken (Luke ii. 35), and in the loving care of the beloved disciple He bequeathed to her a home from which she was removed only to behold His glory in heaven. But there are higher claims than those of parents. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not

worthy of me," said that same Christ who Himself did so much honour to father and mother. "Whoso doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother and sister and brother."

It is strange, passing strange, that parents who have received their children from God should seek to withhold their children from God's service. But if they do, children are not left to choose for themselves whom they will serve. Necessity is laid upon them. They must obey God rather than man. And sometimes great is their reward even in this world.

In one of the Western States of America the family of a wealthy but proud and irreligious man were recently attracted with their neighbours to a prayer meeting. On hearing of it, the father summoned his family together, and told them decisively that if any of them went to that prayer meeting and "got religion" as he called it, he should disinherit and banish them from his house. But the eldest daughter chose a "better part" than an earthly inheritance, and continued to go, and soon found peace in believing. When an opportunity occurred for the avowal of her faith, she did not shrink from declaring her humble hope of salvation through a crucified Saviour. But outside the window of the school-house where this avowal was made there were standing some who went immediately and told her father. And when she went home that night she met him standing in the doorway with a large quarto

Bible in his hand. "Maria," he said, "I have been told that you have publicly professed to-night that you have got religion. Is that so?" "Father," said the girl, "I love you, and I think I love the Saviour too." He opened the Bible to a blank leaf—for the *printed* page, alas, he had small regard—and pointing with his finger, he said, "Maria, whose name is that!" "It is my name, sir." "Did I not tell you that I would disinherit you if you got religion?" "Yes, sir." "Well, I must do it. You cannot come into my house." And tearing the leaf out of the Bible, "There," said he, "do I blot out your name from among my children. You can go."

The young Christian, "cast out" for the sake of Christ, went to the house of a pious lady in the neighbourhood, and heard no more from her father for three weeks. One morning she was surprised to see his carriage drive up to the door. She ran out and said to the driver, "What is the matter, James?" "Your father is very sick," said the coachman, "and thinks he is going to die; and he is afraid he shall go to hell for his wickedness and for the grievous wrong he has done you in disinheriting you and turning you from his house. He wants you to jump into the carriage and come home as quickly as possible."

The young lady was soon in her father's arms. She found him sick, it is true, but she soon saw that he was only sin-sick. She talked with him; she

prayed with him ; she endeavoured to lead him to Christ. In three days the father, mother, two brothers, and a sister, were all rejoicing in hope, making the whole family heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Thus was the *disinherited* made the honoured means, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, of unspeakable blessings to all her father's household, by going straightforward in her Master's service. "What a glorious crown of rejoicing will be hers in the great day when the Lord comes to reckon up His jewels."*

II.

"I will follow Thee," says another, "*But*—the consequences are often hard to bear. Is there no way of doing my duty to Thee and saving my soul without persecution." What can *you*, dear young friends, sons and daughters of England, be called to suffer for Christ's sake? Not death, not exile, not imprisonment, not civil wrong of any kind. In times of old, men of whom the world was not worthy were compelled to wander in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. Five times was the Apostle Paul compelled to bare his back to receive of the

* 'The Power of Prayer,' by S. J. Prime, D.D.

Jews "forty stripes save one;" thrice was he beaten with rods, once was he stoned. Peril for Christ was his daily life. In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, he prosecuted his holy calling. But none of these things moved him. Nor was he moved from his steadfastness even when he was led out of Rome in charge of the Roman lictors to lay his head on the block and die for Christ. When Peter had thrice avowed his love to Jesus, the Saviour responded, not unkindly, but solemnly—"When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." "This spake He," we are told, "signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, '*Follow me.*'" Death, a cruel death, was thus set before Peter as the "sure and certain" end of his devotion to Christ. But the requirement was imperative—"Follow me." Nor did Peter any longer count this a hard saying. From this hour he took up his cross ungrudgingly and followed Jesus.

The glorious army of martyrs has received many

accessions even in our own age. In Madagascar many Christians, but recently raised out of the degradation of heathenism, have chosen to wear the chains of a perpetual servitude, and many to be hurled over a lofty precipice to a speedy death, rather than deny the Lord that bought them. And even of the effeminate sons of India many, during the recent mutiny, have boldly avowed their faith in the "crucified One," with the drawn sword of the fanatical Mussulman extended over their head. But what have *you* to fear? Reproach and cruel mockings, it may be. In the companionship of the workshop, of the school, or perhaps of home, you may be called hypocrite or saint. The former, if deserved, will be an unmingled disgrace; the latter, if deserved, will be your highest honour. Neither term, when used in scorn, will be easy to bear. But there is something else that is still worse to bear. By the ordinance of God the best consequences attend duty, the worst attend sin. Hear Christ. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear Him."

But, dear young friends, talk of consequences keeping you back from following Christ! *He* was not deterred by consequences from undertaking *your* redemption. He foresaw the scorn, the poverty,

the shame, the agony of His life and of His death—and yet He threw Himself into the awful breach which sin had made. And never, never once, did He falter in His purpose to rescue you from death. They that sat in the gate spoke against Him, and He was the song of the drunkards. Reproach broke His heart and He was full of heaviness. And He looked for some one to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but He found none. They gave Him gall for His meat, and in His thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink. (Psalm lxix.) And all this, poor sinner, He bore for you. Had He cared only for Himself, He would have breathed destruction upon His enemies and walked over their dead corpses to a throne of vengeance, or would have dropped the mortal veil in which He was clothed and ascended to a visible throne in the heavens amid the welcome shouts of angels. But to save you He would not save Himself. The darkness thickened around Him, the storm increased, and nature shrank from the dead conflict. But there lay man's soul, an utter wreck, with no hope but one to save it from being everlastingly engulfed—and that one hope was in His love. And through the darkness and the storm that love pressed onward, and bore our sins, and made atonement for our guilt, and planted its flag of triumph on the very altar of its agonies, bearing the never-to-be-forgotten inscription, "It is finished." And now that Jesus Christ

has done all this for you, you shrink from enduring the taunt or the scorn of your fellow sinners, though it is for your own sake, your soul's sake, you are called to bear it. Shame! shame! on the man or woman that is ashamed of Jesus! His track will be followed through the lurid abodes of the lost by the ghost of his own conscience, exclaiming, "Shame! shame!"

A young man of wealth and of fashion in the city of New York found out recently that he had a soul to be saved or lost. He felt himself on the brink of eternal despair, and was bowed down under the load of his sins. For a time he sought relief and found it not. The requirements of the Divine law stared him in the face, and he felt justly condemned. Day after day he went about with his head bowed down like a bulrush, and day after day the burden became more insupportable. His young wife and his sister were, like himself, devoted to the pleasures of the world. They had been all well mated in the love of fashionable folly. And the wife and sister now looked on this husband and brother with mute astonishment.

The young man lost his burden at last, where John Bunyan's "Christian" lost his—at the foot of the cross. And believing that God for Christ's sake had forgiven his sins, he determined that he would never be ashamed of Christ. He would acknowledge and honour Him everywhere. The opportunity soon

came. He was returning to his home in the evening. "Now," said he, "I must honour and obey God in my family. I must set up family worship." "Oh, no," said the tempter, "not yet. Don't be in a hurry. Take time. Get a little stronger, and then you can go better." "I must begin to-night. I do not know what my wife and sister will say; but it is a duty, and I am resolved to do it, and trust God for the rest. I must pray in my family." "Not to-night," said the tempter, "You don't know how to pray. You have never prayed much. Wait and learn how first." "No, no, I *must* pray to-night, I will pray to-night. Get thee behind me, Satan!"

He passed into his dwelling, and into his library, and there before God, his heavenly Father, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, he poured out his heart and asked for strength from on high, to assist him in his duty.

When he met his wife that evening, she saw at a glance that a great change had taken place in him, and she saw it with awe, but said nothing. At length he said, "My dear wife, would you have any objections to our having family worship?" After a moment's surprise and hesitation, she said, politely, "Certainly not, if it is your pleasure." "Bring me a Bible then, please, and let us read and pray."

He read a chapter, and then kneeled down; but his wife and sister sat on their seats, and he felt that he was alone upon his knees. He lifted up his eyes

to God and cried in the bitterness of his soul, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And gathering strength, he went on in his prayer, pouring out his most earnest cries and supplications that God would have mercy on his beloved wife and sister. The heart of the wife was melted and overcome, and she slipped from her seat upon her knees beside him, and putting her arms around his neck, ere she was aware, she burst out into an agonising cry to the Lord Jesus for mercy on her soul; and then the sister knelt down by his other side, and she too put her arms around him, and burst into a flood of tears.

He continued to pray; he devoted himself and those with him to God. He confessed and bewailed his and their manner of life hitherto; he pleaded the promises of God to all those that seek Him, and with unspeakable joy he made mention of the amazing grace of God in the pardon of his sins, and he besought that they all might find together forgiveness and peace through a crucified Saviour. The surrender was fully made. And as the three rose from their knees, it was to acknowledge each to the other what new resolutions and consecration they each had made during the progress of that first prayer in the family, of all they were and all they would be to Christ.

Since that first prayer, God has been daily acknowledged by the same circle. And from that circle they go out day by day in their walks of usefulness,

and on their errands of mercy, seeking out the perishing, ten thousand times happier than they were before. And long as eternity endures will they remember that first family prayer meeting. Who can estimate the injury that would have accrued to that young man's own soul, and the loss to the souls of others, had he yielded to the tempter and been ashamed of Christ ?

III.

“I will follow Thee,” says a third, “*But*—there are some of Thy teachings that are hard to receive, and some of Thine assumed characters that are hard to accept.” Thus was it of old. There gathered a great multitude around Jesus on one occasion, deeply impressed with the idea that He was the very King of Israel. He had fed thousands with a few loaves ; He had walked on the sea ; He had healed the sick ; He had cast out devils. It was never so seen in Israel. But the eager crowd was not prepared to hear Him say, “I am the bread of life that came down from heaven.” “That came down from heaven !” they repeated, in wondering doubt. “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? How is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven ?” When He said, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,” their astonishment was

increased, and they strove among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" And it was changed into positive repugnance when He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "This is a hard saying," murmured many of his would-be disciples, "Who can hear it?" And from that time they went back and walked no more with Him.

These were the prototypes of the Rationalists and Unitarians of modern times—except in one respect. The Jewish doubters and objectors went back and walked no more with Jesus. They did not claim to be called His disciples when they would not own Him in a character which He declared to be essential to their salvation. But modern rejectors of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus and of His atonement plead to be allowed to bear His name and to be numbered with His followers. "I will follow Thee," says one of this order; "never man spake, never man lived, like Thee. If Thou be not true God, there is a *divine* sublimity in Thy character. If Thou has made no atonement for sin, Thou hast taught men how to live. I will follow Thee—oh! let me—on my own terms and in my own way. Do not exact that I shall call Thee God; do not exact that I shall believe in Thy propitiation for sin."

In those who take this ground there is often found

so much beautiful sentiment, and so much admiration, approaching to adoration, of the character of Christ, that it seems hard to decline the homage which they would render to Him. But I see no other response which we can imagine the Saviour to offer, consistently with the ground which He assumed of old, than one that shall amount to this: "My atonement must be thy very life. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me. Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye can have no life in you."

Jesus Christ was the model of meekness and lowliness. But His lowliest deeds and lowliest sayings were pervaded with a consciousness of His own inherent and unchangeable dignity. "When the Spirit of truth is come," He said on one occasion, "He shall *glorify* ME." Now this must have been an extraordinary assumption on His part, if He was not indeed the human shrine of the Eternal God. But believe that He was this, and His words will be felt to be in perfect harmony with His human lowliness. Moses and Jesus are compared in the New Testament—the one the founder of the Mosaic economy, the other of the Christian—both economies being of God, and both founders being faithful to their commission. But mark the difference. Moses was followed for a thousand years by prophets whose work it was to enforce and sustain the institutions which he founded, but not one of them in one single

utterance either incidentally or otherwise *glorified* Moses. Jesus Christ was followed for half a century by inspired apostles, whose work it was further to establish and extend the spiritual kingdom which He had founded, and every one of them made it his business to glorify Christ. It was the same Spirit of God that guided both the prophets that did not glorify Moses and the apostles that did glorify Christ. The institutions of Moses were sacred and divine, as are those of Christ. But between Moses and Christ *personally* there was all the difference there is between a servant and a lord, between the human and the Divine. Once Moses had done his work, Judaism was independent of him ; his name and history might be forgotten, Judaism would still live and thrive. But Christianity without Christ is nothing. *Himself* was essential to it in its infancy ; *Himself* is essential to it now that it is eighteen hundred years old. Any man of all the millions that lived when Moses lived might have been called of God, and endowed to do what Moses did. But of all beings in heaven and on earth, no one but Himself could have done or could have been endowed to do what Christ did. When Moses went up to heaven to receive his recompense of reward, he ceased to have any further living personal connection with the system which bore his name. But when Jesus ascended to heaven to receive the joy that was set before Him, He became the Living Lord and Ruler

of His earthly Church. And out of His fulness have all the members of His Church, from that time until now, received grace for grace. So that He was guilty of no proud assumption, He only stated a characteristic fact, essential to His faith, when He said, "The Spirit of God shall glorify ME."

It is impossible, then, that Christ should acknowledge any "following" of Him which does not heartily recognise His Divine dignity, and that atoning sacrifice which stands or falls with the doctrine of His true Godhead. Let us not take offence at Him, that while living as a man among men, He should say, "I came down from heaven;" or that, while crucified by wicked hands, He should say, "I give my life a ransom for many." Rather let us with grateful and adoring hearts fall down at His feet, and say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

IV.

"I will follow Thee," says another, "I adore Thy Godhead, I glory in Thy cross—*But*—I am so very guilty, so very unworthy, I must first see what I can do for myself." Was there ever folly like this? Look at yonder leper! He stands afar off! His leprosy is old and deep-seated. He has applied to priest and physician in vain. And there is Jesus who can heal him with a word. And he knows it. Others, whose condition was as hopeless as his own,

have already been healed. "*But*" he will make a last attempt. He may, perhaps, slightly mitigate his affliction, and then he will come to Jesus! Look at yonder blind man! From his birth he has been a stranger to the light of day, and often has he wondered what light is. Again and again has his blindness been declared incurable, and he has long since abandoned the hope of ever seeing the world in which he lives. But now he hears of one who can open the eyes of the blind, and he is encouraged to cry as some of his class have already done, "Son of David, have mercy on me." But instead of appealing to the power and mercy of the Son of David, he resolves inwardly to make a last attempt to open his own eyes. He will rub his eyes and strain his eyeballs, and by dint of Will he will, at least, prepare them for the entrance of the light of heaven. And while he thus trifles with the hour of his visitation, the Son of David passes by, and the glorious opportunity is lost for ever.

No such cases as these actually occurred in the days of our Lord's earthly ministry. The leprous, and the blind, and the lame, and the paralytic, were too sensitive to the evils under which they suffered, and too conscious of the impossibility of self-cure to delay on any ground their applications to the Mighty One who had brought the power of heaven down to relieve the miseries of earth. But if such had been their conduct, it would not have equalled thy folly,

O sinner! At thy prison door there stands a great deliverer. He will break the bars which confine thee in thy cell. Or, rather, He will unlock thy prison door, justice itself standing by and smiling approvingly. And with the consent of the very law under whose sentence thou liest, He will bring thee out to enjoy a full and irrevocable pardon. But no —“ Stay thy hand, O Saviour. Let me first try what I can do myself. Let me, at least, loosen my prison bars, and then I will accept and rejoice in Thy mercy.” Strange infatuation! Dost thou not know that “condemned already” is written on thy forehead, and what *can* a condemned man do to entitle him to his forfeited life? Nothing—absolutely nothing. Even if he succeeded, which he cannot do, in the entire renewing and perfect purifying of his character, that would not blot out the sentence that is recorded against him. He must come to Christ for the remission of past sin, with the confession of his guilt, and with no plea on his lips but the sacrifice of Calvary. A thousand years of preparation would go for nothing when they are over—the sinner must then come to Christ as he might have come at the first, in the humble character of a penitent, condemned by God and by his own conscience, to receive a pardon which, from its very nature, must be an act of unmingled grace, which is offered to all freely, and which is actually bestowed on all that believe in Christ.

V .

“I will follow Thee,” says another, “*But*—I know that it is Thy will that Thy followers should crucify and abandon all sin. Now there is one that I would spare. Is it not a little one ?” Few, if any, would avow this reason for halting between two opinions. No. They would be ashamed to do it. But it is true, notwithstanding, that such is the reason of the hesitancy and decision of many. They are not prepared to crucify the flesh with all its affections and lusts. And although they know, as we have just been teaching, that the pardon of sin is not to be bought by the price even of a pure life, they know likewise that the grace which bringeth salvation teacheth men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that the Saviour died to redeem men from all iniquity. They feel instinctively that to receive Christ, and at the same time consciously to cherish or practice sin, are violently contrary the one to the other. The warfare with sin may be life-long, but it must begin in earnest with the soul’s first self-surrender to Christ. And this is what they dread. This is the stumbling-block over which many fall in their half-formed desire to follow Christ. They are more sensitive to the danger of sin than to its evil. They do not loathe it as an abomination, though they tremble before it as a curse. And though they would gladly be wholly pardoned, they shrink from being wholly sanctified.

There is a dream recorded in the life of Major-

General Andrew Burn which, as it was blessed to him, may be instructive to us. On his return from France, after spending years in sin and folly, he heard of the sudden death of a beloved brother. The infidelity which had lent its sanction to his vices, and was his only comfort in the indulgence of them, appeared to him now in all its naked deformity. And it became his earnest desire to be a Christian. In this state of mind he dreamed that he was sitting, a little before daylight, with his deceased brother, on the wall of the parish churchyard with which they had been familiar in boyhood. His brother asked him if he would not go with him into the church. Immediately rising, they walked together towards the porch, and when they reached the inner door, the brother somehow or other passed in before him, and when he attempted to follow, the door, which slid down from above, was instantly let down more than half way, so that he now found it requisite to bend himself almost double before he could possibly enter. But as he stooped to try, the door continued falling lower and lower, till the passage became so narrow that he found it impracticable in that posture. Grieved to be left behind, and determined to get in if possible, he fell down on his hands, and tried to squeeze his head and shoulders through; but finding himself still too high, he kneeled down, crept, wrestled, and pushed eagerly, but all to no purpose. He now threw off all his

clothes, and crawled like a worm ; but being very desirous to preserve a fine silk embroidered waistcoat which he had brought from France, he kept that on in the hope of being able to carry it with him ; then laying himself flat on his face, he pushed, and strove, and soiled the precious waistcoat, but could not get in after all. At last, driven almost to despair, he stripped himself entirely, and forced his body between the door and the ground, till the rough stones and gravel tore all the skin and flesh off his breast, and, as he thought, covered him with blood. Perceiving, however, that he advanced a little, he continued to press in with more violence than ever, till at last he got safely through. As soon as he stood on his feet inside, an invisible hand clothed him in a long white robe ; and, as he looked round to view the place, he saw a goodly company of saints—among whom was his brother—all dressed in the same manner, partaking of the Lord's Supper. He sat down in the midst of them, and the bread and wine being administered to him, he felt a seraphic ecstasy which no mortal could express. He heard a voice call him three times by name, and tell him he was wanted at home. And so great was the joy of his soul that it awoke him out of his slumbers, and "made him start up in bed, singing the high praises of God."

Burn soon became a new man, and for three and forty years he served his God faithfully.

Christ must have the whole heart or He will have none. He demands much, it is true. He could ask no more, but then He could ask no less. To ask less would be to leave His work unfinished and the soul unsaved. And to plead for the sparing of even one sin is to betray an unhumbled and impenitent heart.

VI.

“I will follow Thee,” says another. “*But*—time enough yet. My heart is engaged at present with other things; I shall have more leisure by-and-by.” Has it then come to this, that God must wait your convenience? Your Maker must be content to receive you when you have nothing else to do, and think Himself honoured that you should deign to give yourselves to Him even then! That Lord of glory who veiled His brightness in human form, who carried your sins to yonder cross, and died to open for you a way of return to God, stands before you, and says, “Behold My hands and My feet, these are the prints of the cruel nails; behold My side, there did the spear penetrate to My already broken heart; behold My brow, stained not with dishonour, but with the blood that was shed for the remission of your sins. By these I beseech you, Be ye reconciled to God.” And you respond, “I will, *but not now*; I will when I have a more convenient season.”

Hear! O Heavens, and be astonished, O Earth! A

soul, a lost soul, stands in the presence of its Redeemer and will not be redeemed *till—till* it better suits its convenience! Ye mariners of England, when next the storm shall have wrecked your ship and you are clinging to its last spar or rope, and the lifeboat has reached you, and the strong arm of help is extended to you, push it away and say, “I value your kindness and I will accept your help, but just at this moment I have something else to do!” Ye fevered ones, between whom and death there is less than an inch’s breadth, the physician stands beside you with a heart beating with love, and a hand prepared to administer an infallible remedy. Say to him, “I have no wish to die, I appreciate thy love and thy skill, but I had rather sleep to-night and be healed to-morrow!” Ye poor, who are starving with hunger, who have fought the battle for bread with desperation for many years, help hath come to you at last; see the bread which an unseen hand hath brought to your door, and beside it gold in rich abundance to provide all you need all the days of your life; and when you gaze on that bread and on that gold, say, “How kind of my unknown friend! I will avail myself of his kindness, but at this moment I am not particularly an hungered or athirst; these unexpected supplies will be more welcome to-morrow.” Thou miserable convict under sentence of death, thy sin hath found thee out at last; thy prison-doors are doubly barred; listen, and thou wilt hear the work-

men's hammers as they build the scaffold on which thy judge hath sentenced thee to die. But hark again ! their work is arrested ; thy prison-door is gently but widely opened ; there stands before thee the messenger of thy sovereign ; in his hand he holds a deed of pardon, signed and sealed ; its benefit is proffered thee without money and without price ; only fall down and confess thy crime and believe in thy sovereign's mercy ; and with that deed of pardon in thy hand walk out of thy prison and live. But no. I see thee hesitate. Thou hast become used to thy prison. The terms are very favourable. But, after all, confession of crime is a hard requirement. Thou wilt think of it and determine to-morrow. Poor miserable convict, to-morrow will see thee a dead man ! Thy sovereign's offer is only for this moment. But hesitate another moment, and thy prison-doors will be barred once more ; slighted Mercy, with that life-offer in her hand, will return to her sovereign and leave thee in the hands of justice !

Yes ! my dear friends, if it must be so, if it can be so, let the shipwrecked seaman spurn the lifeboat, and the dying the physican, and the beggar the bread and gold, and the convict the proffered pardon, and let them talk of a more convenient season. But oh ! thou sinner, heir of immortality, with that awful curse on thy guilty head, insult not thus Incarnate Love—wrong not thus thine own soul. Thy Maker would be thy Redeemer. And, with a condescension

which fills heaven with wonder, He stands before thee to plead that thou wilt not destroy thyself.

The experiment of delay has been made a thousand times. The "foolish virgins," when their lamps went out, said to the wise, "Give us of your oil." But the wise answered, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and *the door was shut.*"

The soul that now pleads for a little more indulgence in sin, and says, "To-morrow I will turn to God," if to-morrow should bring disease and sudden death, will exclaim, in the agony of despair, "It is too late! I am lost, lost for ever!" "You cannot possibly magnify the danger of delay," said a young sailor at an American prayer-meeting. "You cannot believe it to be half as great as it is. I remember when in Panama, one of my brother sailors was taken very sick. I had previously on many occasions urged him to take Jesus as his Guide, Counsellor, and Friend. But his answer had ever been, 'Time enough yet.' That putting off, that delivering himself up to the power of Satan, who was constantly whispering in his ear, 'Time enough yet,' reached its fearful crisis at last. As he lay sick upon his mattress, his writhings and contortions betrayed the fever and pain that were within. But the fever of his soul was

causing more anguish than all his bodily ailments. I said to him, 'You need a Saviour now.' 'Oh,' said he, 'I have put off seeking Jesus too long.' I earnestly begged him to look at the Cross of Christ, and there learn what Jesus had done and suffered,' 'that a poor sinner like him might not perish, but have everlasting life.' But he replied, with choking sobs, 'Too late, too late!' 'Oh!' he cried, 'No rest for me. I am going to some place, I know not where!—oh, I know not where!' His head fell back upon the pillow. I cried, 'Ned, are you dying?' But all I heard was, through the gurgling in his throat, 'No rest!' and my dying shipmate was gone!" How solemnly do such facts enforce the admonition, "Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them!"

"*To-day*," then, "if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" Let the settlement of the great controversy between God and your souls be postponed till to-morrow, and to-morrow may see you a castaway from hope and heaven, drifting, drifting ever further towards the region of everlasting despair, and leaving nothing for Christian friends that they can do, but to weep over your lost souls such tears as their Master shed, when, from the slopes of Olivet, He beheld Jerusalem, and said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this

thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

Now, my dear young friends, will you follow Christ, or will you still interpose that fatal “*but*” between your own souls and eternal life ? His claims are undeniable. Your necessities are undeniable. And indecision is trifling with both. Take up your cross, then, and follow Him at once, whithersoever He goeth. He *may* lead you to suffering for His name’s sake, but He will lead you into no sin, no snare, no error. He will lead you out of your native “city of destruction” into the liberty and security of the sons of God. He will guide you into paths of truth and nobleness, and will at last present you before the presence of God with exceeding joy. Say, then, with Doddridge,

“ ’Tis done ! the great transaction’s done ;
 I am my Lord’s, and He is mine ;
 He drew me and I followed on,
 Glad to confess the voice Divine.

Now rest, my long-divided heart ;
 Fixed on this blissful centre, rest.
 With ashes who would grudge to part,
 When called on angels’ bread to feast ?

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
 That vow renewed shall daily hear :
 Till in life’s latest hour I bow,
 And bless in death a bond so dear.”

WITNESSES FOR CHRIST.



“So great a cloud of witnesses.”—Heb. xii. 1.

WE shall imagine ourselves, my dear young friends, crowding, not into a Christian sanctuary, but to Olympia or the Isthmus of Corinth, to join in the celebration of those Grecian games from which the apostle draws so many illustrations. Some of us are artists, and we are proudly carrying our paintings or sculptures to enter them for competition. Some of us are poets, and we are prepared to recite our verses in the ear of assembled Greece. Some of us are historians, and our compositions, we more than hope, will gain us renown and immortality. Others of us have been long and laboriously training ourselves to take part in those athletic games which awaken the enthusiasm of the young and the powerful. Suppose we choose the foot-race. The course is marked out. The goal is erected. A bright sun shines overhead. A “great cloud of witnesses” surrounds us. All Greece is looking on. The acclamations of the multitude cheer us, and at every stage put fresh life into our limbs. A few paces more and the prize is won.

The crown—it is a “corruptible” one, but has inspired the ambition of thousands—is put on our brow. Our native city opens its gates to receive us, like conquerors returned from the scene of mighty victories; and poets celebrate our fame. For such rewards, many have been content to live and to die. But better far, my dear young friends, to be English of the nineteenth century after Christ, than Greeks of the fifth or sixth before Him. A nobler race and a better prize invite your ambition. A cloud of witnesses which no man can number urge you to enter on the glorious course, and to persevere, amid all difficulty, till you reach the goal. And then yours will be not the crown of parsley or pine-leaf, but the crown of eternal life.

My intention this afternoon is to set before you the history and example of certain witnesses for Christ, selected from four classes: the first shall be taken from our POETS, the second from our HEROES and ADVENTURERS, the third from our STATESMEN, and the fourth from our men of PHILOSOPHY and SCIENCE.

Our first witness shall be a POET. And when I tell you that I have just returned from a visit to Olney, you will readily anticipate his name. Hear how he describes his own case, and what peace and happiness the gospel of Christ gave him—

“I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since; with many an arrow deep enfixed

My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One who had himself
Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore,
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live."

WILLIAM COWPER was born in 1731. He was a quiet, gentle, tender creature as ever lived. His mother died when he was only six years old, and the dear little fellow was overwhelmed with sorrow. At his first school he was singled out by a lad of fifteen years of age, as the butt of his cruel temper. The savage conduct of this youth so impressed him with a dread of his figure, that he was afraid to lift his eyes upon him higher than his knees, and he knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress. The poor afflicted boy did not become one whit happier when he became a student of law, and was preparing to practise at the bar. His good fortune in being presented to a lucrative situation connected with the House of Lords only brought on insanity. His dread of the ordeal of examination as to fitness for his office so preyed on his mind, that he sought to destroy himself. Though formerly, in his happiest hours, he had never been able to glance a single thought towards death without shuddering at the idea, he now wished for it, and found himself but

little shocked at the idea of procuring it for himself. One evening in November, 1763, as soon as it was dark, he went into an apothecary's shop and asked for a half-ounce phial of laudanum. In doing this, he affected as cheerful and unconcerned an air as possible. The shopman eyed him narrowly, but he managed his voice and countenance so as to deceive him. The day that required his attendance at the House of Lords was about a week distant, and he kept the bottle close in his side-pocket, resolved to use it when he should be convinced there was no other way of escape. Thus he wished to protract the horrid execution of his purpose. But Satan, he says, was impatient of delay. So out he sallied one day into the fields, where he intended to find some house to die in ; or, if not, determined to poison himself in a ditch, when he could meet with one sufficiently retired. Before he had walked a mile, the thought struck him that he might spare his life and transport himself to France. But while looking over his portmanteau with this view, the purpose of self-murder returned in all its force, and he hired a coach to drive him to Tower wharf, where he intended to throw himself into the river from the Custom House quay. But the tide was low, and there sat a porter on some goods as if to prevent him. "This passage to the bottomless pit (to use his own words) being mercifully shut against him," he returned to his chambers in the Temple, still intent on his purpose.

But I will not follow the sad tale any further. My object in telling it is to show how miserable he was, and how untrue it is that religion drove him mad. At this time he had no religion. But God interposed in mercy to disannul his covenant with death. And his efforts to destroy himself were frustrated by the Providence which would have him live to learn Christ's love, and be a blessing to the world. Up to this time he had felt no concern of a spiritual kind. He was as much unacquainted with Christ in all His saving offices—himself being witness—as if His blessed name had never reached him. Now a new scene opened before him. Conviction of sin took hold upon him. He felt that he had all the guilt of murder to answer for. A sense of God's wrath, and a deep despair of escaping it, instantly succeeded. The fear of death became now much stronger than the desire of it had been. His sins were set in array before him. He began to see and feel that he had lived without God in the world. As he walked to and fro in his chamber, he said within himself, "There never was so abandoned a wretch, so great a sinner!" The story of the barren fig-tree was to him a source of inconceivable anguish. He applied it to himself, with a strong persuasion that when the Saviour pronounced a curse upon it He had him in His eye, and pointed that curse at him. He never went into the street but he thought the people stared and laughed at him, and could hardly per-

suade himself but that the voice of his conscience was loud enough for every one to hear it. He saw himself a sinner—altogether and every way a sinner; but he saw not yet a glimpse of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. This he obtained first from conversation with a friend whom he used to consider an enthusiast, but whom he sent for now, with the conviction that if there was any balm in Gilead he must administer it. His friend spoke to him of the corruption of every man born into the world; and even in this doctrine, strange as it may seem, the afflicted soul found comfort. Something like hope dawned in his heart. “This doctrine,” he says, “set me more upon a level with the rest of mankind, and made my condition appear less desperate.” Next he insisted on the all-atoning efficacy of the blood of Jesus and of His righteousness for our justification. “While listening to this part of his discourse, and the Scriptures upon which he founded it, my heart began to burn within me; my soul was pierced with a sense of my ingratitude to so merciful a Saviour; and those tears which I thought impossible, burst forth freely. I saw clearly that my case required such a remedy, and had not the least doubt within myself but this was the gospel of salvation.” The wounded spirit within him was now less in pain, but by no means healed. He wished for madness, poor man! and it came. Then followed five dreary months in an asylum. He threw away the Bible as

a book in which he had no longer any interest or portion. The horrors which the poor maniac suffered cannot be conceived, far less described. A visit from his brother was the first means of his recovery. His company served to put to flight a thousand deliriums and delusions. The next morning he found the cloud of horror which had so long hung over him was every moment passing away, and every moment came fraught with hope. "I was continually more and more persuaded that I was not utterly doomed to destruction. The way of salvation was still, however, hid from my eyes, nor did I see it at all clearer than before my illness. I only thought that if it would please God to spare me, I would lead a better life; and that I would yet escape hell, if a religious observance of my duty would secure me from it. Thus may the terror of the Lord make a Pharisee; but only the sweet voice of mercy in the Gospel can make a Christian. But the happy period which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear opening of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and, seeing the Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of Romans iii.: 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.' Immediately I received strength to believe it,

and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fulness and completeness of His justification. In a moment, I believed and received the Gospel. Whatever my friend had said to me, long before, revived in all its clearness, with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Unless the Almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy."

Here, my young friends, is a witness for Christ. It is no part of my present business to discuss the merits of his poetry—only, in passing, I would recommend that poetry to you with all my heart—nor is it my intention to follow the narrative of his life. It is enough to say that his insanity returned, in the shape of a monomania that God had passed a special decree respecting him, that, though he was a true believer in Christ, he should not be saved. Such another instance, he believed, was not to be found in the universe. And this mania made him miserable for many years. Yet he would never retract his testimony to the Gospel. And, though dead, he yet speaks to the young heart, and says:—

“ Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heav'nly root ;
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit.”

His experience has been that of thousands, and not all the melancholy that fell upon him would induce him to retract these words:—

“ I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share ;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

“ It was the sight of Thy dear cross,
First wean'd my soul from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.”

The second class from which I will draw a witness for Christ to stimulate you to begin and prosecute the Christian race is that of the ADVENTUROUS and the HEROIC. And here I will take two brothers, who, though the one was four or five years younger than the other, seem like twins in their history and religion.

In the thirteenth century there were Scottish barons of the name of HALDANE, who could trace their descent from Norse adventurers who had visited England three centuries before. In a branch of this family there were born two sons, the one in 1764, and the other in 1768. Their uncle was Admiral Lord Duncan, the hero of Camperdown. Their mother, who died when they were but children, was a pious woman. And her prayers may be regarded

as running like a silver thread through their entire life, with a holier and heavenlier influence than that of any charm. The tales of the sea and the battle-field, to which they listened in youth, filled them with notions of military glory. But there was a hidden power in their mother's prayers which was to rule their destiny and make them famous on a better field than that of battle. Robert Haldane entered the navy when he was seventeen years of age; and the skill and daring with which he conducted the guns under his charge, in the very first action in which he was engaged, attracted the attention of his commander, the hero of St. Vincent, who predicted that he would one day be an ornament to his country. It is rather remarkable, that on going into that action, when his heart beat high with courage and hope, he poured out a prayer that he might be strengthened to discharge his duty as became a British sailor in defence of his country. It was not that at that time he had the fear of God in his heart. On the contrary, we are told that pride, ambition, the love of distinction, and other forms of worldliness, were all in the ascendant. But the truth, which had been implanted in him by a mother's hand, was there like a germ of life ready to burst forth, not in fruits of reckless unbelief, but of Christian heroism. During his brief naval career, our young hero was brought into contact with the good Dr. Bogue, of Gosport. He attended his ministry, and was directed by him

in his reading. A mother's prayers were thus guarding and following him.

The peace of 1783 brought Haldane's short career in the navy to a close, and he never after resumed the profession of sailor. The next twelve years he spent with much energy and intelligence in the improvement of his paternal estate.

But all this time what became of his younger brother, James? He too went to sea when he was seventeen years of age, but it was in the East India Company's service. During his first voyage he fell overboard from a boat. He could not swim, and thought he should have been drowned; but was so hardened that, as he recollected well afterwards, he never thought while in the water of the consequences of death. Providentially he had an oar in his hand, and remembered that an old sailor had told him that no one need be drowned who could keep hold of an oar, and this proved the means of his preservation. He had other narrow escapes from death during the same voyage; but his conscience was now becoming seared as with a hot iron, and he remained unaffected by all the mercies of a good Providence. By the time his ship re-entered the Thames, he was thoroughly acclimatised to the moral atmosphere which he was now breathing, and prepared to throw himself headlong into the pleasures and gaieties of London life. The temple of fashion and dissipation in high life was thrown open to him, and few

worshipped at its shrine more fervently than did young Haldane. On his return to India, he spent six months at Calcutta in a constant round of pleasure and luxury, and no one could distinguish at this time any signs of his having been the child of many prayers. During one of his voyages he became very ill, and was thought to be dying. But so hardened was he at this time that he resolved that if he felt any fear in the prospect of death, he would show no unmanly signs of it. After this he fought a duel, and continued to live a life of worldliness.

When twenty-five years of age, the influence of his high connections procured him a command in the East Indian service, and such a command was in those days a fortune. While waiting in the Channel for orders to sail, he performed one of the most extraordinary feats on record in quelling a mutiny on board a neighbouring ship. But this bold man, with a heart for anything, gradually, and in a way it would be difficult to explain, became disinclined to proceed to sea, and relinquished his command. Religious feeling on his own part had nothing to do with this decision, but we doubt not that his mother's prayers had. They were about to be answered in the conversion of the ungodly son.

Without any outwardly constraining cause, young Haldane now began to read his Bible, and to think of eternity. In Edinburgh he heard two men contending about the divinity of Christ. To the soul of

one of them this doctrine was sweeter than the honeycomb. "If I did not know my Saviour to be God," he said, "I should this night lie down in despair; the Scripture could in this case convey no comfort to my mind." These words struck the young inquirer much. And the impression was deepened by the words of Job: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." He saw that his views of sin must be very inadequate, and prayed God to teach him all that He would have him know. But for a time his strivings were of a self-righteous character. "My desire," he says, "was set upon frames and feelings, instead of building on the true foundation. I got no comfort in this way. Gradually becoming more dissatisfied with myself, being convinced especially of the sin of unbelief, I wearied myself with looking for some wonderful change to take place—some inward feeling by which I might know that I was born again. The method of resting simply on the promises of God, which are yea and amen in Jesus Christ, was too plain and easy; and like Naaman the Syrian, instead of bathing in Jordan and being clean, I would have some great work in my mind to substitute in place of Jesus Christ." By degrees, he was led to renounce self, and to rest his all upon the finished work of Emmanuel. And there he found peace to his conscience and satisfaction to his heart.

Here, then, you have the youngest son of the praying mother a penitent at the foot of the Cross. But what of the elder? We left him improving his estates and seeking happiness in the quiet enjoyment of his wealth. From his thoughtless dreaming he was startled by the French Revolution; and, like many other young men of ardent minds, began to think that a new era, quite millennial, was about to be introduced by those French doctrines which were then breaking up old systems. On this point he was soon undeceived; but it was only to discover a better way. He used to say, in after-years, that if he were to point out the individual from whom he derived most spiritual light at this time, he would mention a journeyman mason. This good man was employed on some of the works at his estate of Airthrey. One day, as they walked several miles to a distant part of the estate, the conversation turned from the subject of masonry to the glory of the Great Architect of the Universe. The views of Divine truth, and of faith in the finished work of Christ, which this humble Christian unfolded, as they went along, were so plain and scriptural, that Robert Haldane "saw the gospel to be indeed glad tidings, and ever afterwards looked back with thankfulness to that memorable walk, in which he began to discern more clearly that, in the matter of justification, faith must cast away all reliance on the shifting sands of frames or feelings, and fasten only upon the 'Rock of Ages.'"

Robert and James Haldane are now brothers in Christ. Twenty-one years have passed away since their mother was taken to glory. They are now men of thirty-one and twenty-six years of age. From the age of seventeen, each of them has been following his own separate path; and yet now, about the same time, they are brought to that Saviour to whom their mother had consecrated them with strong crying and tears so long before. Can we fail to see in this happy result an answer, to prayers which, though lightly esteemed on earth, were not forgotten in heaven?

Come then, my dear young friends, and look at these witnesses for Christ. Possessed of wealth, patronised by ministers of state, and by renowned relations among the heroes of the time,—with nothing, so far as the world goes, to make them dissatisfied with their course of life,—both of them relinquish the world, its pomps and pleasures, and seek rest to their souls in Christ. They acquire new views of God, of themselves, of life, of eternity, which make them feel now as if they had been blind or asleep all their days. In one respect they are unchanged. Saul of Tarsus was bold and heroic as a persecutor, and became bold and heroic as an apostle. So was it with the Haldanes. “Christianity,” said Robert, “is everything or nothing. If it be true, it warrants and commands every sacrifice to promote its influence.” In this spirit he sold his

estate, in order to support himself, and some others, likeminded, as missionaries to India. But the English government forbade them. And then the Haldanes directed their attention to their own country, whose spiritual condition, at that time, was very dark and dreary. James became a preacher; and thousands crowded to the market-places and hillsides of Scotland to hear the East India captain, and many were converted to God. Robert devoted his property to the education of young ministers, and the erection of chapels. By a personal visit to Geneva, which, from being the glory of the Reformation, had sunk into the grossest unbelief, he was the means of a great revival of religion there; and D'Aubigné and Gausson and Monod, and others who have become eminent in the service of Christ, were his spiritual children. Robert Haldane lived to the age of seventy-nine, and James to the age of eighty-three; and both died in the faith and hope of Christ, and are now mingled with the great cloud of witnesses which beckon you, young people, to enter on the Christian race, and encourage those of you who have done so to press toward the goal, that you may receive the crown of life.

My third witness shall be taken from the senate. He shall not be a hero, but a STATESMAN; and yet, a hero of the noblest kind—WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

Wilberforce was born in Hull in 1759. He was a

feeble, delicate child, but had a vigorous mind and an affectionate temper. His father, who was a prosperous, wealthy man, died when he was nine years old, and he was placed under the care of an uncle in the neighbourhood of London. His aunt was a pious woman, who loved the preaching and doctrines of such men as Whitefield, and taught her little nephew about Jesus Christ. But his mother became alarmed by the pious tone of her child's letters, and hastened to London when he was twelve years old, to remove him from what she considered a dangerous contagion. And all that the theatre and ball-room and card-playing could do to quench his early piety was resorted to with infatuated zeal, and with too much success. At first he resisted. When taken to a play, it was almost by force : but, by degrees, he acquired a relish for this kind of life. No pious parent ever laboured more to impress a beloved child with sentiments of piety than his relatives did to give him a taste for the world and its pleasures. So he tells us himself. And by the time he was old enough 'to go to Cambridge, all thoughts of God and of Christ had been driven from his mind. The battle which had been fought on the field of his soul was decided to all appearance in favour of the world, and everything at the University tended to confirm the victory. The night of his arrival there he was introduced to as licentious a set of men as can well be conceived. They drank hard, he says, and their

conversation was even worse than their lives. Though, happily, they never succeeded in dragging him into the mire of licentiousness, he could not, in after-life, look back on this period without unfeigned remorse. He was only twenty-one years of age when he was returned to Parliament, in great triumph, as a member for his native borough. And now he was thrown into a vortex which wellnigh proved his ruin. He became a member of all the leading clubs in London, and joined in the gambling which the great statesmen of that day indulged in without hesitation. Three years after, he became member for Yorkshire, and rose to great influence in the senate of the land. But still he was an utter stranger to the fear of God. In 1784 he went down to York, and was the "joy" of the races. He "spent his twenty-fifth birthday at the top wave and highest flow of those frivolous amusements which had swallowed up so large a portion of his youth." But the eye of mercy followed the young trifler, and led him by a way which he knew not to that Saviour whom he was so sinfully neglecting. He asked a friend to accompany him on a tour to the Continent. This friend quite understood the doctrines of Christ's gospel, and had a high respect for religion, though, in his own life, he exhibited at that time none of its influence. Of his religious opinions Wilberforce knew nothing when he asked him to be the companion of his continental tour ; and, if he had known,

he would not have asked him. When luxuriating on the shores of the Mediterranean, religious topics were often discussed speculatively; but there was nothing in the life of Wilberforce's companion to give much weight to his reasonings, and the young statesman held on his ungodly way unmoved.

One day, just before their return, Wilberforce took up, casually, "Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," which Mr. Unwin, Cowper's friend and correspondent, had given to the mother of a fellow-traveller. Casting his eye over it hastily, he asked his companion what sort of a book it was. "It is one of the best books ever written," was the answer. "Let us take it with us and read it on our journey." They did so; and he determined at some future season to examine the Scripture for himself, and see if things were stated there in the same manner. There was as yet, however, no conviction of sin, and no deep impression of the value of the soul; and the months which followed his return to London were spent in the excitement of politics, and in "a constant round of company and amusement." The villa at Wimbledon, where his infant lips had been taught Hosannas, was now his own, but resounded with songs of another order. The following year Wilberforce and his travelling companion returned to Italy, but their conversation became more serious than before. They began to read together the Greek Testament, and to examine its doctrines. "By de-

grees," he says, "I began to imbibe my companion's sentiments, though I must confess with shame, that they long remained merely as opinions assented to by my understanding, but not influencing my heart. My interest in them certainly increased, and at length I began to be impressed with a sense of their importance." At Spa, in Germany, notwithstanding this, he joined in all the fashionable amusements of the visitors, but his soul was not at ease. "Often," he says, "while in the full enjoyment of all that this world could bestow, my conscience told me that in the true sense of the word I was not a Christian. I laughed, I sang, I was apparently gay and happy; but the thought would steal across me, 'What madness is all this, to continue easy in a state in which a sudden call out of the world would consign me to everlasting misery, and that when eternal happiness was within my grasp!'" At length such thoughts as these completely occupied his mind, and he began to pray earnestly. The deep guilt and black ingratitude of his past life forced itself upon him in the strongest colours, and he condemned himself for having wasted his precious time, and opportunities and talents. "It was not so much," he said, "the fear of punishment by which I was affected, as a sense of my great sinfulness, in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Saviour; and such was the effect which this thought produced, that for months I was in a state of the deepest depression

from strong convictions of my guilt." On the 10th of November he returned to his home a new man. His former life at Wimbledon is separated from that on which he now enters by a dark gulph of ungodliness. But the gulph is crossed, and the regenerate man stands on the Rock of Ages.

But a new trial now awaits him. How will the gay senator, who has been courted alike by statesmen and by the votaries of fashion, treat the circles in whose pursuits he has hitherto taken so deep an interest? Will he be ashamed of Jesus? or will he avow himself manfully as on the Lord's side? For a time he concealed his newborn feelings, and mixed in some measure in uncongenial company. And then he was startled by the very possibility of so foul a crime as being ashamed of Christ. In the course of a few weeks, however, he received grace to make a frank avowal of the change which had taken place to those who had been the companions of his thoughtlessness. Some treated the announcement as the effect of a temporary depression, which social intercourse would soon relieve. Others, knowing that his past life had not been vicious, imagined that he could but turn ascetic. The great statesman, William Pitt, thought that his friend was out of spirits, and hastened to Wimbledon to cheer him, and to discuss him out of what he considered his fancies. But Mr. Wilberforce was prepared to receive him. He had looked up, and Divine strength was given him. For two hours

the man of the world tried to reason the young Christian out of his convictions. But in vain! The young Christian was steadfast as a rock. He now withdrew his name from all the clubs of which he was a member, and sought the friendship of those that feared the Lord. He seemed to himself, as he expressed it ten years after, to have awakened from a dream; to have recovered, as it were, the use of his reason after a delirium. And how thoroughly he was awakened and restored to a truly sound mind, appears from the nearly fifty years which, from this period, he devoted to the glory of God and the good of man. The love of Christ was from this date his talisman, to use his own words. It was this that made him the champion of freedom and the friend of the slave. And we now set him before you as a witness for Christ, to stimulate you to enter on the Christian race, and to persevere in it. Within two months of his death he was consulted by a young friend as to what profession he should choose. His reply was—“Think particularly whether you are choosing for time only or for eternity. For, of course, a sensible man will wish to choose that which will be best in the long run. And then it is just as much part of the consideration, what will be best for me between my thousandth and two thousandth year, as between my twentieth and thirtieth?” Think of this, young men! Be not so nearsighted as to fix your exclusive regard on that portion of your life which lies between

this hour and the grave. Look into the future. A thousand years, ten thousand years hence, you will live as much as you do now. Yea, by that time, your power of life, your capacity for misery or enjoyment, will be immensely expanded. And to make any choice now, which will give you the excitement of present pleasure only to be followed by the collapse of eternal sorrow, is an act of folly which, if we did not know that men commit it, we should deem almost impossible.

Wilberforce did not regret, in his dying hour, that the last forty-eight years of his life were spent in the service of Christ. When Mr. Joseph John Gurney visited him, "the illuminated expression of his furrowed countenance, with his clasped and uplifted hands, were indicative of profound devotion and holy joy." "As for myself," he said, "I have nothing whatever to urge but the poor publican's plea, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" But this was enough. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, kept his heart and mind through Christ Jesus. His noblest monument is not that in Westminster Abbey, nor yet his great achievement in the abolition of the slave-trade; but the example he has left of the power of evangelical truth, and of the practical energy of evangelical love.

My fourth and last witness shall be a PHILOSOPHER. He was many things besides. But he was this very

specially when the Gospel changed his nature—he was all this, and he was nothing more than this.

THOMAS CHALMERS was one of the idlest, strongest, merriest, and most generous-hearted boys in Anstruther. He was only in his twelfth year when he went to that ancient seat of learning, St. Andrews, with the avowed intention of becoming a minister of Christ's gospel. But at this time his heart was an entire stranger to the power of the gospel. During the first two years of his college course, the greater part of his time was spent in boyish amusements. The third year of his course was his *intellectual* birth-time. And from that period his intellect knew no season of slumbering inactivity so long as he lived. It was only an intellectual awakening, however; heart and conscience had no part in it. On the contrary, he imbibed, at this time, principles at variance with the true nature of the gospel. St. Andrews was overrun with a system as cold as death; and her students learned to despise the doctrine of man's depravity and Christ's atonement. Some of them stood midway between the Christian and the infidel; and the youthful Chalmers was deeply tainted with their sentiments, and learned to despise the simple gospel which was held precious in his father's house. This was his state of mind when he was enrolled a student of theology, in his sixteenth year. His religion did not go beyond sublime ideas of the omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and goodness of

God. Salvation, by the death of Jesus Christ, formed no part of it. Yet at this time he was thrown into a very rapture of admiration and delight by his conception of the grandeur of the Godhead. He spent nearly a twelvemonth in a sort of mental elysium; and the one idea which ministered to his soul all its rapture, was the magnificence of the Godhead, and the universal subordination of all things to the one great purpose for which He evolved and was supporting creation. He used to wander early in the morning into the country that, amidst the quiet scenes of nature, he might luxuriate in the glorious conception. But there was nothing in such religion as this to renew his heart. He had not yet learned to offer the first prayer of a fallen creature, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And his magnificent visions soon vanished away.

This was his state when he became a parish minister. Science and philosophy were his all in all. To these he gave himself with all the enthusiasm and ambition of his nature, till death visited his father's family. His brother George, who commanded a West India merchant-ship, returned to his home to breathe his last. It was but a short time before that Thomas had denounced from his pulpit such books as "Newton's Sermons," "Baxter's Saint's Rest," and "Doddridge's Rise and Progress." But now it was one of these books he saw administering comfort to his dying brother. And he heard from the pale and trembling

lips of the dying man these words: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Two years after this a sister died, and she too had been able to exercise a humble confidence in the satisfaction of the Great Redeemer. Still the affectionate brother, whose wounds were thus opened afresh, did not feel his need of mercy through that Atonement in which his brother and sister had found peace of conscience. He could say from the pulpit, "Let us tremble to think that anything but virtue can recommend us to the Almighty." He did not exclude the death of Christ entirely from his creed, but thought it was designed to supply the deficiencies of an imperfect virtue! Miserable comfort this would be to a poor soul mourning over vileness and guilt! And the preacher happily found this out in his own experience. The sudden death of an uncle occurring when he was himself ill, produced quite a panic in his father's family, as if one after another of them was doomed to fall. The young philosopher (for he was nothing more at this time, though a minister of religion) was now quite in earnest about his soul. He could do nothing by halves. His past life appeared to him a feverish dream. Things unseen and eternal assumed their proper magnitude before his eye. At the same time, the meagre faith which he had hitherto held was tried and found wanting. It was by very

slow degrees that he reached anything like a satisfactory knowledge of the way in which God justifies the ungodly freely for the sake of Christ's righteousness. For twelve months his soul was in an agony of endeavour to elevate his practice to the standard of the Divine requirements, and thereby obtain peace of mind. His struggles were intense and prolonged. Sometimes there was an appearance of progress and a measure of peace, which encouraged him to hope and persevere. But the next hour there came some discovery of the holiness of the Divine law, and a humiliating sense of his own shortcomings, which covered him with shame and despair.

The law seemed to rise in its demands as he rose in his endeavours. His attempt to scale the heights of perfection was (to use his own words) "like the laborious ascent of him who, having so wasted his strength that he can do no more, finds that some precipice still remains to be overcome,—some mountain-brow that scorns his enterprise, and threatens to overwhelm him." Struggle as he might to meet the high requirements of the law of God, he still found himself coming immensely short of them. And though he tried to eke out the deficiencies of his obedience by the atonement of Jesus Christ, he found no solid peace. The mixing together the merit of Christ and his own obedience was altogether in vain; and, by degrees, he came to the conviction that he had been attempting an impossibility, and that, by

introducing to any extent his own righteousness into the ground of his meritorious acceptance with God, he had been virtually rejecting the perfect and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great means of producing this conviction was a book by Mr. Wilberforce, called "A Practical View of the Prevailing Systems of Religion in England." The views Mr. Wilberforce gives of the depravity of our nature, of our need of an atonement, of the great doctrine of acceptance through that atonement, and of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, those same doctrines which in former years Chalmers had despised and condemned, were now the means of a spiritual revolution in his soul. He had tried to find life in his own obedience, but utterly failed; but when, like the Philippian jailor, he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, he was saved. He looked to God in a new light; he saw him as a reconciled Father. Love entered his heart, and he became a new creature. Thirty-seven years of life were given to Him after this, and he rose to the highest eminence among the philosophers and preachers and authors of the age. But he not only retained that faith which now gave peace to his awakened conscience, and implanted in him the true principles of Christian obedience, but it was the very beginning and end of all his labours. His philosophy was baptised with it; the prodigious energy of his nature was consecrated to its advancement: and, though dead, he now speaks

to us in the thunder-tones of his majestic eloquence, to proclaim the vanity of all greatness without Christ, and to assure us of the sufficiency of Christ to be the sinner's Saviour and the soul's portion.

Now, my dear young friends, you have seen and heard my witnesses. What think you of them? Or rather, what think you of their testimony? The poet, the hero, the statesman, the philosopher, all direct you to Christ, as the only peace-giver, and the only life-giver. They tell you that neither poetry, nor heroism, nor statesmanship, nor philosophy, is enough for a soul's portion; that, so far as true happiness is concerned, these are broken cisterns, which can hold no water; and that there is not in the universe one who can quench your soul's thirst, but He who said to the woman of Samaria, "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." There are myriads of witnesses prepared to give you similar testimony. Could we summon before us all the pastors that have preached this May-day Lectur, during the past 179 years,—Mr. Mead, Mr. Galpine Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Hubbard, Mr. Brewer, Mr. Ford, and Dr. Fletcher,—they would with one voice proclaim, "Christ is all, and in all." And a large company of young persons, now in glory, who have heard their voices, and been blessed by the truth, would re-echo

the words with all the enthusiasm of heaven, and then strike up a noble anthem of praise to Him who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood. Will you receive their testimony, and make this hundred and eightieth lecture memorable as the means of winning many souls to Christ ?

You have not failed to observe how unanimous our witnesses have been, in reference to man's sin and guilt. For a time proud of their virtue, and having much to make them proud of it according to the judgment of this world—yet in the end they lay prostrate before God, and confessed themselves unclean and undone. Are you one with them in their pride, or in their self-condemnation?—still flattering yourselves with vain thoughts of your goodness, or humbling yourselves in the dust under a sense of your guilt ?

You have observed, likewise, how unanimous our witnesses are, as to the way in which the guilty conscience may find peace. Every one of them laboured hard to find this precious blessing, and to enjoy the hope of pardon by their own doings, more or less, mixing them sometimes with the doings and sufferings of Christ. But in every case the effort failed, and the blessing they sought only fled from them farther and farther, till they renounced self and went to the Cross, and beheld the Lamb of God dying for the guilty, and put their undivided trust in that great sacrifice for sin, which Christ offered on Calvary. And so will it ever be. “THE CROSS!” to use the words of one of our witnesses :—

“There and there only is the power to save,
 There no delusive hope invites despair ;
 No mockery meets you, no deception there.
 The spells and charms that blinded you before,
 All vanish there and fascinate no more.”

One sin unpardoned will be your ruin, and not one of the many sins you have committed will be pardoned till you come to Christ, and renounce all confidence but in the perfection of His sacrifice. Hear one of our witnesses again :—

“Inscribed above the portal, from afar,
 Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
 Legible only by the light they give, [LIVE.
 Stand the soul-quickenng words : BELIEVE AND
 Too many, shocked at what should charm them most,
 Despise the plain direction, and are lost.”

There is one other point in which all our witnesses agree—it is Christ's right to everything they had. Their genius, their energy, their influence in the state, their wealth, their philosophy—they counted nothing that they had their own. Being themselves bought with such a price, being delivered from eternal death by the love of Christ, they felt that they were bound to consecrate their all to the service of that love. And Christ demands the same of you. Whatever you have—youth, health, vigour, money, influence, learn-

ing, time—your hands, your feet, your minds, your hearts—He is Lord of all; and, happily for you, the acknowledgment of His Lordship will not be the surrender of your liberty and happiness, but the consummation of both. Free only when you are delivered from the bondage of sin and guilt—happy only when pardoned and regenerate—these blessings will be yours from the hour that you are Christ's. In the entireness of your obedience to Him will be the perfection of your liberty, and in the intensity of your devotion to His honour will be the fulness of your joy. The first day of His reign over you will be the first day of your own blessedness. The Lord hasten it: and to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting glory. AMEN.

“BEHOLD YOUR KING.”

John xix. 14.

“BEHOLD your King.” We will, Pilate, even at thy bidding. He *is* our King, and we are not ashamed of Him. Shame to thee that thy soldiers should be allowed to put on His head that crown of thorns, and to clothe Him with that purple robe! Shame to thee that He should be scourged and insulted! But we *will* behold Him, notwithstanding, and own Him for our King. His dignity cannot be hid. With His visage so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men, we see a Divine royalty shining forth in His eyes, declaring itself in all the tones of His voice, and stamping itself on His whole demeanour.

Already have we heard Pilate say, “Behold the man,” and recognised in the words the echo of a truth which has not dawned on his mind. He is *the* man. Besides Him, the world has not seen a true and perfect man for thousands of years. The last who possessed all the powers and faculties and dignities of a man was the Father of the race, and from the hour of his fall until now man has been in ruins. The

Divine idea has not once been realised, the Divine image in man has not once been complete until now. But now, in the fulness of the times, "Behold *the* man,"—the Divine idea which was set forth in the first Paradise perfectly realised, the eternal thought of God concerning His earthly child embodied without defect and without excess—without shortcoming and without sin. But from Christ's first appearing until this present hour we find no second man. Would we look upon human nature in its perfectness we must go back eighteen hundred years, and "behold *the* man" in the person of Jesus.

Even so we take the words of Pilate, "Behold your King," and find in them a meaning far beyond his thought. Not *a* King merely, but *the* King—not the King of the Jews merely, but the King of the universe: King, not in some secondary sense, not figuratively, not poetically, but most literally and most really. Your King, O Pilate; yours, Caiaphas; yours, Gamaliel; yours and ours.

He was born a King, and never was kingly birth celebrated as was His. That bright star which brought the wise men from their Eastern home to present their homage before His strange cradle, was the sign of the Divine light by which all nations shall be guided to the foot of His throne. That song which was sung by the angelic host over the plains of Bethlehem is a pledge, not only of the widespread beneficence of His rule on earth, but of the reality of

His rule in heaven as well. Never was princely birth celebrated as was the birth of the Son of Mary. The story of Egypt and Babylon and Greece and Rome can furnish no parallel.

His life was as royal as His birth. His moral qualities were most royal—His purity and His goodness; but of these I will not speak, lest I should seem to be speaking of a figurative, rather than a literal Kingship. Let me speak of His *authority* and *power* rather. These were right royal, such as the world had never witnessed before. While He chose to be “poor for our sakes,” and to surround Himself with none of the signs of earthly royalty, His presence was universally felt to be that of a King. The dominion which was given to Adam over the works of God’s hand was but a shadow of the dominion which He exercised. All manner of diseases were healed by His royal word. The winds and the waves obeyed Him. Death itself was subject to His Sovereign will. Even spirits from the world of darkness recognised His Lordship and submitted themselves to Him. Angels from heaven ministered to Him, and legions of them were at His service any hour that He chose to demand their presence. His was a real Kingship. The world had never seen anything to compare with it, and never will.

Brought up from a child in one of the meanest of the towns of Galilee, He did not show Himself to Israel, till, after the manner of Royalty, His way had

been prepared by a Herald, who made proclamation throughout the land, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand—prepare ye the way of the Lord," and by whose pioneering the mountains were made low and the valleys exalted. When He did come forth from the privacy in which He had chosen to spend His youth, He claimed to be the King whose coming prophets had foretold, and John had heralded. And when John in a moment of faintheartedness, or for the satisfaction of his followers, sent messengers to Him to ask, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" He replied, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached." These works were true witnesses to His Royalty. His conquests were over sin and suffering, and no royal march ever left behind it such traces of power and beneficence as did His. His path was strewn with blessings, which by their character and abundance attested that His kingdom was not of this world.

In virtue of His Kingship, Christ claimed authority over whomsoever He would. "Follow me," He said, as He pleased, to the fishermen on the waters of Galilee, or to the publicans sitting at the receipt of custom. And all reluctance and hesitancy, and delay and reserve, in following Him were treated as crimes. His command was peremptory. The obe-

dience He required was absolute. Should the dead be left to bury their dead, He must be followed at once. Should father or mother, or brother or sister, prefer a first claim to affection or consideration, the claim must be denied. He, the Man of Nazareth, as the world esteemed Him,—He, the Incarnate Son of God, true Lord and King of men, must have homage earlier, devotion more entire, than the highest and holiest of the relations of earth.

In virtue of His Kingship, too, He founded institutions and enacted laws, which continue unto this day. The authority with which Moses was invested, and the sanctions which his words received from the thunders of Sinai, were not greater nor higher than His. His “I say unto you” was equal to the “Thus saith the Lord” of Moses and the prophets. There was no conflict between the two—no antagonism—because, rightly understood, the legislation of Sinai was His as well as the legislation of the Mount of Beatitudes. The circumstances of the latter did not, like those of the former, make men exceedingly fear and quake. But the authority of the gentle voice which spoke to the multitude on the Galilean mountain was not less than the authority of the voice of thunder which awed the great camp of Israel at the foot of Horeb. And the people felt, though they did not understand, the Kingliness of that authority.

Nor was He less a King when He stood at Pilate’s bar. Strange position for Him to occupy,—but *we*

know why He submitted to it. He was, what He had always avowed himself to be, a King, the King, and claimed, as a King, to have higher power, and a better power, than Cæsar or Cæsar's armies. And when sentence was given that He should die, and His sacred form was nailed to the cross, His Kingship, which had been attested by a supernatural light at His birth, was attested by a supernatural darkness at His death. The grave had no power over His royal person. He rose, and solemnly declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He ascended to the world of glory from which He had come, leading captivity captive, amid the welcomes of angels and of men.

"Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious :

See the Man of Sorrows now,
From the fight returned victorious ;
Every knee to Him shall bow.
Crown Him, crown Him ;
Crowns become the victor's brow.

"Hark, those bursts of acclamation !

Hark, those loud triumphant chords !
Jesus takes the highest station ;
Oh what joy the sight affords !
Crown Him, crown Him,
King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Pilate! we hear thy words sounding across the ages, "Behold your King," and we do and will

behold Him with joy unspeakable. We prostrate ourselves in lowliest homage at His feet, and confess ourselves unworthy of being accounted even the least in His kingdom.

I.

Young hearts and souls—"Behold your King," and consider His right to the sovereignty of your whole nature and life. It is twofold.

1. He has the indefeasible right of Godhead. We have declared Him to be *the* man—the only man in whom the ideal of our nature has been realised. But this very fact is suggestive of another fact—that He was more than man—a fact which is attested not only by explicit declarations and isolated texts, but by the whole tone and manner of His life. The story of Jesus becomes an unutterable mystery if you attempt to blot out of it the supernatural and the Divine. His Godhead is so interwoven with His actions and thoughts and words, that if you attempt to separate them, you tear the whole to shreds, and instead of the beautiful fabric which eighteen centuries have admired, you find in your hands a meaningless bundle of fragments. We claim for Him, He claimed for Himself, that He was the Son of God in a sense in which no other ever was or could be. His servants did not exaggerate when they described Him as the image, the manifestation, of the Invisible God, the Heir and Lord of the whole creation, and

gave, as the reason for this high claim, that "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col. i. 15-17.)

"Behold your King." Your whole being is His workmanship—that wonderful spirit within you which is capable of knowing itself, capable of knowing Him and the universe around you—that material form which is the shrine and servant of this spirit: the earth from which you draw your sustenance, the air you breathe, the sun which makes your day, the stars which reveal the infinitude of space around you, they are all His workmanship. "Behold your King." "In Him you live and move and have your being." You have never exercised a power, mental or physical, which He has not conferred on you. You have never eaten a morsel of bread which was not His gift. You know,—your reason and conscience do both confess—that He has a right to reign over you.

2. But this is not the only ground of His right. There is another, which appeals to your heart and conscience with irresistible pathos. Let me explain it in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became

poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” (2 Cor. viii. 9.) “Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” (Phil. ii. 6-11.) Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, for your Maker has become a child of man, a man of sorrows, and hath borne the burden of the guilt of His own rebel subjects, that they might be won back to Him, and again enjoy the blessedness, while discharging the duties, of loyal subjects! This is the great mystery of redemption, and this mystery is the key to other mysteries which no other key can open. Why should the Son of God submit to the unrighteous decree of Pilate, with legions of angels at His bidding? Why should those hands which had blessed multitudes of men be nailed to the accursed tree? Why should He who had saved others from disease and death, not save Himself from the shameful cross? Go back a few hours, and listen to

Him, and He will tell you why. He is celebrating the Paschal feast in commemoration of the redemption of Israel from Egypt, and in doing so, He institutes a feast which shall celebrate through all ages a higher redemption, saying, while He holds the cup in His hand, "This is My blood of the new Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins." But one or two days before, He had said, "The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many." Other words of His were still echoing in the ears of His disciples—"I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep, and therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." This is a great mystery, but it is the only key to other mysteries. In the light of it we understand the agony in Gethsemane, the betrayal, the submission to Pilate, the lifting-up on the cross, the burying in Joseph's tomb, and the rising again. The poverty and weakness and humiliation of His human life, the Judgment Hall and Calvary, thus understood, instead of throwing doubt on the true Kingship of Jesus of Nazareth, add immeasurably to the claims of that Kingship on all human souls. "For love of us He bled, for love of us He died." And He only could thus love, and thus stoop, and thus die for His enemies. Now, the

throne which rested on eternal right has a second foundation in eternal love. Calvary has given to Him a new title to the power which He possesses at the Father's right hand. He who endured the cross for mankind claims the crown of all mankind. And to the sons and daughters of England we say, in the words, but not in the spirit, of Pilate, "Behold your King." The last of the seers to whom visions of heaven were granted, saw on His head many crowns, and on his vesture and on his thigh a name written more true and worthy than that which was written on His cross, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." And it is not more our duty than our joy, while we behold the sight, to say, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, even unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

II.

Such being our King, and such His right to reign, let us now see what manner of LOYALTY He demands of us.

And, first of all, He requires that *it shall begin in repentance and faith*. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The reason of this is obvious. There is a past to be accounted for, a past of rebellion which must be repented of, if the future would be a future of true loyalty. You cannot take your place in the rank of His subjects without a proper settlement of that which is past—a settlement

proper both for Him and for you. It is here you find the need of that great truth, that great fact, so mysterious, but so divinely loving, that this King who claims your loyalty has given Himself a ransom for you. And peace with Him and a place in His kingdom cannot be allowed you in any other way than by repentance, and faith in that ransom by which He has Himself made atonement for you. Every approach to Him is barred but this. Every door of entrance into His kingdom is closed but this. No amount of sentiment, and no kind of sentiment, will constitute you His subject. You must enter the kingdom by way of the cross. This is God's ordinance, and we must insist upon it, although as of old, it is still an offence to the self-wise and the self-complacent.

Visit that German nobleman on his death-bed. He has sent for a clergyman to administer comfort to his soul, but he has forbidden him to speak of Christ and His cross; in them he has no faith, he believes only in the good God, the Father of mankind. On the goodness of God, then, the clergyman expatiates, proving it by innumerable arguments from nature. On a second visit he illustrates and magnifies the wisdom of God, and on a third His power and majesty. Then he ventures to speak of the justice and holiness of the Most High God, and the necessity of a holy heart in order to a holy heaven. The dying man is left to ponder these

things ; and as he ponders them he feels himself far from God, and unworthy to appear before God, until his soul is a chaos of doubt and fear. In haste he sends for his comforter, and says to him, "You have cast me into hell by your last words ; undo what you have done ; tell me something that will deliver me from this abyss." Calmly and decisively the clergyman answers—"I have said nothing but the truth. There is, indeed, one way out of your abyss—but you have forbidden me to speak of it, and I know no other." In agony the dying man exclaims—"Say what you will, tell me what you will, only deliver me from the hell into which you have cast me." Then the preacher speaks to him of Christ and the cross, the great sacrifice for sin, the way of pardon and of life. The dying man's conscience finds peace. And, with peace through the Saviour's blood, comes that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

My young friends, let no man deceive you. After this manner must your loyalty to Christ begin. Thus only can you enter the kingdom of God. Be deaf as the adder to those who would persuade you otherwise. God requireth that which is past ; and the guilt of your past can be blotted out only by the blood that was shed once for all for the remission of sins. Thus at the foot of the cross must you be baptised unto Christ the King.

Beginning where the King Himself would have you to begin, by repentance, and faith in His sacrifice

for your sins, *it follows, secondly, that your loyalty will be a loyalty of love to the King Himself.* Having much forgiven by Him, and forgiven in such a way, you will love Him much. What service you render to Him, what battles you fight for Him, what sufferings you endure in service and in battle, will all be the outcome of His love. In the kingdoms of this world men may only feign respect for their Sovereign, may even despise him or hate him, but, if they pay the tribute and perform the service which law demands, they are accounted good subjects and have the privileges of good citizens. But tribute and service without the heart go for nothing in the kingdom of Christ. Yea, without love they go for nothing.

Herein you see the divineness of His kingdom, and how true it is that it is not of this world. The Sovereign will have the love of His subjects or He will have nothing. Gold and silver, poured into His treasury like the sand on the sea-shore, will not please Him. Deeds of heroism unto death will not please Him. "Give me thy heart—give me thy love." The parent's love to his child makes him yearn for the child's love in return. Our Sovereign's love to us is such that He *must* be loved by us. Could He be unhappy on His throne, He would be, without the love of those who surround it. Love is of God, and God is love.

"Behold your King!" and what manner of loyalty He requires of you. He will not be followed by slaves

but by freemen, and not by freemen except they love Him. By this bond of love only, will He have anyone bound to Him. By this power of love only will He have obedience rendered to Him. Behold Him, and you will see that He is love, that the love of the universe is His due, and that you especially, whom He has ransomed from eternal death, owe to Him a love that passeth knowledge.

The loyalty Christ requires of you, is, thirdly, a loyalty which comprehends your whole nature and your whole life. He demands, and He has a right to demand, that you present every faculty of soul and body in tribute before His throne. He will not accept an occasional offering of money, of praise, of worship, of work. He requires that whatsoever you do, you should do it unto Him. Your lips are not your own, your hands are not your own. Your soul is not your own. He is Lord of all. When you dig, when you sow, when you reap; when you manufacture, when you buy, when you sell; when you pull down, when you build up; when you toil, when you recreate; when you suffer, when you enjoy: He is your Lord. You cannot find a domain of thought, or sentiment, or speech, or action, in which you do not owe to Him an all-pervading loyalty. Sit in your house or walk by the way, lie down or rise up, you are still under law to Christ.

Call not this bondage, unless you are in bondage to the atmosphere, seeing you cannot get out of it

into a region in which you shall find no air to breathe and must die;—unless the earth is in bondage to the sun, seeing it cannot break the invisible chain that binds it to its centre and prevents its rushing out of its orbit into darkness and ruin. Bondage! No. Universal loyalty to Christ would turn London into a heavenly Jerusalem. It would cleanse our shops, our counting-houses, our factories, our streets, our families, of innumerable deceptions and pollutions. It would cleanse our very hearts, and, gathering us around the throne of our King, would inspire us to say with loud voice, as honestly as the Seraphim do—“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.”

Lastly, Christ requires of us *a loyalty that shall be unto death*—a loyalty that shall bear all manner of evils, and submit to all manner of sacrifices, even to the greatest of evils and sacrifices, death itself. He requires that we should follow Him whithersoever He goeth—through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Peter, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” This spake He, signifying by what death Peter should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, when He had held up before the eye of His disciple a cross of shame, as

the end of faithful service, He said, "Follow me." *We* run no risk of martyrdom, but we too are placed under the law of self-sacrifice, and owe to Christ a loyalty that shall shrink from no hardship which His providence may require at our hands.

Hear the words of a wise man from the far east, who has not yet attained to the faith of Thomas, when he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God," but who has studied the life and teachings of Christ until he has become deeply imbued with their spirit, and is able to teach others also. "The two fundamental doctrines of Gospel ethics (he says), which stand out prominently above all others, and give it its peculiar grandeur and its pre-eminent excellence, are, in my opinion, the doctrines of forgiveness and self-sacrifice. These golden maxims how beautifully Christ preached, how nobly He lived!" After many words of great beauty and truth on the forgivingness which Christ taught, this Hindoo preacher said in an assembly of his countrymen: "The other leading doctrine of Gospel morality is self-sacrifice. The paramount importance of this to my countrymen it is impossible to exaggerate, as it is this which affords the best remedy for the chief defect in the native character—viz., selfishness. The precepts which enjoin this virtue are so numerous, and emphatic, and prominent in the Gospel, that one feels no difficulty whatever in recognizing it as the one great truth which threads the whole narrative

of Christ's life and ministry. In this the varied incidents of His life and death find a unity and an explanation. His death on the cross affords the highest practical illustration of self-sacrifice." Appealing to the patriotism of his countrymen, he said: "Nothing short of total self-abnegation will save our country. I assure you, brethren, nothing short of self-sacrifice, of which Christ has furnished so bright an example, will regenerate India. The better to stimulate you to a life of self-denial, I hold up to you the cross on which Jesus died. May His example so influence you, that you may be prepared to offer even your blood, if need be, for the regeneration of your country!"

My young friends, these words, uttered amid the palaces of Calcutta, are but an echo of the truth which has gone thither from these western shores; but they come back to us to chide us that we fall so far short of the law and the life of our Lord Jesus. There is nothing so mars the beauty and enfeebles the strength of Christian character as the spirit of self-indulgence and self-seeking. If we measure virtues and vices by Christ's teaching, there is nothing more distinctively un-Christian, or even anti-Christian than this spirit. Christ requires of us, as He is entitled to do, and as it is for our own interest that He should, a loyalty that will subject our ease, our pleasure, our property, our very will, to His authority, and to the honour and interests of

His kingdom. This He requires not merely in exceptional circumstances, like those of Peter who was crucified, or of Paul who was beheaded, or of John who was exiled to the mines and rocks of Patmos, for the testimony of their Lord and Master, —or even of our own fathers, of whom this lecture reminds us,—“high-minded men,” who “nobly kept the faith” at a cost to which we are strangers, but of us all, and in all circumstances. He wills not that we should make crosses for ourselves and invent self-inflictions. His providence furnishes ample room for self-denial in “the trivial round, the common task” of life,—at home, in business, in society, in the Church. And our loyalty to Him may be approved in these forms as clearly, if not as painfully, as in those in which the martyrs were faithful unto death.

Beloved young friends, our first concern is to see you Christians, not by birth, not by baptism, but by personal faith in the Son of God, and personal consecration to His service. Our next concern is to see you Christians of a high and apostolic order, not effeminate, not self-indulgent, not conformists to the vices and selfishness of a corrupt age, not dwellers in the border-land of the world and the Church; but, like your Master, separated clearly from the ways of sinners; like your Master, able to say, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.” The days in which you live, demand Christians of this

order, men who will hold fast the faith, who will not be ashamed of that which was a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks; who will adorn the doctrine of their God and Saviour in the family, and in the market, and in the street; who will not count their comfort, or their time, or their strength, or their money, dear unto themselves, if they may only do the work which He hath given them to do, who hath bought them with His own blood. In these days God requireth such to serve Him. And if to any of you the requirement seems hard, be it known, that verily the most self-consuming and self-denying of the servants of God have their reward, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Behold now your King! Let Him reign over you from this hour. He only is worthy. Other lords are usurpers, and will bring you to ruin. He is a Saviour-King. And in the peace which He brings to your conscience, and in the purity to which He restores your heart, and in the law to which He subjects your life, and in the strength which He ministers to your weakness, and in the hopes with which He fills your souls, He will bestow on you a present heaven, and the pledge of that eternal heaven in which, clothed with robes that have been made white in His blood, you shall behold His face and share His glory. Behold your King, and live for ever!

THINGS POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE ; WORDS OF WARNING AND HOPE.

“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”—Luke xviii. 27.

“AND what are these ?” some young hearts at once demand. Are we not taught to cancel the word “impossible” from our language, never to pronounce it, never to think it, and to work on as if it had no existence ? What *can* be impossible for a young man ? He may begin life with beggars, but may end it with princes. He may be born in a stable, but may die in a palace. His first outcome in the world may be encompassed with difficulty and darkness ; his last outgoing from the world may be in prosperity and glory. Impossible ! There is nothing impossible.

We can count and measure the very stars. The old world required fable and legend to account for the subduing of the horse to the service of man. But now the very lightning is made the servant of man, and we need neither fable nor legend to explain it. The wings of the wind were once the

swiftest messengers of man's will and purpose, and the symbol of swiftness itself in every tongue that was spoken under heaven. We have now a messenger which has power, as we boast, to annihilate distance, and which is almost swift as thought. And if we have not yet attained to all that we would, does not the experience of the past justify us in saying that with men, even with men, all things are possible ?

“Impossible ! indeed !” young men will say ; looking at the matter in another aspect. Unveil the history of the wealthiest men in London, and what do you find ? They began life, or their fathers began life, with scarcely a penny in their pocket. Entering warehouses as porters, they have become their proprietors. Cabin-boys have become shipowners. Social transformations, almost as marvellous as that of the grub into the butterfly, made sometimes in a few years, teach us to call nothing impossible.

Is not our Prime Minister the son of a Scotch merchant ? Is not the Archbishop of Canterbury the same ? Have we not a living peer whose father died the other day a solicitor in the City of London ? And is not the path of life as open, and the ascent of it as easy for me, as it was for these, and for multitudes besides who have risen from the deepest obscurity to be ranked with the upper ten thousand ?

Be it so ! Be it so ! Set your heart on rising in the world, on making a fortune or attaining fame. The prizes of life are within your reach, as within the

reach of others. You may win them or you may not. If you do not win them, you will look on them, perhaps, all your life with an envious eye, and mourn your lot that you have failed. But if you do win them, it may be only to your sorrow. From your giddy height, exposed at once to storm and sunshine, you may look down enviously into the quiet, humble valley from which you have risen, and sigh for its peacefulness and safety. And what is more—if you do succeed in practically blotting out the word “impossible” from the sphere of social life, and demonstrate how difficulties may be overcome, you will, by so doing, only bring yourselves within the range of that order of impossibilities to which Our Lord referred. He was asked by a *rich* young man, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He replied in terms which were designed to test which was the stronger, his love of money or his desire to be saved. The young man would not do what the Master commanded, and went away in great sorrow. Then Jesus said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Those who heard the saying were surprised, as we should have been, and said, “Who then can be saved?” If not the rich, with all their advantages, who then? If not those who have *reached* the goal of worldly ambition,

shall they who are in the heat and turmoil of the race? If not those who are above all anxiety as to what they shall eat and wherewithal they shall be clothed, shall those whose life is a perpetual struggle with want and care? If it be as difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through a needle's eye, what must it be for a poor man?

It was on this most natural argument, that Jesus pronounced the general principle, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." It is not absolutely impossible for either a rich man or a poor man to be saved. But both great wealth and extreme poverty have an injurious influence on the human heart; and of the two, the influence of wealth is the more injurious—Christ being the judge. It is hard for a man to have it, and not to trust in it, and thus make it his portion and his God. Riches dim the eye that should look upon things spiritual and eternal. They deaden the soul that should long after a better and an enduring substance, and many a rich man will have through all eternity to curse, not the day wherein he was born, but the day wherein he became rich.

Let your bold young hearts then echo to the boast that there is nothing impossible, and prove, it in the world's sense of it, by climbing or levelling every mountain that obstructs your way. Get wealth, get distinction, you only bring yourselves, thereby, within

the range, as I have said, of another class of impossibilities—impossibilities which no human wisdom, no human energy, can overcome, which will give way only before the omnipotence of Divine grace.

Will you, then, look at the principle which Christ stated in the words of our text, as it relates to the great aim of the May-day lecture: which is, in one word, to make the young GODLY, to induce them to exchange the life of the worldling for the life of faith, to make them Christians. Here, perhaps, you will admit the use of the word “impossible;” perhaps you will make it your plea and excuse for not seriously entertaining the subject, and for giving yourselves up to the pleasures and pursuits of the world. The idea you put into the word “impossible,” will depend on the state of mind in which you use it, and the sort of difficulty which you contemplate.

1. First of all, *I can imagine you using it hastily, eagerly, perhaps angrily and petulantly, when you simply mean that you will not give up certain courses to which you are now devoted, and will not enter on certain courses which are at present distasteful to you.* You are urged to become religious, as some would say—to become Christians, to follow Christ. You have but the vaguest idea of what this means, but you have got the general notion that it will make some revolution in your habits; that it will require you to cease from certain things, which now go far to constitute your

happiness, and to do certain things which you exceedingly dislike ; and to the persuasives which are addressed to you, you frankly and boldly, though not wisely, respond, "Impossible—I cannot!" Well, all that I say to you at this point is, let there be no mistake as to your meaning ; you mean that you *will not*—that's all. You have made your choice. You love your idols, and after them you will go. Only one word to you : "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes ; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment."

2. Secondly, I can imagine you in an entirely different state of mind. *There are two things before your eyes, two only.* You can see nothing else, you can think of nothing else. They have taken possession of your soul, and they make you trouble. *These are sin and judgment.* In your heart you see nothing but sin ; you are defiled, you are guilty. In your past life you see nothing but sin. There are dark spots in that life on which you dare not look, and yet you cannot forget them. Or, it may be, there are no darkneses which you care to hide from the world. The one great sin which afflicts you, is that chief, that mother of all sins, *godlessness.* You have lived without God. You have been deaf to the call of Christ. Your privileges have been great and many. You

have been born and brought up in an atmosphere of religion. From your childhood you have been made familiar with the name of Jesus and with the love of Jesus. But heaven has shone upon you and spoken to you in vain—until now. And now you can think only of your sin and your sinfulness, and the judgments of God that impend over the sinner. That there should be mercy for you, you say, and you say it in an agony of sincerity, is *impossible*. You must die in your sins.

A thousand times better that you should feel thus than that you should continue in a state of calm and deathlike ungodliness. But some would tell you that your fears are fanatical—that they are groundless and superstitious. You are not the sinner that you imagine yourself to be. And if you were, you have nothing to fear from the hands of a loving Father. Miserable comforters those are who say such things. Deceivers they are. Say to them, “Get thee behind me, Satan!” Instead of our fears and tremblings being exaggerated and disproportioned to our sins, if we could see our sins as God sees them, we should be overwhelmed, and should be as dead men. There are no realities more real or more terrible than those two—sin and judgment. Let us not disguise it. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Most holy, most righteous is our God; and because He is, “even our God is a consuming fire.”

What then, O sinner, shall we say to you? We hear you bemoaning yourself thus:—

“Depth of mercy! can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?
I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face;
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.”

The question which weighs down your heart and conscience I answer, in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” Did God not say of old:—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon?” And did He not meet the rising doubt of the conscience as to the possibility of such mercy, by saying:—“For my thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are your ways as my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

And not only does God assure us thus of His exceeding great mercy, but He reveals to us how He can be just, and yet freely justify the ungodly.

He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sin. Do we, then, make void the law which condemns sin and condemns the sinner, when we preach to you forgiveness through the death of Jesus Christ? Nay, we establish the law. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, meet and embrace each other at the foot of the Cross. God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Herein, indeed, was the saying made true, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." The great gulf which separated the sinner from God is spanned by the atoning sacrifice of His dear Son. And now we make no exception—we dare make no exception—when we invite the chiefest of sinners, who smite on their breasts and cannot so much as lift their eyes to heaven, to believe that God willeth not their death, to believe that Christ died for them, and then, in the peace and joy which this faith will bring them, to exclaim adoringly:

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

3. I can imagine you in still another state of mind. *You feel yourselves in bondage to sin.* You

have been its servants all your life long. Some of you have been the very slaves of habits and practices which are now more to you than a second nature, and to give them up would do you as much violence as tearing you to pieces. The thing is simply impossible, you say. To lead a Christian life! You might as soon think of leading an eagle's life, and towering over mountain-tops, and claiming fellowship with the sun in his noonday brightness. Or, if you are familiar with Bible language, you will probably quote the old prophet's words:—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may we also do good that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. xiii. 23).

Admit it. It would be difficult to find language too strong to describe the terrible power of evil habits. But I meet you at once with Our Lord's words, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." They bear directly on your condition. But let us understand each other.

Do you mean to appeal to the enslaving force of a long period of ungodliness or of consciously evil habits as an apology for contentedly living and dying in your bondage? This is not what Jeremiah meant when he referred to the Ethiopian's skin and the leopard's spots. He meant not to palliate but to condemn the conduct of those who were accustomed to do evil. Fetters of sin may be strong as fetters of iron. But they bind only those who will to be

bound. And the stronger they are, the guiltier are those who are bound by them. You cannot free yourselves from responsibility, both for getting into such bondage and for continuing in it. And if anything might be regarded as a sign of your being utterly abandoned of God, it would be the spirit which resigns itself without sense of sin or guilt to evil courses, saying, "I have loved idols, and after them will I go."

But I shall hope that this is not your spirit, and that you are rather groaning under the burden of your bondage, and longing to be delivered. And if it is, I congratulate you. Next to being free is the desire to be free. Your fetters are already softening and melting, if this is your state of mind. And the words of our Lord must be good news to you, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." In Him is your help found. He has long been very near to you, to break your yoke, to bring you forth out of your house of bondage, and to make you free. You are now beginning to hear His voice and to feel His touch. Believe in Him, that He is able to work this great deliverance for you; and wait on Him without ceasing for the grace that will make your chains fall off your hands, and will enable you to overcome every difficulty and perplexity as you urge your way out of darkness into the sunshine and liberty of the sons of God.

Wait on God, I have said. But do it intelligently,

do it in His own way. And this means more than prayer, although it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of prayer. Let there be prayer—prayer without ceasing—prayer the most urgent your soul is capable of. But there must be more. While you are prostrate, making supplication with strong crying and tears, you will hear a Divine voice saying to you, “Open your eyes, behold Christ on His cross dying for you; behold Him and live.” This beholding has to do not only with calming the fears of a guilty conscience, not only with giving assurance of pardon, but likewise with destroying the power, killing the life, of sin in the soul. Christ Himself said, “The truth shall make you free.” We may say, “Grace shall make you free.” And grace only can do it. But Christ said, “The truth shall make you free.” And we shall err vastly if we overlook or make light of the great lesson which His words teach. The truth concerning Himself, for He is the truth—the truth concerning His work for us—is the grand instrument of our soul’s freedom, and our life’s freedom from the power of sin. It is this truth which grace uses to work its loving purpose in saving us from sin, and making us the freemen and the children of God. We might almost as well instruct you to pray to God for warmth while you shut yourselves up in a vault from which both fire and sunshine are excluded, or for strength while you abstain from food, as to pray for the grace that renews the

heart and breaks the power of sin, while your eyes are not turned to Christ and the Cross on which He died for you. It is not only when we would speak peace to a guilty conscience, but when we would break the fetters of sin, that we would say, "Behold the Lamb of God! Behold Him bearing your guilt on the accursed tree, and dying the just for the unjust." "The truth shall make you free." It is "the power of God unto your salvation."

The thing has been proved thousands of times. Men will continue to argue that the doctrine of a free forgiveness relaxes the bonds of law and of moral obligation. They did so in the days of Paul. They will, probably, do so to the end. When St. Patrick preached the Gospel on Tarah Hill to the Irish king, the Druids and the wise men of Ireland shook their heads. "Why," asked the king, "does what the cleric preaches seem so dangerous to you?" "Because," was the answer—"because he preaches repentance; and the law of repentance is such that a man shall say, 'I may commit a thousand crimes, and if I repent I shall be forgiven, and it will be no worse with me; therefore I will continue in sin.'" But this theory is disproved by facts. The doctrine of repentance and free forgiveness through Christ is utterly fatal to the love and power of sin. Go into that prison-cell. The minister of Christ is reasoning of righteousness and judgment to come with a young woman who is about to be tried for her life.

She is not only unmoved, but at last she laughs in his face. He then alters his tone, and speaks of the love of Jesus, and the mercy provided for chief sinners, till the tears come into her eyes, and she interrupts him by asking, "Why, do you think there *can* be mercy for me?" He says, "Undoubtedly, if you *can* desire it." "Ah," she replies, "if I had thought so, I should not have been here. I have long fixed it in my mind that I was absolutely lost, and without hope; and this persuasion made me obstinate in my wickedness, so that I cared not what I did."

There is a profound philosophy in this, which if we cannot see we can feel. And I commend it to the most serious thought of all who would be saved from sin as well as from guilt. You may be old; and without having lived a life of vice, your godlessness may have hardened into a rock, and with scarce a desire, far less a hope, of attaining to a new life, you ask, "Can a man be born again when he is old?" Or you may be young in years, but old in sin. And with passion yet strong, and your heart not yet sick of your evil ways, you are roused, notwithstanding, to reflection, but are met at the very threshold of inquiry by the difficulty of the change which is required of you. Be of good cheer: "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." We tell you of a Mighty Saviour. Behold His love to you in His death on the Cross! Lay hold of His strength! There is hope for you, because He

pardons freely and fully. There is hope for you, because He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. There is hope for you, as there was for the lepers in the days of His earthly sojourn. Under His touch your leprosy will depart, and the flesh that has been loathsome will come again like unto the flesh of a little child. Thank God that with Him all things are possible!

4. Let me ask you to look at the matter in a somewhat different aspect of things impossible with men. You have some sense of the claims of religion. You would not for the world utter a word that could be regarded as reproachful or disrespectful towards Christ and His truth. But you have an instinct, *a right and true instinct, that every form of sin is inconsistent with the homage that is due to Christ.* And you find so much in the ways and business of the world that is evil and sinful, that you repel the plea which comes to you for Christ and His ways, by an immediate "impossible." If by this you mean that it is impossible to reconcile persistence in known sin with a true Christian profession, you are right. These things are irreconcilable. And it is well that you should hold fast by this "impossible."

But if you mean that it is impossible to lead a Christian life in the midst of wicked society, we say—no. If you mean what a young man once said to me,

with tears in his eyes, "It's impossible to be religious in the fore-castle," we say—NO. *With God* even this is possible. It is not a matter of necessity that in Rome you should do as they do in Rome. The memory of Joseph in Egypt, and of Daniel in Babylon, has not been preserved in vain. "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God."

But perhaps the difficulty takes another shape with you. The impossibility is that business, such business as you are engaged in, should be carried on without practices which your best instincts tell you are inconsistent with Christ's law. And because you cannot give up your business, and cannot give up these practices, you cannot be a Christian. Now this is a fearful dilemma. *I* do not pretend to know how far business is affected with the incurable leprosy of falsehood and dishonesty. But I know this, that the law of God accepts no apology for sin. And I would remind you of one of old who, when he saw the glory and felt the claims of Jesus, counted what things had been gain to him but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus our Lord. It may require much decision of purpose to follow this example. It may involve you in difficulty and suffering. But yours will be the gain in the end. "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot cause thee to sin, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into ever-

lasting fire. And if thine eye cause thee to sin, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." (Matt. xviii. 8, 9.) "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *with persecutions*; and in the world to come everlasting life." (Mark x. 29, 30.)

Be it known to you that Christ demands your heart and service. He has a right to them, for He is your Lord and God. He has a right to them, for He has died to save you. He gives you no liberty to decline His service. This would be liberty to choose sin rather than holiness, death rather than life. He loves you too much to give you liberty to destroy yourselves. Be the cost, the money-cost, the pleasure-cost, what it may, He will not let you choose the world for either your portion or your master. But He will more than compensate privation and suffering endured for His sake. It may not be in kind, but the compensation will not be the less real on that account. He will turn your loss into gain, and make you sing over again the song of Habakkuk, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Thus will you find that saying true, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

5. If time permitted, there is another application of Our Lord's words on which I should like to dwell, but I can only suggest it for thoughtful consideration. I turn now to Christians—the Christian young—and imagine them saying, that although it is possible, by the grace of God, to be Christians, *it is not possible to be Christians of a very high order*—not possible to strive to any very high degree of Christian excellence and purity. You can understand how monks should be very pure, and spiritual, and unselfish. You can understand how the discipline of days of persecution should make men very heroic and very Christ-like. But in these times of ours the atmosphere is too heavy and unwholesome for any high degree of spiritual health and power. You must be content to mope and languish where your fathers were bright and joyous; you must be content to creep where they stood upright and walked, and often rose as on eagle's wing. You are doomed to this, you say, by the unfavourable circumstances of these times.

Without waiting to inquire how far your circumstances are unfavourable to a life of high Christian attainment, as compared with those of your fathers, I meet you at once with words which take away all

excuse—if you want excuse—and which should inspire you with courage and hope, if you are, as you ought to be, desirous wholly to follow the Lord—“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” Let this be your motto, and in the strength of it forget the things which are behind, and press towards the goal of the highest and purest form of the Christian life.

In conclusion, let us all understand that Christ is this day pleading with us to be His ; and let us dread, above all things, to have to write our spiritual history at last in these words :—

“ Came a gentle, gentle knocking,
Knocking at the latchèd door ;
And my boy’s heart heard the knocking,
And it pierced me to the core,
Like a sweet persuasive music,
Once heard, ne’er forgotten more.
Then I raised the latch and whispered,
Whispered sad as ne’er before,
(As ’twere sin to whisper), ‘ Stranger,
Kind, kind stranger, leave the door ! ’

“ Came again the Stranger knocking,
Knocking loudlier than of yore ;
And my man’s heart heard the knocking
As I bent my dear dead o’er ;

more.

stone,

floor.

silence,

anger,

the door ! *

Poems," by the Rev.

From her silent lip I vainly
Sued for one, but one word more.
Turned I then the key and opened,
Weeping for awhile, the door;—
But drew back with, ‘Patient, Stranger,
Come when this great grief is o’er!’

“ Came again the Stranger knocking,
Knocking when my grief was o’er:
When into the luring ledger,
Eagerly my eyes did pore,
When the silence of the midnight
Searched me, searched me to the core;
Not a day but heard the knocking,
Knocking at the bolted door.
Till I moaned in anger, ‘Stranger,
Leave me, and return no more!’

“ Came still again the Stranger,
Through what night of sinful roar,
Heard the last, last feeble knocking,
When to morn the night on wore!
Fast unbolting and unbarring,
Furious flung I wide the door;
Tears sprang in his eyes so yearning
As I cursed him o’er and o’er.
Turned He from me—in a blessing
Died His voice,—I heard no more.

“ Comes no more that Stranger knocking,
As was wont in days of yore;—

He persisted, I persisted,
Till He, weary, comes no more.
Fire is out upon the hearthstone,
Winter strikes up from the floor.
Comes He not: this silence, silence,
And this desolation sore!
Oh to hear that gentle Stranger,
Once, but once more at the door! *

* From "The Fall of St. Peter—and other Poems," by the Rev.
G. T. Coster.

The attention of the young is invited to the following Books, by the Author of these May-Day Lectures, published by the Religious Tract Society:—

I.

THE DIVINE LIFE.

A Book of Facts and Histories.

II.

WORK AND CONFLICT;

OR,

The Divine Life in its Progress.
A Book of Facts and Histories.

III.

REST

Under the Shadow of the Great Rock.
A Book of Facts and Principles.

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