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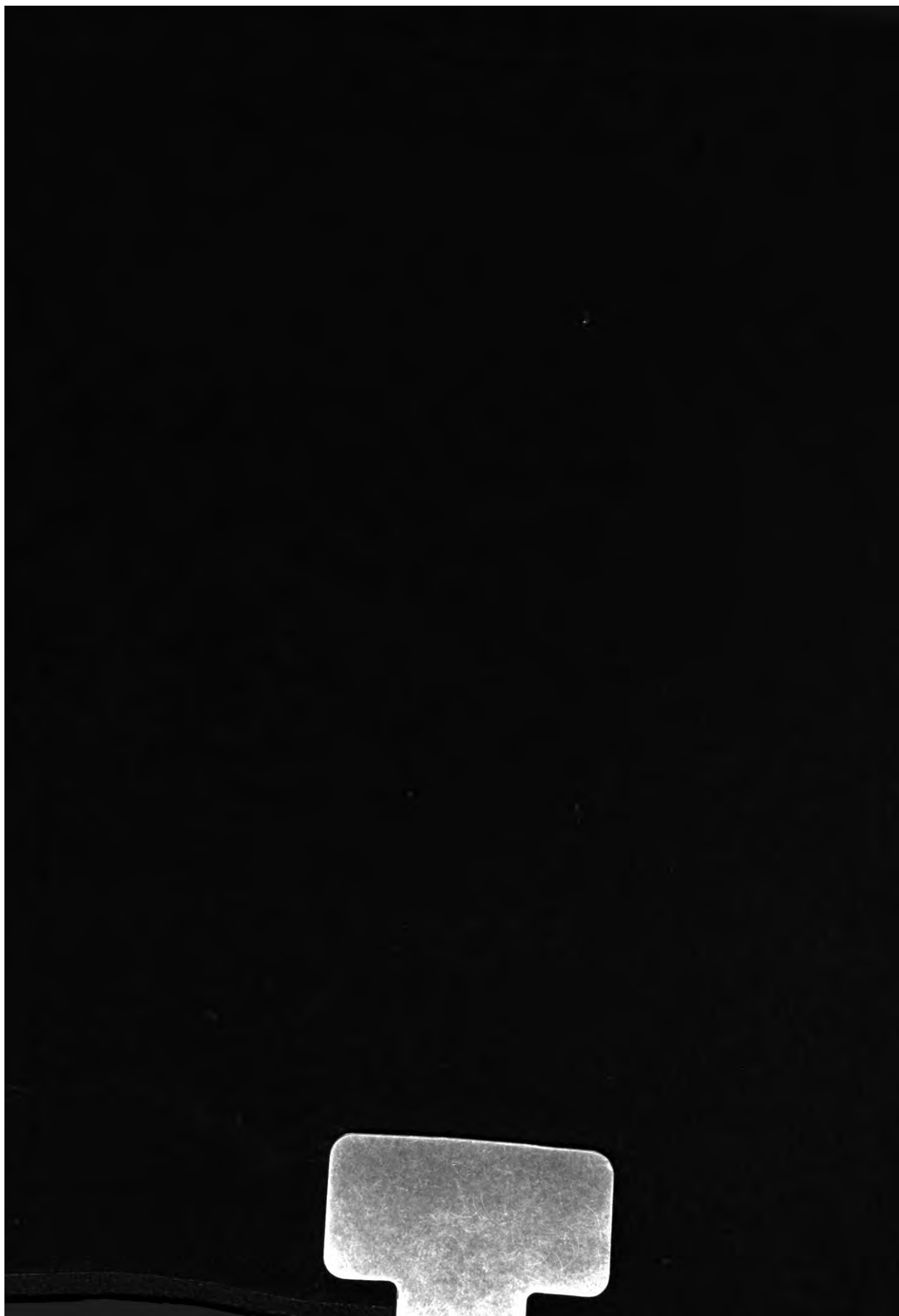
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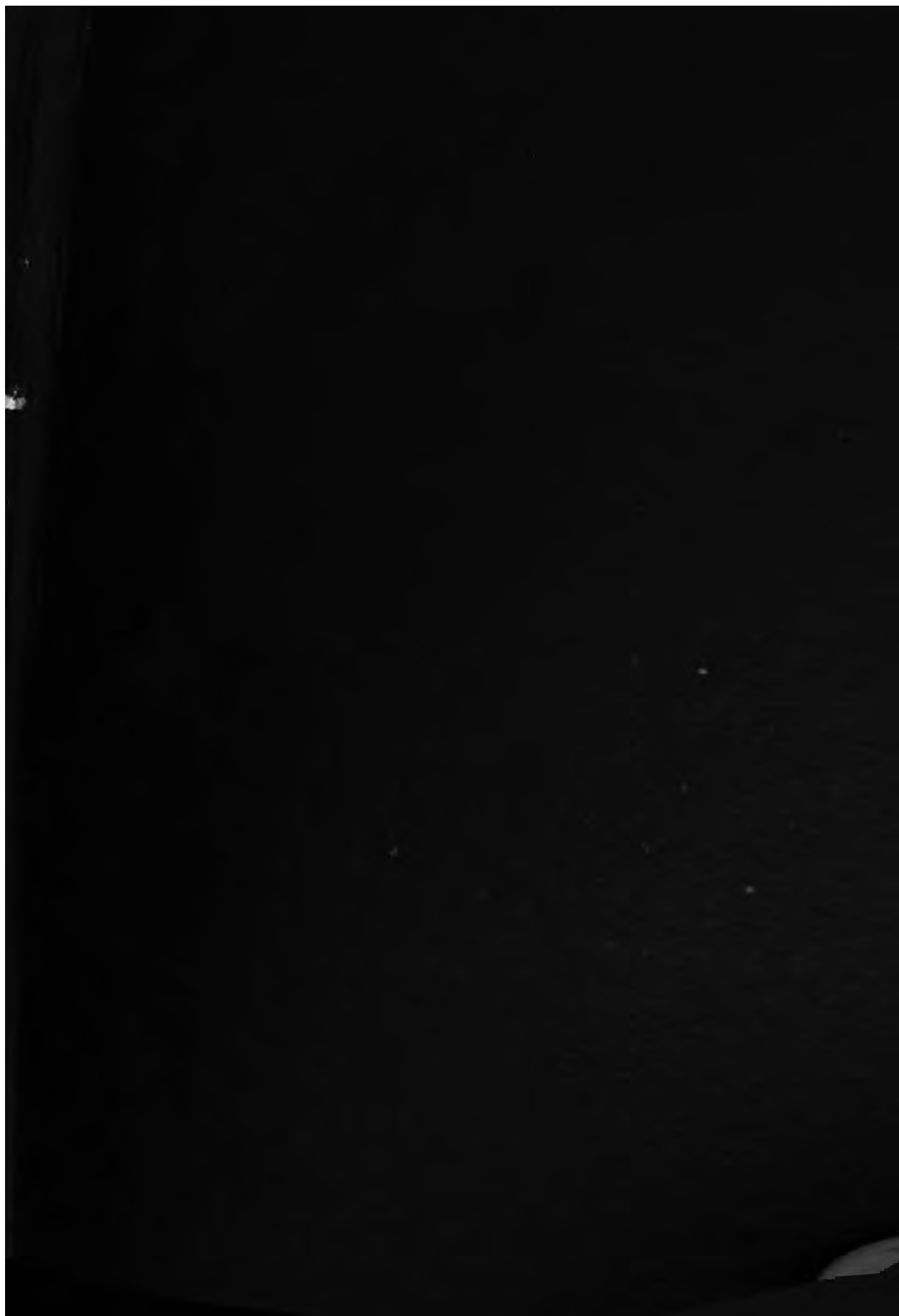


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THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL

GEORGE DAWSON M.A.







THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL.

PREVIOUS VOLUMES.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.



PRAYERS: with a Discourse on
Prayer.

SERMONS ON DISPUTED POINTS
AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

SERMONS ON DAILY LIFE AND
DUTY.



FUTURE VOLUMES.



THE THREE BOOKS OF GOD:
Nature, History, and Scripture.

EVERY-DAY COUNSELS.

THE
AUTHENTIC GOSPEL:

SERMONS BY
GEORGE DAWSON, M.A.

EDITED BY GEORGE ST. CLAIR, F.G.S.

"God is His own interpreter."



LONDON:

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PREFACE.



TWO volumes of Mr. Dawson's sermons, edited by his widow, have already been published. They were selected before the majority of the discourses were reduced from the shorthand-writer's reports. The editor believes that these now presented, and two volumes which are to follow, will be found quite as full of rational piety and devotional beauty as those which preceded them, and not less characteristic in style.

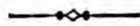
With one exception the discourses here offered were all preached in the last two years of Mr. Dawson's life: and they include the last two which he ever delivered, in which, to some who heard, it seemed as though the shadow of the coming event was already upon him.

The sermons, as preached, were not intended for a connected series ; but an effort is here made so to arrange them that each one shall prepare the mind for the next, and one title shall not unfitly designate the whole.

At the request of Miss Beauclerc, who alone was authorized by Mr. Dawson to take down his discourses in shorthand, they are edited by Mr. Dawson's successor. His labour has been performed *con amore*, but with "regrets eternal" that the loving hand which prepared the previous volumes no longer survives.

CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR,
BIRMINGHAM,
October, 1881.

CHRIST VERIFIES CHRIST.



Morning, May 28th, 1876.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”—JOHN xxi. 25.

SUCH words as these are called “strong language” and “exaggeration.” But strong language is always true to the poet, natural to the passionate, truthful to the large-minded ; and only obnoxious to the small, the feeble, and the chill-blooded, to those limited souls who find human language big enough to live in, turn in, move in, and have their being in. For there are few people of large mind and heart who find human language enough for them. And no one book is enough, no one *anything* is enough, except in a few rare cases, where the intensity of passion excuses the oneness of the

object. Human language is often felt to be like that *bed* of old, which was so short that a man could not stretch himself on it ; and in trying to cover himself with the coverlid, found it to be too narrow. A short bed, and a narrow, scanty coverlid, out of which one's head and limbs are continually going, only to find chilliness and cramp—such is human language.

Is it big enough for you ? Well, well ; there are dwarfs in the world, and language is their fitting garment. But wherever there is a soul that deeply feels, wherever there is abundant passion, love, or devotion, the difficulty has always been to make this cold, cribbed, insufficient tongue of ours do duty. The consequence is that the deeply feeling understand what the scripture saith about “groanings that cannot be uttered ;” and that, before God, their language is all too narrow, chill, and cold. So, as the next thing to having an adequate spoken language, men do what they can by extravagance to make it up. A great poet like Shakespeare presses the universe into his passion. He tells the woman he adores that her eyes outvie the brightness of the rising morning. One great ancient wished he was a star itself, that he might look down always upon her he loved. So these

souls, feeling deeply, in order to say what they wish to say, since words won't do it, call upon all things to help them—the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley—all things are called in, that the beloved may be set forth in glory, that the bridegroom may set forth the charms of his adored.

Strong language is objectionable, is it? Yes, when it is but the emphasis of emptiness; when little people make a great noise, using language stronger than occasion requires. The sin and shame of it is that they have no feeling adequate to it. But when the heart is all aglow, when passion is strong, when the thing to be said is infinite—then the most extravagant language is poverty-stricken, and altogether inadequate. To hear some commentators over such a phrase as that we have just read, is charming: "Dear brethren, this passage must not be taken literally; of course the apostle John meant——" Oh, thank you for nothing! I want not your dry bread of sand. What John meant was that there were so many things that might have been told about Christ, that the world could not contain it all. Beautiful expression! And how adequate!

Now, what does it teach? If any man's biography were to be daily written down, it would

make a big book. There is nothing that happens that might not be made the subject of a book. One of the most charming of books was written by a man about what seems to be a very simple thing—only a tour round his chamber. But *what* a book! Put some people into a room, and they behold no more than a blind horse would. But not so with the instructed man. He would pause at every part of the room, and tell tales of the woodwork, tales of the trees from which that wood came, tales of the tropics where they grew. He would tell stories of the mahogany-tree, its bloom and blossom; tales of the Indians, and stories of other tribes; tales that would run him back to Adam and the antediluvian world—for all things lead to all things, in this world—till there is no knowing where he might finish. Franklin tells us that he “rose at six, washed,” etc. But if, before he passed on to say what he did next, he had stopped to tell us all about “rose,” what a volume would be wanted! “Rose!” What stories about limbs and muscles—of the incoming of air into the lungs! what reminiscences of the night’s dream!—he would never get on. Whilst he was telling you about “rose,” he would cry out with the psalmist, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made!” Then, whilst

he was telling you about "washed," he would go back to the ancients, and tell of the hand-washing of the Jews ; he would travel on to Jordan, and see Christ baptized of John. All the rivers of the earth, and the sweet stories about them, would flow in upon his imagination, and there would be another volume written. Then, whilst he was telling you about "dressed," what tales there would be about silk, and cotton, and cloth ; of tariffs, and free trade. And so another volume would be written ; for thus one thing leads on to another.

And so one might come to think, with the great poet, that the best portion of man's life lies in the little, nameless, unrecorded acts of kindness and of love. It is the unwritten things of life that uphold the great things. So, when we think of Christ's life, and of the little that is said about him, we know there must have been much that might have been written. What words, what actions are lost to us !

So, just now, we want to point out to you how much may be gained by the wise use of two great volumes which are strangely neglected. I have tried to win you to one of them by reading the Apocryphal Books of the Old Testament. It is by these books that the great gap is filled up

between the closing of the Old Testament Canon and the coming of Christ ; and it is these books which enable us to receive and understand what Christ taught. The Apocryphal New Testament, too, is a book of wondrous charm, an unknown book to many, but worth studying, if for no other reason than to justify St. John in saying the world could not contain all that related to Christ. These books show the amazing mass of speculation and hypothesis amid which the canonical Gospels grew ; and in the study of them there are many curious things to be noted. One's estimate of the kind of men who wrote the canonical Gospels is wondrously increased, when we see the divine faculty by which, from this confused mass of things, they seem to have selected those which were most likely to be true of Christ. For, remember, every man tries his own life—every man is himself the touchstone of his own reputation. "As the fining-pot is to silver, and as the furnace is to gold, so is a wise man to his praise." His "praise" is his reputation. That is, when you hear a man's praise or reputation, there will probably be some things in it which will sound more true than others. Take that thing called "gossip," in which little people indulge so much. You hear

a certain thing said about a man, but it does not strike you as true ; and you say, " I don't think that is likely." Why ? " Oh," you say, " it never happened to him," or, " he never said it." But why do you reject that thing ? Because that man, as you know him, and understand him, and believe in him, makes that vile tale impossible. The man himself is the fining-pot of the things that are said of him. There are things you hear of a man which the minute you hear them you say, " Just like him ;" but you hear another thing of him, and you say, " I would not believe it if his own mother said so." What right have you to believe one thing of him more than another ? Ah ! the man himself is the fining-pot of his own actions ! " But," you may be told, " I *saw* him do it, and I *know* it is true." Ah ! don't believe everything you see, for there are few eyes in this world that can be trusted. It is lovely to hear a man or woman, when they are told something scandalous of a friend, say, " I don't believe it ; I will never believe it !" There is the glory of true greatness, that, knowing the man to be in the main a just and true man, it matters not how many drops of scandal fall adown him, they leave no mark or stain.

Now, it is the glory of Christ to have erected a standard by which he may be interpreted. So, when the Council of Nice, or any other Council, are met to settle whether this thing or the other be true of him ; when sceptics say, "He never said that,"—I reply, "By God! he did ; of Christ that tale is true!" But of other things, I say, "I don't believe it." Take that miracle about the devils being driven into the swine. Do you think I could believe *that*? No. "Well, but have you ever examined into the evidences of the genuineness of the passage?" "Yes." "*Why* don't you believe that?" Ah! "As the fining-pot is to silver, as the furnace is to gold, so is a wise man to his praise." Christ send devils into swine? If all the Doctors and Councils of the world were to tell me to believe that, I could not. No, I blacken not the Master ; I allow no shadow to gather over him. Therefore, the rationalist, or, rather, the true spiritualist, finds that the truest Canon is that which comes of the repute which a man has built up for himself.

There are very many things written down concerning Christ, which are believed by others, but which I do not believe. The evidence from without I care very little for, regarding only the evi-

dence that cometh from within. Therefore it is that the reading of these uncanonical Gospels is useful in showing what a fine instinct, what a spirit of good taste, what an almost divinely inspired knowledge of what Christ was, the men who wrote our Four Gospels must have had. I will read you a little from the Apocryphal Books, just to show that, as a matter of fact, there is between the Four Gospels that we commonly use and these, that singular difference which strikes a man of fine taste between the consummate work of a true artist and the work of some dauber—the difference between a work of art wrought in love, and one wrought only for bread. For the spirit of an artist creeps into every stroke of his brush ; and in the writing of the Gospels, in settling which are canonical, every stroke is a betrayal. Oh! there are some things there from which not one jot, not one tittle, shall pass away. Everything is full of character. There is no handwriting but is a betrayal. Through it comes character ; out of it leaps and looks the soul.

When, therefore, you read passages out of our Gospels, you may doubt, for instance, whether some things were done miraculously or not. “Well, but there *are* miracles !” Yes, miracles *and* miracles—

miracles that it is impossible Christ could have done, and miracles that he could have done, had he done any. With the exception of that swine business, of which I have spoken, almost all the miracles of the Gospels are glorious in their object, simple in their method, sweet in their spirit, and such as the "Man of Sorrows," man's great Lover, that great charitable soul, is likely to have done. For Christ verifies Christ. All tales of men are verified or falsified by the men themselves. If there are signs that what is said of this man is true, good ; if not, it must drop slowly out.

I will read to you from the Apocrypha. We won't go into dates : but the writings are early. This book constitutes a curious picture of the floating traditions of the Church. But it is more than that. What a pathetic book to those that understand it ! What an earthen vessel ! and oh, how full of earthly dregs ! It gathers about Christ the stains of human stupidity and of human ignorance. It is a piteous book—a book of infinite pathos. When some of you think that everything should be taken just as it is written, don't be shocked if I tell you that even God himself cannot speak to man in such a way as to convey precisely what God means. It is an impossibility.

The purest soul, coming into contact with earthen stain, cannot be quite as pure afterwards. Let the earthen vessel be what it will, though unstained by sin, it is still earthen ; and there is no purification of earth possible that shall save the water of God going into it from partaking of the earthiness. But oh ! into what an earthen pitcher was poured that life of Christ ! Into man ! And this is what men have made of it.

Remember, there is no revelation possible to you in its pureness. If God himself could speak words to man—if the heavens should be opened, and God should speak to any of you—He must speak in English, or bad French, and that would limit the message. There is no language possible in which God can fully reveal himself to man.

Just as a man of fine taste has no difficulty in judging in a moment between a picture which Raphael *did* paint, and one which some coarse picture-dealer *pretends* that he painted ; just as one accustomed to the fine aromas of the wine of Hamburg can distinguish it from the spurious rubbish that is brought to imitate it ; just as those that know the ring of true gold are proof against being deceived by the mosaic,—so there need be no difficulty in judging of these writings, as

compared with the Four Gospels now in current use.

Call to mind, now, some of the sweet miracles of the Gospels, and the holy silences that are observed regarding the childhood of Christ. The imagination is left to construct the early life of Jesus for itself. His wondrous childhood is never revealed but once—when he was a child of twelve years old, and was found listening to the Doctors, and asking them questions. Some of you have wondered how it is that you have not heard much of the childhood of Christ. Do you know *why*? Those homely men who wrote the Gospels were gentlemen in spirit: so they shelter him in Nazareth, hide him in Bethlehem, keep him at home, and keep back his little speeches and nonsenses. For the sacred right of a child is silence. So these men of fine niceness let the little Christ be born, and showed the Magi at his feet; and after that we scarcely hear again of him until manhood, except that “he went down to Nazareth and was subject unto his parents.” Then, once, in order that the glory to come might not be forgotten in the morning grayness—lest men should forget what was to be looked for—there, in the Temple, stood the wondrous Child,

asking questions of the Doctors, and answering their questions. When that was done, he went down, obedient to his parents again; went down to employ himself with the handicraft of a workman. But, nowadays, if you take up a newspaper, you are sure to see some paltry advertisement of this kind: "Anything done by a genteel pauper that is not *menial*." They who believe that this Christ was God Incarnate, the Eternal Jehovah made visible, let them remember that his fingers were cramped with toil! If that truth about "the carpenter" had been taught to this world as it ought to have been taught, there would not have happened, as in my time, that the churches are neglected by the very class for whom they were intended. Why should they trouble themselves with the church? What have the churches of this world done for the poor, until of late? The churches have been worshippers of the Gold, but they have not cared for the Myrrh. The gospel of work never was preached till our time; and it comes too late, too late. Living easy lives, because of the daring of their fathers, they have spoken with contempt of the poor, and sneered at their passionate attempts for freedom. There might be a society fashioned in this world, in

which there could be a fairer chance for the lowest down, a larger life for the children of toil. When one sees the pride and ostentation that there is in this country, one blesses the man who paints Christ as a carpenter, and makes that poor body of his thin with labour ; for he at least understood the gospel of the hidden life : “ Is not this the carpenter, and the son of a carpenter ? ”

Over against this, let us put the twaddle I am going to read to you. Some of you want to know a great deal about Christ when he was young. Listen to this, then :—“ When the Lord Jesus was seven years of age, he was on a certain day with other boys, his companions, about the same age ; who, when they were at play, made clay into several shapes, namely, asses, oxen, birds, and other figures ; each boasting of his work, and endeavouring to excel the rest. Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys, ‘ I will command these figures which I have made, to walk. ’ And immediately they moved, and when he commanded them to return, they returned. He had also made the figures of birds and sparrows, which, when he commanded to fly, did fly, and when he commanded to stand still, did stand still ; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink.

When at length the boys went away, and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them, 'Take heed, children, for the future, of his company, for he is a sorcerer; shun and avoid him, and from henceforth never play with him.'"^{*} And this of Christ! of whom the Gospels have only this to say—that "he went down with his parents, and was subject unto them." *He* invoke the lightning of God to light his own match with, in order to make toys speak, or clay pigeons fly? If one hears of miraculous toys, one is apt to doubt the genuineness of the statement.

Now, listen again:—"On a certain day also, when the Lord Jesus was playing with the boys, and running about, he passed by a dyer's shop, whose name was Salem. And there were in his shop many pieces of cloth belonging to the people of that city, which they designed to dye of several colours. Then the Lord Jesus, going into the dyer's shop, took all the cloths, and threw them into the furnace. When Salem came home, and saw the cloths spoiled, he began to make a great noise, and to chide the Lord Jesus, saying, 'What hast thou done to me, O thou son of Mary? Thou

^{*} "The Gospel of the Infancy," chap. xv. (Hone's edition).

hast injured both me and my neighbours : they all desired their cloths of a proper colour ; but thou hast come, and spoiled them all.' The Lord Jesus replied, 'I will change the colour of every cloth to what colour thou desirest ;' and then he presently began to take the cloths out of the furnace, and they were all dyed of those same colours which the dyer desired. And when the Jews saw this surprising miracle, they praised God." Do you think this is likely to have happened? It happened only in the minds and in the conceptions of those who wrote it. Put all this into the furnace, into the fining-pot, and see what will come of it.

Then this next chapter, chapter sixteen, is a curious one in many respects :—"And Joseph, wheresoever he went in the city, took the Lord Jesus with him, where he was sent for to make gates, or milk-pails, or sieves, or boxes ; the Lord Jesus was with him wheresoever he went." A fine, homely picture, that ! I don't know whether it was true ; but I think it very likely. The little lad going always with his father ; that I can understand. And when the father gave him a hammer, I can imagine him wielding it with wondrous pride, thinking he was "carrying it for

father." But the story goes on :—" And as often as Joseph had anything in his work, to make longer or shorter, or wider, or narrower, the Lord Jesus would stretch his hand towards it ; and presently it became as Joseph would have it. So that he had no need to finish anything with his own hands, for he was not very skilful at his carpenter's trade." Oh, poor babbler at marvel-mongering ! Joseph has passed the necessity for an action for libel ; but it is too bad to say that he did not understand his trade. Again :—" On a certain time, the King of Jerusalem sent for him, and said, ' I would have thee make me a throne of the same dimensions with that place in which I commonly sit.' Joseph obeyed, and forthwith began the work, and continued two years in the king's palace before he finished it. And when he came to fix it in its place, he found it wanted two spans on each side of the appointed measure. Which, when the king saw, he was very angry with Joseph. And Joseph, afraid of the king's anger, went to bed without his supper, taking not anything to eat. Then the Lord Jesus asked him, what he was afraid of ? Joseph replied, ' Because I have lost my labour in the work which I have been about these two years.' Jesus said to him,

‘Fear not, neither be cast down ; do thou lay hold on one side of the throne, and I will the other, and we will bring it to its proper dimensions.’ And when Joseph had done as the Lord Jesus said, and each of them had with strength drawn his side, the throne obeyed, and was brought to the proper dimensions of the place : which miracle, when those who stood by saw, they were astonished, and praised God. The throne was made of the same wood which was in being in Solomon’s time, namely, wood adorned with various shapes and figures.”

I have read much ; but such inimitable twaddle as this—oh, it is so sweetly human, so monstrously absurd ! Joseph and Jesus pulling at the throne, to stretch it to its proper dimensions ! The Holy Spirit of God must have touched Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with the spirit of “selection,” which saved them from such miracle-mongering. For Christ—the Christ that I adore—rises above these pitiful tales. “As the fining-pot is to silver, and as the furnace is to gold, so is a man to his praise.”

Again :—“On another day, the Lord Jesus going out into the street, and seeing some boys who were met to play, joined himself to their company ; but

when they saw him they hid themselves, and left him to seek for them. The Lord Jesus came to the gate of a certain house, and asked some women, who were standing there, where the boys were gone? And when they answered, that there was no one there, the Lord Jesus said, 'Who are those whom ye see in the furnace?' They answered, they were kids of three years old. Then Jesus cried out aloud, and said, 'Come out hither, O ye kids, to your shepherd;' and presently the boys came forth like kids, and leaped about him, which, when the women saw, they were exceedingly amazed, and trembled. Then they immediately worshipped the Lord Jesus, and beseeched Him, saying, 'O our Lord Jesus, son of Mary, thou art truly that good Shepherd of Israel! have mercy on thy handmaids, who stand before thee, who do not doubt, but that thou, O Lord, art come to save, and not to destroy.' After that, when the Lord Jesus said, 'The children of Israel are like Ethiopians among the people,' the women said, 'Thou, Lord, knowest all things, nor is anything concealed from thee; but now we entreat thee, and beseech of thy mercy, that thou wouldst restore these boys to their former state.' Then Jesus said, 'Come hither, O boys, that we

may go and play ;' and immediately, in the presence of those women, the kids were changed, and returned into the shape of boys."

Then, further on, we read :—"Another time, when the Lord Jesus was coming home in the evening with Joseph, he met a boy, who ran so hard against him that he threw him down, to whom the Lord Jesus said, 'As thou hast thrown me down, so shalt thou fall, and never rise.' And that moment the boy fell down dead." And that is said of Christ!—he who in his dying hour had naught but benediction to give, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "O daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but rather for yourselves and for your children." One wishes that some process of selection may go on still, so that men, with a higher conception of Jesus than ever, shall be obliged to take out of even Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, some of the things that are said there about Christ. But that he should have descended to vulgar anger, even in his youth, one cannot believe it.

We will read a little further :—"There was also at Jerusalem one named Zaccheus, who was a schoolmaster. And he said to Joseph, 'Joseph, why dost thou not send Jesus to me, that he may

learn his letters?’ Joseph agreed, and told St. Mary. So they brought him to that master, who, as soon as he saw him, wrote out an alphabet for him, and he bade him say *Aleph*; and when he had said *Aleph*, the master bade him pronounce *Beth*. Then the Lord Jesus said to him, ‘Tell me first the meaning of the letter *Aleph*, and then I will pronounce *Beth*.’” Ah! this is homely, and sweet; so like an inquisitive child. One thing at a time. Exhaust the letter *Aleph*, before we pass on to *Beth*. Oh, if more men would explain *Alpha*, before they pass on to *Beta*, how much better it would be for the world! But to proceed:—“And when the master threatened to whip him, the Lord Jesus explained to him the meaning of the letters *Aleph* and *Beth*; also which were the straight figures of the letters, which the oblique, and what letters had double figures; which had points, and which had none; why one letter went before another; and many other things he began to tell him and explain, of which the master himself had never heard, nor read in any book. The Lord Jesus further said to the master, ‘Take notice how I say to thee;’ then he began clearly and distinctly to say *Aleph*, *Beth*, *Gimel*, *Daleth*, and so on to the end of the alphabet. At this the

master was so surprised, that he said, 'I believe this boy was born before Noah;' and turning to Joseph he said, 'Thou hast brought a boy to me to be taught, who has more learning than any master.' He said also to St. Mary, 'This your son has no need of any learning.'" A lovely touch, that! These exaggerations are one of the chief beauties of the book; for it is a true book, too, and to a wise man as sweet as one of those pictures of olden days: so lovely and quaint; so human and true; one loves to look at them. "This child must have been born before Noah!" But we proceed:—"They brought him then to a more learned master, who, when he saw him, said, 'Say *Aleph*;' and when he had said *Aleph*, the master bade him pronounce *Beth*; to which the Lord Jesus replied, 'Tell me first the meaning of the letter *Aleph*, and then I will pronounce *Beth*.' But this master, when he lifted up his hand to whip him, had his hand presently withered, and he died. Then said Joseph to St. Mary, 'Henceforth we will not allow him to go out of the house, for every one who displeases him is killed.'" And this of him who, when his disciples said to him, "Lord, shall we call down fire from heaven to consume these people who will not receive thee?" said, "The

Son of Man came to save, and not to destroy." And that is the man of whom they say, "Whosoever displeases him is killed." He who took death from man; he who said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!" Of this man it was said that whosoever thwarted him was killed! Ah! these things come to us through earthen vessels, and have to pay the penalty for it. Even the water of life must run in earthen channels and into poor vessels; even the wine of God is mixed up with the water of earth.

What wonder, then, that we too should have difficulties? for we too have to separate the fine gold from the dross. And this process must go on; and the process is a simple one to us, for the verifying God shall tell me what things are, and what things are not true of Him. And Jesus Christ, out of all this confusion of sweet humanity and strange impossibilities, he shall verify for himself what things are true of him. So, in vain are all Councils, Nicene or otherwise, all manuscripts, and revisionists, and commentators; for to us this is the first law: "As the fining-pot is to silver, and as the furnace is to gold, so is a wise man to his praise," or—so a man verifies what is

said of him, whether it be true or false. And though Moses should write, or God declare it to be otherwise, if the light that lighteth my soul declares that it is not, it passes by me as but the tradition of an older day. So, whatsoever is said of Christ, in any Gospel whatsoever, let him but be born in you, let the inward, spiritual Christ be born in a man, then this spiritual Christ is the verifier of himself; he himself holds a sublime council, and determines the canon. So, whilst we are thankful for the services of all scholars, yet, just as by that instinct which, when somebody tells you something of your mother which the sweet image of her life that is woven into your heart makes it impossible for you to believe, you believe it not; so there are things said about Christ, which, from my conception of him, I cannot accept as true. And no pope infallible, no spirit from another world, no prophets,—not one of them, can persuade me of it.

Now, we come to understand what true Rationalism is—verifying God by Himself. And he who is duly exercised by devout study, and by the perpetual endeavour to receive this light of God into himself; he it is who becomes a

visible Council of Nice ; he it is who determines what is true and what is not true, what is canonical and what is uncanonical. I trust that some day this New Testament Apocrypha will be better known. The deliciously vague way in which Englishmen stare about them when they see any of the old canonical pictures, only shows how ignorant they are of the lives of the saints. Many of those old pictures are painted out of this book ; so that it is necessary to study it, in order to understand the works of the great masters. Ah ! now, perhaps, some of you will get it. By its study, you will be able to wander better through the museums ; ay, and through that wonderfulest of all museums—the development of the human mind, the history of the slow growth of the thought of God in man. In all respects, it is a book worth reading. To the student, it is, in many respects, indispensable. And he too who, in these days of destructive criticism, whilst acknowledging the earthiness of the vessel through which it came, shall take up this book, as the Jew did his book of the Law, kiss it, and fold it to himself as the most veritable garment of God possible for man to touch ; and touching these Four Gospels, as the

woman did Christ, that virtue might go out of him, which the woman received, he too shall find that he hath touched the hem of Christ's garment, and gotten virtue thereout.

THE EVANGEL OF GOD.



Morning, April 2nd, 1876.

“ Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me ; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”—LUKE xv. 8-10.

IT is possible to harp upon one string, either from poverty of strings or from want of skill in the executionist ; but it is also possible for a skilled player by harping upon the finest chord to produce the finest harmony. The Lord Jesus harped upon but one string ; for his was one long plea for what this world hates—the charm of the ugly ; the determination of God to bring His younger sons in ; the gladness of the woman on finding the lost

piece of silver—clipped, worn down, defaced ; the heavenly joy, not over the righteous, but over the sinner. In how many ways did he not teach that ? The poor sheep gone astray, and found, and brought back again ; the prodigal come home. His talk is all about the harlot, the prodigal, the sinner, and the slave. There is nothing about “theology ;” nothing about being “dipped in blood ;” he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Evangelicism, as he taught it, was not a measure of stinginess of how God could be half as kind as any human creature. Evangelicism, as generally understood, is this : “Can God possibly forgive men except something be *paid down* ? No. Then, seeing that the poor wretches are not able to pay, some one else must be found to do so. Therefore *Christ* must come and pay, *pay down in blood* ; and then, you know, man can be forgiven.” And this is what you call the “glad tidings” of God, which might be better called a way in which the Eternal God could deviate into what His creatures have found out long ago—the forgiveness of the prodigal. How He could do it, but through a bargain that would be pitiful in a stockbroker ; how the Almighty Lover found it possible to save the sheep

that was lost ; how God ordained these childish rites of a barbarous day, in order to set forth the Supreme Light of all ; how He might be enabled to be as pitiful as a woman to her babe, or as a wise father to his child. So they explain how God deviated into mercifulness ; how God could be a God of Love, and yet doom His erring children to eternal banishment and penal servitude for ever, without chance of redemption ; how the sweet God of Life, whose name is Love, hath ordained that certain wretches ("for His own greater glory") shall be "born to destruction."

But merely to look at ugly pictures is not the way to understand good ones. Evangelicism, in its deep sense, is the uttering of the mind of God toward man ; and the Gospel of Jesus Christ perpetually is this : "I know Him ; I have more of His Spirit than any other man ; I have, in some sense, been with Him, and I declare that the mind of God is this—'Whosoever turneth to Him shall live.' " And the conditions upon which they shall come back to Him are these : "That they shall enthrone Him in their hearts ; take His will as their guide ; live lowly ; walk charitably ; live cleanly ; trust entirely, and abide in quietness in God." This is the evangelical faith ; but it is

difficult of belief, because of its fulness. And yet, if to-morrow you had a letter to say that a legacy had been left to you, you would say, "Ah! this is good news; it must be true." But if, on the other hand, there comes to you a message from God, a message of such largeness of love that toward it your poor "merit" shrinks into nothingness—ah! then it is hard to believe. The clouds of our own sinfulness too often make us more prompt to behold the clouds of God's anger than the sunshine of His love.

This, then, has been the fault of the world from all time. Notice how constantly the churches endeavour to pour the water of their own feebleness into the wine of God's love; how they endeavour to fine away the mighty tale, and draw around the largeness of God some of the littlenesses of man. Watch how they pick out of a miscellaneous crowd their own few that they think are going to heaven. Hear them ask the Lord, "Are there *few* that shall be saved?" And so they go on, inclusion by exclusion; just as some "respectable" people are always trying to make society a little narrower, because *they* are in it, and they want a narrow circle. And it is amazingly droll to watch the poor little human creatures, to see the

attempts they make to seclude themselves, to become more and more "select," especially to keep themselves free from "poor relations," or those who have ever committed a "commercial error." They want to have some Shibboleth of their own ; and so they go on, till they come to that last concatenation of their folly—a fashionable "evening party," out of which all art and beauty has long ago been banished, till the whole thing has become a poor, thin, vapoury *ghost* of pleasure, without blood, passion, sinew, or charm. And just as you see those little processes going on in what is called "society," so you may see among "religious" people, how they try to narrow the message, and water the wine of God. "Oh!" they say, "these things are too large, too wide. It is impossible that anything should be forgiven, for just as all the noises that have ever been made go sounding on for ever and for ever, so the consequences of sin cannot be cut off." And just as the world adopts little rules by which they make one another into kings and colonels, etc., so religious people keep on making box within box, till they come to the saintly few for which the angels don't care. And so they say, "A certain woman, having lost a piece of silver, said 'Let it go,' and did array

before her the nine pieces of silver which had kept their brightness."

Now, my glorious duty is to preach the other way. Who cares for *brightness*? Let us see wear and tear. Let us see God enamoured of His own image, though so marred and stained. Christ chose to come upon earth to carry no bright sceptre, but stooped to the lowest degradation in order to set forth the charm of the Almighty. And God, like the woman, lights the divine candle, Jesus Christ, the light of life; and here in Bethlehem, and there in Jerusalem, held in the loving Father-Mother's hand, he groped about a world sunk by crime into stainfulness, that he might bring forth the lost piece of silver, the strayed sheep; that he might hold it up, and show it to the Father, and say, Lo! see what I have done. The sheep that have gone astray, these I bring with me.

This is the glorious Gospel of the Glad Tidings of God; the marvellous fascination God feels for sinners, put even to a length which it is almost impossible to follow:—"There is more joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who never went astray." It is hardly believable!

Just fancy, now, ninety and nine just persons, all in a row ! What a sight ! Ninety-nine saints ! members of churches ! I think I can see them. Ninety-nine righteous people, all saved ; all able to-morrow to do any amount of thanking God that they are not like us ! But is there any attraction in them ? Not to me. But then possibly I have got dusty, having rolled away so far from them.

Of all things, it is difficult to love a man who is always speckless ; who says to the stains of this world—Ye have no part in me. When a man seems all sanctity and saintliness, one admires him ; but it is hard to love him. For in all hearts that are modelled in the least after the fashion of Christ's, there is the same tenderness that he showed toward the bent back, the faltering step, the bowed head, the prodigal son, the torn sheep. There is a fascination about the helpless and the lost, the down-trodden and the wounded, that even we poor mortals can understand.

The best way of understanding the Gospel of the Glad Tidings of God, is to see what moves us most. Watch the child when you are showing him a picture-book, how his face brightens when he catches sight of those pictures he loves best. So when I take up the book of man's sad story, my

heart glows when I read the history of the martyrs and the great heroic souls. I turn over those early pages of history, and I read of one who "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer reproach and affliction with the people of God;" and my heart is all stirred when I think of that glorious man Moses. But if I had opened the chapter and read, "Moses, seeing the way of advancement open to him, preferred to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and to have all the advantages of respectability, rather than lead a number of poor slaves through the desert"—ah! down goes the book; dry remains the eye; untouched remains the heart.

So if I open the pages of this last century of Old England's story, there are some of them that thrill the heart to read. One page opens of itself, at that story of John Howard, a Bedfordshire gentleman, a county man (mark that, because you know it is a great thing to belong to a county family)! He might have been a magistrate, and had an opportunity of going to the sessions, and could live in a large red-brick house, and was altogether quite an eligible person—and what dull years of magisterial office he might have had! But he turned his back upon the lot, and sedu-

lously looked to know what piece of money was most lost, what sheep was most torn, what rascal was of the most inimitable rascaldom, that he might restore them to their lost estate. This strange man seemed to wish to carry home the most trampled-down people God ever had. He went among the pest and plague. He visited the vilest creatures in jails and prisons. This strange man went to town to catch the plague, in order to understand chlorodine. He lived as an apostle, and died as a martyr, away in far Russia. So when we read this history of our century we are touched by this man's truly heavenly choice—forsaking the high places of this world in order to minister to the poor, the needy, and the down-trodden. Oh! if you are a good *respectable* Christian, no doubt the history of the Napoleons would be more attractive to you; but if you are an *evangelical* Christian such as I am, believing in the strange love of God for lowly creatures, then you will say that John Howard deserves to be canonized, and to be made into a Father of the Church. Do you love that man Howard, that evangel of God? Nature says to the weak ones of this world, "If you cannot get out of the way, you must get under the wheel." But this strange news from heaven

tells us that though natural laws must continue, though the Jericho road be full of thieves, God has provided a Samaritan, a *Good Samaritan*, whose object in coming into this world is to look out the needy, the feeble, and the sinful ; to *undo* nature ; for whereas nature is always crowning the *best*, evangelicism seeks to crown the feeble and the *worst* ; whereas nature says, "If you are not strong, go out of the way," evangelicism provides the wine of God, the inn of charity for the wounded one, the twopence to be paid to him who cares for him.

Oh ! I like to read of the life of a man, from the time he saved his first penny, to the time when he became a millionaire, and I like to lift the bag now and then, to judge how heavy it gets as he goes on ; but somehow, there is, in some of us, no deep *love* for that man. Did a double chin ever draw out from you your largest, tenderest sympathies ? Did the prosperity of a man, his accumulation of money, and the occasional clinking thereof in its receptacle ever stir you much ? No. The story of the martyr ; of the self-sacrificing ; of the sweet white arm of a woman run through the staple of a door, to keep the ruffians out from her mistress, and to save her

life ; these are the things that stir our hearts much, and for the life of us will bring the tears of God into our eyes.

To all those in whom this sweet, strange eccentricity is deepest, the evangelicism of God means the giving of God's sweetest gifts to the lowly, the restoration of the Magdalen, the finding of the lost piece of silver, the gathering of the torn sheep—the stained, the sinful, the fallen. And all this is set forth in those strange words—which who dared write, had they not been spoken by Christ himself?—"There is more joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." You and I daren't have written it, because we could not have thought that the angels would have cared for such things. We should have thought that the angels of God were *respectable* angels—angels fond of good society—angels dwelling in an eternal West End, far away from poor, penniless beggars. But lo! the Master said—and he *knew* God!—he declared that the divinest thing in man was the divinest thing in the angels of God. And he proclaimed this—that the more sin-stained, and bruised, and broken-hearted a man is, the more God wants him, calls

him, pines for him, sighs for him; that for that wretched man God sent His Son to be betrayed and smitten, to bear the cross of Calvary, to yield up his own will even unto death. All this he did, counting not his life dear unto him.

What wonder that Christ has been worshipped as veritable God? What wonder that man should say that God took upon Himself the form of a man, and that the crucified one was indeed the incarnate God? Christ counted the sinner worth dying for, and worth living for. "Come, my neighbours, rejoice with me, for I have found that which was lost." This is the evangel of God. This is the Gospel of the Glad Tidings of God. If I have not taught it in its fulness, it is from the scantness of one's powers. God knows I have felt small enough interest in the saintly rows of the "ninety and nine," and have had an utter contempt for all chop-straw theology, being an Evangelical of the Evangelicals, and believing mightily in the love of God for those that have sinned, and for those that have denied themselves for the sake of those that were furthest away, if haply they might be brought back, and made dear children of God.

Think how often Christ played upon this one string. If ever he was gentle it was to the sinners.

If ever he had one single touch of scorn, it was against that man who thanked God that he was not like other people. Christ scorned this piece of evangelical sculpture, and declared that the other man went down to his house more justified than he. And what had the other man done? He had had shame concerning himself, and limitless faith in the Almighty. All he cried was, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner." With the faith that a little child has, who runs to his mother and puts up his sinful lips for her forgiving kiss, this man cries to God—"Thou lovest miserable sinners—hear me! thou forgivest sinners—have mercy upon me!" And what did the Lord say? "Verily, I say unto you, this man went down to his house more justified than the other." The road to justification is open to all of us. May God give us true faith in the *Gospel of the Glad Tidings of God!*

THE GOSPEL FOR THE GENTILES.



Morning, August 13th, 1876.

“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee : and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.”—LUKE iv. 14, 15.

THE perfection of husbandry is the amount of crop worth growing that can be got out of the smallest possible amount of soil ; and the perfection of education is the largest amount of instruction, wisdom, and pleasure that can be got out of the smallest thing. The riches that are above all riches are those of the intellectually educated and morally instructed man. Our great poet never spoke of a much more wonderful thing than when, referring to an ordinary, usual sort of man, he says :

“A primrose by a river’s brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.”

Common, food-consuming people really can see nothing more. But another man, an educated man, in the primrose by the river's brim what hidden secrets of anatomy he discovers! what invisible life there is going on in that little stem! what optics have to be called into account as to how it came to be yellow and not blue! what caused the sun to kiss it into yellowness, and made that flower so unlike the next? All these things that little flower might make one think of. And to a man who in all things beholds the Spirit of God, what questions, as to what blood of the Spirit of God, as it were, is in that flower, giving it such glory! Or if one were only a poet, what questions about life, and of the prodigal wealth of God, who, having created this little flower, and for so short a term of life, has nevertheless spent upon it so much care, and given it a perfume so glorious and a form so perfect! All these things, and a thousand more, might that flower awaken in the mind of an educated man. And which of the two men is the richer—the man with a money-bag as heavy as his own brains, or the passionate-hearted, keen-eyed, observant man? That little primrose to the one man is a revelation of the mind of God; but to the other it is nothing.

So in all things. There is not a stone upon which you tread that is not full of eloquence to the educated man. He watches the crystals to know their story. He examines the sands beneath him, knows what countries they came from, and thinks of the war that parted them from their native rock. Moses is close by, and his cosmogony close, as the instructed man sees back to those first days. And this is wealth indeed.

Marching about on Sundays showing your money-bag, that is a poor business; but to feed the hungry, to clothe the ragged and shoeless, and to have your heart all aglow with knowledge and the love of God and man, these are riches indeed. They who have these care little for this world's glories, and smile when they hear that some big man has received a title. Remember what Christ says, "All these things do the Gentiles seek after." Do not trouble yourselves with these things, but with knowledge, learning, wisdom; get them, for they are merchandize above the merchandize of gold. The instructed man does with the shell by the shore as he does with the books that he reads; and when this man takes up a Gospel, he goes fully into it, and the story widens out till it comprises a whole world of things. On going into a synagogue—— (but

as some of you have nearly forgotten what I read to you just now, I will read it again: "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.") Now for the cynic! Now for the satirist! What a wealth of wisdom Christ displays! He is "glorified of all"! It is fair weather now, and the sky is cloudless, for Jesus Christ is being glorified of all. But it is too fine to last. And the kindly man says, "Would that it would!" But did you ever know a whale-ship have it fine for long? If one finds all quiet, depend upon it there will be a squall soon. So a little cloud, not larger than a man's hand, arises on the horizon, and one sees the shadows begin to pass, and the muttered thunder is heard in the distance, till by-and-by the storm breaks out: the thunder rolls heavily, the lightning flashes, and the rain descends in torrents. So if I read this narrative for the first time, I should have paused at the words, "glorified of all," knowing that there would be a thunderstorm before long.

I pass on. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up." It may be an old homely village, and he may have grown in this

world's wealth and esteem since he left it. But it was not possible for him to go back to Nazareth without some deep feeling ; for the old homely things teach him humility.

Here is Christ, with more wisdom in him than all the world beside him ; and yet, "*as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." What did he go there for ? They could teach him nothing. No Jew was likely to get up and instruct him. Yet men and women now, on the plea that they learn nothing, that there is nothing fresh to hear or to know or to learn at church, very seldom come. And many of you who come to hear me, come not to worship God. So I turn and read this history, of how Christ, who was the fountain of life, the wisest of the wise, a teacher whose teaching had altered all things since he taught it, "*as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day."

You talk about your hearts being lifted up to God, and say that therefore you have no occasion to come to a place of public worship ; but if that wisest soul could find a synagogue to be a good place for *him*, I think you had better say no more about that. "And he stood up for to read." We need not here go into the customs of the syna-

gogues at that time. The book is handed to him (the Book of the Prophet Esaias it turned out to be)—and here is Christ choosing a text. Think of that! Here stands a teacher from whose teaching men shall date for all time—he whose teaching shall one day bring kings to the dust, and popes and priests to nothingness—this teacher is about to choose a text. What text it was you know—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (this is the whole Gospel of God and teaching of Christ), "and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down." Doubtless those words of Esaias were read with such emphasis, that for the first time they understood the words of the Prophet. Who could wonder that the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him? They had never heard the words read as they had been read then. Now they glowed with meaning, and, for the first time perhaps, they understood the glad tidings of God. But the weather changes. Christ had been glorified of

all : the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him. But now watch the weather change. And what brings the storm ? "And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And they all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." They could get no farther, you would think. Jewry is saved ; the husbandman has received the Son of the Lord of the vinery ; the world is called in ; the Millennium has come ; the Gospel is preached, and man is saved. "And they all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."

But even from the mount of transfiguration man must come down : even from that he must descend ; and so, from wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, they come down to earth, and human astonishments, and human expressions. "And they said, Is not this Joseph's son ?" As when an anthem is to be sung, some of you are very anxious to know who is going to sing it, and affect a superior knowledge of music when you are utterly unable to see the marvellous skill of the musician ; so now for the friends of Christ. Oh ! I can see them. The whole synagogue is

on fire with the words of Christ; and here comes the "yellow primrose" man, the dull, fat, commonplace man, and says, "It strikes me that this is Joseph's son." And what followed? "How can Joseph's son put the Spirit of God into the Word of God, and make it glorious?" So the fat hand of vulgar commonplace is laid upon this sweet song of the synagogue. So the clouds blacken, and storms come. Oh, it is piteous! "Is not this Joseph's son?" And think not that you, prating your twaddle the very moment a prayer begins, and chronicling your small beer of stupidity when the Word of God is about to be read to you, are very different from those friends in the synagogue.

In the day of human glory, how gracious the words of Christ! And how they all received them! Oh, here they come! Twaddlers of the mean, miserable gospels of this world, with thoughts that ne'er rise above the street. It is a piteous history. "And they all bare witness." What a tiara to God when they "all bare witness" to the gracious words which proceeded out of the mouth of Christ! Oh! could I say one word, and it could be written of it that "all bare witness," then should the Spirit of God touch the conscience of each man, and then would the coal be hot, and the fire

of God light up the heart of every man that bears witness.

“And they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” They found them gracious, and they said, some of them honestly, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” But some of them said it meanly. Christ saw it, for he understood human nature in a supreme degree. Do you suppose that one needs always to hear your thoughts expressed? I know them! “That is a strong word—that is a vulgar word—that is hardly the word to use.” But I use it. So Christ determined to provoke the storm. For the calm that comes o’er rottenness *ought* to break. He who storms never, heals never, and delivers never. A prophet has something better to do than feeding the curious, or sugar-coating his words, and covering in iniquity. “But,” you say, “doesn’t it seem a pity almost that Christ should raise a storm at such a time as that?” I say, No! he was quite right. And how easily it is done! You wonder to see these smooth people so soon ruffled! And what has ruffled them? “No prophet is received in his own country”? But they *had* accepted him. Could any popular preacher want more than that? He was glorified of all. They all bare him witness. Could

any "favourite of the public" (horrible title!) have more than that? Ah! they said, he is one of our folks; we knew him; we were brought up with him. This is Joseph's son.

Now watch for the storm. "And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." Give us now your chief performance. We were at school with you, you know, and knew Joseph and Mary. O kindly heart of Jesus Christ, made strong by the Spirit of the living God! He dare not have peace. The storm must come. He tells them a terrible truth, which they don't like. "In the old days of Jewry, when the Jews were God's elect people, His chosen children, and when there was no one else for whom God cared," etc.—(The rest was matter from which Jewry might draw pride.) But now Christ goes on to say, "In the days of Elias" (how they listen!)"—"in the days of Elias, there were many widows in Israel, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent. But there was one widow to whom he was sent." And who was she? (Now see the lightning flashing! Now hear

the rolling of the thunder! Now see the storm burst!) "She lived at Zarephath, in Zidon." Why, she was not a Jewess, not a daughter of Abraham! She was non-elect, unorthodox, unsound; had not been baptized; had not passed through church membership! What a choice Elijah might have had! There were many widows in Israel—widows descended from the right stock, who attended the right chapel, who were thoroughly orthodox, and in every way sanctified of God. And this Elijah—he turned his back upon all those widows, and went to a widow of Zarephath, in the country of Zidon.

Then again, "There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet." And this terrible man, what did he do? There was only one man healed by him, and he was Naaman the Syrian. Passing over the good, he had chosen Naaman the Syrian! Now for the storm! No longer do Christ's hearers say, "This is a credit to Nazareth; we are part owners in this Jesus, you know." (For there are some people who, if a very notable, even though a bad man, comes to live in their street, feel a sort of pride in him; it is better, to them, to have a hangman in their street, than a nobody.) Look at the change. Christ has

touched them in their tenderest place—in their bitter pride. “Look at this mighty prophet of God. To whom gave he the blessing? To the widow of Zarephath in Zidon; and to Naaman the Syrian.” Now watch the change! Beautiful and gracious seemed to them those words, “He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor;” (but not to the poor Sidonians)—“He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (but they must be the children of Abraham; the Gentiles cannot be counted).

Now I have found nothing written in old history, but I have also found it commented upon by the history of to-day. Just watching one man’s or woman’s life for one day, makes this narrative cease to be wonderful. Have I not heard and seen it? When the lovely truths of liberty were set forth, “How desirable,” you said, “that the poor should be lifted up.” But by-and-by, servants’ wages came to rise; the servants wanted a little more manhood and womanhood; they got restless, and wanted to go to the synagogue nearly as often as you. Ah! then the words remained gracious, but the practical application was un-

pleasant. They were pleasant words ; but when the "broken-hearted" belonged to the lower classes, it was different. The manufacturer, whom once one knew as a workman, and who has made his way in the world, is eloquent upon the sins of the class from which he has just emerged. The words are gracious, until Sarepta's widows want them, and then it is hard to apply the broad principles that we believe. As long as people of Nazareth thought Christ was going to preach all these things to the Jewish nation, it was all right ; but the moment they hear that these things are to be done to the Gentiles, oh ! then the storm comes. It is hard to understand words which have such a fearful application. What groups of angry people ! what quoting of the Law ! what scorning of the poor wretched Gentiles ! That any man could be so dead to the privileges of the Jews ! That Elias should be sent to the woman of Sarepta in Sidon, when there were so many widows in Israel ! If God had any elect, it must have been these people.

I will admit, if you please, that God made a very peculiar covenant with Abraham. If it please you to think so, we will say the Almighty finger delivered it unto Abraham as a Jew. But watch

the prophet break the seal, tear that charter to pieces, and throw the thing to the winds! And what did Christ do? He spent nine-tenths of his teaching over that one point, the meaning of which was—Down with the chosen people; call in the ragamuffins, the Pagans, the un-Abrahamic. This is the man, who came out of the streets unto the wedding-feast. Everywhere the cry is, “Bring in the unelect.” If your theology is based upon Election—that God has favourites—hear this proclamation, that no longer has God any exclusive love for the children of Abraham. That doctrine you are foolish enough to spend thought upon, the doctrine of election, is exploded. I have known a good deal about covenants and elect people, in my youth. The more north you get, the more you hear of covenants. But what is it all? If God Himself tear the covenant (if He ever did elect the Jews), and if the Jew himself revoked it and called it in, who are you to set up a doctrine of election?

Of course I believe in election. You cannot call six children together but one is elected to be king or queen. All through life there is election; all through life there is reprobation. But as for any special doctrine of election, such as the Jews

believed in, all that was torn up at Nazareth. All those people who talk about "Baptismal regeneration," and "membership of Churches;" if they had the spirit of the Nazarene prophet, what parchments would be spoiled and destroyed! I could speak "gracious words" to them if I spoke only to the elect: that where'er their feet had wandered, they should be guided by the Almighty providence of God back again to the fold of their youth; that after having forsaken the fold, they should come back and join the chosen few; while the rest of the world were being fast prepared for an eternal bonfire. But if, in a moment, reversing the whole thing, one were to proclaim universal salvation: that a day should come when God's lost ones should all be redeemed; that eternity was long enough to mend God's worst angels; that God's love was sweet enough and strong enough to bring all safe at last to Himself—even to speak of these things, oh! what a storm it would raise! The sweeter the doctrine, the angrier they would get. If I preached that God would damn all mankind, and that few would be saved, it would be considered very sound doctrine indeed. If I preached of reprobation, "Ah!" they would say, "strong meat, that." Strong meat? Yes. But if a man

preached of the infinite pity of even the human heart—of the mother's love as she stoops over her babe ; of human love which treachery cannot wear out ; of prodigals who have come home again and again, and have ever been received — and plead that that is but a part of the love and charity of God ; that there is a day of God when *all*, ALL, ALL, shall be brought back to Him—would they be charmed? No, no. The sweet babes of Christ would turn violent. "Stone him," they would cry, "he is not worthy to live." The way to anger God's "saints" is to enlarge on the abundance of God's love ; to teach them of the loving heart of Jesus Christ ; to proclaim to them that *every* man, whether in the gaol or on the gibbet, is on his way ultimately to God ; to preach of the widow of Sarepta, and of Naaman the Syrian, being God's darlings ; that all are dear to Him, all are His children. Ah ! then shall the sunny morning of the sweet hours of Nazareth's synagogue be broken, and that terrible history be enacted over again.

You know what they had heard—that God's love was big enough to reach to Sarepta. These people had sound, right views. Think of that ! And what did Christ do to anger them ? He

told them that God's love reached even to Sidon ; that His heart was deep enough to take in the leprous Naaman. What shocking things to tell the people, weren't they? And what effect did they have? "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." They were proud of him ten minutes ago ; but now they are going to throw him headlong over the brow of the hill.

You might profitably meditate upon this little narrative this afternoon ; especially if you are a kindly-hearted man, with a little touch of satire in you. Just hear them exclaim, "What a lovely man ! how well he speaks !" But watch them. Oh ! has any satirist written its equal ? Has there ever been any picture like that ?—the sunny morning ; the welcome Christ ; the teacher kissed ; the teacher thrown down the precipice ! And what brought it about ? He discoursed of the largeness of God's love. I often see these things. It does not belong to this history only. There is far too much exclusiveness to be seen among people nowadays. If there are two copies of a valuable

work, how desirable it seems to some people to destroy one, that they may be the only possessor ! That any other nation should be permitted to get stronger than the English, is very uncomfortable to some people. These things have oft caused a storm. But one of the most violent storms that was ever raised was raised in a synagogue, when Jesus Christ preached of the largeness of God's heart, and the width of God's inclusive arms.

CONVERSION.



Evening, August 29th, 1875.

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”
JOHN iii. 7.

ALL writings about facts must be judged by the facts that are before us. And though it be what we call the Bible, or any other book we may be examining, anything written therein that affects to be a law of life, must be interpreted according to what we find the facts of life to be. If a letter is sent to any of us, and there is a sentence the meaning of which we are doubtful about, we interpret it by what we know of the writer. So if, in reading the Scriptures or any other book, we come to any statement which we cannot verify, let us see whether it has any meaning or no. If the meaning is doubtful, it should be determined by what is before us, and not the facts denied in order to suit

what is written. If I take a book, and read that water flows uphill, I don't believe it, simply because I find that water *now* descends. There are two conclusions, then, either that water has changed its manners, or that the man who said it flowed uphill was mistaken. Either that writer's eyes were holden that he could not see, or he believed what was told him and never went out to verify it for himself, or else the nature of water has changed.

Nothing can make me believe anything unless the facts of nature are in favour of it. I see no miracles nowadays ; I don't say that there were no miracles in former days ; but if you ask me to believe that *you* have worked a miracle, I say, I don't believe it, because I know that miracles are impossible now. Therefore, it is clear to me, either that they never were, or that they have ceased to be.

So if Christ says, "Ye must be born again," I am left to interpret it according to what I see going on now. The words struck Nicodemus with strangeness. He was not thinking of anything spiritual : therefore, it was clear to him that Christ was talking of what was impossible : and he exclaims, "How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and

be born?" But Christ soon set him right, and said, "I am not talking about fleshly things." Then he opened to that ruler of Israel another meaning of being born again, and showed that it applied not to the poor body of which Nicodemus spoke, but to the spirit within, which should bring into subjection the body and all its passions and instincts.

These words of the Lord's must be interpreted according to what we know of human nature. When we find various interpretations of them, you and I can judge which is the correct one: not by help of any commentator, not by the largeness of a mob, not by the howling of men, but by their agreement with what has been felt, seen, tasted, handled; by what is known of the ways of the inner life or heart by those who have diligently studied them. These words, "born of the spirit," or "born again," are not to be lightly set aside; for Christ lays them down for all the race. "Except a *man* be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." In considering any sentence like this, let us reject those explanations which seem to us untrue, and hold fast to those which experience can verify. To this matter of being "born again," without which Christ says "no man can enter into the kingdom of God," men have attached various meanings.

The first and most familiar one is what I am obliged to call a fanatical one; for it is the meaning attached by men of an enthusiastic temperament, to whom it is natural to feel before they judge, to storm before they reason, to conclude before they argue—men who have a strong, vivid, passionate, changeful nature (especially when their past lives have been irregular and sinful). To them religion comes suddenly (for that it *does* come suddenly is as true as that earthly love comes sometimes suddenly)—and these men maintain that they are able to put down in their diary the date of their regeneration, the day in which they were “born again,” just as surely as a fond father can put down the date of his child’s birth. To them, regeneration must be sudden and supernatural. They must be converted like Paul—smitten down by excess of light, astonished by supernatural visions. Talk to them of being converted quietly, and they don’t believe in it: their spiritual birth must be attended by Sinai thunders and revivalistic storms, or they cannot believe that they are really born again. Now, I don’t say that these enthusiastic men are speaking what is false. I have no more reason to believe that a man cannot be suddenly converted, than that he cannot love at

first sight ; but don't let them lay it down that *every* man ought to be influenced in that way. We know perfectly well that two people may meet, and in a moment, for life, for death, for doom, they may become inseparable. And if that be true, that in a moment, without thought, without reasoning, two spirits shall come together, and ne'er part again, that two souls shall have a collision, and become so entangled as to sink or swim together for ever after ; why cannot it be true that by a marvel of enthusiasm, by a word, by the remembrance of a song, a man may be so smitten, that from that time forth, from that day, from that moment, that spirit shall be "born again" ?

I believe in sudden conversions as much as I believe in sudden love : the one is as natural as the other. But when these men of fiery temper, whom nothing but a thunderbolt or a lightning-stroke could possibly convert, go forth to maintain that a man who has not had their experience is not therefore converted, ah ! then I turn to them and say, there are other experiences than yours ; there are other gifts than yours. It is because these Revivalists are so exclusive and narrow-minded, so impertinent and egotistical, that we are obliged to review their doctrines, and simply to point out that

it is not the *usual* method of God, nor the method which gracious natures or wise souls would choose. The enthusiastic collier, smitten in a moment, let him go and put down the date of his spiritual birth, and find the precious text or the gracious prophecy that caused it. But if that man ventures to question all notions of bringing up a child in religion so sweetly and gently that that child shall never be able to say at what moment the work of God began in him ; if that man denies the slow growth of grace, and says that it is impossible for any one to be a subject of the new birth who cannot give the time, the day, the hour, the moment in which he first felt the divine life within him ; then I am obliged to point out that experience no more verifies this than it shows the impossibility of the collier's sudden conversion. For though Paul was smitten down by that wondrous light, and Zacchæus, descending from the tree, comes down a saint, although he went up a sinner ; yet there are humble, gentle, lowly folk who do not know when first the better life began to prevail in them, but simply know that it *did* so, because they find that it *hath* prevailed. So we look more for nurture than for miracle, more for the homely, loving teaching of the mother, than for trumpet-

blowing or sudden conversion, frantic sermons or shouts of spiritual songs. To the enthusiastic we say, We expect *you* to be converted in that way ; but to the mother who has a little child to train, we say, Train him up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, even from the very beginning. What we protest against, then, is that fanaticism which says that though a man may lead a holy, humble, loving life, yet, because he cannot tell when the throes of the new birth came on, because he cannot give the date of his conversion, therefore he is unregenerate, and has not been born again.

Then there comes another school of people, cold, calm, rational, prudent, to whom enthusiasm is an impossibility, and fanaticism a madness, who repress these things as they would a vice, and put them all down as hypocrisy. From that school we would be equally free. Paley maintains that for a young man in the church to speak of having a "new birth" is ridiculous. Not so Christ. When he said to Nicodemus, "You, a master of Israel, and not know these things?" he meant it as a reproach. That *all* men are to be born again, we have but to read the Lord's own words to show. "Except *a man* be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But what Paley maintains is that for any

child, brought up in the church in wisdom, to talk about being "born again," is a fanaticism and a danger. I would not like to be as pale as Paley, or as chill as his cold formalities. His religion might have been measured out by instruments. It was "set fair" continually, and never knew the storms of winter, nor the glories of summer. So, while I maintain that sudden conversion can never be the *rule*, yet I would rather lean to enthusiasm than to this cold and dreary religion.

Then come the men who identify the baptism of water with the baptism of the Spirit. There is nothing easier than to take a child to the font, and let the priest baptize him, and say that the child is "regenerate." How simple the process! How marvellous the result! But with that, of course, I cannot agree. It is either taught that absolutely the baptized child receives the new birth at baptism, and that the unbaptized child goes without it, and goes into death; or that the baptized child is not exactly regenerated by baptism, but the ceremony is only to show the possibilities that are in him.

To me, it is impossible that a child can receive a new nature by baptism; because, being in some things an obstinate practicalist, I have found that

all trees bring forth fruit *of their kind*. I have known so many children who were said to be "regenerate" in baptism, who never showed it anywhere else, but whose sins have been as vigorous as they grew older as their cry was when they were being baptized. If then, I find that "regeneration" did not regenerate, and that their "new birth" left them in the same state as they were before, what am I to do? Have I not a right to ask that anybody who is "born again" by the Spirit should *live* again according to the new birth? And if I find the unbaptized yet living the Divine life, what am I to do? Am I to say that they live without being born, and walk in the ways of righteousness without being regenerate? That is awkward. This faith of people that a child can be born of the Spirit by being born of water, is one of the miserable paganisms that haunt this country: that, by virtue of some magic, performed by a priest, a child can be born again! I have no faith in such things.

Now, when a man declines all these theories, he is almost bound to find some other; therefore, let him accept that which his experience and common sense, and a rational interpretation of the Scriptures will warrant. To me, it seems that the precise

date of conversion is of small consequence, provided the *facts* show themselves in the life. To be "born again" is no marvel or mystery, but is that process in a man which, either suddenly or by degrees, with sudden beginning or with slow growth, gives the spirit in that man at last the victory over the instincts of childhood, the passions of manhood, and the sins of the soul, and at last makes him what a man should be—holy, humble, charitable, walking lowly before God, and lovingly with his brother.

This I find to be the constant teaching of nature. Man consists of flesh and spirit when he comes into life ; but the natural is first, and the spiritual afterwards. The little child at first lives almost as much by instinct as the little dog by his cradle, and has as little responsibility as the little kitten or puppy by his side. As life goes on, this young child becomes more and more responsible ; but, unless he is taught to rule his passions, those instincts will become masters in the child. But by-and-by, slowly or rapidly, all these instincts, which have become in the man the rule of his being—by-and-by, all this greedy hungering and thirsting, getting and winning—all these things are subordinated to the higher law of the spirit.

If a man is defective, fish-blooded, imbecile, incapable, he may know nothing of this struggle. But if a man *be* a man, vigorous, vehement, with hot passions and strong desires, and these things have been allowed to *rule* in him, then the battle is fierce. What chances are there for reason to be heard when the blood is hot and the passions are strong? In vain doth reason plead against desire. In vain doth wisdom cry in the streets. The young man who wanders through Vanity Fair, and does not turn away from pleasure, in vain doth wisdom cry to him; his feet go to the music, and his brains to the wine; the desire of his heart is carried out; the pride of life, the lusts of the flesh, the desires of the eye are gratified; until at last, at last, out he comes, ragged and torn, weary, wasted, and, haply, if possible, sated, disgusted, *saved*.

To walk through Vanity Fair and see its shows, and to walk through it *safely*, is to feel the passions of youth, but to feel them as a good horseman does his steed beneath him, all fire and force, yet under his perfect government. Those of you who know the joy of riding upon a horse that is worth having, know that there are few joys in life which equal it—to feel that strong,

high-stepping, passionate beast beneath you, and to be able to turn him whithersoever you will! And when a strong man can put the finger of reason upon his instincts, and curb his wishes and desires as he curbs his horse; when, slowly but surely, the law of the Lord comes to reign in his soul supreme, the change is so great and wondrous to behold, that I say: That man is born again! he has gained the mastery of his lower nature; he is "born of the Spirit." *When* it began, who can tell? but the growth is there; subtle, it may be; slow, but always sure. We know not the moment at which the golden fruit becomes ripe; yet slowly, surely, hour by hour, minute by minute, the change comes on. So, to those of you who never went out to hear John Baptist, but who yet feel that, slowly, surely, that change has come over you by which the spirit, the higher life of man, has gained the victory over the lower life—to you I say, "Ne'er mind about the *date*." That you *are* born of the Spirit is evident, inasmuch as that once you were governed by the flesh, and now you are governed by the Spirit. There *was* a time in which the Spirit gained the mastery, and the flesh became in bondage; but you cannot trace when the one

began and the other ceased, any more than you can tell when the twilight begins or ends. You need not trouble yourself about these things, for it won't matter.

So it is with children who have been well brought up, gentle souls of humble culture. With them to be "born again" has been a process so gentle, so slow and sure, that they can only say, as that poor blind man said of old, after he received his sight, "By what means I now see, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Enough, because *all!* The spirit rules; the conscience is master; that which is right has gained the victory over that which is pleasant; honesty has become greater than gain, and righteousness greater than greed. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." So it is endlessly true that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The kingdom of God is that company of souls in which the Spirit rules, and which therefore bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

meekness, temperance. The kingdom of this world is that company of men in which the passions rule over the spirit. To pass from the one to the other is a change so radical, that no better words could be used to express it than those which the Lord used: "Ye must be born again." For a man must be *born* of the Spirit in order to *live* in the Spirit; and except he live in the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION.



Good Friday Morning, April 14th, 1876.

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”—JOHN xix. 30.

IT has been wisely said that it has never yet been given to mortal man, but to Christ, to say, “It is finished.” For none of us, even in the hour of death, can look upon the works of our hands as being truly finished ; none of us have ever set any thought or plan of life so clearly before us that we were able to say, “It is finished.” Now and then a man does complete a work, and he has the rapture of pronouncing that word. Some of you will remember one of the most beautiful passages in English literature, which Gibbon gives us. When under the trees at Lausanne, he was able to say of his work on the Fall of Rome, “It is finished.”

Even that is a rare joy—that any man should be able to say of any work of his hands, “It is finished.” You and I think sometimes of the number of things lying about us, which we have begun and continued, yet to which probably no hand will write “Finished.” For the best life is after all but a fragment. One looks with sadness upon those quaint little asterisks which so often cut short a manuscript, and which show that the writer has been stopped—stopped by death. There are few great works that have been finished. Some of you remember that beautiful passage of Sir Walter Raleigh’s, with which he finishes his immortal “History of the World”—that rapturous passage about death, where he adores death as the only thing that could say to the pomp and power of this world, *Hic jacet*, and, putting the topstone upon the whole, say, “It is finished!”

The reason why it is not given to any of us to say “It is finished,” is because the great work of life is *in* a man; for neither of you believes that anything that you can say or do is greater than what you can *be*, become, and live. And of the growth of the inner life of the soul, of the life of God in man, of the one *supreme* work of man’s life, the holiest soul can never say, “That is completed!”

This it is that lends such plaintiveness to mortal life, and which leads the noblest men to cry, "It is *not* finished!" How much remains to be done! For the souls nearest to saintliness have been those who have confessed that "saint" was not the title they had won. But when Christ died that odious death, he put the touchstone upon devotion. With him it was—The will of God, or death? the cross, or denial? Shall Peter's Master be like Peter? He conquered, and in that conquest this was completed—the divine life in a human body, the complete life of God in man. Though Paul said, "I have done the work Thou hast given me to do," yet even he had to turn again, and with weeping eyes call himself a sinner still. For though he had put his hand to the plough, and had ploughed in many lands, he nevertheless found a "thorn in the flesh" (unfinished work), and had to confess himself a sinner still. It was the completed work in Christ's own soul which enabled him to say, "It is finished!" He had fulfilled those two first great commandments, on which hang all the Law and the Prophets; and when you hear him say, "It is finished," you must hear him put the concluding word to the New Testament. He looked at sacrifice and all that child's-work, and knowing

the part it had played in human misery, and loathing the knife of the priest and the flaming altar, he says to himself, "Now remaineth no more sacrifice for sin ; it is finished."

Would that men could have understood these words, "It is finished ;" and the knife had been sheathed, and the poor pigeon had died for the last time for the babyish views of the world ! Would that priests could have dropped the thoughts of God, out of which such evil things did spring, and had ceased to tell men that God needed anything. Would that they had refrained from teaching that He now required the blood of His Son as He had previously required the blood of bulls. Had it been so, Christ's work would have been finished. But they have turned this Christian Religion into heathenism. Having got rid of the picture-book of dying pigeons, rams, and lambs, and bulls, they continue to talk about the "vicarious sacrifice" of Christ, the inability of God to forgive man except through sacrifice ; and of how it "runs through all nature."

It does run through nature, thank God ! but not in these fashions. For when Christ said, "It is finished !" it was not only that the knife of the priest had finished its work, but that the conception

of God which required that between the soul that sinned and the loving forgiveness of the Father there needed any priests, or popes, or doctrines of atonement—that this might be done away with. It is but a half-finished work which sheathes the knife and yet leaves the feelings that required it. By the living God, I would as soon sacrifice a lamb in hope of the forgiveness of my sins as I would invoke the blood of Jesus Christ! But when Christ said, “It is finished,” he meant—The prophets are ended; Moses is done with; the Old Testament is sealed, and the new covenant is come—“the New Testament in my blood,” signed, sealed, and delivered by me at this moment; and that Testament is this: that whosoever turns unto God lovingly, is saved. All is finished; the complete message of God is told; close the book! “It is finished” meant—All is said about God that man knows or has the power to know.

And now we hear of “new views of God!” It is droll to see the amazing conceit some little people have, who seem to think it rather creditable to be sceptical, and nod to one another that they “don’t believe much.” Well, my children, there is not “much” for you to believe. You have been attending half a dozen lectures perhaps, and so

you come to me and say, "The professor said that there was no good scientific evidence of the existence of a personal God." "Oh! did he?" "Yes; and he said that the doctrine of development ——" and so on. Well, that is all very well. I don't know what any wise man could in the least object to in it. *I* have no objection to any doctrine of Evolution, I am sure. Whether God made each one thing separately—whether He first made a cow, then an elephant, then an ape, and then man—would be interesting to know, certainly. It is curious to speculate upon. One would like to have looked in at the window, and seen the Divine Potter at his work. And if any one can *know* all this, and explain it, I shall thank him, and buy his book.

But what then? I shall turn to the old faith, and shall bring out of one's own heart and soul the old evidence; and watching love, and truth, and mercy, and looking at the charities of the heart, which are just the same in all countries, shall understand that the divine things in man are of God—I mean fatherhood, motherhood, lovership, patriotism, self-sacrifice, scorn of ease, scorn of death. I shall look at this little mannikin and get evidence, not by knowing his little history—for what has all

that to do with religion? The religion of God is this: Here is this curious little creature called man, made of water, and phosphorus, and what not; and in this forked radish, with this curiously carved head, there lies something that for the soul of him he feels to be above himself; there lies the divineness that can forgive, the martyrdom that can suffer. I see that this man can rise into what I am obliged to pronounce "spirit," and the true life and immortality of God. Therefore, I read all books upon "The Evidences;" but I look again, and I see the light that comes into the once frivolous eyes of a woman, bending with the heaven of her love over her little child; I see that woman, whose bread is steeped in tears, willing to suffer poverty and privation even unto death for the sake of her child—and there I behold God. Go, watch, if you will, the little bird; so weak and feeble, yet with such fierce love for her little ones—and there you have seen God.

And "The Evidences"? Oh! you can sell your "Tyndall," burn your "Huxley," in order to turn to other evidences—to the story of the martyr; to the history of the saint; to poor John Howard, and such men as he; for these are evidences worth all the scientific proofs in the world.

Perhaps some of you dream that religion has nothing to do with these things, and you are still reading your books about "views." Go read the history of that quaint old man who died down there in Cornwall.* When some of these tedious people visited him, and asked him what his views and opinions were, he turned to the window, which looked out upon the bay, and said to them, "*These* are my 'views;' and as to my 'opinions,' I hold my tongue about them."

There are views *and* views. What does a man want of the little views that can be got out of a chapel? What are the views we want? Sunshine, and the "everlasting hills;" the chrysalis becoming a butterfly; the bud becoming bloom; the dung-heap becoming grape-juice; rottenness opening into blossom and grace and beauty; the Pole Star and the Great Bear; the stars that the ancients looked upon, the stars that led them to God; the great sea, and the great cliffs. *These* are the "views" we want. These stir religion in man, for they come out of God. These are views of the good God, the strong God, the free God, the loving God; of the "will behind the force." For God hath

* Rev. Robert Stephen Hawker, M.A., Vicar of Morwenstow, an agreeable writer, poet, and antiquary.

made me so that I cannot behold this fair world without beholding Him. The moment I see it, I become a Theist. For the life of me, I could not help being so, even were I foolish enough to try.

If these perpetual "evidences," welling up within me, have at times touched at various points, and one has cried out, "Alas! to leave it all so soon!" yet, as one gets older, that Pisgah Mount becomes more precious, and the little divisions that seemed of so much importance to us get very pigmy-like. That little bit of "freehold" of yours, now, that you are so proud of—when you got on the mountain last year, and looked round, you found you had quite lost sight of it, and could hardly tell where it was. Oh, man! if God is good to thee, before you die you will mount Pisgah so high and far, that these little "opinions," about which people quarrel and build chapels, and hoist their little flags (as militia-men carry half a dozen of them), will appear to you but as little specks of red, and yellow, and blue. The day will come when, far above all these things, you shall look down and behold "Atonement," and "Justification by faith," and shall see them only in the distance. When all these things shall have been acted out *in thine own soul* so completely that you have won the *fruits*,

having the wine divine, you may put down the cup. It is finished ; you need not that again.

Now, as life is short, and no one knows whether I may speak to you again on this subject, let me read to you some lines which I want you to remember :—

“ Oh ! there is naught on earth worth being known
But God, and our own souls : for it is not
The hope, nor faith, nor fear, that others have
Of God, can save us ; but the sense and soul
Of Him we have *within us*.”

It is not, therefore, what *other* men have thought about the death of Christ, but “the soul of him within us.” It is what that death of Christ hath wrought in me, what it hath made me ; to what degree it is a motive, an impulsion, a constraint, a restraint, a strength and a promise. Do you suppose that I am going to lose my soul to know what others think of the death of Christ ? When your kiss to your child shall save me from my passionate desire to kiss mine, then will I come to your meeting-house, or read your book, to know what means the life and death of Christ. I *know* it, because I have felt, and tasted, and handled. It is only by what it does *in* a man, through the organs of his own heart and soul and spirit, that he hath any part or lot in the death of Christ. Where it begins

in the dyer's vat, or in the office, bringing forth a miserable parchment, signed, and sealed, and delivered—from all this, Good Lord deliver me ! But, that the death of Christ may mean to me spiritual circumcision (for the heart wants cutting, and the fountains of the soul want cleansing), O God, I pray. Into that atonement of Jesus Christ which brings me unto God, and causes me to offer up my will unto Him, to stretch out my hands to be pierced, rather than go contrary to the will of God, into *that* atonement, O God, enter me. Give me the crown of thorns, the will laid down, that, in life and death, God may be all in all. That I may say, like that holy child of Islâm, "Allah is great, His will be done." That I may say with Christ, "Thy will be done." That I may "fill up what remaineth of the sufferings of Christ." For there are some sufferings that Christ could not have endured, but which *we* have to endure. May we learn to endure them in the spirit and mind in which he endured the cross of shame, that so in us may be worked out the atonement of Christ ; that we may have *our* Calvary, *our* vinegar and gall, *our* bowed head, *our* "Father, forgive them." When a man can feel that that is done, he too may say, "It is finished ; the divine work is achieved."

And though he may never say, "My work, and the consequences of that work are finished," yet, having passed from death unto life, and being a humble soul, he can cry, as the thief did, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

So, then, it is not what other men have felt, or feared, or hoped ; it is not what Paul, or Peter, or John has said, that can save me ; it is not what *other* men have said about the death of Christ that can save me. The death of Jesus Christ saves me when I cleave at all times to what I believe to be best ; when I as deliberately take up the divine will, though it mean reed, and thorn, and gall, and vinegar, and mockery, and death, as he did. Then in me the victory is won. Then in my soul God hath become Lord and Master. Then, when the hour of death comes, all distrustful of one's merit, but all trustful of God, whose will has been wrought out in the soul, man shall bow his head to God, and say, "It is finished ; take me to Thyself," that there, in the sunny days of the eternal years, what remaineth of defect and of earth-stain may be worked out, and the soul grow ever nearer, for ever nearer, to God. Ever far, but ever nearer ; constantly approaching, but never close ; yet with sweet endeavour ever coming to the light and

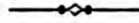
blessedness and peace of God, which, unbroken by sin, shall be man's portion for evermore.

Lastly, if all this has gone on with you, you have no more need of "views" about it. When people ask me what my "views" are about the Atonement, I tell them I don't hold any. If a child comes to me and asks, "What views have you about bread?" "Oh," I say, "I haven't got any views about it." But if he says, "What does bread *do* for you?" "Ah! now I will tell you. Having taken it into my mouth," and so on: I then proceed to describe its effects; how, through eating bread, the blood moves, and colour comes, and the brain grows strong, and the life grows great. But if he says, "Oh, I don't mean *that*. I want to know what the great Roman chemists thought about it, what opinions they had about bread?" I say, "I have not time for these things, and I don't want to wrangle about them."

Ah! if thou hast the *life* in thee, why talk about genesis and methods? And if thou hast it *not*, no *talking* about it will bring it. So, only as the divine things work vitally in the spirit and conscience of a man, does he lay hold of the life eternal. Christ says, "This is life eternal, to know me, and to hear my words." They who have

known and heard him, have felt, and tasted, and handled of the Bread of Life. And when one has done this, it is "finished." Therefore, if you are anxious to know what the death of Christ means, ask yourselves what it has done for *you*. *You* can supply a page of history. Bring forth your mortified pride, your conquered lust, and say, when were *you* pierced? Bring forth the thorny crown, and say, *when* did you win it? *when* did you wear it? *Why* did you win it? *why* did you wear it? Bring me the vinegar and the gall, and tell me, what saidst thou when it was offered? Show me your resistance of evil; show me your victory; and if you can show me all this, then "it is finished." Now, death, come do its worst! God and the soul are at peace. The strayed sheep is brought home. The penitent has returned. The sinner is forgiven. The soul is saved.

SALVATION BY CHARITY.



Morning, June 20th, 1875.

“And, above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves : for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”—
I PETER iv. 8.

THERE is an extraordinary agreement between the apostles of Jesus Christ with regard to charity. Although they were men of such different gifts, and of such a variety of tempers, we find all of them agreeing that charity, or the spirit of constant lovingness, is supreme. Whether we take Paul, with his vast intellectual attainments, and his passionate love of intellectual liberty ; or Peter, that grandest of men, so full of force and impetus ; or John, who was loved by the Lord with a special love, and who specially loved him ; all these three men agree in this—that there is one grace above all other gifts, and that is the possession of charity.

So fervent is this charity to be, that it is to burn the multitude of things—things that we regret to find few people put into the fire of it. Where the spirit of love is, nothing escapes it. Therefore, all meddling with the faults of others, all tale-telling, backbiting, scandal-mongering, should be set down as sins against this great grace of charity.

It is because men and women have gone about chattering of things they don't understand, to the neglect of charity, that some of these "deadly" sins have become fruitful ones, and the individuals themselves have become "dead before God." Such is the constant language of the New Testament: an unloving man is dead towards God; for life is only in love. Without love you are without life; without charity you are "dead before God." To tell a tale of another man, is a sin against charity. Charity covers the multitude of other people's sins. It sees them, but only in order to hide them.

Then, there is another meaning of which the apostle's words are capable: charity covers the multitude of one's *own* sins. This, perhaps, you will more readily understand than the other; for self-love will come in to help you here. You will all enter with interest into the question as to the

way in which charity covers the multitude of your own sins. I don't take it that this speech of the apostle's refers to God's dealings with us privately, but regard it as setting forth the natural effect of love in regard to men's own sins and faults. How few of us even dream that on all great matters we have got the absolute truth! How many of us fail in discovering it! How little we understand of the truth! How many of us have learned to smile at the impossibility of ever having the "true faith." If we say we will join the Pope, or if we become Protestants and join the English Church—how do we know that we have got the truth? We are sure to be right with some, but then we shall be wrong with others. We cannot move many steps without going wrong; and we are *always* wrong in certain places. But what matter? When in Rome, we may find ourselves heretics; and when we have come away, we may find that we are getting "sound;" but in these sins of omission and commission, what a comfort it is to think that charity covereth them all!

How few of you can explain, in any lucid way, the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, or the procession of the Holy Ghost—whether he proceeded from the Father or the Son, or from the Father *and*

the Son, or from the Father *only* ! And yet these things are very vital questions, "which, except a man do firmly believe, he cannot be saved !" And out of the thousand and one doctrines of the atonement, how difficult it is to select *the* one ; and when you have selected it, who is to say that it is the true one ? If a man goes on a visit to a friend at one place, he may find himself all wrong, and in the gall of bitterness ; but if he travels a few miles to visit another, he may find himself nigh unto the kingdom of heaven. So, poor souls as we are, we shift and change, all for want of having time to determine what is truth.

A judicious man soon learns to be careless of what his friends may say about his belief. When you have been in this world a few years, and been condemned by one sect, and prayed over by another, looked upon spitefully by some, and hopefully by others, you will begin to feel yourself an Ishmaelite, with your hand against every man, and every man's hand against you, in this weary war of unintelligible things. When religion is made up of things of which we know nothing, and can know nothing, what a mercy it is—if we feel ourselves so ragged and "unsound,"—to remember that charity covereth the multitude of sins.

So, turning from all these babblers, hear what the Master saith: "If ye *love* me, ye will keep my commandments; and if ye keep my commandments, ye are my friends." A man may know when he loves God, though he cannot know anything about the "Trinity in Unity." A man may be very clear as to whether the love of Christ is in him, and at the same time very "unsound" about the doctrine of the Atonement. The passion of love knows nothing about "attributes," and cares for them nothing at all. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. He who loves me, loves my Father, and my Father will love him, and my Father and I will come to him, and we will dwell with him." To the poor, the ignorant, the unlearned, and the lowly, what a comfort it must be to turn from all this vain babble of sects, and to hear the Master's words. All he asks of Peter is this: "*Lovest* thou me?" And if Peter say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," at once Christ's large charity covers that deadly sin of denial, his cowardice and flight. All these sins are covered over at once when he says, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

So, in this disorderly Church of our times, if we

want to know whether or not a man is in Christ, we have simply to know whether he loves that which is good. And this is based upon a very natural order of things. If you look at a child or a friend, you know how very much we forgive those who are loving-hearted. They have committed very sore sins, perhaps—well, well, but they *loved* much. The sin is there, to be sure, but we cover it, put up with it, for charity makes up for all things. There is nothing in this world that does make up for an unloving spirit; but it is easy to forgive those who love much. Charity does not *atone* for sin in a theological sense, but covers it in a human sense. Some of you may have noticed that we are almost all lenient to kind-hearted people, until at last some of them even fall into the pestilent habit of mistaking our forgiveness for justification. But unlovingness in another, always produces it in ourselves. An ungenerous scrub always receives the harshest judgment, and the unforgiving receive unforgiveness; but to “love much” is always to be easily forgiven, for charity covereth the multitude of sins. So, then, this is the one great rule of God and man. “If ye *love* me,” is the cry. And “If ye love God, ye will love one another.” The one thing that Christ insisted upon was charity—not

intellectual attainments, not keeping of the commandments altogether; but a large, charitable spirit—the charity that covereth the multitude of sins.

Men have been shy of these words, as applied to themselves, because they consider that they teach a dangerous doctrine. But all true doctrines are “dangerous,” as judged by some people. The Gospel of Christ is this: The further a man is off from God, the more God wants him—the further the sheep has strayed from the fold, the more the Shepherd seeks him. No matter how woeful, or wanton, or wicked the prodigal may be, provided he but turn his face toward God, he is welcome. Is there any doctrine more “dangerous” (if the scrub, the screw, the ungenerous, and the brutish have the determining of it) than this: “There is more joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.” This is a dangerous doctrine indeed. It seems to count “just persons” cheap. And yet, is it not a thoroughly *human* doctrine? “What woman, having lost a piece of silver, doth not light a candle, and search diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her

neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found that which was lost." *That* is the Gospel of Christ. It is not the sheep who never left the fold of God, but the *lost* sheep who *have* left it, that the Good Shepherd goes forth to seek and save, and bring back again, through suffering, to God. Ofttimes, when a man is furthest from God, he is nearest to God. When a man reaches the utmost point of his wretchedness it always brings him home again. Oh! if you bring in the balances, and produce the books, and your judgment is to be based upon the special list of sins which the Recording Angel has written therein, then this doctrine does not apply; but if your judgment is to be determined by the general tenour of a man's life and spirit, by the whole bearing of his life, then fervent charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

And that it is possible God shall pass leniently by him who has "loved much," one can easily believe, quite as easily as that a man can "receive Jesus" immediately, and so pass at once into life eternal. And if a man can, in a moment, pass from death into life—if the "blood of Christ" can, in a moment, save a soul, so may large charity. The woman who knelt at the feet of Jesus had

nothing to bring to him but her ointment and her tears, her love and her misery ; and yet he received her. He *forgave* her much, for she *loved* much.

In teaching this doctrine, there is no fear of any dangerous consequences, for no man really believes that the loving-hearted will abuse it. Even a child will not say, "I love my father so much that I need not do what he bids me." Love leads to obedience. "If ye *love* me, keep my commandments." The sins of a loving-hearted man are not unnoticed, but they are much more readily covered and forgiven than those of other men. Though the fiery word comes from the passionate lips ; yet, because of the loving spirit within—because the man is so large-hearted—his sin is covered, or, as Sterne beautifully puts it, "the Recording Angel dropped a tear upon the record, and blotted it out." This is just what you and I admire. Sterne never wrote a sweeter thing, or a truer one, than that. It was but a quaint way of saying, "Charity covereth the multitude of sins."

Thus, then, we are able to apply these words to our own sins, as well as to the sins of others, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves ; for charity shall cover the multitude of

sins." Where there is charity, failing can be excused; but where there is not charity, excellence itself is of little use. You may safely say that, with charity all things can be tolerated; but without charity excellence is unavailing. You may have much excellence, and be damned; and you may have many sins, and much charity, and be saved. The Gospel doctrine is this—that without love there can be no life; but with large love the *eternal* life may be reached. And though there may be much that is not true life, yet if there is aught that a man can have by which he may be saved, it is a loving heart; for love shall slowly burn out of him all passion and false desire, and make him tolerant, patient, merciful. God's doctrine is this: "To the merciful, I will show myself merciful; but to the froward, I will show myself froward." And Christ said, "If ye forgive not one another, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." When the young man came to him professing to love him, Christ put him to the test, and he failed. And the great test is this, whether or no we *forgive*. You may pass an admirable examination in theology, and yet have no chance of the kingdom of heaven. There is no such thing as an unforgiving Christian, in reality. There is more

chance for the harlot, with her alabaster-box of ointment ; there is more chance for the hated Roman tax-gatherer ; there is more chance for the men of Tyre and Sidon than for any of you, who, *professing* to be Christians, carry about with you an unforgiving spirit, and fail to cover the multitude of sins ; for you have the *name* of living before God, but your *heart* is far from Him. No name is ever written in the Book of Life except the name of a lover. The unloving are condemned already. They are "dead before God." Though they may have all faith, yet for them it is hopeless, useless. Though they keep all the commandments, yet, if they lack the "one thing needful," they have no place in Christ. Better to come with the trembling harlot to his feet, and weep there ; for then thou wouldst receive a larger welcome than one of the straightest of Pharisees who has kept the commandments whole, but has carried with it all an unpitying ungenerous spirit.

That is the doctrine, as I read it, of all the apostles ; and it was the doctrine of the great Master. Lay it to heart then—that without love there can be no true life ; without life, no name can be written in the Book of Life ; without love there can be no heaven ;—with love *all* things are

possible. The bitterest disappointments of a teacher's life are to see how very little of this love there is in the Christianity of our times. Is it not notorious that Christians are no better than anybody else, if you offend against them? You have no more chance of getting a tolerant judgment from them for your first sin than from the publican. I would rather trust myself with persons who are not professors of religion than with those who are. There is no more security from the tongue of a woman who has "received Jesus" than from any other. I have known "holy" talebearers! I have seen hives of scandal among Christians. I have found them to be as deeply dipped in scandal as any of us poor worldlings. The best companions that I have met with on life's dusty road, have been the lowly, the true-hearted, the tender; those who, like that poor publican, have smote upon their breasts, and uttered but one sentence, and that sentence this—"God, be merciful to me, a sinner." My experience has made me incline rather to walk with the sinners; for I have found them better company than the saints, fuller of longsuffering, charity, and mercy.

The reasons are obvious to you and me. Christianity, as it is now understood, is little more than a

discourse upon how God has failed in His creation, an unintelligible talk about unintelligible things. What wonder, then, if charity ceases to be fervent, and its flames die out? For I have met with many religious (!) people, who were so full of the "means," that they had come to believe them to be of more consequence than charity. Suspected heresy breaks more friendships than known sin. It is far safer to own yourself a cheat; or that you have a fiery temper, and that your children know it, and are afraid of you when you come home, than to be suspected of not taking an exactly orthodox view of the Atonement. Who cares for *charity*, if his "views" are correct? Ah! you can be "sound" about the "Trinity in Unity," and yet wrangle with each other day and night. You can be Christians! and yet use very strong language about the poor sinners for whom Christ died. I would rather be suspected of ignorance, than be convicted of unforgiveness. I would rather be condemned for not knowing my theological lesson, than take the chance of being put back, when I stand trembling before the bar of God, with these sad words: "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me. Thou showedst no mercy to others, and now there is no

mercy for thee." God grant to us that we may have that large charity that covers the multitude of sins ; then perhaps we may hear at the last : " Their sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for they *loved* much. Because they were forgiven much, they loved much." And though no great deeds may be recorded of us, yet if our hearts be enlarged by that fervent charity that covereth the multitude of sins, our names shall be written in the Book of Life.

"Above all things, have *fervent* charity among yourselves." We want our charity to be *fervent*, *burning*, so that when we are impatient with the sins of others, we may cast them into the fire of it, that they may be burned. But one of the great faults with most people, is that they count some things too small to be brought under the influence of religion. In nature, there is but one rule for all things. The same law that causes the colours of the horizon at sunset, causes the colours of the flowers. The law of the great ocean-tide, is the same as that of the littlest creek. To the child who loves much—that his father's slippers are put ready for him at the right time and in the right place, is a serious business. True love asks not whether the service be great or small. It looks to

little things as well as great ones. It is dangerous for any speck of unkindness to come into the flame of love. Where love is strong, the minuteness of little things is put under the presiding care of that love, as well as the vastness of great ones. It is because love is so weak that the sins against it are so common. When charity shall be more fervent among men, all talebearing, and backbiting, and eagerness to listen to stories of the faults of others, all these things will die down : for they cannot live in the light of love. They may seem to you to be but motes, yet, if the flame of love be fervent, it will burn both great and small. If you put your hand into the fire, it will be burned, and the mote passing through the fire will be burned too ; so a large offence, passing through the fervent fire of charity, is burned, and little sins are burned likewise. To the charitable spirit, all things are important. With all our blundering, at least let us win this—the desire for forgiveness, based upon our own desire to forgive.

*THE RELIGION OF CHARITY
COMPATIBLE WITH ALL CALLINGS.*



Morning, October 10th, 1875.

“All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar’s household.”—PHILIPPIANS iv. 22.

I WISH to point out to you this very remarkable “chiefly”—that among the salutations sent by the saints, the *chief* salutations came from the unlikeliest place. It is a rebuke to some who think that Christianity pervades one state of life more than another. It is foolish to suppose that one place or set of circumstances is pervaded by the spirit of true religion more than another ; for this spirit rejoices in having affinity with strange opposites, and there is no extreme, no largeness or smallness of circumstance, no temperament or character, no faculty, or gift, or grace, with which

the true religion has not an immediate and admirable affinity.

At times, men have thought, from misreading or misunderstanding, that the Christian Religion was peculiarly suitable to the poor, and that it had nothing to do with the king in purple, or the officers of the household of Cæsar. But though, no doubt, Christ at first preached to the lowly, the ignorant, and the despised ; on the other hand, there were many of the wise and the rich that were called. It is true that he proclaimed the opening of the eyes to the blind, but he never preached that blind eyes were better than those that saw, or that the narrownesses of poverty were more congenial than not. The pettinesses of piety were then but little understood. The artist and the poet, the choir-boy and the incense-bearer, all alike took part in the Christian Church, and proclaimed its glorious affinity with every gift, and grace, and function, and that there is *no* calling to which it has not an affinity.

If one can find saints in Cæsar's household, where shall they not be found? But men go sighing about to find the proper soil for religion, and go to the desert in order to be righteous, and think that when a man is a beggar he must be nearest

to the kingdom of heaven. Yet Christianity has a fine affinity with riches, because the great grace of charity can be exercised thereby. Whoso has charity in his heart, and wealth in his hand, has the finest gift of God : so large in fruitfulness are riches. The danger is not in them, but in the absence of charity in the heart. Grant, then, that there be charity in the heart, and wealth in the hand, and that man shall be one of those who are near to the kingdom of heaven. There is no finer sight than a rich man who is also a charitable man. Christianity, or charity, has a fine affinity for wealth ; it is at home in courts, and it can have saints also in Cæsar's household.

For the calling of a statesman, too, it has a fine affinity, although it is very common to say that this is a very uncongenial atmosphere for a Christian man. If a statesman have Christianity, it is his glory to give the Christian law before the Christian spirit can come. For men may be made to drop an evil practically before they know that it is evil. So Christianity has a fine affinity with the statesman ; for he can put an end to the foul obstructions that hinder truth ; he can make laws by which men shall no longer be housed in such conditions as to make righteousness impossible,

where truth is killed in foulness, and charity dies in the mire. The statesman can cut through these foul dens in which those poor human swine have dwelt so long, and from which some of you draw your rents ; and once again in spirit we may behold the procession of him before whom were strewn the palm-branches and the songs of God were raised.

Christianity has an affinity with the soldier, too, though some of you perhaps think not. Though the day will come when war shall be at an end, nevertheless, he who goes forth in a good cause, stirred by the feeling of verity and judgment, to do righteousness in the spirit of a soldier, in the spirit of order and divine obedience and self-sacrifice, between him and the Christian faith are strong affinities.

The Christian religion is fond of retirement, too, and has much to say about the blessings of a retired, quiet existence, in deepening the wells of life, so that when the dry times come, there may be water springing up into everlasting life. So, retirement has eminent affinities with our faith. It goes through the stores of ancient times, too and shows us the world that is past.

The merchant, also, may be the most eminent

missionary, if the common spirit of charity be in him. And the artist—not, of course, those people who look upon pictures as they would look upon the latest fashions, but the true artist—has strong affinities with Christianity. For true art is this—to catch the beauties of nature, and imprison them ; so that, when nature is inhospitable, a man, tired with the work of life, must get him home, that he may enjoy the sunshine of last season thus preserved for him by the artist. So, he, too, preaches of the God of eternal beauty—that before matter was, the ideal existed—and teaches of the spirit underlying all visible things ; and he too shall be worthy to stand amongst the most eminent of the saints.

Thus, I know no calling which may not be a noble calling. Take the actor, setting forth so vividly the eternal tragedy and comedy of life. If the acting be good, it is both a charming pastime and an elevating amusement ; and he too, so oft despised, shall take up his place amongst the true followers of Christ. I can give and get greetings from these poor players far more cordial sometimes than from many people I meet with off the stage, and who would never think of entering a theatre. All these men swell richly the

variegated procession of the followers of Christ, who, though the son of a carpenter, yet belongs to all men—to kings and princes, to fathers and sons, to the highest and the lowest.

So, then, we have a goodly assembly, of priests and prophets, soldiers and saints, and statesmen, from the highest down to the lowest, who, if they be moved by one common spirit, and have in them the Christian faith, howsoever different their actions may be, may have them put down as actions of faith, and deeds of religion. These things are easy to say, and pretty to listen to; but what we want to find is *wherein consists* this unity by which the spirit of Christ, the free spirit of religion, has an affinity with extremely opposite characteristics. Wherein consists the affinity between poor Peter, with his one garment, and the accomplished apostle Paul? And how is it that we find the officers of Cæsar's household sending Christian salutation to the Philippians?

Let us wander away, seemingly, for a time. To answer this great question, let each man put to himself another. It is not whether this or that action, or calling, or function, or characteristic be holy or not, but what *is* that holiness which justifies us in counting that act or calling righteous

or holy. Until men understand that, they will make distinctions, and this act will be called right, and that wrong. The question is not whether this or that be an act of religion, but what *is* the holiness or righteousness which is stated to make it holy or righteous. Until we know exactly what it is that makes an action holy, all is foolishness and shallowness; for nothing can be clean or unclean of itself. All is characterless, except to the degree to which that which makes it characteristic exists. A man may be the sweeper of chimneys, or the holder of a sceptre; but the sceptre may be swayed in righteousness, and the besom may be waved in righteousness. The righteousness of the king or sweep depends upon the degree to which each embodies in his calling that which constitutes righteousness, holiness, or justice.

When Socrates was talking, shallow people got up and cackled because he maintained that they who did justice must be just, and they who did wisely must be wise. Some of that class of people who speak first and think afterwards (and very often neglect the latter), considered these words nonsense. "*Of course*," they said, "he who does justice is just." Not so, however. The mistake of the objector lies in supposing that it is with

wisdom, and virtue, and righteousness as it is with the arts. The artist may paint a charitable act, who has never been guilty of one in his life. He may paint a holy action, but it does not follow that *he* acts it, or feels it. You shall do a wise thing, and never intend it. Perhaps you are surprised sometimes at a wise thing you have said or done, and made to blush for praise you ne'er deserved. If you had not said it, you could not have thought it. You don't call *that* being wise? You don't suppose that because you *happened* to do a good thing the Almighty will count it unto you for righteousness? To do a good action, these three things are essential: (1) that you *know* what you are doing; (2) that you do it *from choice*; and (3) that you have firmness and perseverance *to do the like at all times*. Then I call you a virtuous and holy man. So Socrates was right, you see: they who do wise things *ought* to be wise. But they must know what they do; there must be free choice; and there must be firmness and perseverance to continue, in order that a man may be properly accounted wise or just.

Here it was that Socrates so greatly coincided with Christ: neither of them pronounced judgment upon an act without looking to see the fount from

which it sprang. A positively good act may come from a very foul fountain. The foundations of real justice, and mercy, and right are in the moving motive or power which lies under them. The truth, then, is that in man himself religion lies. Having knowledge, intention, and persistence in the performance of that which is just and wise, the question becomes this : What is that which, put into the voice, or action, or work, constitutes it an act in accord with the Christian faith ? Here comes one of the supreme beauties of religion. The Christian religion declares charity to be that one thing which, being contained in the spirit of that which any man does, enables us to pronounce it an act of faith.

The dominant grace of charity is set forth to the world. Charity means the large, loving, constant, persistent doing of all things, great and small ; not doling out what is *called* charity, nor occasional giving to the poor. These are but some fringes of that charity which thinks no evil, even in the midst of a world of evil, until it is sadly proved to be evil and wrong ; which of all things and people hopes the best ; which endures all ; which listens to evil only when it cannot stop its ears ; but which, when left alone, thinks, believes, and hopes for the best.

Charity is the universal spirit, to which nothing is too great or too small. For it, the littlest creature is not too small or too mean. By charity, kings may reign, and princes may do justice. A king, through charity, may sway the sceptre, and the humblest action can be done in the spirit of love to God and man. Who cares what the action is? A man may be a soldier or a fashioner of pins' heads: what are these things? A room may be swept to the glory of God. Christianity affirms that every action into which charity can flow and does flow, becomes an act of faith. It is this that makes the free spirit utterly careless as to what he does. Let him fish fishes, or collect taxes, or be as rich as Joseph of Arimathea; what matter? Whether a man be servant, soldier, or king, it doesn't matter one straw, provided that into his actions, or office, there be a constant flow of the one divine spirit, the spirit which is above all other things, the spirit of charity. And one may say of charity what Socrates said of virtue and justice,—there are three conditions which are necessary before a man can perform an act of charity: he must know he does it, he must understand it and mean it, and he must persist in it. One person may have a great name for charity, and yet his

actions may have little true charity in them. Another may fill ever so lowly a calling, and yet serve God truly.

Those of you who understand all these things know that there is no calling or office to which Christianity has not an affinity; that in Cæsar's household and in Peter's fishing-hut it is equally possible to be filled with that which constitutes the spirit of religion. Therefore, it is a matter of indifference what your calling may be. If you are scandal-mongers, indeed, it is impossible for any of you to be charitable, because you violate the first principles of charity. If you were charitable, you would keep vain starers from beholding wounds that are at present unhealed. You need not ask, then, "whether this man or that is a Christian?" but, "is he charitable?" Don't run about asking what professions are nearest to the kingdom of heaven; for the king and the sweep can be equally near. Whoso has charity, the kingdom of heaven dwelleth in him; but he who has not charity, is outside the kingdom of heaven, and in the kingdom of darkness and death.

To me, this has solved many difficulties, and got rid of many obstructions; and so I strive to cultivate that large catholicity of spirit by which I can

welcome men of all callings. When one hears of those who dwell not in constant piety, one goes back to Cæsar's household, and thinks who *they* were. Then come, sweet spirit of charity! that canst enter into the limbs of the dancing child, or into the joined hands of the praying saint; canst preside at the feast, and enter into our sorrows, and pour oil upon the bowed heads. All grace and beauty, all science and wisdom, all art and joy—all, all are good. The world is no longer common or unclean, because all things are filled with the sweet spirit of charity. All possibilities of beauty and piety are developments of this one spirit, whose manifestations are so varied.

Finally, I am, like some of you, a latitudinarian. I love liberty of all sorts—political, commercial; but chiefly personal. I love to do the thing that seemeth good to me; only striving in all things to have *fervent charity*. And if we wish to keep that fire ever alight, we must put aside all selfishness, even though it hide itself under the *appearance* of charity, saying, "might not this ointment have been sold, and given to the poor?" To live in all things in the light of charity, this is more difficult than it is to live in arbitrary puritanism. To have a line drawn with chalk, by which to regulate your

actions, oh ! it doesn't require much genius for that. But to feel a passionate delight in all things; to have a touch of voluptuous joy in the beauty of the world, and yet never to forget to have fervent charity, at all times, and towards all things and peoples—if you think *that* is a light and easy task, *try* it, and you shall find that for a man to hold it up as his creed, and, amidst the constant struggles of the world to “get on,” keep *that* fire alight and brightly burning, he must have mastered that by which all actions may be properly called just, virtuous, righteous, charitable, or Christian.

It is because of this common affinity of Christianity with all things, that saints can be found in Cæsar's household, or fishing by the shores of Galilee.

THE COMMUNISM OF CHRISTIANITY.



Evening, May 30th, 1875.

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”—
ACTS ii. 44, 45.

THIS remarkable outbreak of lovingkindness occurred, as you remember, at the time of Pentecost—a time which is famous to the Jew for the Giving of the Law, and the celebration of the Feast of Weeks or festival of thanks for the harvest. And famous to the Christian as being the birthday of the Church: for at Whitsuntide we celebrate the time when the Christian era began; that is, when the visible body of faithful men, the disciples of Jesus Christ, professing his name and doing his will, constituted in the world the leaven which was slowly to leaven the whole lump.

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common ; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” These words have been words of *discouragement* and words of *encouragement*. Of discouragement, when reading them, and feeling, in spite of our inward selfishness, and greedy, grasping covetousness, that they are *divine* words, God-like, Christ-like, sweet and pure ; but that they belong to the first blush, the first bloom of the spring-time of the Church, from which, alas ! we have fallen. Of encouragement, because, to the man who studies nature and life carefully, there is more to be learned from the hour of bloom, as to our ultimate destiny, than from the cold grey light of commonplace.

To those whose eyes are opened wide, because their hearts are truly loving, there is no time in God's whole year that is equal to this time of fullest bloom. Summer has no glory, and Autumn has no bounty to be compared with the first outbreak of Spring. For, when God opens His Hand so wide as during this sweet May month He has done, nature rises to its fullest, and seems to brim over with beauty ; the soul of man is greatened by the promises of the future, and he

walks the earth in gladness, because of the glorious bloom around him. Those who have but little gardens and but few flowers, love them the most passionately. The poor townsman who has upon his window-sill one solitary flower in a pot, loves it with a passion which the master of many acres never knew. That poor prisoner, who, between the chinks of his prison-floor, saw one little plant grow, and watched it till it bloomed, watched it with a passion and a devotedness of love which those of us who are lords of many blooms, and can gather daily many flowers, never can know.

But it is sad, when Autumn comes, to have counted the blossoms of Spring, and to see the pitiful harvest there is sometimes in the yellow days of Autumn. I have counted before now how many blossoms there were on a tree, and then in Autumn I have counted the fruit; and some years—out of a *hundred* blossoms, only *one* came to perfection. There is pathos and tragedy in that. For, in watching the pear-tree and the apple-blossom, I see human life. All human life soon becomes pathetic, even the sweetest :—

“ She was of the world, whose fairest flower
Has shortest bloom ;
And, rose as she was, she lived but an hour,
The rose’s doom.”

Of a thousand babes that are born—God's holiest blossoms—how many come to manhood? how many wear the crown of age? But few! These wondrous blossoms of the sweet May-time, these glorious blooms of human life, and such glorious outbreaks of holy communism as this I read to you to-day—how many of these blossoms are wasted! how few of them ever come to perfection!

Thinking of these things, one finds it hard to be obedient, sometimes; one feels inclined to stand up and say, "Lord, *why* this waste? *Why* should the tree be so loaded with bloom, and the basket so empty of fruit? *Why* was I gladdened with the glory of Spring, if now, in the Autumn, I am beggared in want? *Why* this waste, O Lord?" Yet, God knows best. It is His law that the bloom shall be plentiful, in order that circumstances may be defeated, and that *some* may remain for fruit. He has so ordered it, that man can come to glory only through fight and battle; He has so ordered it, that the tree shall bear more blossoms than it can bear fruit. Some must fall, and but few be left; but those few are a prophecy of what shall be, and man must learn that a little fruit of God is worth great waste of bloom.

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common.” Oh! the doctrine was received into gladsome hearts. The Spring heat was come; the frost was over, and the winter had vanished. They entered into the apostles’ doctrine gladly, and stood by it steadfastly. But—what came of it? It fell. Full, as they were just then, of colour and of life, they put forth this first and most glorious blossom. And, however selfish some of you may be—and God knows you delight pretty much in exclusiveness—still, in your hearts, you *know* that this was a lovely blossom: “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” When all of us can live together well and gladly and holily, the new Jerusalem will indeed have come! the heavenly city will have descended, Christ will have conquered, and God will be all in all. “And all that believed were together.” How few of us would *wish* to be together, to begin with!

“And they had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” When a man looks round this world nowadays, what a strange

blossom *that* seems to be! Who would try to gather it? So that blossom seems to have been in vain. When lovers, newly entranced, are scarce able to see common daylight, or to comport themselves with common sense, what are they to do? Bloom, blossom! But the blossom will not last. It is so like that outbreak of communism—and we know that did not last. I have no hope that it will come again in my time; but I have every hope that it will come, ultimately. It is the word of God, the end of civilization, the aim of all holy souls, the dream of all great spirits. This is “the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,” which will one day be received—into the earth. For—mark you well—what man is when love is new, he will strive to be when love is old. When men are ashamed of what were the days of their youth, they show themselves to be but fools. Have you ever known what it was to take up an old letter you had kept for years, and read it again? There is nothing much more piteous than to get your old love-letters, for instance, and read them over again, when your hair is gray, and your heart seems getting cold; to read the glowing words, and to see again the bloom on the tree, and the

sweet passion-flowers of the heart—and then settle which is the bigger fool, he who wrote that, or he who thinks he was a fool when he wrote it? I know very few things that would test a man more than that. If possible, get a bundle of old letters, written when you were young, before the chill cold world had nipped the buds of your love, before the blight and smoke of the city had come to spoil its blossom; and if, in reading those letters, you think yourself a fool when you wrote them; if you read them twice, and still think so—you may *know* that you are one *now*!

Is love grown colder and less romantic? The man of the world thinks it is; but the man of the Spirit knows that it is not. Here, then, is this first blossom of Christian faith, which was the natural outbreak of loving hearts. Here we find a record of what these men did when their fresh heart was first surrendered to the Holy Ghost; and when this sweet tree had blossomed—"all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

But now let us treat these sweet blossoms as the wind treats the blossoms of the garden; and

we shall see that they could not last. They could not last, because the blossoms of love have to blow out in the cold, and be tried by the storm, as the blossoms of the tree must have the wind to nip them. This holy communism—this sweet sanctity of unselfishness, this glorious blossom of love, was nipped, and it fell ; but it prophesied as it died. As I look at the apple-tree, and know that for every hundred blossoms only one shall come to fruitfulness ; so I know that the river of life can afford to waste, and the great stream of God needs not to be choice about every ripple. Therefore, I *expect* to see some blossoms fall ; but they prophesy as they fall !

Thus, watching a little child's life, what glorious blossoms of unselfishness we see sometimes ! But they don't last. The cynic sneers at this ; but the wise man rejoices, for these blossoms tell him of what man may come to under more perfect conditions. And so these men, who, under some temporary feeling or circumstance, came together, and had all things common, got scattered, and went home again ; and by degrees the old world resumed its sway and power over them. Nevertheless, there yet remains the ultimate outcome of the Christian faith.

We smile at these men, but only as a loving father smiles upon his little child who cries for the moon, because his ambition is so lofty and its realization so impossible. Still, this pentecostal bloom, though it died, prophesied of the future. For, be you certain of this—the Christian religion is making progress in the world, and men are already realizing, in out-of-the-way places, the very things that the pentecostal children did, when God was their first love, Christ was new to them, the Holy Spirit was a rapture, and the heavenly news was “Glad Tidings” indeed.

Now, as I tried to show you this morning, the effect of Christianity is to work out of each one of us, and, therefore, ultimately out of the whole world, all that is evil and low. Christ came here to work out of me, and out of you, all that is bestial and vile, vulgar and selfish; and the Christian doctrine kills the ape and the tiger in us and puts down the wild beast. Though in every one of us there is much of the beast, much of the savage, yet it must be worked out, slowly but surely; until at last the day shall come when men shall follow the teaching of the Master. “When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind.” This country is too sinful, as yet,

to bloom in pentecostal beauty ; but in some other countries, men are beginning already to reap the blessed fruits of this first pentecostal love. Where-soever I see an attempt being made to put all things to the service of all men, I am glad ; and I read again that old story : " And all that believed were together, and had all things common ; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Some few days ago, debating on matters of education, some person found fault with the present method of levying school rates, and said that it was " very hard for men and women who had no children to have to pay a school rate for those who had." This was said by an eminent Christian ! But eminent Christians take a very un-Christianlike view of things sometimes. So it is " hard " for those who have no children to pay a school rate for those who have ! and yet, if a man has a wooden leg, he pays the highway rate the same as those who have two feet. But the holy communism for which some of us do long *will* come, though it be late. The Day of God *will* come ; it *is* coming ; slowly, it may be, but surely.

Some of you who are much given to admiring the pictures of saints in churches, can now have

a library full of the souls of the ancients ; for, far beyond all the saints that you can paint on windows, are those shelves filled with the *books* of the men of olden time. For in these books are the spirits of the fathers, the souls which they have left behind. There is John Milton's soul, and Shakespeare's spirit. There you will find Jeremy Taylor, and many many others, who have left an eloquence behind them, though their tongues have long since gone to dust. There are the thoughts of the fathers, the words of the wise, the songs of the poets, the gathered honey of all nations. And over all this is written, "FREE LIBRARY." O holy words ! words that the Holy Ghost Himself might have inspired ! Here, any man can go in, and sit down, and read as long as he pleases. And though there are no people there to preach, or to distribute tracts ; nevertheless, there comes back again the old river of God : "And all that believed were together, and had all things common." This great river is becoming more and more widely spread. By-and-by we shall have free education for all. Some of you here may live to see the day when it is done—when the school house is free, and its portals are opened wide, so that every child can go in, and education

shall be like the Gospel—free to all, crying, “Come unto me, all ye that labour,” and “he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” So shall the pentecostal spirit come back again : “And all that believed were together, and had all things common ; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

We are winning it. Since I was a boy, what have we not won ? what have we not gained ? So flows the great river of God, and Pentecost is coming back again—not with a “mighty, rushing wind,” but slowly, surely, as a thief in the night. I have long given up the dream of my youth—that all men could do as those men did of old—live in community. Like most fond, fantastic dreams, it has had its day. Robert Owen tried it ; for, with all his faults, he had the heart of a lover in him, and he loved mankind with a passion. Thousands have tried it ; but they have given it up. All attempts at communism, in any practical form, have died out, gone into history ; but—the *fruit* remains. And so I—fond dreamer !—walk my way in gladness of heart, rejoicing that though from so many fair blossoms there be but little

fruit ; yet — *the fruit lasts — the fruit goes on to perfectness.*

Thus, everything in this country is on our side ; and though, as wealth increases, selfishness seems at first to flourish, yet I know which will triumph. At every point we win one thing or another : hours of leisure, and places of recreation ; free libraries of divine wisdom, free roads, free churches, free speech, cheap books. And so, slowly, but oh ! so surely, the sweet pentecostal spirit is making way. " And all that believed were together, and had all things common."

Therefore when I hear of the National Gallery being opened free to the public, oh ! my soul is glad. For, as you know, some of the most beautiful works of art in the nation are there ; they are not now shut up in rich men's houses, but belong, alike, to all ; the works of the greatest masters belong to everybody, to the lowliest as well as to the highest. And are there any of you who think that God intended these things for the rich ? What has God to do with the rich ? Did He send His sun to shine simply for the rich ? Nay, but for the beggar also. The spirit of Christ is always toward the pentecostal blossom ; but, that it may become golden fruit, there must

be large loving, all thought of self must be consumed by the love of God. "And they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." They sold all they had, that the strange man who came to them might become their brother in God. Read it, my brother ; and in all things strive so to have the love of God in your heart, that it may lead you into true wisdom. God's gifts are many ; but strive, as far as possible, to have all things common, *especially* the *greatest* things.

I smile when I see men saving a little property of their own, and keeping apart from one another ; for the *greatest* and *best* things are fast passing into the hands of every one. Books are cheap ; and, when books are cheap, the inspiring things of God belong to all. High price of books means heaven closed, and Pentecost impossible ; but when there are cheap books for every one, *all* men may become prophets, and priests, and kings unto God.

So I read, again and again, that sweet story of Pentecost. I know they were disappointed ; I know those blossoms did not last ; they could not last, for the tree was not strong enough to bear so much fruit ; but *some* of them have lived, and their fruit remains to-day.

Let every man judge his own heart, to what degree the love of God has entered it, for it is to that degree that he will be willing that all things should be common, especially the highest and greatest things.

Some men smile at this doctrine, and think that we mean the dividing of *money*. Who *asked* them to divide their money with the community? And yet, the moment you say anything about Pentecost, they exclaim, "What! am I to share my *property* with everybody?" Their property perish with them! Is *that* all you want to share? Is *that* all you dream about? No! keep your soul-damning riches to yourself. I no more ask a man to share his *money* with me, than I ask him to share his *body* with me. No, keep it yourself. Give me the free *sun-shine* of God, and *keep* your *gold-shine*; *I* don't want it. The free Spirit of God is mine, and no man can take *that* from me. Free libraries; free picture-galleries; free roads; free churches; free speech; cheap books;—all these we have won; and we shall win more yet. So you may keep your old purse; *I* don't want it. The words of the wise; the songs of the poets; the paintings of great artists; the daisy by the road-side; the lily of the valley; the song of the cuckoo; the voice

of the thrush ; the logic of St. Paul ; the sweet heart of the Lord Christ ;—let *these* be common ; and you may keep your gold to yourself.

Thus, then, I do rejoice to consecrate this Pentecost with gladness of heart ; for those blossoms that *did* stop on the tree are now bearing rich and golden fruit, fruit which shall last for ever and for ever.

Christianity is the death-blow of privilege ; the scorner of pedigree ; the mocker of kings ; the ridiculer of fine linen. It turns its back upon all these things, and says, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the halt, the blind ; for they cannot recompense thee." So, to some of you who, like myself, once had dreams—dreams born too much of man's impatience, and too little of the patience of God—I say, The dream is not a fool's dream ; be not impatient, it will come true. For, remember, the Christian religion means this : the opening of the gate of heaven to all men, to whomsoever will seek it. "Come unto me ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." It is the religion whose first miracle was to turn water into wine for humble people ; it gave back the father unto the prodigal, and the prodigal unto

the father. So, slowly, but surely, it will bring back the pentecostal spirit ; not with a mighty rushing wind, or with useless tongues, but with the sweetness of charity and lovingkindness.

You would do well to get it into your plans of daily life ; that the day *will* come when all the nations of Europe shall be pentecostal, and shall "be together ;" for they shall have passed from feudalism to federalism, and Pentecost shall come. And the custom-house shall be abolished ; for all these things shall pass away. And all the nations shall "be together," and the spirit of the Lord shall be upon them, and they shall "have all things common ;" and they shall "sell their possessions and goods," that there may be enough and for *all*. So, dream on, my brother, if these be your dreams ; for God is with them. Drop no fantasy of youth, except this—to think that *every* blossom must bear fruit. Some blossoms must fall, for the tree could not bear all the fruit. The blooms that came out of that pentecostal love were a prophecy of that Spirit of God which is given without measure to those who seek it, and a prophecy also of the ultimate destiny of mankind.

*UNREASONING FEELING REJECTED
BY CHRIST.*



Evening, April 18th, 1875.

“And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead : but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which

are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—LUKE ix. 53-62.

READING the Gospels in the absurd way that many people read them, taking the exact words, and forgetting to go deeper into the meaning, it does seem hard that Christ should have put these people back so coldly. "Suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead : but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Taking that as it stands, how can you explain it? how admire it? What more honest plea could the man have offered?—his father unburied, his heart distressed, the ice all untried. And yet Christ says to him, "Let the dead bury their dead."

If you go to the commentators, you will see that it was not what the men said in either case that determined the answer they got. "Let me first go and bid farewell to them which are at home at my house." That seems honest enough. But Christ said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." But do you believe that that was all the reason they had for not following Christ, and that their words conveyed the whole of it? What

children you must be ! Two men may say to you, "Welcome, sir, my house is at your service ;" but do you equally believe them both ? It is not what a man *says*, but the way in which he says it. For the *intellect* may supply the words, but the *heart* must supply the tone of voice and the play of the mouth. So, it is possible that this man wished to make an excuse. "Let me go and bid my friends farewell." It is possible that he cried out, "Lord, I will follow thee," with a tone of effusion, all gush, and rush, and feeling, but in a moment "reconsidered" it, and must go home to "make arrangements." Fancy *enthusiasm* making arrangements ! Ah ! it was the *tone* that did it.

All these tales of the Gospel should be read in this light. "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Yes ; and then probably he would stay to be the executor, and wait till the "will" was read, and the goods shared, and the men gone. Such errands as that are little likely to be done quickly. So the Lord says, "Let the dead bury their dead ; follow thou me." We may read the same lesson out of ordinary life. One person says, "Oh ! I love you so !" Yes, yes ; but are there any "arrangements" to be made ? or do you give yourself without reserve, at once and for ever ? Another may

say the same thing to you, but how different the tone! You see this especially in the matter of hospitality. Oh! I have been invited to houses that I should take good care never to enter. There was no joy in the tone of him that invited me, no delight in the eye. Had he known how I read his false heart, he would have gone away rather vexed at the detection. The feelings have a great deal more to do with sudden resolves than the intellect and judgment.

Take the other case here. It seems a mighty offence that Christ should be going to Jerusalem. Had he been coming to Samaria, that would have been good! but going to Jerusalem is bad. At one time it was almost enough for an Englishman to see a man with his face turned towards Paris to make him despise him. Ask him if he could give a *reason* for it. "Oh! no, no." So we come back to the same point. It is because our feelings have such an undue influence over us, and need to be corrected, checked, and chilled, that many of these repulsive words of Christ's are uttered.

So, when that woman began her enthusiasms, 'No, no,' said he, "you had better talk sense." He has been preaching to the people, and some woman shouts out at once, "Blessed be the mother

that bare thee!" "Nay," said Christ, "rather, blessed are they that do the will of God." It sounds a hard saying ; for her speech was nothing but natural. Thinking, probably, of her own sorrows in time past, she broke forth in words of blessing upon her who had borne the wondrous Teacher. But probably it was only a matter of *feeling* with her. In order to make people *feel*, you need not make them *understand*. Get a great many people together, and speak to them some high-sounding words, and they will *feel* fast enough. Christ knew that putting back excited feeling brings up the conscience and the judgment to the point.

When I say these things, I am not blaming other people who feel strongly ; but I wish they would argue patiently. The majority of men get into a passion before they come to a conclusion ; whereas, if these feelings did not get in the way, they would argue it out to the end. It is this that leads men into so many evils. "You are going to Jerusalem," said the Samaritans, "and we hate the Jews." This went against the disciples' vanity, wounded their love, and (let us do them justice) wounded their sense of loyalty to the Master. So these strong-feeling men turned to the Lord, and

said, "Let us call down fire from heaven, and burn them up." Now it was feeling that led them astray. It is impossible to be intolerant, if a man have brains, and use them. No man of large sense could be intolerant. But how angry some men get if you differ from them! You may argue with them a bit, but they still differ, and assert that you are wrong. A tolerant man would say, "Probably you are right, from your position, and I am right from my standpoint. Neither of us can reach the absolute truth." The angry man will say, "I *know* this is the truth." So, if he *knows* the truth, he will hate all liars; and as I differ from him, I must be a liar, and he will hate me. Thus, it is not a question of judgment at all; but this intolerance is usually a matter of feeling.

The majority of you are what you are by your feelings, not from your judgment. Here is a proposal made, that people should be burned after they are dead, by a process called cremation. But it is no use to argue about it with some people. "I should like to be buried," they say, "I am not going to be burned." *Why* not? You won't know it. "Oh! I — I — I ——" They can give you no *reason*. I should like to be burned myself; but I leave it to those I love to dispose of me as they

will. It is all a question of feeling. These people have "been accustomed" to be buried.

You will generally find that there is some hazy feeling about the "resurrection." I heard a man say that he thought it "sapped the foundations of the Christian religion." Sapped the foundations of the Christian religion! I know what he meant. He had some dim notion that the Christian religion rested upon the resurrection of the body. Though this bodily form should have passed into utter corruption, nevertheless, they seem to think it not quite so impossible to be raised, as though it had been burned. This body, that will be used up over and over again by nature in various forms, ah! they think it *might* be raised. They don't exactly know how, but they think it could. They won't listen to reason, or they would have to give in. But, out of a sort of feeling of respect for their grandfathers who were buried, they want to be buried too. It is of no use to show them how, in any great city, the living have to be crowded out to make room for the dead; and that nobody likes to have mourning processions passing their door all day long. Incapable of argument, impervious to reason, they say, "I *feel* that I should like to be buried."

Take another case. George III. was an obstinate man, yet a very pleasant man. He used to wander up and down among the poor, visiting their cottages, peeping into the pots on the fire, playing with the children, talking with the parents, and wishing that everybody had a Bible. He was so amiable, that the people round about used to call him "Father George." Yet this excellent man was very obstinate and dogmatic. Said he, "*I* wish nothing but what is good ; *therefore* everybody who does not agree with me is a traitor and a scoundrel." Now that is *history*. Said he, "If you don't see as I do, you cannot be on the side of *good* ; if you don't love good, you are a rascal, and you ought to be hanged." Thus the dear, kindly "Father" called down fire from heaven, and we have been crippled ever since by his foolish wars ; we are burdened with debt to this day. There must be fire, and sword, and famine, and bloodhounds, because those people did not (as he thought) love what was good. "If a man loves not good, he loves evil, and ought to be put out of the world." All very logical, *he* thought. All a question of *feeling*, as *I* think. This man, with a stupid head and a tender conscience, just illustrates how much feeling often has to do with great ques-

tions, and how little intellect and reason are brought to bear upon them.

Take a more modern case—an infamous case that has happened of late—of a man who laid false claim to a title and estate.* People were rushing all over the country, and every idiot turned out to see the man, and pronounce upon his merits or demerits. If you ask them, "Have you read the evidence?" "Oh, yes." "Have you weighed it?" "Yes." "Have you read it *all*?" "Oh, no, no; but I *feel* he is the man." But this is not a question of how you *feel*. I could address a class of children, and they would not *understand* a word I said, and yet I could make them *feel*. So with a crowd of howling people. It is just a question of *contagious temper*—one has caught it from another, and so it goes on.

These things then are warnings. But, happily, they are like soap bubbles, and though some of them keep up a long while, the bright colours, after a time, weaken out, and there is nothing left but a very small quantity of dirty soap-water.

Take another case. There has been a good deal of what is called "Revivalism" going on through

* The so-called Tichborne Claimant.

the country lately.* There have been large gatherings, and people in all ranks of society have been to hear these men preach and sing. The *Princess* went to hear them. Oh! now that *must* be the Gospel if a *princess* has been! So *feelings* are now in fashion. I had no feeling of curiosity about it. I did not want to be "revived" after that fashion. I did not go; because even a man's *presence* seems to give sanction to doctrines and opinions which he has long ago given up. Some of you went. And you were told that a child of hell and wrath could, in a minute, "find Jesus." Find Jesus? Are you a man of any intelligence? And can you believe that a man can "find Jesus" in a minute? What do you *mean* by finding Jesus? Finding Jesus means to have heard who Christ was, to have examined his claims, to know what he taught and why he taught, and then *truly to follow him*. And remember what following him costs. If any man take not up his cross *daily*, and follow him, he is none of his. No man passes from death unto life by a stroke of magic. I don't believe in any magic-mongering whatsoever. But if one thing is more probable than another, I

* The meetings of Messrs. Moody and Sankey.

think there is much more likelihood of God's letting a little water save a poor little child's soul, than that a profligate man should in a moment "find Jesus." Yet multitudes go to hear these doctrines taught.

Then there is that horrible doctrine of "The Blood"—that the Father cannot forgive us, till He has had sacrifice for sin; and so His Son must bleed and die before He can love us. This is the doctrine they teach. They bring these packed assemblies into a state of semi-spiritualism, and then they sing their vile songs:—

"There is a Fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

Every line of that is a lie, rightly interpreted. There is *no* "Fountain filled with blood" in the sense that they imply; and it is *not* true that sinners dipped therein "lose all their guilty stains." It is a question of feeling. It would have been creditable to the Greek; but to hear a man nowadays encouraging ignorant people to think that by being "dipped in blood" they can be cleansed from sin is abominable. Rather the Font for me. Rather believe that a little water put upon the

sweet babe's face did, in a moment, change it from a child of wrath to a child of love, than suffer any feelings of mine to run after *that* sort of thing. If you believe that children come into this world damned, and that, by some holy magic, some sweet, loving superstition, your child can be saved—well well, there is no harm. But to go to hear *that* horrible doctrine—that God could not forgive man, till He had a pledge and a sacrifice—to run after *that*!

Some of you went from curiosity, no doubt. Some of you went from a better motive. Though you did not quite approve of their method, still you thought it was "calculated to do good." How *can* it do good, when it is based entirely upon feeling, without any argument or sense? Yet, there they are, from high to low, running after these things. It almost makes a man despair of his nation; it tempts him to give up the whole thing, and let the people go back to paganism or to Jewry again. There is so much of bargain, and parchment, and business about it. They tell you that the blood of Jesus answered to the blood of goats. And so the beautiful death of Christ is all lost, its awful meaning, its perpetual lesson, its baptismal spirit all lost; and, instead of that, they

give us this dye-work, this "Fountain filled with blood," where sinners "lose all their guilty stains."

Would you teach that to your children—that *that* is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the doctrine that the apostles and the Jews *could not understand*, and so dyed it in blood like poor Joseph's coat—*physical* blood. Let this show you how *feeling* regulates things.

I passed by the place of meeting one day, and I was a close observer. I saw them come out—these righteous people—these ninety and nine just ones of Birmingham. What had they been for? It was pretty evident that they had been to have their *feelings* gratified—to hear the good old rumble once again—to hear the old words played to a new tune, and to hear comparative contempt poured upon those who did not welcome this new method. What is to be done with them? Here are sixteen thousand or thirty thousand people, and they want "reviving!" We want our judgment made *cooler*. We want more *thought* brought to bear upon these things. We want the Gospel to be interpreted by common sense, instead of made into literalness. But this bargaining for salvation dethrones God, and degrades the divine love.

When you have done sneering at baptismal re-

generation, then you and I will have an argument about instantaneous conversion. If I must choose, give me the white-robed priest, the smiling babe, and the sweet, fresh water, the three Holy Names, and the sign of the cross ; rather than noise, and blood, and bargaining—God unable to love us until He had received something for it, notwithstanding that your own Bible tells you, “God *so* loved us, that, while we were yet sinners, He *gave* His Son to *die* for us.” And *I* say “*to die*” for us. But I interpret by the spirit. I don’t mean “to die” as some *beast* died at the Jewish ceremonies, as *penalty* or *punishment* for sin. Are these things true to you, my brother? To me they are the clouds of old Jewry, the shadows of paganism, that are doomed to pass away. Instead of lifting up the light of God’s *love*, they tell you that God condemns men to endless punishment. And there were some of *you* there, helping to sing those songs (accompanied by the harmonium) about the multitude being damned for ever, and a handful of people “saved,” and about “finding Jesus” in a minute. God forgive you! When the cloud shall roll away again, and the bright light break out once more, then shall man learn the spiritual doctrine that he must die *with* Christ, in order to be

saved *by* Christ. He that would save his poor soul by Christ's death, cannot know the true spiritual meaning of those words:—"He that would *save* his life shall *lose* it, and he that will *lose* his life for my sake, shall *find* it." Christ will "save" those who *lose* with him, those who *suffer* with him, those who *carry the cross* with him, and *die* with him. Alas! alas for some of you! But *think* of these things. I have no anger about it, whatsoever. But a man should learn to keep a check upon his feelings, and not suffer himself to run with the crowd.

These people are like those vulgar painters who paint Christ all streaming in blood. They teach this notion of God, that He cannot forgive a man, till the blood of Christ is

"Sprinkled o'er the flaming throne."

There's a picture! God's throne all aflame, and Christ's blood sprinkled upon it. And some of *you* went to hear and to join in the singing of these vile songs (accompanied by the harmonium)! Ugh! so it goes, and will do until men learn to check their feelings by their judgment. If you are curious, be content to *remain* curious, rather than take any part in these things, rather than go with

the crowd, and be intolerant, and ask for fire, and be dogmatic, and get angry, and judge things, not by reason but by feeling. It becomes necessary to disturb you at times ; to stir the pool, and spoil its gentleness ; to doubt this, and question that, in order that, if possible, you may hear Christ say, "Rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." "*Who* are my mother, and brethren, and sisters ?" said Christ : "They that hear the word of God, and keep it." This unreasoning rush of feeling was always quietly put back by him, so that, instead of being carried away by impulse, we might become well-instructed, and be guided by judgment and reason.

*MARY'S PASSIONATE LOVE
ACCEPTED.*



Morning, November 12th, 1876.

“Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.”—
JOHN xii. 7, 8.

THERE are, in Bible history, as there are in life, stories of quiet times, when the soul and its joys have a season to themselves. There is that little supper they made for Jesus at Bethany. The whole familiar narrative is very charming. “There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.” Christ and the crowd have parted from one another, every man has gone to his own house, and Christ has retired to this quiet little home at Bethany. The inmates sat down in a homely

fashion to supper. Martha served, as usual. Dear heart! that was her way of expressing love. It is not the highest form of love, but it is nevertheless gracious—provided there be no “cumbering.” Now, you may be “much serving” without being “cumbered,” as you may be dressed without being cumbered. When those who serve us *keep on* with a series of questions about our wants, their serving is cumbrous, and instead of making the feast the employment of an intelligent being, they leave us worse off than the lower creatures. For, when the rack of the horse is filled with hay, he who gave it generally retires, and the poor beast has peace. “Take no thought for the morrow,” that is, such thought as will cumber you. What the wise man seeks after is this—that he shall feel all things *deeply*, but never feel them *unduly*; that nothing shall *cumber* him.

Mary was quiet, receptive of the Master's words, and even neglectful of the house duty for a little. There are things that may wait when the Lord comes by! Some people, even if visited by a saint, are off to the kitchen; for they think the saint's appetite is of more consequence than his wisdom. They are “cumbered” to their losing.

Well, they made him that little supper, and after

supper comes that beautiful and touching story of Mary and the ointment. You remember how I have spoken to you of the rejections of Christ, of how he sometimes put aside passion and enthusiasm—how men and women brought to him what looked like lovely flowers, and he asked for sterner things. When that enthusiastic woman cried out, "Blessed be the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!" the cold hand of seeming hardness was placed upon her passionate mouth. "Rather," said Christ, "blessed are they that do the will of God." So that woman, with her fine, womanly exclamation, was bidden to stand aside. And when men brought him a crown, and would have made him king, he turned his back upon it, and went away into the mountain alone. And when the young man came running, and fell down and worshipped him, Christ put a cold touchstone to him: "Go," he said, "sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and then come and follow me;" and that young man "went away sorrowful," his glorious bouquet of passion put aside.

I invited you to read all the passages in which Christ put enthusiasm aside, chilled, and damped. And then I showed you the principle that ran

through it all, that it was all sudden emotion and thoughtless impulse which Christ put aside. He knew what the shouts of a mob meant if things pleased them, and he knew what they were worth if things did not please them. They would shout as loud in either case, but with a different intention. The same mouth that grows round with rapture will often grow crooked with hate, and they who say "Hosanna!" will by-and-by cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

It was flowers *without roots* that Christ put aside—flowers that were like the seed sown by the wayside. For what happens? The sun is warm, and the rain comes, and up comes the seed. Beautiful! Yes; but where there is no depth of earth there can be no root, and where there is no root there can be no fulness of foliage, and where there is no fulness of foliage there can be no ripeness of fruit. So in human life—wheresoever the *root* is not deep, the flower will wither away. Therefore Christ put sudden enthusiasms aside.

But now, see what an altered picture! Can you conceive that you are listening to the same man? Except you understand human nature, you will say, "Is this Christ, who was so often ready with an icicle when men and women poured forth their

souls?" Listen again to this sweet story. It is as if one had passed from arctic cold to tropic heat. "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." There is the passion, and there is the sign of it. The house was filled with the odour of the ointment, and Christ's soul was filled with the odour of that woman's love. Who is there to supply ice now? Not Christ? No; but Judas, the proper person. Judas puts his covetous hand down upon this deed of beauty. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" so the thief said. But what said Jesus, he who once chilled the woman, who sent the young man away sorrowful, who declined the crown, forsook the mob, and chose the mountain desert? What said this apparently cold Lord? "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this!" Christ is changed now. This passion-flower he gathers, this flower of Mary's love he puts for ever into the garland of God. Wheresoever the Gospel is told, this sweet deed is to be remembered.

You can imagine the picture. That woman has been *growing* in love. At first, what joy it was to

her to sit at the Master's feet and listen to his words! Then, when her brother came back, her joy and gratitude were overwhelming. She had good grounds for her love; and at last, with a fine impulse, she pours out her best and choicest gift at the feet of her Lord. I see her do it! The supper is ended—the woman's soul is overflowing with love, and joy, and gratitude—she goes to her own room, there she has an alabaster-pot filled with spikenard. She breaks the box, or rather the seal—she knew the ointment was precious. How many years, perhaps, it had been kept there, the treasured gift of an earlier day, too precious to be often used! Poor soul! her house contained, perhaps, but little treasure! What could she do? She brake the box, and brought down this most precious possession; and over the holy feet she poured it—the feet of the Lord whom she loved. She kissed his blessed feet; and her hair, with that she wiped them. And the Lord rejected her not, because her love, which had been contemplative and slow-growing, had now lawfully arrived at the expression of rapture.

The love of this woman was holy. She had grown at his feet, and learned by his teaching. Now she could sit there no longer—the day of her

contemplative love is over, and she must pour out her most costly gift. Now, to know what to give to any one, and how to give it, is one of the last achievements of good manners, one of the most delicate of tasks ; and, when successfully done, is one of the most gracious acts that can be performed. It is also one of the greatest victories of the soul to properly receive a gift. Christ does not put by her gift. It is Judas Iscariot who interferes now ; and, with his beggarly economics, brings in the dirty scales of this world. Arithmetic is always hateful, when it brings in the scales in matters where the heart is concerned. "How many times shall I forgive my brother?" asked Peter, "until seven times?" "Yea, until seventy times seven," said Christ, treating his arithmetic with scorn. So this thief said something that *sounded* well, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" *Doesn't* it sound well, now? It seems like a good utilitarian thought : and there is a good deal in *that*, you know. "*Three hundred pence!* and it *might have been given to the hospital!*" We are apt to forget the thief in the economist, and think that he really did believe it a waste.

And some of *you* might have thought it a true

pity. But not so thought Christ. "Let her alone," he said; "she hath done well." Why had she done well? *Because her whole soul was in it*; and where the whole soul is in anything, arithmetic has naught whatever to do with it. Whoso stops to calculate when the soul is passionate is the killer of passion. He who, before he lets a beautiful expression come out, *weighs* it, has spoiled it already. When a little child offers its caresses to some cold-blooded woman, "There, there, there," she says, "you have kissed me once, that'll do." So the little mouth is put back, and the little heart is chilled, and the little soul is wounded. "That'll do." Yes; it will do for *her*, for a second kiss wasted upon *that* icicle would chill the mouth that gave it, and freeze the heart from which it came.

The Lord accepted this gift of Mary's because it came *last*. She had been contemplative, had heard his word, had sat at his feet, and last, not first, came the spikenard, the outpoured ointment, the anointed feet wiped with the hair of her head. Because this passion-flower was rooted right down in the heart and conscience and intellect of the woman, the Lord Jesus rebuked Judas, and said, "Let her alone; what do *you* understand of her emotion and passion, her holy depth of love?" It

was emotion without depth, flowers without roots, kisses where no love is, attentions without sympathy, the door thrown open when the wishes would shut it, *words* of welcome accorded you when no music is heard in your footstep till you are going away—*these* were the things that Christ put aside. Of all things in the house, these are some of the saddest—greetings where no friendship is, honeyed words which *everybody* gets, the same welcome for *every* fool, *everybody's* hand shaken alike. These things are hateful. But where the fair water-lily, rising from the very bottom of the pool, deep-rooted, slow-climbing, at last reaches the light and bursts forth into glory—Christ loves the flowers. Instead of rejecting Mary, he said, "Let her alone."

"Ah, yes; but *three hundred pence* worth of emotion! Might not this ointment have been sold, and given to the poor?" The chances are that they who give to beggars do it without much heart interest in the matter. But to kiss those sacred feet, what were three hundred pence? *Pounds* would have been little. But what have pence or pounds to do with questions like these? The Lord says, "Let her alone." See, too, with what large-hearted, passionate grace he makes ex-

cuses for the enthusiasm of the woman. What chivalry, what justification of the festal things of life there is here! I know nothing like it. Listen to the Master, this first of gentlemen, "She hath done it for my burial—I am going to die. She will have no more chance of sitting at my feet, except at Calvary; there will be no more chance for her to kiss them until the nails be in them. This is her last office—these are flowers thrown upon my grave. At my *burying*, Judas, it would be graceful and becoming." So, with this sweetness and tenderness of love, he says, "Let her alone. I am a dying man. Her love hath outrun death, and here, after supper, she is doing what must be done after my death at Calvary; she is doing it for my burial."

So the Lord puts aside the restraints which the cold icebergs of life would put upon us. We have all read of the men who have come home from their expedition to discover the North Pole. *I* know men and women that have discovered the pole, and been at seventy-four degrees below the freezing point all their lives; men who kill all the joys of life, and apply to them the miserable foot-rule of their own beggarly shop. But the Lord sets all that aside. "Ointment? Surely, at my

burial. And let Joseph of Arimathea bring his spices, for they are right."

So, it seems to me, the Lord justifies the flowers we put upon the grave of the dead. Where there is much *depth of earth*, he justifies not only passionate emotion, but the outward and visible signs of it. So bring forth the spikenard, lay the wreath and the flower upon the grave. "She hath done it unto my burial."

Thus now, you will understand why I count that passage in the Gospel so sweet. Look at Mary—her great passionate heart seizes at once the most costly thing she possesses—her love laid hold upon it by instinct ; she broke the seal with rapture, and poured it out with delight, and the house was filled with the odour of it. And the Lord *loved* her. Oh ! rooted deep in earth, he let this great passion-flower blow. All expressions of love that did not come from real love, from the conscience, and from the conviction of the intellect, Christ puts aside. Judas, being a bagman, looked upon this act of the woman as useless and stupid ; but the Lord justified her, knowing that where the love is deep, it is right to let the gift be full.

Now then, if to receive the reed, and to treat the sceptre with scorn ; to gather the group which

Christ beckoned to come to him, and to put back the mob and the crown ; if *this* be not the religion of Jesus Christ, then there is no God to be known, and loved, and feared. If to gather the lame, the blind, the halt, the miserable, and the deep souls and true, and to reject the hypocrite, the proud, the scornful, the Pharisee, the babbler, and they who talk first and think afterwards—if *this* be not the religion of Jesus Christ—if this cannot live by its conformity to what is best in every man—then let it pass away. But the true religion of Jesus Christ has great depth of earth ; it is rooted deep in the human heart, and rises high to God. Rooted in the eternal things that never change, it lifts its eternal head to the changeless God.

Pondering then upon these things, I read again that lovely passage, of the woman who, having finished her contemplation, breaks out at last into rapture, and pours forth the precious ointment ; and my heart, like her house, is filled with the odour of her spikenard. And I do see, in vision, that the last end to which a man may hope to come is this—that, having followed Mary in her contemplation, he shall come at length to know her rapture and passion ; and, though hesitating, at last put out his cold fingers, as Thomas did, to feel

the wounds. For in Thomas there was much depth of earth, and at last, when his doubting hand had felt the very print of the nails, the odour burst forth. Like that aloe which takes a hundred years to bloom, the odour of Thomas's passion breaks out at last. "Oh!" said he, "my Lord and my God!" May we all so know God, so know the will of God, and so do it, that however dull by nature or slow of culture, of us it may be said, "They had great depth of earth." Thus, when the flower does come, it shall be a flower of Paradise, a very flower of God.

*CHRISTIANITY A RELIGION OF
STRONG AFFECTIONS.*

*Morning, Nov. 19th, 1876.**

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”—LUKE xiv. 26.

“Then said Jesus, Let her alone : against the day of my burying hath she kept this.”—JOHN xii. 7.

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.”—JOHN xiii. 23.

WE gather these passages together because it is only by gathering and placing that something like harmony can be deduced. Perhaps the most pestering thing that ignorance has ever done for the Scriptures, is the picking out of solitary passages, and causing them to mean something entirely

* This is the last sermon which Mr. Dawson preached. He died on Nov. 30th, 1876.

different from what was intended. Especially in the middle ages did men try to make the religion of Jesus Christ fatal to love, and an upholder of asceticism. Though the Cross of Christ touched higher than the wretched sacrifices of the Jews, yet, *because* higher in quality, it was all the more deadly and disgusting in its nature. For though men once passed their children through the fire as a sacrifice for sin, it was worse when the Cross of Calvary came to be explained in the same sense. And though the offering of rams and lambs was a low view of how to please God, yet the cutting off of human affections, and the steeling of the heart against all the sweet sanctities of the house-life—which has been taught in the name of the Christian Religion—has been a more deadly mistake.

I have been calling your attention the last few weeks to the rejections of Christ. I gathered together certain cases of rapture and passion which the Lord Jesus quietly put aside. Last Sunday, by way of contrast, we looked at one of the loveliest flowers of all the Gospels—that supper they made for Jesus at Bethany, where Mary, full of rapture and passion, goes hastily away to her stores, and thence brings out the alabaster-box, breaks the seal, and pours the precious ointment

upon his feet, and wipes the holy feet with her hair. Therefore the coldness comes not from Christ at that time, but from the proper person, Judas Iscariot. Jesus, with a fine chivalry, began to make admirable excuses for her. He is near his death, and he instinctively knows it, so he says, "What could she do if I were dead? Let her alone : she hath done it for my burial."

Now, *why* put the one woman's words away—the woman who exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee"—and receive *this* woman's raptures and her ointment? Simply because, in the one case, the words came first and the feelings afterwards, if at all, but in the other case, the words came *last*. Therefore, you see, all mere hand-shaking and kisses, all greetings where no love is, all such rootless flowers as these, the Lord put aside. But *Mary's* passion-flower, so slowly growing, at last brings out the confession—"Let her alone : unto my burying hath she kept this." This is the real history of life, and a wise man is very impatient with all flowers that have not much depth of earth. The Lord tried to teach this doctrine—that the convinced intellect and the touched conscience should precede rapture, enthusiasm, and passion. We have to look at the same thing again,

when Christ said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." It is strange that men have been so stupid as to suppose that Christ literally *meant* what was said. To show their bungling, they seem also to forget that a thing may be true at one time and not at another. If you pay attention, you will see that this was a season of great storm, and the Lord is fortifying them against the time when their choice must be made—"Either the faith as you have learned it of me, or Paganism! *Then*, unless you hate father and mother, or at least behave to them *as if* you hated them, you are none of mine." Therefore, when any bigot or ascetic chooses to use these words as though Christ put a cold hand upon human affection, he is utterly and entirely wrong. The same discourse struck another recorder, and he gives it thus—"If any man love father or mother *more than* me, he is not worthy of me." Both have the same meaning, only the one is the expression of stronger feeling. Thus, in one form we have it—"If, compared with me, ye do not act towards them as if ye hated them, ye are none of mine." Explanation:—"If ye love them more than me, or act towards them as though ye

loved them more than me, ye are none of mine." So they explain one another.

Now take another sweet flower out of the Gospels—for we are just now engaged in those religious subjects which the sweet winter worship of the hearth and of the house cause us to look at. "Now, there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." We English are of a colder outward nature, we love not outward signs, and it is not our custom to lean upon the bosom of a man. But what a justification we find here for the tenderest friendship and the deepest love; and, more than that, for demonstration and outward sign. For, just as Christ justified that seeming waste of the ointment, and so allowed of funeral rites—which seems to show that certain outward rites, and even a certain *decoration* of outward rites, must be right—so in this passage you see that the Lord has deep feelings of friendship and love. He allows them, and responds to them: for John's head had not been where it was had not Christ's heart thoroughly *loved* John. We hear it again and again—it is John's title of glory: "The disciple whom Jesus loved."

Yet there have been people who have treated affection as though it were contrary to the faith, and

who have cramped the intellect, that other great thing belonging to the human soul. The true largeness of the human mind, and the true affections of man's heart have been repressed and condemned. Even by philosophers, great strength of affection, tenderness of feeling, fulness of passion, largeness of rapture, and splendour of enthusiasm, have been looked upon as a weakness rather than a strength, as a shame rather than a glory. You and I know men who think that lowness of temperature and nearness to the North Pole are a sign of *respectability*. Now, this their *misfortune* we might lament, this their *deficiency* we might pardon ; but the cold-hearted and cold-blooded oft give themselves airs, which comes of their imbecility, and talk of their "steadfastness," and say, "You don't find much change in *me*." No, you cannot do it, for frequent change shows large resource, and immobility is not a sign of life, but rather of the want of it. Largeness of affection and depth of love are not signs of feebleness, nor are they for a moment inconsistent with strength of will and strength of intellect. If any of you should have a lingering notion that a strong intellect is incompatible with strong affection, I would have you look on that picture of Christ with John leaning upon his bosom.

I know that what are called strong-minded men are usually those who are feeble in affection, and a "strong-minded woman" is often a name for a woman who has borrowed a few of the harshnesses of man, and substituted them for the grace and charm of womanhood—fulness of affection, largeness of rapture, and splendour of enthusiasm. But when you meet with men who would be ashamed to do as John did—lean upon his friend's bosom ; or with a Judas, who brings his beggarly economics into the midst of rapture—when you meet with these cold repellers of enthusiasm, asserting that these large affections and great depths of sorrow and of joy are inconsistent with Christianity—there is the great book of history ; tell them to go to it. There is the story of Christ in his privacy with his loved disciple ; tell them to abide by it. There is Christ—his will was strong, for it took him to Calvary—there is Christ, so strong and far-gazing, who saw the day when Jerusalem's temples should all drop away to dust and nothingness—and yet listen to him : "Let her alone : unto my burying hath she done this. Kiss my feet ; pour out the ointment ; kiss me ; kiss me." "Lean, John, lean upon my bosom ; kiss me ; love me, for I love thee." That

were enough ; but the book of history is open, and if we look at it carefully, we shall find that strong affections *are* consistent with strong will and intellect.

More than that, there can be no glorious development of humanity where the passions are weak. You may have excellent people—you may have people who are even counted worthy of a demonstration or a statue ; but no great, world-moving man, who draws all men to him, ever was or can be, except there be strong affections as well as a strong will and a strong intellect. Who are the mighty masters of the earth ? Take King David, a strong, big-headed, big-hearted, passionate man—and he *was* a sinner !—and yet, what a man he was ! “ Out of the depths I cry unto thee, my God ! ” one day ; and another day we find him dancing and leaping before his God. When his little child is dying, he is broken-hearted ; and when he has committed some great sin, we find him with his head bowed in the dust. So high, so deep was this man, that his psalms have been the heart’s text-book ever since he wrote them. To them men turn in every time of sorrow, when they want another to give them words ; to them they turn in every time of joy, when they want another

to express their feelings. Whether he fought or sung, whatsoever this daring old Hebrew did, he did it with his might. He was a strong-willed man, and he knew strong affections, but he was a great sinner.

Then if you take Paul, he *had* an intellect ! none have beaten it. There are passages in his Epistles that, for power of thought, are not to be excelled. He had a strong brain ; he was a strong-willed, inflexible man. And yet there is one little letter, which you know well, that he wrote to Philemon, where he says, "I, Paul, the aged, beseech thee, for *love's* sake, for my son Onesimus, that thou wouldst receive him as myself. And if he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put it down to me ; I'll pay, I'll pay." And then again we hear him cry, "O, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He was a man who could weep with those that wept, and rejoice with those that did rejoice. Take away Paul's *heart*, and you leave Paul's brain and will ; but he had not formed the course of men's lives as he has done, had it not been for his large-heartedness.

And of all giants of the middle ages, there is that great Luther. *That* man had a will, I think !

He had will enough to take a large part of England away from allegiance to the Pope. He had intellect enough to do all this ; and yet what a *lover* he was !—gentle, womanly, enthusiastic, passionate, rapturous. Hear that grand, stout-hearted man proclaim, “Here stand I ; I can do no other than I have done, so help me God !” He was the greatest, grandest fighting man, and a strong-willed man. And yet, see him writing that letter to little Hans at home ; see him as he stood by Margaret’s grave, and repeated, “I believe in the resurrection, and the life eternal.” And see him go home after that ; and watch the wrinkle that got into that brow on that sad day, and *never* got out of it. A strong man and a scholar, yet he was lover and playfellow too. His house is one of the most charming that history ever opened the doors of for man to enter. There sounded the psalm, and now the song. There the children used to gather, and he played with them. Now you see him in his garden among the violets, on his knees, with his nose buried in the flower-bed, in order that, without plucking the sweet flowers, he might drink in the odour which seemed to come from the very hills of heaven. What a lover he was ! A great, big, strong, rejoicing man !

But you cannot have a great fire without sparks. If there are no sparks, you may be sure there is but a very small fire inside. And yet, one of the things we are constantly hearing is, "You should not use strong language." Then don't, my friend ; *you* shouldn't ; but some men should. There can be no fire without now and then great sparks. And therefore, in Luther, I admit that there *are* fiery outbursts. Good. But his life was almost perfect, so gentle it was. Watch the man, and you will find him a *supreme* man, because he was strong-willed and stout-hearted, yet gentle-hearted, enthusiastic, passionate, and rapturous.

Now set that mighty man by the side of that Frenchman, Calvin. What a mind Calvin had ! Few men have had clearer minds or finer brains than Calvin's, with all the clear-sightedness of his nation. But who *loves* him ? How few people have tried to ! I respect the man as a great interpreter of Scripture ; but he is *cold* ; he is lacking in *affection*. Did any John ever lie upon *Calvin's* bosom ? No, and none ever wanted to lie upon an iceberg. Men *have* made pillows of snow-drifts ; but it has been in cases of *necessity*. Read his letter to his brother, asking him to look him out a wife. He says, "She must be obedient, and willing

to nurse me in my frequent infirmities." There was no *depth* there, you see ; no *fire*.

Now, these two men are, in *will*, equally strong ; but when it comes to the *heart*, then the one drops away, and a chilliness, a coldness that amounts almost to repulsiveness, is the result.

Then take Cromwell. There is great strength of will there, great power of intellect ; and yet that grand Puritan, that masterly soldier, that born king, that wonderful statesman—than whom this country has known no greater—what do we find in him ? His married life was one of touching beauty. And when his daughter died, he greatly felt her loss. A gentle-hearted and tender man ; he, too, had his hours of darkness, and almost despair.

Then look at John Milton. Take him at his prime. No doubt he was the most cultivated man in all Europe. His beauty was remarkable. Men almost thought that Apollo had been born again, and that the old days had come back. Intellect he had, and will he had ; his imagination—who has had anything like it ? He peopled space with angels and devils ; called up the councils of God, and showed men the horrors of hell in figures that will live for ever. His will and intellect were

strong. He made the larger part of English theology. Luther added very little to human belief; but as to Milton, a very large part of what you believe, you never got out of the Bible at all, it comes from Milton. And yet, one always feels that in that great man there was something wanting. There is a hard fibre running through him. I would not wish to lie upon *his* bosom. No man ever did.

His married life was a disaster. His daughters he treated with chilliness, at least. There is neither the fine emotional love of a father, nor the passionate love of a lover. We find his young wife weeping upstairs before the honeymoon has run out; and he sitting downstairs, bringing his Latin to bear upon the question of how he should get rid of her by divorce. He was a solitary man, belonging to no church, herding with no denomination, worshipping God always by himself. He was visited by few. Foreigners came sometimes to see the Englishman whose Latin had shaken the states; but that was all. There is an isolation and severity about him that almost freezes you. Now, this mighty man owes this chilling effect to the comparative feebleness of his affections. Give him Luther's *heart*, and a greater than Luther had

been there. But there he is : a strong-willed man, but comparatively feeble in his affections.

We might multiply cases out of history ; but enough has been said to show you that there has been *no* great man, that has ever *touched men's hearts*, who was not a strong and passionate *lover*. And as Christ said of a certain woman, "She loved much, therefore shall she be forgiven much ;" so men are not hard to the sins of those that love, as they are to the sins of those that are cold.

Christ, therefore, instead of putting down human affections with a chill hand, uses them, ennobles them, and endeavours to lift them all into the service of God.

Nothing should ever persuade you to believe in the wretched rubbish which women are continually being told, "that they must be careful not to love the creature more than the Creator." When some sweet woman, hanging over her little babe and seeing God in its little eyes, is warned "not to make an idol of the child," be you sure that such talk is nothing but moonshine. Nobody will come *now* and say, "Christ or your child !" (for the meeting-point of such love *is* in Christ). "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." You can realize this for your-

selves. What do you *do*, now, when you love God? "Well, I have a feeling of——" Yes, yes; but what do you *do*? "Oh! I pray." Do you? And do you think God *wants* you to pray very frequently? Christ says, No. Divine service is human service, rendered out of love to God; and that while God is invisible (as He *must* be), men at least are visible, and in serving them we render the highest and truest service to God.

There is no fear, then, that a mother can love her child too much. But if that woman's lot had been cast in an earlier time, when the once unknown God was now made known, *then* if the choice had been put to her, "Thy little babe, or thy new-found God?" those words also might have been put to her: "Whosoever hateth not *babe*, or husband, or father, or mother, or brethren, or sisters, is none of mine." But, nowadays, there is no fear of that. There are far more women who neglect the babe and the God for an endless round of vanity, than women who err from putting too much heart and life and love into their family affairs.

Now, then, when you hear pedantic bigots speaking of the Christian Religion as a cold thing which is meant to put down enthusiasm; when

you hear them preaching against a certain degree of beauty and grace in life, tell them that Christianity is the religion of a strong will, a strong mind, and a deep and tender heart. And if you want to render it effectual, you have but to read of that loving sacrifice of the woman's, and point to the ointment ; and point to John's head leaning on Christ's bosom, because Christ's heart *loved* John ; and this will indicate the cultivation of strong human affections, and great depth of human passion, as being the true ways of serving God.

If you want a sweet picture of what church life should be, you may see it in some families:—There sits the father, and there is the mother, with her sweet smile, though perhaps she has got a few little Martha cares to attend to ; and there, upon the hearth, is the little round, rolling babe. There sits the boy at his book, and the girl at hers ; and over the whole is a deep peace, a deep sense of joy in the true service of God. All are bound together by an unspoken, but deep-felt affection ; and the sweet and holy incense is ever going up to God, of a quiet, grateful self-denial, each living for the others' good.

THE NEED OF REST.



Morning, July 16th, 1876.

“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made ; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.”—GENESIS ii. 2.

I NEED not trouble you with any dissertation on the desire which is now felt to cease to find any true history of the world in the ordinary interpretation of these things. To the minds of all intelligent people (except the clergy), to those who study the newer revelations of God, the attempt to find the true history of the world in the Book of Genesis has long ago departed. We read a large part of these opening chapters as mere allegory, or as the statement of how the mind of him who wrote that book conceived these things to have been done. You and I have long renounced any attempt to build into one wall the history of those

old kings and their foolishnesses, the Psalms of David, the Prophets' commandments, the righteousness and spiritual religion of Jesus Christ, in such fashion as that if one brick were to be withdrawn ruin must come upon the whole. For we have long struck past the belief that any religious belief whatsoever, except it bring with it an increase of the Spirit of God, or the rest of the Spirit, is of any value to any one. Therefore, when we read this beautiful saying, "God rested from His labours," we read it with the touching love of a child, rather than as men studying a tenet of theology. We smile with equal kindness upon one who is angry it should be said "God rested," as we do upon one who accepts it as a literal fact. I really do not know which is the more foolish of the two—he who thinks what is said of God to be absolutely true of God, or he who, under the affectation of spiritualism, smiles at those who believe in the mere letter of the word. But this I do know, that whilst our mind says that "God is a Spirit," nevertheless, we require that God should be embodied and spoken of as a man ; and, if He is pictured at all, He must be pictured as a man.

Remember, this resting of God from His labours does not mean that He rested from weariness.

There is nothing more lovely than this conception of the Great Artist resting from His labours, drawing back from His work to give it a last touch; drawing duly apart from it, that its full beauty may reveal itself to Him. One likes to read of the triumphant way in which some artists view the work into which they have put their earnest soul. For no one should attempt to be an artist who has not much soul. We have painters and daubers in plenty; but where the artist puts his soul into his work, he always has this reward—it stirs the souls of those who behold it, and there comes his legitimate triumph. One mighty artist, when he had finished his work, said to the marble, “Now speak!” Therefore, this writer, sublimely painting God, portrays Him as reviewing His creations—the Great Artist of the universe drawing back, looking at His work, and being pleased with it. In it He beheld Himself, saw His own soul, and said that it was good. There is no poet who has ever written one word like that, since. No man has ever praised his own work as it is here said that God Himself praised His. The work was so admirably designed, so true, so effectually carried out, that God said of it, “It is good.” And that chorus of praise can never cease, when God

beholds His works and finds them fair! The "rest" of God, then, is the rest of the spirit when work is done, when it has poured itself forth, and finds its own image and likeness reflected in the work.

But we pass on from this, to note with joy how amazingly these old Hebrew writers enjoyed rest, and to find how constantly these great men rested. Read that old story where the command was given that the land was to rest.⁴ One might have thought that by good husbandry something might be made of it. But no, *there* is the poetic beauty of it, the land was actually to rest! For seven years the field was to have a quiet time, which brought not only rest, but restoration. These chapters may read strangely to us, but the Spirit shall one day blow upon them; and the millennium days will be the days when these dry bones shall once more revive. See how Moses enjoined rest upon man and beast. And with what touching parenthesis he puts in, "Thy man-servant and thy maid-servant, let them rest too." It is always "rest," rest for all. And, further on, when we come to more spiritual regions, we find God spoken of as a "hiding-place," a "strong tower," "a refuge," in whom each soul may rest.

Now we have been wandering over this Hebrew garden, and looking for these few flowers of rest. And it is touching to find how large a part of the beautiful things of life are made so by the rest which comes after struggle. The two divinest expressions to be seen upon the human face are those which come after the deadliest of struggles. I have seen no divineness like that which comes over the face of a young mother when that awful mystery, "Unto us a child is born," has been experienced by her. Having opened unto that little one the gates of life by a struggle which almost terminates in her own death, over her face comes a sweet satisfaction which can be seen nowhere else. Were I an artist, I would take that sweetest of all expressions I have ever beheld—the calm, quiet, divine beauty of her of whom it is said, "A child has been born," and I would write under it, "I will give rest unto you." But remember, that comes after the deadliest of struggles. And, next to that, the most lovely expression is that which may often be seen upon the face of the dead, before decay's effacing fingers have touched it. The ugliness of years is gone; even the wrinkles seem to have departed; all vexation is over; and the sweet spirit, as it winged its way, seems to have left behind it a

touch of that divine peace which it was about to enter. These are the sweetest rests I have ever seen upon human face, these two, the one where Life has come through seeming Death, and the other where Death has come and seemed to rob of Life. These are the two supremest rests, and they have a beauty about them that nothing can equal.

Of all other rests, there is nothing pleasanter than to see labouring people rest. These great hot days seem to be an invitation of the Almighty to us to be quiet, to sit still and to rest. See those working men there, sitting in a row under a wall, taking their midday refreshment. It is a sight of beauty, and he who cannot enter into their joys hath not the divine sense of beauty in him. These things are the sweet employments and glorious possibilities of which Christ took advantage. For Christ took rest after his labours ; and there are few things more lovely even to read than that story of how he "rested by the well." How pleasant to have watched him ! But the moment he begins to teach, all this becomes spiritualized. The Lord Jesus Christ teaches a lesson most precious, when he bids us " Behold the lilies of the field, how they toil not, nor spin, yet your heavenly Father careth for them."

But what do some of you do when the toil of the week is over? If the question were asked, "Whither is he gone?" might it not be said "He has gone home, and taken his books with him." Your uninstructed child, full of sweet romance, how glad he would be to hear that you had come home to rest, and had brought your books with you! And the guileless child might ask, "Will you have my story-book?" Bless the little child, no! That is not what you want. Then what are these books that some of you take home on Sunday? I thought that was your rest-day. Now it comes out that Sunday, being a nice quiet day, is a convenient time for going through your "books," your ledger, your bill-book, and your day-book. Is *that* the sweet rest of God? Was it for *that* the Sabbath, the quiet evening, the encircling home, the little child were given you? Oh! sin against the soul! Oh! shame against God and His mercy! No time for aught that is lofty! no look above the ledger! no soul above the slate! What! the whole life to go in one useless round of slavery? Even the poor mill-horse gets a respite on Sundays; but some of my friends, I find, take none.

But be you sure of this, there are rests *and* rests, and he who forfeits the good-will of sheriffs and

bailiffs, his rest shall be enforced ; it shall be rest of *necessity*, instead of being the sweet rest of choice. And these things are not necessary. "Ah ! but," you say, "you know nothing about it." I do ! I know more than you ; for he who reads but one kind of books knows little. The shaking hand and the wasted strength tell their own tale. Oh, what pictures one might draw of the consequences of this neglect of the day of rest ! From morn to noon, and from noon till night, throughout the week there is this incessant toil, and then on Saturday night the "books" are taken home. Sunday comes, and the little child's spirits are high—a blessing for which a man ought to thank God. (If your children are rather noisy, it is a sign that they are healthy ; if they are much given to silence, it is a sign that they are either sickly or precocious, and that death will have them before long.) But instead of making the Sunday like church bells—a renewal of youth—oh ! I have heard it—"Take those children out of the way ; I cannot bear it." Then it is a pity they were ever born to you. For a man to bring himself to that condition, that he cannot stand the prattle of his own children, is sad indeed. If, on the journey of life, a man is overtaken disastrously, and is

compelled to work early and late, from week's end to week's end, all *that* is pitiable; but when, for the sake of living a little finer, the child's prattle becomes a burden, and the little ones must be carried out of the room, because you have brought your "books" home, and cannot be troubled with children, that is sinful. Ah! read that Scripture account: "On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made." But if you go on as you are doing, there will never be rest for you until sickness puts its calm hand upon you.

Listen again to the words of Christ: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, where thieves do not break through and steal." For there is no outward rest that can be made real rest, until you have a calm heart within. Therefore it was that the Lord Jesus lifted rest into such importance; his cry was always: "Come unto me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

This spiritual rest is what every one of us needs; for we are full of unrests. I have noted to you already the chief unrests of humanity; but there are many others. There are some good people who seem to live but to take care of their houses, for they are always thinking about them and about their furniture, and spending all their care upon them. They are afraid of any vigorous movement in their rooms, for fear it might bring a scratch; or of the sunshine, for fear it should steal a little of the dirt of the dyer's vat out of the things they have surrounded themselves with.

All these petty unrests, and all this strife to be rich, and that greatest unrest of all—the fear of what is coming—Christ tried to put an end to. “Be sure of this,” he says, “God knows your sorrows; He has counted even the hairs of your head; all is ordered by Him; He careth for you; lean, therefore, on God.” The wise farmer knows this, that when he has sown his seed, he had better leave it, and go and do something else. He would be foolish if, having sown his field or planted his orchard, he should wait to see it fructify. Well said that ancient prophet: “Sow thy seed, and *go thy way*: for thou knowest not whether shall

prosper, either this or that." * Let it alone, and the seed will come up.

The fear of death is another great unrest. But why should it be so? Well, as poor Hamlet said, it is "what comes after" that is the fear. But why need a man fear that? Those of you who are bad, there is not much to fear for you; for either God's mercy will end your badness, or He will place you under better conditions; that under better teaching and with better books you may have a nobler chance. And I, when I think of my sins, I love to think of death; when there shall be no more blots, and no more shame and disgrace; when I shall finish the volume of this life, and all my sins will be over. And then I think, too, of the volume that *will* be opened by the Infinite Mercy; of what the divine Master hath prepared for His wandering child, and of the Ragged School to which I shall go. I think of that thief upon the cross, and am glad to find that he too shall have entrance into Paradise; that the long years of eternity will be long enough to repent in, until at last he too shall learn the name of God, and be made worthy to meet his divine

* Eccles. xi. 6.

Master. Therefore, I don't know why a bad man should fear death.

"But," you say, "there is hell." Well, if that is best for you, you need not fear it. Every living soul is in the best place for its eternal welfare. God is good, and great, and wise, and He governs all. Amen, so let it be! If there be a Judgment Seat that I am going to, then I want naught else, until I think of the infinite mercy that I require. Whatsoever God sees fittest for me, I am willing to accept. So I have no fear. The end of sinning is the beginning of smarting, but it is also the beginning of our redeeming. So let *that* unrest be taken out of our souls. If it is better for me to close this mortal life, that through the fire of penance I may pass on to a higher life, then close the book, O God, and let the better day begin. But it seems so hard to close the eyes to this fair world, and we have loved this poor old body so long, that it seems hard to give it to the dust. Yes, but the *spirit* shall go to God.

Christ glorifies all rest by taking unrest out of the soul. But the man who takes home his books of figures on Saturday night, sits down to rest on Sunday with an unquiet heart. He takes these things to his nest of refreshment and repose,

where he should get new life ; and so the great blessing is missed. In vain the house, the home, the Sabbath Jubilee, the rest in the shade, unless the man also will himself beseech that God would take out of his heart ambition, the love of wealth, and all pride and envy. For to kill the wild beasts that roam the desert, and to keep the beasts that roam the heart, is pitiful. And every wild beast has its outward form in man. The tiger lives in man, and the lion lives in him too. And they who read that Scripture aright, they know what the prophet means when he says that the lion shall lie down with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them. When the sweet peace of the spirit shall come, and men shall be redeemed from all these follies, then the "little child," the spirit of rest and peace, shall lead all these strong old passions, and their ferocity shall at last cease.

Therefore, to be a mighty hunter, and yet to keep all these wild beasts within you, is but a little thing to do. To destroy the beasts of the world, and yet to keep all these vile passions within your breasts, is idle. To sit in your chaise, and to have a raging thirst of envy within you because somebody else has got a better one, is idle. The down may be soft, but if the heart be

hard it avails but little. Let you and me be wise enough then above all prayers to pray this : " May the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep my heart and mind." For only as the peace of God comes into our spirits, can these outward rests gain their signification and value. A sleepless night is a sad picture of an unquiet soul. Instead of lying peacefully within the drawn curtains of God, he is like a feverish, irritable child ; and in the morning, instead of rising refreshed and strengthened by repose, there gets up one more utterly sick than laid upon the pillow the night before.

May the infinite forgiveness of God, through His large love, rob you and me of those evil passions which rob us of rest, and may we learn to lie quietly, as they who trust in God ! So may we learn to value the sweet Sabbath rest, the "rest by the well," the rest of friendly intercourse, and the rest that may be ours when we come to the house of God ; and may we so use them, that body and soul may look forward without fear and with a goodly hope, comforting ourselves with those sweet words—"There remaineth a rest for the people of God." May God in His mercy bring you and me near unto that rest, even in the midst of this world and its weariness ! Amen.

GOD A SHADOW AND REFUGE.



Morning, August 20th, 1876.

“For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat.”—ISAIAH xxv. 4.

MAN—frail, feeble, faulty, and in some aspects contemptible ; of the earth, earthy—nevertheless is so wealthy in capacity, as to lay the whole of nature under contribution to supply his wants. From him no creature is safe. For him, the fish of the sea come to the shore, and the birds of the air are brought low. What he cannot hit with his hand, he shoots with his arrow ; and when the range of that is too short, he calls upon science to bring down his prey from afar off. For his vanity and luxury, he destroys the nest of the eagle, and robs the ostrich of its glory, and brings down the elephant.

When this little creature called man has got any

feelings to utter, or passions to express, again he lays all nature under contribution. His vocabulary is scant until he does this. If a man love a woman thoroughly and heartily, she is sun, moon, and stars, all in one. From the passionate love of man for the Saviour arose that Eastern star on the morning of his nativity. All things sweet and fair, man lays under contribution to set forth his love of the Lord.

And when this little creature comes to his noblest attitude, he sees that God may be adequately worshipped as his Fortress and Tower, his Shield and Buckler and Sword ; as a Warrior, a God of Battles, Lord of Hosts ; or as Father and Friend. All things man can think of he presses into his service, to set forth his conception of God, or to manifest his praise. And these expressions vary in their intensity according to varying feelings in men. Whatsoever is found in men, in God is set forth its opposite, or its parallel.

In Eastern lands, where the sun is ever bright, God is looked upon as a Shadow. It were worth while to have had a little experience of a tropical sun to understand this. For to take a year like last year, what one panted for was all sun. We did not want shadow then, but a volcano. This

year we have the heat of the tropics, and the splendour of the orient ; so now we delight ourselves in conceiving of God as the "Shadow of a great rock," as a "Fortress" and "Tower." Now we see the beauty of these words—"Under the shadow of Thy wings have I found refuge." The aspect of nature, and these passionate words (so expressive just now), bring ancient times into freshness.

Nature changes, and our ideas about God change in consequence. A sweet poet says of the sun :—

"He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day." *

But you and I have lived to find his light come before we were ready, and have longed for sunset, if only it might bring a little of the shadow that the weary need. And of course the great preciousness of shadow can only be adequately felt by the wearied, and those who bear the heat and burden of the day. It is very pleasant to see how children are seldom troubled by the heat. Nothing seems to abate their glorious activity. Whilst we are panting and sighing for evening, and long for the sun to go down in the west, they cannot feel the sun too hot, or have too long a day. So with life. In inward weariness, or in outward weariness,

* Hood's Works, vol. i. p. 281, ed. 1863.

how welcome the shadow ! And so this weariness leads us at times to think of God chiefly as a shadow, a coolness, a darkness. But these phrases are very little worth, except one feels them. The greatest mischief the Scriptures have ever done has arisen from the foolishness of those who read them, in endeavouring to feel what is written, when probably they have not depth of feeling enough to understand it. If you do not feel a thing, why should you say it ? God requires of you no affectation. He is more pleased with such feelings as you have, than with an affectation of a depth of feeling impossible to you. In reading the Scriptures—the passionate parts of them, written by men whose souls were steeped in God, and whose words glow with a glory which has moved all nations—there is no need for us, if we cannot feel their power, to affect to feel it. It is when you think of God as a God of sunshine and of joy, that you cannot understand and feel Him to be as a shadow. But when troublous times come, and the weariness of life overpowers you, you understand and feel. These phrases, like stars, come to life only when the sunshine is over ; and only then have these sweet shadows their meaning and their force.

Only the weary care much for the shadow. Some of you remember that passage in the Old Testament : "As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow." * Why "as a *servant*" ? Because his burden is heavy, and his work is great. Those of you who ever did work hard, know what it is to long for the shadow ; for the shadow means evening rest. And there have been servants who have longed for the great shadow of all. For it is possible to be so weary of life as to be like servants, longing for the shadow of death. But for a man to long for it during the heat of life, his case must be deadly. There are days when men should not wish for it ; and there are days when the poor weary servant looks forward to the coolness and quiet of the evening rest.

Now it is only as we feel ourselves weary and weak, that there is any need to use these expressions about God. In some cases they are sweet and precious. When a man knows that he has been doing wrong, he sees not the sunshine, nor the glowing of God's righteous law, but the Father, who, with a mother's pity, will give shadow. For when a child is conscious of having done

* Job vii. 2.

wrong, he goes to the mother's bosom, with hidden face ; there to shut out the light, that he may feel only her heart beat, and not behold the accusing eye, or its tear. So, sinful man, bowed down with shame, hides himself in the bosom of God. Calm and quietness is what he longs for. Poor Adam, filled with shame, showed that shame by hiding himself ; for when God called him, he hid from the Divine presence amongst the trees of the garden. The poet who wrote that story knew the depths of the human soul.

What is wanted is to feel the shadow of that utter pity of God set forth by our Lord Jesus Christ, absolving all those who penitently confess their sins, and flee to Him penitent. As Christ put it—"I would have gathered them under my wings, as a hen gathereth her chickens." And a rare sight it is to see a brood of young chickens under the sheltering wings of the mother. Under those wings they need no mariner's compass, no mathematical rigidity of line ; under those wings they are safe. Those who had looked at life with strong, rejoicing eyes, turned to God, and said, "Under the shadow of Thy wings shall I find refuge." But it is the sad soul, the timid soul, who most needs to take refuge under the shadow of the wings of God.

What are the wings of God? God hath no wings to some, except the wings believed in by the Jews of old—the wings of an eagle, strong and fierce. For in Old Testament history there is a figure of God going to war on the wings of an eagle. That hen can be as bold as a lion, and as fierce as an eagle when her little ones are threatened with danger. But for some of you, who believe God to be cruel, the Lord of hell, and the author, therefore, of that extraordinary justice which makes out punishments on the scale of the judge, instead of on the scale of the wretch being tried ; for those of you who believe that the Everlasting God sits upon a throne before this trembling wretch (who is everlasting too), and dooms him, not to some place or condition through which the purged soul may come at last to the light, but to some eternal bonfire from which there is no escape—I don't know what shadow there can be for refuge. You might as well worship a furnace, and run to it for refuge, as to this burning theology, and expect to get any comfort from it. But when we hear that better doctrine, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him ;" when we hear that the Gospel is preached unto all men, and that all men are called to come home to

God ; when we hear that all men are to be reclaimed and brought into the garden of God, and into His heaven of love ;—then God grows to be a gracious Shadow, soft and cool, and the weary man himself goes to God, as being “patient, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

It is in God's *patience* that man finds most of shadow. The patient God is able to bear with us a long time, and still regards us in love. Most of us having wearied ourselves, not only with working but with fretting, full of impatience flap our foolish wings. When I read of the cruelties that are still done upon the earth ; when I watch this nation, that used once to stir itself in generous deliverance of the poor and in the instruction of the ignorant, now sunk in sloth and lost in wealth ; and scarce a cry against these things is raised, and no audience can be found for these matters, I am ready to cry out, in wrath almost, “Lord, how long ?” Then in vision one thinks of those spirits under the altar, who cry continually, “O Lord, how long ? when wilt thou avenge the blood of Thy saints ?” But by-and-by, looking backward, I perceive that the light of what was then future becomes bright, and I say, “All these things are worked out in God's time ; it is a slow time, but far more exceeding

sure than aught else could be." When I look back, I see that most of the dreams of my youth have come true. I have seen the chief Potentate of the world reduced to be only a priest, thank God. Nations that were torn with fury are now united. Italy has leapt into new life, and Germany has become strong. There are but two other things left now to be accomplished before I can say, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." When I think of these things, I learn to take refuge in God's patience. He knew the end from the beginning. The ways of God seem slow ; but, oh ! they are so sure. Or, as one has said :—

“ Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding
small ;
Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds
He all.” *

So I think of the patience of God, and of how He can wait. His desire for righteousness is stronger than mine ; His passion is deeper than mine. When He can wait, then, O Lord, I will wait Thy time. The longsuffering of the Almighty preaches patience to the feverish ; and He who can preach patience to the feverish, becomes

* Longfellow.

to him as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." How often we hear the remark, "I have no patience with you." Indeed! if that is simply an expression of passion, or if it means that there is any human being who can ever get beyond your desire for his restoration, any sinner who can ever get beyond your loving, I turn to God and His great patience with man. "How many times shall I forgive my brother?" said one to Christ, "until seven times?" "Yea, until seventy times seven," said the forgiving Lord.

Of all tedious things in life, the conquering of one's own faults is the most wearying. Faults which distinguish us as children at school, are seen about us now as men; whatsoever gave us encomium in our youth, clings to us in our old age. And, at times, disgust comes over a man, when he finds that he has not mended this old trick, or that old temptation, but that they still have the old power and cause the old weariness. So one is heavy-laden, for weariness of one's own faults is the dreariest of all. It wears the spirit out more than anything. How one rests then on the forgiveness of sins! How comforting the words of the Lord: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn

of me (to live in simple obedience), and ye shall find my burden to be light." When man needs that, it is as a shadow in the days of fierce burning heat. Just as man thoroughly believes in God ; and just as God is to him thoroughly sweet, and great, and wise, after the fashion of a man ; all the sweet phrases of "shadow," and "fortress," and "protector," come to have meaning and force.

But here, again, perhaps theology has never done the world a greater mischief than by teaching that the love of God is different to the love of man, that justice in the heavenly court is injustice in the earthly, or that things of good report among men are questionable moralities in the heavenly courts. Now, there is no possible conceiving of God's justice, except through the justice of man ; and there can be no knowledge of the love of God, except through the love of man. First set about understanding man then, and you will come to know God. For there are men, who, as soon as we get near to them, we feel a sense of shade and joy, and our burden is loosed. Look round, and see who are the men and women who are like shadows to the weary ; whose patient temper, loving heart, quiet words, wise advice, friendly counsel, strong arm, and clear vision make them

like shadows, or great rocks. What man is to man then, God is to all who put their trust in Him.

And "Strong Tower" is a phrase that is well worth looking at, till you understand it and feel it. Take that line out of Wordsworth. What is that which he calls

"The weary weight of unintelligible things?"

We don't like not to be able to know the truth ; but when the next world becomes a peradventure, and death a certainty ; when the world to come is all a fable, and the old problems press upon a man as to why the good man gets so little good out of this world, and bad men seem to prosper ; what is to be done ? You cannot solve them. The best way is to give them up ; *not for want of thought*, but by an act of sublime faith, saying, "I leave all that to God." And when a man can say that, simply and sweetly, ah ! then the Lord has become to him a Fortress, and a Strong Tower. Who blames a child who aims at things above its mark, and at last gives them up, and says, "I leave all that to father?" O wise babe ! He makes of father a fortress and a tower. And what are you and I but children ?

So I have learnt at last to give many things up. I tried once to take the world to pieces, but I got

headache, and heartache, and burden. So now, when these things come, I say, "They are no affair of mine," and I hand them all over to God. I no longer attempt to mend the clock of the Almighty Maker. Sufficient for me to walk humbly, to love the Lord my God, with all my heart, and soul, and mind ; to love my brother as myself, and to fear nothing but evil. I can leave all the rest to God : He is my Rock and my Fortress. Wonderful refuge that !

Election, predestination, and all that business, I threw them off some time back. Ah ! when Bunyan painted that poor pilgrim whose burden fell off his shoulders, he set forth, not only the burden a man gets rid of when he ceases to do evil, but when he gives up things that are too high for him, and the vexation of things that are too deep. People come to me and say, "I have been having a deep dip in the dark ; I cannot sleep for thinking of it." "Then let the good God take care of it," I say. So he takes refuge in God, and the burden falls off, and the weary man straightens himself after work and lessons, listening to the voice of the Master, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and I will give you rest." The rest of Christ was what?—Forgiveness of sins, the Father-

hood of God, the House of many mansions. These are the things which Christ offered to this weary world, smiling at its vain philosophy; quietly calling men away with those words quietly preached, which if a man do heartily believe, he has indeed found rest. And though the din of these things remain, at last he finds the prophecy fulfilled—"He will keep him in perfect peace, whose soul is stayed on Him." So my soul is stayed on God. All will come right! "He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth" is still watching and waiting.

With this, then, will I be confident. My soul is troubled no more. As to my sins, I give them to God; He has told me what He will do with them—cast them behind His back, with all things dead and done with. As to death, it is in His hands. In my death-chamber I am as much in God's hands as in my life-chamber. Happen to me what will, within the hand of God I am, as all things are. When in sin, I am His; when in the right, I am His; living, I am His; dying, I am His; always God's.

So my soul refuseth any longer to be greatly burdened by these things. "Under the shadow of Thy wings" I have my rest. "Cover me with

thy feathers," said a homely poet of old time. And the feathers of God give safety. Death cannot hurt, and sin cannot harm the soul that shelters there. Patient, because God is patient; quiet, because God is strong; confident, because God is eternal; unshaken, because God is unshaken; that man now understands what it is to find the Lord a "Shadow from the heat." May God grant to you and me that we may find Him in all troublous days of our life "a Shadow from the heat"! May we long for Him "as a servant longeth for the shadow," and find Him to be the exceeding delight of our souls!

ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES:

A SERMON TO CONSOLE.



Morning, March 26th, 1876.

“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”—I CORINTHIANS xv. 9.

YOU will remember that last Sunday I was speaking to you with some contempt about voluntary fasting and self-inflicted pain. Nevertheless, I pointed out to you that no wise man puts mortification away from him ; for none of us are so able to do without the wormwood and the gall that we can afford to put it aside ; and though it is a cup to be sparingly offered and sparingly drunk, yet, knowing myself and you, I say there is no possibility of attaining to perfection or forgivingness, unless the bitter herbs of life be voluntarily taken.

There are things about life which will chastise a man into a fine humility, a lowly trustfulness, a large tolerance, and abundant forgiveness towards others.

We take the apostle's words, because they indicate what is, perhaps, one of the most fearful things for a man to think of. Though Paul could pile up, as it were, his sufferings and build up a very pyramid of his holy doings ; though he could count over what he had gone through for the truth ; nevertheless, in hours of bitterness, when he sees in his visions stoned Stephen, and those eyes that looked to God in their agony appear before the sainted apostle, what can he do but cry out, " I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." And if this great soul, this mighty apostle, when he thought of the evil deeds that he had done, which would go on to the crack of doom—if he had such days of darkness, what wonder that souls like ours should be appalled when we know that no change for the better, no penitence, or sorrow, or grief, can avail to cut off the connection between cause and consequence ; and that every evil deed that we have done is still alive and at work—in some far-off field, it may be—yet still carrying on its conse-

quences, even to the end of time and the far-off fields of the eternal life.

Some of you naturally object to be reminded of this. "It is too evil a thing to be thought of," you say. No, it is needful. Anything that can make us pause before we sin—that can hold us back from rashly leaping into the dark—is good. Therefore, we remind ourselves and you of the evil things that we have done ; of the dark things and days of our lives ; of the evil words that we have spoken, which will go sounding on for ever ; of those that we have corrupted in the days of our youth, who are probably still carrying the results of it—some one, perchance, whom we led astray into the paths of sin, whose standard of right and wrong we have helped to confuse, whose fine ideal of God and life, of heaven and hell, we have dimmed ; who now, perhaps, has a child of his own, whose mind is dimmed through him as we dimmed *his* mind ; and from that child, perhaps, shall come yet another, and it shall be worse and worse. When men have thought of these dark pictures, no wonder that they have dreamed that the last judgment shall be one grand assize, in order that men may see the consequences of the evil they have done. Last Sunday we gave you various cases, which I need

not now quote again. They are pictures too sad to be repainted ; but the wise man will keep them in his heart, as a wise man wears his hair-shirt next to his skin, instead of adopting outward scourging and fasting. All these remembrances should be kept in the heart, so that when we feel a fit of laziness coming on, or find forgetfulness stealing over the soul, we may be roused to renewed action.

It is marvellous how all the greater literature of the world is full of this fear of consequences, so that Macbeth cries out, "What! will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?" And then there is that strange legend of the Wandering Jew—how that when Christ bore the cross up that steep hill, and almost fainted beneath his burden, there came out some man from the wayside crowd and mocked him ; and then Christ said that for his sin he should bear the burden of his own flesh until Christ came again to judge the world. Strange legend, indeed ! Sore mistake concerning Christ ! Strange curse to come from the lips of him who cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Strange words from one who said, "O daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but rather for yourselves and for your children." But think of it as the story goes—this wretched

man never to die ! from one age to another to be wandering on, and even now to be wandering about the world ; to go on bearing the burden of his sin in his own flesh till the end of time ; to hear the judgment trump, and then to give one great sigh of passionate relief as he draws his old, tattered, way-worn boots off his weary feet, his penance over, his retribution ended, his dreary work at last done. When that strange legend grew out of the heart of that passionate people in those mistaken times, what did it say ? That, wandering about the land, the curse of your sin shall remain with you for ever, as they made him to bear about his sin in his own undying flesh. So, in sad hours, I sit and ponder—in what far city of the east or west some sin is being committed at this moment, the beginnings of which were mine, the force of which began in me ; and I ponder whether this sin is still keeping on its deadly course.

But I dwell not too much on these thoughts, lest they become overwhelming. God lets no man sink, if that man will cry out to Him. When Christ comes into the ship, though it be nigh unto sinking, the sea calms, and Peter is safe. Therefore, taking these things as bitters—for occasional use, not for daily consumption (which is after all a

luxury, for a man may learn morbidly to love bitterness), lest this bitter draught be too much for a man, it is given to him to see also the brighter side. For the clouds, as they turn their faces to God, are bright with the Lord's own lustre ; though, as they turn their faces toward us, they be dark with the sin of earth. When I think of those whom my sin has misled, whom my words have led astray, who have been poisoned by my example, contaminated by my low-living, who are maimed past all healing by my sin—nevertheless, lest the draught be too bitter, I remember that the *other* side is true also. Who knows in what far places there may be people whom you have consciously blessed ? or, if not, who knows what noble things are perhaps being done now, thanks to strength gained from you ? I have known pleasant things like this, even in my own poor life. I was not angry when I heard some time ago that some of my sermons were being preached anew a long way off. Why, one of the sermons that I preached here once to you has got into the Welsh language ! Some one showed me a Welsh paper, with the sermon printed in it. It was curious to look at one's own words and not know them ; curious to have a child of one's own, and never to have seen it before.

So one takes comfort sometimes, and, thinking of the sad souls going into darkness through the evil that we have done, we are comforted by the thought of "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"* So a man drinks water out of the wells of salvation, and, looking at the lovely law in all things, wins back courage and says to the master, "Love those whom I have injured," and then listens to the word of the Lord, "Let the dead bury their dead: go thou after the truth," and says, as the Apostle did, "I, that stoned Stephen, must work among living stones." For this wormwood is for our strengthening, and this bitterness inflicted upon myself and you is in order that we may be the more earnestly provoked to righteousness; not that we may bestow outward flagellation upon ourselves, but that we may undergo that nobler penance, that grander righteousness, "Cease to do evil: learn to do well."

If one page of our life has been blotted, let us write upon the next page a legend so sweet, a story so true, that we may at times forget the dark things in the joy of the latter time. So, though the cup of bitters is very necessary at times, I ponder sometimes how long one's credit will be

* The title of one of his sermons which had comforted many. See Vol. on Daily Life and Duty.

good in the next world, and I think of those words, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Then one turns covetous to live in others' character and thought. It does one good to look at the bright side of this business sometimes. There was John Bunyan, whose cursing was enough to have corrupted a whole country; but I turn from that, and take up his glorious Dream, and think of those pictures of his, and the good they have done. And though it is considered more scholarly to praise Dante than Bunyan, yet, remember, when Dante painted his pictures he got pictures beforehand to copy from, but when Bunyan painted he took the unseen life of man, and turned it into visible form. He took man's dark doubts, his trust and hope, and made pictures of them. He looked at man doubting, and he painted Doubting Castle; he had known deliverance, and he painted the Wicket Gate; he saw the weaker side of human nature, and he painted Vanity Fair, with all its stalls and shows, its martyrdom and deliverances. So, sounding on for ever and for ever, that glorious book will continue to deliver soul after soul, gathering together disciples, the recruiting sergeant of God. Bunyan, when he thinks of past days, calls himself a "Jerusalem

sinner." "What!" he says, "*I* preach? A Jerusalem sinner like me?" For he counted his guilt to be so great as to be only paralleled by those who persecuted the Lord. Yet this "Jerusalem sinner" has carried more sheaves into the New Jerusalem than all the Fathers of the Church ever did.

Taking comfort from these things, we say to ourselves—"The dark days have been many; we will brighten those that are left. Our life has been cloudy; we will win brighter days to come." Sometimes we have seen that where the morning was prime, toward the afternoon it grew cloudy and dark; and then, toward evening, there came a little break, an increasing shine, a growing splendour that lifted the clouds, and we saw the burning West, and the sun in its rosy glory; and in our diary for that day we said—"At eventide there was light." And if it be got with any of us late in the evening, still one ponders on how the Master went out at the eleventh hour, and found some still waiting and wanting work, and said unto them, "Go ye also into my vineyard;" and how they too received the penny of God, the forgiveness of their sins, a place in the heavenly kingdom.

Now, it is this terror on the one side, in thinking that the evil things that men have done can never be cut off, and the joy on the other hand, in the hope that those evil deeds might be effaced by a better life, that are the chief roots of many of the religious doctrines now current. When, though Cæsar is dead and turned to clay, still is seen the gleam of his sword in our laws and ways ; when there can be no footfall even on any part of this earth but it is felt through all the universe ; when the step you took in entering this place will go sounding on for ever—no wonder that men have dreamed of eternal punishment. For how should the consequence of man's actions be cut off ? where should it stop ? And so the years of eternity were damned and degraded because man could not see what was to quench the fire, or where the awful consequences of his sin should end. It is these fearful ghosts that make men turn with such passionateness to the Atonement, where they suppose the whole matter may be set right by a plunge and a dip : and so they sing :—

“ There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins ;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”

What wonder that what men have howled for is

atonement? something done *for* them, *to* them, and not in them and through them? Who can blame men who, borne down by this misery of cause and consequence, have cried—"Save us, save us from the consequences of our sin : enter us into the kingdom of heaven, make us strangers to yesterday, and call us Thy dear children" ?

Almost all the mistakes of theology arise naturally out of these pardonable terrors. But not of necessity need they be exhibited as divine truth. The humbler a man is, when that man thinks of the mischief that he has done, the more he will cry—"Lord, the things that have been are Thine ; see Thou to them : the things that are to be are mine ; help me that they be Thine : " and so with sadness shall that great doctrine of the atonement be worked out in him and through him. The One Only Religion is the one of self-sacrifice—to lose, that others may gain ; to become weak, that others may be made strong ; to suffer, that others may rejoice ; to give up, even life, if need be, that the will of God may be perfectly done. Thus, then, these doctrines of eternal punishment are not needful. A man must just cast that burden upon the Lord, and, turning to the better thought of God, remember that it is in the power of

Almightiness to quench the flames of hell; and though He will not cut off the consequences of our evil doings, yet He may so utterly change a man that he may become utterly oblivious to them, or, at least, his sense of love shall quite o'ercome his sense of shame. Thus, the true evangelical doctrine is this—"The bruised reed He will not break, nor quench the smoking flax." When God forgives a man, He does it utterly, completely. Were it not so pathetic, I should find it droll sometimes to watch men go through their forgiveness. "I forgive you, *but* —"; "Yes, yes, I have quite done with it, *only* —". And it is marvellous what odium people may put into that word "only."

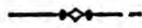
Just another word, and I have done. If there is one thing that I utterly hate, it is to hear a woman scolding—"Now, I have nothing more to say, *only* —". Of all things I adore, it is that utter forgivingness of Christ's. Go, read that parable of the Prodigal Son—that parable of forgiveness and glory. That alone were enough to have deified Christ, to revolutionize humanity, to bring the millennium, to establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth. Ponder upon that parable—"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;

make me as one of thy hired servants." And listen to the answer—"Bring hither the ring, the robe; kill the fatted calf; make merry; call the guests; for this my son (*my son!*) was dead, and is alive again!" Not only alive, but in full privilege again—in the place where he was before he went astray! It is this large love I draw upon—God, strong, wise, loving enough at last to bring all home unto Himself. And who knows, when that sweet day comes, when God shall be all in all, and all His children shall be brought, through much purification, unto Himself, but I may behold those that I have injured brought back, like myself, poor prodigals unto God, and at last see the consequences cut off of my wrong-doing, and their voice and mine be made vocal by the sweetness of the same song: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory."

If man's terror, then, has lighted an eternal hell, shall not Christ open a way, that there may be some great chance for all? that it may be possible, if not here, yet hereafter (for eternity is long), that through some school-house of purification God may bring all those whom we have caused to go astray home to Himself, and we see the consequences of our sin at last come to an

end ; and, beholding those with whom we have sinned, join with them in one prayer—"God have mercy upon me a sinner," and sit with them at one board, and worship one God, and sing the same song of the Redeemer? Then shall man throw up his poor sad hands at last to the Redeemer, and cry—"It is finished ; God is all in all."

WISDOM AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.



Morning, December 26th, 1875.

“When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”—
JOHN vi. 12.

THOUGH it is impossible for us to understand Christ's miracle-working power, which is said to have made so little go so far, yet the homely economy it teaches all must admire. And though it may seem strange, when the bounty was so great and the feast so easy, the cost so small and the satisfaction so great, that *then* a wise economy should be enforced, yet, nevertheless, it is of a piece with all God's works and ways.

There are few lessons in nature more lovely to learn, more worthy of watching, or calling for more wonder, than the amazing economics of this mighty world. Though the wealth of God is so uncountable, still He takes care even of His pence. There

is no waste in the workshop of the Lord : even the sawdust of it goes to brick-making, and in what is cast forth from the table the birds find food. All things go toward the upbuilding of some newer life : when nature seems to be sinking, she is still supporting life. The vapour which is carried off the house-roof shall one day become a shower that shall freshen the earth. From the corruptness of the muck-heap the rose shall bloom. From the grayness of death shall come the greatness of God. Where man cries "waste" he does but cry "dunce ;" he simply proclaims that to that degree he is ignorant of the wonderful way in which all things come into use again.

Whatsoever you behold is but part of the great wheel of life, everything returning : the cloud becomes rain, the rain becomes the river, the river runs to the sea, and the sea returns to cloud again. Thus, round goes the wheel of God, so that one of old who watched God's ways broke out into rapture, praising God for His wonderful works. "O wheel, the one grand emblem and symbol of the works and ways of God, ever revolving, ever seeking itself!" * One of the glories even of our present science is to abolish the word "waste."

* A frequent sentiment in Buddhist writings.

Even the rag-picker has a high function to perform. I never envied his calling, but I never despised it. That man has perhaps a higher office than many of you. It is better to gather rags than to wear over-much finery. It is better to gather rags, which one day the paper-mill shall make white and clear, and on which the printer may put the lovely and heroic deeds of men, than to go peacocking about in your fine clothes. When death comes, he will make mock of your tail, and you will go your way to the rag-heap. He who rescues rags is oftentimes more useful to the world than he who wears them ; and that rag-man might have, written across him, the words of the Master, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." He gathers together rags, bones, pins, and what not, and sorts them, and finds some place for them all. Then they are sold again, and made into new materials, which in their turn come round again to rags. So the great wheel goes round, and to every garment that we cast away we may say, "Old friend, we shall meet again."

I take up a sheet of white paper upon which to write the best I can, and I say of that sheet of paper, "Rags of my youth come back again—come to clothe my soul this time !" Paper is God's

divine material, for on it may be put the breathings of love, the words of the Holy Ghost, the legends of the saints, the kisses of the spirit, the hopes of the eternal soul. Therefore, one looks upon these words with reverence, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." And very lovely are these economics immediately after feasting; for it is the bountiful soul that should be the careful soul. Wantonness spoils feasting, for feasting means bountifulness, joyfulness; but waste!—"Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost."

There are few words that are perhaps better worth meditating upon, as the year is running fast to its ending, than these. For when a thing is very nearly over, how common it is to hear people say, that "it does not much matter what becomes of what is left." So some lazy lie-a-bed, creeping down in the morning, late afield, finding the morning sun has done its work before his sleepy eyes were opened, goes yawning for the rest of the day. "It is too late to do anything," he says; so the fragments are not gathered up, and so comes that most awful waste—the waste of man's time.

You say you "cannot make a good thing out of a bad one." But you can. "Only one hour left," you say. Ah! but what is it worth? In

that strange, wise parable of the householder, who went forth again and again, even unto the eleventh hour, and found some labourers still in the market-place, and said unto them, "Go ye also into the vineyard, and work there," we find that they, too, received every man a penny. So we say to those who cry that they have only one hour left, Shall *that* be wasted because it is a fragment? Never! Hear the word of Christ, "Work, while it is called to-day, for the night cometh, in which no man can work." The nearer the night, the faster should go the fingers. The perfect workman works best at the last. Even in racing one likes to see moderation at the start, in order to come in well at the end. It is good husbandry to begin slowly, in order to finish stoutly. So it is folly for a man, having wasted eleven hours of the day, to waste the twelfth also, to throw the fragment to the dogs, to waste the little that is left.

This tendency should ever be kept in check. The moment you feel so, just think of those words, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." There is a very natural, but very foolish, feeling with many people about the last few days of the year. I know there have been three hundred and sixty that are wasted, gone for ever, and so a

man may be tempted to say of these last five, "What are these among so many?" Well, they do look little; but let their littleness be their value. When a man is poor, as his money dwindles away, he does not say, "There, there, the few coins that are left are worth nothing; I may as well throw *all* away." No, no. As they go one by one, his husbandry increases. I know that in my last sovereign there will be forty shillings! In the last parting from one I loved, I would be timed by the beating of the heart, instead of the ticking of some vulgar clock. People will tell you "You cannot undo the past." They think it is a great thing to say that a man can do nothing to atone for the past. They are so afraid they shall do some damage to the atonement of Christ. They are so afraid we should think they have got any merit of their own, that they take care there shall be none, and thus rob us of the possibility of accusing them of it.

Now, in five days, how much can be done? "What a wealth of endurance man has!" Has he? Just try sea-sickness for a time, and then you will see what capacity he has to endure. Sea-sickness is like death, it is a wonderful leveller—kings and princes, or the poorest man on board, it lays them

all level. One minute may smite a life into misery ; one sentence can wreck a life ; one stroke may smite a life to death. And five minutes ! it is possible to put into that fragment all the splendour and greatness of a lifetime. It is possible in five days or minutes to draw such wealth of happiness, or such depth of woe, as shall change the entire character, and alter the consequences of a whole life.

“ Well, but,” you say, “ what can I do in five days ? ” There are two or three little things I will tell you of that you can do, just by way of illustration. The chances are that you have been offended by some one during the year. Some one has “ said something ” (very likely), or “ done something ” (very probable), and you were a little offended (very probable indeed), and you are still suffering from it (sadly probable), and you have not forgiven it (shamefully probable). That you *should* forgive it is divinely true ; that you *have not* forgiven it is devilishly true. There is time to pacify a *kingdom* in five days. So now there is a little treaty possible for you ; for it is not a question of time, but of temper. “ But,” you say, “ the distance is so great, I cannot go to him.” A good deal of travelling can be done now in five hours. But if it is a

question of *temper*, that is a different thing. We are talking now about the wise use of fragments. So this afternoon let me advise you to look over all your grudges, and your reflections will perhaps be something like this : " I have offended him, or he has offended me ; most of it has been about nothing ; it has been simply a question of temper. I don't believe in God yet, because I don't forgive. I have forgiven nine men their trespasses, but the tenth, the tenth man, shall I forgive him too ? " Some such thing as that will be said over in the heart, and so you will find out what to do with the fragments. If each one of us during this week forgave one grudge, did one deed of mercy, or performed one act of self-denial, what a sweet year this would become ! We should find one another out next Sunday, and there would be such a glory in the countenance, and our prayers would so rise to God—rise with such fervour as they can never have from the lips of an unforgiving, unforgetting man !

You say you have wasted a good deal of time during the year. Well, that is the very reason why you should not waste any more. Suppose you should say, " I have muddled away a good deal of money this year, I may as well spend all

now, I cannot make it up again in these few days." No, but you might get a little account-book ready for next year. So, in the fragment of time that is left, you might get the chamber ready for the soul. It is pleasant to see a good mistress, full of hospitality, getting the guest-chamber ready, and then when all is finished, to see her give just another look round, in case there may be anything she has forgotten, or lest that spiteful thing called "dust" should have settled down upon anything; and then to watch her give a little touch here, and one there; and then, only on the last morning, the flowers are put upon the table, to give a smile of welcome and a gleam of glory. And shall she say, "Oh, the time is so near now, I will do nothing?" Nay. So of this poor old year. We cannot do much for him now I admit; but for the year to come, there is much to be done.

I have five days for getting ready for the year that is to be. It will be quite new; even God never had it before; it is His last child, and He will give it me, if He sees fit, in a few days. So let us "gather up the fragments that remain," that we may do better another year than we have done in this. Turn it which way you will, there is much hard work to be done. So let us have a thorough

cleansing of house and hearth—not a superficial polishing of the surface, but a thorough cleansing, as if the day of judgment were coming next week. And mind the angles ; for it is in the angles of the heart as well as the house that dust and waste is to be found. I have seen houses in which, where there should have been a right angle, there was quite a curve (the right angle was caused by the walls, and the circle by the brush). So, in a man's life there are corners ; and we, looking at his outward life, may say, "How beautiful ! What a sweet curve of righteousness ! What a lovely sweep of morality !" But, in the corners, oh, what things a man doth often hide away ! It were well, now in these last few days, if we could have it all out. Have out all your virtues, and all your vices too, just for once, and let there be a thorough sweeping and garnishing.

A great sweeping of the house is always a fine time, too, for finding and using up all fragments, that nothing be lost. From house-sweeping go to heart-sweeping ; and then from that to the high and solemn things of God and the spiritual life, it is easy to pass.

It is both my duty and pleasure of pleasures to declare to you that toward the Almighty Lover,

the words, "Too late," are never lawful for a man to apply. Too late? Ah! there are people who will tell you so. Men are told that "Jesus is passing by," and that if they don't "be quick," he will be hopelessly gone. True, there is the parable of the foolish virgins, who had no oil, and while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and the door was shut; but that parable is not to be strained into false uses. No man, whilst the heart beats, is allowed to say that with God it is "too late."

There is a new school now, that talks about the "Gates ajar." My old hymn-book says:—

"The glorious gates of gospel grace,
Stand *open* night and day."

But these people have got them only ajar. Their faith is not strong enough to hold them open. *Gates ajar?* Never. The gates of God are always *open*, and man hath no power to shut them.

Some screaming creature gets on to one of the gates, and writes above it, "Election;" the Pope gets on the other; and so between them they try to shut us poor heretics out. How we shudder! Is there anything more absurd than these door porters volunteering their services to the Almighty? God opens for Himself, and opens *wide*. There is no

“too late” with God. I would rather believe in the Romish doctrine of Purgatory—for that does give a poor man another chance. In Purgatory you have to suffer, but your suffering will do you some service ; there is no waste—but all those poor souls, when purged of their sins, shall go home to God. Better that than the terrible doctrine of Protestantism—that God hath made more wasters than creatures that are worth saving ; that the eternal Potter has made more vessels that are not worth keeping than vessels that are ; that He has elected that so many thousands of the human race shall be born, and suffer, and die, only to be lost eternally. I know not of such things, except historically ; they are things from which I am happily delivered. One feels towards the hideousness of English theology, as a man who knows the One God, One Only, looks back with wonder to the gods of the heathen.

I am sorry Tennyson wrote that poem where the little lassie sings to that sad woman.* The sinful queen calls the little child to sing to her, and the little one sang that plaintive, despairing song—“Late, late, so late.” “Too late, too late”—I know no such word. It may be lawful in song,

* Guinevere in “*Idylls of the King*.”

but it is not lawful in prose. It may be a natural feeling to the sad soul, fearful lest the fragment that is left should be worthless to the Almighty ; yet Christ said to such a one—"This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." And yet the heart does so tremble ! When man has done wrong, he is so properly fearful ; sinning Adam does so hide himself in the garden. And to be forgiven is for the time but a new burden—for to be forgiven *is* a burden to a generous spirit, for a while, until, much meditating upon the words of the poet :—

" I bow before the noble mind,
That freely some great wrong forgives ;
But nobler still the one forgiven,
That bears his burden well, and lives."

Until we can enter into that spirit, we tremble fearfully lest we may be making a mistake ; and having little to offer God before we die, we cry, "Too late, too late." For the soul will sometimes look over its fragments ; and then we feel towards God as we do to our friends sometimes—there is nothing left, the shelf is empty, and the bottle dry ! And the sad soul cries out that all is gone, there is nothing left, only five days, or minutes, and they do look so threadbare, they are but as a crust, a crumb, a bone, worthless. O man ! remember that thine arithmetic is not God's. As one great

Frenchman said—"It takes years to obtain the forgiveness of man, and but one tear to get God's forgiveness." And if the tear be of the spirit, the heart, the soul ; if it be the wine of a man's spirit, then that Frenchman is right. It often does take years to win the forgiveness of man ; but a tear, a tear is enough for God. "Yes, but," say some of you who are not able to shed tears, "this is dangerous teaching." *I dare teach anything about God that I have found possible in man !* Shall man be more patient than his Maker ? Shall woman be more *tender* than her Maker ? Let us ask ourselves these questions, and then rise from that to higher things (for the deeds of man are the Jacob's-ladder down which and up which the angels come and go), until we come to understand something of the mighty God, the great Unseen.

Now shall we tell you one tale of humanity which, if rightly understood, becomes a lesson in divinity ! A painter, named Romney, a Kendal man, in his youth, with the consent of his wife, went up to London to seek his fortunes. When he got there—without any wrong intention at first, it happened that he did not say anything about his being married. By degrees that man got on : he became rich and fashionable ; was courted as a

great painter ; and lived in Cavendish Square, or some aristocratic region of that kind. For forty years that man lived in London, and during that forty years he ne'er went back to Kendal once, nor did his wife see him. During the first years travelling was not easy, and there was an excuse for him ; but by-and-by, when the means came, the will was gone. He ne'er went back once ; he never wrote to that faithful woman once ; he never saw her once. O Prodigal ! He had no thought for the fond heart and the true soul at home. Surely, he was the meanest of men ! At the end of forty years sickness came ; the body failed, madness overtook him ; and then, broken in body, diseased in brain, stricken, smitten, driven home by calamity and not by penitence, back went the wretch to his wife. And what did the woman do ? Did she shut the door, and say, " Too late ? " She might have used those words—" Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now," and who could have blamed her ? But not she. She took the man in ; she waited upon his dying hours ; she nursed him tenderly ; she watched the fast-ebbing brain ; she closed his dying eyes ; she laid him in his grave. She did all this, and gave him no word of reproach. In the history of man's meanness, there is no

meaner chapter. In the history of woman's glory, there is no more glorious page.

And shall woman be sweeter than her Saviour? Is it possible for humanity to outdo God? Had that man *merit*? None! Yet she took him in! All is said that need be said. There is *no* "too late" with God. What man can do, God hath already done; for in Him is the root of that woman's grace. As surely as a root planted in this sweet earth draws its glory out of it, so surely was that woman's virtue rooted in God, coming out of His own nature, made possible only because of His life in it. It bloomed in God, for it came from God. Therefore I say, what man has done, God has done before; what is possible for man, is possible to the Almighty. So I draw my pen through those words, "Too late, too late;" and though I know they must be written at times over the gates of earth, the gates of God ne'er will be closed until He has gotten man to Himself; then, when the gates are closed, they will close all triumphantly, because God is all in all.

So, "gather up the fragments that remain;" it is not "too late." It was not too late for the poor thief upon the cross in one expiring rapture to be freed from all his stains. It takes not long to be

freed from bondage, if the angel of God do for the will as he did to Peter—smite off his chains, and set him free. If you have but a few days, or hours, or minutes left, “gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost.” God will not take count of the quantity, but of the quality. It is possible to make these last five days more glorious than all that have gone before, as if all the planets should come together at the end, or as all the characters in a piece come together at the last. It is also possible, perhaps better, in quiet, sad silence (for sadness comes by sinning), to wait and work, until we can look up with confidence and say unto God, “There is but a little time left ; the eleventh hour has struck ; it is Thine ; I go to Thy vineyard, though the morning is so late ; but because it *is* so late I will go so swiftly, and work so trustfully, leaving all the rest to Thee !”

FOLLY OF MOURNING THE DEAD PAST.



Morning, January 2nd, 1876.

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”—JOHN xxi. 15, 16, 17.

OF all tales, this is the most touching, perhaps, in the Gospel—this seeming teasing of a loving heart, and strange tormenting of a faithful spirit. And this done by one who loved so tenderly, pitied so easily, and forgave so plenteously where it was to

bind up the broken-hearted, rather than again to touch with the bitterness of memory the sores of a sad soul. Yet there is no more hopeful and encouraging passage than this for us all ; for here is the bringing out diligently and with pains the past, and here is the Lord dealing with that past. Christ brings forth Peter's sin ; and as that sin had been connected with threefold things before, so three times the torturing question is put, and three times the needed answer must be given.

Leaving the tale alone for a time, let me point out one great lesson which it teaches. For whether there be anything outward to remind us of our past sins and follies, or whether there be nothing, there is always one at home who will do it. Conscience, Milton calls the "Sentry of God," and its duty is to bring out the past. There is voice enough within to tell a man of his denial of the truth, his foolishness, and sin, and shame.

Let us see what Christ did this thing for. Why did he set poor Peter's sin before him ? We note with pleasure that it was not in order to inflict penance, but to call to duty. Peter's threefold sin was not set before him in order to provoke tears, but faithfulness. Christ touched his sins until they became a ground for new duty. And here

we have an eternal lesson of hopefulness for man—that even out of his follies and sin shall come new aims and work which, but for his terrible falling, he would never have had the understanding to accomplish. Mark, then, when Christ spoke to Peter of the past, it was not to give pain, but to fit him for new duty, and to enjoin duty upon him. It is well to remember that the Chief Pastorship was given to him who had been most faithless, and this faithlessness was three times brought to his memory in order that future faithfulness might be three times enjoined. If all of you had courage enough to do that, it would be well for you. Christ did it. He who had denied him most, Christ trusted most, and made him to be the father of the faithful. He who had denied him most, Christ made to be sub-shepherd of his sheep, and raised him to a height of spiritual eminence not possible for us.

This is a principle very needful to be remembered. Truisms are not less true because they are truisms, and it is a common truism that, “What has been done cannot be undone.” Whatsoever resuscitation or reparation is possible, for a man to undo that which has been done is impossible. Therefore, any pain or repinings, any grief or sorrow caused by attempting to undo what has been done, had

better be discharged at once. With remorse for what has been done and cannot be undone, I have very slender sympathy. A large part of the errors in the religions of this country has arisen from thinking that the painful feeling which arises from wrong-doing is a thing to be encouraged.

This cultivation of remorse chooses many forms of showing itself. Sometimes it takes the form of bitter asceticism, and sometimes of howling tears. Sometimes it is shown, when forgiveness is delayed to a child, in order that what is called "penitence" may be more exhibited; as though the sun should refuse to come out in brightness, because the earth was not quite gloomy enough to deserve it! Here it is seen in the stripes upon the back of the old ascetic; there it is proclaimed by some terrible preacher, trying purposely to harrow up the soul on account of past sin.

But whatsoever be the principle of Revivalists, or what not, who endeavour in any way to foster and encourage mere remorse, it is unsustained by Christ's example. It is a form of vivisection which is unreasonable, and unfruitful of any good result. This running about wishing what has been done had not been done, of what use is it? All the wishing in the world won't alter it. The passionate

prayer of the great Psalmist again and again is this, "Cast all mine iniquities behind Thy back." And what that great heart cried to God (and if any man needed to cry to God, that passionate king needed it)—what he cried must be our cry too. Instead of saying to God, "Let me think of my sins : let me set them before me hourly,"—"No, no," he said, "hide me and them ; let me see them no more." For that wise man knew that much of this remorse is an attempt to weep over what cannot be undone, spoiling to-day and to-morrow too, over a debt which cannot be made good. If a man is hopelessly bankrupt, what is the use of always talking about paying twenty shillings in the pound ?

Remorse is born very much from people tormenting themselves with the wish that what has been done, which ought not to have been done, had not really been done at all. You cannot help this as a feeling ; but you should not water it as a flower. If these ghosts will come, you need not entertain them. When the ghost of a dead sin persists in coming, pay no heed to it, except as a help to higher effort to-day. That you should feel remorse is good, but that you should *cultivate* it is a deadly mistake ; because it is born of a childish

wish that what has been done, and cannot be undone, had never been done at all. Remorse has been cultivated as a virtue, as though it could atone for past sin. So fathers and mothers cultivate "penitence" in their children, until they move them to tears of remorse. So people seem to think that their past sins can be atoned for by the Stoic's regret, by penitent weepings and repinings.

No man is blest by being much with corpses. The sepulchre is no place for life. Long weeping ne'er did eyes nor heart good yet; so it should be set aside as a thing never to be cultivated. Constant remorse is no sign of a tender conscience, but an attempt to do what cannot be done—to be your own atonement, your own redeemer; offering to God one of the most worthless of offerings. Better go to sheep-feeding: "one hour of loving work is worth a year of prayer." As though *that* would help Him to forgive whose forgiveness was from the beginning! The forgiveness of God is not to be bought. That eternal treasury was filled before all things, and needs none of this to open it.

Now, then, there is no virtue whatever in increasing the stings of regret. Time has been that when men have sinned, they have spent their life's ingenuity in finding means of torture, and racked

their brains to find out methods of remorse. When a man must go to the Holy Sepulchre because he has sinned, it is a poor childish business. Better have sought out the living God, than the grave where Christ lay. It was thought a good thing that a man should waste his precious hours in weeping at the sepulchre. But did Christ tell Peter to go and spend thirty-three years there because of the remembrance of that fatal cock-crow? No. Of Peter's sorrow you and I can guess; but two pleasant things I read of Peter: first, that after Christ's death "he went a-fishing;" and, secondly, there was no wearing of the hair-shirt, no knotted cord, or cultivation of remorse. There was no saying, "What a deadly sinner you are!" no calling himself a "wretch" and a "worm"; but he listened to the voice of the Master, "Let the dead bury the dead, and come thou, follow me." Let the living man follow the living Lord Christ. Yesterday has no claim upon to-day. You have no right to kill to-morrow by the remembrance of yesterday. Christ gave Peter no penance, nor any encouragement whatsoever for remorse.

I have thought it worth while to trace this remorse to its true source, and to show you a

stronger, healthier form of piety. God wants not your mortified life. As the prophet cried of old, "If I were hungry, would I tell thee? God wants not thy cattle; for the cattle upon a thousand hills are His already,"—so now the prophet says, "Bring not your tears to God; He wants them not. This is the office of God: 'He shall wipe away all tears from all eyes.'" Do you still want the hair-shirt, and the corded whip, and the penitential revival meeting? Poor creature! You will have sorrow enough without that. You are like a foolish woman, sending her child back to howl a little longer, before she administers the heavenly balm of forgiveness. But what does the Lord say? "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." "Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs; feed my sheep." So the dead past was linked on to new duty, not to dead remorse. So the duties of the shepherd were set over against the sad memory of the fatal cock-crow and the foul denial. There must be a divorce between the past and the future, except we can join them, as Christ did, to new endeavour and new faithfulness.

Following this cultivation of the remorseful side of penitence we find a good deal of selfishness in it. You will not do me any good, if you have wronged

me, by marching off to my sepulchre. Better stop at home and work; and when you do take a journey there, let it be a *return* journey. But no, the majority of people run to a preacher who is good at making them *feel*, and they enjoy the "luxury of woe." If you are thus thinking more of your own soul than of serving others, you had better root the thing out. Penance is selfish if inflicted upon yourself. What good would penance have done Peter? Suppose Christ had said to him—"Oh, Peter; ponder upon your sins. You must weep more; sigh more; mourn more. Let the cock crow again, and weep bitterly again, Peter." But no. We are speaking of the Son of God, the Infinite Lover; the Child of Him who "remembereth that we are but dust;" Who values no tears that are not spontaneous; Who says, "When I love thee, I love thee *for good*." So Christ teaches us that God's smile comes as soon as our penitence. For he knows the heart of God. One outbreak of grief is sufficient; now let forgiveness come. "Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep."

So, then, I denounce as selfish and useless the remorse of those who put it in the place of well-doing, endeavour, and courage. Even when you

do call the past out of its grave, you had better get the grave-clothes off as soon as possible. Better take a noble, manly, useful view of repentance. And remember that what a man does is always much worse than what a man is, and therefore it is a serious injury for him to be in bondage to his past. Now, that is shocking to some of you ; but I say, deliberately, that what you do is of less consequence than what you are. If you will constantly be throwing into that fountain of life some deadly thing of the past, it is as though you threw into the water of which you drink some dead carcase to pollute it. See to thy soul's *health*, in order that for the time to come there may be reconstruction and atonement, and not remorse. I do declare that he who spoils to-day because he has spoiled yesterday is a robber ; for he is robbing his own soul of future good, and robbing God of duty, and his brother man of his rights. He is cultivating doom, encouraging darkness, and making friends with death. Every one would think it strange if a man were to say, "I have done so much wrong that I am determined to admit no more sunlight into my room." No, no, arise, man ! yesterday is dead, and you must let the dead past bury its dead. You must take your chance in God's forgiveness,

or you are nowhere. The past is lost, buried, unless out of it you have wisdom enough to cry, "Feed my sheep."

So, then, I declare that it is slavery and bondage to spoil to-day for yesterday. Let God see to that. Therefore, all godly sorrow should be encouraged that leads on to sheep-feeding. The most godly sorrow comes after one has long ceased to commit the sin. We decline to let any past deed whatsoever pass over without blessing. The best way to honour a good act is to repeat it—as large families are the loveliest; but to dwell in barrenness of sorrow for a bad act, that is forbidden by law and reason. "Let the dead bury the dead, and come thou, follow me."

We go further, and declare that no man's life ought to be hindered either by the applause or the reproaches of conscience. "Why," you say, "how can the *applause* of conscience hinder him?" You know that phrase, "We'll rest upon our oars." But to see the smile of satisfaction, the smirk of self-approval that comes over a man's countenance when he is enjoying the applause of a good conscience! There is nothing like it. The counting of money, except with a view to the payment of debts, never did much good. Yet, no wants, no debts.

But to see a man counting money greedily is not a pretty sight. I have known men shut themselves in and count their money, as though their fingers delighted in it, and could add ten per cent. to it every time they went over the delicious heap. There are times when men enjoy the luxury of a good conscience, as they enjoy sitting down to count their money. Now, don't count your money, except you are going to spend it. If you have done well, do more. Who was the good servant? He who having got ten talents already, went and made them ten more. Therefore, if my conscience says I have got ten talents; I must work and wait till I can make them ten times more. If that servant who had the five talents had not had that great aim, but had been content to count up his five talents, where would have been the ten talents which he offered to the Lord at his coming?

And shall the *reproaches* of conscience hinder us? If I do not encourage the counting of good things, shall I count evil things? Oh! if I have destroyed anything that can be regained, let me remember; if I have stained anything that can be cleansed, let me remember; if I have wronged any one and the wrong can be repaired, oh! then let me remember, until it be done. To my soul let

there be no forgetting, to my heart no peace, to my eyes no sleep, until the thing is undone that hath been done, until the debt is paid, and restoration made, and a new and holy repentance carried out. But if all that is impossible, must the cock crow still, and I go out and weep bitterly? Listen to the Saviour—"Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs; feed my sheep." And so say I for myself. There is work to be done that requires all my strength and all my faithfulness, and I say to my conscience—"Hinder me not." Let me take its blows, if I need any more; but I cannot wait for yesterday any longer, it is dead and buried.

Now, I read all these things out of what Christ said to Peter. For he said, deliberately, that Peter was not to suffer his remorse to hinder him. It was not in order to inflict penance upon Peter's soul—not that he might shed tears again, or retire in profitless meditation—but in order to enjoin duty that Christ spoke thus to Peter. He opened the old wound again, that he might pour in healing. He enjoined duties upon him, which Peter would not perhaps have been able to do, had he not first found out his own weakness.

And now about that word so much in use—that word "reprobate." There are people who affirm

that God made some of His vessels on purpose to crack them ; and they think themselves able to settle which of the human family are lost and which are not. Let those who can believe it, believe it. I should be tolerant to any one who is tolerant to me. But to my idea, this doctrine—that the Heavenly Potter made me on purpose to crack me, and settled before He made me that I should be a waster (for which I am not obliged to the Heavenly God, and am in no mood to praise Him)—if that is philosophically true, it must be so ; but that it is a moral lie, is certain. Now, a reprobate human sinner means one who has gone from all possibility of goodness. But nature has no reprobates ; and God has no wasters. “Gather up the fragments,” is the eternal cry of nature, “that nothing be lost.” So it is with God.

As I warned you last week—the sands of life are not run out so nearly for any of you but there is time left for something. There is time for the dying thief to have one passionate moan ; time to the fainting soul to have one gasp of adoration and trust. When nature looks foulest, things come up sweetest. “I will show forth Thy glory” is the cry to God of these things. He who watches nature as I do, watches with fierce joy the harlots

of nature, the publicans of nature, the foul things of nature out of which come beauty and sweetness, and in these things he sees "the salvation of God." Every time those of us who give a little time to the pursuits of the farmer or the gardener see the transmuted sweetness of the violet, and the beauty that is born out of corruption, we see the Master of the feast, and hear him say, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." Then we look over this sinful world, and see how the heavenly alchemy shall transmute meanness into greatness, and bring perfume out of the foul odour of man's deadly heart-sins. Therefore, I am not going to be a reprobate because I have been one ; but will hear the Lord saying unto me, "Let the dead bury the dead, and come thou, follow me, and feed my sheep."

So far, then, though I put the matter strongly, you will perhaps agree with me. This evening we shall go into a far higher matter. I have proclaimed against remorse ; against the wearing of the grave-clothes of a past sin ; against mourning too much before you begin to do right—all of which you can read again in that sweet touching story, "Peter, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

And what then for to-day—to-morrow? "Feed my sheep." Cry, man, to any sad heart that comes weeping to thee, "Feed my sheep." And so to the little child, too. Pity him, put a little crook in the little hand, and send him out with a "Feed my sheep." And the mercy thou showest to another, show thyself. Begin the new year by shaking off the grave-clothes of the past. He who would enter into the new things of life, must "cease to do evil and learn to do well;" must trust his sins to God's mercy and God's forgiveness; must cry to God, "Cast Thou my sins behind Thy back;" must cry to Him, "Hast Thou sheep to be fed? Is there work to be done? Send me, Lord, send me." Mohammed has it that "One hour of charity is worth a year of prayer."

Thus, then, beginning another year, and wishing to walk in the large liberty of the children of God, let us leave the things that are behind. As to to-morrow, there are sheep to be fed. And let the eyes that are dimmed by too much weeping read again those words, "He counteth His sheep; He calleth them all by their names."

*RISING ON STEPPING-STONES OF
OUR DEAD SELVES.*



Evening, January 2nd, 1876.

“And Judas departed, and went and hanged himself.”—

MATTHEW xxvii. 5.

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”—JOHN xxi. 15, 16, 17.

WHEN Judas hanged himself, remorse had its triumph ; when Christ commissioned Peter to feed his sheep, divine repentance had its triumph. The

one caused a soul to dwell only in past darkness ; but the other led on the spirit into light.

Let me briefly renew what I said this morning. Take this passage in the life of our Lord to convey the true way of dealing with penitence, whether of man to his brother, or of God to the hearts of men. When Christ brought before Peter his sad sin, his terrible denial, it was not to generate remorse, but simply to show to him that he, having fallen and truly repented, might for the time to come remember his sin only as a help to future faithfulness. And Peter turned his face towards the light with all the passion of his soul ; not only to be forgiven, but to be more trusted ; not only to have his sin blotted out, but to receive a blessing which, but for it, he might never have known.

When I speak so strongly about remorse and repentance, remember I would not confound the burial of the past with the conduct of the wrong-doer who acts and behaves as if he had not done wrong. Peter had wept bitterly ; and though to him were now committed such high duties, yet they never blotted out the remembrance of those bitter tears. Tradition says of him that when they came to crucify him, the old man would not be crucified as others, but insisted that it should be

with his head downwards ; for he thought himself not worthy to share the same death as his Lord. I would not confound the repentance that leaps into righteousness and not wallows in sorrow, with the arrogance which carries its sinful head as high or higher than innocence dares to do. But much of what men call remorse is a certain teasing of the spirit, arising from the false notion that what cannot be undone ought to be mourned over for ever. This is false policy. To a generous soul it is pleasant to forgive. One of the great joys of life is to blot out another man's sins. And so it is with God. He wants no aggravation of remorse to increase the sting of your regret. Sufficient for Him is the tear of confession, and that, forsaking the evil, you learn to do well in the time to come. Souls come to health only by working ; and he who spends his time in idle weeping will be likely to find weakness and leanness therefrom. A great deal of what is termed "spiritual exercise" is of this miserable kind. But it is with the soul as with the restoration of men's bodies to health—it will not be done by sitting down to sigh, and pray, and weep ; but by coming out to new duty. "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." Peter's first tears were lovely ; but continued weeping is a selfishness to

be utterly condemned. All you can do is to plant trees where you have been fool enough to destroy them. If you have lost a piece of silver, light a candle and sweep; but if it doesn't come to light, better earn another one. Let the dead bury the dead. A wise man may not tarry. Past history must never put down present activity. The memory of yesterday must never kill the heart-beating pulse of to-day.

This morning I was also pointing out to you that there is no such thing as reprobation in nature. In all God's works there is nothing utterly cast out. Waste things are used again; mean things are brought into glory. From the dunghill is brought forth the vine; from filth and loathsomeness is the luscious grape produced. All shreds and patches come into use and beauty. Where there was nothing but mud, the sea comes back again and brings life. God damns and curses none. He has no reprobates in nature. And who dares to say that He has reprobates in grace? If it be possible that, by the divine alchemy of the Master, the mean things and base things of nature can be used again to His glory, shall it not be so with the spiritual nature of man? Who shall doubt but that the failures and foolishnesses, and

even crimes of yesterday, may be so taken up into a future and nobler life, that out of them shall come a perfume which, but for them, had not been known. And they who, after failure, deeply sing of Paradise regained, their song shall attain a deeper meaning, a larger loveliness, a more passionate pathos than any song they sung before its loss. In this world of God's, there is nothing finally bad that we can see. And even death, when its sting has gone, is not so much an evil. It is simply a notice to quit ; and when the messenger brings that notice he shall be rewarded at the door.

To understand this courageous gospel, the preacher should be pre-eminently healthy. The music he gives out should be that to which men can *march*, not that which favours despair. Such being my duty, I shall have to go further yet, and say that even crimes are not to remain unchangeable for ever. If you get into your body that which it can neither assimilate nor discharge—which your stomach cannot master, nor your body take to itself—there you have an evil, because you have something inorganic, through which no life doth flow. Life has nothing to do with it ; it must either be tolerated as an evil or expelled as a nuisance, else it will gain a conquest over life itself.

So, if a man get into his life a sin, and that sin is to lie for ever in his memory in such a way that his life is lessened and hindered by it, that is an evil.

It was in such a way that remorse came to Judas ; he did not know how to expel it, and so it killed him. He saw no way through that deadly sin to a life of righteousness. Whether Judas *meant* the death of the Master is doubtful. Some assume that all he wanted to do was to push Christ on to the proclamation of an earthly Messiahship, and that because he found he had failed, and had brought about the death of his master, he went and hanged himself. However that may be, he treated his sin as the body treats a dead, inorganic substance—either to expel it, or to be killed by it. Judas could not expel it. Through his sin he thought no grace could pierce, no wisdom come ; so there was naught for that man but to end the business, and he “went and hanged himself,” which, in his circumstances, was probably the wisest thing to do. His soul was unable to see the depths of God’s mercy, the largeness of His pity, the greatness of His love. He was so taken up with looking at his own iniquity, that it became to him a cloud over God ; it shut out the stars of heaven, and even the hope and brightness of the world to come.

That great and terrible egotist threw his great sin across the face of God. His deadly sin blotted out all hope, and he forgot his God. Having blackened the heavens till no light could pierce through them, what could he afterwards do? He went and hanged himself. Could he only have sought mercy sooner; could he have looked through the clouds, and seen but a little of God, he too might have seen his deadly sin rolled away, and have passed, after a few days of blindness, into passionate devotion to Christ.

For we do not stop to appraise the sin. Look at Peter's sin—his terrible betrayal of his master! He had denied him with an oath, and Judas had betrayed him to his death; yet the one man treated his sin as a thing ne'er to be done with, and went and hanged himself; while the other, his sin wept over and repented of, listened to the voice of the Master, "Feed my sheep;" he cast himself away from the old life, and became chiefest of the Apostles.

If you will watch for yourself, you will come to see that even crime is not to be treated as some dead, inorganic thing in the conscience; as a stern, hard, unchangeable evil, through which no light or hope may come for ever. Sin, if a man is wise, he

will treat as a sad *experience*. Now, Goethe says that "Experience is knowledge gained at the expense of something we would not willingly have done." And is there a better definition? Understand that wise sentence, and you will know the whole story. "Something we would not *willingly* have done." Peter would not willingly have denied his master. And that experience was doubtless with him when he preached the gospel; when he pleaded with sinners and proclaimed the mercy of God. It is never a profit to a man if he makes no use of his experience. No man should put it to the task of dragging him backward, but always to the task of drawing him forward. He *wastes* experience who puts it to no better use than dragging him back in the march of life; for it is properly destined to lead us on to something higher. If, in consequence of your experience, you learn to feel and see that anything inorganic in the spiritual nature which you cannot get rid of will get rid of you, then the feeding of sheep given to Peter becomes a necessary thing to you also.

A wise man should call to mind his blunders and faults, his sins and crimes, and question them whether they which have cursed him will now bless him. If you have committed a sin, wrestle with it,

and do not let it go until it has blessed you. If you have been deceived or a deceiver, learn to put a wary watch upon yourself for the time to come. For many a soul has learned wisdom it never would have learned but for bitter experiences. If, then, they be used aright, they will become opportunities of new endeavour and occasions of new faithfulness, an incense that shall be lovely. Try to do something else—to “rise on the stepping-stones of your dead selves to higher things.” Remember what mercy you have needed, and show mercy to others. The cry of a generous heart is ever, “I forgive, as I have been forgiven.” Then that old sin shall become transmuted; and instead of a dead thing, an obstruction to life, it shall be a new gate, through which flows the life of mercy, pity, and forgiveness. And just as having been once greatly forgiven leads a man greatly to forgive, so the bitter experience of sin leads a man to new cautions, prudences, and endeavours. The great object of summoning up old sins is that through them we may rise to higher endeavour.

One thinks how that man Peter may have pleaded with sinful men; and, when preaching, who knows but that the cock sometimes seemed to crow again,

and take him back to the time when his Master was denied, forgot, foreswore, forsook? And every time when in preaching he seemed to hear that cock-crow, through that cock-cry what penitence and passion would be stirred in Peter, until he and his hearers would be lifted up to new and earnest endeavour! For "The wounded is the wounding heart." There are fruits that are worth little until they have been frosted; and folks who have never known sorrow cannot comfort others. "It behoved Him to make the Captain of our Salvation *perfect through suffering*;" and it is always said of Christ, that he, having tasted suffering, knew best how to deliver others. His experiences were got by "doing something he would not willingly have done."

Our sins, then, are not to be *forgotten*, but to be *used* as experience; the sorrow for them taking the poison out of the wound, but using that wound as a lesson in surgery for the time to come. There is a law in spiritual healing which prevents any wound from being incurable; and the feeding of sheep will do more than anything else. Forgiveness heals it first; but there must be diligent sheep-feeding afterwards. Every one of you have got a certain amount of intellect, man's supreme power, the sign of his lordship and divineness.

Your intellect should bear you up against emotions, whensoever they hinder the soul's progress. It is a pitiful sight when a man sits down too long. Stand up like a man. There is work to be done ; go and do it. What will sackcloth do for you, or ashes for God ? Sitting in ashes will fill no gap and feed no poor. Call upon your intellect, then, to declare to you these great principles of courage and activity. Turn to the mercy of God ; and with a strong hand put down the tear, and go to work. "Arise, Peter ; feed my sheep." Nor sackcloth, nor ashes, nor weeping will do. "Feed my sheep."

This manly activity, then, has seemed to me to be the only true way of overcoming and expelling remorse. We are all of us called upon to let the dead past bury its dead ; to trust in God's mercy, and to press forward. I do declare to you, that "one hour of honest work for God is worth a year of prayer." One right thing done is better than a sin wept over for months and years. "Go, and sin no more." He who fails to apply God's forgiveness to him in order that he may at once rise and go to sheep-feeding, is egotistically thinking more of himself than of God's love. But the Heavenly Physician ne'er increases a sore, unless it be needful

to its speedy healing. Therefore, if a wise man falls into disaster, he will take courage. If your eyes are dim with weeping, dry them. Drop the past. Let the dead bury the dead, and come thou and hear the Master. "Peter, thou who hast denied me, lovest thou me?" I do. "Then feed my sheep." All godly penitence in a man is not lessened by godly obedience; but he is more liable to feel duly the sins and follies of other days than he is to forget them.

A wise man's duty, then, is to preach to others, and to practise himself, courage; and endeavour always to use past experience as something through which he may gain more toleration than he possibly could have had before; and so to do as God does—use base things, and make them noble, and, through the portals of death and corruption, see them enter into newness and fulness of life.

PERFECT TRUST.



Morning, July 25th, 1875.

“ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”—JOB xiii. 15.

THE song sung at Bethlehem was a song sung in the night, and the supreme agony out of which came Christ's victory was an agony borne in the night. He who can understand these things, and why they are so, is prepared to do that most difficult of all tasks of true piety, that which one of old said he had accomplished—to sing God's song in the night.* The Hebrew of old found it hard by Babylon's streams to sing the sweet songs of Jerusalem's Temple : and, like that banishment to Babylon, the dark times of human life make it hard to sing the song of God. But though they make it difficult, they also make it triumphant and sweet.

* Psalm lxxvii. 6. See Vol. on Daily Life and Duty.

What a man does in the sorest times of his life, is a test of what he will do in the quiet, calm times of life. And though no character can be *built up* by extraordinary things, yet at times it is necessary that the work done in quietness shall be tried by unusual strain and pressure. We read to you, out of these quaint old histories, of what was done in Egypt, when extraordinary events happened. And very lovely the story was. With the dreams we have nothing to do, because dreams that are worth anything have left us poor mortals long ago, and we cannot know much about them. Leaving the dreams, and their divine interpretation, let us see what that Egyptian king *did* when he found that he and his country were going to be put to an unusual strain. One is always glad when a *king* does a wise thing, because the loftiness of the light enables it to be seen a great distance. King Pharaoh, being in a plight, sought to get hold of a wise man to help him. And this Joseph, newly out of prison, his reputation destroyed by malice, but his soul kept pure by sanctity, without pedigree or pretension, only thirty years of age—it struck Pharaoh that this was the man who could help him. He chose a wise man, and he had his reward. What that wise man did at that time is what is

done now in modern politics—he took advantage of the strain that was put upon the people. Having discovered that they had no food, he soon found the way to get hold of their land; for he who keeps the keys of a nation's belly holds the strings of that nation's purse. The most charming part of the story is that Pharaoh, being in a difficulty, did something that was appropriate thereto. This man Pharaoh will stand out for ever as an example of promptitude in time of difficulty. And he had his reward, for his people were saved from starving, and his coffers were well filled.

Now, anything extraordinary or unusual is always watched by wise men, to see what effect it has upon the people. If you read the newspapers, you will often find a paragraph headed—"Terrible Accident: Miraculous Escape," or "Extraordinary and Providential Escape." But what about those that *don't* escape? You don't call *that* providential? Oh! no, no. And that is your notion of what providence is, is it? Some of you are always looking upon providence as something that shall interfere on your behalf, and save you from accident. When you are in luck you call it "providence," but when ill-luck comes to you, *that* is *not* providence, you think! If two men go out in a

boat, and one is drowned, while the other is saved, *how* is it that the man who comes up should claim to be under the care of providence more than the other? *Why* is it that people so shrink from saying that providence is on the side of those who suffer, as well as of those who escape?

It is a remnant of the old times, of the days when all that was good came from the gods, and all that was evil came from—another source. That man has made but little way yet in understanding the goodness of God, who is not as ready to see that he was providentially burnt, or has lost a child, or become bankrupt, as that he has providentially had a legacy left him, or received any other of the good things of this mortal life.

A terrible accident happens on the railway. A number of confiding passengers take their seats in time—the train starts—an accident occurs, and they meet with sudden death. But one man stays behind to get some beer, and “providentially” escapes. Now, without considering the badness of the errand for which that man stayed, how is he justified in supposing that he was under the guidance of a loving providence any more than those who were killed? How much Christ said about this! “There is not a sparrow falleth to

the ground, but your Heavenly Father knoweth it." So if an accident happens, those that are killed are killed by God's providence, as much as those that are saved are saved by His will. Until you have felt that, you have reached only the beginnings of faith in the wisdom and providence of God. But with a sort of pardonable egotism, perhaps, God is only called into account by most people when things go prosperously with them. Whosoever things go smoothly, it is always "D.V." Now, until we understand this—that where-soever any man is at a given minute, is *the* place in which he *should* be—until we know that at that given minute, whatsoever storm, or disaster, or disease it may bring is, of necessity, for our eternal benefit, the one and only thing that *should* come—until we know this, we know but little of the abiding providence of God. Were men where they should not be; then, as far as fate goes, they would have escaped God, missed providence, lost the Father and the Eternal Mansions. Such a thing is impossible. Therefore a wise man should think this out, and as reverently claim God's providence in his disasters as in his blessings. It is too much to ask a man to thank even God for a blow, but it is not too much to ask him to recognize the Father's

hand who gave it. It may be hard to be thankful for misery, but it is not impossible, where the faith is very deep, for disaster to be accepted without murmuring.

Now, lest this should sound too high-pitched for human nature, let us take a human story to give us an illustration of it. Such in olden days was the loyalty and the strange reverence that men had for kings—such was their passionate superstition about the divine right of kings—that they have felt it almost an elevation to receive dishonour from a king. There is a story, in Swedish history, of a king who was mad with rage ; and, in his madness, sent for one of his prisoners to be brought before him. Then the king drew his dagger, and passed it through the arm of his victim ; and the poor wounded man just drew the dagger out, kissed it, and gave it back to the brutal hand which had smitten him. Now, hating such loyalty, as I do, yet how one wonders at the passionate beauty of that deed ! Marvelling that the man could so worship such a creature, yet how perfect was his loyalty to him ! That man might have written, “ Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.” It was the *king's* dagger that struck him, and he was the king's subject, so he just drew out the dagger,

kissed the bloody blade, and gave it back. If human loyalty towards an unworthy king can be so deep, how much more shall a man cry unto the all-loving Lord, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee." Though the sword has been used to my smarting, instead of asking the loving God to withdraw the stroke, shall I not learn to kiss the blade, and give it back to Him, willing that He should repeat the stroke, if need be? Faith has reached its highest mark, and the soul has reached its highest pitch, when a man can say, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee."

What loyalty has done, love has done many a time in this world. Thorough-going love takes the stroke, the frown, the storm, without murmuring; because deep faith, loyalty, and love have this power always behind the clouds to see the unbroken ether, the undisturbed air of perennial love. It always does strike me that very much time has been wasted in defining faith, when we have such large understanding of its final work. To have faith is so to believe in God that there shall be the *certainty* that He *cannot* smite, except lovingly, and for our good. There are men here and there against whose fair fame no amount of evidence could make us believe anything wrong.

If any of you covet a character which shall be glorious, aim at this—that a man shall never be able to believe anything evil of you until it is proved, until the saddest thing in life come to him—the wreck of a good ship, the breaking down of a fair name. And if one can come so near to perfect trust in man, how shall it be difficult for us to put our perfect trust in Him who can never act wrongly or unkindly? The soul goes on, until this stage is reached—that, whether we understand or not, we can still trust, and so learn to sing the Lord's song in the day-time and in the night-time; and then, looking up to God, say, "Though Thou slay me by one stroke or many, yet will I trust in Thee." That is the end of faith—never to doubt for a moment that all things go well—painfully, sadly, perhaps, but well, because coming from love.

It is marvellously easy to praise God when all things prosper. Praise and prosperity usually go together. Just as all my good luck comes from God's providence, so God's mercies perfect my praise. But that is no sign of faith. Even the Gentiles do that. To be thankful when there is something to be thankful for, there is nothing in that. To look pleasant when things are pleasant, is but common graciousness. Not to smile when

the sun shines would be churlish. To dance when the music is good, is inevitable to those who are well attuned—there is nothing in that. But there are some men who are gracious when all things are ungracious, sweet when things are sour, bright when other people are in the dark. The good economist keeps his candle for the time when it is most needed ; then his little light comes into eminent service. He puts his lamp out while other people's lamps are shining ; then, by-and-by, when the unwise virgins are all in the dark, this cheery soul lights his lamp.

It needs a great deal of grace to be able to sing God's song in the night—to be ready to see God in the gloom, and go into unlovely places and circumstances, and be quiet, nay, festal, over them ; but it may be done. Whoso can sing a song of praise when the bread is mildewed and the water is scant, that is the cheerful soul. This is what a man should aim at—always to receive a blow from God as sent *providentially*, and to look upon death as meaning as much lovingkindness as life. To look at the cradle and the coffin as being, both, bright and lovely, is impossible ; but we may shut the sad eyes, and say, “That *is* blackness and sadness ; but, though He slay me, yet will I trust

in Him." A man should be able to look up to God, and say, "Happen what will, come what may, Thou art good. Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee ;" and, like the poor Swede, draw the weapon from his wound, and give it back to God, saying, "Smite me again, if need be." When a man has learned to do that, there is nothing more to be done. When he has thoroughly understood that light and darkness, sunshine and storm, pleasure and pain, are equally "providential," then will he know that cold and gloom, bad prospects and bad harvests, are all admirable. Not that he *likes* them, but that he sees them to be parts of the same wonderful law, guided by the all-wise, all-loving God, and leading towards ends that are good. So, let my path be rugged and crooked, let me be footsore and weary ; pinch me, threaten me with starvation ; nevertheless, behind the cloud the bow of God is shining—behind the gloom is the eternal light.

Ponder upon these things, and remember that all disasters have two great offices—one to bring out your manhood, and the other to deepen your faith. Evil days make manhood daring, but soft times make useless people. When there is nothing to do, lazy people are as good as the industrious. When

there is nothing to eat, the delicate are as charming as the robust. When there is no light, it is "blind man's holiday," and all are on a level. But when anything extraordinary comes, then it is that man is tried. When there is much to lift, strong men grow valuable ; and when there is much to do, the industrious are precious. So, in a man's own life, all smoothness means all softness, and great strain means much strengthening. Sore pinching means a strong manhood, and therefore it is that all soft days make soft fibre. Extraordinary things try what is in you, increase your wisdom, deepen your faith, make your trust perfect. Therefore it is that a wise man asks to be tried, though it be almost unto killing ; that at last, mildew, and fog, and the blasting storm, and disappointment, and death—all these things, being foreseen, as in Pharaoh's dream, may make you as faithful as Job was when he uttered this great speech—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.



Easter Sunday Morning, March 28th, 1875.

“And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.”
LUKE xxiii. 56.

THEY who returned from Calvary were those lovers of Christ's whose love was strong enough to see him suffer, was provident enough to get ready for his burial, strong enough to take them to his sepulchre, and victorious enough to behold him after he had risen. The spices and ointments were the sweetnesses of their love, the last service that could be rendered to the dead ; the last attempt to deceive oneself as to the fate of the body, and the satirical scorn there is in the words—“Dust to dust ; ashes to ashes.” They brought ointments, if haply corruption might be stayed ; and spices, if decay might be stopped ;—ointment, if life might be con-

tinued, or the looks of it ; spices, that the dark dulness of death might be gladdened thereby.

Preparation was to them lovely. For there is perhaps more pathos and more joy in preparation than those of you who are not very observant or very sensitive think. There is nothing perhaps sweeter in life than to watch people making preparations. What more happy sight than to see a happy girl getting ready for her bridal ? What more pleasant than to hear the merry laughter of her companions, teasing her just a little, yet with busy fingers helping to prepare the bride ? They do well who spend many hours over it, for the sweetnesses of life cannot bear to be degraded by cheapness. We need no mar-plot, or kill-joy. Man can ill afford at any time in his life to put off the festal garments too soon, or to be heedless of the injunction—"Young man, rejoice in thy youth."

Sweeter still, and far more pathetic, more touching, it is to watch those fingers of the young girl a little while after, when, half secretly, and with blushes, not of shame, but of sweetness, she is busy in preparing more robes, which tell the tale that by-and-by a little child will be born ; sweet it is to see those fingers, half hiding their loving work ; to see the fancy that is spent upon it, and the

delicateness of the stitching. Even those women of old scarce poured out more the cordial of life than that young mother does in preparing for the solemnest thing that can happen to her. When sometimes, watching keenly, we catch sight of things not intended to be seen, and see the preparation for life, and the faith that gets ready for to-morrow, it is glorious indeed.

To a hearty man, it is pleasant to see the getting ready for a feast, to catch the waft from the kitchen that tells of good cheer. It is to the heart touching to see a mother getting ready the outfit for her boy—to watch her half fill the chest, put things in and take them out and put them in again, and kiss the garments the child is to wear; to see the tear drop upon the clothes, and to find her fearful lest the tear should have left a stain, and wondering whether the lad will ever know all that went into that tear.

Young people cannot feel as we feel. The old man goes out of the house with heavy step, but the lad is listening to other music than the sire. When the boy leaves the house the father is listening to the sad strains of humanity, but the boy hears the pipe and the drum and the shouts of liberty. We poor ancients catch but the music of yesterday, and

are listening to the sounds of the funeral march, and thinking of ages and years that are past, and of our threescore years and ten ; but *he* hears quite another song. We poor simpletons put salt into our tears, and say—"How little feeling these children have !" Do you want them to be as old as you are, and as foolish ? Whoso robs a child of a single joy sins against the God of joy. He who will not let the crowing child continue its crowing until it has finished, what knows he of the God of joy ? Worship your dismal gods if you will ; but let these little ones alone in undiminished joy.

It is strange, but there is one thing people seldom or never get ready for—the hour of death. For birth, for marriage, for feasting, for incoming, ah ! what preparations ! But how few of us deliberately, quietly, joyously get ready for the last great time of joy. We have heard of people who have had their shrouds made, ready for their death ; but we sympathize not with them. I heard of a man once who had his *coffin* made. Poor fool ! a man might as well *sleep* in a coffin. He who has his shroud stitched before death comes, usually has it to kill joy, and that is evil. It is not the outward garment that makes a man. There are some who are dwarfs in any garments. Art thou a sinner ?

Not the garments of the Lord himself can make thee a saint. We want not to spoil mirth, nor to have a shroud made, which, when we got used to it, would have no more effect than our ordinary garments, or the robes of the priest, or the garments of the clergy. I want to get ready for dying, but to get ready as a man—a man who knows that the great time is near when the house of this tabernacle shall be destroyed—a sad time in some sense, though it ought not to be.

Having got ready for the bridal, having prepared for the bridegroom, shall we fear death? No. Oh, the misery of most death-beds! The cat-howling, and weeping, and crowding of relations about the poor dying man, as if they expected *him* to give *them* comfort! They best visit the chamber of death who carry with them spice and ointment, and the oil of gladness for the soul. When a wise man enters the chamber of death, he does so cheerfully. "My son, give me a great thought to comfort me," was the request of a great man when sick, and nigh unto death. Now, a great thought is one of the preparations for death.

But deliberately, which of you have ever got ready, for your dying, spices beforehand—not for the anointing of the body, but to cheer and com-

fort the soul? I have been in many death-chambers, and have closed many eyes. But in the majority of death-chambers you would think there was no risen Christ. Believers? These people believe? Lazarus might as well have stopped in his grave, to hear them howl like unregenerate heathen. "But," they say, "we cannot help feeling the loss." Just so. But are you to comfort the dying man, or he you? I do not say you can express joy. But you can give a great thought, or read one triumphant psalm, or take down that bottle which a wise man always provides himself with—the old Hebrew "oil of gladness," instead of weariness and tediousness and tears. What is it to a Christian man? If you will only stand near, and with sweet voice keep on saying, "I am the resurrection and the life," then shall the dying man have of the oil of gladness, and his dying hours shall be comforted.

Then I have seen the lawyer in the death-room sometimes. What a sight! The only law a dying man ought to be troubled with is that of the dying divine of old, "The days of a man's life are three-score years and ten." That is the limit of time during which nature can spare its particles—it wants them back again after that for other things.

That is the only legal document a dying man should trouble himself with—that he may be ready for his successor, when the lease is out, and the time is up, and the tenant must go. If the taking down of this dear old house (for it *is* dear) should trouble him, then stand by the bedside and tell him, “Though the earthly house of this tabernacle be destroyed, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” One of the preparations for death is therefore to see that the lawyer does not come at the time of death. Send for him sooner. Get done with him in time. No man does well who leaves the regulation of his earthly affairs one moment after to-morrow. Some of you have a dim notion that if you make your will you will die the sooner. You must be living on your gold, and reckoning the power with which you can clutch your gold as the lease of your life. Banish the lawyer from the hour of death. Banish him from the thoughts of death. Let all that work be done before.

And then the clergy! what have we to do with *them* in the hour of death? Well, I think there is no great use in sending for them. Shall a dying man find sweeter accents than those of one of his own children? In the hour of my death if any

man will come, and with kindly voice read to me the words of the old psalm, or the sweet words of the Lord, or the words of absolution if need be—that will do for me. I want no uniforms about me—no priestcraft. Living confident in laymanship all my life, I want no clerics in the hour of death but the clerics of lovingkindness and mercy.

Let me in the hour of death have no hushing. Don't go about with hushed feet on my account. Send for some sweet singing children, if possible. Send for those who have loved me, and those who can play cunningly upon musical instruments. And just when about to go my long journey, let me hear the old chants of the church, for there is nothing like stepping to music to him who is taking the last dead march. Keep time for him, as he goes on his way to meet his God as a faithful servant.

If it be needful, let the light be shut out, but if not, then open the windows, and like that great man who cried in his dying hour, "Let me see the sun once more," * so let me turn to the sun for the last time, and let God teach me to be thankful that it *is* the last, and grateful because I have seen it so

* Probably Douglas Jerrold. Goethe's expression was—"More light !"

many times before. Let me hear the sounds of music. And do not bate your breath for me—speak right out. These are the gettings ready for death.

I have the glass out of which my dying father drank just before he passed out of life, and when my lips shall take their last draught of earth, may it be out of the same cup, sanctified and made holy ! Out of the little glass, last touched by the lips of my sainted sire, let me drink my last, and let my son drink his last. Let us all put our lips to the same cup, in order that that cup may grow glorious, having had this privilege—that out of it man after man has bade farewell to earth, and drank their last toast to the world that is to come. And the coins that have lain upon the lids, and closed over the dearest eyes that I have known—there they are ready, that they may lie upon mine ; sanctified by death, ready for me when I shall close these eyes for ever and for ever. You may keep your jewels. I keep these my treasures—the one drinking-cup, and these my coins—for out of the one the dearest lips that I have known have drunk farewell to earth, and the others have lain upon the eyes that have looked their love, but now are closed for evermore. So, even down to the little furnitures, a man may get ready for death.

But the best preparation for death is, to do as much good as you can whilst you live. If you say, "Thank God, I have done some good in my day," some cleric will tell you that, "You are trusting in your own merits." They need oftentimes to talk about their "merits," if their merits are all they have to trust in. But we poor infidels, what is *our* trust? That God is all and in all; that every ray of light is the shining of His eye, that every one of us are born by His love, upheld by it, saved by it, and afterwards glorified by it. What do we want with "merits"? We want no merits, for God is all in all. Merits? You go bargaining with God if you like. Let the orthodox people chatter about the cross, and tell us that we could not enter heaven except Christ had died. Let these chattering slanderers bargain for salvation, but we poor unbelievers have nothing to bargain about. No, no. Like little children, what we have to do is this: looking at the Lord our God, and knowing that His arms are the arms of everlasting love, we have to put ourselves into them, and, being in them, do as little children do—play, crow, shout, rejoice, grow, live, love, die.

"Merits!" Who is talking about merits? If I were at the death-bed of a little child, I would

let the little lass have her dearest doll, and there would preach to her about it, and tell her that the good God was strong and loving, and she was going to His arms almighty. Then, as she took her last look at her little doll, confidently resting in His arms, she would go her sweet way to God, having learned something of His love through her own love for the little mannikin before her. May a child have a toy or two to die with, and shall not a grown man too? A holy man, who had been good to children, when he came to die, had his house filled with them; they crowded the rooms and the stairs, and with their sweet voices sang to him. He had them there that he might warm himself by the acts of charity which the good God, to whom he was going, had enabled him to do.

It is a good thing sometimes to tell a man what good he has done in life. "But," you say, "is not that forsaking the Saviour, on whom all our reliance should be placed?" Reliance! Ah! that is the old story. But in the time of death, as far as I have seen, people are always thinking of what they should have thought of at the beginning of life. "But," you say, "don't you think it's very improper to tell a man of the good he has done in life?" No, I don't. You will often hear the

question asked anxiously of a dying man, "My dear friend, do you feel an interest in your Saviour?" What a question to ask in a dying hour! Forty years ago *that* should have been settled. The one utterance a dying man should want to speak is, "I know in whom I *have* believed." You remember that old martyr, when dying by fire, and the clergyman wanted to preach to him—"Nay, nay," said the old man, "*when I was a young man* I examined these things; I won't do it again *now*." All these things should be settled long before—not in the solemn hour of death.

"But," you say, "it would be such a comfort to his friends to hear him say he trusted in God." We who believe in the unbroken and awful connection between cause and consequence, believe that just as a man enters eternity, from that plane his education must begin; that there is no sudden turning, as is commonly supposed, of a senseless chatterer of creeds into an angel or saint by death. No; if that is ever done, it will take a long time—time in which they may learn the solemn laws of God. But this common notion is absurd, that when a man lies down in bed to die, a sensualist and a cheat, *he*, by a spasm of spiritualism, can

become a glorified saint the next minute. Oh, it is impossible ! Is God so altered ? Can His laws so change ? Can a thing be born of one that is not ?—for that is what it comes to. Can a clean thing be brought forth out of an unclean thing ? “I was shapen in iniquity.” With what unction and gusto we are told that, “we are born in sin, and cradled in iniquity.” During my unwilling imprisonment in the somewhat chilly land of Scotland, I have seen mothers teaching their children from the catechism, that they were born unclean, and must be damned for the sin of Adam. Even though they had no sin of their own, it was no use ; they came out of an unclean thing, and they must be unclean. And yet men declare that a dying sinner can in a moment pass into another life cleansed and glorified. When *such* faith works, reason perishes.

Now, what is a true preparation for the hour of death ? There should be not only wise living, but careful preparation, deliberate preparation, in little things and in great things. There should be no putting away the thought of death. Nay ; she who looks not forward with joy, thinking to become a bride, is not a woman ; and she who, being a bride, pines not to be a mother, and at the first

indication of it fails to get ready, is looked upon with coldness and scorn. That prodigal who forgets the father's love, and that father who, on the coming home of his repentant son, forgets the fatted calf, we admire not. Whoso, on the coming of a friend, forgets to put one little extra dish or garnish, we admire not. And yet we who find such joy in getting ready for these things, march on day after day to that grandest, solemnest time of all, without any preparation. For what comes when the death-chamber is reached? Usually lawyers, doctors, physic-bottles, and nonsense; instead of its being a place of calmness and quietness and victory, a very festal chamber, where the dying man may utter forth in a few quiet words his faith.

God give us courage enough to do it. Let there be such reading of great thoughts, and such showing of garments made, that the hour of our death may linger pleasantly in the memories of those we love.

And then, there is no disappointment about these preparations. There have been preparations for the bridal, and the bridal never came. There have been preparations for the child, and the child was never born. Feasts have been got ready for guests, and the guests never arrived. But never was pre-

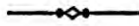
paration made for the hour of death that was wasted. True, the great sea may take us, or we may die by fire, but most of you may be certain of this—you will die in your own bed, in your own house, and amongst your own friends. Prepare spices and ointment for the day of your burial. And if, in the hour of death, instead of the quietness and calm that a wise man longs for, the poor brain should be dizzy, and the light fitful, and foolishness have taken the place of wisdom, and there is gabble on the tongue, then let your best lover stand by and say for you, "I know in whom I have believed." Whilst you perhaps are "babbling of green fields," let there be some to say, "God is good ; he trusted in Him." Let one hold the cross before your dying eyes, and say, "This man also trusted in God." And who knows but that you may master the great secret ?

In death—just after death—is the time of man's supremest loveliness. The dead look so lovely just after they be dead. And why ? It is the hour of victory. The fight is over, and the obstruction gone, and the body hath not yet had inflicted upon it the sentence of its nature. In the very hour of death the countenance is often lovely in its sweetness. I have looked upon the face of

the dead, and said to myself, steadfastly beholding his countenance, "His face is as the face of an angel."

Now, think of those words, "They prepared spices and ointments." Your friends may do it for your body ; but you must do it yourselves for your soul. There ought to be death-beds worth going to. Much of the meanness of the hour of death is simply for this reason—that "they returned," but they brought no spices, and no ointments.

*THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY KEPT
BRIGHT.*



Easter Sunday Morning, April 16th, 1876.

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”—PSALM xlii. 11.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”—I COR. xv. 58.

IN whatsoever way a man may apprehend a truth, that man must put up with the fact that in this life he can never see a truth in its fulness, can never sink to the depths of despair, nor be gladdened with all possible joy. For it is given to man to have nothing that is not liable to eclipses, clouds, and change. And though no doubt much of the change that comes over us is owing to the evil within us, yet, come from what source it will, there must be days and hours of gladness that seem all

too short, and long nights when there is sometimes no star ; and we must flicker in faith, and rise and fall in hope. There must be far times, and times when we seem near to God ; times of undoubtingness, and times of perpetual peradventure. It is part of man's lot ; but it is one of the things that are to be overcome, and only to be overcome by thinking less and less of it ; turning always from the too shifting things of our own feeling to the abiding things of God. Ofttimes, people plague themselves too much. Well, it is of the earth, earthy ; a thing to be mourned over, perhaps, but not to be greatly troubled about.

The one great thing that a man should set before him is this—that it is clear to him that the sun shines, though it may not be visible ; that it is clear to him where the east is, though there be no sun rising ; that it is clear to him where the north star is, though the magnet point not to it. All these things, though unseen, should be nevertheless utterly, abundantly believed. It is useless to go into any history as to how these things have been brought about. Suffice it that every man knows enough of his own nature to understand why in his case there be days of darkness and days of light. Though an essay might be written about it to

supply the circumstances, and so forth, yet, just as I believe nothing about the weather from what is set down in almanacs—for there is so much *terra incognita* on land and sea that it is impossible always to tell from whence comes the gust and storm—so in man's heart there be places of which we know but little. A place may be marked "Desert," which some day shall be found to be "A land flowing with milk and honey."

As to the dispersing of all these things—that were best let alone. In due time they will go. The good God has not allowed any man to feel either at his best or at his worst too long together. On the heights the air is too keen. Come down he must. Though the song at heaven's gate seems so enchanting that it were a pity it should be ever stayed; yet there is also a music that comes from the little beaks at home when crying with hunger, and to the true heart there is more beauty in that than in any strain that soaring bird can sing.

There are times when man's mind expands to the belief in immortality, resurrection, the world to come, a new life—times when all *that*, to a man, is exceedingly clear, though he cannot map the unknown country. And there are days when all this goes back into fog, when man looks out of the

windows of life and death, and sees nothing but a white mist, and comes away, not unbelieving, perhaps, but unwarmed, unblest. Those who do not know this may thank God and take courage. It is good for some to live in the plain ; but the terrible life of others knows great depths and great heights. There are souls that, when in the deep at all, are *sea-deep* ; and when on the heights, are *mountain-high*.

You sometimes punish yourselves by grieving over this. That is foolish ; because no great truth is equally able, at all times, to comfort, uphold, or bring joy. This, which is no doubt a misfortune, is not to be put down as a thing to be blamed. It is what gives life to the grandest book that was ever written—that book so full of lights and shades—the Book of Psalms. It is that which makes it to be the everlasting litany of the human heart, the perpetual solace of all souls. For David acknowledged that there was no truth, however lofty, however probable, that he could at all times see with equal clearness of vision, or be equally warmed by. There are truths that are not always equally near—there are days when we get no warmth from them, days when the spots which appear so many and so big turn their ugly faces toward us, until we shiver where before we had warmth, and tremble with

peradventure where before we had joy and confidence. All this is of necessity, and a wise man should expect it. It is a thing not to torment yourself about, as "religious" people do. When I was amongst them (for I have been amongst them, you know) there was so much pulse-feeling, so much studying of how they felt! It was all very well; but too often it was made to be a sign of grace, just as, to many people, to be a little out of health is considered interesting, and to be pale is charming, and to have a small appetite is refined; until at last their refinement ends in ineptitude, imbecility, or death.

So, these things are misfortunes, necessities, but not anything to be proud of. No! rather a man should strive, if it may be, that there should be to him some trace of this inner life of his revealed in the outer life. With some, life is one long summer; they know no winter. Here and there there are chosen souls who live in such perfect peace that with them the midsummer-day is the only day. But, for the majority of us, it is no matter how great a truth is, we are not always equally warmed by it. And this most frequently arises from infirmities of our own.

The most enviable of all things is a steadfast

heart, unmovable principles. When Paul sang that triumphant song over death, he said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And Paul on Fixedness is well worth studying. "Now," said he, "you are fleeting towards the grave: therefore, in all you do, be ye steadfast, unmovable; and, to help you, I will supply you with something that will make you steadfast and unmovable—be *always abounding in the work of the Lord.*" There is the steadfast man's refuge! He can be peradventurous until the heavens are hidden, and the existence of God Himself becomes doubtful, but he must be "always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knows that his labour is not in vain in the Lord." This is the fixedness for which a wise man longs; this is his Ulysses' secret of steadfastness, to abound in the work of the Lord. For a man shall abound in that, and, though all go wrong, nevertheless he shall not fall.

This is Paul's prescription to bring about fixedness. It may not be the one you adopt; but if you look about in life, you will find it is the only one which braces up the whole man, and from which you can get tonic and strength.

Coming back, then, to this doctrine of immortality, some of you wish you had never doubted it. Well, my friends, children wish for the moon. Much accustomed to scenes of death myself, I often hear people say, "I wish I were *certain* about the next world." I say, "Doubtless." I admit that one would like that one traveller should come back. If some ancient mariner were to return, how we should gather round him! No traveller from far regions of the earth could tell a tale so enrapturing as one who should come from the "undiscovered country," and show us "the things that shall be hereafter." We should like to converse with some who have walked in the Holy City, some who have seen death, and been on the other side of the river. But he whose tongue was mute came back and told no tale. Can nobody make Lazarus speak? Was it worth while to bring a dumb man back into this world! At times I feel like Dr. Johnson, when somebody, half-rebukingly, said something to him about ghosts. He was an honest man, and he could not believe. It was asked him, "Do you think we Christians want any more evidence?" "Yes, yes," said he, "I want all the evidence I can get—all the evidence I can get." Who would not, if he could, listen to Lazarus, or

raise a ghost, or call back a spirit, if it could be done? This it is that has made men listen so naturally always to anything that professes to be from another world, to listen for the footsteps of the departed.

Therefore, the passionate heart *does* cry out for the fixed faith ; and the passionate heart is still obliged to say, "I cannot have it." "It is hard," you say. It is ! But children think a great many things hard. The life of a child is made up of not having what it asks for. The child is angry, and rages with anger, until it ends in his getting moon-*shine* instead of the moon. So it is with the great doctrine of Immortality. Men and women cry out, "Oh ! if I could be *sure—always* sure ; if I could be *certain* of the life hereafter !" I have tried it, and it is no sign of what is called "that infidel temper" of mine, not to see this great truth at all times with equal clearness, or to be always warmed by it.

Those of you who have known Death, know that even the body of the dead will tell one tale one day, and another another day. At one time such heavenly peace seems to rest upon that poor face, that only an angel-spirit could have possibly left there. I have stood and gazed upon the face of

the dead, and in the hour of death the wrinkles seemed to have been smoothed out, and about that poor pinched mouth came a smile so sweet, as though a spirit had placed it there. Evidently, an angel had been there ; for the feathers of his wings were some of them even, as it were, dropped there ; and so one went away confident that this life of ours, though it dip deep under the sea called Death, should rise again. But, another day, standing by the side of one who is dead, the body and soul seem all so gone ! And perhaps the sad signs of that awful corruption are there ; and one sees no life beyond—nothing but the hardness and stiffness of the clay before us ; all seems dead and done with, and one needs the apostle by the side of the grave to restore us to the great belief that they are alive in God.

One comes to me and asks, "Are you certain about the life eternal?" And I say, "No, not to-day ; call to-morrow." He comes again to-morrow, and asks me, "Are you certain about the life eternal?" "Oh," I say, "yes ; perfectly." "Well, but," you say, "that is very inconsistent." It is not inconsistent ; it is part of my poor nature ; for I can never remain at my best or at my worst.

But the curse is, that the majority of people are much more apt to believe in evil than they are in good. Though that glorious German said, "The tear of grief is a diamond of the second class ; but the tear of joy is a diamond of the first water"—do you believe it? No ; the majority of people think they are never so near to God as when they are weeping. The larger part of the religion of this country, what is it? Restraint—decorum. On the death of a friend, standing around the coffin, we see these "Christians" arrayed in the habiliments of unbelief. And that is "religion"! Oh! if men did but truly believe, with that great heart, in the life hereafter! If they would but listen to him too, when he says—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

But it has been said truly—"We paint devils more easily than gods, Furies more easily than Venuses, and hell better than heaven." So we more easily believe in the former than the latter, and in the greatest misfortunes rather than the greatest happiness. When the artist takes his brush to paint the heavenly city, he finds it hard to

do it ; but to paint hell is easy. The doctrines of damnation and atonement by bloodshed ; of sacrifice, death, and darkness—all these are easy to be believed ; but when a man comes and whispers of a mighty joy, of life for ever, of the closing of hell, of redemption for all, and of bringing all men home to God—ah ! that is news ! that is quite unbelievable !

I have found by my experience that the hardest thing is to make people believe in a joyous God—ever-blessed, ever blessing—for they run about with their little book, and though they live in a world of mirth, of music, of greenness, and of glory, nevertheless, the great thing with them is to be miserable and to wear sackcloth. Now, the constant wearing of sackcloth is a disgrace and a shame. Listen to Paul again—“Always abounding in the work of the Lord.” That is the thing to be done.

There are rules by which an even temperature may be kept up in a house ; but there are no methods by which this may be done in the heart. But excessive summer heat may be done away with, and the belief in immortality yet kept eternally bright. Watch constantly that wonderful life within a man, and see how little there is of summer heat in any best days whatsoever.

He who has looked into that word "ought"—that sense of right and wrong which is in every man—whosoever knows the spiritual beauty and has understood the glory and truth of this strange world within him—let him look up, and *demand* of God justice ; let him say as Job did—"I will discourse with my Maker ; I will argue it out with Thee." Let him, keeping his eyes fixed on the inner life, *ask* of God—"Give me a second world, that shall be big enough, fair enough, for this inner life. Let this spirit of Thine know another life, that there, without restriction, this which is Thy life may bloom again in fulness for evermore." But, with an amazing want of connection, I am sometimes told that this fine intellectual life within me was intended to help my poor mortal body along. I don't like to hear that this spirit within me was given to help my old body. No ; let the body be cook, butler, errand-boy, and porter to the soul in man ; then that man shall oft see that his heart is at its best when he is most set on truth, righteousness, and charity ; and that when a man is at his best, his belief in immortality is fullest and strongest. When I am sad, I see not through the tears of my sorrow ; but when I am glad, the life to come seems certain.

It is only when men will understand God better than they do, that, instead of the continual kill-joy and mar-plot they have made the good God to be, they will think of Him as a Father, a Lover, a Friend. Now, just look at God this afternoon. And even though your poor necessities should fashion Him into *form* — what then? What harm? If I wanted to paint God, I would paint Him as a large-hearted man, watching His children, smiling at their play, grieved at their sins and sadnesses; but so loving that He will not destroy them, so proud of them that He will not let death touch them. I would paint my God as a God of graciousness, who wants that all His children shall have more *fulness* of joy. And though I perhaps have little to complain of—for I have known and drunk of some of life's raptures as deeply as a man can—yet, with all my sins and passions, I feel that there is something more owing to me, more of the divineness and fulness of God.

Don't think I am going to say that I merit anything. No, no; only at times I like to play truant, and get away from theology. I cannot conceive that God, who is ever-blessed, should not give a number of people more joy than pain. I know not whether to-day there is going on more sighing or

laughing, more joy or death—I cannot tell you—I do not know. But when I think of what a creature I am, and how great my desires, I tremble sometimes. When I think of what it would take to satisfy me, to give me all that I desire—I don't mean of such baubles as the world prizes: for my estimate of brass buttons and things of that kind is but small—but to satisfy my spirit; to show me all the beauty my soul desires; my dream of a world where the leaf shall flourish, and there shall be nothing to destroy it; where there shall be no maggot at the root of everything; nothing to mar man's beauty or woman's grace. Oh! if you knew all that it would take to satisfy me! Threescore years and ten cannot do it. So, the more I think about the good God, the more confident I get about immortality. "O my soul, why art thou cast down? why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Thus, I should not like to try to construct a more noble God than God is. When we find, every year of our life, how He makes the grass to spring up again, then are we confident, and cry, "O grave! where is thy victory? O Death! where is thy sting?" So, standing by the side of the

grave, I say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him." Then comes the full song; then, the dead I love are in the next room to me, and I hear their voice as in the days of old. At such times there be no dead, but all live in God; and I open the door, as it were, and behold them once again.

So I turn to God, at my best times, and say, "Thou art my Holy One; I shall not die!" So I am confident! Now, then, I have won the victory! But then I turn again to holy Paul, and I thank him for bringing me down so steadily: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable." And how shall you do it? Your feelings may be changeable, your hopes may be but clouds that pass away, but *work* remains—"always abounding in the work of the Lord." Oh, there is no moving that fixed throne! O Jehovah! how constant are Thy ways! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye constant in the works of the Lord."

There is a charming story of an old gentleman, who, when dying, felt the fluctuations of his own changing feelings. Speaking to those near, he said, "I love God;" and then, in a moment, correcting himself, he said, "or rather, I am loved of

Him." No death-bed speech could be more human, more hearty and charming, than the rapid correction of that sinking man, "I love Thee—or rather, *or rather*, I am loved of Thee." So Paul points out to us that, though our feelings may change, and our hopes may faint, yet "the work of the Lord" is always there. It was there before we came; it will be there after we go, and always there.

Mark this. There is no truth a man can believe, however transcendental, however far away from this earthly life, but that truth may be ennobled and brightened by work. Work cleans the windows through which heaven's light can come. The very light of God Himself cannot shine in its fulness upon the dirty, the lazy, and the indolent; for it is no matter though the planet Venus itself be brightly shining, the heavenliness of the light that shall come in depends upon the clearness of the window through which it shines. It is the brightness, or the mean misery of that through which it comes that determines its effect. Arise, then! be like the good housewife—cleaning all things, "abounding" in work. "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the *work* of the Lord." That is the universal brightener, the cleaner of the soul's windows. It keeps bright Heaven's gate,

and makes the way open for the angels. Where work is wanting, there we find the tangled brier and the closed path. Even when Christ came, there must be John the Baptist to "make straight the way of the Lord." Thus, then, the doctrine of immortality can be made clear to us in two ways—by thinking more of the joyous and bright side of life, and by constant labour in the work of the Lord.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.



Easter Sunday, April 5th, 1874.

“That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be. . . . but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.”—1 COR. xv. 37, 38.

IN the Apostles' Creed, so called, there is a clause which says, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” But in the New Testament there is no such phrase at all ; for nowhere in that Book is it written that there is to be a resurrection of the flesh, or a resurrection of the body. Now this in itself would, to a thoughtful man, be ground for inquiry—why the most universal of the Christian creeds should contain a phrase, which phrase embodies a doctrine, yet is not found in the New Testament—and, as some of us think, neither is the doctrine to be found there at all.

And I confess that just at times the body is a sore weariness ; it boweth down the immortal spirit, and we are obliged to call it "the earthly house of this tabernacle." We feel the longing of which St. Paul speaks, to be unclothed, and a desire to be "clothed upon." Just as the body hampers the spirit, so this doctrine of the resurrection of the body hampers, to my mind, the doctrine of the immortal life. Therefore, as I long for the time when the spirit shall be free from the earthly house of this tabernacle that becomes so rent and ragged towards its close, so one would desire more and more that the doctrine of Eternal Life should be free from this beggarly obstruction called the resurrection of the body. I put this matter strongly, because that is the only way to make some of you think at all.

This doctrine of the resurrection of the body is very old. It comes from that usually suspicious source of Christian nonsense—the far East. It is to be found in Hindoo books and in Persian literature. The Hebrews probably got it from Persia. As Christianity was at first only an enlightened Hebrew sect, and all the early Christians were of course Jews, it is no wonder that this doctrine, as St. Paul has put it, came by degrees to be

shaped, defined, and illustrated from these old Eastern sources. That phrase, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," occurs in no creed earlier than the fourth century. But you must beware of a very common, though not necessary or legitimate inference. You must not infer that because the words did not appear in any creed before the end of the fourth century, that therefore the doctrine was not believed. Creeds do not precede belief; they come after belief is beginning to be shaken. The creeds of the Church never taught doctrine, so much as summed it up after people began to doubt. As soon as men begin to doubt, then they begin to define. Had there been no Arianism, there would probably have been no creed called Athanasian. Therefore, I am not prepared to say that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was not the universal belief of the early Church. I should rather think it was, because it was so late before it was stated.

Now, as it is worth while to know why some of you believe in this doctrine, it is worth your while to know why some of us don't. It has long been to me a sepulchre, a tomb, a hindrance, a burden, a ground of disbelief; a thing that spoils immortality, that darkens the life to come with the

hideous shadows of disease, obstruction, and death here. Those of you who think, may follow out the matter for yourselves, and see whether there is any such doctrine as what is vulgarly and commonly called the resurrection of the body.

To state that doctrine as it is stated by our divines and poets, is to state something so ludicrous, that but for the solemnity of the subject, jeers would take the place of discussion, and laughter be the only proper argument by which such childishness could be met. For instance, when we find the great Tertullian—great in many things, I admit—when he informs me that the teeth are providentially made eternal in order to serve as the seeds of the resurrection body, how can a man answer that except by sending Tertullian to the dentist, and asking him whether there is any pleasant prospect for most of you if the teeth are to be made the seeds of the resurrection body? Teeth! You remember one man's pathetic history of his teeth. He said his teeth were a plague to get, a plague to keep, and a plague to lose, and he never knew any comfort from them till they were gone. When men believe in a doctrine, they cluster all their nonsense round it as well as their sense. When once you thoroughly believe

a thing, it is useless to try to argue it out of you. Tertullian made up his mind that the body must be raised again ; and we are asked by Churchmen to accept the statement of that father, who, because he lived nearer the source of Christianity than we do, knew more about it ! The fathers knew *less*. We, in the long ages, sift these things which they believed, and add not to them.

St. Augustine, a man of power, a man of might, great in most things, *he* has made up his mind that his body is to come up again ; and he says that every man's body, however dispersed its atoms here, shall come up perfect. This is a plain statement of the doctrine—that every body shall be restored, quantity and quality. As many hairs as have been cut off, as many nails as have been pared, shall return ; not so as to disfigure the body, but to make it perfect, by going into the substance of the body. They would be sufficient to make a little mountain, exuding, and wondering what is to become of it. He does not say those hairs will come back and all be put upon the head. No. Even the Chinese would be paled by that, effectually. But he says they return into the body : and yet the body is to be the same, quantity and quality. Why, a child in science would tell him

that if the hairs that have been shed, and the nails that have been pared, return into the substance of the body, there must be increase of bulk.

I might multiply these instances of utter childishness—childish because men are determined to believe a thing, and when puzzled with the difficulties that occur, rather than give up the thing will smother it in absurdity, and bury it in foolishness. At last a man can bear it no longer, and, with one Titanic heave, he throws off these mountains which folk, wishing to serve God, have piled upon the possibilities of creeds.

Of course Mohammed took up the doctrine, because he found it suited him exactly in all its foolishness. During the Middle Ages it was one of the great doctrines that men liked to discuss. In those ages, when men had little better to think of than theology, they split hairs about it with an ability never exceeded. Oh! what a dance of folly one might lead you, if one were to quote their opinions and some of their notions on the subject of this carcase of yours! One man asked, "Will each man's hair and nails be restored?" He had been reading St. Augustine probably. Another question was, "Will all of us rise of the same age?" That is important! Most of us could

fix the age we should like to rise at. What age would you like to be, at rising? Three score and ten, or in youth and beauty? Another question—"Will all people, when they rise, be of one size and sex?" Important to giants and dwarfs, and to women folk in general. "Will they rise in old age?" Think of shrunken age, so lean, so spare, and that it is to be allowed to rise again! Perhaps the crutches will rise also! And to show you that this stuff is still believed, let us quote from a modern divine—(I do not know whether he is dead, or, if so, what weight he was when he died)—"Every portion of bone, and every particle of dust shall come forth."

You cannot get rid of these things, if the body is to rise. We ply you with modern science. Science will tell you that the composition of bone is phosphorus, and so on; that your eye is a jelly, and that your bones have done duty before, and that there is nothing original about you. The real history of man is: God gives him a spirit, and it has the power of drawing earth towards it, and nothing is taken away by it when it leaves the body. Now this has raised a difficulty in the modern mind. If there have been so many owners of every particle, who is to reclaim it? How is it

to be divided? What celestial lawyer is equal to the task? By what consummate power of arithmetic shall the fractions be dissolved? "Well, but," people say, "*God* can do this." Oh! of all silly talk, that is to me the simplest. I show you a difficulty—I show you what seems to me an impossibility—and you say, "All things are possible to God." Why, God is *able* to bring back George III. if He liked, and put him on the throne. I say He *could* do it; but will He call Nebuchadnezzar back, or seat George III. on the earthly throne again? I say He could, but I know He won't. The bare statement of the possibilities of God is the idleness of metaphysics—a foolish phrase in which people cheat themselves into believing that they have got some ground of belief.

Then comes what may be called the moral argument for the resurrection of the body. There is an old belief, that in order that a man might be truly judged and truly punished, it would be necessary that he should have his body back again, so that the body might share in the judgment and in the punishment. The belief has been very widely spread that there is a moral necessity for the veritable body to rise again, in order that the judgment and the punishment may be complete.

This belief is admirably illustrated by one of the Rabbinical fables, which is very witty, but not conclusive. A case is put, thus: Here is an orchard, and there is a blind man, who wants the fruit, but he cannot see it. A lame man also wants the fruit, but he cannot reach it. So they enter upon co-operative principles. The blind man gets upon the shoulders of the lame man, and by that means they reach the fruit. So when they come to the judge, the judge asks, "Who stole the fruit?" The blind man says, "I did not, for I could not see;" and the lame man says, "I did not, for I could not reach it." This is supposed to be the condition of the soul and the body. The soul says, "I did not sin, because the moment I got rid of the body I winged my flight aloft, and I have been sinless ever since;" and the body says, "I did not sin, because when the soul left me I was laid in the grave." The fable states that the judge told the blind man to get on to the shoulders of the lame man, and he had them both scourged. That is merely an illustration, quaint and curious, shallow enough, but no argument; and I think it is supposed to state, and does state, the doctrine. The sins you and I have committed were a joint-stock operation, and as both body and soul say they did

not do it, have them both up and punish them both. That is what is called the moral argument for the resurrection of the body.

Now, if you feel there is any force in that, you have not learned this much in life : that the punishments a man really dreads, in proportion as he is intellectual, spiritual, and moral, are not the punishments that fall upon the body, but those that fall upon the spirit. It is well, you know, for a man at a certain stage of stupidity to believe in the Gehenna of Hell and its flames, but by-and-by, when the spirit becomes instructed in the things of the Spirit, he knows that the true pains are in the spirit, and not in the poor body itself.

Now I have stated the case, and I have stated it in its exaggeration in order that you may see what is in it. It has been held by the larger part of the Church that this very body—flesh, and blood, and bones—is to rise again ; and one Scotch divine, lately dead, held that when Paul said that flesh and blood could not inherit the Kingdom of God, he did not say *bones* ; and therefore the divine made an exception in favour of bones, the same as Tertullian did in favour of teeth. Doesn't this strike you as very childish ?

Let us go to the Council of Trent—that gathering

together of saints from all parts of Christendom—and hear them discourse on this subject. They declared that the body should be raised without deformities and superfluities—that as it was the partner of a man's deeds, so it was necessary for it to rejoin the partnership in order to be punished. If I had the spirit of one of the old schoolmen, it would take me an hour to ask questions on the body being raised without deformities and superfluities. One would wonder how a deformed man would do. He is to be raised up perfect. Is the deformed part to be exempted from the punishment of the other parts? If the body is to be made perfect, then the deformed man may possibly have a limb that does not suffer, or have a limb that is not justly treated. Therefore, we must speculate on all the deformed creatures we have seen. They are all to be made perfect! Then I say that is not the body. If every man was to be raised without deformities and superfluities, and all men were to be beauteous in the world to come in consequence of the resurrection of the body, then would one see in that doctrine some hope. But, when you look at the majority of people's bodies—now, honestly, do you wish to see them rise again? and, taking an impartial view of your own body, would you like to

have nothing but that to go on with? When you look on men's bodies and see the signs of sin, the marks of meanness, the odiousness that comes of sensuality, the bloated look of the glutton, the greedy eye of the thief—are these things to be raised again? At what time of a man's life, then, shall he rise again?

Now the dream that all men are to be raised with an equality of body destroys the whole business. Take your beauty. Perhaps some of your sins were committed because you were not a beauty. Who knows how much ill-temper and jealousy and spite some people have, because of their countenance? It is a difficult thing to begin life with a squint: it leads a man into many obliquities of temper. And yet, if that is not to be raised again, what becomes of the fable of the lame man and the blind man? It is hardly worth while to expose this idleness further.

But we may ask you what are your grounds for holding this belief? It is marvellous to me how St. Paul who wrote that wondrous argument upon the resurrection could have been so put out of the Council of Trent, and every other Council, and so utterly maligned, misunderstood, and misinterpreted, as that they could for a moment suppose he ever held or

taught this strange fiction—the resurrection of the body. He seems to have been weary of his body, and sighs for the day when the earthly house shall be dissolved. He longs to be “clothed upon.” He finds the body a prison-house. He finds it vile, cheap ; and he says the time shall come when this body shall be destroyed, and we shall have a glorious body from the Lord. And then, what can be plainer than the words I have read to you, unless you read them with pre-judgment ? He says, “Thou sowest *not* that body that shall be : God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him.” He says nothing about the resurrection of the body all through that chapter ; and yet if I had asked some of you if St. Paul believed in it, you would have said, “Oh, yes,” and pointed to 1 Corinthians xv. I cannot see it—neither in the word, nor the thought, nor the letter of the chapter at all. He declares that we sow a body of pain that is death, and that there shall rise a man to whom God shall give a body, fit, suitable. There is a natural body, that we sow ; there is a spiritual body, that we win. The natural body we have done with ; it goes to its proper place to be used up again : the spiritual body is to be a gift. And he says elsewhere, pathetically : “It doth not yet appear what we shall be ;

but this we know, that we shall be like unto Him." * And as in another place he has contrasted the vile cheap body with the more glorious body, so he seems to draw a clear distinction between this body that is sown in corruption, and the spiritual body which shall be given hereafter.

"But," you say, "I cannot understand what is meant by a 'spiritual body.'" No, nor any one else, if you mean by "understanding" it to understand its laws and conditions; but you can understand this—that the spirit may have given to it hereafter some outward form by which it may be made visible, but a different form from this.

Why do men cling to this natural body, and want it up again? One reason is, that they fear if the body rise not, they shall not know one another again. That is at the bottom of it, if you search; and so the resurrection of the body becomes a sweet dream that has been built up out of the longing from which it springs. No woman ever did read the words of our Lord without a pang and a shudder: "In the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

* 1 John iii. 2 (a pardonable confusion).

A man sighs, too, to think of disembodiment ; and we often think of the pale spectres so unlike the original that they know not one another—spirits wandering away, knowing not their identity ; strange shadows that know us not when we go to them. Men shrink from a world that has not in it some of “the old familiar faces”—some of the old loves and likings. It is because of this that the Swedenborgians, and others, have filled the world to come with their old friends, their old desires, and the old tongues. All this is natural enough.

But is *that* all you know of love and truth and friendship? Do you only know people by their faces? Have you no communion with the dead? Have you never heard that phrase in the creed, “I believe in the communion of saints”? Is all your communion with the dead with their bodies? Is that all you know of one another? There is a little German ballad I have quoted before ; but it grows upon me, as the world grows, in increasing brightness :—

Many a year is in its grave,
Since I crossed this restless wave ;
And the evening, fair as ever,
Shines on ruin, rock, and river.

Then in this same boat beside
Sat two comrades old and tried,—
One with all a father's truth,
One with all the fire of youth.

One on earth in silence wrought,
And his grave in silence sought ;
While the younger, brighter form
Passed in battle and in storm.

So, whene'er I turn my eye
Back upon the days gone by,
Saddening thoughts of friends come o'er me,
Friends that closed their course before me.

But what binds us, friend to friend,
But that soul with soul can blend ?
Soul-like were those hours of yore ;
Let us walk in soul once more.

Take, O boatman ! thrice thy fee,—
Take, I give it willingly ;
For, invisible to thee,
Spirits twain have crossed with me.*

That is the whole history. One body in the boat, but three souls. One man left, and two come back. "Take, O boatman, thrice thy fee ; for, invisible, you carried three."

And so you shall not know your old friend, unless he have his body ? Can you not make all

* Johann Ludwig Uhland : translated by Longfellow, "Poets and Poetry of Europe," New York, 1855, page 338.

places populous without bodies? I have come into this place before now, when there was not a person in it, and I have filled in, put back into their places some of those who loved me in older days, and have seen them with the soul's eye, and heard them, not with their body, but with their love. And when I cry, not to their real humanity, but to their spiritual goodness or hearty hospitality, then it is enough—this place is never *less* empty than when "empty." I behold them, and commune with them, and see the faces I love, with the spirit. Not know them? Is spirit so beggared of expression that it must have phosphorus back to its help? Is spirit so limited here in its possibilities, that, except you see the body of your friend, you don't know him? If so, then your friends are dead. Mine are not: they live. I behold them! I need not go to the witch of Endor, that she may summon up dead Samuel to commune with me. Some men need to call back the dead, as poor trembling Saul did; but they that walk, in the spirit, in the days of old, see the spirits when the bodies are not there.

I find that, even in that sense, I have conquered this doctrine of the resurrection of the body. When the soul looks back and calls to mind old

deeds, and thinks of the martyrs—and it is good reading, the history of the martyrs—and thinks of the pain that was inflicted on their bodies while in this world, and of the sweet, saintly, cheery souls they had, then a man says, “Not that which I sow: but some body which it shall please God to give me.” These martyrs rise triumphant over the body. I bethink me of him who lay upon the iron, and of his cheery spirit. Why even that poor, vacillating Englishman had courage enough to stretch out his hand and slowly burn it in the fire, because it was a traitor. He scorned the body, and am I to hope that he should have that back again? I should say, “Good Lord, deliver him.” If I were writing a new Litany, one of the prayers would be this:—“From the body as it was; from the flesh in its feebleness; from the earthly house of this tabernacle, with all its rents and tatters, Good Lord, deliver me.”

Now, therefore, I feel that there can be no need, for the sake of our being recognized, that this weary body should be restored, unless I am ignorant of what really constitutes true love and true friendship. But there is another fear—for the subtleties of fear are almost equal to the subtleties of love. There is a crying out, you know, from

the human heart, of a fear lest *we* should *not know the dead* that died, the friend that loved and left us. But then, think you, if you were spirit too, would the difficulty be there, and the fear? I do sometimes fear lest my friend, having lost his outward likeness, should pass me in that great world and I know him not—should so transcend me in that which alone carries men high in the world to come—godliness—that he should pass up to altitudes where I should not see him. But when I consider what these fears arise from, I find it is this: because I am still in the body, I think of him as out of the body; or I fear my disembodied spirit may not know him embodied. Ay, but bring him to his equals. Give him a spirit, and then again we know one another by the old signs, the signs of which the eyes are but the mere servants; for—

“What doth bind us friend to friend,
But that soul with soul can blend?”

Make him a spirit, then I have no fear that they who knew me in the spirit here shall know me then, and that I, too, shall know them. This very trembling that some of you naturally have, lest in the world to come we should not know each other, arises from the inequality of conditions.

"They are all gone to a land of light, and I alone sit weeping here," I say. But it is the body that encumbers me, it is the earthliness which surrounds me that makes me dread ; but make us all of one age, give us all a spiritual body, and we shall know each other full well.

Thus, then, that fear dies down, if a man sees that it arises out of the unequal conditions—that it is the terror of one who is in the flesh lest one who is out of the flesh should not be recognized. If both are taken from the body, and both dwell in the light of the upper mansion, that difficulty is overcome. If, then, you honestly say you won't know your old father because he has not his old body with him, I pity you. Don't you know more of the deep things of life already than that ? As I have said, Is there no communion without bodily presence ? Do the spirits never come back to any man unless with a body and form ?

But, again, to many the beginning of life is the moment of death, and the spiritual life often requires for its full development to wait the emancipation of the burden of the flesh. If you ask me, then, "Do you believe in the resurrection ?" I say, "Yes." If you say, "of the body ?" I say, "not of the flesh ; for I know that 'flesh and

blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.' ”
“Then what is it you believe in?” you ask. I believe in the resurrection of the dead, by which I mean the resurrection of those who have passed out of this state into the state we call death. I believe that they shall rise again, and shall have given them some wondrous body fit for another life; and as all true men know that a man’s identity doth not consist in his carcase but in his memory, in the continuity of his earthly life; so that is the only true resurrection—such a resurrection of a man’s spirit as shall enable him to represent his past life, and take part in the life to come. One should be sorry if there were “claimants” there whose bodies would have to be examined, and about whose tattoo marks inquiries would have to be made. Done with all that *then*. In the world to come, the identity of a man will be in his mind and in his thoughts. What identity is there between me now, and when I came to this town in my youth? How little of the old is left! And yet, dear old friends (as I see a few still left), has there been any break in friendship, because there has been a change in form? Is not our feeling what it was? All that oneness of spirit—hospitality and kindliness of heart—trust and faith

in one another—these are the unbroken lines, these the apostolic descent. For as the apostle says, They are not Abraham's children necessarily, who are so by pedigree or by body; *they* be Abraham's children who have Abraham's faith. So that, therefore, in the world to come, it is not the identity of outward things; but it is the unity of spirit, the continuity of memory—the same man.

There is a book at which the frivolous sneer, and the stupid—well, those who have little deep emotion. It is called "Man, and his Dwelling-place." The very title of that book is a text of wisdom, a very gospel. "Man, and his dwelling-place." "Oh! that must mean my house," you say. Oh, no, not at all. It does not mean your villa; it means your *body*. That is your dwelling-place. This body is no more to me than is that hideous box of bricks in which I live. I would be ashamed if a man called that house *me*. I had nothing to do with the building of it. And I should be as much ashamed to have this thing (the body) called me as that. The body! It is a sign; it is my dwelling-place, such as it is; and I long for release out of it, and to see him whom men call "grim" come with the solemn mandate

of notice to quit ; and to hear that it is wanted for another tenant. When I can I shall leave my dwelling-place behind me, in order that it may speedily decay.

Now, ponder upon these things, and if you still believe in the resurrection of the body, you won't be angry with me for not wanting to have my body back again. I shall be glad some day to be rid of it—I long sometimes for the day to come—and to be “clothed upon” with the spiritual body that is from above. If you wish to have your body back, good ; let me hope that you will have your wishes gratified. But, as I said before, to me this doctrine of the resurrection of the body is a shadow, a cruel, cold shadow, falling across the sunny hopes of the life eternal ; and when I have delivered myself from that, then I say with an emphasis I knew not in the days of old, “There is a natural body—I have it ; there is a spiritual body—I long for it. That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; *after*, that which is spiritual. As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” But you—some of you should write a new 15th Chapter of the Corinthians, and it would run thus : “As we have borne the image of the

earthly, so we shall bear it again. There is a natural body, and there shall be a second edition of it."

I tell you, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust, the spirit back again to God!" My love is in my soul; my identity is in my spirit. It is good to read the history of the martyrs, to know how little the body can do to put down the soul. It is with men as it is with houses. You and I know some very large ones—very splendid they are—what is called "well-appointed," and "suitable for the residence of a genteel family." And what do you get when you go there? Fairish commons; a good manger—and it is pretty full—and that is about all. And you and I have also known some little houses, with such signs of poverty about them, such glorious little pinchings without anything to hide from you; and yet there was the welcome of the spirit, and the ruby redness of love, and the words of the wise. There are houses in which there are not twenty volumes worth reading; but if you go down to the cellar, the vintages lie there. Other men's vintages lie more on the shelf than in the cellar; and other men's vintages again are in the Bible. Those of you who agree with me will read this chapter this afternoon, and read it carefully,

and you will find that Paul says it is "first that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual. Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body."

Now, lastly, I like my body upon the whole. But is that the best that God can do for me? Sinful man as I am, yet I have seen in my time such glowing words upon my tongue; have conquered at times my will, and trodden down my passions; have known hours of divineness! And is this all that God can do for such a seed as that? Base as we are, we have known love and friendship, and true beauty, and wit, and wisdom, and divineness; and for that seed, the spirit that can do these things, is this *all*? Never! "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." If it were needful, how one could turn the tables upon those people who tell us of the resurrection of the body, and plead for the sickly, and the ugly, and the little babes, and the obstructed—plead for the epileptic, plead for those on whose brain came down the pressures of life—plead for those who have poverty—plead for the poor dwarfs—plead for the poor idiots. And you want them

to come back in the same body? No. God will look upon these crooked ones, and shall give them a body *as it hath pleased Him*. Therefore, your doctrine is the shadow of death, while mine is light, and sunshine, and peace. I think of the dead who died in weakness, who lived in weakness. Behold that body again? Never! There was in it a spirit so beauteous, a soul so devout, a heart so loving: and shall that crooked body live again? Never! So my doctrine is a doctrine of light.

I will not go over many other matters; but all I ask you is to ponder upon these things. For the loving God will give to each a body according to its wants. It will be such a body as will not only never obstruct, but shall forward and help the spirit to higher and higher development. If I believed your doctrine, it would be as though the Almighty frowned upon me; but my doctrine of the spiritual body is like one of these sweet flowers*—a kiss, a smile of the Divine One, a carefulness of the Heavenly Father for his weary child—sunshine, and love, and brightness. Wherefore, I say no more.

* It is customary to decorate the church with flowers every Easter Sunday.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead. I say now, with an emphasis which in past years it was not possible for me to put into the words—"I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life eternal."

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